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STUDY ARTICLES FOR THE WEEKS OF:

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Jehovah Is My Share

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

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PURPOSE OF STUDY ARTICLES

STUDY ARTICLES 1, 2 PAGES 7-15

When Jehovah told the Levites: "I am your share," what did he mean? (Num. 18:20) Were the Levites the only ones who had that privilege? Can we today have Jehovah as our share? If so, how? These two study articles will examine the matter of how Jehovah can be one's share.

STUDY ARTICLES 3, 4 PAGES 16-24

These articles will help us to see how we can win our race for the prize of everlasting life. Where can we find support and encouragement? What pitfalls and entanglements should we avoid? And what will help us to press on to the finish line?

STUDY ARTICLE 5 PAGES 25-29

Jehovah's faithful servants are known and approved by him. What qualities can help us to maintain that precious standing with Jehovah? This article will assist each of us to make a self-examination.

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BIBLE READING MY LIFELONG SOURCE OF STRENGTH

AS TOLD BY
MARCEAU LEROY



“**I**N THE beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” I began reading in the privacy of my room. Why did I read in secret? Surely my father, a confirmed atheist, would not approve of the book I had in my hands—the Bible.

I had never read the Bible before, and those opening words of Genesis struck me like a bolt of lightning. I thought, ‘Here is the explanation for the harmony of the physical laws that has always amazed me!’ Enthralled, I read from eight at night until four in the morning. Thus began my lifelong habit of reading God’s Word. Let me explain how Bible reading has been a source of strength to me throughout my life.

“You Will Have to Read It Every Day”

I was born in 1926, in Vermelles, a coal-mining village in northern France. During the second world war, coal was a commodity of national importance. So as a miner, I was exempt from military service. Still, to improve my lot, I began studying radio and electricity, which impressed on me the harmony of physical laws. When I was 21, a

classmate handed me my first Bible, saying, “It is a book worth reading.” By the time I finished reading it, I was convinced that the Bible is God’s Word, a revelation to mankind.

Thinking that my neighbors too would be excited to read the Bible, I obtained eight copies. To my surprise, I met with mockery and opposition. Superstitious relatives warned, “Once you start reading this book, you will have to read it every day!” Read it I did, and I have never regretted doing so. It became my lifelong custom.

Recognizing my interest in the Bible, some neighbors passed on to me publications of Jehovah’s Witnesses that they had received. Booklets such as *One World, One Government** (shown in French) explained why the Bible points to God’s Kingdom as the only hope for mankind. (Matt. 6:10) I was more determined than ever to share this hope with others.

One of the first to accept a Bible from me was Noël, a childhood friend. Being a practicing Catholic, he arranged for us to meet



* Published in 1944, but now out of print.

with a man who was studying to become a priest. I felt intimidated, yet I knew from reading Psalm 115:4-8 and Matthew 23:9, 10 that God disapproves of using idols in worship and addressing clergymen with religious titles. This gave me the courage to defend my newfound belief. As a result, Noël accepted the truth, and to this day he remains a faithful Witness.

I also visited my sister. Her husband had books on spiritism and was being harassed by demons. Although I felt rather powerless at first, such Bible verses as Hebrews 1:14 convinced me that I had the support of Jehovah's angels. When my brother-in-law applied Bible principles and rid himself of everything connected with the occult, he was able to free himself from demon influence. Both he and my sister became zealous Witnesses.

In 1947 an American Witness, Arthur Emiot, called at my home. Excited, I asked him where the Witnesses met. He told me that there was a group in Liévin, some six miles (10 km) away. Even bicycles were hard to come by in those days, so for several months I walked to and from the meetings. The work of Jehovah's Witnesses in France had been under ban for eight years. There were only 2,380 Witnesses in the whole country—many being Polish immigrants. But on September 1, 1947, our work in France was legally recognized again. A branch office was reestablished in Paris at Villa Guibert. Because there was not even one pioneer in France, the December 1947 issue of *Informant* (now *Our Kingdom Ministry*) launched an appeal for general pioneers, who would preach 150 hours a month. (In 1949 that was reduced to 100 hours.) In full agreement with Jesus' words at John 17:17, "[God's] word is truth," I was baptized in 1948, and in December 1949, I became a pioneer.

From Prison Back to Dunkerque

My first assignment, Agen, in southern France, was short-lived. Because I had left the mines, I was eligible for military service. I refused to join the army, so I was sent to prison. Though I was not allowed to have a Bible, I was able to obtain a few pages of the book of Psalms. Reading them encouraged me. When I was released, I had a decision to make: Should I stop the full-time service in order to get settled? Here again, what I read in the Bible helped me. I meditated on Paul's words at Philippians 4:11-13: "For all things I have the strength by virtue of him who imparts power to me." I made up my mind to continue pioneering. In 1950, I received a new assignment—Dunkerque, a town where I had preached before.

When I arrived there, I had nothing. The town had been severely damaged during World War II, and accommodations were hard to find. I decided to visit a family I used to call on, and the lady of the house was overjoyed: "Oh, Mr. Leroy, you've been released! My husband says that if there were more men like you, there never would have been a war." They had a guesthouse, so they offered me lodging until the tourist season started. The same day, Arthur Emiot's brother, Evans, offered me work.* He was an interpreter in the port and was looking for a night watchman to guard a ship. He introduced me to one of the ship's first officers. After my time in prison, I was as thin as a rake. When Evans explained why, the officer told me to help myself to the food in the refrigerator. On that one day, I obtained lodging, work, and food! My confidence in Jesus' words recorded at Matthew 6:25-33 had indeed been strengthened.

When the tourist season started, my pio-

* For more information about Evans Emiot, see *The Watchtower*, January 1, 1999, pages 22 and 23.

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DECEMBRE 1957
"NATIONS"
UN SUJET
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◀ Simon and me

When serving as district overseer ▶



◀ A Bible similar to the first one I received

neer partner, Simon Apolinarski, and I had to find other lodging, but we were determined to stay in our assignment. We were offered accommodations in an old horse stable, where we slept on straw mattresses. We spent our days in the service. We witnessed to the owner of the stable, and he became one of many who accepted the truth. It was not long before an article appeared in the local press, warning the inhabitants of Dunkerque of the "outbreak of Jehovah's Witness activity in the region." Yet, Simon and I and a handful of publishers were the only Witnesses there! In the face of difficulties, we were encouraged by meditating on our Christian hope and considering the way Jehovah had taken care of us. There were some 30 regular publishers in Dunkerque when my assignment was changed in 1952.

Strengthened for New Responsibilities

After a brief stay in the city of Amiens, I was appointed a special pioneer to serve in Boulogne-Billancourt, a suburb of Paris. I had many Bible studies, and some of them later took up full-time service and missionary work. One young man, Guy Mabilat, accepted the truth and went on to serve as a

circuit overseer and then as a district overseer. Later, he had oversight of the construction of the printery at the present-day Bethel in Louviers, some distance from Paris. Frequent Bible discussions in the ministry further imprinted God's Word on my mind, filling me with joy and enabling me to improve my teaching ability.

Then in 1953, out of the blue, I was appointed to be a circuit overseer in Alsace-Lorraine, a region that between 1871 and 1945 was twice annexed by Germany. Hence, I had to learn some German. When I started in the circuit work, there were few cars, televisions, or typewriters in that region and no transistor radios or personal computers. But my life was neither sad nor austere. In fact, it was a most joyful time. Following the Bible's advice to keep 'a simple eye' meant that there were fewer distractions from serving Jehovah than there are today.—Matt. 6:19-22.

The 1955 "Triumphant Kingdom" Assembly in Paris was a memorable occasion for me. There I met my future wife, Irène Kolan-ski, who had started full-time service the year before I did. Her Polish parents were longtime, zealous Witnesses. In France they were visited by Adolf Weber. He had been



◀ On our wedding day

Irène and I enjoy reading and studying God's Word ▶



Brother Russell's gardener and had come to Europe to declare the good news. Irène and I were married in 1956, and she joined me in the circuit work. What a fine support she has been throughout the years!

Two years later, another surprise awaited me—I was appointed a district overseer. Still, to make up for the shortage of qualified brothers available, I continued to visit some congregations as a circuit overseer. What a busy time that was! In addition to preaching 100 hours a month, each week I had talks to give, three book studies to visit, records to check, and reports to prepare. How would it be possible to buy out time to read God's Word? I saw only one solution—I cut pages out of an old Bible and kept some with me. Whenever I had to wait for someone to arrive for an appointment, I took out the pages and read. Those brief moments of spiritual refreshment strengthened my resolve to continue in my assignment.

In 1967, Irène and I were invited to become permanent members of the Bethel family in Boulogne-Billancourt. I began working in the Service Department, and over 40 years later, I still have that privilege. An enjoyable aspect of my work has been answering letters asking Bible questions. How I

delight in digging into God's Word and "defending . . . the good news"! (Phil. 1:7) I also take pleasure in conducting Bible discussions at morning worship before breakfast. In 1976, I was appointed to be a member of the Branch Committee in France.

The Best Way of Life

Although I have experienced trialsome times, the most challenging time in my life is now, when old age and health problems limit what Irène and I can do. Still, reading and studying God's Word together keeps our hope alive. We enjoy taking the bus to our congregation territory to share this hope with others. Our combined experience of more than 120 years in full-time service moves us to recommend wholeheartedly this course to all who wish to pursue an exciting, joyful, and useful life. When King David wrote the words of Psalm 37:25, he had "grown old," but like him, I too "have not seen anyone righteous left entirely."

Throughout my life, Jehovah has strengthened me by means of his Word. My relatives predicted over 60 years ago that Bible reading would be a lifelong habit. They were right. It has been—a daily habit that I have never regretted!

JEHOVAH IS MY SHARE

"I am your share and your inheritance in the midst of the sons of Israel."

—NUM. 18:20.

AFTER the Israelites had conquered much of the Promised Land, Joshua turned his attention to apportioning the land by lot. In doing this, he worked along with High Priest Eleazar and heads of the tribes. (Num. 34:13-29) As for the Levites, they were not to have a land inheritance such as the other tribes received. (Josh. 14:1-5) Why did the Levites have no tribal territory, or share, of the Promised Land? Were they being left out?

² We find the answer in what Jehovah told the Levites. Underlining the fact that they were not being abandoned, Jehovah said to them: "I am your share and your inheritance in the midst of the sons of Israel." (Num. 18:20) What a profound assurance: "I am your share"! How would you feel if Jehovah said that to you? Your first reaction might be, 'Am I worthy of such an assurance from the Almighty?' You might also wonder, 'Can Jeho-

1, 2. (a) What was the situation of the Levites as to a land inheritance? (b) What assurance did Jehovah give the Levites?

vah really be the share of any imperfect Christian today?" Those questions involve you and your loved ones. So let us determine what that divine statement means. That will help us understand how Jehovah can be the share of Christians today. More specifically, he can be *your* share, whether you hope to live in heaven or you look forward to life in an earthly paradise.

Jehovah Provides for the Levites

³ Before Jehovah gave the Law to the Israelites, family heads served as priests among them. When God provided the Law, he arranged for a full-time priesthood and for assistants from the tribe of Levi. How did this come about? When God destroyed Egypt's firstborn, he sanctified Israel's firstborn, setting them apart as his, as belonging to him. Then God made this significant adjustment: "I do take the Levites . . . in place of all the firstborn among the sons of Israel." Since a census showed that the firstborn sons of Israel exceeded the Levites in number, a ran-

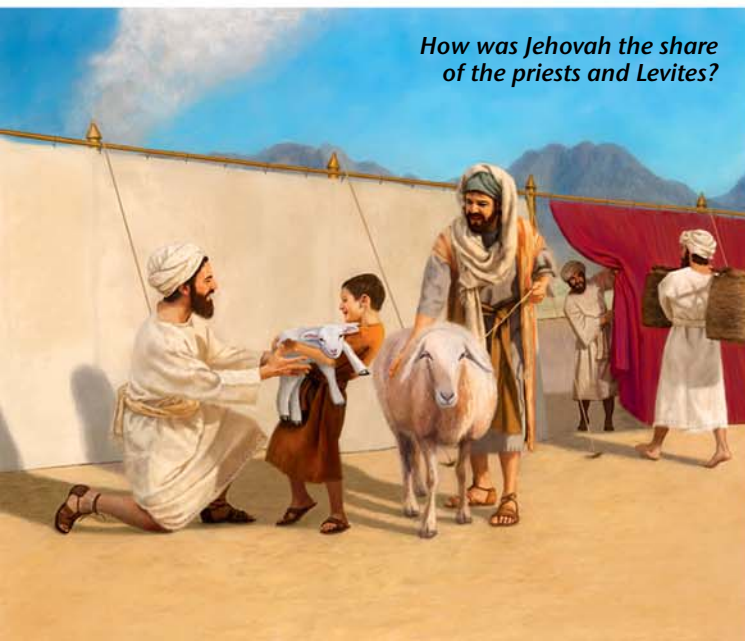
som price was paid to make up the difference. (Num. 3:11-13, 41, 46, 47) Thus the Levites could carry out their role in serving the God of Israel.

⁴ What did that assignment mean for the Levites? Jehovah said that he was to be their share in the sense that rather than receiving a land

3. What led to God's taking the Levites for his service?

4, 5. (a) What did it mean for the Levites to have God as their share? (b) How did God provide for the Levites?

How was Jehovah the share of the priests and Levites?



inheritance, they were entrusted with a priceless privilege of service. Being “the priesthood of Jehovah” was their inheritance. (Josh. 18:7) The context of Numbers 18:20 shows that this did not leave them impoverished materially. (**Read Numbers 18: 19, 21, 24.**) The Levites were to be given “every tenth part in Israel as an inheritance in return for their service.” They would

The Levites did not
receive a land inheritance.
Instead, Jehovah was their
share, for they had the great
privilege of serving him

receive 10 percent of Israel’s produce and of the increase of the domestic animals. In turn, the Levites were to contribute a tenth part of what they received, “of the very best of it,” for the support of the priesthood.* (Num. 18:25-29) The priests were also given “all the holy contributions” that the sons of Israel brought to God at his place of worship. Members of the priesthood thus had good reason for believing that Jehovah would provide for them.

⁵ It appears that the Mosaic Law provided for a second tithe, which was set aside for the household’s sustenance and enjoyment during the holy conventions each year. (Deut. 14:22-27) However, at the end of every third and sixth year of the seven-year sabbatical cycle, this tithe was deposited at the gate for the benefit of the poor as well as the Levites. Why were the Levites included as recipients? Because they had “no share or inheritance” in Israel.—Deut. 14:28, 29.

* For details about how the priesthood was maintained, see *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 2, page 684.

⁶ You might wonder, ‘If the Levites had no land assigned to them, where would they reside?’ God provided for them. He gave them 48 cities along with the surrounding pasture grounds. These included the six cities of refuge. (Num. 35:6-8) Thus, the Levites had a place to live when they were not serving at the sanctuary of God. Jehovah provided abundantly for those who gave themselves to his service. Clearly, the Levites were able to show that Jehovah was their share by putting their trust in his willingness and power to provide for them.

⁷ The Law did not include any penalty for an Israelite who failed to tithe. When the people became negligent as to tithing, the priests and Levites were affected. That happened in the days of Nehemiah. As a result, the Levites had to work in their fields, neglecting their ministry. (**Read Nehemiah 13:10.**) Clearly, the sustenance of the Levitical tribe hinged on the spirituality of the nation. Furthermore, the priests and Levites themselves needed faith in Jehovah and in his means of providing for them.

Individuals Had Jehovah as Their Share

⁸ The Levites *as a tribe* were to have Jehovah as their share. It is noteworthy, though, that individual Levites used the phrase “Jehovah is my share” to express devotion to God and reliance on him. (Lam. 3:24) One such Levite was a singer and composer. We will refer to him as Asaph, though he could have been a member of the house of Asaph, the Levite who led the singers in the days of King David. (1 Chron. 6:31-43) In Psalm 73

6. Though having no tribal share of land in Israel, where would the Levites reside?

7. What was required of the Levites for them to have Jehovah as their share?

8. Describe the trouble the Levite Asaph faced.

we read that Asaph (or one of his descendants) became perplexed. He envied the wicked who were leading a prosperous life and went to the point of saying: “Surely it is in vain that I have cleansed my heart and that I wash my hands in innocence itself.” He apparently lost sight of his privilege of service; he failed to appreciate that Jehovah was his share. He was spiritually troubled “until [he] proceeded to come into the grand sanctuary of God.”—Ps. 73:2, 3, 12, 13, 17.

⁹ At the sanctuary, Asaph began to view things from God’s perspective. You may have had a similar experience. Perhaps at one point you lost sight of your spiritual privileges to some extent and began to focus on what you were lacking in a material way. But by studying God’s Word and by going to Christian meetings, you came to see things Jehovah’s way. Asaph perceived what would eventually happen to the wicked. He thought about his lot and realized that Jehovah would take hold of his right hand and lead him. Asaph could thus say to Jehovah: “Besides you I do have no other delight on the earth.” (Ps. 73:23, 25) He then referred to God as his share. (**Read Psalm 73:26.**) Although the psalmist’s ‘organism and heart might fail,’ God would be his “share to time indefinite.” The psalmist was confident that Jehovah would remember him as a friend. His faithful service would not be forgotten. (Eccl. 7:1) How reassuring that must have been for Asaph! He sang: “As for me, the drawing near to God is good for me. In the Sovereign Lord Jehovah I have placed my refuge.”—Ps. 73:28.

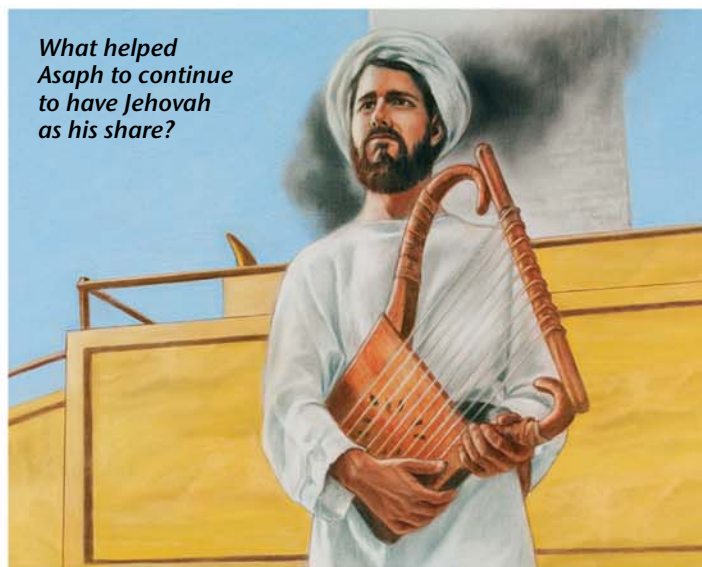
¹⁰ Having Jehovah as his share meant more to Asaph than the material sustenance he received as a Levite. What he referred to

9, 10. Why could Asaph refer to God as his “share to time indefinite”?

was mainly his privilege of service and his relationship with Jehovah, the friendship he had cultivated with the Most High. (Jas. 2:21-23) To preserve that relationship, the psalmist had to maintain faith in Jehovah, trusting in him. Asaph had to have confidence that the final outcome of his life would be a rewarding one if he lived according to the divine standard. You can have the same confidence in the Almighty.

¹¹ The prophet Jeremiah was another Levite who recognized Jehovah as his share. Let us consider what he meant when using that expression. Jeremiah lived in Anathoth, a Levite city near Jerusalem. (Jer. 1:1) At one point, Jeremiah became perplexed: Why were the wicked prospering while the righteous suffered? (Jer. 12:1) After observing what was taking place in Jerusalem and Judah, he felt compelled to ‘complain’ about what he saw. Jeremiah knew that Jehovah is righteous. What Jehovah thereafter inspired Jeremiah to prophesy and

11. What question did Jeremiah have, and how was it answered?



*What helped
Asaph to continue
to have Jehovah
as his share?*

how He fulfilled those prophetic words gave a solid answer to the prophet's question. In harmony with divine prophecies, those who obeyed Jehovah's direction 'received their souls as spoil,' whereas the prosperous wicked ones ignored the warning and perished.—Jer. 21:9.

¹² As Jeremiah later looked over his devastated homeland, he felt as though he were walking in darkness. It was as if Jehovah had made him "sit like men dead for a long time." (Lam. 1:1, 16; 3:6) Jeremiah had told the wayward nation to return to their heavenly Father, but their badness had reached the point where God had to let Jerusalem and Judah be destroyed. That caused Jeremiah pain, though he was not at fault. Amid his afflictions, the prophet remembered God's mercies. "We have not come to our finish," he said. Indeed, Jehovah's mercies are new each morning! It was then that Jeremiah declared: "Jehovah is my share." He continued having the privilege of serving Jehovah as a prophet.—*Read Lamentations 3:22-24.*

¹³ For 70 years, the Israelites would lack a homeland. It would lie desolate. (Jer. 25:11) But Jeremiah's expression "Jehovah is my

12, 13. (a) What moved Jeremiah to declare: "Jehovah is my share," and what attitude did he have? (b) Why did all the tribes of Israel need to cultivate a waiting attitude?

How Would You Answer?

- In what sense was Jehovah the share of the Levites?
- Asaph, Jeremiah, and David did what, showing that Jehovah was their share?
- What quality do you need if God is to be your share?

share" revealed his confidence in divine mercy, and it gave him reason for showing "a waiting attitude." All the tribes of Israel had lost their inheritance, so they needed to cultivate the same attitude as the prophet. Jehovah was their only hope. After 70 years, God's people were restored to their homeland and had the privilege of serving him there.—2 Chron. 36:20-23.

Others Could Have Jehovah as Their Share

¹⁴ Both Asaph and Jeremiah were of the tribe of Levi, but was it only the Levites who could be privileged to serve Jehovah? Hardly! Young David, the future king of Israel, called God his "share in the land of the living ones." (*Read Psalm 142:1, 5.*) At the time that David composed this psalm, he was not in a palace or even in a house. He was in a cave, hiding from his enemies. On at least two occasions, David took refuge in caves—one near Adullam and the other in the wilderness of En-gedi. He may well have composed Psalm 142 in one of those caves.

¹⁵ If that was the case, King Saul was the one hounding David, seeking to take his life. David fled to a cave that was hard to approach. (1 Sam. 22:1, 4) In this remote region, it might have seemed to David that no friend was at his side to give him protective support. (Ps. 142:4) That was when David called out to God.

¹⁶ By the time David composed Psalm 142, he may have learned what had befallen High Priest Ahimelech, who had unwittingly given him assistance when he was fleeing from Saul. Jealous King Saul had Ahimelech and his household killed. (1 Sam. 22:11, 18,

14, 15. Other than the Levites, who let Jehovah be his share, and why?

16, 17. (a) What reasons did David have for feeling helpless? (b) Whom could David turn to for help?

19) David felt responsible for their deaths. It was as if he had killed the priest who had helped him. If you had been in David's position, would you have felt responsible? Adding to David's stress was the fact that he had no rest because Saul kept on pursuing him.

¹⁷ Soon thereafter came the death of the prophet Samuel, who had anointed David to be the future king. (1 Sam. 25:1) That could have added to David's feelings of helplessness. Yet, David knew whom he could turn to for help—to Jehovah. David did not have the same privilege of service as the Levites, but he had already been anointed to perform another type of service, eventually to be the king of God's people. (1 Sam. 16:1, 13)

Hence, David poured out his heart to Jehovah and continued to look to God for direction. You too can and should have Him as your share and your refuge as you exert yourself in his service.

¹⁸ Those whom we have considered had Jehovah as their share in the sense that they received an assignment of work in his service. They relied on God for sustenance as they served him. Both the Levites and those of Israel's other tribes, such as David, could let God be their share. How can you likewise let Jehovah be your share? We will discuss that in our next article.

18. How did the ones we discussed in this article show that they had Jehovah as their share?

ARE YOU LETTING JEHOVAH BE YOUR SHARE?

"Keep on . . . seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you."—MATT. 6:33.

WHEN you read the name Israel in the Bible, what comes to your mind? Do you think of Isaac's son Jacob, who was renamed Israel? Or do you think of his descendants, the ancient nation of Israel? What of spiritual Israel? When Israel is referred to in a figurative sense, it usually applies to "the Israel of God," the 144,000, who are anointed with holy spirit to become kings and priests in heaven. (Gal. 6:16; Rev. 7:4; 21:

1, 2. (a) "The Israel of God" mentioned at Galatians 6:16 represents whom? (b) At Matthew 19:28, whom do "the twelve tribes of Israel" represent?

12) But consider the special reference to Israel's 12 tribes that is found at Matthew 19:28.

² Jesus said: "In the re-creation, when the Son of man sits down upon his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also yourselves sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." In this verse, "the twelve tribes of Israel" are those who will be judged by Jesus' anointed disciples and who are in line to receive eternal life in Paradise on earth. They will benefit from the priestly services of the 144,000.

³ Like the priests and Levites of old, anointed ones today view their service as a privilege. (Num. 18:20) The anointed do not expect to be given some territory or location on earth as a possession. Instead, they look forward to being kings and priests in heaven with Jesus Christ. They will continue to serve Jehovah in that assignment, as indicated by what we read at Revelation 4:10, 11 concerning the anointed in their heavenly position.—Ezek. 44:28.

⁴ While on earth, anointed ones live in a way that gives evidence that Jehovah is their share. Their privilege of serving God is of primary importance to them. They exercise faith in Christ's ransom sacrifice and follow him continually, thus 'making their calling and choosing sure.' (2 Pet. 1:10) Their individual circumstances and abilities differ. Yet, they do not use any limitations as an excuse to do only a small amount in God's service. On the contrary, they give high priority to God's service, doing all they can. And they set a good example for those who hope to live on a paradise earth.

⁵ Whether we have the heavenly hope or an earthly one, we must 'disown ourselves and pick up our torture stake and continually follow Christ.' (Matt. 16:24) Millions who look forward to life in Paradise on earth are worshipping God and following Christ in that way. They are not content to do just a little when they sense that they can do more. Many have been impelled to simplify their life and have become pioneers. Others manage to pioneer some months each year. Still others, while unable to pioneer, exert themselves in the ministry. Such ones are like devoted Mary, who poured perfumed oil on Je-

sus. He said: "She did a fine deed toward me. . . . *She did what she could.*" (Mark 14:6-8) Our doing all we can may not be easy, for we live in a world dominated by Satan. Yet, we exert ourselves vigorously and put our trust in Jehovah. Consider how we do so in four specific areas.

Seeking First God's Kingdom

⁶ Jesus taught his followers to seek first the Kingdom and God's righteousness. People of the world tend to seek personal interests first as "men of this system of things, whose share is in this life." (**Read Psalm 17: 1, 13-15.**) With no regard for their Creator, many devote themselves to making a comfortable living, raising a family, and leaving behind an inheritance. Their share is in this life only. David, on the other hand, was interested in making "a good name" with Jehovah, as his son later recommended that all do. (Eccl. 7:1, ftn.) Just like Asaph, David saw that having Jehovah as his Friend was far better than putting his own interests foremost in life. He rejoiced in walking with God. In our time, many Christians have put spiritual activities ahead of their secular employment.

⁷ Consider Jean-Claude, in the Central African Republic. He is a married elder with three children. In that land, finding work is hard, and most people will do almost anything to keep their job. One day, the production manager told Jean-Claude to begin working nights—starting at 6:30 p.m., seven days a week. Jean-Claude explained that in addition to supporting his family materially, he needed to care for their spiritual wel-

3, 4. What fine example have faithful anointed ones set?

5. How can all Christians have Jehovah as their share, and why might that be challenging?

6. (a) How do people in general show that their share is in this life only? (b) Why is it better to have David's outlook?

7. What blessing did one brother receive for putting the Kingdom first?

fare. He also stated that he had a responsibility to help the congregation. The manager's response? "If you are fortunate enough to have a job, you must forget all other things, including your wife, your children, and your problems. You must devote your life to your work—nothing but your work. Make your choice: your religion or your work." What would you have done? Well, Jean-Claude realized that if he lost his job, God would look after him. He would still have plenty to do in God's service, and Jehovah would help care for his family's material needs. Thus, he attended the next midweek meeting. After that, he got ready to go to work, not sure if he would even have a job. Just then, he got a phone call. The manager had been fired, but our brother still had his job.

⁸ Some who have been in a situation where their job seemed at risk may have wondered, 'How will I fulfill my responsibility to provide for my family?' (1 Tim. 5:8) Whether you have faced a similar challenge or not, from your own experience you are likely sure that you will never be disappointed if God is your share and you highly treasure the privilege of serving him. When Jesus told his disciples to keep on seeking first the kingdom, he assured them: "All these other things"—such as what to eat, drink, or put on—"will be added to you."—Matt. 6:33.

⁹ Think of the Levites, who did not receive a land inheritance. Since pure worship was their primary concern, for sustenance they had to rely on Jehovah, who told them: "I am your share." (Num. 18:20) Although we are not serving at a literal temple as the priests and Levites did, we can imitate their spirit, having confidence that Jehovah will

8, 9. In what sense can we imitate the priests and Levites in having Jehovah as our share?

provide for us. Our trust in God's power to provide becomes more and more important as we move deeper into the last days.—Rev. 13:17.

Seeking First God's Righteousness

¹⁰ Jesus also urged his disciples to 'keep on seeking first God's righteousness.' (Matt. 6:33) This means putting Jehovah's standard of what is right and what is wrong ahead of human norms. (**Read Isaiah 55:8, 9.**) You may recall that in the past, a number of people were involved in growing tobacco or selling tobacco products, training others in warfare, or producing and selling weapons

Jehovah becomes our share when we make his service our primary concern

of war. After coming to a knowledge of the truth, most chose to change their employment and qualify for baptism.—Isa. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:1; Gal. 5:14.

¹¹ Andrew is an example. When he and his wife learned about Jehovah, they resolved to serve him. Andrew took much pride in his job but left it. Why? Because he was working for a nonneutral organization and was determined to put first God's righteousness. When Andrew left that job, he had two children, no income, and enough money to last just a few months. From a human standpoint, it may have seemed that he had no 'inheritance.' He searched for a job, trusting in God. Looking back, he and his family can confirm that Jehovah's hand

10, 11. How have some put their trust in Jehovah in connection with their employment? Give an example.

is not short. (Isa. 59:1) By keeping their life simple, Andrew and his wife have even had the privilege of being in full-time service. "There have been times when finances, housing, health, and just growing older have made us anxious," he says. "But Jehovah has always stood by us. . . . We can say without a hint of doubt that serving Jehovah is, without question, the most noble and rewarding human endeavor."*—Eccl. 12:13.

¹² Jesus told his disciples: "If you have faith the size of a mustard grain, you will say to this mountain, 'Transfer from here to there,' and it will transfer, and nothing will be impossible for you." (Matt. 17:20) Would you be able to put God's standards foremost if that would result in difficulties? If you are uncertain whether you could do so, speak with other members of the congregation. You will no doubt find it spiritually refreshing to hear their experiences.

Appreciating Jehovah's Spiritual Provisions

¹³ If you treasure your privilege of serving Jehovah, you can be sure that he will supply your physical and spiritual needs, just as he provided sustenance for the Levites. Think about David. Though he was in a cave, he could count on God to provide for him. We too can rely on Jehovah even when we see no way out. Recall that when Asaph came "into the grand sanctuary of God," he gained insight into what was distressing him. (Ps. 73:17) Similarly, we need to turn to the divine Source of our spiritual nourishment. Thus we show appreciation for our

* See *Awake!* November 2009, pages 12-14.

12. What quality is needed to put God's standards foremost? Cite local examples.

13. When we exert ourselves in Jehovah's service, what can we expect as to spiritual provisions?

privilege of serving God no matter what our circumstances may be. We are thereby letting Jehovah be our share.

¹⁴ How do you react when Jehovah, the Source of spiritual enlightenment, sheds light on "the deep things of God" found in the Bible? (1 Cor. 2:10-13) We have an excellent example in the apostle Peter's reaction when Jesus told His listeners: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in yourselves." Taking those words literally, many disciples said: "This speech is shocking; who can listen to it?" They "went off to the things behind." But Peter said: "Lord, whom shall we go away to? You have sayings of everlasting life."—John 6:53, 60, 66, 68.

¹⁵ Peter did not fully understand what Jesus said about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. But the apostle relied on God for spiritual enlightenment. When spiritual light on some matter gets brighter, do you try to understand the underlying Scriptural reasons for the adjustment? (Prov. 4:18) The first-century Bereans received the word "with the greatest eagerness of mind, carefully examining the Scriptures daily." (Acts 17:11) Imitating them will deepen your appreciation for your privilege to serve Jehovah, to have him be your share.

Marrying Only in the Lord

¹⁶ Another area in which Christians need to keep God's purposes in mind is in applying the Bible's direction to marry "only in the Lord." (1 Cor. 7:39) Many have chosen to remain single rather than disregard this divine counsel. God kindly takes in such ones. What did David do when he felt lonesome

14, 15. How should we respond when there is increased light on certain scriptures, and why?

16. How can God be our share regarding the command found at 1 Corinthians 7:39?



*Jeremiah's example
is encouraging*

and seemingly lacked any help? "Before [God] I kept pouring out my concern," he said. "Before him I continued to tell about my own distress, when my spirit fainted away within me." (Ps. 142:1-3) Similar feelings may have surfaced in the prophet Jeremiah, who served God faithfully for decades as a single person. You may want to study his example as discussed in chapter 8 of the book *God's Word for Us Through Jeremiah*.

¹⁷ "I have never resolved to remain single," says a sister in the United States. "I am open to getting married when I meet the right person. My unbelieving mother tried to convince me to marry just about anyone who came along. I asked her if she wanted to be responsible if my marriage turned out badly. In time, she saw that I had a stable job, was taking care of myself, and was happy. She stopped pressuring me." This sister at times feels some loneliness. "Then," she says, "I try to make Jehovah my confidence."

17. How does one single sister cope with occasional loneliness?

He never forsakes me." What has helped her to trust in Jehovah? "Prayer helps me sense that God is real and that I am never alone. The Most High of the universe is listening, so how could I not feel dignified and joyful?" Confident that "there is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving," she says: "I try to give of myself to help others, not expecting anything in return. When I am think-

ing, 'What can I do to help this person?' I have inner joy." (Acts 20:35) Yes, she has Jehovah as her share, and she is enjoying her privilege of serving him.

¹⁸ No matter what situation you find yourself in, you can let God be your share. As you do, you will be counted among his happy people. (2 Cor. 6:16, 17) That can result in your being *Jehovah's* share, as was true of others in the past. (***Read Deuteronomy 32: 9, 10.***) Just as Israel became God's share among the nations, he can mark you as his and lovingly care for you.—Ps. 17:8.

18. In what sense can Jehovah make you his share?

How Would You Answer?

How can you let Jehovah be your share

- by seeking first God's Kingdom and his righteousness?
- by showing appreciation for spiritual food?
- by observing God's command to marry only in the Lord?

RUN THE RACE WITH ENDURANCE

*“Let us run with endurance
the race that is set before us.”—HEB. 12:1.*

EACH year, marathons are held in many places. The so-called elite runners enter the race with one objective—to win. Most others who participate aim a bit lower. For them, just to finish the race is an accomplishment to be proud of.

² In the Bible, the Christian life course has been compared to a race. The apostle Paul called this point to the attention of his fellow Christians in ancient Corinth in his first letter to them. He wrote: “Do you not know that the runners in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may attain it.”—1 Cor. 9:24.

³ Was Paul saying that only one of those Christians would gain the prize of life and all the rest would run in vain? Of course not! Runners in the competitions trained and exerted themselves rigorously with the goal of becoming the winner. Paul wanted his fellow Christians to exert themselves that way in their quest for everlasting life. Doing so, they could hope to gain the prize of life. Yes, in the Christian race, all who finish win that prize.

⁴ Those words are encouraging, yet sobering, to all who have taken up the race for life today. Why? Because the prize—whether life in heaven or life in Paradise on earth—is be-

yond compare. True, the race is long and arduous; there are many obstacles, distractions, and dangers along the way. (Matt. 7:13, 14) Sadly, some have slowed down, given out, or even fallen along the way. What pitfalls and dangers are there in the race for life? How can you avoid them? What can you do to finish and thus win that race?

Endurance Needed to Win

⁵ In his letter to the Hebrew Christians in Jerusalem and Judea, Paul again made reference to features of athletic games or races. (**Read Hebrews 12:1.**) He not only called attention to the reason for engaging in the race but also pointed out what one must do to win. Before we examine Paul’s inspired advice to the Hebrew Christians to see what lessons there are for us, let us consider what prompted Paul to write the letter and what he was trying to encourage his readers to do.

⁶ The first-century Christians, especially those living in Jerusalem and Judea, were facing many trials and hardships. They were under great pressure from the Jewish religious leaders, who still wielded powerful influence over the people. Earlier, these leaders had succeeded in having Jesus Christ condemned as a seditionist and killed as a criminal. And they were not about to stop

1, 2. To what did the apostle Paul compare the Christian life course?

3. Why did Paul mention that only one runner wins?

4. What do we need to consider regarding the race that is set before us?

5. As recorded at Hebrews 12:1, Paul made what reference to a race?

6. Christians were under what pressure from religious leaders?

their opposition. In the book of Acts, we read one account after another of their threats and attacks against Christians, starting almost immediately after the miraculous events at Pentecost 33 C.E. This certainly made life difficult for the faithful ones.—Acts 4:1-3; 5:17, 18; 6:8-12; 7:59; 8:1, 3.

⁷ Those Christians were also living in the period just before the end of the Jewish system of things. Jesus had told them about the destruction to come upon the unfaithful Jewish nation. He had also told his followers about events that would take place just prior to the end, giving them specific instructions on what action to take to survive. (*Read Luke 21:20-22.*) What, then, would they do? Jesus warned: “Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking and anxieties of life, and suddenly that day be instantly upon you.”—Luke 21:34.

⁸ At the time Paul wrote his letter to the Hebrews, nearly 30 years had passed since Jesus gave that warning. How did the passage of time affect those Christians? Some succumbed to the pressures and distractions of daily life and failed to make the spiritual advancement that would have fortified them. (Heb. 5:11-14) Others apparently felt that life would be so much easier if they just went along with the majority of Jews around them. Those Jews, after all, had not completely abandoned God; they were still following his Law to some extent. Other Christians were persuaded or intimidated by individuals in the congregation who clamored for sticking to the Mosaic Law and tradition. What might Paul say that would help

7. What critical times were upon Christians to whom Paul wrote?

8. What might have caused some Christians to slow down or give out?

his Christian brothers to keep spiritually alert and endure in the race?

⁹ It is interesting to observe the way Paul, under divine inspiration, sought to strengthen the Hebrew Christians. In chapter 10 of his letter, Paul pointed out that the Law was but “a shadow of the good things to come” and clearly demonstrated the value of the ransom sacrifice of Christ. Toward the end of that chapter, Paul admonished his readers: “You have need of endurance, in order that, after you have done the will of God, you may receive the fulfillment of the promise. For yet ‘a very little while,’ and ‘he who is coming will arrive and will not delay.’”—Heb. 10:1, 36, 37.

¹⁰ In Hebrews chapter 11, Paul skillfully explains what true faith in God is. And he illustrates it by historical examples of men and women of faith. Was that an unnecessary digression? Not at all. The apostle knew that his fellow worshippers needed to realize that faith called for courageous action and endurance. The sterling example set by those ancient faithful servants of Jehovah would strengthen the Hebrews to deal with the trials and hardships they faced. Thus, after enumerating the acts of faith of those loyal ones in the past, Paul could say: “Because we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also put off every weight and the sin that easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”—Heb. 12:1.

“A Cloud of Witnesses”

¹¹ The ‘great cloud of witnesses’ were no mere spectators or bystanders, as it were,

9, 10. (a) Toward the end of Hebrews chapter 10, we read what encouragement by Paul? (b) Why did Paul write about the faithful acts of ancient witnesses?

11. Thinking of the ‘great cloud of witnesses’ can have what effect on us?

who were there only to watch the race or to see their favorite athlete or team win. Rather, they were participants, like runners in a race. And they had successfully run the race and finished it. Though now deceased, they could be thought of as seasoned runners who could encourage newer runners in the race. Imagine how a contestant would feel if he knew that surrounding, or watching, him were some of the most accomplished runners. Would he not be moved to do his best or even to outdo himself? Those witnesses of old could testify that such a figurative race, no matter how strenuous, can be won. Thus, by keeping closely in mind the example of the “cloud of witnesses,” the first-century Hebrew Christians could draw courage and ‘run the race with endurance’—as can we today.

¹² Many of the faithful ones whom Paul mentioned had circumstances similar to ours. For example, Noah was living when the pre-Flood world was ending. We are living near the end of the present system of things. Abraham and Sarah were called upon to leave behind their homeland to pursue true worship and await the fulfillment of Jehovah’s promise. We are urged to disown ourselves and gain Jehovah’s approval and the blessings he holds out for us. Moses journeyed through a fearsome wilderness, heading for the Promised Land. We are on a course through this dying system of things, heading toward the promised new world. What these men went through, their successes and failures, as well as their strengths and weaknesses, is truly worthy of our consideration.—Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11.

They Succeeded—How?

¹³ What enabled these servants of Jeho-

12. How are the examples Paul cited relevant to us?

13. Noah faced what challenges, and what enabled him to overcome them?

vah to endure and succeed in the race? Note what Paul wrote about Noah. (***Read Hebrews 11:7.***) “The deluge of waters upon the earth [that would] bring to ruin all flesh” was something that Noah had “not yet beheld.” (Gen. 6:17) It was something that had never taken place before, something totally unprecedented. Still, Noah did not dismiss it as impossible or even improbable. Why? Because he had faith that whatever Jehovah said, Jehovah would do. Noah did not feel that what he was asked to do was too difficult. Rather, “he did just so.” (Gen. 6:22) Considering all that Noah had to do—building the ark, gathering the animals, stocking the ark with food for humans and animals, preaching a warning message, and keeping his family spiritually strong—it was no small task to do “just so.” Yet, Noah’s faith and endurance resulted in life and blessings for him and for his family.

¹⁴ Abraham and Sarah come next in Paul’s list of the “cloud of witnesses surrounding us.” They were uprooted from their normal life in Ur, and their future appeared uncertain. They proved to be examples of unwavering faith and obedience in trying times. In conjunction with all the sacrifices that Abraham was willing to make for true worship, he was fittingly called “the father of all those having faith.” (Rom. 4:11) Paul touched only on the high points, his readers being well-acquainted with the details of Abraham’s life. Nonetheless, the lesson Paul drew is powerful: “In faith all these [including Abraham and his family] died, although they did not get the fulfillment of the promises, but they saw them afar off and welcomed them and publicly declared that they were strangers and temporary residents

14. What trials did Abraham and Sarah endure, providing what lesson for us?



Abraham and Sarah were willing to leave behind the comforts of Ur

in the land.” (Heb. 11:13) Clearly, their faith in God and their personal relationship with him helped them run the race with endurance.

¹⁵ Moses is another exemplary servant of Jehovah among the “cloud of witnesses.” Moses left behind a prosperous, privileged life, “choosing to be ill-treated with the people of God.” What motivated him to do so? Paul answered: “He looked intently toward the payment of the reward. . . . He continued steadfast as seeing the One who is invisible.” (**Read Hebrews 11:24-27.**) Moses was not distracted by “the temporary enjoyment of sin.” God and his promises were so real to Moses that he demonstrated extraordinary courage and endurance. He exerted himself untiringly in leading the Israelites out of Egypt to the Promised Land.

15. What motivated Moses to live as he did?

¹⁶ Like Abraham, Moses did not experience the fulfillment of God’s promise in his lifetime. With the Israelites poised to enter the Promised Land, Moses was told: “From a distance you will see the land, but you will not go there into the land that I am giving to the sons of Israel.” This was because earlier he and Aaron, exasperated by the people’s rebelliousness, “acted undutifully toward [God] in the middle of the sons of Israel at the waters of Meribah.” (Deut. 32:51, 52) Did Moses become despondent or resentful? No. He pronounced a blessing on the people and concluded with these words: “Happy you are, O Israel! Who is there like you, a people enjoying salvation in Jehovah, the shield of your help, and the One who is your eminent sword?”—Deut. 33:29.

16. Why did Moses not become despondent when he was not allowed to enter the Promised Land?

Lessons for Us

¹⁷ From our review of the life of some of those who make up the “cloud of witnesses surrounding us,” it is clear that for us to run the race to the finish, we must have implicit faith in God and his promises. (Heb. 11:6) Faith cannot be just at the corners of our life; it needs to be at the center of it. Unlike those without faith, Jehovah’s servants can see beyond the present. We are able to see “the One who is invisible” and thus run the race with endurance.—2 Cor. 5:7.

¹⁸ The Christian race is not easy. Nonethe-

17, 18. (a) As to our race for life, what can we learn from the “cloud of witnesses”? (b) What will be considered in the following article?

less, it is possible for us to finish the race successfully. In the following article, we will consider what further help we have available.

Can You Explain?

- Why did Paul write at length about the ancient faithful witnesses?
- How can envisioning the “cloud of witnesses surrounding us” encourage us to run with endurance?
- What have you learned from considering such faithful witnesses as Noah, Abraham, Sarah, and Moses?

“RUN . . . THAT YOU MAY ATTAIN IT”

“Run in such a way that you may attain it.”—1 COR. 9:24.

IN HIS letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul used a powerful word picture to encourage his fellow Christians. He reminded them that they were not alone in running the race for life. Surrounding them were a ‘great cloud of witnesses,’ who had successfully completed the race. Having clearly in mind the faithful acts and strenuous efforts of these forerunners would give the Hebrew Christians incentive to press on and not to give out in their race.

² In the preceding article, we considered

1, 2. (a) What did Paul use to encourage the Hebrew Christians? (b) What are God’s servants admonished to do?

the life course of several among the “cloud of witnesses.” All demonstrated that unshakable faith enabled them to remain loyal to God, as if they were pressing on in a race to the finish. We can draw a lesson from their success. As noted in that article, Paul offered this admonition to his fellow servants, including us: “Let us also put off every weight and the sin that easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”—Heb. 12:1.

³ Regarding foot racing, one of the popular athletic events of the day, the book *Back-*

3. What was Paul’s point of counsel with reference to runners in the Greek games?

grounds of Early Christianity tells us that “the Greeks exercised and competed in the nude.”* In such cases, the runners stripped themselves of any extraneous weight or burden that could slow them down. While we would object to their lack of modesty and propriety, they ran that way with the sole objective of winning the prize. Paul’s point was that to gain the prize in the race for life, it is essential for runners to remove hindrances of any sort. This was sound counsel for Christians back then, and it is for us today. What weights or burdens might hinder us from gaining the prize in the race for life?

“Put Off Every Weight”

⁴ Paul’s counsel was to “put off every weight.” That includes everything that might prevent us from giving our full attention and best effort to the race we are running. What might such weights be? Looking at Noah—one of those examples cited by Paul—we recall what Jesus said: “Just as it occurred in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of man.” (Luke 17:26) Jesus was not speaking primarily about the unprecedented destruction that is to come; he was referring to the people’s way of life. (***Read Matthew 24:37-39.***) The majority of the people in Noah’s day did not show interest in God, let alone endeavor to please him. What had distracted them? Nothing extraordinary. Eating, drinking, and marrying—things that are normal aspects of life. The real problem was that “they took no note,” as Jesus said.

* This was offensive to the Jews of ancient times. According to the apocryphal book of 2 Maccabees, it caused considerable controversy when, as a Hellenizing effort, the apostate high priest Jason proposed to build a gymnasium in Jerusalem.—2 Macc. 4:7-17.

4. What were people in Noah’s day preoccupied with?



⁵ Like Noah and his family, we have much to do every day. We need to make a living and to take care of ourselves and our family. That can occupy a large portion of our time, energy, and resources. Especially in economically challenging times, it is easy to become anxious about life’s necessities. As dedicated Christians, we also have important theocratic responsibilities. We share in the ministry, prepare for and attend Christian meetings, and keep spiritually strong by personal study and family worship. Despite all that Noah had to do in serving God, “he did just so.” (Gen. 6:22) Surely, keeping the weight we have to carry to a minimum, as well as avoiding taking on any unnecessary burden, is vital if we are to run the Christian race to the finish.

⁶ What did Paul mean when he said to put off “every weight”? Of course, we cannot relieve ourselves completely of every responsibility that we have. In this regard, bear in mind Jesus’ words: “Never be anxious and say, ‘What are we to eat?’ or, ‘What are we to drink?’ or, ‘What are we to put on?’ For all

5. What can help us to complete the race successfully?

6, 7. We should keep in mind what counsel of Jesus?

these are the things the nations are eagerly pursuing. For your heavenly Father knows you need all these things.” (Matt. 6:31, 32) Jesus’ words imply that even so-called normal things like food and clothing can become a burden or a stumbling block if not kept in their proper place.

⁷ Focus on Jesus’ words: “Your heavenly Father knows you need all these things.” This implies that our heavenly Father, Jehovah, will do his part to take care of our needs. To be sure, “all these things” may be different from what we personally are inclined to like or want. Still, we are told not to be anxious about “the things the nations are eagerly pursuing.” Why? Jesus later advised his listeners: “Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking and anxieties of life, and suddenly that day be instantly upon you as a snare.” —Luke 21:34, 35.

⁸ The finish line is just ahead. What a pity it would be if we allowed ourselves to be burdened down with unnecessary weights that could impede us when we are so close to the end! The apostle Paul’s counsel, therefore, is truly wise: “It is a means of great gain, this godly devotion along with self-sufficiency.” (1 Tim. 6:6) Our taking Paul’s words to heart will greatly enhance our prospects of attaining the prize.

“The Sin That Easily Entangles Us”

⁹ In addition to “every weight,” Paul mentioned putting off “the sin that easily entangles us.” What might that be? The Greek word translated “easily entangles” appears

8. Why is now especially the time to “put off every weight”?

9, 10. (a) To what does the expression “the sin that easily entangles us” refer? (b) How might we be entangled?

only once in the Bible, in this verse. Scholar Albert Barnes observed: “As a runner would be careful not to encumber himself with a garment which would be apt to wind around his legs in running, and hinder him, so it should be with the Christian, who especially ought to lay aside everything which resembles this.” How might a Christian become entangled, with the result that his faith is weakened?

¹⁰ A Christian does not lose his faith overnight. That might take place gradually, even subtly. Earlier in his letter, Paul warned about the danger of ‘drifting away’ and of ‘developing a wicked heart lacking faith.’ (Heb. 2:1; 3:12) When a runner’s legs get entangled with his garment, almost unavoidably he falls. The risk of entanglement is particularly great if the runner ignores the danger of wearing certain clothing while running. What might cause him to ignore the danger? Perhaps carelessness or overconfidence or some distraction. What lesson can we draw from Paul’s counsel?

¹¹ We should bear in mind that loss of faith is the end result of what we might do over the course of time. Regarding “the sin that easily entangles us,” another scholar notes that it is “the sin that has the greatest advantage against us, by the circumstances we are in, our constitution, our company.” The idea is that our environment, our personal weaknesses, and our associations can all exert a powerful influence on us. They can cause a weakening of our faith or even the loss of it.—Matt. 13:3-9.

¹² Over the years, the faithful and discreet slave class has been reminding us to be careful about what we watch and listen to, that

11. What might cause us to lose faith?

12. What reminders should we take to heart so as not to suffer a loss of faith?



What is “the sin that easily entangles us,” and how might it entangle us?

is to say, what we set our hearts and minds on. We have been warned about the danger of getting entangled in the pursuit of money and possessions. We might be sidetracked by the glitter and glamour of the entertainment world or by the endless parade of new gadgets. It would be a serious mistake to feel that such counsel is overly restrictive or that it applies only to others, while we personally are somehow immune to the dangers. Subtle and deceptive are the entanglements that Satan’s world puts in our way. Carelessness, overconfidence, and distractions have been the undoing of some, and such things could affect our hope of attaining the prize of life.—1 John 2:15-17.

¹³ Day in and day out, we are exposed to people who promote the goals, values, and thinking of the world around us. (**Read Ephesians 2:1, 2.**) Nonetheless, the degree to which we are affected depends largely on

13. How can we protect ourselves against harmful influences?

us, on how we react to these influences. “The air” that Paul spoke about is death-dealing. We must constantly be on guard so as not to be choked, or asphyxiated, and thus fail to finish the race. What help do we have to stay the course? Jesus is the perfect lead runner, you might say. (Heb. 12:2) We also have Paul’s example, for he counted himself among the runners in the Christian race and urged his fellow believers to imitate him.—1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:14.

“You May Attain It”—How?

¹⁴ How did Paul view his personal share in the race? In his final address to the elders from Ephesus, he said: “I do not make my soul of any account as dear to me, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received of the Lord Jesus.” (Acts 20:24) He was willing to sacrifice everything, including his life, in order to finish the

14. How did Paul view his personal share in the race?

race. For Paul, all his efforts and hard work in connection with the good news would amount to nothing if he should somehow fail to finish the course. Yet, he was not self-assured, feeling that he would without fail win the race. (*Read Philippians 3:12, 13.*) Only toward the end of his life did he say with a measure of confidence: “I have fought the fine fight, I have run the course to the finish, I have observed the faith.” —2 Tim. 4:7.

¹⁵ In addition, Paul had an intense desire to see his fellow Christians finish the course and not drop out along the way. For example, he urged Christians in Philippi to work hard for their own salvation. They needed to keep “a tight grip on the word of life.” He continued: “That I may have cause for exultation in Christ’s day, that I did not run in vain or work hard in vain.” (Phil. 2:16) Similarly, he urged the Christians in Corinth: “Run in such a way that you may attain [the prize].” —1 Cor. 9:24.

¹⁶ In a long race, such as a marathon, the finish line is not in sight at first. Still, all through the race, a runner keeps focused on the finish. That focus becomes clearer when he knows that the goal is near. It should be similar in our race. The goal, or prize, needs to be real to us. That will help us to attain it.

¹⁷ “Faith is the assured expectation of things hoped for, the evident demonstration of realities though not beheld,” wrote Paul. (Heb. 11:1) Abraham and Sarah were willing to leave a comfortable way of life behind and live as “strangers and temporary residents in the land.” What helped them?

15. What encouragement did Paul give his fellow runners in the race?

16. Why should we have the goal, or prize, clearly in view?

17. How is faith involved in keeping focused on the prize?

“They saw [the fulfillment of God’s promises] afar off.” Moses rejected “the temporary enjoyment of sin” and “the treasures of Egypt.” How did he have the faith and strength to do so? He “looked intently toward the payment of the reward.” (Heb. 11: 8-13, 24-26) Understandably, Paul prefaced his description of each of these people with the expression “by faith.” Faith enabled them to look beyond the trials and hardships of the present and see what God was doing in their behalf and would yet do.

¹⁸ By meditating on the men and women of faith mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11 and imitating their example, we can cultivate faith and put off “the sin that easily entangles us.” (Heb. 12:1) Also, we can “consider one another to incite to love and fine works” by gathering together with people who are cultivating like faith.—Heb. 10:24.

¹⁹ We are near the end of our race. The finish line is as good as in sight. Through faith and with Jehovah’s help, we too can “put off every weight and the sin that easily entangles us.” Yes, we can run in such a way that we may attain the prize—the blessings promised by our God and Father, Jehovah.

18. To put off “the sin that easily entangles us,” what positive steps can we take?

19. How do you feel about keeping focused on the prize?

Do You Remember?

- What is involved in putting off “every weight”?
- What might cause a Christian to lose faith?
- Why must we keep our focus on the prize?

ARE YOU KNOWN BY JEHOVAH?

“Jehovah knows those who belong to him.”—2 TIM. 2:19.

ONE day a Pharisee approached Jesus and asked: “Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus responded: “You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind.” (Matt. 22:35-37) Jesus had great love for his heavenly Father and truly lived by those words. Jesus was also concerned about his standing with Jehovah, demonstrating this by his faithful life course. Therefore, shortly before his death, he could state that God knew him as one who faithfully obeyed His commandments. Jesus thus remained in Jehovah’s love.—John 15:10.

² Many today claim to love God. We no doubt include ourselves in that number. However, serious aspects to consider are: ‘Am I known by God? How does Jehovah view me? Am I known as belonging to him?’ (2 Tim. 2:19) What a privilege it is to contemplate such a close relationship with the Sovereign of the universe!

³ Yet, some who have much love for Jehovah find it challenging to believe that God can know them in a positive way. Some have feelings of worthlessness, so they question the idea of belonging to Jehovah. How glad we can be, though, that God can see us from a different perspective! (1 Sam. 16:7) The

1, 2. (a) What was Jesus concerned about?
(b) What questions should we consider?

3. Why do some question whether they can belong to Jehovah, and what will help to counteract such thinking?

apostle Paul told his fellow Christians: “If anyone loves God, this one is known by him.” (1 Cor. 8:3) Your love for God is an important prerequisite for being known by him. Consider: Why are you reading this journal? Why are you striving to serve Jehovah with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength? If you are dedicated to God and baptized, what led you to take those steps? The Bible explains that Jehovah, who examines hearts, draws desirable ones. (***Read Haggai 2:7; John 6:44.***) Therefore, you can conclude that you are serving Jehovah because he drew you. He will never leave the ones whom he has drawn if they remain faithful. God views them as very precious, and he loves them dearly.—Ps. 94:14.

⁴ Once Jehovah has drawn us, we should be concerned with remaining in his love. (***Read Jude 20, 21.***) Remember, the Bible shows that it is possible to drift away or draw away from God. (Heb. 2:1; 3:12, 13) For example, just prior to the statement found at 2 Timothy 2:19, the apostle Paul mentioned Hymenaeus and Philetus. Those two men had evidently belonged to Jehovah at one point, but they later deviated from the truth. (2 Tim. 2:16-18) Recall, too, that in the Galatian congregations, some who had been known by God did not remain in the spiritual light they once enjoyed. (Gal. 4:9) May we never take for granted our precious standing with God.

4. Why should we continue to reflect on our being known by God?

Like Abraham, do we have faith that Jehovah will completely fulfill his promises?

⁵ There are some qualities that Jehovah especially values. (Ps. 15:1-5; 1 Pet. 3:4) Faith and humility distinguished some who were known by God. Let us examine the examples of two men to see how these qualities endeared them to Jehovah. We will also look at a man who thought he was known by God but who took a prideful course and found out that Jehovah had rejected him. We can learn valuable lessons from these examples.

The Father of Those Having Faith

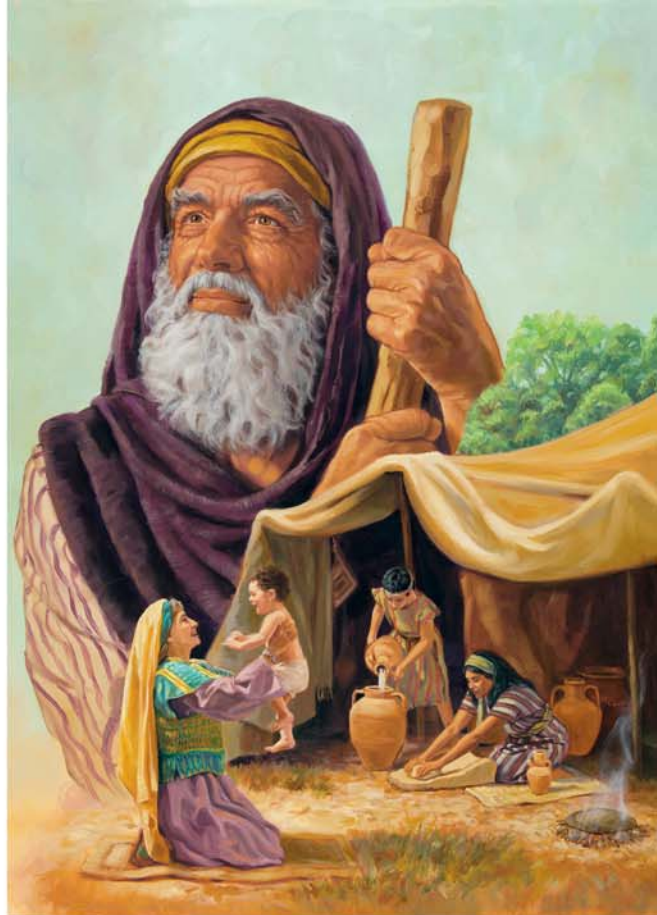
⁶ Abraham was a man who “put faith in Jehovah.” In fact, he is called “the father of all those having faith.” (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:11) In faith, Abraham left his home, his friends, and his possessions to go to a distant land. (Gen. 12:1-4; Heb. 11:8-10) Abraham’s faith was still strong many years later. This was evident when he “as good as offered up Isaac” his son in obedience to Jehovah’s command. (Heb. 11:17-19) Abraham demonstrated faith in Jehovah’s promises, so God viewed him as special; he really knew Abraham. (**Read Genesis 18:19.**) Jehovah was not merely aware of Abraham’s existence; he cherished Abraham as a friend.—Jas. 2:22, 23.

⁷ It is noteworthy that Abraham did not during his lifetime receive the inheritance of the land promised to him. He also did not see his seed become “like the grains of sand that are on the seashore.” (Gen. 22:17, 18)

5. (a) What are some qualities that God values? (b) What examples will we consider?

6. (a) Abraham demonstrated what faith in Jehovah’s promises? (b) How was Abraham known by Jehovah?

7. What is noteworthy about the fulfillment of Jehovah’s promises, and how did this affect Abraham?



Though these promises went unfulfilled during Abraham’s lifetime, he maintained strong faith in Jehovah. He knew that if God gave his word, it was as good as done. Yes, Abraham lived his life in harmony with that faith. (**Read Hebrews 11:13.**) Are we known by Jehovah as having faith similar to Abraham’s?

Waiting on Jehovah Is a Mark of Faith

⁸ We may have desires that we long to see fulfilled. Marriage, having children, and good health are all natural and appropriate desires. For many, though, one or more of those desires may go unfulfilled. If that is so in our case, how we deal with the situation may be a measure of our faith.

8. What appropriate desires do some long to see fulfilled?

⁹ How unwise it would be to seek to fulfill these desires in a way contrary to godly wisdom. That would be to one's spiritual detriment. Some, for instance, have chosen forms of health care that conflict with Jehovah's counsel. Others have taken on employment that keeps them away from their families or congregation meetings. Or what of developing a romantic relationship with an unbeliever? If a Christian follows such a course, is he truly seeking to be known by Jehovah? How would Jehovah have felt if Abraham had become impatient about the fulfillment of God's promises to him? What if Abraham had taken matters into his own hands to settle down again and make a celebrated name for himself rather than wait on Jehovah? (Compare Genesis 11:4.) Would he have continued to be favorably known by Jehovah?

¹⁰ What desires do you long to see fulfilled? Is your faith strong enough for you to wait on Jehovah, who promises to satisfy your proper yearnings? (Ps. 145:16) As was true with Abraham, the fulfillment of some divine promises may not come as soon as we would like. Still, Jehovah values our developing faith like Abraham's and our acting in harmony with it. Doing so is surely to our ultimate benefit.—Heb. 11:6.

A Contrast Between Humility and Pride

¹¹ Moses and Korah stand in sharp contrast when it comes to demonstrating respect for Jehovah's arrangement and his decisions. Their reactions had a bearing on

9, 10. (a) How have some sought to fulfill their desires? (b) How do you feel about the fulfillment of God's promises?

11. Korah may have enjoyed what privileges, evidently indicating what about his attitude toward God?

how Jehovah viewed them. Korah was a Kohathite Levite, and he enjoyed many privileges, which likely included seeing the deliverance of the nation through the Red Sea, supporting Jehovah's judgment against disobedient Israelites at Mount Sinai, and having a role in transporting the ark of the covenant. (Ex. 32:26-29; Num. 3:30, 31) He had evidently been loyal to Jehovah for years and was subsequently looked up to by many in the camp of Israel.

¹² Nevertheless, while the nation of Israel was en route to the Promised Land, Korah perceived what he imagined to be problems in God's arrangement. Then 250 other leading men in the nation sided with Korah in trying to make changes. Korah and the others must have felt secure about their relationship with Jehovah. They told Moses: "That is enough of you, because the whole assembly are all of them holy and Jehovah is in their midst." (Num. 16:1-3) What an overconfident and prideful attitude! Moses told them: "Jehovah will make known who belongs to him." (**Read Numbers 16:5.**) By the end of the next day, Korah and all those who had sided with him in rebellion were dead.—Num. 16:31-35.

¹³ In contrast, Moses was "by far the meekest of all the men who were upon the surface of the ground." (Num. 12:3) He manifested his meekness and humility by his determination to follow Jehovah's direction. (Ex. 7:6; 40:16) There is no indication that Moses often questioned Jehovah's way of doing things or got annoyed at having to follow procedures that Jehovah set out. For example, Jehovah gave commands

12. As depicted on page 28, how did pride affect Korah's being known by God?

13, 14. In what ways did Moses demonstrate his humility?

regarding the tabernacle construction down to the smallest detail, such as the color of the thread and the number of loops to be used in making the tent cloths. (Ex. 26:1-6) If a human overseer in God's organization provides you with instructions that seem extremely detailed, you might at times feel frustrated. Jehovah, however, is a perfect overseer, who delegates generously and trusts his servants. When he gives many details, he does so for good reason. Take note, though, that Moses did not become irritated with Jehovah for giving that level of detail, as if Jehovah were demeaning him or stifling his creativity or freedom. Rather, Moses made sure that the workers "did just so" in following God's directions. (Ex. 39:32) What a humble course! Moses recognized that it was Jehovah's work and that he was just a tool being used to get that work done.

¹⁴ Moses' humility was also evident when he faced negative circumstances that affected him personally. On one occasion, Moses lost self-control and failed to sanctify God

when dealing with the complaining people. As a result, Jehovah told Moses that he would not take the people into the Promised Land. (Num. 20:2-12) He and his brother, Aaron, had endured the grumbling of the Israelites for years. Then, because Moses erred on that one occasion, he would not get to experience what he had been expecting for so long! How did Moses react? While understandably disappointed, Moses humbly accepted Jehovah's decision. He knew that Jehovah is a righteous God, with whom there is no injustice. (Deut. 3:25-27; 32:4) When you think of Moses, do you not see him as one known by Jehovah?—***Read Exodus 33:12, 13.***

Submitting to Jehovah Requires Humility

¹⁵ How we react to adjustments in the worldwide Christian congregation and decisions made by those taking the lead in it has a bearing on our being known by Jehovah.

15. What can we learn from Korah's prideful course?

Korah was not willing to submit humbly to direction



*Are you known by
Jehovah as one who humbly
submits to directions?*

Korah and his associates alienated themselves from God by their overconfidence, pride, and lack of faith. Although in Korah's eyes it was aged Moses who was making day-to-day decisions, it was really Jehovah who was directing the nation. Korah lost sight of that fact and consequently failed to show loyalty to those whom God was using. How much wiser it would have been for Korah to wait on Jehovah for a clearer understanding or for adjustments if those were really needed. So in the end, Korah destroyed his record of faithful service by his prideful actions!

¹⁶ That account provides a serious warning for elders and others in the congregation today. Waiting on Jehovah and following directions from those appointed to take the lead requires humility. Do we show that we are as humble and mild-tempered as Moses was? Can we acknowledge the position of those taking the lead among us and submit to directions we receive? Are we able to rise above our personal feelings when faced with disappointments? If so, we too will be known favorably by Jehovah. Our humility and submission will endear us to him.

Jehovah Knows Those Who Belong to Him

¹⁷ It is beneficial to reflect on those whom Jehovah drew and knew favorably. Abraham

16. How can following Moses' example of humility affect our being known by Jehovah?

17, 18. What can help us to continue to be known as belonging to Jehovah?



and Moses were imperfect and had flaws, as we do. Yet, they were known by Jehovah as ones belonging to him. Korah's example, however, illustrates that it would be possible for us to draw away from Jehovah and thus no longer be known by him with approval. Each of us does well to ask himself: 'How does Jehovah see me? What can I learn from these Bible examples?'

¹⁸ You can take great comfort in knowing that Jehovah views as belonging to him faithful ones whom he has drawn. Continue to develop faith, humility, and other qualities that further endear you to our God. Being known by Jehovah is undeniably a precious privilege that brings satisfaction to our life now, and it holds out wonderful blessings for the future.—Ps. 37:18.

Do You Recall?

- What precious standing can you enjoy with Jehovah?
- How can you imitate the faith of Abraham?
- What lessons can we learn from Korah and Moses?

Can You Be Like Phinehas When You Face Challenges?



IT IS a precious privilege to serve as a congregation elder. God's Word acknowledges, however, that elders face challenges. On occasion, they must handle cases of wrongdoing in which they 'judge for Jehovah.' (2 Chron. 19:6) Or an overseer may receive an assignment for which he feels unprepared, as did Moses, who meekly asked regarding one assignment: "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?"—Ex. 3:11.

The Scriptures, written under the influence of the same active force that appoints elders, provide living examples of overseers who faced trials successfully. Phinehas was the son of Eleazar and the grandson of Aaron and thus was in line to become high priest. Three events in his life highlight the need for elders today to face challenges with courage, insight, and reliance on Jehovah.

"He at Once Got Up"

Phinehas was a young man when the Israelites were encamped on the Plains of Moab. The Bible reports: "The people started to have immoral relations with the daughters of Moab. . . . And the people began to eat and to bow down to their gods." (Num. 25:1, 2) Jehovah afflicted the wrongdoers with a death-dealing scourge. Can you imagine how this report of wrongdoing and the scourge it caused must have affected Phinehas?

"Look!" the account continues, "a man of the sons of Israel came, and he was bringing near to his brothers a Midianite woman before Moses' eyes and before the eyes of all the assembly of the sons of Israel, while they were weeping at the entrance of the tent of meeting." (Num. 25:6) What would priest Phinehas do? He was relatively young, and the offending Israelite was a chieftain who took the lead in worship among the people.—Num. 25:14.

But Phinehas feared Jehovah, not men. When he caught sight of the two, he at once took a lance in his hand and went after the man into the tent and pierced both of them through. How did Jehovah view Phinehas' courage and decisiveness? Jehovah immediately ended the scourge and rewarded Phinehas with a covenant that the priesthood would remain in his line "to time indefinite."—Num. 25:7-13.

Of course, Christian elders today do not resort to violence. But like Phinehas, elders must be ready to be decisive and courageous. For example, Guilherme had been serving as an elder for only a few months when he was asked to serve on a judicial committee. The case of wrongdoing involved an elder who had helped Guilherme when he was younger. "I felt awkward being in that position," he says. "I found it difficult to sleep at night. I kept going over in my mind ways to han-



dle this case without letting my emotions blur my spiritual vision. I prayed for several days and researched Bible publications.” This helped him to have the needed courage to handle the unique situation and render spiritual assistance to his erring brother.—1 Tim. 4:11, 12.

By acting with courage and decisiveness when situations in the congregation require such, elders become examples of faith and loyalty. Of course, other Christians also need to act courageously, reporting serious wrongdoing that they may become aware of. Likewise, it takes loyalty to discontinue association with a friend or relative who is disfellowshipped.—1 Cor. 5:11-13.

Insight Averts a Crisis

Phinehas’ courage was not mere youthful impetuosity. Consider how he displayed insight—acting with prudence and discretion—when another report reached his ears. The tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh built an altar near the Jordan River. Other Israelites concluded that it was for false worship and prepared to take military action.—Josh. 22:11, 12.

How did Phinehas react? Phinehas, along with the Israelite chieftains, prudently discussed the matter with those who had built the altar. The accused tribes clarified the situation, explaining that it actually was an al-

tar for “the service of Jehovah.” A crisis was thus averted.—Josh. 22:13-34.

If a Christian hears an accusation or a negative report about a fellow servant of Jehovah, how wise it would be to imitate Phinehas! Insight restrains us from taking offense or revealing unkind observations about our brothers.—Prov. 19:11.

How can insight assist elders to act as Phinehas did? “When a publisher starts speaking about a personal difference he is having with another person,” notes Jaime, an elder for over ten years, “I quickly ask Jehovah to help me not to take sides but to provide Scriptural guidance. A sister once approached me about a personal problem regarding the way a responsible brother in another congregation had treated her. Since the brother was my personal friend, it would have been easy for me to speak to him. Instead, the sister and I reasoned on several Bible principles. She agreed, first of all, to speak to the brother herself. (Matt. 5:23, 24) Peace was not immediately restored. So I urged her to consider other Scriptural principles. She decided to pray again about the situation and to strive to forgive.”

What was the result? “Several months later,” Jaime recalls, “the sister approached me. She explained that, in time, the brother regretted what he had said. He arranged to work with her in the ministry and expressed

appreciation for her. The matter was resolved. Could I have come up with a better outcome if I, who might have seemed to be partial, had become unduly involved in the dispute?" The Bible counsels: "Do not go forth to conduct a legal case hastily." (Prov. 25:8) Insightful elders wisely encourage Christians who have personal differences to apply Scriptural principles to promote and achieve peace.

He Inquired of Jehovah

Phinehas was privileged to serve as a priest for God's chosen people. As noted, he had extraordinary courage and insight, even at a relatively young age. However, his success in coping with challenges depended on his trusting in Jehovah.

Following the tragic rape and murder of a Levite's concubine by the men of Gibeah, of the tribe of Benjamin, the other tribes set out to wage war against the Benjamites. (Judg. 20:1-11) They prayed for Jehovah's help before fighting, but they were defeated twice, with significant losses. (Judg. 20:14-25) Would they conclude that their prayers were ineffective? Was Jehovah truly interested in seeing them respond to the wrong that had been done?

Unwavering in his confidence, Phinehas, now Israel's high priest, again came to the fore. "Shall I go out yet again to battle against the sons of Benjamin my brother or shall I cease to?" he prayed. In response, Jehovah gave the Benjamites into their hand, and Gibeah was burned to the ground. —Judg. 20:27-48.

What lesson might we learn from this? Some problems faced in the congregation persist despite the elders' diligent efforts and prayers for God's help. If this occurs, elders do well to remember Jesus' words: "Keep on asking [or praying], and it will

be given you; keep on seeking, and you will find; keep on knocking, and it will be opened to you." (Luke 11:9) Even if an answer to prayer seems delayed, overseers can be assured that Jehovah will respond in his own due time.

For instance, a congregation in Ireland was in desperate need of a Kingdom Hall but did not have the favor of the local planning officer. He objected to all proposals for the site on which the brothers hoped to build. It seemed that the only other authority who could approve the proposals was the chief planning officer for the entire county. Would prayer help, as it did in Phinehas' day?

A local elder relates: "After a great deal of prayer and supplication, we traveled to the main planning office. I was told that it would probably be weeks before we could see the chief officer. However, we managed to meet with him for five minutes. After he saw the redrawn plans, he quickly gave us permission to continue, and from then on the local planning officer went out of his way to help us. That experience impressed on us the power of prayer." Yes, Jehovah will answer the sincere prayers of elders who rely on him.

Phinehas carried a heavy load of responsibility in ancient Israel; yet, with courage, insight, and reliance on God, he was able to face challenges successfully. And Phinehas' diligent care for God's congregation met with Jehovah's approval. Some 1,000 years later, Ezra was inspired to write: "It was Phinehas the son of Eleazar that happened to be leader over them in the past. Jehovah was with him." (1 Chron. 9:20) May that be true of all who take the lead among God's people today, in fact, of all Christians who serve him loyally.