

# Brazil News



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Editorial

## From Captain to Servant

Naaman, “a Syrian, the commander of the armies of Benhadad II in the time of Joram, king of Israel.” —Eaton’s Dictionary.

Bible history often clicks the shutter on only one brief chapter of the life of some of the most interesting personalities—like Naaman. In such cases, we feel an almost irresistible urge to fill in the picture with our own feeble brush strokes. What wouldn’t we give to be able to sit down and talk with Naaman, with his wife and her maid, with his servants, with the prophet...oh yes, and with his servant?

Naaman was a military man. An officer. In today’s military hierarchy, a captain is still fairly low on the ladder. We have reason to believe that in Naaman’s time the rank of a captain would be comparable to that of a modern general, for as Eaton says, he was “the *commander of the armies*” of his nation.

Soldiers—professional soldiers—are in a class all their own. True soldiers can be recognized, even when out of uniform. Their bearing, their posture, their cadenced walk, their speech, are different from that of a civilian.

No one rises in the ranks in the military without learning how to both receive and give orders. Boot camp teaches prospective Marines that it is more blessed to receive than to give, for until a recruit has learned how to receive and obey orders, he is unfit to be a soldier, and much less to be promoted and give orders.

Being a soldier is deadly serious business. Literally. They know that very few battles are fought without the loss of lives. So as they prepare for battle, they attempt to calculate how many soldiers they will lose to gain their objective.

(“Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?”)

Generals who have repeatedly made decisions that have cost hundreds or thousands

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of lives see life in a different perspective than a farmer, a businessman or a day laborer.

Naaman was a captain—or as we would say today, a general—in Benhadad II's army. He knew what it meant to overrun a walled city and put young and old to the sword, sparing no one. He himself must have at times given this dreadful order.

When plundering a city, the lives of some of the inhabitants were sometimes spared, especially in the case of promising young men (Daniel and his friends), maidens and children, and carried away into captivity.

It was on one of these incursions in Israelite territory that a small girl was taken captive. Since no details are given, we must use our imagination...

Before laying siege to the city, Naaman, the commanding officer, called his lieutenants into his conference tent and set forth the battle plans:

“Gentlemen, we have captured several men of this city as they attempted to escape by night and go to neighboring kings and solicit their help. With a bit of physical persuasion, we convinced them to give us some vital information.

“The city is strongly guarded and under normal circumstances it would be very difficult to gain entrance. But, through these same men whom our men captured we discovered that their water supply is low. At the most, they have a two-week supply. So rather than losing men trying to breach the wall, we will erect some earthworks to guard the spring, for when thirst becomes intolerable, in desperation they will attempt to break out and get water.

“When the enemy perceives that we have secured their water supply, they will throw open the gates of the city and beg for mercy. At this point you will march in with your soldiers and spoil the city. Spare only teenage boys that show a superior intelligence, the most comely maidens and children who seem to be exceptionally bright. Everyone else must be slain. As we leave, the city must be set afire.”

Things turned out exactly as Naaman had predicted. After setting the city afire, his army began the return journey.

The first evening, some 15 miles from the burning city, Naaman did a rapid inspection of the camp. As he walked through the section where the captives were kept, he kept his head high, apparently impervious to their desperate cries, yet seeing everything.

Suddenly he stopped and lowered his gaze. Sitting among the wailing captives, there was a young girl, maybe nine years old, whose countenance was different. Deep sorrow was stamped on her face, but not desperation. Looking upward toward the stars, from her lips there floated a plaintive song, a song of strength and hope.

The general stood for several moments listening to the beautiful melody. Then, turning to his aide-de-camp, he gave an order: “Take good care of that girl. I'm going to take her to my wife.”

Naaman's wife immediately took to the girl. One evening while talking to Naaman, she remarked, “It's an amazing thing. Karina has only been with us for three months and she can already carry on a conversation with me. No, it's not a fluent conversation, but she manages to tell me so many things. Apparently she and her mother were very close...”

Seeing the tears in his wife's eyes, Naaman asked, “What is it dear?”

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“Oh Naaman, why must war be so cruel? Why did you have your men kill Karina’s parents? And her brothers and sisters? Why...?”

Assuming a military air, in a clipped voice the general answered his wife: “That is warfare. That is what I have been trained to do.” His tone of voice made it plain that the subject was closed.

Time went by. Naaman’s wife often tried to imagine what her home would be like without the little slave girl. Often as she worked, her voice would be heard as she softly sang the songs of Zion.

A year went by. Then another. Karina by now was hardly a slave girl anymore. Like Joseph, she carried on many of the household functions. She was privy to all that happened in Naaman’s family. She knew that Naaman was a sick man. Many times as her mistress cried her heart out, Karina would sit with her, holding her hand and lowly sing the songs of Zion.

It was on one of these occasions that Karina said to her mistress, “Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! For he would recover him of his leprosy.”

“What do you mean?”

“Back where I came from, there is a prophet who is able to cure people with leprosy.”

“How do you know?”

“My dad saw it happen...”

“Tell me about it.”

“I heard him tell mother that one day he had to go to the prophet’s place on business. While he was there, a man was brought to him who was really bad off; he was all disfigured. Dad said that he could hardly walk anymore. When the prophet saw him, he kindly asked, ‘What do you desire of me?’ He answered, ‘Oh sir, that I be healed of this terrible disease.’”

“And then what happened?” asked the mistress, almost breathlessly.

“My dad said that the prophet looked at him for several moments. Then he walked up to the man, extended his hands over the leper’s head and said, ‘May Jehovah, the God of heaven, heal you.’”

“Was he healed?”

“My dad said that in that very instant the man was totally healed. His fingers and toes, his nose, his skin, were all normal again.”

That conversation had far-reaching effects. News soon reached the king’s ears. A messenger was immediately dispatched: “Naaman, the king wants to see you urgently.”

“Naaman, what is this story about a prophet in Israel being able to cure leprosy?”

“Well, I hardly know what to say. It was the little girl I brought back from Israel and is now my wife’s maid. She is a very reliable girl and we have never known her to be untruthful. I know it all sounds far out...but, coming from Karina, I’m inclined to believe there may be something to it.”

“Naaman, you **MUST** go to Israel and check this out. Your condition is such that your military days are over, that is, unless you can find a cure for your sickness.”

“That’s true, but I believe that your Majesty understands this is a very delicate

situation. As you know perfectly well, relations aren't good between us and Israel, especially after that last incursion when we burned some of their cities. How do I know they won't mob me?

"They won't. To begin with, you are known throughout Israel as a man of war. You are both feared and respected by all. You must go in full military dress. You will ask no favors of them. I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. You will take with you ten talents of silver, six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment. Do you understand, Naaman? You are going there as a military man, as my representative. You will go directly to the king and hand him my letter. Make it clear to him that you are fully prepared to pay for your medical treatment. We are asking no favors. We will pay—and pay well—for their services."

Naaman understood perfectly well the importance of going directly to the king. As commander of the Syrian armies, there was a thinly veiled threat of military reprisals if his request was not granted.

Naaman's entourage was large. Beside his most trusted servants, he was protected by a company of soldiers. Even at a distance, it was evident this was no ordinary group of travelers.

When the watchmen in the towers of the city gate spotted Naaman and company, runners were sent to the palace with the news. Soldiers were immediately put on alert with orders to shut the city gates at the slightest sign of provocation.

The arrival of Naaman and his troops was an imposing sight. The standards waving in the wind left no doubt: This was a regal/military commission. A sentinel came forward and saluted smartly. Naaman leaned out of his chariot and announced: "I bear a letter from the king of Syria for the king of Israel. Be so kind as to deliver it for me."

With tremulous hands the sentinel took the letter and set off at a run for the king's palace.

The king of Israel was pacing about in his summer garden when the sentinel arrived. Quickly the king broke the seal of the envelope and read: "Now, when this letter is come unto thee, behold I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy."

The reaction of the king was similar to that of Belshazzar upon seeing the handwriting upon the wall. He rent his clothes and had to be supported by his servants. Looking about in despair, the king moaned, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?"

Calling in his military advisors, he announced, "We're in big trouble. Naaman, the captain of the Syrian army is here. He is leprous and the king demands that I—that's right, that I—cure him of his leprosy. How can I? Am I God? I know exactly what is happening. He knows perfectly well I can't heal anyone of leprosy. If I tell him I can't he'll call in his entire army, which is probably hid down in the valley... And not one of us will live to tell the story."

As the king and his military officers deliberated, a soldier came running: "Your Majesty, Naaman is becoming impatient. He is conferring with his officers."

With this news, the king became incoherent. He was about to give the order to close

the city gates and prepare for a siege, when another messenger arrived. Expecting more bad news, the king asked, “What is it?”

“Your majesty, my lord, the prophet Elisha, sends you this message: “Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? Let [Naaman] come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.”

A sigh of relief was heard. The king knew of the prophet’s power to do miracles. Quickly he gave an order: “Tell Captain Naaman that the prophet Elisha will heal him. Accompany him to the prophet’s house.”

Elisha. A prophet. Yes, wasn’t that what Karina had said? It was a prophet, and not the king who would cure him of his leprosy. “Follow me,” the king’s servant said, “and I will lead you to the prophet’s house.”

News spread like wildfire that the mighty Naaman was in town. The king’s virulent fear had by now contaminated the populace. Windows and doors were barred and as Naaman and his company made their way through the city, the streets were deserted.

“Here we are,” announced the king’s servant, pointing to a small, unpretentious house.

“That... that is the prophet’s house?”

“Yes, this is where he lives.”

“You’re sure of that?”

“Positive.”

In his clipped military voice, Naaman ordered: “Inform the prophet that Naaman, captain of the Syrian army, wishes to see him.”

Hardly had the king’s servant alit from Naaman’s chariot, when the door of the prophet’s house opened and a servant came out. Approaching the official chariot, he announced, “Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.”

Thus said, the servant turned his back, entered the house and shut the door.

After the initial shock of such unceremonious treatment, Naaman flew into a rage.

“Let’s get out of here. Just you wait until Benhadad hears about this. He will teach these people a thing or two. Back to Syria!”

Naaman’s servants knew their master well. They were used to his choleric outbursts. It was they who frequently talked him out of rash decisions. Even now, as his chariot sped down the deserted streets, they attempted to reason with him.

Looking at his blotched skin, he bitterly cried out, “Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper...”

“But even so...” they attempted to reason with him.

“Are not Albana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean?”

Anxiously the servants besought their master, calling him father. “Father, please slow down. Let’s think this thing through. It’s true that the prophet was a bit...ah, how shall we say?...a bit undiplomatic. Perhaps he didn’t understand he was dealing with a captain of the Syrian army. Maybe that is his way of healing people...”

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“But didn’t Karina say that her dad saw him place his hands on the patient’s head and say, ‘May Jehovah, the God of heaven, heal you?’”

“Yes, father, that is true. But maybe he has more than one way of curing his patients. ‘If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean?’ Father, please try it. You have nothing to lose. Think of your career. Think of your wife. Indeed, think of your very life.”

Slowly the determined look in Naaman’s eyes began to soften. Common sense began to prevail over wrath. The servants knew that once again they had managed to steer their master in the right direction. They were not surprised when he ordered, “Let’s head out to the Jordan.”

As Naaman’s chariot approached the roiling waters of the Jordan, his indignation surfaced again. “Why couldn’t the prophet have just put his hands on my head? Does he think I don’t have money to pay for his treatment? He didn’t even give me a chance to tell him how much I was prepared to pay. That old prophet is going to have to realize that a captain in the Syrian army isn’t a beggar...”

The captain now spoke in undertones, to himself. “Look at that muddy water... Dip seven times... And if nothing happens and I come out of the river dripping muddy water...? And others find out what a fool I made of myself? If I return to Syria still a leper, and Benhadad finds out about this humiliating trick the king of Israel is playing on me...”

“Please, father...”

Military men are disciplined men. Like other mortals, they resist, but they are trained to listen to the voice of common sense.

Once again looking at his dying body, Naaman made his decision. “What is worse? White, decaying skin? Or muddy skin? I have nothing to lose by finding out... And who knows...?”

Miraculously, several scenes floated through his mind. He saw his wife, her eyes filled with tears—and hope—as he bid her farewell. She believed, from the bottom of her heart, that he would return to Syria a new man.

He saw Karina, with her gentle eyes, He heard her singing the songs of Zion, that first night in captivity, and then many, many times again in his home. He remembered her words: “Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! For he would recover him of his leprosy.”

And then there came a thought such as he had never before had in his life. As a military officer, he had always expected—and demanded—special treatment. This special treatment he demanded of his wife, of his household, of the man on the street, and of all those of inferior rank in the king’s army. Come to think of it, he felt himself inferior only to the king of Syria. Not even to the king of Israel. And yet, here he was, an enemy, a destroyer, in the land of Israel, demanding a favor which the most mighty men in his own country were unable to give. Never before had it crossed Naaman’s mind, never had he imagined it possible, that maybe he wasn’t worthy of what he was asking.

Naaman paused at the river’s bank, looking at the red tide. He stood there for long moments, until he heard one of his servants again say, “My father...”

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Turning, he looked into the concerned faces of his servants and said, of all things, “Thank you.”

Once again he faced the river. How could it be? He, Naaman, the mighty and valiant Namaan, the terror of neighboring nations, the captain of the king’s armies, was at that very moment dying. Before him flowed the red waters of the Jordan. Yet he, Naaman, the mighty and valiant Naaman, the terror of neighboring nations, the captain of the king’s armies, believed he deserved better treatment.

Better treatment! After the incursions made into Israel, after killing men, women and children, young and old, after taking captive the best of the land, he deserved better treatment? He, a dying man, whose valor, fame and rank would go to the grave with him, deserved better treatment?

Naaman didn’t have a Christian Hymnal. He knew no Christian songs. Naaman was a pagan, a sinner. Yet, if at that moment he could have seen number 308, The Cleansing Wave, and sung the chorus, he would have done so with deep meaning:

*The cleansing stream I see, I see!  
I plunge, and oh, it cleanseth me;  
Oh, praise the Lord, it cleanseth me,  
It cleanseth me, yes, cleanseth me.*

Astonished, Naaman’s servants beheld as he removed his uniform, with its epaulets and decorations, and tossed it on the ground. Unhesitatingly he stepped into the river, not stopping until the water reached his shoulders. Then, seven times, his head disappeared beneath the “crimson wave.”

As Naaman came up from the river, his servants hardly noticed his skin, his restored features. They could only gaze at his face. Gone was the military mien. He was smiling, not sardonically, not haughtily, but joyously. With tears in his eyes, he embraced each of his servants. And said “Thank you” to each of them. Never, never had they dreamed such a thing was possible.

His servants had picked up his uniform and flicked the dirt off as much as possible. They now offered to help him dress. With a wave of the hand, he dismissed their offer. “Find me some ordinary clothes. I don’t feel like wearing these clothes.”

“Father, but we have cleaned them up...”

“Yes, yes I know. And thank you. But I want something worthy of my rank. You...” he said, turning to one of his servants, “you are about my size. Loan me one of your robes.”

Back in the chariot, the charioteer asked, “Back to Syria?”

“Not just yet. Let’s go back to the prophet’s house.”

As they returned, Naaman chatted with his servants. He told them of the feeling that came over him when he realized he was unworthy to be healed and the wonderful sensation of seeing his restored body. Never before had Naaman chatted with his servants, and much less revealed his inner feelings to them. Later, when the servants were alone, one of them said, “It’s unbelievable! Now when I’m with Naaman, he gives me the feeling that I am his superior.”

“It’s really strange,” another said. “We used to call him father, but now I feel like he is my brother.”

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The prophet was waiting when Naaman and his company pulled up in front of his house. He, like the servants, was more impressed by the look on Naaman's face than by his healed body. Truly, this man was healed in both body and soul.

After embracing the prophet, Naaman made a brief speech: "Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel; now therefore I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant." The erstwhile captain, now a servant, was offering to pay the prophet for his services.

The prophet, of course, refused, even after Naaman had insisted. Now he asked a favor—a strange favor: "Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? For thy servant will hence forth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the Lord."

Now came the final proof of Naaman's "conversion." His new conscience constrained him to discuss with the prophet a problem which he foresaw upon returning to Syria: "In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon; when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing."

The prophet simply replied, "Go in peace."

When the earth from the two mules was unloaded in Naaman's backyard and formed into an altar, no one was happier than Karina. As the smoke would curl upward from the sacrifices being burned, she would sing the songs of Zion.

If Karina would have had a Christian Hymnal, doubtlessly she would have sung number 308 for her master. Or rather, they together would have sung number 308.

*Oh, now I see the crimson wave,  
The fountain deep and wide;  
Jesus, my Lord, mighty to save,  
Points to His wounded side.  
I see the new creation rise,  
I hear the speaking blood;  
It speaks! Polluted nature dies,  
Sinks 'neath the crimson flood.  
I rise to walk in heav'n's own light,  
Above the world and sin;  
With heart made pure and garments white,  
And Christ enthroned within.  
Amazing grace! 'tis heav'n below,  
To feel the blood applied;  
And Jesus, only Jesus know,  
My Jesus Crucified.  
The cleansing stream I see, I see!  
I plunge, and oh, it cleanseth me;  
Oh, praise the Lord, it cleanseth me,  
It cleanseth me, yes, cleanseth me.*

Even today, captains cannot sing this song. Only servants. ▲



## Thinking Out Loud

### Jihad

Henry Kissinger, one of the greatest statesmen of all times, arguably has a better grasp today of the workings and nuances of the state of the world than any other political analyst. In a recent Newsweek article, the octogenarian reflects on the challenges which the newly-elected president of the United States will face during the next four years in office. He writes:

*No president has faced an agenda of comparable scope. This is not hyperbole; it is the hard history has dealt this generation. Never before has it been necessary to conduct a war with neither front lines nor geographic definition and, at the same time, to rebuild fundamental principles of world order to replace the traditional ones which went up in the smoke of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.*

During the Colonial days, warfare, waged with muskets, bayonets, swords and muzzleloading canon was a precise engagement with the enemy. Dressed in bright, highly visual uniforms, opposing armies would often meet on an open plain marching in strict formation. At a predetermined distance from each other, the order would be given to halt. An officer, usually on horseback with sword in hand, would give the order to get ready, aim and fire. Then came the order (to the survivors) to reload and fire. Finally there would come the order to charge, when bayonets and swords came into play. Needless to say, in this chivalrous type of warfare, amounting to a mass duel, the casualty rate was very high.

It was this mentality that war should be gentlemanly and fought with rules respected by both sides that gave the Indians an enormous advantage over the Colonists. The Indian, with inferior weaponry was often able to inflict severe damage on the white man by using trees, shadows, the darkness of night and other subterfuges as his allies.

While the Colonists never did become proficient at invisible warfare, they did learn how to use uneven terrain and trees to their advantage. The Indians were subdued by sheer superiority of weaponry, organization and ruthlessness.

The conflict in Vietnam stalemated because of invisible warfare. Lilliputian soldiers disappeared in underground tunnels, only to reappear many miles distant, ready for combat. Supplies were transported for hundreds of miles on the backs of human carriers threading their way through hidden trails in dense jungle.

On the surface and in the air, American troops equipped with state of the art equipment, flying in mammoth helicopters and supersonic fighters, were unable to bring this ragtag army to its knees.

Why? Because most of the time they were invisible. An American soldier once remarked, that the barber who gave him a haircut during the day in Saigon, could very easily be a soldier shooting at him at night in the jungle.

The president of the United States must today face an invisible enemy far more cunning and barbaric than Indians or Vietnamese. Radical Moslems today divide the world into “we” and “they”—“we” being the ones chosen by Allah to rule the earth,

and “they” being we, the Satanic ones who need to be destroyed at any cost, in a war known as jihad. In *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*, author Norman F. Cantor describes this (un)holy conflict in the 12<sup>th</sup> century as “the Moslem *jihad*, or holy war, with its doctrine that the highest morality was to die fighting on behalf of the deity.”

The United States today finds itself in the crosshairs of the jihad warriors; friendly nations are also prime targets. It can safely be said that the greatest challenge the United States has ever faced is survival of the invisible jihad foes—yes, survival, for this foe will never be overcome.

There are especially several factors that make this a struggle for survival:

Firstly, nations—which includes those in both Europe and Asia—are all too aware of the dread consequences that casting their lot with the United States can bring. With the honorable exception of the United Kingdom (which may change with the next Prime Minister), the majority of the countries of the world are either highly critical of the United States, or pointedly neutral, hoping to thus appease the wrath of the jihad.

We quote Kissinger:

*“All this has generated a witches’ brew of mutual misunderstandings. In America, critics describe European attitudes as fainthearted, querulous and, on occasion, duplicitous. In Europe the media (and too many political figures) revel in descriptions of America’s racial tension, the death penalty, difference over the environment and mistreatment of prisoners as if aberrations reflected the ultimate meaning of the United States. Shifting their priority from the Atlantic alliance to the U.N. Security Council, Europeans feel no special obligation to support U.S. policy, on occasion actively opposing it.”*

Squeezed into a nutshell, America will have to fight this battle alone, and even so come to the rescue of ungrateful nations that come under attack by religious fanatics.

Secondly—and this I realize loyal Americans will probably resent—with ever increasing security measures, the day may well come in which Uncle Sam’s pocket book will no longer be sufficient to pick up the tab. President Reagan’s missile shield, that would have neutralized the Soviet Union’s pre-emptive capabilities, proved more than their already shattered economy could handle. Rather than develop a similar technology, they threw in the towel. Soon the Berlin Wall crumbled and a precarious capitalism has sprung up.

Thirdly, the media is increasingly departing from its primordial function of *informing* audiences and is now *influencing* audiences with biased news. The press is able to make or break public officials, to place them in office or keep them from being elected. To say that the media today is controlled by the forces of evil would hardly be an exaggeration. God’s children should use great discretion in reading and interpreting the news.

The short-term objectives of the jihad warriors may be to collapse towers and destroy cities, but long-term, there looms the very real possibility of economic collapse, when it is no longer possible to foot the national security bill.

As already happened this past election, voters will clamor for a president who will make peace with opposing forces, believing that jihad warlords and followers can be placated.

The former election was decided by one vote, cast in the Supreme Court. For man this was a close one; for God it was a revelation of His will. The margin this election

was better, but still not a strong national referendum. As we have said at different times, democracy can survive only so long as 51 percent of the population is God-fearing. Once those who fear the Lord become a minority, elected officials will rule according to the itching of their ears.

President Bush is not up to the job of ruling his own nation and maintaining world peace. Nor is any other human being. It is only if he accepts a loan of divine wisdom that he will have a chance. We are not of those who put President Bush into office, but we should be of those who make him successful in office. If we have prayed for rulers before, we should now double, triple, our prayers in their behalf.

Henry Kissinger says that “*Opportunity for world order presents itself to each generation disguised as a set of problems.*” Current problems are not just another set of problems. They are end-time problems. They will never be solved or go away; they can only be steered in the least destructive way by the President of the United States, the Prime Minister of England and other concerned officials. But as never before, it will be the prayers of the saints that will grant these officials wisdom and courage to make right decisions. ▲

## Zigzagging Around

### Telephones

When we moved to Rio Verde in 1969, our telephone system was strictly local. Some of the businesses and only a few households could afford a phone.

Once limited domestic long-distance service became available, it used the old manually operated switchboard in which physical contact was made by plugging the right peg in the right hole.

Service wasn't good. Those of us who lived through that period will never forget the shouting that could be heard from the other side of the street...

“Alô! ALÔ! **ALÔ! ALÔÔÔÔ!**”

Fiercely the person grips the receiver and shouts even louder. In short sentences, repeated possibly a dozen times, the matter was discussed, until *a linha caiu*—the line fell—that is, until getting cut off (Lamentably, we on the Colony are beginning to speak a somewhat mongrel English and it is very common to hear someone say, “I was talking to so and so, when the line fell..”)

Finally the day came that an international call could be made. Since we didn't have phones back then, we had to go to the telephone office in town. A normal wait for a call to go through was one to two hours. Once I spent eight hours waiting.

Since all phone services were state owned, and consequently monopolized, the right to a phone line was at least five hundred dollars—but with a two to three year waiting period. It was possible to get one quicker by buying from another individual who had a line for sale, for up to five thousand dollars. And then there was the option of looking in the classified ads and find a number of telephone line brokers. They would have lines available for immediate installation, at an astronomic price. Often these brokers would

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offer immediate loans with no collateral or red tape. When it came right down to it, what it took was a quick signature, signing one's telephone line over to the broker in case the loan wasn't paid. I suspect these brokers fervently hoped the loans wouldn't be paid.

Then there was the thing of renting out telephones. Someone with six or eight telephones rented out would have a very decent income.

All that has changed. There is no longer such a thing as renting out a telephone, or buying or selling lines. The state owned telephone company has been sold and private companies compete fiercely for their share of the market. The big winner has been the customer. Today it is possible to sign up for a new telephone and have it installed the same day, or at the most, the following day, for a minimal fee. Anyone today can own a phone. Proof of this is that presently there are 25 phones for every 100 inhabitants.

But that isn't even half of the story. Today there are more cell phones in Brazil than conventional lines. It isn't unusual to see someone traveling with a horse and cart—with a cell phone hanging on his belt.

Cell phones, which used to cost nearly a thousand dollars, today can be purchased for as low as 30 dollars, divided into 10 equal payments of three dollars, without interest. Rates are constantly coming down. ▲

## Transportation

Brazil's Achilles' heel is transportation. A country the size of the continental United States, with tremendous potential, should have a good transportation system. Beginning with the highway system, for every one thousand square kilometers of territory...

Brazil has 26 km of highways;

China has 38;

Mexico has 57;

And the United States has 447!

Of Brazil's 164,247 kilometers of highway, 55,000 are in bad shape. Or worse. To fix these roads would cost over three billion US dollars, ten times more than the government is currently spending.

Studies show that Brazil has some of the worst roads in the world. Not only does this hinder development and cost industry, merchants and farmers billions of dollars in lost profits, but it makes Brazil's highways some of the most dangerous in the world. In Brazil there are 24 traffic fatalities for every 100 thousand inhabitants per year. In France there are four!

When I think of rural Kansas in which even small towns are served by one, and maybe two, railroads, Brazil's situation becomes especially bleak. In the 40s, railroads were put on the back burner and investments dropped to a minimum. Even many existing railroads were abandoned. Powerful lobbies tipped the balance in the favor of truck manufacturers, in detriment to rail and water transportation.

In Brazil 65% of all freight is hauled by truck, 15% by rail and 20% by water.

China: 14% truck, 37% rail, 50% water.

United States: 33% truck, 44% rail, 23% water.

When it comes to air transportation, Brazil has a much better record. Most airports are modern, aircraft are good and rates are moderate. And as is happening world over, inefficient airlines are going broke and in their place we see new, cost-efficient companies.

For the sake of you readers who are acquainted with air transportation in Brazil...

Varig Airlines, the “Brazilian PanAm,” is struggling under an enormous debt load. Presently it is undergoing yet another restructuring. Because of its strategic importance, it is believed Varig will end up getting some kind of government bailout.

Transbrasil has gone under and no longer flies.

Vasp was privatized a number of years ago. The wheeler-dealer owner, Wagner Canhedo, is better at managing crises than airlines, but everything indicates his game will soon be up.

Varig continues to be a very good option to fly, as are TAM and GOL, plus a number of fledgling cost-efficient airlines.

For international travel, in addition to Varig and TAM, there are a number of N American carriers. All are good.

Brazil has a good safety record. ▲

## Bible Study

At different times in the past, I have mentioned that we were using Bible Doctrine and Practice (which we also have in Portuguese) for our Wednesday Bible Study. Finally, after three seasons, we have finished the book.

I have been asked what method or helps we used. It couldn't have been simpler. A chapter would be selected and announced for the upcoming Wednesday evening. We would then spend as many evenings as necessary to finish the lesson. A few lessons were finished in one evening, while others took two, three and even four evenings. For those who didn't have a book, lessons were printed out in both English and Portuguese.

I can highly recommend Bible Doctrine and Practice for both adults and youth. The book is written in a way that no helps are needed; it *is* a textbook, which, when used with the Bible, lays out the doctrines of the Bible.

One of the secrets of using Bible Doctrine and Practice in Bible Study is to set no goals. As much as possible, decide, *after* each lesson, and not *before*, if there will be another session.

Just a little repeat of what I have said before. It is deplorable how we have come to believe that the study of the Bible must be accompanied by helps. To simply assign a chapter or a subject and encourage everyone to dig in and study—after all, isn't that what Bible study is about?—meets a blank stare. Bible study, folks, is meat, not Gerber's baby food. ▲

## Tract Exploratory Trip

The South American continent is *muito grande*. Yet very few colored pins bedeck it in our activity offices. Maybe this is because of an ingrained feeling that Catholicism is an impenetrable veil...a locked door that no man can open.

Historically, Catholicism is the official religion in South American countries. But Catholicism is *not* an impenetrable veil, nor a locked door. Today it is a paraplegic religion, a sterile religion. The old-time fervor is limited pretty much to the old-time members. For the new generation its function is social, the traditional place to get married.

Not only has Catholicism been neutralized, but evangelical churches are springing up everywhere. Contrary to the Catholic church, whose members are largely tepid, those attending evangelical churches are fervent in their belief. The argument that South America is a Catholic continent and closed to the gospel no longer is valid.

Since both tract distribution and mission work in the South American continent have been placed largely in the hands of the church in Brazil, with complementary help from North America, it was felt a quick investigation tour should be made to several neighboring countries to check out tract distribution possibilities.

Brothers Chris Stoltzfus, Daniel Martin and William Miller visited both Paraguay and Bolivia. Bro. Mark Loewen accompanied them in Paraguay, where they visited some of the Mennonite colonies where people are searching for the truth.

Steeped in traditionalism, these Mennonites face a formidable social hurdle as they think of breaking ties with a religion that has a past but no future.

The brethren report that in their travels in both Paraguay and Bolivia, tracts were anxiously accepted. They feel there is an open door to continue this work.

Bolivia also has a large Mennonite settlement that hopefully will open its doors to visits.

The tract office on the Rio Verde Colony is gearing up to this work and now has a small variety of Spanish tracts, which are being printed here, for the work in South America.

The Spanish language is going to become increasingly important and necessary as the work in neighboring countries opens up. ▲

## Book Review

### On Alternative Medicine

By Rodney Mast, published by Lamp and Light Publishers, Inc., sold by Gospel Publishers, this study on alternative medicine includes the following chapters and subtitles:

1. To Heal the Whole  
*Our bodies, minds, and spirits*  
*Holistic healing for our minds and spirits*  
*God's healing for our minds and spirits*
2. With the Hands  
*Chiropractic*  
*Reflexology*  
*Applied kinesiology*  
*Other massages*
3. From China  
*Acupuncture*  
*Acupressure and shiatsu*  
*Chinese herbology*
4. Eyes, Plants, and Pendulums  
*Iridology*  
*Homeopathy*  
*Radiesthesia*
5. In the Back of the Mind  
*Biofeedback*  
*Yoga*  
*Meditation*  
*Hypnotherapy*
6. Come Now, Let Us Reason  
*The energy link*  
*Clouds of fog*  
*Draw a line*  
*What would Paul say?*  
*The New Age...undercover*
7. The Alternative  
*Questions*  
*Calculation Detail*

It is doubtful if anyone will agree with everything the author has to say about alternative medicine. Yet, it is a book that should be read. The attraction we as a people are increasingly feeling for non-conventional cures is alarming.

Those who practice and rely on alternative therapies will question what Mast has to say. I recommend that *On Alternative Medicine* be read with an open mind by all. It will be especially helpful for those who wonder if there would be any harm in resorting to alternative practices. Some answers may be found.

The author concludes his introduction by stating: "As the years go by, we will likely find the difference between alternative and conventional medicine growing less and less distinct. There is an effort in many hospitals to combine the two, or at least to offer alternative therapies along with conventional medicine. More doctors are embracing mystical concepts. While this may mean more sympathy for a faith which before we considered unreasonable, it

also presents an age-old challenge in clothes that are new to us: Will we worship the one true God and Him alone?"

In today's highly scientific world we constantly must make decisions. Not all modern technology can be used by Christians. Many inventions which can be had for a song and attempt to thrust themselves upon us are diabolical. The same is true in alternative medicine, and as Mast points out, will become increasingly so in conventional medicine.

For the Christians, the twenty-first century is a time of constant decisions. Some of these decisions appear to be quite insignificant, but can open the door to something very serious. *On Alternative Medicine* may help you make the right decision. ▲

## This & That

The rainy season was ushered in this year with steady rains. I noticed today coming home from town that the entire countryside is green with soybeans—not corn.

I didn't see a single cornfield between Rio Verde and the Colony. If the price at harvest time does as well as the rains are doing today, there will be a bunch of happy farmers around.

Life on the Colony has been enriched by a dual culture. Now we are privileged to have an additional culture. The Paul Jeffery family, from the United Kingdom, are now living in what used to be the Reno & Marilyn Hibner house. Pauls have been missionaries in the neighboring state of Mato Grosso for a number of years. They came in contact with the church some time ago and have decided they would like to make it their home. We welcome them.

One of the most interesting adoptions took place some months ago, when Stephen & Dete Kramer adopted a little boy in the Northeast. Stephen, how about writing up your experience for the next issue of BN? I'm sure readers would enjoy it.

October 12 is Children's Day in Brazil. It was also Susan Vieira's baby shower.

Roger Hibner's are back from the northern state of Roraima, where they spent a number of months taking care of the crops on the land purchased by several brethren from the Rio Verdinho Cong. One of them, Dea. David Miller, is willing to answer questions. Call him at 011 55 64 613 9333. The state of Roraima is north of the Equator and—if I'm not mistaken—only some three hours by air from Miami. I believe there is real opportunity for children of the soil in northern Brazil.

Perdigão is expanding operations in the Rio Verde area. 168 new broiler barns (capacity: 24 thousand birds each) will be put up, plus quite a few more hog barns. They are setting up a turkey and heavy broiler operation in the city of Mineiros, several hundred kilometers west of Rio Verde.

The dollar/real exchange is slowly dropping. A dollar now buys approximately 2.78 reals, a tribute to our president's economic policy.



# Brazil News