



Is the Bible *Really*
FROM GOD?



3 COVER SUBJECT The Bible—Is It Truly “Inspired of God”?

Is the Bible from God? Or is it a book that contains purely thoughts from men?

This issue of “Awake!” considers three lines of evidence that the Bible really is from God.

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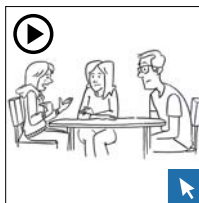
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THE BIBLE

Is It Truly “Inspired of God”?

DO YOU believe that the Bible is from God? Or do you think that it is a book that contains purely thoughts from men?

That is an ongoing debate even among professed Christians. For instance, in 2014 a Gallup poll in the United States revealed that the majority of nominal Christians agreed that “the Bible is connected in some way to God.” On the other hand, about 1 in 5 polled viewed the Bible as a book of “ancient fables, legends, history, and precepts written by man.” This controversy puts the spotlight on the real meaning of the term “inspired” with regard to the Bible.—2 Timothy 3:16.

“INSPIRED”—WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

The Bible is made up of 66 small books, which were written by some 40 writers over a period of about 1,600 years. But if the Bible was written by men, how can it be “inspired of God”? Simply stated, the expression “inspired of God” means that the *Source* of the information in those

writings is God. The Bible puts it this way: “Men spoke from God as they were moved by holy spirit.” (2 Peter 1:21) In other words, God used his invisible energizing force, holy spirit, to transmit his message to the writers of the Bible books. This can be likened to a businessman dictating a letter to his secretary. The letter’s author is, not the one doing the writing, but the one doing the dictating.

Some Bible writers actually heard God’s message conveyed audibly by an angel. Others saw visions from God. In some cases, God communicated his message in the form of dreams. While God at times allowed the writers to use their own words to record his message, at other times he gave them precise wording. In any event, human writers conveyed God’s thoughts and not their own.

How can we be sure that it was God who inspired the Bible writers? Consider three lines of evidence that build confidence in the Bible’s divine origin.



THE BIBLE

Accurate in All Respects



Scientifically Accurate

ALTHOUGH the Bible is not a science textbook, it is accurate when it discusses the natural world. Consider examples from the fields of meteorology and genetics.

METEOROLOGY—FORMATION OF RAIN

The Bible states: “[God] draws up the drops of water; they condense into rain from his mist; then the clouds pour it down.”—Job 36:27, 28.

Here the Bible describes the three main steps of the hydrologic cycle. God—the Source of solar heat—“draws up the drops of water” by (1) *evaporation*. Then, by means of (2) *condensation*, the uplifted water vapor forms clouds that pour water down as rain or some other form of (3) *precipitation*. Even now, meteorologists do not fully understand all the details of the phenomenon of rain. Interestingly, the Bible asks: “Can anyone understand the layers of clouds?” (Job 36:29) The Creator, however, does understand the rain cycle and saw to it that a human writer would include the facts accurately in the Bible. And he did this long before men could explain the basic process scientifically.

GENETICS—DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUMAN EMBRYO

The Bible writer King David said to God: “Your eyes even saw me as an embryo; *all its parts were written in your book.*” (Psalm 139:16) In poetic language, David speaks of an embryo developing according to the directions written in a preexisting “book,” or plan. Amazingly, this was written some 3,000 years ago!

Yet, it was not until the mid-1800’s that Austrian botanist Gregor Mendel discovered the basic principles of genetics. And only in April 2003 did researchers finish sequencing the human genome, which contains all the genetic information needed to build a living human body. Scientists have described the genetic chemical code as being like a dictionary filled with words made up of the letters of an alphabet. The words form the genetic instructions. Based on these instructions, the embryo’s parts—such as the brain, heart, lungs, and limbs—develop in precise sequence and with perfect timing. Fittingly, the genome has been described by scientists as “the book of life.” How was the Bible writer David able to be so accurate? He humbly admitted: “The spirit of Jehovah spoke through me; his word was on my tongue.”* —2 Samuel 23:2.

* In the Bible, God is identified by his personal name, Jehovah.—Psalm 83:18.



Accurately Predicts the Future

IT IS very difficult—if not impossible—to know when, how, and to what extent kingdoms and cities will rise or fall. Yet, the Bible foretold the destruction of mighty rulerships and cities in great detail. Consider just two examples.

THE FALL AND DESOLATION OF BABYLON

Ancient Babylon was the hub of a powerful empire that exerted influence over western Asia for centuries. At one time it was the world's largest city. Yet, some 200 years in advance, God inspired the Bible writer Isaiah to prophesy that a conqueror by the name of Cyrus would overthrow Babylon and that it would end up uninhabited forever. (Isaiah 13:17-20; 44:27, 28; 45:1, 2) Is this what really happened?

In one night, in October 539 B.C.E., Cyrus the Great conquered Babylon. In time, the canals that had once irrigated the surrounding fertile region choked up from neglect. By 200 C.E., the site was said to have been deserted. Today, Babylon remains in ruins. Precisely as the Bible foretold, Babylon has “become utterly desolate.”—Jeremiah 50:13.

Where did the Bible writer get such accurate historical foresight? The Bible reveals that this was “a pronouncement against Babylon that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw in vision.”—Isaiah 13:1.

NINEVEH—“AS DRY AS A DESERT”

Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, was considered to be an architectural wonder. The city boasted wide streets, public gardens, temples, and massive palaces. Nevertheless, the prophet Zephaniah foretold that this magnificent city would become “desolate, as dry as a desert.”—Zephaniah 2:13-15.

Nineveh was completely destroyed by the combined forces of the Babylonians and the Medes in the seventh century B.C.E. According to one reference, the vanquished city then “passed into oblivion for 2500 years.” For a period of time, people doubted whether Nineveh had ever existed! Only in the mid-19th century did archaeologists excavate Nineveh's ruins. Today the site suffers from decay and vandalism, causing the Global Heritage Fund to warn: “Nineveh's ancient remains could again be buried forever.”

Where did Zephaniah get his advance information? He acknowledged that it was “the word of Jehovah that came to [him].” —Zephaniah 1:1.



The Bible Answers Life's Big Questions

THE Bible provides satisfying answers to life's big questions. Consider the following examples.

WHY IS THERE SO MUCH EVIL AND SUFFERING IN THE WORLD?

The matter of evil and suffering is covered extensively throughout the Scriptures. The Bible explains:

1. *"Man has dominated man to his harm."*
—Ecclesiastes 8:9.
Incompetent and corrupt human rule has brought untold suffering.
2. *"Time and unexpected events overtake them all."*—Ecclesiastes 9:11.
Unforeseen events—such as serious illnesses, accidents, or disasters—can strike anyone, anywhere, at any time.
3. *"Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin."*
—Romans 5:12.

Human imperfection and death did not exist in the beginning, when man and woman were first created. Sin "entered into the world" when they deliberately disobeyed their Creator.

The Bible does more than explain why people suffer. It promises that God will eradicate evil and "will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore."—Revelation 21:3, 4.

WHAT HAPPENS TO US WHEN WE DIE?

The Bible explains that death is a state of absolute unconsciousness and inactivity. "For the living know that they will die," states Ecclesiastes 9:5, "but the dead know nothing at all." At death, our very "thoughts perish." (Psalm 146:4) So all brain activity—including the function of our sensory organs—ceases when we die. Hence, we cannot act, feel, or think after death.

However, the Bible does more than explain the condition of the dead. It holds out the happy prospect that people will be awakened from the deep sleep of death by means of the resurrection.—Hosea 13:14; John 11:11-14.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?

According to the Bible, Jehovah God created man and woman. (Genesis 1:27) The first man, Adam, is thus described as a "son of God." (Luke 3:38) Man was created for a purpose—to build a friend-



ship with his heavenly Father and to live happily and productively on earth forever. To that end, all humans are endowed with a spiritual capacity, that is, a natural desire to want to learn about God. Hence, the Bible states: “Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need.”—Matthew 5:3.

Furthermore, the Bible says: “Happy are those hearing the word of God and keeping it!” (Luke 11:28) The Bible not only teaches us about God but helps us to live happier lives and gives us hope for the future.

The Divine Author and You

AFTER examining the evidence, millions of people around the world have concluded that the Bible is more than an ancient piece of literature. They are convinced that the Bible is God’s inspired Word, his communication with mankind—including you! It contains God’s invitation to you to get to know him and become his friend. “Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you,” promises the Bible.—James 4:8.

Digging into the Bible opens up a thrilling prospect. What is it? Just as reading a book gives you a glimpse into the mind of the author, reading the Bible reveals the thoughts and feelings of its divine Author, God. Think of what that can mean for you. You can get to know the sentiments and emotions of your Creator! In addition, the Bible reveals:

- ▶ God’s name, nature, and marvelous qualities.
- ▶ God’s purpose for man.
- ▶ How you can develop a relationship with God.

Would you be interested in learning more? Jehovah’s Witnesses will be glad to assist you. They can arrange for you to study the Bible free of charge. This can help you draw ever closer to the divine Author of the Bible—Jehovah God. ■



This article examined some of the evidence that the Bible is an inspired book. For more information, see chapter 2 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses and available at www.jw.org, or scan this code

You may also watch the video *Who Is the Author of the Bible?* available at www.jw.org
Look under PUBLICATIONS > VIDEOS



The Importance of Chores



THE CHALLENGE

In some families, children are expected to help out around the house, and they do so without complaint. In other families, parents have lowered their expectations, and children—happy to oblige—have lowered their performance.

Researchers see this trend particularly in Western lands, where children tend to be *consumers* rather than *contributors*. “Today, children are left alone to play video games, surf the Internet, and watch TV,” observes a parent named Steven. “Very little is expected of them.”

What do *you* think? Are chores really important—not only for the upkeep of the home but also for a child’s development?

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Some parents are reluctant to assign chores, especially when their child’s week is already crammed with homework and after-school activities. However, consider the benefits.

Chores contribute to a child’s maturity. Children who take on household tasks are likely to be more successful at school, and no wonder. Helping out around the house helps a child develop confidence, self-discipline, and strength of character—essential tools for learning.

Chores prepare children to serve others. Some have observed that children who are expected to help out at home are more likely to take on community service as adults. This is hardly surprising, since chores train them to put others’ needs above their own. On the other hand, Steven, quoted earlier, notes: “When nothing is expected of them, children learn that they are here to be served, and they grow up with a distorted view of what life will require of them in the way of responsibility and hard work.”

Chores promote family unity. Through their efforts at home, children come to realize not only that they are a valued part of the family but also that they have a responsibility toward it. This lesson can be lost when parents place a higher priority on after-school activities than on chores. Ask yourself, ‘Of what benefit is it if my child



forges a connection with the soccer team but loses his connection with the family team?’

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Start young. Some say that parents should assign chores when children are three years of age. Others recommend two years of age or even younger. The point is, very young children love to work alongside their parents and imitate them.—*Bible principle: Proverbs 22:6.*

Assign age-appropriate chores. For example, a three-year-old might pick up toys, clean up spills, or sort laundry. Older children can vacuum, wash the car, and even prepare a meal. Work with your child’s ability. You might be surprised at how enthusiastic he or she becomes about handling chores.

Place a priority on chores. That might be difficult when your child faces a daily mountain of homework. However, eliminating chores for the sake of high grades “is a sign of misplaced priorities,” says the book *The Price of Privilege*. As stated earlier, handling chores *helps* children become better students. And the lessons learned prepare them for the time when they will have a family of their own.—*Bible principle: Philippians 1:10.*

Focus on the objective rather than the result. It may take your child longer to complete a task than you would wish. You may also notice that the quality of the work could be better. When that happens, resist the urge to take over the task. Your objective is not to have the chore performed with adultlike precision but to help your child learn responsibility and discover the joy that work can bring.—*Bible principle: Ecclesiastes 3:22.*

Focus on the right reward. Some say that paying a child to do chores teaches them responsibility. Others say that it makes children focus on what they can *get* from the family rather than on what they can *contribute* to it. They also warn that a child might refuse to do chores when he has enough money—a sign that the benefit of chores is being lost. The lesson? It might be better to keep a child’s chores and his allowance on separate tracks. ■

KEY SCRIPTURES

“Train a child in the way he should go; even when he grows old he will not depart from it.”—Proverbs 22:6, footnote.

“Make sure of the more important things.”—Philippians 1:10.

“There is nothing better than for a man to find enjoyment in his work.”—Ecclesiastes 3:22.



“Chores create a feeling of contribution to the family. When our family finishes a day that involved doing chores—perhaps in the yard or in the house—there is a feeling of camaraderie. Everyone had a share, and it’s a good feeling.”
—Steven.

“Giving our girls chores from an early age has helped them to be able to handle real life as they’ve grown. We try to convey the message that the family is a team and that we work together. When we, the parents, display a positive outlook about chores, it helps our daughters to do the same.”
—Stephanie.

The Enteric Nervous System

Your Body's "Second Brain"?

HOW many brains do you have? If you answer "one," you are correct. Yet, there are other nervous systems in your body. One network of neurons is so extensive that some scientists have referred to it as a "second brain." It is the enteric nervous system (ENS) and is located, not in your head, but mostly in your belly.

It takes an enormous amount of coordination and effort for the body to transform food into fuel. Hence, it is fitting that the brain is designed to delegate, as it were, most digestive control to the ENS.

While much simpler than the brain, the ENS is immensely complex. In humans, it is made up of an estimated 200 to 600 million neurons. This complex network of neurons is built into the digestive system. Scientists believe that if the function of the ENS were to take place in the brain, the needed nerves would be too thick. According to the book *The Second Brain*, "it is thus both safer and more convenient to let the [digestive system] look after itself."

"A CHEMICAL WORKSHOP"

Food digestion requires a variety of very precise chemical mixtures produced at the right times and delivered to the right locations. Professor Gary Mawe aptly describes the digestive system as "a chemical workshop." The sophistication of this chemical operation is mind-boggling. For instance, the intestinal wall is lined

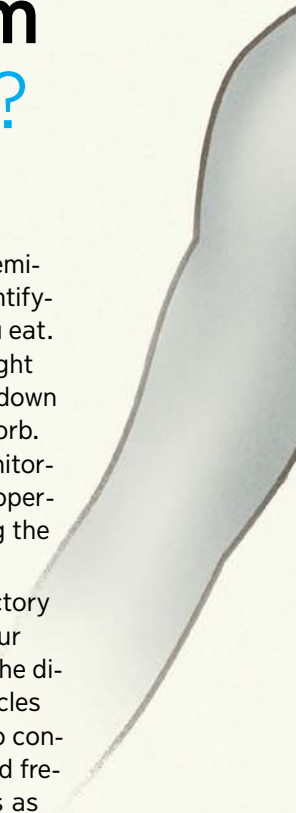
with specialized cells that act as chemical detectors, or taste receptors, identifying chemicals present in the food you eat. This data helps the ENS enlist the right digestive enzymes to break the food down into particles that the body can absorb. Also, the ENS plays a vital role in monitoring the acidity and other chemical properties of food particles and in adjusting the digestive enzymes accordingly.

Think of the digestive tract as a factory line managed mostly by the ENS. Your "second brain" moves food through the digestive system by directing the muscles along the wall of the digestive tract to contract. The ENS varies the strength and frequency of these muscle contractions as needed to make the system function like a line of conveyor belts.

The ENS also supervises safety functions. The food you swallow is likely to contain potentially harmful bacteria. It is no wonder that about 70 to 80 percent of your body's lymphocyte cells—a vital component of your immune defense system—are housed inside your belly! If you ingest high levels of harmful organisms, the ENS protects the body by triggering powerful contractions that expel most of the toxic matter through vomiting or diarrhea.

GOOD COMMUNICATION

While the ENS seems to function independently of the brain, these two nerve





The enteric nervous system (ENS, shown in blue) is embedded in the digestive tract

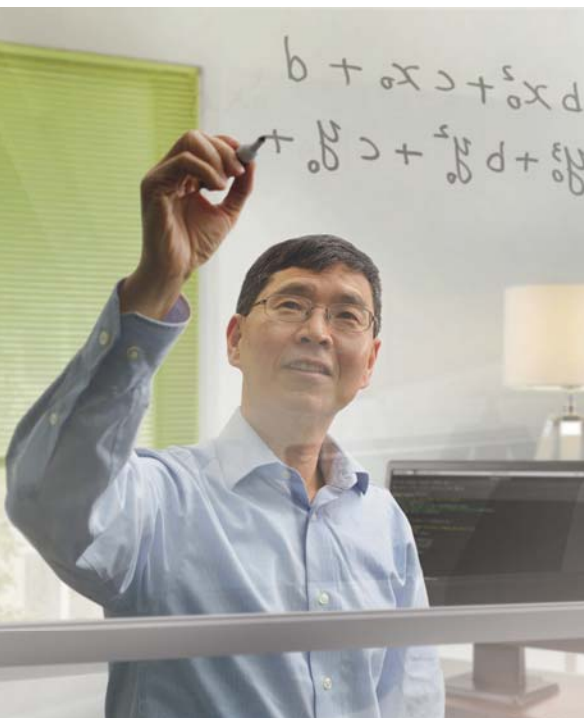
centers engage in constant communication. For example, the ENS plays a role in the regulation of hormones that tell the brain when you should eat and how much you should eat. ENS nerve cells signal the brain when you are full and may possibly trigger nausea if you eat too much.

Even before reading this article, you may have suspected that there is a communication link between your digestive tract and your brain. Have you noticed, for instance, that eating some fatty foods seems to improve your mood? Research suggests that this happens when your ENS sends 'happy signals' to your brain, start-

ing a chain reaction that makes you feel better. This may explain why people tend to eat so-called comfort food when feeling stressed. Scientists are exploring the possibility of artificially stimulating the ENS as a treatment for depression.

Another example of communication between the brain and the digestive system is what has been described as having butterflies in one's stomach. This feeling may be the result of the ENS diverting blood away from the stomach when the brain experiences tension or stress. Nausea can be another result, as during stress the brain triggers the ENS to change the gut's normal contractions. According to experts, this brain-gut connection might also be the basis for so-called gut instincts.

While the ENS may generate such gut feelings, it cannot think for you or direct your decisions. In other words, the ENS is not really a brain. It cannot help you to compose a song, balance your bank account, or do your homework. Still, this marvelous system continues to amaze scientists for its complexity—much of it perhaps still undiscovered. So the next time you are about to eat a meal, pause and think about all the monitoring, data processing, coordination, and communication that is about to take place in your digestive system! ■



A Software Designer Explains His Faith

DR. FAN YU began his career as a research mathematician at the China Institute of Atomic Energy, near Beijing. At that time he was an atheist and believed in the theory of evolution. But now Dr. Yu believes that life was designed and created by God. *Awake!* asked him about his faith.

Please tell us about your background.

I was born in 1959 in Fuzhou City, Jiangxi Province, China. By the time I was eight years old, the country was experiencing the effects of what is now called the Cultural Revolution. My father, a civil engineer, was ordered to build a railway in a distant wilderness area. For years he could visit us only once a year. During that time I lived with my mother, who was a teacher in an elementary school. We actually lived in the very school where she taught. In 1970, we had to move to Liufang, at the time a poor rural

village in the Linchuan District, where food was scarce.

What did your family believe?

My father was not interested in religion or politics. My mother was a Buddhist. At school, I was taught that life evolved by natural processes, and I believed what my teachers said.

Why did you become interested in mathematics?

I was attracted to mathematics because it involves seeking truth through logical reasoning. I went to university shortly after the leader of the

revolution, Mao Tse-tung, died in 1976. I chose mathematics as my main subject. After I obtained a master's degree, my first job involved mathematical research for the design of nuclear reactors.

What was your first impression of the Bible?

In 1987, I came to the United States to pursue doctorate studies at Texas A&M University. I was aware that in America, many people believe in God and read the Bible. Also, I had heard that the Bible contains a lot of practical wisdom, so I thought I should read it.

The teachings of the Bible sounded practical. But I found some parts hard to understand and soon stopped reading it.

How was your interest in the Bible renewed?

In 1990, one of Jehovah's Witnesses called at my house and showed me what the Bible says about a better future for mankind. She arranged for a married couple to come and help me understand the Bible. Later, my wife, Liping, who had taught high school physics in China and who was also an atheist, began studying the Bible as well. We learned what the Bible says about the origin of life. The idea of a Creator was new to me, so I decided to do my own research on the subject.

How did you go about that?

As a mathematician, I was trained to calculate the probabilities of events. I had also learned that for life to occur spontaneously, proteins would already have to exist. So I tried to calculate the probability of a protein originating by an unguided process. Proteins are among the most complex molecules known, and living cells can have thousands of different types of proteins interacting in very precise ways. I realized, as others have, that the spontaneous formation of a protein is so improbable

that it is essentially impossible! I have not read anything in evolution theory that explains to my satisfaction how these highly complex molecules could, in effect, create themselves—let alone the living systems of which they form an integral part. To me, the facts pointed to a Creator.

What convinced you that the Bible comes from God?

As I continued studying with the help of Jehovah's

software for computers, and I often feel amazed at how our brain outperforms computer programs. For example, our brain's ability to recognize speech is mind-boggling. Most of us can easily understand speech, even if it includes incomplete sentences, laughter, coughs, stutters, accents, echoes, background noise, or telephone distortion. You might think this unremarkable. But software designers know otherwise. Even the best

The idea of a Creator was new to me, so I decided to do my own research on the subject

Witnesses, I learned that the Bible contains many detailed prophecies that have been fulfilled. I also began experiencing the benefits of applying Bible principles. I wondered, 'How could Bible writers living thousands of years ago write words of wisdom that remain so practical today?' Progressively, I realized that the Bible is God's Word.

What continues to convince you that there is a Creator?

When I give thought to the many elements in nature, I cannot help but believe in a Creator. Currently I design

speech-recognition software is a far cry from the human brain.

Unlike the most complex computers, our brain can discern emotions, recognize accents, and identify speakers by their voice characteristics. Software designers are researching how computers could mimic the human brain's ability to recognize speech. I am convinced that in doing so they are actually studying the handiwork of God. ■



ANGELS

Angels have been featured in literature, artwork, and films. But who are the angels, and what role do they play?

Who are the angels?

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS Before God created the physical universe and the first humans, he had already created a higher order of intelligent creatures. They are more powerful than humans, and they inhabit the same realm as God himself—a realm inaccessible and invisible to mankind. (Job 38:4, 7) The Bible calls those superior beings “spirits” and “angels.”—Psalm 104:4.*

* The Bible reveals that some spirits rebelled against God's authority, and it calls these wicked angels “demons.”—Luke 10:17-20.

How many angels exist? A huge number. The angels around God's throne number “myriads of myriads,” or “tens of thousands times tens of thousands.” (Revelation 5:11; footnote) If this expression is to be taken in its literal sense, then the angels number into the hundreds of millions!

“I saw . . . many angels around the throne . . . , and the number of them was myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands.”—Revelation 5:11.

What did angels do in ancient times?

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS Angels often served as God's spokespersons or messengers.* They are also portrayed in the Bible as carrying out God's miraculous works. God sent an angel to bless Abraham and prevent him from sacrificing his son Isaac. (Genesis 22:11-18) An angel appeared to Moses in the midst of a burning bush to

* In fact, the original Hebrew and Greek words used in the Bible for “angel” both mean “messenger.”

deliver a life-changing message. (Exodus 3:1, 2) When the prophet Daniel was thrown into a pit of lions, “God sent his angel and shut the mouth of the lions.”—Daniel 6:22.

“Then Jehovah's angel appeared to [Moses] in a flame of fire in the midst of a thornbush.”—Exodus 3:2.



What are angels doing now?

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS We cannot know all that the angels are doing today. However, the Bible indicates that they are involved in helping sincere people come to know more about God.—Acts 8:26-35; 10:1-22; Revelation 14:6, 7.

Jehovah gave the patriarch Jacob a dream in which he saw angels ascending and descending a “stairway” between heaven and earth. (Genesis 28:10-12) Jacob probably concluded from that dream what we too can conclude—that Jehovah God dispatches the angels to

the earth on missions, to act in behalf of loyal humans who are in need of his assistance.—Genesis 24:40; Exodus 14:19; Psalm 34:7. ■

“There was a stairway set on the earth, and its top reached up to the heavens; and there were God’s angels ascending and descending on it.”—Genesis 28:12.





WAS IT DESIGNED?

The Sea Otter's Fur



Brian M. Guzzetti/Alaska Stock – Design Pics/Supersstock

MANY aquatic mammals that live in cold waters have a thick layer of blubber under the skin to help them stay warm. The sea otter relies on another insulation method—a thick fur coat.

Consider: The fur of the sea otter is denser than that of any other mammal, with some one million hairs per square inch (155,000 per sq cm). When the otter swims, its coat traps a layer of air close to its body. That air acts as an insulator, preventing the cold water from coming into direct contact with the animal's skin and sapping its body heat.

Scientists believe that there is a lesson to be learned from the sea otter's fur. They have experimented with a number of artificial fur coats, varying such factors as hair

length and hair spacing. The researchers have concluded that “the denser and the longer the hairs are, the dryer or the more water-repellent the hairy surface is.” Put another way, sea otters can boast a truly efficient fur coat.

Researchers hope that their studies will lead to technological advances in the design and production of novel water-repellent textiles. This may lead some to wonder whether people who have to dive in cold waters may not be better off wearing a hairy wet suit—one similar to that of the sea otter!

What do you think? Did the heat-insulating fur of the sea otter evolve? Or was it designed? ■



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