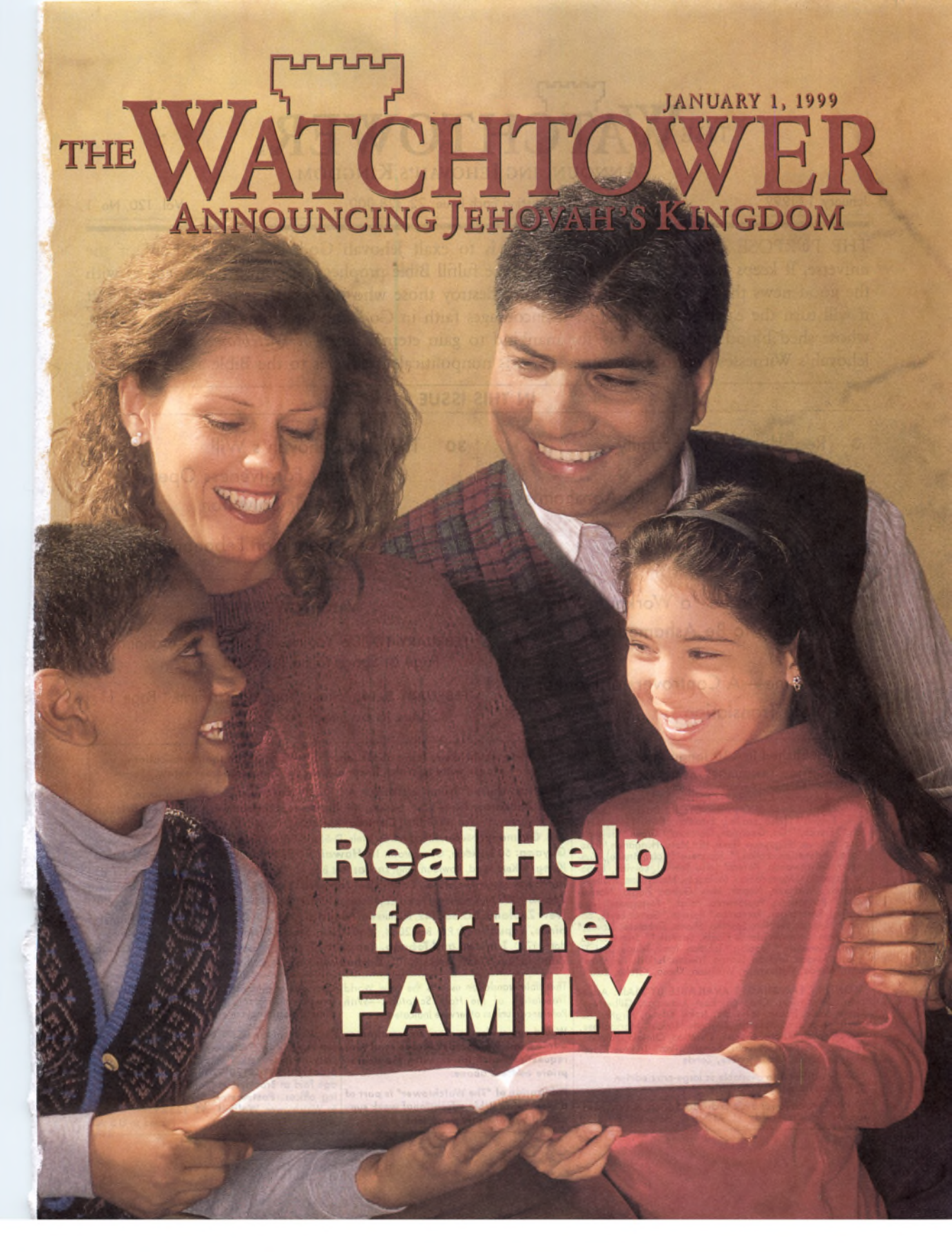




JANUARY 1, 1999

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

**Real Help
for the
FAMILY**

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

January 1, 1999

Average Printing Each Issue: 22,328,000

Vol. 120, No. 1

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.

IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 Real Help for the Family
- 6 Do You Have Faith Like Abraham's?
- 11 "Make Your Hearts Firm"
- 21 Striving to Be "a Workman With Nothing to Be Ashamed Of"
- 26 Jerome—A Controversial Pioneer in Bible Translation

- 30 They Did Jehovah's Will
An Act of Forgiveness Opens
the Way for Salvation
- 32 "Tall as a Cedar on Lebanon"

WATCHTOWER STUDIES

FEBRUARY 1-7: Do You Have Faith Like Abraham's?
Page 6. Songs to be used: 64, 144.

FEBRUARY 8-14: "Make Your Hearts Firm." Page 11.
Songs to be used: 76, 98.

New published in 130 languages.

SEMI-MONTHLY LANGUAGES AVAILABLE BY MAIL: Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Bengali, Bicol, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cebuano,* Chichewa, Chinese, Chinese (Simplified), Cibemba, Croatian, Czech,* Danish,** Dutch,* Ekk,* English,** (also Braille), Estonian, Ewe, Fijian, Finnish,** French,** Ga, Georgian, German,** Greek,* Gujarati, Gun, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hiri Motu, Hungarian,* Igbo, Iloko,* Indonesian, Italian,** Japanese** (also Braille), Kannada, Kinyarwanda, Korean* (also Braille), Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Maltese, Marathi, Myanmar, Nepali, New Guinea Pidgin, Norwegian,* Pangasinan, Papiamentu, Polish,* Portuguese* (also Braille), Rarotongan, Romanian,* Russian,* Samar-Leyte, Samoan, Sepedi, Serbian, Sesotho, Shona, Sinhalese, Slovak,* Slovenian, Solomon Islands Pidgin, Spanish,** Sranantongo, Swahili, Swedish,** Tagalog,* Tahitian, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Tigrinya, Tongan, Tshiluba, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Twi, Ukrainian,* Venda, Vietnamese, Wallisian, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu

MONTHLY LANGUAGES AVAILABLE BY MAIL: Armenian, Cambodian, Chitonga, East Armenian, Gilbertese, Greenlandic, Hausa, Icelandic, Isoko, Kiluba, Kirghiz, Kirundi, Kwanyama/Ndanga, Luganda, Luvale, Marshallese, Monokutuba, Moore, Nivuean, Ossetian, Osetela, Palauan, Persian, Panapean, Punjabi, Sango, Siliozi, Trukese, Tuvaluan, Umbundu, Urdu, Yapepe, Zande

* Study articles also available in large-print edition.
* Audiocassettes also available.

© 1999 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved. Milton G. Henschel, President

If you would like to learn about Jehovah's Witnesses or their publications, please write to Watch Tower at the appropriate address below.

America, United States of: Wallkill, NY 12589. **Australia:** Box 280, Ingleburn, N.S.W. 2565. **Bahamas:** Box N-1247, Nassau, N.P. **Barbados:** Fontabelle Rd., Bridgetown. **Britain:** The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN. **Canada:** Box 4100, Halton Hills (Georgetown), Ontario L7G 4Y4. **Germany:** Niederselters, Am Steinfels, D-65618 Selters. **Ghana:** P. O. Box GP 760, Accra. **Guyana:** 50 Brickdam, Georgetown 16. **Hawaii 96819:** 2055 Kam IV Rd., Honolulu. **Hong Kong:** 4 Kent Road, Kowloon Tong. **India:** Post Bag 10, Lonavla, Pune Dis., Mah. 410 401. **Ireland:** Newcastle, Greystones, Co. Wicklow. **Jamaica:** Box 103, Old Harbour P.O., St. Catherine. **Japan:** 1271 Nakashinden, Ebina City, Kanagawa Pref., 243-0496. **Kenya:** Box 47788, Nairobi. **New Zealand:** P.O. Box 142, Manurewa. **Nigeria:** P.M.B. 1090, Benin City, Edo State. **Philippines, Republic of:** P.O. Box 2044, 1060 Manila. **South Africa:** Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. **Trinidad and Tobago, Republic of:** Lower Rapsey Street & Laxmi Lane, Curepe. **Zambia:** Box 33459, Lusaka 10101. **Zimbabwe:** P. Bag A-6113, Avondale.

The Bible translation used is the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*—With References, unless otherwise indicated.

Would you welcome more information or a free home Bible study? Please send your request to Watch Tower, using the appropriate address above.

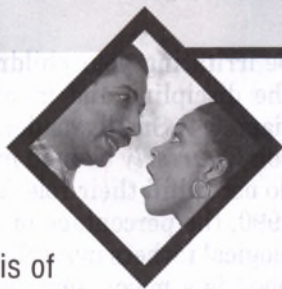
Publication of "The Watchtower" is part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations.

Changes of address should reach us 30 days before your moving date. Give us your old and new address (if possible, your old address label).

The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semi-monthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to Watchtower, Wallkill, NY 12589.

Printed in U.S.A.

Real Help for the Family



"It's fair to say that there's a crisis of family in America. It's impossible to draw any other conclusion from the divorce rates, out-of-wedlock birth statistics, [and] juvenile and spousal abuse cases."

THESE words by United States television commentator Tom Brokaw could apply to most countries. What does this crisis mean?

In many ways the family is the basic building block of society. If the family is in trouble, society is also in trouble. Further, the family is the source of emotional and financial support for children. It is where they learn the first and most important lessons of life. If the family is in trouble, what are the children learning? Where is their security? What kind of adults will they grow up to be?

Is there any help for the family in this time of crisis? Yes. The family is an institution that God himself established. (Genesis 1:27, 28) And he has given indispensable family guidance in his Word, the Bible. (Colossians 3:18-21) True, we cannot change society as a whole, but we can apply the Bible's counsel to our own family. We would like to tell you of some people who did this and of the good results they obtained.

Heading Off Divorce

In a number of countries some 50 percent of all marriages end in divorce. That is a large-scale failure in human relations! True, many who for this reason end up as single parents do a heroic job in rearing their children. But most would surely agree that it is better when a couple can solve their problems and stay together.

The marriage of a couple in the Solomon Islands was headed for disaster. The husband, the son of a chief, was violent and had many bad habits. Life was so difficult for his wife that she even attempted suicide. Then, the husband agreed to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. He learned that anyone who wants to please God must not only know

what is wrong but also "hate what is bad." (Psalm 97:10) That includes hating such things as lying, stealing, violence, and drunkenness. He took this to heart and soon conquered his bad habits and his violent temper. His wife was amazed at the change, and their marriage greatly improved, thanks to the influence of God's Word.

In South Africa a woman who is one of Jehovah's Witnesses heard that her employer and her employer's husband were thinking of getting a divorce. The Witness spoke to her boss about God's view of marriage and showed her a book entitled *The Secret of Family Happiness*. This book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses, highlights the Bible principles that apply to marriage, laying particular stress on how the Bible helps couples to solve problems. The employer and her husband both read the book and tried sincerely to apply the Bible counsel it presented. As a result, they decided not to get a divorce—another marriage saved by the application of Bible principles.

Different Religions

What of a marriage where the spouses have different religions? The Bible realistically counsels Christians to marry "only in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7:39)

Sometimes, though, a marriage partner changes religion. Need that be the end of the marriage? Not at all.

In Botswana a woman who had recently become one of Jehovah's Witnesses was asked how her new faith had changed her. She asked her husband to answer for her, and this is what he said: "Since my wife has become one of Jehovah's Witnesses, I have seen many positive changes in her. She now has a quiet, wise strength that she did not have before. She had the strength and conviction to stop smoking, a fault that I still cannot overcome. My wife has become more loving and affectionate to my children and me, as well as to others. She is more tolerant, especially toward the children. I see her spending time in her ministry, trying to help others to improve their lives. I have also seen positive changes in myself. I believe this is entirely because of her example." What a fine effect Bible principles have had on this marriage! Many non-Witnesses have made similar comments about their Witness spouses.

When Father Neglects His Responsibilities

The relationship between a father and his children is a key to building strong families. The apostle Paul counseled: "You, fathers, do not

be irritating your children, but go on bringing them up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah." (Ephesians 6:4) Small wonder, then, that an article in *The Wilson Quarterly* blamed many social problems on fathers who do not fulfill their role. The article said: "Between 1960 and 1990, the percentage of children living apart from their biological fathers more than doubled . . . The decline of fatherhood is a major force behind many of the most disturbing problems that plague American society."

Does this mean that children whose fathers do not guide them are destined to failure? No. The psalmist of old said: "In case my own father and my own mother did leave me, even Jehovah himself would take me up." (Psalm 27:10) A nine-year-old boy in Thailand found this to be true. He lost his mother when he was a baby, and his father, not wanting him, left him with his grandmother. Feeling unwanted and unloved, the boy was rebellious and earned a reputation as a bully. He even threatened his grandmother. Two full-time evangelizers of Jehovah's Witnesses, noticing that he often stood outside the local Kingdom Hall, one day invited him into their home.

They told him about God—that He, like a father, loves his children. They also spoke about the earthly Paradise that God has promised faithful humans. (Revelation 21:3, 4) All of this appealed to the boy, and he came back every day to learn more. The Witnesses told him that he would have to stop being a bully if he really wanted God to be his Father. This was in harmony with Paul's words to the Romans: "As far as it depends upon you, be peaceable with all men." (Romans 12:18) He would also need to deal kindly with his grandmother. (1 Timothy 5:1, 2) Soon, he was putting Bible principles into practice—no doubt greatly improving his family life with his grandmother. (Galatians 5:22, 23) The neighbors were so impressed with the changes they observed in him that they wanted their own children to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses!

A Peaceable Spirit

The apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians: "Clothe yourselves with love, for it is a perfect bond of union. Also, let the peace of the Christ control in your hearts." (Colossians 3:14, 15) A peaceful spirit and heartfelt love cannot fail to bind a family together. And they can mend long-standing family divisions. Rukia, who lives in Albania, did not speak to her brother for over 17 years because of a family disagreement.

When she studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, she learned that every servant of God is urged to cultivate peace with others. "Let him seek peace and pursue it." —1 Peter 3:11.

Rukia realized that she had to seek peace with her brother. She prayed all night, and the next morning, her heart pounding, she walked to her brother's house. Rukia's niece opened the door and asked in surprise: "What are you doing here?" Rukia calmly asked to see her brother, explaining that she wanted to make peace with him. Why? Because she now realized that this was God's will. Her brother responded, and their reunion was marked with hugs and tears of joy—a family reunited because Bible principles were followed.



Family problems have been solved by applying Bible principles

Bad Associations

"Today, the average child watches seven hours of television per day. By the end of grade school he's seen over eight thousand murders and one hundred thousand acts of violence." So says the book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families*. What effect does such exposure have on a child? "Experts" do not agree among themselves about that, but the Bible strongly warns against bad associations. It says, for example: "He that is having dealings with the stupid ones will fare badly." (Proverbs 13:20) It also says: "Bad associations spoil useful habits." (1 Corinthians 15:33) Family life can improve if we prudently view this principle as holding true whether the bad associations are in the flesh or on a television program.

A mother in Luxembourg was studying the Bible with one of Jehovah's Witnesses. One day she told the Witness that in the evenings her two daughters of seven and eight years of age were very quarrelsome and aggressive. The Witness asked what the girls did during the evenings. The mother said that they watched television while she cleaned up the kitchen. What programs? "Oh, some cartoons," replied the mother. When her visitor mentioned that such programs

are often violent, the girls' mother promised to monitor them.

The very next day, the mother reported that she was shocked at the cartoons that her daughters were watching. They featured imaginary monsters from outer space that viciously destroyed everything in their path. She explained to her daughters that Jehovah hates violence and is not happy when we watch such cruelty. (Psalm 11:5) The girls, wanting to please Jehovah, agreed to do some drawing and painting instead of watching television. Immediately, their aggressive conduct changed, and the family atmosphere improved.

These are just a few examples to show that applying Bible principles improves family life. The Bible's counsel covers all kinds of situations. It is authentic and has a powerful effect for the good. (Hebrews 4:12) When people study the Bible and sincerely try to apply what it says, families are strengthened, personalities are improved, and mistakes are avoided. Even if only one member of a family follows God's counsel, things get better. Truly, in all areas of life, we should view God's Word as did the psalmist who wrote: "Your word is a lamp to my foot, and a light to my roadway."—Psalm 119:105.

DO YOU HAVE FAITH LIKE ABRAHAM'S?

"When the Son of man arrives, will he really find the faith on the earth?"—LUKE 18:8.

IT IS not easy to keep one's faith strong today. The world puts heavy pressure on Christians in order to divert their attention from spiritual things. (Luke 21:34; 1 John 2:15, 16) Many have to struggle to survive in the face of wars, disasters, diseases, or hunger. (Luke 21:10, 11) In a number of nations, there is a strong secular culture, and any who live by their faith are viewed as unreasonable, even fanatic. Further, many Christians are persecuted for their faith. (Matthew 24:9) Jesus' question, raised almost 2,000 years ago, is certainly appropriate: "When the Son of man arrives, will he really find the faith on the earth?"—Luke 18:8.

² The fact is, though, that strong faith is vital if we are to make a success of life now and receive the promised everlasting life in the future. Quoting Jehovah's words to Habbakkuk, the apostle Paul wrote: "My righteous one will live by reason of faith," and, 'if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.' . . . Without faith it is impossible to please [God] well." (Hebrews 10:38-11:6; Habbakkuk 2:4) Paul told Timothy: "Fight the fine fight of the faith, get a firm hold on the everlasting life for which you were called." (1 Timothy 6:12) How is it possible, then,

1. Why is it difficult to keep one's faith strong today?
2. (a) Why is strong faith vital for a Christian?
(b) Whose example of faith do we do well to consider?

to have unbreakable faith? In considering that question, we do well to look to a man who lived some 4,000 years ago, yet whose faith is still highly regarded in three major religions—Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. That man is Abraham. Why was his faith so remarkable? Can we imitate him today?

Obedience to God's Direction

³ Abraham (originally called Abram) is first mentioned very early in the Bible. At Genesis 11:26, we read: "Terah . . . became father to Abram, Nahor and Haran." Terah and his family lived in Ur of the Chaldeans, a flourishing city in southern Mesopotamia. However, they did not stay there. "Terah took Abram his son and Lot, the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai [Sarah] his daughter-in-law, the wife of Abram his son, and they went with him out of Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan. In time they came to Haran and took up dwelling there." (Genesis 11:31) Abraham's brother Nahor also moved his family to Haran. (Genesis 24:10, 15; 28:1, 2; 29:4) Why, though, did Terah move from prosperous Ur to distant Haran?

⁴ Some 2,000 years after Abraham's time, the faithful man Stephen, speaking before the Jewish Sanhedrin, explained this unusual move by Terah's family. He said: "The

3. 4. Why did Terah move his family from Ur to Haran?



God of glory appeared to our forefather Abraham while he was in Mesopotamia, before he took up residence in Haran, and he said to him, 'Go out from your land and from your relatives and come on into the land I shall show you.' Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and took up residence in Haran." (Acts 7:2-4) Terah submitted to Jehovah's will for Abraham when he moved his immediate household to Haran.

⁵ Terah's family settled down in their new city. Years later when Abraham spoke of "my country," he meant the area of Haran, not Ur. (Genesis 24:4) Nevertheless, Haran was not to be Abraham's permanent home. According to Stephen, "after [Abraham's] father died, God caused him to change his residence to this land in which you now dwell." (Acts 7:4) Obedient to Jehovah's direction, Abraham, accompanied by Lot, crossed the Euphrates into the land of Canaan.*

⁶ Why did Jehovah cause Abraham to move to Canaan? The reason had to do with God's purposes for that faithful man. Jehovah had said to Abraham: "Go your way out of your country and from your relatives and from the house of your father to the country that I shall show you; and I shall make a great nation out of you and I shall bless you and I will make your name great; and prove yourself a blessing. And I will bless those

* Likely, Abraham adopted his nephew Lot when Lot's father, Abraham's brother, died.—Genesis 11:27, 28; 12:5.

5. Where did Abraham go after his father died? Why?

6. What promise did Jehovah utter to Abraham?

Abraham was willing to make big changes in his life in order to inherit the promise

who bless you, and him that calls down evil upon you I shall curse, and all the families of the ground will certainly bless themselves by means of you." (Genesis 12:1-3) Abraham would be father of a great nation that would enjoy Jehovah's protection and that would possess the land of Canaan. A wonderful promise! But Abraham had to make radical changes in his life in order to inherit that land.

⁷ When Abraham left Ur, he left a prosperous city and likely his father's extended family—important sources of security in those patriarchal times. When he left Haran, he separated himself from his father's household, including the family of his brother Nahor, and moved to an unknown land. In Canaan he did not seek safety within the walls of a city. Why not? Shortly after Abraham entered the land, Jehovah said to him: "Go about in the land through its length and through its breadth, because to

7. What changes did Abraham have to be prepared to make in order to inherit Jehovah's promise?

you I am going to give it." (Genesis 13:17) The 75-year-old Abraham and his 65-year-old wife, Sarah, followed these instructions. "By faith he resided as an alien in the land of the promise as in a foreign land, and dwelt in tents."—Hebrews 11:9; Genesis 12:4.

Faith Like Abraham's Today

⁸ Abraham and his family are named among the great "cloud of [pre-Christian] witnesses" mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11. In view of the faith of these early servants of God, Paul encourages Christians to "put off every weight and the sin [lack of faith] that easily entangles us." (Hebrews 12:1) Yes, lack of faith can 'easily entangle us.' But in Paul's day and ours, genuine Christians have been able to cultivate strong faith comparable to that of Abraham and others of ancient times. Speaking of himself and fellow Christians, Paul says: "We are not the sort that shrink back to destruction, but the sort that have faith to the preserving alive of the soul."—Hebrews 10:39.

⁹ True, the world has changed from Abraham's time. Nevertheless, we still serve the same "God of Abraham," and he does not change. (Acts 3:13; Malachi 3:6) Jehovah deserves to be worshiped today just as he did in Abraham's time. (Revelation 4:11) Many dedicate themselves wholly to Jehovah and, like Abraham, make whatever changes are necessary in their lives in order to do God's will. Last year, 316,092 gave public evidence of their dedication by submitting to water baptism "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit."—Matthew 28:19.

¹⁰ Most of these new Christians did not have to travel to distant foreign lands in order to do this. In view of the example of Abraham and other ancient witnesses, what should we cultivate? 9, 10. What evidence is there that many today have faith like that of Abraham?

order to fulfill their dedication. In a spiritual sense, though, many of them traveled a considerable distance. For example, in Mauritius, Elsie used to be a sorceress. Everyone feared her. A special pioneer arranged a Bible study with Elsie's daughter, and this opened the way for Elsie 'to turn from darkness to light.' (Acts 26:18) In view of her daughter's interest, Elsie agreed to study *My Book of Bible Stories*. Her study was conducted three times a week because she needed constant encouragement. Her occult practices brought her no happiness, and she had many personal problems. Eventually, though, she was able to complete the long journey from demonism to true worship. When people came to seek her services, she would explain that only Jehovah could protect them from evil. Elsie is now a baptized Witness, and 14 people from among her family and acquaintances have accepted the truth.

¹¹ Most of those who last year dedicated themselves to serve God did not have to make such radical changes. But all moved from being spiritually dead to being spiritually alive. (Ephesians 2:1) Although still in the world physically, they are no longer part of it. (John 17:15, 16) Similar to anointed Christians, whose "citizenship exists in the heavens," they are like "aliens and temporary residents." (Philippians 3:20; 1 Peter 2:11) They brought their lives into harmony with God's standards, motivated above all by love of God and love of neighbor. (Matthew 22:37-39) They do not pursue selfish, materialistic goals or feel the need for personal fulfillment in this world. Instead, they fix their eyes on the promised 'new heavens and new earth in which righteousness is to dwell.'—2 Peter 3:13; 2 Corinthians 4:18.

11. What adjustments are those who dedicate themselves to Jehovah willing to make?



The evidence shows that Jesus has found "the faith on the earth" during his presence

¹² When Abraham moved to Canaan, he and his family were alone there with only Jehovah to support and protect them. However, these 316,092 newly baptized Christians are far from alone. True, Jehovah supports and protects them by his spirit, as he did Abraham. (Proverbs 18:10) In addition, though, he supports them through a vibrant, international "nation" that is more populous than some secular nations today. (Isaiah 66:8) Last year, a peak of 5,888,650 citizens of that nation gave evidence of their active faith by talking to their neighbors about God's promises. (Mark 13:10) They spent the extraordinary amount of 1,186,666,708 hours in this work, seeking to find interested ones. As a result, 4,302,852 Bible studies were conducted with others who wish to cultivate faith. As a further demonstration of their zeal, 698,781 in this "nation" shared in the pioneer service, either full-time or for a month or more. (Details of the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses last year are found on pages 12 to 15.) This remarkable record is a positive, living answer to Je-

12. What activity reported last year gives evidence that Jesus during his presence has found "the faith on the earth"?

sus' question, "When the Son of man arrives, will he really find the faith on the earth?"

Faithful Despite Tests

¹³ Things were often difficult for Abraham and his household in Canaan. On at least one occasion, there was a severe famine that drove him out of Canaan down to Egypt. Moreover, both the ruler of Egypt and the ruler of Gerar (near Gaza) tried to take Abraham's wife, Sarah, for themselves. (Genesis 12:10-20; 20:1-18) There were also conflicts between the herders of Abraham's livestock and the herders of Lot's livestock, and this caused a separation between the two households. Unselfishly, Abraham gave Lot first choice of the land, and Lot chose to live in the District of the Jordan, which appeared Edenic in its fertility and beauty. —Genesis 13:5-13.

¹⁴ Then, Lot was caught up in a war between the king of distant Elam and his allies and the kings of five cities on the Low Plain of Siddim. The foreign kings vanquished the local kings and took much spoil, including Lot and his goods. When Abraham heard what had happened, he fearlessly pursued

13, 14. Describe some of the difficulties encountered by Abraham and his family in Canaan.

the foreign kings and was able to recover Lot and his household, as well as the goods of the local kings. (Genesis 14:1-16) However, that was not Lot's worst experience in Canaan. For some reason he took up residence in Sodom, in spite of the city's immoral reputation.* (2 Peter 2:6-8) When warned by two angels that the city would be destroyed, Lot fled with his wife and daughters. However, Lot's wife ignored the specific instructions of the angels and, as a result, became entombed in salt. Lot was reduced to living for a time in a cave in Zoar with his two daughters. (Genesis 19:1-30) These events must have disturbed Abraham very much, especially since Lot had come into Canaan as part of Abraham's household.

¹⁵ Did Abraham ever wonder whether he and Lot should have stayed in the security of Ur with his father's extended family or in Haran with his brother Nahor? Did he ever wish he could have put down roots in the safety of a walled city instead of living in tents? Did he, perhaps, question the wisdom of the sacrifices he made by being a wanderer in a strange land? Speaking of Abraham and his family, the apostle Paul noted: "If they had indeed kept remembering that place from which they had gone forth, they would have had opportunity to return." (Hebrews 11:15) Yet, they did not return. Undeterred by the hardships, they stayed where Jehovah wanted them to be.

Endurance Today

¹⁶ Similar endurance is seen in Christians today. Although serving God is a source of

* Some have suggested that Lot took up residence in a city for greater security after having been part of the booty of the four kings.

15. Despite the problems Abraham faced while living in tents in a strange land, what negative thinking did he evidently avoid?

16, 17. (a) What difficulties do many Christians face today? (b) What positive attitude do Christians have? Why?

great joy to them, life is not easy for true Christians in these last days. Although they live in a spiritual paradise, they suffer the same economic pressures as do their neighbors. (Isaiah 11:6-9) Many have become innocent victims in the wars of the nations, and some have been reduced to extreme poverty through no fault of their own. In addition, they endure the problems of being an unpopular minority. In many lands they preach the good news in the face of overwhelming apathy. In others they suffer the deceptive attacks of those who 'frame trouble by decree' and "pronounce wicked even the blood of the innocent one." (Psalm 94:20, 21) Even in lands where Christians are not under attack and where they are praised by some for their high standards, they are conscious of being different from their schoolmates and workmates—rather like Abraham, who lived in tents while most people around him dwelt in cities. Yes, it is not easy to live in the world and yet be "no part" of it.—John 17:14.

¹⁷ Do we, then, regret our dedication to God? Do we wish that we had stayed part of the world, being like everyone else? Do we lament the sacrifices we have made in Jehovah's service? By no means! Rather than looking back longingly, we recognize that anything we might have sacrificed had no real value compared with the blessings enjoyed now and those to be enjoyed in the future. (Luke 9:62; Philippians 3:8) Besides,

Do You Remember?

- ☐ Why is strong faith essential?
- ☐ How did Abraham show that he had strong faith?
- ☐ How is dedication accompanied by changes in one's life?
- ☐ Why are we happy to serve God despite any problems we may face?

are people in the world happy? The truth is, many of them are seeking answers that we already possess. They suffer because of not following the guidance that we follow from God through the pages of the Bible. (Psalm 119:105) And many of them long for the kind of Christian companionship and delightful fellowship that we enjoy with fellow believers.—Psalm 133:1; Colossians 3:14.

¹⁸ True, we sometimes have to be courageous like Abraham when he chased after Lot's captors. But when we are, Jehovah blesses the outcome. For example, in Northern Ireland hatreds have become entrenched as a result of the sectarian violence, and it takes courage to be neutral. Yet, faithful Christians have followed Jehovah's words to

18. What is the eventual result when Christians show courage like that of Abraham?

Joshua: "Be courageous and strong. Do not suffer shock or be terrified, for Jehovah your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9; Psalm 27:14) Over the years their fearless stand has won them respect, and today they can preach freely in all communities of that land.

¹⁹ We need never doubt that whatever situation we face, if we follow Jehovah's direction, the final outcome will be to his glory and to our long-term benefit. Despite challenges and sacrifices, there is no place we would rather be than in Jehovah's service, enjoying fellowship with our Christian brothers and looking forward confidently to the eternal future that God has promised.

19. Where are Christians happy to be, and what outcome do they confidently expect when they follow Jehovah's direction?

"MAKE YOUR HEARTS FIRM"

"You have need of endurance, in order that, after you have done the will of God, you may receive the fulfillment of the promise."—HEBREWS 10:36.

OF ALL Bible writers, no one mentioned faith more often than the apostle Paul. And frequently, he spoke of those whose faith had weakened or died. For example, Hymenaeus and Alexander "experienced shipwreck concerning their faith." (1 Timothy 1:19, 20) Demas abandoned Paul because "he loved the present system of things." (2 Timothy 4:10) Some, by their unchristian, irresponsible actions "disowned the faith." Others were deceived by false wisdom and

1, 2. (a) What happened to a number of Christians in the first century? (b) Why is it easy for faith to weaken?

"deviated from the faith."—1 Timothy 5:8; 6:20, 21.

² Why did those anointed Christians lose out in these ways? Well, "faith is the assured expectation of things hoped for, the evident demonstration of realities though not beheld." (Hebrews 11:1) We exercise faith in what we cannot see. We do not need it for things that *are* beheld. It is easier to work for visible wealth than for unseen spiritual riches. (Matthew 19:21, 22) Many visible things—such as "the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes"—strongly appeal to our imperfect flesh and can weaken our faith.—1 John 2:16.

1998 SERVICE YEAR REPORT OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES WORLDWIDE

Country or Territory	Population	1998 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, One Pub- lisher to:	1998 Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 1997	1997 Av. Pubs.	1998 No. Bptd.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Cong.	Total Hours	Av. Bible Studies	Memorial Atten- dance
Alaska	637,228	2,246	284	2,068	-3*	2,124	84	186	28	333,881	715	4,770
Albania	3,262,000	1,525	2,139	1,294		994	340	414	34	613,833	2,561	6,952
American Samoa	61,200	193	317	182	0	182	11	31	3	45,362	174	619
Andorra	65,306	161	406	138	0	138	4	19	2	29,630	50	244
Angola	12,630,000	38,161	331	35,536	13	31,497	4,309	4,586	600	9,826,792	67,833	147,429
Anguilla	10,000	30	333	27	13	24		2	1	4,722	26	114
Antigua	65,952	363	182	335	1	331	11	43	5	74,092	328	955
Argentina	33,180,171	121,829	272	116,584	2	113,903	6,632	12,966	1,675	23,145,592	69,781	250,445
Armenia	3,465,611	4,569	759	4,061	32	3,074	351	518	36	1,137,206	5,278	13,410
Aruba	92,260	589	157	567	3	548	41	29	8	85,180	464	1,804
Australia	18,588,600	63,454	293	60,226	1	59,892	1,664	4,626	769	10,279,163	19,368	108,636
Austria	8,102,000	21,044	385	20,498	-1*	20,611	316	1,463	299	3,528,370	7,443	32,673
Azores	243,749	546	446	521	-6*	557	18	54	15	101,376	285	1,139
Bahamas	255,055	1,456	175	1,350	1	1,341	54	175	23	300,445	1,235	3,269
Bangladesh	137,366,800	111	1,237,539	82	30	63	15	12	1	17,851	96	213
Barbados	260,490	2,375	110	2,231	2	2,183	77	215	25	384,712	1,577	5,335
Belarus	10,439,916	2,448	4,265	2,187	21	1,806	193	275	19	546,666	1,948	6,272
Belau	18,110	65	279	61	5	58	5	14	1	19,835	108	279
Belgium	10,192,264	27,718	368	26,007	-1*	26,328	632	1,795	377	4,242,434	7,411	46,904
Belize	230,000	1,214	189	1,134	3	1,100	73	148	26	252,565	1,099	4,726
Benin	5,532,000	5,709	969	5,453	9	5,021	541	749	114	1,376,135	7,465	24,212
Bermuda	62,009	431	144	410	0	409	16	53	5	89,425	208	913
Bolivia	7,855,000	14,747	533	13,996	8	13,007	1,413	2,598	223	4,134,297	18,154	53,303
Bonaire	15,086	65	232	60	-3*	62	2	2	1	8,909	64	166
Bosnia & Herzegovina	4,204,300	937	4,487	841	16	725	99	220	9	334,635	550	1,943
Botswana	1,571,728	1,153	1,363	1,027	0	1,022	64	97	25	211,911	1,178	3,007
Brazil	161,444,870	487,661	331	462,395	6	435,032	25,293	44,402	7,386	85,076,922	439,834	1,216,268
Britain	57,549,220	131,981	436	123,191	0	123,318	3,375	10,138	1,452	20,088,395	36,375	214,351
Bulgaria	8,329,000	996	8,362	946	12	843	90	106	17	218,872	847	2,178
Burkina Faso	10,352,000	988	10,478	816	6	770	70	150	22	260,194	1,183	2,382
Burundi	6,500,000	2,433	2,672	2,078	29	1,614	339	235	48	550,635	3,829	6,529
Cambodia	10,700,000	29	368,966	25	39	18	3	13	1	16,683	100	193
Cameroon	14,439,000	26,498	545	25,396	2	25,014	2,490	1,927	600	4,528,700	23,417	77,524
Canada	30,457,701	113,136	269	109,664	0	109,880	2,986	10,062	1,383	19,834,685	31,595	184,787
Cape Verde	465,530	1,385	336	1,347	8	1,247	121	203	24	359,676	2,278	4,780
Cayman Islands	32,000	129	248	110	9	101	5	11	1	20,759	83	300
Central Afr. Rep.	3,800,000	2,302	1,651	2,235	8	2,063	300	376	48	634,891	3,609	11,536
Chad	6,870,000	550	12,491	533	7	500	64	100	15	168,481	767	2,877
Chile	14,821,714	59,124	251	53,643	4	51,495	3,231	7,145	621	12,297,194	47,140	147,112
Chuuk	69,002	55	1,255	51	9	47	4	20	3	28,343	170	550
Colombia	40,826,816	100,488	406	87,457	8	81,061	8,572	10,269	1,064	19,501,860	123,125	325,837
Comoros	540,000	7	77,143	6	0	6				1,008	6	30
Congo, Dem. Rep. of	50,000,000	108,710	460	94,475	6	89,346	6,971	13,210	2,477	24,369,883	181,528	534,318
Congo, Rep. of	2,700,000	3,850	701	3,198	5	3,032	309	529	106	1,018,622	10,873	16,387
Cook Islands	19,103	135	142	121	-5*	127	6	13	3	24,681	108	362
Costa Rica	3,429,423	19,393	177	18,343	2	17,897	807	1,972	241	3,377,489	14,997	45,610
Côte d'Ivoire	14,401,000	5,829	2,471	5,636	4	5,333	366	937	140	1,650,944	9,602	19,871
Croatia	4,494,000	5,336	842	5,188	4	4,991	310	639	69	1,204,889	2,047	9,559

Cuba	11,093,152	82,258	135	79,775	9	73,478	8,256	13,934	1,200	17,826,465	133,184	170,148
Curaçao	146,870	1,552	95	1,517	-1*	1,539	49	109	20	242,496	1,384	4,003
Cyprus	657,900	1,797	366	1,759	2	1,730	70	227	20	377,258	792	3,170
Czech Republic	10,295,401	17,061	603	16,188	-1*	16,318	468	925	241	2,404,193	6,067	30,698
Denmark	5,301,304	15,234	348	14,987	-1*	15,155	274	959	222	2,154,197	3,733	22,986
Dominica	71,794	359	200	338	2	330	18	46	8	88,024	384	1,023
Dominican Rep.	8,124,000	22,701	358	21,075	5	20,120	1,543	3,952	333	5,883,216	33,826	75,459
Ecuador	12,115,185	38,608	314	35,866	7	33,642	2,476	5,714	500	9,081,753	47,133	136,126
El Salvador	6,026,629	26,991	223	25,222	3	24,497	1,737	2,501	443	5,093,088	23,818	71,159
Equatorial Guinea	406,151	608	668	510	21	423	96	70	10	144,895	1,365	2,437
Estonia	1,453,800	3,846	378	3,569	7	3,351	303	431	43	771,837	2,781	8,276
Ethiopia	58,000,000	6,021	9,633	5,623	6	5,292	519	833	93	1,540,177	3,317	15,293
Faeroe Islands	44,801	77	582	72	-4*	75		19	4	20,175	39	118
Falkland Islands	2,221	9	247	7	-13*	8		1	1	894	3	15
Fiji	775,077	2,021	384	1,900	11	1,708	171	243	30	417,450	1,608	6,446
Finland	5,147,349	20,103	256	19,254	0	19,191	500	1,792	304	3,032,850	6,727	28,201
France	58,700,000	121,498	483	118,572	-2*	120,490	3,021	7,267	1,672	18,401,603	31,109	207,749
French Guiana	163,000	1,485	110	1,465	2	1,440	84	177	21	349,972	2,047	4,965
Gabon	1,014,976	1,905	533	1,740	1	1,725	305	206	46	421,834	4,171	6,921
Gambia, The	1,180,000	105	11,238	88	22	72	11	15	1	27,036	117	265
Georgia	5,174,642	13,011	398	12,177	10	11,082	1,724	1,446	130	2,368,078	5,490	32,409
Germany	82,057,379	171,704	478	166,136	0	166,780	4,979	9,805	2,083	25,798,633	59,635	271,606
Ghana	19,274,090	60,112	321	55,257	8	51,133	4,761	5,662	919	11,863,965	118,144	201,800
Gibraltar	27,192	125	218	105	2	103	1	10	2	19,590	29	152
Greece	10,259,900	27,300	376	27,007	1	26,704	949	2,899	437	5,058,256	8,977	43,417
Greenland	56,076	163	344	153	0	153	6	30	7	38,067	97	334
Grenada	110,000	604	182	592	2	583	29	72	7	128,177	557	1,486
Guadeloupe	410,000	7,953	52	7,630	1	7,584	294	438	98	1,145,129	5,992	17,020
Guam	150,000	622	241	607	4	584	45	132	9	176,999	770	2,037
Guatemala	9,285,000	19,359	480	17,981	7	16,738	1,549	1,881	264	3,665,732	15,888	54,669
Guinea	6,756,800	847	7,977	709	-12*	805	73	150	21	243,828	1,260	2,992
Guinea-Bissau	1,200,000	81	14,815	68	21	56	12	31	1	43,311	251	303
Guyana	777,648	2,068	376	1,925	1	1,898	136	261	36	402,466	2,145	7,948
Haiti	7,300,000	11,503	635	10,745	5	10,248	968	1,327	211	2,387,202	12,827	50,597
Hawaii	1,186,602	7,709	154	7,464	1	7,389	238	1,126	95	1,743,042	4,635	17,600
Honduras	6,077,000	11,460	530	10,546	9	9,696	998	1,288	158	2,463,660	11,997	35,518
Hong Kong	6,600,000	4,313	1,530	4,235	5	4,035	312	830	42	1,260,792	3,942	7,301
Hungary	10,135,000	20,690	490	19,268	5	18,387	1,644	1,682	233	3,604,177	10,245	40,003
Iceland	272,069	326	835	314	0	314	10	30	8	55,105	150	570
India	985,481,400	20,390	48,332	18,510	8	17,183	1,619	1,700	486	3,303,011	11,935	44,324
Ireland	5,335,559	4,594	1,161	4,493	1	4,454	126	586	113	1,024,333	1,684	7,770
Israel	8,877,000	918	9,670	863	11	775	88	89	11	194,201	743	1,907
Italy	57,495,656	232,145	248	224,504	2	220,945	7,809	30,208	3,032	52,043,180	76,151	385,387
Jamaica	2,502,030	11,003	227	10,292	3	10,034	618	1,026	183	1,812,249	9,414	28,063
Japan	125,568,035	222,912	563	222,347	2	217,970	7,779	85,930	3,802	96,257,029	160,011	366,637
Kazakhstan	16,898,572	11,877	1,423	11,229	14	9,808	1,262	1,124	97	2,484,608	10,107	31,072
Kenya	28,840,000	13,214	2,183	12,381	8	11,445	1,495	2,264	228	3,864,896	16,037	34,590
Kiribati	78,300	88	890	67	-1*	68	5	12	1	21,410	167	240
Korea, Republic of	46,429,817	85,983	540	84,946	2	83,273	2,480	29,591	1,508	35,037,657	54,391	135,519
Kosrae	8,848	19	466	16	-6*	17		5	1	6,980	50	99
Kyrgyzstan	4,540,185	3,490	1,301	3,287	7	3,076	454	333	31	671,770	2,085	8,095
Latvia	2,449,000	1,882	1,301	1,698	16	1,463	263	270	21	458,288	1,696	4,189
Lebanon	3,858,736	3,736	1,033	3,516	1	3,494	103	281	72	627,099	1,647	6,773
Lesotho	1,811,752	2,544	712	2,203	3	2,149	208	309	54	568,075	2,317	6,654

Country or Territory	Population	1998 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, One Pub- lisher to:	1998 Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 1997	1997 Av. Pubs.	1998 No. Bptzd.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Congs.	Total Hours	Av. Bible Studies	Memorial Atten- dance
Liberia	2,781,000	2,624	1,060	2,308	40	1,648	338	467	42	835,553	6,173	11,164
Libya	5,431,610	10	543,161	6	0	6				545	5	20
Liechtenstein	31,320	54	580	50	-6*	53		2	1	5,889	14	109
Lithuania	3,704,800	2,275	1,628	1,988	18	1,688	213	233	20	442,086	1,294	4,529
Luxembourg	511,345	1,956	261	1,865	1	1,853	54	133	33	319,392	764	3,624
Macao	470,000	136	3,456	127	9	116	5	29	2	41,089	108	242
Macedonia	1,965,018	923	2,129	840	12	750	98	95	15	194,893	564	2,621
Madagascar	14,053,274	9,761	1,440	9,362	13	8,307	1,027	1,640	203	2,615,938	20,620	41,559
Madeira	259,131	1,075	241	1,036	6	978	56	79	15	175,487	519	2,034
Malawi	11,349,512	42,770	265	41,205	4	39,779	4,867	5,430	609	9,209,819	28,279	120,412
Malaysia	22,179,500	2,021	10,975	1,920	5	1,827	164	293	43	492,181	2,455	5,187
Mali	11,300,000	208	54,327	167	5	159	7	58	6	89,281	374	667
Malta	376,340	552	682	532	4	511	22	66	6	100,021	170	878
Marshall Islands	51,162	206	248	196	4	189	16	46	4	68,345	582	1,076
Martinique	359,570	4,054	89	3,988	2	3,922	226	349	47	747,562	2,822	8,945
Mauritius	1,107,325	1,286	861	1,269	1	1,254	87	93	19	229,450	973	2,937
Mayotte	131,320	54	2,432	50	2	49	4	8	1	13,237	53	126
Mexico	95,646,354	518,307	185	503,406	5	479,247	32,834	59,860	11,299	105,958,479	526,511	1,569,363
Moldova	4,304,700	15,880	271	14,865	10	13,481	1,509	1,094	142	2,177,983	8,110	39,138
Montserrat	4,000	14	286	6	-70*	20		2	1	1,103	2	
Mozambique	15,740,000	28,005	562	27,444	17	23,460	3,218	5,091	652	7,947,446	37,853	111,256
Myanmar	46,000,000	2,573	17,878	2,451	4	2,352	53	286	96	530,673	1,599	5,416
Namibia	1,749,953	995	1,759	851	4	817	56	68	19	160,027	791	2,499
Nauru	10,600	11	964	9	29	7	1	1	1	1,419	12	67
Nepal	23,242,800	377	61,652	331	26	262	56	50	3	82,914	433	1,126
Netherlands	15,638,305	31,915	490	30,200	-1*	30,536	742	1,702	422	4,240,109	7,941	52,584
Nevis	10,080	49	206	46	12	41		5	1	10,712	43	138
New Caledonia	200,000	1,676	119	1,541	1	1,532	81	141	23	281,093	1,167	3,994
New Zealand	3,618,202	13,487	268	12,582	1	12,496	454	1,184	164	2,277,838	5,416	24,738
Nicaragua	4,765,000	14,345	332	13,536	6	12,733	1,028	1,554	239	3,118,468	18,597	57,597
Niger	7,490,000	238	31,471	216	-4*	225	17	41	7	70,736	354	904
Nigeria	107,129,469	222,306	482	207,546	5	197,532	17,779	28,842	4,073	44,796,294	313,546	539,978
Niue	2,088	35	60	32	10	29	2	2	1	5,615	24	103
Norfolk Island	1,887	16	118	13	-13*	15	1	1	1	2,114	6	30
Norway	4,431,399	10,201	434	9,523	1	9,449	192	522	175	1,255,869	2,487	15,905
Pakistan	130,580,000	450	290,178	409	9	376	39	54	9	92,498	391	1,660
Panama	2,763,612	9,661	286	8,957	4	8,651	561	1,222	188	2,031,639	9,183	28,904
Papua New Guinea	4,512,514	3,575	1,262	2,999	2	2,944	204	319	55	617,869	2,737	14,363
Paraguay	5,218,835	6,525	800	5,872	6	5,536	612	876	83	1,418,739	6,408	14,628
Peru	24,795,286	63,972	388	58,122	8	54,019	5,842	11,984	716	17,557,189	76,645	202,671
Philippines	71,000,000	128,134	554	125,720	2	122,727	8,435	21,414	3,534	26,552,574	80,554	403,643
Pohnpei	39,292	69	569	66	2	65	1	17	1	18,524	126	540
Poland	38,661,700	126,635	305	123,952	0	123,704	4,516	6,601	1,744	15,723,874	42,062	233,060
Portugal	9,477,292	47,540	199	46,428	2	45,635	1,935	3,272	651	7,646,228	19,130	89,061
Puerto Rico	3,800,000	26,727	142	25,964	1	25,589	816	2,486	328	4,785,641	14,443	61,248
Réunion	687,200	2,758	249	2,703	0	2,701	125	216	34	489,564	1,393	5,640
Rodrigues	35,018	35	1,001	32	-9*	35	2	4	1	7,884	32	62
Romania	22,607,620	37,452	604	36,680	3	35,588	1,809	2,647	483	5,575,469	14,284	82,198
Rota	2,574	10	257	9	0	9	1	3	1	2,572	8	54
Russia	147,987,101	100,012	1,480	92,722	17	79,202	13,861	10,190	760	21,872,572	81,712	254,612
Rwanda	7,883,000	5,633	1,399	5,163	10	4,679	813	945	80	1,791,276	9,780	17,779
Saba	1,000	1	1,000	1	0	1		1		1,034	6	6
St. Eustatius	1,500	19	79	18	6	17	2	3	1	3,775	21	34
St. Helena	5,010	160	31	151	6	142	5	2	2	14,164	43	342

St. Kitts	31,800	168	189	157	4	151	14	18	3	35,903	175	492
St. Lucia	128,910	715	180	665	2	649	34	102	9	161,983	730	1,787
St. Maarten	24,000	285	84	269	11	242	20	42	3	70,248	330	850
St. Pierre & Miquelon	6,300	17	371	16	23	13		2	1	2,790	7	25
St. Vincent	107,600	321	335	299	-2*	304	12	43	7	78,450	310	811
Saipan	55,305	185	299	174	3	169	17	29	3	49,956	211	554
Samoa	165,195	388	426	370	5	352	39	62	7	100,547	335	1,127
San Marino	25,515	178	143	177	5	169	6	18	2	40,455	63	273
São Tomé & Príncipe	133,379	266	501	242	12	217	15	50	3	82,471	518	808
Senegal	9,000,000	842	10,689	817	3	794	46	143	20	264,593	1,189	2,000
Seychelles	78,064	193	404	174	13	154	11	23	3	43,868	203	429
Sierra Leone	4,510,000	912	4,945	696	-7*	750	55	136	19	222,529	1,261	2,486
Slovakia	5,390,657	12,880	419	12,411	0	12,361	449	499	193	1,609,938	3,851	24,334
Slovenia	1,983,351	1,873	1,059	1,833	3	1,786	70	217	31	431,324	625	3,095
Solomon Islands	415,000	1,504	276	1,400	7	1,306	115	216	41	340,110	1,479	5,414
South Africa	37,900,000	66,732	568	62,408	3	60,736	4,152	6,911	1,308	13,323,085	58,099	154,040
Spain	39,669,394	103,784	382	97,384	-1*	98,724	2,350	10,133	1,300	19,931,234	23,988	155,723
Sri Lanka	18,600,000	3,111	5,979	2,735	11	2,468	395	322	52	610,790	2,398	7,568
Suriname	430,230	1,936	222	1,875	5	1,789	83	238	32	424,386	1,957	5,867
Swaziland	912,876	2,024	451	1,871	2	1,843	145	259	67	493,243	2,165	5,267
Sweden	8,852,287	24,292	364	23,366	-1*	23,692	525	1,999	353	3,604,094	6,955	36,739
Switzerland	7,096,800	18,528	383	18,023	-1*	18,186	414	1,038	308	2,818,484	6,967	28,930
Tahiti	219,521	1,933	114	1,897	2	1,867	78	138	38	325,193	1,578	5,294
Taiwan	21,300,000	3,691	5,771	3,576	8	3,325	281	902	53	1,286,267	4,254	9,013
Tajikistan	6,013,855	250	24,055	220	25	176	54	15	1	49,331	376	673
Tanzania	29,000,000	7,377	3,931	6,914	7	6,469	703	1,174	167	1,996,440	7,828	21,126
Thailand	60,816,227	1,840	33,052	1,744	5	1,666	144	285	52	450,126	1,590	3,742
Togo	4,406,000	10,748	410	10,233	4	9,861	818	1,268	156	2,392,371	22,287	39,363
Tokelau	1,487	6	248	5	25	4			1	352	3	17
Tonga	97,466	108	902	98	21	81	12	22	3	33,144	176	320
Trinidad & Tobago	1,269,155	7,802	163	7,576	3	7,350	415	1,122	85	1,631,688	8,421	20,843
Turkey	66,000,000	1,529	43,165	1,498	6	1,408	101	185	23	366,803	898	2,569
Turks & Caicos Isls.	16,249	117	139	104	-7*	112	2	8	3	24,427	164	454
Tuvalu	9,403	49	192	40	-11*	45	1	4	3	8,436	42	189
Uganda	20,810,000	2,191	9,498	2,081	10	1,887	220	280	33	530,706	3,030	6,822
Ukraine	50,499,900	101,755	496	90,076	15	78,264	11,768	8,633	823	18,396,962	53,816	229,328
U.S. of America	269,295,000	1,040,283	259	944,218	2	929,471	37,351	105,151	11,064	182,823,355	405,282	2,066,919
Uruguay	3,030,000	10,422	291	10,310	1	10,242	574	865	136	1,631,848	7,058	22,434
Vanuatu	185,000	276	670	248	17	212	14	21	3	53,860	410	1,568
Venezuela	24,200,000	82,779	292	77,323	3	75,261	5,219	11,958	1,104	19,419,262	85,311	253,084
Virgin Isls. (Brit.)	17,000	159	107	148	6	139	7	23	2	34,736	138	601
Virgin Isls. (U.S.)	101,800	657	155	630	5	600	24	80	9	136,528	556	1,852
Wallis & Futuna Isls.	15,000	44	341	36	80	20	6	6	1	9,724	45	105
Yap	10,974	32	343	29	4	28	3	7	1	10,497	55	193
Yugoslavia, F.R.	10,546,983	3,986	2,646	3,883	5	3,699	288	578	51	1,017,827	1,849	8,560
Zambia	10,073,537	104,096	97	92,298	5	87,747	4,678	10,736	2,060	18,857,852	114,283	411,017
Zimbabwe	12,684,679	28,063	452	25,848	3	25,063	2,301	3,065	817	5,533,667	32,759	66,360
30 Other Lands		24,422		21,661	6.0	20,438	1,662	2,036	476	4,722,847	23,225	56,164
GRAND TOTAL (233 lands)		5,888,650		5,544,059	3.6	5,353,078	316,092	698,781	87,644	1,186,666,708	4,302,852	13,896,312

During the 1998 service year, the Watch Tower Society spent \$64,414,274.00 in caring for special pioneers, missionaries, and traveling overseers in their field service assignments.

MEMORIAL PARTAKERS WORLDWIDE: 8,756

* Percentage of decrease



If we listen to Jehovah's Word, our confidence in his promises will be renewed

³ Yet, says Paul, "he that approaches God must believe that he is and that he becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him." Moses had faith like that. He "looked intently toward the payment of the reward" and "continued steadfast as seeing the One who is invisible." (Hebrews 11:6, 24, 26, 27) A Christian needs this kind of faith. As noted in the preceding article, Abraham was a fine example in this respect.

Abraham's Example of Faith

⁴ Abraham was in Ur when he received God's promise that he would father a seed that would be a blessing to people of all nations. (Genesis 12:1-3; Acts 7:2, 3) On the basis of that promise, Abraham obeyed Jehovah, moving first to Haran and then to Canaan. There, Jehovah promised to give the land to Abraham's seed. (Genesis 12:7; Nehemiah 9:7, 8) However, much of what Jehovah promised was to be fulfilled after Abraham's death. For instance, Abraham himself never owned any part of Canaan—except for the cave of Machpelah, which he purchased as a burial place. (Genesis 23:1-20) Still, he had faith in Jehovah's word. Above all, he had faith in a future "city hav-

ing real foundations, the builder and maker of which city is God." (Hebrews 11:10) Such faith sustained him throughout his life.

⁵ This is seen especially with regards to the promise that Abraham's seed would become a great nation. In order for this to happen, Abraham needed a son, and he waited a long time to be blessed with one. We do not know how old he was when he first heard God's promise, but when he made the long trip to Haran, Jehovah had not yet given him a child. (Genesis 11:30) He was in Haran long enough to 'accumulate goods and acquire souls,' and when he moved to Canaan, he was 75 years old and Sarah was 65. Still, there was no son. (Genesis 12:4, 5) When Sarah reached her mid-70's, she concluded that she was now too old to give Abraham a child. Hence, following a custom of the time, she gave her slave girl Hagar to Abraham, and he had a son by her. But this was not the promised child. Hagar and her child, Ishmael, were eventually sent away. Still, when Abraham pleaded in their behalf, Jehovah promised to bless Ishmael.—Genesis 16:1-4, 10; 17:15, 16, 18-20; 21:8-21.

⁶ In God's own due time—a long, long time after they first heard the promise—the 100-year-old Abraham and the 90-year-old Sarah had a baby boy, Isaac. How wonderful it must have been! For this aged couple, it was almost like a resurrection when

3. What kind of faith should a Christian cultivate?

4. How was the course of Abraham's life affected by his faith?

5, 6. In what way was Abraham's faith tested as to Jehovah's promise?

their “deadened” bodies brought forth new life. (Romans 4:19-21) The wait was long, but when the promise was finally fulfilled, the wait was worth it.

⁷ Abraham’s example reminds us that faith should not be just for a short term. Paul linked faith to endurance when he wrote: “You have need of endurance, in order that, after you have done the will of God, you may receive the fulfillment of the promise. . . . We are not the sort that shrink back to destruction, but the sort that have faith to the preserving alive of the soul.” (Hebrews 10:36-39) Many have waited a long time for the fulfillment of the promise. Some have waited a whole lifetime. Their strong faith has sustained them. And, like Abraham, they *will* receive the reward in Jehovah’s due time.—Habakkuk 2:3.

Listening to God

⁸ At least four things strengthened Abraham’s faith, and the same things can help us. First, he demonstrated his ‘belief that God is’ by paying heed when Jehovah spoke. Thus, he was different from the Jews of Jeremiah’s day, who believed in Jehovah but had no faith in his words. (Jeremiah 44:15-19) Today, Jehovah speaks to us through the pages of the Bible, his inspired Word, which Peter said is like “a lamp shining in a dark place . . . in your hearts.” (2 Peter 1:19) When we read the Bible attentively, we are being “nourished with the words of the faith.” (1 Timothy 4:6; Romans 10:17) Further, in these last days, “the faithful and discreet slave” is providing spiritual “food at the proper time,” guidance in applying Bible principles and understanding Bible prophecy. (Matthew 24:45-47) Listening to Jehovah through these means is indispensable to having strong faith.

7. How is faith linked to endurance?

8. How do we listen to God today, and why will that strengthen our faith?

⁹ Abraham’s faith was closely related to his hope. “Based on hope he had faith, that he might become the father of many nations.” (Romans 4:18) This is a second thing that can help us. We should never forget that Jehovah is “the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him.” The apostle Paul said: “We are working hard and exerting ourselves, because we have rested our hope on a living God.” (1 Timothy 4:10) If we truly believe the Christian hope, our whole life course will be a demonstration of our faith, as was the case with Abraham.

Speaking With God

¹⁰ Abraham spoke with God, and this was a third thing that strengthened his faith. Today, we too can speak with Jehovah, using the gift of prayer through Jesus Christ. (John 14:6; Ephesians 6:18) It was after telling a parable emphasizing the need for constant prayer that Jesus asked the question: “When the Son of man arrives, will he really find the faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8) Faith-building prayer is not unthinking or automatic. It is deeply meaningful. For example, heartfelt prayer is vital when we have important decisions to make or when we are under great stress.—Luke 6:12, 13; 22:41-44.

¹¹ When Abraham was getting old and Jehovah still had not given him the promised seed, he spoke with God about his concern. Jehovah reassured him. The result? Abraham “put faith in Jehovah; and he proceeded to count it to him as righteousness.” Then, Jehovah provided a sign to confirm his reassuring words. (Genesis 15:1-18) If we open our hearts to Jehovah in prayer, accept Jehovah’s assurances in his Word, the Bible,

9. What will result if we truly believe the Christian hope?

10. What kind of prayer will strengthen our faith?

11. (a) How was Abraham strengthened when he opened his heart to God? (b) What can we learn from Abraham’s experience?



**Our faith is strengthened when we
share in the ministry**

and obey him
in full faith, then
Jehovah will also strengthen our faith.—Matthew 21:22; Jude 20, 21.

¹² A fourth thing that strengthened Abraham's faith was the support that Jehovah gave him when he followed God's guidance. When Abraham went to rescue Lot from the invading kings, Jehovah gave him the victory. (Genesis 14:16, 20) While Abraham lived like a temporary resident in the land his seed would inherit, Jehovah blessed him materially. (Compare Genesis 14:21-23.) Jehovah guided the efforts of his steward to find a fitting wife for Isaac. (Genesis 24:10-27) Yes, Jehovah "blessed Abraham in everything." (Genesis 24:1) So strong was his faith as a result and so close his relationship with Jehovah God that Jehovah called him "my friend."—Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23.

¹³ Can we today have such a strong faith? Yes. If we, like Abraham, put Jehovah to the test by obeying his commands, he will bless us too, and that will strengthen our faith. For example, a glance at the 1998 Service Year Report shows that many were

12, 13. (a) How was Abraham blessed when he followed Jehovah's guidance? (b) What kind of experiences will strengthen our faith?

blessed in a wonderful way when they obeyed his command to preach the good news.—Mark 13:10.

A Record of Faith Today

¹⁴ Back in October 1997, the worldwide campaign with *Kingdom News* No. 35 was an outstanding success, thanks to the zeal and enthusiasm of millions of individual Witnesses. Typical is what happened in Ghana. Almost 2.5 million copies were distributed in four languages, and nearly 2,000 Bible studies were requested as a result. In Cyprus two Witnesses distributing *Kingdom News* noticed a priest following them. After a while, they offered him a copy of *Kingdom News*. He had already received a copy and said: "I was so impressed by its message that I wanted to congratulate the people who prepared it." In Denmark, 1.5 million copies of *Kingdom News* were distributed with fine results. A lady who works in public relations there said: "The tract has a message for everyone. It is easy to understand, and it moves you, gives you a desire to know more. It really hits the bull's-eye!"

¹⁵ In 1998 an effort was made to preach to people not only in their homes but everywhere. In Côte d'Ivoire a missionary couple visited 322 ships at the docks. They placed

14. How did Jehovah bless the campaign with *Kingdom News* No. 35?

15. What experiences show that Jehovah blessed the effort to reach people everywhere?

247 books, 2,284 magazines, 500 brochures, and hundreds of tracts, as well as videos for the sailors to watch while at sea. In Canada a Witness went to an automobile body shop. The owner was interested, and the brother stayed four and a half hours, although the time spent witnessing totaled only an hour or so between customers. Eventually, a study was arranged for 10:00 p.m. Sometimes, though, it did not get started until midnight and lasted until two o'clock in the morning. The schedule was likely a challenge, but good results were obtained. The man decided to close his shop on Sundays so as to attend meetings. He and his family were soon making fine progress.

¹⁶ The brochure *What Does God Require of Us?* and the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life* continue to be powerful instruments in the preaching and teaching work. In Italy a nun waiting for a bus accepted a copy of *Kingdom News*. The next day, she was approached again and accepted the *Require* brochure. Each day after that, she had a 10- to 15-minute Bible study at the bus stop. After a month and a half, she decided to leave the convent and go home to Guatemala to continue her study. In Malawi an ardent churchgoer named Lobina was displeased when her daughters began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. Still, the girls shared Bible truth with their mother when they could. In June 1997, Lobina saw the *Knowledge* book and was intrigued by the expression "Knowledge That Leads." In July she agreed to a Bible study. In August she attended the district convention and listened carefully to the whole program. By the end of that month, she had left her church and had qualified as an unbaptized publisher. She was baptized in November 1997.

16. What experiences show that the *Require* brochure and the *Knowledge* book are powerful tools in the preaching and teaching work?

¹⁷ The Society's videos have helped many to "see" spiritual things. In Mauritius a man left his church because of disunity there. A missionary showed him the unity of Jehovah's Witnesses, using the video *United by Divine Teaching*. Impressed, the man said: "You Jehovah's Witnesses are already in Paradise!" He agreed to a Bible study. A sister in Japan showed her unbelieving husband the video *Jehovah's Witnesses—The Organization Behind the Name*, and he was moved to have a regular Bible study. After watching *United by Divine Teaching*, he wanted to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses. The three-part series entitled *The Bible—A Book of Fact and Prophecy* helped him to apply Bible principles in his life. Finally, *Jehovah's Witnesses Stand Firm Against Nazi Assault* showed him that Jehovah strengthens His people against Satan's attacks. The man was baptized in October 1997.

¹⁸ These are just a few of the many, many experiences enjoyed during the past service year. They show that Jehovah's Witnesses have an active faith and that Jehovah is strengthening that faith by blessing their activity.—James 2:17.

Cultivate Faith Today

¹⁹ In many ways we today are in a better position than Abraham was. We know that Jehovah fulfilled all his promises to Abraham. Abraham's offspring did inherit Canaan, and they did become a great nation. (1 Kings 4:20; Hebrews 11:12) Moreover, some 1,971 years after Abraham left Haran, a descendant of his, Jesus, was baptized

17, 18. How have the Society's videos proved useful in helping individuals to "see" spiritual things?

19. (a) How are we in a better position than Abraham? (b) How many gathered last year to commemorate Jesus' sacrificial death? (c) What countries had outstanding Memorial attendances last year? (See chart on pages 12 to 15.)

in water by John the Baptizer and then in holy spirit by Jehovah himself to become the Messiah, Abraham's Seed in the complete, spiritual sense. (Matthew 3:16, 17; Galatians 3:16) On Nisan 14, 33 C.E., Jesus offered up his life as a ransom for those who would exercise faith in him. (Matthew 20:28; John 3:16) Millions could now bless themselves by means of him. Last year, 13,-896,312 gathered on Nisan 14 to commemorate this wonderful act of love. What a vindication of Jehovah, the Great Keeper of promises!

²⁰ In the first century, many from all nations—starting with fleshly Israel—exercised faith in this Seed of Abraham and became anointed sons of God, members of a new, spiritual “Israel of God.” (Galatians 3:26-29; 6:16; Acts 3:25, 26) They had an assured expectation of immortal spirit life in the heavens as corulers in God's Kingdom. Only 144,000 would be blessed in this way, and few of them remain. (Revelation 5:9, 10; 7:4) Last year, 8,756 testified to their belief that they were of this number by partaking of the emblems during the Memorial celebration.

20, 21. How did people from all nations bless themselves through Abraham's Seed in the first century, and how are they blessing themselves today?

Do You Know?

- ☐ How can we listen to God today?
- ☐ What benefits come from meaningful prayers to God?
- ☐ If we obediently follow Jehovah's guidance, how will our faith be strengthened?
- ☐ What aspects of the annual report (pages 12 to 15) did you find especially interesting?

²¹ Almost all of Jehovah's Witnesses today are of the “great crowd” prophesied at Revelation 7:9-17. Because they bless themselves through Jesus, they have the hope of eternal life on a paradise earth. (Revelation 21:3-5) The 5,888,650 who shared in the preaching work in 1998 are evidence that this crowd is truly “great.” It was especially thrilling to see both Russia and Ukraine report more than 100,000 publishers for the first time. Outstanding, too, was the report from the United States—1,040,283 publishers in August! These were just three of the 19 countries that reported more than 100,000 publishers last year.

Hope Soon to Be Fulfilled

²² Memorial attenders were reminded how far along we are in the fulfillment of Jehovah's promises. In 1914, Jesus was enthroned as King of God's heavenly Kingdom, beginning his presence in Kingdom power. (Matthew 24:3; Revelation 11:15) Yes, the Seed of Abraham now reigns in heaven! James said to Christians of his day: “Exercise patience; make your hearts firm, because the presence of the Lord has drawn close.” (James 5:8) Well, that presence is now a reality! How much more reason to make our hearts firm!

²³ May our confidence in God's promises be constantly renewed by regular Bible study and meaningful prayer. May we never cease to experience Jehovah's blessing as we obey his Word. Then we will be like Abraham, not like those whose faith weakened and died, as mentioned by Paul. Nothing will separate us from our most holy faith. (Jude 20) We pray that this will be true of all of Jehovah's servants during the 1999 service year and on into an eternal future.

22, 23. (a) Why should we make our hearts firm today? (b) How can we prove to be like Abraham, not like the faithless ones mentioned by Paul?

STRIVING TO BE “A WORKMAN WITH NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF”

AS TOLD BY ANDRÉ SOPPA



World War II raged, bringing indescribable carnage and despair in its wake. As a signalman in the German Navy stationed near Narvik, in Norway, I was able to see firsthand man's inhumanity to man. At night, in the shelter of the fjords, the ethereal beauty of the northern lights led me to reflect deeply on life. I was sure that the God who created such things could not be responsible for the madness of war.

I WAS born in 1923 in the small village of Lassoth (now in Poland), near the Czech border, and I grew up in a poor farming family. My parents were practicing Catholics, and religion played a very big part in our lives. However, early on I began to have doubts about my religion. In our village, there were three Protestant families, and these were ostracized by the Catholic community. I could not understand why this should be the case. At school we were taught catechism. But one day when I asked the priest to explain the Trinity, all I got for an answer was ten strokes of the cane.

Nevertheless, it was something that happened when I was 17 years old that confirmed my disillusion with the church. My mother's parents died one month apart, and my mother did not have enough money to pay for two church funeral services. So she asked the priest if she could pay him later. "Your parents had some things, didn't they?" was his reply. "Sell them, and use the money for the funeral."

A few years before that, after Hitler came to power in 1933, we were no longer permitted to speak Polish; we had to speak German. Those who refused, or

**The type of boat that I served
on in the fjords of Norway**

who could not learn German, gradually disappeared—sent to the concentration camps, we were later told. Even the name of our village was changed to a German name, Grünfliess. I quit school at 14, and because I was not in the Hitler Youth organization, I had difficulty finding a job. Eventually, though, I was taken on as an apprentice blacksmith. Once the war started, prayers were said in church for Hitler and for the German troops. I wondered whether similar prayers for victory were being said by the other side.

Service in the German Navy

In December 1941, I signed up for the German Navy, and at the beginning of 1942, I was sent to the Norwegian coast to serve on a scout ship. We were assigned to convoy duty between Trondheim and Oslo, escorting ships carrying troops, munitions, or freight. It was while at sea that I overheard two sailors talking about the end of the world as foretold in the Bible. Although afraid to talk openly, they told me that their parents were associated with Jehovah's Witnesses but that they had not followed their example. This was the first time I heard of Jehovah's Witnesses.

At the end of the war, we were taken prisoner by the British and handed over to the Americans to be taken back to Germany. Those of us whose homes were now in the Soviet zone were sent to a prison camp in Liévin, northern France, to work in the coal mines. This was in August 1945. I remember asking one of my French guards what his religion was. "Catholic," he re-



plied. Since I too was a Catholic, I asked him what we had done to each other? "There is no point in trying to understand. That's just the way it is," was his answer. To me it was absurd that people of the same religion should fight and kill one another.

A Ray of Light in a Coal Mine

On my first day in the mine alongside local miners, a certain Evans Emiot shared his sandwiches with me. Originally from Ohio, in the United States, he had lived in France for a number of years. He spoke to me of a world where there would be no more war. His kindly attitude amazed me. He bore me no animosity even though I was a German and he was an American. We had no more contact until the beginning of 1948 when he gave me a booklet entitled "*The Prince of Peace*." Here at last I learned of a God of goodness who hated war—the kind of God I had imagined while watching the northern lights. I determined to find the religion that taught this. But since Evans worked in another part of the mine, I was unable to contact him. I went around to all the different religious groups in the prison camp, asking if they knew anything about the booklet, but to no avail.

Finally, in April 1948, I was released from the prison camp and became a free

Preaching by bicycle in northern France

ning. I did not understand much of what was said, but when everyone in attendance raised their hand, I asked the person next to me why they did that. "They are the ones who can go to Dunkerque next week to preach." "May I come?" I asked. "Why, yes!" was the reply. So the following Sunday saw me preaching from house to house. Although not everyone we met was agreeable, I enjoyed myself and was soon preaching regularly.

Learning to Control My Temper

Shortly thereafter, the Witnesses began to preach in the barracks where the freed German prisoners lived. This was not easy for me, since I was well-known there for my hot temper. When someone refused to take me seriously, I would threaten him, saying: "If you're not careful, there will be trouble." Once while working in the mine, I even punched someone who mocked Jehovah.

With Jehovah's help, however, I was able to make changes in my personality. One day, while we were preaching in these barracks, a group of men who had drunk too much alcohol were making trouble for some of the Witnesses. Knowing my quick temper, the brothers I was with tried to stop me from intervening, but one of the men strode up to me menacingly and started to take off his jacket. I got off my bicycle, gave it to him to hold, and put my hands in my pockets. He was so surprised at this that he listened to what I had to say. I told him to go home and sleep and then come to the public talk. Sure enough, at 3:00 p.m., there he was! Eventually, about 20 former prisoners accepted the message. As for me, I was baptized in September 1948.



Piled-up suitcases served as the speaker's stand for the public talk

worker. The very next Sunday, I was surprised to hear a little bell ringing in the street. How happy I was to see Evans! He was with a group of Jehovah's Witnesses wearing sandwich boards that announced the title of a public talk. The Witness ringing the bell was Marceau Leroy, now a member of the Branch Committee in France. I was introduced to a German-speaking Pole named Joseph Kulczak, who had suffered in the concentration camps for his faith. He invited me to come to the meeting that eve-



***With my wife, Jeannette, at
our wedding in 1952***

A Full but Rewarding Schedule

I was given the responsibility of caring for the territories in which we were to preach and of finding locations where we could hold public talks. To this end I sometimes traveled about 30 miles on my little motorcycle, before working the late shift in the mines. Then on weekends, we went to the territory by bus and dropped off two or four publishers along with the speaker. In larger towns, on finding a suitable location, we piled up our suitcases to use as a speaker's stand. Often, we wore sandwich boards to advertise the theme of the public talk to which we invited people.

It was in 1951 that I met Jeannette Chaufour, a Witness from Reims. It was love at first sight, and one year later, on May 17, 1952, we were married. We moved to Pecquencourt, a mining town near Douai. Soon,

however, I started to have health problems. I was diagnosed with silicosis, a respiratory illness caused by working in the mines, but I was unable to find any other kind of work. So when, in 1955, during the international assembly in Nuremberg, Germany, we were asked to help a small congregation in Kehl, a little industrial town on the Rhine, we were free to move there. At the time, there were only 45 publishers in the congregation. Over the next seven years that we worked with this congregation, the number of publishers increased to 95.

Further Privileges of Service

Seeing that the congregation was firmly established, we asked the Society for an assignment in France as special pioneers. To our great surprise, we were assigned to Paris. The eight months that we spent there were filled with great joy. Between us, Jeannette and I had the privilege of conducting 42 Bible studies. Five of our students were baptized during our stay, and 11 others subsequently accepted the truth.

Since we lived in the Latin Quarter, we often met professors from the Sorbonne. A retired professor of philosophy who practiced faith healing studied the Bible and eventually became one of Jehovah's Witnesses. One day I started a Bible discussion with a civil engineer who was in close contact with Jesuit teachers. He came to

our apartment at three o'clock in the afternoon and left at ten o'clock that evening. To our surprise, he was back at our door one and a half hours later. He had spoken with a Jesuit who could not answer his questions about Bible prophecy. At one o'clock in the morning, he went home, only to return at seven o'clock. In time, he too became one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Such a thirst for truth was a great encouragement to my wife and me.

After serving in Paris, I was invited to serve as traveling overseer for the east of France. It was a real joy for us to visit French- and German-speaking congregations, strengthening the brothers. While visiting the congregation of Rombas, in Lorraine, I met Stanislas Ambroszczak. He was a Pole who had served on an Allied submarine during the war and had fought in Norwegian waters. We had been on opposing sides while sailing the same seas. Now we were brothers working together serving our God, Jehovah. On another occasion at an assembly in Paris, I caught sight of someone I recognized. It was the commander of the camp where I was a prisoner in the north of France. How happy we were to work together during the convention! Such is the power of God's Word that it turns former enemies into brothers and close friends!

Sadly, after 14 years in the traveling work, I had to stop because of my declining health. However, my wife and I were determined to continue serving Jehovah to the best of our ability. So we found accommodations and employment in the town of Mulhouse, in the east of France, and became pioneers (full-time evangelizers).

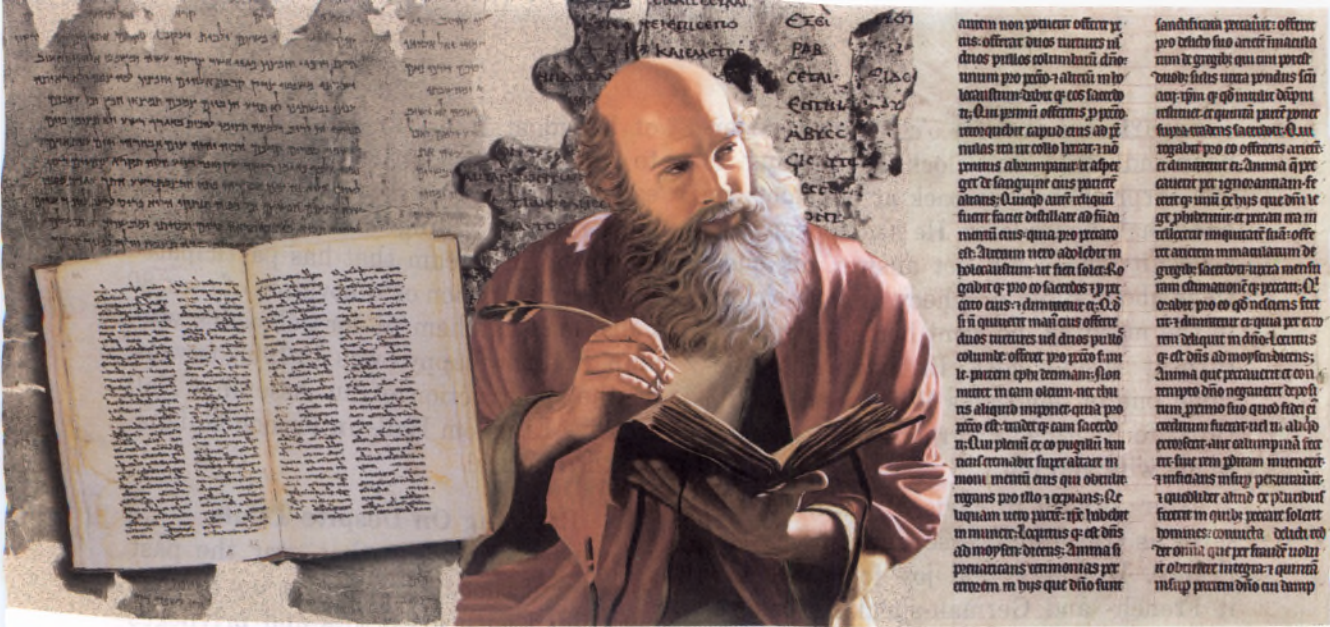
Another great joy over the years has been my involvement in the construction

of Kingdom Halls. In 1985, I was asked to organize a construction team for the east of France. By using skilled tradesmen and training willing volunteers, we were able to form a team that has participated in the construction or renovation of over 80 halls, making them fit for Jehovah's worship. And how happy I was, in 1993, to work on the construction of an Assembly Hall and five Kingdom Halls in French Guiana, South America!

Pressing On Despite Trials

I can certainly say that over the past 50 years of theocratic activity, my life has been filled with great joys and privileges of service. Sadly, in December 1995 my dear wife, with whom I had spent 43 years, died. While this was a time of great sorrow—and I still grieve today—Jehovah gives me strength, and my spiritual brothers and sisters have given me love and support that lessen the pain somewhat with the passing of time.

I still clearly remember the words of an anointed brother at an assembly in Munich, Germany, in 1963. "André," he said, "don't look to the left or to the right. The brothers in the concentration camps underwent tests. Now it's up to us to carry on. We must never feel sorry for ourselves. So press on!" I have always kept this in mind. Now that I cannot do as much because of ill health and growing older, the words found at Hebrews 6:10 are a constant source of comfort to me: "God is not unrighteous so as to forget your work and the love you showed for his name." Yes, working in Jehovah's service is the greatest privilege that anyone can have. For the past 50 years, my goal has been, and still is, to be "a workman with nothing to be ashamed of."—2 Timothy 2:15.



JEROME

A Controversial Pioneer in Bible Translation

ON April 8, 1546, the Council of Trent decreed that the Latin *Vulgate* “has been approved by the [Catholic] Church . . . and that no one dare or presume under any pretext whatsoever to reject it.” Though the *Vulgate* was completed over one thousand years earlier, it and its translator, Jerome, had long been the center of controversy. Who was Jerome? Why were he and his Bible translation controversial? How does his work influence Bible translation today?

The Making of a Scholar

Jerome's Latin name was Eusebius Hieronymus. He was born about 346 C.E. in Stridon, in the Roman province of Dalmatia, near the present-day border between Italy and Slovenia.* His parents were moderate-

ly wealthy, and he tasted the advantages of money at an early age, receiving an education in Rome under the renowned grammarian Donatus. Jerome proved to be a gifted student of grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy. During this period he also began to study Greek.

After leaving Rome in 366 C.E., Jerome wandered about, finally ending up in Aquileia, Italy, where he was introduced to the concept of asceticism. Attracted to these views of extreme self-denial, he and a group of friends spent the next several years cultivating an ascetic way of life.

In 373 C.E., an unexplained disturbance caused the group to break up. Disillusioned, Jerome wandered eastward across Bithynia,

* Not all historians agree on the dates and order of events in Jerome's life.

Galatia, and Cilicia and eventually arrived in Antioch, Syria.

The long journey took its toll on him. Exhausted and in poor health, Jerome was nearly overcome by fever. "Oh, if only the Lord Jesus Christ would suddenly transport me to you," he said, writing to a friend. "My poor body, weak even when well, has been shattered."

As if illness, loneliness, and inner conflict were not enough, Jerome soon faced yet another crisis—a spiritual one. In a dream he saw himself "dragged before the judgment seat" of God. When asked to identify himself, Jerome replied: "I am a Christian." But the one presiding fired back: "Thou liest, thou art a follower of Cicero and not of Christ."

Up until then Jerome's passion for learning had primarily centered on the study of pagan classics rather than on God's Word. "I was tortured," he said, "by the fire of conscience." Hoping to set matters right, Jerome vowed in his dream: "Lord, if ever again I possess worldly books, or if ever again I read such, I have denied Thee."

Later, Jerome argued that he could not be held accountable for a pledge made in a dream. Still he was determined to fulfill his vow—at least in principle. So Jerome left Antioch and sought seclusion in Chalcis in the Syrian desert. Living as a hermit, he immersed himself in a study of the Bible and theological literature. Said Jerome: "I read the books of God with a zeal greater than I had previously given to the books of men." He also learned the local Syriac tongue and began to study Hebrew with the help of a Jew who had converted to Christianity.

The Pope's Commission

After about five years of monastic living, Jerome returned to Antioch to continue his studies. Upon arriving, however, he found the church to be deeply divided. Indeed, while

he was still in the desert, Jerome had appealed to Pope Damasus for advice, saying: "The church is rent into three factions, and each of these is eager to seize me for its own."

In time, Jerome decided to align himself with Paulinus, one of the three men who had laid claim to the title of bishop of Antioch. Jerome agreed to be ordained by Paulinus on two conditions. First, he wanted to be free to pursue his monastic ambitions. And second, he insisted on remaining exempt from any priestly obligations to minister to a particular church.

In 381 C.E., Jerome accompanied Paulinus to the Council of Constantinople and thereafter continued on with him to Rome. Pope Damasus quickly recognized Jerome's scholarship and linguistic skills. Within a year Jerome was elevated to the prestigious position of private secretary to Damasus.

As secretary, Jerome did not shy away from controversy. If anything, he seemed to attract it. For example, he continued to live as an ascetic in the midst of the luxurious papal court. In addition, by promoting his austere life-style and by speaking out vehemently against the worldly excesses of the clergy, Jerome made a good number of enemies.

In spite of his detractors, however, Jerome received Pope Damasus' full support. The pope had good reason to encourage Jerome to continue his Bible research. At the time, there were numerous Latin versions of the Bible in use. Many of these were carelessly translated, containing glaring errors. Another concern of Damasus was that language was dividing the Eastern and Western realms of the church. Few in the East knew Latin; fewer in the West knew Greek.

Pope Damasus was therefore anxious for a revised Latin translation of the Gospels. Damasus wanted a translation that would accurately reflect the original Greek, yet be eloquent and clear in its Latin. Jerome was one of the few scholars who could provide such a

translation. Being fluent in Greek, Latin, and Syriac and having some working knowledge of Hebrew, he was well qualified for the job. So with Damasus' commission, Jerome began a project that would consume more than the next 20 years of his life.

The Controversy Intensifies

Although working with great speed in translating the Gospels, Jerome displayed a clear, scholarly technique. Comparing all of the Greek manuscripts then available, he made corrections in the Latin text, both in style and in substance, in order to bring it into closer harmony with the Greek text.

Jerome's translation of the four Gospels was generally well received, as was his Latin revision of the Psalms, which was based on the Greek *Septuagint* text. Nevertheless, he still had critics. "Certain contemptible creatures," wrote Jerome, "were deliberately assailing me with the charge that I had endeavored to correct passages in the gospels, against the authority of the ancients and the opinion of the whole world." Such denunciations intensified after the death of Pope Damasus in 384 C.E. Jerome's relationship with the new pope was less than favorable, so he decided to leave Rome. Once more, Jerome headed east.

The Making of a Hebrew Scholar

In 386 C.E., Jerome settled in Bethlehem, where he was to remain for the rest of his life. He was accompanied by a small band of loyal followers, including Paula, a wealthy woman of nobility from Rome. Paula had adopted the ascetic way of life as a result of Jerome's preaching. With

her financial backing, a monastery was established under Jerome's direction. There he pursued his scholarly work and completed the greatest labor of his life.

Living in Palestine afforded Jerome the opportunity to improve his understanding of Hebrew. He paid several Jewish tutors to help him understand some of the more difficult aspects of the language. Even with a tutor, though, it was not easy. Concerning one teacher, Baraninas of Tiberias, Jerome said: "What trouble and expense it cost me to get Baraninas to teach me under cover of night." Why did they study at night? Because Baraninas feared the Jewish community's view of his associating with a "Christian"!

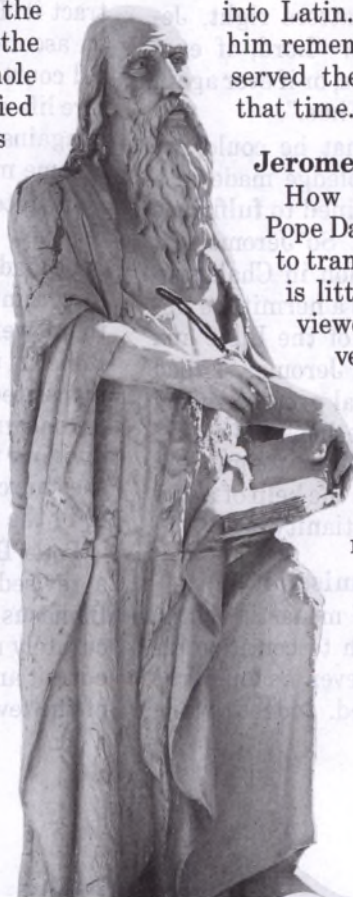
In Jerome's day, Jews often ridiculed Hebrew-speaking Gentiles for their inability to pronounce the guttural sounds properly. Still after much effort, Jerome was able to master these sounds. Jerome also transliterated a large number of Hebrew words into Latin. This step not only helped him remember the words but also preserved the Hebrew pronunciation of that time.

Jerome's Greatest Controversy

How much of the Bible that Pope Damasus intended for Jerome to translate is not clear. But there is little doubt as to how Jerome viewed the matter. Jerome was very focused and determined.

His burning desire was to produce something "useful to the Church, worthy of posterity." He thus resolved to provide a revised Latin translation of the entire Bible.

Statue of Jerome in Bethlehem



Garol Nalbandian

For the Hebrew Scriptures, Jerome intended to base his work on the *Septuagint*. This Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures, originally translated in the third century B.C.E., was viewed by many as directly inspired by God. Thus, the *Septuagint* enjoyed wide circulation among Greek-speaking Christians of that time.

As Jerome progressed with his work, however, he found inconsistencies between the Greek manuscripts, similar to those he had encountered in the Latin. Jerome's frustration grew. Finally, he came to the conclusion that to produce a reliable translation, he would have to bypass the Greek manuscripts, including the much revered *Septuagint*, and go directly to the original Hebrew text.

This decision caused an outcry. Jerome was labeled by some as a falsifier of the text, a profaner of God, abandoning the traditions of the church in favor of the Jews. Even Augustine—the church's leading theologian of the time—pleaded with Jerome to return to the *Septuagint* text, saying: "If your translation begins to be more generally read in many churches, it will be a grievous thing that, in the reading of Scripture, differences must arise between the Latin Churches and the Greek Churches."

Yes, Augustine's fear was that the church might split if the Western churches used Jerome's Latin text—based on the Hebrew texts—while the Greek churches of the East still used the *Septuagint* version.* Additionally, Augustine voiced misgivings about putting aside the *Septuagint* in favor of a translation that only Jerome could defend.

How did Jerome react to all these naysayers? True to his character, Jerome ignored his critics. He continued to work directly from the Hebrew, and by the year 405 C.E., he

had completed his Latin Bible. Years later his translation was dubbed *Vulgate*, which refers to a commonly received version (the Latin *vulgatus* meaning "common, that which is popular").

Long-Lasting Achievements

Jerome's translation of the Hebrew Scriptures was far more than a revision of an existing text. For generations to come, it changed the course of Bible study and translation. "The Vulgate," said historian Will Durant, "remains as the greatest and most influential literary accomplishment of the fourth century."

Although Jerome possessed a sharp tongue and a contentious personality, he single-handedly redirected Bible research back to the inspired Hebrew text. With a keen eye, he studied and compared ancient Hebrew and Greek Bible manuscripts that are no longer available to us today. His work also preceded that of the Jewish Masoretes. Hence, the *Vulgate* is a valuable reference for comparing alternate renderings of Bible texts.

Without condoning his extreme behavior or religious views, lovers of God's Word can appreciate the diligent efforts of this controversial pioneer in Bible translation. And yes, Jerome did fulfill his goal—he produced something "worthy of posterity."

In Our Next Issue

United in the Best Way of Life

Are Your Prayers
"Prepared as Incense"?

Do Others Accept Your Counsel?

* As things worked out, Jerome's translation became the basic Bible for Western Christendom, while the *Septuagint* continues to be used in Eastern Christendom right down to today.

An Act of Forgiveness Opens the Way for Salvation

THE ten sons of Jacob who stood before the prime minister of Egypt shared a terrible secret. Years earlier they had sold their half brother Joseph into slavery, planning to tell their father that he had been killed by a wild beast.—Genesis 37:18-35.

Now, some 20 years later, a severe famine had forced these ten men to come to Egypt to buy grain. But things did not go smoothly. The prime minister, who also served as food administrator, accused them of being spies. He imprisoned one of them and demanded that the rest return home and bring back their youngest brother, Benjamin. When they did so, the prime minister carried out a plan to have Benjamin arrested.—Genesis 42:1-44:12.

Judah, one of Jacob's sons, protested. 'If we go back home without Benjamin,' he said, 'our father will die.' Then something happened that neither Judah nor any of his traveling companions expected. After ordering all except the sons of Jacob to leave the room, the prime minister wept loudly. Then, regaining his composure, he declared: "I am Joseph."—Genesis 44:18-45:3.

Clemency and Deliverance

"Is my father still alive?" Joseph asked his half brothers. There was no response. Indeed, Joseph's half brothers were at a loss for words. Should they be ecstatic, or should they be terrified? After all, when they were 20 years younger, they had sold this man into slavery. Joseph had the authority to imprison them, send them home without food, or—dare they think it—execute them! For good reason, Joseph's half brothers were "unable to answer him at all, because

they were disturbed by reason of him."—Genesis 45:3.

Joseph quickly put these men at ease. "Come close to me, please," he said. They obeyed. Then he said: "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. But now do not feel hurt and do not be angry with yourselves because you sold me here; because for the preservation of life God has sent me ahead of you."—Genesis 45:4, 5.

Joseph's mercy was not extended without a basis. He had already observed evidence of their repentance. For example, when Joseph accused his half brothers of being spies, he overheard them say among themselves: "Unquestionably we are guilty with regard to our brother . . . That is why this distress has come upon us." (Genesis 42:21) Also, Judah had offered to become a slave in Benjamin's place in order that the young man could be returned to his father.—Genesis 44:33, 34.

Hence, Joseph was justified in extending mercy. Indeed, he realized that doing so could result in the salvation of his entire family. Therefore, Joseph told his half brothers to return to their father, Jacob, and say to him: "This is what your son Joseph has said: 'God has appointed me lord for all Egypt. Come down to me. Do not delay. And you must dwell in the land of Goshen, and you must continue near me, you and your sons and the sons of your sons and your flocks and your herds and everything you have. And I will supply you with food there.'"—Genesis 45:9-11.

The Greater Joseph

Jesus Christ can be called the Greater Joseph, for there are striking similarities between these



two men. Like Joseph, Jesus was mistreated by his brothers, fellow descendants of Abraham. (Compare Acts 2:14, 29, 37.) Yet, both men experienced an extraordinary reversal. In time, Joseph's status of a slave was changed to that of prime minister, second only to Pharaoh. Similarly, Jehovah raised Jesus from the dead and exalted him to a superior position "to the right hand of God."—Acts 2:33; Philippians 2:9-11.

As prime minister, Joseph could dispense food to all who came to Egypt to buy grain. Today, the Greater Joseph has upon earth a faithful and discreet slave class through whom he is dispensing spiritual food "at the proper time." (Matthew 24:45-47; Luke 12:42-44) Indeed, those who come to Jesus "will hunger no more nor thirst anymore . . . because the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, will shepherd them, and will guide them to fountains of waters of life."—Revelation 7:16, 17.

Lesson for Us

Joseph provides an outstanding example of mercy. Strict justice would have demanded that he punish those who had sold him into slavery. In contrast, sentiment could have moved him simply to overlook their transgression. Joseph did neither. Instead, he tested his half brothers' repentance. Then, when he saw that their sorrow was genuine, he forgave them.

We can imitate Joseph. When someone who has sinned against us displays a genuine change of heart, we should forgive him. Of course, we should never let mere sentiment blind us to gross wrongdoing. On the other hand, we should not let feelings of resentment blind us to acts of genuine repentance. So let us "continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely." (Colossians 3:13) In doing so, we will be imitating our God, Jehovah, who is "ready to forgive."—Psalm 86:5; Micah 7:18, 19.



"TALL AS A CEDAR ON LEBANON"

ON THE beautiful mountains of Lebanon grow trees that are known as *Arz Ar-rab*, meaning "Cedars of the Lord." These imposing evergreens, which once blanketed the mountains, are mentioned in the Bible some 70 times—more than any other tree.

To describe the stately cedars of Lebanon, the Scriptures use the words "choice" and "majestic." (Song of Solomon 5:15; Ezekiel 17:23) The cedar's size and the durability of its wood have long made it popular for building homes and ships as well as for making furniture. The fragrance and warm red color of the wood are very attractive, and

its high resin content makes it resistant to decay and insect infestation. The trees are strikingly tall and massive, attaining a height of up to 120 feet and a circumference of up to 40 feet, and they have deep, strong roots. No wonder some modern foresters have described them as "the crowning glory of the plant world"!

The Bible writer Ezekiel prophetically likened the Messiah to a twig of a cedar, which God himself then plants. (Ezekiel 17:22) In fact, the Hebrew word for "cedar" comes from a root meaning "to be firm." Today, followers of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, likewise need to "stand firm in the faith, . . . grow mighty," like a tall, resilient cedar. (1 Corinthians 16:13) How can this be accomplished? By firmly resisting unchristian influences and steadfastly enduring in a course of integrity and godly devotion. Those who do so are described in the Bible as "the righteous . . . [who] grow tall as a cedar on Lebanon." —Psalm 92:12, *The New English Bible*.

