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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

Words of Wisdom for People Today

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in God's now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower,* published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

IN THIS ISSUE

3 A Book of Wisdom With a Message for Today

8 Kingdom Proclaimers Report

9 Life After Death—What Do People Believe?

14 Life After Death—What Does the Bible Say?

20 Who Molds Your Thinking?

23 In Search of Paradise

28 Baal Worship—The Battle for the Israelites' Hearts

32 Authorities Praise Witnesses

WATCHTOWER STUDIES

MAY 3-9: Life After Death—What Do People Believe? Page 9. *Songs to be used:* 23, 206.

MAY 10-16: Life After Death—What Does the Bible Say? Page 14. *Songs to be used:* 102, 185.

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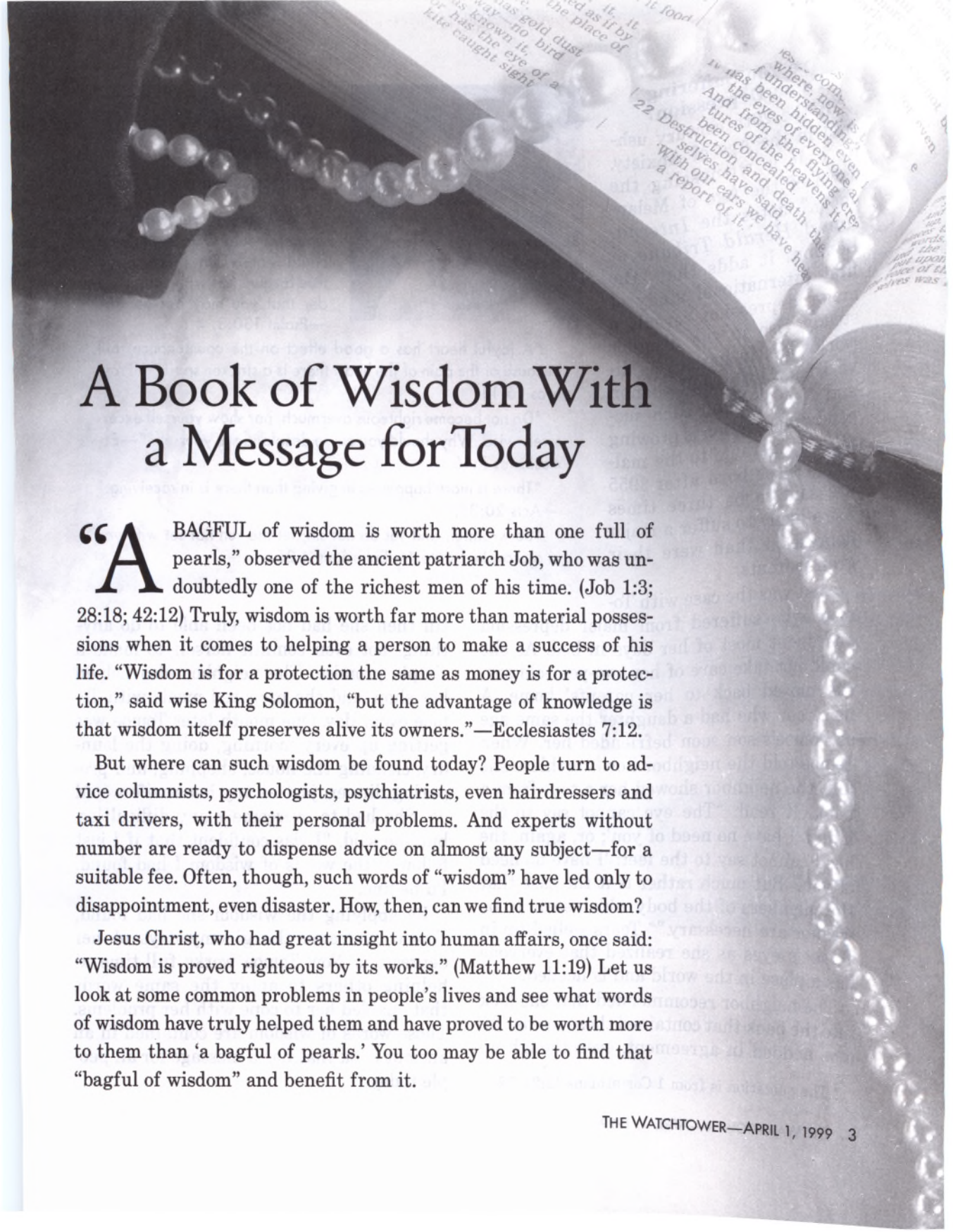


A Book of Wisdom With a Message for Today

"A BAGFUL of wisdom is worth more than one full of pearls," observed the ancient patriarch Job, who was undoubtedly one of the richest men of his time. (Job 1:3; 28:18; 42:12) Truly, wisdom is worth far more than material possessions when it comes to helping a person to make a success of his life. "Wisdom is for a protection the same as money is for a protection," said wise King Solomon, "but the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom itself preserves alive its owners."—Ecclesiastes 7:12.

But where can such wisdom be found today? People turn to advice columnists, psychologists, psychiatrists, even hairdressers and taxi drivers, with their personal problems. And experts without number are ready to dispense advice on almost any subject—for a suitable fee. Often, though, such words of "wisdom" have led only to disappointment, even disaster. How, then, can we find true wisdom?

Jesus Christ, who had great insight into human affairs, once said: "Wisdom is proved righteous by its works." (Matthew 11:19) Let us look at some common problems in people's lives and see what words of wisdom have truly helped them and have proved to be worth more to them than 'a bagful of pearls.' You too may be able to find that "bagful of wisdom" and benefit from it.

Are You Suffering From Depression?

"If the 20th century ushered in the Age of Anxiety, its exit is witnessing the dawn of the Age of Melancholy," notes the *International Herald Tribune* of London. It adds that "the first international study of major depression reveals a steady rise in the disorder worldwide. In nations as diverse as Taiwan, Lebanon and New Zealand each successive generation is growing more vulnerable to the malady." Those born after 1955 are said to be three times more likely to suffer a major depression than were their grandparents.

That was the case with Tomoe, who suffered from major depression and spent most of her days in bed. As she could not take care of her two-year-old son, she moved back to her parents' home. A neighbor who had a daughter the same age as Tomoe's son soon befriended her. When Tomoe told the neighbor how worthless she felt, the neighbor showed her a text from a book. It read: "The eye cannot say to the hand: 'I have no need of you'; or, again, the head cannot say to the feet: 'I have no need of you.' But much rather is it the case that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary."* Tears welled up in Tomoe's eyes as she realized that everyone has a place in the world and is needed.

The neighbor recommended that she look into the book that contained those words. Tomoe nodded in agreement, even though up till then she had not been able to do anything, not even commit herself to make a simple promise. The neighbor also helped her shop, and she prepared meals with Tomoe every day. One month later Tomoe was getting up every morning, doing the laundry, cleaning the house, shopping, and preparing dinner, just as any housewife would do. She had to overcome many difficulties, but she said, "I was confident that if I just followed the words of wisdom I had found, I'd be fine."

By applying the wisdom she had found, Tomoe overcame the gloomy days of her depression. Now Tomoe works full-time at helping others to apply the same words that enabled her to cope with her problems. Those words of wisdom are contained in an ancient book that has a message for all people today.

* The quotation is from 1 Corinthians 12:21, 22.

Words of Wisdom for Maintaining Emotional Balance

"If errors were what you watch, O Jah, O Jehovah, who could stand? For there is the true forgiveness with you, in order that you may be feared." —Psalm 130:3, 4.

"A joyful heart has a good effect on the countenance, but because of the pain of the heart there is a stricken spirit."—Proverbs 15:13.

"Do not become righteous overmuch, nor show yourself excessively wise. Why should you cause desolation to yourself?"—Ecclesiastes 7:16.

"There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." —Acts 20:35.

"Be wrathful, and yet do not sin; let the sun not set with you in a provoked state."—Ephesians 4:26.

Words of Wisdom for a Happy Family Life

"There is a frustrating of plans where there is no confidential talk, but in the multitude of counselors there is accomplishment." —Proverbs 15:22.

"The heart of the understanding one acquires knowledge, and the ear of wise ones seeks to find knowledge."—Proverbs 18:15.

"As apples of gold in silver carvings is a word spoken at the right time for it."—Proverbs 25:11.

"Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely if anyone has a cause for complaint against another. Even as Jehovah freely forgave you, so do you also. But, besides all these things, clothe yourselves with love, for it is a perfect bond of union."—Colossians 3:13, 14.

"Know this, my beloved brothers. Every man must be swift about hearing, slow about speaking, slow about wrath."—James 1:19.

Are You Facing Domestic Problems?

Around the world the divorce rate is escalating. Domestic problems are increasing even in Oriental countries, where people once took pride in their close-knit families. Where can we find wise marriage guidance that works?

Consider the case of Shugo and Mihoko, a couple who had endless marital problems. They quarreled over every trifle. Shugo was short-tempered, and Mihoko shot back every time he found fault with her. Mihoko even thought, 'It is impossible for us to agree on anything.'

One day a woman visited Mihoko and read to her these words from a book: "All things, therefore, that you want men to do to you, you also must likewise do to them."* Although not interested in religion, Mihoko agreed to study the book that contained those words. Her interest was in improving her family life. So when she was invited to attend a meeting where a publication entitled *Making Your Family Life Happy* was discussed, Mihoko —and her husband—readily accepted.*

At the meeting, Shugo noted that those in attendance were actually applying what they were learning and that they seemed to be happy. He decided to look into the book that his wife was studying. One statement soon caught his attention: "He that is slow to anger is abundant in discernment, but one that is impatient is exalting foolishness."# Although it took time for him to apply this principle in his life, the gradual change in him was manifest to those around him, including his wife.

Seeing the changes in her husband, Mihoko also started to apply what she was learning. One principle that proved especially helpful was this: "Stop judging that you may not be judged; for with what judgment you are judging, you will be judged."△ So Mihoko and her husband decided that they would talk about their good points and how they could improve rather than find fault with each other. What was the result? Mihoko recalls: "It has made me really happy. We have been doing this at dinner each evening. Even our three-year-old son joins in the conversation. It has been truly refreshing to us!"

* Matthew 7:12.

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

Proverbs 14:29.

△ Matthew 7:1, 2.

When this family put into practice the meaningful counsel that they had received, they were able to overcome the problems that had been straining their relationship to the breaking point. Is that not worth more to them than a bagful of pearls?

Words of Wisdom for Making a Success of Life

"A cheating pair of scales is something detestable to Jehovah, but a complete stone-weight is a pleasure to him." —Proverbs 11:1.

"Pride is before a crash, and a haughty spirit before stumbling."—Proverbs 16:18.

"As a city broken through, without a wall, is the man that has no restraint for his spirit."—Proverbs 25:28.

"Do not hurry yourself in your spirit to become offended, for the taking of offense is what rests in the bosom of the stupid ones." —Ecclesiastes 7:9.

"Send out your bread upon the surface of the waters, for in the course of many days you will find it again."—Ecclesiastes 11:1.

"Let a rotten saying not proceed out of your mouth, but whatever saying is good for building up as the need may be, that it may impart what is favorable to the hearers."—Ephesians 4:29.

Do You Want to Make a Success of Your Life?

For many today, accumulating riches is the goal in life. Yet, a rich businessman in the United States who has given away hundreds of millions of dollars to charity once said: "Money has an attraction for some people, but nobody can wear two pairs of shoes at one time." Few are those who admit this fact and fewer still are those who stop pursuing riches.

Hitoshi grew up poor, so he had a strong desire to be rich. After seeing how creditors twist people around their little finger, he decided: "The one who grabs ahold of the money is the winner." Hitoshi believed so much in the power of money that he thought even human lives could be bought with it. In order to accumulate riches, he applied himself to his plumbing business and worked all year round, never taking a day off. As hard as he tried, Hitoshi soon realized that he, a subcontractor, would never be as powerful as the contractors who gave him work. Frustration and fear of bankruptcy were his daily portion.

Then a man came to Hitoshi's door and asked him if he knew that Jesus Christ had died for him. Since Hitoshi felt that no one would die for a person like him, he was curious and agreed to have further discussions. The following week, he attended a lecture and was shocked to hear the admonition to 'keep the eye simple.' The speaker explained that a "simple" eye is one that is farsighted and focused on spiritual things; on the other hand, a "wicked," or "envious," eye is focused only on immediate fleshly desires and is shortsighted. The counsel, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also," hit him hard.* There is something more important than gaining riches! He had never heard anything like it.

Impressed, he started to apply what he was learning. Rather than toiling for money, he began to put spiritual values first in his life. He also spent time caring for the spiritual welfare of his family. Naturally, that meant less time for work, yet his business took a favorable turn. Why?

* Matthew 6:21-23; footnote.

Studying the Bible is the first step toward becoming a beneficiary of the "bagful of wisdom"

His aggressive personality changed to a mild and amicable one as he responded to counsel he was given. He was particularly impressed by the admonition: "Really put them all away from you, wrath, anger, badness, abusive speech, and obscene talk out of your mouth. Do not be lying to one another. Strip off the old personality with its practices, and clothe yourselves with the new personality, which through accurate knowledge is being made new according to the image of the One who created it."* Following this advice did not make him rich, but his "new personality" did make a good impression on his clients and won their trust and confidence. Yes, the words of wisdom he found helped him to make a success of his life. For him, they were literally worth far more than a bagful of pearls or money.

* Colossians 3:8-10.

Will You Open the Bag?

Can you identify the bagful of wisdom that has proved so valuable to the individuals in the above examples? It is the wisdom found in the Bible, the most widely circulated and most readily available book on earth. Possibly you have a copy or can easily obtain one. However, just as having a bagful of valuable pearls and not putting them to use would do the owner little good, simply having a Bible in one's possession will also be of little value. Why not open up the bag, so to speak, and apply the Bible's wise counsel and timely advice and see how it can help you to deal successfully with life's problems.

If you were ever given a bagful of pearls, would you not be grateful and try to find out who your benefactor is so that you can thank him? Do you know who the Giver is in the case of the Bible?

The Bible reveals the Source of the wisdom found in it when it says: "All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial." (2 Timothy 3:16) It also tells us that "the word of God is alive and exerts power." (Hebrews 4:12) That is why the wise words found in the Bible are timely and effective for us today. Jehovah's Witnesses would be delighted to help you to learn about this generous Giver, Jehovah God, so that you can come in line for being a beneficiary of the "bagful of wisdom" contained in the Bible—the book of wisdom with a message for people today.

KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

Preaching 'in Favorable Season and in Troublesome Season'

WHEN war swept across the country of Bosnia and Herzegovina, thousands experienced extreme hardships. During that trying time, Jehovah's Witnesses made every effort to bring encouragement and hope to the people. Following are excerpts from a letter written by a Witness who served for a time in Sarajevo.

"Life is tough here, but people are very receptive to Bible truth. The local Witnesses are a marvelous example of perseverance. Materially, they have very little, but they have an excellent spirit. Almost all the young ones in the congregation are in the full-time ministry. New publishers are encouraged by this zeal, and it is not unusual for them to devote 60 hours or more a month to the ministry right from their first month in the service.

"Besides preaching from house to house, we have tried various other methods to reach people. For example, we have had good results sharing Bible publications in the many cemeteries in the city.

"A witness has also been given in hospitals. In the Cardiology Department of a Sarajevo hospital, the chief physician accepted the December 8, 1996, *Awake!*, which has the cover theme 'Heart Attack —What Can Be Done?' He asked for additional copies so that he could share them with other doctors. The Witnesses were then granted permission to visit all the patients in his department. Thus, in a little over an hour, more than 100 magazines were distributed from bed to bed. Many patients said that it was the first time anyone had visited them in the hospital to offer encouragement and hope.

"On another occasion the Pediatric Department was visited with magazine articles appropriate for children. The chief physician also accepted a few copies of *My Book of Bible Stories* for the reading room. Now mothers who visit their children at the hospital read Bible stories to them every day. Arrangements have also been made to call on this doctor at her home.

"In Sarajevo there are thousands of NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] soldiers of different nationalities. These too have received a thorough witness. Sometimes we go from armored car to armored car using the booklet *Good News for All Nations* along with the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines in different languages. More than 200 magazines were distributed in the barracks of the Italian troops. Strangely enough, many Italian soldiers said that they had never spoken with Jehovah's Witnesses before. Well, we caught up with them in Sarajevo.

"One day an armored car was parked at the side of the road. I knocked on the car with my umbrella, and out came a soldier. I offered him a *Watchtower* with the cover title 'Messengers of Peace —Who Are They?' The soldier looked at me and asked, 'You're not one of *Jehovah's Witnesses*, are you?' After learning that I am, he replied, 'I don't believe it; you're here as well! Is there any place on earth where there are no Witnesses?' "

The apostle Paul exhorted: "Preach the word, be at it urgently in favorable season, in troublesome season." (2 Timothy 4:2) Like their fellow believers the world over, Jehovah's Witnesses in Sarajevo are doing that, even from bed to bed and from armored car to armored car!

LIFE AFTER DEATH—WHAT DO PEOPLE BELIEVE?

"If an able-bodied man dies can he live again?"—JOB 14:14.

IN A funeral parlor in New York City, friends and family quietly file by the open casket of a 17-year-old boy whose young life was consumed by cancer. The heartbroken mother tearfully repeats over and over: "Tommy's happier now. God wanted Tommy in heaven with him." That is what she has been taught to believe.

[2] Some 7,000 miles away, in Jamnagar, India, the eldest of three sons lights the wood on the cremation pyre for their deceased father. Over the crackling of the fire, the Brahman chants the Sanskrit mantras: "May the soul that never dies continue in its efforts to become one with the ultimate reality."

[3] The reality of death is all around us. (Romans 5:12) It is only normal for us to wonder if death is the end of it all. Reflecting on the natural cycle of the plants, Job, an ancient faithful servant of Jehovah God, observed: "There exists hope for even a tree. If it gets cut down, it will even sprout again, and its own twig will not cease to be." What, then, about humans? "If an able-bodied man dies can he live again?" Job inquired. (Job 14:7, 14) Over the ages, people in every society have pondered the questions: Is there life after death? If so, what kind of life? Consequently, what have people come to believe? And why?

1, 2. How do many seek comfort when they have lost a loved one in death?
3. What questions have people pondered for ages?

Many Answers, a Common Theme

[4] Many nominal Christians believe that after death, people go either to heaven or to

4. What do people of various religions believe about life after death?

hell. Hindus, on the other hand, believe in reincarnation. According to Islamic belief, there will be a day of judgment after death, when Allah will assess each one's life course and consign each person to paradise or to hellfire. In some lands, beliefs regarding the dead are a curious blend of local tradition and nominal Christianity. In Sri Lanka, for example, both Buddhists and Catholics leave the doors and windows wide open when a death occurs in their household, and they place the casket with the feet of the deceased facing the front door. They believe that these measures facilitate the exit of the spirit, or soul, of the deceased. Among many Catholics and Protestants in West Africa, it is customary to cover mirrors when someone dies so that no one might look and see the dead person's spirit. Then, 40 days later, family and friends celebrate the soul's ascension to heaven.

[5] In spite of this diversity, it seems that most religions do at least agree on one point. They believe that something inside a person —be it called soul, spirit, or ghost—is immortal and continues living after the death of the body. Nearly all of Christendom's hundreds of religions and sects advocate belief in the immortality of the soul. This belief is also an official doctrine in Judaism. It is the very foundation of Hinduism's teaching of reincarnation. Muslims believe that the soul lives on after the body dies. The Australian Aborigine, the African animist, the Shintoist, even the Buddhist, all teach variations on this same theme.

[6] On the other hand, there are those who take the view that conscious life ends at death. To them the idea that emotional and intellectual life continues in an impersonal, shadowy soul separate from the body seems beyond reason. The 20th-century Spanish scholar Miguel de Unamuno writes: "To believe in the immortality of the soul is to wish that the soul may be immortal, but to wish it with such force that this volition shall trample reason under foot and pass beyond it." Others who believe similarly include people as diverse as the noted ancient philosophers Aristotle and Epicurus, the physician Hippocrates, the Scottish philosopher David Hume, the Arabian scholar Averroës, and India's first prime minister after independence, Jawaharlal Nehru.

[7] Confronted with such conflicting ideas and beliefs, we must ask: Do we really have an immortal soul? If the soul is actually *not* immortal, then how could such a false teaching become an integral part of so many of today's religions? Where did the idea come from? It is imperative that we find truthful and satisfying answers to these questions because our future depends on it. (1 Corinthians 15:19) But, first, let us examine how the doctrine of the immortality of the soul originated.

The Birth of the Doctrine

[8] The fifth-century B.C.E. Greek philosophers Socrates and Plato are credited with being among the first to advance the belief that the soul is immortal. Yet, they were not the originators of the idea. Rather, they polished and transformed it into a philosophical teaching, thus making it more appealing to the cultured classes of their day and beyond. The fact is that the Zoroastrians of ancient Persia and the Egyptians before them also believed in the immortality of the soul. The question, then, is, What is the source of this teaching?

5. What is a central belief on which most religions agree?
6. How do some scholars view the idea that the soul is immortal?
7. What important questions about the belief of the immortality of the soul must now be considered?
8. What role did Socrates and Plato play in advancing the idea that the soul is immortal?

9 "In the ancient world," says the book *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria,* "Egypt, Persia, and Greece felt the influence of the Babylonian religion." Regarding Egyptian religious beliefs, the book goes on to say: "In view of the early contact between Egypt and Babylonia, as revealed by the El-Amarna tablets, there were certainly abundant opportunities for the infusion of Babylonian views and customs into Egyptian cults."* Much the same can be said of the old Persian and Greek cultures.

10 But did the ancient Babylonians believe in the immortality of the soul? On this point, Professor Morris Jastrow, Jr., of the University of Pennsylvania, U.S.A., wrote: "Neither the people nor the leaders of religious thought [of Babylonia] ever faced the possibility of the total annihilation of what once was called into existence. Death [in their view] was a passage to another kind of life, and the denial of immortality [of the present life] merely emphasized the impossibility of escaping the change in existence brought about by death." Yes, the Babylonians believed that life of some kind, in some form, continued after death. They expressed this by burying objects with the dead for their use in the Hereafter.

11 Clearly, the teaching of the immortality of the soul goes back to ancient Babylon. Is that significant? Indeed, for according to the Bible, the city of Babel, or Babylon, was founded by Nimrod, a great-grandson of Noah. After the global Flood in Noah's day, all the people spoke one language and had one religion. Not only was Nimrod one "in opposition to Jehovah" but he and his followers wanted to "make a celebrated name" for themselves. Thus by founding the city and constructing a tower there, Nimrod started a different religion.—Genesis 10:1, 6, 8-10; 11:1-4.

12 Tradition has it that Nimrod died a violent death. After his death the Babylonians would reasonably have been inclined to hold him in high regard as the founder, builder, and first king of their city. Since the god Marduk (Merodach) was regarded as the founder of Babylon and a number of the Babylonian kings were even named after him, some scholars have suggested that Marduk represents the deified Nimrod. (2 Kings 25:27; Isaiah 39:1; Jeremiah 50:2) If this is so, then the idea that a person has a soul that survives death must have been current at least by the time of Nimrod's death. In any case, the pages of history reveal that following the Flood, the birthplace of the teaching of the immortality of the soul was Babel, or Babylon.

13 The Bible further shows that God thwarted the efforts of the tower builders at Babel by confusing their language. No longer able to communicate with one another, they abandoned their project and were scattered "from there over all the surface of the earth." (Genesis 11:5-9) We must bear in mind that even though the speech of these would-be tower builders had been altered, their thinking and concepts had not. Consequently, wherever they went, their religious ideas went with them. In this way Babylonish religious teachings—including that of the immortality of the soul—spread across the face of the earth and became the foundation of the major religions of the world.

* El-Amarna is the site of ruins of the Egyptian city Akhetaton, claimed to have been built in the 14th century B.C.E.

9. What was a source of influence common to the ancient cultures of Egypt, Persia, and Greece?

10. What was the Babylonian view of life after death?

11, 12. After the Flood, what was the birthplace of the teaching of the immortality of the soul?

13. How did the teaching of the immortal soul spread across the face of the earth, and what was the result?

Thus a world empire of false religion was founded, appropriately described in the Bible as "Babylon the Great, the mother of the harlots and of the disgusting things of the earth." —Revelation 17:5.

The conquest by Alexander the Great led to the blending of the Greek and Jewish cultures

The World Empire of False Religion Expands Eastward

[14] Some historians say that over 3,500 years ago, a wave of migration brought a pale-skinned, Aryan people down from the northwest into the Indus Valley, now located mainly in Pakistan and India. From there they spread into the Ganges River plains and across India. Some experts say that the religious ideas of the migrants were based on ancient Iranian and Babylonian teachings. These religious ideas, then, became the roots of Hinduism.

[15] In India the idea of an immortal soul took the form of the doctrine of reincarnation. Hindu sages, grappling with the universal problem of evil and suffering among humans, came to what is called the law of Karma, the law of cause and effect. Combining this law with belief in the immortality of the soul, they arrived at the teaching of reincarnation, whereby merits and demerits in one life are said to be rewarded or punished in the next. The goal of the faithful is moksha, or liberation from the cycle of rebirths and unification with what is called the ultimate reality, or Nirvana. Over the centuries, as Hinduism spread, so did the teaching of reincarnation. And this doctrine has become the mainstay of present-day Hinduism.

[16] From Hinduism sprang other faiths, such as Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. These also hold to belief in reincarnation. Moreover, as Buddhism penetrated most of East Asia—China, Korea, Japan, and elsewhere—it profoundly affected the culture and religion of the entire region. This gave rise to religions that reflect an amalgam of beliefs, embracing elements of Buddhism, spiritism, and ancestor worship. Most influential among these are Taoism, Confucianism, and Shinto. In this way the belief that life continues after the body dies has come to dominate the religious thinking and practices of the vast segment of humanity in that part of the world.

What About Judaism, Christendom, and Islam?

[17] What do people who follow the religions of Judaism, Christendom, and Islam believe about life after death? Of these religions, Judaism is by far the oldest. Its roots go back some 4,000 years to Abraham—long before Socrates and Plato gave shape to the theory of the immortality of the soul. The ancient Jews believed in the resurrection of the dead and not in inherent human immortality. (Matthew 22:31, 32; Hebrews 11:19) How, then, did the doctrine of the immortality of the soul enter Judaism? History provides the answer.

[18] In 332 B.C.E., Alexander the Great conquered the Middle East, including Jerusa-

14. How did Babylonian religious beliefs spread into the Indian subcontinent?
15. How did the idea of an immortal soul come to influence present-day Hinduism?
16. What belief about the Hereafter came to dominate the religious thinking and practices of the vast population of East Asia?
17. What did the ancient Jews believe regarding life after death?
18, 19. How did the doctrine of the immortality of the soul enter Judaism?

lem. As Alexander's successors continued his program of Hellenization, a blending of the two cultures—the Greek and the Jewish—took place. In time, Jews became conversant with Greek thought, and some even became philosophers.

[19] Philo of Alexandria, of the first century C.E., was one such Jewish philosopher. He revered Plato and endeavored to explain Judaism in terms of Greek philosophy, thus paving the way for later Jewish thinkers. The Talmud—written commentaries on oral laws by the rabbis—is also influenced by Greek thought. "The rabbis of the Talmud," says the *Encyclopaedia Judaica,* "believed in the continued existence of the soul after death." Later Jewish mystical literature, such as the Cabala, even goes as far as to teach reincarnation. Thus through the back door of Greek philosophy, the idea of the immortality of the soul found its way into Judaism. What can be said about the entry of the teaching into Christendom?

[20] Genuine Christianity began with Jesus Christ. Concerning Jesus, Miguel de Unamuno, quoted earlier, wrote: "He believed rather in the resurrection of the flesh, according to the Jewish manner, not in the immortality of the soul, according to the [Greek] Platonic manner." He concluded: "The immortality of the soul . . . is a pagan philosophical dogma." In view of this, we can see why the apostle Paul strongly warned the first-century Christians against "the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary things of the world and not according to Christ."—Colossians 2:8.

[21] When and how, though, did this "pagan philosophical dogma" infiltrate Christendom? *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* explains: "From the middle of the 2nd century AD Christians who had some training in Greek philosophy began to feel the need to express their faith in its terms, both for their own intellectual satisfaction and in order to convert educated pagans. The philosophy that suited them best was Platonism." Two such early philosophers who wielded a great deal of influence on Christendom's doctrines were Origen of Alexandria and Augustine of Hippo. Both were deeply influenced by Plato's ideas and were instrumental in fusing those ideas with Christian teachings.

Augustine tried to fuse Platonic philosophy with Christianity

[22] While the idea of the immortality of

20, 21. (a) What was the position of the early Christians regarding Platonic, or Greek, philosophy? (b) What led to a fusing of Plato's ideas with Christian teachings?

22. How has the teaching of the immortality of the soul remained prominent in Islam?

Can You Explain?

- ☐ What is a common theme that runs through most religions' beliefs about life after death?
- ☐ How do history and the Bible point to ancient Babylon as the birthplace of the doctrine of the immortal soul?
- ☐ In what way are Eastern religions affected by the Babylonian belief in an immortal soul?
- ☐ How did the teaching of the immortality of the soul infiltrate Judaism, Christendom, and Islam?

Alexander: Musei Capitolini, Roma; Augustine: From the book *Great Men and Famous Women*

the soul in Judaism and Christendom is due to Platonic influence, the concept was built into Islam from its beginning. The Koran, the holy book of Islam, teaches that man has a soul that goes on living after death. It speaks of the final destiny for the soul as being either life in a heavenly garden of paradise or punishment in a burning hell. This is not to say that Arab scholars have not tried to synthesize Islamic teachings and Greek philosophy. The Arab world, in fact, was influenced to some extent by Aristotle's work. However, the immortality of the soul remains the belief of Muslims.

[23] Clearly, religions around the world have developed a bewildering array of beliefs in the Hereafter, based on the teaching that the soul is immortal. And such beliefs have affected, yes, even dominated and enslaved billions of people. Confronted with all of this, we feel compelled to ask: Is it possible to know the truth about what happens when we die? Is there life after death? What does the Bible have to say about it? This we will consider in the next article.

23. What compelling questions regarding life after death will be considered in the next article?

LIFE AFTER DEATH—WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

"Dust you are and to dust you will return."—GENESIS 3:19.

"THE theory of everlasting suffering is inconsistent with belief in God's love for created things. . . . To believe in the eternal punishment of the soul for the mistakes of a few years, without giving it a chance for correction, is to go against all the dictates of reason," observed Hindu philosopher Nikhilananda.

[2] Like Nikhilananda, many today are uncomfortable with the teaching of eternal torment. By the same token, others have difficulty understanding such concepts as the achieving of Nirvana and being at one with nature. Even among those who claim to base their beliefs on the Bible, there are differing ideas about what the soul is and what happens to it when we die. But what does the Bible really teach about the soul? To find out, we need to examine the meanings of the Hebrew and Greek words that are translated "soul" in the Bible.

1, 2. (a) What different ideas about the Hereafter are there? (b) What do we need to examine in order to determine what the Bible teaches about the soul?

The Soul According to the Bible

[3] The Hebrew word translated "soul" is *ne'phesh,* and it occurs 754 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. What does *ne'phesh* mean? According to *The Dictionary of Bible and Religion,* it "usually refers to the entire living being, to the whole individual." This is borne out by the Bible's description

3. (a) What word is translated "soul" in the Hebrew Scriptures, and what is its basic meaning? (b) How does Genesis 2:7 confirm that the word "soul" can denote a whole person?

of the soul at Genesis 2:7: "Jehovah God proceeded to form the man out of dust from the ground and to blow into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man came to be a living soul." Note that the first man "came to be" a soul. That is to say, Adam did not

They are all souls

have a soul; he *was* a soul—just as someone who *becomes* a doctor *is* a doctor. The word "soul," then, here describes the whole person.

[4] The word translated "soul" (*psy·khe'*) appears more than a hundred times in the Christian Greek Scriptures. Like *ne'phesh* this word often refers to the whole person. For example, consider the following statements: "My soul is troubled." (John 12:27) "Fear began to fall upon every soul." (Acts 2:43) "Let every soul be in subjection to the superior authorities." (Romans 13:1) "Speak consolingly to the depressed souls." (1 Thessalonians 5:14) "A few people, that is, eight souls, were carried safely through the water." (1 Peter 3:20) Clearly, *psy·khe',* like *ne'phesh,* refers to the whole person. According to scholar Nigel Turner, this word "signifies what is characteristically human,

4. What word is translated "soul" in the Christian Greek Scriptures, and what is the basic meaning of this word?

"Soul" as the Life of a Creature

At times, the word "soul" refers to the life that a person or an animal enjoys. This does not alter the Bible's definition of the soul as a person or an animal. To illustrate: We say that someone *is* alive, meaning that he is a living person. We might also say that he *possesses* life. In the same way, a living person *is* a soul. Yet, while he is alive, "soul" may be spoken of as something that he *possesses*.

For example, God told Moses: "All the men who were hunting for your soul are dead." Clearly, Moses' enemies were seeking to take his life. (Exodus 4:19; compare Joshua 9:24; Proverbs 12:10.) Jesus used the word in a similar way when he said: "The Son of man came . . . to give his soul a ransom in exchange for many." (Matthew 20:28; compare 10:28.) In each case, the word "soul" means "life of a creature."

Hummingbird: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C./Dean Biggins

the self, the material body having God's *rûaḥ* [spirit] breathed into it. . . . The emphasis is on the whole self."

[5] Interestingly, in the Bible the word "soul" applies not only to humans but also to animals. For example, in describing the creation of sea creatures, Genesis 1:20 says that God commanded: "Let the waters swarm forth a swarm of living souls." And on the next creative day, God said: "Let the earth put forth living souls according to their kinds, domestic animal and moving animal and wild beast of the earth according to its kind."—Genesis 1:24; compare Numbers 31:28.

[6] Thus, the word "soul" as used in the Bible refers to a person or an animal or to the life that a person or an animal enjoys. (See box above.) The Bible's definition of the soul is simple, consistent, and

5. Are animals souls? Explain.
6. What may be said of the Bible's use of the word "soul"?

unencumbered by the complicated philosophies and superstitions of men. That being the case, the urgent question that must be asked is, According to the Bible, what happens to the soul at death?

The Dead Are Unconscious

7 The condition of the dead is made clear at Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10, where we read: "The dead know nothing . . . There is no pursuit, no plan, no knowledge or intelligence, within the grave." (*Moffatt*) Death, therefore, is a state of nonexistence. The psalmist wrote that when a person dies, "he goes back to his ground; in that day his thoughts do perish." (Psalm 146:4) The dead are unconscious, inactive.

8 When pronouncing sentence upon Adam, God stated: "Dust you are and to dust you will return." (Genesis 3:19) Before God formed him from the dust of the ground and gave him life, Adam did not exist. When he died, he returned to that state. His punishment was death—not a transfer to another realm. What, then, happened to his soul? Since in the Bible the word "soul" often simply refers to a person, when we say that Adam died, we are saying that the soul named Adam died. This might sound unusual to a person who believes in the immortality of the soul. However, the Bible states: "The soul that is sinning—it itself will die." (Ezekiel 18:4) Leviticus 21:1 speaks of "a deceased soul" (a "corpse," *The Jerusalem Bible*). And Nazirites were told not to come near "any dead soul" ("a dead body," *Lamsa*).—Numbers 6:6.

9 What, though, about the statement at Genesis 35:18 regarding the tragic death of Rachel, which occurred as she gave birth to her second son? There we read: "As her soul was going out (because she died) she called his name Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin." Does this passage imply that Rachel had an inner being that departed at her death? Not at all. Remember, the word "soul" can also refer to the life that a person possesses. So in this case Rachel's "soul" simply meant her "life." That is why other Bible translations render the phrase "her soul was going out" as "her life was ebbing away" (*Knox*), "she breathed her last" (*JB*), and "her life went from her" (*Bible in Basic English*). There is no indication that a mysterious part of Rachel survived her death.

10 It is similar with the resurrection of a widow's son, recorded in 1 Kings chapter 17. In verse 22, we read that as Elijah prayed over the young boy, "Jehovah listened to Elijah's voice, so that the soul of the child came back within him and he came to life." Once again, the word "soul" means "life." Thus, the *New American Standard Bible* reads: "The life of the child returned to him and he revived." Yes, it was life, not some shadowy form, that returned to the boy. This is in harmony with what Elijah said to the boy's mother: "See, your son [the whole person] is alive."—1 Kings 17:23.

What About the Spirit?

11 The Bible says that when a person dies, "his spirit goes out, he goes back to his ground." (Psalm 146:4) Does this mean that a disembodied spirit literally departs and lives on after a person's death? That could not be, for the psalmist next says: "In that day his thoughts do perish" ("all his thinking ends," *The New English Bible*). What, then, is the spirit, and how does it 'go out' from a person at the time of his death?

7, 8. (a) What do the Scriptures reveal about the condition of the dead? (b) Give examples from the Bible that show that the soul can die.
9. What does the Bible mean when it says that Rachel's "soul was going out"?
10. In what way did the soul of the widow's resurrected son 'come back within him'?
11. Why could the word "spirit" not refer to a disembodied part of a person that survives death?

[12] In the Bible the words translated "spirit" (Hebrew, *ru'ach;* Greek, *pneu'ma*) basically mean "breath." Thus, instead of "his spirit goes out," the translation by R. A. Knox uses the phrase "the breath leaves his body." (Psalm 145:4) But the word "spirit" implies much more than the act of breathing. For example, in describing the destruction of human and animal life at the time of the global Deluge, Genesis 7:22 says: "Everything in which the breath of the force [or, spirit; Hebrew, *ru'ach*] of life was active in its nostrils, namely, all that were on the dry ground, died." So "spirit" may refer to the life-force that is active in all living creatures, both humans and animals, and that is sustained by breathing.

[13] What, then, does it mean when Ecclesiastes 12:7 states that when a person dies, "the spirit itself returns to the true God who gave it"? Does this mean that the spirit literally travels through space into God's presence? Nothing of the sort is implied. Since the spirit is the life-force, it "returns to the true God" in the sense that any hope of future life for that person now rests entirely with God. Only God can restore the spirit, or life-force, causing a person to come back to life. (Psalm 104:30) But does God purpose to do so?

"He Will Rise"

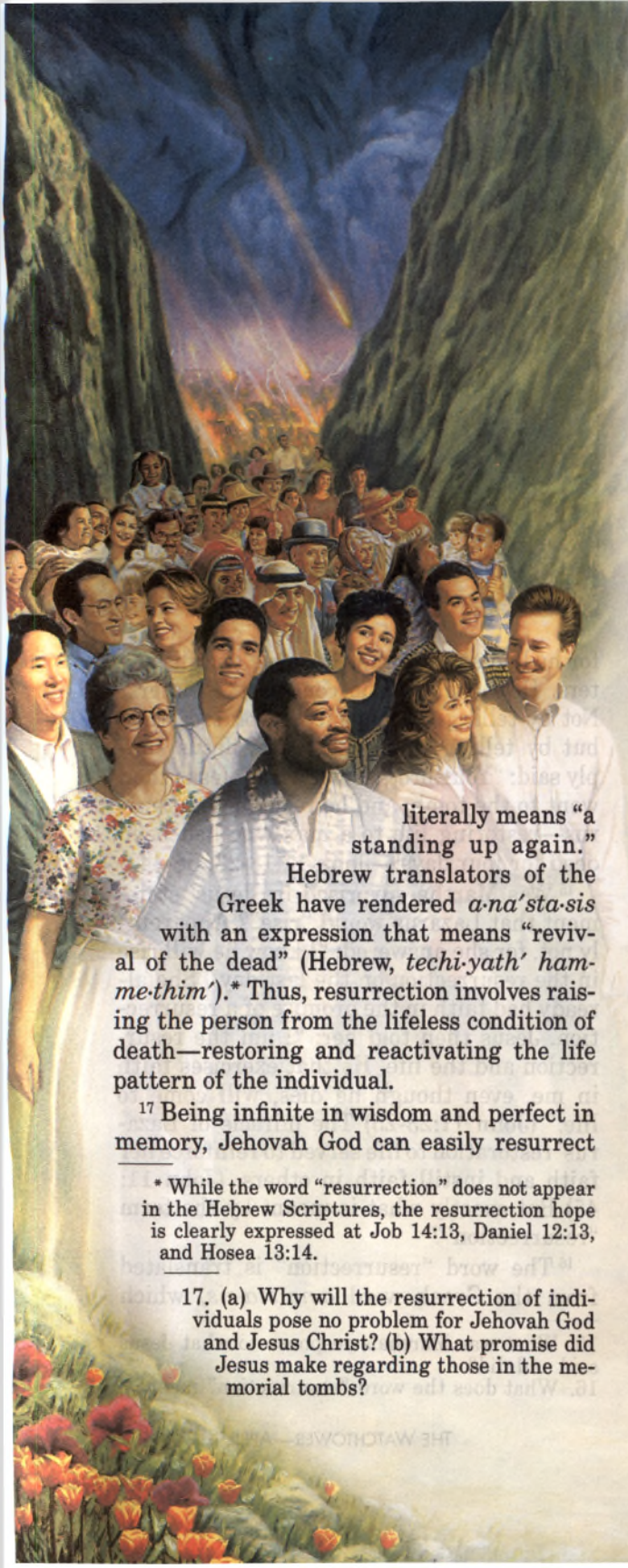
[14] In the small town of Bethany, about two miles east of Jerusalem, Mary and Martha were mourning the untimely death of their brother, Lazarus. Jesus shared their grief, for he had affection for Lazarus and his sisters. How could Jesus console the sisters? Not by telling them some convoluted story, but by telling them the truth. Jesus simply said: "Your brother will rise." Jesus then went to the tomb, and he resurrected Lazarus—restoring life to a man who had been dead for four days!—John 11:18-23, 38-44.

[15] Was Martha surprised by Jesus' statement that Lazarus would "rise"? Apparently not, for she answered: "I know he will rise in the resurrection on the last day." She already had faith in the promise of a resurrection. Jesus then told her: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that exercises faith in me, even though he dies, will come to life." (John 11:23-25) The miracle of Lazarus' restoration to life served to reinforce her faith and instill faith in others. (John 11: 45) But exactly what is meant by the term "resurrection"?

[16] The word "resurrection" is translated from the Greek word *a·na'sta·sis,* which

12. What is implied by the Hebrew and Greek words translated "spirit" in the Bible?
13. How does the spirit return to God when a person dies?
14. What did Jesus say and do to bring relief and comfort to Lazarus' sisters after the loss of their brother?

15. What was Martha's response to what Jesus said and did?
16. What does the word "resurrection" mean?



literally means "a standing up again." Hebrew translators of the Greek have rendered *a·na′sta·sis* with an expression that means "revival of the dead" (Hebrew, *techi·yath′ ham·me·thim′*).* Thus, resurrection involves raising the person from the lifeless condition of death—restoring and reactivating the life pattern of the individual.

17 Being infinite in wisdom and perfect in memory, Jehovah God can easily resurrect a person. Remembering the life pattern of dead ones—their personality traits, their personal history, and all the details of their identity—is not a problem for him. (Job 12:13; compare Isaiah 40:26.) Moreover, as the experience of Lazarus indicates, Jesus Christ is both willing and able to resurrect the dead. (Compare Luke 7:11-17; 8:40-56) In fact, Jesus Christ said: "The hour is coming in which all those in the *memorial* tombs will hear his [Jesus'] voice and come out." (John 5:28, 29) Yes, Jesus Christ promised that all those in Jehovah's memory will be resurrected. Clearly, according to the Bible, the soul dies, and the remedy for death is the resurrection. But billions of people have lived and died. Who among them are in God's memory, awaiting the resurrection?

18 Those who have pursued a righteous course as Jehovah's servants will be resurrected. Yet, millions of other people have died without showing whether they would comply with God's righteous standards. They either were ignorant of Jehovah's requirements or lacked sufficient time to make needed changes. These others too are in God's memory and thus will be resurrected, for the Bible promises: "There is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous."—Acts 24:15.

19 The apostle John had a thrilling vision of resurrected ones standing before the throne of God. Describing it, he wrote: "The sea gave up those dead in it, and death and Hades gave up those dead in them, and they were judged individually according to their deeds. And death and Hades were hurled into the lake of fire. This means the second

* While the word "resurrection" does not appear in the Hebrew Scriptures, the resurrection hope is clearly expressed at Job 14:13, Daniel 12:13, and Hosea 13:14.

17. (a) Why will the resurrection of individuals pose no problem for Jehovah God and Jesus Christ? (b) What promise did Jesus make regarding those in the memorial tombs?

18. Who will be resurrected?

19. (a) What vision did the apostle John receive about the resurrection? (b) What is "hurled into the lake of fire," and what does that expression mean?

death, the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:12-14) Think of what that means! All the dead who are in God's memory will be released from Hades, or Sheol, mankind's common grave. (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:31) Then "death and Hades" will be hurled into what is called "the lake of fire," symbolizing complete destruction. The common grave of mankind will cease to exist.

A Unique Prospect!

20 When millions are raised in the resurrection, they will not be brought back to life on an empty earth. (Isaiah 45:18) They will awaken in beautifully improved surroundings and will find that living quarters, clothing, and an abundance of food have been prepared for them. (Psalm 67:6; 72:16; Isaiah 65:21, 22) Who will make all these preparations? Clearly, people will have to be living in the new world before the earthly resurrection begins. But who?

21 The fulfillment of Bible prophecy shows that we are living in "the last days" of this system of things.* (2 Timothy 3:1) Very soon now, Jehovah God is going to intervene in human affairs and wipe out wickedness from the earth. (Psalm 37:10, 11; Proverbs 2:21, 22) At that time, what will happen to those who are faithfully serving God?

22 Jehovah will not destroy the righteous along with the wicked. (Psalm 145:20) He has never done such a thing, and he will not do it when he cleanses the earth of all badness. (Compare Genesis 18:22, 23, 26.) In fact, the last book of the Bible speaks of "a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues," coming out of "the great tribulation." (Revelation 7:9-14) Yes, a great multitude will survive the great tribulation in which the present wicked world ends, and they will enter God's new world. There, obedient mankind can fully benefit from God's marvelous provision to free mankind from sin and death. (Revelation 22:1, 2) Thus, the "great crowd" need never experience death. What a unique prospect!

Life *Without* Death

23 Can we have confidence in this astounding hope? Absolutely! Jesus Christ himself indicated that there would be a time when people would live without ever dying. Just before resurrecting his friend Lazarus, Jesus told Martha: "Everyone that is living and exercises faith in me will never die at all."—John 11:26.

24 Do you want to live forever in Paradise on earth? Do you yearn to see your loved ones again? "The world is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains forever," says the apostle John. (1 John 2:17) Now is the time to learn what God's will is and be resolved to live in harmony with it. Then you, along with millions of others already doing God's will, can live forever in Paradise on earth.

* See *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life,* published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., pages 98-107.

20. Millions now dead will be resurrected to what kind of surroundings?
21, 22. What unique prospect lies ahead for those living in "the last days"?

23, 24. What must you do if you want to enjoy life without death in Paradise on earth?

Do You Remember?

- ☐ What is the basic meaning of the original-language words translated "soul"?
- ☐ What happens to the soul at death?
- ☐ According to the Bible, what is the remedy for death?
- ☐ What unique prospect awaits faithful ones today?

Who Molds Your Thinking?

"NO ONE tells me what to think! And no one tells me what to do!" Saying that so emphatically usually means that you have great confidence in yourself and in your own judgment. Is that how you feel? Understandably, no one else should make up your mind for you. But is it wise to reject so quickly what might turn out to be good advice? Can no one at all ever help you to make wise decisions? Anyway, can you really be sure that someone is not, in fact, molding your thinking, without your even being aware of it?

Prior to the second world war, for example, Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's propaganda minister, took control of Germany's film industry. Why? Because he realized that this would give him an extremely powerful weapon with which he could "influence people's beliefs and hence their behaviour." (*Propaganda and the German Cinema 1933-1945*) You are probably aware of the chilling effectiveness with which he used this and other means to manipulate ordinary people—normal, rational people—to follow Nazi philosophy blindly.

The fact is that how you think, and hence how you act, is *always* influenced in some way by the feelings and views of those to whom you listen. This need not be a bad thing, of course. If these are people who have your interests at heart—like teachers, friends, or parents—then you will get great benefit from their counsel and advice. But if they are people who have only their own interests at heart and who are themselves misled or corrupted in their thinking, "deceivers of the mind," as the apostle Paul described them, then beware!—Titus 1:10; Deuteronomy 13:6-8.

Thus, do not become complacent and think that no one could ever influence you. (Compare 1 Corinthians 10:12.) Most likely it is already happening—more frequently than you might care to admit—without your even noticing. Take the simple example of what product you decide to buy when you go shopping. Is that always a purely personal, rational decision? Or do other people, often unseen, subtly but powerfully affect your choice? Investigative journalist Eric Clark thinks they do. "The more we are bombarded by advertising," he says, "the less we notice, and yet, almost certainly, the more we are affected." He also reports that when people are asked how effective they feel advertising is, "most agree that it works, but not on them." People tend to feel that everyone else is vulnerable, but they are not. "Alone, it seems, they are immune."—*The Want Makers.*

Squeezed Into Satan's Mold?

Whether you are influenced by everyday advertising may not have serious consequences. There is another influence, however, that is much more dangerous. The Bible clearly shows that Satan is the master manipulator. (Revelation 12:9) His philosophy is basically the same as the thinking of one advertising agent who said that there are two ways to influence customers—"by seducing them or by conditioning them." If propagandists and advertisers can use such subtle techniques to mold your thinking, how much more skilled Satan must be at using similar tactics!—John 8:44.

The apostle Paul knew this. He feared that some of his fellow Christians might let their guard down and become victims of Satan's deceit. He wrote: "I am afraid that somehow, as the serpent seduced Eve by its cunning, your minds might be corrupted away from the sincerity and the chastity that are due the Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:3) Take that warning seriously. Otherwise you may be like those people who believe that propaganda and conditioning do work—"but not on them." The fact that satanic propaganda does work is clearly seen all around us in the brutality, depravity, and hypocrisy that characterize this generation.

Paul, therefore, begged his fellow Christians to "quit being fashioned after this system of things." (Romans 12:2) One Bible translator paraphrased Paul's words this way: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould." (Romans 12:2, *Phillips*) Satan will try anything to force you into his mold, like the potter of old who forced the clay into an open mold to pick up the markings and characteristics he wanted to impress on it. Satan has the world's politics, commerce, religion, and entertainment geared up to do that. Just how pervasive is his influence? It is as widespread as it was in the apostle John's day. "The whole world," John said, "is lying in the power of the wicked one." (1 John 5:19; see also 2 Corinthians 4:4.) If you have any doubts about Satan's ability to seduce people and corrupt their thinking, remember how effectively he did this to a whole nation of people, Israel, who were dedicated to God. (1 Corinthians 10:6-12) Might the same thing happen to you? It could if you leave your mind open to Satan's seductive influence.

Know What Is Going On

In the main, such insidious forces will influence your thinking only if you let them. In his book *The Hidden Persuaders,* Vance Packard made this point: "We still have a strong defence available against such [hidden] persuaders: we can choose not to be persuaded. In virtually all situations we still have the choice, and we cannot be too seriously manipulated if we know what is going on." That is also true of propaganda and deceit.

Of course, to "know what is going on," you must keep your mind open and receptive to good influences. A healthy mind, just as a healthy body, needs to be well nourished if it is going to function properly. (Proverbs 5: 1, 2) Lack of information can be just as lethal as misinformation. So while it is true that you need to protect your mind from misleading ideas and philosophies, try not to develop a jaundiced and cynical view of all advice or information offered to you.—1 John 4:1.

Honest persuasion is not the same thing as hidden propaganda. The apostle Paul certainly did warn the young man Timothy to be on the lookout for "wicked men and impostors [who] will advance from bad to worse, misleading and being misled." But Paul added: "You, however, continue in the things that you learned and were persuaded to believe, knowing from what persons you learned them." (2 Timothy 3:13, 14) Since everything you take into your mind will influence you to some degree,

the key is 'knowing from what persons you learn things,' to be sure that they are people who have your best interests at heart, not their own.

The choice is yours. You can choose to be "fashioned after this system of things" by letting this world's philosophies and value systems govern your thinking. (Romans 12:2) But this world does not have your interests at heart. "Look out," therefore, warns the apostle Paul, "perhaps there may be someone who will carry you off as his prey through the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men." (Colossians 2:8) Being squeezed into Satan's mold in this way, or being 'carried off as his prey,' takes no effort. It is like passive smoke. You can be affected simply by breathing the polluted air.

Alternatively, you can avoid breathing that "air." (Ephesians 2:2) Instead, follow Paul's advice: "Be transformed by making your mind over, that you may prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:2) This does take effort. (Proverbs 2:1-5) Remember, Jehovah is no manipulator. He makes all the needed information available, but to benefit from it, you must listen to it and let it affect your thinking. (Isaiah 30:20, 21; 1 Thessalonians 2:13) You must be willing to fill your mind with the truth contained in "the holy writings," God's inspired Word, the Bible.—2 Timothy 3:15-17.

In Our Next Issue

Is Everlasting Life Really Possible?

Do You Show Yourself Thankful?

How to Recognize and Overcome Any Spiritual Weakness

Respond to Jehovah's Molding

The need for a willing, obedient response on your part if you are to benefit from Jehovah's molding influence was powerfully illustrated when Jehovah told the prophet Jeremiah to visit the workshop of a potter. Jeremiah saw the potter change his mind about what to do with one vessel when the product he was trying to make "was spoiled by the potter's hand." Jehovah then said: "Am I not able to do just like this potter to you people, O house of Israel? . . . Look! As the clay in the hand of the potter, so you are in my hand, O house of Israel." (Jeremiah 18:1-6) Did that mean that people in Israel were just like lumps of lifeless clay in Jehovah's hands for him to mold arbitrarily into one kind of vessel or another?

Jehovah never uses his almighty power to make people do things against their will; nor is he responsible for defective products, as might be the case with a human potter. (Deuteronomy 32:4) Defects develop when those whom Jehovah tries to mold in a positive way resist his direction. That is one huge difference between you and a lifeless lump of clay. You have free will. Exercising it, you can choose to respond to Jehovah's molding influence or deliberately reject it.

What a sobering lesson! How much better to listen to Jehovah's voice instead of arrogantly asserting, "No one tells me what to do"! We all need Jehovah's guiding influence. (John 17:3) Be like the psalmist David, who prayed: "Make me know your own ways, O Jehovah; teach me your own paths." (Psalm 25:4) Remember what King Solomon said: "A wise person will listen and take in more instruction." (Proverbs 1:5) Will you listen? If you do, then "thinking ability itself will keep guard over you, discernment itself will safeguard you."—Proverbs 2:11.

IN SEARCH OF PARADISE

AS TOLD BY PASCAL STISI

The night was already well along, and the streets of the town of Béziers, southern France, were empty. Finding the newly painted wall of a religion bookshop, my friend and I scrawled on it in giant black letters the words of the German philosopher Nietzsche: 'The gods are dead. Long live the Superman!' What, though, led me to all of this?

I WAS born in France in 1951 into a Catholic family of Italian extraction. When I was a child, we would go on vacation to the south of Italy. There, each village had its image of the Virgin Mary. Walking with my grandfather, I followed these huge dressed statues in endless processions through the mountains—but entirely without conviction. I finished my basic education at a religious school run by Jesuits. However, I cannot remember hearing anything that really built my faith in God.

It was when I enrolled at a university in Montpellier to study medicine that I began to reflect on the purpose of life. My father had been injured during the war and always had doctors at his bedside. Would it not be better to end war rather than spend so much time and effort healing people from its ravages? Yet, the Vietnam War was in full swing. To me the only logical way to treat lung cancer, for example, was to eliminate its primary cause—tobacco. And what of the illnesses that resulted from malnutrition in developing countries and those that resulted from overeating in rich lands? Would it not be better to remove the causes instead of trying to remedy the grievous consequences? Why was there so much suffering on earth? I felt that there was something terribly wrong with this suicidal society, and I held the governments responsible.

My favorite book was written by an anarchist, and I would copy sentences from it on walls. Little by little, I too became an anarchist, without faith or moral laws, who wanted no God or master. For me, God and religion were the inventions of the rich and powerful so that they could dominate and exploit the rest of us. 'Work hard for us on earth, and your reward will be great in

paradise in heaven,' they seemed to say. But the time of the gods was over. People needed to be told. Graffiti was one way of telling them.

As a result, my studies were relegated to second place. In the meantime I had enrolled to study geography and ecology in another Montpellier university where a state of insurrection reigned. The more I studied ecology, the more disgusted I was to see the polluting of our beautiful planet.

Every year during summer vacation, I went hitchhiking, covering thousands of miles throughout Europe. While traveling and talking with hundreds of drivers, I saw with my own eyes the evil and decay afflicting human society. Once, while searching for paradise, I came across some magnificent beaches on the beautiful island of Crete and found them covered with oil. I felt sick at heart. Was there a corner of paradise left anywhere on earth?

Back to the Land

In France ecologists were advocating a return to the land as a solution to society's woes. I wanted to work with my hands. So I bought an old stone house in a tiny village in the foothills of the Cévennes Mountains in southern France. On the door, I wrote "Paradise Now," the slogan of American hippies. A young German girl who was passing through became my companion. It was out of the question to get married in front of the mayor, a representative of the system. And the church? Forget it!

Most of the time, we walked barefoot, and I had long hair and a shaggy beard. Cultivating fruits and vegetables fascinated me. In summer the sky was blue and the cicadas sang. The scrubland flowers were so fragrant, and the Mediterranean fruits that we grew—grapes and figs—were so succulent! It seemed that we had found our niche in paradise.

Belief in God Awakens

At the university, I had studied cellular biology, embryology, and anatomy, and I had been deeply impressed by the complexity and harmony of all these mechanisms. Now that I could contemplate and observe creation firsthand every day, its beauty and potential filled me with wonder. Day after day the book of creation spoke to me page by page. One day during a long walk in the hills and after having reflected deeply on life, I came to the conclusion that there had to be a Creator. I decided in my heart to believe in God. Previously, I had felt an emptiness in my heart, a troubling loneliness. The day that I started to believe in God, I said to myself, 'Pascal, you will never be alone again.' It was an extraordinary sensation.

Soon after, my companion and I had a little girl—Amandine. She was the apple of my eye. Now that I believed in God, I began to respect the few moral laws that I knew. I stopped stealing and lying, and I soon realized that this helped me to avoid many problems with those around me. Yes, we had our problems, and my paradise was not all that I had hoped for. The local wine growers used insecticides and herbicides that also polluted my crops. My question about the cause of wickedness was still unanswered. What is more, although I had read much on family life, this did not prevent heated arguments with my companion. We had few friends, and those we had were false; some even tried to make my companion cheat on me. There had to be a better paradise.

The Answer to My Prayers

In my own way, I prayed very often for God to guide me in life. One Sunday morning a friendly woman named Irène Lopez and her little boy came to our door. She was one of Jehovah's Witnesses. I listened

to what she had to say and accepted the offer of another visit. Two men came to see me. From our conversation, I retained two things—Paradise and God's Kingdom. I carefully kept those thoughts in my heart, and with the passing months, I understood that one day I would have to put things right with God if I wanted to have a clean conscience and find real happiness.

To bring our life into harmony with the Word of God, my companion was at first disposed to marry me. Then she got into bad company with people who mocked God and his laws. Coming home one spring evening, I had a terrible shock. Our house was empty. My companion had left, taking our three-year-old girl with her. For days I kept waiting for their return—but in vain. Rather than blaming God, I prayed for him to help me.

Shortly thereafter, I took the Bible, sat down under my fig tree, and began to read. In fact, I drank in its words. Though I had read all kinds of books by psychoanalysts and psychologists, never had I come across such wisdom. This book must have been divinely inspired. Jesus' teaching and his understanding of human nature astounded me. I was comforted by the Psalms and amazed by the practical wisdom of the Proverbs. I quickly realized that while the study of creation is excellent for drawing someone to God, it can reveal only "the fringes of his ways."—Job 26:14.

The Witnesses had also left me the books *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life* and *Making Your Family Life Happy.** Reading them opened my eyes. The *Truth* book helped me to understand why man was facing pandemic pollution, wars, increasing violence, and the threat of nuclear annihilation. And just as the red sky that I saw from my garden heralded fine weather the following day, these events proved that God's Kingdom is at hand. As for the *Family Life* book, I wished that I could show it to my companion and tell her that we could be happy by putting the Bible's advice into practice. But it was no longer possible.

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Making Spiritual Progress

I wanted to know more, so I asked Robert, a Witness, to visit me. Much to his surprise, I told him that I wanted to get baptized, so a Bible study was started. I immediately began speaking to others about what I was learning, and I started to distribute the publications that I obtained at the Kingdom Hall.

In order to earn a living, I enrolled in a masonry course. Aware of the good that God's Word can do for a person, I seized every opportunity to preach informally to fellow students and to teachers. One evening, I met Serge in a corridor. He had some magazines in his hands. "I see that you like reading," I said to him. "Yes, but I'm bored with this." "Do you want something really good to read?" I asked him. We had an excellent discussion about God's Kingdom, after which he accepted some Bible literature. The following week, he came to the Kingdom Hall with me, and a Bible study was started.

One day I asked Robert if I could preach from house to house. He went to his closet and found a suit for me. The next Sunday, I took my first steps in the ministry with him. Finally, on March 7, 1981, I publicly symbolized my dedication to Jehovah God by baptism.

Help While in Distress

In the meantime I had found out where Amandine and her mother were living

Moved by the wonders of creation, I decided in my heart to believe in God. (Right) In Bethel service today

abroad. Alas, her mother—in all legality, according to the laws of the country where she was living—forbade me to see my daughter. I was devastated. Amandine's mother married, and my despair reached a new low when I received an official notification that her husband had adopted my daughter—entirely without my consent. I no longer had any rights over my child. In spite of legal action, I was unable to obtain visitation rights. I felt as if I were carrying a hundred pounds on my back, such was my pain.

But Jehovah's Word sustained me in several ways. One day when I was extremely distressed, I repeated over and over the words of Proverbs 24:10: "Have you shown yourself discouraged in the day of distress? Your power will be scanty." This verse helped me not to break down. On another occasion, after a setback in trying to see my daughter, I went out in the ministry and grasped the handle of my book bag as hard as I could. Through such difficult moments, I was able to experience the truth of Psalm 126:6, which says: "The one that without fail goes forth, even weeping, carrying along a bagful of seed, will without fail come in with a joyful cry, carrying along his sheaves." An important lesson I learned is that when you have serious trials, once you have done all you can to sort them out, you have to put them behind you and press on with determination in Jehovah's service. This is the only way to keep your joy.

Reaching Out for Something Better

Seeing the changes that I had made, my dear parents offered to help me to continue my studies at the university. I thanked them, but now I had another goal. The truth had freed me from human philosophy, mysticism, and astrology. I now had real friends who would never kill one another in war. And I finally had the answer to my questions about why there was so much suffering on earth. Out of gratitude I wanted to serve God with all my strength. Jesus had devoted himself entirely to his ministry, and I wanted to follow his example.

In 1983, I gave up my masonry business to become a full-time minister. In answer to my prayers, I found part-time work in a park to support myself. What a joy it was to attend the pioneer school along with Serge, the young man to whom I had witnessed in masonry school! After three years as a regular pioneer, I felt the desire to do even more in Jehovah's service. Thus, in 1986, I was appointed to be a special pioneer in the picturesque town of Provins, not far from Paris. Often, on coming home in the evening, I knelt in prayer to thank Jehovah for

the wonderful day that I had spent in talking to others about him. In fact, my two greatest pleasures in life are speaking to God and speaking about God.

Another great joy for me was the baptism of my 68-year-old mother who lived in Cébazan, a little village in the south of France. When my mother began to read the Bible, I sent her subscriptions to *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* She was a thinking person, and very soon she came to recognize the ring of truth in what she read.

Bethel—A Remarkable Spiritual Paradise

When the Watch Tower Society decided to reduce the number of special pioneers, I applied for the Ministerial Training School and for Bethel, the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in France. I wanted to leave it up to Jehovah to decide how best I could serve him. A few months later, in December 1989, I was invited to Bethel in Louviers, northwest France. This proved to be an excellent outcome, as the location enabled me to help my brother and sister-in-law to care for my parents when they became very ill. I would not have been able to do this had I been in missionary service thousands of miles away.

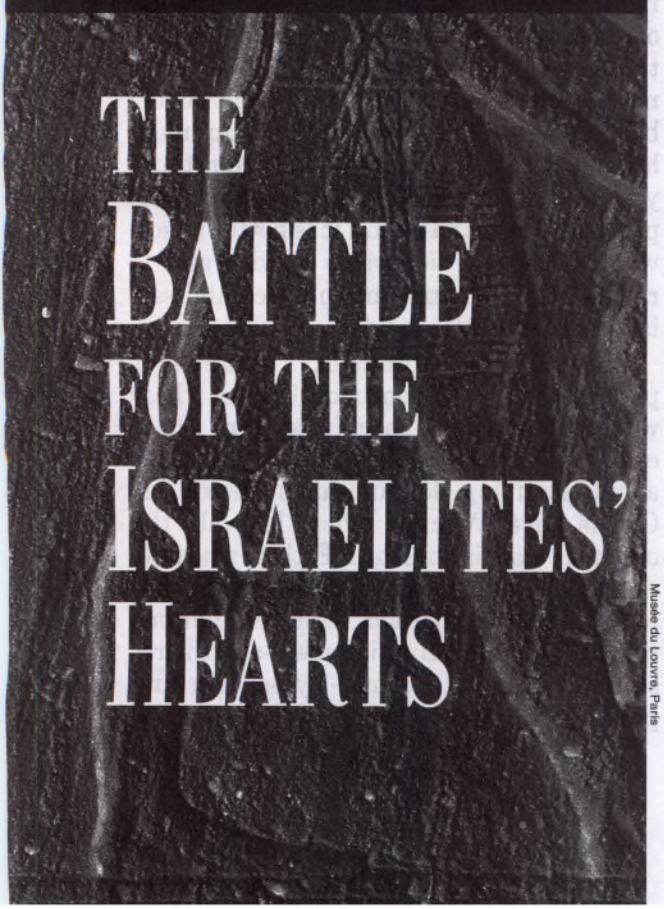
My mother came to visit me several times at Bethel. Even if it was a sacrifice for her to live away from me, she often told me: "Stay at Bethel, Son. I'm happy that you are serving Jehovah in this way." Sadly, both my parents have now passed away. How I look forward to seeing them in an earth transformed into a literal paradise!

I really believe that if any house deserves the description "Paradise Now," it is Bethel—the "House of God"—for the real paradise is, above all else, spiritual, and spirituality reigns at Bethel. We have the opportunity to cultivate the fruitage of the spirit. (Galatians 5:22, 23) The rich spiritual food that we receive during the daily Bible text discussion and the family study of *The Watchtower* helps to strengthen me for Bethel service. Furthermore, being able to associate with spiritually-minded brothers and sisters who have been serving Jehovah faithfully for decades makes Bethel a unique place in which to grow spiritually. Although I have been separated from my daughter for 17 years now, I have found numerous zealous youths at Bethel, whom I consider to be my children, and in whose spiritual progress I take delight. Over the past eight years, I have had seven different assignments. While these changes have not always been easy, such training is beneficial in the long run.

I used to grow a type of bean that produces a hundredfold. Similarly, I have experienced that when you sow what is bad, you reap a hundred times worse—and not just one harvest. Experience is a school where the lessons are very costly. I would prefer never to have been enrolled in that school but, rather, to have been brought up in Jehovah's ways. What a privilege for those youths who are brought up by Christian parents! Without a doubt, it is better to sow what is good in Jehovah's service and to reap a hundred times more peace and satisfaction.—Galatians 6:7, 8.

When I was a pioneer, I sometimes passed by the religion bookshop on whose wall we wrote the anarchist slogan. I have even been inside and spoken to the owner about the living God and his purpose. Yes, God is alive! What is more, Jehovah, the only true God, is a faithful Father, who never abandons his children. (Revelation 15:4) May further multitudes from all nations find the spiritual paradise now—and the restored Paradise to come—by serving and praising the living God, Jehovah!

BAAL WORSHIP



THE BATTLE FOR THE ISRAELITES' HEARTS

Musée du Louvre, Paris

For nearly a thousand years, a battle raged for the hearts of the Israelite nation. Superstitious fear and sexual rites on the one hand fought against faith and loyalty on the other. This life-and-death struggle pitted the worship of Baal against the worship of Jehovah.

WOULD the nation of Israel cling faithfully to the true God, who brought them out of Egypt? (Exodus 20:2, 3) Or would they defect to Baal, the favorite god of Canaan, who promised to make the land fertile?

This spiritual battle, fought thousands of years ago, matters to us. Why? "These things," wrote the apostle Paul, "were written for a warning to us upon whom the ends of the systems of things have arrived." (1 Corinthians 10:11) The underlying warning of this historic conflict will be more meaningful if we understand who Baal was and what Baal worship involved.

Who Was Baal?

The Israelites came in contact with Baal when they arrived in Canaan, about the year 1473 B.C.E. They found that the Canaanites worshiped a multitude of gods who were not unlike the gods of Egypt, although they had different names and some different characteristics. The Bible, however, singles out Baal as the principal god of the Canaanites, and archaeological discoveries confirm his preeminence. (Judges 2:11) Although Baal was not the supreme god of their pantheon, he was the god who mattered most to the Canaanites. They believed that he had power over the rain, the wind, and

the clouds and that he alone could deliver the people—as well as their animals and crops—from sterility or even death. Without Baal's protection, Mot, a vindictive Canaanite god, would surely bring calamities down upon them.

Baal worship pulsed with sexual rites. Even the religious objects connected with Baal, like the sacred pillars and sacred poles, had sexual connotations. Apparently, the sacred pillars—rocks or hewn stones in the form of a phallic symbol—represented Baal, the male part of the sexual union. The sacred poles, on the other hand, were wooden objects or trees that represented Asherah, Baal's consort and the female element. —1 Kings 18:19.

Temple prostitution and child sacrifice were other prominent aspects of Baal worship. (1 Kings 14:23, 24; 2 Chronicles 28:2, 3) The book *The Bible and Archaeology* says: "In the temples of the Canaanites there were male and female prostitutes ('sacred' men and women) and all sorts of sexual excesses were practiced. [Canaanites] believed that in some way these rites caused the crops and the herds to prosper." That at least was the religious justification, although such immorality doubtless appealed to the fleshly desires of the worshipers. How, then, did Baal seduce the Israelites' hearts?

Why So Attractive?

Perhaps many Israelites preferred practicing a religion that demanded little of them. In worshiping Baal they were spared the observance of the Law, such as the Sabbath and the many moral restrictions. (Leviticus 18:2-30; Deuteronomy 5:1-3) Possibly, the material prosperity of the Canaanites convinced others that Baal needed to be appeased.

Canaanite shrines, known as high places and located in wooded groves on spurs of mountains, must have formed an attractive backdrop to the fertility rites that were practiced there. Before long, the Israelites were not content with frequenting Canaanite sacred sites; they even built their own. "They too kept building for themselves high places and sacred pillars and sacred poles upon every high hill and under every luxuriant tree."—1 Kings 14:23; Hosea 4:13.

But first and foremost, Baal worship appealed to the flesh. (Galatians 5:19-21) The sensual practices went beyond the desire for bountiful crops and herds. Sex was glorified. This is evidenced by the many figurines that have been unearthed, with exaggerated sexual features, depicting sexual arousal. Feasting, dancing, and music set the mood for licentious behavior.

We can imagine a typical scene in early autumn. In a striking natural setting, gorged by feasting and stimulated by wine, the worshipers dance. Their fertility dance is intended to awaken Baal from his summer inactivity so that the land will be blessed by rain. Round and round the phallic pillars and sacred poles they go. The movements, particularly those of the temple prostitutes, are erotic and sensual. The music and the audience drive them on. And likely, at the climax of the dance, the dancers repair to the chambers of the house of Baal for immoral relations.—Numbers 25:1, 2; compare Exodus 32:6, 17-19; Amos 2:8.

They Walked by Sight, Not by Faith

While such a sensual form of worship attracted many, fear also drove the Israelites toward Baal worship. As the Israelites lost their faith in Jehovah, fear of the dead, fear of the future, and a fascination with the occult led them into practicing spiritism, which in turn involved rites of the utmost depravity. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* describes how Canaanites honored the departed spirit as part of ancestor worship: "Feasts . . . were celebrated in the family tomb or at burial mounds with ritual drunkenness and sexuality (possibly involving incest) in which the deceased were

thought to participate." Taking part in such degrading spiritistic practices separated the Israelites more and more from their God, Jehovah.—Deuteronomy 18:9-12.

Idols—and associated rituals—also attracted those Israelites who preferred to walk by sight rather than by faith. (2 Corinthians 5:7) Even after seeing spectacular miracles at the invisible hand of Jehovah, many Israelites who had left Egypt felt the need for a visual reminder of him. (Exodus 32:1-4) Some of their descendants likewise wished to worship something visible, such as the idols of Baal.—1 Kings 12:25-30.

Who Was Victorious?

The battle for the Israelites' hearts raged for centuries, from the time they arrived at the plains of Moab shortly before entering the Promised Land to the time of their deportation to Babylon. The advantage seemed to move back and forth. At times, the majority of the Israelites stayed loyal to Jehovah, but frequently they turned to Baal. A principal reason for this was their association with the pagan peoples around them.

After their military defeat, the Canaanites fought by more subtle means. They lived alongside the Israelites and encouraged their conquerors to make the gods of the land their own. Such courageous judges as Gideon and Samuel resisted this trend. Samuel exhorted the people: "Put away the foreign gods . . . , and direct your heart unswervingly to Jehovah and serve him alone." For a time the Israelites heeded Samuel's exhortation, and they "put away the Baals and the Ashtoreth images and began serving Jehovah alone." —1 Samuel 7:3, 4; Judges 6:25-27.

After the reigns of Saul and David, Solomon in his later years began to make sacrifices to foreign gods. (1 Kings 11:4-8) Other kings of Israel and Judah did likewise and surrendered to Baal. Nevertheless, faithful prophets and kings, such as Elijah, Elisha, and Josiah, took the lead in fighting against Baal worship. (2 Chronicles 34:1-5) Furthermore, throughout this period of Israelite history, there were individuals who remained faithful to Jehovah. Even during the time of Ahab and Jezebel, when Baal worship was at its height, seven thousand refused 'to bend their knees to Baal.'—1 Kings 19:18.

Finally, after the Jews returned from exile in Babylon, there is no further mention of Baal worship. Like those referred to at Ezra 6:21, all 'separated themselves from the uncleanness of the nations of the land, to search for Jehovah the God of Israel.'

Warnings From the Worship of Baal

Although the worship of Baal has long since disappeared, that Canaanite religion and today's society have one thing in common—the glorification of sex. Enticements to immorality seem to be in the very air that we breathe. (Ephesians 2:2) "We are up against the unseen power that controls this dark world, and spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil," Paul warns. —Ephesians 6:12, *Phillips*.

This "unseen power" of Satan promotes sexual immorality in order to enslave people spiritually. (John 8:34) In today's permissive society, sexual abandon is not practiced as a fertility rite but, rather, as a way to find personal fulfillment or to do one's own thing. And the propaganda is just as persuasive. Through entertainment, music, and advertising, sexual messages saturate people's consciousness. God's servants are not immune to this assault. In fact, the majority of those disfellowshipped from the Christian congregation are individuals who succumbed to such practices. Only by continually repudiating these immoral suggestions will a Christian remain chaste.—Romans 12:9.

Young Witnesses are especially exposed to danger, since many things they may find at-

Ruins in Gezer of sacred pillars used in Baal worship

tractive are packaged with sex. To make matters worse, they have to resist the influence of other young ones urging them on. (Compare Proverbs 1:10-15.) Not a few have got into trouble, for example, at large gatherings. As in Baal worship in ancient times, music, dancing, and sexual allure make a heady mix.—2 Timothy 2:22.

"How will a young man cleanse his path?" asked the psalmist. "By keeping on guard according to [Jehovah's] word," he replied. (Psalm 119:9) Just as God's Law commanded the Israelites to shun close association with the Canaanites, so the Bible alerts us to the dangers of unwise association. (1 Corinthians 15:32, 33) A young Christian shows his maturity when he says no to that which may be sensually attractive but which he knows is morally harmful. Like faithful Elijah, we cannot allow the tide of popular opinion to make our decisions for us.—1 Kings 18:21; compare Matthew 7:13, 14.

Another warning concerns loss of faith, "the sin that easily entangles us." (Hebrews 12:1) It seems that many Israelites still believed in Jehovah, but they looked to Baal as the god who would protect their crops and supply their daily needs. Perhaps they felt that Jehovah's temple in Jerusalem was too far away and that the keeping of his laws was impractical. Baal worship was so undemanding and convenient—they could even offer up smoke to Baal on their own housetops. (Jeremiah 32:29) Possibly, they drifted into Baal worship by just sharing in some of the rites or even by making offerings to Baal in the name of Jehovah.

How might we lose faith and slowly draw away from the living God? (Hebrews 3:12) We could gradually lose the appreciation we formerly had for meetings and assemblies. Such an attitude betrays a lack of confidence in Jehovah's provision of spiritual "food at the proper time." (Matthew 24:45-47) Thus weakened, we might loosen our "grip on the word of life" or even develop a divided heart, perhaps succumbing to materialistic pursuits or immorality.—Philippians 2:16; compare Psalm 119:113.

Holding Fast to Our Integrity

No doubt about it, today a battle is being waged for the heart. Will we stay loyal to Jehovah or become sidetracked by the loose living of this world? Sad to say, just as the Israelites gravitated to disgusting Canaanite practices, some Christian men and women today have been enticed to commit shameful acts.—Compare Proverbs 7:7, 21-23.

Such a spiritual defeat can be avoided if, like Moses, we 'continue steadfast as seeing the One who is invisible.' (Hebrews 11:27) True, we have to "put up a hard fight for the faith." (Jude 3) But by remaining loyal to our God and to his principles, we can look forward to the time when false worship will disappear forever. Just as the worship of Jehovah prevailed over Baal worship, so we can be sure that soon "the earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea."—Isaiah 11:9.

Authorities Praise Witnesses

IN Cádiz, Spain, a seaport city situated some 300 miles southwest of Madrid, mayor Doña Teófila Martínez presented a plaque (pictured above) to Jehovah's Witnesses. It reads: "The city hall of Cádiz to Jehovah's Witnesses in appreciation for their collaboration and efforts in behalf of this city." What did the Witnesses do to receive this honor?

It was given in recognition of the work the Witnesses had done to renovate part of the city's municipal stadium. Over several weekends, hundreds of Witnesses volunteered to help remodel the ground-floor restrooms of the Carranza football stadium. Now, all who use the stadium benefit from the pipes, plumbing fixtures, and flooring that were installed.

For some time, Jehovah's Witnesses have enjoyed a good relationship with the city of Cádiz. Every year, city hall kindly makes the Carranza Stadium available to the Witnesses for their annual district convention. Therefore, the Witnesses are glad to do what they can to help keep the stadium in good repair.

In addition to occasional physical labors, however, Jehovah's Witnesses regularly visit the city's neighborhoods to support the public in another way. They proclaim the "good news" of God's Kingdom. Of course, they do not engage in their public ministry in order to receive praise from men. It is performed in obedience to Jesus' command to preach the "good news of the kingdom" and to "make disciples of people of all the nations." (Matthew 24:14; 28:19) In this way, Jehovah's Witnesses hope to serve the community by educating people in "the path of righteousness." —Proverbs 12:28.

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