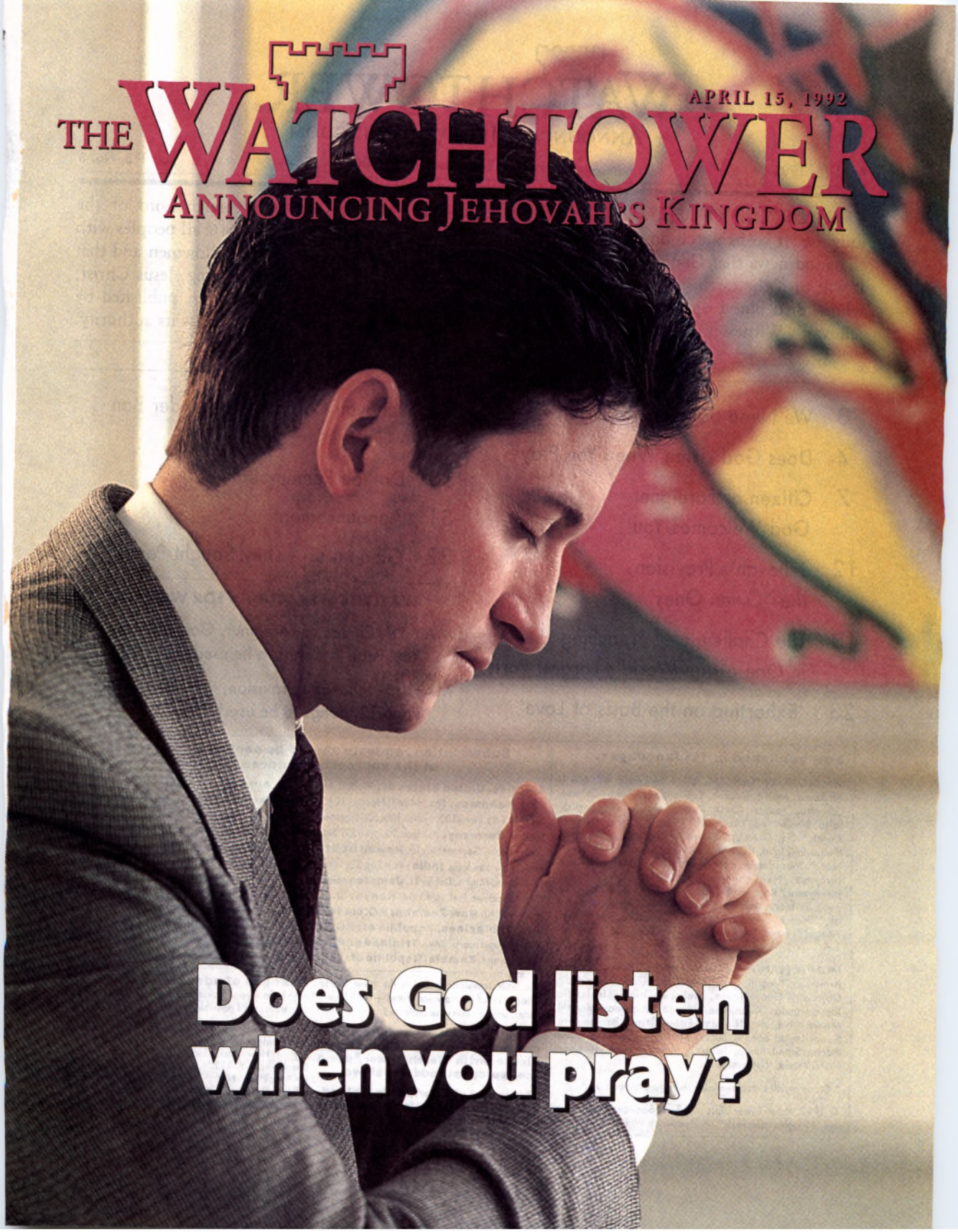
APRIL 15, 1992

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



Does God listen when you pray?

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in God's now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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We Need Someone to Listen

AS HUMANS, we try to find joy and satisfaction in life. But when personal problems arise, how helpful and comforting it is to have someone with whom to talk over our troubles!

Says Dr. George S. Stevenson: "Talking things out helps to relieve your strain, helps you to see your worry in a clearer light, often helps you to see what you can do about it." Dr. Rose Hilferding observed: "We all have to share our troubles. We have to share worry. We have to feel there is someone in the world who is willing to listen and able to understand."

Of course, no human can completely fill this need. Because of limitations on time and other factors, our human confidants may be unavailable when we need them most, or we may be hesitant to discuss some matters even with our closest friends.

True Christians, however, are never completely without a listening ear, for the avenue of prayer is always available. The Bible repeatedly encourages us to pray to God, our Creator, whose name is Jehovah. We are directed to pray in sincerity, in the name of Jesus, and in harmony with God's will. Even personal and private matters are proper subjects for prayer. "In everything . . . let your petitions be made known to God," we are told at Philippians 4:6. What a remarkable gift! The Sovereign Ruler of our universe is always ready to welcome and receive the prayers of his humble servants whenever they desire to approach him.—Psalm 83:18; Matthew 6:9-15; John 14:13, 14; 1 John 5:14.

Yet, does God really listen? Some may wonder if the effectiveness of prayer is limited to human ability: A person prays, arranging his thoughts and expressing them in words. Having thus defined his problem, he seeks a fitting solution and is alert to everything that may contribute toward finding it. When his problem is solved, he may credit God, but it was actually his own mind and efforts that produced the desired results.

Many today think that that is all there really is to prayer. Do you? Is the power of prayer thus limited? Granted, a person's mental and physical efforts in harmony with his prayers play a significant role in receiving answers. What, however, of God's own role in the matter? Does God listen when you pray to him? Does he count your prayers important, giving consideration to their content and responding to them?

The answers to these questions are significant. If God does not give his attention to our prayers, then prayer is of no more than psychological value. On the other hand, if God does receive and listen with interest to each of our prayers, how grateful we should be for such a provision! It should move us to make use of that provision every day.

We invite you, then, to read on, as these issues are addressed in the following article.

Does God Listen When You Pray?

A CHIEF executive decides whether he will delegate a matter or will handle it personally. Similarly, the Sovereign Ruler of the universe has the option to determine the extent of his personal involvement in any matter. The Scriptures teach that God has chosen to involve himself personally in our prayers and therefore direct us to address these to him.—Psalm 66:19; 69:13.

God's choice in this matter reveals his personal interest in the prayers of his human servants. Rather than discourage his people from approaching him with every thought and care, he exhorts them: "Pray incessantly," "persevere in prayer," "throw your burden upon Jehovah himself," "throw all your anxiety upon [God]."—1 Thessalonians 5:17; Romans 12:12; Psalm 55:22; 1 Peter 5:7.

If God did not want to give attention to his servants' prayers, he would never have arranged for such access to him and encouraged free use of it. This, then, God's choosing to make himself so approachable to his people, is one reason for confidence that he actually listens. Yes, he gives consideration to each of his servants' prayers.

Not to be overlooked is the fact that the Bible plainly states that God listens to prayer. The apostle John, for example, writes: "This is the confidence that we have toward him, that, no matter what it is that we ask according to his will, he hears us." (1 John 5:14) King David referred to Jehovah God as the "Hearer of prayer" and confidently asserted: "He hears my voice."—Psalm 55:17; 65:2.

So while the act of praying doubtless has benefits in itself, the Scriptures show that much more is involved when a righteous person prays. Someone is listening. That listener is God.—James 5:16-18.

Prayers That Were Heard

The Bible abounds with accounts of people whose prayers were, in fact, heard and answered by God. Their experiences clearly

confirm that the benefits of prayer go beyond the therapeutic effect of sorting out and expressing one's thoughts. They go beyond a person's personal efforts in harmony with his prayers.

For example, when confronted by Absalom's conspiracy to usurp the kingship of Israel, King David prayed: "Turn, please, the counsel of Ahithophel [Absalom's adviser] into foolishness, O Jehovah!" No small request, as "the counsel of Ahithophel . . . was just as when a man would inquire of the word of the true God. That was the way all the counsel of Ahithophel was." Absalom thereafter rejected Ahithophel's suggested strategy for overthrowing King David. Why? "Jehovah himself had given command to frustrate the counsel of Ahithophel although good, in order that Jehovah might bring calamity upon Absalom." Plainly, David's prayer was heard.—2 Samuel 15:31; 16:23; 17:14.

Similarly, after Hezekiah supplicated God for deliverance from his terminal illness, he recovered. Was this simply because of the psychological benefits to Hezekiah as a result of having prayed? No, indeed! Jehovah's message to Hezekiah, as delivered by the prophet Isaiah, was: "I have heard your prayer. I have seen your tears. Here I am healing you."—2 Kings 20:1-6.

Daniel, whose prayer was answered later than he may have expected, was assured by Jehovah's angel: "Your words have been heard." The prayers of others, such as those of Hannah, Jesus' disciples, and the army officer Cornelius, were answered in ways that cannot be credited to human ability alone. The Bible, then, clearly teaches that prayers in harmony with the divine will are received, heard, and answered by God. —Daniel 10:2-14; 1 Samuel 1:1-20; Acts 4: 24-31; 10:1-7.

But how does God answer the prayers of his faithful servants today?

Answers to Prayers

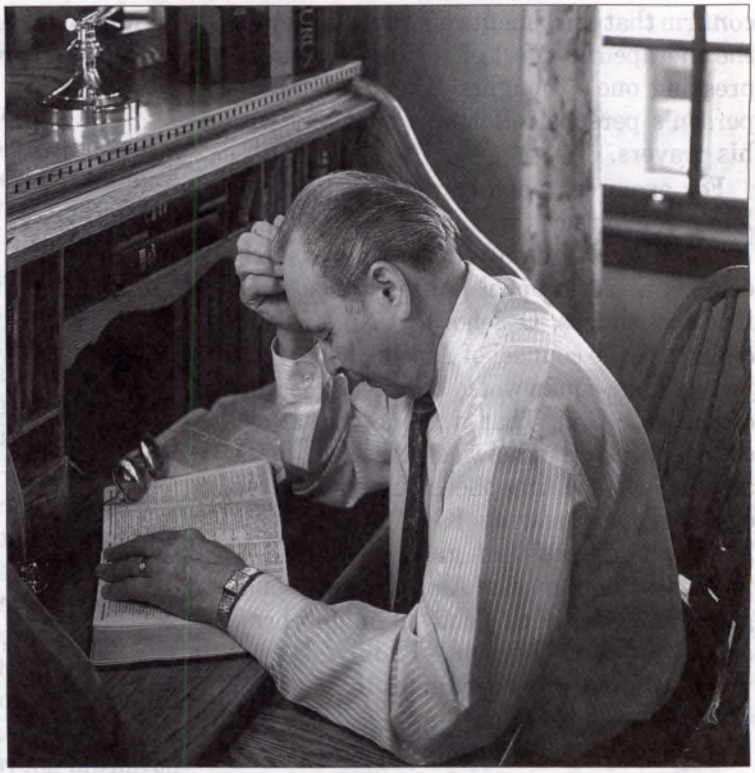
The prayers cited above were answered in dramatic, miraculous ways. Please bear in mind, though, that even in Bible times, the most frequent answers to prayers were not so easily discernible. This is because they related to giving moral strength and enlightenment, enabling God's servants to hold to a righteous course. Especially for Christians, answers to prayers involved matters that were mainly spiritual, not spectacular or powerful acts.—Colossians 1:9.

Hence, do not be disappointed if your prayers are not always answered in the way that you expect or prefer. For example, rather than remove a trial, God might choose to give you "power beyond what is normal" to endure it. (2 Corinthians 4:7; 2 Timothy 4:17) Never should we minimize the value of such power, nor should we conclude that Jehovah did not really answer our prayer at all.

Consider the case of none other than God's Son, Jesus Christ. In his concern not to die as an apparent blasphemer, Jesus prayed: "Father, if you wish, remove this cup from me." Was this prayer favorably heard by God? Yes, as confirmed at Hebrews 5:7. Jehovah did not relieve his Son of the need to die on a torture stake. Instead, "an angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him."—Luke 22:42, 43.

A dramatic, miraculous answer? To any of us, it would be! But to Jehovah God, the source of such power, this was no miracle. And Jesus was, from his earlier life in heaven, familiar with past instances when angels appeared to humans. So an angel's appearance would not have the dramatic impact on him that it would on us. Nevertheless, this angel, whom Jesus evidently knew personally from His prehuman existence, helped to

God listens to prayers. Do we listen to him through his Word?



strengthen Him for the trial just ahead.

In answering the prayers of his faithful servants today, Jehovah frequently gives the needed strength to endure. This support might take the form of encouragement from fellow worshipers with whom we are personally associated. Would any of us want to reject that encouragement, perhaps concluding that since our fellow servants have not experienced trials similar to ours, they are in no position to strengthen us? Jesus could have taken just such a view toward the angel who appeared to him. Instead, he accepted the encouragement as Jehovah's answer to his prayer and so was able to fulfill faithfully his Father's will. We too will want to accept graciously the strength that God gives in answer to our prayers. Remember, too, that such periods of patient endurance are often followed by untold blessings.—Ecclesiastes 11:6; James 5:11.

Be Confident That God Listens

Never lose confidence in the effectiveness of prayer if you are not answered right away. Answers to some prayers, such as those for personal relief from distress or for increased responsibility in one's service to God, may have to wait for the time that God knows is right and best. (Luke 18:7, 8; 1 Peter 5:6) If you are praying regarding a matter of deep personal concern, show God by your persistence that your desire is intense, your motive pure and genuine. Jacob manifested this spirit when, after wrestling at length with an angel, he said: "I am not going to let you go until you first bless me." (Genesis 32: 24-32) We must have similar confidence that if we keep asking, we will receive a blessing in due time.—Luke 11:9.

One final thought. To receive a hearing ear from the Sovereign of the universe is a precious privilege. In view of this, do we carefully listen when Jehovah God, through his Word, speaks to us of his requirements? As our prayers bring us intimately closer to our Creator, we will want to give serious attention to everything that he has to say to us.

CITIZEN OR FOREIGNER, GOD WELCOMES YOU!

"He made out of one man every nation of men, to dwell upon the entire surface of the earth."—ACTS 17:26.

PRESS reports indicate that in many lands concern is growing about foreigners, immigrants, and refugees. Millions are desperate to move from parts of Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. Perhaps they seek relief from crushing poverty, civil war, or persecution. But are they welcome elsewhere? *Time* magazine stated: "As Europe's ethnic mix begins to change, some countries discover they are not as tolerant of foreign cultures as they once thought they were." Of the 18,000,000 "unwanted" refugees, *Time* said: "The challenge they present to stable nations will not go away."

[2] Whatever develops in this regard, the Bible shows that God welcomes people of every nation—whether a person be a natural-born citizen, an immigrant, or a refugee. (Acts 10:34, 35) 'Yet,' some might ask, 'how can you say that? Did not God select only ancient Israel as his people, to the exclusion of others?'

[3] Well, let us see how God dealt with ancient peoples. We can examine also certain prophecies that bear on what privileges are available to true worshipers today. Reviewing this prophetic material can bring to light a fuller understanding that you may find most encouraging. It gives indication, too, of how God may deal with individuals "of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues" following the great tribulation.—Revelation 7:9, 14-17.

1. What predicament exists in many places today as to acceptance of people from foreign cultures?

2, 3. (a) What refreshing assurance does the Bible offer in connection with acceptance? (b) Why can we benefit from examining what the Scriptures present about God's dealing with peoples?

'All Nations Will Bless Themselves'

[4] After the Flood, Noah's immediate family made up all of mankind, and all were true worshipers. But that unity soon changed. Before long, some people, ignoring God's will, began to build a tower. This led to humankind's breaking into language groups that became scattered peoples and nations. (Genesis 11:1-9) Still, true worship continued in the line leading to Abraham. God blessed faithful Abraham and promised that his offspring would become a great nation. (Genesis 12:1-3) That nation was ancient Israel.

[5] Jehovah was not, however, excluding people other than Israel, for his purpose extended to cover all mankind. We see this clearly from what God promised Abraham: "By means of your seed *all nations of the earth will certainly bless themselves* due to the fact that you have listened to my voice." (Genesis 22:18) For centuries, though, God dealt in a special way with Israel, giving a

4. How did the problem of nationality develop, but what steps did God take?

5. Why can all of us take heart from God's dealings with Abraham?

national Law code, arranging for priests to offer sacrifices at his temple, and providing the Promised Land in which to reside.

[6] God's Law to Israel was good for people of all nations in that it made human sinfulness plain, showing the need for a perfect sacrifice to cover human sin once and for all. (Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 7:26-28; 9:9; 10:1-12) Yet, what assurance was there that Abraham's Seed—through whom all nations would bless themselves—would arrive and meet the qualifications? Israel's Law helped here too. It forbade intermarriage with the Canaanites, a people notorious for immoral practices and rites, such as the custom of burning children alive. (Leviticus 18:6-24; 20:2, 3; Deuteronomy 12:29-31; 18:9-12) God decreed that they and their practices had to be eliminated. That was to the long-term benefit of all, including the alien resident, as it would serve to keep the line of the Seed from being corrupted.—Leviticus 18:24-28; Deuteronomy 7:1-5; 9:5; 20:15-18.

[7] Even while the Law was in effect and God viewed Israel as special, he showed mercy to non-Israelites. His willingness to do so had been demonstrated when Israel marched out of Egyptian bondage toward its own land. "A vast mixed company also went up with them." (Exodus 12:38) Professor C. F. Keil identifies those as "a swarm of foreigners . . . a medley, or crowd of people of different nations." (Leviticus 24:10; Numbers 11:4) Likely many were Egyptians who accepted the true God.

Welcome for Foreigners

[8] As Israel carried out God's command to rid the Promised Land of debased nations, he protected one group of foreigners, the Gibeonites, who lived north of Jerusalem. They sent disguised ambassadors to Joshua, suing for and winning peace. When their ruse was discovered, Joshua ruled that the Gibeonites would serve as "gatherers of wood and drawers of water for the assembly and for Jehovah's altar." (Joshua 9:3-27) Today many immigrants also accept humble service positions in order to become part of a new people.

[9] It may encourage you to know that God's welcome was not just for groups of foreigners back then; solitary individuals were welcome also. Today some nations welcome only immigrants who have social rank, wealth to invest, or higher education. Not so with Jehovah, as we see from an event just prior to the episode with the Gibeonites. This involved a Canaanite who was hardly of high social rank. The Bible calls her "Rahab the harlot." Because of her faith in the true God, she and her household were delivered when Jericho fell. Though Rahab was a foreigner, the Israelites accepted her. She was a model of faith that is worthy of our imitation. (Hebrews 11:30, 31, 39, 40; Joshua 2:1-21; 6:1-25) She even became an ancestress of the Messiah.—Matthew 1:5, 16.

[10] Non-Israelites were accepted in the Promised Land in accord with their effort to please the true God. Israelites were told not to fellowship, especially religiously, with those who did not serve Jehovah. (Joshua 23:6, 7, 12, 13; 1 Kings 11:1-8; Proverbs 6:23-28) Still, many non-Israelite settlers obeyed the basic laws. Others even became circumcised proselytes, and Jehovah fully welcomed them as members of his congregation.—Le-

6. How would God's arrangements with Israel benefit all?
7. What early indication was there that God welcomed strangers?
8. How did the Gibeonites find a place among God's people?
9. How is the example of Rahab and her family encouraging as respects foreigners in Israel?
10. The reception of foreigners in Israel depended upon what?

viticus 20:2; 24:22; Numbers 15:14-16; Acts 8:27.*

King Solomon prayed about foreigners who would come to worship Jehovah

11 God directed the Israelites to imitate his attitude toward foreign worshipers: "The alien resident who resides as an alien with you should become to you like a native of yours; and you must love him as yourself, for you became alien residents in the land of Egypt." (Leviticus 19:33, 34; Deuteronomy 1:16; 10:12-19) This provides a lesson for us, even though we are not under the Law. It is easy to fall prey to prejudices and hostility toward those of another race, nation, or culture. So we do well to ask: 'Am I trying to rid myself of such prejudices, following Jehovah's example?'

12 The Israelites had visible proof of God's welcome. King Solomon prayed: "To the foreigner, who is no part of your people Israel and who actually comes from a distant land by reason of your name . . . and he actually comes and prays toward this house, may you yourself listen from the heavens . . . in order that all the peoples of the earth may get to know your name so as to fear you."—1 Kings 8:41-43; 2 Chronicles 6:32, 33.

13 While Jehovah was still using the nation of Israel as his people and thus protecting the Messiah's line of descent, God foretold significant changes. Earlier, when Israel agreed to be in the Law covenant, God granted that they could be the source of "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Exodus 19:5, 6) But Israel showed unfaithfulness for centuries. So Jehovah foretold that he would conclude a new covenant under which those making up "the house of Israel" would have their error and sin forgiven. (Jeremiah 31:33, 34) That new covenant awaited the Messiah, whose sacrifice would really cleanse many from sin.—Isaiah 53:5-7, 10-12.

Israelites in Heaven

14 The Christian Greek Scriptures help us to understand how all of this was accomplished. Jesus was the Messiah, whose death fulfilled the Law and laid the basis for full forgiveness of sin. To gain that benefit, one did not need to be a Jew circumcised in the flesh. No. The apostle Paul wrote that in the new covenant, "he is a Jew who is one on the inside, and his circumcision is that of the heart by spirit, and not by a written code." (Romans 2:28, 29; 7:6) Those who put faith in Jesus' sacrifice gained forgiveness, and God approved of them as 'Jews by the spirit,' who make up a spiritual nation called "the Israel of God."—Galatians 6:16.

15 Yes, being accepted into spiritual Israel did not depend upon a certain national or

* As to differences between "alien resident," "settler," "stranger," and "foreigner," see *Insight on the Scriptures,* Volume 1, pages 72-5, 849-51, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

11, 12. (a) How were Israelites to treat foreign worshipers? (b) Why might we need to improve in following Jehovah's example?
13. Why did God make provision to change his dealings with Israel?
14. What new "Israel" did Jehovah accept, and how?
15. Why is fleshly nationality not a factor in being part of spiritual Israel?

ethnic background. Some, such as Jesus' apostles, were natural Jews. Others, such as the Roman army officer Cornelius, were uncircumcised Gentiles. (Acts 10:34, 35, 44-48) Paul correctly said regarding spiritual Israel: "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, foreigner, Scythian, slave, freeman." (Colossians 3:11) Those anointed by God's spirit became "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession."—1 Peter 2:9; compare Exodus 19:5, 6.

[16] What future do spiritual Israelites have in God's purpose? Jesus answered: "Have no fear, little flock, because your Father has approved of giving you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32) Anointed ones, whose "citizenship exists in the heavens," will be joint heirs with the Lamb in his Kingdom rule. (Philippians 3:20; John 14:2, 3; Revelation 5:9, 10) The Bible indicates that these are 'sealed out of the sons of Israel' and "bought from among mankind as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb." They number 144,000. However, after giving the account of this number being sealed, John introduces a different group —"a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues."—Revelation 7:4, 9; 14:1-4.

[17] Some might wonder: 'What about the millions who are not part of spiritual Israel, such as those who may pass through the great tribulation as that great crowd? What role do they have today in relation to the few remaining ones of spiritual Israel?'*

* Over 10,600,000 attended the annual memorial of the Lord's Evening Meal held by Jehovah's Witnesses in 1991, but only 8,850 professed to be of the remnant of spiritual Israel.

16, 17. (a) What role do spiritual Israelites have in God's purpose? (b) Why is it appropriate to consider those not of the Israel of God?

Foreigners in Prophecy

[18] Turning back to the time when Israel was under the Law covenant but unfaithful to it, we find that God determined to let the Babylonians desolate Israel. In 607 B.C.E., Israel was taken into captivity for 70 years. Then God repurchased the nation. Under the leadership of Governor Zerubbabel, a remnant of natural Israel returned to their land. The rulers of the Medes and the Persians, who had overthrown Babylon, even aided the returning exiles with provisions. The book of Isaiah foretold these developments. (Isaiah 1:1-9; 3:1-26; 14:1-5; 44:21-28; 47:1-4) And Ezra gives us historical details about that return.—Ezra 1:1-11; 2:1, 2.

[19] Still, in foretelling the repurchase and return of God's people, Isaiah made this startling prophecy: "Nations will certainly go to your light, and kings to the brightness of your shining forth." (Isaiah 59:20; 60:3) This means more than that individual foreigners were welcome, in line with Solomon's prayer. Isaiah was pointing to an unusual change in status. *"Nations"* would serve with the sons of Israel: "Foreigners will actually build your walls, and their own kings will minister to you; for in my indignation I shall have struck you, but in my goodwill I shall certainly have mercy upon you."—Isaiah 60:10.

[20] In many respects, Israel's going into and returning from exile has found a parallel in modern times with spiritual Israel. Prior to World War I, the remnant of anointed

18. What led to Israel's return from Babylonian exile?

19. In connection with Israel's return, what prophetic indication was there that foreigners would be involved?

20, 21. (a) We find in modern times what parallel to the return of Israel from captivity? (b) How were 'sons and daughters' thereafter added to spiritual Israel?

Christians were not fully in line with God's will; they held to some views and practices carried over from the churches of Christendom. Then, during the wartime hysteria and partially at the instigation of the clergy, leading ones among the remnant of spiritual Israel were unjustly imprisoned. After the war, in 1919 C.E., those anointed ones in literal prison were freed and exonerated. This evidenced that God's people were released from captivity to Babylon the Great, the worldwide empire of false religion. His people went forth to build up and occupy a spiritual paradise.—Isaiah 35:1-7; 65: 13, 14.

[21] This was indicated in Isaiah's description: "They have all of them been collected together; they have come to you. From far away your own sons keep coming, and your daughters who will be taken care of on the flank. At that time you will see and certainly become radiant, and your heart will actually quiver and expand, because to you the wealthiness of the sea will direct itself; the very resources of the nations will come to you." (Isaiah 60:4, 5) In the following decades, 'sons and daughters' continued to come in, being anointed with spirit to fill out final places in spiritual Israel.

[22] What about the 'foreigners who will actually build your walls'? This too has occurred in our time. As the calling of the 144,000 was coming to completion, a great crowd out of all nations began flocking to worship with spiritual Israel. These newer ones have the Bible-based expectation of everlasting life on a paradise earth. Though the eventual location of their faithful service would be different, they were delighted to help the anointed remnant in preaching the good news of the Kingdom.—Matthew 24:14.

22. How have "foreigners" come to work along with spiritual Israelites?

[23] Today, over 4,000,000 who are "foreigners," along with the remnant of those whose 'citizenship is in heaven,' are proving their devotion to Jehovah. Many of them, men and women, young and old, are serving in the full-time ministry as pioneers. In most of the over 66,000 congregations, such foreigners are carrying responsibilities as elders and ministerial servants. The remnant rejoice in this, seeing a fulfillment of Isaiah's words: "Strangers will actually stand and shepherd the flocks of you people, and the foreigners will be your farmers and your vinedressers." —Isaiah 61:5.

[24] So in whatever nation of earth you are a citizen, an immigrant, or a refugee, you have the grand opportunity to become a spiritual foreigner whom the Almighty heartily welcomes. His welcome includes the possibility of enjoying privileges in his service both now and into the everlasting future.

23. To what extent have "foreigners" assisted the anointed?
24. Why can we be encouraged by God's dealings with Israel and others in the past?

Did You Note This?

- ☐ How did God offer hope that people of all nations would be accepted by Him?
- ☐ What shows that peoples other than God's special people, Israel, could approach Him?
- ☐ In prophecy, how did God indicate that foreigners would join themselves to Israel?
- ☐ What has paralleled Israel's return from exile in Babylon, and how have "foreigners" become involved?

JEHOVAH'S PROVISION, THE "GIVEN ONES"

"Strangers will actually stand and shepherd the flocks of you people."—ISAIAH 61:5.

WHAT a generous giver God is! The apostle Paul said: "[Jehovah] himself gives to all persons life and breath and all things." (Acts 17:25) Each of us can benefit from reflecting on the many 'good gifts and perfect presents' that we receive from God.—James 1:5, 17; Psalm 29:11; Matthew 7:7; 10:19; 13:12; 21:43.

[2] With good reason the psalmist wondered how he might repay Jehovah. (Psalm 116:12) Our Creator does not really need anything that humans might have or could give. (Psalm 50:10, 12) Jehovah indicates, though, that it pleases him when people appreciatively give of themselves in true worship. (Compare Hebrews 10:5-7.) All humans should give of themselves in dedication to their Creator who, in turn, may extend added privileges, as was the case with the ancient Levites. Though all Israelites were dedicated to God, he chose the Levitical family of Aaron as priests to offer sacrifices at the tabernacle and the temple. What about the rest of the Levites?

[3] Jehovah told Moses: "Bring the tribe of Levi near . . . And they must take care of all the utensils of the tent of meeting . . . And you must give the Levites to Aaron and his sons. They are given ones [Hebrew, *nethu-nim'*], given to him from the sons of Israel." (Numbers 3:6, 8, 9, 41) The Levites were "given" to Aaron to carry out duties in tabernacle service, so God could say: "They are given ones, given *to me* from among the sons of Israel." (Numbers 8:16, 19; 18:6) Some Levites performed simple tasks; others received outstanding privileges, such as teaching God's laws. (Numbers 1:50, 51; 1 Chronicles 6:48; 23:3, 4, 24-32; 2 Chronicles 35:3-5) Let us now shift our consideration to another "given" people and a modern parallel.

1. Why might the word "giver" call Jehovah to our minds?

2, 3. (a) How should we respond to God's gifts? (b) In what sense were the Levites "given ones"?

Israelites Return From Babylon

[4] Ezra and Nehemiah relate how a remnant of Israelites, led by Governor Zerubbabel, returned from Babylon to their land, to restore true worship. Both accounts report that these returnees totaled 42,360. Thousands of that number were "men of the people of Israel." The accounts next list the priests. Then come about 350 Levites, including Levitical singers and gatekeepers. Ezra and Nehemiah write also of additional thousands who were apparently Israelites, maybe even priests, but who could not prove their genealogy.—Ezra 1:1, 2; 2:2-42, 59-64; Nehemiah 7:7-45, 61-66.

[5] This remnant of Israel taken into exile and who later returned to Jerusalem and to

4, 5. (a) What Israelites returned from exile in Babylon? (b) In modern times, what corresponds to the Israelites' return from exile?

Judah displayed outstanding devotion to God and deep commitment to true worship. As noted, we see in modern times a fitting correspondency in the remnant of spiritual Israel who came out of captivity to Babylon the Great in 1919.

[6] Since their release in 1919, the remnant of Christ's anointed brothers have moved zealously forward in true worship. Jehovah has blessed their efforts to gather the final ones of the 144,000 making up "the Israel of God." (Galatians 6:16; Revelation 7:3, 4) As a group, the anointed remnant constitute "the faithful and discreet slave" class used to provide an abundance of life-giving spiritual food, which they have worked hard to distribute earth wide.—Matthew 24:45-47.

[7] As the preceding article showed, Jehovah's people now include millions of "other sheep," who have the God-given hope of passing through the great tribulation just ahead. They desire to serve Jehovah forever on earth, where they will hunger and thirst no more and where tears of sadness will no longer flow. (John 10:16; Revelation 7:9-17; 21:3-5) Do we find in the account of the returnees from Babylon anything corresponding to such ones? Yes!

Non-Israelites Also Return

[8] When the call went out for lovers of Jehovah in Babylon to return to the Promised Land, thousands of non-Israelites responded. In the lists provided by Ezra and Nehemiah, we read of the "Nethinim" (meaning, "Given Ones") and "the sons of the servants of Solomon," whose combined number was 392. The accounts mention also more than 7,500 others: 'men slaves and slave girls,' as well as non-Levite "male singers and female singers." (Ezra 2:43-58, 65; Nehemiah 7:46-60, 67) What moved so many non-Israelites to return?

[9] Ezra 1:5 speaks of "everyone whose spirit the true God had roused, to go up and rebuild the house of Jehovah." Yes, Jehovah moved all those who returned. He stimulated their spirit, that is, their impelling mental inclination. Even from the heavens, God could do this by using his holy spirit, his active force. Thus, all who rose "to go up and rebuild the house of Jehovah" were helped "by [God's] spirit."—Zechariah 4:1, 6; Haggai 1:14.

A Modern-Day Parallel

[10] Who are foreshadowed by such non-Israelite returnees? Many Christians might reply: 'The Nethinim correspond to the "other sheep" today.' True, but not just the Nethinim; for *all the non-Israelites who returned* represent Christians today who are not of spiritual Israel.

[11] The book *You May Survive Armageddon Into God's New World** observed: "The remnant of 42,360 Israelites were not the only ones that left Babylon with governor Zerubbabel . . . There were thousands of non-Israelites . . . Besides the Nethinim there were other non-Israelites, the slaves, the professional male and female singers and the descendants of the servants of King Solomon." The book explained: "The Nethinim, the slaves, the singers and the sons of the servants of Solomon, all non-Israelites, left

6. How has God used the spiritual Israelites in our time?
7. Who are associating with the anointed ones in true worship?
8. Who accompanied the Israelites returning from Babylon?

* Pages 142-8; published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

9. How was God's spirit involved in the return from exile?
10, 11. What parallel can be drawn to the non-Israelites who returned from Babylon?

A CHANGED STATUS

Many Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias comment on the changes experienced by some of the non-Israelites who returned from the exile. For example, under "Change in their position," the *Encyclopædia Biblica* says: "Their social position was, as already indicated, at the same time necessarily raised. [The Nethinim] no longer appear as slaves in the strict meaning of that word." (Edited by Cheyne and Black, Volume III, page 3399) In *The Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature,* John Kitto writes: "It was not to be expected that many of them [the Nethinim] would return to this humble station in Palestine . . . The voluntary devotedness which was thus manifested by these persons considerably raised the station of the Nethinim." (Volume II, page 417) *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* points out: "In the light of this association and their background in the Solomonic period, it can be assumed that Solomon's servants had significant responsibilities in the second temple."—Edited by G. W. Bromiley, Volume 4, page 570.

the land of captivity and returned with the Israelite remnant . . . So is it right to think that today people of different nationalities who are not spiritual Israelites would associate themselves with the remnant of spiritual Israel and promote the worship of Jehovah God with them? Yes." Such ones 'have become modern-day, antitypical Nethinim, singers, and sons of the servants of Solomon.'

[12] As in the ancient pattern, God provides his spirit also for these hoping to live forever on earth. True, they are not born again. Each of the 144,000 has the singular experience of being born again as a spiritual son of God and anointed with holy spirit. (John 3:3, 5; Romans 8:16; Ephesians 1:13, 14) Of course, that anointing is a unique manifestation of God's spirit in behalf of the little flock. But God's spirit is also needed to carry out his will. Hence, Jesus said: 'The Father in heaven gives holy spirit to those asking him.' (Luke 11:13) Whether the one asking has the heavenly hope or is of the other sheep, Jehovah's spirit is abundantly available to carry out His will.

12. How does God use his spirit in a special way for spiritual Israelites, but why can we be sure that it is available to all of his worshipers?

[13] God's spirit moved both Israelites and non-Israelites to return to Jerusalem, and it strengthens and helps all of his loyal people today. Whether a Christian's God-provided hope is life in heaven or life on earth, he must preach the good news, and holy spirit enables him to be faithful in that. Every one of us —whichever our hope—ought to cultivate the fruits of the spirit, which all of us need in full measure.—Galatians 5:22-26.

Given for Special Service

[14] Among the thousands of non-Israelites that the spirit moved to return were two small groups that God's Word singled out —the Nethinim and the sons of the servants of Solomon. Who were they? What did they do? And what might this mean today?

[15] The Nethinim were a group who had non-Israelite origins and who were priv-

13. How can the spirit operate on all of God's servants?

14, 15. (a) Among the non-Israelites who returned, what two groups were singled out? (b) Who were the Nethinim, and what did they do?

Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

When the Israelites returned to rebuild Jerusalem, thousands of non-Israelites accompanied them

ileged to minister with the Levites. Recall the Canaanites from Gibeon who became "gatherers of wood and drawers of water for the assembly and for Jehovah's altar." (Joshua 9:27) Probably some of their descendants were among the Nethinim returning from Babylon, as well as others who had been added as Nethinim during David's reign and at other times. (Ezra 8:20) What did the Nethinim do? The Levites were given to help the priests, and thereafter the Nethinim were given to help the Levites. Even for circumcised foreigners, this was a privilege.

[16] When the group returned from Babylon, it contained few Levites, compared to the priests or Nethinim and "sons of the servants of Solomon." (Ezra 8:15-20) The *Dictionary of the Bible,* by Dr. James Hastings, observes: "After a time we find [the Nethinim] so completely established as a sacred official class, that privileges are accorded to them." The scholarly journal *Vetus Testamentum* notes: "A change occurred. After the Return from Exile, these [foreigners] were no longer regarded as *slaves* of the Temple, but as *ministrants* in it, enjoying a status similar to that of those other bodies, which officiated in the Temple."—See the box "A Changed Status."

[17] Of course, the Nethinim did not become the equals of the priests and the Levites. The latter groups were Israelites, who were chosen by Jehovah himself and not to be supplanted by non-Israelites. Yet, the Biblical indications are that in the face of a reduced number of Levites, the Nethinim were given more to do in God's service. They were assigned living quarters close to the temple. In Nehemiah's day they worked with priests in repairing walls near the temple. (Nehemiah 3:22-26) And the king of Persia decreed that the Nethinim be exempt from taxes, just as the Levites were exempt because of their temple service. (Ezra 7:24) This indicates how closely these "given ones" (Levites and Nethinim) were then linked in spiritual matters and how the Nethinim's assignments increased in accord with the need, though

16. How did the role of the Nethinim change in time?

17. Why did the Nethinim receive more to do, and what Biblical evidence is there for this?

they never were counted as being Levites. When Ezra later collected exiles to return, no Levites were initially among them. So he intensified efforts to collect some. That resulted in 38 Levites and 220 Nethinim returning to serve as "ministers for the house of our God."—Ezra 8:15-20.

[18] A second group of non-Israelites singled out were the sons of the servants of Solomon. The Bible gives few details about them. Some were "the sons of Sophereth." Ezra adds a definite article to that name, making it *Has·so·phe'reth,* possibly meaning "the scribe." (Ezra 2:55; Nehemiah 7:57) They thus may have been a staff of scribes or copyists, possibly temple/administrative scribes. Though of foreign extraction, the sons of the servants of Solomon proved their devotion to Jehovah by leaving Babylon and returning to share in restoring His worship.

Giving of Ourselves Today

[19] In our time, God has used the anointed remnant mightily in spearheading pure worship and declaring the good news. (Mark 13:10) How these have rejoiced to see tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, and then millions of other sheep join them in worship! And what delightful cooperation there has been between the remnant and the other sheep!—John 10:16.

[20] All the non-Israelites who returned from exile in ancient Babylon parallel the other sheep who now serve with the remnant of spiritual Israel. What, though, of the fact that the Bible singles out the Nethinim and the sons of the servants of Solomon? In the pattern the Nethinim and the sons of the servants of Solomon were given privileges beyond those of other non-Israelite returnees. This could well foreshadow that God today has extended privileges and added duties to some mature and willing other sheep.

[21] The Nethinim's added privileges were linked directly to spiritual activities. The sons of the servants of Solomon evidently received administrative responsibilities. Similarly today, Jehovah has blessed his people with "gifts in men" to care for their needs. (Ephesians 4:8, 11, 12) Included in this provision are many hundreds of mature, experienced brothers who share in 'shepherding the flocks,' serving as circuit and district overseers and on Branch Committees at the Watch Tower Society's 98 branches. (Isaiah 61:5) At the world headquarters of the Society, under the direction of "the faithful steward" and its Governing Body, capable men receive training to help in preparing spiritual food supplies. (Luke 12:42)

18. The sons of the servants of Solomon may have carried out what function?
19. What is the relationship between the anointed today and the other sheep?
20. What new understanding is reasonable as to a parallel to the Nethinim and the sons of the servants of Solomon? (Proverbs 4:18)
21. How have some brothers with the earthly hope received added duties and privileges?

Points to Remember

- ☐ In what way were the Levites "given ones" in ancient Israel?
- ☐ What non-Israelites returned from exile, foreshadowing whom?
- ☐ What change seems to have occurred with the Nethinim?
- ☐ Concerning the Nethinim and the sons of the servants of Solomon, what parallel is now appreciated?
- ☐ What confidence is engendered by the cooperation between the anointed and the other sheep?

The Branch Committee in Korea. As did the ancient Nethinim, men of the other sheep have weighty responsibilities in true worship today

Other longtime dedicated volunteers have been trained to operate Bethel homes and factories and to oversee programs worldwide in constructing new branch facilities and halls for Christian worship. They have excelled in serving as close helpers of the anointed remnant, who constitute part of the royal priesthood.—Compare 1 Corinthians 4:17; 14:40; 1 Peter 2:9.

[22] In ancient times, priests and Levites continued to serve among the Jews. (John 1:19) Today, however, the remnant of spiritual Israel on earth must go on decreasing. (Contrast John 3:30.) Finally, after the demise of Babylon the Great, all 144,000 'sealed ones' will be in heaven for the marriage of the Lamb. (Revelation 7:1-3; 19:1-8) But now the other sheep must go on increasing. The fact that some of them, comparable to the Nethinim and the sons of the servants of Solomon, are now being assigned weighty responsibilities under the oversight of the anointed remnant does not cause them to be presumptuous or feel self-important. (Romans 12:3) This gives us confidence that as God's people "come out of the great tribulation," there will be experienced men—"princes"—prepared to take the lead among the other sheep.—Revelation 7:14; Isaiah 32:1; compare Acts 6:2-7.

22. Why is it appropriate that some of the other sheep be given weighty responsibilities now, and how should we react to this?

[23] All who returned from Babylon were willing to work hard and prove that they had Jehovah's worship uppermost in mind and heart. It is the same today. Along with the anointed remnant, "strangers . . . actually stand and shepherd the flocks." (Isaiah 61:5) So no matter what God-provided hope we have, and no matter what privileges may be extended spirit-appointed elders before the day of Jehovah's vindication at Armageddon, let all of us cultivate a selfless, wholesome, giving spirit. While we can never repay Jehovah for all of his grand benefits, may we be whole-souled in whatever we are doing within his organization. (Psalm 116:12-14; Colossians 3:23) Thus all of us can give of ourselves for true worship, as other sheep serve closely with anointed ones, who are destined to "rule as kings over the earth."—Revelation 5:9, 10.

23. Why must all of us cultivate a giving spirit regarding God's service?

The challenge of preaching in one of the world's largest ports

ROTTERDAM, situated where the Rhine, Europe's busiest river, enters the North Sea, enjoys the distinction of being one of the world's largest seaports. With some 500 shipping lines coming here, Rotterdam has direct links to more than 800 destinations worldwide. It is truly an international port.

However, this 650-year-old Dutch port is more than a crossroads of shipping lines. It is also a meeting point of people. A flow of sailors arrives every day and night from all corners of the world. These seamen have not escaped the attention of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Netherlands. Like Witnesses elsewhere, they look for ways to preach the world's best news—that God's Kingdom will soon turn the earth into a Paradise—to people of all sorts, including sailors.—Daniel 2:44; Luke 23:43; 1 Timothy 4:10.

"Missionary Assignment in Reverse"

Some years ago, the Watch Tower Society in the Netherlands asked six full-time preachers, or pioneers, to work from ship to ship throughout the port of Rotterdam. The pioneers jumped at the chance. They gathered data from the port authority, surveyed the harbors, and soon realized that they had a challenging assignment.

"It's like a missionary assignment in reverse," says Meinard, who coordinates the harbor preaching. What does he mean? "Usually a missionary makes a long journey to go to the people, but in our case the people make the long journey to come to us." He adds, "our preaching territory is probably as international as you can get it." The *Rotterdam Europoort* yearbook of 1985 stated that in 1983, the year the pioneers began this special work, the port of Rotterdam received 30,820 sea-

going vessels from 71 different countries. That *is* international!

Fittingly, the "port missionaries"—as sailors soon began to call the pioneers—also reflect an international flavor. Geert, Peter, and his wife, Karin, are Dutch; Daniël and Meinard came from Indonesia; and Solomon is Ethiopian. Their European, Asian, and African roots cut across eight language barriers, but to succeed in this work, they had other barriers to tackle.

"The Cycling Church"

"You can't just walk up a quay, climb a gangplank, and board a ship," says 32-year-old Peter, a former sailor. "You need terrain permits." That means permits to enter quays and permits to board ships. "It was a lot of red tape," recalls Peter, "but after we got eight permits, complete with our photographs and official stamps, we were ready to go all out." They divided the 23 miles of harbor quays into three sections, each one cared for by two pioneers.

How, though, do you deal with the multitude of languages spoken by sailors from so many countries? Even though the pioneers stocked Bible literature in 30 languages and carried as much as possible on their bicycles, there never seemed to be enough. "You never know for sure which languages you will need," recounts 30-year-old Solomon with a smile. "It often happens that sailors want books in the very language that you did not bring along, and then they tell you that their ship is leaving in three hours or so." Not wanting to disappoint the sailors, one of the pioneers dashes off, gets the right books, races back, and hands them to the eager sailors. "When the same problem came up while we were preaching in parts of the harbor located three hours away by bicycle," says Peter, "it was obvious we needed another approach."

One day some Witnesses living in the harbor area surprised the pioneers with two bicycle trailers, each the size of a washtub. The pioneers stuffed the trailers with literature in all available languages, hooked them to their bikes, and headed for the harbor. Soon the trailers became a familiar sight. "They have become our calling cards," says one of the pioneers. "When a gatekeeper sees us coming, he opens the gate, waves us through, and shouts: 'There goes the cycling church!' " At other times, when a guard notices "the cycling church" coming his way, he opens the gate and calls out: "Two Polish and one Chinese!" Such helpful hints enable the pioneers to go aboard with literature in the proper languages. But they must also go at the proper time. Why?

Timely Visits With a Timely Message

The pioneers can talk to the crew only during their morning and afternoon coffee breaks or their lunch hour. The cook, however, has different working hours, and the captain and other officers can be found throughout the day. Moreover, the pioneers learned that British ships anchored in Rotterdam stick to British time (one hour different from Dutch time), so that their crews head for the messroom when non-British crews return to work. Obviously, for a harbor pioneer, a reliable watch is a necessity.

Are sailors willing, though, to use their breaks for Bible discussions? "As a rule, I find them to be open-minded toward the Kingdom message," says 31-year-old Geert. "Perhaps that's because they see firsthand the failure of human governments." For instance, some sailors told Geert that the heaps of grain they had unloaded for starving Ethiopians were still lying there months later when they called again, only by then the grain was rotten and infested with rats. "No wonder many sailors have lost hope in politics," Geert notes. "So the Bible's promise of one government for all mankind appeals to them."

REACHING OUT INTO BANNED TERRITORIES

In one recent year, over 2,500 ships from countries where the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses were under ban docked in Rotterdam. And the harbor pioneers saw that as an opportunity to reach out to these territories with the Bible message.

On one of the first Asian ships they visited, the pioneers placed their entire supply of 23 books, leaving some crew members upset because they missed getting a copy. A galley boy on another Asian ship was more cautious. After accepting a book from a pioneer, he returned it wrapped in paper with an address written on it. The pioneer got the point. It was too risky for the boy to take the book with him. That same day it was in the mail to the Far East.

On board a ship from Africa came a sailor with a list of books the Witnesses back home wanted. From then on, each time that sailor returns home, his suitcase is stuffed with literature. A sailor from another African country was sorely disappointed when the pioneer studying with him could offer only three copies of the book *Making Your Family Life Happy*. "That's nothing!" exclaimed the sailor, throwing his arms up in despair. "The brothers back home need 1,000!" For his own safety, the pioneers persuaded him to take only 20 copies at a time.

Perhaps most touching was the time when the pioneers learned that a ship had come in from a country where the Witnesses were persecuted because of their beliefs, and many had lost their jobs and property. When they found out that the steward on board was a Witness, they called on the captain and asked for permission to send relief aid aboard his ship. The captain agreed, and a few days later, a hundred big bags of clothes, shoes, and other goods were on their way to the Witnesses in that country.

Peter agrees. "One German captain said that ten years ago his crew would have sent me off the ship, but today's changing world conditions had aroused their interest in the Bible's timely message." One Korean ship's cook related that during the Iran-Iraq war, the supertanker he was working on was hit by a rocket and set ablaze in the Persian Gulf. He vowed that if he stayed alive, he would look for God. He did survive. When the pioneers met him later in Rotterdam, he wanted all the Korean literature they could bring him.

Most ships remain in the harbor for several days. This allows the pioneers to return two, three, or more times to continue their Bible discussions after working hours. Yet, when a ship has engine trouble, it may remain moored for three weeks. "That's bad for the company," quips a grinning pioneer, "but good for our work." Then, besides continuing the Bible discussions, the pioneers also arrange to show one of the Society's slide programs, "The Bible—A Book for This Generation," in the messroom. Some sailors also come to the meetings of the many foreign-language groups of Jehovah's Witnesses in Rotterdam. This lasts until the engine runs again. Then the Bibles must be closed. The hawsers are cast off, and the ship disappears from the harbor—but not from the pioneers' minds.

Encouraging Sailor Stories

By means of newspaper listings or the port authority's public computer system, the harbor pioneers keep track of the comings and goings of ships they have visited. As soon as one of them comes in again, the pioneers are eager to call on the sailors to find out what has happened since the last visit. What encouraging stories the sailors tell!

One sailor handed out copies of the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* to five of his shipmates after his ship had put out to sea, and the six of them had a Bible

PREACHING SHIP TO SHIP—A WOMAN'S VIEW

"At first, I hesitated to accompany Peter," recalls Karin, the only woman among the pioneers, "because I'd heard stories that sailors are often rough and drunk. However, I have found that most are polite. Often, after a sailor learns that we are a married couple, he will pull out a picture of his wife and children and begin to chat about his family. That way, we have placed lots of copies of the book *Making Your Family Life Happy.*"

Visiting ships as husband and wife also makes it easier to contact the wives of crew members and other women who sometimes work as nurses. "Usually they are reserved toward strangers," says Karin, "but when they notice me, they feel more inclined to engage in conversation."

What was the biggest challenge in her assignment? "Rope ladders," Karin answers. "I hated those flimsy things." Did she overcome her fear? "Yes. Once when I hesitated to climb one, a group of sailors from Paraguay looked on and shouted: 'You'll make it. Just trust in God.' Of course," says Karin with a laugh, "after that remark, I had no choice but to go up." Says her admiring husband: "Four years and lots of rope ladders later, she now climbs them like a sailor."

Karin and her husband, Peter, attended the 89th class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead in the United States. On September 28, 1990, they left for their new assignment, Ecuador, a country with a port. They should feel right at home.

study. He also recorded the chapter about family life on an audiocassette and played it back in the messroom for the benefit of the whole crew. Aboard another ship, a sailor who had visited a Kingdom Hall in the nearby port of Antwerp put up on the wall of the mess hall a banner with the words "Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses" in large letters. Then he invited the crew members to come there when he conducted a Bible meeting. Before taking down the banner, he invited the crew to the next meeting. The following week, the banner and the crew were in place again.

The pioneers also found that some sailors never shelved their books. "When we walked into the cabin of Isaac, a West African radio officer, it was hard to find a seat," relates Meinard. "The Society's magazines, books, and concordances were everywhere—and opened." Isaac also had a list of Bible questions ready, as he had been waiting for the pioneers' return call.

Some seamen, though, do not wait for the pioneers to call on them. One night Geert's phone rang after he had gone to sleep.

"Who in the world could this be?" Geert muttered while groping for the receiver.

"Hello, this is your friend!" announced a cheerful voice.

Geert tried to think.

"Your friend from the ship," came the voice again.

"It's three o'clock in the morning!" Geert said.

"Yes, but you told me to call you as soon as my ship came to Rotterdam again. Well, I'm here!" Shortly after, Geert was on his way to meet this friend who was interested in God's Word.

"Send Out Your Bread"

Appreciation for Bible literature is also expressed in letters from sailors to the pioneers. Following are some excerpts:

'I have started to read the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* . . . Now I understand many things that I did not understand before. I hope our ship will be back in Rotterdam.'—Angelo.

'I read the book, and I'm sending questions

to you so that you can answer them in your letters.'—Alberta.

'I now read the Bible every day. I'm glad to be your friend. Having found friends that guide me to God is the best thing that has happened in my life.'—Nickey.

Such heartwarming letters remind the pioneers of what the Bible says at Ecclesiastes 11:1: "Send out your bread upon the surface of the waters, for in the course of many days you will find it again." They especially rejoice when they learn that some seamen have taken their stand for Jehovah.

Polish sailor Stanislav, for one, was thrilled by what he learned from the Society's books. He quickly acquired a small library of Bible literature and, while at sea, studied every piece of it. "When we heard from him again," says Meinard, "he wrote that he had been baptized."

Folkert, an inland-shipping skipper, first heard the Kingdom message in Rotterdam. Every two months he was back in port for a week and studied the Bible for seven days straight. Then, before he left for another two-month trip, the pioneers handed him a list of Kingdom Hall addresses along his shipping route. Folkert stopped by the halls and was moved by the warm welcome he received. Before long, this skipper got baptized and now serves Jehovah zealously.

Mike, a British Navy officer, had had some contact with the Witnesses before and had been studying the Bible while at sea. Once, when the frigate he worked on anchored in Rotterdam, he used his folding bicycle to get to a Kingdom Hall. He was impressed by the love and unity he saw and told the friends that he had decided to quit his job. Though he was only four years away from receiving a handsome pension, he stuck to his decision and was later baptized.

Says Meinard: "The eagerness of Mike, Stanislav, Folkert, and others to serve Jehovah moves us to keep on searching the port for sailors like them."

Can You Have a Share?

Looking back on nearly a decade of preaching in one of the world's largest ports, the six "port missionaries" wholeheartedly agree —the assignment has been challenging but rewarding. "After each day of preaching," sums up Meinard, "we cycle home with the feeling that some of those sailors were waiting for our visit."

Could there be sailors waiting for a visit in a port in your area? Perhaps the elders in your congregation can make arrangements so that you may have a share in this challenging but rewarding work.

ARE YOU A SAILOR?

Do you want to attend an English-language meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses while your ship is anchored in one of the world's major ports? Then keep this list of current Kingdom Hall addresses and meeting times handy:

Hamburg, Schellingstr. 7-9;
Saturday, 4:00 p.m.; phone: 040-4208413

Hong Kong, 26 Leighton Road;
Sunday, 9:00 a.m.; phone: 5774159

Marseilles, 5 Bis, rue Antoine Maille;
Sunday, 10:00 a.m.; phone: 91 79 27 89

Naples, Castel Volturno (40 km north of Naples), Via Napoli, corner of Via Salerno, Parco Campania;
Sunday, 2:45 p.m.; phone: 081/5097292

New York, 512 W. 20 Street;
Sunday, 10:00 a.m.; phone: 212-627-2873

Rotterdam, Putsestraat 20;
Sunday, 10:00 a.m.; phone: 010-41 65 653

Tokyo, 5-5-8 Mita, Minato-ku;
Sunday, 4:00 p.m.; phone: 03-3453-0404

Vancouver, 1526 Robson Street;
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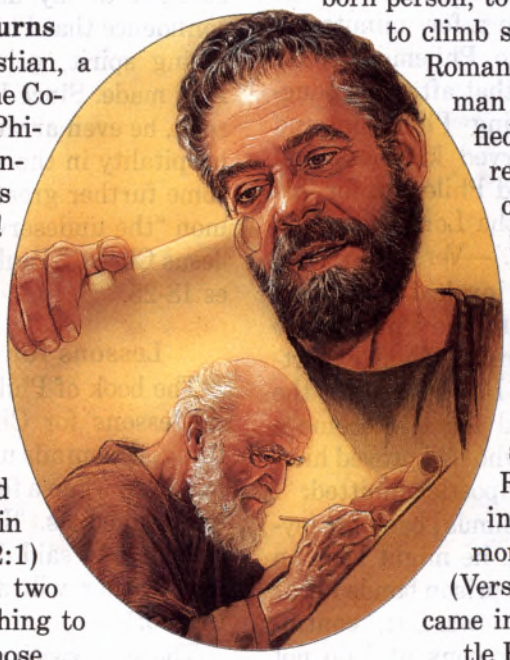
'Exhorting on the Basis of Love'

ABOUT 60-61 C.E., a runaway slave left Rome and began a 900-mile journey home to Colossae, a city in southwest Asia Minor. He carried with him a handwritten message for his owner, penned by none other than the apostle Paul. Today, that letter is a part of the Bible and has come to bear the name of its recipient, Philemon.

The letter to Philemon is a masterpiece of tactful, persuasive reasoning. More important, though, it contains a number of practical lessons for Christians today, one of which is the value of exhorting one another on the basis of Christian love. Let us take a close look at this short but powerful letter.

A Runaway Returns

Philemon was a Christian, a much loved member of the Colossian congregation. (Philemon 4, 5) Why, the congregation there used his home as a meeting place! (Verse 2) Furthermore, Philemon was personally acquainted with the apostle Paul; it may be that the apostle was instrumental in his becoming a Christian. True, Paul indicates that he did not personally preach in Colossae. (Colossians 2:1) He did, however, spend two years in Ephesus, preaching to such an extent that "all those inhabiting the district of Asia [which embraced Colossae] heard the word of the Lord." (Acts 19:10) Philemon was likely among the responsive hearers.



Rather than appealing to his authority as an apostle, Paul exhorted Philemon on the basis of Christian love

At any rate, like many affluent men of that period, Philemon was a slave owner. In ancient times, slavery was not always degrading. Among the Jews, selling oneself or family members into slavery was an accepted means of paying off debts. (Leviticus 25: 39, 40) *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* comments about the Roman period: "Large numbers of people sold themselves into slavery for various reasons, above all to enter a life that was easier and more secure than existence as a poor, free-born person, to obtain special jobs, and to climb socially. . . . Many non-Romans sold themselves to Roman citizens with the justified expectation, carefully regulated by Roman law, of becoming Roman citizens themselves when manumitted [set free]."

A problem arose, though, when one of Philemon's slaves, a man named Onesimus, deserted him and fled to Rome, possibly even stealing money from Philemon to finance his escape. (Verse 18) In Rome, Onesimus came in contact with the apostle Paul, who was a prisoner there.

The "formerly useless" slave who had fled servitude

now became a Christian. He put himself at the disposal of Paul and rendered useful services to the imprisoned apostle. Little wonder that Onesimus found a place in Paul's "own tender affections" and became "a brother beloved" to Paul!—Verses 11, 12, 16.

The apostle Paul would have liked to have Onesimus remain with him, but Philemon had legal rights as Onesimus' owner. Onesimus was thus obliged to return to his legal master's service. How, then, would Philemon receive him? Would he angrily demand his right to mete out severe punishment? Would he challenge the sincerity of Onesimus' claim of being a fellow Christian?

Settling Matters in Love

Paul was moved to write Philemon regarding Onesimus. He wrote the letter in his own hand, not using a secretary as was his custom. (Verse 19) Take a few minutes to read the brief letter to Philemon in its entirety. You will note that after introducing himself and wishing Philemon and his household "undeserved kindness and peace," Paul commended Philemon for 'his love and faith toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the holy ones.'—Verses 1-7.

Paul could easily have invoked his authority as an apostle and 'ordered Philemon to do what is proper,' but instead Paul 'exhorted on the basis of love.' He vouched for the fact that Onesimus had indeed become a Christian brother, one who had proved himself useful to Paul. The apostle admitted: "I would like to hold [Onesimus] back for myself that in place of you he might keep on ministering to me in the prison bonds I bear for the sake of the good news. But," continued Paul, "without your consent I do not want to do anything, so that your good act may be, not as under compulsion, but of your own free will."—Verses 8-14.

The apostle thus urged Philemon to accept his former slave back as a brother. "Receive him kindly the way you would me," wrote Paul. Not that Onesimus would necessarily be freed from servitude. Paul was not agitating to change the existing social order of his day. (Compare Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 4:1; 1 Timothy 6:2.) Nevertheless, the slave-master relationship would unquestionably be tempered by the Christian bond that now existed between Onesimus and Philemon. Philemon would view Onesimus "as more than a slave, as a brother beloved." —Verses 15-17.

What, though, of the debts Onesimus may have incurred, perhaps as the result of thievery? Again, Paul appealed to his friendship with Philemon, saying: "If he did you any wrong or owes you anything, keep this charged to my account." Paul expressed confidence that Philemon would show a forgiving spirit, going beyond the requests Paul made. Since Paul hoped to be released soon, he even arranged to enjoy Philemon's hospitality in the near future. After giving some further greetings and wishing Philemon "the undeserved kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ," Paul closed his letter.—Verses 18-25.

Lessons for Christians Today

The book of Philemon abounds in practical lessons for Christians today. For one thing, it reminds us of the need to be forgiving, even when a fellow believer has seriously wronged us. "If you forgive men their trespasses," said Jesus Christ, "your heavenly Father will also forgive you."—Matthew 6:14.

Those in positions of authority within the Christian congregation today can especially benefit from the book of Philemon. It is noteworthy that Paul refrained from using

his apostolic authority to order Philemon to do what is proper. Furthermore, Paul did not demand that Onesimus be allowed to remain in Rome in Paul's service. Paul respected the property rights of others. He also appreciated that while an authoritarian approach might have resulted in compliance, it would be better for Philemon to act from his heart. He made an appeal based on love so as to elicit a heartfelt response.

Christian elders today should therefore never be "lording it over those who are God's inheritance" by abusing their power or by using a harsh, authoritarian way of dealing with the flock. (1 Peter 5:1-3) Said Jesus: "You know that the rulers of the nations lord it over them and the great men wield authority over them. This is not the way among you." (Matthew 20:25, 26) Overseers generally find that members of the flock respond far more to loving appeals than to orders. Those suffering from depression appreciate overseers who will kindly make time to listen to their problems and give understanding counsel.

Paul's letter further reminds elders of the value of commendation and tact. He begins by acknowledging that 'the tender affections of the holy ones were refreshed through' Philemon. (Verse 7) This sincere commendation no doubt put Philemon in a more receptive frame of mind. Similarly today, counsel or advice can often be cushioned with sincere, warm commendation. And such counsel should be, not blunt or tactless, but generously "seasoned with salt" so as to be more palatable to the listener.—Colossians 4:6.

The apostle Paul further expressed confidence that Philemon would do the right thing, saying: "Trusting in your compliance, I am writing you, knowing you will even do more than the things I say." (Verse 21) Elders, do you express the same confidence in your fellow Christians? Does this not help them want to do what is right?

Interestingly, parents often find that expressing confidence in their offspring also has a good effect. By recognizing the value of willing obedience—a desire to go beyond merely meeting requirements—parents can grant their children a measure of dignity. Parental commands or requests should, when possible, be made in a kind, loving tone of voice. Empathy ought to be shown, reasons given. Parents should warmly commend their children when such commendation is deserved and avoid being overly critical of them, especially in public.

Along the same lines, husbands can manifest the qualities of reasonableness and kindness, being ready to praise their wives. This makes wifely submission a pleasure and a source of refreshment and joy!—Proverbs 31:28; Ephesians 5:28.

Exactly how Philemon responded to Paul's letter is not stated. We cannot imagine, though, that Paul's confidence in him was misplaced. May Christian elders, parents, and husbands today similarly find success in their dealings, not by compelling, ordering, or coercing, but by 'exhorting on the basis of love.'

In Our Next Issue

1914—The Year That Shocked the World

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Who Will Escape the "Time of Distress"?

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Keep Awake in "the Time of the End"

For decades Jehovah's Witnesses have wondered about their brothers in lands where their Christian activities were restricted. We are happy to present the first of three articles that reveal some of what occurred. These are personal accounts of faithful Christians in what was then known as East Germany.

Jehovah Cared for Us Under Ban

Part 1

IN 1944, I was a German prisoner of war, working as a medical orderly in Cumnock Camp, near Ayr, Scotland. I was allowed outside the camp, although fraternization with the local people was restricted. Taking a stroll one Sunday, I met a man who made earnest efforts to explain things from the Bible to me. Afterward we often sauntered along together.

In time he invited me to a gathering in a house. This was risky on his part, since I was a member of an enemy nation. At the time I did not realize that he was one of Jehovah's Witnesses—the meeting was evidently one of their small Bible study groups. Although not comprehending very much, I remember clearly a picture of a child dressed in a long white garment, together with a lion and a lamb. This portrait of the new world, as described in the Bible book of Isaiah, made a deep impression on me.

In December 1947, I was released from the prison camp. Returning home to Germany, I married Margit, whom I had known before the war. We made our home in Zittau, close to the borders with Poland and Czechoslovakia. Within a few days, one of Jehovah's Witnesses knocked on our door. "If this is the same group I met in Scotland," I told my wife, "then we have to join them." That same week, we attended our first meeting with the Witnesses.

From the Bible, we soon learned of the need to attend Christian meetings regularly and to share in the preaching work. In fact, what the Witnesses taught from the Bible soon became the most important thing in our lives. In time I began conducting a group Bible study. Then, in February 1950, two traveling Christian overseers asked: "Don't you ever want to get immersed?" That very afternoon Margit and I symbolized our dedication to God by baptism.

Beginning of Troubles

Zittau was in the Soviet zone of Germany, and efforts to make trouble for Jehovah's Witnesses had begun in 1949. Only after much difficulty were facilities obtained for a

small assembly in Bautzen. Then, during the summer, special trains for the larger district convention in Berlin were suddenly canceled. Yet thousands attended.

Congregation meetings were also disturbed. Hecklers would attend just to shout and whistle. On one occasion we were almost forced to stop a traveling overseer's talk. The press called us prophets of doom. Newspaper articles even claimed that we had gathered on hilltops while waiting to be swept away in the clouds. The papers also quoted some girls as saying that Witnesses tried to commit immorality with them. The explanation that 'those making a dedication to Jehovah would receive everlasting life' was twisted to say that those who had sex with the Witnesses would gain everlasting life.

Later we were also accused of being warmongers. What we said about God's war of Armageddon was misinterpreted to mean that we encouraged the arms race and war. How absurd! Nevertheless, in August 1950, when I arrived for the night shift at the local newspaper where I worked as a printer, I was stopped at the gate. "You have been fired," said the watchman, who was accompanied by the police. "You people are in favor of war."

Back home, Margit was relieved. "No more late work," she said. We did not become anxious. I soon found another job. We trusted in God to provide, and he did.

Our Work Is Banned

On August 31, 1950, the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses in the German Democratic Republic were banned. A wave of arrests followed. Witnesses were put on trial, some receiving life sentences. Two from Zittau, who had suffered in concentration camps under the Nazis, were incarcerated by the Communists.

We enjoyed a small assembly in Bautzen

The one overseeing our congregation was arrested along with his wife. Those who arrested them left their two young children alone in the house to fend for themselves. The grandparents took the children, and today both girls are zealous in telling others about God's Kingdom.

Couriers from the congregations in East Germany traveled to and from Berlin to collect literature at pickup points in the free western sector. Many of these courageous couriers were arrested, dragged into court, and given prison sentences.

The authorities turned up early one morning to search our home. We had anticipated their coming, so I had put all the congregation records, which I was keeping, in our barn, next to a wasp's nest. The insects never bothered me, but when the men started poking around, they were suddenly enveloped in a cloud of wasps. All the men could do was run for safety!

Jehovah had prepared us for the ban by means of the conventions held in 1949. The program had urged us to intensify personal study, meeting attendance, and our preaching activity, as well as to depend on one another for support and encouragement. This really helped us to remain loyal. Thus, even though people often criticized and cursed us, we took little notice.

Holding Meetings Under the Ban

Following the announcement of the ban, I met with two fellow Witnesses to discuss how to continue our congregation meetings. Attending was dangerous, since arrest while present could mean a prison sentence. We called on the Witnesses in our area. Some were anxious, but it was encouraging that each recognized the need to attend meetings.

An interested man who had a barn offered it for use as a meeting place. Although it stood in a field, visible for all to see, the barn had a back door that opened onto a path that was concealed by bushes. So our coming and going was not observed. All through the winter that old barn played host to our meetings held by candlelight, with about 20 persons in attendance. We met each week for our study of the *Watchtower* magazine and for the Service Meeting. The program was adapted to our circumstances, stressing that we had to keep spiritually active. We were soon thrilled to welcome the same interested man as our new brother in the truth.

In the mid-1950's, court sentences became milder, and some brothers were released from prison. Many were deported to West Germany. As for me, things took an unexpected turn following the visit of a brother from West Germany.

My First Major Assignment

The brother called himself Hans. Following our conversation, I was asked to call at an address in Berlin. Upon locating the code name on the doorbell, I was invited in. Two persons joined me and engaged me in a pleasant but very general discussion. Then came what they had been leading up to: "If you were offered a special assignment, would you accept it?"

"Of course," was my answer.

"Fine," they said, "that is all we wanted to know. Have a safe journey home."

Three weeks later I was asked to return to Berlin and again found myself in that room. Handing me a map of the region around Zittau, the brothers came to the point. "We have no contact with the Witnesses in this area. Could you restore contact for us?"

"Of course I will," was my immediate reply. The area was huge, over 60 miles long, from Riesa to Zittau, and up to 30 miles wide. And all I had was a bicycle. When contact with individual Witnesses was established, each was integrated within his own congregation, which regularly sent a representative to Berlin to pick up literature and instructions. This method of operation prevented the endangering of other congregations when the authorities were persecuting any one congregation.

Trust in Jehovah

Despite the persecution, in obedience to Bible instructions, we never ceased going from house to house with our message about God's Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20; Acts 20:20) We called at addresses on the basis of recommendations from individuals already known to us, and we enjoyed some wonderful experiences. At times even our mistakes were turned into blessings, as the following illustrates.

My wife and I were given an address to visit, but we called at the wrong house. When the door opened, we noticed a police uniform on the coatrack. Margit's face paled; my heart pounded. This could mean prison. Time only for a quick prayer.

"Who are you?" asked the man tersely. We kept calm.

"I am sure I know you from somewhere," Margit said, "but I just cannot think where.

Yes, you are a policeman. I must have seen you on duty."

This poured oil on troubled waters, and he asked in a friendly tone. "Are you Jehovah's?"

"Yes," I joined in, "we are, and you must admit it takes courage for us to knock on your door. We are interested in you personally."

He invited us into his home. We visited him a number of times and started a Bible study. In time this man became our Christian brother. How that experience strengthened our trust in Jehovah!

Sisters often acted as couriers, which called upon them to place their implicit trust in Jehovah. Such was the case when Margit once traveled to Berlin to pick up literature. There was far more than expected. A clothesline was used to tie the heavy, overloaded suitcase. All went well until Margit was on the train. Then a border official came along.

"Whose is it, and what is in it?" he demanded, pointing to the suitcase.

"It's my laundry," Margit replied.

Suspicious, he ordered her to open it up. Slowly and deliberately, taking apart one knot at a time, Margit began untying the clothesline around the case. Since the border official's job called for him to travel with the train only a certain distance and then disembark and take another train on the return journey, he became increasingly impatient. Finally, when but three knots remained, he gave up. "Clear off, and take your laundry with you!" he yelled.

Jehovah's Personal Care

Often I managed no more than four hours' sleep a night, since I usually cared for congregation matters under the cover of darkness. It was after a night of such activity that officials pounded on our door one morning. They had come to carry out a search. It was too late to hide anything.

The officials spent the whole morning turning the place inside out, even inspecting the toilet in case anything was hidden in it. No one thought to examine my jacket that was hanging on the coatrack. I had hurriedly stashed documents into its many pockets. The pockets were bulging with the very things the officials were after, but they left empty-handed.

On another occasion, in August 1961, I was in Berlin. It turned out to be my final collection of literature before the Berlin Wall was erected. The Berlin railway station was swarming with people as I prepared to return to Zittau. The train pulled in, and everyone rushed down the platform to get on. Swept along in the throng, I suddenly found myself in an empty part of the train. No sooner had I got on than the guard locked the doors from the outside. I stood alone in one section, with the other passengers being herded into the rest of the train.

We set off for Zittau. For some time I was alone in the car. Then the train came to a halt, and the doors to my section were opened. Dozens of Soviet soldiers entered. Only then did I realize that I had been traveling in a section reserved for the Soviet military. I wished the ground would open up and swallow me. Yet, the soldiers did not seem to see anything amiss.

We resumed the journey to Zittau, where the doors to our section were thrown open, and the soldiers bounded out. They began a search of all the passengers at the station. I was the only one to leave unhindered. Many of the soldiers even saluted me, thinking I was a high official.

Only afterward did we realize how valuable that literature was, for the erection of

the Berlin Wall temporarily interrupted our supply route. Yet, that literature was sufficient to serve our needs for several months. In the meantime, arrangements to keep in touch with us could be made.

The advent of the Berlin Wall in 1961 brought changes for us in East Germany. But Jehovah, as always, was ahead of events. He continued to care for us under the ban.—*As told by Hermann Laube.*

♦

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Have you found the recent issues of *The Watchtower* to be of practical value to you? Then why not test your memory with the following:

□ **What was a major purpose of Jesus' healings?** They portrayed, for the encouragement of the great crowd of sheeplike people today, that Armageddon survivors will be healed relatively soon after Armageddon. (Isaiah 33:24; 35:5, 6)—12/15, page 12.

□ **Why do we need the constant reminder: "Persevere in prayer"? (Romans 12:12)** Life's pressures and responsibilities may weigh so heavily on us at times that we could forget to pray. Or problems may overwhelm us, causing us to stop rejoicing in the Kingdom hope, even to cease praying. Thus, we need reminders that encourage us to pray and in this way draw ever nearer to Jehovah.—12/15, page 14.

□ **What proves that the Flood of Noah's day left an indelible impression on the human race?** It has been estimated that over 500 Flood legends are told by more than 250 tribes and peoples. Some basic similarities are to be found in all these legends.—1/15, page 5.

□ **How are false prophets today like those in Jeremiah's time?** Today's false prophets claim to represent God, but they steal God's words by preaching things that distract people from what the Bible really says. Especially is this true in regard to the teaching of the Kingdom. (Jeremiah 23:30)—2/1, page 4.

□ **What is implied when one is baptized in the name of the holy spirit?** This implies that the one being baptized is determined to cooperate with the spirit, doing nothing to hinder its operation among Jehovah's people. Hence, that one must cooperate with the faithful and discreet slave and with the elder arrangement in the congregation. (Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 5:1-4)—2/1, page 18.

□ **Why is image worship so damaging to the worshiper?** The Bible shows that images are detestable to Jehovah God and useless in helping their devotees to get closer to God. (Deuteronomy 7:25; Psalm 115:4-8) Satan the Devil "has blinded the minds" of people so that the truth does "not shine through." (2 Corinthians 4:4) So when venerating an image, one is actually serving the interests of the demons. (1 Corinthians 10:19, 20)—2/15, pages 6-7.

□ **Why were sheep considered a valuable asset in Bible times?** The wool was a renewing asset and could be used to make clothing for the family or could be sold. The horns of rams were used to signal the Jubilee or could be used to sound alarm or direct war maneuvers. Since sheep were one of the clean animals that Israelites could eat, a flock of sheep ensured a supply of food, and it provided a regular milk supply for drinking or for making cheese.—3/1, pages 24-5.

□ **What are lovers of God requesting when they pray for God's Kingdom to come? (Matthew 6:10)** They are asking that God's heavenly Kingdom take decisive action by destroying man-made governmental systems, which have failed to live up to their promise to bring peace and security. (Daniel 2:44)—3/15, page 6.

□ **Who were the Apologists, and did they teach the Trinity?** The Apologists were churchmen who lived in the latter part of the second century. They wrote to defend the Christianity they knew against hostile philosophies prevailing in the Roman world. None of them taught the Trinity.—4/1, pages 24-9.

□ **Was Zechariah, the father of John the Baptizer, made deaf and mute, as Luke 1:62 seems to indicate?** Gabriel said that Zechariah's speech would be affected, not his hearing. (Luke 1:18-20) Luke 1:64 states: "Instantly his [Zechariah's] mouth was opened and his tongue loosed and he began to speak." Notice, no mention is made here about his hearing having been affected in any way. The mention of "signs" at Luke 1:62 may mean that some gesture was made to elicit Zechariah's decision.—4/1, page 31.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Assistance for Governing Body Committees

The members of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, at present 12 in number, continue to serve faithfully in their assignments. They are always thankful to the loyal members of the increasing "great crowd" for their zealous support. (Revelation 7:9, 15) In view of the tremendous increase worldwide, it seems appropriate at this time to provide the Governing Body with some additional assistance. Therefore it has been decided to invite several helpers, mainly from among the great crowd, to share in the meetings of each of the Governing Body Committees, that is, the Personnel, Publishing, Service, Teaching, and Writing Committees. Thus, the number attending the meetings of each of these committees will be increased to seven or eight. Under the direction of the Governing Body committee members, these assistants will take part in discussions and will carry out various assignments given them by the committee. This new arrangement goes into effect May 1, 1992.

For many years now, the number of the remnant of anointed Witnesses has been decreasing, while the number of the great crowd has increased beyond our grandest expectations. (Isaiah 60:22) How we thank Jehovah for this marvelous expansion! When the new name, Jehovah's Witnesses, was gratefully accepted in 1931, the peak number of Kingdom publishers was 39,372, most of whom professed to be anointed brothers of Christ. (Isaiah 43:10-12; Hebrews 2:11) Sixty years later, in 1991, the worldwide peak of publishers was 4,278,820, of whom only 8,850 professed to be of the anointed remnant. As anticipated in the light of the Scriptures, the "great crowd" now outnumber the remnant of the "little flock" by more than 480 to 1. (Luke 12:32; Revelation 7:4-9) In caring for the expanding Kingdom interests, the remnant surely need and appreciate the cooperation and support of the great crowd.

As explained in this issue of *The Watchtower,* there is a group serving with spiritual Israel today that is comparable to the Nethinim and the sons of the servants of Solomon who returned from Babylonian exile with the Jewish remnant; those non-Israelites even outnumbered the returning Levites. (Ezra 2:40-58; 8:15-20) "Given ones" from among today's great crowd are mature Christian men who have had considerable experience as a result of caring for oversight in branches, in the traveling work, and among the 66,000 congregations now established throughout the earth.

Recently, Kingdom Ministry Schools were held worldwide for the instruction of overseers and their assisting ministerial servants. In the United States alone, 59,420 overseers attended. These "older men" were thus equipped to fulfill their responsibilities more effectively.—1 Peter 5:1-3; compare Ephesians 4:8, 11.

At the Brooklyn headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses, some "given ones" have served for a great many years. These include mature overseers from the great crowd who have gained a wealth of ability and experience. Thus, the Governing Body has selected a few of such overseers to assist in the meetings of the Governing Body's committees. These are not necessarily the men with the longest record of service. Rather, they are mature, experienced men with qualifications that fit them for giving assistance in particular fields. Their being assigned to work with a committee does not give them a special status. As Jesus said concerning his disciples, "all you are brothers." (Matthew 23:8) However, much will be entrusted to these men, and consequently "much will be demanded" of them.—Luke 12:48.

We rejoice in the forward march of Jehovah's organization today. Over the past ten years, there has been almost a 100 percent increase in the number of those ministering in the field, in line with the prophecy concerning the Greater David, Jesus Christ: "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." (Isaiah 9:7, *King James Version*) In the same way that the Nethinim worked alongside the priests in repairing the walls of Jerusalem, so today the prophecy concerning Jehovah's organization is being fulfilled: "And foreigners will actually build your walls." (Isaiah 60:10; Nehemiah 3:22, 26) The modern-day Nethinim are to be commended for the zeal that they show in building up true worship, assisting "the priests of Jehovah" in whatever work or service may be assigned in Jehovah's worldwide organization.—Isaiah 61:5, 6.

GIBEONITES
They Sought Peace

Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

THE hilltop city above is identified as being on the spot where ancient Gibeon stood, some six miles north of Jerusalem.

You likely know that Gibeon came to prominence soon after Joshua led Israel into the Promised Land and defeated Jericho. The Canaanites of Gibeon realized that they could not withstand Israel, who clearly had divine backing. What to do? Resorting to a ruse, the Gibeonites sent representatives who posed as travelers from a distant land. This effort toward peace succeeded, for Israel made a covenant with them. When their trick was exposed, the Gibeonites became gatherers of wood and drawers of water.

God must not have been displeased with this people who sought peace. He supported Joshua's defense of the Gibeonites when they were attacked by five kings. Jehovah even performed the miracle of extending daylight for that battle.—Joshua 9:3-27; 10:1-14.

Excavators found on this mound a deep pit, or pool, cut into solid rock. The Gibeonites could descend steps into this and obtain water from an underground chamber. Might this have been "the pool of Gibeon" mentioned at 2 Samuel 2:13? Archaeologists also discovered cellars cut into rock and a great deal of wine-making equipment. Yes, it seems that Gibeon was a center for making wine.

During David's time the tent, or tabernacle, of the true God was located here. King Solomon came here to offer sacrifices. Jehovah appeared to Solomon in a dream and promised him "a wise and understanding heart," as well as riches. (1 Kings 3:4-14; 2 Chronicles 1:3) The article on pages 12-17 of this issue shows that the descendants of the people who dwelt here in Gibeon were specially privileged among God's nation at a later time. Do you know how?