

THE WATCHTOWER

JUNE 1, 2006

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



Comfort for the Elderly



THE WATCHTOWER®

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in God's now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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Neglected, Mistreated, and Elderly



AS HE made his rounds, the night watchman was not prepared for the chilling sight that awaited him. There, just outside a plush residential complex, he came upon two lifeless bodies—an elderly married couple who had leaped from the window of their eighth-floor apartment. As shocking as their suicide was, their motive was even more jarring. A note found in the husband's pocket stated: "We are ending our lives because of constant abuses and harassment from our son and daughter-in-law."

The details of this story may be unusual, but the underlying issue is disturbingly common. Indeed, mistreatment of the elderly infects virtually every part of the globe. Consider the following:

- In one study, 4 percent of Canadian seniors reported being abused or exploited—usually by a family member. However, many seniors are too ashamed or too afraid to talk about their plight. The true figure may be closer to 10 percent, experts say.

- "The Indian nation, beneath its facade of strong family ties, is crumbling under a

rising number of elderly people who are unwanted by their children," reports the magazine *India Today*.

- According to the best available estimates, "between 1 and 2 million Americans age 65 or older have been injured, exploited, or otherwise mistreated by someone on whom they depended for care or protection," says the National Center on Elder Abuse. A deputy district attorney in San Diego, California, calls elder abuse "one of the most serious issues facing law enforcement today." He adds: "I see the problem magnifying over the next few years."

- In Canterbury, New Zealand, there is growing concern that the elderly are being targeted by family members—particularly those with drug, alcohol, or gambling problems. The number of reported cases of elder abuse in Canterbury rose dramatically from 65 in 2002 to 107 in 2003. The chief executive of an agency that has been set up to prevent such mistreatment says that this figure may represent just the "tip of the iceberg."

• The Japan Federation of Bar Associations advised that "elderly victims need to receive even more attention than victims of child abuse or other domestic violence," reports *The Japan Times*. Why? One reason, says the *Times*, is that "compared with child or spouse abuse, abuse of the elderly tends to take longer to surface, in part because the elderly feel responsible when the violence is

inflicted by their offspring, and also because the government and local administrators have so far failed to address the problem."

This brief sampling of what is happening around the world causes us to ask: Why are so many older ones being neglected and mistreated? Is there any hope that things will improve? What comfort is there for the elderly?



TODAY'S rampant mistreatment of the elderly is not surprising. Long ago, the Bible foretold that during "the last days" of this ungodly system, people would be "lovers of themselves, ... having no natural affection." (2 Timothy 3:1-3) The Greek word rendered "natural affection" can include the love that normally exists within families. True to Bible prophecy, that kind of affection is noticeably lacking today.

In stark contrast with those who mistreat the elderly, Jehovah God highly values and cares for those who are advanced in years. Consider how this is shown in the Bible.

"A Judge of Widows"

Jehovah God's concern for the elderly is evident in the Hebrew Scriptures. At

God Cares for the Elderly

Psalm 68:5, for example, David calls God "a judge of widows," who are often elderly.* In other Bible translations, the word "judge" is rendered "defender," "protector," and "champion." Clearly, Jehovah cares for widows. In fact, the Bible says that if they are mistreated, his anger blazes. (Exodus 22:22-24) Widows—and all faithful elderly ones—are highly valued by God and by his servants. Proverbs 16:31 expresses the view of Jehovah God and of his people when it states: "Gray-headedness is a crown of beauty when it is found in the way of righteousness."

Not surprisingly, respect for older ones was an intrinsic part of the Law that Jehovah gave to Israel. The Israelites were com-

* Of course, some widows are not elderly. The fact that God also cares for younger widows is shown, for instance, at Leviticus 22:13.

manded: "Before gray hair you should rise up, and you must show consideration for the person of an old man, and you must be in fear of your God. I am Jehovah." (Leviticus 19:32) Hence, in Israel regard for older ones was tied in with one's very relationship with Jehovah God. A person could not say that he loved God if he mistreated the elderly.

Christians are not subject to the Mosaic Law. However, they are under "the law of the Christ," which has a profound effect on their conduct and attitude, including showing love and concern for parents and the elderly. (Galatians 6:2; Ephesians 6:1-3; 1 Timothy 5:1-3) And Christians show love not simply because they are commanded to do so but because they are moved from the heart. "Love one another intensely from the heart," urged the apostle Peter.—1 Peter 1:22.

The disciple James provides further reason for us to care for the elderly. He wrote: "The form of worship that is clean and undefiled from the standpoint of our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their tribulation, and to keep oneself without spot from the world." (James 1:27) James makes a touching point. It calls to our attention how important these dear ones are to Jehovah.

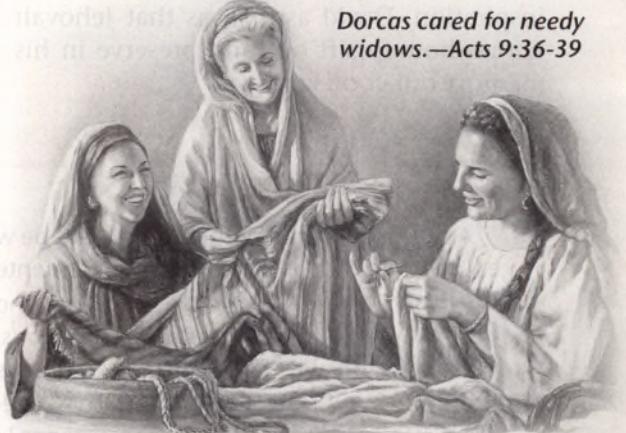
Hence, it is not enough simply to refrain from mistreating the elderly. Instead, we should show active concern for them by performing positive works. (See the box "Love in Action," on pages 6-7.) James wrote: "Faith without works is dead."—James 2:26.

Comfort "in Their Tribulation"

There is another point to be drawn from James' words. Note that James told Christians to look after widows "*in their tribulation*." The Greek word rendered "tribulation" basically means the distress, affliction, or suffering that results from the pressures

of our circumstances in life. There is no doubt that many among the elderly experience such distress. Some are lonely. Others are depressed over the limitations that come with age. Even those who are quite active in their service to God may be discouraged. Consider John,* a faithful proclaimer of God's Kingdom for more than four decades, the last three of which he has spent in

Dorcas cared for needy widows.—Acts 9:36-39



special full-time service. Now in his 80's, John admits that at times he feels despondent. He says: "I often look back and remember my mistakes, so many mistakes. I continually think to myself that I could have done better."

Such ones can be comforted in knowing that Jehovah, while perfect, is not a perfectionist. Though he is aware of our mistakes, the Bible says of him: "If errors were what you watch, O Jah, O Jehovah, who could stand?" (Psalm 130:3) Yes, Jehovah looks beyond our mistakes and perceives what is in the heart. How do we know this?

King David—himself no stranger to error and imperfection—was inspired by God to compose the following words, recorded at Psalm 139:1-3: "O Jehovah, you have

* Not his real name.

searched through me, and you know me. You yourself have come to know my sitting down and my rising up. You have considered my thought from far off. My journeying and my lying outstretched you have measured off, and you have become familiar even with all my ways." Here, the phrase "measured off" literally means to "sift," much in the same way that a farmer winnows out the chaff to leave behind the grain. Under divine inspiration, David assures us that Jehovah knows how to sift out and preserve in his memory our good works.

Among Jehovah's Witnesses, congregation elders take the lead in showing regard for the elderly. They take seriously the apostle Peter's admonition: "Shepherd the flock of God in your care." (1 Peter 5:2) Caring for the elderly in practical ways is part of taking care of God's flock. What, though, might this involve?

It takes patience and possibly a number of visits and chats to ascertain the full extent of the needs of an elderly person. Perhaps assistance is needed with shopping and cleaning, with transportation to Christian meetings, with reading the Bible and Christian publications, and with a host of other things. Wherever possible, practical and reliable arrangements

should be worked out and implemented.*

What, though, if an older brother or sister in the congregation is in dire straits, perhaps needing financial assistance? First, it would be good to find out if there are children or other relatives who can help. This would be in line with what is stated at 1 Timothy 5:4: "If any widow has children or grandchildren, let these learn first to practice godly devotion in their own household and to keep paying a due compensation to their parents and grandparents, for this is acceptable in God's sight."

* For further consideration, see the article "Meeting the Needs of Our Older Ones—A Christian Challenge," in the July 15, 1988, issue of *The Watchtower*.

Our merciful heavenly Father remembers—and cherishes—our good works as long as we remain faithful to him. Indeed, the Bible says that he would view it as an act of unrighteousness to forget our work and the love we showed for his name.—Hebrews 6:10.

"The Former Things Have Passed Away"

The Bible shows that the problems of old age were not what God purposed for humankind. It was only after our original parents, the first man and woman, rebelled against

Love in Action

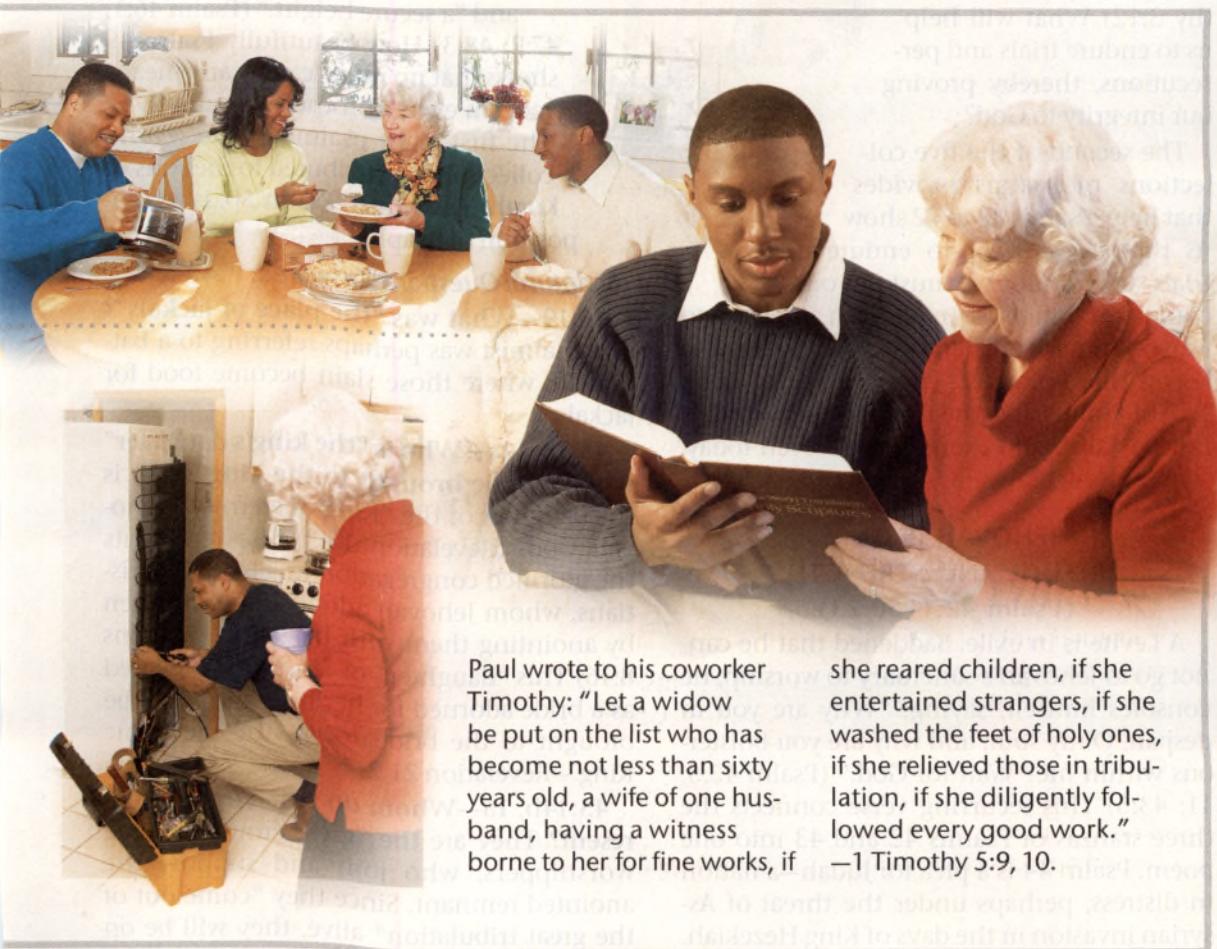
It may be that the elderly one needs assistance in determining if he or she is eligible for any provisions that the government makes available. Perhaps some in the congregation would be able to help. If none of these avenues are open, the elders could determine if the individual qualifies for assistance from the congregation. In some cases, this was permitted in the first-century congregation, for the apostle

their Creator that the crippling effects of aging became part of the human experience. (Genesis 3:17-19; Romans 5:12) This will not continue indefinitely.

As already noted, many of the bad conditions we are experiencing today—including the mistreatment of the elderly—constitute evidence that we are living in “the last days” of this system of things. (2 Timothy 3:1) God’s purpose is to undo the effects of sin, including the ravages of old age and death. The Bible says: “[God] will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no

more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.”—Revelation 21:4.

In God’s new world, the aches and pains of old age will be part of a bygone era. So will mistreatment of the elderly. (Micah 4:4) Even those who have died and are in God’s memory will be brought back to life, so that they too will have the opportunity to live forever on a paradise earth. (John 5:28, 29) At that time, it will be evident as never before that Jehovah God cares not only for the elderly but for all who obey him.



Paul wrote to his coworker Timothy: “Let a widow be put on the list who has become not less than sixty years old, a wife of one husband, having a witness borne to her for fine works, if

she reared children, if she entertained strangers, if she washed the feet of holy ones, if she relieved those in tribulation, if she diligently followed every good work.”
—1 Timothy 5:9, 10.

Jehovah's Word Is Alive

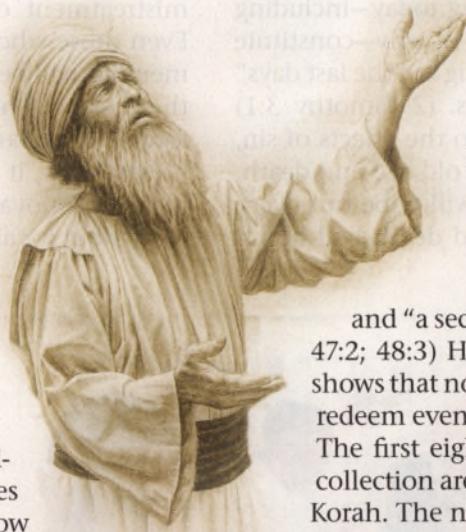
Highlights From Book Two of Psalms

AS Jehovah's servants, we expect trials and tests to come our way. "All those desiring to live with godly devotion in association with Christ Jesus will also be persecuted," wrote the apostle Paul. (2 Timothy 3:12) What will help us to endure trials and persecutions, thereby proving our integrity to God?

The second of the five collections of psalms provides that help. Psalms 42 to 72 show us that if we want to endure trials successfully, we must put our complete confidence in Jehovah and learn to wait on him for deliverance. What a valuable lesson that is for us! The message of Book Two of Psalms, like the rest of God's Word, is indeed "alive and exerts power" even today.—Hebrews 4:12.

JEHOVAH IS OUR "REFUGE AND STRENGTH" (Psalm 42:1–50:23)

A Levite is in exile. Saddened that he cannot go to Jehovah's sanctuary to worship, he consoles himself, saying: "Why are you in despair, O my soul, and why are you boisterous within me? Wait for God." (Psalm 42:5, 11; 43:5) This recurring verse connects the three stanzas of Psalms 42 and 43 into one poem. Psalm 44 is a plea for Judah—a nation in distress, perhaps under the threat of Assyrian invasion in the days of King Hezekiah.



Psalm 45, a song about a kingly wedding, is prophetic of the Messianic King. The following three psalms portray Jehovah as "a refuge and strength," "a great King over all the earth,"

and "a secure height." (Psalm 46:1; 47:2; 48:3) How beautifully Psalm 49 shows that no man "can by any means redeem even a brother"! (Psalm 49:7) The first eight psalms of the second collection are attributed to the sons of Korah. The ninth, Psalm 50, is a composition of Asaph.

Scriptural Questions Answered:

44:19—What was "the place of jackals"? The psalmist was perhaps referring to a battlefield, where those slain become food for jackals.

45:13, 14a—Who is "the king's daughter" who "will be brought to the king"? She is the daughter of the "King of eternity," Jehovah God. (Revelation 15:3) She represents the glorified congregation of 144,000 Christians, whom Jehovah adopts as his children by anointing them with his spirit. (Romans 8:16) This "daughter" of Jehovah, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband," will be brought to the bridegroom—the Messianic King.—Revelation 21:2.

45:14b, 15—Whom do "the virgins" represent? They are the "great crowd" of true worshippers, who join and support the anointed remnant. Since they "come out of the great tribulation" alive, they will be on

earth when the marriage of the Messianic King is completed in heaven. (Revelation 7:9, 13, 14) On that occasion, they will be filled with "rejoicing and joyfulness."

45:16—In what way will there come to be sons in place of the king's forefathers? When Jesus was born on earth, he had earthly forefathers. They will become his sons when he resurrects them from the dead during his Thousand Year Reign. Some of them will come to be among those appointed as "princes in all the earth."

50:2—Why is Jerusalem called "the perfection of prettiness"? This was not because of the city's appearance. Rather, it was because Jehovah used it and bestowed splendor upon it by making it the site for his temple and the capital of his anointed kings.

Lessons for Us:

42:1-3. As a hind, or female deer, in a dry region longs for water, the Levite longed for Jehovah. So intense was the man's sadness over not being able to worship Jehovah at His sanctuary that 'his tears became his food day and night'—he lost his appetite. Should we not cultivate deep appreciation for worshiping Jehovah in association with fellow believers?

42:4, 5, 11; 43:3-5. If for some reason beyond our control we are temporarily separated from the Christian congregation, the memory of the joys of such association in the past can sustain us. While this may at first intensify the pain of loneliness, it would also remind us that God is our refuge and that we need to wait on him for relief.

46:1-3. Whatever calamity may confront us, we must have unwavering confidence that "God is for us a refuge and strength."

50:16-19. Anyone speaking deception and practicing vile things has no right to represent God.

50:20. Rather than eagerly publicizing the faults of others, we should overlook them.
—Colossians 3:13.

"TOWARD GOD WAIT SILENTLY, O MY SOUL" (Psalm 51:1–71:24)

This group of psalms opens with David's heartfelt prayer following his sin with Bathsheba. Psalms 52 to 57 show that Jehovah will deliver those who throw their burden upon him and wait on him for salvation. As expressed in Psalms 58-64, during all his distresses, David makes Jehovah his refuge. He sings: "Indeed toward God wait silently, O my soul, because from him is my hope." —Psalm 62:5.

Intimacy with our Deliverer should move us to "make melody to the glory of his name." (Psalm 66:2) Jehovah is praised as a generous provider in Psalm 65, as a God of saving acts in Psalms 67 and 68, and as the Provider of escape in Psalms 70 and 71.

Scriptural Questions Answered:

51:12—With whose "willing spirit" did David ask to be supported? This refers, neither to God's willingness to help David nor to Jehovah's holy spirit, but to David's own spirit—to his mental inclination. He is asking God to impart to him the desire to do what is right.

*Do you know who is pictured by
"the king's daughter"?*



53:1—How is the person who denies God's existence "senseless"? The senselessness here does not denote intellectual deficiency. That such a person is morally senseless can be seen from the resulting moral breakdown described at Psalm 53:1-4.

58:3-5—In what way are the wicked like a snake? The lies they tell about others are like a serpent's venom. They poison the good reputation of their victims. "Like the cobra that stops up its ear," the wicked do not listen to direction or correction.

58:7—How do the wicked "dissolve as into waters that go their way"? David may have been thinking of the waters of certain torrent valleys in the Promised Land. While a flash flood would swell water levels in such a valley, these waters quickly run off and disappear. David was praying for the speedy disappearance of the wicked.

68:13—How were "the wings of a dove covered with silver and its pinions with yellowish-green gold"? Certain doves of a blue-gray color have an iridescent brightness on some of their feathers. Their plumage takes on a metallic appearance in the golden sunlight. David was perhaps likening the victorious Israelite warriors coming forth from a battle to such a dove—strong of wing and brilliant in appearance. As some scholars suggest, the description may also fit a work of art, a trophy, taken as spoil. In any case, David was

alluding to the victories Jehovah gave his people over their enemies.

68:18—Who were the "gifts in the form of men"? These were men from among those taken captive during the conquest of the Promised Land. Such men were later assigned to assist the Levites in their work.—Ezra 8:20.

68:30—What does the request to "rebuke the wild beast of the reeds" mean? Speaking figuratively of the enemies of Jehovah's people as wild beasts, David asked God to rebuke them, or to keep in check their power to do harm.

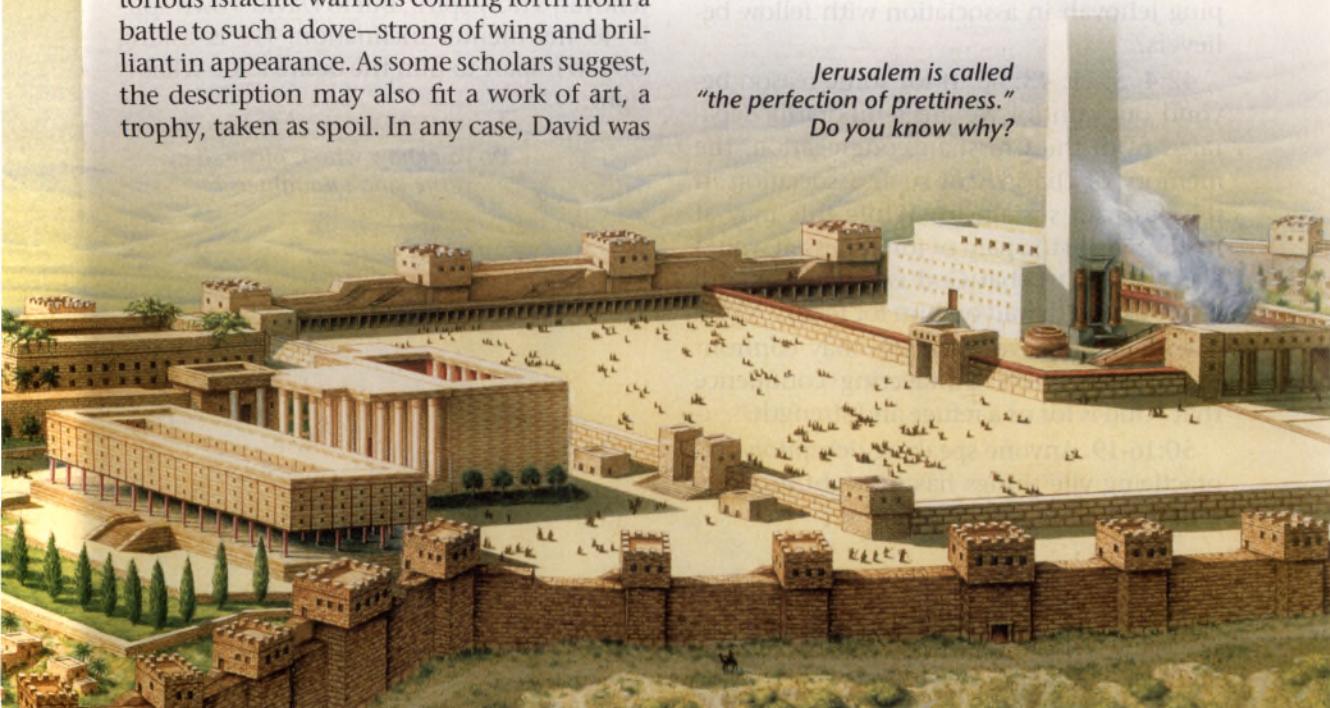
69:23—What is the meaning of 'causing enemy hips to wobble'? The muscles in the hip area are essential for performing strenuous tasks, such as picking up and carrying heavy loads. Unsteady hips suggest a loss of power. David prayed that his foes be deprived of their power.

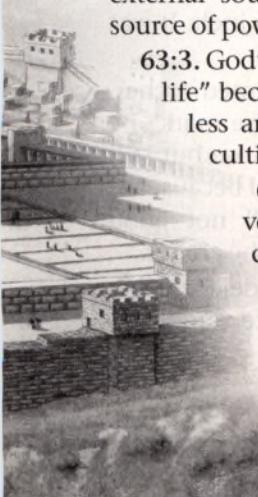
Lessons for Us:

51:1-4, 17. Committing sin need not alienate us from Jehovah God. If we repent, we can have confidence in his mercy.

51:5, 7-10. If we have sinned, we can appeal to Jehovah for forgiveness on account of our

*Jerusalem is called
"the perfection of prettiness."
Do you know why?*





inherited sinfulness. We should also pray to him to cleanse us, to restore us, to help us to remove sinful tendencies from our heart, and to give us a steadfast spirit.

51:18. David's sins threatened the welfare of the entire nation. So he prayed for God's goodwill toward Zion. When we commit a serious sin, it often brings reproach on Jehovah's name and on the congregation. We need to pray to God to repair the harm we may have caused.

52:8. We can be "like a luxuriant olive tree in God's house"—close to Jehovah and productive in his service—by obeying him and by willingly accepting his discipline.—Hebrews 12:5, 6.

55:4, 5, 12-14, 16-18. The conspiracy of his own son Absalom and the betrayal of the trusted counselor Ahithophel caused David intense emotional pain. However, that did not diminish David's confidence in Jehovah. We should not allow emotional strain to weaken our trust in God.

55:22. How do we throw our burden upon Jehovah? We do this (1) by taking a matter of concern to him in prayer, (2) by turning to his Word and organization for guidance and support, and (3) by doing what we reasonably can to relieve the situation.—Proverbs 3:5, 6; 11:14; 15:22; Philippians 4:6, 7.

56:8. Jehovah is aware not only of our situation but also of its emotional impact on us.

62:11. God does not have to depend on any external source of energy. He is the very source of power. 'Strength belongs to him.'

63:3. God's "loving-kindness is better than life" because without it, life is meaningless and purposeless. We are wise to cultivate friendship with Jehovah.

63:6. Nighttime—quiet and devoid of distraction—can be an excellent time for meditation.

64:2-4. Harmful gossip can ruin an innocent person's good

name. We should neither listen to such gossip nor spread it.

69:4. For us to keep peace, it may sometimes be wise to "give back" by apologizing, even if we are not convinced that we are in the wrong.

70:1-5. Jehovah hears our urgent pleas for help. (1 Thessalonians 5:17; James 1:13; 2 Peter 2:9) God may allow a trial to continue, yet he will give us wisdom to deal with the situation and the strength to endure it. He will not let us be tempted beyond what we can bear.—1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 10:36; James 1:5-8.

71:5, 17. David developed courage and strength by making Jehovah his confidence in his youth—even before he confronted the Philistine giant Goliath. (1 Samuel 17:34-37) Young ones do well to lean on Jehovah in all that they do.

"Let His Glory

Fill the Whole Earth"

The final song in the second collection of psalms, Psalm 72, is about Solomon's rulership, foreshadowing conditions that will prevail under the Messiah's reign. What wonderful blessings are described there—abundant peace, the end of oppression and violence, plenty of grain on the earth! Will we be among those who will enjoy these and other Kingdom blessings? We can be if, like the psalmist, we are content to wait on Jehovah, making him our refuge and strength.

"The prayers of David . . . come to their end" with the words: "Blessed be Jehovah God, Israel's God, who alone is doing wonderful works. And blessed be his glorious name to time indefinite, and let his glory fill the whole earth. Amen and Amen." (Psalm 72:18-20) Let us likewise wholeheartedly bless Jehovah and praise his glorious name.

Find Contentment by Applying Bible Principles

YOU have no doubt seen a cat curled up and purring—a picture of obvious contentment. How fine it would be to curl up like him and enjoy the same contentment! For many, however, contentment is hard to find, and it is fleeting. Why is this so?

Because we often blunder in our imperfection, and we must endure the shortcomings of others. Furthermore, we are living in the time period that the Bible calls “the last days,” characterized by “critical times hard to deal with.” (2 Timothy 3:1-5) Even if we cherish some fond memories of contentment in childhood, most of us now feel the full impact of these “critical times.” Is it possible to find contentment in this day and age?

Notice that the Scriptures say that these critical times would be, not *impossible*, but *hard* to deal with. We can deal with them by applying Bible principles. We may not always solve our problems, but we will find a measure of contentment. Let us examine three such principles.

Maintain a Realistic View

To find contentment, we must maintain a realistic view of our own limitations and those of others. In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul points out: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23) Many facets of Jehovah’s glory lie far beyond our comprehension. One example is the simple fact stated at Genesis 1:31: “God

saw everything he had made and, look! it was very good.” Whenever Jehovah chooses to look back on what he has done, he can always say that “it was very good.” No human can always claim that. Acknowledging our limitations is the first step toward gaining contentment. However, there is more to it. We need to understand and accept Jehovah’s view of the matter.

The Greek word translated “sin” comes from a root that means “to miss the mark.” (Romans 3:9, footnote) To illustrate: Envision someone who is hoping to win a prize

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

—Romans 3:23

by hitting a target with an arrow. He has three arrows at his disposal. He shoots the first one and misses by a yard. He aims better with the second arrow but still misses by a foot. With full concentration he lets the last arrow go and misses by only an inch. It was so close, but a miss is a miss.

We are all like that disappointed archer. Sometimes we seem to “miss the mark” by much. Other times we come close but still miss the mark. We are frustrated because we tried so hard, but it was still not good enough. Now, let us go back to the archer.

He is slowly turning away, dejected because he really wanted that prize. Suddenly,

the man in charge calls him back and hands him a prize, saying: "I want to give you this because I like you, and I saw how hard you tried." The archer is elated!

Elated! Everyone who receives from God "the gift" of everlasting life in perfection will feel this way. (Romans 6:23) Thereafter, everything they do will be good—they will never miss the mark again. They will be perfectly content. In the meantime, if we keep this view in mind, we will feel better about ourselves and those around us.

Recognize That Things Take Time

It is a fact that everything takes time. Have you noticed, though, how difficult it is to remain contented when something you are waiting for seems to take longer than expected or when an unpleasant situation seems to drag on longer than you had anticipated? Still, some have been able to maintain contentment in such situations. Consider the example of Jesus.

Before coming to the earth, Jesus was a model of obedience in heaven. However, it was here on earth that he "learned obedience." How? "From the things he suffered." Previously, he had observed suffering but had never experienced it in person. When on earth, especially from his baptism in the Jordan to his death at Golgotha, he underwent many trying situations. We do not know all the details of how Jesus was "made perfect" in this regard, but we do know that the process took time.—Hebrews 5:8, 9.

Jesus succeeded because he meditated on "the joy that was set before him," the reward for his faithfulness. (Hebrews 12:2) Nevertheless, at times he "offered up supplications and also petitions . . . with strong outcries and tears." (Hebrews 5:7) We might sometimes find ourselves praying in the same fashion. How does Jehovah view this? The same verse shows that Jehovah heard Jesus



Jesus "learned obedience from the things he suffered."

—Hebrews 5:8, 9

"favorably." God will do the same for us. Why?

Because Jehovah knows our limitations, and he comes to our aid. Everyone has limits as to what he can endure. People in Benin, Africa, say: "Too much water will eventually drown even the frogs." Jehovah knows better than we ourselves when we are about to reach our limits. He lovingly provides "mercy and . . . undeserved kindness for help at the right time." (Hebrews 4:16) He did this for Jesus, and he has done it for countless others. Consider how Monika has experienced this.

Monika grew up as a carefree, vibrant person with a cheerful disposition. In 1968, while still in her early 20's, she was shocked to learn that she had multiple sclerosis, a disease usually resulting in partial paralysis. This changed her life completely and required major adjustments in her full-time ministry. Monika realized that it would be a long-drawn-out process. Sixteen years later, she said: "My disease is still incurable and

may very well remain so until God's new system of things makes all things new." She admitted that it had not been easy: "Although my friends say that I have kept my sunny disposition and that I'm as cheery as ever, . . . my closest friends know that at times the tears flow long and hard."

However, she observed: "I have learned to be patient and to rejoice at the smallest sign of progress. My personal relationship with Jehovah has been strengthened by my seeing how helpless man is in his fight against disease. Only Jehovah can bring about complete healing." With Jehovah's help, Monika has maintained contentment and can now look back on more than 40 years of full-time service.

Admittedly, situations like Monika's are not easy. But for a certainty, you will be more content if you recognize that some things may take more time than you anticipate. Like Monika, you too can be sure of Jehovah's "help at the right time."

Do Not Compare —Set Reasonable Goals

You are an individual. There is no one exactly like you. A saying in the African Gun language expresses this fact simply: "The fingers are not all of the same length." It would be folly to compare any one finger with another. You would not want Jehovah to compare you with another person, and he never will. However, among humans the tendency to compare is widespread and can rob people of contentment. Note how Jesus powerfully illustrated this, as we read at Matthew 20:1-16.

Jesus spoke of a "master" who needed workers for his vineyard. He located some unemployed men and hired them "early in the morning," probably at 6:00 a.m. They agreed to the common daily wage of the

time, one denarius for a 12-hour workday. The men were no doubt happy to have found work and that at the usual wage. Later, the master located other groups of unemployed men and put them to work—at 9:00 a.m., 12:00 noon, 3:00 p.m., and even as late as 5:00 p.m. None in these groups would be working a full workday. For wages, the master promised them "whatever is just," and the workers agreed.

At the end of the day, the master ordered his man in charge to pay out the wages. He said to call the workers and first pay those who had been hired last. These had worked only one hour, but surprisingly they received the full day's wage. We can imagine the animated discussion that ensued. Those who had worked the full 12 hours concluded that they would get correspondingly more. However, they too received the same amount.

Their reaction? "On receiving it they began to murmur against the householder and said, 'These last put in one hour's work; still you made them equal to us who bore the burden of the day and the burning heat!'"

The master, though, saw things differently. He pointed out that they received what they had agreed to, nothing less. As for the others, he decided to give them a full day's wage, undoubtedly more than they had expected. In reality no one received less than what had been agreed upon; many, in fact, received more than they had anticipated. So in conclusion, the master asked: "Is it not lawful for me to do what I want with my own things?"

Now imagine if the man in charge had paid the original group first and these had departed immediately. They would have been content. The discontent arose only when they saw that others had received the

same wage for less work. This made them angry, even to the point of murmuring against the master, the one to whom they would originally have been so thankful because he had hired them.

This well illustrates what happens when we make comparisons. If you meditate on your personal relationship with Jehovah and appreciate how he blesses you, you will be content. Do not compare your situation with that of others. If it appears that Jehovah has decided to do something extra for others, be happy for them and with them.

Indeed lead to finding contentment even in these last days and in spite of imperfection. During your daily Bible reading, why not look for such principles, either plainly stated or tucked away in narratives and illustrations?

If you feel that your contentment is ebbing, endeavor to identify the real cause. Then look for principles that you could apply to correct the situation. For instance, you might check pages 110-11 of the book *"All Scripture Is Inspired of God and Beneficial."** There, the book of Proverbs is discussed, and you will find a large selection of

***"He will have cause
for exultation in regard
to himself alone, and
not in comparison
with the other person."***

—Galatians 6:4

Jehovah does, however, expect something of you. What is that? Galatians 6:4 says: "Let each one prove what his own work is, and then he will have cause for exultation in regard to himself alone." In other words, set reasonable goals for yourself. Plan what you realistically can do, and then follow through. If the goal is reasonable and you reach it, you will "have cause for exultation." You will experience contentment.

Rewards Are Forthcoming

The three principles we have considered show that applying Bible principles can in-



principles and counsel listed under 12 headings. *The Watch Tower Publications Index** and *Watchtower Library on CD-ROM** are excellent sources of information. By using them often, you will become adept at locating applicable principles.

The time is coming when Jehovah will grant deserving ones everlasting life in perfection on a paradise earth. Contentment will completely fill their lives.

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



SERVING JOYFULLY DESPITE INFIRMITIES

AS TOLD BY
VARNAVAS SPETSIOTIS

In 1990, at the age of 68, I became completely paralyzed. Yet, for about 15 years now, I have joyfully been serving as a full-time minister on the island of Cyprus. What has given me the strength to remain active in Jehovah's service despite my infirmities?

I WAS born into a family of nine children—four boys and five girls—on October 11, 1922. We lived in the village of Xylophagou, in Cyprus. Although my parents were relatively well-off, raising such a large family involved a lot of hard work in the fields.

My father, Antonis, was by nature studious and inquisitive. Shortly after I was born, Father noticed, while visiting the schoolteacher of the village, a tract entitled *Peoples Pulpit*, published by the Bible Students (as Jehovah's Witnesses were then

known). He started reading it, and he was soon engrossed in its contents. As a result, Father and one of his friends, Andreas Christou, were among the first on the island to associate themselves with Jehovah's Witnesses.

Growth Despite Opposition

In time, the two of them obtained more Bible-based publications from Jehovah's Witnesses. Soon, Father and Andreas were motivated to share with their fellow villagers the Bible truths they were learning. Their



The first Kingdom Hall in Xylophagou, still in use today

preaching activity provoked strong opposition from the Greek Orthodox clergy and others who felt that Jehovah's Witnesses were a corrupting influence.

Many of the local folk could not help but respect these two Bible teachers. My father was well-known for his kindness and generosity. Very often he extended a helping hand to poor families. Sometimes he sneaked out of the house late at night and left wheat or bread at the door of needy families. Such selfless Christian conduct made the message of these two ministers even more appealing.—Matthew 5:16.

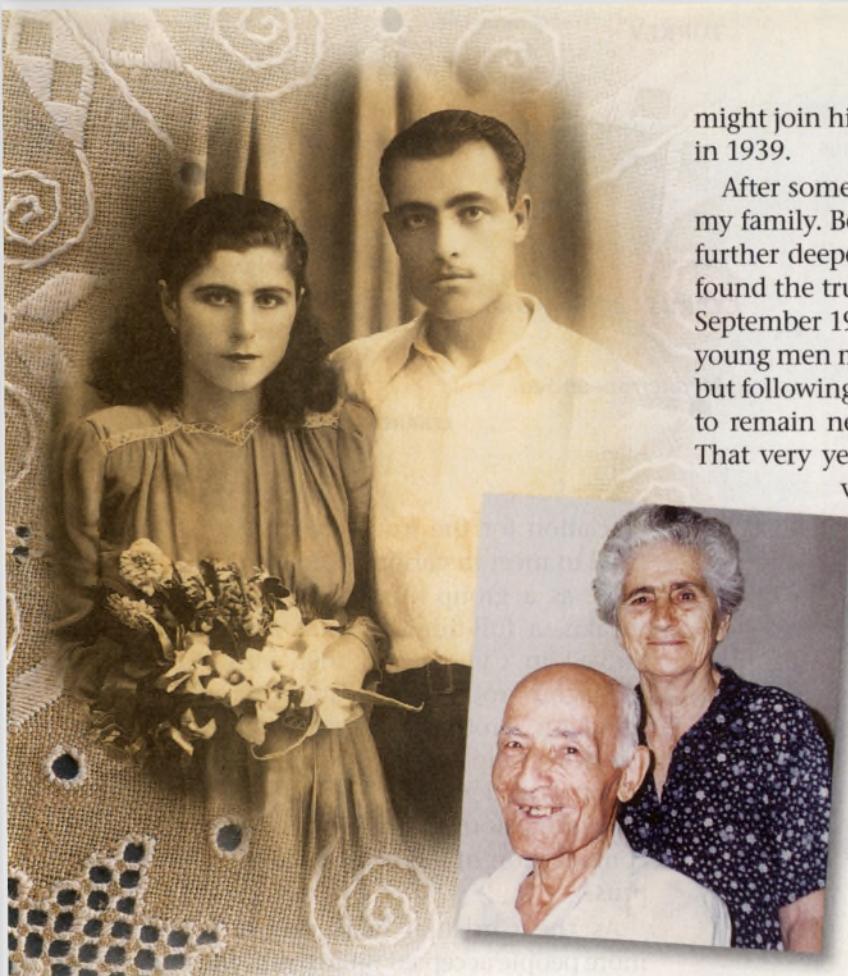
The result was that about a dozen people responded to the Bible message. As their ap-

preciation for the truth grew, they felt the need to meet in various homes to study the Bible as a group. About 1934, Nikos Matheakis, a full-time minister from Greece, arrived in Cyprus and met with the Xylophagou group. With patience and determination, Brother Matheakis helped organize the group and assisted them to acquire a better understanding of the Scriptures. This group formed the nucleus of the first congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in Cyprus.

As the Christian work progressed and more people accepted Bible truth, the brothers felt the need for a permanent place for their meetings. My eldest brother, George, and his wife, Eleni, offered a room that they were using as a barn. This property, adjacent to their home, was repaired and converted into a suitable place for the meetings. Thus the brothers came to own their first Kingdom Hall on the island. How grateful they were! And what an impetus this proved to be for further expansion!

Making the Truth My Own

In 1938, at the age of 16, I decided to become a carpenter. Thus, Father sent me to the capital of Cyprus, Nicosia. With much foresight, he arranged for me to stay with Nikos Matheakis. This faithful brother is still



With Efprepia in 1946 and today

remembered by many on the island for his zeal and hospitality. His unbridled enthusiasm and steadfast courage were necessary qualities for any Christian in Cyprus during those early days.

Brother Matheakis helped me tremendously to get grounded in Bible knowledge and to make spiritual progress. While I was staying with him, I attended all the meetings held in his home. For the first time, I felt that my love for Jehovah was growing. I developed a determination to build a meaningful relationship with God. Within a few months, I asked Brother Matheakis if I

might join him in the field service. This was in 1939.

After some time, I returned home to visit my family. Being with my father for a while further deepened my conviction that I had found the truth and the meaning of life. In September 1939, World War II began. Many young men my age volunteered to go to war, but following the Bible's direction, I decided to remain neutral. (Isaiah 2:4; John 15:19) That very year, I dedicated myself to Jehovah and was baptized in 1940.

For the first time, I felt that I was free from the fear of man!

In 1948, I married Efprepia. We were blessed with four children. Soon we realized that we had to work hard in order to bring them up "in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah." (Ephesians 6:4) Our prayers and efforts were focused on implanting in our children a deep love for Jehovah and respect for his laws and principles.

Health Problems Present a Challenge

In 1964, at the age of 42, I started to feel a numbness in my right hand and leg. Gradually, this spread to my left side. I was diagnosed with muscle atrophy, an incurable disease that eventually leads to complete paralysis. I was badly shaken by the news. Things happened so quickly and unexpectedly! Engulfed by emotions of anger and indignation, I thought: 'Why did this have to happen to me? What have I done to deserve this?' In time, however, I was able to absorb the initial shock of the diagnosis. Then I was overwhelmed by feelings of anxiety and un-

certainty. A number of questions were whirling around in my mind. Would I become completely paralyzed and fully dependent on others? How would I cope? Would I be able to provide for my family—my wife and our four children? I really cringed at such thoughts.

At this critical juncture in my life, more than ever before, I felt the need to turn to Jehovah in prayer and to share with him all my concerns and anxieties in full sincerity. I prayed day and night with tears in my eyes. Soon I felt consoled. The soothing words of Philippians 4:6, 7 proved very true in my case: “Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus.”

Coping With Paralysis

My condition continued to worsen. I realized that I had to adjust quickly to my new circumstances. Since I could no longer work as a carpenter, I decided to find a less demanding occupation that suited my physical condition and that still enabled me to make ends meet. Initially, I sold ice cream from a small van. I did this for about six years until my illness confined me to a wheelchair. Then I switched to various lighter jobs that I could manage.

Since 1990 my health has deteriorated to the point that I have been unable to do any secular work at all. Now, I depend completely on others, even for tasks that would be routine for an able-bodied person. I need help to go to bed, to wash myself, and to get dressed. To attend Christian meetings, I have to be pushed in a wheelchair to the car and then lifted into it. At the Kingdom Hall, I

have to be lifted out of the car and into a wheelchair and then pushed inside. During the meeting, I have an electric heater next to me to keep my feet warm.

Despite the paralysis, though, I attend all the meetings quite regularly. I appreciate that this is where Jehovah teaches us, and being with my spiritual brothers and sisters is a real refuge and a source of support and encouragement. (Hebrews 10:24, 25) Regular visits by spiritually mature fellow believers have been a constant aid to me. I cannot help but feel as David did: “My cup is well filled.”—Psalm 23:5.

My dear wife has been a wonderful helper all these years. My children too have been most generous with their support. For several years now, they have helped me with everyday needs. What they are doing is not easy, and as the years go by, it becomes more and more difficult to care for me. They are truly exemplary in cultivating patience and in expending themselves, and I pray that Jehovah continues to bless them.

Another marvelous provision from Jehovah to fortify his servants is prayer. (Psalm 65:2) In response to my heartfelt supplications, Jehovah has given me the strength to continue in the faith all these years. Especially when I feel low, prayer brings relief and helps me maintain my joy. Constant communication with Jehovah refreshes me and renews my determination to carry on. I am absolutely convinced that Jehovah hears the prayers of his servants and gives them the peace of mind they need.—Psalm 51:17; 1 Peter 5:7.

Most of all, I am reinvigorated every time I remember that God will eventually heal all who are blessed with life in Paradise under the Kingdom rule of his Son, Jesus Christ. Tears of joy have more than once streamed down my face as I contemplate

that marvelous hope.—Psalm 37:11, 29; Luke 23:43; Revelation 21:3, 4.

Serving as a Full-Time Minister

About 1991, I realized after analyzing my situation that the best way to avoid giving in to self-pity was to keep busy in sharing the precious Kingdom good news with others. In that year, I started serving as a full-time minister.

Since I am disabled, most of my witnessing is done through letter writing. However, for me, writing is not an easy task; it requires real effort. I find it difficult to hold the pen firmly with my hand, which is weakened by muscle atrophy. Yet, through perseverance and prayer, I have been witnessing by letter writing for more than 15 years now. I also use the telephone to preach to people. I never miss an opportunity to talk about my hope of the new world and the Paradise earth to relatives, friends, and neighbors who visit me in my home.

As a result, I have enjoyed many encouraging experiences. I was very happy to see one of my grandchildren, with whom I studied the Bible some 12 years ago, make spiritual progress and show appreciation for Bible truth. Motivated by his Bible-trained conscience, he has remained loyal and steadfast on the issue of Christian neutrality.

I am particularly pleased when people to whom I write get in touch with me for further information about the Bible. Occasionally, some request more Bible literature. For



*I find joy in
witnessing by phone
and by letter writing*

instance, a lady telephoned me and thanked me for the encouraging letter I sent to her husband. She found the thoughts in the letter very interesting. This led to many Bible discussions with her and her husband in my home.

A Bright Outlook

Over the years, I have seen the number of Kingdom proclaimers increase in this part of the world. The small Kingdom Hall next to the house of my brother George has been expanded and renovated a number of times. It is a beautiful place of worship, used by two congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Father died in 1943, at the age of 52. But what a spiritual heritage he left behind! Eight of his children embraced the truth and are still serving Jehovah.

In the village of Xylophagou, where Father was born, and in the nearby villages, there are now three congregations, with a total of 230 Kingdom publishers!

Such positive results have been a source of great joy to me. Now, at the age of 83, I echo with confidence the words of the psalmist: "The maned young lions themselves have had little on hand and gone hungry; but as for those seeking Jehovah, they will not lack anything good." (Psalm 34:10) I am eagerly awaiting the time when the prophecy recorded at Isaiah 35:6 comes true: "At that time the lame one will climb up just as a stag does." Until then, I am determined to continue serving Jehovah joyfully despite my infirmities.

JEHOVAH TELLS “FROM THE BEGINNING THE FINALE”

“The One telling from the beginning the finale, and from long ago the things that have not been done.”—ISAIAH 46:10.

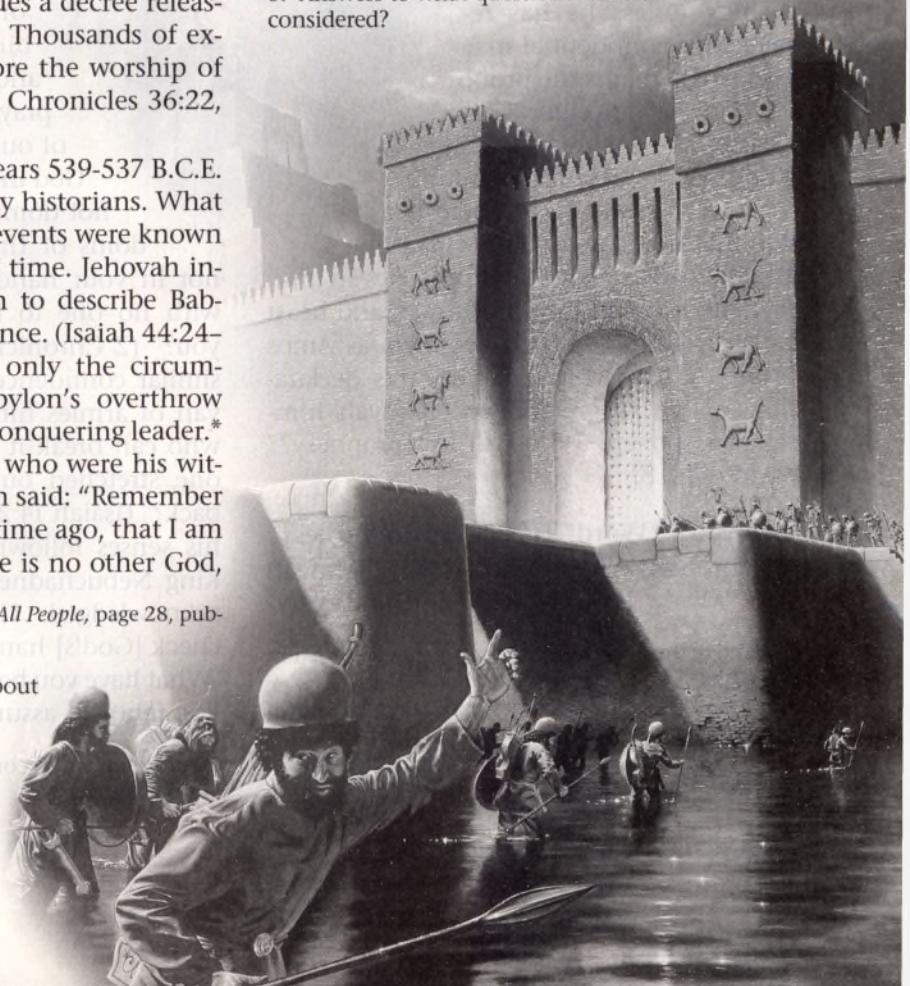
IN THE dead of night, enemy soldiers advance stealthily along the bed of the Euphrates River toward their objective, the mighty city of Babylon. As they approach the entrance to the city, an astonishing sight greets their eyes. The colossal two-leaved doors in Babylon’s wall have been left open! Out of the riverbed, they climb; into the city, they enter. Swiftly the city falls. Cyrus, their leader, promptly takes charge of the conquered land and later issues a decree releasing the Israelite captives. Thousands of exiles return home to restore the worship of Jehovah in Jerusalem.—2 Chronicles 36:22, 23; Ezra 1:1-4.

² Those events of the years 539-537 B.C.E. are now well attested to by historians. What is remarkable is that the events were known some 200 years ahead of time. Jehovah inspired his prophet Isaiah to describe Babylon’s fall that far in advance. (Isaiah 44:24-45:7) God revealed not only the circumstances surrounding Babylon’s overthrow but also the name of the conquering leader.* Addressing the Israelites, who were his witnesses back then, Jehovah said: “Remember the first things of a long time ago, that I am the Divine One and there is no other God,

nor anyone like me; the One telling from the beginning the finale, and from long ago the things that have not been done.” (Isaiah 46:9, 10a) Jehovah is truly a God who can know ahead of time what will happen.

³ How much of the future does God know? Does Jehovah know in advance what each of us will do? Indeed, is our future predestined? We will consider the Bible’s

3. Answers to what questions will now be considered?



* See the brochure *A Book for All People*, page 28, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

1, 2. What is remarkable about the events associated with Babylon’s overthrow, and what does this fact indicate about Jehovah?

answers to these and related questions in this and the following article.

Jehovah—A God of Prophecy

⁴ Being able to foreknow the future, Jehovah inspired his servants in Bible times to record many prophecies, which allow us to know in advance what Jehovah has purposed to do. “The first things —here they have come, but new things I am telling out,” Jehovah declares. “Before they begin to spring up, I cause you people to hear them.” (Isaiah 42:9) How privileged God’s people are!

⁵ The prophet Amos assures us: “The Sovereign Lord Jehovah will not do a thing unless he has revealed his confidential matter to his servants the prophets.” This advance knowledge brought with it responsibility. Notice the powerful illustration that Amos next uses: “There is a lion that has roared! Who will not be afraid?” Just as a lion’s roar provokes an immediate reaction from both man and beast in the vicinity, so such prophets as Amos promptly gave voice to Jehovah’s declarations. “The Sovereign Lord Jehovah himself has spoken! Who will not prophesy?” —Amos 3:7, 8.

Jehovah’s “Word” Has “Certain Success”

⁶ Through his prophet Isaiah, Jehovah said: “My own counsel will stand, and every-

4. Who is the Source of the prophecies recorded in the Bible?
5. What responsibility comes with advance knowledge of what Jehovah will do?
6. In what way did Jehovah’s “counsel” prevail in connection with Babylon’s downfall?

thing that is my delight I shall do.” (Isaiah 46:10b) God’s “counsel,” that is, his will or purpose as far as Babylon was concerned, involved calling Cyrus out of Persia to conquer Babylon and bring about its downfall. Jehovah declared that purpose long in advance.

As already noted, it unfailingly came to pass in the year 539 B.C.E.



*Jehoshaphat
had confidence
in Jehovah*

7. Nearly four centuries before Cyrus’ conquest of Babylon, King Jehoshaphat of Judah faced the combined armies of Ammon and Moab. He confidently prayed: “O Jehovah the God of our forefathers, are you not God in the heavens, and are you not dominating over all the kingdoms of the nations, and are there not in your hand power and mightiness, with no one to hold his ground against you?” (2 Chronicles 20:6) Isaiah expressed similar confidence when he stated: “Jehovah of armies himself has counseled, and who can break it up? And his hand is the one stretched out, and who can turn it back?” (Isaiah 14:27) Later, when restored to his senses following a period of insanity, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon humbly acknowledged: “There exists no one that can check [God’s] hand or that can say to him, ‘What have you been doing?’” (Daniel 4:35) Yes, Jehovah assures his people: “My word
7. Why can we be confident that Jehovah’s “word” always succeeds?

... will not return to me without results, but it will certainly do that in which I have delighted, and it will have certain success in that for which I have sent it." (Isaiah 55:11) We can have full confidence that Jehovah's "word" always comes true. God's purpose is infallible.

God's "Eternal Purpose"

⁸ In his letter to the Ephesian Christians, the apostle Paul referred to God as having an "eternal purpose." (Ephesians 3:11) This is not simply a plan of action, as though God had to map out the way he would work. Rather, it relates to Jehovah's determination to accomplish what he originally intended for mankind and the earth. (Genesis 1:28) To help us appreciate the infallibility of his purpose, consider the first prophecy recorded in the Bible.

⁹ The promise at Genesis 3:15 indicates that immediately after Adam and Eve sinned, Jehovah determined that his symbolic woman was to bring forth a seed, or son. Jehovah also foresaw the result of the enmity between his woman and Satan and between their opposing seeds. Although Jehovah would allow the Seed of God's woman to suffer a bruising in the heel, in God's due time, the Seed would bruise the serpent, or Satan the Devil, in the head. In the meantime, Jehovah's purpose unfailingly advanced through the chosen genealogical line down to Jesus' appearing as the promised Messiah.—Luke 3:15, 23-38; Galatians 4:4.

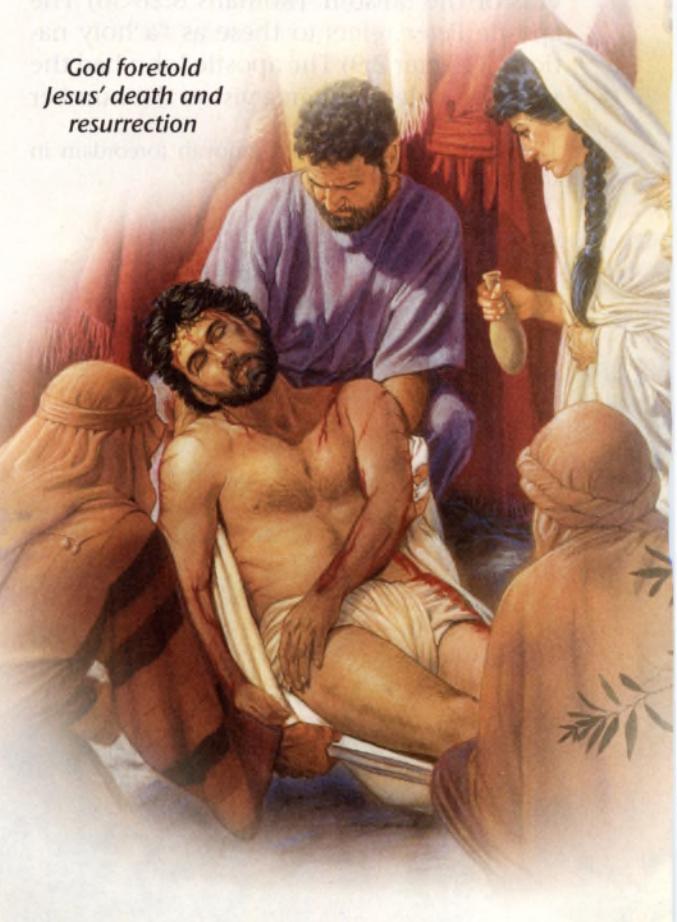
What Jehovah Foreordains

¹⁰ Speaking about the role that Jesus played in God's purpose, the apostle Peter

8. What is God's "eternal purpose"?
9. How does Genesis 3:15 relate to God's purpose?
10. Did Jehovah predetermine from the beginning that Adam and Eve would sin? Explain.

wrote: "He [Jesus] was foreknown before the founding of the world, but he was made manifest at the end of the times for the sake of you." (1 Peter 1:20; footnote) Did Jehovah predetermine from the beginning that Adam and Eve would sin and that the ransom sacrifice provided by means of Jesus Christ would be needed? No. The word "founding" is translated from a Greek term that literally means "throwing down of seed." Had there been a "throwing down of seed," or a conceiving of human offspring, before Adam and Eve sinned? No. It was after their act of disobedience that Adam and Eve brought forth children. (Genesis 4:1) So following the rebellion but before the conception of offspring by Adam and Eve, Jehovah foreordained the appearance of the "seed." Jesus' death and resurrection

*God foretold
Jesus' death and
resurrection*

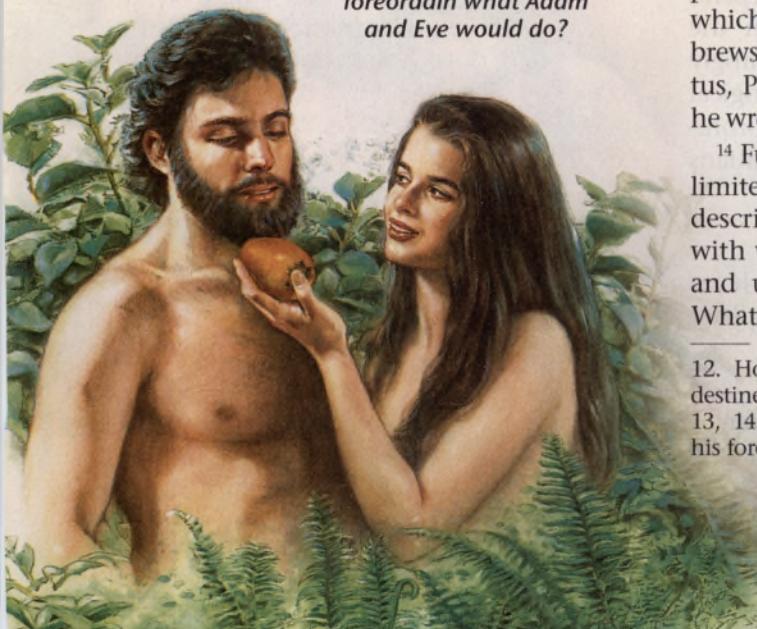


provided the loving arrangement of the ransom, whereby inherited sin and all of Satan's efforts are to be brought to nothing.—Matthew 20:28; Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8.

¹¹ God foreordained another development in the outworking of his purpose. This is indicated by what Paul wrote to the Ephesians, namely that God will "gather all things together again in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth." Then, with reference to "the things in the heavens," that is, those who are chosen as heirs with Christ, Paul explained: "We were foreordained according to the purpose of him who operates all things according to the way his will counsels." (Ephesians 1:10, 11) Yes, Jehovah determined ahead of time that a limited number of humans would make up a secondary part of the seed of God's woman and share with Christ in dispensing the benefits of the ransom. (Romans 8:28-30) The apostle Peter refers to these as "a holy nation." (1 Peter 2:9) The apostle John had the privilege of learning in a vision the number

11. What development did Jehovah foreordain in the outworking of his purpose?

Did Jehovah foreordain what Adam and Eve would do?



of those who would become Christ's joint heirs—144,000. (Revelation 7:4-8; 14:1, 3) United with Christ as King, they serve "for the praise of [God's] glory."—Ephesians 1:12-14.

¹² The foreordination of the 144,000 does not mean that certain individuals were predestined to serve God faithfully in this way. Indeed, the admonition in the Christian Greek Scriptures was written primarily to guide and strengthen anointed ones to maintain integrity and keep themselves worthy of their heavenly calling. (Philippians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:5, 11; 2 Peter 1:10, 11) Jehovah knows in advance that 144,000 individuals will qualify to serve his purpose. Who they prove to be depends on how those invited individually choose to live their life, a decision that each one of them must make personally.—Matthew 24:13.

What Jehovah Foreknows

¹³ Since Jehovah is a God of prophecy and purpose, how does he exercise his foreknowledge? To begin with, we are assured that all of God's ways are truthful, righteous, and loving. When writing to Hebrew Christians of the first century C.E., the apostle Paul confirmed that God's oath and his promise make "two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie." (Hebrews 6:17, 18) In his letter to the disciple Titus, Paul also expressed this thought when he wrote that God "cannot lie."—Titus 1:2.

¹⁴ Furthermore, although Jehovah has unlimited power, he never acts unjustly. Moses described Jehovah as "a God of faithfulness, with whom there is no injustice; righteous and upright is he." (Deuteronomy 32:4) Whatever Jehovah does harmonizes with

12. How do we know that the 144,000 are not predestined as individuals?

13, 14. With what does the way Jehovah exercises his foreknowledge harmonize, and why?

his wonderful personality. His actions manifest the perfect harmony of his cardinal qualities of love, wisdom, justice, and power.

¹⁵ Consider how all of this relates to the events in the garden of Eden. As a loving Father, Jehovah provided everything human creatures needed. He endowed Adam with the ability to think, to reason on a matter, and to reach a conclusion. Unlike the animal creation, which is largely guided by instinct, Adam had the ability to make choices. The result of this was that God looked down from his heavenly throne and saw "everything he had made and, look! it was very good."—Genesis 1:26-31; 2 Peter 2:12.

¹⁶ When Jehovah chose to lay a command upon Adam not to eat of "the tree of the knowledge of good and bad," He provided adequate instruction so that Adam could decide what to do. He allowed Adam to eat from "every tree of the garden" except one and warned of the fatal results of eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. (Genesis 2:16, 17) He laid before Adam the consequences of his actions. What would Adam do?

¹⁷ Jehovah apparently chose not to foresee what Adam—and Eve—would do, even

15, 16. What prospects did Jehovah lay before Adam in the garden of Eden?

17. Why can we say that Jehovah's exercise of foreknowledge is selective?

Can You Explain?

- What ancient examples testify that God's "word" always has "certain success"?
- What has Jehovah foreordained in connection with his "eternal purpose"?
- In what way does Jehovah exercise his foreknowledge?

though He has the ability to know everything in advance. It is therefore a question, not of whether Jehovah *can* foresee the future, but of whether he *chooses* to do so. Furthermore, we can reason that Jehovah, being a God of love, would not knowingly and cruelly predetermine that rebellion—with all its sad consequences—should take place. (Matthew 7:11; 1 John 4:8) Thus, as far as Jehovah's exercise of foreknowledge is concerned, it is selective.

¹⁸ Does Jehovah's selective exercise of his foreknowledge mean that he is somehow lacking, imperfect? No. Moses described Jehovah as "the Rock," adding: "Perfect is his activity." He was not to blame for the consequences of human sin. The disastrous effects felt by all of us today stem from that unrighteous act of disobedience. The apostle Paul clearly reasoned that "through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because they had all sinned."—Deuteronomy 32:4, 5; Romans 5:12; Jeremiah 10:23.

¹⁹ So far in our discussion, we have seen that there is no injustice with Jehovah. (Psalm 33:5) Rather, Jehovah's abilities, moral qualities, and standards support his purpose. (Romans 8:28) As the God of prophecy, Jehovah tells "from the beginning the finale, and from long ago the things that have not been done." (Isaiah 46:9, 10) We have also seen that his exercise of foreknowledge is selective. Where, then, do we fit in? How can we make sure that our decisions conform to God's loving purpose? And what blessings will doing so bring us? The next article will consider these questions.

18. Why is Jehovah's selective exercise of foreknowledge no indication of imperfection on his part?

19. What questions will be considered in the next article?

'CHOOSE LIFE TO KEEP ALIVE'

"I have put life and death before you, the blessing and the malediction; and you must choose life in order that you may keep alive."

—DEUTERONOMY 30:19.

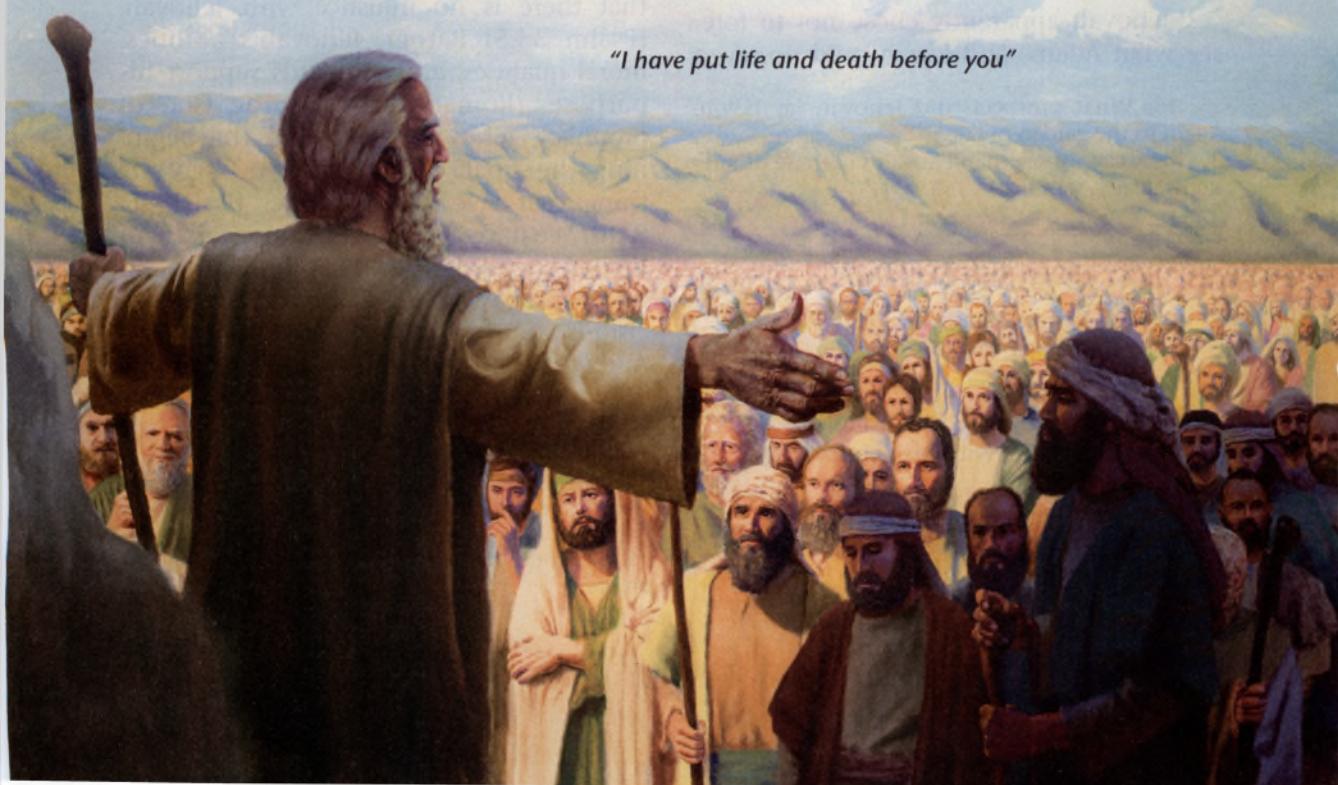
LE^T us make man in our image, according to our likeness." That divine statement is recorded in the first chapter of the Bible. Accordingly, "God proceeded to create the man in his image, in God's image he created him," reports Genesis 1:26, 27. Thus the first human differed from all other creations on earth. He resembled his Creator, able to reflect a godlike attitude in reasoning, in demonstrating love, justice, wisdom, and power. He had the faculty of conscience to help him reach decisions that would benefit

1, 2. In what ways was man created in God's image?

himself and please his heavenly Parent. (Romans 2:15) In short, Adam had free will. Observing the makeup of his earthly son, Jehovah made this assessment of his handiwork: "Look! it [is] very good."—Genesis 1:31; Psalm 95:6.

² As Adam's descendants, we too are in God's image and likeness. However, do we really have a choice in what we do? Although Jehovah has the ability to know in advance what will happen, he does not predetermine our individual actions and destiny. He never allows his earthly children to be ruled by predestination. To help us grasp the importance

"I have put life and death before you"



of exercising our free will to make right choices, let us first of all learn a lesson from the nation of Israel.—Romans 15:4.

Freedom of Choice in Israel

³ “I am Jehovah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slaves,” said Jehovah to the Israelites. (Deuteronomy 5:6) In 1513 B.C.E., the nation of Israel experienced a miraculous deliverance from Egyptian bondage and therefore had no reason to doubt those words. In the first of the Ten Commandments, Jehovah through his spokesman Moses declared: “You must not have any other gods against my face.” (Exodus 20:1, 3) On that occasion, the nation of Israel chose to obey. They willingly gave Jehovah their exclusive devotion.—Exodus 20:5; Numbers 25:11.

⁴ Some 40 years later, Moses forcefully reminded another generation of Israelites of the choice before them. “I do take the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you today,” he declared, “that I have put life and death before you, the blessing and the malediction; and you must choose life in order that you may keep alive, you and your offspring.” (Deuteronomy 30:19) Similarly today, we can choose. Yes, we can make a choice to serve Jehovah faithfully with everlasting life in view, or we can choose to disobey him and suffer the consequences. Consider two examples of people who made contrasting choices.

⁵ In 1473 B.C.E., Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land. In a powerful exhortation uttered before his death, Joshua entreated the whole nation: “Now if it is bad in your eyes to serve Jehovah, choose for your-

3. What was the first of the Ten Commandments, and how did faithful Israelites choose to obey it?
4. (a) What choice did Moses place before Israel? (b) What choice do we have today?
5. 6. What choice did Joshua make, and with what outcome?

selves today whom you will serve, whether the gods that your forefathers who were on the other side of the River served or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are dwelling.” Then, referring to his family, he continued: “As for me and my household, we shall serve Jehovah.”—Joshua 24:15.

⁶ Earlier, Jehovah had urged Joshua to be courageous and strong, instructing him not to deviate from obedience to God’s Law. Rather, by reading the book of the Law in an undertone day and night, Joshua would be able to make his way successful. (Joshua 1:7, 8) And so it proved to be. Joshua’s choice led to blessings. “Not a promise failed out of all the good promise that Jehovah had made to the house of Israel,” Joshua declared. “It all came true.”—Joshua 21:45.

⁷ In contrast, consider the situation in Israel some 700 years later. By that time, many Israelites were following pagan customs. For example, on the last day of the year, people gathered around a table spread with a variety of tasty foods and sweet wine. This was no simple family get-together. It was a religious ceremony that honored two pagan deities. The prophet Isaiah recorded God’s view of this unfaithfulness: “You men are those leaving Jehovah, those forgetting my holy mountain, those setting in order a table for the god of Good Luck and those filling up mixed wine for the god of Destiny.” They believed that the year’s harvest depended, not on having Jehovah’s blessing, but on appeasing “the god of Good Luck” and “the god of Destiny.” In reality, though, their rebellious course and willful choice sealed their destiny. “I will destine you men to the sword,” Jehovah declared, “and you will all of you bow down to being slaughtered; for the reason that I called, but you did not answer; I spoke, but you did not listen; and you kept doing what

7. In Isaiah’s day, what choice did some Israelites make, and with what consequences?

was bad in my eyes, and the thing in which I took no delight you chose." (Isaiah 65:11, 12) Their unwise choice brought destruction upon them, and the gods of Destiny and Good Luck were powerless to prevent it.

Making the Right Choice

⁸ When Moses exhorted Israel to choose life, he pointed out three steps that they should take: "By loving Jehovah your God, by listening to his voice and by sticking to him." (Deuteronomy 30:20) Let us examine each of these so that we may make the right choice.

⁹ *By loving Jehovah our God:* We choose to serve Jehovah because we love him. Heeding the warning examples from Israel's day, we resist all temptations to commit immorality and we shun lifestyles that may cause us to sink into the world's morass of materialism. (1 Corinthians 10:11; 1 Timothy 6:6-10) We cleave to Jehovah and keep his regulations. (Joshua 23:8; Psalm 119:5, 8) Before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, Moses exhorted them: "See, I have taught you regulations and judicial decisions, just as Jehovah my God has commanded me, for you to do that way in the midst of the land to which you are going to take possession of it. And you must keep and do them, because this is wisdom on your part and understanding on your part before the eyes of the peoples who will hear of all these regulations." (Deuteronomy 4:5, 6) Now is the time to demonstrate our love for Jehovah by putting Jehovah's will first in our life. We will surely be blessed if we choose to do so.—Matthew 6:33.

¹⁰ *By listening to God's voice:* Noah was "a preacher of righteousness." (2 Peter 2:5) Virtually all the people of the pre-Flood world were distracted and "took no note" of

8. According to Deuteronomy 30:20, what is involved in making the right choice?

9. How can we demonstrate our love for Jehovah? 10-12. What lessons do we learn from considering what happened in the days of Noah?

Noah's warnings. The consequence? "The flood came and swept them all away." Jesus warned that our day, during "the presence of the Son of man," would be similar. What happened in Noah's day serves as a stark warning for people today who choose not to heed God's message.—Matthew 24:39.

¹¹ Those who ridicule the divine warnings sounded by God's modern-day servants should realize what failure to heed the warnings will mean. Of such ridiculers, the apostle Peter stated: "According to their wish, this fact escapes their notice, that there were heavens from of old and an earth standing compactly out of water and in the midst of water by the word of God; and by those means the world of that time suffered destruction when it was deluged with water. But by the same word the heavens and the earth that are now are stored up for fire and are being reserved to the day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men."—2 Peter 3:3-7.

¹² Contrast this with the choice Noah and his household made. "By faith Noah, after being given divine warning of things not yet beheld, showed godly fear and constructed an ark." His heeding the warning brought salvation to his household. (Hebrews 11:7) May we prove to be swift about hearing God's message and then obediently heed it.—James 1:19, 22-25.

¹³ *By sticking to Jehovah:* To 'choose life and keep alive,' not only must we love Jehovah and listen to him but we must also 'stick to Jehovah,' that is, persist in doing his will. "By endurance on your part you will acquire your souls," said Jesus. (Luke 21:19) Actually, the choice we make in this regard reveals what is in our heart. "Happy is the man that is feeling dread constantly, but he that is hardening his heart will fall into calamity," observes Prov-

13, 14. (a) Why is 'sticking to Jehovah' vital? (b) How should we allow Jehovah, "our Potter," to mold us?



erbs 28:14. Pharaoh of ancient Egypt was an example of this. As each of the Ten Plagues befell Egypt, Pharaoh hardened his heart rather than displayed godly fear. Jehovah did not force Pharaoh into a course of disobedience but allowed that proud ruler to choose. In any case, Jehovah's will was accomplished, as the apostle Paul explained regarding Jehovah's view of Pharaoh: "For this very cause I have let you remain, that in connection with you I may show my power, and that my name may be declared in all the earth."—Romans 9:17.

¹⁴ Centuries after Israel's deliverance from Pharaoh's control, the prophet Isaiah declared: "O Jehovah, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are our Potter; and all of us are the work of your hand." (Isaiah 64:8) As we allow Jehovah to mold us through our personal study and application of his Word, we gradually put on the new personality. We become more meek and malleable, making it easier for us to stick loyally to Jehovah because we sincerely want to please him.—Ephesians 4:23, 24; Colossians 3:8-10.

"You Must Make Them Known"

¹⁵ To the assembled nation of Israel poised

15. According to Deuteronomy 4:9, Moses reminded Israel of what twofold responsibility?

to enter the Promised Land, Moses said: "Only watch out for yourself and take good care of your soul, that you may not forget the things that your eyes have seen and that they may not depart from your heart all the days of your life; and you must make them known to your sons and to your grandsons." (Deuteronomy 4:9) In order

to have Jehovah's blessing and prosper in the land they were about to inherit, the people had to fulfill a twofold responsibility before Jehovah their God. They were not to forget the marvelous things Jehovah had performed before their eyes, and they were to teach them to future generations. As God's people today, we must do the same if we want to 'choose life and keep alive.' What have we seen with our eyes that Jehovah has performed in our behalf?

¹⁶ We are thrilled to see how Jehovah has blessed our preaching and disciple-making work. Since the opening of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead in 1943, missionaries have spearheaded the disciple-making work in many lands. To this day, early graduates of this school maintain a zeal for Kingdom preaching, even though they are advanced in years and some are hampered by physical limitations. One fine example is Mary Olson, who graduated from Gilead in 1944. She has served as a missionary first in Uruguay, then in Colombia, and now in Puerto Rico. Although somewhat restricted by physical problems brought on by old age, Sister Olson

16, 17. (a) What have Gilead-trained missionaries been able to accomplish in the Kingdom-preaching work? (b) What examples of undiminished zeal do you know?

maintains her enthusiasm for preaching. Putting her knowledge of the Spanish language to use, she schedules time each week to join local publishers in the field ministry.

¹⁷ Now widowed, Nancy Porter, who graduated from Gilead School in 1947, still serves in the Bahamas. She is another missionary who keeps busy in the preaching work. "Teaching others Bible truth has been a special source of joy," reports Sister Porter in her life story.* "It provides an orderly spiritual routine that has given structure and stability to my life." When Sister Porter and other faithful servants look back, they do not forget what Jehovah has done. What about us? Do we look appreciatively at the way Jehovah has blessed the Kingdom work in our neighborhood? —Psalm 68:11.

¹⁸ We rejoice in what these old-timers have accomplished and still accomplish. Reading their life stories is a source of encouragement to us because when we see what Jehovah has done for these faithful ones, it strengthens our determination to serve Jehovah. Do you regularly read such thrilling accounts published in *The Watchtower* and meditate on them?

* See "Joyous and Thankful Despite Heartbreaking Loss," published in *The Watchtower* of June 1, 2001, pages 23-7.

18. What can we learn from reading the life stories of missionaries?

Can You Recall?

- What have you learned from the examples of contrasting choices we have considered?
- What steps must we take in order to "choose life"?
- What twofold responsibility are we urged to fulfill?



Mary Olson

Nancy
Porter

¹⁹ Moses reminded the Israelites that they were not to forget all the things Jehovah had done for them and that these things should not depart from their heart all the days of their life. He then added a further step: "You must make them known to your sons and to your grandsons." (Deuteronomy 4:9) True stories have a special appeal. Youngsters growing up need good examples. Single sisters can learn lessons from the faithful example of older sisters whose life stories are related in *The Watchtower*. Service in a foreign-language territory in their home country offers both brothers and sisters expanded opportunities to be busy in preaching the good news. Christian parents, why not use the experiences of faithful Gilead missionaries and others to provide an incentive for your children to choose a life of full-time service?

²⁰ How, then, can each of us "choose life"? By using the wonderful gift of free will to show Jehovah that we love him and by continuing to do our best in his service as long as he allows us that privilege. "For," as Moses declared, Jehovah "is your life and the length of your days."—Deuteronomy 30:19, 20.

19. How can Christian parents make good use of the life stories recorded in *The Watchtower*?
20. What must we do to "choose life"?

Questions From Readers

In the Mosaic Law, why were certain natural sexual functions viewed as making a person “unclean”?

God created sex, both for the reproduction of the human race and for the enjoyment of married couples. (Genesis 1:28; Proverbs 5:15-18) In chapters 12 and 15 of Leviticus, however, we find detailed statutes concerning uncleanness ascribed to seminal emissions, menstruation, and childbirth. (Leviticus 12:1-6; 15:16-24) Such laws given to ancient Israel fostered a healthy lifestyle, upheld lofty moral values, and stressed the sanctity of blood and the need for atonement for sins.

The Mosaic Law's requirements concerning sexual functions promoted, among other things, the general health of the Israelite community. The book *The Bible and Modern Medicine* states: "The observance of the menstrual cycle with the prescribed period of abstinence from cohabitation proved to be an effective preventive against certain sexual diseases . . . and also a definite deterrent in the formation and development of cervical malignancies." Such laws protected God's people from diseases that might have been unknown to or even undetectable by them. Sound sexual hygiene increased the fertility of a nation that had been blessed by God with a promise of increase and prosperity. (Genesis 15:5; 22:17) The emotional health of God's people was also involved. By obeying these laws, husbands and wives learned to control sexual passion.

The paramount issue involved in the types of uncleanness resulting from sexual matters, however, was the flow or loss of blood. Jehovah's laws regarding blood impressed on the minds of the Israelites not only the sanctity of

blood but also the special place that blood occupies in the worship of Jehovah, namely, in sacrifices and atonement for sins.—Leviticus 17:11; Deuteronomy 12:23, 24, 27.

The Law's detailed requirements in this respect, therefore, are closely related to human imperfection. The Israelites knew that Adam and Eve—after their sin—could not bring forth perfect children. All their descendants would suffer from the effects of inherited sin—imperfection and death. (Romans 5:12) Because of this, parents could transmit only imperfect and sinful life, even though human reproductive organs were originally designed to pass on perfect life through the marital arrangement.

The Law's purification requirements would thus remind the Israelites not only of their hereditary sinfulness but also of the need for a ransom sacrifice to cover sins and restore human perfection. Of course, the animal sacrifices they offered did not accomplish that. (Hebrews 10:3, 4) The purpose of the Mosaic Law was to lead them to Christ and to help them appreciate that it was only by means of Jesus' perfect human sacrifice that true forgiveness was possible, opening the way to everlasting life for faithful ones.—Galatians 3:24; Hebrews 9:13, 14.

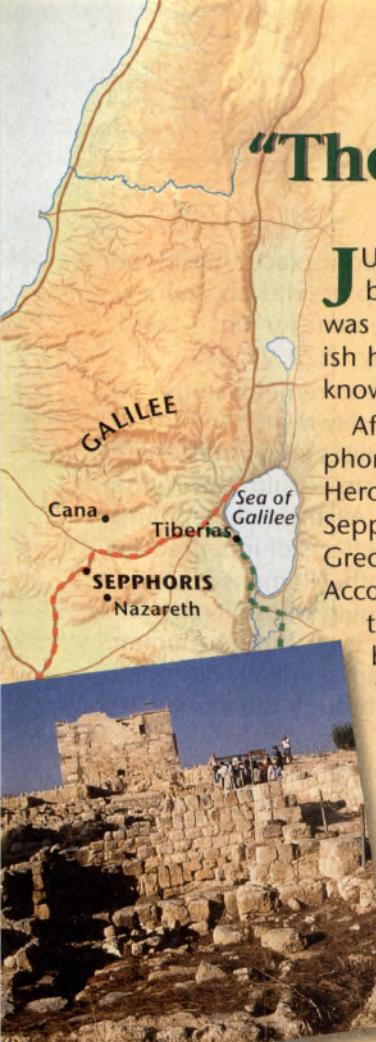
IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

A Sure Guide to Happiness

"How I Do Love Your Law!"

A Lesson About Pride and Humility

"The Ornament of All Galilee"



JUST four miles northwest of Nazareth, the town where Jesus was brought up, was a city that is never mentioned in the Gospels. Yet, it was hailed as "the ornament of all Galilee" by the noted first-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus. It was the city of Sepphoris. What do we know about this city?

After the death of Herod the Great, likely in 1 B.C.E., the citizens of Sepphoris revolted against Rome, resulting in the destruction of their city. Herod's son Antipas inherited Galilee and Perea and selected the ruins of Sepphoris as the location of his new capital. The city was rebuilt with a Greco-Roman architectural veneer, but the population was mainly Jewish. According to Professor Richard A. Batey, it became "the nerve center for the government's control of Galilee and Perea," until Antipas built Tiberias in about 21 C.E. to replace Sepphoris as the capital. This was the time Jesus was living in the proximity of the city.

Professor James Strange, who has excavated at Sepphoris, pictures the city having archives, a treasury, an armory, banks, public buildings, and markets selling ceramics, glass, metalwares, jewelry, and a variety of foods. There were weavers and clothing merchants and shops where baskets, furniture, perfumes, and the like could be bought. The population at that time is estimated to have been between 8,000 and 12,000.

Did Jesus ever visit this busy metropolis, an hour's walk from Nazareth? The Gospels do not give us an answer. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* notes, however, that "one logical route from Nazareth to Cana of Galilee ran through Sepphoris." (John 2:1; 4:46) From Nazareth, the hill of Sepphoris can be seen, rising almost 400 feet above the valley floor. Some believe that when Jesus gave the illustration that "a city cannot be hid when situated upon a mountain," he possibly had this city in mind.—Matthew 5:14.

After the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., Sepphoris became the principal Jewish city in Galilee and later the site of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court. For a time, it flourished as a center of Jewish learning.

