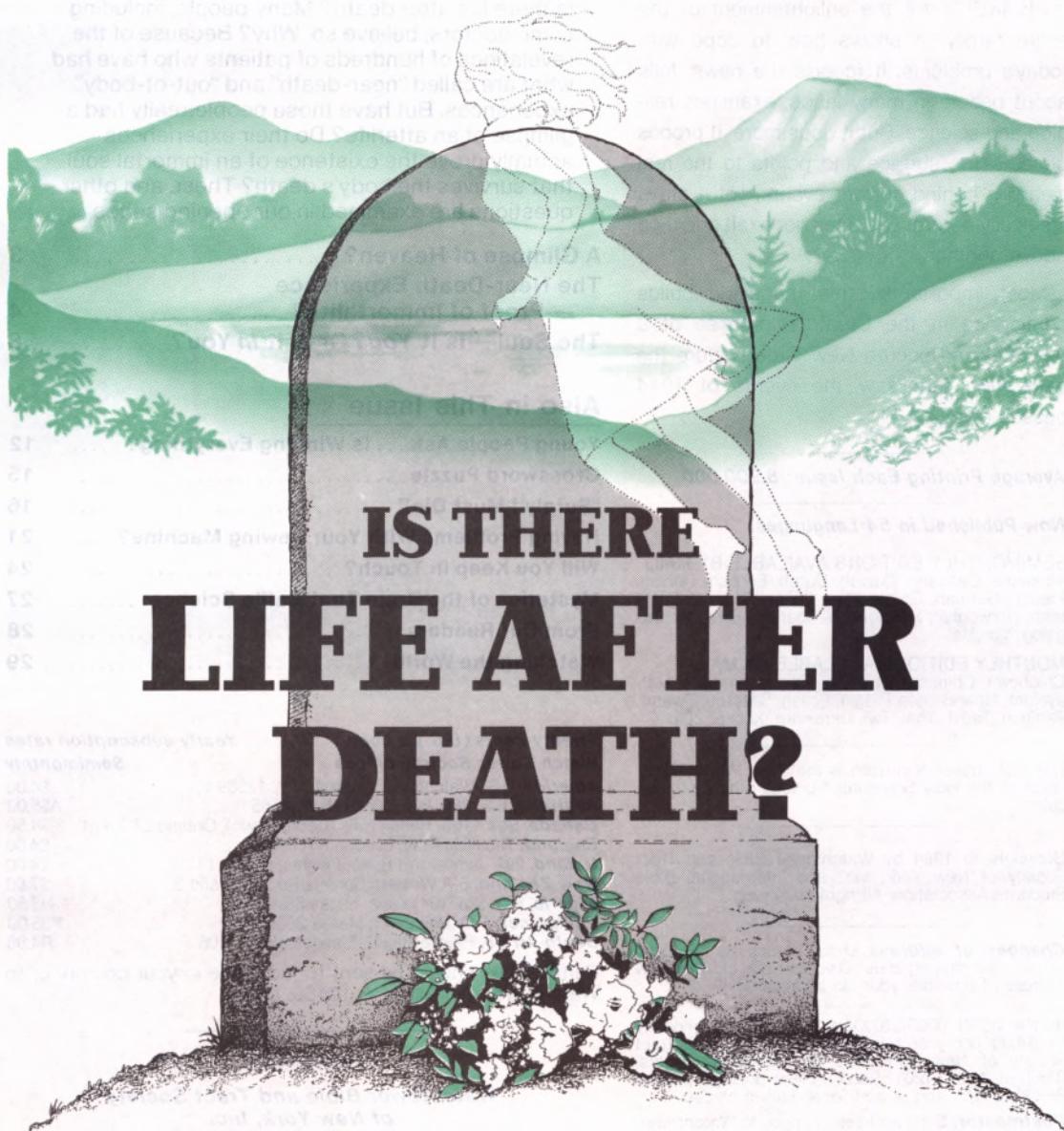


# **Awake!**

OCTOBER 8, 1984

Revolving Windows



## **IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?**

**Do Near-Death Experiences Prove It?**

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AWAKE! is 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 stays politically neutral and does not exalt one race above another.

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Awake! (ISSN 0005-237X) is published semimonthly for \$4.00 per year by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201. Second-class postage paid at Brooklyn, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices.

**Postmaster:** Send address changes to Watchtower, Wallkill, N.Y. 12589.

Printed in U.S.A.

## Feature Articles

Is there life after death? Many people, including some doctors, believe so. Why? Because of the revelations of hundreds of patients who have had what are called "near-death" and "out-of-body" experiences. But have these people really had a glimpse of an afterlife? Do their experiences actually prove the existence of an immortal soul that survives the body's death? These and other questions are examined in our opening series.

A Glimpse of Heaven? .....	3
The Near-Death Experience	
—Proof of Immortality? .....	4
The Soul—Is It You? Or Is It in You? .....	8

## Also in This Issue

Young People Ask ... Is Winning Everything? ....	12
Crossword Puzzle .....	15
"Surely I Must Die!" .....	16
Having Problems With Your Sewing Machine? ....	21
Will You Keep in Touch? .....	24
Mysteries of the Brain That Baffle Science .....	27
From Our Readers .....	28
Watching the World .....	29

Twenty cents (U.S.) a copy  
Watch Tower Society offices

Yearly subscription rates  
Semimonthly

America, U.S., Watchtower, Wallkill, N.Y. 12589	\$4.00
Australia, Box 280, Ingleburn, N.S.W. 2565	A\$5.00
Canada, Box 4100, Halton Hills (Georgetown), Ontario L7G 4Y4	\$4.50
England, The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN	£4.00
Ireland, 29A Jamestown Road, Finglas, Dublin 11	£4.00
New Zealand, 6-A Western Springs Rd., Auckland 3	\$7.00
Nigeria, P.O. Box 194, Yaba, Lagos State	N3.50
Philippines, P.O. Box 2044, Manila 2800	P35.00
South Africa, Private Bag 2, Elandsfontein, 1406	R4.80

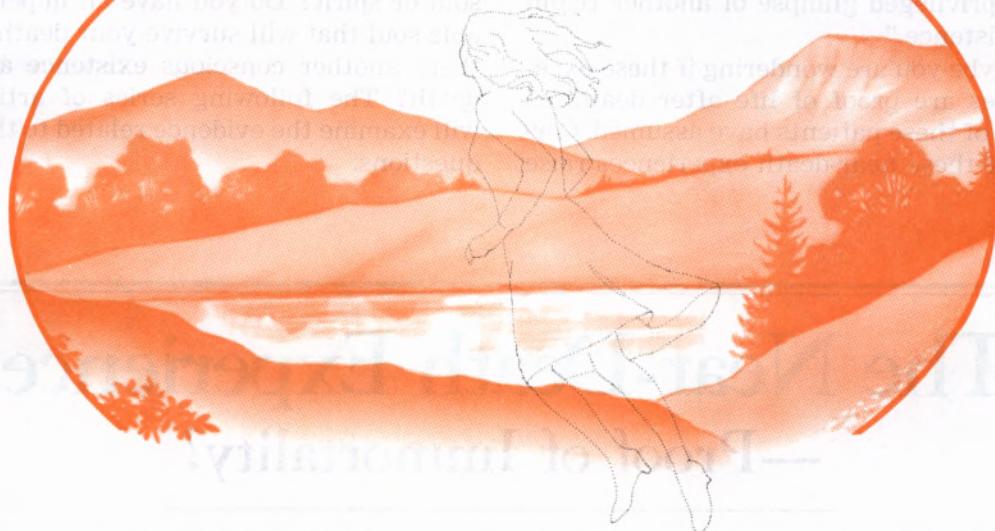
Remittances should be sent to the office in your country or to Watchtower, Wallkill, N.Y. 12589, U.S.A.

Published by  
**Watchtower Bible and Tract Society  
of New York, Inc.**

25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201, U.S.A.

Frederick W. Franz, President

# A Glimpse of Heaven?



**T**HAT was the most beautiful instant in the whole world when I came out of that body! . . . All I saw was extremely pleasant! I can't imagine anything in the world or out of the world that could anywhere compare. Even the most beautiful moments of life would not compare to what I was experiencing."—A 54-year-old heart-operation patient.

"What I recall while I was in the operating room was it seems like I was just floating up near the ceiling. . . . It was sort of a funny feeling because I was up there and this body was below. . . . I could see them operating on my back. . . . Then I remember Dr. D saying, 'There's the disk. There it is.' At that point, I came down closer to see what was going to happen."—A 42-year-old Missouri woman describing her own operation as she "saw" it.

"During this vision that I had, I couldn't see myself but I was standing on something high because down below me there was just the most beautiful, greenest pasture. . . . It was just like a bright sunshiny day. . . . The whole outline of it looked like a putting green on a well-kept golf course."—"Seen" by a 55-year-old textile-mill laborer during cardiac arrest.

What do these three experiences have in common? They are what are now termed near-death experiences (NDE) of people who came close to dying. Hundreds of these cases have been documented by doctors and scientists. Many of these near-death patients had what have been called out-of-body experiences. They speak of seeing a bright light or of being in a region of great scenic beauty, and in some cases of seeing Jesus or God.

In his book *Recollections of Death*,

Dr. Michael Sabom states: "Many of these people, victims of cardiac arrest and other life-threatening crises, recalled a series of extraordinary events that 'took place' while they were unconscious and near death. Some considered this experience to be a privileged glimpse of another realm of existence."

Maybe you are wondering if these experiences are proof of life after death, as some of these patients have assumed. Certainly these near-death experiences raise

questions that demand an answer. For example, Did these people really have a "glimpse of another realm of existence" that follows death? Were they able to describe scenes in their operations because they were existing as an invisible soul or spirit? Do you have an imperishable soul that will survive your death? Is there another conscious existence after death? The following series of articles will examine the evidence related to these questions.

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# The Near-Death Experience —Proof of Immortality?

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**"The soul of man is immortal and imperishable."**

—Plato, Greek philosopher, c. 428-348 B.C.E.

**"Such harmony is in immortal souls."**

—William Shakespeare, English playwright, 1564-1616.

**"The soul is indestructible . . . its activity will continue through eternity."**

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, German poet and dramatist, 1749-1832.

**"Our personality . . . survives in the next life."**

—Thomas Edison, American inventor, 1847-1931.

**F**OR thousands of years man has believed that he has inborn immortality. The ancient Egyptian rulers filled their tombs with the comforts and luxuries of life so that the body would be well served in its reunion with the *ka*, or soul.

Thus man has tried to convince himself that the certainty of death is annulled by the survival of an immortal soul or spirit.

Others, like the English poet Keats, want to believe but doubt. As Keats wrote: "I long to believe in immortality . . . I wish to believe in immortality." What do you believe about man's supposed immortality?

In Keats' words we perhaps have a simple clue to the conclusions that are being drawn by some doctors and psychiatrists,

as well as people who have undergone an NDE (near-death experience). For example, in tests carried out by physician and professor of medicine Dr. Michael Sabom on those who had an NDE, "a definite decrease in the fear of death and a *definite increase in the belief in an afterlife* were reported by the vast majority of persons with an NDE."—Italics ours.

To what conclusion did psychiatrist Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross arrive after

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**Dr. Kübler-Ross: "Our physical body is truly only the cocoon . . . Our inner, true self . . . is immortal"**

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checking out over a thousand cases of NDE? In her book *On Children and Death* she stated: "And so it is with death . . . the end before another beginning. Death is the great transition." She adds: "With further research and further publications, more and more people will know rather than believe that our physical body is truly only the cocoon, the outer shell of the human being. Our inner, true self, the 'butterfly,' is immortal and indestructible and is freed at the moment we call death."

Dr. Kenneth Ring, professor of psychology and author of *Life at Death*, draws the following conclusion: "I do believe . . . that we continue to have a conscious existence after our physical death." Then he adds: "My own understanding of these near-death experiences leads me to regard them as 'teachings.' They are, it seems to me, by their nature, *revelatory experiences*. . . . In this respect, [near-death] experiences are akin to *mystical or religious experiences* [Italics ours.]. . . . From this point of view, the voices we have heard in this book [*Life at Death*] are those of prophets

preaching a religion of universal brotherhood."

**A Contrasting Viewpoint**

But what do other investigators say? How do they explain these near-death and out-of-body experiences? Psychologist Ronald Siegel sees them in a different light. "These experiences are common to a wide variety of arousal in the human brain, including LSD, sensory deprivation and extreme stress. The stress is producing the projection of the images into the brain. They are the same for most people because our brains are all wired similarly to store information, and these experiences are basically electrical read-outs of this wiring."

Dr. Richard Blacher of Tufts University School of Medicine, Boston, wrote: "I suggest that people who undergo these 'death experiences' are suffering from a hypoxic [oxygen deficiency] state, during which they try to deal psychologically with the anxieties provoked by the medical procedures and talk. . . . We are dealing here with the fantasy of death, not with death

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**Dr. Blacher: "We are dealing here with the fantasy of death, not with death itself"**

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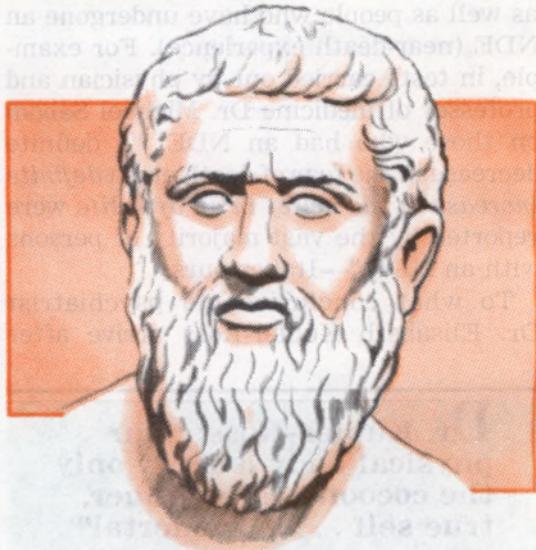
itself. This fantasy [within the patient's psyche, or mind] is most appealing, since it solves several human concerns at one time. . . . The physician must be especially wary of accepting religious belief as scientific data."

Siegel indicates another interesting point about the "visions" of the nearly dead: "As in hallucinations, the visions of the afterlife are suspiciously like this

world, according to the accounts provided by dying patients themselves." For example, a 63-year-old man who had spent much of his life in Texas related his "vision" as follows: "I was suspended over a fence. . . . On one side of the fence it was extremely scraggly territory, mesquite brush . . . On the other side of the fence was the most beautiful pasture scene I guess I have ever seen . . . [It was] a three- or four-strand barbed-wire fence." Did this patient actually see barbed wire in "heaven" or in the realm beyond death? It is obvious that these images were based on his life in Texas and recalled from his own brain data bank—unless we are being asked to believe that there is barbed wire "on the other side"!

In fact, so many NDEs are closely related to the patients' experiences and background in life that it is unreasonable to believe that they are having a glimpse of a realm beyond death. For example, do those NDE patients who see a "being of light" see the same person regardless of whether they are Christian, Jewish, Hindu or Muslim? In his book *Life After Life*, Dr. Raymond Moody explains: "The identification of the being varies from individual to individual and seems to be largely a function of the religious background, training, or beliefs of the person involved. Thus, most of those who are Christians . . . identify the light as Christ . . . A Jewish man and woman identified the light as an 'angel.'"

At a strictly scientific level, Dr. Ring admits: "I remind my audiences that what I have studied are *near-death* experiences, not *after-death* experiences. . . . There is obviously no guarantee either that these experiences will *continue* to unfold in a way consistent with their beginnings or indeed that they will continue at all. That,



#### **Plato's philosophy contaminated the teachings of many religions**

I believe, is the correct *scientific* position to take on the significance of these experiences."

#### **Common Sense and the Bible**

As for death, psychologist Siegel gives his opinion: "Death, in terms of its physical sequels, is no mystery. After death the body disintegrates and is reabsorbed into the inanimate component of the environment. The dead human loses both his life and his consciousness. . . . The most logical guess is that consciousness shares the same fate as that of the corpse. Surprisingly, this commonsense view is not the prevalent one, and the majority of mankind . . . continue to exert their basic motivation to stay alive and formulate a myriad of beliefs concerning man's survival after death."

About 3,000 years ago the same "commonsense view" was given by a king who wrote: "For the living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are

conscious of nothing at all, neither do they anymore have wages, because the remembrance of them has been forgotten. Also, their love and their hate and their jealousy have already perished, and they have no portion anymore to time indefinite in anything that has to be done under the sun. All that your hand finds to do, do with your very power, for there is no work nor devising nor knowledge nor wisdom in Sheol [mankind's common grave], the place to which you are going."—Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, 10.

Certainly the Bible leaves no room for considering near-death experiences as a prelude to life after death. King Solomon's description of death and its effects has no hints of an immortal soul surviving into some other form of conscious existence. The dead "are conscious of nothing at all."

Of course, those who practice spiritism and communication with the "dead" are only too pleased to have the apparent support of hundreds of near-death experiences. Psychologist Siegel quotes one lecturer on the paranormal, or supernatural, as saying that "if we are to examine the evidence for an afterlife honestly and dispassionately we must free ourselves from the tyranny of common sense." (*Psychology Today*, January 1981) Interestingly, this same lecturer "argues that ghosts and apparitions are indeed hallucinations, but they are projected telepathically from the minds of dead people to those of the living!" That certainly does not agree with Solomon's conclusion that the dead are dead and know nothing.

### **Near-Death Experiences —How Explained?**

How, then, can all the near-death and out-of-body experiences be explained? Basically, there are at least two possibilities—one is that presented by some psychol-

ogists to the effect that the still-active brain of the near-dead person recalls and forms images under the stresses of the near-death experience. These are then *interpreted* by some patients and investigators to be glimpses of life after death. In fact, as we have seen from the Bible, such cannot be the case, for man does not have an immortal soul, and there is no such thing as life after death as perceived in these cases.

But there is a second possibility to be taken into account that may explain some of these experiences. It is a factor that most investigators will not admit. For example, Dr. Moody explained in his book *Life After Life* that "rarely, someone . . . has proposed demonic explanations of near-death experiences, suggesting that the experiences were doubtless directed by inimical forces." However, he rejects the idea since he feels that instead of the patients' feeling more godly after the experience, "Satan would presumably tell his servants to follow a course of hate and



**English poet Keats 'wanted to believe in immortality'**

destruction." He adds, "He certainly has failed miserably—as far as I can tell—to make persuasive emissaries for his program!"

In this respect Dr. Moody makes a grave mistake in two ways. First, Satan would not necessarily promulgate hate and destruction through these experiences. Why not? Because the Bible states: "Satan himself keeps transforming himself into an angel of light. It is therefore nothing great if his ministers also keep transforming themselves into ministers of righteousness." (2 Corinthians 11:14, 15) If he can perpetuate the basic lie that he has always maintained—"You positively will not die"—he can do it through the apparently most innocent and enlightening means.—Genesis 3:4, 5.

Second, he has not failed miserably to make persuasive emissaries for his program of lies about the immortal soul! To the contrary, he now has doctors, psychologists and scientists fully supporting the

lie that he has promulgated through priests and philosophers down through the ages! How appropriate is Paul's summation of the situation when he wrote: "If, now, the good news we declare is in fact veiled, it is veiled among those who are perishing, among whom the god of this system of things has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, that the illumination of the glorious good news about the Christ, who is the image of God, might not shine through!"—2 Corinthians 4:3, 4.

Nevertheless, as we have seen, some psychologists believe that man has a conscious existence after death. This personal interpretation of the meaning of near-death experiences obliges us to raise the following pertinent questions on behalf of those who believe the Bible: Is there any Biblical basis at all for saying that man has an immortal soul that abandons the body like a butterfly out of a cocoon? What about those texts in the Bible that use the words "soul" and "immortality"?

## The Soul —Is It You? Or Is It in You?

DO YOU think you have an immortal soul that survives when you die? Most people with any religious background, whether Christian, Muslim, Jew, Shinto, Buddhist or Hindu, share this one basic idea. But why do they believe it? Because they have proof? Or because it has always been taught that way by most religions and by popular hearsay? How, in

fact, did the immortal soul idea get into "Christian" teaching?

In his book *Death Shall Have No Dominion*, Douglas T. Holden writes: "Christian theology has become so fused with Greek philosophy that it has reared individuals who are a mixture of nine parts Greek thought to one part Christian thought." This is well illustrated with re-

gard to the generally held belief in an immortal soul. For example, Plato, a Greek philosopher of the fourth century B.C.E., wrote: "The soul is immortal and imperishable, and our souls will truly exist in another world!"

According to Plato, where did these souls go when the body died? "And those who appear to have lived neither well nor ill, go to the river Acheron, . . . and there they dwell and are purified of their evil deeds, and having suffered the penalty of the wrongs which they have done to others, they are absolved." Does this not sound rather like Christendom's purgatory teaching? And where do the souls of the wicked go? "Such are hurled into Tartarus [to the ancient Greeks, a section of Hades reserved for punishment of the worst offenders], which is their suitable destiny, and they will never come out." Certainly, the ancient Greeks had their belief of everlasting torment in hell long before Christendom's theologians took it over!

### **Is There Reason to Doubt?**

If his *Dialogue* writings really reflect his own thinking, Plato was convinced that he had an immortal soul. And his teachings soon began to convince others who revered him as a philosopher. As a consequence, Platonic philosophy was even accepted by second-century Christian writers. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* states in this respect: "The Christian Platonists gave primacy to revelation and regarded Platonic philosophy as the best available instrument for understanding and defending the teachings of Scripture and church tradition. . . . From the middle of the 2nd century AD, Christians who had some training in Greek philosophy began to feel the need to express their faith in its terms, both for their own intellectual satisfaction

and in order to convert educated pagans. The philosophy that suited them best was Platonism."

However, down through the centuries there have been distinguished dissenters against the Greek concepts of an immortal soul. The Bible translator William Tyndale (c. 1492-1536) wrote in the foreword to his translation: "In putting departed souls in heaven, hell, or purgatory you destroy the arguments wherewith Christ and Paul prove the resurrection . . .

**Bible translator Tyndale wrote: "If the soul be in heaven, tell me what cause is there for the resurrection?"**

If the soul be in heaven, tell me what cause is there for the resurrection?" That is a logical question. If death is defeated by means of an 'immortal and imperishable' soul, then what purpose is served by the resurrection that Jesus taught and that the ancient Hebrew patriarchs believed in?—Hebrews 11:17-19, 35; John 5:28, 29.

In his book *The Agony of Christianity*, Spanish writer Miguel de Unamuno struggled with this same conflict. He wrote regarding Christ: "He believed . . . in the resurrection of the flesh, according to the Jewish way of thinking, not in the immortality of the soul, according to the Platonic way of thinking." He even went on to say: "The immortality of the soul . . . is a pagan philosophical dogma. . . . It is sufficient to read Plato's *Phaedo* to be convinced of that."

### **"Soul" in the Bible**

The poet Longfellow wrote: "Dust thou art, to dust returnest, was not spoken of

*the soul.*" (Italics ours.) Was he right? When God said, "For dust you are and to dust you will return," to whom was he speaking? To the first man, Adam. Did that death sentence apply only to Adam's body? Or to Adam as a breathing soul?

Genesis 2:7 clearly states: "And Jehovah God proceeded to form the man out of dust from the ground and to blow into his nostrils the breath of life, and *the man came to be a living soul.*" This text is fundamental to understanding the word "soul" as used in the Bible. It clearly states that "man came to be [not to *have*] a living soul." Thus God told that living soul, or breathing creature, Adam, that if disobedient, he would positively die and return to the elements of the earth from which he had been formed.—Genesis 2:17; 3:19.

Please note that no mention is made of any alternative destination for man's supposed soul. Why not? Because Adam, with all his faculties, *was* a soul. He did not



**Spanish scholar Unamuno wrote: "The immortality of the soul . . . is a pagan philosophical dogma"**

possess a soul. If such places as a fiery hell and purgatory existed, this is the one point in the Bible when they should have been mentioned. Yet they are not even alluded to. Why is that? Because the simple judgment for disobedience was just the opposite of the life Adam enjoyed in Paradise—namely, death, not life somewhere else. Thus Paul states the case with simplicity in Romans 6:23: "For the wages sin pays is death." (Compare Ezekiel 18:4, 20.) There is no mention here of any hellfire or purgatory, just death. And isn't that punishment enough?

Another factor to bear in mind is that a basic sense of justice requires that man should have known the true extent of his possible punishment before he disobeyed. Yet there is absolutely no mention of any immortal soul, hellfire or purgatory in the Genesis account. Furthermore, if man had really been created with an immortal soul, then this whole set of doctrines relating to the immortal soul and its destiny should have been part and parcel of Hebrew and Jewish teaching from the very earliest times. But such was not the case.

Another logical question also arises. If God's original purpose was for perfect, obedient humankind to live forever on a paradise earth, what purpose would there be in endowing man with a separate and immortal soul? Not only would it be immortal; it would be superfluous!—Genesis 1:28.

In addition, the Hebrew Scriptures clearly show that the faithful men and women of old awaited a resurrection, even as Paul commented in Hebrews 11:35: "Women received their dead by resurrection [in certain miraculous cases]; but other men were tortured because they would not accept release by some ransom, in order that they might attain a better



**Catholic theologian Küng: "When Paul speaks of resurrection, what he means is simply not the Greek idea of the immortality of a soul"**

resurrection [to everlasting life]." Evidently they were not trusting in the "butterfly" myth of human philosophy.

But perhaps you ask, What about the words of Paul where he speaks about immortality? True, he says: "For this which is corruptible must put on incorruption, and this which is mortal must put on immortality. But when this which is corruptible puts on incorruption and this which is mortal puts on immortality, then the saying will take place that is written: 'Death is swallowed up forever.'" (1 Corinthians 15:53, 54) But in no way can an immortal soul be read into those words. Paul speaks of 'putting on immortality.' Therefore it is nothing inherent in man but, rather, a new creation of those who will reign with Christ in his heavenly Kingdom.—2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:5-11; Revelation 14:1, 3.\*

Even modern theologians are coming

around to recognize this point, after centuries of Christendom's immortal-soul teaching. For example, Catholic theologian Hans Küng writes: "When Paul speaks of resurrection, what he means is simply not the Greek idea of the immortality of a soul that has to be freed from the prison of the mortal body. . . . When the New Testament speaks of resurrection, it does not refer to the natural continuance of a spirit-soul independent of our bodily functions."

The German Lutheran Catechism for Grown-Ups (*Evangelischer Erwachsenenkatechismus*) states regarding the body-soul split taught by Plato: "Evangelical theologians of modern times challenge this combination of Greek and Biblical concepts. . . . They reject the separation of man into body and soul. Since man as a whole is a sinner, therefore at death he dies completely with body and soul (full death). . . . Between death and resurrection there is a gap; the individual continues his existence at best in God's memory."

Jehovah's modern-day Witnesses have been teaching this for over a hundred years! They never swallowed Plato's pagan philosophy, for they knew very well that Jesus had taught: "Do not marvel at this, because the hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who did good things to a resurrection of life, those who practiced vile things to a resurrection of judgment." (John 5:28, 29) The very expression "memorial tombs" implies that those dead persons are retained in the "memory" of God. He will restore them to life. There is the true hope for the dead that will be realized when this earth is under the full control of God's Kingdom government by Christ.—Matthew 6:9, 10; Revelation 21:1-4.

\* For a more detailed study of the soul doctrine, see the book *Is This Life All There Is?* published by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society.

## Young People Ask...

# Is Winning EVERYTHING?

**W**HEN I win it is routine. When I lose, life comes to an end." Life does not end too often for Martina Navratilova, presently the women's tennis champion. She seldom loses. Yet by her own admission, losing is a traumatic experience.

"We were destroyed, and I looked awful. After the game I sat in the locker room and cried, like a gigantic baby sitting there weeping. I hated to lose, and I absolutely hated to look bad doing it." For sure, even in his high-school days, losing was a blow for ultratall American basketball player Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Is that how you feel when you lose?

### Why Does Losing Hurt?

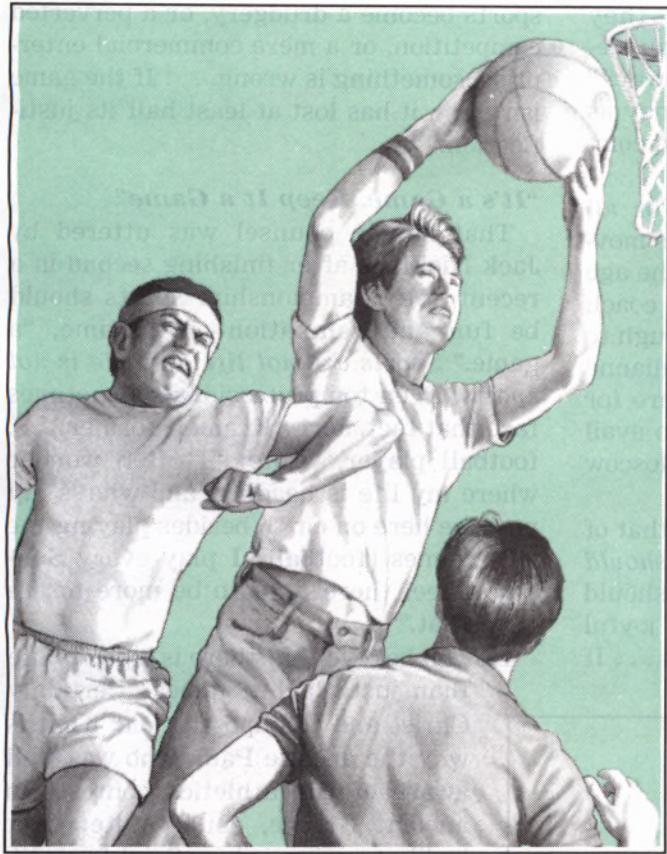
Why does losing come as such a shock to many of us? Among other things, we have been made to believe that winning is all that counts. To be second or third or just to participate means you have lost! As a former soccer amateur from Germany states: "A defeat is oftentimes a spiritual 'funeral dirge,' resulting in ruthless criticism."

Says veteran sports journalist Leonard Koppett in his book *Sports Illusion, Sports Reality*: "The win-only psychology becomes pervasive.... It is a harmful influence in our culture because it is unrealistic (there can be only one number one) and because it impoverishes us by downgrading so many other virtues: skill, courage,

dedication, brilliance, satisfactory effort, improvement, honorable performance." Yes, other fine qualities may be displayed without one's necessarily being the winner. Then should losing be a trauma? "To reduce all values to whether you win or not is self-limiting and foolish," is how Koppett sees it.

The pressure to win, and to enjoy sports only if you do win, often starts at home—with parents. They sometimes seek fulfillment through their children's accomplishments. Unconsciously, some parents give the impression that *their* reputation is on the line if their children don't win. Pressure is also applied at school level. Speaking of his school coach, Abdul-Jabbar says: "There was his stinging criticism to face if anyone came anywhere close to beating us. Losing became unthinkable, and basketball stopped being fun. . . . [He] coached through benign humiliation. *He challenged your pride*, knowing that the worst thing that can happen to an adolescent is to look bad in front of the guys."—Italics ours.

*There* is the clue to the win-at-all-costs syndrome—PRIDE. No one likes being shown up in front of others or being made to feel inferior because they lost. The truth of the matter is that if you brag about winning or despair about losing, you ARE a lesser person. Why so? Because as a winner you fail to respect the dignity and self-esteem of the loser. The Bible high-



### Do you hate to lose? Why?

lights this danger saying: "But now you take pride in your self-assuming brags. All such taking of pride is wicked." As a devastated loser, you attribute too much importance to an illusion—the illusion that sports are real life when, in fact, they are a short-lived "vanity." Wise King Solomon wrote: "I myself have seen all the hard work and all the proficiency in work, that it means the *rivalry of one toward another*; this also is vanity and a striving after the wind." Remember, your true value as a person does not depend on a few seconds or minutes of sports activity!—James 4:16; Ecclesiastes 4:4.

### What Does It Take to Be a Winner?

"If sports become a drudgery . . . something is wrong," said writer James Michener. That phrase leads us to another factor in the winning-is-all-that-counts philosophy. What is it? Total dedication.

To illustrate: Arthur Ashe, the former tennis champion, wrote: "It is possible to take an athletic seven- or eight-year-old girl and, with expert instruction and about 5,000 hours of practice and competition, conceivably produce a top-50 tennis player in seven or eight years. It would take about 8,000 hours for a boy of comparable skill." Notice that even after 5,000 or 8,000 hours of practice and competition, there is no guarantee of producing the Number 1 player. Just "conceivably" coming up with a player in the top 50.

What is the danger for a Christian in this kind of dedication? Ashe's figures represent three

hours per day, five days per week, playing tennis. What other vital interests must suffer to achieve this degree of tennis dedication? How much time is left for normal general education? How much time for more important spiritual advancement? How much upbuilding family association is lost? These are not idle questions for young people. Youth is a time when vital character, personality and spiritual foundations are laid—or neglected.

A recent article in "Teen" magazine illustrated the sacrifices that dedicated gymnasts have to make. It concerned three teenagers, Olympic aspirants Mary Lou,

Dianne and Julianne. How had they achieved their success? "Mary Lou describes it as being 'dedicated all the way.'" They have to practice six hours a day as well as keep up with schoolwork and competition travel.

But there is a price to pay. "For all three, the most difficult tradeoff was moving away from their homes before the age of 15, to be able to work with a coach whose training ability was good enough to push them to their potential." Julianne left home at the age of 13 to prepare for the 1980 Olympics. It was all to no avail—the United States boycotted the Moscow Games.

Perhaps a more balanced view is that of novelist James Michener: "*Sports should be fun for the participant.* They should provide release from tensions, a joyful exuberance as the game progresses . . . If

sports become a drudgery, or a perverted competition, or a mere commercial enterprise, something is wrong. . . . If the game isn't fun, it has lost at least half its justification."

#### ***"It's a Game. Keep It a Game"***

That simple counsel was uttered by Jack Nicklaus after finishing second in a recent golf championship. Sports should be fun and relaxation—a pastime, "a game." *Sports are not life and life is not sports.* Even top professionals sometimes face that fact. Jerry Kramer, former U.S. football player, wrote: "I often wonder where my life is heading, and what's my purpose here on earth besides playing the silly games [football] I play every Sunday. I feel there's got to be more to life than that."

Do you believe that there is more to life than just playing games? Certainly Christ and the apostles did. That is why the apostle Paul, who was well aware of the athletics contests in ancient Greece, could write: "For bodily training is beneficial for a *little*; but *godly devotion is beneficial for all things*, as it holds promise of the life now and that which is to come."—1 Timothy 4:8.

It is sensible to try, within reasonable limits, to keep fit. But in the long run godly devotion is more vital than bodily training. Winning the Christian race is more valuable than striving to win any type of sports contest. Victory in sports is a flash in the pan—glory today, a statistic tomorrow. But remember, success in godly devotion "holds promise of the life now and that which is to come"—everlasting life under God's Kingdom.—1 Timothy 6:19.



**Sports can be a relaxing pastime when fierce competition is eliminated**

# crossword puzzle

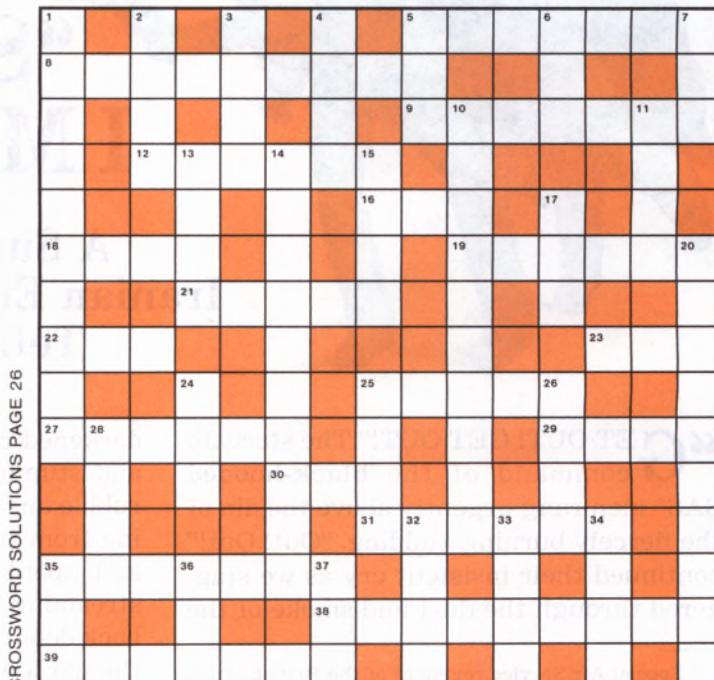
## Clues Across

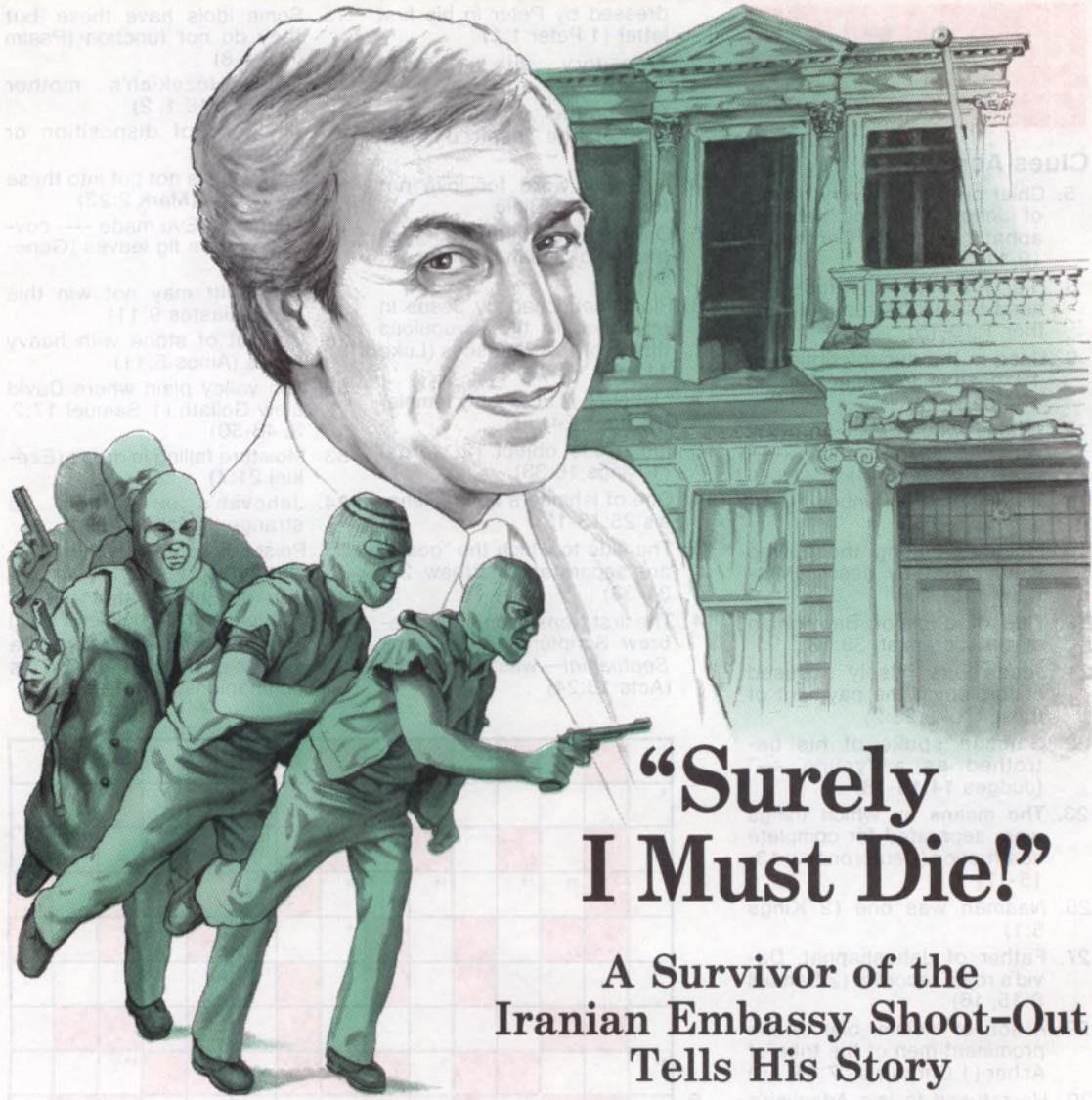
5. Chief priest "for every matter of Jehovah" during Jehoshaphat's reign (2 Chronicles 19:11)
8. His wife, Vashti, refused to heed this king's request (Esther 1:10-15)
9. Used in the superscription of 15 psalms (Psalms 120 to 134)
12. "Those who are in harmony with the flesh cannot ----- God" (Romans 8:8)
16. The shape of a rainbow (Genesis 9:12-16)
18. Included among those who were cured by Jesus (Matthew 11:4, 5)
19. Title of a major Babylonian official (Jeremiah 39:13)
21. Jesus was falsely accused of forbidding the payment of these (Luke 23:2)
22. Samson spoke of his betrothed as a "young ---" (Judges 14:15-18)
23. The means by which things were separated for complete destruction (Deuteronomy 13: 15-17)
25. Naaman was one (2 Kings 5:1)
27. Father of Jehoshaphat, David's royal recorder (2 Samuel 8:15, 16)
29. A son of Helem, one of the prominent men of the tribe of Asher (1 Chronicles 7:35, 40)
30. He refused to join Adonijah's conspiracy against King David (1 Kings 1:5-8)
31. Required (Acts 17:25)
35. Early Christian martyr (Revelation 2:13)
38. They loved prominence and flattering titles (Luke 11:43)
39. Clearly (Acts 10:3)

## Clues Down

1. Christians in this Roman province were among those ad-

- dressed by Peter in his first letter (1 Peter 1:1)
2. Transitory site (Exodus 14:20)
  3. This brother of James was one of the inspired Bible writers
  4. A Greek word for love not found in the Bible
  5. One of the six faithful kings of the line of Judah (1 Kings 15: 9-15)
  6. Plant mentioned by Jesus in reference to the scrupulous tithing of the Pharisees (Luke 11:42)
  7. "Jehovah is in --- holy temple" (Psalm 11:4)
  10. Idolatrous object [2 words] (1 Kings 16:33)
  11. One of Ishmael's sons (Genesis 25:13-15)
  13. The side to which the "goats" are separated (Matthew 25: 31-33)
  14. The first translation of the Hebrew Scriptures—the Greek Septuagint—was made here (Acts 18:24)
  15. Some idols have these, but they do not function (Psalm 115:4-8)
  17. King Hezekiah's mother (2 Kings 18:1, 2)
  20. Mildness of disposition or manner
  24. New wine is not put into these wineskins (Mark 2:22)
  25. Adam and Eve made ---- coverings from fig leaves (Genesis 3:7)
  26. The swift may not win this (Ecclesiastes 9:11)
  28. Cut out of stone with heavy blows (Amos 5:11)
  32. The valley plain where David slew Goliath (1 Samuel 17:2, 3, 48-50)
  33. Moisture falling in drops (Ezekiel 21:7)
  34. Jehovah's is said to be strange (Isaiah 28:21)
  35. Poisonous snake (Isaiah 11:8, *Authorized Version*)
  36. Son of Bela of the tribe of Benjamin (1 Chronicles 7:6, 7)
  37. False brothers did this with a view to enslaving Paul and his companions (Galatians 2:4)





## “Surely I Must Die!”

A Survivor of the  
Iranian Embassy Shoot-Out  
Tells His Story

**G**ET OUT! GET OUT!” The staccato command of the black-hooded SAS\* men rang urgently above the din of the fiercely burning building. “Out! Out!” continued their insistent cry as we staggered through the dust and smoke of the

darkened room that had been our prison and stumbled down the stairs over the rubble and debris to save our lives. Choking from the acrid smell of the grenades and spent ammunition and with eyes streaming, we were pushed through the back door of the embassy and pitched into the garden.

\* Special Air Service regiment of the British army.

Vividly I recall the hysteria of the moment. Rolling over and over on the grass, my excitement mingled with sobs of joy. "The sky! The sky! I can see the sky! Thanks be to God!" I cried out again and again. All of us had been held hostage for six days. The nightmare was over, but tension and stress had taken their toll.

Yes, I did thank God that I was still alive, but now, over four years later, I have even more cause to thank him. Let me explain why.

### **Taken Hostage!**

My name is Ali Asghar Tabatabai. My name Tabatababai attests to the fact that I am considered a direct descendant of the prophet Muhammad, in my case through the line of both my father and my mother.

In 1980 I came to London, England, for a scholarship course in banking. On the morning of Wednesday, April 30, as I ran for my train I knew I had a busy day ahead of me. Had I not been in such a hurry and instead waited a few minutes for the next train, I would have avoided the traumatic experiences that were to follow. But there was no way of knowing that!

First, I called at the Iranian embassy to pick up some maps for a lecture I was to give at the bank. No sooner had I sat down to wait a few moments for them than I heard a commotion from the embassy entrance. Then six masked gunmen rushed in and ordered all of us upstairs. Within minutes, 26 people, including the policeman who had been on guard duty, were being held hostage. It all happened so quickly it was unbelievable.

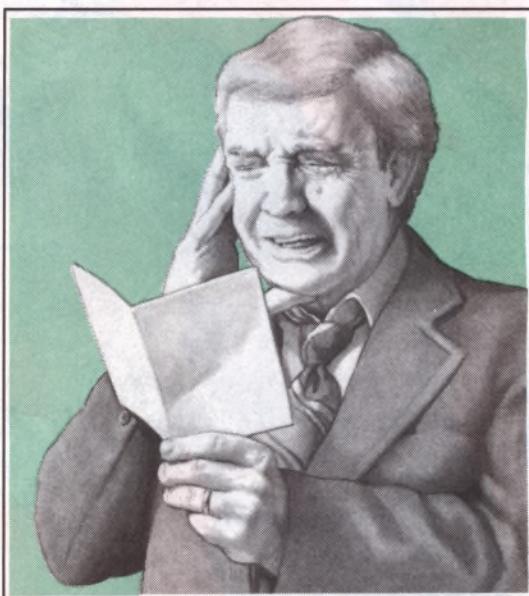
I had never taken any active interest in politics, and my religious convictions, although sincerely held, were not profound. My true interests lay with my family and in my work. Banking in London was en-

joyable, and life seemed to be improving for me as I pursued my studies. Little did I realize that soon everything I stood for was going to be put to the test.

As the police closed in and sealed off the building, we learned something about the men who were holding us captive. They told us that they had taken over the embassy to highlight problems in their homeland and that they would kill all of us by the next midday if the demands they were going to make were not met.

### **Living With Death—But Why?**

After the first day had passed, it became apparent that the police authorities were playing for time and that they were not readily going to agree to the gunmen's demands. Tension increased alarmingly. During this time, all of us tried hard to keep our spirits up. I had been given the name "Ali the Bank" and did my



**I burst into tears when I saw the photographs of my wife and children**

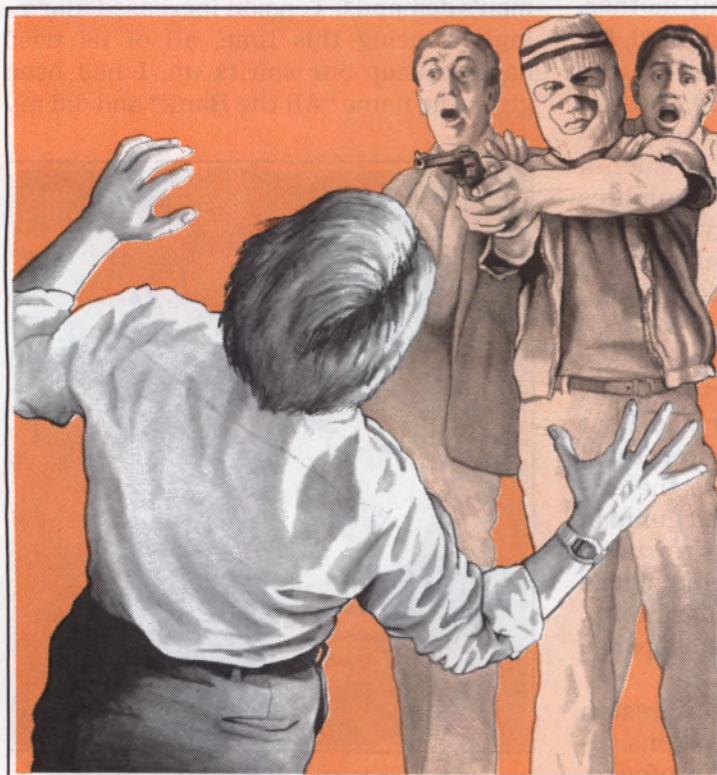
best to amuse my fellow captives to ease the strain. At times I would cash imaginary cheques or devise puzzles for the hostages to solve. It helped to while away the hours, but time still hung heavily and there was really nothing we could do about that.

As the frustration of the gunmen grew, it became increasingly obvious that the lives of all of us were in great danger. They constantly threatened to kill everyone, and armed to the teeth as they were it was evidently no idle threat. The tension became unbearable. Every hour or so one of the captives would convulse in sobs—it was terrifyingly unnerving. As I spoke fluent English, I was often able to

mediate, and that took my mind off things. But one day I opened my passport and there inside I saw the photographs of my dear wife and children. I too burst into tears. Would I ever see them again? How would my wife cope with life in a foreign land? Would my small son lose his father as I had done at such an early age? I had no wish to die—there was so much to live for!

As I started to write out my will, I tried to reason with the leader of the gunmen. "What happens if you kill us?" I asked. "Our children will come and kill your children because you have killed us, and we are innocent!" "It is the law of the jungle," was his terse reply. "I am simply a banker," I told him. "I have nothing to do with politics and I do not want to die for political reasons." "Stop begging for your life!" one of the hostage diplomats shouted back. "I am not begging," I answered. "You are diplomats. You are paid a lot of money to work in this country and take risks. I am not, and I do not want to die for something I do not believe in." I had made my point.

When in serious trouble, people sometimes become fervent in prayer. Many of my fellow captives prayed regularly and audibly, and *Allah* was heard repeatedly day and night. Perhaps I should explain that *Allah* is the Arabic word for "God." In Persian, my language, we use the comparable



**In desperation the gunmen brutally killed the first hostage**

word "Khuddah" for "God," the Creator. I prayed to *Khuddah* many times, but I felt that my prayers would be unacceptable as I was unable to wash as I had been taught I should do before praying.

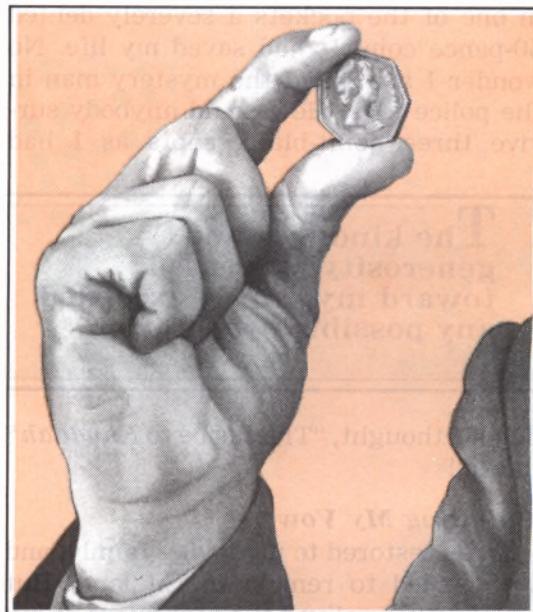
My thoughts were so disjointed. I could not understand why *Khuddah* had allowed all these terrible things to happen. All my life I had done my best. What sort of God was he to allow me to be killed, as I felt sure I would be? Yet I had to admit that I had lived a life of pleasure, just pleasing myself. What had I ever done for *Khuddah*? Indeed, what do I know about him? I asked myself.

It was at one of these moments that I vowed to *Khuddah* that if there was any way my life could be spared, for my family's sake, I would really try to find him and serve him for the rest of my life. I truly meant what I said.

### **"Surely I Must Die!"**

The days dragged on. Finally, in desperation the gunmen brutally killed the first hostage and bundled the corpse out of the embassy front door. Ironically, it was the diplomat who had told me to stop begging for my life. The terrorists proclaimed that if their demands were still ignored, they would kill the rest of us at 45-minute intervals! As soon as this became known, the SAS struck—just after seven o'clock in the evening of the sixth day. Their swift action was watched on television screens throughout the world.

Inside the embassy, pandemonium broke loose. The smashing of windows, the exploding of stun grenades and the rapid repeat fire of machine guns filled the air. Immediately three of the terrorists burst into our prison room and within moments opened fire indiscriminately as we lay crouched on the floor. My immediate thought was, 'Surely I must die!'



A 50-pence coin such as this saved my life

I saw the gunman turn toward me. He raised his pistol and fired. I heard and felt nothing, but within seconds my clothing was covered with blood. I clutched at my jacket in a pitiful attempt to shield myself. He aimed a second and a third shot directly at me—yet to my amazement I was not killed. How could it be?

As already recounted, we were rescued after a short, sharp battle and rushed to the hospital. Seeing the state I was in, all the doctors thought I had been seriously injured. But a close examination revealed nothing at all—except a bullet (apparently the second shot) that had become inexplicably wrapped up in my shirt, having just seared my back. Then why all the blood? I later discovered that at the first shot it had spurted from the hostage lying next to me. What of the third shot? When the police returned to the embassy, they found the remains of my jacket and

in one of the pockets a severely dented 50-pence coin. It had saved my life. No wonder I am called the mystery man in the police files. How could anybody survive three point-blank shots as I had

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## The kindness and generosity expressed toward my family exceeded any possible expectation

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done! I thought, "Thanks be to *Khuddah*" indeed!

### Fulfilling My Vow

I was restored to my loving family, and we decided to remain in England. But constantly I relived the nightmare of my ordeal. Rehabilitation was extremely difficult, yet how very grateful I was to be alive! What, then, of my vow to *Khuddah*? I knew I must do something—but what? I had no idea.

Unknown to me, for some months my wife, Shirin, had regularly accepted copies of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* as she found that they were a good help to her in learning English. Later when a member of the local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses called to see me, I politely listened. I found the references to the Bible interesting and checked them in a Persian copy. But when I was told that God, *Khuddah*, had a name, that was something different! Yes, I had a name and was proud of my name, and now the Bible clearly showed me that *Khuddah* had a personal name—Jehovah! Eagerly I learned all I could about him from my Bible studies.

Now I could see! *Khuddah* was not just a God to be bowed down to and worshipped at set times of the day, but he was

an individual, personal God, with a loving purpose for mankind. Not a God who simply demands worship, but someone who cares for us individually—for me and my family, personally! My picture was complete. Gladly I would serve Jehovah!

From this point on, things moved rapidly, and now my wife and I are both baptized witnesses of Jehovah. As we were welcomed into the worldwide association of Jehovah's people, the kindness and generosity expressed toward my family exceeded any possible expectation. Not only did our new spiritual brothers and sisters give their time teaching us the truth of God's Word but they gave us material necessities too in abundance as we set about rebuilding our lives.

As the days go by, memories do fade, it is true. But the terror of the six-day siege still remains vividly in my mind. Now, however, I realize that such tragic happenings will soon be forever things of the past. Also, in Jehovah's New Order of righteousness now near at hand, such sad memories will never need to be "called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart." (Isaiah 65:17) For such grand promises my family and I now gratefully thank and praise Jehovah.

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## In Our Next Issue

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- *Is Time Running Out for This World?*
  - *Do You Know What Your Children Read?*
  - *Conquest in the Name of the Church*
  - *Coping With High Prices*
-

# Having Problems With Your SEWING MACHINE?

**Are you thinking of buying your first sewing machine?  
If so, the following advice will interest you.**

**O**H, WHY won't this sewing machine work now?" Tears of frustration welled up in Elsa's eyes as she despairingly examined yet *another* puckered seam. "What can I be doing wrong?" Sewing with a machine was new to her and she was having a beginner's problems.

Have you ever been in that situation? If you own a sewing machine, it is likely that your own experience has taught you to sympathize with Elsa's predicament. Yet, as frustrating as some difficulties may be, it may not be necessary to buy a new machine or even do a major repair job. You can take care of many problems—even head off serious ones—right at home, with a resultant saving of time and money.

Does that prospect interest you? If so, it may encourage you to know that often only minimal mechanical ability is required to maintain and adjust your machine, and that most problems can usually be overcome by making minor adjustments. So if you have your sewing machine near, you may want to examine it as you continue reading this article to see just how relatively easy it is to keep it in good shape.

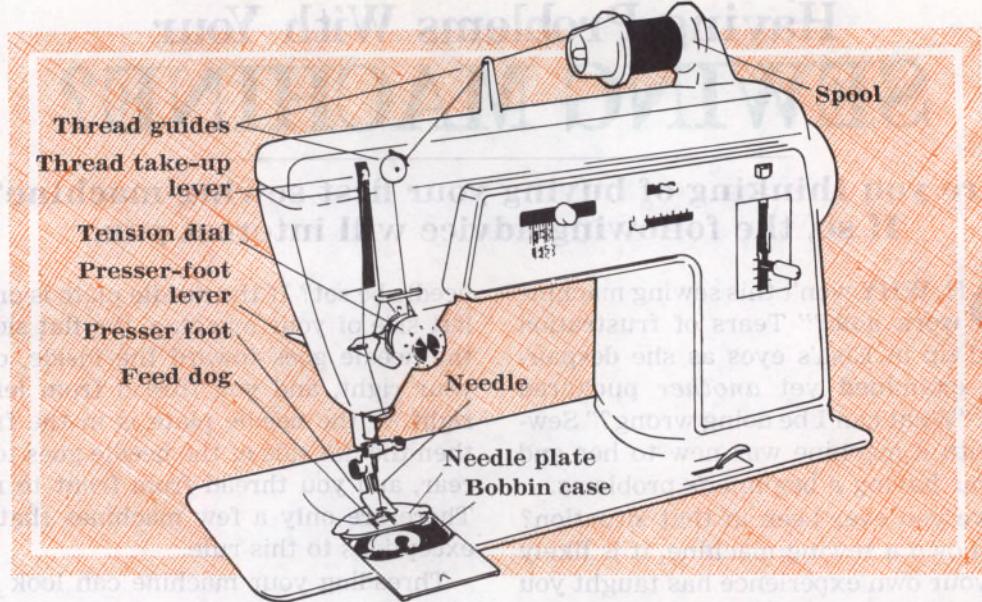
## THREADING YOUR MACHINE

First, especially if you haven't used your machine for a while, check the threading and the needle. Which way should your

needle be set? If the needle plate is on the left side of your machine, the flat side of the needle goes toward the inside, or to your right, and you thread from left to right. If the needle plate is in the front, then the flat side of the needle goes to the rear, and you thread from front to rear. There are only a few machines that are exceptions to this rule.

Threading your machine can look difficult, but it is really simple. Start by putting the presser foot in the up position (the presser foot lever is on the left rear side of your machine). Advancing from your spool of thread, look for one or two thread guides on the left top cover. Then take the thread down to and around the tension or tension dial, making sure to catch the spring there; next, up to the thread take-up lever, through the hole in it, down through one or two more thread guides and finally through the needle. If the machine is threaded wrong, or if the needle is in backward, the thread will break or it will not form stitches.

Does your machine skip stitches? If so, try a new needle, as a bent needle will always cause it to skip. The type of fabric being sewn also plays a part. On most of the new polyesters and sheer fabrics you may want to try a special ball-point needle as it helps, in some cases, to eliminate skipping. Another trick is to sew the fabric with a sheet of thin tissue paper underneath to give it body, and then, of course, tear the paper off.



In Elsa's case, the puckering mentioned in the introduction could have been caused by improper tension adjustment. A more common fault is that one of the threads remains straight on top or underneath the material. The solution? Usually just a simple adjustment of the tension regulator (dial). First, try changing the tension to the next number on the dial. If that does not solve it, try one number in the opposite direction. If the problem persists, it may be necessary to adjust the bobbin tension.

A rough guide to this adjustment is: When the bobbin case containing the bobbin is suspended from its thread, the weight will make the bobbin unwind if the tension is too loose. In this case the solution is to tighten the tension screw one eighth of a turn clockwise until its weight stops the unwinding. Then tighten the tension screw again one eighth of a turn. This makes a total adjustment of one quarter of a turn and should solve the problem.

## CLEANING YOUR MACHINE

The few items that you will need for cleaning and repairing are easily obtainable. They are: (1) A small stiff brush. A toothbrush will do and is excellent for getting into small tight areas. (2) A small screwdriver. (Remember, it is always best to use a screwdriver with the same size tip as the slot in the screw head.) (3) A few cotton swabs. (4) A small lint-free rag. (5) A small strip of fine emery cloth (available at any hardware store). (6) Sewing-machine oil. (7) A small amount of kerosene or automotive carburetor cleaner. (8) Tweezers (to pull thread or lint from the machine).

Accumulated lint and dirt are probably the most common cause of difficulty in a home sewing machine. Lint builds up in the shuttle mechanism and the feed dog as small particles of thread and cloth become entrapped. Often this causes the fabric to feed improperly and results in puckering.

and skipping. To clean, remove the needle and the presser foot. Unscrew the needle-plate setscrews and take off the needle plate. With your brush, clean out dust and lint clogged between the feed-dog teeth. Apply a couple of drops of oil where you see oil holes.

Cleaning of the shuttle assembly is next. First, remove the bobbin case and the bobbin. Next, remove the shuttle-race ring—usually held in place by two clasps—and the shuttle hook behind it. Use the brush and the tweezers to remove any visible lint. While you have the shuttle assembly apart, take time to examine the shuttle carefully for nicks or scratches. This is important because irregularities on the surface of the shuttle can catch the thread and cause it to break. How did they get there? They are often caused by pulling the material through faster than the machine feeds it. The added pressure on the sewing needle causes it to flex and strike the shuttle.

To check, run the tip of your fingernail over the area where the point of the shuttle is and then directly in front of the point and through the slot. It may be possible to clear up any irregularities found by lightly rubbing the shuttle with fine emery cloth. The alternative is to purchase a new shuttle, so there is little to be lost in trying this cheaper solution. Now simply put the shuttle assembly together again and apply a drop of oil to the shuttle-race area.

### OILING YOUR MACHINE

Oiling is usually not too difficult. Many manufacturers provide sewing-machine oil and a lubrication guide with the machine when purchased. Manufacturers recommend that you lubricate your ma-

chine in proportion to its use: daily if used for several hours each day; weekly if used only for an hour or less each day. *DO NOT OVEROIL.* One or two drops is usually all that is needed. Use only sewing-machine oil. All-purpose, household or vegetable oils should *not* be used.

In some machines there are holes in the case at the top where oil can be applied. In others, the top cover of the machine has to be removed for lubrication. Usually two screws hold this cover on, though some machines will have only one. Unscrew them and remove the cover. Several oil holes will now be visible along the top. Apply a couple of drops of oil to each and replace the cover.

In the event that your machine is old and has a buildup of oil (which will turn into a yellowish, hard, varnishlike glaze), you can remove this with kerosene or automotive carburetor cleaner, using a swab or rag. Since the cleaning fluid is volatile, be sure to do this in a well-ventilated area. If your machine has *nylon or plastic gears or parts, be careful not to get this solution on them as it will damage them.*

While this article will not prepare you to become a sewing-machine technician, it may become a valuable future reference when problems arise, as well as indicate when it is time to call in a professional to do some repairs. And, as you become more conscious of maintaining your machine on a regular basis, you will be assured of a better-running machine and will extend its life of service. Most of all, a properly functioning machine will spare you the frustrations that so many have to endure. This will certainly add to your joy in turning out good work for the pleasure and comfort of yourself and others.—Contributed.

# Will You Keep in Touch?

**W**HAT is this?" asked the puzzled couple as they pulled two letters from an envelope. Their daughter, Louise, had sent them. One brought the parents up to date on their daughter's life. The other, though, was a multiple-choice questionnaire. All that the parents had to do was mark the answers and mail the questionnaire back to Louise in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope.

But why a questionnaire? To prod a written reply. "I only wanted them to keep in touch, even if I had to write the letter myself," Louise explains. "The fact

that I'm not at home doesn't mean I don't love them anymore or that I don't want to hear from them."

Wouldn't you agree, though, that keeping in touch is often easier said than done? For some, the idea of sitting down and writing a letter appears as challenging as climbing Mount Everest. So where do you begin? Where do you find the time? Usually you don't find it—you make it! Since it takes time and effort to develop a friendship in the first place, would it not be worthwhile regularly to invest a small amount of time to maintain that friendship by either telephone or mail?

## ***Use the Telephone***

Do you live away from home? Perhaps you, like many others, just enjoy hearing the voice of a loved one. Many adults still find comfort and wisdom in the voice of their parents. Parents also enjoy hearing from their children and often even more so from their grandchildren. With the use of satellites and undersea cables for international telephone calls, you can call around the world in an instant. One missionary in Papua New Guinea, regularly receives encouraging telephone calls from her mother who lives in the United States, some 6,000 miles away! Although the 17-hour difference in time must be considered, both are able to find great joy in the short time spent talking together.

Whether we use the telephone often or just occasionally, it is good to keep certain things in mind. When making a phone call, it is generally best to identify yourself. It is not



**How do you keep in touch?**

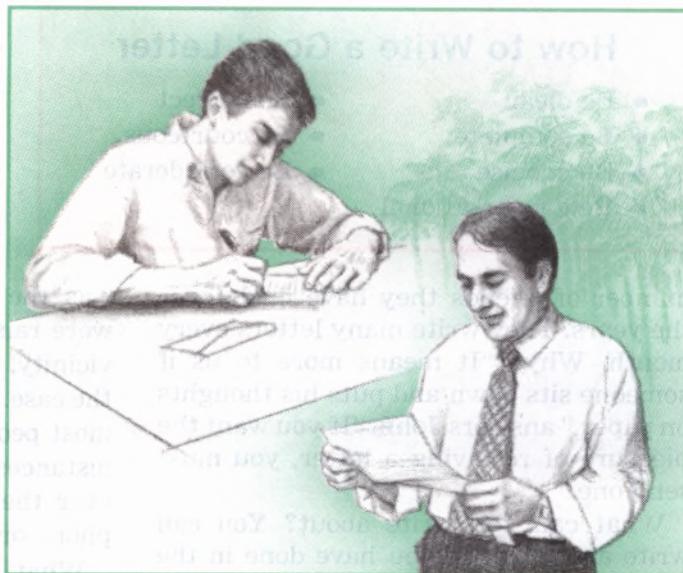
the time for a guessing game. It may cause embarrassment and can hurt your conversation before it begins or waste your money if you have a wrong number!

Time is a large factor in telephone cost. The longer you talk the more it costs. How can you save money? In some places there are cheaper phone companies to choose from. Then, also, know what you want to say. Some people write themselves brief notes prior to calling, especially if calling the doctor or when doing business. How often have you hung up the phone only to remember an unasked question or an unmentioned request?

Finally, when keeping in touch by phone, be cordial, and if others use the same telephone line, be brief. A friendly greeting and concern for others is always appreciated. Then really *listen* as you are spoken to, taking a genuine interest in what is said. But telephoning is not the only means of keeping in touch. Many people say . . .

#### **I Like to Write to My Friends'**

How does a letter differ from a telephone conversation? One woman expressed her appreciation of letters in this way: "I enjoy both phone calls and letters. When I'm very depressed and I need to talk, the phone is fine. But if it is late or I know I can't reach anyone by phone, I still have the letters from my family to read. They help me cope. On the phone, when I finish speaking, the words are gone, but the thought stays. With a letter I have the words *and* thoughts forever. I can refer to them whenever I need them."



**A short note with a simple heartfelt message is an excellent way to deepen friendships**

Does writing a letter have to be a tense experience? No! You will write best if you relax and write as if you are speaking directly to your friend or family. The advice of the 18th-century English statesman and author Lord Chesterfield still rings true for today's letter writers: "Letters should be easy and natural, and convey to the persons to whom we send them just what we would say to those persons if we were with them."

Letter writing reveals your personality —your likes and dislikes, your taste and character, your experience and education, your manners. So think before you write, and try not to write while irritated or angry, because your letter bears mute but strong evidence of the real you.

Will you run out of things to say? "No," answers John. He writes home each week, even though he has not lived with his family since 1936! He and his wife also try to keep in touch with the great

## How to Write a Good Letter

- ◆ Be clear
- ◆ Be complete
- ◆ Be concise
- ◆ Be conversational
- ◆ Be correct
- ◆ Be courteous
- ◆ Be considerate

number of friends they have made over the years. They write many letters every month. Why? "It means more to us if someone sits down and puts his thoughts on paper," answers John. "If you want the pleasure of receiving a letter, you must send one."

What can you write about? You can write about things you have done in the past or about what you are now doing. Friends will be interested in your daily happenings. A mental outline may be of help while writing, as well as answering questions asked in any previous letter received. A word of caution though about the use of questions. One man wrote his nephew and asked a number of questions, hoping for a letter in return. It worked. The nephew answered every question. However, the whole letter consisted mainly of "yes" and "no" answers. The boy's uncle had a difficult time trying to remember all the questions he had asked, but at least the nephew had written.

"I can't spell," or, "I don't write or type well," are common excuses for not writing. That could be true, and yet penmanship will not improve without practice. Besides, is it worth the risk of letting a friendship go cold because of not writing for fear of misspelling words? Most friends are just happy to receive a letter from you. They don't expect you to be a grammarian or a novelist.

Remember, a letter does not have to be long. A short note with a simple heartfelt

message is an excellent way to deepen friendships.

### ***It Is Worth the Time***

"Ultimately the bond of all companionship, whether in marriage or in friendship, is conversation," noted one 19th-century poet. In years gone by, the home was the center of family life. Children were raised and remained in the general vicinity. In many lands, this is no longer the case. We live in a mobile society. Since most people cannot afford to travel long distances to visit family or friends whenever they wish, communication by telephone or mail becomes a must.

What will you gain? "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving," Jesus Christ said. (Acts 20:35) You can reap the benefits of personal satisfaction and happiness. But more important than that, you will strengthen and maintain long-lasting friendships, simply by keeping in touch.

### **CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS**

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

## Mysteries of the Brain That Baffle Science

**A** bold new breed of supersmart computers is taking shape in artificial intelligence laboratories," says *High Technology*. They are second-generation "expert" systems, which—like their first-generation counterparts—will have the specialized knowledge of human experts encoded in their data banks. The newer systems, moreover, will have some problem-solving abilities not found in the older versions. But will they be able to *think*?

Creating a computer that thinks has been the dream of computer engineers ever since the mid-1950's, when artificial intelligence became a well-defined field of computer science. But so far the dream has not materialized. "We don't have programs that are truly creative, or truly inventive, or can understand the complexities of somebody's reasoning," admits Roger C. Schank, director of the Artificial Intelligence Project at Yale. In fact, *Psychology Today* sums up over 25 years of research this way: "Every human infant can do three things that no computer is yet able to do—recognize a face, understand a natural language and walk on two legs."

Computers are simply left behind by the capabilities of the human mind. Why? For one thing, the most advanced computer microcircuitry is rudimentary compared to the interconnections of an estimated 100 billion (100,000,000,000) neurons—nerve cells—that are found in a normal human brain. According to one theory, the brain's retrieval system is based on a network of connections and "this rich network of connections in human memory is one of the most profound differences between humans and machines. The brain's ability to search for information through its millions of neurons simultaneously looks positively uncanny."

Further, says *Science*, "the brain makes millions or billions of neuronal calculations simultaneously and in parallel; our current generation of serial, one-step-at-a-time computers are hopelessly outclassed."

True, some computers can perform difficult mathematical calculations in a fraction of the time it would take the smartest mathematicians. Advanced computers can even beat most people at chess. But the machines have serious limitations. "An inspired chess-playing program might be able to trounce a good player," states a recent article in *The New York Times Magazine*, "but change the rules a little . . . and the machine will be at sea, while the human player will manage to cope."

What gives humans this advantage? We reason and make analogies. We look at a problem from many different angles, distinguishing important data from what is irrelevant. Further, we have no difficulty dealing with language concepts or with learning from experience. In short, we have "common sense." The frustrating experience of trying to duplicate this "common sense," says *Science*, has given scientists "a certain humility, an appreciation of how awesomely complex the most ordinary human act can be—and of just how much a computer (or a human) has to *know* before it can do much of anything."

Scientists admit that there will be no major breakthroughs soon in producing artificial intelligence, despite the increased capabilities of upcoming computer systems. Part of the problem is that we simply do not understand our own thinking process well enough to create a model of it.

"Aha!" we say when a good idea comes to mind. But just how we got the idea remains a mystery.

# From Our Readers

## Hyperactive Children

Thank you for writing the article about hyperactive children. (June 8, 1984) I have a 15-year-old son who is hyperactive. I am grateful that this subject was discussed because people who don't live with this situation can't fully understand the child, and they believe that he is spoiled and should be disciplined more severely. In my case, I am a single parent and this makes it more difficult to cope with the problem. My son has overcome some of the symptoms of hyperactivity but is still struggling with others, though they are not as severe as they were years ago.

A. H., New York

## Children of Divorced Parents

My name is Claudia (13-14 years old), and I read in *Awake!* (Italian edition) that children whose parents are divorced are so miserable! ('We Loved You Even Before You Were Born,' July 8, 1984, English edition) My parents are divorced, but I do not feel like a "parcel." Both of them have another family, and I'm living with my mother, but Saturday and Sunday I stay with my father. First of all, I accept their decision on divorce; second, even if sometimes I have to make sacrifices, I make them because I love my parents. Maybe there are children who are worse off than I am, but do you think that they are better off living with parents who quarrel all the time?

C., Italy

*We commend you for being able to cope with your situation. However, as*

*you suggest, there are many children of divorced parents who are not as well off as you are. In fact, the weight of evidence shows that children of divorced parents have many more hardships to contend with than do those whose parents stay together. Our stand on divorce is based on Jesus' words: "I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except on the ground of fornication, and marries another commits adultery." (Matthew 19:3-9) We do not believe that the only options for a family are for the parents either to get a divorce or to live together and quarrel all the time. There is a desirable third option—that of the parents applying the principles of God's Word in their marriage, unselfishly making adjustments and staying together, putting up with one another in love and thus building a happy, united family.—ED.*

## Missing Children

I am nine years old. I am writing to compliment you on the article "My Child Is Missing!" (April 22, 1984) I really enjoyed the tips on what to do. We went over it as a family, and the very next day a stranger drove up to me on the street and asked if I wanted a ride. I could not hear him because it was raining, and I said, "What?" He asked again if I wanted a ride, and I said, "NO!" He put an angry look on his face and drove away. I ran home and told my mother, and she called the police. The policeman came to our home and asked for a description of him. Everyone we told was alarmed. But I want to thank you for saving us with the pages of *Awake!*

A. R., New Jersey

# Watching the World



## Jehovah's Witnesses and Concentration Camps

• The book *Crystal Night*, authored by Rita Thalmann and Emmanuel Feinermann, documents a history of Hitler's concentration camps. While the book primarily relates the persecution of the Jews, it also gives some information on Jehovah's Witnesses in the camps. It states:

"Set apart from the other barracks were special isolation barracks for disciplinary treatment. These were occupied mostly by the Jehovah's Witnesses, who wore brown [actually, purple] triangles and refused to give the Hitler salute or to undergo military service. Often their refusal to abandon their pacifist religious convictions resulted in death.

"Historians of the Third Reich may perhaps have exaggerated the extent of the German Churches' 'resistance' to the National Socialist regime, but few have mentioned the martyrdom of the 5,911 Jehovah's Witnesses arrested by the Nazis. More than two thousand perished in concentration camps."

After describing life at the Buchenwald camp where 2,250 Jews were prisoners, the book states that there were "300-400 Jehovah's Witnesses" there "who were particularly helpful to the Jews and even shared their bread rations with them."

## Money and War Weapons

• "International arms sales, after surging for more than a decade, have leveled off and quite possibly begun to decline," states *The Wall Street Journal*. What accounts for this? "Market saturation" is one reason given as well as "burdensome foreign debt and depressed commodity prices . . . along with past buying sprees that have filled up arsenals and sated weapons appetites." The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute estimates that last year's worldwide exports of major weapons were about \$13.5 thousand million.

## Pope Praises Soldiers

• "Pope John Paul II said today that military service was compatible with Christianity, telling soldiers from 24 coun-

tries they could regard themselves as ministers of security and freedom," reported New Zealand's *Auckland Star*. He then went on to praise the soldiers by saying: "The morality of your profession, dear soldiers, is linked to this ideal of service for peace in the national communities and still more in the international context."

## Changing China

• "Possessed of exit visas and fortunes too enormous to be confined by the nation's borders, 50 jetsetters from rural Hebei province will fly to Tokyo next week, the first rustics of the New China to vacation abroad at their own expense," reports Toronto's *Globe and Mail*. The cost of the trip is \$3,530 (Canadian), about "20 times the average annual income" in China. How could they afford it? The report says that a few peasants, "unleashed from collective grain farming by the Government of Deng Xiaoping, have prospered in sideline occupations—chicken ranching, tractor repair, basket weaving."

## "United" Church Divided

• "United Church sharply divided over ordination of homosexuals," read the headline in *The Toronto Star*. Opinion is sharply divided on this question because "some see homosexuality as a sin and ask if Canada's largest Protestant denomination still upholds moral standards." The General Council will decide whether to accept or reject a former "report that concludes homosexuality, in itself, is not a barrier to ordination."

Lee Langner, choir director at Ottawa's Emmanuel United

Church, says that by ordaining homosexual ministers the church has strayed from the Scriptures, and he has decided to leave. Few have taken this "dramatic step," but it was reported that one in ten writing to the church has threatened to quit if the ordaining of homosexuals as ministers is adopted at the General Council meeting.

### Bride Price

● A decree by the government of Temotu Province in the Solomon Islands states that "\$600 is the maximum price that can be charged for brides." Why was this action taken? Because nearby Papua New Guinea "raised wife prices to \$3,000." The law states that anyone paying more than \$600 for a bride faces three months in jail and a \$90 fine.

### Sexual Activity and Hepatitis

● Dr. James Maynard, from the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia, said that the number of persons listed as hepatitis-B carriers is increasing at the rate of 2,000 per year in Canada and 20,000 in the United States. It is estimated that worldwide about 200 million people are carriers. Chronic hepatitis is the cause of 80 percent of the world's liver cancer cases according to Dr. Maynard, who adds: "It is second only to cigarette smoking as a major, known cancer-causing agent."

Dr. Maynard says that this hepatitis is largely spread through sexual relations, with the risk increasing in direct relation to the number of sex partners. He also asserts that every year the individual homo-

sexual runs a 25 percent risk of becoming infected. By the age of 40, studies show, 85 percent of homosexuals have been infected.

### American Check Writers

● Americans wrote more than 40 billion checks last year. That averages over 100 million checks a day, according to banking industry figures. It is reported that 130 million Americans have checking accounts. What was the total amount of the 40 billion checks written last year? Over a trillion dollars.

### Why Moon's Conviction?

● According to the report in the *Detroit Free Press*, clergyman Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church, "was convicted in 1982 of filing false income tax returns, sentenced to 18 months in prison and fined \$25,000." Although Moon has fought his case clear up to the U.S. Supreme Court, this high court denied a hearing of the case. Because a bank account is in Moon's name, the government says it was his money and was, therefore, subject to taxation. Moon began his prison stint on July 20, 1984.

### World's Deserts Spread

● "Six million hectares [15,000,000 a.] of land are being lost to desert each year and a further 21 million hectares [52,000,000 a.] are being rendered unproductive," according to a report in *The Gazette* of Montreal, Canada. In spite of a United Nations environment program aimed at fighting their spread, the world's deserts are threatening to engulf huge new areas of land. Principally the

areas are the Sahara, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Latin America and Australia, and the encroaching deserts affect about 850 million people. The problem, says the report, "lies in the misuse and overuse of land, and in overgrazing, deforestation, overcultivation and poor irrigation."

### Valium Tranquillizers

● "An estimated seven million people [in Britain] take Valium and other so called 'minor' tranquillisers each year," reports the London *Daily Mail*. The Valium tranquilizer drug was made in 1959, and it was said that as a muscle relaxant it was "ten times more effective than Librium." It was supposed to remove the sharp edges of emotional anguish while enabling a person to carry on a normal life.

The report adds, however: "Far from softening the cruelties of 20th-century life, it is claimed, tranquillisers can hook people—especially women." The Wolfson Unit of Clinical Pharmacology estimates that about a quarter of the patients taking benzodiazepines for four months become dependent on them. Effects produced are listed as: insomnia, anxiety, depression, panic attacks, nausea, blurred vision and muscle pain.

### Chopstick Dilemma

● Many young Japanese people are growing up without knowing how to use chopsticks, or *hashi*, properly. As reported in *The New York Times*, a Ministry of Education report showed that only 48.4 percent of the elementary school students surveyed stated that they knew how to use the implements cor-

rectly. Concerned over the situation, the Tokyo Police Department is giving its recruits a crash course in the etiquette and use of chopsticks. And, for a fee of almost \$80 (U.S.), one can obtain a three-month course of instruction in using *hashi*. "Trainer chopsticks"—with loops to show children where to put their fingers—have been devised and are being sold in record numbers. One college professor who has studied the matter estimates that over one third of the Japanese 30 and younger are incompetent when it comes to the use of chopsticks.

#### New Phone Code

- Beginning September 1, 1984, New York City gained a second telephone area code. "New York City is running out

of available access lines [telephone numbers]," New York Telephone District Staff Manager Charles Herndon told *Awake!* "A second area code will double the number of access lines for the city." With only one area code, the demand for new numbers would exceed the supply by early 1985. Presently, New York City has 4,200,000 telephone numbers—one phone number for every 1.7 persons!

The New York City borough of Brooklyn is being served by the new 718 area code. (It was 212.) This means that starting September 1, to reach the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses from outside Brooklyn, Queens or Staten Island, you must first dial 1, then area code 718, and the number 625-3600.

#### Refugees Ignored

- "Refugee officials are troubled," reports *The New York Times*, "by what they say is a growing tendency by passing ships not to help Vietnamese fleeing their country by boat." Recently, at least 40 passing ships, some coming as close as 10 yards (9 m), apparently ignored the pleas of a boatload of Vietnamese refugees trying to make their way across the South China Sea. As a result, 68 out of the 84 refugees in the boat died because of starvation, thirst or disease. Refugee officials say that captains of passing boats are unwilling to lose time in transporting refugees to the nearest point and dropping them off. The drop-off time alone often takes four or five days.

