

Awake!

MAY 2015



HOPE

for the **Homeless**
and the **Poor**

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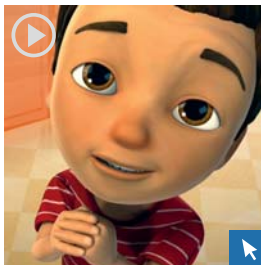


What Happens at a Kingdom Hall?

This short video takes you to meetings of Jehovah’s Witnesses all over the world and introduces you to some of the people who attend.

(Look under ABOUT US > MEETINGS)

CHILDREN



BECOME JEHOVAH’S FRIEND Please and Thank You

In this video, see why Caleb’s face lights up when he learns to display good manners.

(Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > CHILDREN)

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SPOTLIGHT ON ASIA

Asia is the world's most populous continent. China and India alone are home to over one third of earth's inhabitants. What challenges do Asian nations face in educating and protecting their citizens?



POST-TYPHOON MORTALITY According to one study, the average number of infant girls in the Philippines who die in the year *after* a typhoon outnumbers by about 15 to 1 the number of people reported as killed by the storm itself. Possible factors include unemployment after a storm, the cost of rebuilding, and the way resources are allocated to infant females, including nutrition and health care.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS: 'Share your bread with the hungry, bring the poor and homeless into your house, clothe someone naked when you see him.'—Isaiah 58:7.

EDUCATION PROTECTS CHILDREN Children are at greater risk of abuse when their parents fail to teach them about sex at an early age, according to Chinese legal experts. Prosecutors in China handled some 8,000 accusations of child sexual abuse in a recent four-year period. Children "are vulnerable and easily become targets," says a law professor at Beijing Normal University. "Education is the key to preventing sexual assaults."

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS: Wise parents teach their children how to protect themselves "from the man speaking perverse things."
—Proverbs 2:1, 10-12.

SUICIDE AMONG THE ELDERLY IN SOUTH KOREA During 2011, more than a quarter of all suicides in South Korea were committed by people 65 years of age and older. Some researchers blame changing attitudes toward care of the elderly and economic factors—almost 50 percent of South Korean seniors live in relative poverty. Less than half of the people in South Korea now think that children should support their aging parents.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS: "Honor your father and your mother."
—Ephesians 6:2.



Hope for the Homeless and the Poor

Joe is a military veteran in the United States. Personal and family tragedies left him homeless for some 18 years. One year he began to visit a local public library, where he sometimes conversed with a librarian. Those conversations changed his life.

Martín, a young man in Argentina, felt spiritually empty. Life seemed purposeless to him. In his search for meaning, he left home and ended up living on a beach. But instead of finding the answers he was seeking, he became deeply depressed. In tears, he begged God: “If you exist, please help me to find you.” What was the outcome? We shall see.

PEOPLE become homeless for various reasons. Some, like Joe, experience personal tragedies. Others, like Martín, simply opt out of “normal” life, seeing it as a meaningless routine. Still others become homeless because of poverty, natural disasters, domestic violence, drug or alcohol abuse, mental illness, a lack of affordable housing, or loss of employment.

Once thought to be limited to developing lands or those battered by war or economic depression, homelessness has “emerged as a major social issue in most developed nations,” says psychology professor Paul Toro.* Contributing factors may include government policies regarding aid to low-income families and a widening gap of income inequality.

Many people are anxious about tomorrow. Some, however, have lessened their anxiety by considering what the Bible says about the future—a topic that we will touch on shortly. The Bible can also help us *now* by giving us sound principles to live by—principles that enhance both our economic security and our

* Because of conflict, violence, or persecution, millions of people have been forced from their homes, becoming refugees or internally displaced persons. This problem was discussed in the January 22, 2002, issue of *Awake!*

emotional health, as Joe and Martín discovered for themselves.

THE BIBLE CHANGED HIS LIFE

“Joe seemed intelligent, mannerly, and humble,” said Cindi, who often saw him in the library where she worked. As one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, she gave him copies of the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines and invited him to attend a Christian meeting. There he was treated with kindness and respect, so he began to attend regularly. He also accepted a personal Bible study, which was offered to him by one of the men in the congregation.

Joe found much comfort in what he learned, and he began to apply Bible teachings, even though this meant making big changes in his life. For example, he learned that life is a divine gift, which should be treated with respect, and that smoking pollutes the body. (Psalm 36:9) Therefore, he gave up smoking, in harmony with the principle stated at 2 Corinthians 7:1: “Let us cleanse ourselves of every defilement of flesh.” Of course, Joe’s decision not only benefited his health but also saved him money.

Having taken to heart the Bible’s advice that we should do what we can to care for our own material needs, Joe began to look for work.* (1 Thessalonians 4: 11, 12) “There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and find enjoyment in his hard work,” says Ecclesiastes 2:24. That joy is also a result of self-respect, for honest work dignifies us. And it enables us to assist the needy.—Ephesians 4:28.

Seeing Joe’s sincerity, “the congregation embraced him,” said Cindi, and



Joe’s study of the Bible helped him gain self-respect

“some helped him to apply for suitable housing and other things for which he was eligible.” Joe continued to make progress and in time was baptized as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Now he can speak from personal experience when he encourages others to acquire wisdom from God, as found in the Bible.—Proverbs 3: 13, 14.

HE FOUND LIFE’S PURPOSE

Martín began to search for the meaning of life when he was 20 years old. “I investigated religions and philosophies and took drugs,” he said, “hoping to fill the emptiness I felt within, but to no avail.” He lived in California, U.S.A., for a while and then went to Hawaii. “I thought I had found paradise,” he recalled. But beautiful scenery did not fill the void. “I became so overwhelmed with depression,” he recalls, “that I even contemplated suicide.” It was at that point in his life that he wept uncontrollably and begged God, “If you exist, please help me to find you.”

Martín remembered that earlier he had seen a sign that read “Kingdom Hall of Jehovah’s Witnesses.” He decided to go there to attend a Christian meeting. “I walked in with long hair and a beard, and I had on the clothes I had been wearing for months,” he said. “Nevertheless, I was warmly welcomed.” Martín accepted a personal Bible study and regularly walked from his “home” on the beach to the town square to have his Bible study there.

* Some people who want to work are unable to, perhaps because of disability, ill health, or old age. God disapproves of the one who “does not want to work.”
—2 Thessalonians 3:10.



Martín now has a positive outlook on life

At last, Martín began to receive satisfying answers to his questions. As a result, his depression lifted and he experienced the joy Jesus spoke about when he said: “Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need.”—Matthew 5:3.

Martín’s new outlook on life soon became apparent as he applied the same Bible principles that helped Joe, mentioned earlier, to take control of his life. Martín took more interest in his appearance, and with the help of the Witnesses, he found a job and a place to live.

“People were amazed at the changes I was making”

“Previously, I was known as the homeless man in the square,” he said, “but now local people were amazed at the changes I was making.”

Later, Martín returned to Argentina, where he was baptized as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Now he treasures the privilege of helping other spiritually hungry ones to find the answers to life’s big questions.

WHEN HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY WILL BE NO MORE

Jeremiah, an ancient servant of God, lived through a time of great distress. A cruel enemy invaded his homeland and took many of his people into exile and slavery. (Lamentations 1:3) Although spared, Jeremiah lost virtually everything he owned. In grief, he prayed: “Remember my affliction and my homeless state.” —Lamentations 3:19.

Despite his sufferings, Jeremiah did not cave in to despair. Why? For one thing, he knew that Jehovah would not abandon him. (Jeremiah 1:8) For another, he was a

PRINCIPLES THAT CAN IMPROVE ECONOMIC SECURITY

Avoid unnecessary debt. “The borrower is a slave to the lender.”—Proverbs 22:7.

Beware of get-rich-quick schemes. “The naive person believes every word, but the shrewd one ponders each step.”—Proverbs 14:15; 22:26, 27.

Be a diligent worker. “The lazy person has his cravings, yet he has nothing, but the diligent one will be fully satisfied.” —Proverbs 13:4.

Exercise self-control. “A drunkard and a glutton will come to poverty.”—Proverbs 23:21.

Have a balanced outlook. “Give me neither poverty nor riches.”—Proverbs 30:8, 9.

Be generous, not stingy. “The generous person will prosper.” —Proverbs 11:25.



“They will build houses and live in them.”—Isaiah 65:21

student of the Scriptures, which tell of a time when poverty and suffering will cease to exist and will be replaced by true peace and security.—Psalm 37:10, 11.

Those conditions will come about, not by human efforts, but by means of a perfect government called God’s Kingdom. (Daniel 7:13, 14) The King of that Kingdom is none other than Jesus Christ, who displayed great compassion for the poor when he was on earth as a man. (Luke 7: 22; 14:13) Under his rule, “the righteous will flourish, and peace will abound . . . He will rescue the poor who cry for help, also the lowly one and whoever has no helper. From oppression and from violence he will rescue them.”—Psalm 72:7, 12, 14.

Jesus made God’s Kingdom the focus of his teaching. (Luke 4:43) He even taught people to pray: “Let your Kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also on earth.” (Matthew 6:9, 10) What will life on earth be like when God’s Kingdom is in full control? The Bible gives us appealing previews. For example, it says of the subjects of God’s Kingdom:

- “They will build houses and live in them, and they will plant vineyards and eat their fruitage. They will not build for someone else to inhabit, nor will they plant for others to eat. . . . The work of their hands my chosen ones will enjoy to the full.”—Isaiah 65:21, 22.
- “They will sit, each one under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one will make them afraid, for the mouth of Jehovah of armies has spoken.” —Micah 4:4.

That sure hope can buoy us up during our trials. At the same time, Bible principles can help us to live meaningful and satisfying lives even now, as Joe, Martin, and many others have discovered. Indeed, our Creator, Jehovah God, gives us this guarantee: “The one listening to me will dwell in security and be undisturbed by the dread of calamity.” (Proverbs 1:33) May those words prove to be true in your life! ■



Teaching Children to Obey



THE CHALLENGE

You and your four-year-old keep getting locked in a battle of wills, and your child always seems to win.

- When you tell him to do something he does not want to do, he ignores you.*
- When you tell him *not* to do something he *wants* to do, he throws a tantrum.

‘Is this only a phase?’ you wonder. ‘Should I just hope that he grows out of it?’

You *can* teach your child to obey. But before we discuss how, consider one possible reason for his misbehavior.

* Although we refer to the child as a male, the principles discussed in this article apply to girls as well.

WHY IT HAPPENS

When your child was a newborn, your primary role was that of caregiver. You were at your child’s beck and call. All he had to do was whimper, and you came running, anxious to cater to his every need. Of course, such a response was proper and necessary. A newborn or infant needs a parent’s constant attention.

After many months of that treatment, however, it is only natural that a child will act as if he were the master of the house and his parents the servants who are there to do his bidding. Then, usually by two years of age, the child becomes aware of a harsh reality: His little “autocracy” has crumbled. His parents no longer follow *his* orders; they expect *him* to follow *theirs*. This is a rude awakening for children! Some respond by throwing tantrums. Others test their parents’ authority by refusing to obey.

At that critical time, a parent needs to assume a new role—that of an authority figure who gives clear direction as to what is expected of the child. But what if the child ignores or rejects that direction, as depicted in the opening scenario?



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Take the lead. Your child will not accept your role as a leader unless he sees you taking the lead. So, in a balanced way, you need to assert your authority. In recent decades, some so-called experts have made the word “authority” sound harsh. One even calls parental authority “unethical” and “immoral.” But the alternative—permissiveness—can leave children feeling confused, indulged, and entitled. It does little to prepare them for responsible adulthood.—*Bible principle: Proverbs 29:15.*

Employ discipline. One dictionary defines discipline as “training which produces obedience or self-control, often in the form of rules and punishments if these are broken.” Of course, discipline should never be unreasonable or abusive. On the other hand, it should not be vague or inconsequential, leaving the child with no incentive to change.—*Bible principle: Proverbs 23:13.*

Be clear. Some parents merely ask for their child’s obedience. (“I would like you to clean up your room—OK?”) Perhaps they feel that this shows good manners. That tactic, however, can put the parent in a submissive role and leave the child free to weigh the pros and cons of the request and then decide whether to comply. Rather than abdicate your authority, give clear direction in the form of statements.—*Bible principle: 1 Corinthians 14:9.*

Be decisive. If you say no, stick to that, and present a united front with your spouse. If you have decided on a consequence for disobedience, follow through. Do not get embroiled in negotiations or endlessly discuss *why* you made a decision. It will be much easier for your child—and for you—if you just “let your ‘Yes’ mean yes and your ‘No,’ no.”—James 5:12.

Be loving. The family is neither a democracy nor a dictatorship. Rather, it is a God-given arrangement in which children can be lovingly guided toward responsible adulthood. As part of that process, discipline will teach your child to obey and help him feel secure in your love. ■

KEY SCRIPTURES

“A child left unrestrained brings shame on his mother.”—Proverbs 29:15.

“Do not hold back discipline.”
—Proverbs 23:13.

“Unless you . . . use speech that is easily understood, how will anyone know what is being said?”
—1 Corinthians 14:9.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

To find out more about how Bible principles can help parents, go to our Web site, jw.org. Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > COUPLES & PARENTS. There you will find such articles as:

“Disciplining Children”

“How to Deal With Tantrums”

“How to Say No”

“Inculcate Moral Values
in Your Children”

“When Your Child Lies”

“How to Discipline Your Teenager”

See also the cover subject “Whatever Happened to Discipline?” in the April 2015 issue of *Awake!*



Memorial wreaths at the gymnasium

Anzhelika died during the mayhem



“God Is Helping Us to Heal”

NATALYA and her nine-year-old son, Aslan, huddled near Zarina and her twelve-year-old daughter, Anzhelika. More than 1,000 other children and adults sat together nearby, watched by heavily armed attackers.

Earlier that Wednesday, September 1, 2004, the children and parents had been outside, preparing to celebrate the first day of school in Beslan, a small town in Alania, Russia. Suddenly, gunmen and suicide bombers dashed into their midst, shooting into the air and shouting. The more than 30 attackers herded the terrified crowd into the school gymnasium and wired explosives around the room.

The Standoff and the Mayhem

Thus began a tense three-day standoff between the attackers and security

forces. “I had never prayed so much,” recalls Natalya, who was studying the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses.

It was late summer, and the gymnasium became stiflingly hot. Beginning the morning of the second day, the attackers gave their hostages no food or water, and by the third day—Friday—some hostages resorted to drinking urine and eating the flowers the children had brought for their teachers. “A boy sitting near us put a leaf into my hand,” says Natalya. “I tore it in two and gave half to Anzhelika and half to Aslan.”

Later on the third day, mayhem broke out. “Explosions knocked me over,” Natalya relates. “Dense smoke filled the air, and shooting began.” Under the cross fire between the soldiers and the terrorists, Natalya and Aslan crawled away. A local

Ossetian named Alan pulled them out to safety. Many others did not escape.

The Aftermath

Hundreds of children and adults died, including Anzhelika. For weeks, sobs and wails could be heard in Beslan. Natalya’s apartment overlooks the school, and even after a new school was built nearby, Aslan could not bring himself to step inside it. He did not even go out to play. “We implored Jehovah to help him overcome his fears,” says Natalya. In time, he found the courage to return to school.

Natalya’s test was attending Christian meetings at the Kingdom Hall. “Whenever I was with many people in a confined space, I got the feeling that the building was about to be stormed,” she relates. “I would pray that nothing would happen. After a while, I stopped going. I also struggled with the knowledge that many people perished, while we survived.”

The Healing

“I am grateful to those in the congregation who continued helping me,” says Natalya. “A Witness named Tatyana visited me every three days without fail. Later, she brought along another Witness—kind, tactful, and soft-spoken Ulyana—who knew the Bible well. She commended me for the efforts I had made, and she really listened when I spoke.

“Ulyana read me the words of the Christian apostle Paul recorded at 2 Corinthians 1:9. After an ordeal in Asia, Paul said: ‘We felt that we had received the sentence of death.’ She also read Isaiah 40:31: ‘Those hoping in Jehovah will regain power. They will soar on wings like eagles.’ Such scriptures, along with

regular emotional support from Ulyana and others, strengthened me to attend Christian meetings again, along with my children. Even so, being in a hall still makes me uneasy.”

Zarina later became one of Jehovah’s Witnesses and looks forward to welcoming Anzhelika back in the resurrection to

“I can at last talk about that day without bitterness or fear”

life on a beautiful, peaceful earth, which will be ruled by God’s Kingdom. (Matthew 6:9, 10; Acts 24:15) Natalya and her children were baptized in 2009. They still live near the ruins of the gymnasium but have left the horror behind. “I can at last talk about that day without bitterness or fear,” says Natalya. “God is helping us to heal.” ■

SAD STATISTICS

Attackers: More than 30

Hostages: Over 1,000

Killed: At least 330

Injured: In excess of 700



© Melvyn Longhurst/SuperStock

Al-Khwarizmi

WHEN people measure their weight or tally the cost of their groceries, many use Hindu-Arabic numerals. Why “Hindu-Arabic”? The basis of the modern number system that uses the digits zero to nine appears to have developed in India and to have made it to the West by way of medieval scholars who wrote in Arabic. Foremost among them was a man named Muhammad ibn-Musa al-Khwarizmi. Likely born in what is now Uzbekistan in about 780 C.E., al-Khwarizmi is called the “great hero of Arabic mathematics.” Why did he receive this acclaim?

QUICK FACTS

- ▶ Prototypes of modern numerals were being used in India as early as the third century B.C.E.
- ▶ Hindu scholars later transmitted their mathematical knowledge to the court of Caliph al-Mansur in Baghdad.
- ▶ Al-Khwarizmi’s book *Calculation With Indian Numerals* promoted the decimal system. He elaborated on concepts found in older sources, including Greek, Hebrew, and Hindu treatises.

“HERO OF ARABIC MATHEMATICS”

Al-Khwarizmi wrote about the practical use of decimals and also clarified and popularized a method for solving certain mathematical problems. He explained the method in his work *The Book of Restoring and Balancing*. The term *al-jabr* in its Arabic title, *Kitab al-jabr wa'l-muqabala*, is the source of the English word algebra. Algebra, says science writer Ehsan Masood, is considered “the single most important mathematical tool ever devised, and one that underpins every facet of science.”*

“Countless generations of high school students wish [al-Khwarizmi] hadn’t bothered,” quips one author. Be that as it may, al-Khwarizmi stated that his aim was to explain methods in order to simplify calculations in trade, the division of inheritances, surveying, and so on.

* In modern algebra, unknown numbers are represented by letters, such as x or y . An example is the equation $x + 4 = 6$. Subtracting 4 from both sides of the equation reveals that x equals 2.

Algebra: “The single most important mathematical tool ever devised”

Centuries later, Western mathematicians, including Galileo and Fibonacci, held al-Khwarizmi in high esteem because of his clear explanations regarding the use of equations. Al-Khwarizmi’s descriptions paved the way for further studies in algebra, arithmetic, and trigonometry. The latter enabled Middle Eastern scholars to calculate values for angles and sides of triangles and to advance studies in astronomy.*

Those who built on al-Khwarizmi’s work developed new ways to use decimal fractions and pioneered new techniques to determine area and volume. Middle Eastern architects and builders used such advanced methods long before their Western counterparts, who became familiar with them during the Crusades. They later took the knowledge home, aided by educated Muslim captives and immigrants.

ARABIC MATH SPREADS

In time, al-Khwarizmi’s works were translated into Latin. The Italian mathematician Fibonacci (c. 1170-1250), also known as Leonardo of Pisa, is generally credited with popularizing Hindu-Arabic numerals in the West. He learned about them during his travels in the Mediterranean world and thereafter wrote his *Book of Calculation*.

Al-Khwarizmi’s explanations took centuries to become well-known. But now his methods and the mathematics related to them are the very lifeblood of science and technology, not to mention commerce and industry. ■

* Greek astronomers pioneered the work of calculating the sides and angles of triangles. Islamic scholars used trigonometry to determine the direction to Mecca. Muslims like to pray facing Mecca. Tradition requires that the dead be buried facing Mecca and that Muslim butchers face Mecca when killing animals for meat.

A Priceless Legacy

“When it comes to numbers and mathematics the legacy [left by medieval Middle Eastern scholars] is immense and indisputable.”—*Science and Islam*, by Ehsan Masood.

“Modern Western numerals may be a conglomeration from different sources. However, as far as is known, the country that first used the largest number of these numeral forms is India.”
—*Britannica Online Encyclopedia*.

In Europe, Hindu-Arabic numerals “became commonly known during the 15th century.”—*Encyclopedia of Society and Culture in the Medieval World*.

To illustrate the simplicity of Arabic numbers, the number 188 is

CLXXXVIII

in Roman numerals.



VIOLENCE

Human history is filled with violence. Will this tragic record continue indefinitely?

How does God view violence?

WHAT PEOPLE SAY Many, including religious people, feel that violence is a justifiable response to provocation. And millions consider media violence to be an acceptable form of entertainment.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS Near the city of Mosul, in northern Iraq, lie the ruins of a once great city—Nineveh, the capital of the ancient Assyrian Empire. While the city was still a thriving metropolis, the Bible foretold that God would “make Nineveh desolate.” (Zephaniah 2:13) “I will make a spectacle of you,” God said. The reason? Nineveh was a “city of bloodshed.” (Nahum 1:1; 3:1, 6) And “Jehovah detests violent . . . people,” states Psalm 5:6. As Nineveh’s ruins testify, God acted on his words.

Violence originated with the archenemy of both God and man—Satan the Devil, whom Jesus Christ called “a murderer.” (John 8:44) Moreover, because “the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one,” his traits are reflected in popular attitudes toward violence, including the world’s infatuation with media violence. (1 John 5:19) To please God, we must cultivate a hatred for violence and a love for what God loves.* Is that possible?

* God did allow ancient Israel to engage in war in order to defend its territory. (2 Chronicles 20:15, 17) That situation changed, however, when God terminated his covenant with Israel and established the Christian congregation, which has no borders.

“Jehovah . . . hates anyone who loves violence.”—Psalm 11:5.

Can violent people change?

WHAT PEOPLE SAY Violence is simply a reflection of human nature, which does not change.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS Put away “wrath, anger, badness, abusive speech, and obscene talk.” It also says: “Strip off the old personality with its practices, and clothe yourselves with the new personality.”

(Colossians 3:8-10) Is God asking too much of us? No. People can change.* How?

The first step is gaining an accurate knowledge of God. (Colossians 3:10)

* Examples of people who changed their ways can be found in the series “The Bible Changes Lives,” featured in *The Watchtower*.



When a person with a receptive heart learns about our Creator's appealing qualities and standards, he is drawn to God in love and wants to please him.—1 John 5:3.

The second step is related to our choice of associates. "Do not keep company with a hot-tempered man or get involved with one disposed to rage, so that you never learn his ways and ensnare yourself."—Proverbs 22:24, 25.

The third step involves insight. See the inclination toward violence for what it is—a serious weakness that reflects a lack of self-control. The peaceable, by comparison, have inner strength. "The one slow to anger is better than a mighty man," says Proverbs 16:32.

"Pursue peace with all people."

—Hebrews 12:14.

Will violence ever end?

WHAT PEOPLE SAY Violence has always been with us and always will be.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS "Just a little while longer, and the wicked will be no more . . . But the meek will possess the earth, and they will find exquisite delight in the abundance of peace." (Psalm 37:10, 11) Yes, in order to save the meek and peaceable, God will do to lovers of violence what he did to ancient Nineveh. Thereafter, violence will never again mar the earth! —Psalm 72:7.

Now, therefore, is the time to seek God's favor by cultivating a peaceful disposition. Says 2 Peter 3:9: "Jehovah . . . is patient with you because he does not desire anyone to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance." ■

"They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears."—Isaiah 2:4.



"The mild-tempered . . . will inherit the earth."—Matthew 5:5



The Light Organ of the Hawaiian Bobtail Squid



© Doug Perrine/SeaPhotos.com

A **NOCTURNAL** hunter, the Hawaiian bobtail squid creates its own light—not to be seen, but to be unseen—to blend in with the ambient moonlight and starlight. The animal’s secret is its partnership with light-emitting bacteria. That partnership may also hold secrets that could benefit us, but in a seemingly unrelated way. It may benefit our health.

Consider: The Hawaiian bobtail squid lives in the clear coastal waters of the Hawaiian Islands. Light from the moon and the stars would normally make the silhouette of the creature stand out to predators below. The bobtail squid, however, emits a glow from its underside that mimics ambient night light in both intensity and wavelength. The result is stealth—no silhouette, no shadow. The squid’s “high-tech” apparatus is its light organ, which houses bioluminescent bacteria that produce just the right glow to camouflage their host.

The Hawaiian bobtail squid as seen under normal lighting

The bacteria may also help to regulate the squid’s sleep-wake pattern. This interests researchers because the bobtail squid may not be the only creature where there is a link between bacteria and circadian cycles, or daily rhythms in activity. In mammals, for example, bacteria that play a role in digestion may also be associated with circadian rhythms. Disturbances of these rhythms have been linked to depression, diabetes, obesity, and sleep disorders. Hence, the study of the squid’s bacteria-host system may furnish insights into human health.

What do you think? Did the light organ of the Hawaiian bobtail squid come about by evolution? Or was it designed? ■

