

JUNE 15, 2007

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**WHAT SHAPES
YOUR VALUES?**



THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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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 fellow men 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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Adrift in a Sea of CHANGING VALUES

A POPULAR legend says that he walked about in broad daylight with a lantern in a determined but vain search for a virtuous man. His name was Diogenes, a philosopher who lived in Athens in the fourth century B.C.E.

Whether that legend is accurate cannot be confirmed. Still, if Diogenes were alive today, he might be forgiven if he had to look even harder to discover moral individuals. Many seem to reject the belief that people should embrace any fixed ethical values. Time and again the media call our attention to moral lapses—in private life, in government, in the professions, in sports, in the business community, and in other areas. Many of the cherished values of past generations are no longer respected. Established standards are being reevaluated and often rejected. Other values are revered in theory but not in practice.

"The day of shared moral standards is gone," says religion sociologist Alan Wolfe. He is also quoted as saying: "Never in history has there been more a sense that people can't rely on traditions and institutions to guide them, morally." Regarding the past 100 years, the *Los Angeles Times* notes philosopher Jonathan Glover's observation that the decline of religion and universal moral laws played a major part in a global collapse into violence.

Such confusion over commonly accepted values, however, has not stopped some people from searching for a moral code. A few years ago, Federico Mayor, former director general of UNESCO, stated that "more than ever, ethics is at the very, very forefront of the world preoccupation." But the world's failure to adopt positive values does not mean that there are no wholesome values that can and should be adopted.

Can all people, though, agree on what standards to adopt? Obviously not. And if there are no agreed-upon standards of right and wrong, how can anyone assess any values? Such moral relativism is fashionable today. Yet, you can see that this attitude has not really improved morals in general.

British historian Paul Johnson holds that this philosophy of relativism has helped to "undermine . . . the highly developed sense

of personal responsibility, and of duty towards a settled and objectively true moral code" that seemed to prevail before the beginning of the 20th century.

Is it possible, then, to find an "objectively true moral code" or to live by "universal moral laws"? Is there an authority that can provide timeless, unchangeable values that can add stability to our lives and give us hope for the future? The next article will address these questions.



Anchored by TIMELESS VALUES

ALL human societies espouse some moral code. Do you not agree that such qualities as honesty, kindness, compassion, and altruism are cherished around the globe and are appealing to most of us?

Whose Values?

In the first century C.E., a well-educated man named Saul lived amid three influential value systems—the Jewish, the Greek, and the Roman. Besides the elaborate norms

and laws imposed by those cultures, Saul discerned that humans in general are guided by an inherent moral sense. That is our conscience. After Saul became the Christian apostle Paul, he wrote: "Whenever people of the nations that do not have law do by nature ["by natural instinct," *The New Testament in Modern Speech*] the things of the law, these people, although not having law, are a law to themselves. They are the very ones who demonstrate the matter of the law to be written in their hearts, while their conscience is bearing witness with them."—Romans 2:14, 15.

Is it enough, however, for us to be directed only "by natural instinct" when we try to decide what is right and what is wrong? As you may have observed, human history is studed with the failures of individuals and groups. This has convinced many that we need direction from a higher source in order to establish the best values by which to live. Many will acknowledge that mankind's Maker is in the best position to offer such timeless standards. In his book *The Undiscovered Self*, Dr. Carl Jung observed: "The individual who is not anchored in God can offer no resistance on his own resources to the physical and moral blandishments of the world."

That conclusion is in keeping with what an ancient prophet wrote: "To earthling man his way does not belong. It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step." (Jeremiah 10:23) Our Creator says: "For your own good, I teach you, and I lead you along the right path."—Isaiah 48:17, *Contemporary English Version*.

A Reliable Source of Trustworthy Values

The words just quoted are found in the most widely circulated source of moral values—the Holy Scriptures. Millions of people

around the world, even non-Christians and nonreligious individuals, have turned to the Scriptures for insight and wisdom. German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote: "For my part, I loved and revered [the Bible], because I owed almost my whole development in moral culture to it." Hindu leader Mohandas Gandhi is reported to have said: "By all means drink deep of the fountains that are given to you in the Sermon on the Mount [part of Jesus Christ's teachings found in the Bible] . . . For the teaching of the Sermon was meant for each and every one of us."

The apostle Paul, previously quoted, highlighted the important role the Holy Scriptures play in providing solid values: "All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching." (2 Timothy 3:16) Is that really so?

Why not see for yourself? Examine the principles listed on the next page. See the positive values they promote. Meditate on how the ideas included in these teachings have the power to improve the quality of your life and of your relationships with others.

Will You Benefit?

The principles listed are but a sampling of the practical counsel found in the Holy Scriptures. Besides these, God's Word contains numerous warnings against harmful thoughts, speech, and deeds that could have a detrimental effect on our lives.—Proverbs 6:16-19.

Yes, the teachings of the Bible offer something that human society in general is sorely lacking—counsel enabling people to develop the best moral standards possible. Those who accept and apply these teachings undergo a significant transformation. Their way of thinking is changed for the better. (Ephesians 4:23, 24) Their motives

are improved. Learning God's values as expressed in the Bible has helped many to root out of their hearts racism, prejudice, and hatred. (Hebrews 4:12) The Scriptures and the values they promote have moved people to renounce all kinds of violence and vice and to become better people.

Yes, the Bible's values have helped millions to overcome deeply entrenched habits and practices like those that have ruined the lives of others. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) Bible teachings have been changing such individuals—not just their habits but their hearts, their hopes, their households. No matter

TIMELESS PRINCIPLES

The Golden Rule. "All things, therefore, that you want men to do to you, you also must likewise do to them; this, in fact, is what the Law and the Prophets mean."—Matthew 7:12.

Love your neighbor. "You must love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:39) "Love does not work evil to one's neighbor; therefore love is the law's fulfillment."—Romans 13:10.

Respect and honor others. "In brotherly love have tender affection for one another. In showing honor to one another take the lead."—Romans 12:10.

Pursue peace. "Keep peace between one another." (Mark 9:50) "If possible, as far as it depends upon you, be peaceable with all men." (Romans 12:18) "Let us pursue the things making for peace."—Romans 14:19.

Be forgiving. "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." (Matthew 6:12) "Become kind to one another, tenderly compassionate, freely forgiving one another."—Ephesians 4:32.

Be loyal, faithful. "Be faithful to your own wife and give your love to her alone. . . . Be happy with your wife and find your joy with the girl you married . . . Let her charms keep you happy; let her surround you with her love. . . . Why should you give your love

to another woman? Why should you prefer the charms of another man's wife?" (Proverbs 5:15-20, *Today's English Version*) "The person faithful in what is least is faithful also in much, and the person unrighteous in what is least is unrighteous also in much." (Luke 16:10) "What is looked for in stewards is for a man to be found faithful."—1 Corinthians 4:2.

Be honest. "Can I be morally clean with wicked scales and with a bag of deceptive stone weights?" (Micah 6:11) "We trust we have an honest conscience, as we wish to conduct ourselves honestly in all things."—Hebrews 13:18.

Be truthful, fair. "Hate what is bad, and love what is good, and give justice a place in the gate." (Amos 5:15) "Speak truthfully with one another. With truth and the judgment of peace do your judging in your gates." (Zechariah 8:16) "Now that you have put away falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor."—Ephesians 4:25.

Be industrious, diligent. "Have you beheld a man skillful in his work? Before kings is where he will station himself." (Proverbs 22:29) "Do not loiter at your business." (Romans 12:11) "Whatever you are doing, work at it whole-souled as to Jehovah, and not to men."—Colossians 3:23.

how much the world deteriorates, people around the globe continue to change for the better. And this is not going to stop. "The green grass has dried up, the blossom has withered; but as for the word of our God, it will last to time indefinite."—Isaiah 40:8.

However, will you personally benefit from

"the word of our God"? Jehovah's Witnesses will be happy to show you how to embrace the Bible's values to your benefit. Living in harmony with such values will mean gaining God's approval now and will lead to a lasting life governed by divine, timeless principles.



Embracing the Bible's values can help us enjoy successful marriages, happy family relationships, and fulfilling friendships

Be mild, compassionate, kind. "Clothe yourselves with the tender affections of compassion, kindness, lowliness of mind, mildness, and long-suffering."—Colossians 3:12.

Conquer evil with good. "Continue to love your enemies and to pray for those persecuting you." (Matthew 5:44) "Do not let

yourself be conquered by the evil, but keep conquering the evil with the good."—Romans 12:21.

Give God your best. "'You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment."—Matthew 22:37, 38.

A Year in “THE GOOD LAND”

IN 1908 an exciting discovery was made at the site of the Biblical city of Gezer, which lies toward the coastal plain west of Jerusalem: a small limestone plaque, or tablet, believed to be from the tenth century B.C.E. On it, in ancient Hebrew script, was found what is thought to be a simplified version of an agricultural year, or cycle, with its various operations. This tablet has come to be known as the Gezer Calendar.

The tablet bears a signature: Abijah. Though not all archaeologists agree, many consider it to be a schoolboy's exercise set in verse.* Would you like to see the passing of seasons through the eyes of a boy who lived back then? Doing so might help you to recall some Bible events.

* There is not full agreement about the correspondence between the list on the Gezer Calendar and the months generally followed in the Bible. Furthermore, some agricultural operations could take place at slightly different times in the various areas of the Promised Land.

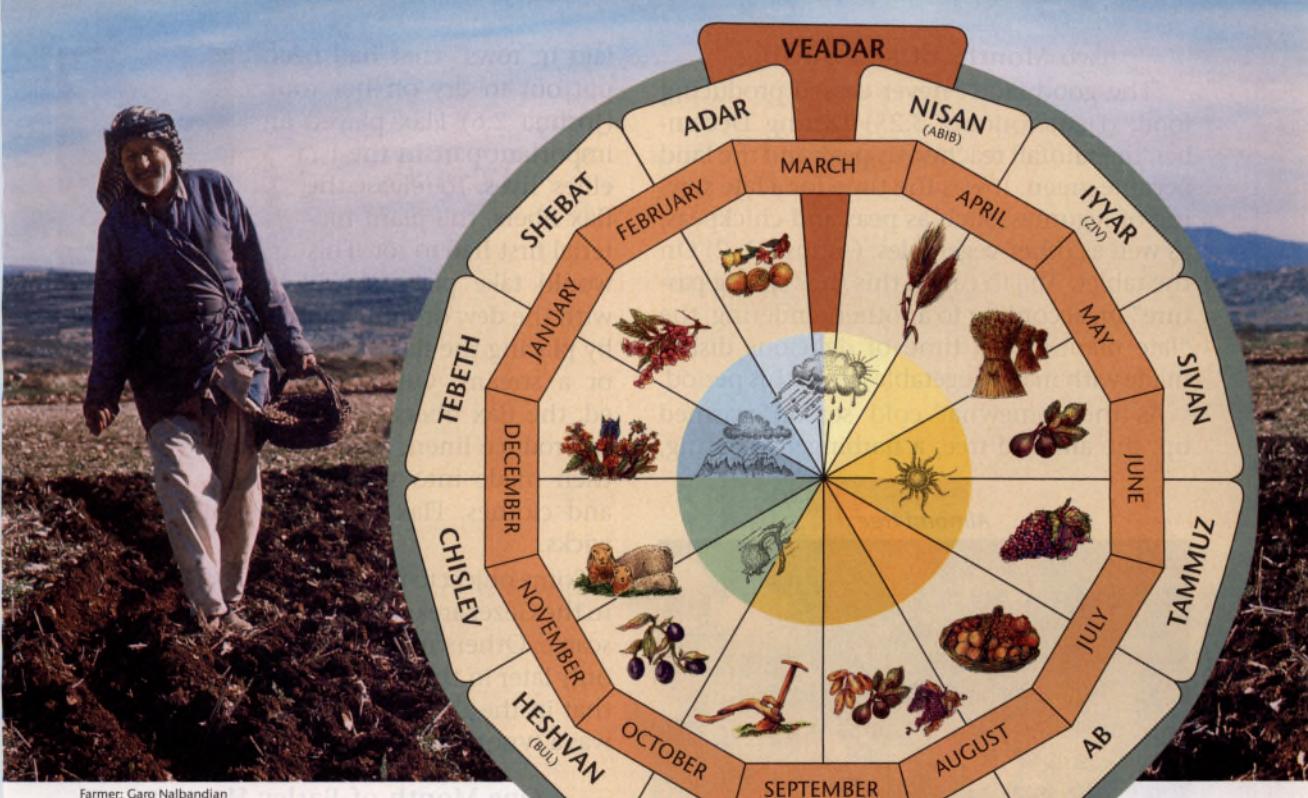
Excavation at Gezer

Two Months of Ingathering

The writer of this ancient calendar began with the general ingathering. While it was listed first in this calendar, you can understand why the Israelites considered this ingathering to be the climax, or the end, of the major part of the agricultural year. The month of Ethanim (later called Tishri) corresponds to September/October on our present calendar. With the bulk of the harvesting finished, this was a particularly festive time that would have involved young Abijah. Imagine his excitement while helping his father make the booth that would become their home for a week as they joyfully thanked Jehovah for the fruitage of their fields!—Deuteronomy 16:13-15.

About this time, the olives were nearly ready for Abijah's family to harvest them by beating the tree branches, a job that may have been too hard for young Abijah but





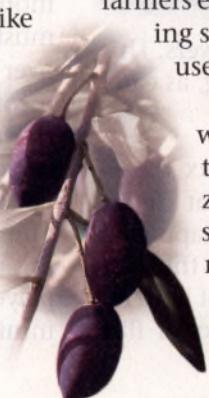
Farmer: Garo Nalbandian

fun to watch. (Deuteronomy 24:20)

They would then pick up the olives and take them to the nearest stone press to make oil. Or a family might obtain some oil by a simpler method—that of placing beaten or cracked olives in water and scooping up any oil that floated to the surface. In any case, this precious liquid provided more than food. It was also used as fuel for lamps and to treat bruises and wounds, such as a lad like Abijah might get while playing.

Two Months of Sowing

When the early rains began, Abijah might have been happy to feel the cool shower on his skin. His father probably told him how important rain is for the land. (Deuteronomy 11:14) The soil, baked hard for months by the sun, would soften and become



ready for plowing. The ancient plowman skillfully guided a wooden plow, perhaps one having a metal tip, as an animal pulled it along. The goal was to make straight furrows in the soil. The land was precious, so Israelite farmers even made use of small plots, including slopes. But there they might have to use handheld implements.

Once the softened soil was plowed, wheat and barley could be sown. Interestingly, the next entry in the Gezer Calendar refers to two months of such planting. The sower might carry the grain in a fold in his clothes and spread the seed with a wide sweeping movement of his arm.

Two Months of Late Sowing

"The good land" never ceased producing food. (Deuteronomy 3:25) During December, the rainfall reached its peak and the land became green. It was the time for a late sowing of legumes, such as peas and chickpeas, as well as other vegetables. (Amos 7:1, 2) On the tablet, Abijah called this the "spring pasture" or, according to another rendering, the "late planting," a time of delicious dishes made with many vegetables from this period.

As the somewhat cold season warmed up, the almond tree, a harbinger of spring,

Almond tree



blossomed with white and pink flowers. This could start at the slightest warming, as early as January.—Jeremiah 1:11, 12.

One Month of Cutting Flax

Abijah next mentioned flax. That might call to your mind an episode that happened centuries before Abijah's time on the east side of the Judean hills. In the city of Jericho, Rahab hid two spies "among stalks of flax

laid in rows" that had been put out to dry on her roof. (Joshua 2:6) Flax played an important part in the Israelites' lives. To release the flax fibers, the plant material first had to rot. This would take place slowly with the dew or more rapidly by placing the flax in a pond or a stream. Once separated, the flax fibers were used to produce linen, which was then made into sails, tents, and clothes. Flax was also used for lamp wicks.

Some object to the idea that flax was grown in the Gezer area, where water was somewhat scarce. Others maintain that flax was grown only later in the year. That is why some hold that in the Gezer Calendar, the word "flax" was a synonym for fodder "grass."

One Month of Barley Harvest

Each year, close to the spring equinox, Abijah observed the green ears of barley, the crop he mentioned next on his calendar. The corresponding month in Hebrew is Abib, meaning "Green Ears," possibly referring to the stage when the ears are ripe but still soft. Jehovah commanded: "Let there be an observing of the month of Abib, and you must celebrate the pass-over to Jehovah." (Deuteronomy 16:1) Abib (later called Nisan) corresponds to parts of today's March and April. The time of the ripening of barley may have played a role in determining the start of this

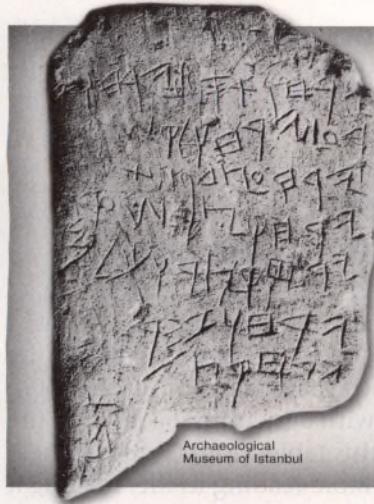


Flax plant

Barley



U.S. Department of Agriculture



A POSSIBLE RENDERING OF THE GEZER CALENDAR TEXT:

"Months of vintage and olive harvest;
months of sowing;
months of spring pasture;
month of flax pulling;
month of barley harvest;
month of wheat harvest
and measuring;
months of pruning;
month of summer fruit."
[signed:] *Abijah**

* Based on *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*, Volume 1, by John C. L. Gibson, 1971.

month. Even today, Karaite Jews observe this ripening to establish their new year. In any case, barley firstfruits had to be waved before Jehovah on the 16th of Abib.—Leviticus 23:10, 11.

Barley had a very important place in the everyday life of most Israelites. Cheaper than wheat, barley was often preferred for making bread, particularly by the poor.—Ezekiel 4:12.

One Month of Harvest and Measure

If you think back to Abijah's time, you can imagine that early one morning he might have noticed the heavy clouds dissipating—no more rain for a while. The plants of the good land were now dependent on the dew. (Genesis 27:28; Zechariah 8:12) Israelite farmers were aware that many crops harvested during the sunniest months of the year needed a subtle balance of winds until Pentecost. The cold, wet wind coming from the north might have benefited developing cereals, but such were damaging to fruit trees once they blossomed. The hot, dry wind from the south helped the blossoms to open and pollinate.—Proverbs 25:23; Song of Solomon 4:16.

Jehovah, the Master of the elements, had set in motion a finely tuned ecological sys-

tem. In Abijah's day, Israel was really "a land of wheat and barley and vines and figs and pomegranates, a land of oil olives and honey." (Deuteronomy 8:8) Abijah's grandfather may have told him about the extraordinary period of abundance under wise King Solomon's rule—clear evidence of Jehovah's blessing.—1 Kings 4:20.

After mentioning harvesting, the calendar contained a word that some take to mean "measuring." That might refer to measuring the harvest to give portions to the owners of the field and to the workers or even to pay as a tax. However, other scholars understand the Hebrew word to be "feasting" and see in this an allusion to the Festival of Weeks, which fell in the month of Sivan (May/June).—Exodus 34:22.

Two Months of Leaf Plucking

Abijah next wrote about two months of tending vines. Might he have helped to pluck the abundant foliage off the vines to allow the sun to reach the grapes? (Isaiah 18:5) Then came the time to gather the grapes, an exciting period for a youth back then. How delicious the first ripe grapes were! Abijah had likely heard about the 12 spies sent into the Promised Land by Moses.

They went in the days of the first ripe fruits of the grapes to see how good the land was. On that occasion, one bunch of grapes was so large that it took two men to carry it!—Numbers 13:20, 23.

One Month of Summer Fruit

The last entry on Abijah's calendar referred to summer fruit. In the ancient Middle East, summer was the part of the agricultural year that focused on fruit. After Abijah's time, Jehovah used the expression "a basket of summer fruit" to illustrate that 'the end had come to his people Israel,' using a wordplay with "summer fruit" and "end" in Hebrew. (Amos 8:2) This should have reminded un-

faithful Israel that it had reached its end and that Jehovah's judgment was due. Figs were no doubt among the summer fruits that Abijah was referring to. Summer figs might be pressed into cakes to eat or used as a poultice for boils.—2 Kings 20:7.

The Gezer Calendar and You

Young Abijah was likely in direct contact with the agricultural life of the country. Farm activities were widespread among the Israelites in those days. Even if you are not in close contact with agricultural activities, the references in this tablet from Gezer can help to bring your Bible reading to life, making it more understandable and meaningful.

Ernst Glück's Daunting Task



OVER 300 years ago, Ernst Glück took on a task that few men throughout history have dared to start. He decided to translate the Bible into a language that he did not know.

Glück was born about 1654 in the small town of Wettin, near Halle, Germany. His father was a Lutheran pastor, and the religious atmosphere in the home gave young Ernst spiritual leanings. At the age of 21, he finished his theological studies in Germany and moved to what is now Latvia. At that time, most of the local people lacked formal education, and few books were available in their language. Glück wrote: "When in my youth I arrived in this land, the first shortcoming I noticed was that

the Latvian church lacked the Bible . . . This moved me to resolve before God to study this language and master it completely." He was determined to give the Latvian people a Bible in their language.

Preparations for Translation

The area where Glück settled was then known as Livonia and was ruled by Sweden. The local representative of the king of Sweden was Johannes Fischer. He was interested in raising the standard of education in the country and also in making money. Glück spoke with Fischer about translating the Bible into Latvian. Fischer owned a printery in the capital city of Riga. By printing the Latvian Bible, he could further his work in education and, at the same time, hopefully turn a nice profit. Fischer asked King Charles XI of

Sweden to authorize the translation. The king granted him permission for the project and offered to finance it. A royal resolution of August 31, 1681, allowed the translating work to begin.

Meanwhile, Glück was preparing himself. With his German background, he could have used Martin Luther's translation as the basis for the Latvian Bible. But Glück wanted to produce the best version possible and concluded that this required translating from the original Hebrew and Greek. Glück's knowledge of Biblical languages was inadequate, so he went to Hamburg, Germany, to study Hebrew and Greek. While he was there, a Livonian clergyman named Jānis Reiters likely helped him with the Latvian language as well as Biblical Greek.

Years of Work, Years of Waiting

Finishing his language training in 1680, Glück returned to Latvia and began serving as a minister. Soon he started his translation work. In 1683, Glück received a new appointment as pastor to the large parish of

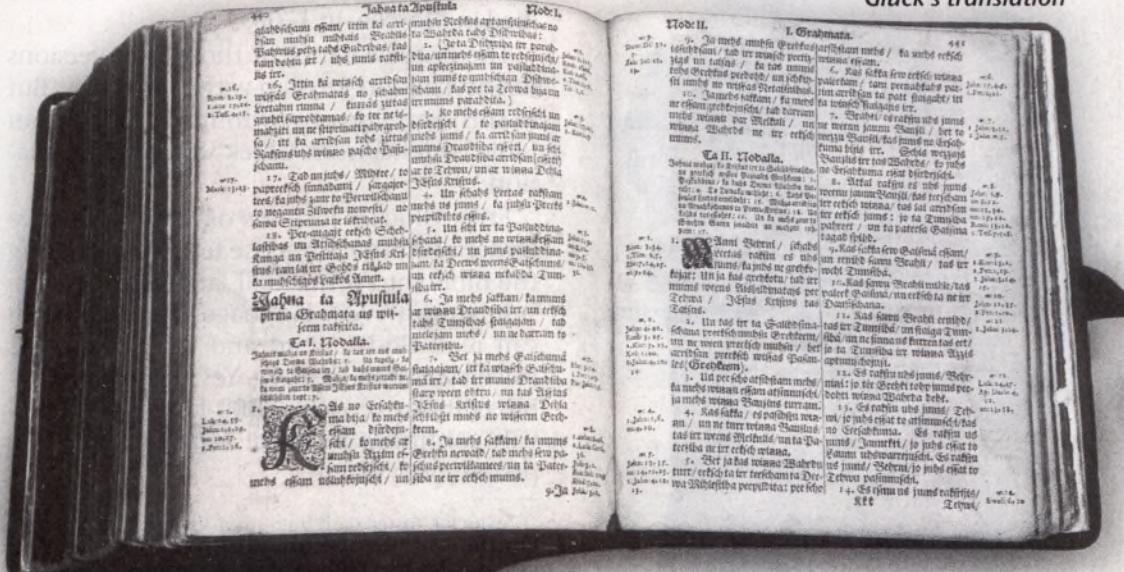
Alūksne, which became closely connected with his translation.

At that time, the Latvian language lacked words for many Biblical terms and concepts. Hence, Glück used some German words in his translation. But he did his best to put God's Word into Latvian, and experts agree that his translation is of high quality. Glück even coined new words, and several words of his making are now widely used in Latvian. These include the Latvian terms for "example," "feast," "giant," "to spy," and "to testify."

Johannes Fischer kept the king of Sweden informed of how the translation work was progressing, and their correspondence reveals that by 1683, Glück had translated the Christian Greek Scriptures. He finished the entire Bible by 1689, having completed his daunting task in just eight years.* There were long delays in publication, yet in 1694 he reached his goal—the government

* By comparison, 47 scholars labored for seven years to complete the English *Authorized Version*, or *King James Version*, in 1611.

Glück's translation



authorized public distribution of the Latvian Bible.

Some historians have questioned whether Glück's Bible translation was all his own work. No doubt he consulted Luther's translation and worked into his text portions of the Bible that already existed in the Latvian language. These parts, however, make up only a small portion of his translation. Were other translators involved? Glück did have an assistant while he was translating, and others helped with proofreading and quality checking. It seems, though, that their assistance did not include actual translating. So it is likely that Glück was the sole translator.

Glück's translation was a milestone in the development of the written Latvian language, yet there was a far more important result. At last, the Latvian people could read God's Word in their own language and take in its life-giving teachings. They have not

forgotten what Ernst Glück did for them. For over 300 years, the people of Alūksne have cared for two oak trees known as *Glika ozoli*, or Glück's oaks. Glück planted them to commemorate the Latvian Bible. There is a small museum in Alūksne that contains various Bible versions, among them a copy from the first printing of Glück's translation. And the coat of arms of Alūksne shows the Bible as well as the date 1689, when Glück finished his work.

His Later Work

Soon after his arrival in Latvia, Glück started learning Russian. In 1699 he wrote that he was fulfilling another desire—to translate the Bible into that language. In a letter dated 1702, he wrote that he had started to revise the Latvian Bible. But the conditions favorable for Bible translation were ending. After many years of peace, Latvia became a battlefield. In 1702 the Russian armies defeated the Swedes and took control of Alūksne. Glück and his family were deported to Russia.* In those turbulent times, Glück lost the manuscripts of his new Latvian Bible and of his Russian translation. He died in Moscow in 1705.

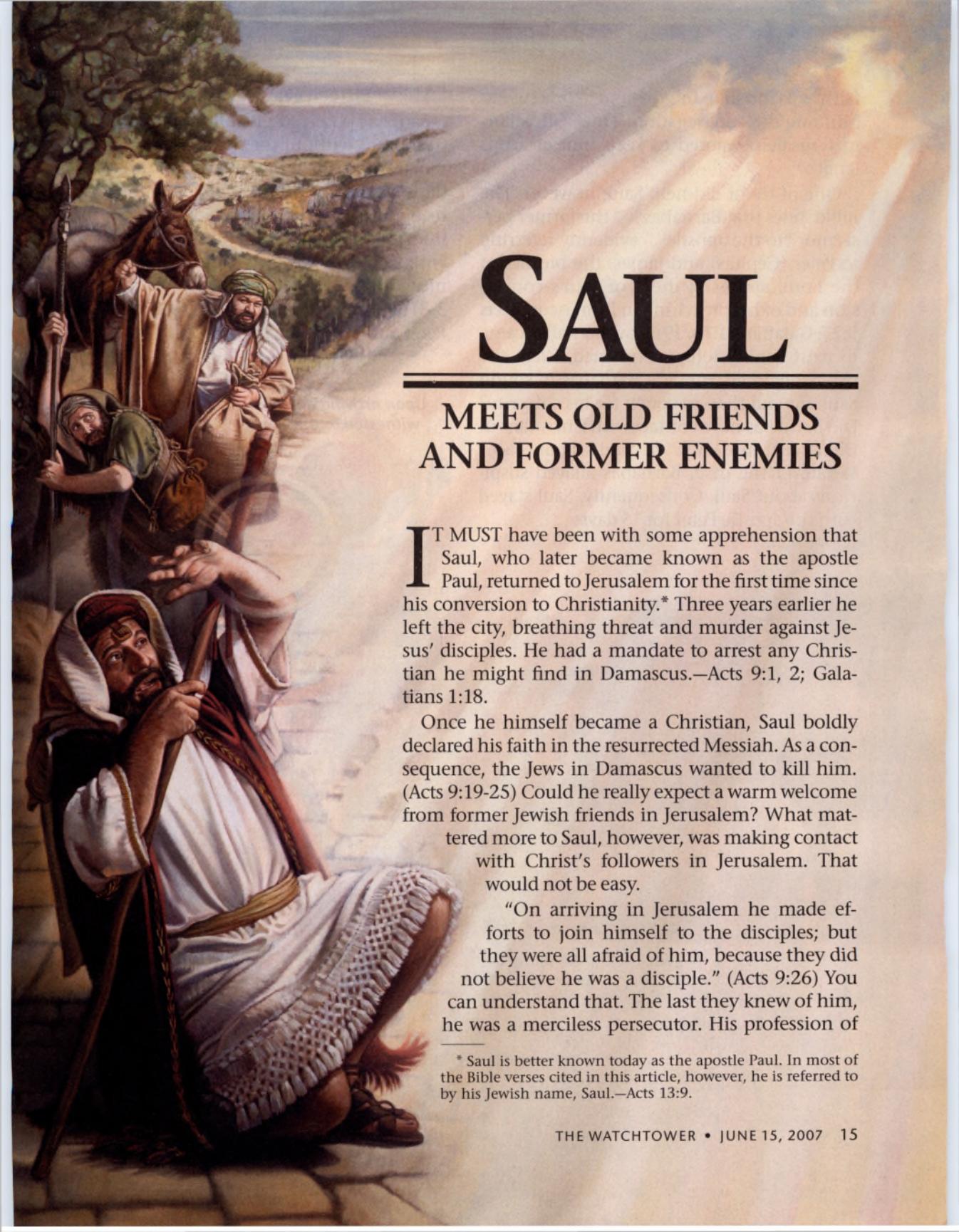
The disappearance of those later versions in Latvian and Russian was a great loss. But to this day everyone who reads the Latvian Bible benefits from Glück's original translation.

Ernst Glück is just one of many who have undertaken the immense task of translating the Bible into vernacular languages. As a result, almost every language group on earth can read God's Word and thus take in its priceless waters of truth. Yes, by means of Bible editions in over 2,000 languages, Jehovah continues to make himself known to people everywhere.

* Glück's foster daughter survived him and married Russian Czar Peter the Great. In 1725, the year Peter died, she became Catherine I, the empress of Russia.

Jehovah's Witnesses teach the Bible in the town where Glück translated it





SAUL

MEETS OLD FRIENDS AND FORMER ENEMIES

IT MUST have been with some apprehension that Saul, who later became known as the apostle Paul, returned to Jerusalem for the first time since his conversion to Christianity.* Three years earlier he left the city, breathing threat and murder against Jesus' disciples. He had a mandate to arrest any Christian he might find in Damascus.—Acts 9:1, 2; Galatians 1:18.

Once he himself became a Christian, Saul boldly declared his faith in the resurrected Messiah. As a consequence, the Jews in Damascus wanted to kill him. (Acts 9:19-25) Could he really expect a warm welcome from former Jewish friends in Jerusalem? What mattered more to Saul, however, was making contact with Christ's followers in Jerusalem. That would not be easy.

"On arriving in Jerusalem he made efforts to join himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, because they did not believe he was a disciple." (Acts 9:26) You can understand that. The last they knew of him, he was a merciless persecutor. His profession of

* Saul is better known today as the apostle Paul. In most of the Bible verses cited in this article, however, he is referred to by his Jewish name, Saul.—Acts 13:9.

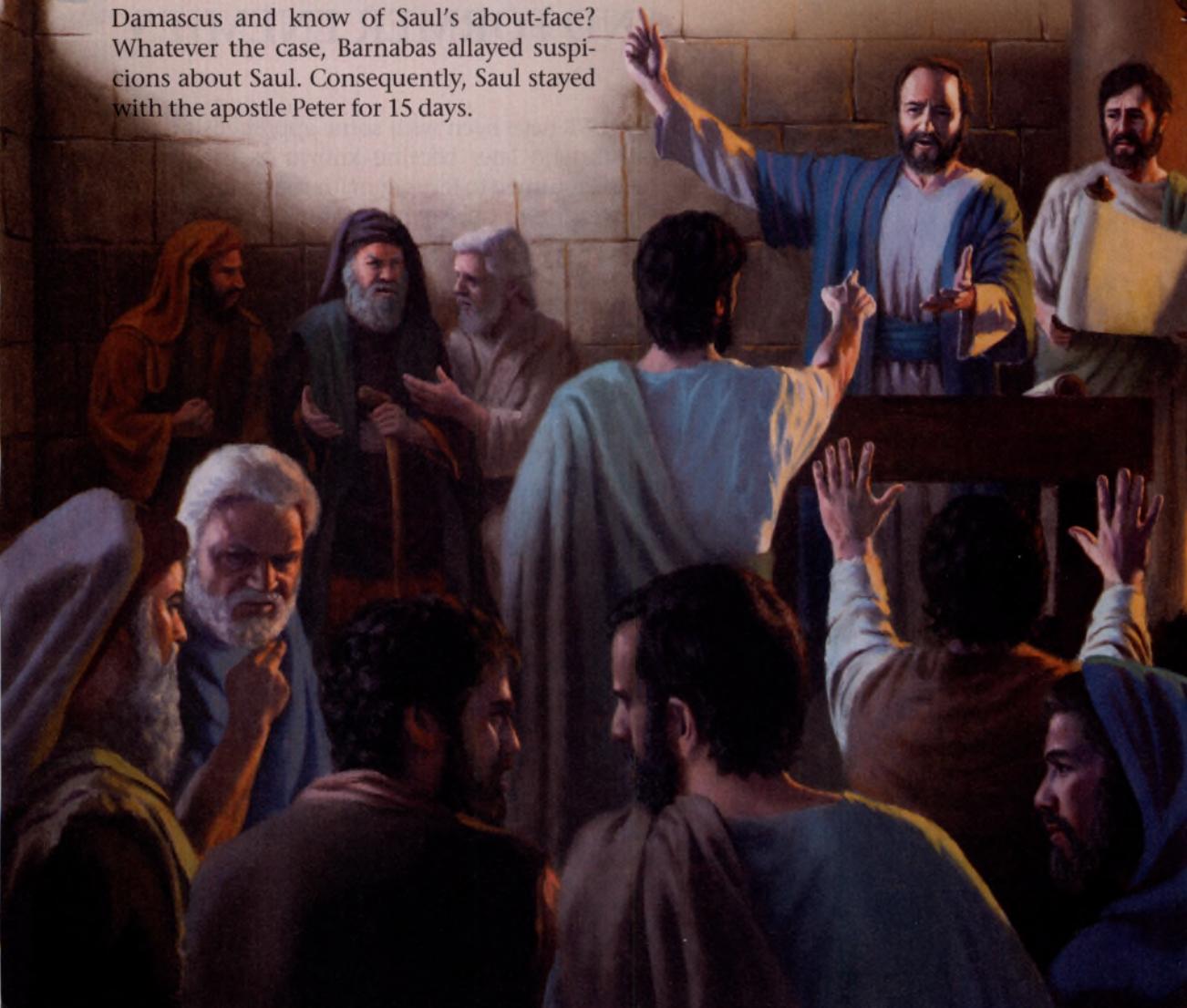
faith as a Christian might seem to be a ruse to infiltrate the congregation. Thus, Christians in Jerusalem wanted to keep him at arm's length.

One of them did help Saul, however. The Bible states that Barnabas led the former persecutor "to the apostles," evidently referring to Peter (Cephas) and James, the brother of the Lord, apprising them of Saul's conversion and of his preaching in Damascus. (Acts 9:27; Galatians 1:18, 19) How Barnabas came to trust Saul is left unexplained. Were the two acquainted, moving Barnabas to sound Saul out and then to vouch for his sincerity? Did Barnabas have contact with Christians in Damascus and know of Saul's about-face? Whatever the case, Barnabas allayed suspicions about Saul. Consequently, Saul stayed with the apostle Peter for 15 days.

Fifteen Days With Peter

Saul had received his commission directly from Jesus without the need for any human sanction, as he emphasized to the Galatians. (Galatians 1:11, 12) But Saul doubtless recognized the importance of being well-informed about Jesus' ministry. The stay with Peter would afford Saul ample opportunity for that. (Luke 24:12; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8) Saul would have many things to ask of Peter and James, and they would have ques-

Upon arriving in Jerusalem, Saul boldly witnessed to the Greek-speaking Jews



tions for Saul regarding his vision and his commission.

Saved From Former Friends?

Stephen has been called the first Christian martyr. Those with whom Stephen had previously disputed were of "the so-called Synagogue of the Freedmen, and of the Cyrenians and Alexandrians and of those from Cilicia and Asia." Now Saul was "disputing with the Greek-speaking Jews," or "the Hellenists," boldly witnessing to them. The reaction? They wanted to kill him.—Acts 6:9; 9:28, 29, footnote.

It would have been natural for Saul to want to explain the radical change in his life and to strive to enlighten former friends about the Messiah. However, these Jewish Hellenists responded venomously to the man they regarded as a traitor.

Did Saul grasp the extent of the danger he was in? We read that as he was praying in the temple, he fell into a trance and saw Jesus, who told him: "Hurry up and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not agree to your witness concerning me." Saul responded: "Lord, they themselves *well know* that I used to imprison and flog in one synagogue after another those believing upon you; and when the blood of Stephen your witness was being spilled, I myself was also standing by and approving."—Acts 22:17-20.

Some take Saul's reply to mean that he acknowledged the risk. Others think that he was saying: 'I was a persecutor like them, and they know that. Surely they should take my conversion seriously. Maybe I can reach them.' Still, Jesus knew that those Jews would not heed the testimony of an "apostate." He told Saul: "Get on your way, because I shall send you out to nations far off."—Acts 22:21, 22.

When fellow Christians became aware of the peril, they hurried Saul down to the sea-

port of Caesarea and dispatched him on the 300-mile journey to Tarsus, his home city. (Acts 9:30) It was several years before Saul returned to Jerusalem.

That hasty departure may have been a protection for the Christian congregation. The former persecutor's presence was potentially explosive. After Saul departed, "the congregation throughout the whole of Judea and Galilee and Samaria entered into a period of peace, being built up; and as it walked in the fear of Jehovah and in the comfort of the holy spirit it kept on multiplying."—Acts 9:31.

Lessons in Caution

As in the first century, situations in which it is appropriate to exercise caution may present themselves today. We have no reason to be unduly suspicious of strangers. At times, however, unscrupulous individuals have tried to exploit Jehovah's people, either for personal gain or with the intent of damaging the congregation. Hence, we use discernment so as not to fall prey to the deceptions of impostors.—Proverbs 3:27; 2 Timothy 3:13.

Saul's reaction to preaching in Jerusalem illustrates another way that Christians can exercise caution. Witnessing in certain neighborhoods or to some individuals, including former friends, can be hazardous—physically, spiritually, or even morally. Due precautions are in order, such as being selective as to the time and place.—Proverbs 22:3; Matthew 10:16.

We can be confident that the good news of God's Kingdom will be preached before the end of this wicked system arrives. What a fine example Saul set in that regard, "speaking boldly in the name of the Lord" even to old friends and former enemies!—Acts 9:28.



Are You Imitating Jehovah in Caring for Others?

"THROW all your anxiety upon [God], because he cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7) What a warm invitation! Jehovah God has personal concern for his people. We can feel secure in his arms.

We should cultivate and manifest a similar caring attitude toward others. Being imperfect, we need to beware of certain pitfalls when we show personal interest in others. Before noting some of them, let us see some of the ways in which Jehovah cares for his people.

Using a shepherd as an illustration, the psalmist David described God's care: "Jehovah is my Shepherd. I shall lack nothing. In grassy pastures he makes me lie down; by well-watered resting-places he conducts me. My soul he refreshes. . . . Even though I walk in the valley of deep shadow, I fear nothing bad, for you are with me."—Psalm 23:1-4.

Being a shepherd himself, David knew what was involved in caring for a flock. The shepherd protects his sheep from predators, such as lions, wolves, and bears. He keeps the flock from scattering, looks for lost sheep, carries weary lambs in his bosom, and cares for the sick and the injured. Daily he waters

the flock. This does not mean that the shepherd controls every movement of the sheep. The sheep are free yet protected.

That is how Jehovah cares for his people. The apostle Peter explained: 'You are being safeguarded by God's power.' Here, "being safeguarded" literally means "being kept under watch." (1 Peter 1:5, footnote) Out of genuine concern, Jehovah is always watching over us, ever ready to extend help whenever we ask for it. However, Jehovah created us as free moral agents, so he does not intervene in all our actions and decisions. How can we imitate Jehovah in this regard?

Imitate God in Caring for Your Children

"Sons are an inheritance from Jehovah." Hence, parents should protect and care for their children. (Psalm 127:3) That may involve drawing out the children and then taking their thinking and feelings into consideration when dealing with them. If parents try to control their children's every move, completely ignoring their wishes, it would be like a shepherd trying to control his sheep with leashes. No shepherd would tend his flock in

such a way; neither does Jehovah shepherd us that way.

Mariko* admits: "For years I just kept telling my children, 'You should do this' and 'You shouldn't do that.' I believed that this was my obligation as a parent. I gave no words of commendation, nor did I have any real communication with them." Although Mariko's daughter would talk for hours on the phone with her friends, conversations with her mother would not last long. "Then I realized the difference," continues Mariko. "When talking to her friends, my daughter would use expressions that show empathy, such as 'Yes, I agree' or 'So do I.' I started using similar expressions to draw out my daughter, and soon our conversations became longer and more pleasant." This highlights the importance of good communication, which is usually mutual, not one-sided.

Parents need to draw out their children, and children need to understand why parental care serves as a safeguard. The Bible counsels children to obey their parents; then it

* Some names have been changed.

Draw out your children with commendation and empathy

states the reason: "That it may go well with you and you may endure a long time on the earth." (Ephesians 6:1, 3) Children who are strongly convinced of the benefits of submissiveness find obedience to be easier.

In Caring for Jehovah's Flock

Jehovah's loving concern is reflected in the Christian congregation. As the Head of the congregation, Jesus Christ directs elders to care for his flock. (John 21:15-17) The Greek word for overseer is related to a verb meaning "watch carefully." Emphasizing how this should be done, Peter instructs elders: "Shepherd the flock of God in your care, not under compulsion, but willingly; neither for love of dishonest gain, but eagerly; neither as lording it over those who are God's inheritance, but becoming examples to the flock."—1 Peter 5:2, 3.

Yes, the elders' task is similar to that of shepherds. Christian elders are to care for the spiritually sick and readjust them so that their lives reflect righteous standards. The elders are responsible for organizing congregation activities, making arrangements for



meetings, and maintaining order in the congregation.—1 Corinthians 14:33.

The above words of Peter, though, call our attention to a danger—that of elders' "lording it over" the congregation. One step in that direction is an elder's making unnecessary rules. Out of a strong sense of obligation to protect the flock, an elder might go too far. In one congregation in the Orient, elders made rules on how to greet others in the Kingdom Hall—such as who should speak first—believing that following these rules would contribute to the peace of the congregation. Though the motives were no doubt good, were those elders imitating Jehovah's care for his people? Significantly, the apostle Paul's mental attitude was reflected in his words: "Not that we are the masters over your faith, but we are fellow workers for your joy, for it is by your faith that you are standing." (2 Corinthians 1:24) Jehovah trusts his people.

In addition to refraining from setting rules without a Scriptural basis, caring elders show their genuine concern by not revealing private information. They are mindful of the divine warning: "Do not reveal the confidential talk of another."—Proverbs 25:9.

The apostle Paul likened the congregation of anointed Christians to the human body: "God compounded the body... so that there should be no division in the body, but that its members should have the same care for one another." (1 Corinthians 12:12, 24-26) The Greek expression for "have the same care for one another" literally means 'should be anxious over one another.' The members of the Christian congregation should be intensely interested in one another.—Philippians 2:4.

How may true Christians manifest that they are 'anxious over one another'? They may show their concern for other members of the congregation through their prayers and by offering practical assistance to needy ones. This helps to bring out the good in oth-

ers. Consider how Tadataka was helped by such loving concern. When he was baptized at the age of 17, he was the only one in his family who was serving Jehovah. He relates: "A family in the congregation often invited me over for meals and gatherings. I dropped by their house almost every morning on my way to school to discuss the day's Bible text with them. I received advice on how to cope with problems at school, and we prayed about them together. From this family, I learned the spirit of giving." Tadataka is now putting what he learned into practice by serving at one of the branch offices of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The apostle Paul warned of a distinct pitfall regarding showing interest in others. He mentioned certain women who had become "gossips and meddlers in other people's affairs, talking of things they ought not." (1 Timothy 5:13) While we are rightly interested in others, we must be careful that we do not go to the extent of meddling in their personal affairs. Immoderate interest in others can manifest itself in 'talking of things we ought not,' such as by making judgmental remarks.

We do well to remember that Christians may differ in how they arrange their personal affairs, what they choose to eat, and which form of wholesome relaxation they select. Within the parameters indicated by Bible principles, each is free to decide what he will do. Paul admonished Roman Christians: "Let us not be judging one another any longer.... Let us pursue the things making for peace and the things that are upbuilding to one another." (Romans 14:13, 19) Our sincere concern for one another in the congregation should be displayed, not by meddling in the affairs of others, but by our readiness to help. When we care for one another in this way, love and unity flourish in the family and in the congregation.

WE ARE “WONDERFULLY MADE”

“In a fear-inspiring way I am wonderfully made.”—PSALM 139:14.

THE natural world is filled with wonderful creations. How did they come to be? Some believe that the answer can be found without referring to an intelligent Creator. Others hold that arbitrarily ruling out a Creator limits our ability to understand nature. They believe that earth's creatures are far too complex, too varied and, you might say, too wonderful to have originated by chance. To many people, some scientists included, the evidence shows that the universe had a wise, powerful, and benevolent Maker.*

² King David of ancient Israel was one who was convinced that a Maker deserves praise for His wonderful creations. Although David lived long before today's scientific era, he perceived that he was surrounded by marvelous examples of God's creative work. David needed only to consider his own makeup to be profoundly awed by God's creative ability. “I shall laud you because in a fear-inspiring way I am wonderfully made,” he wrote. “Your works are wonderful, as my



soul is very well aware.”
—Psalm 139:14.

³ David gained this strong conviction by thinking seriously. Today, school curriculums and the media are replete with faith-destroying theories about man's origin. For us to have faith like that of David, we too must think seriously. We cannot afford to let others think for us, especially on such fundamental issues as the existence and role of a Creator.

⁴ Moreover, contemplating Jehovah's works strengthens our appreciation for him and gives us confidence in his promises for the future. That, in

turn, can motivate us to get to know Jehovah even better and to serve him. Let us therefore consider how modern science has confirmed David's conclusion that we are “wonderfully made.”

Our Marvelous Physical Development

⁵ “You yourself produced my kidneys; you kept me screened off in the belly of my mother.” (Psalm 139:13) All of us began our existence inside our mother's body as a single cell smaller than the period at the

3, 4. Why is it important for each of us to think seriously about Jehovah's works?

5, 6. (a) How did all of us begin life? (b) What role do our kidneys play?

* See the June 22, 2004, issue of *Awake!* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

1. Why do many thinking people credit God for earth's wonders?

2. What moved David to praise Jehovah?

end of this sentence. That microscopic cell was extremely complex—a miniature chemical laboratory! It grew rapidly. By the end of your second month in the womb, your major organs were already formed. Among them were your kidneys. When you were born, your kidneys were ready to filter your blood supply—removing toxins and excess water but retaining useful substances. Your two kidneys, if healthy, filter the water in your blood—about five quarts in an adult—every 45 minutes!

⁶ Your kidneys also help control the mineral content of your blood as well as its acidity and pressure. They perform many other vital functions, such as converting vitamin D to an active form necessary for proper bone development and producing the hormone erythropoietin, which stimulates red blood cell production in your bones. No wonder the kidneys have been called “the master chemists of the body”!*

⁷ *“My bones were not hidden from you when I was made in secret, when I was woven in the lowest parts of the earth.”* (Psalm 139:15) The

* See also “Your Kidneys—A Filter for Life,” in the August 8, 1997, issue of *Awake!*

- 7, 8. (a) Describe an unborn baby’s early growth. (b) In what way is a developing baby “woven in the lowest parts of the earth”?

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

“Divided by Language
but United by Love”

The First Bible in Portuguese
—A Story of Perseverance

“Keep Conquering the Evil
With the Good”

original cell divided, and the new cells continued to divide. Soon the cells began to differentiate, or specialize, to become nerve cells, muscle cells, skin cells, and so forth. Cells of the same type grouped together to form tissues and then organs. For instance, during the third week from conception, you began to develop a skeletal system. By the time you were just seven weeks old and only about an inch long, early forms of all 206 of your adult bones were in place, although they had not yet ossified, or turned into hard bone.

⁸ This amazing developmental process took place within your mother’s womb, hidden from human sight as if buried deep in the earth. Indeed, much about how we develop remains unknown to man. What, for example, activated specific genes in your cells to set in motion the process of differentiation? Science may eventually find out, but as David next observed, our Maker—Jehovah—has fully understood it all along.

⁹ *“Your eyes saw even the embryo of me, and in your book all its parts were down in writing, as regards the days when they were formed and there was not yet one among them.”* (Psalm 139:16) Your first cell contained the complete plan for your entire body. This plan guided your development during your nine months in the womb before birth and then through more than two decades of growth to adulthood. During this time, your body passed through many stages, all directed by the information programmed into that original cell.

¹⁰ David had no knowledge of cells and genes, being without even a microscope. But he correctly discerned that the development of his own body attested to advance planning. David may have had some knowledge of how embryos develop, so he could reason

- 9, 10. How is the formation of an embryo’s parts “down in writing” in God’s “book”?

that each step must take place according to a preexisting design and timetable. In poetic language, he described this design as being "down in writing" in God's "book."

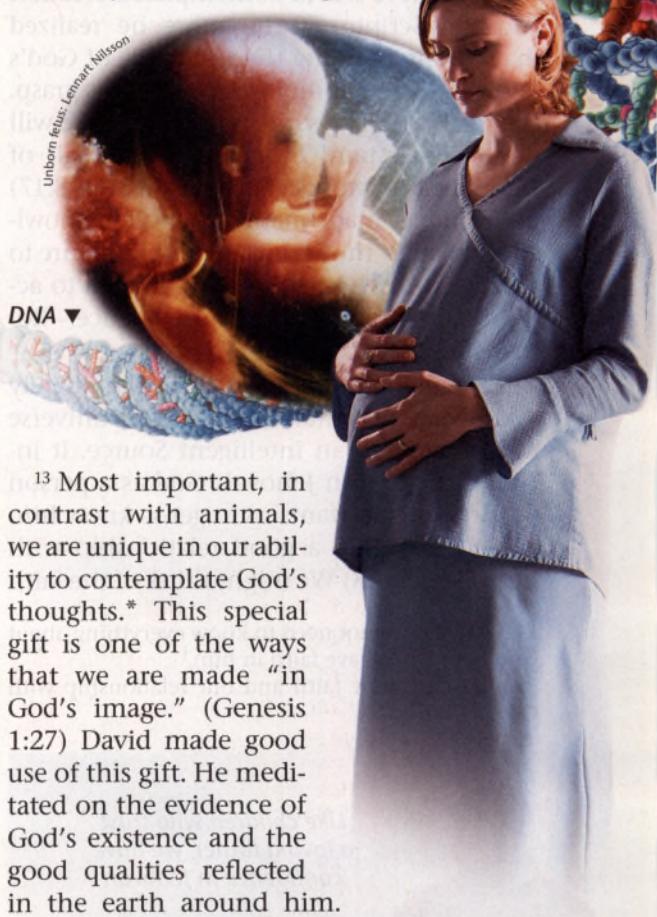
¹¹ Today, it is known that characteristics you inherited from your parents and forebears—such as your height, facial features, eye and hair color, and thousands of other traits—were determined by your genes. Each of your cells contains tens of thousands of genes, and each gene is part of a long chain made of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid). Building instructions for your body are "written" in the chemical structure of your personal DNA. Every time your cells divide—to make new cells or to replace old cells—your DNA passes those instructions on, thereby keeping you alive and maintaining your basic appearance. What an outstanding example of the power and wisdom of our heavenly Maker!

Our Unique Mind

¹² *"So, to me how precious your thoughts are! O God, how much does the grand sum of them amount to! Were I to try to count them, they are more than even the grains of sand."* (Psalm 139:17, 18a) Animals too are wonderfully made, and some possess certain senses and abilities that exceed those of humans. But God gave humans mental faculties that far surpass those of any animal. "As similar as we humans are in many ways to other species, we are unique among the earth's life forms in our ability to use language and thought," notes one science textbook. "We are also unique in our profound curiosity about ourselves: How are we put together physically? How were we formed?" These are questions that David likewise pondered.

-
11. How did we come to have our physical characteristics?
 12. What especially sets humans apart from animals?

A baby's development in the womb follows a predetermined design



¹³ Most important, in contrast with animals, we are unique in our ability to contemplate God's thoughts.* This special gift is one of the ways that we are made "in God's image." (Genesis 1:27) David made good use of this gift. He meditated on the evidence of God's existence and the good qualities reflected in the earth around him.

David also had the early books of the Holy Scriptures, which contain revelations by God about himself and his works. These inspired writings helped David to understand God's thoughts, personality, and purpose. Meditating on the Scriptures, on creation, and on God's dealings with him moved David to praise his Maker.

* The words of David at Psalm 139:18b seem to mean that if he spent all day until he fell asleep at night counting Jehovah's thoughts, upon awakening in the morning, he would still have more to count.

13. (a) How could David meditate on God's thoughts? (b) How can we follow David's example?

What Faith Involves

¹⁴ The more David contemplated creation and the Scriptures, the more he realized that comprehending the full range of God's knowledge and ability was beyond his grasp. (Psalm 139:6) The same is true of us. We will never understand everything about all of God's creative works. (Ecclesiastes 3:11; 8:17) But God has 'made manifest' enough knowledge through the Scriptures and in nature to enable truth-seekers living in any era to acquire faith that is based on evidence.—Romans 1:19, 20; Hebrews 11:1, 3.

¹⁵ Having faith involves more than merely acknowledging that life and the universe must have had an intelligent Source. It includes trusting in Jehovah God as a person—a person who wants us to get to know him and to maintain a good relationship with him. (James 4:8) We might think of the faith

14. Why do we not need to know everything about God in order to have faith in him?

15. Illustrate how faith and our relationship with God are linked.

and trust one has in a loving father. If a skeptic questioned whether your father would really help you in a crisis, you might not be able to convince him that your father is trustworthy. If through experience you have accumulated evidence of your father's good character, however, you can be confident that he will not let you down. Similarly, coming to know Jehovah by studying the Scriptures, contemplating creation, and experiencing his help in answer to our prayers moves us to trust in him. It makes us want to learn ever more about him and to praise him forever out of unselfish love and devotion. That is the most noble purpose that anyone can pursue.—Ephesians 5:1, 2.

Seek Our Maker's Guidance!

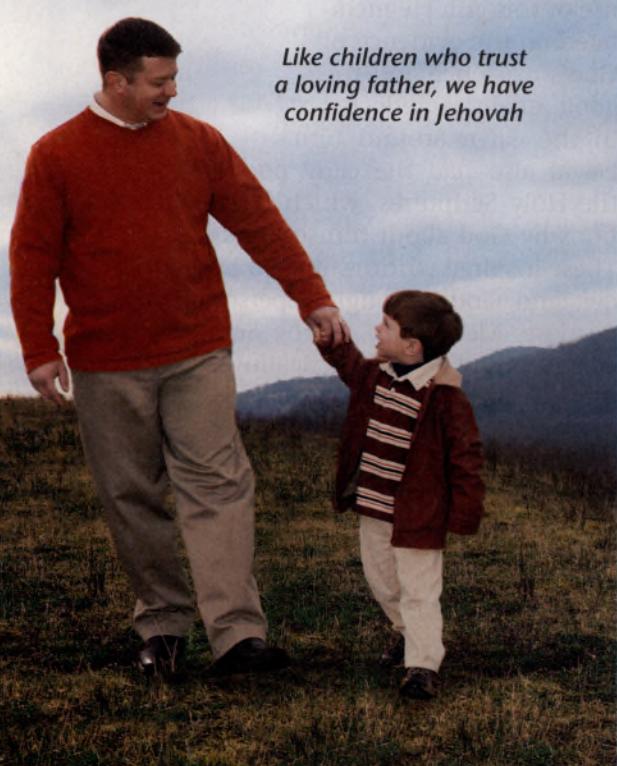
¹⁶ "Search through me, O God, and know my heart. Examine me, and know my disquieting thoughts, and see whether there is in me any painful way, and lead me in the way of time indefinite." (Psalm 139:23, 24) David was aware that Jehovah already knew him thoroughly—everything that he thought, said, or did was within the scope of his Maker's view. (Psalm 139:1-12; Hebrews 4:13) Such intimate knowledge on God's part made David feel secure, just as a small child feels secure in the arms of his loving parents. David cherished this close relationship with Jehovah and strove to maintain it by thinking deeply about His works and by praying to Him. In fact, many of David's psalms—including Psalm 139—are essentially prayers set to music. Meditation and prayer can likewise help us to draw close to Jehovah.

¹⁷ Being made in God's image, we are endowed with free will. We can choose to do

16. What can we learn from David's close relationship with Jehovah?

17. (a) Why did David want Jehovah to examine his heart? (b) How does the way we exercise our free will affect our lives?

*Like children who trust
a loving father, we have
confidence in Jehovah*



*Pondering Jehovah's handiwork
moved David to praise Him*

good or to do bad. With that freedom comes moral accountability. David did not want to be classed with the wicked. (Psalm 139:19-22) He wanted to avoid making painful mistakes. Thus, upon contemplating Jehovah's all-encompassing knowledge, David humbly asked God to examine his innermost person and to guide him in the way that leads to life. God's righteous moral standards apply to everyone; so we too need to make right choices. Jehovah urges all of us to obey him. Doing so brings us his favor and many benefits. (John 12:50; 1 Timothy 4:8) Walking with Jehovah day by day helps us to cultivate inner calm, even in the face of grievous problems.—Philippians 4:6, 7.

Follow Our Wonderful Maker!

¹⁸ As a youth, David was often outside, shepherding the flocks. The sheep lowered their heads to graze, but he raised his eyes to the heavens. In the evening darkness, David reflected on the grandeur of the universe and what it all meant. "The heavens are declaring the glory of God; and of the work of his hands the expanse is telling," David wrote. "One day after another day causes speech to bubble forth, and one night after another

18. What did David conclude from his contemplation of creation?

Can You Explain?

- How does the way an embryo develops show that we are "wonderfully made"?
- Why should we meditate on Jehovah's thoughts?
- How are faith and our relationship with Jehovah linked?



night shows forth knowledge." (Psalm 19:1, 2) David understood that he needed to search for and follow the One who had made all things so wonderfully. We need to do likewise.

¹⁹ David exemplified the counsel that his son Solomon later offered to young people: "Remember, now, your Grand Creator in the days of your young manhood . . . Fear the true God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole obligation of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:1, 13) As a youth, David already discerned that he was "wonderfully made." Acting on this insight brought him great benefits throughout his life. If we, young and old, praise and serve our Grand Creator, our present and future life will be delightful. Regarding those who stay close to Jehovah and live by his righteous ways, the Bible promises: "They will still keep on thriving during gray-headedness, fat and fresh they will continue to be, to tell that Jehovah is upright." (Psalm 92:14, 15) And we will have the hope of enjoying our Maker's wonderful works forever.

19. What lessons can young and old draw from being "wonderfully made"?

JEHOVAH VALUES YOUR OBEDIENCE

"Be wise, my son, and make my heart rejoice."—PROVERBS 27:11.

A SPIRIT of independence and disobedience permeates the world today. The apostle Paul explains why in his letter to Ephesian Christians: "You at one time walked according to the system of things of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit that now operates in the sons of disobedience." (Ephesians 2:1, 2) Yes, Satan the Devil, "the ruler of the authority of the air," has, you might say, infected the whole world with the spirit of disobedience. He was doing so in the first century, and he has been doing so even more intensely since being cast out of heaven about the time of World War I.—Revelation 12:9.

² As Christians, however, we know that Jehovah God deserves our heartfelt obedience because he is our Creator, the Sustainer of our life, the loving Sovereign, and our Deliverer. (Psalm 148:5, 6; Acts 4:24; Colossians 1:13; Revelation 4:11) The Israelites of Moses' day knew that Jehovah was their Life-Giver and their Rescuer. Therefore, Moses told them: "You people must take care to do just as Jehovah your God has commanded you." (Deuteronomy 5:32) Yes, Jehovah deserved their obedience. Yet, they quickly became disobedient to their Sovereign.

³ How important is our obedience to the Creator of the universe? God once had the prophet Samuel tell King Saul: "To obey is

1. What spirit permeates today's society?
- 2, 3. What reasons do we have for obeying Jehovah?

better than a sacrifice." (1 Samuel 15:22, 23)
Why is this so?

How Obedience "Is Better Than a Sacrifice"

⁴ As the Creator, Jehovah already owns everything we have in a material way. That being the case, is there anything that we can give him? Yes, we can give him something very precious. What is that? We can draw the answer from the following admonition: "Be wise, my son, and make my heart rejoice, that I may make a reply to him that is taunting me." (Proverbs 27:11)

4. In what sense can we give something to Jehovah?

How would a caring physician feel about a patient who ignored his recommendations?



We can give God our obedience. Though we have different circumstances and backgrounds, by being obedient, each of us can respond to the vicious claim of Satan the Devil that humans will not remain loyal to God in the face of trials. What a privilege that is!

⁵ God is interested in the decisions we make. If we disobey, it affects him. How? He is pained to see anyone take such an unwise course. (Psalm 78:40, 41) Suppose a diabetic failed to stick to the healthy diet that had been prescribed for his good and kept eating what was bad for him. How would his caring physician feel? We can be sure that Jehovah feels pained when humans disobey him, for he knows the consequences of ignoring his prescription for life.

⁶ What will help us individually to be obedient? It is appropriate for each of us to ask God for "an obedient heart," as did King Solomon. He asked for such a heart so that he could "discern between good and bad" in order to judge his fellow Israelites. (1 Kings 3:9) We need "an obedient heart" if we are to discern between good and bad in a world permeated with the spirit of disobedience. God has provided us with his Word, Bible study aids, Christian meetings, and caring congregation elders so that we can cultivate "an obedient heart." Are we making good use of such loving provisions?

⁷ In this connection, recall that in the past, Jehovah revealed to his ancient people that obedience was even more important than animal sacrifices. (Proverbs 21:3, 27; Hosea 6:6; Matthew 12:7) Why was that so,

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5. How does disobedience affect the Creator? Illustrate.
 6. What will help us to be obedient to God?
 7. Why does Jehovah stress obedience more than sacrifices?

since it was Jehovah who had commanded his people to offer such sacrifices? Well, what is the motive of the one offering the sacrifice? Is he doing it to please God? Or is he merely following some ritual? If a worshipper is truly desirous of pleasing God, he will take care to be obedient to all of God's commands. God has no need of animal sacrifices, but our obedience is one thing of value that we can give him.

A Warning Example

⁸ The Bible record of King Saul underlines the vital importance of obedience. Saul started off as a humble and modest ruler, 'little in his own eyes.' In time, though, pride and false reasoning began to govern his decisions. (1 Samuel 10:21, 22; 15:17) On one occasion, Saul was to face the Philistines in battle. Samuel told the king to wait for him to come to offer sacrifices to Jehovah and to provide further direction. However, Samuel did not come as soon as he was expected, and the people began to disperse. Seeing that, Saul "went offering up the burnt sacrifice." This was displeasing to Jehovah. When Samuel finally arrived, the king excused his own disobedience, saying that because Samuel was late, he 'compelled himself' to offer up the burnt sacrifice to soften Jehovah's face. To King Saul, offering that sacrifice was more important than obeying the direction he had received to wait for Samuel to make that sacrifice. Samuel told him: "You have acted foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of Jehovah your God that he commanded you." Disobedience to Jehovah cost Saul his kingship.—1 Samuel 10:8; 13:5-13.

⁹ Did the king learn a lesson from this

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8. Why did God reject Saul as king?
 9. How did Saul manifest a pattern of disobeying God?



Why did King Saul incur Jehovah's displeasure?

ferings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Look! To obey is better than a sacrifice, to pay attention than the fat of rams." (1 Samuel 15:22) Since Jehovah had determined that those animals were to be destroyed, they were not acceptable for offering as sacrifices.

Be Obedient in All Things

¹¹ How pleased Jehovah is to see his loyal servants remain steadfast despite persecution, proclaim the Kingdom despite an apathetic public, and attend Christian meetings even though feeling the pressure to earn a living! Our obedience in such important aspects of our spiritual life makes his heart rejoice! Our efforts in worshiping Jehovah are precious to him when offered out of love. Humans may ignore our hard work, but God takes note of our heartfelt offerings and remembers them.—Matthew 6:4.

¹² To be fully pleasing to our God, however, we must be obedient in all facets of our life. We must never deceive ourselves into thinking that we can take certain liberties with God's requirements as long as we are rendering worship to him in other aspects of life. For example, a person might deceive himself into thinking that if he goes through some of the motions of formal

experience? No! Later, Jehovah commanded Saul to annihilate the nation of Amalek, which had earlier attacked Israel without provocation. Saul was not even to spare their domestic animals. He obeyed to the point of "striking down Amalek from Havilah as far as Shur." When Samuel came to meet him, the king was elated over the victory and said: "Blessed are you of Jehovah. I have carried out the word of Jehovah." Yet, contrary to the clear instructions they had received, Saul and his people kept alive King Agag and "the best of the flock and the herd and the fat ones and . . . the rams and . . . all that was good." King Saul justified his disobedient course by saying: "The people had compassion upon the best of the flock and of the herd, for the purpose of sacrificing to Jehovah your God."—1 Samuel 15:1-15.

¹⁰ At that, Samuel told Saul: "Does Jehovah have as much delight in burnt of-

10. What lesson did Saul fail to learn?

11, 12. (a) How does Jehovah view our efforts to please him in our worship? (b) How might a person deceive himself into thinking that he is doing God's will while in reality he is being disobedient?

worship, he can get away with committing immorality or engaging in other serious wrongdoing. What a mistake that would be!—Galatians 6:7, 8.

¹³ Accordingly, we can ask ourselves, ‘Am I obeying Jehovah in my day-to-day activities, even in seemingly private matters?’ Jesus stated: “The person faithful in what is least is faithful also in much, and the person unrighteous in what is least is unrighteous also in much.” (Luke 16:10) Are we ‘walking about in the integrity of our heart’ even ‘inside our house,’ where others do not see us? (Psalm 101:2) Yes, while we are in our house, our integrity might be tested. In many lands where computers are common household items, obscene images are only a few clicks of a mouse away. A few years ago, one could not see such images without venturing into places featuring immoral entertainment. Will we obediently take to heart the words of Jesus: “Everyone that keeps on looking at a woman so as to have a passion for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart”? Yes, will we refuse even to look at immoral images? (Matthew 5:28; Job 31:1, 9, 10; Psalm 119:37; Proverbs 6:24, 25; Ephesians 5:3-5) What of TV programs with violent content? Are we in agreement with our God, whose soul ‘certainly hates anyone loving violence’? (Psalm 11:5) Or what of the excessive use of alcohol in private? The Bible condemns drunkenness, but it also warns Christians not to be given to “a lot of wine.” —Titus 2:3; Luke 21:34, 35; 1 Timothy 3:3, footnote.

¹⁴ Another area in which we need to be alert is that of handling money matters. For

13. In private, how might our obedience to Jehovah be tested?

14. What are some ways in which our obedience to God in money matters becomes apparent?

example, would we get involved in a get-rich-quick scheme that borders on fraud? Are we tempted to resort to illegal means to avoid paying taxes? Or, rather, do we conscientiously obey the command to “render to all their dues, to him who calls for the tax, the tax”?—Romans 13:7.

Obedience That Stems From Love

¹⁵ Obedience to divine precepts brings blessings. For example, by abstaining from tobacco use, by living moral lives, and by respecting the sanctity of blood, we may avoid falling victim to certain diseases. In addition, by living in harmony with Bible truth in other aspects of life, we may benefit in an economic, social, or domestic way. (Isaiah 48:17) Any such tangible benefits can rightly be viewed as blessings that prove the practicality of God’s laws. Still, the main reason we obey Jehovah is that we love him. We do not serve God for selfish reasons. (Job 1:9-11; 2:4, 5) God gave us the freedom to choose to obey whomever we want. We choose to obey Jehovah because we want to please him and because we seek to do what is right.—Romans 6:16, 17; 1 John 5:3.

¹⁶ Jesus set the perfect example in obeying Jehovah out of heartfelt love for Him. (John 8:28, 29) While on earth, Jesus “learned obedience from the things he suffered.” (Hebrews 5:8, 9) How? Jesus “humbled himself and became obedient as far as death, yes, death on a torture stake.” (Philippians 2:7, 8) Although Jesus had already been obedient in heaven, his obedience was further tested on earth. We can be sure that Jesus is well-qualified in every way to serve

15. Why do you obey Jehovah’s commands?

16, 17. (a) How did Jesus show obedience to God out of heartfelt love? (b) How can we imitate Jesus?



*Are you obeying God's commands
in the privacy of your home?*

brews 13:17) Our obedience to divine commandments in our private life is precious in Jehovah's eyes.

¹⁸ Today, our obeying Jehovah may involve enduring persecution in order to maintain our integrity. (Acts 5:29) Also, our obeying Jehovah's command to preach and to teach requires that we endure until the end of this system of things. (Matthew 24:13, 14; 28:19, 20) We need endurance to continue gathering together with our brothers, even though we may feel the weight of pressures from the world. Our loving God is fully aware of our efforts to be obedient in such areas. To be fully obedient, however, we have to fight our sinful flesh and turn away from bad while building appreciation for what is good.—Romans 12:9.

¹⁹ When we serve Jehovah out of love and with an appreciative heart, "he becomes [toward us] the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him." (Hebrews 11:6) Proper sacrifices are necessary and desirable, but it is complete obedience out of love for Jehovah that pleases him to the fullest extent.—Proverbs 3:1, 2.

18, 19. Our heartfelt obedience to God results in what?

as High Priest for his spiritual brothers as well as for others of believing mankind.
—Hebrews 4:15; 1 John 2:1, 2.

¹⁷ How about us? We can imitate Jesus in giving priority to obedience to God's will. (1 Peter 2:21) We can personally find satisfaction when our love for God motivates us to do what Jehovah commands, even at times when we are pressured or tempted to do otherwise. (Romans 7:18-20) This includes our being willing to obey directions from those who are taking the lead in true worship, though they are imperfect. (He-

How Would You Answer?

- Why can we say that we have something to give to Jehovah?
- What mistakes did Saul make?
- How can you show that you believe that obedience is better than sacrifice?
- What moves you to obey Jehovah?

Questions From Readers

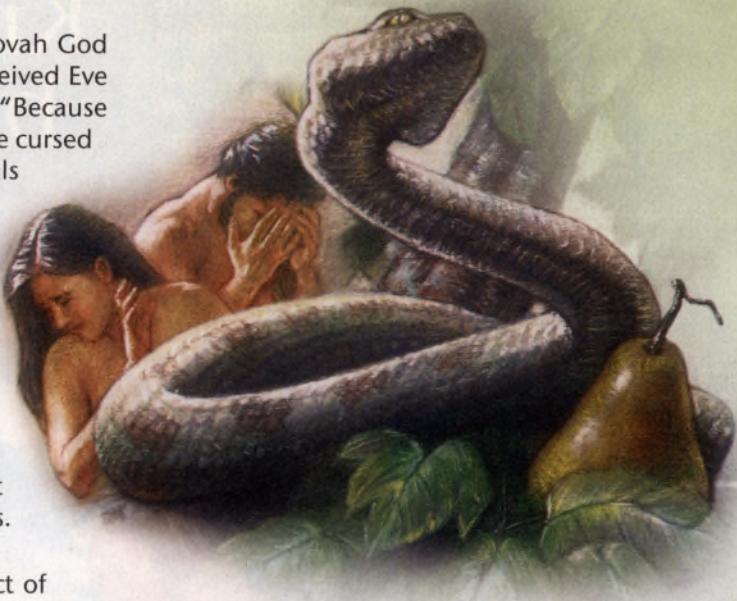
Did the serpent that spoke to Eve have legs?

As recorded at Genesis 3:14, Jehovah God addressed the serpent that had deceived Eve in the garden of Eden. God said: "Because you have done this thing, you are the cursed one out of all the domestic animals and out of all the wild beasts of the field. Upon your belly you will go and dust is what you will eat all the days of your life." The Bible does not specifically state that the animal used in tempting Eve had previously had legs but lost them. While the wording of Genesis 3:14 might lead some to think so, we need not necessarily conclude that prior to this curse, serpents had legs. Why not?

Principally because the real object of Jehovah's judgment was Satan—the invisible spirit who had misused that lowly animal. The Bible describes Satan as "the father of the lie" and "the original serpent." Both of these expressions apparently point back to Satan's using a visible animal, a serpent, as his mouthpiece to induce Eve to disobey God's command.—John 8:44; Revelation 20:2.

God created serpents, and Adam had apparently given serpents their name before Satan's deceptive act. The unreasoning serpent that spoke to Eve was not to blame. It would have been unaware that Satan was manipulating it, and it could not understand the judgment that God rendered against the disobedient parties.

Why, then, did God speak of the serpent's physical abasement? The behavior of a serpent in its natural environment, crawling on



its belly and flicking its tongue as if to lick up dust, fittingly symbolized Satan's debased condition. Having previously enjoyed a lofty position as one of God's angels, he was consigned to the lowly condition referred to in the Bible as Tartarus.—2 Peter 2:4.

Further, as a literal serpent might wound a man's heel, Satan in his debased state would 'bruise the heel' of God's "seed." (Genesis 3:15) The primary part of that seed proved to be Jesus Christ, who temporarily suffered at the hands of Satan's agents. But the symbolic serpent's head will, in time, be permanently crushed by Christ and his resurrected anointed Christian companions. (Romans 16:20) Thus, God's directing his curse toward the visible serpent aptly pictured the debasement and ultimate destruction of the invisible "original serpent," Satan the Devil.

THAT question aroused the interest of a woman in the southwestern part of Central Asia. The question appeared on the cover of the January 22, 2004, issue of our companion magazine, *Awake!* The woman wrote to the publishers: "Right from the start, I was attracted to your journal, and it helped me to focus on good values. My view of life is becoming more positive. I am telling everybody about our God and the peace this knowledge brings."

In many places, in fact "to the most distant part of the earth," people are becoming acquainted with the divine name, Jehovah. (Acts 1:8) For example, this name in the Turkmen language, *Yehowa*, can readily be found in the Turkmen translation of the Holy Scriptures. Psalm 8:1 reads: "Jehovah our Lord, how majestic your name is in all the earth!"

In order to learn more about Jehovah God, the woman asked for a copy of the 32-page brochure *The Divine Name That Will Endure Forever*. You too may request this brochure from one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

"Do You Know God by Name?"

Пробудитесь!

22 ЯНВАРЯ 2004

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Знаете ли
вы Бога
по имени?