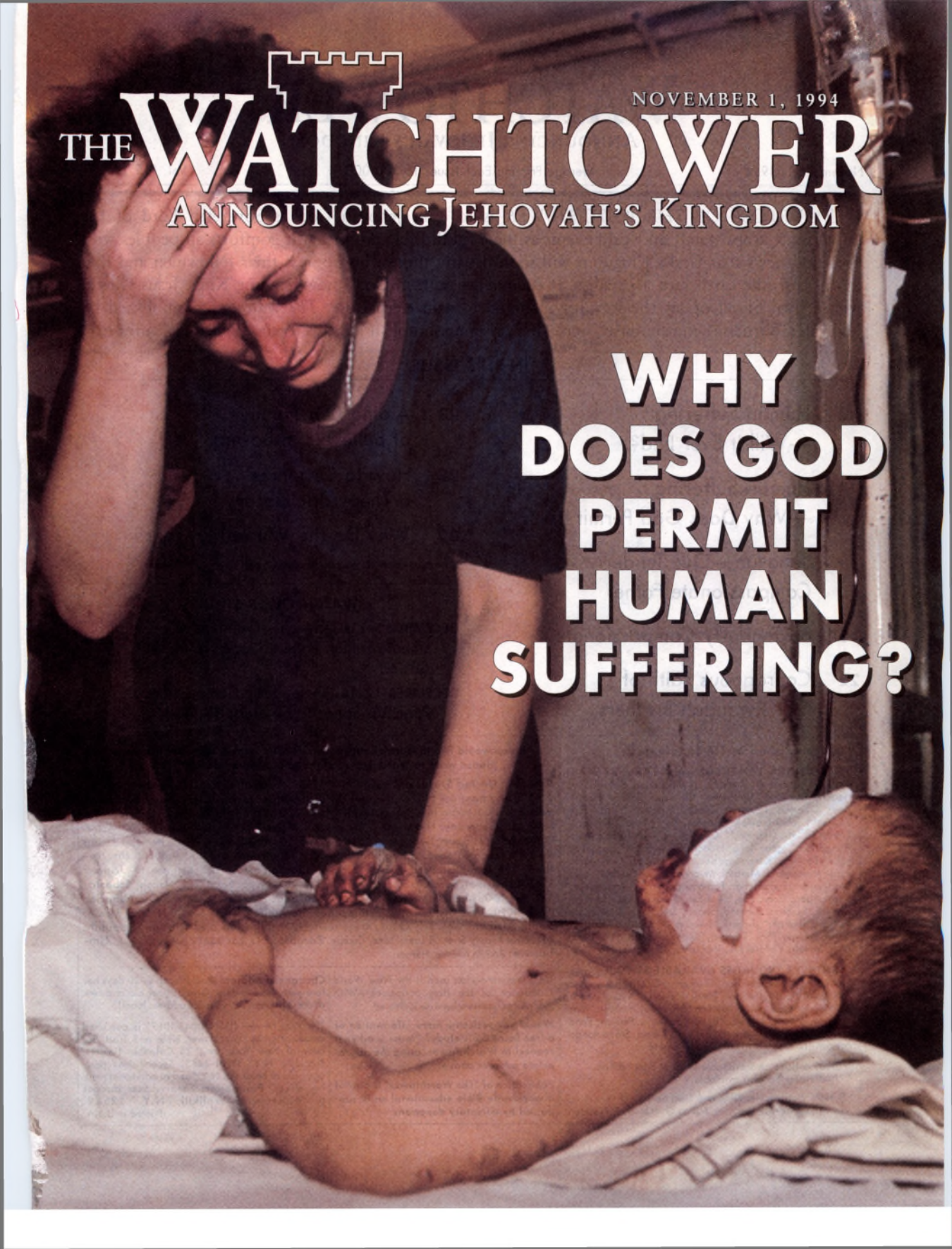




NOVEMBER 1, 1994

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

**WHY
DOES GOD
PERMIT
HUMAN
SUFFERING?**

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 fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in God's now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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HUMAN SUFFERING

Will it ever end?

GRUESOME scenes after a bomb explodes in a crowded market of Sarajevo; massacres and mayhem in Rwanda; starving children clamoring for food in Somalia; dazed families counting their losses after an earthquake in Los Angeles; helpless victims of flood-ravaged Bangladesh. Such scenes of human suffering confront us daily on TV or in magazines and newspapers.

A sad effect of human suffering is that it causes some people to lose faith in God. "The existence of evil has always provided

the most serious impediment to faith," according to a statement published by a Jewish community in the United States. The writers refer to deaths in Nazi concentration camps like Auschwitz and from bombs such as the one that exploded over Hiroshima. "The question of how a just and powerful God could allow the annihilation of so many innocent lives haunts the religious conscience and staggers the imagination," say the authors.

Sadly, the endless flow of tragic reports may have a numbing effect on human

emotions. As long as friends and relatives are not involved, many find themselves hardly moved by the suffering of others.

Yet, the fact that we are capable of feeling compassion, at least for our own loved ones, should tell us something about our Maker. The Bible says that man was created "in God's image" and "according to [his] likeness." (Genesis 1:26, 27) This does not mean that humans are like God in appearance. No, for Jesus Christ explained that "God is a Spirit," and "a spirit does not have flesh and bones." (John 4:24; Luke 24:39) Being made in God's likeness refers to our potential for displaying godlike qualities. Therefore, since normal humans feel compassion for those who suffer, we must conclude that man's Creator, Jehovah God, is compassionate and that he feels deeply for his suffering human creation.—Compare Luke 11:13.

One way in which God has shown his compassion is by providing mankind with a written explanation of the cause of suffering. This he has done in his Word, the Bi-

ble. The Bible clearly shows that God created man to enjoy life, not to suffer. (Genesis 2:7-9) It also reveals that the first humans brought suffering upon themselves by rejecting God's righteous rule.—Deuteronomy 32:4, 5; Romans 5:12.

In spite of this, God still feels compassion for suffering humanity. This is clearly shown in his promise to bring an end to human suffering. "Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."—Revelation 21:3, 4; see also Isaiah 25:8; 65:17-25; Romans 8:19-21.

These wonderful promises prove that God is sensitive to human suffering and that he is determined to bring an end to it. But what exactly caused human suffering in the first place, and why has God permitted it to continue until our day?

HUMAN SUFFERING

Why does God permit it?

AT THE start of man's history, there simply were no tears of sorrow or of pain. Human suffering did not exist. Mankind was given a perfect start. "God saw everything he had made and, look! it was very good."—Genesis 1:31.

But some object, 'The story of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden is just an allegory.' Sadly, many clergymen of Christen-

dom say this. However, no less an authority than Jesus Christ himself confirmed as historical the events in Eden. (Matthew 19:4-6) Furthermore, the only way to understand why God has permitted human suffering is to examine these events of man's early history.

The first man, Adam, was given the satisfying work of caring for the garden of

Eden. Also, God set before him the goal of expanding his Edenic home into a global garden of pleasure. (Genesis 1:28; 2:15) To help Adam accomplish this great task, God provided him with a marriage mate, Eve, and told them to be fruitful and multiply and to subdue the earth. Yet something else was needed to ensure the success of God's purpose for the earth and mankind. Being made in God's image, man possessed free will; hence, it was necessary that man's will never clash with God's. Otherwise, there would be disorder in the universe, and God's purpose to fill the earth with a peaceful human family would not be realized.

Submission to God's rule was not automatic. It was to be a loving expression of man's free will. For example, we read that when Jesus Christ faced a severe test, he prayed: "Father, if you wish, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, let, not my will, but yours take place."—Luke 22:42.

Likewise, it was up to Adam and Eve to prove whether they wanted to submit to God's rule. To this end, Jehovah God arranged for a simple test. One of the trees in the garden was called "the tree of the knowledge of good and bad." It represented God's right to determine the standards of correct conduct. In plain language, God forbade the eating of fruit from this particular tree. If Adam and Eve disobeyed, it would result in their death.—Genesis 2:9, 16, 17.

The Start of Human Suffering

One day a spirit son of God presumed to question God's way of ruling. Using a snake as a mouthpiece, he asked Eve: "Is it really so that God said you must not eat from every tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:1) Thus a seed of doubt was planted in Eve's mind as to whether God's way of ruling

was right.* In reply Eve gave the correct answer, which she had learned from her husband. However, the spirit creature then contradicted God and lied about the consequences of disobedience, saying: "You positively will not die. For God knows that in the very day of your eating from it your eyes are bound to be opened and you are bound to be like God, knowing good and bad."—Genesis 3:4, 5.

Sadly, Eve was deceived into thinking that disobedience would result, not in human suffering, but in a better life. The more she looked at the fruit, the more desirable it appeared, and she began eating it. Later, she talked Adam into eating it too. Tragically, Adam chose to retain his wife's favor rather than God's.—Genesis 3:6; 1 Timothy 2:13, 14.

By instigating this rebellion, the spirit creature turned himself into an opposer of God. He thus came to be called Satan, from the Hebrew word meaning "opposer." He also lied about God, making himself a slanderer. Hence, he is also called Devil, from a Greek word meaning "slanderer."—Revelation 12:9.

Thus, human suffering began. Three of God's creatures had misused their gift of free will, choosing a selfish way of life in opposition to their Creator. The question now arose, How would God handle this rebellion in a just way that would reassure the rest of his intelligent creation, including faithful angels in heaven and future descendants of Adam and Eve?

God's Wise Response

Some might argue that it would have been best if God had immediately destroyed Satan, Adam, and Eve. But that would not

* A lawyer and author of the early 20th century, Philip Mauro, who examined this question in his discussion of "The Origin of Evil," concluded that this was "the cause of all the trouble of mankind."

have settled the issues raised by the rebellion. Satan had questioned God's way of ruling, suggesting that humans would be better off independent of God's rule. Also, his success in turning the first two humans against God's rule raised other questions. Since Adam and Eve sinned, did this mean that there was something wrong with the way God had created man? Could God have anyone on earth who would remain faithful to him? And what about Jehovah's angelic sons who witnessed Satan's rebellion? Would they uphold the righteousness of His sovereignty? Obviously, sufficient time was needed to settle these issues. That is why God has allowed Satan to exist until our day.

As for Adam and Eve, on the day of their disobedience, God sentenced them to death. So the dying process began. Their descendants, who were conceived after Adam and Eve had sinned, inherited sin and death from their imperfect parents.—Romans 5:14.

Satan started off with the first two humans on his side of the issue. He has used the time allowed him to try to keep all of Adam's descendants under his control. He has also succeeded in seducing a number of angels into joining in his rebellion. However, the majority of God's angelic sons have loyally upheld the righteousness of Jehovah's rulership.—Genesis 6:1, 2; Jude 6; Revelation 12:3, 9.

At issue was God's rule versus Satan's, an issue that was very much alive in the days of Job. This faithful man proved by his conduct that he preferred God's righteous rule to satanic independence, as such God-fearing men as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph had already done. Job became the subject of a conversation that took place in heaven in front of

the faithful angels of God. In support of His righteous rule, God said to Satan: "Have you set your heart upon my servant Job, that there is no one like him in the earth, a man blameless and upright, fearing God and turning aside from bad?"—Job 1:6-8.

Refusing to admit defeat, Satan claimed that Job served God only for selfish reasons, since God had richly blessed Job with material prosperity. So Satan charged: "For a change, thrust out your hand, please, and touch everything he has and see whether he will not curse you to your very face." (Job 1:11) Satan even went further, calling into question the integrity of all of God's creatures. "Everything that a man has he will give in behalf of his soul," he charged. (Job 2:4) This slanderous attack involved not only Job but all of God's faithful worshippers in heaven and on earth. Satan implied that they would give up their relationship with Jehovah if their lives were at stake.

Jehovah God had full confidence in Job's integrity. Giving evidence of that, he permitted Satan to bring human suffering upon Job. By his faithfulness Job not only cleared his own name but, more important, upheld the righteousness of Jehovah's sovereignty. The Devil was proved to be a liar.—Job 2:10; 42:7.

However, the best example of faithfulness under test was Jesus Christ. God had transferred the life of this angelic Son from heaven to the womb of a virgin. Therefore Jesus did not inherit sin and imperfection. Instead he grew up to be a perfect man, the exact equivalent of the first man before that one lost his perfection. Satan made Jesus a special target, bringing many temptations and trials upon him, climaxing in a humiliating death. But Satan failed to break Jesus' integrity. In a complete way, Jesus upheld the righteousness

of his Father's rule. He also proved that the perfect man Adam had no excuse for joining Satan's rebellion. Adam could have been faithful under his much smaller test.

What Else Has Been Proved?

About 6,000 years of human suffering have passed since Adam and Eve's rebellion. During this time God has allowed mankind to experiment with many different forms of government. The ghastly record of human suffering proves that man is not capable of ruling himself. In fact, anarchy now prevails in many areas of the earth. Independence from God, as advocated by Satan, is calamitous.

Jehovah has not had to prove anything to himself. He knows that his way of ruling is righteous and in the best interests of his creatures. However, to answer all the questions raised by Satan's rebellion satisfactorily, he has allowed his intelligent creatures opportunity to show their preference for his righteous rule.

The rewards for loving God and being faithful to him far outweigh the temporary period of suffering at the Devil's hand. The case of Job illustrates this. Jehovah God healed Job from the sickness that the Devil had brought upon him. Furthermore, God "blessed the end of Job afterward more than his beginning." Finally, after a 140-year extension of life, "Job died, old and satisfied with days."—Job 42:10-17.

The Christian Bible writer James calls attention to this, saying: "You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome Jehovah gave, that Jehovah is very tender in affection and compassionate."—James 5:11, footnote.

The time is now up for Satan and his world. Soon, God will reverse all the suffering that Satan's rebellion has brought upon mankind. Even the dead will be raised. (John 11:25) Then, faithful men like Job will have the opportunity of gaining everlasting life on a paradise earth. These



God's purpose to transform the earth into an Edenic paradise must be fulfilled!

future blessings that God will pour out upon his servants will vindicate him forevermore as a righteous Sovereign who is indeed "very tender in affection and compassionate."



Above: Acropolis Museum, Greece

CRUEL GODS OF MEN

ANCIENT gods were often depicted as bloodthirsty and lustful. To placate them, parents even burned their children alive in fires. (Deuteronomy 12:31) At the other extreme, pagan philosophers taught that God was without such feelings as anger or pity.

The demon-inspired views of these philosophers influenced God's professed people, the Jews. The Jewish philosopher Philo, a contemporary of Jesus, asserted that God is "not susceptible to any passion at all."

Not even the strict Jewish sect of the Pharisees escaped the influence of Greek philosophy. They adopted Plato's teachings that man is made up of an

immortal soul trapped in a human body. Furthermore, according to the first-century historian Josephus, the Pharisees believed that the souls of wicked people "suffer eternal punishment." The Bible, however, gives no basis for such a view.—Genesis 2:7; 3:19; Ecclesiastes 9:5; Ezekiel 18:4.

What about the followers of Jesus? Did they allow themselves to be influenced by pagan philosophy? Recognizing this danger, the apostle Paul warned fellow Christians: "Look out: perhaps there may be someone who will carry you off as his prey through the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of things of the world and not according to Christ."—Colossians 2:8; see also 1 Timothy 6:20.

Sadly, a number of professed Christian overseers of the sec-

ond and third centuries ignored that warning and taught that God does not have feelings. *The Encyclopedia of Religion* states: "On the whole, God's attributes were understood much as they were affirmed in Jewish and philosophical thought of the time . . . The idea that God the Father could have feelings such as pity . . . has been generally regarded as unacceptable at least until the late twentieth century."

Thus, Christendom adopted the false teaching of a cruel god who punishes sinners by making them suffer conscious torment forever. On the other hand, Jehovah God plainly states in his Word, the Bible, that "the wages sin pays is death," not eternal conscious torment.—Romans 6:23.

Courtesy of The British Museum



JEHOVAH—OUR TENDERLY COMPASSIONATE FATHER

"Jehovah is very tender in affection and compassionate."

—JAMES 5:11, footnote.

THE universe is so large that astronomers cannot even begin to number all its galaxies. Our galaxy, the Milky Way, is so vast that man could not even begin to count all its stars. Some stars, like Antares, are thousands of times bigger and brighter than our sun. How powerful the Grand Creator of all the stars in the universe must be! Indeed, he is "the One who is bringing forth the army of them even by number, all of whom he calls even by name." (Isaiah 40:26) Yet, this same awe-inspiring God is also "very tender in affection and compassionate." How refreshing such knowledge is to humble servants of Jehovah, especially to those who suffer from persecution, sickness, depression, or other hardships!

² Many view the softer emotions, such as the "tender affections and compassions" of Christ, as weaknesses. (Philippians 2:1) Influenced by evolutionary philosophy, they encourage people to put themselves first even if it means trampling on the feelings of others. A number of role models in entertainment and sports are machos who do not shed tears or show tender affection. Some political rulers act in like manner. The Stoic philosopher Seneca, who educated cruel emperor Nero, emphasized that "pity

is a weakness." M'Clintock and Strong's *Cyclopædia* states: "The influences of Stoicism . . . continue to operate on the minds of men even in the present times."

³ In contrast, the personality of mankind's Creator is heartwarming. He described himself to Moses in these words: "Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth, . . . pardoning error and transgression and sin, but by no means will he give exemption from punishment." (Exodus 34:6, 7) True, Jehovah ended this description of himself by highlighting his justice. He will not exempt willful sinners from deserved punishment. Still, he describes himself first of all as a God who is merciful, literally "full of mercy."

⁴ Sometimes the word "mercy" is thought of only in the cold, judicial sense of withholding punishment. However, a comparison of Bible translations brings out the rich meaning of the Hebrew adjective derived from the verb *racham'*. According to some scholars, its root meaning is "to be soft." "*Racham*," explains the book *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, "expresses a deep and tender feeling of compassion, such as is

1. Why are lowly ones drawn to Jehovah God?
2. How are tender emotions often viewed by people of this world?

3. How did Jehovah describe himself to Moses?
4. What is the heartwarming meaning of the Hebrew word often translated "mercy"?



When divine compassion reached its limit, Jehovah allowed the Babylonians to conquer his wayward people

aroused by the sight of weakness or suffering in those that are dear to us or need our help.” Other heartwarming definitions of this desirable quality can be found in *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 2, pages 375-9.

⁵ God’s tender compassion is clearly evident in the Law he gave to the nation of Israel. Disadvantaged ones, such as widows, orphans, and the poor, were to be treated compassionately. (Exodus 22:22-27; Leviticus 19:9, 10; Deuteronomy 15:7-11) All, including slaves and animals, were to benefit from the weekly Sabbath of rest. (Exodus 20:10) Furthermore, God took note of individuals who treated lowly ones tenderly. Proverbs 19:17 states: “He that is showing favor to the lowly one is lending to Jehovah, and his treatment He will repay to him.”

5. How was mercy evident in the Mosaic Law?

Limits to Divine Compassion

⁶ The Israelites bore God’s name and worshiped at the temple in Jerusalem, which was “a house to the name of Jehovah.” (2 Chronicles 2:4; 6:33) In time, however, they came to tolerate immorality, idolatry, and murder, bringing great reproach on Jehovah’s name. In harmony with his compassionate personality, God patiently tried to rectify this bad situation without bringing calamity upon the entire nation. He “kept sending against them by means of his messengers, sending again and again, because he felt compassion for his people and for his dwelling. But they were continually making jest at the messengers of the true God and despising his words and mocking at his prophets, until the rage of Jehovah came up against his people, until there was no healing.”—2 Chronicles 36:15, 16.

⁷ Although Jehovah is compassionate and slow to anger, when necessary he does man-

6. Why did Jehovah send prophets and messengers to his people?

7. When Jehovah’s compassion reached its limit, what happened to the kingdom of Judah?



Watching his beloved Son die must have caused Jehovah God the greatest pain that anyone has ever had to suffer

ifest righteous anger. Back then, divine compassion had reached its limit.

We read about the consequences: "So [Jehovah] brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who proceeded to kill their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, neither did he feel compassion for young man or virgin, old or decrepit. Everything He gave into his hand." (2 Chronicles 36:17) Thus Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed, and the nation was taken captive to Babylon.

Compassion for His Name

⁸ The surrounding nations rejoiced over this calamity. In a mocking way, they said: "These are the people of Jehovah, and from his land they have gone out." Sensitive to this reproach, Jehovah declared: "I shall have compassion on my holy name . . . And I shall certainly sanctify my great name, . . . and the nations will have to know that I am Jehovah."—Ezekiel 36:20-23.

⁹ After his nation had been in captivity for 70 years, the compassionate God, Jehovah, released them and allowed them to return and rebuild the temple

8, 9. (a) Why did Jehovah declare that he would have compassion for his name? (b) How were the enemies of Jehovah silenced?

in Jerusalem. This silenced the surrounding nations, who looked on in amazement. (Ezekiel 36:35, 36) Sadly, though, the nation of Israel again fell into bad practices. A faithful Jew, Nehemiah, helped to rectify the situation. In a public prayer, he reviewed God's compassionate dealings with the nation, saying:

¹⁰ "In the time of their distress they would cry out to you, and you yourself would hear from the very heavens; and in accord with your abundant mercy you would give them saviors who would save them out of the hand of their adversaries. But as soon as they were at rest, they would again do what is bad before you, and you would leave them to the hand of their enemies, who would tread them down. Then they would return and call to you for aid, and you yourself would hear from the very heavens and deliver them in accord with your abundant mercy, time and again. . . . You were indulgent with them for many years."—Nehemiah 9:26-30; see also Isaiah 63:9, 10.

¹¹ Finally, after cruelly rejecting God's beloved Son, the Jewish nation lost its privileged status forever. God's loyal attachment to them had lasted over 1,500 years. It stands as an eternal witness to the fact that Jehovah is indeed a God of mercy. What a sharp contrast to the cruel gods and unfeeling deities invented by sinful men!—See page 8.

The Greatest Expression of Compassion

¹² The greatest expression of God's compassion was his sending his beloved Son

10. How did Nehemiah highlight Jehovah's compassion?

11. What contrast exists between Jehovah and the gods of men?

12. What was the greatest expression of God's compassion?

A GRAPHIC TERM FOR "TENDER LOVING CARE"

"O MY intestines, my intestines!" cried the prophet Jeremiah. Was he complaining of a bowel ailment due to something bad he had eaten? No. Jeremiah was using a Hebrew metaphor to describe his deep concern over the calamity coming upon the kingdom of Judah.—Jeremiah 4:19.

Since Jehovah God has deep feelings, the Hebrew word for "intestines," or "bowels" (*me'im*'), is also used to describe his tender emotions. For example, decades before the days of Jeremiah, the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel was taken captive by the king of Assyria. Jehovah permitted this as punishment for their unfaithfulness. But did God

forget them in exile? No. He was still deeply attached to them as part of his covenant people. Referring to them by the name of the prominent tribe Ephraim, Jehovah asked: "Is Ephraim a precious son to me, or a fondly treated child? For to the extent of my speaking against him I shall without fail remember him further. That is why my intestines have become boisterous for him. By all means I shall have pity upon him."—Jeremiah 31:20.

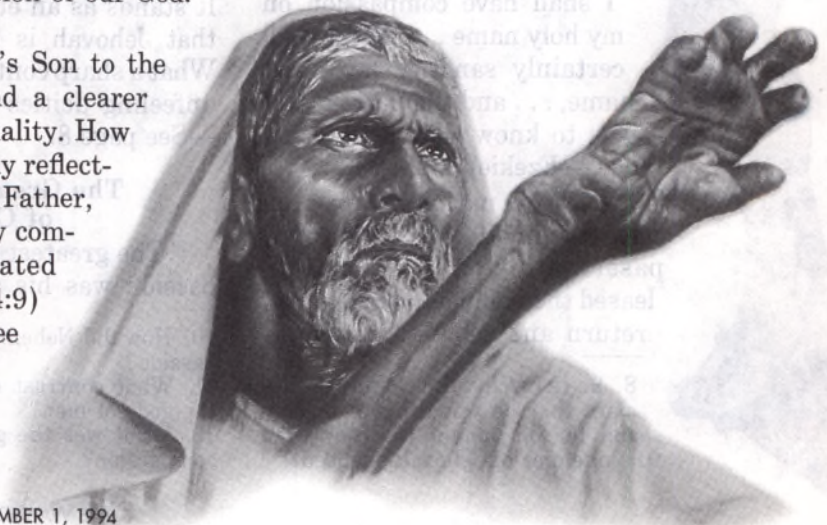
By saying "my intestines have become boisterous," Jehovah used a figure of speech to describe his deep feelings of affection for his exiled people. In his commentary on this verse, 19th-century Bible

to the earth. True, Jesus' life of integrity brought great pleasure to Jehovah, supplying him with a perfect answer to the Devil's false charges. (Proverbs 27:11) At the same time, however, having to watch his beloved Son suffer a cruel and humiliating death no doubt caused Jehovah greater pain than any human parent has ever had to endure. It was a very loving sacrifice, opening the way for mankind's salvation. (John 3:16) As Zechariah, the father of John the Baptizer, foretold, it magnified "the tender compassion of our God."—Luke 1:77, 78.

¹³ The sending of God's Son to the earth also gave mankind a clearer view of Jehovah's personality. How so? In that Jesus perfectly reflected the personality of his Father, especially in the tenderly compassionate way he treated lowly ones! (John 1:14; 14:9) In this respect, the three

13. In what important way has Jesus reflected the personality of his Father?

Gospel writers Matthew, Mark, and Luke use a Greek verb, *splag-khni'zo-mai*, which comes from the Greek word for "intestines." "From its very derivation," explains Bible scholar William Barclay, "it can be seen that it describes no ordinary pity or compassion, but an emotion which moves a man to the very depths of his being. It is the strongest word in Greek for the feeling of compassion." It is variously translated "feel pity" or "moved with pity."—Mark 6:34; 8:2.



scholar E. Henderson wrote: "Nothing can excel the touching exhibition of tender parental feeling towards a returning prodigal, which is here presented by Jehovah. . . . Though he had thus spoken against [the idolatrous Ephraimites] and punished them . . . , he never forgot them, but, on the contrary, delighted in the anticipation of their ultimate recovery."

The Greek word for "bowels," or "intestines," is used in a similar way in the Christian Greek Scriptures. When not used literally, as at Acts 1:18, it refers to tender emotions of affection or compassion. (Philemon 12) The word is sometimes joined to the Greek word meaning "good" or "well." The apostles Paul and Peter use the combined expression when encouraging Christians to be "tenderly

compassionate," literally "disposed well to pity." (Ephesians 4:32; 1 Peter 3:8) The Greek word for "bowels" can also be joined to the Greek word *poly*. The combination literally means "having much bowel." This very rare Greek expression is used only once in the Bible, and it refers to Jehovah God. The New World Translation gives this rendering: "Jehovah is very tender in affection." —James 5:11.

How grateful we should be that the most powerful one in the universe, Jehovah God, is so unlike the cruel gods invented by uncompassionate men! In imitation of their "tenderly compassionate" God, true Christians are moved to act likewise in their dealings with one another. —Ephesians 5:1.

When Jesus Felt Pity

¹⁴ The scene is a city of Galilee. A man "full of leprosy" approaches Jesus without giving the customary warning. (Luke 5:12) Does Jesus harshly reprove him for not shouting, "Unclean, unclean," as required by God's Law? (Leviticus 13:45) No. Instead, Jesus listens to the man's desperate plea: "If you just want to, you can make me clean." "Moved with pity," Jesus reaches out and touches the leper, saying: "I want to. Be made clean." The man's health is instantly restored. Jesus thus demonstrates not only his miraculous, God-given powers but also the tender feelings that motivate him to use such powers. —Mark 1:40-42.

¹⁵ Must Jesus be approached before he will show feelings of compassion? No. Sometime later, he meets up with a funeral procession coming out of the city of Nain. No doubt, Jesus has witnessed many funerals before, but this one is especially tragic. The deceased is the only son of a widow. "Moved with pity," Jesus approaches her and says: "Stop weeping." Then he per-

14, 15. In a city of Galilee, how is Jesus moved with pity, and what does this illustrate?

forms the outstanding miracle of raising her son back to life. —Luke 7:11-15.

¹⁶ The dramatic lesson learned from the above events is that when Jesus is "moved with pity," he does something positive to help. On a later occasion, Jesus inspects the large crowds that keep following him. Matthew reports that "he felt pity for them, because they were skinned and thrown about like sheep without a shepherd." (Matthew 9:36) The Pharisees do little to satisfy the spiritual hunger of the common people. Instead, they burden humble ones with many unnecessary rules. (Matthew 12:1, 2; 15:1-9; 23:4, 23) Their view of the common people was revealed when they said of those who listened to Jesus: "This crowd that does not know the Law are accursed people." —John 7:49.

¹⁷ In contrast, Jesus is deeply moved by the spiritual plight of the crowds. But there are simply too many interested people for him to give them individual care.

16. Why does Jesus feel pity for the large crowd following him?

17. How does Jesus' pity for the crowds move him, and what far-reaching guidance does he there provide?

So he tells his disciples to pray for more workers. (Matthew 9:35-38) In harmony with such prayers, Jesus sends out his apostles with the message: "The kingdom of the heavens has drawn near." The instructions given on that occasion have served as a valuable guide for Christians right down to the present day. Without doubt, Jesus' feelings of compassion move him to satisfy the spiritual hunger of mankind.—Matthew 10:5-7.

¹⁸ On another occasion, Jesus again feels concern for the spiritual needs of the crowds. This time he and his apostles are tired after a busy preaching tour, and they seek out a place to rest. But the people soon find them. Instead of Jesus' being irritated by this intrusion into their privacy, Mark records that he was "moved with pity." And what was the reason for Jesus' deep feelings? "They were as sheep without a shepherd." Again, Jesus acts upon his feelings and starts teaching the crowds "about the kingdom of God." Yes, he was so deeply moved by their spiritual hunger that

18. How does Jesus react when crowds intrude on his privacy, and what lesson do we learn from this?

Questions in Review

- ☐ What does it mean to be merciful?
- ☐ How did Jehovah show compassion for his name?
- ☐ What is the greatest expression of compassion?
- ☐ In what outstanding way does Jesus reflect the personality of his Father?
- ☐ What do we learn from Jesus' compassionate actions and from his illustrations?

he sacrificed needed rest to teach them.—Mark 6:34; Luke 9:11.

¹⁹ While primarily concerned about people's spiritual needs, Jesus never overlooked their basic physical needs. On that same occasion, he also "healed those needing a cure." (Luke 9:11) On a later occasion, the crowds had been with him for a long time, and they were far from home. Sensing their physical need, Jesus said to his disciples: "I feel pity for the crowd, because it is already three days that they have stayed with me and they have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away fasting. They may possibly give out on the road." (Matthew 15:32) Jesus now does something to avert possible suffering. He miraculously provides thousands of men, women, and children with a meal produced from seven loaves of bread and a few little fishes.

²⁰ The last recorded instance of Jesus' being moved with pity is on his final trip to Jerusalem. Large crowds are traveling with him to celebrate the Passover. On the road near Jericho, two blind beggars keep shouting: "Lord, have mercy on us." The crowds try to silence them, but Jesus calls them and asks what they want him to do. "Lord, let our eyes be opened," they plead. "Moved with pity," he touches their eyes, and they receive sight. (Matthew 20:29-34) What an important lesson we learn from this! Jesus is about to enter the last week of his earthly ministry. He has a lot of work to accomplish before suffering a cruel death at the hands of Satan's agents. Yet, he does not allow the pressure of this momentous time to crowd out his tender feelings of compassion for less important human needs.

19. How did Jesus' concern for the crowds extend even beyond their spiritual needs?

20. What do we learn from the last recorded instance of Jesus' being moved with pity?

Illustrations That Highlight Compassion

²¹ The Greek verb *splag-khni'zo-mai*, used in these accounts of Jesus' life, is also used in three of Jesus' illustrations. In one story a slave begs for time to repay a large debt. His master, "moved to pity," cancels the debt. This illustrates that Jehovah God has shown great compassion in canceling a large debt of sin for each individual Christian who exercises faith in the ransom sacrifice of Jesus.—Matthew 18:27; 20:28.

²² Then there is the story of the prodigal son. Recall what happens when the wayward son returns home. "While he was yet a long way off, his father caught sight of him and was moved with pity, and he ran and fell upon his neck and tenderly kissed

21. What is illustrated by the master's canceling the large debt of his slave?

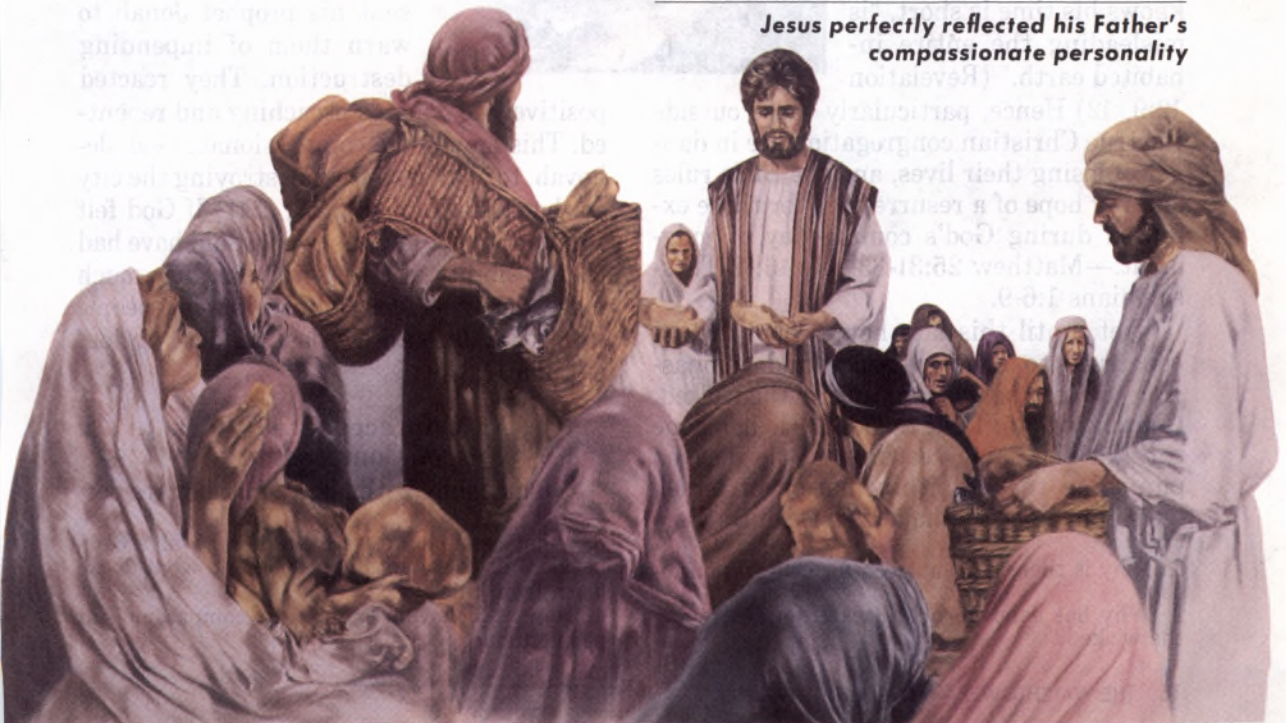
22. What does the parable of the prodigal son illustrate?

him." (Luke 15:20) This shows that when a Christian who has become wayward shows genuine repentance, Jehovah will feel pity and tenderly accept that one back. Thus, by these two illustrations, Jesus shows that our Father, Jehovah, "is very tender in affection and compassionate."—James 5:11, footnote.

²³ The third illustrative use of *splag-khni'zo-mai* concerns the compassionate Samaritan who "was moved with pity" at the plight of a Jew who had been robbed and left half dead. (Luke 10:33) Acting upon these feelings, the Samaritan did all in his power to help the stranger. This demonstrates that Jehovah and Jesus expect true Christians to follow their example in displaying tenderness and compassion. Some of the ways we can do this will be discussed in the next article.

23. What lesson do we learn from Jesus' illustration of the neighborly Samaritan?

Jesus perfectly reflected his Father's compassionate personality



BE TENDERLY COMPASSIONATE

"Clothe yourselves with the tender affections of compassion, kindness."

—COLOSSIANS 3:12.

NEVER before in history have so many people been in need of compassionate assistance. In the face of sickness, hunger, unemployment, crime, wars, anarchy, and natural disasters, millions need help. But there is a problem even more serious, and that is mankind's desperate spiritual plight. Satan, who knows his time is short, "is misleading the entire inhabited earth." (Revelation

12:9, 12) Hence, particularly those outside the true Christian congregation are in danger of losing their lives, and the Bible rules out any hope of a resurrection for those executed during God's coming day of judgment.—Matthew 25:31-33, 41, 46; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9.

² Yet, until this late hour, Jehovah God continues to show patience and compassion toward the unthankful and the wicked. (Matthew 5:45; Luke 6:35, 36) He has done this for the same reason that he delayed punishing the unfaithful nation of Israel. "As I am alive," is the utterance of the Sov-



ereign Lord Jehovah, "I take delight, not in the death of the wicked one, but in that someone wicked turns back from his way and actually keeps living. Turn back, turn back from your bad ways, for why is it that you should die, O house of Israel?"—Ezekiel 33:11.

³ Jehovah's compassion was also extended to the wicked Ninevites. Jehovah sent his prophet Jonah to warn them of impending destruction. They reacted

positively to Jonah's preaching and repented. This moved the compassionate God, Jehovah, to hold back from destroying the city at that time. (Jonah 3:10; 4:11) If God felt sorry for the Ninevites, who would have had the possibility of a resurrection, how much more must he feel compassion for people who today face an everlasting destruction!—Luke 11:32.

An Unprecedented Work of Compassion

⁴ In harmony with his compassionate per-

1. Why is there a great need for compassion today?
2. Why has Jehovah held back from destroying the wicked?

3. What example do we have of Jehovah's compassion for those not his people, and what do we learn from this?
4. How is Jehovah expressing compassion for people today?

sonality, Jehovah has commissioned his Witnesses to keep visiting their neighbors with the "good news of the kingdom." (Matthew 24:14) And when people respond with appreciation to this lifesaving work, Jehovah opens their hearts to grasp the Kingdom message. (Matthew 11:25; Acts 16:14) In imitation of their God, true Christians show tender compassion by calling back on interested ones, helping them, where possible, by means of a Bible study. Thus, in 1993, over four and a half million Witnesses of Jehovah, in 231 countries, spent more than one billion hours preaching from house to house and studying the Bible with their neighbors. These newly interested ones, in turn, have the opportunity of dedicating their lives to Jehovah and joining the ranks of his baptized Witnesses. Thus, they too commit themselves to this unprecedented work of compassion in behalf of prospective disciples still trapped in Satan's dying world.—Matthew 28:19, 20; John 14:12.

In 231 lands Jehovah's Witnesses are carrying out an unprecedented work of compassion in people's homes, in the streets, even in prisons



⁵ Soon Jehovah will act as "a manly person of war." (Exodus 15:3) Out of compassion for his name and for his people, he will clear away wickedness and establish a righteous new world. (2 Peter 3:13) The first to experience God's day of wrath will be the churches of Christendom. Even as God did not spare his own temple in Jerusalem from the hand of the king of Babylon, so he will not spare religious organizations that have misrepresented him. God will put it into the heart of members of the United Nations to desolate Christendom and all other forms of false religion. (Revelation 17:16, 17) "And as for me," Jehovah declares, "my eye will not feel sorry, neither shall I show compassion. Their way I shall certainly bring upon their own head."—Ezekiel 9:5, 10.

5. When divine compassion has reached its limit, what will happen to religion that misrepresents God?



⁶ While there is still time, Jehovah's Witnesses continue to show compassion for their neighbors by zealously preaching God's message of salvation. And naturally, where possible, they also help people who are in material need. In this regard, though, their first responsibility is to care for the needs of close family members and those related to them in the faith. (Galatians 6:10; 1 Timothy 5:4, 8) The many relief missions performed by Jehovah's Witnesses in behalf of fellow believers who have suffered various disasters have been striking examples of compassion. Nevertheless, Christians do not have to wait for a crisis before showing tender compassion. They quickly display this quality in dealing with the ups and downs of daily living.

Part of the New Personality

⁷ It is true that our sinful nature and the bad influence of Satan's world are obstacles to our being tenderly compassionate. That is why the Bible urges us to put away "wrath, anger, badness, abusive speech, and obscene talk." Instead we are counseled to 'clothe ourselves with the new personality'—a personality that conforms to God's image. First of all, we are commanded to clothe ourselves "with the tender affections of compassion, kindness, lowliness of mind, mildness, and long-suffering." The Bible then shows us a practical way to manifest these qualities. "Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely if anyone has a cause for complaint against another. Even as Jehovah freely forgave you, so do you also." It is much easier to be forgiving if we have cultivated the 'tender affection of

compassion' for our brothers.—Colossians 3:8-13.

⁸ On the other hand, the failure to display compassionate forgiveness jeopardizes our relationship with Jehovah. This was forcefully shown by Jesus in his illustration of the unforgiving slave, put in jail by his master "until he should pay back all that was owing." The slave deserved this treatment because he shockingly failed to show compassion for a fellow slave who begged for mercy. Jesus concluded the illustration by saying: "In like manner my heavenly Father will also deal with you if you do not forgive each one his brother from your hearts."—Matthew 18:34, 35.

⁹ Being tenderly compassionate is an important aspect of love. And love is the identifying mark of true Christianity. (John 13:35) Hence, the Bible's description of the new personality concludes: "Besides all these

8. Why is it important to have a forgiving spirit?

9. How is tender compassion related to the most important aspect of the new personality?

Exposure to violence, such as that on TV, undermines tender compassion



6. In what ways are Jehovah's Witnesses moved to show compassion?

7. (a) At Colossians 3:8-13, how is compassion linked with the new personality? (b) What does tender affection make it easier for Christians to do?

things, clothe yourselves with love, for it is a perfect bond of union.”—Colossians 3:14.

Envy—An Obstacle to Compassion

¹⁰ Because of our sinful human nature, feelings of envy can easily take root in our hearts. A brother or a sister may be blessed with natural abilities or material advantages that we do not have. Or perhaps someone has received special spiritual blessings and privileges. If we become envious of such ones, will we be able to treat them with tender compassion? Probably not. Instead, jealous feelings may eventually manifest themselves in critical talk or unkind acts, for Jesus said of humans: “Out of the heart’s abundance his mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:45) Others may side with such criticism. Thus the peace of a family or a congregation of God’s people could be disrupted.

¹¹ Consider what happened in one large family. Jacob’s ten oldest sons grew jealous of their younger brother Joseph because he was their father’s favorite. As a result, “they were not able to speak peacefully to him.” Later, Joseph was blessed with divine dreams, proving that he had Jehovah’s favor. This gave his brothers “further reason to hate him.” Because they did not root out jealousy from their hearts, it crowded out compassion and led to serious sin.—Genesis 37:4, 5, 11.

¹² Cruelly, they sold Joseph into slavery. In an attempt to cover up their wrongdoing, they deceived their father into thinking that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. Years later their sin came to light when they

10. (a) What may cause jealousy to take root in our hearts? (b) What bad results can come from jealousy?

11. How did Joseph’s ten brothers crowd compassion out of their hearts, and with what result?

12, 13. What should we do when feelings of jealousy enter our heart?

UNCOMPASSIONATE PHARISEES

THE Sabbath day of rest was meant to be a spiritual and physical blessing for God’s people. Jewish religious leaders, however, made many rules that dishonored God’s Sabbath law and made it burdensome for the people. For example, if anyone had an accident or suffered from sickness, he could not receive help on the Sabbath unless his life was in danger.

One school of Pharisees was so strict in its interpretation of the Sabbath law that it said: “One does not comfort mourners, nor does one visit sick people on the Sabbath.” Other religious leaders allowed such visits on the Sabbath but stipulated: “Tears are forbidden.”

Thus, Jesus rightly condemned the Jewish religious leaders for overlooking the more important requirements of the Law, such as justice, love, and mercy. No wonder he said to the Pharisees: “You make the word of God invalid by your tradition!”—Mark 7:8, 13; Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42.

were forced by famine to go down to Egypt and buy food. The food administrator, whom they did not recognize to be Joseph, accused them of spying and told them not to seek his help again unless they brought their youngest brother, Benjamin. By this time Benjamin had become their father’s favorite, and they knew that Jacob would not want to let him go.

¹³ So while standing before Joseph, their consciences moved them to admit: “Unquestionably we are guilty with regard to our brother [Joseph], because we saw the distress of his soul when he implored compassion on our part, but we did not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us.” (Genesis 42:21) By his compassionate yet firm dealings, Joseph helped his brothers prove the genuineness of their repentance.

Then he revealed his identity to them and generously forgave them. Family unity was restored. (Genesis 45:4-8) As Christians, we should learn a lesson from this. Knowing the bad consequences of envy, we should pray to Jehovah for help in replacing jealous feelings with the 'tender affection of compassion.'

Other Obstacles to Compassion

¹⁴ Another obstacle to our being compassionate can result from unnecessarily exposing ourselves to violence. Sports and entertainment that feature violence promote bloodlust. In Bible times, pagans regularly watched gladiatorial contests and other forms of human torture in the arenas of the Roman Empire. Such entertainment, according to one historian, "destroyed the nerve of sympathy for suffering which distinguishes the human from the brute creation." Much of the entertainment in today's modern world has the same effect. Christians, who strive to be tenderly compassionate, need to be highly selective in their choice of reading matter, motion pictures, and TV programs. Wisely they keep in mind the words of Psalm 11:5: "Anyone loving violence [Jehovah] certainly hates."

¹⁵ A self-centered person is also likely to lack compassion. This is serious, as the apostle John explains: "Whoever has this world's means for supporting life and beholds his brother having need and yet shuts the door of his tender compassions upon him, in what way does the love of God remain in him?" (1 John 3:17) A similar lack of compassion was shown by the self-righteous

priest and the Levite in Jesus' illustration of the neighborly Samaritan. On seeing the plight of their half-dead Jewish brother, these crossed to the other side of the road and continued on their way. (Luke 10:31, 32) On the contrary, compassionate Christians respond quickly to the material and spiritual needs of their brothers. And like the Samaritan of Jesus' illustration, they are also concerned about the needs of strangers. Thus they gladly give of their time, energy, and means to advance the disciple-making work. In this manner they contribute to the salvation of millions.—1 Timothy 4:16.

Compassion for the Sick

¹⁶ Sickness is the lot of imperfect, dying mankind. Christians are no exception, and most of them are not medical professionals, nor can they perform miracles as did some early Christians who received such powers from Christ and his apostles. With the death of Christ's apostles and their immediate associates, such miraculous powers passed away. Hence, our ability to aid those who suffer from physical sickness, including brain dysfunction and hallucinations, is limited.—Acts 8:13, 18; 1 Corinthians 13:8.

¹⁷ Depression often accompanies illness. For example, God-fearing Job was very depressed because of severe sickness and the calamities that Satan brought upon him. (Job 1:18, 19; 2:7; 3:3, 11-13) He needed friends who would treat him with tender compassion and who would "speak consolingly." (1 Thessalonians 5:14) Instead, three so-called comforters visited him and jumped to wrong conclusions. They aggravated Job's depressed state by suggest-

14. Why should we avoid unnecessary exposure to violence?

15. (a) How may a person betray a serious lack of compassion? (b) How do true Christians respond to the needs of fellow believers and neighbors?

16. What limitations do we encounter in dealing with cases of sickness?

17. What lesson do we learn from the way the sick and bereaved man Job was treated?

ing that his calamities were due to some fault of his own. Being tenderly compassionate, Christians will avoid falling into a similar trap when fellow believers are sick or depressed. Sometimes, the main thing that such ones need is a few kindly visits from elders or other mature Christians who will listen with a sympathetic ear, show understanding, and provide loving Scriptural counsel.—Romans 12:15; James 1:19.

Compassion for the Weak

¹⁸ Elders especially must be tenderly compassionate. (Acts 20:29, 35) “We . . . who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those not strong,” the Bible commands. (Romans 15:1) Being imperfect, all of us make mistakes. (James 3:2) Tenderness is needed in dealing with one who “takes some false step before he is aware of it.” (Galatians 6:1) Never do the elders want to be like the self-righteous Pharisees who were unreasonable in their application of God’s Law.

¹⁹ In contrast, elders follow the tenderly compassionate examples of Jehovah God and Jesus Christ. Their main work is to nourish, encourage, and refresh God’s sheep. (Isaiah 32:1, 2) Instead of trying to control matters by a multitude of rules, they appeal to the fine principles in God’s Word. Hence, the function of the elders should be to build up, to bring joy and appreciation for Jehovah’s goodness to the hearts of their brothers. If a fellow believer makes some minor error, an elder usually will avoid correcting him in the hearing of others. If it is necessary to talk at all, tender feelings of compassion will move the elder to take that one aside and discuss the problem out of ear-

18, 19. (a) How should elders deal with weak or erring ones? (b) Even if it is necessary to form a judicial committee, why is it important for elders to treat wrongdoers with tender compassion?

shot of others. (Compare Matthew 18:15.) No matter how difficult someone may be to get along with, the elder’s approach should be patient and helpful. Never does he want to look for excuses to throw such a one out of the congregation. Even when it is necessary to form a judicial committee, the elders will show tender compassion in dealing with the person involved in serious wrongdoing. Their gentleness may help bring that one to repentance.—2 Timothy 2:24-26.

²⁰ There are times, however, when a servant of Jehovah cannot show compassion. (Compare Deuteronomy 13:6-9.) For a Christian to “quit mixing in company” with a close friend or relative who has been disfellowshipped can be a real test. In such a case, it is important that one not give in to feelings of pity. (1 Corinthians 5:11-13) Such firmness may even encourage the erring one to repent. Further, in dealing with the opposite sex, Christians must avoid inappropriate displays of compassion that could lead to sexual immorality.

²¹ Space does not allow us to discuss all

20. When are emotional expressions of compassion inappropriate, and why?

21. In what other areas do we need to show tender compassion, and what are the benefits?

Questions in Review

- ☐ How does Jehovah show compassion for sinful mankind?
- ☐ Why is it important to be tenderly compassionate?
- ☐ What are some obstacles to our being tenderly compassionate?
- ☐ How should we treat the sick and the depressed?
- ☐ Who especially need to be tenderly compassionate, and why?

the many areas in which tender compassion is needed—in dealing with the elderly, the bereaved, those undergoing persecution from unbelieving mates. Hardworking elders should likewise be treated with tender compassion. (1 Timothy 5:17) Respect them and give them support. (Hebrews 13:7, 17)

“All of you be . . . tenderly compassionate,” wrote the apostle Peter. (1 Peter 3:8) By acting in this manner in all situations that require it, we promote unity and happiness in the congregation and draw outsiders to the truth. Above all, we thereby honor our tenderly compassionate Father, Jehovah.

Courageous Faith of Our Rwandan Brothers

EARLY in 1994 the world was stunned as reports of large-scale massacres emerged from the African country of Rwanda. A brutal civil war had erupted—the culmination of centuries of animosity.

Faced with the total collapse of law and order, the 2,000-and-more Witnesses of Jehovah in Rwanda were forced to flee for their lives. About 1,300 found sanctuary in refugee camps in nearby Zaire and Tanzania, but some were not able to escape in time. We are saddened to report that about 400 of our brothers and sisters—both adults and children, all civilians of course—have perished in the mad violence. Christians the world over mourn the loss of these courageous integrity keepers and take comfort in the Bible’s promise of a resurrection.—John 11:25.

How have the surviving Rwandan brothers and sisters fared? Elders were dispatched from a number of countries to investigate matters firsthand. One report said that the Rwandan brothers have faced the situation “with much dignity and courage.” For example, one of the first requests the brothers made was for Bible literature. ‘They seem more concerned about receiving spiritual food than material help, although they are in dire need of many things,’ the report concludes. And though conditions in the camps

are primitive, ‘the cleanest part is where our brothers live.’

The Watch Tower Society has made funds available for the purchase of food, blankets, clothes, shoes, and medicine. Our brothers in France contributed generously, and by early June, almost two tons of supplies had been shipped to our needy Rwandan brothers.

Not surprisingly, these circumstances have resulted in a fine witness. Observers have been touched by the fact that our Rwandan brothers received such help and support from fellow Witnesses, and it has been possible to share this help with others. Some have commented that the Witnesses are the only ones in the camps who have been visited by members of their religion!

The plight of our Rwandan brothers reminds us that in these “last days,” men will be “fierce” and “violent.” (2 Timothy 3:1-5; *Today’s English Version*) And while Jehovah does not promise his people miraculous protection from physical dangers, he does promise to safeguard their spirituality and relationship with him and, during Christ’s Millennial rule, to resurrect those who now perish. (Psalm 91:1-10) May our prayers that Jehovah sustain and help our surviving Rwandan brothers during this troublesome time continue to be offered up in their behalf.—Psalm 46:1.



AIDING OUR FAMILY OF BELIEVERS IN BOSNIA

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES take no part in political conflicts. (John 17:16) However, following Paul's counsel to do good "especially to our family of believers," they readily come to the aid of their fellow Christians in war-torn areas. (Galatians 6:10, *Beck*) As the winter of 1993-94 approached, Witnesses from Austria and Croatia risked their lives to aid their family of believers in Bosnia. The following is their report.

From March to October 1993, there was no chance to send relief shipments to Bosnia. At the beginning of October, however, the authorities indicated that it might be possible to transport goods. This would still be a dangerous undertaking, as there was heavy fighting on all Bosnian fronts.

Nevertheless, on Tuesday, October 26, 1993, our trucks left Vienna carrying 16 tons of food and firewood for fellow Christians in Bosnia. We wore our district convention lapel cards for identification.

Upon arriving at the border of Croatia and Bosnia, we were escorted to a military base where our trucks were thoroughly

searched. Our request to travel through Serbian territory was denied. Passage would be permitted only via central Bosnia—right through the combat zone!

Futile Efforts?

As military escorts led us from one checkpoint to another, we heard earsplitting detonations from tanks and guns. During the night, we traveled through the woods escorted by two tanks and a jeep. Our trucks crept slowly through the front line of battle! All went well until morning when shots were fired over our heads and we had to take cover behind a hill. After a while the shooting stopped, and we continued our journey.

When we arrived at a camp, the commanding officer asked us who we were and what we wanted. "Your undertaking is doomed to failure," he said after we stated our purpose. "You have no chance of getting out of the camp, even to go a few yards. There is so much famine in the country that people will attack you and steal your goods." He urged us to turn around and go back.



Were our efforts “doomed to failure”? Was it futile to expect that we could travel through war-torn and famine-stricken areas and yet preserve our goods and our lives? A serious decision had to be made. We had already heard gunfire and deafening explosions of bombs. As we passed the night with the soldiers, we could see that they were prepared for the rigors of battle. They wore bullet-proof vests and were heavily armed. Even the cook toted a machine gun on his back. And here we were wearing shirts, neckties, and lapel cards! Was it wise for us to continue?

Arrival at Travnik

Our only hope, it seemed, was to negotiate with the third party in this war. The next morning we asked a young woman if she knew where to find the party's post headquarters. “It's not far,” she said. “Just through the woods, you will find a building

Taking aid to Bosnia and Herzegovina

that was once a hospital.” We were anxious to go. The soldiers were amazed that we dared to leave the camp unarmed.

The former hospital was in ruins, but an officer was present. He agreed to help, advising us to speak to his commander first. He took us in his battered car and drove at high speed along the front line. We stopped at a building where the commanding officer received us in a dark room.

“Last night we wanted to open fire on you,” he said. “What do you want?”

“We are Jehovah's Witnesses, and we want to take relief goods to our brothers.”

He was quite surprised—and impressed—since for weeks no relief convoy had dared to venture into Bosnia. After being thoroughly searched, we were given a written confirmation. The previous night

we thought we had no chance of continuing our journey, and now we could proceed without escort!

We drove through the woods, passing through one checkpoint after another, and at times we drove along front lines. Despite the danger, we arrived safely at Travnik. A soldier who heard of our arrival ran to a house where our brothers had gathered. "Your people are here with the trucks!" he cried. You can imagine their joy. We carried food into the house, spoke a few words, but then had to move on. It was getting dark, and a perilous 20-mile journey lay ahead.

On to Zenica

An escort car guided us through the woods at high speed. Some said that we would never make it to Zenica, but we did. A gloom seemed to have settled upon the town. There were no lights and no cars on the road. Zenica was besieged on all sides, resulting in great famine and despair.

As we drove along the street, we saw an amazing thing—two Christian sisters witnessing! The previous day at their meeting, we learned, it was decided that the brothers would have to go to the woods to look for food, as supplies were depleted. We arrived just in time! We unloaded one of the trucks at four o'clock in the morning, while no one was on the street.

The next day we contacted a general, who was quite surprised that we had made it to Zenica. We now inquired about traveling to our next destination, Sarajevo.

"No one has ventured in there by truck for months," the general said. He eventually gave us permission to travel across the mountains. "But I tell you, it is tough," he warned. "I am not sure your trucks are strong enough to make it."

The general had not exaggerated. When we were just 25 miles from Sarajevo, we had

to make a 90-mile detour through the woods! We will never forget the ride from Zenica via Sarajevo to Jablanica that took three days and two nights, often at a speed of only three miles per hour. The "road" was a path worn down by armored vehicles. We drove over daunting rocks and holes. Frequently we had to drive without light, and on two occasions our trucks almost slipped down treacherous hills. An army truck following our convoy turned on its light for just a moment and was immediately fired upon. At times we had to repair damaged bridges and fix tires.

As we arrived at the outskirts of Sarajevo, we asked to speak with the general in charge. While waiting, we saw a truck on the street carrying ten corpses and a sack of heads; soldiers were negotiating the surrender of the corpses—an unpleasant sight indeed, making us yearn for the day when war will cease.—Isaiah 2:4.

At 10:00 a.m., one of us was finally granted an audience with the general and his high officers in a dark room, lit only by a candle.

"Who are you?" the general asked.

"We are Jehovah's Witnesses. We want to take food to our fellow Witnesses in Sarajevo."

"Do you know that there are many of Jehovah's Witnesses in Sarajevo?"

"Yes, that's why we are here."

Then the general mentioned the name of a Witness. "Do you know him?"

"Yes, he is our friend."

"He is my friend too," the general said. "We went to school together. Since he has become a Witness, I appreciate him even more. He has done a lot for you people. Please tell us more about Jehovah's Witnesses."

An hour-long discussion ensued, after which more than a dozen magazines and brochures were placed. After a second

Inching past a capsized truck

meeting, the general agreed to make special arrangements so that the relief goods could be delivered to the Sarajevan brothers.

This was no small undertaking. About 30 persons, including some non-Witnesses, lugged parcels weighing about 60 pounds each. They labored from 8:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. on two separate nights—a total of 18 hours. An elder related that his neighbors were so overwhelmed by the relief efforts that they knelt with the brothers and thanked Jehovah! Of course, they too received some food.

Imagine our brothers' joy upon receiving some 24,250 pounds of relief goods! The situation was desperate. Locally, two pounds of flour cost between DM450 and DM1,000 (\$300 and \$660, U.S.). A sack of wood cost about DM400 (\$260, U.S.), and a quart of diesel fuel cost DM30 (\$20, U.S.).

It was as if for every danger we faced along the way, we were now rewarded. We were delighted to contemplate the joy of our brothers when they received this relief shipment. It was an experience that they—and we—will never forget. But now we had to start thinking about the challenge of returning home.

Returning Home

"How do we get back?" we asked the general.

"The same way you came," he replied.

We were exhausted, low on fuel, and had no spare tires. It started to rain, and we could not travel through the mud. We asked the general if we could travel to the south.

"There are heavy battles there," he said. "Not even a mouse could get through." After a while, however, he reconsidered. "Try it," he said. "After all, you made it here."



We had to leave one truck behind and distribute its fuel among the other three trucks. We left at midnight and again drove off into the woods.

Our return trip was not without problems. We encountered an army truck lying on its side, partially obstructing a bridge that we needed to cross. We saw that if we could remove just one of its wheels, there would be enough room to pass.

We appealed to an armed soldier. "May we take off the wheel and mount it again after we have crossed the bridge?"

"If you touch the wheel, my gun will have some work to do," the soldier replied, aiming his weapon.

We thought it might be better to make some coffee and offer the soldier a cup. For some hours, we told him about the 1991 international conventions, such as the one held in Zagreb. After that, his attitude softened, and he allowed us to remove the wheel.

At Jablanica, one of us spoke to a commander about the route we wanted to travel. He could not believe what he was hearing. "You want to go through the Neretva Valley?"

He was understandably alarmed. The hillsides of the Neretva Valley are held by different armies. They are constantly shooting at one another. For nearly ten miles, the

road is treacherous. "That's the way it is," the general said, "and yet you want to go through?"

After weighing the matter, the general said that we could go—but only if we were accompanied by officials. These officials, however, were reluctant to go with us! Eventually, we requested that they simply contact the other side and announce our passage. We would cross unescorted the next morning.

With large letters, we labeled our trucks as carrying humanitarian aid. After saying a prayer, we drove into the valley. We agreed that if shots were fired, we would not increase our speed and create suspicion.

We crossed the bridge to the other side of the river and continued on through the next valley, passing animal carcasses and demolished trucks and tanks. Suddenly we noticed land mines lying on the street, making it impossible for us to pass. We sounded the truck's horn until two soldiers peeked from behind a rock. "Who are you? What do you want?" they demanded.

After identifying ourselves, we asked if they would clear the street, and they agreed. Finally, we reached the other side.

The soldiers there were amazed to see us. They came slowly out of their hiding places, approaching the truck with their guns aimed directly at us. We showed our permit papers along with our license plates, which we had removed for security reasons while we were driving through the war zone.

"Nobody was expecting you," one soldier said. "How could you get through?"

Contrary to our request, no one at these outposts had been informed that we were coming! The officer continued: "Our guns were cocked, and we were about to start firing."

We asked why they did not do it.

"I have no idea," the soldier replied. "I believe it was your fate. But when we looked at you through our field glasses, we saw the 'humanitarian aid' label, and we did not know what to do with you. So you made it." We later offered a heartfelt prayer of thanks to Jehovah for his protection.

Though their circumstances are severe, the spirit of our Bosnian brothers and sisters is inspiring. They share the material things they possess as well as many words of faith and encouragement. In Zenica, there are 40 active Witnesses, including 2 special pioneers, 11 auxiliary pioneers, and 14 newly baptized persons. The 65 Witnesses plus 4 auxiliary pioneers that still remain in the city of Sarajevo are conducting 134 Bible studies. The Witnesses spend an average of 20 hours each month talking to others about the good news of God's Kingdom.

Truly, Jehovah's Witnesses constitute a worldwide family of believers. They willingly risk their lives to do good to those related to them in the faith—even those they have never before met. Why? Because they love them. Jesus Christ said: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves." (John 13:35) Certainly this has been the case with our family of believers in Bosnia.

In Our Next Issue

Where Are the Dead?

Job Endured—So Can We!

"If You Owe Taxes, Pay Taxes"

HOW TO ORGANIZE A THEOCRATIC LIBRARY

SHEREZADE, a bright little Spanish girl, was four years old when her teacher informed the class that they were going to color pictures of "Father Christmas." Right away, Sherezade asked to be excused. She explained that her conscience would not allow her to do that.

Surprised by this objection, the teacher told her that it was only like coloring a picture of a doll and that there was nothing wrong in that. Sherezade replied: "If it is only a doll, I would prefer to draw a doll myself if you don't mind."

On another occasion the class was told to color the national flag. Once again Sherezade asked if she could do something else. By way of explanation, she told the teacher the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.—Daniel 3:1-28.

Not long afterward the teacher telephoned Sherezade's mother to express her amazement. "Your daughter on several occasions has spoken to me about her conscience," she said. "Can you imagine that? A girl of her age explaining to me why her conscience is troubling her! Look, I don't agree with what you are teaching her, but I assure you that you are succeeding. And I want you to know that I take my hat off to your daughter."

How can a four-year-old girl acquire a Bible-trained conscience? Her mother, Marina, explains that Sherezade has her own theocratic library in her bedroom. The library includes her personal copies of *The Watchtower*, which she has underlined, her literature for preaching, and all the publi-

cations of the Watchtower Society that have been released since she was born. The favorite item in her library is the audiotape *My Book of Bible Stories*, which she listens to every night while following along in her printed copy. It was these Biblical accounts that enabled her to make the decisions mentioned above.

Could a well-organized theocratic library help you and your children? Why is a home library necessary?

"A Library Is Not a Luxury"

"A library is not a luxury, but one of the necessities of life," declared Henry Ward Beecher. Doubtless, nearly all of us have one of these "necessaries of life," albeit unknowingly. How so? Because even if we have in our possession nothing more than the Bible, we own a library of a kind.

The Bible is really a theocratic library par excellence. In the fourth century, Jerome coined the Latin phrase *Bibliotheca Divina* (Divine Library) to describe the complete collection of inspired books we call the Bible. Jehovah provided us with this sacred library to give us practical help, instruction, and guidance. It is something we should never take for granted. The mere possession of the entire Bible means that we have a more extensive library than most of God's servants had in times past.

When expensive handwritten manuscripts were all that were available, few, if any, private homes could boast a complete Bible. When Paul wished to study the Scriptures during his final imprisonment in

Rome, he had to ask Timothy to bring him some scrolls from Asia Minor—probably portions of the Hebrew Scriptures. (2 Timothy 4:13) Synagogues, however, did house a collection of scrolls, and both Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul took advantage of these libraries in their preaching work. (Luke 4:15-17; Acts 17:1-3) Happily, the Scriptures are now much more accessible than they were in the first century.

Thanks to the invention of the printing press, today almost all of God's servants—whatever their language may be—can obtain the entire Bible at a reasonable cost. We also have the unique opportunity of complementing this sacred "library." For over a century, the "faithful and discreet slave" has been busy providing spiritual food at the proper time.—Matthew 24:45-47.

But it is unlikely that we will take full advantage of this invaluable information if we do not organize a personal theocratic library. How can that be done? The first step, of course, is to obtain the books such a library needs. It is well worth the effort, since it will enable us to have at our fingertips the precise information we need to handle problems and answer Bible questions.

What Books Do I Need?

Have you ever wondered how you could solve a communication problem in your marriage or how you could help your children say *no* to drugs? How could you help

a friend who is suffering from depression? Can you explain clearly what evidence we have that God exists and why he permits wickedness? What does the scarlet-colored beast of Revelation chapter 17 represent?

These and countless other questions can be answered if you have an adequate theocratic library. The Watchtower Society has published books, brochures, and magazine articles that cover a complete range of Scriptural subjects. Furthermore, this literature deals with family matters, builds up our faith in God and the Bible, enables us to improve our preaching skills, and helps us to understand Bible prophecies.

Most of the publications printed by the Society during the last 20 years are still available. If you have come into the truth recently, it would be worthwhile for you to obtain all such works that are available in your language. It may be that bound volumes of past years of *The Watchtower* are available in your language. Outstanding reference works, such as *Insight on the Scriptures* and the *Comprehensive Concordance*, have also been published in various languages. Acquiring these books, however, is only the first step.

Organize Your Library!

Knowing that you have the book somewhere is one thing, but finding the one you need is another. If we have to waste a lot of time searching for the reference work we

Governing Body Addition

WITH a view to building up the personnel of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, effective July 1, 1994, an additional member has been added to the 11 elders now serving. The new member is Gerrit Lösch.

Brother Lösch entered full-time service on November 1, 1961, and graduated from the 41st class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead. He served in the circuit and district work in Austria from 1963 to 1976. He married in 1967, and

he and his wife, Merete, later served for 14 years as members of the Austria Bethel family in Vienna. Four years ago they were transferred to the Society's headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, where Brother Lösch has served in the Executive Offices and as an assistant to the Service Committee. With his varied experience in the European field and his knowledge of German, English, Romanian, and Italian, he will make a valuable contribution to the work of the Governing Body.

need, chances are we will lose interest in the matter. On the other hand, if we have our books well arranged, in a convenient place, we will be much more inclined to do personal research.

If possible, it is helpful to have the bulk of theocratic books in one place. Bookshelves can be made, and often quite cheaply, if we cannot afford to buy them ready-made, and they need not take up much space. Easy access to the library is also important. Books stored away in attics usually do little more than collect dust.

The next step is to organize the books. Just a short time spent arranging the books in a logical order brings dividends.

What if most of your family are not Jehovah's Witnesses? Although you may not be able to organize a library as you would like to, in your own room you may have a bookshelf that contains at least some Scriptural publications.

A Theocratic Library Can Help Build Spirituality

Once we have our books arranged, we need a system to help us locate the information. Our memories may be faulty, and we may not personally be familiar with the contents of every book in our theocratic library. Nevertheless, all the information in the library is readily accessible. If it is available in our language, the *Watch Tower Publica-*

HOW COULD YOU ARRANGE YOUR BOOKS?

There are no hard-and-fast rules on how to organize your books. Nevertheless, the following logical divisions illustrate one way you could arrange your books according to contents.

- 1. Books that contain a verse-by-verse analysis of certain parts of the Bible**
(Examples: *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived*, *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*, "The Nations Shall Know That I Am Jehovah"—How?, "Your Will Be Done on Earth")
- 2. Books related to family life**
(Examples: *Making Your Family Life Happy*, *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, *My Book of Bible Stories*)
- 3. Bibles and reference works**
(Examples: *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*, other Bibles, *Watch Tower Publications Indexes*, *Comprehensive Concordance*, *Insight on the Scriptures*, *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures*, a good dictionary)
- 4. Books currently being used for the Congregation Book Study and the Theocratic Ministry School**
- 5. Audiocassettes and videos**
- 6. Bound volumes of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!***
- 7. History of Jehovah's Witnesses**
(Examples: *Yearbooks of Jehovah's Witnesses*, *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*)
- 8. Books and brochures we regularly use in our ministry**
(Examples: *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, *Reasoning From the Scriptures*, *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution or by Creation?*, *Mankind's Search for God*, *United in Worship of the Only True God*)



Sherezade has already become a good Bible student

tions *Index* can enable us to find specific information on almost any subject in a short time.

Julián, who has served for many years as a special pioneer and an elder, explains that the *Index* is invaluable in teaching his youngest son to do personal study. "Jairo, who is seven years old, came home from school the other day and asked me, 'Daddy, what has the Society said about dinosaurs?' We went straight to the *Index* and looked up the word 'dinosaurs.' Almost right away we found an *Awake!* cover series on the subject. [February 8, 1990] That same day, Jairo began to read it. He already knows that our theocratic library has useful information on practically every subject. Personally, I'm convinced that when our children learn to make good use of a theocratic library, it helps them grow spiritually. They learn to reason, and what's more, they discover that personal study can be enjoyable."

Fausto, the father of Sherezade mentioned at the outset, believes that you cannot start too early in training children to use a theocratic library. "We are already showing Sherezade, who is now six years

old, how to use the *Index*," he explains. "Since she is fascinated by the prospect of the earthly Paradise, we began by showing her the word 'paradise' in the *Index* and then looking up *Watchtower* articles mentioned. Usually we would just show her the pictures. Nevertheless, by this method she learned that the *Index* is the key to finding information in our home library. We knew that she had got the point when she returned from school one day with a question about Easter celebrations. 'Why don't we look something up with the *Index*?' she asked her mother."

Whatever our age, the Bible encourages us to "make sure of all things; hold fast to what is fine." (1 Thessalonians 5:21) This requires that we examine what the Scriptures say. (Acts 17:11) If we have a well-organized theocratic library, such research can be a pleasure. Each time we successfully use our library to prepare a talk, to find practical counsel on handling a problem, or to look up interesting information, it will impress upon us the practical value of our library.

Sherezade's parents point out: "In a Christian household, a theocratic library is definitely not a luxury!"

Although young, this boy is using a theocratic library



Why Do the Wicked Prosper?

"WHY is it that the wicked themselves keep living?" This question was asked long ago by faithful Job, and it has been repeated many times since his day. Likely it is on the minds of many people in the territory of the former Yugoslavia (such as the woman shown on our cover) who mourn over those who suffer in a tragic war. Why do wicked people survive and even prosper? As Job noted, often "their houses are peace itself, free from dread, and the rod of God is not upon them." —Job 21:7, 9.

Does this mean that there is no value in serving God, loving one's neighbor, and abstaining from doing wrong? By no means! The Bible gives us the right perspective when it says: "Do not strive to outdo the evildoers or emulate those who do wrong. For like grass they soon wither, and fade like the green of spring. Trust in the LORD and do good." —Psalm 37:1-3, *The New English Bible*.

Yes, the apparent prosperity of the wicked is just temporary. In fact, their lives are very short, while those who serve God have a glorious hope for the future. Soon, God's promise will be fulfilled: "[God] will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:4) Only the righteous, not the wicked, will see that time. What an encouragement to draw close to God and learn to do his will, however wicked those around us may be!

