

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



WHEN A
LOVED ONE DIES

THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, honors Jehovah God, the Ruler of the universe. It comforts people with the good news that God's heavenly Kingdom will soon end 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 continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Will these words ever be fulfilled?

“God . . . will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more.”
—Revelation 21:3, 4.

This issue of *The Watchtower* discusses how God will fulfill that promise and what it can mean for you.

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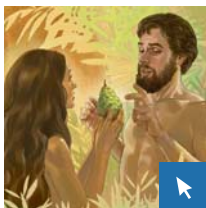
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When a Loved One Dies

“God knows best, baby.
... Don’t ... you ... cry.”

Those words were whispered into the ear of a woman named Bebe. She was at the funeral of her father, who had died in a car accident.

Bebe had been very close to her father. The remark came from a well-meaning family friend, but Bebe found it more cutting than comforting. “His death wasn’t for the best,” she kept repeating to herself. It was clear that when Bebe recounted the incident in a book years later, she was still grieving.

As Bebe came to see, it can take a long time for someone to overcome grief, especially when the bereaved person was very close to the deceased. In the Bible, death is aptly described as “the last enemy.” (1 Corinthians 15:26) It breaks into our lives with irresistible force, often when we are completely unprepared, and it robs us of those we hold dear. None of us are immune to its ravages. So it is not surprising if we feel at a loss when it comes to coping with death and its aftermath.

Perhaps you have wondered: ‘How long does it take to get over grief? How can a person cope with grief? How can I comfort others who have been bereaved? Is there any hope for our loved ones who have died?’

Is It Wrong to Grieve?

Have you ever had a brief bout with illness? Perhaps you recovered so quickly that you have practically forgotten the episode. Well, grief is not like that. “There is no such thing as ‘getting over’ grief,” writes Dr. Alan Wolfelt in his book *Healing a Spouse’s Grieving Heart*. However, he adds: “Over time and with the support of others, your grief will soften.”

As an example, consider how the patriarch Abraham reacted when his wife died. The Bible says that “Abraham began to mourn and to weep over Sarah.” The expression “began to” suggests that it took some time for him to cope with his loss.* Another example is Jacob, who was deceived into believing that his son Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. He grieved for “many days,” and his family members were unable to comfort him. Several years later, the death of Joseph still weighed heavily on his mind.—Genesis 23:2; 37:34, 35; 42:36; 45:28.

* Abraham’s son Isaac also experienced prolonged grief. As we note in the “Imitate Their Faith” article in this issue, Isaac was still grieving over the loss of his mother, Sarah, three years after her death.—Genesis 24:67.

Abraham mourned
the loss of his
beloved Sarah

The same is true today of many who mourn the death of someone very close. Consider the following two examples.

“My husband, Robert, died on July 9, 2008. The morning of the fatal accident was no different from any other day. After breakfast, as we always did when he was leaving for work, we gave each other a kiss, a cuddle, and an ‘I love you.’ Six years later the pain in my heart is still there. I don’t think I will ever get over my loss of Rob.”—Gail, aged 60.

“Although I have been without my dear wife for more than 18 years, I still miss her and grieve over my loss. Whenever I see something in nature that is attractive, my thoughts go to her, and I cannot help wondering how she would have enjoyed seeing what I am seeing.”—Etienne, aged 84.

Clearly, such painful and long-lasting feelings are only natural. Each person grieves in his or her own way, and it would be unwise to judge the way another person responds to tragedy. At the same time, we may need to hold off from condemning ourselves if our reaction to loss seems excessive. How can we cope with grief?



Dealing With Your Grief

There is no shortage of advice on this subject. Not all of it, however, is helpful. For instance, you may find that some will advise you not to cry or show your feelings in any way. Others may push you to do the opposite and expose all your feelings. The Bible presents a more balanced view, one that is supported by modern research.

In some cultures it is considered unmanly for a male to cry. But is there a real need to feel ashamed about shedding tears, even in public? Mental-health experts acknowledge that tearfulness is a normal part of grieving. And grieving may, in time, help you to move on despite the enormity of your loss. Suppressing grief, however, may do more harm than good. The Bible lends no support to the notion that it is wrong or unmanly to shed tears of grief. Think of Jesus, for example. At the death of his dear friend Lazarus, Jesus openly wept, even though he had the power to bring the dead back to life!—John 11:33-35.

Bouts of anger are often part of grieving, especially in cases of sudden, unexpected death. There are many reasons why a bereaved person may feel angry, such as when thoughtless and unfounded comments are made by a respected person. “I was only 14 years old when my father died,” explains a South African man named Mike. “At the funeral, the Anglican minister said that God needs good people and takes them early.* This angered me because we desperately needed our father. Now, 63 years later, it still hurts.”

And what about guilt? Especially in the case of unexpected death, the bereaved person may repeatedly think, ‘It might not have happened if only I had done this or that.’ Or maybe your last

encounter with the deceased involved an argument. This may add to your feeling of guilt.

If you are being plagued by such feelings of guilt and anger, it is important not to bottle up these emotions. Rather, speak to a friend who will listen and reassure you that such irrational feelings are common to many bereaved ones. The Bible reminds us: “A true friend shows love at all times, and is a brother who is born for times of distress.”—Proverbs 17:17.

The best Friend a bereaved person can have is our Creator, Jehovah God. Pour out your heart to him in prayer because “he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7) Moreover, he promises that all who do so will have their thoughts and feelings soothed by “the peace of God that surpasses all understanding.” (Philippians 4:6, 7) Also, allow God to help you heal by means of his comforting Word, the Bible. Make a list of comforting scriptures. (See accompanying box.) You may even want to memorize a few of them. Having such thoughts to ponder over may be especially

COMFORTING BIBLE VERSES

- God feels for you in your pain.
—Psalm 55:22; 1 Peter 5:7.
- God patiently listens to the prayers of his servants.—Psalm 86:5;
1 Thessalonians 5:17.
- God misses people who have died.
—Job 14:13-15.
- God promises to resurrect the dead.
—Isaiah 26:19; John 5:28, 29.

* This is not a Bible teaching. The Bible reveals three causes of death.—Ecclesiastes 9:11; John 8:44; Romans 5:12.

helpful at night when you are alone and find it hard to sleep.—Isaiah 57:15.

Recently, a 40-year-old man, whom we will call Jack, lost his beloved wife to cancer. Jack says that at times he feels intense loneliness. But he has found help in prayer. “When I pray to Jehovah,” he explains, “I never feel alone. I often wake up during the night and cannot get back to sleep. After reading and meditating on comforting thoughts from the Scriptures and then pouring out the feelings of my heart in prayer, I sense a calmness and a transcending peace come over me, putting my mind and heart at rest and enabling me to sleep.”

A young woman named Vanessa lost her mother to illness. She too has experienced the power of prayer. “In my most difficult times,” she says, “I would just call on God’s name and break down in tears. Jehovah listened to my prayers and always gave me the strength I needed.”

Some bereavement counselors advise those who are struggling with grief to get involved in helping others or to volunteer their time in some community service. Doing so can bring joy and may ease a person’s grief. (Acts 20:35) Many bereaved Christians have found that working to help others has brought them great comfort.—2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.

Comforting Those Who Mourn



Have you ever felt helpless when someone near to you was grieving over the loss of a loved one? Sometimes we may feel unsure of what to say or do—so we wind up saying and doing nothing. But there are practical, helpful things that we can do.

Often, all that is needed is your presence along with a simple expression, such as “I am so sorry.” In many cultures, giving the person a hug or a gentle squeeze of the arm is an effective way to show you care. If the bereaved one wants to talk, listen sympathetically. Best of all, do something for the bereaved family, perhaps performing a chore the grieving one has not been able to care for, such as cooking a meal, caring for the children, or helping with funeral arrangements if that is desired. Such actions may speak louder than the most eloquent words.

In time, you may be moved to talk about the deceased, perhaps focusing on some good qualities or happy experiences. Such conversation may even bring a smile to the bereaved person’s face. For example, Pam—who lost her husband, Ian, six years ago—says: “People sometimes tell me good

things that Ian did that I never knew about, and that makes my heart feel good.”

Researchers report that many bereaved people receive a lot of initial help but that their needs are soon forgotten as friends get busy again with their own lives. Therefore, make a point of contacting a bereaved friend on a regular basis after the loss.* Many grieving ones deeply appreciate this opportunity to relieve themselves of prolonged feelings of grief.

Consider the example of Kaori, a young Japanese woman who was devastated by the loss of her mother followed by the loss of her older sister 15 months later. Thankfully, she received ongoing support from loyal friends. One named Ritsuko is much older than Kaori and offered to be her close friend. “To be honest,” says Kaori, “I wasn’t happy about that. I didn’t want anyone to take the place of my mother, and I didn’t think that anyone could. However, because of the way Mama Ritsuko treated me, I came to feel close to her. Every week, we went out in the evangelizing work together and went to Christian meetings together. She invited me to have tea with her, brought me meals, and wrote me letters and cards many times. Mama Ritsuko’s positive attitude had a good influence on me.”

Twelve years have passed since Kaori’s mother died, and today she and her husband are full-time evangelizers. “Mama Ritsuko,” Kaori says, “continues to show her concern. When I go back home, I always visit her and enjoy her upbuilding association.”

Another example of someone who benefited from ongoing support is Poli, one of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Cyprus. Poli had a kind husband, Sozos, who set a good example as a Christian shepherd by often inviting orphans and widows to their home for association and a meal. (James 1: 27) Sadly, at the age of 53, Sozos died of a brain tumor. “I lost my loyal husband with whom I had spent 33 years of marriage,” says Poli.

* Some have even marked the date of the death on their calendar as a reminder to offer comfort when it may be most needed—on or near the date of the loss.



Find practical ways to offer help to the bereaved

After the funeral, Poli moved to Canada with her youngest son, 15-year-old Daniel. There, they began associating with a congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses. “The friends in my new congregation,” recalls Poli, “did not know anything about our past and our difficult circumstances. But that did not stop them from approaching us and embracing us with their kind words and practical help. How precious that help was, especially at that time, when my son needed his father most! Those taking the lead in the congregation showed a great deal of personal interest in Daniel. One in particular made sure to include Daniel when enjoying association with friends or when going out to play ball.” Both mother and son are doing well today.

To be sure, there are many ways we can offer practical help and comfort to those who mourn. The Bible also comforts us by means of a thrilling hope for the future.

The Dead Will Live Again!

You may recall that Gail, mentioned earlier in this series, doubts whether she will ever get over the death of her husband, Rob. However, she is looking forward to seeing him again in God's promised new world. "My favorite scripture," she says, "is Revelation 21:3, 4." It reads: "God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."

Gail says: "This promise says it all. My feelings really go out to people who have lost someone they love but who are not aware of this hope of seeing their loved one again." Gail acts in harmo-

ny with her beliefs by doing volunteer work as a full-time evangelizer, sharing with her neighbors God's promise of a future when "death will be no more."

'Unbelievable!' you may say. But consider the example of a man named Job. He had been desperately ill. (Job 2:7) Though Job wished he were dead, he still had faith in God's power to resurrect him back to life on earth. He confidently said: "O that in the Grave you would conceal me . . . You will call, and I will answer you. You will long for the work of your hands." (Job 14:13, 15) Job was confident that his God would miss him and would long to restore him to life.

Soon, God will do just that—for Job and countless others—when this earth is transformed into a paradise. (Luke 23:42, 43) "There is going to be a resurrection," the Bible confirms at Acts 24:15. "Do not be amazed at this," Jesus assures us, "for the hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out." (John 5:28, 29) Job will see that promise fulfilled. He will have the prospect of regaining "his youthful vigor," and his flesh will forever remain "fresher than in youth." (Job 33:24, 25) The same will happen to all who respond with appreciation to God's merciful provision of a resurrection to life on earth.

If you have suffered the loss of someone dear to you, the information we have discussed may not completely take away your grief. But by meditating on God's promises found in the Bible, you can find real hope and the strength to keep going.—1 Thessalonians 4:13.

Would you like to learn more about how to cope with grief? Or do you have related questions, such as "Why does God allow evil and suffering?" Please visit our website, jw.org, to see how the Bible gives comforting, practical answers. ■

Job was confident that he would live again





Who was Joseph's father?

Joseph, the carpenter of Nazareth, was the adoptive father of Jesus. But who was Joseph's father? Jesus' genealogy in Matthew's Gospel names a certain Jacob, whereas Luke's says that Joseph was "son of Heli." Why the seeming discrepancy? —Luke 3:23; Matthew 1:16.

Matthew's account reads: "Jacob *became father to* Joseph," employing a Greek term indicating clearly that Jacob was Joseph's natural father. So Matthew was tracing Joseph's natural genealogy, the kingly line of David, through which the legal right to the throne passed to Joseph's adoptive son, Jesus.

On the other hand, Luke's account says: "Joseph, son of Heli." That expression, "son of," can be understood as "son-in-law of." A similar case is found at Luke 3:27, where Shealtiel, whose real father was Jeconiah, is listed as "son of Neri." (1 Chronicles 3:17; Matthew 1:12) Shealtiel was likely married to an unnamed daughter of Neri, thus becoming his son-in-law. Joseph was in the same sense "son" of Heli, as he married Heli's daughter Mary. So Luke traces Jesus' natural lineage "according to the flesh," through his biological mother, Mary. (Romans 1:3) The Bible thus gives us two distinct and useful genealogies for Jesus. ■

What textiles and dyes were available in Bible times?



DYED WOOL FOUND IN A CAVE
NEAR THE DEAD SEA, DATED
FROM BEFORE 135 C.E.

Photographer: Clara Amit, COURTESY OF THE ISRAEL
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Sheep's wool was widely used for fabrics in the ancient Middle East as was hair from goats and camels. The most common textiles were woolen, and the Bible frequently refers to sheep, shearing, and woolen clothing. (1 Samuel 25:2; 2 Kings 3:4; Job 31:20) Flax, used to produce linen, was grown in Egypt and Israel. (Genesis 41:42; Joshua 2:6) The Israelites of Bible times may not have grown cotton, but the Scriptures mention use of this fiber in Persia. (Esther 1:6) Silk was a costly luxury material, likely imported only by traveling merchants from the Far East.—Revelation 18:11, 12.

"Wool came in a variety of natural colors, from clear white to dark brown with many shades between," says the book *Jesus and His World*. In addition, wool was often dyed. An expensive purple dye was extracted from certain mollusks, and various plants, roots, leaves, and insects were used to produce dyes in such colors as red, yellow, blue, and black. ■



AS TOLD BY
JOSEPH EHRENBGEN

YEAR BORN

1960

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

FRANCE

HISTORY

VIOLENT DRUG ADDICT,
DISRESPECTED WOMEN



I learned to respect women and myself

MY PAST: I was born in Mulhouse, northeastern France, in a working-class suburb renowned for its violence. My childhood memories are of violent disputes among families in the area. In our family, women were looked down on and rarely consulted by men. I was taught that a woman's place was in the kitchen, looking after the men and the children.

My childhood was not easy. When I was ten, my father died as a result of his alcoholism. Five years later, one of my older brothers committed suicide. The same year, I witnessed a murder during a family feud, and I was deeply shocked. Family members taught me how to use knives and guns and to fight whenever the occasion required it. A disturbed young man, I started to cover my body with tattoos and to drink.

By 16 years of age, I was drinking between 10 and 15 bottles of beer each day, and before long I started taking drugs. To pay for my vices, I sold scrap metal and resorted to theft. By age 17, I had already done prison time. In total, I received 18 sentences for theft and violence.

During my early 20's, my situation worsened. I smoked up to 20 marijuana joints a day and took heroin and other illicit substances. Several times, I nearly died of overdoses. I started dealing drugs, so I was constantly armed with knives and guns. Once, I tried to shoot a man, but fortunately the bullet ricocheted off his belt buckle! When I was 24, my mother died, and my rage increased. Frightened pedestrians would cross the street when they saw me approaching. Because of fights, I often spent my weekends at the police station or in the hospital having my wounds stitched up.

At 28, I got married. As you might expect, I did not treat my wife with respect. I insulted her and beat her. We did not do anything together as a couple. I thought it was enough just to shower her with stolen jewelry. Then, something unexpected happened. My wife started studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. After her first study, she stopped smoking, refused to accept any more stolen money, and gave me back her jewelry. I was furious. I opposed her Bible study and would blow

cigarette smoke in her face. I also ridiculed her throughout our neighborhood.

One night, in a drunken stupor, I set fire to our apartment. My wife saved me and our five-year-old daughter from the flames. When I sobered up, I was riddled with guilt. Deep inside, I felt that God could never forgive me. I remembered once hearing a priest say that the wicked go to hell. Even my psychiatrist told me: “It’s over for you! You are beyond redemption.”

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: After the fire, we moved in with my wife’s parents. When the Witnesses came to visit my wife, I asked them, “Can God forgive me for all my sins?” They showed me 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 in the Bible. That passage lists forms of conduct that God condemns, but it adds: “That is what some of you were.” Those words assured me that it was possible to change. Then the Witnesses reassured me that God loved me by showing me 1 John 4:8. Encouraged, I asked the

Witnesses to study the Bible with me twice a week, and I began attending their Christian meetings. I prayed to Jehovah constantly.

Within a month, I decided to quit drugs and alcohol. I soon felt that a war had erupted in my body! I suffered from terrible nightmares, headaches, cramps, and other withdrawal symptoms. Yet, at the same time, I sensed that Jehovah was holding me by the hand and strengthening me. I felt as the apostle Paul did. Concerning the help that God gave him, Paul wrote: “For all things I have the strength through the one who gives me power.” (Philippians 4:13) In time, I was also able to quit smoking tobacco.—2 Corinthians 7:1.

Besides helping me to get control of my life, the Bible also improved our family. My attitude toward my wife changed. I started to show her more respect and to say “please” and “thank you.” I also started being a real father to our daughter. After studying the Bible for one year, I dedicated my life to Jehovah and got baptized, following my wife’s example.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: I am certain that Bible principles saved my life. Even my non-Witness family members recognize that I would probably have died from substance abuse or would have been killed in a fight.

My family life was completely transformed by Bible teachings that pointed out my responsibilities as a husband and father. (Ephesians 5:25; 6:4) We started doing things together as a family. Now, rather than confine my wife to the kitchen, I happily support her in her activities as a full-time evangelizer. And she is happy to support me in my role as a congregation elder.

Jehovah God’s love and mercy have deeply touched my life. I have a strong desire to talk about his qualities to those considered hopeless cases, for many viewed me as one. I know that the Bible has the power to help *anyone* find a clean and purposeful life. Not only has the Bible taught me to love and respect others, both men *and* women, but it has also allowed me to respect myself. ■



I enjoy helping others to find purpose in life

“I Am Willing to Go”

REBEKAH looked out over the rugged landscape as the shadows lengthened. After weeks of travel, she was finally getting used to the swaying gait of the camel as she sat perched high atop its back. Her childhood home in Haran was far behind her, hundreds of miles to the northeast. She might never see her family again. Questions about her future surely flooded her mind—especially now as she neared her journey’s end.

The caravan had passed through much of Canaan and was traversing harsher terrain, the Negeb. (Genesis 24:62) Rebekah likely saw sheep. The country here might be too wild and arid for extensive farming, but it provided ample pasturage for grazing. It was familiar ground to her elderly guide. He was bursting with good news to tell his master—Rebekah was to become Isaac’s wife! Rebekah must have wondered, though, what kind of life she would lead in this land. What would her groom, Isaac, be like? They had never even met! Would he be pleased when he saw her? And how would she feel about him?

In many parts of the world today, arranged marriages may seem strange. In other regions, such unions are common. Whatever your background, you may agree that Rebekah was heading into the unknown. She was, in fact, a woman of remarkable courage and faith. We need both qualities when we face changes in life. There are other beautiful and rare qualities associated with Rebekah’s faith.

“I WILL ALSO DRAW WATER FOR YOUR CAMELS”

The great change that came into Rebekah’s life began in a way that may have seemed fairly ordinary to her. She grew up in or near Haran, a city

in Mesopotamia. Her parents were different from most people in Haran. They did not worship the moon-god Sin. Rather, their God was Jehovah. —Genesis 24:50.

Rebekah grew up to be a very beautiful young woman, but she was no passive, vain beauty. She was spirited, and she remained morally pure. Her family was prosperous enough to have servants, but Rebekah was not coddled or treated like a princess; she was raised to work hard. Like so many women of those times, Rebekah had some heavy chores to do, including fetching water for the family. Early in the evening, she would hoist a vessel onto her shoulder and head off to the spring.—Genesis 24:11, 15, 16.

One evening, after she had filled her jar, an elderly man ran up to meet her. He said to her: “Please give me a little sip of water from your jar.” It was such a modest request and so politely made! Rebekah could see that the man had traveled far. So she quickly swung her water jar from her shoulder and let the man drink, not a mere sip, but a real drink of the fresh, cool water. She noticed that he had a train of ten camels kneeling nearby and that the trough had not yet been filled to water them. She could see that his kind eyes were watching her attentively, and she wanted to be as generous as she could. So she said: “I will also draw water for your camels until they are done drinking.”—Genesis 24:17-19.

Note that Rebekah offered not merely to give the ten camels a drink but to water them until they were satisfied. If very thirsty, one camel might drink over 25 gallons (95 L) of water! If all



ten camels were that thirsty, Rebekah faced hours of hard work. As matters turned out, it seems unlikely that the camels were extremely thirsty.* But did Rebekah know that when she made her offer? No. She was willing, even eager, to work as hard as need be to show hospitality to this elderly stranger. He accepted her offer. Then he watched her intently as she ran back and forth, filling and refilling her jar and emptying it into the trough again and again.—Genesis 24:20, 21.

Rebekah's example speaks eloquently to us today. We live in an age when selfishness seems to reign supreme. As foretold, people have become "lovers of themselves," unwilling to go out of their way for others. (2 Timothy 3:1-5) Christians who seek to fight the influence of that trend do well to contemplate the Bible's picture of that young woman so long ago, running back and forth to the well.

* It was already evening. The account contains no indication that Rebekah was detained at the well for hours. It does not imply that her family was asleep by the time she finished or that anyone came to see why her errand was taking so long.

Rebekah surely noticed the elderly man's gaze upon her. There was nothing improper in his look; it suggested amazement, wonderment, and joy. When Rebekah was done at last, he gave her gifts—precious jewelry! Then he asked: "Please tell me, whose daughter are you? Is there any room at your father's house for us to spend the night?" When she told him of her family, his joy intensified. Perhaps in a rush of enthusiasm, she added: "We have both straw and much fodder and also a place to spend the night"—a considerable offer, as there were others traveling with the old man. Then she ran off ahead of him to tell her mother what had happened.—Genesis 24:22-28, 32.

Clearly, Rebekah was raised to be hospitable. Here is another value that seems to be on the wane today—and another reason to imitate the faith of this kindhearted young woman. Faith in God should lead us to be hospitable. Jehovah is hospitable, for he is generous to all, and he wants his worshippers to follow suit. When we are hospitable even to those who may never repay us,

Rebekah was industrious and hospitable



we please our heavenly Father.—Matthew 5:44-46; 1 Peter 4:9.

“YOU MUST TAKE A WIFE FOR MY SON”

Who was that old man at the well? He was a servant of Abraham, the brother of Rebekah’s grandfather. Thus, he was welcome in the home of Bethuel, Rebekah’s father. This servant’s name was probably Eliezer.* The hosts offered him a meal, but he refused to eat until he had disclosed the reason for his visit. (Genesis 24:31-33) We may imagine him speaking excitedly, for he had just seen powerful evidence that his God, Jehovah, was blessing him on this vital mission. How so?

Imagine Eliezer telling his story as Rebekah’s father, Bethuel, as well as her brother Laban, listened with rapt attention. He told them that Jehovah had blessed Abraham greatly in Canaan and that Abraham and Sarah had a son, Isaac, who was to inherit everything. Abraham had given this servant a commission of great importance: He was to seek a wife for Isaac among Abraham’s relatives in Haran.—Genesis 24:34-38.

Abraham made Eliezer take an oath that he would not select a wife for Isaac from among the women of Canaan. Why? Because the Canaanites neither respected nor worshipped Jehovah God. Abraham knew that Jehovah intended in due time to punish those people for their wicked practices. Abraham did not want his beloved son, Isaac, to be bound to those people and their immoral ways. He also knew that his son had a vital role to play in fulfilling God’s promises.—Genesis 15:16; 17:19; 24:2-4.

Eliezer went on to tell his hosts that when he arrived at the well near Haran, he prayed to Jehovah God. He asked Jehovah, in effect, to choose the young woman for Isaac to marry. How? Eliezer asked God to ensure that the girl He wanted Isaac to wed would come to the well. When asked for a

drink, she should volunteer not only to give Eliezer a drink but to water his camels as well. (Genesis 24:12-14) And who had come along and done precisely that? Rebekah! Imagine how she might have felt if she overheard the story Eliezer told her family members!

Bethuel and Laban were moved by Eliezer’s account. They said: “This is from Jehovah.” As was the custom, they concluded a marriage covenant, betrothing Rebekah to Isaac. (Genesis 24:50-54) Does that mean, though, that Rebekah had no say in the matter?

Weeks earlier, Eliezer had raised that very issue with Abraham, asking: “What if the woman is unwilling to come with me?” Abraham had responded: “This will release you from your oath.” (Genesis 24:39, 41) In the house of Bethuel too, the young woman’s preferences mattered. Eliezer was so enthusiastic about the success of his mission that on the following morning, he asked if he could return to Canaan with Rebekah immediately. The family, however, wanted her to remain with them for at least another ten days. Finally, they resolved the matter this way: “Let us call the young woman and inquire of her.”—Genesis 24:57.

Here, then, was a great crossroads in Rebekah’s life. What would she say? Would she play on the sympathy of her father and brother, pleading for a release from this journey into the unknown? Or would she view it as a privilege to have a part in events that were clearly being guided by Jehovah? When she answered, she revealed how she felt about this sudden, perhaps daunting, change in her life. She simply said: “I am willing to go.”—Genesis 24:58.

What a remarkable spirit she had! Today, our customs regarding marriage may be quite different, but we can still learn much from Rebekah. What mattered most to her was, not her own preferences, but those of her God, Jehovah. When it comes to marriage today, God’s Word still offers the best guidance available—regarding the kind of mate to choose and how to become a good husband or wife. (2 Corinthians 6:14, 15; Ephesians 5:

* Eliezer is not named in this account, but he was likely the servant involved. Abraham once intended to bequeath all his property to Eliezer in case there was no natural heir, so he was surely the eldest and most trusted of Abraham’s servants. That is also how the servant in this account is described.—Genesis 15:2; 24:2-4.

28-33) We do well to follow Rebekah's example and seek to do things God's way.

"WHO IS THAT MAN THERE?"

Bethuel's family blessed their beloved Rebekah. Then she and her childhood nurse, Deborah, along with some servant girls, set off with Eliezer and his men. (Genesis 24:59-61; 35:8) Before long, Haran was far behind them. The journey was a long one, 500 miles (800 km) or so, and it lasted perhaps three weeks. It was likely not a comfortable trip. Rebekah had seen camels aplenty in her life, but we cannot assume that she was an experienced camel rider. The Bible portrays her family as shepherd folk, not as traders who drove caravans of camels. (Genesis 29:10) Novice camel riders often complain of discomfort—even after a very short ride!

At any rate, Rebekah looked ever forward, no doubt trying to learn all she could from Eliezer about Isaac and his family. Picture the old man talking to her by an evening campfire, telling her of Jehovah's promise to His friend Abraham. God would raise up from Abraham's family line an offspring who would bring blessings to all mankind. Think of the awe that filled Rebekah's heart when she realized that Jehovah's promise would be fulfilled through her own husband-to-be, Isaac—hence, through her as well!—Genesis 22:15-18.

Finally, the day came that we described at the outset of this article. As the caravan traversed the Negeb and twilight began to fall over the land, Rebekah saw a man out walking in the fields. He looked thoughtful, contemplative. "She quickly got down from the camel," we read—perhaps not even waiting for the beast to kneel down—and she asked her guide: "Who is that man there walking in the field to meet us?" When she learned that it was Isaac, she covered her head with her shawl. (Genesis 24:62-65) Why? Evidently the gesture was a sign of respect for her future husband. That kind of submission may strike some today as old-fashioned. Really, though, men as well as women may take a lesson from Rebekah's humility, for



Rebekah showed a humility that is rare and precious

who of us does not need more of that lovely quality?

Isaac, a man of about 40, was still grieving the loss of his mother, Sarah, who had died about three years earlier. We may infer, then, that Isaac was a man of warm and tender feelings. What a blessing for such a man to be given a wife who was so industrious, hospitable, and humble! How did the two get along? The Bible says simply: "He fell in love with her."—Genesis 24:67; 26:8.

Even for us, some 39 centuries later, it is easy to love Rebekah. How can we help but admire her courage, her industriousness, her hospitality, and her humility? All of us—young and old, men and women, married and single—do well to imitate her faith! ■

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?



God's name (highlighted) as it appears in an ancient Bible manuscript

Does God have a name?

SOME PEOPLE SAY that he has no name, others say that it is God or Lord, and still others say that he has dozens of names.

What do you think?

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

“You, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth.”—Psalm 83:18.

WHAT ELSE CAN WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE?

- Although God has many titles, he has given himself only one name.—Exodus 3:15.
- God is not a mystery; he wants us to get to know him.—Acts 17:27.
- Knowing God's name can be the first step to having a friendship with him.—James 4:8.

Is it wrong to pronounce God's name?

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

- Yes
- No
- It depends

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

“You must not take up the name of Jehovah your God in a worthless way.” (Exodus 20:7) The only time it is wrong to use God's name is if this is done disrespectfully.—Jeremiah 29:9.

WHAT ELSE CAN WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE?

- Jesus knew and used God's name.—John 17:25, 26.
- God invites us to address him by name.—Psalm 105:1.
- God's enemies try to make people forget his name.—Jeremiah 23:27.

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What Does the Bible Really Teach?



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