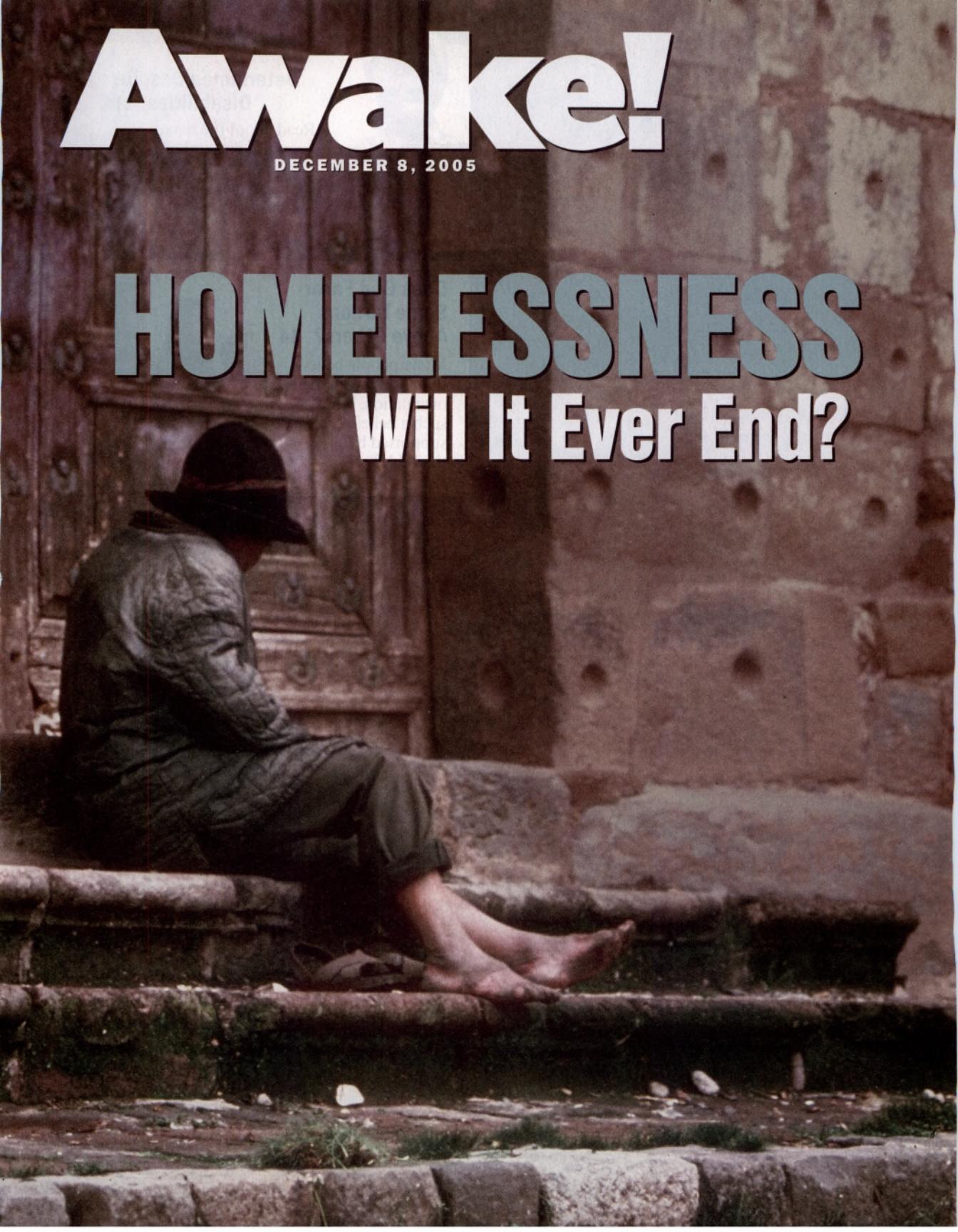


Awake!

DECEMBER 8, 2005

HOMELESSNESS **Will It Ever End?**

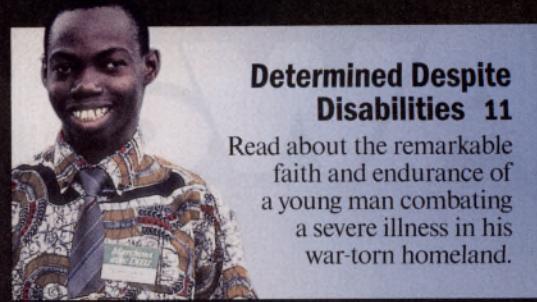


Awake!

AVERAGE PRINTING 22,842,000
PUBLISHED IN 82 LANGUAGES

- 3 Homelessness—A Worldwide Problem
- 4 Homelessness—What Is Behind It?
- 8 Homelessness—What Is the Solution?
- 16 A Brief History of Purple
- 18 Braving the Surf on Reeds
- 19 Crossword Puzzle
- 20 Tombs—Windows to Ancient Beliefs
- 25 Come With Us to Pick Mushrooms!
- 28 Watching the World
- 30 From Our Readers
- 31 "Welcome to Jehovah's Organization"
- 32 Precious Memories Awakened

HOMELESSNESS Will It Ever End? 3-10



Determined Despite Disabilities 11

Read about the remarkable faith and endurance of a young man combating a severe illness in his war-torn homeland.

Does God Favor Some Nations Above Others? 14

Many people believe that God favors their own nation, but is such a belief supported by the Bible?



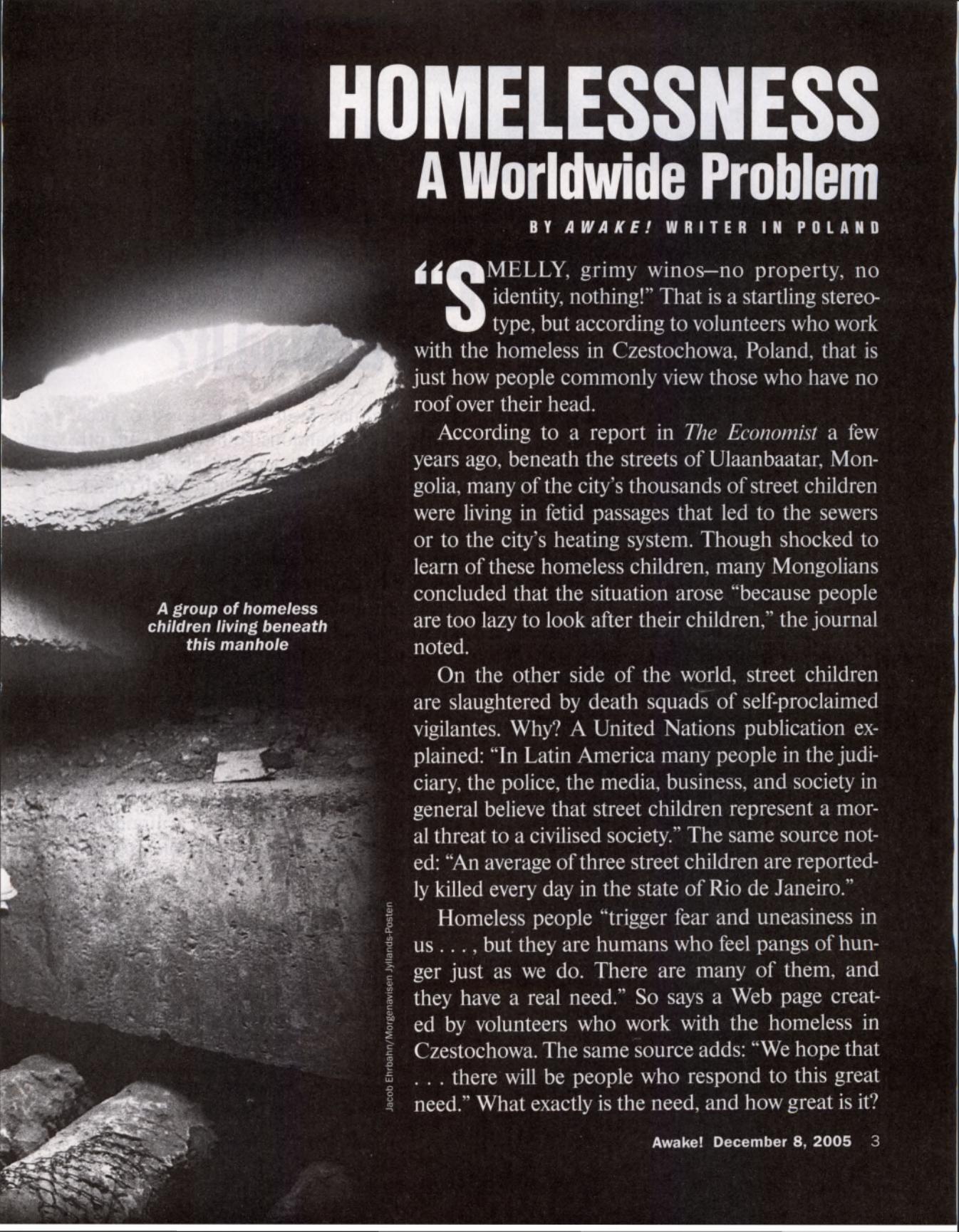
What is behind the widespread plague of homelessness? What is the best way to help the homeless? Is there a real hope for a solution to the problem?



HOMELESSNESS

A Worldwide Problem

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN POLAND



SMELLY, grimy winos—no property, no identity, nothing!” That is a startling stereotype, but according to volunteers who work with the homeless in Czestochowa, Poland, that is just how people commonly view those who have no roof over their head.

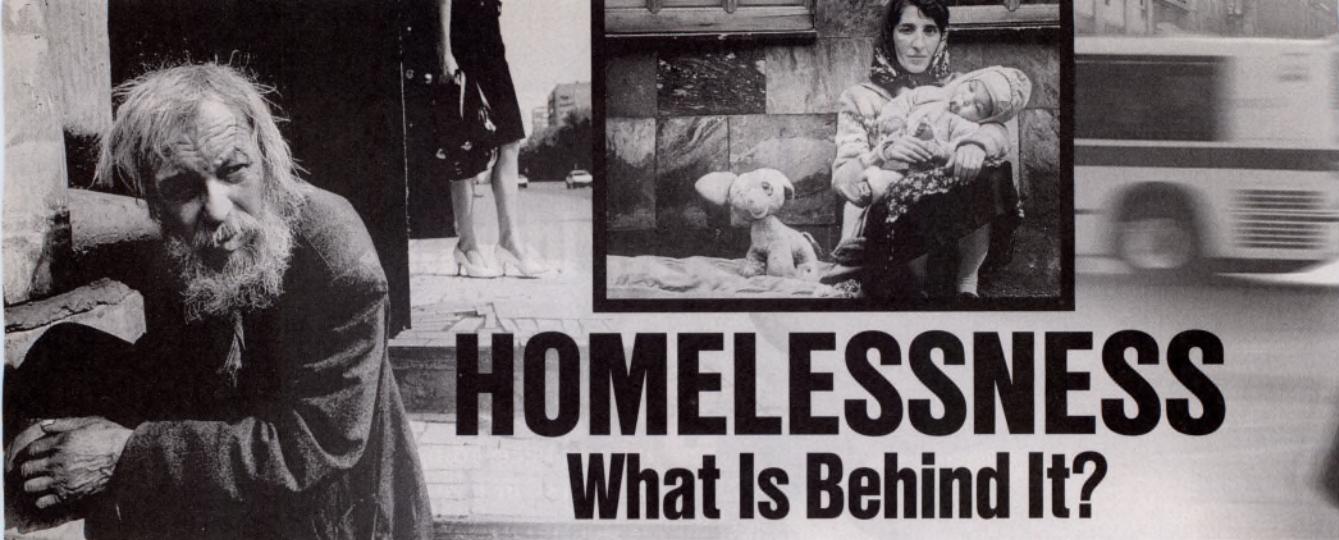
According to a report in *The Economist* a few years ago, beneath the streets of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, many of the city’s thousands of street children were living in fetid passages that led to the sewers or to the city’s heating system. Though shocked to learn of these homeless children, many Mongolians concluded that the situation arose “because people are too lazy to look after their children,” the journal noted.

On the other side of the world, street children are slaughtered by death squads of self-proclaimed vigilantes. Why? A United Nations publication explained: “In Latin America many people in the judiciary, the police, the media, business, and society in general believe that street children represent a moral threat to a civilised society.” The same source noted: “An average of three street children are reportedly killed every day in the state of Rio de Janeiro.”

Homeless people “trigger fear and uneasiness in us . . . , but they are humans who feel pangs of hunger just as we do. There are many of them, and they have a real need.” So says a Web page created by volunteers who work with the homeless in Czestochowa. The same source adds: “We hope that . . . there will be people who respond to this great need.” What exactly is the need, and how great is it?

A group of homeless children living beneath this manhole

Jacob Ehrbahn/Norgenavisen/Jyllands-Posten



HOMELESSNESS

What Is Behind It?

WORLDWIDE there are over 100 million homeless people," reports the United Nations. If that figure is accurate, then 1 human in every 60 or so is without adequate shelter! Still, the real scope of the problem is hard to assess. Why?

Definitions of homelessness vary from one part of the world to another. The approaches and aims of those who study the problem influence the way they define it. Their definition, in turn, affects the statistics they publish. So it is difficult, if not impossible, to get an accurate overview of the problem.

The book *Strategies to Combat Homelessness*, published by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, defines homelessness as the condition of "not having an acceptable level of housing provision. It would include all states below what may be regarded as adequate" for the society in which the homeless

live. Some may dwell on the streets or occupy derelict or abandoned buildings, while others might find shelter in hostels. Still others find temporary accommodation with friends. In any case, says the same study: "To classify someone as homeless indicates a state in which 'something must be done' for the victim of such circumstances."

It is estimated that in Poland, a country with a population of some 40 million, there are as many as 300,000 homeless people. No one really knows how many, since they are not registered in any fixed location and they keep moving from place to place. Some believe the real figure to be close to half a million!

Since homelessness is widespread, someone you know may be affected by it. The plight of the homeless raises a number of questions. How did these people come to be without adequate housing? How do they

Left: © Gerd Ludwig/Vision/Panos Pictures; inset: © Mikkel Ostergaard/Panos Pictures; right: © Mark Henley/Panos Pictures

Awake!®

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

Awake! (ISSN 0005-237X) is published semimonthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; M. H. Larson, President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. **Changes of address** should reach us 30 days before your moving date. Give us your old and new address (if possible, your old address label). **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *Awake!*, c/o Watchtower, Wallkill, NY 12589. © 2005 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.



get by? Who helps them? And what does the future hold for the homeless?

In and Out of Homelessness

Sabrina* is a single mother from a poor neighborhood in Harlem, a section of New York City. She dropped out of high school after tenth grade. Sabrina lives with her three young children in a city-run shelter for the long-term homeless. She shares a one-bedroom apartment with her three boys—aged ten months, three years, and ten years. The city makes such provisions for people who have no other safe place to live.

Sabrina moved out of her mother's apartment ten years ago. Since then she has lived with her boyfriend, stayed with friends and relatives, and resorted to city shelters when things got bad. "I've worked off and on,

mostly braiding people's hair for money," says Sabrina, "but for the most part, I've been on public assistance."

Paradoxically, Sabrina's problems, as recounted in *Parents* magazine, began when she found a good job as a housekeeper in a hotel. While she was working there, she earned too much to qualify for public assistance but not enough to cover her expenses, including housing, food, clothing, transportation, and child care. Thus, she found it hard to pay her rent, and her landlord tried to evict her. In the end, Sabrina quit her job and resorted to an emergency short-term shelter until there was room where she is now.

"It's all been hard on my kids," says Sabrina. "My oldest son has already been in three different schools. He should be in fifth grade, but he was held back a year . . . We've had to move around so much." Sabrina is on a waiting list for subsidized housing.

To any who have absolutely no place to go, Sabrina might seem fortunate. Life in a shelter, however, is not a welcome safety net for all the homeless. According to the Polish Community Help Committee, some "are afraid of the discipline and rules of shelters" and reject the help provided. For example, those who live in hostels for the homeless are expected to work and to abstain from alcohol and drugs. Not everyone is prepared to comply. Hence, depending on the time of year, homeless people may be found sleeping in train stations, stairwells, and cellars, as well as on park benches, under bridges, and in

* Some of the names in these articles have been changed.

Semimonthly Languages: Afrikaans, Albanian, Arabic, Cebuano, Chinese, Chinese (Simplified), Croatian, Czech,^a Danish,^b Dutch, English,^{c+d} Estonian, Finnish,^b French,^b German,^b Greek, Hungarian, Iloko, Indonesian, Italian,^b Japanese,^b Korean,^b Latvian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese,^b Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish,^b Swahili, Swedish,^b Tagalog, Ukrainian

^a Audiocassettes also available.

^b CD also available.

^c MP3 CD-ROM also available.

Monthly Languages: Amharic, Bulgarian, Chichewa, Georgian, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Igbo, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Myanmar, Nepali, Sesotho, Sinhala, Tamil, Thai, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu

Publication of *Awake!* is part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*.

Would you welcome more information? Write Jehovah's Witnesses at the appropriate address: **America, United States of:** Wallkill, NY 12589. **Australia:** Box 280, Ingleburn, NSW 1890. **Britain:** The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN. **Canada:** Box 4100, Halton Hills (Georgetown), Ontario L7G 4Y4. **Ghana:** P. O. Box GP 760, Accra. **Jamaica:** P. O. Box 103, Old Harbour, St. Catherine. **New Zealand:** P.O. Box 75-142, Manurewa. **Nigeria:** P.M.B. 1090, Benin City 300001, Edo State. **South Africa:** Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. **Zambia:** Box 33459, Lusaka 10101. **Zimbabwe:** Private Bag WG-5001, Westgate.

The Results of Abject Poverty

Hundreds of thousands live on the city streets of India. Past estimates have found some 250,000 pavement dwellers in Mumbai alone. Their only shelter may be a tarpaulin tied between poles and neighboring structures. Why do they live here rather than in relatively affordable housing near the city's outskirts? Because they work—as petty traders, hawkers, rickshaw pullers, or scrap collectors—close to the city center. "They have no choice," says *Strategies to Combat Homelessness*. "They are simply forced by poverty to spend nothing on rent that could be used for food."

Some 2,300 men, women, and children live in Park Station, Johannesburg, South Africa. They sleep on

open railroad platforms, using scraps of blankets as beds, or in cardboard shacks. Most have no work and have lost hope of finding any. Thousands live in a similar fashion throughout the city. They lack water, toilet facilities, and electricity. In such conditions disease spreads fast.

The reason for the homelessness of these two groups of people and many others like them is simple—abject poverty.

industrial areas. Similar scenes are repeated the world over.

One book on the subject lists many factors that contribute to homelessness in Poland. They include job loss, debt, and family problems. There is a shortage of housing for the elderly, disabled, and people infected with HIV. Many homeless people have mental and physical problems or problems of addiction, particularly to alcohol. The majority of homeless women have left—or have run away from—their husbands, have been thrown out of their home, or have a history of prostitution. It seems that behind every case, there is a sad story.

Victims of Circumstance

Stanisława Golinowska, a specialist in socio-economics, says: "Here [in Poland]

A former railway station was converted into a hostel for the homeless in Pretoria, South Africa



there is no genuine case of homelessness by choice. . . . Rather, it is a result of various failures in life, which have led to breakdown and loss of the will to live." Homelessness seems to befall people who, for various reasons, feel unable to deal with their problems. Some, for example, have been released from prison, only to find that vandals have wrecked their home. Others have been evicted. Many have lost the roof over their head in the wake of natural disasters.*

One study found that nearly half the homeless surveyed in Poland used to be part of a family and lived with their spouse, though often the family had problems. Most were thrown out of their home or felt compelled to leave because of extreme hardship. Only 14 percent freely made a decision to leave.

After spending time in a shelter, some are able to become self-sufficient again and find their own accommodations. For others, the situation is more difficult to resolve.

In part because of mental or physical illness, substance abuse, lack of incentives to work, poor work habits, lack of ade-

* Millions of people worldwide have also been displaced from their homes by some form of political instability or armed conflict. For a consideration of their plight, please see the series of articles entitled "Refugees—Will They Ever Find a Home?" published in the January 22, 2002, issue of *Awake!*

quate education, or a combination of factors, they become chronically homeless. In the United States, some 30 percent of homeless people are in and out of what one nonprofit organization calls the "homeless system"—a system that includes shelters, hospitals and, sadly, prisons. Those who are chronically dependent on the system are said to utilize as much as 90 percent of the national resources dedicated to the problem.

Help for the Homeless?

Some shelters offer services aimed at helping people to break out of the homeless life. Individuals may be helped to obtain public assistance, financial help from other sources, legal aid, support in reestablishing links with family, or the chance to learn basic skills. Centers for young people in London offer advice on diet, cooking, healthier lifestyles, and work placement. Counseling aims to increase self-respect and motivation and to help people achieve greater independence so that they can find and keep a home of their own. Such provisions are certainly praiseworthy.

Not always, however, do shelters offer the homeless the help they feel they need most. Jacek, a homeless person in Warsaw, explains that life in the shelters does not equip residents to deal with the outside world. He feels that the residents, by associating and conversing almost exclusively with one another, tend to develop "a warped pattern of thinking." He says, "The shelter that isolates us from the outside world becomes like a children's home for adults." In his view, many residents have "malfunctioning minds."

According to one Polish study, loneliness is the most painful emotion the homeless experience. As a result of

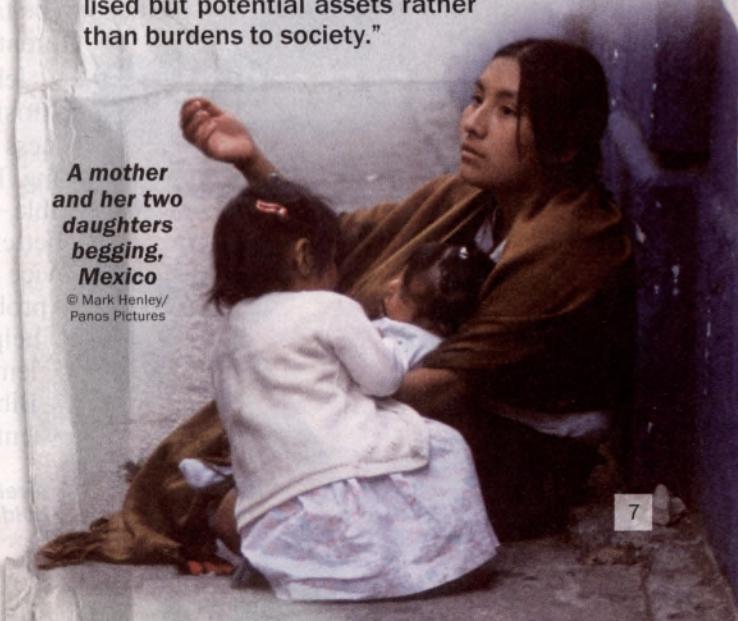
Failings of Modern Society

The book *Strategies to Combat Homelessness*, published by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, identifies a number of shortcomings of the present social, political, and economic system when it comes to providing homes for all. Included are the following:

- "The main issue with respect to homelessness remains the inability of governments to devote significant resources towards the full realisation of the right to adequate housing."
- "The existence of inappropriate regulations and inefficient planning systems can . . . cause havoc with housing supply for the poor majority."
- "Homelessness is a sign of the inequitable distribution of housing costs and benefits in the community."
- "The crisis of homelessness is the culmination of policies that have either ignored or misdiagnosed the adverse impact of economic shifts, the lack of affordable housing, increased drug abuse, and other physical health and mental health problems of those who are the most vulnerable in . . . society."
- "There is a great need to modify the training of professionals who deal with vulnerable people. Homeless people, particularly street children, should be regarded as unutilised but potential assets rather than burdens to society."

*A mother
and her two
daughters
begging,
Mexico*

© Mark Henley/
Panos Pictures



financial problems and low social standing, the homeless tend to consider themselves worthless. Some turn to alcohol. Jacek says, "Seeing no hope for change, many of us slowly lose the conviction that there is anything we can do to improve our plight." They are ashamed of the way they look, of their poverty and helplessness, and of the simple fact that they are homeless.

"Whether we talk about the pavement dwellers in Bombay [Mumbai] and Calcutta or the rough sleepers in the streets of London, or the Street Children in Brazil," says Francis Jegede, who specializes in population issues, "the condition of homelessness is too grave and pathetic to imagine, let alone ex-

perience." Then he adds: "Whatever may be the cause or causes of this phenomenon, the question one keeps asking is why is it that the world, with all its wealth and wisdom and its technological know-how, seems incapable of dealing with the problem of homelessness?"

It is evident that all the homeless need help—not just physical help but also the kind that can soothe their hearts and lift their spirits. Such help can empower people to face and overcome many of the problems that contribute to homelessness. But where can the homeless find that kind of help? And what hope is there that the tragedy of homelessness will ever be eradicated?

HOMELESSNESS

What Is the Solution?

GIVE a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime." This saying illustrates the truth that simply filling an immediate physical need may be of limited value. It is even better to help people learn how to solve problems and address their own needs. Many people need to be taught life skills or even an altogether different outlook on and approach to life.

Jehovah's Witnesses are convinced that the most effective way to help with homelessness is to teach people the best way of living. This means applying the best advice available—that provided by man's Creator. Who is better qualified to give such counsel? His advice is helping people to avoid many of the problems that lead to homelessness. It is also helping sincere people who have the problem to overcome it. Of course, reading the Bible will not, in itself, make all the problems we face vanish. However, the Bible can



A refugee mother from Somalia holding a food ration card

© Trygve Bolstad/Panos Pictures

help people to eliminate costly vices, to regain a measure of self-respect, and to lead a more dignified life.

Many people have lost their home as a result of substance abuse, a life of crime, financial problems, or family breakdown. The Bible gives practical counsel on all these matters. Applying such advice has already helped millions of people to change their outlook on life—and indeed change their whole personality—for the better. Application of Scriptural counsel alone, of course, may not resolve all the problems associated with homelessness. In the short term, natural disasters, ill health, widespread poverty, addiction, and the like are problems that frequently call for other kinds of assistance. While Jehovah's Witnesses do all they can to help individuals who are suffering from the effects of such afflictions, they recognize that only mankind's Maker can resolve those problems once and for all. Will he?

God's Original Purpose

There is good reason to hope that homelessness will soon end. On what basis? Consider: Jehovah God provided a good home for the first human pair. God placed them in a paradise, where they had all they needed. Had they followed their Maker's guidance, they would have extended that Paradise to all the earth. Their offspring would have enjoyed abundance and comfortable homes. Each member of the human family would have been able to rely on the love and cooperation of everyone else. That was God's original purpose. He has not changed his mind.—Psalm 37:9-11, 29.

Furthermore, whatever God intends to be will be, without fail. (Isaiah 55:10, 11) The Bible prophesies that a time will come when everyone will have his own home and material plenty. Granted, before that is possible, all human society as we know it now will have to change. Such a change will be brought about by divine intervention in mankind's affairs. That is what Jesus had in mind when he told his disciples to pray: "Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth."—Matthew 6:9, 10.

Under the just rule of God's Kingdom, obedient mankind will see the fulfillment of this heartening prophecy: "They will certainly build houses and have occupancy . . . They will not build and someone else have occupancy; they will not plant and someone else

do the eating. . . . The work of their own hands my chosen ones will use to the full." (Isaiah 65:21, 22) Simply put, no one will be homeless.

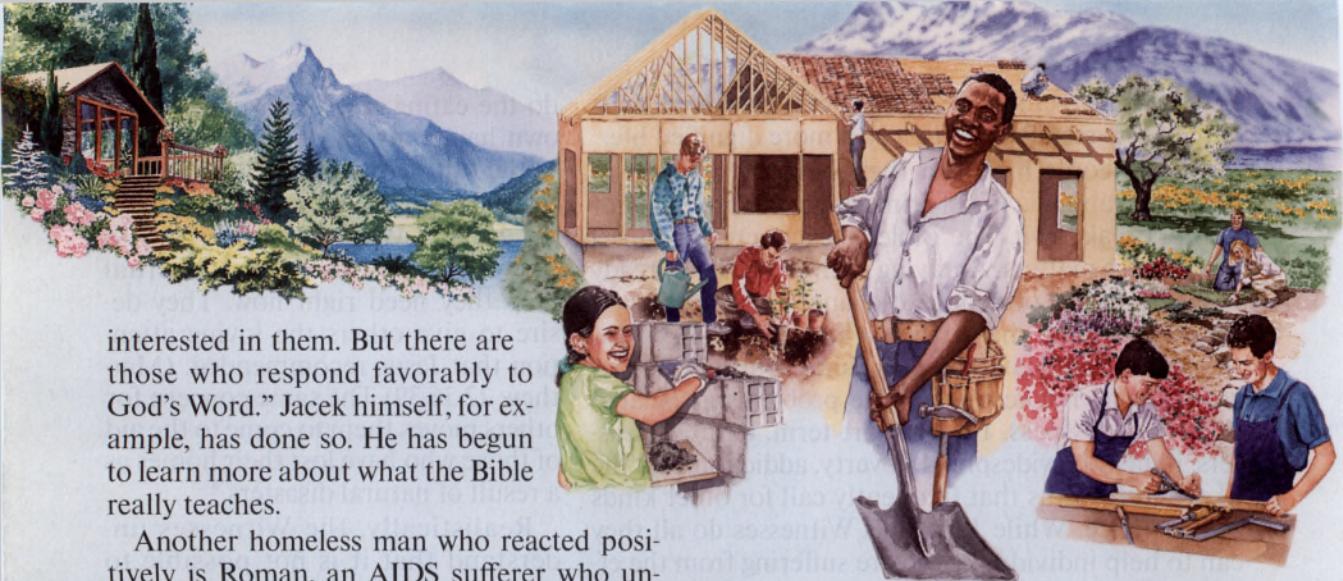
Jehovah's Witnesses are striving to provide people with the spiritual help they need right now. They desire to give others the loving attention that Jesus recommended. (Matthew 22:36-39) The same concern for others moves them to come to the aid of those who have lost their homes as a result of natural disasters.*

Realistically, the Witnesses understand that it is not possible to help everyone. Jacek, from Poland, who lives in a shelter for the homeless, acknowledges regarding the homeless: "Some are aggressive or are under the influence of drugs. Others have an aversion to religious topics, thinking that God is not

* For examples, please see *Awake!* of January 8, 1993, pages 14-21; October 22, 2001, pages 23-7; and August 8, 2003, pages 10-15.

Above all, homeless people need a hope for the future





interested in them. But there are those who respond favorably to God's Word." Jacek himself, for example, has done so. He has begun to learn more about what the Bible really teaches.

Another homeless man who reacted positively is Roman, an AIDS sufferer who until recently lived on the street. "When I arrived at the Social Services care unit, I did not know that Jehovah's Witnesses met nearby," he recalls. "Soon they started a conversation with me in the street and explained that the cries for help of the homeless do not go unnoticed by God. They also invited me to one of their meetings."—Psalm 72:12, 13.

How was he affected by what he heard? "I learned that I can live forever in Paradise on earth and that I am precious in God's eyes. Surrounded by new, caring friends, I stopped focusing on my predicament and started changing my personality. Out of love for God, I gave up smoking and in prayer made a pledge to him that I would walk the path of righteousness."

Roman made fine spiritual progress and was soon baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. With the help of fellow believers and the authorities, he was able to move

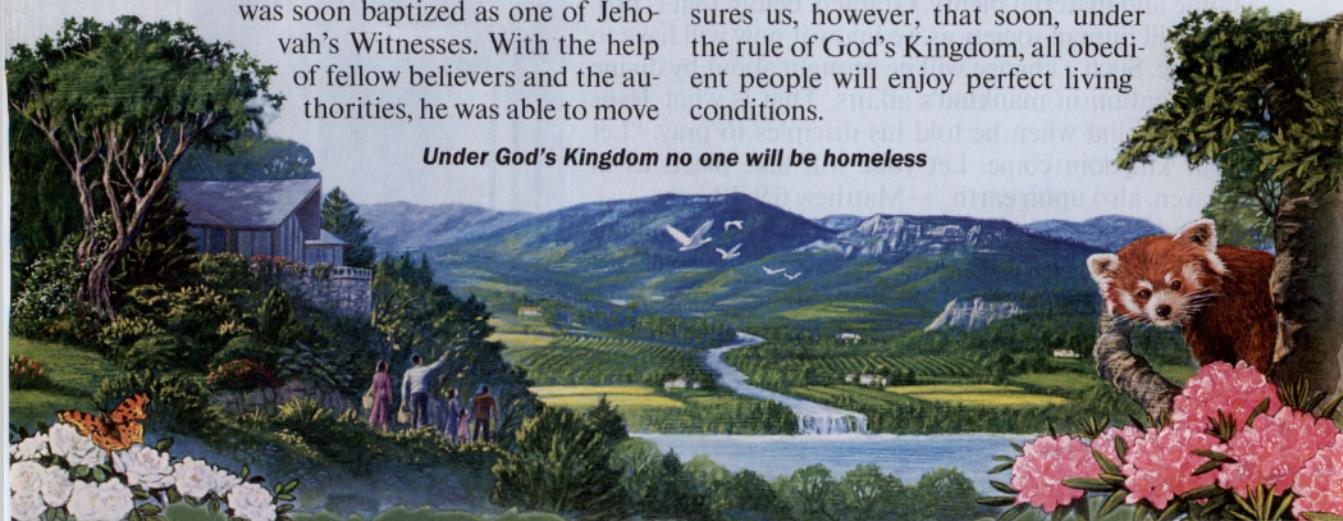
into suitable accommodations. Roman joyously exclaims: "Indescribable happiness has taken root in my heart. I have drawn close to a loving God, who restored purpose to my life. He gave me a wonderful family of brothers and sisters and also a home!"

A Future for the Homeless

Jehovah's Witnesses strive to show empathy to all their neighbors, including the homeless. They are anxious to share Bible truths regarding a better future—truths that even now can transform lives.—John 8:32.

"That which is made crooked cannot be made straight," says the Bible. (Ecclesiastes 1:15) Yes, despite the best intentions of volunteers and the authorities, such deep-rooted social problems as homelessness and poverty are difficult to eradicate. The Bible assures us, however, that soon, under the rule of God's Kingdom, all obedient people will enjoy perfect living conditions.

Under God's Kingdom no one will be homeless



Determined Despite Disabilities

As told by Kouamé N'Guessan

My companion and I struggled to push our bicycle up yet another hill. It was November 2002, and civil strife was raging in Ivory Coast, Africa. So the desolate road held many dangers. Looming in the distance was the next military checkpoint. Why was I taking such a dangerous trip during this period of strife?

I WAS born in 1978 with a progressive illness. It began with a hearing impediment and debilitating pain in my legs. As I grew older, my family belittled me, saying that I had 'useless legs and ears plugged with refuse.' Older ones looked down on me, and children yelled that I was lame and had broken feet.

I started school at the age of eight and immediately became a victim of bullying by classmates and teachers alike. Often I wanted the earth to open up and swallow me. Sensing that I was terrified, people made fun of me. I left the house only to go to school.

'Why did this illness strike me?' I would ask myself. Mother said it resulted from a magic spell someone had put on me. At times, I saw others with similar infirmities and wondered, 'Did that mean they were also targets of sorcery?'

In 1992, I began to suffer excruciating pain in my elbows. After the pain subsided, I was unable to straighten my arms. Two years later, I lost the use of my left eye. My parents took me to a number of so-called healers

but all in vain. The deterioration of my health forced me to leave school.

Searching for Answers

A religious classmate invited me to attend church along with him. I was raised an animist; however, for a year I attended church services.* I learned little there about the Bible, so I began to wonder if there was any good in organized religion.

Some church doctrines frightened me, particularly hellfire. I didn't think I was so bad as to merit eternal torment. Yet, at the same time, I didn't believe I was good enough to receive eternal happiness in heaven. Since I didn't find satisfying answers to my questions, I began to lose interest in religion.

The following year I was invited to a healing session in Abidjan, the capital of Ivory Coast, some 100 miles from our small town of Vavoua. Before our departure I told

* Animism involves the belief that conscious life exists in animals, plants, and other objects of nature.



responsible ones in the church that I didn't have enough money for the entrance fee or for food. They gave me the impression that I would be looked after in Abidjan, but things turned out otherwise. Although I was surrounded by a huge crowd of between 40,000 and 50,000 people, I felt alone and dejected. No one took an interest in me.

I returned to Vavoua just as ill as before, but now I was disillusioned as well. The local church leaders told me that God had not healed me because I lacked faith. After that, I severed all contact with religion.

Finally, Spiritual Comfort

In 1996 one of Jehovah's Witnesses visited our family. I had never spoken with a Witness before, but I listened in on the animated discussion between my older brother and the visitor. My brother was not interested, but I was. Every word that the Witness said went straight to my heart.

The Witness explained that sin infected the human family as a result of the disobedience of the first man. That rebellion led to imperfection and death for all mankind. However, Jesus provided his life as a ransom so that our sins can be forgiven and we can enjoy eternal life. (Romans 3:23; 5:12, 17-19) Moreover, the Witness showed from the Bible that soon Jehovah God, by means of his Kingdom, will transform the earth into a paradise and wipe out sin and all its distressing consequences.

—Isaiah 33:24; Daniel 2:44; Revelation 21:3, 4.

The logic of Bible teachings had a profound effect on me. The Witness, whom I later came

to know as Robert, made arrangements to study the Bible with me twice a week. Within a few months, equipped with my new Bible knowledge, I qualified to accompany the Witnesses in their door-to-door ministry. To do this was a challenge, since I had to overcome my apprehension of mixing with people.

Obstacles Arise

My family was not pleased that I was studying the Bible. To annoy me, my older brother would smoke cigarettes in my bedroom during the night. In the morning I would have a headache and feel ill. Another challenge was the food we ate. Father was an avid hunter, and the meat he provided was a staple of our diet. I explained to him that the Bible forbids eating the meat of unbled animals. (Acts 15:28, 29) Still, he refused to bleed the animals. Mother would occasionally put plain rice aside for me, but I often went without adequate food.

Although the Kingdom Hall in Vavoua was on the other side of town, I never allowed the distance or inclement weather to hold me back from attending meetings. I was baptized in September 1997 at the "Faith in God's Word" District Convention in Ivory Coast. Eventually I increased my participation in the Christian ministry to the extent that I qualified to be a pioneer, as Jehovah's Witnesses call their full-time ministers.

Further Challenges

Political unrest culminated in civil war in September 2002. In a matter of weeks, the national army was approaching Vavoua. Fearing for their lives, some people fled, including most of Jehovah's Witnesses. Five days after that departure, soldiers took over the town and immediately banned all social activities. At that, most of the inhabitants of Vavoua dispersed, including the remaining Witnesses.

Since there was no public transportation, people had to walk many miles to reach neighboring towns. I couldn't walk such a

In Our Next Issue

- **The Next Global Epidemic—When?**
- **Twice Sentenced to 25 Years of Slave Labor**
- **Amazing Discoveries at Earth's Equator**



En route to Daloa to attend the assembly

long distance, so I was the only Witness left in Vavoua. I continued to preach, and I held congregation meetings to which some of the local inhabitants came.

Efforts to Attend an Assembly

A special assembly day of Jehovah's Witnesses was scheduled for November in the town of Daloa. I prayed to Jehovah, expressing my desire to attend. A Witness who had previously left town returned unexpectedly. I asked him if he would take me on his bicycle to the assembly location, which was some 30 miles away. He readily agreed, although he too suffered from serious infirmities.

Tension reigned, so it was not the ideal time for such a journey. Vehicles were prohibited from traveling from Vavoua to Daloa. An unidentified traveler might be viewed suspiciously and machine-gunned by a soldier of one of the opposing factions. Nevertheless, on Saturday morning, November 9, 2002, we left Vavoua by bicycle and headed for Daloa, as described at the outset.

Soon we came to the first of many military checkpoints. We were thoroughly searched and allowed to continue. The trip was long and taxing. We would walk to the top of a hill, and then when we reached the summit, we would both sit on the bicycle and coast down.

In time, another cyclist offered to help us. I sat on the small rack at the back of his bicycle. As this hospitable stranger cycled along, I used the opportunity to talk to him about the

I make and sell wooden butterfly ornaments to support myself



Kingdom of God. I explained that the government of God is heavenly and that soon it will bring lasting peace to the earth. He was amazed at what I said and bombarded me with questions. When we arrived in Daloa, he bought us food and promised to attend the special assembly day the next morning.

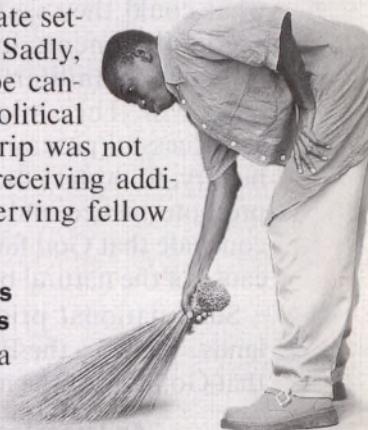
We arrived at Daloa late in the evening, tired but happy that we had reached our destination. Our nine-hour trip had not been easy. A local Witness family warmly welcomed us and suggested that we stay with them until the political climate settled down somewhat. Sadly, the assembly had to be canceled because of the political unrest. However, the trip was not in vain. It led to my receiving additional privileges of serving fellow Christians in Daloa.

Determination Has Brought Blessings

I now keep busy as a ministerial servant and regular pioneer in a congregation in Daloa. I also help with the maintenance of the Daloa Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses. To care for my material needs, I make and sell wooden butterfly ornaments and also paint signs.

For many years I left my house only to go to school, but since then I have covered many miles searching for those who are thirsting for the truth about why sickness and suffering exist. While I wait for God's Kingdom to wipe out all infirmities, I continue to share with the people in Ivory Coast the comforting good news regarding God's purposes.

Assisting with the care of our Assembly Hall in Daloa



DOES GOD FAVOR SOME NATIONS ABOVE OTHERS?

MANY feel that God favors their own nation above others. But if asked for proof, what could they say? Some might point to accomplishments in their nation's history—such as military victories or economic growth. They might even call attention to successful programs designed to feed the hungry, to protect those less fortunate, or to promote justice and fair treatment. Others conclude that God favors their homeland because of the natural beauty there.

Such national pride can be found in all lands. Yet, does the Bible support the notion that God favors one nation above others?

An Important Trait of God

The answer is clear if we understand an important trait of Almighty God, one that the Bible describes emphatically. God is impartial. For example, Acts 10:34 says plainly: "God is not partial." The Bible also says that Jehovah God "treats none with partiality" and that "with Jehovah our God there is no unrighteousness or partiality." (Deuteronomy 10:17; 2 Chronicles 19:7) God hates partiality; he even equates it with unrighteousness.

You might wonder, though: 'Did not God favor the ancient nation of Israel above other nations? Was that not evidence of partiality?' God did single out the nation of Israel in Bible times, and he protected the Israelites in some of their conflicts with other nations. Additionally, the Bible says of God: "He is telling his word to Jacob, his regulations and his

judicial decisions to Israel. He has not done that way to any other nation." (Psalm 147:19, 20) But do God's dealings with Israel suggest that he is partial? Not at all. Consider three reasons.

First, God singled out Israel in order to benefit *all nations*. He made a covenant with the forefather of that nation, Abraham, saying: "By means of your seed all nations of the earth will certainly bless themselves." (Genesis 22:17, 18) Yes, God's purpose in dealing with Israel was to produce a "seed" that would make great blessings available, not just to the people of one nation but to people of "all nations of the earth."

Second, God's blessings were never *limited* to the people of Israel. He impartially opened the way for individuals of other nations to join with his chosen people in worshipping him. (2 Chronicles 6:32, 33) Many accepted that invitation and were blessed as a result. The Moabite woman Ruth was just one well-known example of such.—Ruth 1:3, 16.

Third, God's special relationship with earthly Israel was *temporary*. In 29 C.E., Israel produced the foretold "seed" in the person of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. (Galatians 3:16) But Jesus' countrymen rejected him as the Messiah. He said to them: "Look! Your house is abandoned to you." (Matthew 23:38) Thereafter, God's dealings with mankind have been separate from individual secular nations and their conflicts. Rather, he has impartially made blessings available to all mankind. Consider some examples.

God's Gifts to All

The ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ is God's greatest gift to man. (Romans 6:23) It has provided a means of release from sin and death, giving each of us the opportunity to inherit everlasting life. This gift is for individuals "out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation." (Revelation 5:9) Yes, God wants "everyone exercising faith" in Jesus to have "everlasting life."—John 3:16.

The good news about God's Kingdom brings many blessings to those who listen. (Revelation 14:6, 7) It brings hope for the future and provides wise counsel that can lead to a happier life now. Jehovah has impartially arranged that "this good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to *all the nations*." (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20; Acts 16:10) That good news is contained in the Bible, a book that can be found—at least in part—in more than 2,300 languages. As a loving Father, Jehovah has made available to virtually every person on earth the "sayings of everlasting life."

—John 6:68; Joshua 1:8.

These and other gifts from God are available to all—yes, to people of all nations, races, and language groups. So, receiving God's favor and blessing does not depend on our place of birth or ethnic background.

Who Are Favored by God?

What, then, do we need to do in order to receive God's favor? The apostle Peter answers by saying: "In every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:34, 35) Clearly, a passive in-

terest in God is not enough. We need to develop a sincere love for God, fearing to displease him. We also need to 'work righteousness,' or actively pursue the doing of what is good in the eyes of God.

To illustrate: In many lands public schooling is widely available, but only those who attend classes and apply themselves will benefit. Similarly, God's favor is available to all, but effort is required on our part. Such effort would include reading the Bible regularly, demonstrating faith in Christ's ransom sacrifice, and living a life based on Bible principles. If we really "search for Jehovah," we will find ourselves on the path to an approved standing with him.—Psalm 105:3, 4; Proverbs 2:2-9.

**God has made the
"sayings of everlasting life"
available to people
of all nations**





A BRIEF HISTORY OF Purple

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN MEXICO

"As for you, O son of man, raise up concerning Tyre a dirge . . . Linen in various colors from Egypt your cloth expanse happened to be, in order for it to serve as your sail. Blue thread and wool dyed reddish purple from the islands of Elishah are what your deck covering proved to be. . . . They were your traders in gorgeous garments."—Ezekiel 27:2, 7, 24.

TYRE was the principal seaport of ancient Phoenicia, in the territory now known as Lebanon. That defiant city had a prosperous trade in purple fabric. In fact, it was because of Tyre that this vivid color was known in the Roman Empire as Tyrian purple.

Because of its high cost, the color purple came to be associated with royalty, honor, and riches.* In fact, by imperial decrees in

* The color purple—basically a combination of blue and red—includes several hues, from violet to a dark red. In ancient times the term "purple" was also used for crimson.

ancient Rome, a "common" individual who presumed to wear a complete robe dyed with the finest kind of this color was considered guilty of high treason.

This particular dye, back then and today, is obtained in small amounts from sea snails—a drop from each one. The Tyrians used murex snails, particularly the *brandaris* and the *trunculus*, which are found in various areas along the Mediterranean Coast. Different shades of the dye could be obtained depending on the exact site where the snails were collected.

The "Purpura" snail



The snail is "milked" and then returned to the sea



© FULVIO ECCARDI

Tracing Its History in Mexico

Centuries ago when first introduced to fabrics dyed purple, Spanish conquerors in South America expressed admiration for the permanency of this color. They noted that when such fabrics were washed, the color seemed to improve. Archaeological evidence suggests that the indigenous inhabitants wore a variety of garments dyed purple.

The native peoples of Mexico, especially the Mixtec, dyed their fabrics with an excretion from a snail called *Purpura patula pansa*, which was related to a snail used by the Tyrians. Both kinds of snails produce a substance that looks pale at first but becomes purple when exposed to air and light. The dye colors the textile fiber without the need of a mordant, or fixative—a unique property among dyes.

Mixtec people obtained their *Purpura* snails from the waters of the Pacific Ocean.

While the Tyrians and Romans killed the mollusk—indeed, a hill of empty shells survives from those

times—the Mixtec only “milked” the snails. Blowing on the mollusk induced it to release its precious liquid, which was dripped directly onto the fibers; then the creature was returned to the sea. Indigenous people did not “milk” the snails during the reproductive season. That practice has, in fact, preserved the snail population to this day.

According to the National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity, until the early 1980's, Mixtec dyers traveled 100 miles to the bays of Huatulco, from October to March, in order to obtain purple. The balance maintained by this nonaggressive practice, though, was upset from 1981 to 1985, when a foreign firm exploited this resource. As a result, the *Purpura* population dropped. That prompted the creation of an official agreement forbidding the killing of this snail and allowing its use, in the traditional way, only by indigenous communities.

The *Purpura* snail still faces the threat of a growing tourist industry in the bays where it lives. Nonetheless, many hope that this fascinating creature will be preserved and continue to provide its beautiful color.



**Purple yarn ready
to be woven**



Weaving a “posahuanco” (skirt)



A Pre-Inca ceramic pottery depicting a fisherman on a totora-reed boat



▲ Museo Rafael Larco Herrera/Lima, Perú

An unusual surfing competition attracts people to a beach near the city of Trujillo, Peru. Instead of riding the familiar Hawaiian surfboards, the competitors use "sea horses," or *caballitos del mar*. These tiny craft are made out of bundles of totora reeds, which grow here. Each vessel is somewhat like a kayak in form but with a long prow that curves upward, enabling the "sea horse" to clear the breakers. Crouching on top of their boats like horsemen, the surfers propel themselves over the crashing waves with bamboo paddles. Some observers say they look like jockeys leaping the hedges in a steeplechase. What is the origin of these strange vessels?

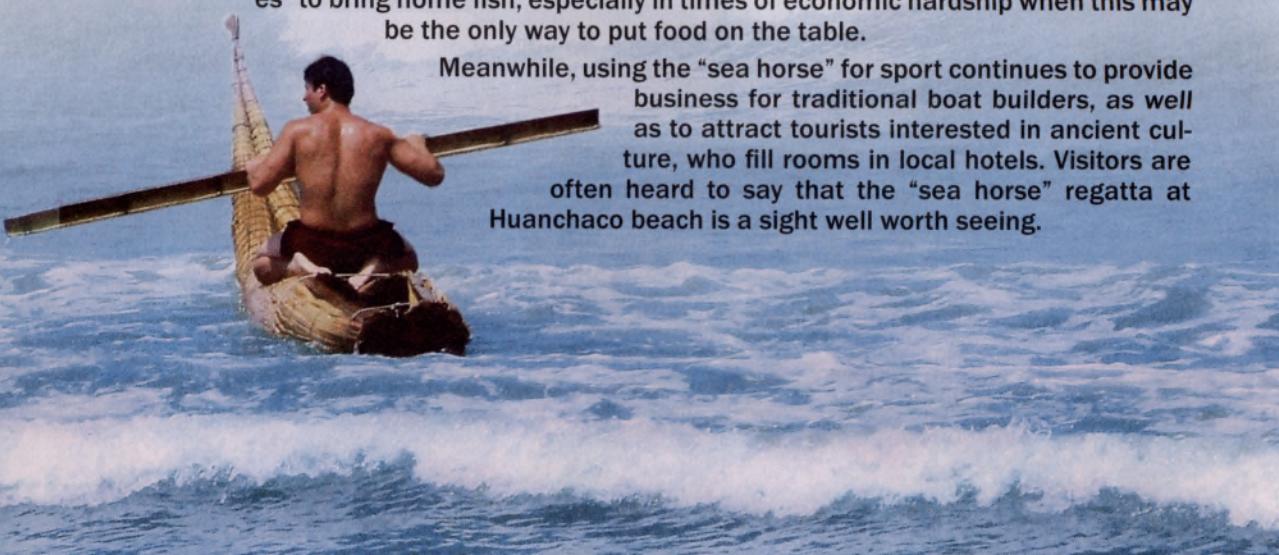
Braving the Surf on REEDS

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN PERU

side but spongy and buoyant on the inside, making them useful for building boats. Nevertheless, the boats become waterlogged after a year and have to be discarded.

For centuries local fishermen have braved the powerful waves of the Pacific Ocean on these handmade "sea horses." Now this aspect of their culture is disappearing. Trawlers using industrial fishing methods have overfished the sea, sometimes forcing traditional fishermen to travel miles from the coast in search of fish. But a few descendants of indigenous tribes still use "sea horses" to bring home fish, especially in times of economic hardship when this may be the only way to put food on the table.

Meanwhile, using the "sea horse" for sport continues to provide business for traditional boat builders, as well as to attract tourists interested in ancient culture, who fill rooms in local hotels. Visitors are often heard to say that the "sea horse" regatta at Huanchaco beach is a sight well worth seeing.



Crossword Puzzle

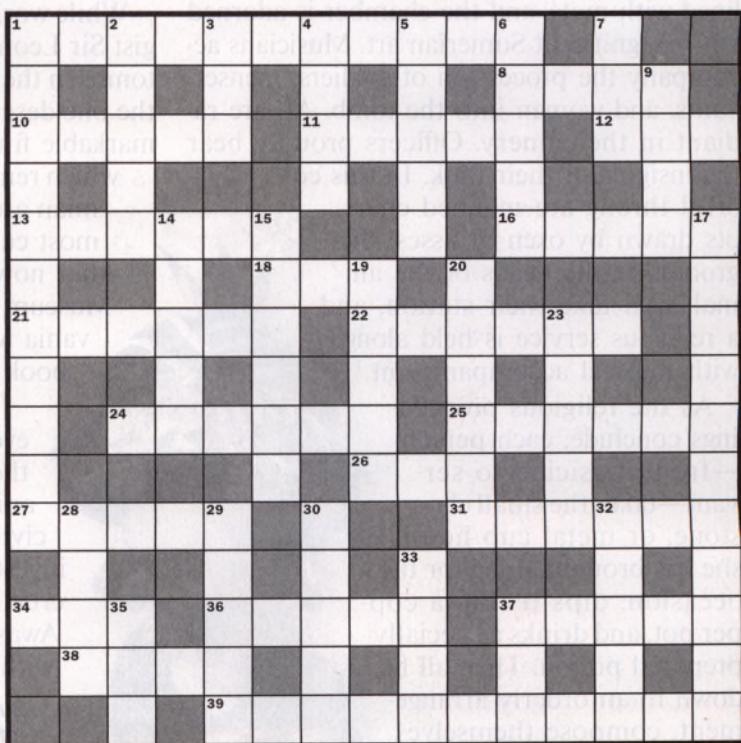
Clues Across

- When Abraham purchased the cave of Machpelah from Ephron the Hittite for 400 silver shekels, he intended to use it as this [2 words] (Genesis 23:17, 19, 20)
- To wear away by persistent biting (Revelation 16:10)
- He and his sons were of "the sons of Gilead" (Numbers 26:30)
- One of the seven sons of Noah's son Japheth (Genesis 10:2)
- At this site David's men twice struck down giant Philistine warriors (2 Samuel 21:18, 19)
- A city in the mountainous region of Judah (Joshua 15:49)
- This fragrant shrub is mentioned only in The Song of Solomon (Song of Solomon 1:14; 4:13; 7:11)
- Seventh letter of the Greek alphabet
- Incapable (Acts 21:34)
- Paul encountered these Greek philosophers when he was preaching in the marketplace at Athens (Acts 17:16-21)
- Gideon used this to make sure that Jehovah would keep his promise to save Israel by means of him (Judges 6:36-40)
- He was one who attested by seal to Nehemiah's "trustworthy arrangement" (Nehemiah 9:38; 10:13)
- The large copper vessel used by the priests for washing themselves in the courtyard of Solomon's temple was called this because of the large quantity of water it could contain (2 Chronicles 4:6)
- This descendant of Judah was an ancestor of David (1 Chronicles 2:11)
- The largest of the Hebrew units of weight and of monetary value (Ezra 8:26)
- This broke out in heaven following the birth of the Kingdom (Revelation 12:7)
- Situated farther within (Acts 16:24)
- Ancestor of a family of Nethinim temple slaves (Ezra 2:46)
- This large wild animal is mentioned only once in the Scriptures (Psalm 80:13)
- Jesus said that "it is easier for a camel to get through" this "than for a rich man to get into the kingdom of God" [3 words] (Matthew 19:24)

Clues Down

- Calling the scribes and the Pharisees this, Jesus mentioned that they "strain out the gnat but gulp down the camel" [2 words] (Matthew 23:24)
- This king of Syria cleared out the Jews from the Judaean city of Elath,

- frightening King Ahaz into turning to Assyria for help (2 Kings 16:6, 7)
 - Bearing or demeanor (Job 36:9)
 - Moved by feeling this for a man suffering from leprosy, Jesus said: "I want to. Be made clean" (Mark 1:40, 41)
 - A son of Abishur and Abihail of the tribe of Judah (1 Chronicles 2:29)
 - While in Hebron, this wife of David bore him a son named Ithream (2 Samuel 3:5)
 - Joseph's missing cup was found in this possession of Benjamin (Genesis 44:12)
 - Borne or put on (Luke 8:27)
 - Contemptuously described in the Scriptures as harsh, bad, good-for-nothing, and senseless, he was struck dead by Jehovah (1 Samuel 25:3, 17, 25, 36-38)
 - Paid attention (Acts 5:40)*
 - Answerable (Matthew 5:21)
 - Job likened the sayings of his false comforters to proverbs of these (Job 13:12)
 - Battle (Numbers 31:14)
- * The Scripture cited has a form of the word needed.





TOMBS

Windows to Ancient Beliefs

IMAGINE yourself thousands of years back in time. You are in Ur, a thriving royal city in Sumer, Babylonia. A large procession of Sumerians has left the city, entered the cemetery, and is now heading down a ramp into the tomb of a recently deceased ruler. The tomb's walls and floor are lined with mats, and the chamber is adorned with magnificent Sumerian art. Musicians accompany the procession of soldiers, messengers, and women into the tomb. All are radiant in their finery. Officers proudly bear the insignia of their rank. In this colorful throng are manned chariots drawn by oxen or asses, the grooms at the heads of the animals. All take their station, and a religious service is held along with musical accompaniment.

As the religious proceedings conclude, each person—from musician to servant—takes the small clay, stone, or metal cup he or she has brought along for the occasion, dips it into a copper pot, and drinks a specially prepared potion. Then all lie down in an orderly arrangement, compose themselves

quietly, go to sleep, and die. Someone quickly slaughters the animals. Workers fill in the shaft and seal the tomb. Their god-king, the Sumerians believe, is now riding off gloriously into the next world in his interred chariot, his loyal retainers and soldier guard resplendent in his train.

While working in southern Iraq, archaeologist Sir Leonard Woolley uncovered 16 royal tombs in the cemetery of ancient Ur, just like the one described. They were a grisly but remarkable find. "The wealth in these tombs,

which remains unparalleled in Mesopotamian archaeology, included some of the most celebrated pieces of Sumerian art that now grace the halls of the British Museum and the University of Pennsylvania Museum," says Paul Bahn in his book *Tombs, Graves and Mummies*.

The tombs of ancient Ur, however, were far from unique, even in the macabre aspect of human and animal sacrifice. In many ancient civilizations, the nobility and royalty invested prodigiously—and, at times, cruelly—in their death and afterlife. Awash in artistic splendor and packed with treasures, their tombs often ri-



**Sumerian headdress and jewelry
of a female attendant buried in
a royal tomb at Ur**

© The British Museum



Ch'in terra-cotta army—each soldier was sculptured with unique facial features

Inset: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY;
© Joe Carini / Index Stock Imagery

valed the palaces of the living. Nowadays, however, those tombs, as well as many other more modest graves, serve as a window to the past, allowing us to examine the beliefs, the culture, and the artistic and technological skills of ancient peoples and vanished civilizations.

Decaying in Splendor—With Company

In 1974, peasants near the city of Xi'an, in China, were sinking a well. But instead of finding water, they found fragments of clay figures, bronze crossbow mechanisms, and arrowheads. Unknowingly, they had chanced upon the 2,100-year-old Ch'in terra-cotta army, comprising over 7,000 larger-than-life clay soldiers and horses—all in military rank and file! A part of the largest imperial tomb in China, the Ch'in terra-cotta army is named after Ch'in Shih Huang Ti, the emperor who unified China's warring states in 221 B.C.E.

Ch'in's mausoleum is essentially an underground palace. But why the terra-cotta army? In his book *The Qin Terracotta Army*, Zhang Wenli explains that Ch'in's "mausoleum is a representation of the Qin empire [and was] intended to provide Qin Shi Huangdi [Ch'in Shih Huang Ti] after death with all the splendour and might he enjoyed during life." The tomb is now part of a vast museum comprising 400 satellite tombs and pits.

To build the tomb, "over 700,000 men from all parts of the empire were conscripted," says Zhang. Work continued after Ch'in's death in 210 B.C.E. and lasted a total of 38 years. Not all of Ch'in's interred entourage, however, was terra-cotta. His successor decreed that Ch'in's childless concubines be buried with him, resulting in the death of a "very great" number of people, say historians. Such practices were far from unique.

Northeast of Mexico City lie the ruins of the ancient city of Teotihuacán. This city had a street called the Street of the Dead. "Along this street," writes Bahn, quoted earlier, "are some of the greatest architectural monuments in the world." These include the Pyramid of the Sun and the Pyramid of the Moon, both built during the first century C.E., and the remains of the Temple of Quetzalcoatl.

The interior of the Pyramid of the Sun seems to have been a burial chamber for high-ranking individuals, perhaps including priests. Human remains found in mass graves nearby suggest that warriors may have been sacrificed to protect those in the interior. The distinct pattern of burials has led archaeologists to believe that the site contains the remains of about 200 people, including children who may have been sacrificed as part of the dedication program for the monuments.

Sailing or Riding Into the Afterlife

The Vikings, seafaring warriors of Scandinavia who terrorized Europe about 1,000 years ago, also hoped to enjoy the best trappings of a good earthly life after death. Their dead, they believed, rode their horses or sailed their longboats into the next world. Thus, Viking burial sites may contain anything from the skeletons of slain horses to the rotting timbers of longboats. In *A History of the Vikings*, Gwyn Jones writes: “The dead man or woman was given everything that could make the after-life as comfortable and honourable as that they knew on earth . . . The ship [buried] at Ladby in Denmark . . . had its anchor on board, ready to be dropped at the end of its lord’s voyage.”

A warlike race, the Vikings believed that if they died fighting, they would go to the home of the gods—a place called Asgard. “There, they could fight all day and dine all night,” says *World Book Encyclopedia*. Viking burial also involved human sacrifice. “When a chieftain dies, slaves and servants are asked who will die with him,” says the book *The Vikings*.

The ancient Celts of northern Europe even

Crossword Solutions

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

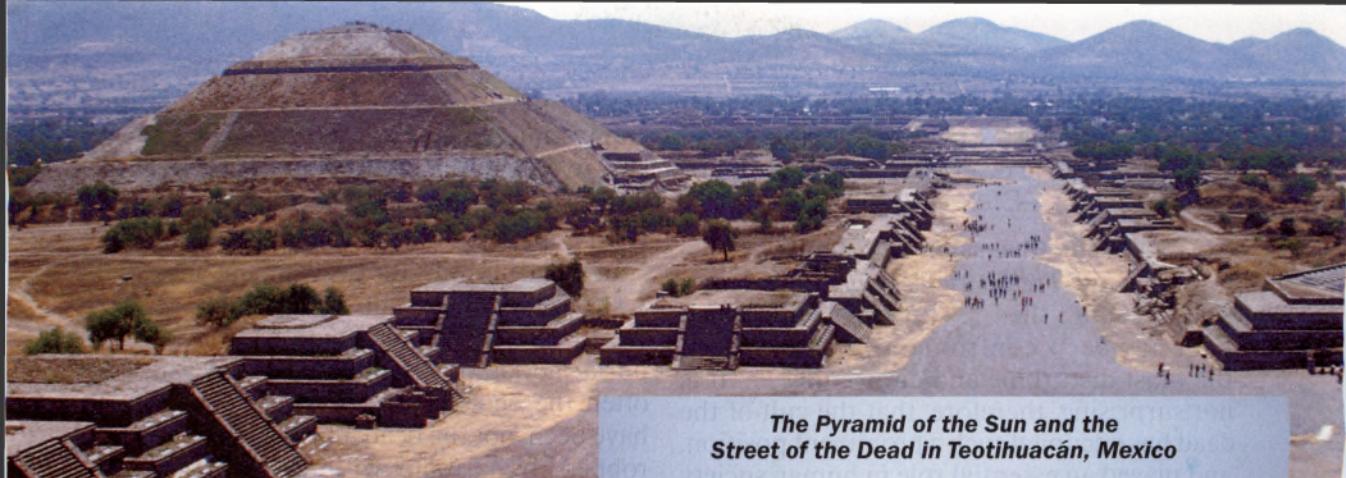
believed that a debt could be carried over into the next world—perhaps a cagey excuse for putting off payment! In Mesopotamia children were interred with toys. In parts of ancient Britain, food items such as legs of lamb were buried with soldiers so that they would not embark on their next life hungry. In Central America, Maya royalty were entombed with articles of jade—a green gemstone representing condensed moisture and breath. The intent may have been to ensure a continuation of life after death.

Sometime after 1,000 B.C.E., the Thracians—a feared race, but one that was also known for its exquisite works of gold—lived in a region that today lies in Bulgaria, northern Greece, and Turkey. Thracian tombs reveal that their chiefs were interred in magnificence along with chariots, horses, fine weaponry and, yes, their wives too. In fact, a Thracian wife saw it as an honor to be sacrificed and buried alongside her husband!

A little later and not far away—just north of the Black Sea—lived the Scythians. These warmongers drank out of cups made from the skulls of their victims and dressed in cloaks made from their scalps. In one Scythian tomb was found the skeleton of a woman with a cache of cannabis by her side. Her skull had three small holes drilled into it, perhaps to relieve swelling and the resulting pain. The cannabis was probably placed by her side so that she would have something with which to ease her headache in the next world.

The Egyptian Afterlife

Egypt’s pyramids near Cairo and burial chambers in the Valley of the Kings near Luxor are among the most famous of all ancient tombs. To the early Egyptians, the word for “tomb” was the same as for “house”—*per*. “So there was a house during life and a house after death,” says Christine El Mahdy in her book *Mummies, Myth and Magic in Ancient Egypt*. She also states that “according to [the Egyptians’] beliefs, the survival of the body was necessary



The Pyramid of the Sun and the Street of the Dead in Teotihuacán, Mexico

Top: © Philip Baird (www.anthroarchaeart.org); painting: Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

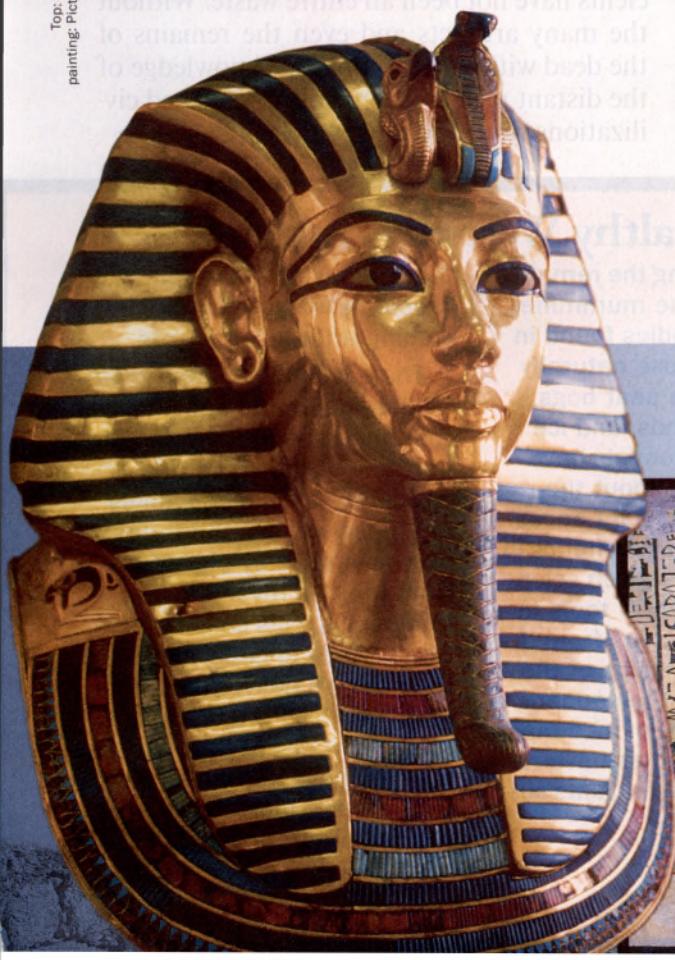
for the survival of the other aspects of their being: the *ka*, the *ba* and the *akh*.^{*}

The *ka* was a spiritual copy of the physical body and included its expectations, desires, and needs. After death the *ka* left the body and inhabited the tomb. Because the *ka* needed everything that the person had needed during life, "the goods placed in the tomb

were primarily to satisfy its needs," writes El Mahdy. The *ba* could be likened to a person's character or personality and was pictured by a bird with a human head. The *ba* entered the body at birth and left the body at death. The third entity, the *Akh*, "germinated" from the mummy as magic spells were said over it.* The *Akh* inhabited the world of the gods.

In dividing a person into three entities, the Egyptians went one step further than the ancient Greek philosophers who divided humans into two entities—the body and a conscious "soul." Still a popular teaching, this

* The term "mummy" comes from the Arabic *mummiya*, which means "bitumen" or "pitch." The term was originally given to resin-soaked cadavers because of their blackened appearance. It now applies to any preserved body—human or animal—regardless of whether the preservation is accidental or deliberate.



Left: Solid gold funerary mask of Egyptian King Tutankhamen; below: Tomb painting depicting the *ba* as a human-headed bird



concept finds no support in the Bible, which states: "The living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all."—Ecclesiastes 9:5.

Why the Obsession With Death?

In his book *Prehistoric Religion*, E. O. James writes: "Of all the . . . situations with which man has been confronted death has been the most disturbing and devastating . . . It is not surprising, therefore, that the cult of the dead has occupied such a prominent position, and played an essential role in human society from its first emergence."

The oldest book of genuine wisdom, the Bible, calls death an enemy of humans. (1 Corinthians 15:26) How fitting! Every tribe and civilization has vigorously resisted the idea that death is an absolute finality. On the other hand, at Genesis 3:19, the Bible accurately states the reality that all graves reveal: "Dust you are and to dust you will return." However, the Bible also uses the expression "memorial tomb" in connection with many dead humans. Why so? Because many of those in the grave, even those who have fully decom-

posed, are in God's memory, awaiting the happy time when God will resurrect them and give them the opportunity to enjoy everlasting life on a paradise earth.—Luke 23:43; John 5:28, 29.

In the meantime, the dead are unconscious. Jesus likened their state to sleep. (John 11:11-14) In such a state, a person has no need of burial goods or attendants. In fact, all too often the beneficiaries of interred treasures have been, not the dead, but the living—tomb robbers! In harmony with its teaching about the state of the dead, the Bible says: "We have brought nothing into the world, and neither can we carry anything out." (1 Timothy 6:7) How grateful Christians are for this truth that 'sets them free' from the cruel and barbaric practices of ancient—and sometimes even modern—death cults!—John 8:32.

That said, the grandiose tombs of the ancients have not been an entire waste. Without the many artifacts and even the remains of the dead within the tombs, our knowledge of the distant past and some of its vanished civilizations would be murky indeed.

How Healthy Were the Ancients?

By examining the remains—especially the mummified remains of bodies found in tombs and those naturally mummified in peat bogs, hot desert sands, and ice and snow—scientists have learned much about the health of our distant ancestors. Advances in genetics in particular have given scientists powerful new tools to determine anything from the family relationships of the Pharaohs and their queens to the blood types of Inca maidens. These studies have revealed that the ancients suf-

fered many of the health problems we have today, including arthritis and warts.

The ancient Egyptians in particular seemed to suffer more than their share of ills, largely because of the multitude of parasites—from blood flukes to guinea worms and tape-worms—that they picked up from the Nile River and irrigation canals. This calls to mind God's words to Israel just after the nation's deliverance from Egypt in 1513 B.C.E.: "As for all the evil diseases of Egypt that you have known, he [Jehovah] will not place them upon you."—Deuteronomy 7:15.



© R Sheridan/ANCIENT ART &
ARCHITECTURE COLLECTION LTD

Come with us to pick Mushrooms!

By Awake! writer in
the Czech Republic

YOU may have enjoyed them many times—perhaps on a pizza or in a salad, a soup, or a sauce. Or maybe you have taken delight in their whimsical appearance, which appeals to many artists who specialize in illustrating children's stories. Have you ever wondered, though, just what the mushroom *is*? What makes it grow? Who pick mushrooms, and how? Let us see.

For the most part, mushrooms are easy to recognize. They have no leaves, no flowers, and no chlorophyll to make them green. So they often stand out in stark contrast to the greenery around them. Many have a large cap set on a stalk. But they come in a wide variety of shapes and colors. There are even mushrooms that glow in the dark. The mushroom is a type of fungus. However, there are many varieties of fungi that are not mushrooms in the technical sense but are commonly grouped with them. For instance, there are fungi that resemble sea corals. Other species grow on trees and look like miniature bookshelves.

What Is It?

For a long time scientists held that the mushroom was a special and somewhat mysterious kind of plant. Nowadays, most biologists classify mushrooms as a higher order of mold. They call mushrooms an independent group of organisms, citing their unusual body structure, growth, and manner of getting nutrition. Many mushrooms are edible, and some even have medicinal properties. Others, though, are hallucinogenic or poisonous. The mushroom has the scientific name *Mycota* or *Mycetes*. The scientific study of fungi such as mushrooms is thus called mycology.





The Surprising Mushroom

How do mushrooms propagate? That was long a mystery to science. Today we know that the adult mushroom scatters microscopic spores, which are distributed by air currents. In the soil the spores change into a dense net of thin threads called the mycelium. From this net the fruiting body of the mushroom grows. That is the part we are accustomed to seeing and picking.

To survive, mushrooms need all kinds of organic matter. In the wild, therefore, they grow primarily in forests, gardens, and grassy areas. Sick or dead trees form their staple food, and thus mushrooms play an important role in the cleaning of forests. By consuming the remains of plants, leaves, and twigs, mushrooms help to create natural humus, enriching the soil. Some mushrooms live in symbiosis with healthy trees; the mycelium of the mushroom absorbs water and nutrients from the soil and trans-

fers some to the plant. The plant reciprocates by feeding the mushroom.

Mushrooms also need moisture and warmth. That is why they spring up after a summer rain. In favorable conditions some species will grow to their full size overnight. One species needs but 10 to 14 days to reach a diameter of some 20 inches. Other species are exceptional for their life span. The mycelium from which the body of the mushroom grows can live for centuries. And the funguses that form part of lichens can, according to some data, live up to 600 years.

A special feature of certain mushroom species or their relatives—truffles, for instance—is their intense smell. That is why dogs can smell them some 20 yards off, although the whole fruiting body grows underground.*

Who Pick Mushrooms?

Over the centuries people have picked mushrooms in many places. Today in some regions of Western Europe and North America, mushroom picking is almost exclusively a job for professionals, who sell to traders. In contrast, amateur mushroom picking is a popular tradition in Central and Eastern Europe. Such interest in mushrooms is not limited to people living in the country. Many city

* Specially trained dogs and pigs are used in truffle hunting. Truffles are very expensive compared with common mushrooms.

Portobello

Shiitake

Cremini



dwellers like to spend their weekends in the woods picking mushrooms. They do so to relax both physically and mentally—and to enrich their bill of fare as well. How do people go about picking mushrooms?

The pickers often start out early in the morning, when the mushrooms are fresh. Walking slowly through the woods, they look among the grass, moss, or trees where the mushrooms grow. They wear rugged clothes, including sturdy shoes or boots, and carry a raincoat in their backpack in case of a sudden shower. The mushroom picker respects nature and therefore tries to do no harm to the environment, even minimizing noise that might disturb the wildlife.

Look! A picker has just found a mushroom. He bends down to it and, without touching, examines it to decide if it is edible. He picks full-grown mushrooms because only with those can he be absolutely sure of the species. After making quite certain of the variety, he gently takes it by the stalk—never by the cap—and wiggles it free from the earth. Right away, he cleans it of clinging soil or debris and cuts away any wormy or damaged parts. Whatever he cuts from the mushroom he covers with moss or soil. He puts the cleaned mushrooms into his basket. He does not put them in plastic bags or containers because if he did, the mushrooms would start fermenting and would be spoiled before he could even get them home.

Mushroom picking can also make a good group activity. One Christian minister says: "First we go in the ministry as a group, but after we finish, we like to stay together and enjoy pleasant fellowship. Sometimes we simply head for the nearby woods to pick mushrooms together. While looking for them, we relate the experiences we have had in the ministry and generally enjoy ourselves."

Preparing the Mushrooms

Mushrooms have many uses in cooking. Some are delicious and can be made an im-

portant part of the meal. For instance, many people like to fry the cap of the large portobello as if it were a steak or to cut up table mushrooms and stir-fry them with vegetables. Spicy varieties of mushrooms can be used to add flavor to a wide array of dishes. If sufficiently dried out by means of heat, mushrooms can also be used as a diet or health food. Some varieties are valued for their proteins, vitamins, and minerals.

Mushrooms spoil easily. Therefore, it is necessary to handle them the day they are picked. According to experts, a badly stored edible mushroom can become quite poisonous. If you do not want to eat mushrooms right away, you may choose to dry or sterilize them. That way you can flavor your food with them year-round. You may find more details in reference books on mushroom picking.

A Need for Caution

If you have never picked mushrooms and would like to try, it is very important that you start with some careful research. Find out what edible and poisonous mushrooms grow in your region. Learn how to recognize them. You may also want to consult some experts, such as a pharmacist, an apothecary, or a mycologist. Never pick a mushroom just because it is pretty or it smells good. If you are not completely sure about a mushroom, do not pick it! One poisonous mushroom is enough to render an entire dish inedible, even dangerous. If you happen to feel nausea or a headache after eating a mushroom dish, consult a doctor immediately.

Whether you try picking mushrooms or not, you can always admire their beauty. Doing so may remind you that these complex, important, and surprising creations did not get here by accident. Like the other wonders of the natural world, they give evidence of a wise and loving Creator.—Genesis 1:11-13; Psalm 104:24.

Watching the World

Stressed Caregivers

According to a Statistics Canada study, "three in 10 people aged 45 to 64 must tend to an elderly relative in need of care while also caring for children under 25 and in many cases balancing a full-time job as well," says the *National Post* newspaper of Canada. The study found that of people caring for the elderly while also raising children, there is a higher rate of depression among women than among men. Working women devote about 29 hours a month to elder care compared with some 13 hours a month by their male counterparts. Women are also more likely to do more nurturing, such as cooking for and bathing the elderly. Over half the survey respondents felt that they "would do a better job if they could get a break every now and then," says the *Post*.



Atheist Turns to God

A British philosophy professor who has been called "the world's most influential atheist" now says that he believes in God. In an online preview of an interview scheduled to be published in the journal *Philosophia Christi*, 81-year-old Dr. Antony Flew said that he "had to go where the evidence leads." According to Flew, this evidence includes recent scientific discoveries in the fields of cosmology and physics. Additionally, "the findings of more than fifty years of DNA research have provided materials for a new and enormously powerful argument to design," he explained. Even the "biblical account [of Genesis chapter one] might be scientifically accurate," he states. So, is he ready to become a practicing Christian? "It's

very unlikely," he says. However, "if I wanted any sort of future life I should become a Jehovah's Witness."

Healthy Gums, Healthy Heart?

Regular brushing of teeth, which prevents periodontal disease, may lower the risk of suffering a stroke or a heart attack, reports Mexico City's *Milenio* newspaper. Researchers from the University of Minnesota found that people with high levels of bacteria that cause periodontal disease also had a narrower carotid artery. One possible explanation is that "the microorganisms that cause periodontal disease emigrate and travel throughout the bloodstream, which stimulates the immune system and provokes inflammation," says the paper. In turn, that

inflammation increases the buildup of fatty deposits in the arteries or contributes to the formation of blood clots that can lead to heart attacks, researchers theorize. Therefore, "caring for oral health may have a significant impact on cardiovascular health," says *Milenio*.

Memories of Auschwitz Fading

More than one million people died in the infamous Auschwitz death camp in Poland during World War II. Yet, according to *The Daily Telegraph* of London, "almost half the adult population [of England] has never heard of Auschwitz." The poll of 4,000 people was commissioned by the British Broadcasting Corporation to mark the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the death camp.

A Doll for Teaching Braille

The Spanish National Organization for the Blind (ONCE) has introduced a doll called Braillín. Designed to teach young children Braille, the doll has a front panel with six large buttons that correspond to the matrix of six dots used in Braille. Even boys or girls without a visual disability can learn Braille while playing with Braillín. Thirty experts refined and tested the doll, and some 50 children helped to optimize its design. ONCE plans to distribute more than 1,100 Braillín dolls in its schools for the blind. According to María Costa of the Association for Research in the Toy Industry, "Braillín represents an excellent teaching tool. Moreover, it constitutes a novel way to play with dolls, one that links learning and fun."

Deadly Air Pollution

"Every year, air pollution causes 310,000 deaths in

Europe," reports the Spanish newspaper *El País*. Experts are particularly worried about two contaminants: low-level atmospheric ozone and particles that are suspended in the air. These particles are produced by the combustion of fossil fuels, mainly by automobiles, power stations, and industrial plants. The worst levels in Europe are found in the Benelux area, followed by northern Italy and Eastern Europe. The newspaper adds: "Besides damaging human health, air pollution damages the environment. It is a source of acidification in forests, lakes, and other ecosystems. Ozone harms crops, and air pollution damages city buildings."

Catholic Dioceses Bankrupt

By the end of 2004, three Catholic dioceses in the United States had filed for bankruptcy. All three were forced

to take this step because of the financial costs of clergy sexual abuse scandals. A number of dioceses have talked about the possibility of having to file for bankruptcy, but the first to do so was the Archdiocese of Portland, Oregon, in July 2004. That action halted two lawsuits in which plaintiffs were seeking a total of \$155 million in compensation for molestation. According to the *National Catholic Reporter*, "the archdiocese and its insurers already have paid more than \$53 million to settle more than 130 claims by people who say they were abused by priests." In September 2004, the diocese of Tucson, Arizona, became the second diocese to seek bankruptcy protection from multimillion dollar claims being brought against it. The diocese of Spokane, Washington, became the third, in December 2004.

How Long Should You Nap?

"Scientists are finding the old-fashioned nap can be a boon to productivity," reports Australia's *Sydney Morning Herald*. However, the length of time spent napping is important. After testing naps of varying lengths, Flinders University sleep expert Professor Leon Lack stated: "One minute of sleep seemed to produce no benefit whatsoever. Five minutes of sleep seemed to produce benefits for some people but not very dramatic ones. However, 10 minutes of sleep seemed to produce significant improvements in virtually all the measures we had." In contrast, people dozing for longer periods—up to 30 minutes—reported feeling tired for up to an hour afterward.

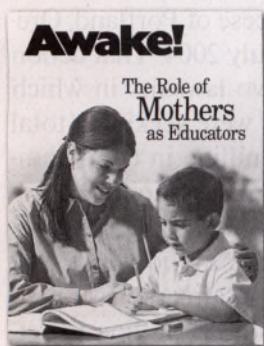


From Our Readers

Mothers Thank you for the beautifully written series “The Role of Mothers as Educators.” (February 22, 2005) It truly touched my heart, and it impelled me to call my mom as soon as I finished

reading it. My mother raised my brother and me by herself. She put herself through school so that she could provide for us. She made sure we were regular at Christian meetings and in the ministry. Her work paid off. Thank you for reminding me of her wonderful example.

M. S., United States



I was reminded of my mother's self-sacrificing effort to educate me spiritually and morally. Even though she did not have the emotional and financial support of my father, she taught me to love Jehovah. She also encouraged me to become a full-time evangelizer. I guess I took my mother's effort for granted, but as the series suggested, she deserves commendation. I made a long-distance call to thank her!

C.H.K., Republic of Korea

My father does not share our Christian beliefs. It was my mother who brought me up “in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah.” (Ephesians 6:4) It was not easy for her, considering the attitude I displayed at times. I am now 24 years old, and I am grateful that she did not lose heart but persevered in inculcating Bible truth in my heart.

D. M., Italy

DNA I loved the article “‘Junk’ DNA?” (February 22, 2005) I took a course in molecular biology a few years ago. I became indignant with the textbook, as it called 95 percent of our DNA junk! The author used wonderful illustrations to explain the workings of DNA, and in the next breath, he credited evolution for its coming into being. So you can see how happy I was to read about so-called junk DNA in *Awake!*

J. C., United States

Young People Ask The article “Young People Ask . . . How Can I Control My Emotions?” touched my heart. (February 22, 2005) I am 31 years old and was raised as a Christian, but I am a long way from having a mature personality. I recently had episodes of hysterical rage, which startled even me. Advice from my mother and another Christian sister helped. And then came this article—exactly at the right time. I have read it twice and will keep it nearby so that I can learn to control my emotions.

I. B., Germany

Sign Language I am puzzled by the frequent reference to deafness, the most recent being in the “Watching the World” item “Internet Sign Language.” (February 8, 2005) I am one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, and I have been active in the ministry for many years. Yet, I must say that I have never encountered a deaf person in all of my witnessing! Is the problem of deafness really that extensive?

Name withheld, United States

“Awake!” responds: According to one study, about 8,000,000 people over five years of age have hearing problems in the United States alone—even with the help of a hearing aid. About 1,000,000 of that number rely on sign language to communicate. Another study in the same country suggested that there are approximately 28,000,000 individuals (of all age groups) with hearing problems who do not use a hearing aid. It is possible to encounter deaf people without realizing it, since deafness tends to go undetected by onlookers. Furthermore, if a deaf person lives with hearing people, it is often a hearing person who answers the door.

"Welcome to Jehovah's Organization"

A family in Finland who had associated with Jehovah's Witnesses for some time had experienced opposition from many quarters. "They will take your money," people warned. Others said, "You will lose your home." Coincidentally, one night a fire badly damaged the building where the family's heating system was located—a serious loss in a cold northern climate.

Insurance barely covered the cost of reconstruction materials. The fire seemed to confirm the ominous predictions. The father of the family recalls with a sigh, "We really felt downhearted." Still, the husband and wife did not alter their plans to be baptized just three weeks later.

The local congregation saw this as an opportunity to apply the Bible's counsel: "Little children, let us love, neither in word nor with the tongue, but in deed and truth." (1 John 3:18) Fellow believers put in motion a plan to repair the building. The branch office of Jeho-

vah's Witnesses in Finland supplied practical advice on how to proceed. Construction drawings were made, building permits obtained, lists of needed materials compiled, and a call for volunteers sent out.

By about a month after the fire, work was in full swing. On a Wednesday, local Witnesses pulled down the charred remains. By Friday, with the help of Witnesses from other congregations, the framework of the new building began to emerge. On a trip to town, the father of the family encountered a local official who wanted to know if he had protected the damaged building from rain by putting tarpaulins over the roof. "No, there are no tarpaulins," the father proudly replied, "but there are 30 men on the roof!"

On Saturday nearly 50 spiritual brothers and sisters were at the site, happy for the privilege of helping out. A neighbor who had also lent a helping hand commented: "Last night I stopped to think how special you people are! You really care for and help one another."

That evening the work was completed. The new building stood as a clear answer to the prejudiced warnings given the family. One congregation elder recalls the moment when he and the father stood back to view the results: "It was a tremendous feeling to be able to put my arm around our newly baptized brother's shoulder and say, 'Welcome to Jehovah's organization.'"



Fire damage

During renovation



PRECIOUS MEMORIES AWAKENED

After receiving the book *Learn From the Great Teacher*, a woman decided to take a copy to her elderly sister. The sister, now in her mid-80's, suffers from Alzheimer's disease. For 70 years, however, she had been an avid Bible student and a Bible teacher. But she remembers little of current happenings and rarely initiates any conversation.

"The first day," the younger sister recalled, "I explained that the book had been designed to help parents instill Bible principles and teachings in their children and that I wished to read it to her. There was no response. However, when I began reading, she became very animated and answered every question posed in the reading. There were times while I was quoting a scripture that she finished it from memory—but according to the *King James Version*, which she remembered from youth. Occasionally, she grabbed my arm while I was relating a Bible account and said, 'Oh, I remember that!'

"Toward the end of our visit—after I had read more than half the book to her—she expressed the desire to keep hearing more. Her husband, who cares for her every need, con-



tinued to read the rest of the book to her. This experience with my sister helped me to realize the value of reading such publications to elderly and infirm ones."

