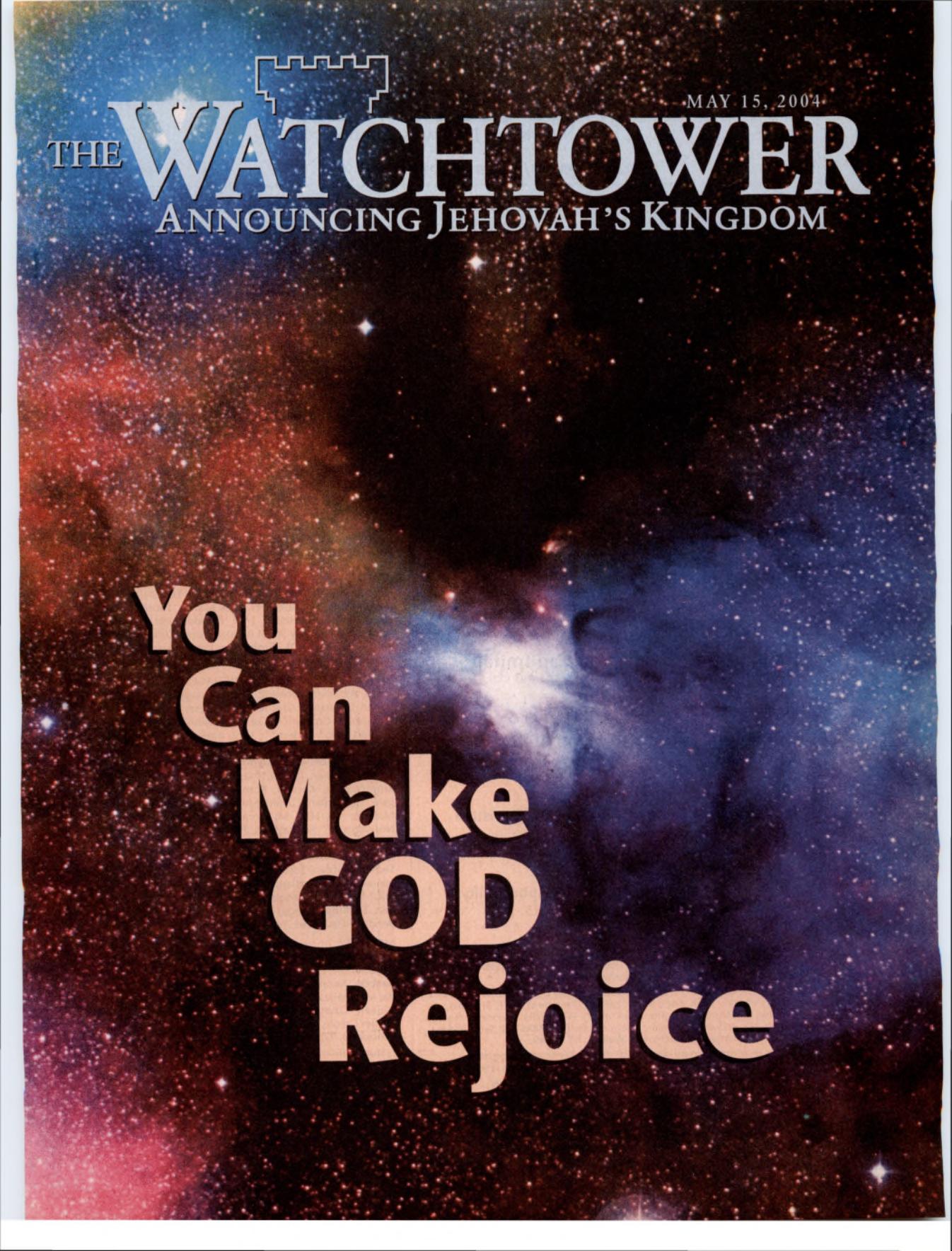


MAY 15, 2004

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



You
Can
Make
GOD
Rejoice

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

May 15, 2004

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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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MANKIND'S QUEST TO PLEASE GOD

"THERE has never been any human society in which God has not been a part, usually a controlling and creative part. That is true even of those societies that set out to be deliberately secular." So says John Bowker in his book *God—A Brief History*. In one way or another, the quest to find God and gain his favor has been a thread woven through the fabric of human behavior. Around the world, many have a sincere desire to please God. Of course, how they try to do this varies according to their beliefs.

Some believe that all that is necessary to gain God's favor is to live a good life. Others feel that they win God's approval by performing charitable acts for the poor. Then again, religious ceremonies and rituals are important to millions of people.

On the other hand, there are those who believe that God is beyond their reach—too distant or too occupied with other matters to pay attention to ordinary peo-

ple. The philosopher Epicurus of ancient Greece reportedly believed that 'gods are too remote to do you any more harm than good.' Nevertheless, many who have such thoughts are religious. Some may even offer sacrifices and perform rituals in hopes of appeasing their dead ancestors.

What do you think? Does God really take note of our efforts to gain his favor? Is it possible for us to touch God's heart and please him?

You Can Make **GOD** **Rejoice**

CAN we actually affect the way God feels? Does God have the capacity to rejoice? One dictionary definition of the word "God" is "the supreme or ultimate reality." What if that awesome reality were simply a force? Could we expect an impersonal force to rejoice? Hardly. Consider, though, what the Bible says about God.

"God is a Spirit," said Jesus Christ. (John 4:24) A spirit is a form of life that differs from humans. Though invisible to human eyes, a spirit has a body—"a spiritual one." (1 Corinthians 15:44; John 1:18) Employing figures of speech, the Bible even speaks of God as having eyes, ears, hands, and so forth.* God also has a name—Jehovah. (Psalm 83:18) The God of the Bible, then, is a spirit person. (Hebrews 9:24) "He is the living God and the King to time indefinite."—Jeremiah 10:10.

As a real living person, Jehovah is capable of thought and action. He manifests qualities and feelings, likes and dislikes. The Bible, in fact, abounds in expressions that reveal what things please or displease him. Whereas man-made gods and idols merely mirror the traits or qualities of their human inventors, the almighty God, Jehovah, is the very Originator of the emotions that he planted in humans.—Genesis 1:27; Isaiah 44:7-11.

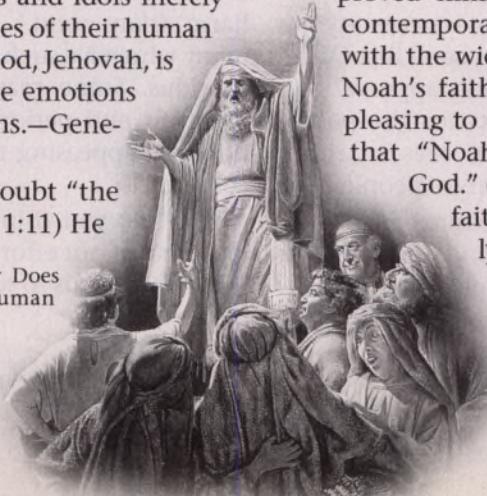
Jehovah is without a doubt "the happy God." (1 Timothy 1:11) He

not only rejoices in his creative works but also takes pleasure in accomplishing his purpose. Through the prophet Isaiah, Jehovah declares: "Everything that is my delight I shall do . . . I have even spoken it; I shall also bring it in. I have formed it, I shall also do it." (Isaiah 46:9-11) The psalmist sang: "Jehovah will rejoice in his works." (Psalm 104:31) But there is yet another source of joy to God. He says: "Be wise, my son, and make my heart rejoice." (Proverbs 27:11) Think of what that means—we can make God rejoice!

How We Can Make God's Heart Rejoice

Consider how the family head Noah made Jehovah's heart rejoice. Noah "found favor in the eyes of Jehovah" because "he proved himself faultless among his contemporaries." In stark contrast with the wicked people of that time, Noah's faith and obedience were so pleasing to God that it could be said that "Noah walked with the true God." (Genesis 6:6, 8, 9, 22) "By faith Noah . . . showed godly fear and constructed an ark for the saving of his

* See the box entitled "Why Does the Bible Describe God in Human Terms?"

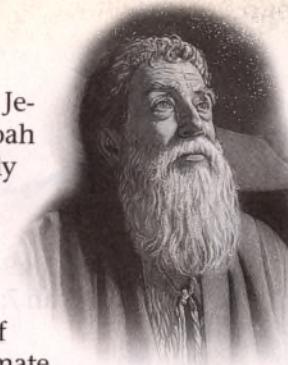


*Noah found favor in
God's eyes*

household." (Hebrews 11:7) Jehovah was pleased with Noah and blessed him and his family with survival through that turbulent period of human history.

The patriarch Abraham also had an acute awareness of Jehovah's feelings. His intimate knowledge of God's thinking was clearly evident when Jehovah informed him that Sodom and Gomorrah would be destroyed because of their depravity. Abraham knew Jehovah well enough to conclude that it was unthinkable that God would put to death the righteous man with the wicked one. (Genesis 18:17-33) Years later, in obedience to God's direction, Abraham "as good as offered up Isaac," for "he reckoned that God was able to raise him up even from the dead." (Hebrews 11:17-19; Genesis 22:1-18) Abraham was so attuned to God's feelings and displayed such strong faith and obedience that "he came to be called 'Jehovah's friend.'"—James 2:23.

Another man who endeavored to make God's heart glad was King David of ancient Israel. Concerning him, Jehovah said: "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man agreeable to my heart, who will do all the things I desire." (Acts 13:22) Before facing the giant Goliath, David put his implicit trust in God and told Israelite King Saul: "Jehovah, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, he it is who will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." Jehovah blessed David's confidence in Him, enabling David to slay Goliath. (1 Samuel 17:37, 45-54) David wanted not only his actions but also 'the sayings of his mouth and the meditation of his heart to be pleasurable before Jehovah.'—Psalm 19:14.



Abraham was attuned to God's feelings

What about us? How can we please Jehovah? The more sensitive we are to God's feelings, the more we will become aware of what we can do to make God's heart rejoice. As we read the Bible, then, it is essential that we make the effort to learn about God's feelings so that we "may be filled with the accurate knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual comprehension, in or-

der to walk worthily of Jehovah to the end of fully pleasing him." (Colossians 1:9, 10) Knowledge, in turn, helps us to build faith. This is vital because "without faith it is impossible to please [God] well." (Hebrews 11:6) Yes, by putting forth effort to build strong faith and by bringing our lives into harmony with Jehovah's will, we can make his heart glad. At the same time, we must be careful not to make Jehovah feel hurt at heart.

Do Not Make God Feel Hurt

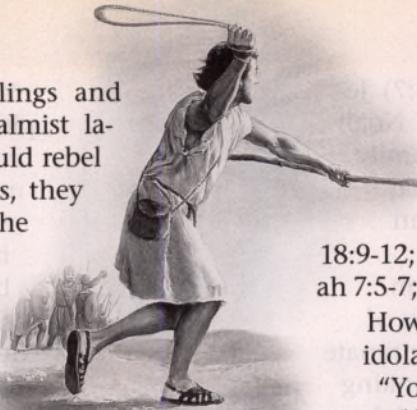
An example of how Jehovah's feelings can be hurt is found in the account about the days of Noah. At that time, "the earth became filled with violence. So God saw the earth and, look! it was ruined, because all flesh had ruined its way on the earth." How did God feel as he surveyed the depravity and the violence? "Jehovah felt regrets that he had made men in the earth," says the Bible, "and he felt hurt at his heart." (Genesis 6:5, 6, 11, 12) God felt regrets in that the conduct of humans had become so evil that he had a change of attitude as regards the wicked pre-Flood generation. Because of his displeasure over their wickedness, God turned from the attitude of the Creator of humans to that of a destroyer of them.

Jehovah also felt distressed when his own people, the ancient nation of Israel,

persistently ignored his feelings and his loving direction. The psalmist lamented: "How often they would rebel against him in the wilderness, they would make him feel hurt in the desert! And again and again they would put God to the test, and they pained even the Holy One of Israel." Yet, "he was merciful; he would cover the error and not bring ruin. And many times he made his anger turn back, and he would not rouse up all his rage." (Psalm 78:38-41) Even though the rebellious Israelites rightly suffered the consequences of their own sinfulness, the Bible tells us that "during all their distress it was distressing to [God]."—Isaiah 63:9.

Regardless of the ample evidence of God's tender feelings for them, the people of Israel "were continually making jest at the messengers of the true God and despising his words and mocking at his prophets, until the rage of Jehovah came up against his people, until there was no healing." (2 Chronicles 36:16) Ultimately, their stiff-necked pattern of rebellion "made his holy spirit feel hurt" to such an extent that they lost Jehovah's favor. (Isaiah 63:10) The result? God justly withdrew his protection, and calamity befell them when the Babylonians conquered Judah and destroyed Jerusalem. (2 Chronicles 36:17-21) How sad when people choose to pursue a sinful course of life that is offensive and distressing to their Creator!

The Bible leaves us in no doubt that God is deeply pained by unrighteous conduct. (Psalm 78:41) Things that are offensive—even detestable—to God include pride, lying, murder, practicing magic, fortunetelling, ancestor worship, loose morals, ho-



David put his complete confidence in Jehovah

mosexuality, marital unfaithfulness, incest, and the oppression of the poor.—Leviticus 18:9-29; 19:29; Deuteronomy 18:9-12; Proverbs 6:16-19; Jeremiah 7:5-7; Malachi 2:14-16.

How does Jehovah feel about idolatry? Exodus 20:4, 5 states: "You must not make for yourself a carved image or a form like anything that is in the heavens above or that is on the earth underneath or that is in the waters under the earth. You must not bow down to them nor be induced to serve them." Why? Because an idol "is a thing detestable to Jehovah." (Deuteronomy 7:25, 26) The apostle John warned: "Little children, guard yourselves from idols." (1 John 5:21) And the apostle Paul wrote: "My beloved ones, flee from idolatry."—1 Corinthians 10:14.

Seek God's Approval

God's "intimacy is with the upright ones." Those "blameless in their way are a pleasure to him." (Proverbs 3:32; 11:20) On the contrary, those who persist in offending God by stubbornly ignoring or defying his righteous feelings will shortly become the objects of his displeasure. (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10) Indeed, he will soon bring an end to all the wickedness so prevalent today.—Psalm 37:9-11; Zephaniah 2:2, 3.

The Bible makes it very clear, however, that Jehovah "does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) He would much rather display his affection for righteous people who love him than express his displeasure upon those who choose to be irreformable. Jehovah finds pleasure, "not in the death of the wicked one, but in that someone wicked turns back

from his way and actually keeps living.”—Ezekiel 33:11.

So no one needs to become the object of Jehovah’s anger. “Jehovah is very tender in affection and merciful.” (James 5:11) With full confidence in God’s feelings, you can “throw all your anxiety upon him, because he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7) Be assured that those who make God’s heart rejoice have the wonderful prospect of enjoying his approval and friendship. Hence, it is now more urgent than ever before to “keep on making sure of what is acceptable to the Lord.”—Ephesians 5:10.

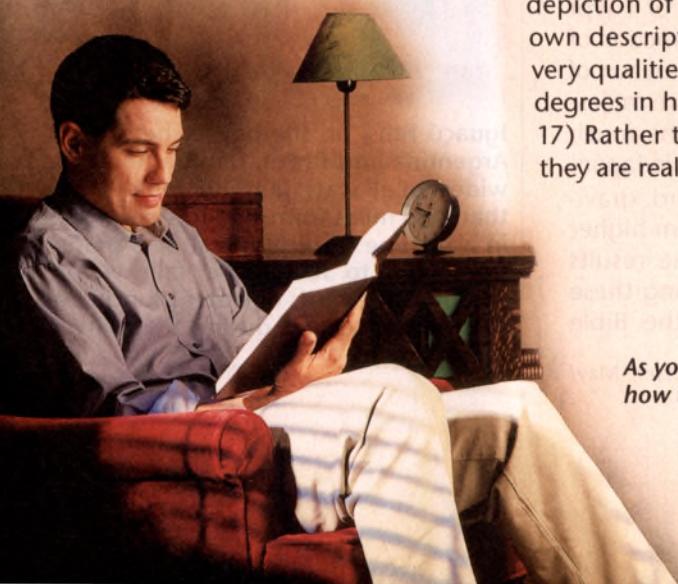
How marvelous that God in his undeserved kindness has revealed his glorious qualities and feelings! And it is within your power to make his heart rejoice. If you desire to do so, we urge you to contact Jehovah’s Witnesses in your area. They will be happy to show you what they have found to be practical and attainable in their endeavor to please God.

Why Does the Bible Describe God in Human Terms?

Since “God is a Spirit,” we cannot see him with our physical eyes. (John 4:24) The Bible therefore uses figures of speech, such as similes, metaphors, and anthropomorphisms to help us comprehend God’s might, majesty, and activities. Anthropomorphism (Greek, “man-form”) is the attributing of human characteristics to a nonhuman subject. So even though we do not know what God’s spirit body looks like, the Bible speaks of God as having eyes, ears, hands, arms, fingers, feet, and a heart.—Genesis 8:21; Exodus 3:20; 31:18; Job 40:9; Psalm 18:9; 34:15.

Such descriptive language does not mean that God’s spirit body has the same kind of members that human bodies have. Anthropomorphisms are not to be taken literally. They merely help humans to have a better understanding of God. Without such figures of speech, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for any description of God to be comprehensible to mere humans. However, that does not mean that Jehovah God’s personality has been fabricated by humans. The Bible clearly explains that man was created in God’s image—not God in man’s image. (Genesis 1:27) Because Bible writers were “inspired of God,” their depiction of God’s personality is in reality his own description of his personal qualities—the very qualities that he has implanted to varying degrees in his human creation. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) Rather than being man’s qualities in God, they are really God’s qualities in man.

As you read the Bible, you can learn how to make God rejoice



"Let the Rivers Themselves Clap Their Hands"

GLANCE at a map of the earth, and in most places, you will see lines snaking their way across landmasses. These tendrils cross plains, deserts, and grasslands. They wind their way through valleys, canyons, and forests. (Habakkuk 3:9) These are rivers, our planet's arteries of life. Such watercourses testify to the wisdom and power of earth's Creator, Jehovah. As we observe them, we share the feelings of the psalmist who sang: "Let the rivers themselves clap their hands; all together let the very mountains cry out joyfully before Jehovah."—Psalm 98:8, 9.*

Rivers are closely linked with human history. The Bible speaks of four major rivers that were parted from a river issuing out of Eden. (Genesis 2:10-14) One of the earliest civilizations sprang up in the fertile valleys of the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers in the Middle East. Great civilizations were made possible by the Hwang River in China, the Ganges and the Indus in southern Asia, and the Nile in Egypt.

No wonder, then, that man has always stood in awe before the might, the bounty, and the beauty of rivers. The Nile of Egypt flows for about 4,150 miles. The distinction of being the largest river goes to the Amazon of South America. While some rivers are majestic, others are very beautiful, like the much smaller but swift-flowing Tone River in Japan.

What makes a river flow? In a word, gravity. It is gravity that draws water from higher to lower elevations. Sometimes the results are thundering waterfalls. Describing these displays of force and grandeur, the Bible

says: "The rivers have raised, O Jehovah, the rivers have raised their sound; the rivers keep raising their pounding."—Psalm 93:3.

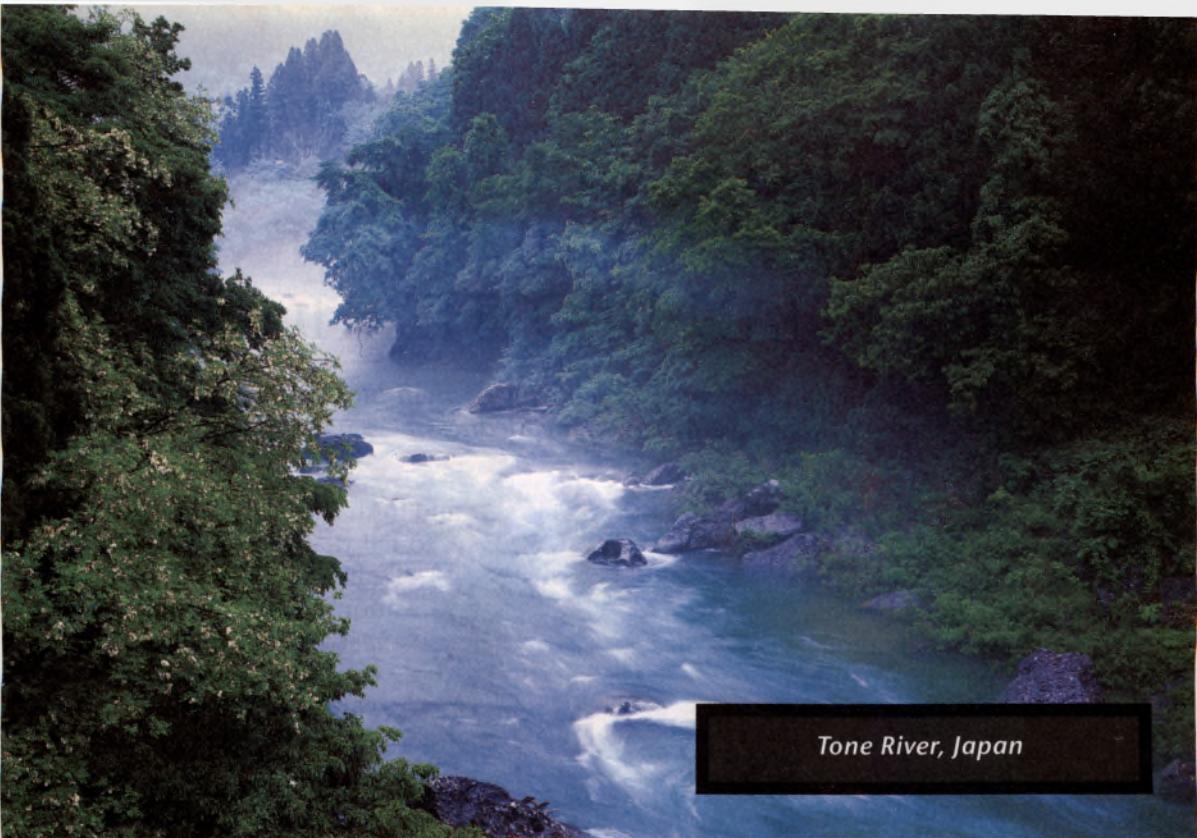
"Who sends torrents of rain?" Jehovah asked the godly man Job. (Job 38:25, *Contemporary English Version*) Yes, where does all the water come from? The answer involves an intricate system called the water cycle. Earth's water is in a constant state of circulation powered by the energy of the sun and by gravity. After water evaporates, it rises in the atmosphere. Eventually, it cools and condenses to form clouds. In time, this vapor returns to the earth as snow or rain. Much of the water is stored in oceans, lakes, rivers, glaciers, polar icecaps, and under the ground.

Regarding this remarkable cycle, the Bible says: "All the winter torrents are going forth



Iguazu Falls, on the border between Argentina and Brazil, ranks among the widest of all waterfalls. It stretches more than two miles from side to side. Nested in a pristine tropical forest, it is made up of close to 300 smaller falls. Nearly 13,000 cubic yards of water plunge over them every second during the rainy season.

* See 2004 Calendar of Jehovah's Witnesses, May/June.



Tone River, Japan

to the sea, yet the sea itself is not full. To the place where the winter torrents are going forth, there they are returning so as to go forth." (Ecclesiastes 1:7) Only Jehovah, the God of infinite wisdom and loving care, could set such a cycle in motion. And what does such ingenious design tell us about the kind of person God is? He is a God of great wisdom and loving care.

—Psalm 104:13-15, 24, 25; Proverbs 3:19, 20.

Despite their size and number, rivers carry very little of the world's fresh water. Nevertheless, they are vital to life. "Without access to and some degree of control over water, human life at its simplest and its most complex

would be impossible," states the book *Water*. "The record of man's response to that fact constitutes much of the history of civilization."



For thousands of years, rivers have quenched the thirst of man and provided water for his gardens. The fertile soil along many rivers is ideal for growing crops. Note how this thought is expressed in a blessing on Jehovah's servants: "How good-looking are your tents, O Jacob, your tabernacles, O Israel! Like torrent valleys they have extended a long way, like gardens by the river. Like aloe plants that Jehovah has planted, like cedars by the waters." (Numbers 24:5, 6) Rivers also help to sustain such animals as the ducks and the jackal you see here. In fact, the more we study the rivers, the more we are compelled to give thanks to Jehovah.



ELDERLY ONES —VALUABLE MEMBERS OF OUR CHRISTIAN BROTHERHOOD

"Those who are planted in the house of Jehovah . . . will blossom forth. They will still keep on thriving during gray-headedness."—PSALM 92:13, 14.

JEHOVAH loves all his faithful servants, including those of advanced years. According to a national estimate, however, every year nearly half a million elderly people in the United States suffer abuse or neglect. Similar reports from around the world indicate that abuse of the elderly is a global problem. At its root is what one organization calls "the pervading attitude among many people . . . that older persons have outlived their usefulness, are unproductive and over-dependent."

² Jehovah God treasures his loyal elderly servants. He focuses on "the man we are inside"—our spiritual condition—rather than on our physical limitations. (2 Corinthians 4:16) In his Word, the Bible, we find the following heartwarming assurance: "The righteous himself will blossom forth as a palm tree does; as a cedar in Lebanon does, he will grow big. Those who are planted in the house of Jehovah, in the courtyards of our God, they will blossom forth. They will still keep on thriving during gray-headedness, fat



and fresh they will continue to be, to tell that Jehovah is upright."

(Psalm 92:12-15) A consideration of these verses will reveal aspects of the valuable contribution you older ones can make to the Christian brotherhood.

"Thriving During Gray-Headedness"

³ The psalmist likens the righteous to palm trees 'planted in the courtyards of our God.' They "keep on thriving during gray-headedness."

Another version reads: "In old age they still produce fruit." (*Tanakh*) Do you not agree that this is an encouraging thought? Graceful, upright palm trees were a common sight in Oriental courtyards in Bible times. In addition to their decorative value, palms were prized for their abundant fruit, with some trees continuing productive for over a hundred years.* By remaining firmly planted in true worship, you can sim-

* Each cluster of dates may have as many as a thousand individual fruits and may weigh 18 pounds or more. One writer estimates that "each fruit-bearing [palm] tree will have yielded two or three tons of dates as tribute to its owners in the course of its lifetime."

3. (a) Why are righteous ones likened to palm trees? (b) How can older ones 'thrive during gray-headedness'?

1. How do many people view the elderly?
2. (a) How does Jehovah view his faithful elderly servants? (b) What heartwarming description do we find at Psalm 92:12-15?

ilarly "go on bearing fruit in every good work."—Colossians 1:10.

⁴ Jehovah expects Christians to produce "the fruit of lips"—words spoken in praise of him and his purposes. (Hebrews 13:15) Does this apply to you as an older person? It certainly does.

⁵ The Bible contains examples of older ones who fearlessly bore witness to Jehovah's name and purposes. Moses had already exceeded his "seventy years" when Jehovah commissioned him as his prophet and representative. (Psalm 90:10; Exodus 4:10-17) Advanced age did not prevent the prophet Daniel from giving a fearless witness regarding Jehovah's sovereignty. Daniel was probably in his 90's when Belshazzar summoned him to interpret the mysterious handwriting on the wall. (Daniel, chapter 5) And what about the aged apostle John? Toward the end of his long career, he found himself imprisoned on the isle of Patmos "for speaking about God and bearing witness to Jesus." (Revelation 1:9) Very likely you can remember many other Bible characters who produced "the fruit of lips" in their later years.—1 Samuel 8:1, 10; 12:2; 1 Kings 14:4, 5; Luke 1:7, 67-79; 2:22-32.

⁶ Quoting the Hebrew prophet Joel, the apostle Peter declared: "'In the last days,' God says, 'I shall pour out some of my spirit upon every sort of flesh [including "old men"], . . . and they will prophesy!'" (Acts 2:17, 18; Joel 2:28) Accordingly, in these last days, Jehovah has used elderly members of the anointed class and of the "other sheep" to declare his purposes. (John 10:16) Some of these have faithfully been producing Kingdom fruitage for decades.

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- 4, 5. (a) What important fruitage do Christians need to produce? (b) Give Scriptural examples of older ones who produced "the fruit of lips."
 6. How has Jehovah used "old men" to prophesy in these last days?



The elderly produce valuable Kingdom fruitage

⁷ Consider Sonia, who became a full-time Kingdom publisher in 1941. Despite a long struggle with chronic illness, she regularly conducted Bible studies in her home. "Preaching the good news is part of my life," explained Sonia. "Actually, it is my life. I refuse to retire." Not long ago, Sonia and her sister, Olive, shared the Bible's message of hope with Janet, a terminally ill patient whom they met in a hospital waiting room. Janet's mother, a devout Catholic, was so impressed by this loving interest shown to her daughter that she accepted the offer of a home Bible study and is now making excellent progress. Could you seize similar opportunities to produce Kingdom fruitage?

⁸ By courageously pressing on in the Kingdom-preaching work despite the limitations of advancing years, older Christians are following in the footsteps of the faithful Israelite Caleb, who accompanied Moses in the wilderness for four decades. Caleb was 79 years old when he crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land. After fighting in the ranks of Israel's victorious army for six years, he could have rested on his laurels.

7. Illustrate how older ones continue producing Kingdom fruitage despite physical limitations.
8. How did aging Caleb demonstrate his trust in Jehovah, and how can elderly Christians imitate his example?

But no, he courageously requested the challenging assignment of capturing the "great fortified cities" in the mountainous region of Judah, an area inhabited by the Anakim, men of unusual size. With Jehovah's help, Caleb did "dispossess them, just as Jehovah promised." (Joshua 14:9-14; 15:13, 14) Be assured that Jehovah is with you, as he was with Caleb, as you continue producing Kingdom fruitage in old age. And if you remain faithful, he will grant you a place in his promised new world.—Isaiah 40:29-31; 2 Peter 3:13.

"Fat and Fresh They Will Continue to Be"

⁹ Calling attention to the fruitfulness of elderly servants of Jehovah, the psalmist sang: "The righteous himself will blossom forth as a palm tree does; as a cedar in Lebanon does, he will grow big. They will still keep on thriving during gray-headedness, fat and fresh they will continue to be."—Psalm 92:12, 14.

¹⁰ How can you retain your spiritual vigor despite advancing years? The secret of the palm tree's perennial beauty lies in an unfailing source of fresh water. Likewise, you can draw sustenance from the waters of Bible truth by your study of God's Word and by association with his organization. (Psalm 1:1-3; Jeremiah 17:7, 8) Your spiritual vitality makes you a precious asset to fellow believers. Consider how this proved true in the case of elderly High Priest Jehoiada.

¹¹ Jehoiada was probably over a hundred years old when ambitious Queen Athaliah seized control of Judah by murdering her

9, 10. How do older Christians remain healthy in faith and retain their spiritual vigor? (See box on page 13.)

11, 12. (a) What vital role did Jehoiada play in the history of the kingdom of Judah? (b) How did Jehoiada use his influence to promote true worship?

own grandchildren. What could elderly Jehoiada do? For six years he and his wife hid the only surviving royal heir, Jehoash, in the temple. Then, in a dramatic move, Jehoiada proclaimed seven-year-old Jehoash king and had Athaliah executed.—2 Chronicles 22:10-12; 23:1-3, 15, 21.

¹² As the king's guardian, Jehoiada used his influence to promote true worship. He "concluded a covenant between himself and all the people and the king that they would continue as the people of Jehovah." At Jehoiada's orders, the people tore down the house of the false god Baal and removed its altars, images, and priest. It was also under Jehoiada's guidance that Jehoash restored temple services and carried out much-needed temple repair work. "Jehoash continued doing what was right in Jehovah's eyes all the days of his that Jehoiada the priest instructed him." (2 Chronicles 23:11, 16-19; 24:11-14; 2 Kings 12:2) When he died at the age of 130, Jehoiada was given the exceptional honor of burial with the kings because "he had done good in Israel and with the true God and His house." —2 Chronicles 24:15, 16.

¹³ Perhaps poor health or other circumstances limit what you can do to promote true worship. Even if that is so, it is within your power to 'do good with the true God and his house.' You can display zeal for Jehovah's spiritual house by attending and participating in congregation meetings and by sharing in the field ministry whenever possible. Your ready acceptance of the Bible's counsel and your loyal support for "the faithful and discreet slave" and the congregation will have a strengthening effect on the Christian brotherhood. (Matthew 24:45-47) You can also incite fellow worshipers "to

13. How can older Christians 'do good with the true God and his house'?

How They Have Remained Healthy in Faith

What has helped longtime Christians to remain healthy in faith and to maintain their spiritual vigor? Here is what some have said:

"Reading scriptures that focus on our relationship with Jehovah is very important. Most nights, I recite Psalm 23 and 91."—Olive, baptized in 1930.

"I have made it a point to be present at every baptism talk and to listen carefully, as if it were my own baptism. Keeping my dedication fresh has been an important step in remaining faithful."—Harry, baptized in 1946.

"Daily prayer is vital—always asking for

Jehovah's help, protection, and blessing, 'taking notice of him in all our ways.' " (Proverbs 3:5, 6)—Antônio, baptized in 1951.

"Listening to experiences of those still faithfully serving Jehovah after so many years renews my determination to remain loyal and faithful to him."—Joan, baptized in 1954.

"It is important not to think too much of oneself. What we have is due to God's undeserved kindness. Having this perspective keeps us looking in the right direction for the spiritual nourishment needed to endure till the end."—Arlene, baptized in 1954.

love and fine works." (Hebrews 10:24, 25; Philemon 8, 9) And you will be a blessing to others if you act in harmony with the apostle Paul's counsel: "Let the aged men be moderate in habits, serious, sound in mind, healthy [“vigorous,” *An American Translation*] in faith, in love, in endurance. Likewise let the aged women be reverent in behavior, not slanderous, neither enslaved to a lot of wine, teachers of what is good."—Titus 2:2-4.

¹⁴ Have you served as a congregation elder for many years? "Use the wisdom that comes with advancing years unselfishly," is the advice of one longtime congregation elder. "Delegate responsibility, and share your experience with others who have a willing spirit . . . See the potential in others. Develop and nurture it. Build for the future." (Deuteronomy 3:27, 28) Your genuine interest in the ever-expanding Kingdom work will result in many blessings for others in our Christian brotherhood.

14. What can longtime Christian overseers do to promote true worship?

"Tell That Jehovah Is Upright"

¹⁵ Older servants of God joyfully discharge their responsibility "to tell that Jehovah is upright." If you are an elderly Christian, your words and deeds can show others that 'Jehovah is your Rock, in whom there is no unrighteousness.' (Psalm 92:15) The palm tree bears silent witness to its Creator's superlative qualities. But Jehovah has given you the privilege of testifying about him to those now embracing true worship. (Deuteronomy 32:7; Psalm 71:17, 18; Joel 1:2, 3) Why is this important?

¹⁶ When the Israelite leader Joshua was "old and advanced in days," he "proceeded to call all Israel, its older men and its heads and its judges and its officers," and to remind them of God's upright dealings. He said: "Not one word out of all the good words that Jehovah your God has spoken to

15. How do elderly Christians "tell that Jehovah is upright"?

16. What Bible example illustrates the importance of 'telling that Jehovah is upright'?

you has failed. They have all come true for you." (Joshua 23:1, 2, 14) For a time, these words strengthened the people's resolve to remain faithful. After Joshua's death, however, "another generation began to rise . . . that did not know Jehovah or the work that he had done for Israel. And the sons of Israel fell to doing what was bad in the eyes of Jehovah and serving the Baals." —Judges 2:8-11.

17 The integrity of the present-day Christian congregation does not depend upon the oral testimony of older servants of God. Yet, our faith in Jehovah and his promises is reinforced when we hear firsthand accounts of the "great work" that he has performed for his people in these last days. (Judges 2:7; 2 Peter 1:16-19) If you have been associated with Jehovah's organization for many years, you may recall the time when there were very few Kingdom proclaimers in your region or country or when the preaching work faced stiff opposi-

17. How has Jehovah dealt with his people in modern times?

What Are Your Answers?

- How do the elderly "produce fruit"?
- Why is the spiritual vitality of older Christians a valuable asset?
- How can older ones "tell that Jehovah is upright"?
- Why does Jehovah treasure his long-time servants?



The spiritual vitality of the elderly is a valuable asset

tion. Over time, you have seen Jehovah remove certain obstacles and 'speed up' Kingdom growth. (Isaiah 54:17; 60:22) You have noted the clarification of Bible truths and have witnessed the progressive refinement of the visible part of God's organization.

(Proverbs 4:18; Isaiah 60:17)

Do you seek to build others up by sharing with them your experience relating to Jehovah's upright dealings? What a positive and strengthening

effect this can have on the Christian brotherhood!

18 What about the occasions when you have experienced Jehovah's loving care and guidance in your personal life? (Psalm 37:25; Matthew 6:33; 1 Peter 5:7) An elderly sister named Martha used to encourage others by saying: "No matter what happens, never abandon Jehovah. He will sustain you." This advice had a profound effect on Tolmina, one of Martha's Bible students who was baptized in the early 1960's. "When my husband died," recalls Tolmina, "I felt very discouraged, but those words made me determined not to miss a single meeting. And Jehovah really did strengthen me to continue." Tolmina has given the same advice to many of her own Bible students over the years. Indeed, by offering encouragement and recounting Jehovah's upright dealings, you can do much to build up the faith of fellow believers.

18. (a) Illustrate the long-term effect of 'telling others that Jehovah is upright.' (b) How have you personally experienced Jehovah's uprightness?

Jehovah Treasures Faithful Older Ones

¹⁹ Today's world, characterized by a lack of gratitude, has little time for the elderly. (2 Timothy 3:1, 2) When they are remembered, it is often because of their past achievements—what they *were*, rather than what they *are*. In contrast, the Bible says: "God is not unrighteous so as to forget your work and the love you showed for his name, in that you have ministered to the holy ones

19, 20. (a) How does Jehovah view the activities of his elderly servants? (b) What will be considered in the next article?

and continue ministering." (Hebrews 6:10) Of course, Jehovah God remembers your past record of faithful works. But he also values you for what you *continue* to do in his service. Yes, he views faithful older ones as fruitful, spiritually healthy, and vigorous Christians—a living testimony to his power. —Philippians 4:13.

²⁰ Do you view the older members of our Christian brotherhood as Jehovah views them? If you do, you will be moved to show your love for them. (1 John 3:18) The next article will consider some practical ways to show such love in caring for their needs.

CARING FOR THE ELDERLY —A CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY

"Even to one's old age I am the same One; and to one's gray-headedness I myself shall keep bearing up."—ISAIAH 46:4.

DEVOTED parents nurture their children through infancy, childhood, and the teenage years. Even when young people reach adulthood and have their own families, their fathers and mothers continue to give them loving attention and support.

² Although there is a limit to what humans can do for their children, our heavenly Father is always able to give his faithful servants loving attention and support. Addressing his chosen people of ancient times, Jehovah stated: "Even to one's old age I am the same One; and to one's gray-headedness I myself shall keep bearing up." (Isaiah 46:4) What reassuring words these are for older Christians! Jehovah does not abandon those

1, 2. How does our heavenly Father's care differ from that given by human parents?

who remain loyal to him. Rather, he promises to sustain, support, and guide them throughout their lives, even into old age. —Psalm 48:14.

³ How can we imitate Jehovah's loving concern for the elderly? (Ephesians 5:1, 2) Let us consider ways in which children, congregation overseers, and individual Christians can care for the needs of senior members of our worldwide brotherhood.

Our Responsibility as Children

⁴ "Honor your father and your mother." (Ephesians 6:2; Exodus 20:12) With this simple yet profound quotation from the

3. What will be considered in this article?
4. What responsibility do Christian children have toward their parents?



Are we generous in our expressions of affection for elderly parents?

⁶ With Jehovah's blessing, Joseph had become one of Egypt's richest and most powerful men. (Genesis 41:40) But he did not consider himself too important or too busy to honor his 130-year-old father. On learning that Jacob (or Israel) was approaching, "Joseph had his chariot made ready and went up to meet Israel his father at Goshen. When he appeared to him he at once fell upon his neck and gave way to tears upon his neck again and again." (Genesis 46:28, 29) This welcome was much more than a formal show of respect. Joseph dearly loved his elderly father and was not ashamed to demonstrate his love. If we have aging parents, are we similarly unstinting in our expressions of affection for them?

Hebrew Scriptures, the apostle Paul reminded children of the responsibility they have toward their parents. But how do these words apply to caring for the elderly? A heartwarming example from pre-Christian times will help us answer this question.

⁵ For more than 20 years, Joseph had no contact with his elderly father, the patriarch Jacob. However, Joseph had evidently not lost his filial love for Jacob. In fact, when Joseph revealed his true identity to his brothers, he asked: "Is my father still alive?" (Genesis 43:7, 27; 45:3) At that time, the land of Canaan was in the grip of famine. Thus, Joseph sent word to his father, saying: "Come down to me. Do not delay. And you must dwell in the land of Goshen, and you must continue near me . . . And I will supply you with food there." (Genesis 45:9-11; 47:12) Yes, honoring aged parents includes protecting them and providing for them materially when they are not in a position to care for themselves. (1 Samuel 22:1-4; John 19:25-27) Joseph gladly accepted this responsibility.

5. (a) What indicates that Joseph had not forgotten his filial duties? (b) What does it mean to honor our parents, and what fine example did Joseph set in this regard?

⁷ Jacob's devotion to Jehovah remained strong to the end of his life. (Hebrews 11:21) Because of his faith in divine promises, Jacob asked that his remains be buried in Canaan. Joseph honored his father by complying with this request, despite the considerable cost and effort involved.—Genesis 47:29-31; 50:7-14.

⁸ What motivated Joseph to care for his father? While love and a sense of indebtedness to the one who had given him life and who had nurtured him were factors, Joseph no doubt also felt a keen desire to please Jehovah. So should we. Paul wrote: "If any widow has children or grandchildren, let these learn first to practice godly devotion in their own household and to keep paying

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6. How did Joseph demonstrate genuine love for his father, and how can we imitate his example?
 7. Why did Jacob wish to be buried in Canaan?
 8. (a) What is our chief motivation in caring for elderly parents? (b) What did one full-time servant do in order to care for his aging parents? (See box on page 17.)

When His Parents Needed Help

Philip was serving as a volunteer construction worker in Liberia in 1999 when he received news that his father was critically ill. Convinced that his mother would be unable to cope on her own, he decided to return home to organize medical care for his father.

"It was not easy going back," recalls Philip, "but I felt that my first obligation was to my parents." Over the next three years, he

moved his parents to a more suitable home and with the help of local fellow Christians adapted the dwelling to accommodate his father's special needs.

Philip's mother is now better prepared to cope with his father's serious health problems. Recently, Philip was able to accept an invitation to work as a volunteer at the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Macedonia.

a due compensation to their parents and grandparents, for this is acceptable in God's sight." (1 Timothy 5:4) Indeed, love for Jehovah and reverential fear of him will move us to care for aging parents, no matter what challenges doing so may involve.*

How Elders Show That They Care

⁹ Near the end of his long life, Jacob referred to Jehovah as "the true God who has been shepherding me during all my existence until this day." (Genesis 48:15) Today, Jehovah shepherds his earthly servants by means of Christian overseers, or elders, under the direction of his Son, Jesus Christ, "the chief shepherd." (1 Peter 5:2-4) How can overseers imitate Jehovah as they care for the older members of the flock?

¹⁰ Shortly after the inception of the Christian congregation, the apostles appointed "seven certified men . . . full of spirit and wisdom" to supervise "the daily distribu-

* For practical suggestions on how to care for elderly parents, see *Awake!* of February 8, 1994, pages 3-10.

9. Who has Jehovah appointed to shepherd the flock, including elderly Christians?

10. What has been done to provide material help for elderly Christians? (See box on page 19.)

tion" of food among needy Christian widows. (Acts 6:1-6) Later, Paul instructed the overseer Timothy to put exemplary aged widows on the list of those who were entitled to receive material help. (1 Timothy 5:3, 9, 10) Likewise, congregation overseers today willingly coordinate practical assistance for elderly Christians when this is necessary. However, more is involved in caring for faithful older ones.

¹¹ Near the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus sat down at the temple and "began observing how the crowd was dropping money into the treasury chests." Then someone caught his attention. Says the account: "A poor widow came and dropped in two small coins, which have very little value." Jesus called his disciples to him and told them: "Truly I say to you that this poor widow dropped in more than all those dropping money into the treasury chests; for they all dropped in out of their surplus, but she, out of her want, dropped in all of what she had, her whole living." (Mark 12:41-44) In monetary terms, the widow's contribution was small, but Jesus knew how much his

11. What did Jesus say about the needy widow who offered a small contribution?



All in the congregation can demonstrate their love for elderly fellow believers

heavenly Father values such whole-souled expressions of devotion. Regardless of the poor widow's age, Jesus did not overlook what she did.

¹² Like Jesus, Christian overseers do not overlook what the elderly do to promote true worship. Elders have reason to commend older ones for their share in the ministry, for their participation in meetings, for their positive influence in the congregation, and for their endurance. A sincere word of encouragement can help the elderly find "cause for exultation" in their sacred service, thus avoiding frustrating comparisons with what other Christians are able to do or with their own past accomplishments.

—Galatians 6:4.

¹³ Elders can acknowledge the valuable contribution made by older Christians by drawing on their experience and talents. Exemplary elderly ones may occasionally be used in demonstrations or interviews. "The



audience really sits up and listens when I interview an older brother or sister who has reared children in the truth," observes one elder. Elders in another congregation report that a 71-year-old pioneer sister has been successful in helping Kingdom publishers to become regular in field service. She also encourages them to do the "basics," such as reading the Bible and the daily text and then meditating on what they read.

¹⁴ Elders also value the contribution of older fellow overseers. José, who is in his 70's and has served as an elder for decades, recently underwent extensive surgery. Faced with a long convalescence, he thought of relinquishing his privilege of serving as a presiding overseer. "The reaction of the other elders surprised me," says José. "Instead of accepting my suggestion, they asked what practical help I needed in order to continue

12. How can elders show their appreciation for the contribution made by elderly Christians?

13. In what ways can elders draw on the talents and experience of older ones?

14. How did one body of elders show appreciation for an older fellow overseer?

They Have Not Ignored Her Needs

When Ada, an 85-year-old Christian in Australia, became confined to her home because of poor health, congregation elders arranged to provide assistance. They organized a group of fellow believers who could help her. These brothers and sisters were glad to care for such jobs as cleaning, washing, cooking, and running errands.

That assistance was started nearly a decade ago. So far, more than 30 fellow Witnesses of Jehovah have helped to care for

Ada. They continue to visit her, reading to her from Bible publications, keeping her informed as to the spiritual progress of those in the congregation, and regularly praying with her.

A local Christian elder commented: "Those who care for Ada deem it a privilege to help her. Many have been inspired by her faithful service over the decades, and they simply could not imagine ignoring her needs."

caring for my responsibilities." With the assistance of a younger elder, José was able to continue serving joyfully as presiding overseer, and this has been a blessing to the congregation. A fellow elder states: "The brothers greatly appreciate José's work as an elder. They love and respect him for his experience and example of faith. He enriches our congregation."

Caring for One Another

¹⁵ It is not only children with aged parents and appointed servants who should be concerned about the elderly. Comparing the Christian congregation to the human body, Paul wrote: "God compounded the body, giving honor more abundant to the part which had a lack, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its members should have the same care for one another." (1 Corinthians 12:24, 25) Another translation reads: "All the different parts of [the body are] to make each other's welfare their common care." (Knox) For the Christian congregation to function harmoniously, each member must be concerned about

15. Why should all Christians be interested in the well-being of the elderly among them?

the well-being of his fellow believers, including the elderly.—Galatians 6:2.

¹⁶ Christian meetings afford a fine opportunity to show our interest in the elderly. (Philippians 2:4; Hebrews 10:24, 25) Do we take time to converse with older ones on such occasions? While it may be appropriate to inquire about their physical well-being, could we "impart some spiritual gift," perhaps by sharing an upbuilding experience or a Scriptural thought? Since some older ones have limited mobility, it would be kind to go to them rather than expect them to come to us. If hearing is a problem, we may need to speak slowly and enunciate clearly. And if there is to be a true "interchange of encouragement," we must listen attentively to what the older person says.—Romans 1:11, 12.

¹⁷ What if certain older ones cannot attend Christian meetings? James 1:27 shows that it is our duty "to look after orphans and widows in their tribulation." One meaning of the Greek verb translated "to look after"

16. How can we show interest in the elderly when we attend Christian meetings?

17. How can we show our concern for elderly Christians who are housebound?

is "to visit." (Acts 15:36) And how the elderly appreciate our visits! While imprisoned in Rome about 65 C.E., the "aged man" Paul found himself practically alone. He longed to see his fellow worker Timothy and wrote: "Do your utmost to come to me shortly." (Philemon 9; 2 Timothy 1:3, 4; 4:9) Although they are not literally prisoners, some elderly ones are housebound because of health problems. In effect, they may be saying, 'Please, do your best to visit me soon.' Are we responding to such appeals?

¹⁸ Never underestimate the beneficial effects of visiting an elderly spiritual brother or sister. When a Christian named Onesiphorus was in Rome, he diligently looked for Paul, found him, and thereafter 'often brought him refreshment.' (2 Timothy 1:16, 17) "I love spending time with younger ones," says one elderly sister. "What I like most is that they treat me like a member of their family. It lifts my spirits." Another older Christian states: "I really appreciate it when someone sends me a card, calls me on the phone for just a few minutes, or visits me for a while. It is like a breath of fresh air."

Jehovah Rewards Those Who Care

¹⁹ Caring for older ones results in many blessings. Associating with the elderly and being able to draw on their knowledge and experience is in itself a privilege. Caregivers experience the greater happiness that comes from giving, as well as a sense of accomplishment and inner peace from having fulfilled their Scriptural responsibility. (Acts 20:35) Moreover, those who care for the elderly need not fear that they themselves will be abandoned in their later years.

18. What benefits can result from our visiting the elderly?

19. What blessings come from caring for the elderly?

God's Word assures us: "The generous soul will itself be made fat, and the one freely watering others will himself also be freely watered."—Proverbs 11:25.

²⁰ Jehovah rewards God-fearing children, overseers, and other caring Christians for unselfishly tending to the needs of elderly fellow believers. Such a spirit is in line with this proverb: "He that is showing favor to the lowly one is lending to Jehovah, and his treatment He will repay to him." (Proverbs 19:17) If love prompts us to show favor to the lowly and the poor, God considers such giving to be a loan that he repays with blessings. He also repays us for giving loving care to our elderly fellow worshipers, many of whom are 'poor respecting the world but rich in faith.'—James 2:5.

²¹ How generous God's repayment is! It includes everlasting life. For the vast majority of Jehovah's servants, that will be life eternal on a paradise earth, where the effects of inherited sin will be eliminated and faithful elderly ones will enjoy the restoration of their youthful vigor. (Revelation 21:3-5) While we await that blessed time, may we continue to fulfill our Christian responsibility to care for the elderly.

20, 21. How does Jehovah view those who care for the elderly, and what should be our determination?

What Are Your Answers?

- How can children honor aged parents?
- How do elders show appreciation for older members of the flock?
- What can individual Christians do to show their genuine interest in the elderly?
- What blessings result from caring for elderly Christians?

Jehovah's Word Is Alive

Highlights From the Book of Leviticus

A YEAR has not yet passed since the Israelites were liberated from Egyptian bondage. Now organized into a new nation, they are on their way to the land of Canaan. Jehovah's purpose is to have a holy nation dwell there. However, the way of life and the religious practices of the Canaanites are very degraded. So the true God gives the congregation of Israel regulations that will set it apart for his service. These are recorded in the Bible book of Leviticus. Written by the prophet Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, apparently in 1512 B.C.E., the book covers no more than one lunar month. (Exodus 40:17; Numbers 1:1-3) Jehovah repeatedly urges his worshipers to be holy.—Leviticus 11:44; 19:2; 20:7, 26.

Witnesses of Jehovah today are not under the Law given by God through Moses. The death of Jesus Christ did away with that Law. (Romans 6:14; Ephesians 2:11-16) However, the regulations found in Leviticus can benefit us, teaching us much about the worship of our God, Jehovah.

HOLY OFFERINGS —VOLUNTARY AND COMPULSORY (Leviticus 1:1-7:38)

Some of the offerings and sacrifices of the Law were voluntary, whereas others were compulsory. The burnt offering, for example, was voluntary. It was presented to God in its entirety, even as Jesus Christ willingly and wholly gave his life as a ransom sacrifice. The voluntary communion sacrifice was shared. One part of it was presented to God on the altar, another portion was eaten

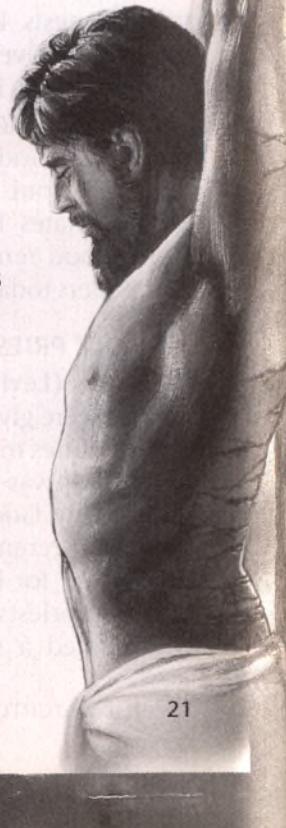
by the priest, and still another by the offerer. Comparably, for anointed Christians, the Memorial of Christ's death is a communion meal.—1 Corinthians 10:16-22.

Sin offerings and guilt offerings were compulsory. The first atoned for sins committed by mistake, or unintentionally. The second satisfied God when a right was violated, or it restored certain rights for the repentant wrongdoer—or both. There were also grain offerings made in recognition of Jehovah's bounty. All these matters are of interest to us because the sacrifices commanded under the Law covenant pointed to Jesus Christ and his sacrifice or to benefits flowing therefrom.—Hebrews 8:3-6; 9:9-14; 10:5-10.

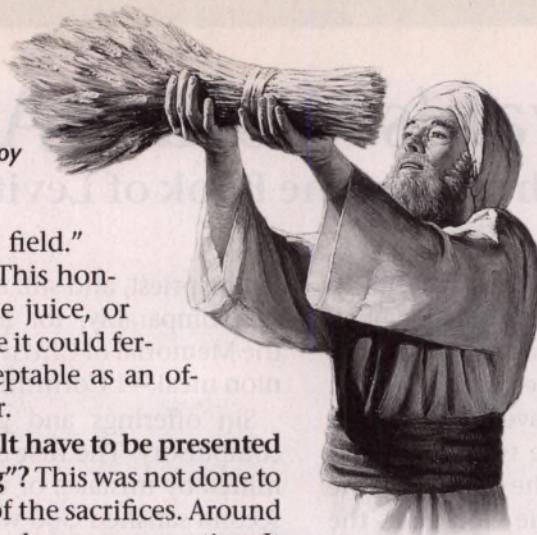
Scriptural Questions Answered:

2:11, 12—Why was honey “as an offering made by fire” unacceptable to Jehovah? The honey meant here could not refer to that of bees. Though not allowed “as an offering made by fire,” it was included among “the firstfruits of . . .

Sacrifices offered under the Law pointed to Jesus Christ and his sacrifice



*The Festival of
Unfermented Cakes
was an event of great joy*



the produce of the field.” (2 Chronicles 31:5) This honey was evidently the juice, or syrup, of fruits. Since it could ferment, it was unacceptable as an offering upon the altar.

2:13—Why did salt have to be presented “with every offering”? This was not done to enhance the flavor of the sacrifices. Around the world, salt is used as a preservative. It was likely presented with offerings because it represents freedom from corruption and decay.

Lessons for Us:

3:17. Since the fat was regarded as the best or the richest part, the prohibition against eating it evidently impressed upon the Israelites that the best part belonged to Jehovah. (Genesis 45:18) This reminds us that we should give our very best to Jehovah. —Proverbs 3:9, 10; Colossians 3:23, 24.

7:26, 27. The Israelites were not to eat blood. In God's view, blood represents life. “The soul [life] of the flesh is in the blood,” states Leviticus 17:11. Abstinence from blood remains the standard for true worshipers today.—Acts 15:28, 29.

HOLY PRIESTHOOD IS SET FORTH

(Leviticus 8:1–10:20)

Who were given the responsibility of caring for duties involving sacrifices and offerings? That was entrusted to the priests. As directed by God, Moses conducted an installation ceremony for Aaron, the high priest, and for his four sons, who were to be underpriests. The ceremony apparently occupied a seven-day period, and the

priesthood began functioning on the following day.

Scriptural Questions Answered:

9:9—What is significant about the pouring of blood at the base of the altar and the placing of it on various items? This demonstrated that Jehovah accepted blood for atonement purposes.

The whole atonement arrangement was based on blood. “Nearly all things are cleansed with blood according to the Law,” wrote the apostle Paul, “and unless blood is poured out no forgiveness takes place.” —Hebrews 9:22.

10:1, 2—What may have been involved in the sin of Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu? Soon after Nadab and Abihu took liberties in performing their priestly duties, Jehovah forbade priests to use wine or intoxicating liquor while serving at the tabernacle. (Leviticus 10:9) This suggests that Aaron’s two sons may have been under the influence of alcohol on the occasion here under consideration. However, the actual reason for their death was their offering “illegitimate fire, which [Jehovah] had not prescribed for them.”

Lessons for Us:

10:1, 2. Responsible servants of Jehovah today must comply with divine requirements. Moreover, they must not be presumptuous as they care for their responsibilities.

10:9. We should not perform God-given duties while under the influence of alcoholic beverages.

Annual festivals, such as the Festival of Booths, were occasions for offering thanks to Jehovah

HOLY WORSHIP DEMANDS CLEANNESS (Leviticus 11:1–15:33)

Food regulations concerning clean and unclean animals benefited the Israelites in two ways. These regulations protected them from being infected by harmful organisms and strengthened the barrier between them and the people of the surrounding nations. Other regulations dealt with uncleanness from dead bodies, the purification of women upon giving birth, procedures involving leprosy, and uncleanness resulting from male and female sexual discharges. Priests were to take care of matters dealing with uncleanness contracted by individuals.

Scriptural Questions Answered:

12:2, 5—Why did childbirth make a woman “unclean”? The reproductive organs were made to pass on perfect human life. However, because of the inherited effects of sin, imperfect and sinful life was passed on to the offspring. The temporary periods of ‘uncleanness’ associated with childbirth, as well as other matters, such as menstruation and seminal emissions, called this hereditary sinfulness to mind. (Leviticus 15:16–24; Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12) The required purification regulations would help the Israelites to appreciate the need for a ransom sacrifice to cover mankind’s sinfulness and restore human perfection. Thus the Law became their “tutor leading to Christ.”—Galatians 3:24.

15:16–18—What is the “emission of semen” mentioned in these verses? This apparently refers to a nocturnal emission as well as to marital sexual relations.



Lessons for Us:

11:45. Jehovah God is holy and demands that those who render him sacred service be holy. They must pursue holiness and remain physically and spiritually clean.—2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Peter 1:15, 16.

12:8. Jehovah allowed the poor to offer birds instead of a more costly sheep as a sacrificial offering. He is considerate of the poor.

HOLINESS MUST BE MAINTAINED

(Leviticus 16:1–27:34)

The most important sacrifices for sins were offered on the annual Day of Atonement. A bull was offered for the priests and the tribe of Levi. A goat was sacrificed for Israel’s nonpriestly tribes. Another goat was sent away alive into the wilderness after the people’s sins had been pronounced over it. The two goats were regarded as one sin offering. All of this pointed to the fact that Jesus Christ would be sacrificed and would also carry away sins.

Regulations about the eating of meat and

about other matters impress us with the need for holiness when we worship Jehovah. Appropriately, the priests were to keep themselves holy. The three annual festivals were occasions for great rejoicing and the giving of thanks to the Creator. Jehovah also gave his people regulations involving the abuse of his holy name, the observance of Sabbaths and of the Jubilee, conduct toward the poor, and the treatment of slaves. The blessings that would result from obedience to God are contrasted with the maledictions that would be experienced for disobedience. There are also regulations about offerings in connection with vows and valuations, the firstborn of animals, and the giving of every tenth part as "something holy to Jehovah."

Scriptural Questions Answered:

16:29—In what way were the Israelites to 'afflict their souls'? This procedure, followed on Atonement Day, revolved around seeking forgiveness for sins. Fasting at that time was evidently associated with the acknowledgment of sinfulness. Most likely, then, 'afflicting the soul' referred to fasting.

19:27—What is meant by the command not to "cut [the] sidelocks short around" or "destroy the extremity" of the beard? This law was evidently given to prevent the Jews from trimming their beards or hair in a way that would imitate certain pagan practices. (Jeremiah 9:25, 26; 25:23; 49:32) However, God's command did not mean that the Jews could not trim their beards or facial hair at all.—2 Samuel 19:24.

25:35-37—Was it always wrong for the Israelites to charge interest? If the money was lent for business purposes, the lender could charge interest. However, the Law forbade the charging of interest on loans made to relieve poverty. Profiting from a destitute neighbor's economic reversals was wrong.—Exodus 22:25.

26:19—How can 'the heavens become like iron and the earth like copper'? Because of a lack of rain, the heavens over the land of Canaan would become in appearance like hard, nonporous iron. Without rain, the earth would have a copper-colored, metallic brightness.

26:26—What is meant by 'ten women baking bread in one oven'? Normally, each woman would need a separate oven for all the baking she had to do. But these words pointed to such scarcity of food that one oven would be sufficient to handle all the baking done by ten women. This was one of the foretold consequences of failing to maintain holiness.

Lessons for Us:

20:9. A hateful and vicious spirit was as bad as murder in Jehovah's sight. He therefore prescribed the same penalty for reviling one's parents as for actually murdering them. Should this not prompt us to show love for fellow believers?—1 John 3:14, 15.

22:32; 24:10-16, 23. Jehovah's name is not to be reproached. On the contrary, we must praise his name and pray for its sanctification.—Psalm 7:17; Matthew 6:9.

HOW LEVITICUS AFFECTS OUR WORSHIP

Jehovah's Witnesses today are not living under the Law. (Galatians 3:23-25) Since what is said in Leviticus gives us insight into Jehovah's viewpoint on various matters, however, it can affect our worship.

As you do the weekly Bible reading in preparation for the Theocratic Ministry School, no doubt you will be impressed with the fact that our God requires holiness of his servants. This Bible book can also move you to give the Most High your very best, always maintaining holiness to his praise.

Abraham and Sarah

You Can Imitate Their Faith!

HE IS called "the father of all those having faith." (Romans 4:11) His beloved wife also possessed that quality. (Hebrews 11:11) They were the godly patriarch Abraham and his devout wife, Sarah. Why were they such fine examples of faith? What were some of the trials they endured? And of what value is their story to us?

Abraham manifested faith when God commanded him to leave his home. Jehovah said: "Go your way out of your country and from your relatives and from the house of your father to the country that I shall show you." (Genesis 12:1) The faithful patriarch obeyed, for we are told: "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed in going out into a place he was destined to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, although not knowing where he was going." (Hebrews 11:8) Consider what that move meant.

Abraham lived in Ur, in what is now southern Iraq. Ur was a thriving Mesopotamian center that traded with lands of the Persian Gulf and likely the Indus Valley. Sir Leonard Woolley, who direct-



ed the systematic excavation of Ur, points out that in Abraham's time most houses there were built of brick, with plastered and whitewashed walls. For instance, the home of one prosperous citizen was a two-story building with a paved central courtyard. The ground floor housed domestics and guests. At the first-floor level, a wooden gallery ran around the wall, providing access to rooms reserved for family use. With their 10 to 20 rooms, such residences were "comparatively spacious and afforded scope for a life decent, comfortable and, by Eastern standards, luxurious," says Woolley. They were "pre-eminently the homes of a civilised people and answered to the needs of a highly developed urban life." If Abraham and Sarah left such a home with the prospect of dwelling in tents, they made great sacrifices to obey Jehovah.

Abraham's move took his family first to Haran, a city in northern Mesopotamia, and then on into Canaan. That was a distance of some 1,000 miles—quite a move for an elderly couple! On leaving Haran, Abraham was 75 years of age and Sarah was 65.—Genesis 12:4.

How might Sarah have felt when Abraham revealed that they were going to leave Ur? Leaving the security of a pleasant home, moving to some strange and potentially hostile land, and accepting a lower standard of living might have concerned her. Nevertheless, Sarah was submissive, thinking of Abraham as her "lord." (1 Peter 3:5, 6) Some scholars consider this a manifestation of Sarah's "customary, respectful attitude and behavior toward him," evidence of "real habits of thought and feeling." But above all, Sarah trusted in Jehovah. Her submission and faith stand as a fine example for Christian wives.

True, we are not asked to abandon our home to obey God, although some full-time evangelizers have left their homeland in order to preach the good news in another country. Regardless of where we serve God, as long as we put spiritual inter-

ests first in life, he will care for our needs.—Matthew 6:25-33.

Neither Sarah nor Abraham regretted the decision they made. "If they had indeed kept remembering that place from which they had gone forth, they would have had opportunity to return," says the apostle Paul. But they did not return. Confident that Jehovah "becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him," they exercised faith in his promises. So must we if we are to continue to render whole-souled devotion to Jehovah.—Hebrews 11:6, 15, 16.

Spiritual and Material Riches

After Abraham reached Canaan, God told him: "To your seed I am going to give this land." Abraham responded by building an altar to Jehovah and by calling "on the name of Jehovah." (Genesis 12:7, 8) Jeho-

Because of their faith, Jehovah blessed Abraham and Sarah with a son in their old age



vah made Abraham rich, and those in his encampment were great in number. Since he once mustered 318 trained men, slaves born in his household, it has been suggested that "his total group must have numbered well over a thousand." For whatever reason, people regarded him as "a chieftain of God."—Genesis 13:2; 14:14; 23:6.

Abraham took the lead in worship, teaching those of his household to "keep Jehovah's way to do righteousness and judgment." (Genesis 18:19) Present-day Christian family heads can draw encouragement from Abraham's example as a person who succeeded in teaching members of his household to rely on Jehovah and act in a righteous way. It is therefore not surprising that Sarah's Egyptian maid-servant Hagar, the patriarch's eldest servant, and Abraham's son Isaac relied on Jehovah God.—Genesis 16:5, 13; 24:10-14; 25:21.

Abraham Sought Peace

Events in Abraham's life reveal that Abraham had a godly personality. Instead of allowing a quarrel to continue between his herders and those of his nephew Lot, Abraham suggested separating their camps and invited the younger man Lot to choose the land he preferred. Abraham was a peacemaker.—Genesis 13:5-13.

If we ever have to choose between insisting on our rights or making concessions to preserve peace, we might note that Jehovah did not let Abraham suffer because he showed consideration for Lot. On the contrary, God thereafter promised Abraham and his seed all the land Abraham could see in every direction. (Genesis 13:14-17) "Happy are the peaceable [“peacemakers,” footnote]," said Jesus, "since they will be called ‘sons of God.’"—Matthew 5:9.

Who Would Be Abraham's Heir?

Despite promises of a seed, Sarah remained barren. Abraham presented the matter to God. Would his servant Eliezer inherit all that he owned? No, for Jehovah said: "This man will not succeed you as heir, but one who will come out of your own inward parts will succeed you as heir."—Genesis 15:1-4.

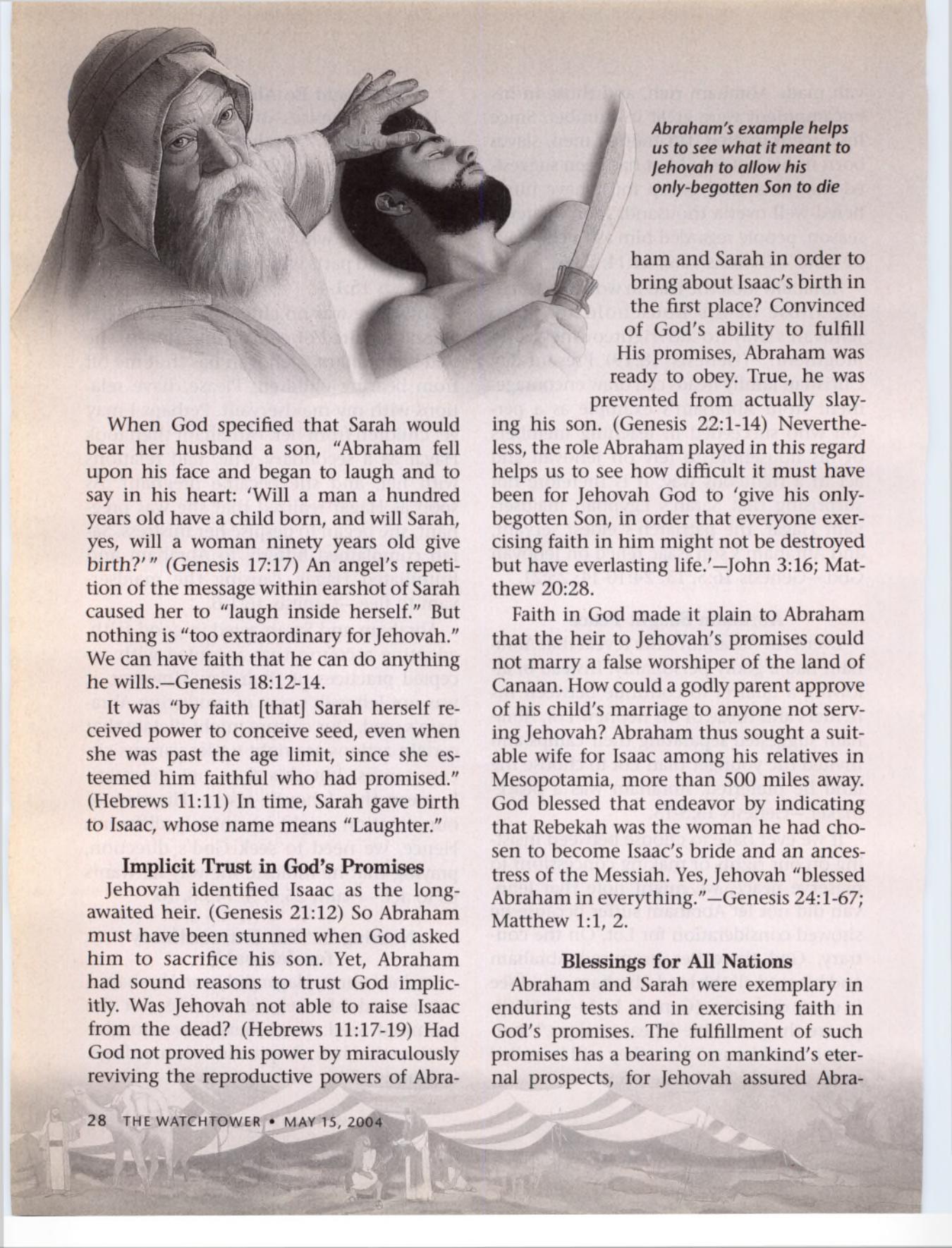
Still there was no child, and 75-year-old Sarah despaired of conceiving. Hence, she said to Abraham: "Jehovah has shut me off from bearing children. Please, have relations with my maid-servant. Perhaps I may get children from her." Abraham then took Hagar as a secondary wife, had relations with her, and she became pregnant. As soon as Hagar realized that she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. Sarah complained bitterly to Abraham and humiliated Hagar, causing the maid-servant to flee.—Genesis 16:1-6.

Abraham and Sarah acted in good faith, adopting a course that accorded with accepted practices of their day. However, it was not Jehovah's way of producing Abraham's seed. Our culture might dictate that certain actions are right under various circumstances, but this does not necessarily mean that Jehovah agrees. His view of our situation might be entirely different. Hence, we need to seek God's direction, praying that he indicate the way he wants us to act.—Psalm 25:4, 5; 143:8, 10.

Nothing Is "Too Extraordinary for Jehovah"

In due course, Hagar did bear Abraham a son named Ishmael. Yet, he was not the promised Seed. Sarah herself was to give birth to that heir, despite her advanced age.—Genesis 17:15, 16.





Abraham's example helps us to see what it meant to Jehovah to allow his only-begotten Son to die

When God specified that Sarah would bear her husband a son, "Abraham fell upon his face and began to laugh and to say in his heart: 'Will a man a hundred years old have a child born, and will Sarah, yes, will a woman ninety years old give birth?'" (Genesis 17:17) An angel's repetition of the message within earshot of Sarah caused her to "laugh inside herself." But nothing is "too extraordinary for Jehovah." We can have faith that he can do anything he wills.—Genesis 18:12-14.

It was "by faith [that] Sarah herself received power to conceive seed, even when she was past the age limit, since she esteemed him faithful who had promised." (Hebrews 11:11) In time, Sarah gave birth to Isaac, whose name means "Laughter."

Implicit Trust in God's Promises

Jehovah identified Isaac as the long-awaited heir. (Genesis 21:12) So Abraham must have been stunned when God asked him to sacrifice his son. Yet, Abraham had sound reasons to trust God implicitly. Was Jehovah not able to raise Isaac from the dead? (Hebrews 11:17-19) Had God not proved his power by miraculously reviving the reproductive powers of Abra-

ham and Sarah in order to bring about Isaac's birth in the first place? Convinced of God's ability to fulfill His promises, Abraham was ready to obey. True, he was prevented from actually slaying his son. (Genesis 22:1-14) Nevertheless, the role Abraham played in this regard helps us to see how difficult it must have been for Jehovah God to 'give his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life.'—John 3:16; Matthew 20:28.

Faith in God made it plain to Abraham that the heir to Jehovah's promises could not marry a false worshiper of the land of Canaan. How could a godly parent approve of his child's marriage to anyone not serving Jehovah? Abraham thus sought a suitable wife for Isaac among his relatives in Mesopotamia, more than 500 miles away. God blessed that endeavor by indicating that Rebekah was the woman he had chosen to become Isaac's bride and an ancestress of the Messiah. Yes, Jehovah "blessed Abraham in everything."—Genesis 24:1-67; Matthew 1:1, 2.

Blessings for All Nations

Abraham and Sarah were exemplary in enduring tests and in exercising faith in God's promises. The fulfillment of such promises has a bearing on mankind's eternal prospects, for Jehovah assured Abra-

ham: "By means of your seed all nations of the earth will certainly bless themselves due to the fact that you have listened to my voice."—Genesis 22:18.

Of course, Abraham and Sarah were imperfect, even as we are. When God's will became clear to them, however, they promptly complied with it—regardless of the cost.

Abraham is thus remembered as "Jehovah's friend" and Sarah as a 'holy woman who was hoping in God.' (James 2:23; 1 Peter 3:5) By striving to imitate the faith of Abraham and Sarah, we too can enjoy precious intimacy with God. We can also benefit from the precious promises Jehovah made to Abraham.—Genesis 17:7.

Questions From Readers

• How can we grieve God's holy spirit, since it is not a person?

It was the apostle Paul who wrote: "Do not be grieving God's holy spirit." (Ephesians 4:30) Some take these words to be an indication that the holy spirit is a person. However, publications of "the faithful steward" have often provided Scriptural and historical proof that the early Christians viewed the holy spirit neither as a person nor as a god equal to the Most High as part of a so-called Trinity.* (Luke 12:42) So Paul was not referring to God's holy spirit as a person.

God's holy spirit is his invisible active force. (Genesis 1:2) Jesus was to baptize "with holy spirit," just as John was baptizing with water. (Luke 3:16) At Pentecost 33 C.E., some 120 disciples were "filled with holy spirit"—obviously not with a person. (Acts 1:5, 8; 2:4, 33) Such anointed ones received a heavenly hope, and God's spirit led them in a life of faithfulness. (Romans 8:14-17; 2 Corinthians 1:22) The spirit produced godly fruitage and helped them

to avoid the sinful "works of the flesh" that could result in divine disapproval.—Galatians 5:19-25.

If we are God's servants with an earthly hope, we have not been anointed with holy spirit. Nevertheless, we can have just as much of God's spirit as those with the heavenly hope. Hence, we too could grieve the spirit. But how?

If we were to ignore Scriptural counsel penned under the guidance of holy spirit, we could develop traits that could result in willful sin against the spirit, the loss of Jehovah's favor, and eventual destruction. (Matthew 12:31, 32) We might not yet be sinning gravely, but we could be starting off on the wrong road, one that could eventually take us in a direction contrary to the leading of the spirit. Under such circumstances, we would be grieving the holy spirit.

How, then, can we avoid grieving God's spirit? We certainly have to control our thoughts and actions. In his letter to the Ephesians, chapter 4, the apostle Paul spoke about avoiding tendencies toward dishonest statements, sustained wrathfulness,

* See the brochure *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

laziness, and unsuitable speech. If we have put on "the new personality" and yet allow ourselves to drift back toward such things, what would we be doing? We would be going against the spirit-inspired counsel of God's Word, the Bible. By doing this, we would be grieving the holy spirit.

In Ephesians chapter 5, we read Paul's counsel about avoiding prurient interest in fornication. The apostle also urges fellow believers to avoid shameful conduct and obscene jesting. If we do not want to grieve God's holy spirit, we ought to bear this in mind when choosing entertainment. Why would we show interest in such things by talking about them, reading about them, and viewing their portrayal on television or elsewhere?

Of course, we could grieve the spirit in other ways. Jehovah's spirit promotes unity in the congregation, but suppose we were to spread harmful gossip or encourage cliques in the congregation. Would we not be working against the spirit's leadings toward unity? In a general way, we would be grieving the holy spirit, like those who caused divisions in the congregation in Corinth. (1 Corinthians 1:10; 3:1-4, 16, 17) We would also be grieving the spirit if we deliberately undermined respect for spirit-appointed men in the congregation.—Acts 20:28; Jude 8.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Creation Declares the Glory of God!

Do Your Circumstances
Control Your Life?

From Dark Dungeons
to the Swiss Alps

Clearly, then, it is wise to consider our attitude and actions in the light of what we know to be the leadings of the holy spirit as reflected in the Bible and in the Christian congregation. Let us also be "praying with holy spirit," yielding to its influence and always acting in harmony with what is said in God's inspired Word. (Jude 20) May it be our determination never to grieve the spirit but always to be led by it to the honor of Jehovah's holy name.

- Jesus Christ compared a rich man's difficulty in getting into the Kingdom with a camel that is trying to get through a needle's eye. Did Jesus have in mind a literal camel and a real sewing needle?

Two of the three Scriptural quotations of this statement are quite similar. According to Matthew's account, Jesus said: "It is easier for a camel to get through a needle's eye than for a rich man to get into the kingdom of God." (Matthew 19:24) Similarly, Mark 10:25 reads: "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Some reference works suggest that the "needle's eye" was a small gate in one of Jerusalem's large gates. If the big gate was closed at night, the small one could be opened. It is held that a camel could fit through it. Is this what Jesus had in mind?

Evidently it is not. Jesus apparently was referring to a sewing needle. Since both bone and metal needles of ancient origin have been found in that region, they must have been common household items. Luke 18:25 removes any uncertainty about Jesus' words, for it quotes him as saying: "It is easier, in fact, for a camel to get through the eye of a sewing needle than for a rich man to get into the kingdom of God."

Various lexicographers agree with the rendering "sewing needle" as found in

the *New World Translation*. The Greek word for 'needle' at Matthew 19:24 and Mark 10:25 (*rha-phis*) is drawn from a verb meaning "sew." And the Greek term found at Luke 18:25 (*be-lo'ne*) is used to refer to a literal surgical needle. Says *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*: "The idea of applying 'the needle's eye' to small gates seems to be a modern one; there is no ancient trace of it. The Lord's object in the statement is to express human impossibility and there is no need to endeavour to soften the difficulty by taking the needle to mean anything more than the ordinary instrument."—1981, Volume 3, page 106.

Some suggest that in these verses "camel" should be rendered "rope." The Greek words for rope (*ka'mi-los*) and camel (*ka'me-los*) are similar. However, the Greek word for "camel" rather than the one for "rope" appears at Matthew 19:24 in the oldest extant Greek manuscripts of Matthew's Gospel (the Sinaitic, the Vatican No. 1209, and the Alexandrine). Reportedly, Matthew originally wrote his Gospel in Hebrew and may personally have translated it into Greek. He knew exactly what Jesus said and therefore used the proper word.

So, then, Jesus meant a literal sewing needle and a real camel. He was using these to emphasize the impossibility of something. But did Jesus mean that no rich man could ever get into the Kingdom? No, for Jesus' statement was not meant to be taken literally. He was using hyperbole to illustrate that just as a literal camel cannot go through the eye of an actual sewing needle, it is impossible for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom if he continues to cling to his riches and



does not put Jehovah first in his life.
—Luke 13:24; 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

Jesus made this statement just after a rich young ruler turned down the grand privilege of becoming Jesus' follower. (Luke 18:18-24) A wealthy individual having greater love for his possessions than for spiritual things cannot expect to gain everlasting life in the Kingdom arrangement. Yet, certain rich people did become Jesus' disciples. (Matthew 27:57; Luke 19:2, 9) So a rich person who is conscious of his spiritual need and who seeks divine help can receive God-given salvation.—Matthew 5:3; 19:16-26.

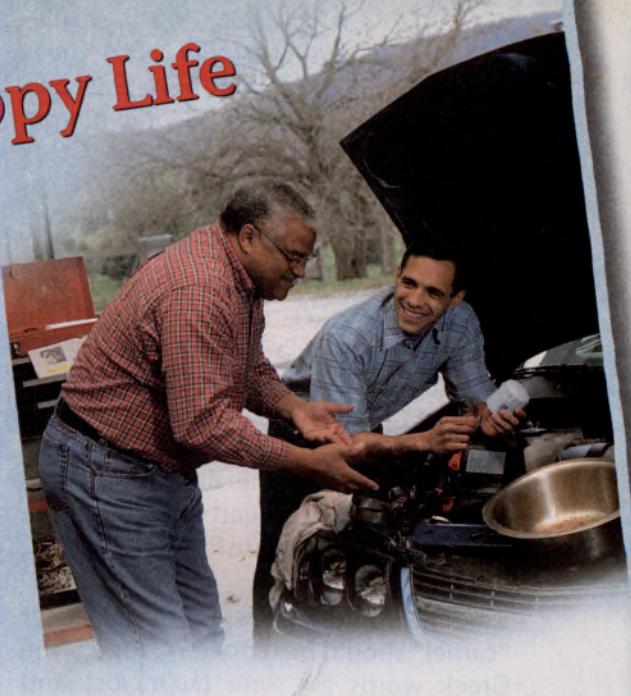
Recipe for a Long and Happy Life

EVERYONE wants to get older; but no one wants to be old." So the saying goes. Many people approaching retirement age look forward to having more time and fewer responsibilities. Yet, they are afraid of becoming aimless and useless. They also fear isolation, unhappiness, and diminishing health.

What, then, is the secret of a happy life? Good friends and a loving family help to bring happiness to young and old alike. But what others contribute to an elderly person's life is not all that counts. Even more important is what an older individual can do for others.

A long-term study of 423 elderly couples indicated that "making a contribution to the lives of other people may help to extend our own lives." Stephanie Brown, who conducted the study, explains: "These findings suggest that it isn't what we get from relationships that makes contact with others so beneficial; it's what we give." Such giving may include helping others with housework, taking care of children, running errands, providing transportation, or listening to someone who needs to talk.

About 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ said: "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." (Acts 20:35) The recipi-



pe for a long and happy life does not consist of a big bank account or antiaging therapies and diets. Rather, it consists of staying active and giving of one's time, energy, and strength to enrich the lives of others.

Nevertheless, it will take more than giving to save us from old age, illness, and death. Only God's Kingdom will do away with such things. Under its rule, sickness will be gone and even "death will be no more." (Revelation 21:3, 4; Isaiah 33:24) In fact, obedient humans will live forever in happiness on a paradise earth. (Luke 23:43) Jehovah's Witnesses are glad to be able to give others this Bible-based recipe for a long and happy life.