

THE WATCHTOWER
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

DECEMBER 1, 2012

SOMETHING
BETTER
THAN
CHRISTMAS



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.

This publication is not for sale. It is provided as part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*.

FROM OUR COVER

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 3 In Search of the Christmas Spirit | 7 Family Togetherness |
| 4 Remembering Jesus Christ | 8 "Peace Among Men of Goodwill" |
| 5 The Joy of Giving | 9 They Found Something Better |
| 6 Helping the Needy | |

REGULAR FEATURES

- 10 Our Readers Ask . . .
Why Do Some People Not Celebrate Christmas?
- 11 Draw Close to God
—Are You in God's "Book of Remembrance"?
- 16 Learn From God's Word
—Why Did God Send Jesus to Earth?
- 21 Did You Know?
- 22 A Letter From Benin
- 30 Teach Your Children
—Jotham Remained Faithful Despite Troubles at Home

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- 12 At Last, I Found True Freedom!
- 18 Do You Believe That You Have Lived Before?
- 24 The Use of Cosmetics in Bible Times
- 27 "History Does Not Lie"



In Search of the Christmas Spirit

AS THE Christmas season approaches, songs, films, and TV programs promote a jolly and exciting holiday mood—the Christmas spirit. What do you think should be the most important element of that spirit? Would it be

- Remembering Jesus Christ?
- Sharing in the joy of giving?
- Helping the needy?
- Spending time with family?
- Promoting peace?

As Governor Henry, quoted earlier, put it, many who celebrate Christmas find it difficult to achieve any of those goals during the holiday season. Christmastime often tends to be hectic, stressful and, above all, commercial. Is cultivating the Christmas spirit—or at least what it is supposed to be—a lost cause?

The Bible does encourage all of us to remember Jesus Christ, to be liberal in giving, to help the needy, and to spend time with our families. It also teaches us how to be peaceable. Therefore, rather than discuss why some do not celebrate Christmas,* this series of articles will consider the following questions:

- What do some feel should be the reason for celebrating Christmas?
- Why is it a challenge to achieve what they hope for in Christmas?
- What Bible principles have helped millions to find something better than Christmas?

“It’s easy to get caught up in the hubbub of the season. Holiday traditions become tasks to check off a list, time with family and friends can be cut short by busy schedules. The joy we should experience is sometimes obscured by the stress we do experience.”

—FORMER OKLAHOMA [U.S.A.]
GOVERNOR BRAD HENRY,
DECEMBER 23, 2008.

* For the Scriptural reasons why some people decide not to celebrate Christmas, see the article “Our Readers Ask—Why Do Some People Not Celebrate Christmas?” on page 10.

Remembering Jesus Christ

“Keep doing this in remembrance of me.”—LUKE 22:19.

A reason why some celebrate Christmas.

Regarding Christmas, some say that Jesus is “the reason for the season.” They celebrate Christmas to commemorate his birthday.

Why is it a challenge?

Popular Christmas music and many Christmas customs have little to do with Jesus Christ. Millions who celebrate the holiday do not put faith in him; some do not even believe that he existed. In the commercial world, Christmas has become a holiday to advertise goods rather than an occasion to remember Jesus.

What Bible principles can help?

“The Son of man came . . . to give his soul a ransom in exchange for many.” (Mark 10:45) Jesus spoke the words quoted at the beginning of this article, obviously not on his birthday, but on the night before he died. On that evening, he instituted a simple ceremony to memorialize his death. Yet, why would Jesus want his followers to remember his death rather than his birth? Because Jesus’ ransom sacrifice gives obedient humans the opportunity to receive everlasting life. “The wages sin pays is death,” says the Bible, “but



the gift God gives is everlasting life by Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23) Thus, each year, on the anniversary of his death, Jesus’ followers remember Jesus Christ, not as a helpless infant, but as “the savior of the world.”—John 4:42.

“Christ suffered for you, leaving you a model for you to follow his steps closely.” (1 Peter 2:21) To honor and remember Jesus, you should study his example as a perfect, intelligent man. Also, meditate on the way Jesus displayed compassion, patience, and the courage to do what is right, and look for opportunities to imitate him in your own life.

“The kingdom of the world did become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will rule as king forever and ever.” (Revelation 11:15) When you remember Jesus Christ, consider what he is doing now. Jesus is ruling as a heavenly King. God’s Word prophesied regarding Jesus: “With righteousness he must judge the lowly ones, and with uprightness he must give reproof in behalf of the meek ones of the earth.” (Isaiah 11:4) Those appealing qualities belong, not to a newborn baby, but to a mighty Ruler.

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.jw.org/contact.

4

America, United States of: 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. **Australia:** PO Box 280, Ingleburn, NSW 1890. **Britain:** The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN. **Canada:** PO Box 4100, Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4. **Germany:** 65617 Selters. **Guam:** 143 Jehovah St, Barrigada, GU 96913. **Jamaica:** PO Box 103, Old Harbour, St. Catherine. **Japan:** 4-7-1 Nakashinden, Ebina City, Kanagawa-Pref, 243-0496. **Puerto Rico:** PO Box 3980, Guaynabo, PR 00970. **South Africa:** Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. **Trinidad and Tobago:** Lower Rapsey Street & Laxmi Lane, Curepe.

The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semi-monthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; L. Weaver, Jr., President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483, and by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Canada, PO Box 4100, Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Watchtower, 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299. © 2012 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved. Printed in Canada.

The Joy of Giving

“There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.”—ACTS 20:35.



A reason why some celebrate Christmas.

As Jesus stated, giving makes both the giver and the receiver happy. In pursuit of that happiness, many view gift-giving as one of the most important features of Christmas. Even during last year's economic crisis, one survey found, for example, that in Ireland, each household expected to spend over 500 euros (about \$660 U.S.) on Christmas gifts.

Why is it a challenge?

Many feel that Christmas gift-giving brings more stress, not more happiness. How so? A lot of shoppers feel compelled to buy gifts that they cannot afford. And since everyone is shopping for gifts at the same time, crowds and long lines make shopping an exasperating experience for many.

What Bible principles can help?

“Practice giving,” said Jesus.* (Luke 6:38) He did not limit gift-giving to a certain time of

* Some Bible translations simply say: “Give.” In the original Greek, however, the verb form denotes *continuous* action. To convey the full sense of the word that Jesus used, the *New World Translation* renders it “practice giving.”

the year when people would be expected to give. Jesus urged his followers to make spontaneous gift-giving a practice, a way of life.

“Let each one do just as he has resolved in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:7) The essence of Paul's counsel is that “nothing is ever to be given ‘from compulsion,’ from a feeling that one is forced to give,” explains one Bible commentary. Being “a cheerful giver” rules out the feeling of being obligated to give a specific item to a specific person at a specific time—the way Christmas gift-giving often turns out to be.

“If the readiness is there first, it is especially acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what a person does not have.” (2 Corinthians 8:12) God does not require Christians to go into debt to pay for expensive gifts. Rather, when a person gives ‘according to what he has,’ his gifts are not merely tolerable but “*especially acceptable*.” What a refreshing contrast to the “buy now, pay later” message of advertisers during the holidays!

NOW PUBLISHED IN 195 LANGUAGES: Acholi, Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Armenian (West), Aymara,[°] Azerbaijani, Azerbaijani (Cyrillic), Baoulé, Bengali, Bicol, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cambodian, Catalan, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese (Simplified), Chinese (Traditional)[°] (audio Mandarin only), Chitonga, Chitumbuka, Chuukese, Cibemba, Croatian, Czech,[°] Danish,[°] Dutch,[°] Efik, English,[°] Estonian, Ewe, Fijian, Finnish,[°] French,[°] Ga, Garifuna, Georgian, German,[°] Greek, Greenlandic, Guarani,[°] Gujarati, Gun, Haitian Creole, Hausa, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hiri Motu, Hungarian,[°] Icelandic, Igbo, Iloko, Indonesian, Isoko, Italian,[°] Japanese,[°] Kannada, Kazakh, Kikaonde,

Kikongo, Kikuyu, Kiluba, Kimbundu, Kinyarwanda, Kirghiz, Kiribati, Kirundi, Kongo, Korean,[°] Kwangali, Kwanama, Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Luganda, Lunda, Luo, Luvale, Macedonian, Macua, Malagasy, Malayalam, Maltese, Marathi, Marshallese, Mauritian Creole, Maya, Mixe, Mizo, Mongolian, Moore, Myanmar, Nahuatl (Northern Puebla), Ndebele, Ndonga, Nepali, Ngabere, Niuean, Norwegian,[°] Nyaneka, Nzema, Oromo, Otetela, Palauan, Pangasinan, Papiamentu (Aruba), Papiamentu (Curaçao), Persian, Polish,[°] Ponapean, Portuguese,[°] Punjabi, Quechua (Ancash), Quechua (Ayacucho), Quechua (Bolivia),[°] Quechua (Cuzco), Quichua, Rarotongan, Romanian, Russian,[°] Samoan, Sango, Sepedi, Serbian,

Serbian (Roman), Sesotho, Seychelles Creole, Shona, Si-lozi, Sinhala, Slovak, Slovenian, Solomon Islands Pidgin, Spanish,[°] Sranantongo, Swahili, Swati, Swedish,[°] Tagalog,[°] Tahitian, Tamil, Tatar, Telugu, Tetum, Thai, Tigrinya, Tiv, Tok Pisin, Tongan, Totonac, Tshiluba, Tshwa, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Tuvaluan, Twi, Tzotzil, Ukrainian, Umbundu, Urdu, Uruund, Venda, Vietnamese, Wallisian, Waray-Waray, Wolaita, Xhosa, Yapese, Yoruba, Zande, Zapotec (Isthmus), Zulu

[°] Braille also available.

⁺ CD also available.

[°] MP3 CD-ROM also available.

[°] Audio recordings also available at www.jw.org.

Helping the Needy

"He that is kindly in eye will be blessed, for he has given of his food to the lowly one."—PROVERBS 22:9.

A reason why some celebrate Christmas.

Because Jesus helped people who were poor, sick, and afflicted, some want to follow his example. They feel that the best time to do that may be Christmas, when charities often put forth extra effort to collect donations.

Why is it a challenge?

During the holidays, many people are pre-occupied with shopping, entertaining, and visiting friends and family. All of this leaves them with little time, energy, or money to attend to the poor and needy, other than perhaps making a donation.

What Bible principles can help?

"Do not hold back good from those to whom it is owing, when it happens to be in the power of your hand to do it." (Proverbs 3:27) The poor, the hungry, and the afflicted do not suffer only at Christmastime. If you perceive that someone needs help and it is within "the power of your hand" to assist, why wait for a holiday to act? Your kindness and compassionate actions will be blessed.

"Every first day of the week let each of you at his own house set something aside in store as he may be prospering." (1 Corinthians 16:2) The apostle Paul gave that advice to early Christians who wanted to help the poor. Could you 'set aside,' or budget, some money that you can regularly give to individuals or to an organization that uses its funds wisely?



In this way, you ensure that you care for the needy while still giving within your means.

"Do not forget the doing of good and the sharing of things with others, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." (Hebrews 13:16) Notice that besides "the sharing of things with others," we must also remember "the doing of good," or helpful acts. For example, wise parents train their children to help the elderly with everyday tasks; to encourage the sick by means of a card, a visit, or a phone call; and to take a personal interest in other children who are poor or suffer from a disability. As a result, children learn to be kind and generous year-round.

Wise parents train their children to help the elderly, the sick, and children who are disadvantaged. As a result, children learn to be kind and generous year-round

Family Togetherness

“Look! How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!” —PSALM 133:1.

A reason why some celebrate Christmas.

Since the Israelites were all descendants of one man, Jacob, or Israel, they were “brothers,” members of one family. When they assembled for festivals in Jerusalem, it was “good” and “pleasant.” Like them, many families today look forward to getting together and enjoying a “good” and “pleasant” time at Christmas.

Why is it a challenge?

The *Encyclopedia of Christmas and New Year's Celebrations* acknowledges: “Family tensions that simmer below the surface during the rest of the year very often boil over when the family gathers together for the holidays.”

What Bible principles can help?

“Keep paying a due compensation to [your] parents and grandparents.” (1 Timothy 5:4) To the extent possible, arrange regular visits with your family. If your relatives live far away, you can still communicate often. Why not write a letter, call them on the telephone, send an e-mail, or chat online? Regular communication keeps misunderstandings to a minimum.

“You are cramped for room in your own tender affections. . . . Widen out.” (2 Corinthians 6:12, 13) Relatives seen only once a year can quickly become strangers—especial-



ly for children. Some children feel that they have little in common with their grandparents or distant relatives. Therefore, encourage your children to “widen out” in their affections by including elderly relatives.* Children who regularly spend time with elderly people tend to develop more empathy and appreciation for people who are older than they are.

“Saying the right word at the right time is so pleasing.” (Proverbs 15:23, *New Century Version*) How can you prevent misunderstandings or issues from straining family relationships? One way is to select “the right time” to discuss legitimate concerns. If your relationship is lubricated by regular communication, you will find it easier to approach family members privately to resolve any problems and enjoy “good” and “pleasant” times when you come together.

* See the articles “Why Should I Get to Know My Grandparents?” and “How Can I Get Closer to My Grandparents?” in the April 22 and May 22, 2001, issues of *Awake!* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

“Peace Among Men of Goodwill”

“Glory in the heights above
to God, and upon earth peace
among men of goodwill.”

—LUKE 2:14.

A reason why some celebrate Christmas.

Every year, the pope and other religious leaders preach messages of peace, hopeful that the Christmas season will fulfill the angelic proclamation: “Upon earth peace among men of goodwill.” Some make special pilgrimages to celebrate.

Why is it a challenge?

Peace during Christmastime is temporary at best. For example, in December 1914, while Europe was engulfed in World War I, British and German soldiers emerged from the trenches and celebrated Christmas together. They shared food, drink, and cigarettes. They even played soccer. However, the truce did not last long. In a letter from the front lines, a British soldier related that a German soldier told him: “Today we have peace. Tomorrow you fight for your country; I fight for mine.”

What Bible principles can help?

“There has been a child born to us . . . His name will be called . . . Prince of Peace. To the abundance of the princely rule and to peace there will be no end.” (Isaiah 9:6, 7) Is not that prophecy about Jesus Christ reassuring? Jesus was not born on earth to bring one day of



peace each year. As a heavenly Ruler, he will bring genuine peace that will not end.

“By means of me [Jesus] you may have peace. In the world you are having tribulation, but take courage! I have conquered the world.” (John 16:33) Even today, Jesus nurtures peace among his followers. True, Christians have tribulation. Yet, thanks to the Bible, they understand why suffering exists and how Jesus will bring lasting peace. Therefore, they enjoy peace of mind.

By following Jesus’ words, Jehovah’s Witnesses—regardless of their nationality, skin color, ethnicity, or language—enjoy such peace. See for yourself by attending a meeting at their Kingdom Hall. Perhaps you, like many others, will agree that this peace is better than any peace that Christmas can offer.

Jehovah’s Witnesses are unified by peace regardless of their skin color or language. See for yourself by attending a meeting at a Kingdom Hall

They Found Something Better

MILLIONS of Christians choose not to celebrate Christmas. How do they feel about their decision? Do they feel that they are missing out on something? Do their children feel deprived? Consider what Jehovah's Witnesses around the world say about the matter.

● **Remembering Jesus Christ:** "Before I became one of Jehovah's Witnesses, I rarely went to church. If I did go, I went only on Christmas or Easter. Yet, even then, I didn't really think about Jesus Christ. I no longer celebrate Christmas, but I attend Christian meetings twice weekly and I even teach others what the Bible says about Jesus!"

—EVE, AUSTRALIA.

● **The joy of giving:** "I get excited when people give me a present when I don't expect it. I love surprises! I also like making cards and painting pictures for other people because it makes them feel a bit happier, and it makes me happy too."—REUBEN, NORTHERN IRELAND.

● **Helping the needy:** "We enjoy making meals for people who are sick. Sometimes we bring them flowers, a cake, or a small gift to cheer them up. We enjoy this because we can visit these people at any time of the year."

—EMILY, AUSTRALIA.

● **Family togetherness:** "When our family gets together, our children get to know their uncles, aunts, grandparents, and cousins in a relaxed atmosphere. Since we are not bound by fixed holidays, we do not feel pressured, and our family knows that we visit them because we love them."—WENDY, CAYMAN ISLANDS.

● **Peace:** "At Christmastime, it seems that there is so much to do that few people think about peace. I have learned what the Bible promises for humans; I feel at ease. I understand that my children will enjoy a happy future."—SANDRA, SPAIN.



EVE



REUBEN



EMILY



WENDY



SANDRA

Why do some people not celebrate Christmas?

■ Around the world, nearly two billion people celebrate Christmas each December 25, while at least 200 million others celebrate the birthday of Jesus Christ on January 7. However, there are also millions who choose not to celebrate Christmas at all. Why?

For one thing, they may belong to a religion that is not part of Christendom. They may be of the Jewish, Hindu, or Shinto faith, to name a few. Others, such as atheists, agnostics, free-thinkers, or secular humanists, view the Christmas story as a myth.

Surprisingly, though, a sizable number of people who believe in Jesus reject the Yuletide traditions. Why? They point to at least four reasons.

First, they do not believe that Jesus was born in either December or January. The Bible does not give a specific date. It simply states: "There were also in that same country shepherds living out of doors and keeping watches in the night over their flocks. And suddenly Jehovah's angel stood by them, and . . . the angel said to them: ' . . . There was born to you today a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.' "—Luke 2:8-11.

Facts point to Jesus' birth at approximately the beginning of October when shepherds with their flocks would still spend the night in the fields. The countryside around Bethlehem experiences the coldest weather during the months of December and January. Hence, to keep them warm at night, flocks are herded into protective shelters.

A second reason: The only event Jesus specifically instructed his followers to commemorate was his death, not his birth, and this was to be done as a simple communion meal. (Luke 22:

19, 20) Note, too, that the Gospels of Mark and John are silent about Jesus' birth.

A third reason: There is no historical evidence that the early Christians celebrated the birth of the Christ. But they did memorialize his death. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26) It was not until more than 300 years after Jesus' birth that Christendom officially began to observe Christmas on December 25. Interestingly, in the mid-17th century, an act of parliament banned Christmas celebrations in England. In the United States, the Massachusetts General Court did the same. Why? The book *The Battle for Christmas*, says:

The only event Jesus specifically instructed his followers to commemorate was his death, not his birth

"There is no biblical or historical reason to place the birth of Jesus on December 25." It adds that to the Puritans, "Christmas was nothing but a pagan festival covered with a Christian veneer."

That brings us to a fourth reason: The unsavory origin of the celebration itself. The roots of Christmas can be traced back to pagan Rome with its mixture of festivals for honoring the agricultural god Saturn and the sun god Sol Invictus, or Mithra. Anthropologists Christian Räscher and Claudia Müller-Ebeling, coauthors of the book *Pagan Christmas*, write: "Like many pre-Christian customs and beliefs, the old feast commemorating the yearly return of the sun was rededicated to the birth of Christ."

In view of the foregoing, can you see why true Christians do not celebrate Christmas?



Are You in God's "Book of Remembrance"?

DOES Jehovah notice the efforts of his worshippers to please him? Yes, he does! But he observes more than their godly deeds and words of praise. He takes note even when they *think* appreciatively about him. What is more, Jehovah will never forget his people and what they have done. How can we be sure? The answer is found in words recorded by the prophet Malachi.—**Read Malachi 3:16.**

In the fifth century B.C.E., when Malachi prophesied, moral and religious conditions in Israel were appalling. The priests neglected their duties, and the people in general took up such God-dishonoring practices as sorcery, adultery, and fraud. (Malachi 2:8; 3:5) In the midst of such corruption, however, there was a core of Israelites who remained loyal. What were they doing?

"Those in fear of Jehovah spoke with one another," explains Malachi. Fear of God is a positive quality. Malachi here describes Israelites who had a profound respect for God coupled with a healthy dread of displeasing him. Note that those God-fearing individuals "spoke with one another." Evidently they got together to speak well of Jehovah and encourage one another, lest they become disheartened or tainted by the corruption around them.

The faithful Israelites showed their reverence for Jehovah in another meaningful way: They were "thinking upon his name." Another translation says "esteeming His name." Those God-fearing ones honored Jehovah even in their thoughts. In the privacy of their heart, they thought appreciatively, or meditated, on Jehovah and his great name. Was Jehovah aware of what they were doing?

Malachi says: "Jehovah kept paying attention and listening." From his lofty abode in heaven, Jehovah, in effect, inclined his ear and heard every word of praise that his worshippers spoke to one another. He also paid attention to all their private meditations. (Psalm 94:11) But he did more than just pay attention to their good words and thoughts.

"A book of remembrance began to be written up before him," notes Malachi. That book is a record of all those who have served Jehovah in integrity. Notice that it is called "a book of remembrance."^{*} That tells us that Jehovah will never forget his faithful worshippers and all that they have done to praise him—every good deed, word, and thought. But God remembers them for a reason. He promises to reward with everlasting life those whose names are indelibly recorded in his book of remembrance.[#]—Psalm 37:29.

How comforting it is to know that Jehovah values all that we do to worship him acceptably! The words at Malachi 3:16 give us cause for sober reflection. We do well to ask, 'Is my name in God's "book of remembrance"?' It will be if we do our best to act, speak, and think each day in ways that Jehovah will want to remember.

^{*} The Hebrew word for "remembrance" means more than just calling something to mind. It can also imply doing something about what is remembered.

[#] For more information about God's promise of eternal life, see chapter 3 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

SUGGESTED BIBLE READING FOR DECEMBER:

■ **Nahum 1—Malachi 4**



U.S. Army photo

AT LAST, I FOUND TRUE FREEDOM!

AS TOLD BY MARIA KILIN

"No one is asking for you," an officer of the prison said with a laugh. "You can stay here." How did we, a hardworking, peaceful Russian family, end up as prisoners in North Korea in 1950, some five years after the end of World War II?

ACCORDING to my documents, I was born in 1924. My birthplace was evidently the village of Shmakovka, in the Far East of Russia, near the Chinese border.

One day my father and my older brothers were taken away by bandits, and Mother never saw them again. She was left with a houseful of younger children, whom she could barely feed. A neighbor offered to take us young ones to the Russian Orthodox orphanage and say that Mother had abandoned us.

Mother agreed with this plan because her young ones, including me, would probably have starved to death if she hadn't. Now that I am in my mid-80's, I am grateful that Mother sent us to the orphanage. It probably saved our lives. Still, her decision continues to haunt me.

In 1941, I moved to Korea, where I married a kind Russian man named Ivan. Our daughter, Olya, was born in Seoul, Korea, in 1942. Our son Kolya was born there in 1945, and his brother Zhora in 1948. My husband cared for our family store, and I took in sewing. Because Seoul had been occupied by the Japanese, our children grew up speaking Japanese, although we spoke Russian at home. Until 1950, there seemed to be peace

among the Soviets, Americans, and Koreans in Seoul. All of them were customers at our store.

Captured by the North Koreans

Like a thunderclap, everything changed in 1950. North Korean troops took control of Seoul. Unable to flee, we were arrested along with other foreign civilians. For three and a half years, we were marched with British, Russian, American, and French prisoners of war to various locations all over North Korea. We were housed wherever there was shelter, and we tried to avoid the bombs.

On occasion, we lived in houses with heat and were given enough food. Usually, however, we had only millet to eat and slept in cold, abandoned buildings. Many of our group died of malnutrition and neglect. I was frantic when my children suffered. Winter came early in North Korea. I remember sitting by the fire all night, heating stones to place under the children.

When it got warmer, some Korean villagers taught us which wild plants were edible, and we foraged for greens, raspberries, grapes, and mushrooms. Clearly, the villagers felt no hatred toward us, only pity for our plight. I learned how to catch frogs to supplement our meager diet. It broke my heart

to hear my children constantly begging for frogs.

One October, we were ordered to march to Manp'o. We were told that oxcarts would be provided for the sick and the small children. Olya and her father were marched off with the group on foot. Her little brothers and I waited anxiously for days for the carts to arrive. Eventually they did.

Sick prisoners were piled on the carts like stacks of grain. It was a horrible sight! With little Zhora on my back, I tried to place Kolya on a corner of a cart, but he burst out crying: "Mama, Mama, I want to walk with you! Please don't leave me!"

Kolya trailed behind, one little fist clutching at my skirt while he trotted to keep up. Many prisoners were shot during this infamous march, which lasted for days. Flocks of crows followed, picking at the corpses that were left behind. Finally, we were reunited with my husband and Olya. We wept and embraced. That night, I stayed awake and warmed stones by the fire. Since I was now putting them under *all* my children, I was at peace.

In 1953, near the 38th parallel that divides North and South Korea, our lives became somewhat easier. We received clean uniforms, shoes, bread, and even candy. Soon, the British were released, and then the French. But we were citizens of no country. When the last prisoners were gone, we were alone. We wept in despair and could not eat. It was then that the Korean officer said the hurtful words quoted in the introduction.

A New Life in the United States

Surprisingly, not long afterward we were taken across the demilitarized zone into South Korea. Following



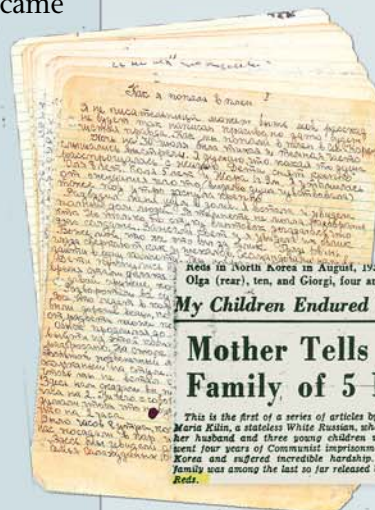
Village of Shmakovka, Primorskiy Kray, in the Russian Far East, where I was born

A COMPELLING STORY

Late in 1954, Maria Kilin wrote down a compelling account of her life in North Korea. It was translated into English by a Russian worker at the Australian Embassy and sold to a newspaper in the United States. It ran in 12 installments, from January 16 to 28, 1955.

The first installment began with the words: "I am not a writer. Perhaps I cannot write my story adeptly. But I can write it completely and I can write it truthfully." And Maria did.

The accompanying article provides a brief account of Maria's life, including the dramatic change that occurred years after she arrived in the United States.



lives in North Korea in August, 1953. The children are Yvokolai (left), then seven; Olga (rear), ten, and Giorgi, four and a half.

My Children Endured Korean Death March

Mother Tells How Reds Seized Family of 5 Huddled in Seoul

This is the first of a series of articles by Mrs. Maria Kilin, a stateless White Russian, who with her husband and three young children underwent four years of Communist imprisonment in Korea and suffered incredible hardship. The family was among the last so far released by the Reds.

We waited with cold fear in our hearts for nearly a month. The night of July 29 was overcast and almost silent. Across the prelate city only an occasional rifle shot could be heard. With each shot I think, some poor soul departed this life.

HANDWRITTEN MANUSCRIPT OF MY STORY AND THE FIRST INSTALLMENT IN THE NEWSPAPER

interrogation by American military personnel, we were allowed to immigrate to the United States. We made our way by ship to San Francisco, California, where we were assisted by a charitable organization. Later, we moved to Virginia, and acquaintances there kindly helped us to get on our feet. Eventually, we moved to Maryland to begin a new life.

We were overwhelmed by simple things, such as a vacuum cleaner. As immigrants in a new country, we worked long and hard. But I was saddened to see ones who were doing well in their new environment taking advantage of new arrivals. Soon after we arrived, we met a Russian Orthodox priest who said: "You are on blessed land now. If you want to progress, don't be with your own kind." I was shocked and puzzled. Shouldn't we help one another?

In 1970 a man named Bernie Battleman, one of Jehovah's Witnesses, called at our door to discuss something from the Bible. He was a strong, outspoken person, just like one of us. We talked for hours. Because I had

grown up in an Orthodox orphanage, I knew the church liturgy by heart. But never did I think of owning a Bible! Bernie brought us one and said: "This Bible is for you because I love you." He also introduced us to Ben, a Russian-speaking Witness from Belarus.

Ben and his wife kindly answered my questions from the Bible. I was sure, though, that the Witnesses had distorted the holy text. I was especially incensed that their publications said that Mary had children other than Jesus, when the church taught otherwise.

I called up a Polish friend and asked her to look at her Polish Bible to see what it said at Matthew 13:55, 56. When she read me the verse, I was shocked to learn that Jesus did indeed have younger brothers! My friend also called up an acquaintance who worked at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., to check this verse in all the available Bible translations there. She reported that they all said the same thing: Jesus had brothers and sisters!

I had so many other questions. Why do children die? Why are nations fighting? Why

U.S. Army photo

When Ivan and I were married, 1941



With my husband and two of our children, 1954



do people not understand one another, even when they speak the same language? The answers I received from the Bible thrilled me. I learned that suffering is not God's will for humans. I was overjoyed to learn that I would again see dear ones who had perished during various conflicts. Gradually, Jehovah became real to me.

One day, I was standing before my icons, begging God for help with my son, who had just returned from combat in Vietnam and was suffering deep emotional distress. Suddenly, I realized that my prayers should be directed, not to the icons, but to the living God, Jehovah. I pulled the icons apart and saw that they were nothing more than colorful tinfoil. I had bought them at the church, but that night I got rid of them.

It was not easy to break from the church I had grown up with. But I had come to value what the Bible teaches above everything else. A year later, I took my daughter and my husband with me to visit the Russian Orthodox priest. I had a notepad with pages of Bible questions with scriptures jotted under them. As I read the Bible verses out loud, the priest shook his head and said, "You're lost." He told us never to darken his door again.

This episode impressed my strong-minded, inquisitive daughter, Olya. She too began examining the Bible closely and was soon attending meetings of the Witnesses with me. I was baptized in 1972, and Olya was baptized the following year.

Our Family Motto

Our motto has been, Focus on the present, let go of the past. So we were never hesitant to do something new if we were convinced that it was right. When my daughter and I began developing a relationship with God, we had a strong desire to go to people's homes and tell them what we were learning. I must admit, my outspoken, unsentimental



In the garden of my home in Maryland, U.S.A., about 1990

personality meant that others would sometimes have to step in and smooth things over. But in time, I learned to talk to people of many nationalities and backgrounds who, like me, were searching for a better life.

During the years that followed, my daughter and I often said that if the Iron Curtain ever fell, we would go to Russia to help people like us learn about God. When it did fall in the early 1990's, Olya fulfilled that dream for both of us. She moved to Russia and for 14 years served as a full-time minister there. She studied the Bible with many and was able to assist in translating Bible literature from English into Russian at the Russia branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Now I am bedridden, and my children do all that they can to make my life as comfortable as possible. I thank God that after my early years of suffering, I truly found a better life. I have come to a realization of the Bible psalm of the shepherd David: "By well-watered resting-places [God] conducts me. My soul he refreshes. He leads me in the tracks of righteousness for his name's sake." —Psalm 23:2, 3.*

* Maria Kilin fell asleep in death on March 1, 2010, while this first-person account was being prepared for publication.



LEARN FROM GOD'S WORD

Why Did God Send Jesus to Earth?

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

1. Where was Jesus before God sent him to earth?

Jesus lived as a spirit person in heaven before he was born in Bethlehem. He was God's first creation and the only one created directly by God. Therefore, he is fittingly referred to as God's only-begotten Son. In heaven, he often spoke as God's representative. That is why he is called the Word. He also acted as God's helper and took part in the creation of all other things. (John 1:2, 3, 14) Jesus lived with God in heaven for aeons before humankind was created.

—Read Micah 5:2; John 17:5.



2. How did God send his Son to earth?

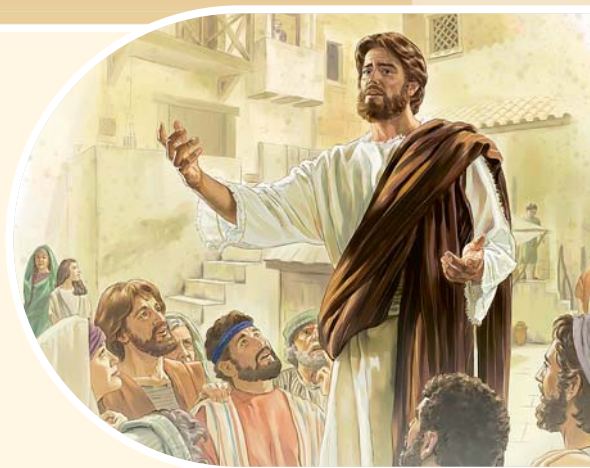
Jehovah transferred the life of Jesus from heaven to the womb of Mary by means of holy spirit. So Jesus was born without the aid of a human father. Angels announced his birth to some local shepherds, who were living outdoors at night as they kept watch over their flocks. (Luke 2:8-12) Thus, Jesus was born, not in the depths of winter, but likely in early October, when the weather was still warm. Some time later, Mary and her husband, Joseph, took Jesus to their home in Nazareth and raised him there. Joseph cared for Jesus as his adopted son. —Read Matthew 1:18-23.

When Jesus was about 30 years old, he was baptized, and God publicly announced that Jesus was his Son. Then Jesus began the work that God had sent him to do.—Read Matthew 3:16, 17.

3. Why did God send Jesus to earth?

God sent Jesus to teach people the truth. Jesus taught about God's Kingdom, a government in heaven that will bring peace to all the earth. He provided the hope of everlasting life. (John 4:14; 18:36, 37) Jesus also taught people many things about finding real happiness. (Matthew 5:3; 6:19-21) He taught by example. For instance, he showed how to do God's will even in difficult circumstances. When he was mistreated, he did not retaliate.—*Read 1 Peter 2:21-24.*

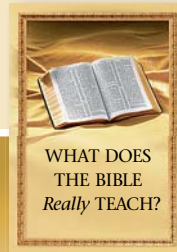
Jesus taught his followers self-sacrificing love. He had enjoyed many privileges living in heaven with his Father, yet he humbly obeyed his Father and came to earth to live among mankind. No one could give us a finer example of love than Jesus.—*Read John 15:12, 13; Philipians 2:5-8.*



4. What did Jesus accomplish by dying?

God also sent Jesus to die for our sins. (John 3:16) We are all sinners, meaning that we are imperfect and sinful. That is why we get sick and die. In contrast, the first man, Adam, was perfect. He had no sin and would never have died or become sick. But he lost his perfection when he disobeyed God. From Adam, we inherited sin and its wages, death.—*Read Romans 5:12; 6:23.*

Jesus, who was a perfect man, did not die for his own sins. He died for *our* sins. Jesus' death makes it possible for us to enjoy everlasting life and be blessed by God.—*Read 1 Peter 3:18.*



For more information, see chapters 4 and 5 of this book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



DO YOU BELIEVE THAT YOU HAVE Lived Before?

"The return to life is an actual fact, and it is a fact that the living are generated from the dead and that the souls of the dead exist."—PLATO, GREEK PHILOSOPHER, 5TH CENTURY B.C.E., QUOTING "SOCRATES."

"Since the soul is not found without body and yet is not body, it may be in one body or in another, and pass from body to body."—GIORDANO BRUNO, ITALIAN PHILOSOPHER, 16TH CENTURY C.E.

"Nothing is dead: men feign themselves dead . . . and there they stand looking out of the window, sound and well, in some new and strange disguise."—RALPH WALDO EMERSON, AMERICAN ESSAYIST AND POET, 19TH CENTURY C.E.

HAVE you ever wondered who you really are? Have you ever imagined that you have lived before? If so, you are not alone. Since early times, people from both Eastern and Western cultures have pondered such questions. In their search for answers, some have turned to a belief called reincarnation. This is the idea that when a person dies, an intangible "soul" leaves the body and is re-born in another body—human, animal, or even plant—in one or more successive existences.

While such a belief may satisfy some people, how can we be sure whether it is true? What does God's Word, the Bible, have to say about it? First, though, we must ask, Where did the idea come from?

Where Did Reincarnation Originate?

According to historians and scholars, the inhabitants of ancient Babylon, a city founded in the latter part of the third millennium B.C.E., toyed with the idea of the immortality of the human soul. The problem of immortality "engaged the serious attention of the Babylonian theologians," said Morris Jastrow, Jr., in his book *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*. To the Babylonians, "death was a passage to another kind of life," he explained. "No doubt, the impossibility for the individual to conceive of himself as forever deprived of consciousness, was at the bottom of the primitive theory of the perpetuity of existence in some form."

From that beginning in Babylon, teachings on the transmigration and rebirth of the soul also began to develop in other parts of the ancient world. Indian philosophers formulated an elaborate belief system around a cycle of rebirths based on the law of cause and effect, or Karma. Influential Greek philosophers also adopted the idea of reincarnation, giving it wide appeal.

Coming to our time, there has been a surge of interest in reincarnation in Western countries. Celebrities and the younger generation have become fascinated with Eastern religious ideas and practices. Today, there is a profusion of books and Internet sites that discuss the significance of supposed past-life experiences. Fast becoming popular in many countries is what has been called past-life therapy. It promotes the use of hypnosis to explore people's presumed previous lives in an effort to understand their present health and behavior patterns.

Is Reincarnation True?

Even though belief in reincarnation has ancient roots, surely an answer is needed to the foremost question—Is it true? And Christians would want to know if that belief is consistent with Bible-based Christian faith. (John 17:17) Since our Creator, Jehovah God, is the Source of life and "a Revealer of secrets," he discloses things about life and death otherwise unknown to humans. We can confidently look to his Word, the Bible, for answers on the subject.—Daniel 2:28; Acts 17:28.

God's answers can be easily identified when we allow the Bible to interpret itself. For example, at Genesis 3:19, we find God's words to Adam after Adam and Eve disobeyed him. God said: "In the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. For dust you are and to dust you will return." Adam was created from the dust. At death, he returned to the dust. That was God's clear statement on the matter. So at death a person is not reborn as someone else but ceases to exist.* Just as heat and cold, dry and wet, light and dark are opposites, death is the opposite of life. The dead are really dead! Isn't that simple and logical?

Recollections of past lives must therefore have other explanations. The workings of the human mind, including the subconscious, and the effects of medication or traumatic experiences are still not fully understood. Dreams and imagined events based on the colossal amount of information stored in the memory bank of the brain can be so vivid that they appear to be real. In some cases, wicked spirit forces create uncanny experiences that can make the unreal appear real.—1 Samuel 28:7-19.

It is a natural human desire to want to live

* For more information, see chapter 6, "Where Are the Dead?" in the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

and to know about the future. But where did that desire come from? Interestingly, the Bible says regarding the Creator: “He has also set eternity in the hearts of men.” (Ecclesiastes 3:11, *New International Version*) Hence, humans have a heartfelt desire to live indefinitely.

If our Creator, Jehovah God, has put the desire to live forever in the hearts of men, it is

only logical that he would also explain how that desire can be satisfied. The Bible reveals the Creator’s lofty purpose to bless obedient humans with everlasting life on a paradise earth. “The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it,” said the inspired psalmist, King David. (Psalm 37:29) A primary Bible doctrine inseparably linked with God’s eternal purpose is the resurrection of the dead.—Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15:16-19.

A Superior Hope

Rather than trying to piece together a doubtful framework of past-life experiences shrouded in mystery, why not take time to examine the Bible’s teaching on the resurrection? It provides truly satisfying answers now and great comfort in times of sadness.

For example, Theodore was deeply grieved after losing Rosemarie, his beloved wife of 44 years. He said: “I know Rosemarie is in the safest place possible—Jehovah’s memory. The Biblical accounts of the resurrection are so sure, with so many witnesses to testify that they actually occurred, that I am waiting to hear Jesus say, as he did to Lazarus: ‘Rosemarie, come on out!’”

Costas and Maria were tragically bereaved of their 20-month-old daughter because of a genetic disorder. Maria says: “The death of Evi, our daughter, was truly painful. From that time on, we have had a much deeper understanding of suffering, death, and the resurrection. Bible verses such as Isaiah 33:24; 35:5, 6; and Revelation 21:4, 5 mean so much more to us! Yes, Jehovah has been a loving Father in giving us the sure hope of the resurrection.”

The Bible’s answers to questions about life and death come directly from our Creator. Like Theodore, Costas, and Maria, you too can have a trustworthy hope for the future if you build it on the rocklike foundation of God’s Word. It can never lie!—Titus 1:2.

Resurrection

—The Proven Hope for the Dead

The Bible contains eight eyewitness accounts of people being raised from the dead back to life on earth.* These were cases of resurrection, not reincarnation. The ones brought back from the dead were immediately recognized by family and friends. In no case did the relatives need to search among newborns near and far to try and ascertain if one of the infants was the reincarnated soul of their dead loved one.—John 11:43-45.

Reassuringly, God’s Word indicates that the vast majority of those who have died will come back in the resurrection of the dead in God’s new world, which will soon replace this wicked world here on earth. (2 Peter 3:13, 14) Right now, the life patterns of billions of individuals are preserved in the limitless, perfect memory of Jehovah, the God who even remembers the names of all the stars! (Psalm 147:4; Revelation 20:13) When he restores successive generations of people to life in his new world, they will be able to trace their family tree and personally get to know their ancestors. What a fascinating, thrilling prospect!

* The eight recorded instances are found at 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:32-37; 13:20, 21; Luke 7:11-17; 8:40-56; John 11:38-44; Acts 9:36-42; 20:7-12. As you read the accounts, note how these resurrections took place in front of many eyewitnesses. A ninth account describes the resurrection of Jesus Christ.—John 20:1-18.



DID YOU KNOW?

Was Jesus in error when he spoke about salt losing its salinity?



DEAD SEA SALT DEPOSITS

■ In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told his followers: “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its strength, how will its saltiness be restored? It is no longer usable for anything but to be thrown outside to be trampled on by men.” (Matthew 5:13) Salt is a preservative. Hence, Jesus’ illustration likely meant that his disciples could and should protect others from spiritual and moral decay.

With regard to Jesus’ comment about salt losing its salinity, however, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* says: “The salt from the Dead Sea region was generally contaminated with other

minerals; thus the salt could be dissolved out of this mixture, leaving a tasteless substance.” It is understandable, therefore, that Jesus described the residue as “no longer usable for anything but to be thrown outside.” “Although its impurity made the salt from the Dead Sea inferior to most sea salts,” the encyclopedia adds, “its accessibility (it could simply be picked up along the shore) made it the main source of salt for Palestine.”

What meaning would the loss of a drachma coin in Jesus’ parable have to his listeners?



A DRACHMA COIN

■ Jesus told the parable of a woman who after losing one of the ten drachmas she possessed took a lamp and swept her house carefully until she found it again. (Luke 15:8-10) In Jesus’ day, a drachma was worth almost a day’s wage, so the monetary loss Jesus illustrated was not trivial. Yet, the scene he described was true to life for other reasons.

Some reference works indicate that women often used coins as ornaments. Jesus may thus have alluded to a coin that was part of a cherished heirloom or part of a woman’s dowry. Whether this was the case or not, losing one of her ten coins would understandably make the woman extremely anxious to recover it.

The houses of common people in Jesus’ day, moreover, were designed to keep out as much light and heat as possible. They had few, if any, windows. The floors were usually covered with straw or dried stems of various plants. If a coin was dropped, it would be hard to find. “Hence,” says one commentator, “when a comparatively small article, like a piece of money, was lost in such a place, the lighting of a lamp, and the sweeping of the house, were the most natural means to be used for its recovery.”



A LETTER FROM BENIN

What Did I Get Myself Into?

IT WAS a typical West African morning. The aroma of boiling sauces and rice wafted through the air. Women walked by with unbelievable loads balanced on their heads. The sound of hearty laughter mingled with fierce bargaining. The sun quickly whitened into a blaze.

Upon seeing a *Yovo*, or white person, a group of children swung into their usual song and dance. The song started with “*Yovo, Yovo, bon soir*” and ended with “How about a gift for the performance?” One boy was not singing. As I continued on my way, he followed me and began to gesture with his hands. It looked like sign language. In the United States, I had learned to spell in American Sign Language (ASL), but Benin is a French-speaking country.



I struggled to sign the eight letters of my name. The boy's face exploded into a smile. He grabbed my hand and guided me through some narrow streets to his home, a typical two-room cinder-block dwelling. His family flocked around. Everyone was signing. Now what? I signed my name and then wrote a note saying that I was a missionary who taught the Bible and that I would come back. Some hearing neighbors joined in, all nodding approval. ‘What did I get myself into?’ I thought.

Back home I pondered, ‘There must be someone who could help these people learn about God's promise: “The very ears of the deaf ones will be unstopped.”’ (Isaiah 35:5) I did some research. A recent census had counted 12,000 known deaf and hard-of-hearing people in Benin. My eyes widened when I discovered that ASL, not French Sign Language, was used in the schools for the deaf. But how sad to find that not one of Jehovah's Witnesses here knew ASL. Sighing, I said to a local Witness, “I wish someone who knew ASL would come and help.” She replied, “You're here, aren't you?” She was right! I ordered a self-help book and the





DVDs in ASL published by Jehovah's Witnesses. My prayers for help were answered when a Witness who knew ASL well moved from Cameroon to Benin.

Word of my endeavor spread. I was told I should visit Brice, a sign painter. His atelier, or workshop, made of palm fronds sewn together was refreshingly airy in the steamy climate. Years of his cleaning paint brushes had given the walls a rainbow of colors. He dusted off a couple of stools and stared at me, waiting for me to begin. I slid a DVD into my portable player. He dragged his stool closer to the small screen. "I understand! I understand!" he signed. Neighborhood children gathered and craned their necks to see. One blurted out, "Why are they watching a movie without sound?"

Each time I returned to see Brice, the huddle around the DVD player grew larger. Soon

Brice and others began coming to our Christian meetings. Trying to interpret for them aided my progress. As the group grew, some even came looking for me. For example, one day my old car grunted and groaned in protest as I hit potholes while trying to avoid stray goats and pigs. Then there was a sudden bang from the rear. 'Oh, no,' I thought to myself, 'not another breakdown!' No, it was a deaf man running after my car and trying to get my attention the best way he could—by banging on my car!

ASL groups developed in other cities. When sign-language sessions were organized at our annual convention, I was among those asked to interpret. As I stepped onto the platform and waited for the speaker to begin, for a moment my thoughts went back to when I first started in my assignment. I used to think, 'What more could I do as a missionary in Africa?' Looking at the audience, I knew that I had found the answer—be a missionary who helps the deaf. I no longer ask myself, 'What did I get myself into?'



The Use of Cosmetics in Bible Times

After bathing, the woman applies some fragrant oil over her softened skin. Then she opens a colorfully ornamented box that contains a collection of small bottles, vases, and jars made of glass, ivory, shell, or stone. In them she has an assortment of oils and perfumes that are delicately scented with balsam, cardamom, cinnamon, frankincense, honey, myrrh, and the like.

From the box, the woman takes out several delicately shaped spoons, dishes, and bowls. Using them, she mixes the cosmetics she has chosen for the day. Peering into a bronze mirror, she carefully proceeds with her beauty regimen.

IT SEEMS that since the earliest of times, women have been very interested in making themselves beautiful. Early tomb paintings, frescoes, and mosaics all suggest that the use of cosmetics was widespread among people in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. The heavily made up, almond-shaped eyes seen on images of Egyptian women were much admired.

What, though, about the Israelites? Did women of ancient Israel use cosmetics? And if so, what kind? There are, of course, no tomb paintings or frescoes from ancient Israel that we can refer to. But certain accounts in the Bible along with various archaeological artifacts unearthed in Bible lands can provide at least a glimpse of the use of cosmetics in Bible times.

The Tools Used

Countless items linked to the use of cosmetics and perfumes have been unearthed in excavations throughout the land of Israel. Stone bowls or palettes for grinding and mixing cosmetic materials, carrot-shaped perfume bottles, alabaster ointment jars, and

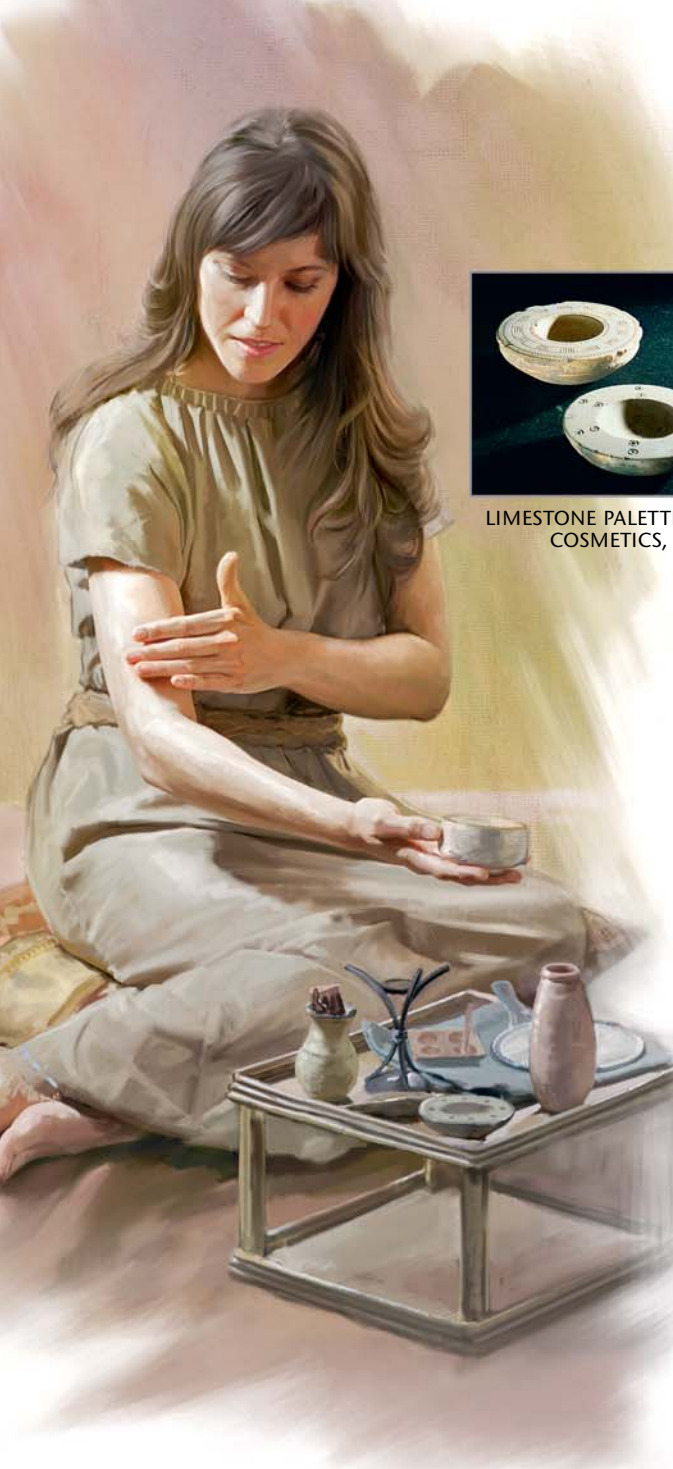
hand mirrors of polished bronze were among the finds. One ivory spoon has carved palm leaves on one side of its handle and a woman's head flanked by doves on the other.

Decorated shells appear to have been popular cosmetic containers among the well-to-do. Tiny cosmetic spoons made of ivory or wood, some carved in the form of girls swimming and various other intricate designs, have also been found in Egypt and at Canaanite sites. All of this testifies to the extent of the use of cosmetics by women of that time.

For the Eyes

In the Bible, one of Job's daughters is named "Keren-happuch." In Hebrew, this name could mean "Horn of the Black (Eye) Paint," that is, a receptacle or box used to store makeup, perhaps kohl, or eye makeup. (Job 42:14) The name could have alluded to her beauty in general, but it also seems to suggest that the use of cosmetics was known at that time.

Significantly, Biblical references to eye painting are always connected with such no-



LIMESTONE PALETTES FOR COSMETICS, ISRAEL



TERRA-COTTA PERFUME FLASK, ISRAEL



IVORY COSMETIC CONTAINER, ISRAEL

torious women as the scheming Queen Jezebel and unfaithful Jerusalem, portrayed as a prostitute by the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. (2 Kings 9:30; Jeremiah 4:30; Ezekiel 23:40) Judging by the large number of glass or stone containers with tiny wands for applying kohl eyeliner that have been unearthed, it is evident that many women in apostate Israel—particularly those of royalty and the rich—had taken up the practice of decorating themselves heavily with eyeliner and other kinds of cosmetics.

Perfumed Oil for Sacred or Secular Use

The production and use of olive-oil-based perfumes has a long history in ancient Israel. The Bible book of Exodus contains a recipe for making the sacred perfumed oil used by the priests in their services at the temple. It is a blend of cinnamon, myrrh, and other aromatic plants. (Exodus 30:22-25) In Jerusalem archaeologists have found what they believe to be a first-century C.E. workshop where perfume and incense were produced for use at the temple. There are many

The beauty regimen of some women in Bible times included the use of cosmetics for the eyes, face, and skin

Biblical references to perfumed oil, used in both sacred services and everyday life.—2 Chronicles 16:14; Luke 7:37-46; 23:56.

Water was scarce in that part of the world, so scented oils were a welcome addition to the hygiene routine. Oil was used not only for protection of the skin in the hot dry climate but also for its cosmetic benefits. (Ruth 3:3; 2 Samuel 12:20) The Jewish maiden Esther, before being presented to King Ahasuerus, received a 12-month “spa” treatment—a 6-month massage with oil of myrrh and then another 6-month treatment with balsam oil.—Esther 2:12.

Perfumes or perfumed oils were a valued commodity on a par with silver and gold. When the queen of Sheba made her epic journey to visit King Solomon, the valuable gifts she brought included gold, precious stones, and balsam oil. (1 Kings 10:2, 10) When King Hezekiah showed the treasures of his house to envoys from Babylon, “the balsam oil and the good oil” were proudly displayed alongside the silver, the gold, and his entire armory.—Isaiah 39:1, 2.

Only tiny amounts of perfume or oil could be extracted from the various flowers, fruits, leaves, resins, or bark. The Bible mentions a number of these aromatic plants, such as aloe, balsam, bdellium gum, calamus, cassia, cinnamon, frankincense, myrrh, saffron, and spikenard. Some of them were indigenous and grew in the Jordan Valley. Others were imported by way of the legendary incense trade routes from India, South Arabia, and elsewhere.

The Enigmatic Balsam Oil

Balsam oil is mentioned in the Bible in the accounts about Queen Esther, the queen of Sheba, and King Hezekiah, as noted above. In 1988 a small jug of oil was discovered in a cave near Qumran, on the western shore of

the Dead Sea. It raised much speculation. Was this the last remaining sample of the famous balsam oil? Researchers have no conclusive answer. Down to this day, growers are trying to reestablish the once renowned balsam groves.

Evidence seems to bear out that the balsam oil mentioned in the Bible was cultivated in the area around En-gedi. Excavations have uncovered furnaces, jars, and various metal and bone objects, dating from the sixth century B.C.E., similar to those used in other areas for perfume-making. Most scholars believe that the balsam bush originally came from Arabia or Africa. The fragrance was produced from the sap. Balsam oil was so highly prized that the methods of cultivation and production were kept secret.

Balsam was even used as a bargaining tool in political maneuvers. For example, according to the historian Josephus, Mark Antony obtained an entire grove of these precious plants and offered them as a gift to the Egyptian Queen Cleopatra. The Roman historian Pliny mentioned that during the Jewish War in the first century C.E., Jewish fighters attempted to destroy all the balsam plants to prevent the conquering Romans from taking them.

From Bible references and archaeological discoveries, we are able to get a glimpse of the art of cosmetic use among the people of Bible times. Rather than condemning the use of cosmetics and other adornment, the Bible emphasizes that they be used in modesty and with soundness of mind. (1 Timothy 2:9) The apostle Peter pointed out that what is “of great value in the eyes of God” is “the quiet and mild spirit.” In view of ever-changing styles and fashions, this surely is fine advice for Christian women, young and old.—1 Peter 3:3, 4.

"HISTORY DOES NOT LIE"

On June 14, 2007, the Estonian National Post Office issued a commemorative postage stamp, shown at right. The release was accompanied by an announcement: "This souvenir sheet was issued to commemorate victims of the Stalinist genocide of the Estonians." Between 1941 and 1951, tens of thousands of Estonians were forcibly deported.



"HISTORY does not lie." That is a well-known saying in Estonia, and there are similar sayings in other lands. Yes, we cannot change the past, but we can certainly learn from it. Wise King Solomon of ancient Israel said: "I saw all this when I thought about the things that are done in this world, a world where some men have power and others have to suffer under them."—Ecclesiastes 8:9, *Today's English Version*.

A powerful testimony to the truth of this Biblical statement was seen some decades ago in Estonia, as well as in many other parts of Eastern Europe. Human rule brought suffering to countless innocent people who were forcibly deported to faraway places to be resettled or imprisoned in labor camps.

According to local historians, more than 46,000 civilians were deported from this small country between 1941 and 1951. Most were targeted for their political affiliation, others for their nationality or social status. Jehovah's Witnesses, however, were singled out for their religious beliefs.

Attack on God-Fearing People

In a study published by Tartu University Press in 2004, historian Aigi Rahi-Tamm stated: "From 1948 to 1951, 72 of Jehovah's Witnesses were arrested, including people associated with them. However, a deportation on a far wider scale was planned and carried out on the night of April 1, 1951, not just in the Baltic States but also in Moldova, western Ukraine, and Belorussia."

Before 1951, Jehovah's Witnesses in Estonia were subjected to arrest, psychological pressure, interrogation, and imprisonment. This new campaign of deportation was apparently an all-out effort to wipe Jehovah's Witnesses out of Estonia altogether.

The date April 1, 1951, appears on the stamp mentioned above. The number 382 on the stamp refers to the number of Witnesses and their children who were deported on that day. This number includes some relatives and neighbors who were not Witnesses. During the day, arrests were made throughout the country. That night, those

arrested—young and old—were herded into animal boxcars on trains headed for Siberia.

Ella Toom,* 25 years old at the time, was one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Recalling a typical interrogation, she says: "An officer tried to frighten me and demanded that I stop preaching. Once he asked: 'Do you want to live? Or do you want to die with your God on the fields of Siberia?'" Ella, however, fearlessly continued to preach the good news. She was sent to Siberia and was transferred from one labor camp to another over a period of almost six years.

Among the hundreds of individuals who were deported without a court hearing was another young Witness woman, Hiisi Lember. Recalling the events of April 1, 1951, she related: "They came totally unexpectedly at night, ordering us: 'You have half an hour. Pack your things!'" Under the cover of darkness, Hiisi and her six-year-old daughter were then taken to the train station. The creaky train traveled from station to station and picked up more Witnesses. "We were thrown into an animal boxcar. Thankfully, the animal dung was frozen; otherwise, it would have been difficult to stand in it. We were like animals stuffed into a container."

* The life story of Ella Toom appears in the *Awake!* magazine of April 2006, pages 20-24.

Unimaginable "Scale of Terror"

"It is impossible to grasp the . . . scale of terror that swept across the country . . . , millions of ruined lives. For people [were] executed without trial or record; for people [were] exiled and sent to concentration camps, deprived of civil rights for having the 'wrong' occupation or the 'improper social origins.' . . . Let's just think about it: Millions of people died because of terror and false accusations."—PRESIDENT MEDVEDEV OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, OCTOBER 30, 2009.

The grueling two-week train trip was traumatic. The boxcars were overcrowded and unsanitary. Young and old were humiliated and disgraced in every possible way. Some of them wept and refused to eat. However, the Witnesses encouraged and helped one another by singing songs of worship, and they shared what food they had. They were sent to a "permanent settlement" and were told that this was a "one-way trip."

Hiisi recalled the heartwarming support that she received from fellow believers during this ordeal: "At one station, our train stopped next to a train from Moldova. Through the wall of the boxcar, we heard a man ask who we were and where we were going. We explained that we didn't know where we were going and that we were Jehovah's Witnesses from Estonia. Fellow Witnesses in the train from Moldova overheard the conversation. Through an opening in the boxcar, they threw us a big loaf of bread and some prunes." She added: "Then we began to understand the extent of the roundup of Jehovah's Witnesses—that it was from all the republics of the Soviet Union!"

Two teenage Witness girls—Corinna and her sister, Ene—were separated from their mother for more than six years. Their mother, also one of Jehovah's Witnesses, had been arrested earlier and sent to a labor camp. Then, on that infamous April night, the two young girls were snatched from their home and herded into a boxcar. Corinna reflects with thankfulness, "On the train, a Witness with two children offered to care for us and assured us that we could live together as a family with her and her children."

What happened at the final destination? The day after reaching the cold Siberian wilderness, a humiliating "slave market" began. Men from nearby collective farms came to choose workers for their farms. Corinna re-





1. ELLA TOOM
2. HIISI LEMBER AND HER DAUGHTER, MAAJA
3. ENE AND HER SISTER, CORINNA



calls: “We overheard them bickering among themselves, saying: ‘You already have a driver for your tractor. This one is mine,’ or, ‘I already took two old ones. You have to take some old ones too.’”

Corinna and Ene were brave girls. They said later: “We missed our mother very much, and oh, how we yearned just to be in her warm embrace again!” Even so, they maintained their spiritual strength and sense of humor. Corinna added: “In a way, it was good that mother did not see us because sometimes we had to work outside in the bitter cold without proper clothing.”

To be sure, innocent people in Estonia and elsewhere have suffered gross injustice, and Jehovah’s Witnesses as a group have been among them. (See the box “Unimaginable ‘Scale of Terror.’”) Despite such mistreatment and suffering in the past, Jehovah’s

Witnesses in Estonia are still an active and happy group of people.

A Bright Future Ahead

The Bible assures us that Jehovah God hates injustice. It says: “Everyone doing these things, every doer of injustice, is something detestable to Jehovah your God.” (Deuteronomy 25:16) Though God has tolerated wickedness in the past, the time will soon come when he will bring injustice and wickedness to an end. “Just a little while longer,” says the psalmist, “and the wicked one will be no more; and you will certainly give attention to his place, and he will not be. But the meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace.” —Psalm 37:10, 11.

Yes, a bright future awaits us! Though we cannot change the past, we can take steps to assure our future. Draw close to God and see how you can be part of the wonderful future when true righteousness will prevail.—Isaiah 11:9.



TEACH YOUR CHILDREN

Jotham Remained Faithful Despite Troubles at Home

WHEN a parent turns away from the true God, Jehovah, it can make life hard for a child. Let's talk about Jotham. We'll learn about the troubles he faced at home when he was growing up.

Jotham's father, Uzziah, was the king of Judah. He was the most powerful man in the country. Uzziah had been a good king for many years, even before Jotham was born. But later, when Jotham was still young, Uzziah became proud and broke God's Law. So God struck him with leprosy, a bad disease. ***Do you know what Jotham did then?—****

Jotham kept right on serving Jehovah. Perhaps his mother, Jerusha, helped him. Still, it may have been hard for Jotham to remain faithful to Jehovah after his father, Uzziah, was turned away from Jehovah's house.

What if your father or mother stopped worshipping Jehovah? ***That would make it very hard for you, wouldn't it?***— But it is not wrong to think about such a thing happening. A look at what David wrote in the Bible shows us this.

David's father, Jesse, was a good man. He served Jehovah, and we can be sure that David loved his father. But David learned to love Jehovah even more than he loved Jesse. Let's see why we know this.

* If you are reading with a child, the dash provides a reminder to pause and encourage the child to express himself.



Please turn in the Bible to Psalm 27:10. David wrote here: “In case my own father and my own mother did leave me, even Jehovah himself would take me up.” Think about this: What the Bible is saying is that *if* David’s father, Jesse, or his mother should stop serving Jehovah, David would keep on serving Him.

What about you? ***Would you keep on serving Jehovah even if your father or mother did not?***— This is a good question to ask yourself. The reason has to do with the most important commandment in the Bible. It is: “You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind.”

This commandment means to be faithful to Jehovah even when that is hard to do. ***Who do you think wants us to quit serving Jehovah?***— God’s enemy Satan the Devil does. Jesus called him “the ruler of this world.” The Bible also says he is “the god of this system of things.” ***Do we need to be afraid of Satan?***—

No, we don’t. Rather, we need to remember that Jehovah is more powerful than Satan. Jehovah will protect us if we trust in him. Read in your Bible how Jehovah protected David from the fearsome giant Goliath. Jehovah can also protect you if you remain faithful to him.

READ IN YOUR BIBLE

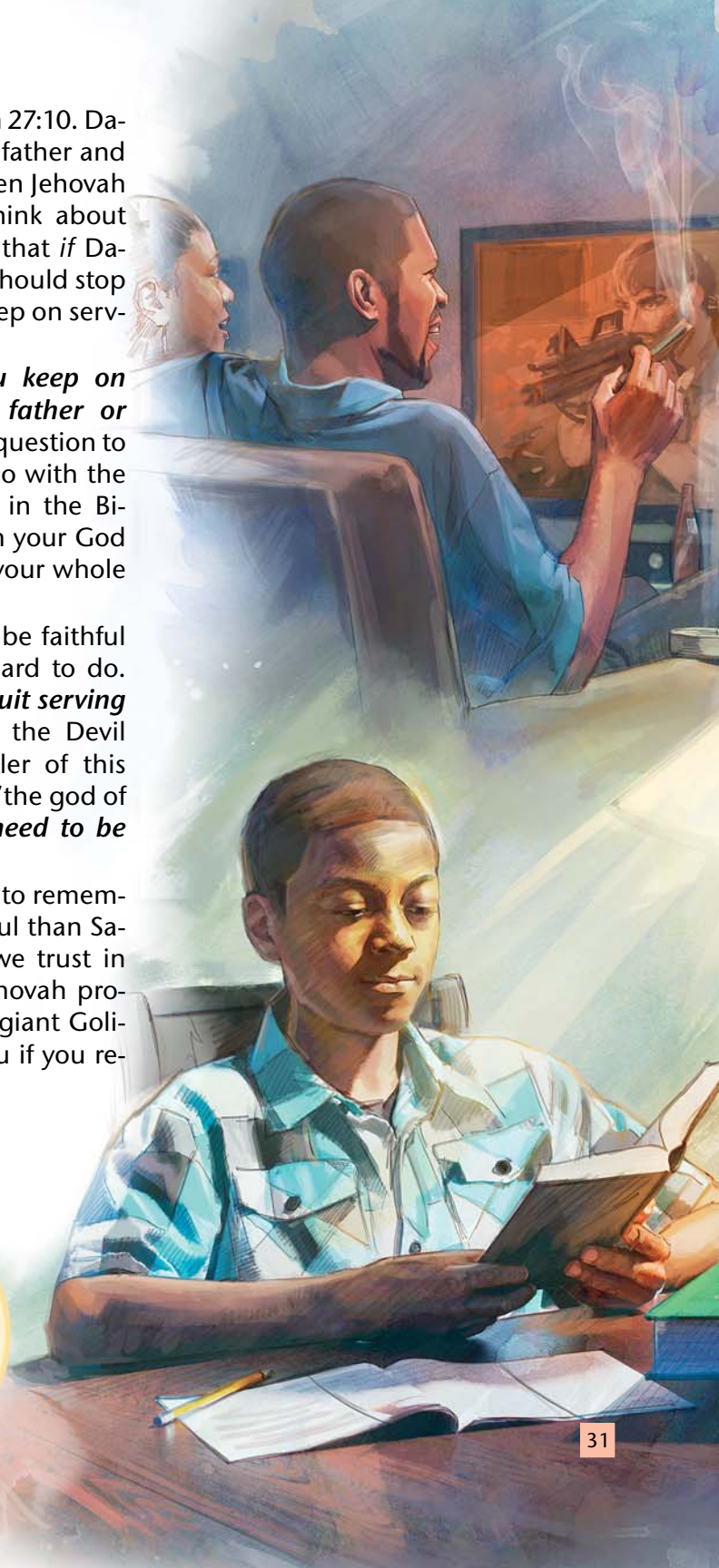
2 Chronicles 26:16-21; 27:1, 2

Matthew 22:37

John 12:31; 2 Corinthians 4:4

Hebrews 13:5, 6

1 Samuel 17:41-54





What do you think should characterize the Christmas spirit?
Is there something better? SEE PAGES 3-9.



Do you know why God sent Jesus to earth?
SEE PAGES 16-17.



Have you lived before? Some believe they have, but why?
SEE PAGES 18-20.



What did women in Bible times use to enhance their beauty?
SEE PAGES 24-26.