A man and a woman are walking hand-in-hand on a wet, cobblestone city street. The woman is wearing a tan trench coat and a dark skirt, holding a blue and white checkered umbrella. The man is wearing a dark jacket and trousers. They are walking under the shade of a large, leafy green tree. In the background, a suspension bridge is visible across a body of water, and a brick building is on the right. The ground is wet and reflects the scene.

NOVEMBER 1, 2011

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

WHAT IS THE
BIBLE'S VIEW OF
SEX?

THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, is to honor Jehovah God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe. Just as watchtowers in ancient times enabled a person to observe developments from afar, so this magazine shows us the significance of world events in the light of Bible prophecies. It comforts people with the good news that God's Kingdom, which is a real government in heaven, will soon bring an end to all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. This magazine has been published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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DOES THE ANSWER Matter?

"I was ten years old when I began going out with boys. At first, we would hold hands and kiss. Soon, though, we were touching intimate body parts and experimenting with various sexual activities. When I was 15, I started working and was approached by men on the job who wanted to go all the way with sex. I wanted to be daring and join my workmates in whatever they were doing. I wanted my associates to accept me, which in turn led to more and more sexual experimentation."—SARAH,* AUSTRALIA.

* Name has been changed.

WOULD it surprise you to learn that Sarah was brought up in a religiously devout home? Her parents tried to raise her to live by the Bible's moral standards. But Sarah chose a different course.

Many would agree with Sarah's choice. They believe that the Bible's view of sex is hopelessly out-of-date. Others see no conflict between claiming to be religiously devout and pursuing a sexually permissive lifestyle.

Does it matter whether you know and live by what the Bible teaches about sex? The Bible claims that it is "inspired of God and beneficial for teaching." (2 Timothy 3:16) If you believe that God created humans and that

the Bible is his inspired Word, then what it says on the subject is worth knowing.

Unfortunately, many are confused about what the Bible teaches concerning sex. Religious leaders who claim to respect the Bible promote conflicting ideas. In fact, the issue has divided many mainstream churches.

Rather than rely on what others say, why not take a few minutes to investigate the subject for yourself? The following article considers ten frequently asked questions about the Bible's view of sex. In that article you will find frank answers based on what the Bible really teaches. The last article in this series will consider why the choices we make do matter.

TEN QUESTIONS ABOUT SEX

Answered

1

Was sex the original sin that was committed by Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden?



■ **Answer:** Many people are under the impression that the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden represented sexual relations. However, that is not what the Bible teaches.

Consider: Even before Eve was created, God commanded Adam not to eat the fruit of “the tree of the knowledge of good and bad.” (Genesis 2:15-18) Because Adam was alone, this prohibition could not have referred to sexual relations. In addition, God gave Adam and Eve an unambiguous command to “be fruitful and become many and fill the earth.” (Genesis 1:28) Would a loving God instruct the first couple to “fill the earth”—which, of course, involved having sexual relations—and then sentence them to death for obeying his instructions?—1 John 4:8.

Furthermore, it was when Eve’s husband was not with her that she “began taking of [the forbidden] fruit and eating it. *Afterward* she gave some also to her husband when with her and he began eating it.”—Genesis 3:6.

Finally, Adam and Eve were not censured when they had relations and brought forth children. (Genesis 4:1, 2) Clearly, the fruit that Adam and Eve ate did not represent their having sexual relations but was literal fruit that grew on a tree.

2

Does the Bible prohibit sexual pleasure?

■ **Answer:** The first book of the Bible reveals that it was God who created humans as both “male and female.” God declared his creation to be “very good.” (Genesis 1:27, 31) Later, God inspired a Bible writer to give these instructions to husbands: “Rejoice with the wife of your youth . . . Let her breasts intoxicate you at all times.” (Proverbs 5:18, 19) Do those statements sound as if the Bible prohibits sexual pleasure?

THE **WATCHTOWER**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH’S KINGDOM

Would you welcome more information or a free home Bible study? Please send your request to Jehovah’s Witnesses, using one of these addresses. For a complete list of addresses, see www.watchtower.org/address.

4

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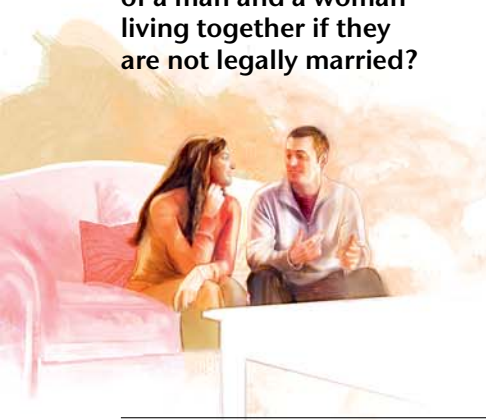
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The facts show that in addition to making reproduction possible, God created the sexual organs in a way that allows a married couple to express their love and affection for each other in a mutually pleasurable way. Such relations can fill the physical and emotional needs of a man and woman who are in a warm and intimate relationship.

3

Does the Bible approve of a man and a woman living together if they are not legally married?



■ **Answer:** The Bible clearly states that “God will judge fornicators.” (Hebrews 13:4) The Greek word for fornication, *por-nei’a*, broadly refers to the misuse of the sexual organs of those who are not married to each other.* Therefore, it would be wrong in God’s eyes for a couple to live together—even if they intend to get married later.

Even if a couple are deeply in love, God still requires that they marry before enjoying sex. It was God who created us with the capacity to love. God’s primary quality is love. Therefore, he has good reason for insisting that sex be enjoyed only by married couples, as the next article will explain.

* *Por-nei’a* also refers to other acts that deviate from God’s original purpose in creating the human sexual organs, such as adultery, homosexuality, and bestiality.

4

Is polygamy acceptable?

■ **Answer:** For a time, God did permit a man to have more than one wife. (Genesis 4:19; 16:1-4; 29:18-30:24) But God did not originate the practice of polygamy. He provided only one wife for Adam.

God authorized Jesus Christ to reinstitute His original standard of monogamy. (John 8:28) When asked about marriage, Jesus said: “He who created them from the beginning made them male and female and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and will stick to his wife, and the two will be one flesh.’ ”—Matthew 19:4, 5.

One of Jesus’ disciples was later inspired by God to write: “Let each man have his own wife and each woman have her

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* CD also available.

• MP3 CD-ROM also available.

• Audio recordings also available at www.jw.org.

own husband.” (1 Corinthians 7:2) The Bible also states that any married man in the Christian congregation who is given special responsibilities must be “a husband of one wife.” —1 Timothy 3:2, 12.

5

Is it wrong for married couples to use contraceptives?

■ **Answer:** Jesus did not command his followers to have children. Neither did any of Jesus’ disciples issue any such directive. Nowhere does the Bible explicitly condemn birth control.

Married couples, therefore, are free to decide for themselves whether they will raise a family or not. They may also decide how many children they will have and when they will have them. If a husband and wife choose to use a nonabortive form of contraception to avoid pregnancy, that is their personal decision and responsibility.* No one should judge them.—Romans 14:4, 10-13.

* For more information about the Scriptural view of sterilization, please see “Questions From Readers” in *The Watchtower* of June 15, 1999, pages 27-28.

6

Is it wrong to have an abortion?

■ **Answer:** Life is sacred to God, and he views even an embryo as a distinct, living being. (Psalm 139:16) God stated that a person would be called to account for injuring an unborn child. So, in his eyes, killing an unborn child is murder.—Exodus 20:13; 21:22, 23.

What, though, if an emergency situation at the time of childbirth forces a couple to choose between letting the mother live and the baby die or vice versa? In that case, the couple would have to decide which life to try to save.*

* For a discussion of whether a rape victim would be justified in seeking an abortion, see *Awake!* of May 22, 1993, pages 10-11, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

7

Does the Bible permit divorce?

■ **Answer:** The Bible does permit divorce. However, Jesus identified only one acceptable reason to end a marriage, stating: “Whoever divorces his wife, *except on the ground of fornication* [sex outside of the marriage], and marries another commits adultery.”—Matthew 19:9.

God hates a deceitful, treacherous divorce. He will personally hold accountable those who frivolously leave their mate, especially when they do so with the motive of taking another partner.—Malachi 2:13-16; Mark 10:9.

8

Does God approve of homosexuality?

■ **Answer:** The Bible clearly condemns fornication, which includes homosexual relations. (Romans 1:26, 27; Galatians 5:19-21) While the Bible is definite about God's disapproval of that lifestyle, we also know that "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life."—John 3:16.

Even though they do not condone homosexual relations, true Christians show kindness to all people. (Matthew 7:12) God wants us to "honor men of all sorts." Therefore, genuine Christians are not homophobic.—1 Peter 2:17.

9

Is there anything wrong with phone sex, "sexting," or cybersex?

■ **Answer:** Phone sex involves talking inappropriately about sex or listening to explicit erotic messages on the phone. "Sexting" is a term that refers to using cell phones to send erotic images and sexually explicit text messages to others. Cybersex involves erotic interaction on the Internet.

The Bible does not specifically discuss modern practices such as these. But it does say: "Let fornication and uncleanness of every sort or greediness not even be mentioned among you, just as it befits holy people; neither shameful conduct nor foolish talking nor obscene jesting, things which are not becoming." (Ephesians 5:3, 4) Such things as phone sex, "sexting," and cybersex promote a distorted view of sex and encourage people to experience sexual pleasures outside the marriage arrangement. Rather than help people control their sexual impulses, these practices promote selfish gratification.

10

What is the Bible's view of masturbation?

■ **Answer:** The Bible does not specifically mention masturbation—the deliberate self-stimulation that produces sexual arousal and orgasm. However, God's Word commands Christians: "*Deaden*, therefore, your body members that are upon the earth as respects fornication, uncleanness, [and improper] sexual appetite."—Colossians 3:5.

Masturbation fosters a distorted and self-centered view of sex. The Bible assures us that God can impart "power beyond what is normal" to those who make a sincere effort to break this habit.—2 Corinthians 4:7; Philippians 4:13.





Those who ignore Bible standards often cause emotional pain

WHY LIVE BY Bible Standards?

IS THE Bible's view regarding sex old-fashioned and needlessly restrictive? No. On the contrary, the Bible's view of sex can help us avoid:

- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Out-of-wedlock pregnancies
- The painful consequences of broken marriages
- A guilty conscience
- The degradation of being used by others

Our Creator, Jehovah God,* wants us to enjoy and benefit from the use of his gifts. God is "the One teaching you to benefit yourself." (Isaiah 48:17) A person who lives by the Bible's guidelines on sex gains:

- God's approval
- Peace of mind
- Stronger family relationships
- A good reputation
- Self-respect

What, though, if you are not currently living by the Bible's moral standards? Is it possible for you to change your lifestyle? Will God hold your past conduct against you?

Consider this fact: Some who made up the first-century Christian congregation were formerly fornicators, adulterers, and homosexuals. They chose to change their lifestyle, and they reaped significant benefits. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) Today, thousands of individuals throughout the world have made a similar choice. They have freed themselves from a promiscuous lifestyle and have experienced the benefits of bringing their con-

* Jehovah is God's personal name as revealed in the Bible.

duct into harmony with the Bible's standards. Note, for example, the experience of Sarah, mentioned in the opening article.

"I Quickly Felt Relief"

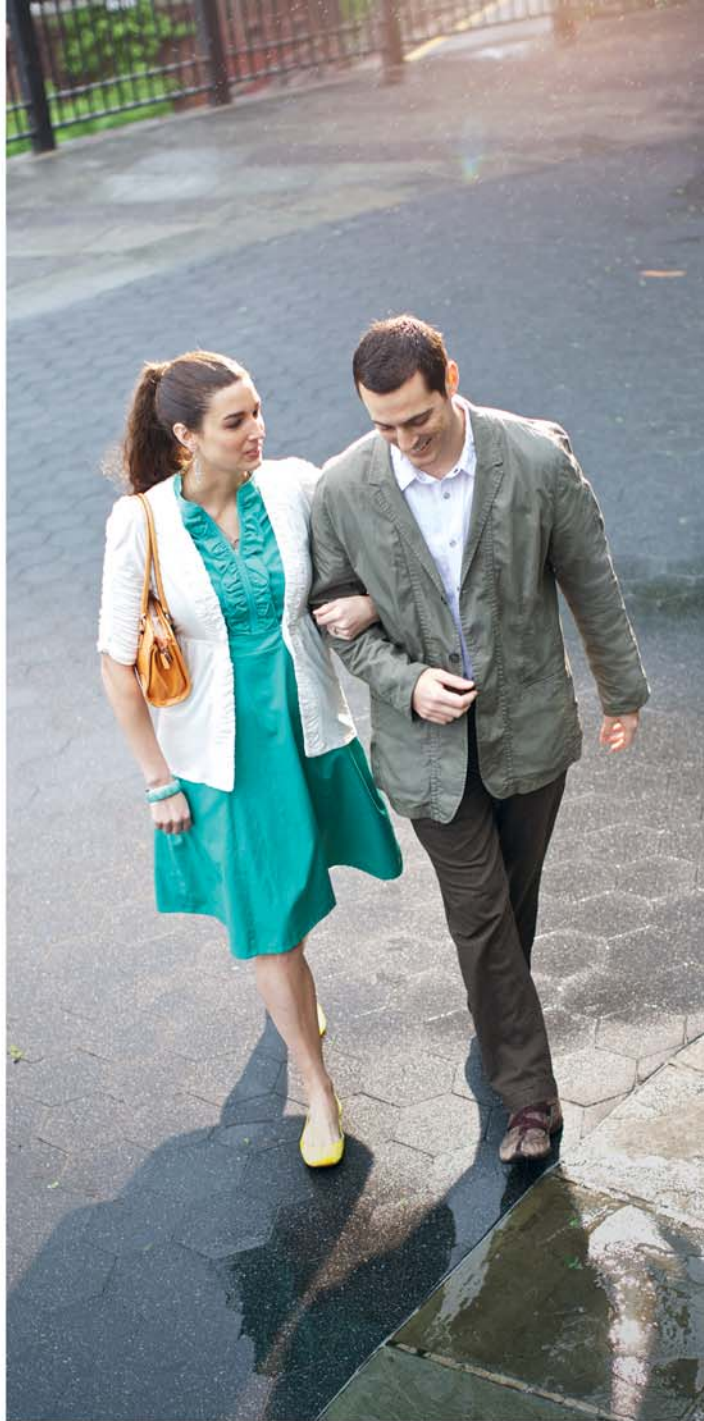
Sarah discovered that her unrestrained lifestyle did not bring her the freedom and satisfaction for which she yearned. "I felt that my conscience had become seared," she says. "I was ashamed and worried that I might become pregnant or pick up a horrible disease. I never lost my belief that God existed, and I knew that my course of life had hurt him. I felt unclean, and it ate away at me."

Eventually, Sarah found the strength to change her lifestyle. She sought the help of her parents, who are Jehovah's Witnesses. She also asked for help from qualified Christian elders in the local congregation. "I was pleasantly surprised by the warmth and love of my parents and the congregation elders," Sarah says. "I quickly felt relief."

Now Sarah is raising two children of her own. "I openly tell my children," says Sarah, "about the choices I made. I want them to understand how disregarding God's standards affected me. My goal is to help them appreciate the physical, mental, and emotional benefits of living by God's standards regarding sex. I am convinced that God gives us moral standards because he does not want to see us get hurt."

You too can experience the benefits of following God's loving guidance. The Bible makes this promise: "The orders from Jehovah are upright, causing the heart to rejoice; the commandment of Jehovah is clean, making the eyes shine. . . . In the keeping of them there is a large reward."—Psalm 19:8, 11.*

* To learn more about the Bible's practical advice, feel free to contact Jehovah's Witnesses locally. Or you may write to the appropriate address listed on page 4 or visit our Web site www.watchtower.org.



**Those who live by Bible standards
have a clean conscience and enjoy
stronger family relationships**

THE BIBLE CHANGES LIVES

WHAT motivated a gambler and burglar to break his addiction and change his lifestyle? Read what he has to say.



“I was passionate about racehorses.”

—RICHARD STEWART

YEAR BORN: 1965

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: JAMAICA

HISTORY: GAMBLER AND CRIMINAL

MY PAST: I grew up in a poor, densely populated area of Kingston, the capital of Jamaica. Unemployment was high, and crime widespread. Gangs kept people living in fear. I heard gunshots almost every day.

My hardworking mother gave her all for me and my younger brother and sister. She made sure that we received a good education. I had little interest in school, but I was passionate about racehorses. I would skip school and go to the racetrack. I even rode the horses.

Soon I became heavily involved in gambling on horse races. I led an immoral life, becoming a serious womanizer. I smoked marijuana and committed robberies to pay for my lifestyle. I owned many guns, but I am thankful now that nobody was killed as a result of the countless robberies in which I took part.

Eventually, I was caught by the police and sent to prison for my crimes. After my re-

lease, I merely picked up my lifestyle where I had left off. In fact, I became worse than before. Although I had an innocent-looking face, I was strong-willed, irritable, and cruel. I cared for no one but myself.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED

MY LIFE: During this troubled period of my life, my mother studied the Bible and became one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. I saw posi-

tive changes in her personality and became curious. I decided to find out what made my mother change, so I began discussing the Bible with the Witnesses.

I found that the teachings of Jehovah’s Witnesses were different from those of other religions and discovered that the Witnesses backed up everything they said with the Bible. They were the only group I knew of who preached from house to house, as the early Christians did. (Matthew 28:19; Acts 20:20) I became convinced that I had found the true religion when I saw the genuine love they displayed for one another.—John 13:35.

From what I learned from the Bible, I saw the need to make some big changes in my life. I discovered that Jehovah God hates fornication and that if I was to please him, I would have to give up practices that defiled my body. (2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 13:4) I was moved when I learned that Jehovah has

feelings and that my actions could either hurt him or make him happy. (Proverbs 27:11) So I resolved to quit smoking marijuana, to give up my guns, and to try to improve my personality. Among the most difficult changes I made were giving up my immoral lifestyle and quitting my gambling.

At first, I did not want my friends to know that I was studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. But a turning point came after I read Matthew 10:33, where these words of Jesus are recorded: "Whoever disowns me before men, I will also disown him before my Father who is in the heavens." That statement prompted me to tell my associates that I was studying with the Witnesses. They were shocked. They couldn't believe that someone like me wanted to become a Christian. But I told them that I didn't want anything more to do with my former lifestyle.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: My mother was overjoyed when she saw me start to live by Bible principles. Now she no longer worries about what bad things I might be up to. We talk about the common bond we have—our love for Jehovah. At times, I look back at what

"I learned that Jehovah has feelings and that my actions could either hurt him or make him happy"

I used to be like and can't believe the changes that I've been able to make with God's help. I no longer crave the immoral, materialistic lifestyle I used to lead.

If I hadn't responded to the Bible's message, I would be either dead or in prison today. Now, though, I have a wonderful, happy family. It gives me great joy to serve Jehovah God along with my supportive wife and obedient daughter. I am thankful to Jehovah for allowing me to be part of a loving Christian brotherhood. I am so grateful that someone made the effort to teach me Bible truth. And I value the opportunities I have to help others learn what the Bible teaches. I am especially grateful to Jehovah God for his loving kindness in drawing me to him.

With my wife and daughter

I saw positive changes in my mother's personality





DID YOU KNOW?

How were the services at Jehovah's temple in Jerusalem financed?



ACTUAL SIZE

Top: Clara Emit, Courtesy of Israel Antiquities Authority; bottom: Zev Radovan

■ The various temple services were maintained through taxation, mainly obligatory tithing. But other forms of taxation were also used. For example, at the time of the construction of the tabernacle, Jehovah instructed Moses to collect half a silver shekel from every registered Israelite, as a "contribution to Jehovah."—Exodus 30:12-16.

Apparently, it became customary for each Jew to contribute this fixed amount as an annual temple tax. It was this tax that Jesus instructed Peter to pay with a coin taken from a fish's mouth.—Matthew 17:24-27.

Several years ago, two silver coins of types used to pay the temple tax were discovered in Jerusalem. One coin,

minted in Tyre in 22 C.E., was found in a first-century drainage channel. This shekel bears the head of Melkart, or Baal, the chief deity of Tyre, on one side and an eagle perched on a ship's prow on the other. The second coin, found in rubble removed from the temple mount, dates to the first year of the Jewish revolt against Rome, 66-67 C.E. It bears a chalice and three budding pomegranates, as well as the inscriptions "Half Shekel" and "Holy Jerusalem." Regarding this find, Professor Gabriel Barkay says that the coin has "signs of having been damaged by fire, most likely the fires that destroyed the Second Temple in 70 C.E."

How impressive were the building projects of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon?



RECONSTRUCTION OF THE ISHTAR GATE

■ The Bible book of Daniel records Nebuchadnezzar as saying: "Is not this Babylon the Great, that I myself have built for the royal house with the strength of my might and for the dignity of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30) Was this ancient city truly great?

Historians credit Nebuchadnezzar with the building of temples, palaces, city walls, and a magnificent terraced garden. The principal temple at the center of Babylon had a tower, or ziggurat, that was probably over 230 feet (70 m) high. However, "the most famous of [Nebuchadnezzar's] achievements are the Processional Way and the Ishtar Gate," says the book *Bab-*

ylon—City of Wonders. The Processional Way, which ran through the Ishtar Gate, was flanked by reliefs of striding lions. Of the gate itself, Babylon's grandest entrance, the same book states: "Clad entirely in deep blue glazed bricks and bedecked with relief images of hundreds of marching bulls and dragons, the sight greeting an ancient visitor to the capital must have been unforgettable."

At the start of the 20th century, archaeologists excavated thousands of fragments of the Processional Way and the Ishtar Gate and then reconstructed many of them in the Pergamon Museum, in Berlin, Germany.



KEYS TO FAMILY HAPPINESS

Cultivate Spirituality as a Couple

Frederick*: “When we were first married, I insisted that my wife and I study the Bible together. I was determined that she concentrate during our study sessions. But Leanne just could not seem to sit still. And when I asked questions, she gave only yes or no answers. Her responses did not fit with how I felt a Bible study should be conducted.”

Leanne: “I was 18 when I married Frederick. We studied the Bible together regularly, but Frederick used each session as an opportunity to point out all my faults and the ways I needed to improve as a wife. I became so discouraged and hurt!”

WHAT, do you think, was the problem with Frederick and Leanne’s relationship? Their intentions were good. They both loved God. And they both saw the need to study the Bible together. But the very thing that could have helped to unite them seemed to have an opposite effect. They may have been studying together, but they were not cultivating spirituality as a couple.

What is spirituality? Why should married couples strive to cultivate it? What challenges might they face, and how can they overcome them?

What Is Spirituality?

The word “spirituality” as used in the Bible refers to an attitude or an approach to life. (Jude 18, 19) The Bible writer Paul, for example, highlights the difference in attitude be-

* Names have been changed.



tween a spiritual person and one who is fleshly. Those with fleshly tendencies, Paul indicates, focus more on themselves than on others. They do what is right in their own eyes, rather than trying to live up to God’s standards.—1 Corinthians 2:14; Galatians 5:19, 20.

By contrast, those with a spiritual attitude value God’s standards. They view Jehovah

God as their Friend and endeavor to imitate his personality. (Ephesians 5:1) Thus, they are loving, kind, and mild when dealing with others. (Exodus 34:6) And they obey God even when it is inconvenient for them to do so. (Psalm 15:1, 4) "The way I understand it," says Darren, who lives in Canada and has been married for 35 years, "a spiritual person always thinks about how his speech and actions will affect his friendship with God." His wife, Jane, adds: "I think that a spiritual woman is one who works hard each day to make the fruitage of God's spirit part of her personality."—Galatians 5:22, 23.

Of course, a person does not have to be married to develop a spiritual attitude. In fact, the Bible teaches that each individual has the responsibility to learn about God and imitate him.—Acts 17:26, 27.

Why Cultivate Spirituality as a Couple?

Why, then, should marriage mates strive to cultivate spirituality *as a couple*? Consider this illustration: Two gardeners jointly own a garden plot and want to grow vegetables. One decides to plant seeds at a certain time of year, whereas the other thinks that the seeds should be planted later. One wants to use a particular type of fertilizer, but the other disagrees strongly and feels that the plants do not need any help. One wants to toil in the garden each day. The other is happy to sit back and watch, rather than work. In such a scenario, the garden may yield some results, but it will not produce as much as it would have if both gardeners had agreed on what to do and then worked together to achieve those goals.

A husband and wife are like those gardeners. If just one partner cultivates spirituality, the relationship might improve. (1 Peter 3:1, 2) Yet, how much better it is when both partners agree to live by God's standards and work hard to support each other as they serve

God! "Two are better than one," wrote wise King Solomon. Why? "Because they have a good reward for their hard work. For if one of them should fall, the other one can raise his partner up."—Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10.

You likely yearn to cultivate spirituality with your marriage mate. But just as with gardening, desire alone will not yield results. Consider two challenges you may face and how you might overcome them.

CHALLENGE 1: We can't find the time.

"My husband picks me up from work at 7:00 p.m.," says Sue, who has been married a short time. "When we get home, all the chores are waiting for us. It's a struggle between mind and body; our minds tell us that we need to spend time learning about God together, but our bodies crave some rest."

A possible solution: Be adaptable and cooperative. Sue says: "My husband and I decided to get up early and read and discuss a portion of the Bible together before going to work. He also helps me with some of the chores so that I have time to spend with him." What benefits come from making this extra effort? Sue's husband, Ed, says: "I've found that when Sue and I regularly discuss spiritual matters together, we cope more effectively with the problems we face and we manage our anxieties better."

In addition to talking to each other, it is vital that you spend a few minutes each day praying together. How may that help? "A little while ago," says Ryan, who has been married for 16 years, "my wife and I went through a very difficult time in our relationship. But we made time to pray together each night, expressing our concerns to God. I feel that praying together helped us to resolve our problems and to regain joy in our marriage."

TRY THIS: Set aside just a few minutes at the end of each day to discuss any good

things that happened to you as a couple, things you can thank God for. Also talk about challenges you face, ones that you especially need God's help to cope with. **Caution:** Do not use this as an opportunity to list your mate's faults. Instead, when you pray together, mention only those issues that you need to work on together. The next day, act in harmony with the requests you made in the prayer.

CHALLENGE 2: We have different abilities. "I have never been one to sit down and read a book," says Tony. His wife, Natalie, says: "I love to read, and I love to talk about what I've learned. Sometimes I think Tony is a bit intimidated by me when we discuss Bible-based material."

A possible solution: Be supportive, not competitive or judgmental. Complement and encourage your mate's strengths. "My wife's enthusiasm for discussing Bible topics can be a little overwhelming at times," says Tony, "and in the past I was reluctant to discuss spiritual subjects with her. However, Natalie is very supportive. Now we regularly discuss spiritual matters together, and I've discovered that there is nothing to be afraid of. I enjoy talking about these topics with her. It has helped us become more relaxed and at peace as a couple."

Many couples have found that their marriage improves when they set aside a regular time each week to read and study the Bible together. A word of caution, though: Apply any points of counsel to yourself, not to your mate. (Galatians 6:4) Discuss contentious marital issues at another time, not during your study sessions. Why not?

Consider this: If you were eating a meal with your family, would you choose that time to dress a festering wound? Not likely. You would ruin everyone's appetite. Jesus compared learning about and doing God's will to

eating food. (Matthew 4:4; John 4:34) If you talk about emotional wounds each time you open the Bible, you could cause your mate to lose his or her spiritual appetite. Certainly, you need to discuss problems. But deal with those matters at a time set aside for that purpose.—Proverbs 10:19; 15:23.

TRY THIS: Write down two or three qualities of your mate that you appreciate most. When you next discuss spiritual matters related to those qualities, tell your mate how much you appreciate the way he or she displays them.

You Reap What You Sow

If you sow, or cultivate, spirituality as a couple, you will eventually reap a more peaceful and rewarding marriage. In fact, God's Word guarantees that "whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap."—Galatians 6:7.

Frederick and Leanne, quoted at the beginning of this article, learned the truth of that Bible principle. They have now been married for 45 years and know that perseverance pays off. "I used to blame my wife for the lack of communication," says Frederick. "However, in time, I realized that I had to make an effort too." Leanne says: "What really helped us through the difficult times was our mutual love of Jehovah God. Throughout the years, we have regularly studied and prayed together. As I see Frederick making an effort to improve in showing Christian qualities, it makes it easier for me to love him."

ASK YOURSELF . . .

- *When was the last time we prayed together as a couple?*
- *What could I do that would encourage my mate to be more open about discussing spiritual matters with me?*



LEARN FROM GOD'S WORD

How Do God's Laws Benefit Us?

This article raises questions you may have asked and shows where you can read the answers in your Bible. Jehovah's Witnesses would be pleased to discuss these answers with you.

1. Why should we obey God?

It is only right to obey God—he created us. Even Jesus always obeyed God. (John 6:38; Revelation 4:11) God's laws give us a way to prove that we love him.—*Read 1 John 5:3.*

All of Jehovah God's laws are good for us. They teach us the best way of life now and show how we can gain everlasting rewards in the future.—*Read Psalm 19:7, 11; Isaiah 48:17, 18.*



2. How do God's laws benefit our health?

God's law against drunkenness protects us from deadly disease and accidents. Overdrinking is addictive and leads to foolish conduct. (Proverbs 23:20, 29, 30) Jehovah allows us to drink alcohol but only in moderation.—*Read Psalm 104:15; 1 Corinthians 6:10.*

Jehovah also warns us against jealousy, uncontrolled anger, and other destructive attitudes. To the extent that we apply his advice, our health will benefit.—*Read Proverbs 14:30; 22:24, 25.*

3. How can God's law protect us?

God's law forbids sex outside of marriage. (Hebrews 13:4) Couples who obey this law feel more secure and create a better environment for their children. On the other hand, sex outside of marriage often results in disease, divorce, violence, emotional trauma,

and one-parent families.—*Read Proverbs 5:1-9.*

By avoiding situations that tempt us to have sex outside of marriage, we protect our friendship with God. We also avoid harming others.—*Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6.*

4. How does respect for life benefit us?

People who respect God's gift of life enjoy health benefits when they drop such habits as smoking and other life-threatening addictions. (2 Corinthians 7:1) God treasures even the life of a baby developing in the womb. (Exodus 21:22, 23) So we should not deliberately kill an unborn child. Also, those who appreciate God's view of life take safety precautions at work, at home, and in a car. (Deuteronomy 22:8) In addition, they do not risk their life for sport, because life is a gift from God.—*Read Psalm 36:9.*

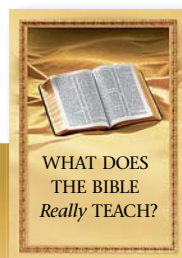


5. How does the sacredness of blood benefit us?

Blood is sacred because God says that it represents the life, or soul, of a creature. (Genesis 9:3, 4) God's law, which equates the value of blood with that of life, benefits us. How? It makes possible the forgiveness of sins.—*Read Leviticus 17:11-13; Hebrews 9:22.*

Jesus' blood was especially precious because he was perfect. Jesus presented to God something that represented his life—his blood. (Hebrews 9:12) His shed blood makes everlasting life possible for us.—*Read Matthew 26:28; John 3:16.*

For more information, see chapters 12 and 13 of this book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.





How Can Fathers Stay Close to Their Sons?

“DADDY, how do you know so much?” Has your boy ever taken you by surprise with such a question? At the time, you probably felt proud of being a father. But if your son went a step further—if he applied your wise counsel and reaped the benefit—your heart no doubt glowed with even greater joy.* —Proverbs 23:15, 24.

Over the years, however, has your son’s admiration for you remained unbounded? Or does it seem that as he grows, his regard for you shrinks? How can you stay close to your son as he develops from a boy into a man? First, let us consider some of the challenges fathers face.

Three Common Challenges

1. LACK OF TIME: In many countries, fathers earn most of the income for the family. Often, their job requires that they be away from home for most of the day. In some places, fathers spend remarkably little time with their children. A recent survey in France, for example, found that fathers there spend on average less than 12 minutes a day caring for their children.

* While this article focuses on the unique bond between fathers and sons, the principles discussed also apply to the relationship between fathers and daughters.

TO THINK ABOUT: How much time do you spend with your son? Over the next week or two, why not write down the total amount of time that you interact with him each day? The results may surprise you.

2. LACK OF A GOOD EXAMPLE: Some men have had little to do with their own father. “I lacked contact with my father,” says Jean-Marie, who lives in France. How has Jean-Marie been affected? “It has created problems that I never imagined,” he says. “For instance, I find it difficult to engage my own sons in meaningful conversations.” In other cases, men know their father very well, but the relationship between father and son is damaged. Philippe, 43, says: “My father found it difficult to express affection for me. As a result, I have to work hard at being more affectionate with my son.”

TO THINK ABOUT: Do you feel that the relationship you have with your own father affects the way you treat your son? Have you noticed yourself following your father’s good or bad habits? How so?

3. LACK OF BALANCED ADVICE: Some cultures downplay the father’s role in raising children. “Where I grew up,” says Luca, who

was raised in a Western European land, “people felt that looking after children was a wife’s job.” In other cultures, fathers are encouraged to be strict disciplinarians but little else. George, for example, was brought up in an African country. He says: “In my culture, fathers do not play together with their children for fear that this will lessen the father’s authority. So I have always had trouble just enjoying the company of my son.”

TO THINK ABOUT: In your community, what role are fathers expected to play? Are they taught to view child rearing as women’s work? Are fathers encouraged to express love and affection for their sons, or are such ideas frowned upon?

If you are a father who faces one or more of these challenges, how can you succeed? Consider the following suggestions.

Start While Your Son Is Young

Sons seem to be born with a desire to imitate their father. So while your son is young, harness that desire. How can you do so? And when can you find time to spend with him?

Whenever possible, include your son in your daily activities. For example, if you are doing chores, have him help you. Give your boy a small broom or a tiny spade. No doubt he will be delighted to work by the side of his hero and role model, his dad! It may take you a little longer to finish the chore; but you will strengthen the bond between you, and you will be teaching him a good work ethic. Long ago, the Bible encouraged fathers to include their children in their daily activities and to use those occasions to communicate with them and to teach them. (Deuteronomy 6: 6-9) Such advice is still sound.

In addition to working with your boy, make time to play together with him. Play does much more than provide an opportunity to have fun together. Research shows that

when fathers play with their young children, they encourage them to be more adventurous and bold.

Play between a father and son serves an even more important function. “It is through play,” says researcher Michel Fize, “that a boy communicates best with his father.” During playtime, a father can express affection for his son by both words and actions. In doing so, he teaches his son how to express affection too. “When my son was a child,” says André, a father who lives in Germany, “we often played together. I hugged him, and he learned to return my love.”

Bedtime is another occasion when a father can strengthen the bonds of love with his son. Regularly read him a story, and listen to him express his joys and concerns about the day. If you do, you will make it easier for him to continue communicating with you as he grows older.

Continue to Pursue Common Interests

Some teenage sons may seem indifferent to a father’s attempts to communicate with them. If your son appears to be evading your questions, do not conclude that he is closed to any conversation. He may be more willing to open up if you adapt the way you communicate with him.

Jacques, a father who lives in France, sometimes found it difficult to communicate with his son, Jérôme. But instead of forcing his son to talk, he adapted his approach—he played soccer with him. “After our physical exercise,” says Jacques, “we used to sit on the grass and rest a bit. My son often opened his heart at that time. The simple fact that we were together and, I think, that he had me to himself during these times, created a special bond between us.”

What if your son does not like sports? André fondly remembers the hours he spent gazing at the stars with his son. “We would



set up deck chairs in the cold night air,” says André. “Then we would wrap ourselves up warmly and, with a cup of tea in hand, observe the night sky. We talked about the One who created the stars. We talked about personal matters. We talked about almost everything.”—Isaiah 40:25, 26.

What if you do not like to do some of the things that interest your son? In that case, you may have to forgo personal preferences. (Philippians 2:4) “I was far more interested in sports than my son Vaughan was,” says Ian, who lives in South Africa. “He liked airplanes and computers. So I made those things my interest too, taking him to air shows and playing with a flight simulator on the computer. I feel that because we shared enjoyable activities together, Vaughan was able to speak more freely with me.”

Build His Self-Confidence

“Look, Daddy, look!” Did your little boy shout something like that to you when he mastered a new skill? If he is now a teenager, does he still seek your approval so openly? Maybe not. But he definitely needs it if he is to grow into a well-balanced adult.

Note the example that Jehovah God himself set in dealing with one of his sons. When Jesus was about to begin a special phase of his life on earth, God publicly expressed his affection for him, saying: “This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved.” (Matthew 3:17; 5:48) True, you have an obligation to

discipline and teach your son. (Ephesians 6:4) But do you also look for opportunities to express approval for the good things he says and does?

Some men find it a challenge to express approval and affection. They may have grown up in families where their parents emphasized mistakes rather than achievements. If that is true in your case, you will need to make a conscious effort to build your son’s self-confidence. How could you do so? Luca, quoted earlier, regularly works with his 15-year-old son, Manuel, as they do household chores. “Sometimes,” says Luca, “I tell Manuel to start a task by himself and that I will help him if he needs me. Most of the time, he manages the job on his own. His successes give him satisfaction and boost his self-confidence. When he succeeds, I commend him. When he doesn’t do as well as he hoped, I still let him know that I appreciate his effort.”

You can also boost your son’s self-confidence by helping him reach larger goals in life. What, though, if your son reaches goals more slowly than you wish? Or what if his goals, though not bad, are different from ones that you would choose for him? In that case, you may need to reassess your expectations. Jacques, quoted earlier, says: “I try to help my son set achievable goals. But I also try to make sure that they are *his* goals, not mine. Then I remind myself that he needs to work toward his objectives at his own pace.” If you listen to your son’s opinions, commend his strengths, and encourage him to overcome his failures, you will help him to reach his goals.

Realistically, your relationship will have its strains and challenges. But in the long run, your son will likely want to remain close to you. After all, who does not want to stay close to someone who helps him succeed?



DRAW CLOSE TO GOD

Fulfilling Our Obligation to God

HAVE you ever wondered, 'What is the purpose of life?' Jehovah endowed us with not only the capacity to ask such a question but also the deep, inner need to know the answer. Thankfully, our loving God has not left us in the dark. The answer we yearn for is in his Word, the Bible. Consider the words of King Solomon found at Ecclesiastes 12:13.

Solomon was in a unique position. He could well comment on how to find happiness and meaning in life. Blessed with extraordinary wisdom, enormous wealth, and kingly authority, he was able to make a careful search of human pursuits, including the quest for riches and prominence. (Ecclesiastes 2:4-9; 4:4) Then, under divine inspiration, he summed up his findings, saying: "The conclusion of the matter, everything having been heard, is: Fear the true God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole obligation of man." Those words outline the most rewarding and noble human endeavor.

"Fear the true God." The idea of fearing God might not seem appealing at first. But this fear is a healthy disposition of heart. We might think not of a slave who is terrified of enraging a harsh master but of a child who is eager to please a loving father. One reference work says that fear of God is the "attitude of reverence and awe that His people show to Him because they love Him and respect His power and His greatness." Such an attitude moves us to submit to God's will because we love him and we know that he loves us. This wholesome fear is not just a feeling; it is manifested by actions. How so?

"Keep his commandments." Fear of God moves us to obey him. It makes sense to give Jehovah our obedience. As our Maker, he knows

the best way for us to live, just as a manufacturer knows the best way to use its product. In addition, Jehovah has our best interests at heart. He wants us to be happy, and his requirements are designed to promote our well-being. (Isaiah 48:17) The apostle John put it this way: "This is what the love of God means, that we observe his commandments; and yet his commandments are not burdensome." (1 John 5:3) Our obedience demonstrates our love for God, and his commandments reflect his love for us.

"This is the whole obligation of man." These words highlight an important reason to fear God and obey him. Doing so is our obligation, our duty. Jehovah is our Creator, so we owe our very life to him. (Psalm 36:9) We also owe him our obedience. When we live as he wants us to live, we are fulfilling our obligation.

What, then, is the purpose of life? Put simply, it is this: We are here to do God's will. There is no better way to fill your life with meaning. Why not find out more about Jehovah's will and how you can bring your life into harmony with it? Jehovah's Witnesses would be pleased to assist you.

SUGGESTED BIBLE READING FOR NOVEMBER:

■ **Proverbs 22—Song of Solomon 8**





This is the second of two articles in consecutive issues of *The Watchtower* that discuss scholarly questions surrounding the date of the first destruction of ancient Jerusalem. This two-part series presents thoroughly researched and Bible-based answers to questions that have puzzled some readers.

When Was Ancient Jerusalem Destroyed?

PART TWO WHAT THE CLAY DOCUMENTS REALLY SHOW



PART ONE ESTABLISHED THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

- Secular historians say that Jerusalem was destroyed in 587 B.C.E.*
- Bible chronology indicates that the destruction occurred in 607 B.C.E.
- Secular historians base their conclusions on the writings of classical historians and on the canon of Ptolemy.
- Some writings of classical historians contain significant errors and are not always consistent with the records on clay tablets.†

When were they released? In “the first [regnal] year of Cyrus king of Persia.” (2 Chronicles 36:21, 22, *New International Version*) Biblical and secular history agree that this exile in Babylon ended after Cyrus conquered Babylon and freed the Jews, who returned to Jerusalem in 537 B.C.E. Since the Bible explicitly says that the exile lasted for 70 years, it must have begun in 607 B.C.E.

However, most scholars date the destruction of Jerusalem at 587 B.C.E. This allows for only a 50-year exile. Why do they conclude that? They base their calculations on ancient cuneiform documents that provide details about Nebuchadnezzar II and his successors.¹ Many of these documents were written by men who lived during or close to the time of Jerusalem’s destruction. But just how sound are the calculations that point to the date 587 B.C.E.? What do these documents *really* show?

To answer those questions, consider three types of documents that scholars often rely on: (1) The Babylonian chronicles, (2) business tablets, and (3) astronomical tablets.

THE Bible says that the Jewish captives were to be exiled in Babylon “until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah.”

* There are various ways of expressing dates. In this article, B.C.E. means “Before the Common Era.”

† See the article “When Was Ancient Jerusalem Destroyed?—Why It Matters, What the Evidence Shows” in our issue of October 1, 2011.

● The Babylonian chronicles.

What are they? The Babylonian chronicles are a series of tablets recording major events in Babylonian history.²

What have experts said? R. H. Sack, a leading authority on cuneiform documents, states that the chronicles provide an incomplete record of important events.* He wrote that historians must probe “secondary sources . . . in the hope of determining what actually happened.”

What do the documents show? There are gaps in the history recorded in the Babylonian chronicles.³ (See the box below.) Logically, then, the question arises, How reliable are deductions based on such an incomplete record?

● Business tablets.

What are they? Most business tablets from the Neo-Babylonian period are legal receipts.

* **Note:** None of the secular experts quoted in this article hold that Jerusalem was destroyed in 607 B.C.E.

The tablets were dated to the day, month, and year of the reigning king. For example, one tablet states that a transaction took place on “Nisan, the 27th day, the 11th year of Nebuchadnezzar [also known as Nebuchadnezzar II], king of Babylon.”⁴

When the king died or was removed and a new king came to the throne, the remaining months of that regnal year were considered the accession year of the new ruler.⁵ In other words, the transition of one king to the next took place in the same Babylonian calendar year. Accordingly, tablets of the new ruler’s accession year should logically be dated during months after the last month of the former king.

What have experts said? R. H. Sack examined numerous business tablets from the Neo-Babylonian period. In 1972, Sack wrote that new unpublished British Museum texts placed at his disposal “completely upset”

* An accession year was not counted toward the years of a king’s rule; it referred to the remaining months of the year until the new king was officially enthroned.

BM 21901



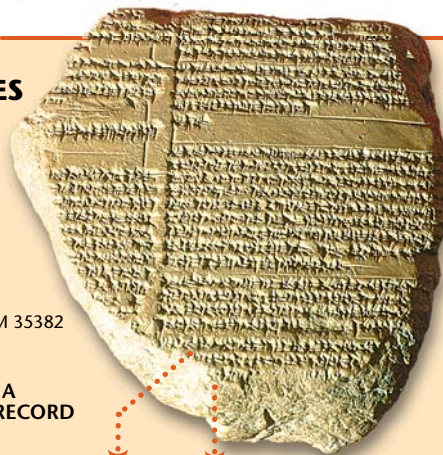
BM 21946



THE BABYLONIAN CHRONICLES —A HISTORY WITH GAPS

The Babylonian chronicles provide an account for only 35 years of the Neo-Babylonian period, traditionally presumed to span some 88 years.

BM 35382



A YEAR WITHOUT A
CHRONICLE RECORD

A YEAR WITH A
CHRONICLE RECORD

NEO-BABYLONIAN PERIOD

PERSIANS

Nabopolassar

Nebuchadnezzar II

Amel-Marduk

Nabonidus

BM 25127

BM 22047

Neriglissar

Labashi-Marduk

BM 25124



previous conclusions regarding the transition of rule from Nebuchadnezzar II to his son Amel-Marduk (also known as Evil-merodach).⁶ How so? Sack knew that tablets showed Nebuchadnezzar II to be still ruling in the sixth month of his last (43rd) year. But these newly deciphered tablets from the accession year of the following king, Amel-Marduk, were dated to the *fourth* and *fifth* months of what had been assumed to be the same year.⁷ Clearly, there was a discrepancy.

What do the documents show? There are further discrepancies in the transition of one king to another. For example, the documents show that Nebuchadnezzar II was still ruling in his tenth month—six months after his successor is assumed to have begun reigning.⁸ A similar discrepancy exists with the transition between Amel-Marduk and his successor, Neriglissar.⁹

Why are these discrepancies significant? As mentioned earlier, gaps in the history documented by the Babylonian chronicles suggest that we may not have a continuous chronological record.¹⁰ Could others have ruled between the reigns of these kings? If so, additional years would have to be added to the Neo-Babylonian period. Therefore, neither the Babylonian chronicles nor the business tablets provide a basis to establish with

certainty that Jerusalem was destroyed in 587 B.C.E.*

● Astronomical tablets.

What are they? Cuneiform tablets that contain descriptions of the positions of the sun, moon, planets, and stars, coupled with such historical information as the regnal year of a particular king. For instance, the astronomical diary shown below records a lunar eclipse that occurred in the first month of the first year of King Mukiin-zeri's reign.¹¹

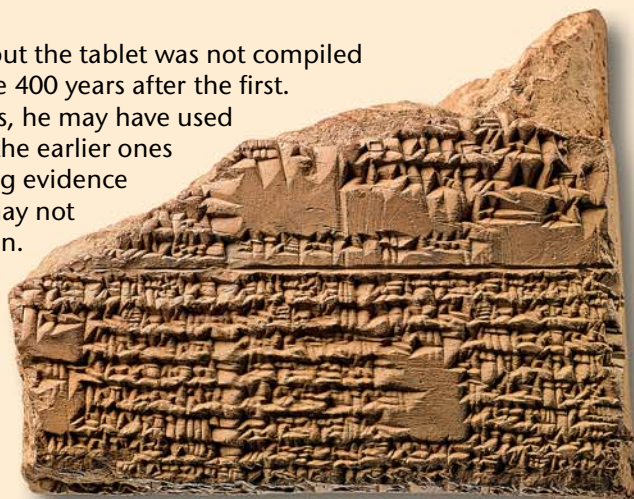
What have experts said? Experts agree that the Babylonians had developed extensive charts and schemes to predict when eclipses would most likely occur.¹²

But could the Babylonians project backward to calculate when eclipses had occurred in the past? "It is possible," states Professor John Steele, "that some of the earliest predictions could have been made by projecting the scheme *backwards* when the text was compiled." (Italics ours.)¹³ Professor David Brown, who believes that the astronomical

* Business tablets exist for all the years traditionally attributed to the Neo-Babylonian kings. When the years that these kings ruled are totaled and a calculation is made back from the last Neo-Babylonian king, Nabonidus, the date reached for the destruction of Jerusalem is 587 B.C.E. However, this method of dating works only if each king followed the other in the same year, without any breaks in between.

ASTRONOMICAL DIARY BM 32238

This tablet contains a record of lunar eclipses, but the tablet was not compiled until after the last eclipse, which occurred some 400 years after the first. Since the scribe did not observe all those events, he may have used mathematical calculations to determine when the earlier ones took place. Unless there is additional supporting evidence confirming his conclusions, such calculations may not be a source of reliable chronological information.



charts included predictions made shortly before the recorded events, acknowledges that it is conceivable that some of these were “retrocalculations undertaken by scribes in the 4th and later centuries BC.”¹⁴ If these are retrocalculations, could they really be considered absolutely reliable unless corroborated by other evidence?

Even if an eclipse did occur on a certain date, does this mean that the *historical* information the writer of the tablet assigns to that date is accurate? Not necessarily. Scholar R. J. van der Spek explains: “The compilers were astrologers, not historians.” He describes sections of the tablets that contain historical records as “more or less casual,” and he warns that such historical information must “be used with caution.”¹⁵

What do the documents show? Consider the example of VAT 4956. The opening line of this tablet reads: “Year 37 of Nebukadnezzar, king of Babylon.”¹⁶ Thereafter, it contains detailed descriptions of the position of the moon and planets in relation to different stars and constellations. Also included is one lunar eclipse. Scholars say that all these positions occurred in 568/567 B.C.E., which would make the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar II, when he destroyed Jerusalem, 587 B.C.E. But do these astronomical ref-

erences irrefutably point *only* to the year 568/567 B.C.E.?

The tablet mentions a lunar eclipse that was calculated as occurring on the 15th day of the third Babylonian month, Simanu. It is a fact that a lunar eclipse occurred on July 4 (Julian calendar) of this month during 568 B.C.E. However, there was also an eclipse *20 years earlier*, on July 15, 588 B.C.E.¹⁷

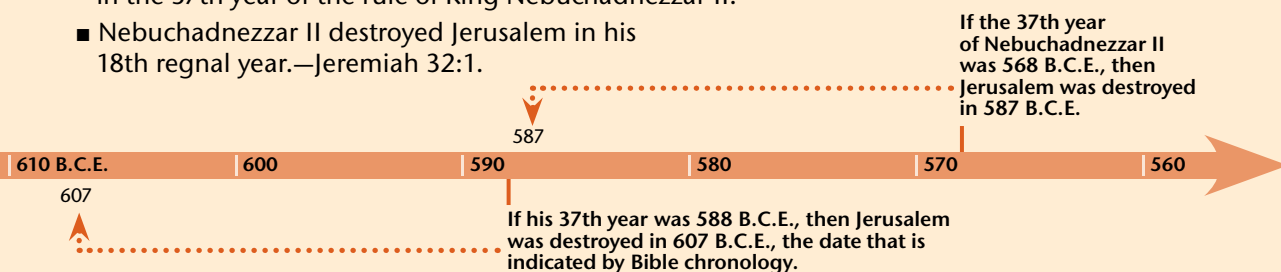
If 588 B.C.E. marked the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar II, then his 18th year would be 607 B.C.E.—the very year indicated by the Bible’s chronology for the destruction of Jerusalem! (See the time line below.) But does VAT 4956 provide further corroborating evidence for the year 607 B.C.E.?

In addition to the aforementioned eclipse, there are 13 sets of lunar observations on the tablet and 15 planetary observations. These describe the position of the moon or planets in relation to certain stars or constellations.¹⁸ There are also eight time intervals between the risings and settings of the sun and the moon.^{18a}

Because of the superior reliability of the lunar positions, researchers have carefully analyzed these 13 sets of lunar positions on VAT 4956. They analyzed the data with the aid of a computer program capable of showing the location of celestial bodies on a

VAT 4956 POINTS TO WHICH YEAR FOR JERUSALEM’S DESTRUCTION —587 B.C.E. OR 607 B.C.E.?

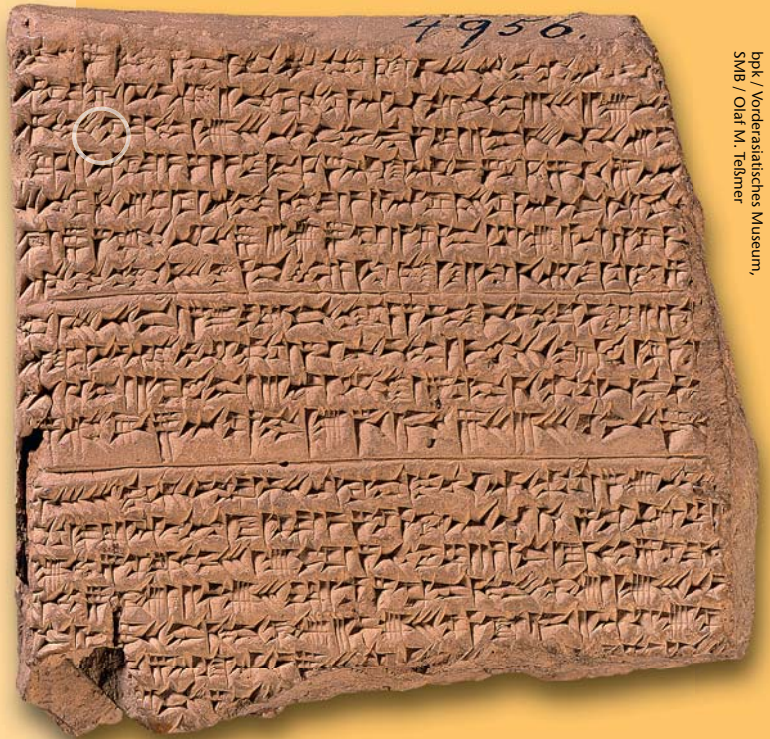
- The tablet describes astronomical events that occurred in the 37th year of the rule of King Nebuchadnezzar II.
- Nebuchadnezzar II destroyed Jerusalem in his 18th regnal year.—Jeremiah 32:1.



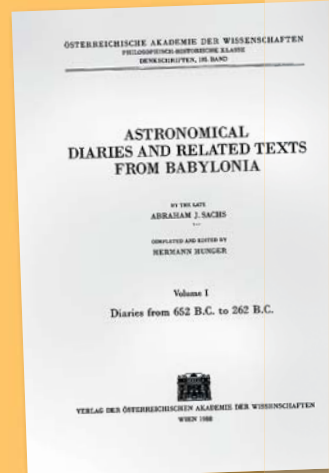
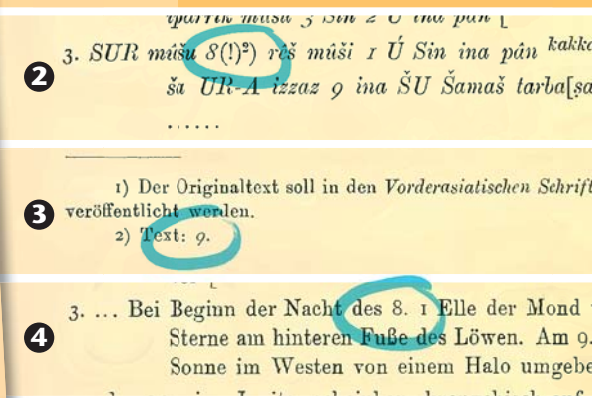
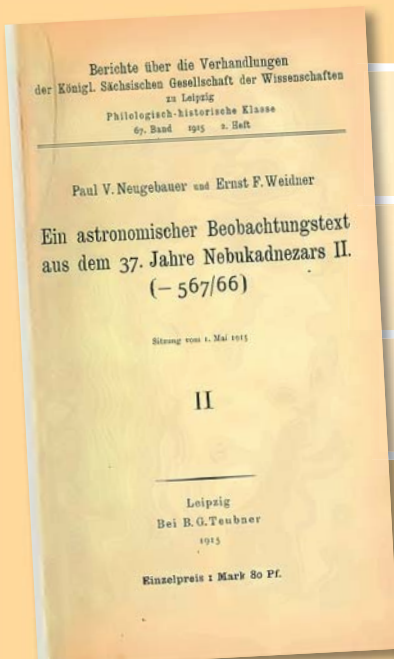
- VAT 4956 points more convincingly to 607 B.C.E.

WHAT DOES VAT 4956 REALLY SAY?

Why an issue? The third line on this tablet reads that on the “night of the 9th” during the first month (Nisanu/Nisan), the “moon stood 1 cubit in front of β Virginis.” However, Neugebauer and Weidner wrote in 1915 regarding the year 568 B.C.E. (which would point to 587 B.C.E. for Jerusalem’s destruction) that “the moon stood 1 cubit before this star on 8 Nisan, and *not on 9 Nisan.*” (Italics ours.) However, there was an exact match of the moon’s position for 588 B.C.E. on Nisan 9, which points to the date 607 B.C.E.



bpk / Vorderasiatisches Museum,
SMB / Olaf M. Telmer



Should it be the 9th day or the 8th day?

- (1) As shown in the accompanying photograph, the Akkadian symbol for the number 9 is clearly seen.
- (2) In their transliteration of this cuneiform text, Neugebauer and Weidner changed the "9" to an "8."
- (3) Only the footnote indicates that there was a "9" in the original text.
- (4) Even in their German translation, they put "8."
- (5) In 1988, Sachs and Hunger published the text as it actually reads, with a "9."
- (6) Yet, they preserve the alteration in their English translation, calling the "9th" an "error for: 8th."

VAT 4956

Copy: E.F. Weidner, AfO 16 Tf. XVII

Photo: Pl. 1 and 3

Transcription, translation, and commentary: P.V. Neugebauer and E.F. Weidner, *Texte aus dem 37. Jahre Nebukadnezars II. (-567/66) (= der Wiss., Phil.-hist. Kl. Bd. 67/2, 1915).*

Obv.:

1 MU-37 ^{1d}AG-NIG-DU-ŠEŠ LUGAL TIN-TIR^{ki}
[...]

2 ^dSAG-UŠ *ina* IGI SIM 2 *ina* Še-rì TIR-AN *ina*
[...]

5 3 ŠUR GE₆ 9 SAG GE₆ 1 KÜŠ *sin ina* IGI ^{mul}-GÌ
TÜR [... 11]

6 3 in the west. Night of the 3rd, the moon was 2
it rained'. Night of the 9th (error for: 8th), begi
1 cubit in front of β Virginis. The 9th, the sun in
[... The 11th]

4 or 19th. Jupiter's astronomical rising. On the 14th

certain date in the past.¹⁹ What did their analysis reveal? While not all of these sets of lunar positions match the year 568/567 B.C.E., *all 13 sets* match calculated positions for 20 years earlier, for the year 588/587 B.C.E.

One of the places where the lunar observations fit 588 B.C.E. even better than 568 B.C.E. is shown in the tablet reproduced on these pages. On line 3 of that tablet, we read that the moon was in a certain position on the "night of the 9th [of Nisanu]." However, the scholars who first dated the event to 568 B.C.E. (astronomical -567) acknowledged that in 568 B.C.E., the moon was in that position on "the 8th of Nisanu and not on the 9th." To support dating the tablet to 568 B.C.E., they postulated that the scribe erroneously wrote "9" instead of "8."²⁰ But the lunar position in line 3 finds an *exact match* on Nisanu 9 of 588 B.C.E.²¹

Clearly, much of the astronomical data in VAT 4956 fits the year 588 B.C.E. as the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar II. This, therefore, supports the date of 607 B.C.E. for Jerusalem's destruction—just as the Bible indicates.

Why Trust the Bible?

At present, the majority of secular historians believe that Jerusalem was destroyed in 587 B.C.E. However, the Bible writers Jeremiah and Daniel clearly state that the Jews were in exile for 70 years, not 50 years. (Jeremiah 25:1, 2, 11; 29:10; Daniel 9:2) Those statements strongly indicate that Jerusalem was destroyed in 607 B.C.E. As the above evidence shows, that conclusion has some secular support.

Secular experts have repeatedly questioned the Bible's accuracy. Yet, when more evidence is uncovered, the Bible record has time and again been vindicated.* Those who trust the Bible have good reason to do so. They base their opinion on proof that the Bible is historically, scientifically, and prophetically accurate. That evidence leads them to believe the Bible's claim that it is the inspired Word of God. (2 Timothy 3:16) Why not investigate the evidence for yourself? You may well come to the same conclusion.

* For specific examples, see chapters 4 and 5 of the book *The Bible—God's Word or Man's?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Notes for "When Was Ancient Jerusalem Destroyed?—Part Two"

1. Cuneiform is a wedge-shaped form of writing. It was produced by a scribe pressing various signs into the surface of a soft clay tablet, using a sharp stylus with a wedge-shaped point.

2. *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, by A. K. Grayson, published 1975, 2000 reprint, page 8.

3. The Neo-Babylonian period began during the seventh century B.C.E., when the Chaldean dynasty of kings ruled the Babylonian Empire. The first ruler was Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar II. The period ended when the last king, Nabonidus, was overthrown by Persian King Cyrus in 539 B.C.E.

4. *Neo-Babylonian Business and Administrative Documents*, by Ellen Whitley Moore, published 1935, page 33.

5. *Archimedes, Volume 4, New Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology*, "Observations and Predictions of Eclipse Times by Early Astronomers," by John M. Steele, published 2000, page 36.

6. *Amel-Marduk 562-560 B.C.—A Study Based on Cuneiform, Old Testament, Greek, Latin and Rabbinical Sources. With Plates*, by Ronald H. Sack, published 1972, page 3.

7. The tablets BM 80920 and BM 58872 are dated in Evil-merodach's fourth and fifth months of his accession year. These were published by Sack in *Amel-Marduk 562-560 B.C.—A Study Based on Cuneiform, Old Testament, Greek, Latin and Rabbinical Sources. With Plates*, pages 3, 90, 106.

8. The tablet in the British Museum (BM 55806) is dated to the tenth month, 43rd year.

9. Tablets BM 75106 and BM 61325 are dated in the seventh and tenth months of what is considered the last (second) year of the ruling king Evil-merodach. However, the tablet BM 75489 is dated in the second month of the accession year of Neriglissar, his successor.—*Catalogue of the Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum*, Volume VIII, (Tablets From Sippar 3) by Erle Leichty, J. J. Finkelstein, and C.B.F. Walker, published 1988, pages 25, 35.

Catalogue of the Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum, Volume VII, (Tablets From Sippar 2) by Erle Leichty and A. K. Grayson, published 1987, page 36.

Neriglissar—King of Babylon, by Ronald H. Sack, published 1994, page 232. The month on the tablet is Ajaru (second month).

10. Consider the example of Neriglissar. A royal inscription regarding him states that he was "the son of Bêl-shum-ishkun," the "king of Babylon." (Italics ours.) Another inscription calls Bêl-shum-ishkun the "wise prince." The original word rendered "prince," *rubû*, is a title also meaning "king, ruler." Since there

is an obvious discrepancy between the reign of Neriglissar and his predecessor, Amel-Marduk, could this "king of Babylon," Bêl-shum-ishkun, have ruled for a time between the two? Professor R. P. Dougherty acknowledged that "the evidence of Neriglissar's noble ancestry cannot be disregarded."—*Nabonidus and Belshazzar—A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, by Raymond P. Dougherty, published 1929, page 61.

11. *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts From Babylonia*, Volume V, edited by Hermann Hunger, published 2001, pages 2-3.

12. *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, Volume 2, No. 4, 1948, "A Classification of the Babylonian Astronomical Tablets of the Seleucid Period," by A. Sachs, pages 282-283.

13. *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts From Babylonia*, Volume V, page 391.

14. *Mesopotamian Planetary Astronomy—Astrology*, by David Brown, published 2000, pages 164, 201-202.

15. *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, L N° 1/2, Januari-Maart, 1993, "The Astronomical Diaries as a Source for Achaemenid and Seleucid History," by R. J. van der Spek, pages 94, 102.

16. *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts From Babylonia*, Volume I, by Abraham J. Sachs, completed and edited by Hermann Hunger, published 1988, page 47.

17. *Babylonian Eclipse Observations From 750 BC to 1 BC*, by Peter J. Huber and Salvo De Meis, published 2004, page 186. According to VAT 4956, this eclipse occurred on the 15th of the third Babylonian month, which suggests that the month of Simanu began 15 days earlier. If the eclipse fell on July 15, 588 B.C.E. according to our Julian calendar, then the first day of Simanu would be June 30/July 1, 588 B.C.E. Therefore, the first Babylonian month (Nisanu) would have started the new year two months earlier, on May 2/3. While normally the year of this eclipse would have begun on April 3/4, VAT 4956 states on line 6 that an extra month (intercalary) was added after the twelfth (last) month (Addaru) of the preceding year. (The tablet reads: "8th of month XII₂.") Therefore, this made the new year actually not start until May 2/3. Thus, the date of this eclipse in 588 B.C.E. well fits the data on the tablet.

18. According to *Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Königl. Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig* (Reports Regarding the Discussions of the Royal Saxonian Society of Sciences at Leipzig); Volume 67; May 1, 1915; in the article "Ein astronomischer Beobachtungstext aus dem 37. Jahre Nebukadnezars II" (An Astronomical Observer's Text of the 37th Year Nebuchadnezzar II), by Paul V. Neugebauer and Ernst F. Weidner, pages 67-76, there are 13 sets of obser-

vations of the moon wherein it is described in relationship with a certain star or constellation. They also list 15 sets of planetary observations. (Pages 72-76) Though the cuneiform sign for the moon is clear and unambiguous, some of the signs for the names of the planets and their positions are unclear. (*Mesopotamian Planetary Astronomy—Astrology*, by David Brown, published 2000, pages 53-57) Because of this, the planetary observations are open to speculation and to several different interpretations. Since the moon can easily be tracked, the positions of those other celestial bodies mentioned on VAT 4956 and connected to the moon can be identified and their positions dated with a good measure of certainty.

18a. These time intervals ("lunar thirds") are the measurement of time from, for example, sunset to moonset on the first day of the month and during two other periods later in the month. Scholars have tied these time measurements to calendar dates. ("The Earliest Datable Observation of the Aurora Borealis," by F. R. Stephenson and David M. Willis, in *Under One Sky—Astronomy and Mathematics in the Ancient Near East*, edited by John M. Steele and Annette Imhausen, published 2002, pages 420-428) For ancient observers to measure this period required some sort of clock. Such measurements were not reliable. (*Archimedes, Volume 4, New Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology*, "Observations and Predictions of Eclipse Times by Early Astronomers," by John M. Steele, published 2000, pages 65-66) On the other hand, calculating the position of the moon in relation to other celestial bodies was done with greater certainty.

19. This analysis was made with the astronomy software entitled TheSky6®. In addition, the analysis was augmented by the comprehensive freeware program Cartes du Ciel/Sky Charts (CDC) and a date converter provided by the U.S. Naval Observatory. Because the cuneiform signs for many of the planetary positions are open to speculation and to several interpretations, these positions were not used in this survey to pinpoint the year intended by this astronomical diary.

20. *Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Königl. Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig* (Reports Regarding the Discussions of the Royal Saxonian Society of Sciences at Leipzig); Volume 67; May 1, 1915; "Ein astronomischer Beobachtungstext aus dem 37. Jahre Nebukadnezars II, (-567/66)" (An Astronomical Observer's Text of the 37th Year Nebuchadnezzar II), by Paul V. Neugebauer and Ernst F. Weidner, page 41.

21. VAT 4956 reads on line three: "The moon stood 1 cubit [or 2 degrees] in front of β Virginis." The previously mentioned analysis concluded that on Nisanu 9, the moon was $2^{\circ}04'$ in front of and 0° below the star β Virginis. It was considered an exact match.

OUR READERS ASK . . .

Should parents teach their children about sex?

■ Many parents go to great lengths to protect their children from contracting harmful diseases. Parents need to invest similar effort into protecting their children from harmful moral attitudes. One way they can do so is by means of balanced sex education. (Proverbs 5:3-23) Such parental training and moral guidance is essential because children are increasingly being exposed to graphic sexual material on TV and the Internet, in books, and in comics.

“The problem today isn’t that our kids are learning about sex,” explains Professor of education and author, Diane Levin. “The problem is *what* they are learning, the age at which they’re learning it, and who is teaching them. Children get a very powerful and damaging kind of sex education from marketers and the popular culture.”

Parents need to protect their children from the distorted and immoral views that are corroding society. (Proverbs 5:1; Ephesians 6:4) Young children need to know how their bodies work, how to care for themselves physically, and how to protect themselves from immoral people. Before puberty—the age at which signs of sexual maturing begin to appear—a daughter needs to know about the changes that will occur in her body and to understand why and how menstruation takes place. Similarly, a boy should know in advance about nocturnal emis-

sions, or wet dreams. When children are little, parents can start teaching them the correct names for body parts. Loving parents teach their children three key lessons about these body parts: (1) They are special and private. (2) They are not to be discussed in a bad way. (3) They are generally not to be touched by or exposed to others. As children grow older, parents need to discern when to explain how a woman becomes pregnant.*

When should parents start such instruction? Earlier than many realize. A girl might first menstruate at the age of 10 or even earlier. A boy might have his first nocturnal emission as early as the age of 11 or 12. These life-altering events can be very disturbing if children do not understand what is happening. Children need to be reassured ahead of time that there is nothing wrong with such natural developments in their bodies. This is also the time to help them understand the value and importance of following the Bible’s moral standards—something that most secular sex-education programs fail to provide.—Proverbs 6:27-35.

* Parents can find helpful material on these subjects in the following publications produced by Jehovah’s Witnesses: *Awake!* of May 2006, in the article “Preparing Your Daughter for Menarche,” pages 10-13; *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, Volume 2, chapter 6, “What’s Happening to My Body?”; and *The Watchtower* of November 1, 2010, “Keys to Family Happiness—Talk to Your Children About Sex,” pages 12-14.





FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Rescued From a Fiery Furnace!

Instructions: Do this exercise in quiet surroundings. As you read the scriptures, imagine that you are part of the event. Visualize the scene. Hear the voices. Feel the emotions of the characters. Let the account come to life.

Main characters: Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Nebuchadnezzar

Summary: The faith of three young Hebrews is put to the test.

1 ANALYZE THE SCENE.—READ DANIEL 3:1-30.

Describe the sounds that you “heard” when reading verses 3-7. _____

Describe the appearance of the fiery furnace, as you imagine it. _____

What emotions do you sense in the voice of Nebuchadnezzar as he commands that the furnace be heated up seven times more than is customary? (*Reread verses 19 and 20.*) _____

Describe the appearance of the fourth man in the furnace, as you picture him. (*Reread verses 24 and 25.*) _____

What qualities do you notice in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as they address Nebuchadnezzar in verses 16-18? _____

2 DIG DEEPER.

Using research materials at your disposal, find out the measurement of a cubit, and then calculate the dimensions of the image that Nebuchadnezzar made. (*Reread verse 1.*) _____

When you compare verses 19 and 20 with verses 28 and 29, what type of person does Nebuchadnezzar seem to be? _____

3 APPLY WHAT YOU LEARNED. WRITE DOWN WHAT YOU LEARNED ABOUT . . .

Showing respect for those in authority. _____

The importance of standing up for what you believe. _____

Jehovah's support during times of trial. _____

FOR FURTHER APPLICATION.

In what circumstance is *your* faith likely to be tested? _____

How will the account of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego help you to remain faithful? _____

4 WHAT ASPECT OF THIS ACCOUNT IS MOST MEANINGFUL TO YOU, AND WHY?



**IF YOU
DON'T HAVE
A BIBLE,**

ASK JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES
FOR ONE, OR
READ IT ONLINE AT
www.watchtower.org





Is there anything wrong with phone sex, “sexting,” or cybersex?

SEE PAGE 7.



What is spirituality? SEE PAGES 13-14.



How do God’s laws benefit our health? SEE PAGE 16.



How can a father build his son’s self-confidence? SEE PAGE 20.



Should parents teach their children about sex?

SEE PAGE 29.

Would you welcome a visit?