

With Prayer Guide THE SOWER is the official journal of the Bible Society of South Africa. Articles herein may be freely used with acknowledgement.

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Dear Friends

It has been a busy period of late.

I just returned from São Paulo, Brazil, where I visited with CEOs from various Sub-Saharan African countries and YouVersion representatives to discuss digital strategy and mission resilience within the United Bible Societies (UBS) fellowship.

During the recent Africa CEOs meeting, the six resolutions of the World Assembly were discussed to find a roadmap for implementing these resolutions. The main topic of the six resolutions is translations. In May, the Sub-Saharan Translation Affinity group will gather in Kempton Park to discuss executing the plans for this region.

The other resolutions included Digital Transformation and Strategy, Mission Resilience, Immigration, Creation Care, Printed Bible Distribution and Bible Engagement. The issue of digital strategy and mission resilience are hot topics within the UBS family that necessitated the meeting with YouVersion.

The youth communicate digitally and there is consensus that Bible Societies need to be in this space. The big question is how and what can we do together as Bible Societies to be effectively present in this space. The other hot topic is mission resilience. Many Bible Societies struggle financially, and grants from more prominent Bible Societies and resource organisations have become less sustainable.

Please pray for the Bible Society as we continue to navigate the way forward towards fulfilling our vision of a Bible for everyone.

Until next time,

RP van by h

Rodney van Wyk Chief Executive Officer

A worthy legacy to **HELP MILLIONS RECEIVE A BIBLE**

Martin grew up in a God-fearing family. From an early age, he was taught the importance of the Bible and the positive impact it can have on a person's life.

"Even in your darkest moments, the Lord has a way of communicating with you through His Word. All we need to do is read our Bibles and trust in Him," Martin says.

"I received my first Bible, the Bible Society of South Africa's (BSSA) Afrikaans 1983 translation, for my ninth birthday. Little did I know that some 33 years later, I would work for the same organisation," he reflects.

"As an adult, the Word of God plays an even more significant role in my life now than when I paged through my first Bible. As a child, I didn't realise just how lucky I was. Even today, millions of people across the globe still do not own a Bible. For many, having a Bible in their own language is just a dream."

"That is why I decided, years ago, to leave some of my earthly wealth to the BSSA. By doing this, I can help in a small way, ensuring that they continue providing affordable Bibles to everyone in need so that all may experience the life-giving message of the Lord."

Nobody should be denied a Bible because of financial constraints.

By nominating the BSSA in his will, Martin will contribute to leaving a legacy that will have eternal value for countless people. What a wonderful way to impact the lives of future generations. If you want to leave a legacy, visit www.biblesociety.co.za.



CEO MEETS WITH UBS to further Bible work



Rev Rodney van Wyk, CEO of the Bible Society of South Africa (BSSA), initiated several key events to kick off Bible work for 2024.

Notably, from 1 February to 26 March, CEOs and Board Chairpersons from 40 countries in the SSA clusters (Sub-Saharan Africa) convened for their bi-annual meeting, focusing on resolutions from the 2023 World Assembly.

Rev van Wyk presented on collaboration opportunities during the Africa Bible Translation Roadmap session, and joined a panel discussing governance and leadership roles in the Bible Society Mission Resilience. The CEOs also addressed challenges in their respective roles.

LuminAfrica, formed by the BSSA and five other translation organisations, aimed to secure funding from high-income individuals, businesses and foundations.

Rev van Wyk chairs its Steering Committee.

From 18 to 21 February, LuminAfrica hosted guests from various American

organisations, including Illuminations, ETEN, and the Global Philanthropy Fellowship, alongside resource companies like the Seed Company and Mergon Foundation. They focused on learning best practices for building relationships with high-net-worth individuals supporting religious causes.

Additionally, a United Bible Societies (UBS) delegation, joined by YouVersion representatives, convened in São Paulo at the Bible Society of Brazil. While UBS and YouVersion have a longstanding partnership, recent developments within both parties necessitated a re-evaluation of the current agreement.



BIBLES HELP young saplings grow

The Bible Society of South Africa recently had the opportunity to be part of a special project at a Mpumalanga school.

Parents from Middelburg Primary School have been involved with the Oak Tree Project for many years. The project provides a group of impoverished students with daily meals. The parents wanted to do something special for the kids during Easter and decided to present each child with a gift hamper that included a Bible. Pastor Johan Pieterse, a Bible Society Relationship Ambassador, presented the school with 38 Afrikaans and four English Bibles for the project. The Bibles, each with a special handwritten note inside, were part of the gift hampers shared with the children on 20 March, the last day of the first term.

"We thank the Bible Society of South Africa for the Bibles. The children were excited and overjoyed when they received their gift bags with their very own Bibles inside," one of the grateful parents said.

GATHERING FOR WOMEN in Kimberley



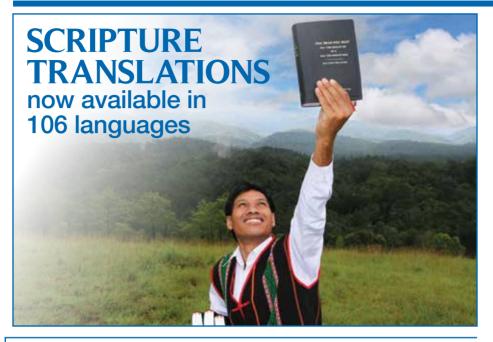
During March, the Northern Cape Reformed Churches hosted Sustersaamtrek 2024, an event for women in Kimberley, Northern Cape. The event created a platform for spiritual growth, community building and the celebration of womanhood through the lens of the Christian faith.

The main speaker, Prof Fika Janse van Rensburg, spoke to the audience at the Reformed Church in Bloempark about growth in all seasons. His message shed light on the importance of mental perseverance and adaptability, regardless of life's challenges.

Bible Society of South Africa (BSSA) Relationship Ambassador, Mr Neels Loots, and BSSA Central Region Team Lead, Dr Elrika Senekal-Van der Berg, informed the meeting about the BSSA's current projects and initiatives in the Northern Cape. Mr Loots then invited the audience to get actively involved in BSSA projects and activities, a call that many took up.

Dr Hennie Briel and his team hosted the event, which served as a platform for spiritual growth and inspiration.

It also laid the foundation for stronger relationships within the community and a connection to Bible work in the region.



n 2023, Bible Societies worldwide achieved a significant milestone by completing Scripture translations in 106 languages, impacting over 1,25 billion people.

This achievement underscores the United Bible Society's (UBS) dedication to making the Bible accessible to diverse language communities globally.

In total, 72 first translations, including 16 complete Bibles and 17 New Testaments, were published, benefiting 100 million individuals who gained access to Scripture in their native languages for the first time.

Moreover, Bible Societies revised or created new translations, including study editions in 36 languages, reaching over 1,15 billion people. These efforts reflect the commitment of Bible Societies to ensure the relevance and meaningfulness of sacred texts for modern generations.

Rev Dirk Gevers, UBS Secretary General, emphasised the impact of the UBS Fellowship's translation efforts, stating that one in eight people worldwide received Scripture texts in various formats in 2023.

"Together, we continue to play a pivotal role in bringing about a profound change in the lives of individuals and communities as we remain dedicated to our mission of spreading the transformative power inherent in the message of the Bible."

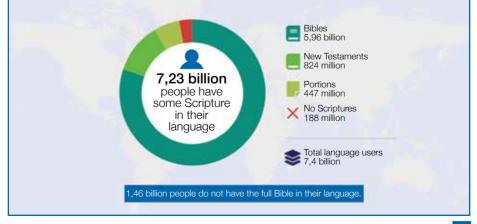
Despite these achievements, significant gaps remain, with around 3 710 languages lacking any form of Scripture. However, ongoing efforts aim to bridge these gaps, with Bible Societies continuously working to provide access to the transformative power of the Bible to all, regardless of linguistic or cultural differences.

www.biblesociety.co.za





How many **people** have Scripture in their language?



Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital SCRIPTURE DISTRIBUTION

Following the Covid-19 pandemic, hospital ministry has become increasingly difficult due to the implementation of strict protocols. According to Pastor Joseph Naidu from the First Baptist Church in Phoenix, KwaZulu-Natal, God has opened a door and made biblical materials available to those who wish to engage with the Scriptures.

Pastor Naidu and his team recently distributed Scripture material at the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital in Phoenix. They have found favour with the hospital administration and worked tirelessly to construct a system that meets minimum requirements, without compromising the mission of Scripture distribution. Various churches, evangelists and missional organisations pray for patients within the hospital wards and direct the patients to collect Scripture material, upon request.

"Bless our Lord for His amazing grace that enables us to serve Him as he has commanded us in His precious Word.

"Thank you to Pastors Brian and Gershwyn Gopaul of the Bible Society of South Africa for equipping us with 7 200 Gospel of John booklets in English and isiZulu for our Bible stand refills.

"We continue to trust our Lord to do as He eternally purposed, as He perfectly wills, at all these medical platforms," said Pastor Naidu.

Pray with

the Bible Societies

Prayer Guide no 3 • 2024

Estonia Latvia Lithuania Belarus Poland German Czech Ukraine Republic Slovakia Moldova Austria Hungary Romania Croatia Serbia Italy Bulgaria Bosnia and Herzegovina Slovenia 2 Albania з Macedonia Δ 5 Greece

30 June – 6 July

Lithuania: Believers in Lithuania need a Bible translation in a more comprehensible language for a better understanding. Pray that the translators working on the new translation of the Lithuanian New Testament will be divinely inspired and that those reading this translation will understand the heart of God. Belarus: Approximately 24 500 children within 14 500 high-risk families live in Belarus. Our *Children in Danger* project offers spiritual support to them. They are incredibly open to a show of spiritual comfort and willingly accept the Good News. Pray for spirit-filled mentors and that the Gospel will be a guiding light in their lives for generations.

1 – 13 July

Albania: Albanian Gheg is a language spoken by 2,3 million people in Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro. The Albanian Bible Society wants to translate the New Testament from the original language into this language. Pray that this translation will have a significant impact, especially in the majority Muslim communities. Greece: The Hellenic Bible Society acknowledges the need for a Greek Sign Language Bible. Pray for the successful commencement of this project and that translators will have the strength, clarity and resilience to carry out this valuable work.

Macedonia: Over 1 000 teenagers from various churches attend summer schools and take Bible courses during the holidays. The Bible Society of Macedonia wants to provide these young people with suitable Scriptures. Pray that they will grow spiritually and embrace God's Word.

14 – 20 July

Croatia: Producing a Bible selection in local Sign Language will help spread the Good News among the Deaf communities of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Pray that this translation will become a cornerstone for Bible engagement.

Slovenia: The audio recording of the Old Testament to accompany the existing audio of the New Testament in Slovenian will offer the complete Bible to many Slovenians. Pray for this project and for the right person to complete this work.

Bosnia and

Herzegovina: Bosnia and Herzegovina is an impoverished country with minimal prospects. In these circumstances, minority groups are sometimes entirely marginalised. Pray for efforts to make the Bible available in Bosnian and that God's Word will offer hope.

Serbia: Pray for cooperation between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Bible Society of Serbia to increase Bible engagement. Pray that this project will further ignite an interest in studying the Word.

21 – 27 July

Germany: Around two-thirds of the German population identify as Christians; however, the number of people who attend church is significantly lower. Pray for a greater love of God's Word among our people.

Italy: Secularism is increasing in our country. Moving away from organised religion is a growing trend of concern to local clergy. Pray for our efforts to provide people with a new revelation of God and his love, illustrated by the saving grace of Jesus.

Austria: Pray for our project that distributes free Scriptures to refugees and asylum seekers arriving or living in Austria. Pray that their time in Austria will be a life-changing experience as they come to faith or experience a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ through the Scriptures.

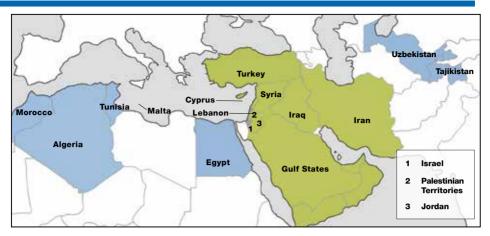
28 July – 3 Aug Egypt: Our Scriptures for Poor Children and their Families project aims to support churches nationwide that minister to impoverished children by providing 162 000 Scripture resources at a discount. Pray that this project will offer hope to these children and their families.

Morocco: The first complete Bible translation in Moroccan Arabic is scheduled to be released in the next few months. This translation and the accompanying audio Bible are expected to make the Word of God available to 200 000 individuals annually. Pray for the lasting influence of this Bible.

Algeria: The Bible Society's translation of the Gospel of Luke was the first book published in Berber Kabyle. The availability of Scripture in this language has significantly influenced the Kabyle people and encouraged evangelisation efforts. Pray for the translation of the complete Bible, now in its final phase.

Tunisia: A small percentage of Tunisians identify as Christians. Although churches that serve foreign Christians enjoy some freedom, public evangelism is not tolerated. Pray that Tunisian Christians will gain access to the Word of God and be kept safe from persecution.

4 – 10 Aug **Czech Republic:** About 72% of the Czech



population do not identify with a religious group. Pray that the Word of God will play a significant role in bringing the Good News to this largely secular nation.

Slovakia: In Slovakia, church engagement within the Deaf community is minimal. It is essential to change the situation and bring the Gospel to deaf people. Pray for our project to translate selected Old and New Testament Bible portions into Slovak Sign Language.

Poland: Polish youth need the Word of God and biblical wisdom to guide them through the challenges of daily life. Pray that our efforts to give them access to the Bible will instill a habit of daily Bible reading and reveal the importance of God's Word in their lives.

11 – 17 Aug

Ukraine: Thank God that we could maintain our presence during the war, which has been a big blessing to churches, relief organisations, military chaplains and individuals. Pray for God's protection as we continue to distribute the Word of God.

Tajikistan: Our Bread of Life project has helped needy families with food packages. The gift of physical bread has opened people's hearts so Christians can present them with God's Word. Pray that those who receive the Bible will be filled with hope and encouragement.

Uzbekistan: Most

Christians in Uzbekistan cannot afford Bibles. We want to support local believers with free large-print Bible portions. Pray that this project and our efforts to print Uzbek-Russian diglots in 2024 will be successful.

18 – 24 Aug

Bulgaria: The Bulgarian Protestant Bible was published in 1871 and revised in 2000. Churches have voiced the need for a revision that aligns with the most recent critical editions of source texts. Pray for the success of this project, scheduled for completion in 2028.

Moldova: Ties that Bind is a project encouraging vulnerable families to interact more deeply with the Bible. Pray for this project, which aims to reach a new generation through the free distribution of Bibles.

Hungary: Pray for our project to create a visual New Testament of the recently revised Hungarian Bible for the Deaf. The translation will use Hungarian Sign Language and help develop biblical vocabulary.

25 – 31 Aug

Latvia: Creating an audience-focused digital presence is one of our most critical activities. It will take us into the future, build digital resilience and connect with young generations. Pray that online access to the Bible will touch many hearts.

Estonia: We aim to create a hunger for the Word of God by hosting Bible exhibitions in museums, libraries and cultural halls. Pray that taking the Bible into these spaces will encourage people to read the Bible and be touched by the life-changing message of salvation.

Romania: We want to offer materials that connect children to the Bible and encourage them to attend religious classes. Pray for our project to develop engaging and interactive children's biblical material.

1 – 7 Sep

Iraq: The Bible Society is uniquely positioned at an equal distance from all churches and serves them by providing the Word of God, and advocating its importance as a witness for Christ. Pray for the safety and protection of all Iraqi Christians.

Gulf States: Our goal for 2024 is to conduct workshops to train 200 pastors and leaders of all migrant churches in Kuwait and Bahrain. Pray for successful training programmes, fruitful cooperation with the churches involved and changed lives.

Iran: Pray for our mission to make the Bible available in Persian and other Iranian languages and in various mediums so Iranians around the globe may experience the transformative message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

8 – 14 Sep

Cyprus: Greek Cypriot Orthodox believers try to participate in the liturgies, but very few can understand what the Bible says. Pray for our efforts to bring the Word of God to believers by translating the liturgical readings of the Orthodox Church into modern Greek.

Malta: Although Malta remains the most religious nation in Europe, few people here have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Pray that more people will read the Bible and experience the Holy Spirit.

Turkey: Local churches have expressed the need for a new translation of the Turkish Bible, including modern Turkish synonyms and syntax changes. Pray that the project will progress smoothly and for the active involvement of all churches.

15 – 21 Sep

Syria: Our Trauma healing project aims to train, equip and empower highly motivated specialists to work with people suffering from trauma. Pray for our efforts to share God's Word with different groups of people in various ways.

Jordan: Our project, The Good Shepherd, aims to equip church and ministry leaders, and unite all denominations. Pray that this project will break barriers among different church families in Jordan and build a new concept of unity in the body of Christ.

Lebanon: Our youth centre helps Lebanese youth by assisting them to engage with the Word of God. Annually, 10 000 young people are reached through seminars at schools and universities. Pray that this project helps them to grow spiritually through interaction with God's Word.

22 – 28 Sep

Israel: The local body of believers in Israel has been growing significantly. The group of Hebrewspeaking believers in Israel is in its infancy and existing Messianic Hebrew resources are minimal. Pray for our project, *Let the children come to me*, which will produce three new Hebrew children's books and a training manual for Sunday school teachers.

Arab Israeli Bible

Society: Pray for our goal of seeing the Arab Israeli people engaged and interacting with the powerful message of God's Word. Pray that we can equip and resource the Arab Israeli people with Scriptures and relevant biblical tools by producing, developing and distributing relevant, effective, and creative Scripture resources that lead people into a relationship with Christ.

Two decades of **BAKING JAFFLES FOR BIBLES**

The "Ned Geref" congregation Parys East held its annual jaffle bake in February in support of the Bible Society.

This is the 20th year that the congregation has teamed up in this wonderful way to raise money for Bible distribution. During the event, which spanned two days, 50 members worked hard to assemble 7 000 jaffles and bake them on 27 gas stoves.

Dr Elrika Senekal-Van der Berg, Team Leader of the Central Region, and Rev Pierre du Plooy, Relationship Ambassador, also helped out during the event with baking the jaffles.

The wonderful amount of R117 000 was raised.



AFM National Office Bearer's REGIONAL EMPOWERMENT

Pastor Brad Espin and Michelle Fisher of the Bible Society of South Africa (BSSA) had the opportunity to set up a stall at the AFM National Office Bearer's Regional Empowerment held at the AFM Missio



Dei (Bellville) on 2 and 3 February 2024. The BSSA enjoyed great exposure at the event, with Bible sales and referrals. The Deputy Chairman, Pastor Barend Petersen, applauded the BSSA's work and honoured the partnership started by Pastor Theuns Louw, former BSSA Relationship Ambassador. Seven AFM representative preachers in various regions, including the Western Cape, now carry out the partnership.

Pastor Martin Jansen from the Boland Region and Pastor Ansie Louw (Pastor Theuns Louw's wife) were also acknowledged for their contributions.

All parties confirmed their continued support of the BSSA and its vision and mission.

NEW SESOTHO SEMI-LUX BIBLE HANDOVER

On Friday, 23 February, a special handover ceremony took place at the Bible House in Bloemfontein.

Pastor Ishmael Notzi of the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) of South Africa, at the Meloding Assembly in Virginia, received a copy of the new semi-luxury Sesotho Bible produced by the Bible Society of South Africa (BSSA).

After conducting a community survey, Pastor Notzi approached the BSSA and presented the need for a semi-luxury Sesotho Bible, particularly the 1909 translation.

Dr Elrika Senekal-Van der Berg (BSSA Central Region Team Lead) and Stella Moletsane (Sales Representative) handed the Bible over to an overjoyed Pastor Notzi, who read an excerpt aloud. The first print edition of this Bible was ordered in 2023 and sales thereof have performed remarkably well

among Sesotho-speaking audiences. Dr Senekal-Van der Berg asked Pastor Notzi to help the BSSA with their next survey to determine the need for large-print Sesotho Bibles.

IRONMEN BIBLE DISTRIBUTION



Some influential Christian business professionals, known as the Ironmen, who meet bi-weekly in the Durban area for prayer, support and connection did a fantastic outreach drive in November 2023.

The group purchased Bibles from the Bible Society of South Africa and distributed them freely in deep rural parts of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). Ecstatic school learners received the Bibles and some fruit snacks handed out by the Ironmen.

Partnership brings **BIBLICAL VALUES** to schools

As part of the *YesKids* free grant programme, the Bible Society of South Africa (BSSA) enlisted the help of Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF), a long-standing ministry partner of the BSSA in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN).

The project saw 600 YesKids books distributed to both Umhlatuzana Primary School, located in a township near KZN South and Ginginglovu



Primary School, located in a rural area in Mtunzini in KZN North.

Pastor Ashby Kurian, a key representative from CEF and an active BSSA donor, works with all types of schools in KZN. His church addresses literacy challenges, and instills biblical morals and values through their outreach initiatives. Many schools in impoverished areas are without curriculum (especially in isiZulu) and upon distribution of these units, principals, teachers and students were overjoyed. The principal of Umhlatuzana Primary School said that "students will be able to express themselves better and interpret the Bible in their own way with discipline being impacted positively as they are exposed to God's word."

BSSA celebrates 100 YEARS together with church



Dr Gerhard Lindeque, Regional Team Leader of the Bible Society's Northern Region, attended the Maranatha Reformed Church of Christ centenary celebration in Newcastle in November.

During the historic event, Dr Lindeque presented the latest isiZulu translation of the Bible (2020 translation) to the Moderator of the church, Oscar Madlala. Dr Lindeque and his wife, Karien, also used the opportunity to hand over some of the Bible Society's Bible-based literacy material to the women who are responsible for teaching local children. They also distributed other materials to raise awareness about the Bible Society.

"We were particularly struck by the joy and gratitude of all the people, especially the number of young people and their passion for and excitement about the Word of God in all the stories," Dr Lindeque said.



Executive Board ELECTIONS AT AGM

The Bible Society of South Africa (BSSA) held their Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Thursday, 14 March 2024 and the following people were elected as non-executive Directors of the Board.



Prof Rantoa Letšosa has been appointed as the Chairman of the Board, following his one-year tenure as a board member. He is the Dean of the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Pretoria, and a member of the Reformed Churches of South Africa.



Mr Ben Vermooten has been appointed as a board member. He is an experienced corporate executive with over 30 years of experience in senior executive roles in listed, public and private companies, and serves in non-executive director roles in various companies.



The outgoing chairman, **Dr Paul du Plessis**, has been appointed as a board member for the next two years. We extend our gratitude to him for his service as Chairman of the Board for the last six years.

Training for **SIGN LANGUAGE** Bible translators

n December, the United Bible Societies (UBS) in partnership with the Bible Society of South Africa (BSSA) hosted a training workshop for Sign Language translators from Africa.

Rev Shane Fraser, Regional Team Lead of the Bible Society's Northern Region, welcomed all the participants on behalf of the BSSA's CEO, Rev Rodney van Wyk, to the training session in Kempton Park. More than 40 participants from Nigeria, Gabon and neighbouring countries like Eswatini and Zimbabwe attended the event. Representatives of Hands with Words, a ministry currently translating the Bible into South African Sign Language, were also



present at the training.

It was evident that the participants learned a lot and will take this knowledge back with them, and apply it in their translation projects.

KIDS CORNER

"The disciples went to him and woke him up. "Save us, Lord!" they said. "We are about to die!" Why are you so frightened?" Jesus answered. "How little faith you have!" Then he got up and ordered the winds and the waves to stop, and there was a great calm. – Matthew 8:25-26 (GNT)

Complete the words Fill in the missing letters below.

1. Jesus climbed into a

2. They sailed across a

- 3. Jesus was not awake, he was still
- 4. There was a big

5. The boat was going to

6. Jesus ordered the winds and waves to

7. Then the storm was

Find this activity and more on biblesa.co.za/kids-corner

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of south africa

GENESIS

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The Story of Creation

1 In the beginning, when God created the universe,⁴ ² the earth was formless and desolate. The raging ocean that covered everything was engulfed in total darkness, and the Spirit of God^b was moving over the water. ³ Then God commanded, "Let there be light" — and light appeared. ⁴God was pleased with what he saw. Then he separated the light from the darkness, ³ and he named the light "Day" and the darkness "Night." Evening passed and morning came that was the first day.

*Then God commanded, "Let there be a dome to divide the water and to keep it in two separate places" — and it was done. So God made a done, and it separated the water under it from the water above it. "He named the dome "Sky." Evening passed and morning came — that was the second day.

"Then God commanded "Let the water

-



Be patient, then, my brothers and sisters, until the Lord comes. See how patient a farmer is as he waits for his land to produce precious crops. He waits patiently for the autumn and spring rains. You also must be patient. Keep your hopes high, for the day of the Lord's coming is near. James 5:7-8

(GNT)

Your Bible House

Central Region p 12149 Brandhof 9324 t 051 444 5980 Eastern Region p 30801 Mayville 4058 t 031 207 4933

Northern Region p 2002 Kempton Park 1620 t 011 970 4010 South Eastern Region

p 7579 Newton Park 6055t 041 364 1138

Western Region p 4848 Tyger Valley 7536 t 021 910 8777