

Pacific Union College

Oral History Series

The Good Life of Truneh Wolde Selassie

Learn the secrets of a long, rewarding and healthy life in this extended interview with octogenarian Truneh Wolde Selassie, the elder statesman of Seventh-day Adventism in Ethiopia. Interviewed by his student Adu Worku, library director at Pacific Union College, Elder Truneh recalls his career as a church leader and educator, a career beginning as a shepherd boy in rural Ethiopia. He recounts the history of the Adventist Faith in Ethiopia, a history in which he played a leading role. Having survived several serious threats on his life, Elder Truneh explains his success in terms of faith, daily bible reading, good nutrition and walking at least five miles daily. You will be inspired by this story of the good life of a distinguished Christian leader.

Introduction:

Adu Worku:

Greetings. My name is Adugnaw Worku. Commonly known around here as Adu Worku. I am originally from Ethiopia. But I currently live in the United States of America. I am director of Library Services at Pacific Union College in Angwin, California. Today is February 23, 2014 and we have a special guest from Ethiopia. His name is Elder Truneh Wolde Selassie. Elder Truneh was born in NW Ethiopia and brought up there. He started out life as a shepherd and then transitioned into being a country farmer during his teenage years. His life took a sharp turn with an event and that changed the course of his life. He got an opportunity to go to school. He completed his elementary and secondary education in Ethiopia and he got a chance to go to Australia to college education. He attended Avondale College in Australia and graduated with a major in Education with a history emphasis in 1961. Subsequent to that, he returned to his homeland and served for a while. Then he came to the United States for graduate studies. He attended Andrews University and earned a Master's degree in Education in 1966. He then returned to his homeland once again and served the Adventist Church for 42 years in various capacities. The former shepherd and country farmer turned out to be an outstanding teacher a seasoned administrator, a distinguished public speaker and preacher, and an accomplished author. He has an impeccable record as a role model, especially for young people. He loves young people and he cares deeply about young people. His former students now occupy positions of responsibility in government, in the church, and in private business. Both in the country and overseas. Young people respect and love him in return. So much so, that they postponed their wedding date to accommodate Elder Turneh's busy schedule. Just to have him officiate at their wedding. This is a testament to his lifelong commitment to serve and mentor young people. This former shepherd has performed a lot of responsibilities. Among them are uh, his role as an academy and college teacher, an academy principal, um, a college dean (academic dean), secretary and president of the Ethiopian Union. And as if these responsibilities are not enough, he has

done a lot of things in his “free time” – probably evenings and weekends. He translated many hymns from English to Amharic, the Ethiopian language. He prepared the first ever song book in Amharic with staff notations. He translated the Church Manual, also from English to Amharic. And he has authored three books as well as numerous scholarly articles. Where did he get the energy and the time? We’re going to ask him during our conversations. Elder Turneh served the Adventist Church for forty-two years and uh, he has now become the Elder Statesman of the Church. He’s a cheerleader in good times and comforter in chief in times of death, sadness, and tragedy. He’s a much sought after public speaker. So, this gentleman who is 82 years old, believe it or not, you look at him, he’s clear in thought, physically fit, and energetic at 82. And still going strong. He officially retired from church service in 1996 and for the last 18 years he has been fully engaged in the service of his church, his people, and his country. On the personal side, he is married to sister Lickamierlish (?), a professional in her own right, a licensed nurse and a licensed midwife. They have been married for 50 years and they have 4 children – 3 girls and a boy – and 9 grandchildren. It is interesting to note that the name Truneh means “you’re good” and the name Likamierlish in the Ethiopian language means “you’re the best.” So the good man and the best woman got married and they produced four wonderful children. Three girls and a boy. Heruti(?) was the first born, and she’s currently director of nurses at Stanford University Medical Center. Buena(?) is a medical doctor, a gynecologist by specialty. Edna is a successful business woman and Ambache, the last child, and the only boy, is a talented, a very, very talented and skillful engineer. So by all accounts, this family is a blessed family. But they have also blessed many in return with their time, their money, and their friendship. It has been my good fortune to have been part of this wonderful family since 1965 and I have enjoyed and appreciated their friendship and their love. It is my distinct honor and privilege to introduce my beloved teacher, my lifelong mentor, and my best friend Elder Truneh Wolde Selassie. Thank you for coming all the way to Angwin, CA and welcome.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Thank you very much, Adu. You just made me feel small, really. Because I don’t think I deserve everything you said about me and uh, uh, I like to just be uh, somebody who has lived a good life, clean life, and uh, also ‘twas my wish to contribute in the area of training our young people - both for the church and for the country. And in that respect, I feel God has blessed me and I thank you for enumerating all the activities I’ve been engaged in. You know, Adu used to be one of my students. And I remember that as clearly as it was yesterday. And I remember in particular, when I was teaching you history, Ethiopian history. On one occasion, I gave a test about Tildres (?) Emperor Tildres. And I remember your paper. The title of it was “? - The Innocent Sinner” [VTS_02_1.VOB 10:55] And that really caught my attention. Although you were just a young man, growing up in those days, I said to myself, “This boy is going to be somebody someday.” And I was a prophet and ??? and that happened to be so. [VTS_02_1.VOB 11:20] I’m very thankful this morning to be here to be introduced by one of my students with these glowing terms. And I appreciate all that you have said and (11:35) and everything that you have done. And so I wish you when you retire like me as one of your students who sits in front of you and say all the wonderful things you have done. the /???(VTS_02_1.VOB 11:47) your family, your church, your country, and the world also in general [VTS_02_1.VOB 11:54]. God bless you, thank you.

Adu Worku:

Thank you very much. Now, today is about you. And so we are going to have a conversation as i said. And, um, your life started simple and ordinary and turned out to be extra ordinary by all accounts. So, lets go back to the beginning. You were born in rural Ethiopia. You were just an ordinary child. What did you do? What did your family do? What was the community like when you were born way back, 82 years ago?

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Yes, I was born in Northwest Ethiopia in 1931. That was the year I was born. And, uh, the place I was born was called ??? [VTS_02_1.VOB 12:59] Feres Meda. A village actualy. Just rural village. Nothing special about it. But when I look back, my childhood days and what had transpired in those days. I could sense that there was hand of God leading, guiding, my life. This is how I feel. And there are many, many indications that God was in my life.

Now your question is how i was born, how i grew up, and the condition of the churches in the country at that time when I was just a little boy. You know, I am the, uh, third child in my family. And the first boy. The two born before me were girls. And the fourth one, who was born after me, was a girl. But in my family, there were four of us. Unfortunately, the first born died when she was just young, about 8 years of age. So, I didn't even get to know her, i just heard about her. The second one, who is three years older than I am, she's still alive. She is strong, physically well fit, and uh, i don't think of all my siblings, there is anyone to whom i am so closely attached as my older sister. There was a time in our family, when there were only the two of us children with my father and mother. And that brought very close relationship between the two of us. So my older sister (name?) [VTS_02_1.VOB 15:00], the mother of seven. She is a very charming lady and she has very wonderful children. And she has (15:12). And then my mother died. In fact she died before I knew her. I remember, I have just a very few recollections about her. Uh, generally, I remember that she was tall. This image I have in my mind about her. Apart from that, I don't remember much. But because she died when I was about 3 1/2 years old. And after she died, my father got remarried - second wife. And not long after that the war came. The Ethiopian and Italian war. My father was a soldier so he had to move to the front. And my step-mother, my older sister and me, three of us, were left behind at home. My uncle on my mother's side, was very closely attached to our family. When he found out, he was not living in our village, he was living in another village far away from us. When he heard that my father had gone to the war front, he came to our home and he said, "I am going to take this child with me. He has lost his mother, now his father has gone to war, he may or not may come back, in case he does not come back, i will raise him up as my child, i will take care of him. but if he does come back, I will bring back the child if the father does come back. So I stayed with him for seven months while my father was in the front fighting. Something happened when I was living with them which I shall never forget. For the first time in my life, I saw an airplane. We were playing just outside the house and we heard a sound, a terrific sound, and we didn't know what to make of it. We looked out and we couldn't see anything, but there was some sound overhead, and we were terrified! We started screaming, we started running. But then, a lady who was there at home, said, "Look at that, look at that!" and she pointed up. And there was something flying up in the air. We didn't know what it was, but was something flying. That was the airplane. For the first time in my life, I saw an airplane. But of

course, then, after that, these planes were coming back again and again bombing villages and other cities and towns. I grew up to get used to them. Then we started to say "Oh, the plane comes, the plane comes." But that was uh, during the time I stayed with my uncle for seven months. After seven months, the news came that my father had come home, alive. With all his friends. And immediately, I went to my uncle and said, "Take me home. I can't stay here overnight. I can't stay here overnight. Take me home today." He took me back home. I met my father. I was so happy. I was so pleased. Because I had lost my mother and now he was the only one I had and I also feared that I might lose him, too. But I was so glad to see him back.

Now, soon after my father came back, I was about 5 and 5 1/2 years old. Very fortunate in our village, there was a school.

Adu Worku: Which is unusual.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Very unusual.

Adu Worku: Which is unusual.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Very unusual.

Adu Worku: Very unusual for those days.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Very unusual, no schools in the whole country, the whole region, no school, but in my village there was a school. It was established by the missionaries, by the Seventh-day Adventist missionaries. I might have a chance to speak about that later on, but for the time being, my father said I had to go to school. I went to school. I had two teachers. ??? (name) and ??? (name) [VTS_02_1.VOB 20:08:12]. They taught me the Amharic alphabets and all 73. But, the impression that those two men, and my father gave me in life, are everlasting. I shall never forget that. Reading, writing, anybody can teach you. But, nobody can teach you what those men taught me. They are the ones who gave me the foundation of my faith. They were the ones who introduced me to Jesus Christ. My father, a very Godly man, very simple farmer, but he had two books in his house, I remember. One was the New Testament and the other one was Steps to Christ in Amharic. Those two books he had. And every morning, before going to his farm, he would take out his New Testament, read and pray. And listen to that man pray! It's not praying, it's just talking to God face to face. Is how I felt. He was just talking to God. And so I learned, the true science of prayer from my father. My heart was touched in my young years. That he spoke to God as though he was seeing him face-to-face. That's what I learned from my father. And those two men, (name?) and (name?), [VTS_02_1.VOB 21:55:02] they also were very Godly men. So they were my primary introducers to the life of Christ. And for this I thank them very much. Now, God answered me to remain Christian all the rest of my life all because I think, all because they had laid a very solid foundation. And I am very grateful for that. [VTS_02_1.VOB 22:30:01]

Adu Worku:

Now I have a follow-up question related to that, but before we get there, something happened that

interrupted that schooling that you had started and you went back to what children ordinarily do, as a matter of tradition. So what uh, were you a shepherd? [VTS_02_1.VOB 23:03:08]

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Well, uh, at that point in time, the Ethiopian government was defeated. The Italians were invading the whole country, they were occupying the country, and normal functioning was disrupted, school included, normal schooling. And then, the invaders came right into my village. They burned all the houses. The Church, which was also the school, was burned down at the same time. We had to hide in the caves, mountains, the bushes, wherever we could find. So normal life was completely disrupted. But little by little, we started coming back. Before coming back to the normal life, what I saw in those days, what I witnessed in those days was a terrible situation, absolutely terrible. Because, there was no government in Ethiopia in those days. The Italians, although they occupied the cities, but they were not governing the countryside. The countryside was without any governor, without anybody in charge. And this gave an opportunity for the enemies of the Church to try to destroy us completely because we were Seventh-day Adventists. My village, the whole village, is a Seventh-day Adventist village. And there were also other villages who were Seventh-day Adventists. And so the surrounding people thought that was a very good opportunity for them to kill out Seventh-day Adventism in the area. So they invaded our village. And they took everything we had. Whatever was left of the Italians. Whatever had been rebuilt was again taken away by the people who were living around about us. And it's not only that it's both, the Italians invaded us and the surrounding criminals invaded us. And our lives were not secured at any moment. Many people have lost their lives at that time, many of our people. So, we were living in a cartic(???) [VTS_02_1.VOB 25:35:12] situation. It was a time of lawlessness, a time of persecution, a time of great confusion. (end of section) From day to day, we didn't know what was coming next. So, this was the kind of situation that resulted. And that's what brought me back to farming. No more schooling. I had to live as a farmer, assisting my father, and that was life I was living.

Adu Worku:

Just to clarify the historical context of the Italian occupation in Ethiopia. The Italians had designs to colonize Ethiopia as early as the 19th Century. In fact there was an epic battle between the Italians and the Ethiopians in 1896 in Northern Ethiopia, which Ethiopia decisively won. And years later, in 1935, Mussolini wanted to come back and avenge that, uh, disgraceful defeat as they felt it was, and they were more than prepared with mustard (?) gas, airplanes, tanks, you name it. That was the time you were talking about. That happened during your childhood. Now I want to, um, to ask the Northern Ethiopian genre and the area where you were born in particular, was predominantly Ethiopian orthodox **Christian bastian(?)** with a few Muslims and some um, um, eh, Ethiopian Jews in the area as well. My question is: how in the world did Adventism get established in your remote village in Northwest Ethiopia?

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Well, that's a very interesting question Adu. Because that's basic and that is uh, an interest of mine about which I've written quite a bit. And this is how it happened. And I think I have to go back in history

to give you the background of this. Emperor Tigris and Emperor ?? [VTS_02_2.VOB 2:22] felt that to unite Ethiopia politically, it had to be first of all united religiously. It is what they believed. If they could unite the country and uh, have only one religion, that would help the unity of the whole country. With this in mind, they tried different methods. Emperor Tigris tried to convert the Muslims in Ethiopia just by a gentle persuasion in collaboration with the priests, the cooperative priests. No using of force, but simply preach to them, teach them, and bring them in gently as much as possible. That didn't work. And the man who followed him, Emperor ???, had a different plan. He wanted to convert all the Muslims in Ethiopia by a decree. A day was set. On that day, every Muslim was to become Christian. And of course, this led to a very, very angry situation in the country, because the Muslims said, some of them were uh, who didn't have any choice were converted, but others said no. They ran away from the country. They went to the Sudan. But another group went into the bush into hiding. And one Muslim leader who was out leading against the decree of the government was named Zacharias, [VTS_02_1.VOB 4:08] Chez Zacharias (?). And Chez Zacharias was approached by one of his friends who had converted to Christianity and advised him saying how to become a Christian. This is a government decree, you can't go against it. If you want to live in this country, just accept the decree as the rest of us have and live [VTS_02_1.VOB 4:30] ?? . But, this man said no, I will not. Religion ?? must be believed not forced. I don't accept a Christianity that's forced upon me. I simply say no. And then the other man said, "if you say that, you know the next thing is war. You and I will have a fight. I am the governor of the district and it's my responsibility to from the ??? [VTS_02_1.VOB 5:00], I shouldn't enforce you to become a Christian. And this man said, "ok. You come, follow me, we'll go down to the desert of Takazi, the lowland of Takazi, let us meet there." [VTS_02_1.VOB 5:13]. So he disappeared, going to the lowland. That means he became what you call a shifter. Uh...

Adu Worku: Bandit.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Bandit. Roland (?) bandit.

Adu Worku: Bandit. A rebel. Like an ????

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

???? I think that's more like it. We can qualify that. And there was a war between the two and the government man was deficit. (VTS_02_2.VOB 5:35) And this ??? was victorious. But then he could not live with the rest of the people, so he kept on hiding for 11 years. After 11 years, he had a vision. He was praying to God and had a vision. And in the vision he saw the trinity. The father, the son, and holy spirit. And in his vision he said, they came to me. And they were sitting around me. And I was sitting in their midst. And one of them said to me, "Zacharias, we have come here to tell you the truth of, about God. And now, we invite you from this day on, you have to get a copy of the Bible." And the Koran of course, (mumbles), you take the two books, compare the two books, take whatever you can take from the Koran, which harmonizes with the Bible and from the two books, you are going to teach the true religion. And in the manner they came, they disappeared from me, they went back, he says, but after, I was watching them going back to Heaven, one of them came back to me and he said, "I will not leave you. I will always be with you." And he felt that always there was the person with him. The Holy Spirit working with him. Now um, this Muslim chief who had rebelled against the government. Now was

hiding for 11 years and after 11 years, God revealed himself to him. And after God revealed himself to him, he sat with him, he sat teaching his followers, he had many followers, he started teaching them about the true God. About the true religion. And... when it came time for him, just about to become a Christian, all the Muslims round about him accused him. And they accused him in many places in Ethiopia, first in Tagrai...

Adu Worku: Northern Ethiopia

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

In Northern Ethiopia, in ??? in Tigray, in the court of the ?????? Selassie, then in Sekota ???, then in the Debre Tavor ???, and finally in ????? before emperor Miliac (?). The Muslims accused him and he was able to prove his points from the Koran and from the Bible that he was right, before the emperor. And the Emperor, after listening to both sides, exonerated him. He became recognized by the government as a genuine Christian, although he was not baptized(?) [VTS_02_2.VOB 8:43]. And the head of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, who was at the court at that time, asked Chez Zacharias, "of course you are a Muslim, you say you are a Muslim, but you are teaching the Christian faith. Why don't you become baptized? Become a complete Christian, orthodox Christian instead of pretending to be Muslim and teach the Muslims. And the man says, I am the modern Paul. The ancient Paul appeared to be a Jew when he was teaching the Jews and appeared to be a gentile when he was teaching the gentiles. And that's the way he preached and I am following his example. If I become a Christian, if I become baptized, none of the Muslims will accept me. I cannot do it amongst them. But, I know what I believe and I am going to take from the Koran whatever is pertinent and harmonize with the Bible and I will continue teaching. SO he continued teaching 70 years. After 70 years, he became Christian in the orthodox church. He was baptized in 1903, Ethiopian Kareanga [VTS_02_2.VOB 10:13]. He was baptized in about 1910.

Adu Worku: Now he uh, converted how many Muslims into Christianity?

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

When he was baptized into Christianity, on the very same time, he had 15,000 Muslims who had become Christians.

Adu Worku: Because of him?

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Because of him. Now I'm going to tell you a very interesting story. Which might interest you very much. Chez Zacharias had a daughter. And his daughter, married one of his students. And his daughter had a son. And her son is your wife's grandfather. (??? Name [VTS_02_1.VOB 11:10]. Your wife here. And so you are related to that man in a way. And that is the beginning of Christianity in that area for Muslims. But, the question was, the problem was that some of the students, some of Chez Zacharias's students did not agree with him about the Sabbath, about baptism, about the intercession of saints, they had questions. When they were to be baptized into the Coptic(?) [VTS_02_2.VOB 11:25] church, some of the students said, but the c?? people baptized by sprinkling. And they said, this is who are baptism, baptizing. And they said, the true baptism is the baptism of Jesus Christ in the River Jordan.

Adu Worku: By immersion.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

By immersion. This is what we believe, according to the Bible. The real baptism. And uh, therefore, we cannot be baptized with you. If you want to be baptized, you have to alone. We don't agree with you. And secondly, we don't think that Sunday is the true Sabbath. According to the Bible, Saturday is the Sabbath. This is another point of disagreement. And thirdly, they said, that the Coptic (?) people believe that the saints in heaven can intercede for us in behalf of humanity. We don't believe that because it is not in the Bible. So there was a disagreement between the teacher and the students. The teacher was a very wise man, so he said...

Adu Worku: We are talking about Chez Zacharias

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

My responsibility given to me by God, is to lead you all this far, not any further. But, I can tell you that God has told me, someday, some people will come to you. The color of their skin is not the color of your skin. Their language is not your language. They are going to come from beyond the seas. And they will teach you the right way of baptizing people. They will teach you about the Sabbath. They will teach you about the intercession of saints, what you are questioning me now. But for the time being, God has told me to lead you this far. Now let us get baptized into the Coptic (?) church and later on, mark my words, some people will come and they will explain all this to you. And, he said, I will give you a sign. When you meet them for the first time, you will find them preaching the same message, one message, in three different languages, at the same time. This is the sign. When you meet them, they will be preaching the same sermon, one sermon, in three different languages at the same time. This is the sign. Watch for it. He died. One of his students (name??) [VTS_02_2.VOB 14:25] who was an uncle of mine, was so dissatisfied with his new faith he had to leave ??? and travel all the way to ??? [VTS_02_2.VOB 14:45], one month, on foot.

Adu Worku: He walked for one month.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: One month, he walked.

Adu Worku: In search of...?

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

In search of the truth. According to the bible. He came to the city of Asmara. He met the Swedish mission people. They were very kind to him. Very, very kind to him. They gave him a room where he would stay. They gave him free food. They assign a teacher to him because he had told them that he came all the way from ???, searching for the truth. And after he had stayed there for a while, the leader of the church came to him and said, "Now you have been with us about three months. What do you think of us?" And ??? was says, "you are good people. I like you. You are very kind to me. But, he said, but I have a question. What is it? Last Sabbath, I saw ??? [VTS_02_2.VOB 15:40] baptizing a small child. He had the baby in his arm, he had water in a plate, he dipped his hand into the plate, the water plate, and he sprinkled it on the head of the baby and says, "Now I baptize you and later on I will teach you.

Now I baptize you and later on I will teach you." Three times he did that. And uh, ??? (name) [VTS_02_2.VOB 16:07] says, this is not according to the Bible. The Bible does not teach us to baptize small children. The person should be baptized after he has believed. And children don't have that capacity of believing. This, he said, I, I, I don't feel comfortable with that. And then he said to him now, You also keep Sunday. The Bible says Saturday is the right day. And that also does not good with me. So, uh, otherwise, you are good people. Very good people. And...uh, this man says to him, well, you know, you are asking these questions because you have not studied the Bible well. After you have studied the Bible with us, that well, you are find the answers. Yes, we keep Sunday because Saturday is was done away with. It's abolished. Therefore we keep Sunday. And we baptize the small Children because they are from Christian homes. If they were heathen, we don't baptize them until they believe. But these are from homes of Christians. And so we baptize them. And ?? (name) [VTS_02_2.VOB 17:24] says, "Where do you find in the Bible such a text which says Saturday is changed to Sunday and it's okay to baptize small children from Christian homes. If you show me the text, I'll accept. Please show me." And there was no text. So there was a disagreement between the two. One Sunday morning, ??? was sitting at the gate of the mission compound...of that mission compound. Somebody came to him. Met him. And said to him, "where are you from?"

He said, "I'm from ??? (name) [VTS_02_2.VOB 18:05]."

"What are you here for?"

"Looking for the truth."

"What truth?"

"Religious truth."

"Well," he says, "you don't find religious truth by sitting in just one place. You have to move around this city. See other churches. See other groups. You might find people who are keeping the true day, and so on and so forth. Why don't you do that?"

"Oh," he says, "I am a stranger. I don't know the place and I don't have anybody."

"Well if you like, I can come next Sabbath, next uh, Sunday, next uh, Monday, next Saturday morning and I can take you to a group of people here in the city who worship on Saturday."

And ??? (VTS_02_2.VOB 18:59) says "that would be very good! Please do!"

So, next Saturday morning, he was sitting there, and the gentleman comes back. He takes him to the church in G...??? [VTS_02_2.VOB 19:11], Asmara, the Seventh-day Adventist Church. When he got there, he found them studying in the Sabbath School. He sat there with them, studied the Sabbath School, enjoyed it, and then the time for preaching came. When the time for preaching came, he was sitting there watching. And on the stage he saw 3 men, standing to preach. The first man was an American missionary, preaching in English. The second one was a Norwegian, translating the sermon from English to Swedish. And the third one was an Ethiopian translating from Swedish to Tigrinya (?). [VTS_02_2.VOB

25:52] See, this Ethiopian didn't understand English, but he understands Swedish, so the Swedish man who understood English was translating from English to Swedish and from Swedish to Tigrinya (?), this other man was translating. And ??? (name) was sitting there and he was so excited. He said, "this is the fulfillment of the prophecy that our teacher has told us. Now I have found the people. These are the true God's people." Instead of them ??? [VTS_02_2.VOB 20:30], he asked them about the Sabbath, he asked them about baptism, and in fact baptizing, he asked them about the institution of the saints, every question he had. And he got satisfying answers to all of his questions. And then at the end of the day, he said to the leader of the mission, "I have enjoyed being here with you today. I have full agreement with what you believe. I have one question. Send a missionary to us in ?? [VTS_02_2.VOB 21:04]. I can assure you, all my people will accept your message. Just send us a teacher, a preacher. And he made this agreement with them and they agreed to send someone all the way to Magimda???. Went back to the Swedish mission, and he said to them, "Goodbye. You have been good people to me. I thank you very much, but now I have found what I want and I am going home." So he went home.

Soon after that, two Eritreans came to Magimda (?). One was uh, Meruko Ma?? (name) [VTS_02_2.VOB 21:40] who was a teacher. He's the one who started the school in my village. The other one was [VTS_02_2.VOB 21:50] Areka ??? (name) [VTS_02_2.VOB 21:49]. He was an evangelist and was going around preaching in that area.

Adu Worku: Among the people who were converted from Islam to Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

That's right, among the 15,000 new converts to Christianity. Actually, this, my uncle, (name) [VTS_02_2.VOB 22:07], and his group who were leading this man around, who were taking [him around?]. Because they are their own people, they go and they preach. And when uh, they had preached and taught the Bible long enough, they decided to invite a pastor all the way from Asmara, and pastor ??? [VTS_02_2.VOB 22:25] Okovagzee, the first Ethiopian pastor ever, was sent from Asmara to Magimda (?) to baptize my people.

Adu Worku: Walking for a month.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Walking for a month. He came to this village and he baptized 200 people. The River Tekem ??? [VTS_02_2.VOB 22:42] where you have built a school now. That river. Baptized all these people. This is a long story, but this is how Adventism came to my village, Adu. It's what you asked me and I think it has answered your question.

Adu Worku:

Yes, yes, I appreciate your response. And that's probably why comparisons are made between Chez Zacharias of Ethiopia for Ethiopian Adventism, (**Truneh Wolde Selassie:** Yes.) and William Miller in this country for American Adventism.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Yeah.

Adu Worku:

They laid the, the, the, foundation (**Truneh Wolde Selassie:** Yes.) for the development of the Church.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Yeah.

Adu Worku:

That's very interesting. Just for the record and for historical context, Eritrea, who's capital is Asmara, is in the Northern, Northern tip of Ethiopia. That place, that province, or that section has now become an independent country. At the time that, uh, the Adventist message entered Ethiopia, that province, or that place was under the Italians. (**Truneh Wolde Selassie:** That's correct.) When the Ethiopians defeated the Italians in 1896, they did not drive them out completely. (**Truneh Wolde Selassie:** That's correct.) They stayed in Eritrea. And that's where Protestantism entered and then from there, uh, to the mainland, to mainland Ethiopia. Um, so, fast forward, 200 people who were baptized and this Chez Zacharias told his disciples about education. Tell us about that and what happened subsequent to that.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Again, that's a very interesting point and one that's very close to my heart. Fifteen days, fifteen days before he died, he gathered all his students on all, as many as his followers in the town of ??? [VTS_02_2.VOB 25:07]. And he said to them, "I am dying. I have told already the members of my family to prepare for the burial. But before I die, I have a message for you my students. And this message is this. Number 1: Study the Bible. Study the Bible. Study it again. What I have done, is I have laid the foundation. I have not taught you everything from the Bible. I have taught you something. But there is a lot more to be discovered. Keep on studying and studying and studying. This is what I advise you because you will [match?], you will find a grid?? [VTS_02_3.VOB 00:05] of treasure that is buried in the Bible. So read the Bible, study the Bible. To do that, first you have to be able to read. Unless you are able to read, you cannot read the Bible. You must learn the alphabets."

That was one of his strong points, very strong points. He definitely believed that all of his followers must be educated, must be able to read, otherwise they would not be able to stand when somebody comes and tries to convince them or convert them toward some other religion. But if they read their Bible, if they know their Bibles, they will be able to stand on their own. So, in order to read the Bible, they have to learn the alphabet, and in my village, every man was able to read. They all read. Two of the women I remember, who were able to read, the older women didn't read.

Adu Worku: Who were the two women, just for the record?

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

The two women were (name ???) [VTS_02_3.VOB 1:06] and (name ???). These two, they could read. And um, this was done because ?? Zacharias had a very strong message for his followers concerning education. And then next to reading and studying the Bible, he said, "Teach your children to be able to read, study and learn the modern system of learning, the modern education, whatever it is. Teach them, teach them, teach them. Because this is going to be the answer to our problems. The education of your children is going to answer many of their questions. One day your children are educated, they are going

to be helpful to you. They are going to help you financially, they are going to help you socially, they are going to help you religiously. Many ways.”

So, his followers took this message to heart and they have been always education conscious. My people in that area, ??? [VTS_02_3.VOB 02:28] the older generation, they would do anything, they would make any sacrifice, to educate their children. That is why at the age of 9, at the age of 10, they sent seven of their children from Begemba to Asmara? on foot.

Adu Worku: For a month.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: For a month.

Adu Worku: It took a month.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: It took a month. I don't think you have been to the River Tekazir?.

Adu Worku: No.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: So you have...

Adu Worku: I've not seen it [VTS_02_3.VOB 03:00]. I've traveled by bus across it.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: You have.

Adu Worku: Yes, I have.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

I have crossed it couple of times. A terrible place. Terrible! You can't walk but you have to just scoot, um, crawl, with both arms, hand and feet. And so you cross that place. It is true, that area, these young people, small boys, age of 9, 10, cross that river crying, in to Asmara?, because that was the advice given to this man. They sent them there because once they are educated in Asmara, they are going to come back and preach the gospel. And they did. Pastor ??? (names) [VTS_02_3.VOB 3:43].... They came back and they became workers, teachers, evangelists. So this is uh, in harmony with the advice given to this new converts by ??? Zacharias. And so he, uh, was a very education conscious man.

Adu Worku:

Now let's go back to your, your, um, experience. You started going to school. You learn to write, to read and write. And all that was disrupted by the Italian Invasion. You tried to survive. And, uh, in between you were a shepherd and you were a farmer. So, what happened to get you back to school? When? How old were you? and on that, just on that story.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

You know, the original village where ??? preached [VTS_02_3.VOB 4:55] was called Asmara (VTS_02_3.VOB 4:57). It had too many people. The place was crowded. And the farmers didn't have enough land. So, they decided to leave that area and come to a place called Gouda [VTS_02_3.VOB 5:10], a new place, where there was plenty of land, open land, and when they came there, the people

who were living in that area didn't like them...didn't like us because we are going to share the land...who had right to the land, just as much as they had. They didn't like that. So, they conspired against us. They spread the news that we were anti-may? [VTS_02_3.VOB 5:48] and anti-Coptic Church and we were Catholics. They called us waterlic ? [VTS_02_3.VOB 5:56], which means they are Catholics. And that we deserved to be destroyed. They spread the news far and wide. And that was just the time the missionaries were coming back after the Italian invasion and the Debre Tabor??? [VTS_02_3.VOB 6:13] mission station was being reorganized and the missionaries who came back to Debre Tabor??? finding out that our members some were poor and in need, had given clothes. And these people had found out about that. So, they spread the news that if you want clothes, new clothes, if you want cows, oxen, and what-have-you, come here. So, they gathered a band of uh, a big group of bandits. They came to our village, our new village one evening and they killed two of the, of our leaders. They burned every house. Not a single house was spared. They took our, all our cattle and some of our people were just/left? [VTS_02_3.VOB 7:08] literally naked, no clothes on them. That left us with nothing, even what to eat for the day. There was nothing. What did you do? We had to travel 17 km from Gode? [VTS_02_3.VOB 7:25] to Debre Tabor where the mission station was. When we arrived at the mission station, the mission received us. The government had known about it, but the government did not do anything to help us, but the mission did. They gave us something. They helped us get some clothes. They gave us food. And we stayed with them for 3 months. It is at that time that I started learning English, Mathematics, and what have you and others??? [VTS_02_3.VOB 8:07] of modern education.

Adu Worku: Over the three months...

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Over the three months, yes. As a refugee I came to this place and I started learning.

Adu Worku: Hmm..mmm. How old were you?

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

I was about 17, uh 17 plus. And, after 3 months, uh, a decision had to be made as to what to do with all these, all of us who have come from Gode to Debre Tabor. Solution was to be found. And the suggestion was made that we should go back to this spot where we were persecuted and start life all over again. And there was no other alternative. That was the suggestion, so everybody had to go back, including me. I was just about to go back then my father said, "No. You are not going." I said, "Why?" He said, "No, you are not going. You stay here. Continue with your education. Because," he said, "I don't want you to live a life like mine. I wish a better life for you."

Adu Worku: So, stay in school.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Yes, stay in school. He was going to go back all by himself to build a new house. And, uh, I have my younger sisters and brothers and he was going to take, uh, all of them. And I was of age to be able to help him, but he decided, he decided that I should not. And that is how I started my modern education. I was able to read. I was learned, had learned to read when I was in my village, but, uh, nothing like, uh, the modern education.

Adu Worku:

This is fascinating. Um, I'm going to ask you... you, you have lived through almost the entire, with the exception of maybe the first seven, eight, nine years, uh, of the new church and uh...so, you, you know the entire history of the Seventh-day Adventist from, from, it's unlikely beginning to uh, it's uh, current, uh status in a country where communication was non-existent at that time. No roads, no uh, uh, telephones for people to communicate with. And it took three months, apparently, to walk from say, Tigray? [VTS_02_3.VOB 10:54], where the battle of ?? between the Italians and the Ethiopians took place, from there to the capitol in central Ethiopia. Three months of walking!

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Mmmm hmmm, mmm hmmm...

Adu Worku:

Now, you knew most of the pioneer missionaries. How did they manage to do what they did? I mean food, transportation, eh, were so far away from home, and all of that. Who were these people and how did they do all this stuff?

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Uh, well, this is uh, partly, uh, answered in the previous, uhhh....explanation I gave how Adventism came to my village. That's just part of the story. But now, let me go back. You know, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was very, very interested in Ethiopia because it's mentioned in the Bible so many times, it is an ancient country, it is a Bible believing country, and therefore, there was a great deal of interest.

Adu Worku: And the Sabbath was also part of it.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

That's right, the Sabbath was also part of it. Matter of fact, uh, the leader of the work in Europe at that time, Conradi, was once translating a book written by Eng..., by uh, ... J. N. Andrews, about the Sabbath. He was translating it from English to German. And as he was translating it, he discovered about Ethiopia from that pamphlet. And Conradi said, "Nooo, where is Ethiopia mentioned in this book? Now," he said, "I must really follow up, follow this up and, uh, find out about Ethiopia; and find out all of the possibilities of getting into Ethiopia." So, while he was thinking this idea, he had to travel, at that very moment from Germany to Jerusalem, to visit the Seventh-day Adventist work in Jerusalem. And while he was traveling by boat, he met some black people, dressed in this priestly garments, and wearing the cross around the necks. And these dark people, he noticed were always praying before eating. They prayed. And, uh, Conradi said well these are interesting people. He wanted to talk to them. But then ??? [VTS_02_3.VOB 13:36] when to start and how to start conversation. Finally, he couldn't resist the temptation and he said, um, uh, he introduced himself and they said to him, "Who are you? Where are you from?" And they told them they were Ethiopians going to Jerusalem because they have churches in Jerusalem, Ethiopian Orthodox Church has churches in Jerusalem. So they were traveling from Ethiopia to these churches. Oh, Conradi says, you are from Ethiopia? Yes. Please tell me about the Sabbath. Do you keep the Sabbath? Do you still keep the Sabbath? And these priests said, "Yes, we do. We keep both Sabbath, Saturday, and Sunday." And he kept on talking and talking and then, uh, "Do you still uh, have

worship on Saturday?" "Yes. If you come to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church on Saturday, this Saturday, you will find us worshipping."

Adu Worku: In Jerusalem.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

In Jerusalem. He did. And he worshipped with them. And then he wanted to go back and make plans to enter Ethiopia. He tried in many different ways. He tried to get into Ethiopia through the Sudan, eh, through Kenya, through Jewuti? [VTS_02_3.VOB 14:50], and in every attempt, there was no way. Ethiopia was closed because of the Adwa [VTS_02_3.VOB 14:59] experience, missionaries, so called missionaries who came first, got a piece of land in ??? [VTS_02_3.VOB 15:07], sold it to a trader, and that became the property of the Italians. And so, Ethiopia was very, very, worried about missionaries. They [VTS_02_3.VOB 15:17] ??? closed the door. And so that's why Conradi was not able. But, one day, he heard the Swedish mission had started work in Eritrea. Oh, he said, that's the clue! He said, "I'm going to start in Eritrea." And instead of going to Ethiopia, go to Eritrea because Eritrea was under the Italians in those days. And so he did! He recruited his missionaries, ??? [VTS_02_3.VOB 15:50] and Pilson from Sweden.

Adu Worku: This was, I understand, two thous- uh, uh, 1907.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

That's correct. 1907. He recruited these men, and, two of them. And later on came [VTS_02_3.VOB 16:06] ??? V. E. Thorpenburg and uh, another ??? [VTS_02_3.VOB 16:08] came later on also. That is how they were able to start work in Ethiopia. And, um, after spending, uh, fourteen years in Eritrea, they found it is very, very difficult to preach the gospel in Eritrea. The Italians, didn't want them to preach. These are Protestants. The Italians allow only Catholic missionaries. They like to have only Catholic missionaries, not Protestants. The Coptic people, they don't want any missionaries. The Muslim don't want any missionaries. So the work was very difficult. They had only, I think, in fourteen years, had baptized about three people, I think. So, finally they decided to move from Eritrea to Ethiopia and Thorpenburg was the first man to take that step. Folkenburg, eh, Thorpenburg who had started the work in Eritrea, he's one of the pioneers, and he re-pioneered ??? [VTS_02_3.VOB 17:23] in 1919. He came back after the first World War, the mission was destroyed, he came back and he started it all over again. Now, that, at that time, 1921, he decided to move to Ethiopia. So, there was the Ethiopian consulate in Asmara who went to him, asked him permission, and the consulate said to him, "I will not give you any papers...any permission to go to Ethiopia. Because what advise you is, just go." My wife is going, she is going from Asmara to Musoa??? [VTS_02_3.VOB 17:58] and from Musoa to Jawuti [VTS_02_3.VOB 18:00] by ship and from Jawuti to Addis?? [VTS_02_3.VOB 18:04] by train. You just go over there. That's what I advise you. If you want to try, that's what you need to do. And Thorpenburg would say, "I agree." Without any permission, without any paper, he came all the way from Asmara to Addis. And when he came to Addis, there was nobody to welcome him. No Adventists. Nobody. He just came by train from Jerwti to Addis, got off on the train, found a hotel, stayed overnight in the hotel. IT was called the ??? Hotel [VTS_02_3.VOB 18:40]. And he writes in his book, he says, "There was nothing [VTS_02_3.VOB 18:44] ...??? about it." It was full of rats, mice, a terrible night he had spent in that place.

But the following day he started looking for a house and he found one in Caprine??? [VTS_02_3.VOB 18:57]. He rented that house. But that house was also very, very dirty, mud floor, full of lice ... it was terrible! Fortunately for him, while he was traveling from Jewuti to Addis, he had met the Secretary of the British Delegation. And, uh, Mr. Shipo??? [VTS_02_3.VOB 19:25], and they had talks. So that morning, he went to the Emba...to the Delegation, to the British Delegation to, uh, ask for their protection because there was no American Embassy in those days. He was an American. No American Delegation, so he said, "I need your protection. I want to be registered here." And they registered him. But then, that man who was the Secretary saw him and said, "Mr. Thorpenburg, when are you living?" "Down there, I'm living down there." "And did you find a good house?" "No. It wasn't good." Then he said, "Here is a key for you. Take this key and my servant will show you my house above the river. You open and see." He did. When he looked at it, he saw a modern house, well furnished, clean, a good house. And Thorpenburg says, "No, I cannot live this house because I cannot afford the rent." So, he gave the key back to the servant, saying, "Go back and tell your master, I'm sorry, I can't live in this for financial reasons." Then this man met him again. And here he brought up the same subject. "What about the house I offered you?" Well, he said, I'm sorry I can't live in it because I can't afford the rent." He said, "Did I ask you to pay rent?" "No." "I am telling you to go and live in that house free of rent. Just live in it." He did. He started the work there in 1931. This is a long story, it takes a book to write all of it. And most of it I have written, but for our purpose now, because you have asked me about these missionaries, this is the first man. I admired that man. I know him because he was my teacher from 1951-1952. A very Godly man.

Adu Worku: He stayed there a long time.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Yes. While(?) he had to go in between, went back to East Africa, established work in East Africa, and came back. So, he came to Ethiopia three times, actually. Three times. And that man! He's just like a military general. When he starts on a job, he gives the order and the order must be carried out. And he [VTS_02_3.VOB 22:14] ??? wonderfully. Uh, this is only one. He is one of the pioneers. And I don't know how many you want me to mention, but let me, shall I mention a couple more?

Adu Worku: Sure

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Ok. A certain one I admired is Guna Goodmansen, Goodmansen is a ...

Adu Worku: Sounds like a Scandinavian name.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: That's right, he's a Scandinavian. He's from Norway.

Adu Worku: Mmm hmm

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

He came first to Asmara, he stayed with the first group there for a while. But there was not much they could do there. So, Goodmansen tried to enter Ethiopia different ways. From the North. But the Italians

wouldn't allow him. The Ethiopians wouldn't allow him. So what did he do? He traveled all the way from Asmara to Khartoum.

Adu Worku: Sudan

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Sudan. And from Khartoum, he came to Ethiopia through Metema [VTS_02_3.VOB 23:12]. And he had heard about Chez Zacharias and his followers and the first Adventists that were baptized in ??? [VTS_02_3.VOB 23:19]. This man followed a map he had drawn. Came right to my village.

Adu Worku: Incredible!

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

In 1928, he came and visited our people. Later on, after establishing a ?? [VTS_02_3.VOB 23:40] in Ethiopia, he traveled again from Asmara to Addis, all the way on foot.

Adu Worku: On foot.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: And he wore out 4 pairs of shoes.

Adu Worku: Wow!

Truneh Wolde Selassie: He says.

Adu Worku: Wow!

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Yeah. He is the man who established the Debre Tabor ? [VTS_02_3.VOB 24:01] Mission

Adu Worku: In Northwest Ethiopia.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Northwest Ethiopia. What had a hospital, the school, evangelist center, a church; the light of the town. That's the second one I'd like to mention. The third one is Erik Palm [VTS_02_3.VOB 24:19]. He is from Sweden. Erik Palm is a marvelous man. He's an amazing person. He's the one who assisted establishing Debra Tabor. One.

Two, he's the one who established Dessie ? [VTS_02_3.VOB 24:37]; Dessie mission station.

Three, he's the one with Thorpenburg who established Kuyera ? [VTS_02_3.VOB 24:43] Mission.

Four, he's the man who established the mission station at, um, Abolza ? [VTS_02_3.VOB 24:50].

And, number five, at ?? Saki [VTS_02_3.VOB 24:56] and while he was doing that, he was living in a tent. He didn't have any house ... ??? [VTS_02_3.VOB 25:06]... no. Living in tents, he built many, many mission stations. A very well rounded person. Very good singer, very good preacher, and health professional, a plumber, electrician, a farmer. There is nothing that Erik Palm couldn't do.

Adu Worku: Wow

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

And yet, I've never seen him claiming any credit for himself. After all that . He did it all to the glory of God. No, Erick Palm was one of those precious ones. There are many others, but let me mention one more. Horganwick? [VTS_02_3.VOB 25:45]. Maybe you know something about him, too.

Adu Worku: Also from Norway.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Yeah, he's Norway...from Norway. A missionary in Ethiopia for 32 years. [End VTS_02_3.VOB]. And a very selfless man. Always interested in helping the poor people. I was told by Pastor Boranu [VTS_02_4.VOB 00:13] that he had bought 40 oxen to give to poor people in that area, poor Adventists, he gav-- buys oxen and he gives them.

Adu Worku: To plow their field with

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Right, their field with. Yeah. And, the story of the bot must be told also. He had a booth which he used to wear the medicines in. But then he saw one of the night guards who didn't have any shoes. He didn't have any shoes. He was barefoot.

Adu Worku: Boots that were long to the leg and covered the ...

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

That's right. So he gives this, his own boots to this poor man. He said, you do it during the night and I'll use it, too, during the day. At the end of the night before you go home, bring it, wash it, and put it on the veranda for me. Then I'll use them. And he did. He shared, he shared his shoes. That was so convenient [VTS_02_4.VOB 1:16]. A very Godly man. Hansen is another one, the founder of Akaki [VTS_02_4.VOB 1:21]. Who refused to go when the Italians occupied Ethiopia. He said, I have been here with the Ethiopians in the days when they were free, and I will be with them when they are occupied until they are free. I stay here. And, uh, he and his wife and two ?? [VTS_02_4.VOB 1:44] missionaries stayed there.

Adu Worku: And he was, he, he was buried there, in fact.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Yes, he died there and was buried there. His wife was hoping to die there and uh, be buried, but the change of government, she couldn't stay there. She had to come here and she died here.

Adu Worku:

When the emperor who had gone into exile when the Italians invaded Ethiopia in 1935 came back and probably the Hansens were the only foreign missionaries that he found. Is that because...is that why he put Mrs. Hansen in charge of his, uh, his, uh, kitchen, his palace?

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

You know, when he came back, when the emperor came back. The town was in a mess. The Italians had left and they had taken as much as they could and the British didn't help that either. And, uh, his palace was just in a bad shape. He was looking for somebody who could clean up the whole thing, set it up properly, and, uh, after much searching, they found Mrs. Hansen. She was willing to go and assist to clean up everything and set it up properly so that it would function as a palace. That's how she was invited and worked with the emperor until 1974 when he was removed from power.

Adu Worku:

Uh, the Hansens were, uh, were impact players. I understand and I met Mrs. Hansen here. I did not know them in Ethiopia. Um...but a lot of high ranking government officials sent their school to Akaki where Mr. Hansen was principal. And I understand when he died, all those former students who had now occupied high offices in their government, closed shop and showed up for his funeral.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Absolutely correct. Mr. Hansen was liked and appreciated by his students very, very much. You know, in Amharic, you have two terms where you address people - the polite form and the ordinary. All missionaries are used, are, are, are, called by the ordinary form, except Hansen. With Hansen, all the new students and all others, they use this polite form for him. ??? [VTS_02_4.VOB 4:21] They had a very high regard for him. And a very good educator, and a very Godly man at the same time. Many, many of the, uh, government officials in the early days of the Ethio-, of Ethiopia after the Italians were driven out, were his students. Many of them. Not only at the time of his death, but even before he died, they had a special celebration for him. I remember a picture of all his students and he sitting in the middle of them, taken from that occasion. No, I tell you, he has contributed a lot for the development of Ethiopia by training those young people. They were the only ones, Ethiopia in those days didn't have many educated people. Had very few educated people. And those few came from Akaki, most of them.

Adu Worku: Our school

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Yes, our school. Seventh-day Adventist School. And, uh, the Minister of Education was educated from there. And the man who was uh, um, after the fall of ??? [VTS_02_4.VOB 5:32] who was appointed as Prime Minister was educated from there. ??? (name) [VTS_02_4.VOB 5:36]. An Akaki graduate. Uh, so Akaki has contributed a great deal for the development of Ethiopia. In many areas, in many aspects of its development.

Adu Worku:

I'd like to add my own, uh, uh, appreciation to, to this record about the contribution of missionaries. I wouldn't be here. I would not be here if it weren't for missionaries. In my case, American missionaries. And, th-, the pioneers who lived like us, who ate what our people ate, who slept on dirt floors, who traveled on foot for hundreds of miles, not just a few miles, and established all these institutions, we are indeed in their debt. Um, so, we just want to enter that into the record. Since this is a conversation, I'm going to be free to jump around. There's an interesting historical piece about the Sabbath. Isn't it true

that Ethiopia was only a Sabbath-keeping country until the beginning of the 16th Century, maybe, when Sunday was added? And since you are an historian, I think that would be of interest to enter that into this conversation record.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Ok, well, I'll come back to that, but before I do that, let me go back to where we were about the missionaries. As you were speaking, a thought came to my mind. You know, it is sometimes unwise to mention names, because in doing so, you give credit to some, you don't give to the others. Because there were others, many, many others besides the ones I mentioned. And so, when I started naming, uh, some persons, I was taking a risk of being blamed - others would be disappointed, but, in general let me say, all the missionaries I knew who came to Ethiopia, were men and women who were prepared to make the sacrifice. They have sacrificed lives, talents, time, money. For instance, Mr. Hansen died there, we mentioned, but Mrs. Thudi ??? [VTS_02_4.VOB 8:20] was killed by the Italians while she was working in the hospital in Addis? [VTS_02_4.VOB 8:25]. She died right there. By a stray bullet. She gave her life. Her husband had to carry her dead body back home. And, the Gensen? [VTS_02_4.VOB 8:39] family lost two of their children in one week while they were establishing the work in Ethiopia in Gimbi? [VTS_02_4.VOB 8:47]. And what is sad is that the father was not there at the mission station when the children died. He was out in the bush, trying to evangelize. And there was no communication to reach him. No telephone, nothing. A runner had to be sent. And this runner had to go way back in the bush and tell him that his two children had died. That is a sacrifice!

Adu Worku: And the Saunders

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Eh, Saunders, that's right.

Adu Worku: They also lost uh...

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

They lost one of their girls in Gimbi and her grave is still there. The mother had written on the uh, tombstone, the gravestone, she says, "The, the, the, flower was picked here to blossom in heaven." That was the thing she had written on there.

Adu Worku: On the tombstone

Truneh Wolde Selassie: On the tombstone. So there are many who have sacrificed a lot, in general, I would say, "God bless them, and we appreciate every one of them."

Adu Worku: Now let's go back to the Sabbath issue.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: So, the question about the Sabbath, is when...?

Adu Worku:

Ethiopia was a Sabbath keeping country, (**Truneh Wolde Selassie:** yes) is my understanding. There is some Jewish connection (**Truneh Wolde Selassie:** yes) and all that. And of course, when we read Acts chapter 7 (**Truneh Wolde Selassie:** yes) in the Bible, it says and Ethiopian official went to Jerusalem to

worship God. (**Truneh Wolde Selassie:** yes) We know Ethiopia was not a Christian country then, so it must be the Jewish God Yahweh that he went to worship. The record also says that he became a Christian on his way back. So, um, was it up to the 16th century Ethiopia was only once uh, uh, became Christian, I believe the Sabbath-keeping goes back even before Ethiopia became a Christian, but even after Ethiopia became Christian around 340 AD or so, the Sabbath was the only day of worship Ethiopia kept, observed. (**Truneh Wolde Selassie:** Mmm hmmm.) How did that change?

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Well, uh, this is, uh, uh, important, very important question. Uh, you know, as you have hinted already, Ethiopia had connections with the Jewish State, Israel, many years back. Even before the birth of Christ. And before Ethiopia became a Christian, I think it had to do with the connection, uh or, the visit of the Queen of Sheba to the courts of Solomon. And, following that, according to Ethiopian tradition, the Ark of the Covenant came to Ethiopia, and those Jews, who came to Ethiopia, were, of course, Sabbath keepers. True Sabbath keepers, so before Christianity came to Ethiopia, Judaism was in Ethiopia. And those who had accepted their faith were Sabbath keepers. And this was followed by the gentlemen you had mentioned around 34 AD, the Ethiopian eunuch, who had been worshipping in Jerusalem, who was met by uh, Philip, and was baptized...when he came back home. Although the Bible doesn't tell us, but history mentions, that he came back home and the palace accepted his belief and they were Christians. They became Christians. That was it. And then, in the 4th century, because of those two boys from Syria who had a ship wreck at the Red Sea, again they were rescued by the Ethiopians, they were brought to the palace and, in those days, the Sabbath was kept also. This is the second instance, uh, the third instance when Sabbath keepers came to Ethiopia. And so, from the beginning, Ethiopians as Jews were Sabbath keepers, and when they accepted Christianity, the Sabbath was still maintained, although they accepted Christ, but the Sabbath wasn't changed. They were still Sabbath keepers. But then, the Muslim religion came. And Ethiopia was cut off from Europe and from the rest of the world. Like the historian Gibon?? [VTS_02_4.VOB 13:46] says, Ethiopia slept nearly a thousand years, forgetting the world, by which she was forgotten. So all the communication. In the 12th century, again, when connection was established between Ethiopia and the outside world, the Christian world, especially the Coptic Christians from whom the bishops of Ethiopia used to come from Alexandria. They were originally...

Adu Worku: In Egypt.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

In Egypt, yeah. They were from Egypt, always. But because of this, uh, break of communication, unable to come, Ethiopia was without any priests...any bishops from Alexandria for a very long, long time. But in the 12th century, yet came the first one. And when he came, he found the people of Ethiopia worshipping on Sabbath, keeping the Sabbath. And he said to them, now, you are out of step. The Christian world doesn't keep Sunday anymore.

Adu Worku: Saturday.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Sunday, uh, Sunday. I mean Saturday, yes, sorry. Doesn't keep Saturday, but Sunday. This happened

because you were cut off. Didn't have any connection. But now I'm coming here and I'm telling you this is what the rest of the world does and is what it must be. Keep Sunday, not Saturday. And, ??? (name) [VTS_02_4.VOB 15:13], a man by the name of ??? from the Coptic Church says to him, "Okay, but then, show us from the Bible that Saturday is changed to Sunday and we will follow." And this man says, "I'm telling you it's not from the Bible. I'm telling you what they teach in the street, what the general church is teaching." "But," he says, "no, but that's not good enough. To tell me that because the people in Cairo are keeping Sunday, we should also keep Sunday here. That's not good enough. That doesn't have any authority, that statement. What I would like to see is show it to me from the Bible that Saturday is changed to Sunday and we'll accept it." Of course they were stunned, no proof. And so there was a fight between this Egyptian bishop and the Ethiopian Christians. So much, so finally they the thing was reported to Zerionco?? [VTS_02_4.VOB 16:18], the king. This problem was reported to him. And Zerionco?? says, "Let us give you, let us compromise, it's a compromise. The compromise is this. Those of you who would like to keep Sunday, keep Sunday. And those of you who would like to keep Saturday, you are free to keep Saturday. And others, who would like to keep both, you are free to do so." But, the bishop was not happy. The Egyptian bishop. He wanted him to rule saying that it is only Sunday you should keep. And so, refusing...I mean, without accepting the suggestion for the Emperor, this, uh, Egyptian priest was so tough and mean, persecuting these Christians, flogging them even, putting them in jail, for keeping Saturday. It's terrible. So, this man runs away, the leader, runs away, from Ethiopia, comes to Cairo to report to the high priest here, ??? (name) [VTS_02_4.VOB 17:31], what had happened. He came and reported. And the Egyptian head of the Orthodox Church says to him, "You should agree with your leaders back home. I cannot give you any different ruling. What I advise you is to go back. Just accept what has been suggested." And the man says, "NO! I will not go back to Ethiopia. I will die in Jerusalem. And instead of going to Ethiopia, I am going to go to the holy land. That's the end. I will not live in Ethiopia where people are forced to keep Sunday instead of Saturday. I will not go back to Ethiopia and live slaved, having lost my freedom. I will stay." And he stayed there. And that is how the Sabbath was preserved. So the majority of the Christians chose to keep both days. That's why if you go today to Degrai, (names of cities)?? [VTS_02_4.VOB 18:43] they all keep both days. They keep Saturday, they keep Sunday.

Adu Worku:

A compromise. Now let's go back to the history of our Adventist Church. It has been about 100 years, a few more, a few more years than 100, but about 100 years. During these 100 years, what would you say are the significant contributions that the Adventist Church has made to Ethiopia in general.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

The Adventist Church has impact Ethiopia in many ways. But there are three, I think, that are outstanding. Three areas through which the missionaries, and later on, even the natives with the missionaries, the Adventist Church in Ethiopia has impacted the nation of Ethiopia. I think number 1 would be education. Uh...when the missionaries came, they came with the message of Jesus Christ – with the mission of Jesus Christ. The mission of Jesus Christ had 3 aspects – learning, healing, preaching. Teaching, preaching, healing. These were the three aspects. This is what Jesus did. And this is what the missionaries came to do. And every station that they have established in Ethiopia, right beginning from

Eritrea at the beginning, they had their mission compound, a small clinic, a farm, and a school. These three were there. And later on, when they moved to the Debre Tabor, again, in Debre Tabor, they had hospital, a school, and the gospel preaching. One after the other, all the others we can repeat the same thing. You go to Dessie, that's what you find, ... (village names?) [VTS_02_4.VOB 21:35] everywhere they went, they had these three aspects of the mission going on at the same time. Therefore, you are asking me in which area did they impact the nation the most. And I think I will say education comes first. Because the country was in need of schools. There were no schools in Ethiopia. When the Italians left, there were not schools. The Italians established few schools for their own people, but as far as Ethiopian schools were concerned, there were no schools. Akaki [VTS_02_4.VOB 22:21] was the first school in Ethiopia after the Italian invasion. Did you know that?

Adu Worku: Hmm

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

That's the first school. All the other government schools came later, after Akaki. And we can say the same, Akaki started first and then followed Debre Tabor, the other mission school, Gimbi, Kuyera, ??? [VTS_02_4.VOB 22:42]. So, education, education, education. The land was ready, the people were ready, the people of Ethiopia were very, very anxious to get education. Before the invasion of the Italians, education was not a big deal in Ethiopia. Nobody cared for it. But, after the Italians, our people found out that they invaded us and subjected us simply because they had better educated soldiers, better educated workers, and so our people opened their eyes and they were hungering and thirsting for education. And the Seventh-day Adventist Church was there to meet that need. And so, uh, as I mentioned earlier on, many of the workers in Ethiopia in government offices as well as private places were mission educated. There were many of them. Akaki educated, Kuyera educated, ??? [VTS_02_4.VOB 23:52] educated, and so on and so forth. Many of them. And to this very day, all those educated in the mission schools, even if they are not members of the Church, have a very positive attitude toward Adventist Education. They have a high regard, very high regard for Adventist Education. So the missionaries, with the natives, have done a marvelous job in educating Ethiopia. So Ethiopia has played a very major role as far as education is concerned. I can say with conviction, I can say without any hesitation, that Ethiopian Adventist Education stands out. High, very high. The second area, the second aspect where the mission made impact, is in health. In the health area.

Adu Worku: Mmm...hmm

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

When they established the Dessie mission, the Dessie mission, the number 1 project was this is a ??? [VTS_02_4.VOB 24:54] hospital. That was in 1928. And when that hospital was established, there was no any health institution in the whole province. Nothing! That's the only one. I wish you would have read the testimonies of the journalists who were there in Ethiopia at the time of the Italian invasion. And read what they have written about the Dessie Seventh-day Adventist Hospital. They had, they had, they have nothing but the highest admiration for the doctors, nurses, and everybody who connected with the hospital there. They said that was a timely established institution, a God-sent institution; which was half way between Addis and the [END VTS_02_4.VOB] war. Soldiers going to the front, and soldiers coming

back wounded, they were in that hospital. There were 40 journalists recording these events. In fact, the story says they had changed their views about missions and missionaries after they saw what Dr. Studing [VTS_02_5.VOB 00:27] and the other doctors were doing for the unfortunate people of Ethiopia at that very time. It's not only Dessie, but they had also established very fine hospital in Debre Tabor. That hospital was there all by itself, serving that whole province for 40 years. No other hospital in that area. No government hospitals, no other mission hospitals, only the Seventh-day Adventist Hospital. And imagine, the whole province being served by one hospital. Again, I admire the doctors and all others who were working with them - their willingness to work around the clock. When the war was going on, there was nobody to replace them. They kept on. They kept working and working and working. The Debre Tabor hospital has a unique feature in it that is, people in the area who had goiters, were coming to Dr. Orgamic ? [VTS_02_5.VOB 1:47] and he had no special training about goiters.

Adu Worku: The goiters is the swelling in the...

Truneh Wolde Selassie: The swelling in the neck.

Adu Worku: The neck, ok.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Lack of iodine in their water. People were suffering - literally suffering. He operated on 200 people with goiters.

Adu Worku: Wow!

Truneh Wolde Selassie: And they all came out alive. That's good.

Adu Worku: No loss.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: No loss. And he was respected; he was loved for what he did for the people around there.

Adu Worku: Mmm

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

So, the Debre Tabor Hospital will never be forgotten. It will always be remembered as a mission hospital that was doing good to a people who were absolutely helpless. That's the second one. The third one is Gimbi Adventist Hospital. It was eh started in 1925 as a clinic. And when the Italians came, they took it away from us. And after the Italians were driven out, Dr. Steen came all the way from Ethiopia, from America, to re-open that facility. And wonder of wonders, there has never been any other hospital in Gimbi until just recently. All these years, it was only the Seventh-day Adventist's hospital. Even if you don't know any Seventh-day Adventists, if you just mention the name Gimbi Hospital, "oh," they say, "this is Adventist." Gimbi Hospital, Adventist. Just recently, the Ethiopian government has established another hospital in the town of Gimbi. But all these years, from 1925 up to here, it was only the Seventh-day Adventist Hospital. And the other hospital was Flora Zewditu (?) Memorial Seventh-day Adventist Hospital. This hospital was given to us, actually. It was not built by us. It was the government that built it in memory of empress Zewditu. And they had made arrangements with the Swiss

government to operate it. And the Swiss government had initially agreed to operate it. And they had brought in the finest Swiss equipment, hospital equipment and had filled every room of it. But towards the end, before they started work, there was a disagreement between the Ethiopian government and the Swiss government and the Swiss government withdrew its offer, said, no, we cannot. We will leave all this equipment here for you and all your people.... ?? [VTS_02_5.VOB 4:49]...so they withdrew. But then, uh... the mission president then, Sorensen, ? [VTS_02_5.VOB 5:00] Sorensen, had a meeting with the emperor of Ethiopia at that very time and they were talking about the Seventh-day Adventist work around the world. And, uh, Sorensen says to him, "We don't only operate schools, but we have many hospitals all over the world. And uh, we are interested in the health work." And the emperor says, "I know about it. You have established Dessie, for which I am very happy, but would like you also to start something in Addis? [VTS_02_5.VOB 5:35], but Sorensen says, "Well, we are usually interested in the rural areas where there is no help. Where the people are absolutely helpless. That's what we are interested in." Then the emperor say, "That's good, that's fine, but you should be also interested in the people of the cities as well." And so he says, "Here is a hospital for you, brand new hospital, built, equipped, why don't you take it and operate it?" Just like that. Immediately, Sorensen accepted the offer, sent a message to the General Conference. General Conference representatives came, they accepted the offer, they asked for doctors from Loma Linda and Dr. Bergman was willing to come to Ethiopia to help establish, started the Zewditu Hospital.

Adu Worku: So, Dr. Sorensen is another impact player as a missionary.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

He was the leader of the mission field for many years. And so, the Filwoha ? [VTS_02_5.VOB 6:43] Hospital did to the city of Addis what the Dessie Hospital, the Gimbi Hospital and the Debre Tabor Hospital did for the, for the rural people. Here in Addiz, all the members of the Impirial family used to come there to get treated and to deliver babies. And so the Seventh-day Adventist work became famous because of these hospitals and the impression that people had of the Seventh-day Adventist work in Ethiopia was really very much colored by what the hospitals, the health institutions, did.

Adu Worku: And the educational institutions as well.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Yes, educational, which I had mentioned already, and this is the second place.

Adu Worku: You know, just, sorry to interrupt, but, uh, apparently, and and you can uh, verify if this is true. Uh, a young man attended our boarding academy at Akaki, not an Adventist, and became a high ranking official in charge of land management and all, uh, something related to that in Bahir Dar, and he sought out the Adventist leaders in the Northwest field and said, "I will give you land if you build a school like Akaki, like the one I attended."

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Uh huh.

Adu Worku: Is that true?

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Uhhh...well, I have not heard about this, but uh, I believe it is true because we have got the land.

Adu Worku: Yeah

Truneh Wolde Selassie: That's the proof of it.

Adu Worku: Atwalena ? [VTS_02_5.VOB 8:27] was the one who told me about it.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Yeah, I, I, I believe it. Because it's a large piece of land that they had given to the Church in Bahir Dar - 31,000 square feet.

Adu Worku: Almost eight um, acres.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Square meters, square meter.

Adu Worku: Yeah.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Yeah.

Adu Worku: Uh, in American uh, uh, system, about 8 uh...

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Hectars

Adu Worku: Hec...uh, no, uh, acres

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Acres

Adu Worku: Acres would call it.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Okay, well, that's what they..

Adu Worku: Yeah, it's a large piece of land.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

But, I know that the government people in uh, Bahir Dar have been in favor of our work being established in Bahir Dar. They were the ones who gave us the land to build a church and they were the ones who gave us this piece of land to building a school. And the school is built now. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmmm.) I was there for the opening. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmmm.) And, uh, that's very true.

Adu Worku:

We were fortunate, were really fortunate to have you as the elder statesman of the Church in Ethiopia, an historian who is interested in the record of the work the people who, who created and sacrificed, uh, for the work and all that, and um, I have two of your books in my hand. There is this one, the first of its kind, and it's in English - "Adventism in Ethiopia: The Incredible Saga of the Beginning and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventist Work in Ethiopia" Now this one here is in Amharic, uh, the national language, and it's about that uh, Chez Zacharias [VTS_02_5.VOB 10:10] um, that we talked about. Now, um,

writing books is no easy task. Especially a history book, uh, of a movement in a country. So, what, uh, what motivated you to, to write this book, especially the history book, and how, how did you get the materials for it?

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Okay, Adu, I will come back to it, but, before I answer that question, there is one point left out from the previous question...

Adu Worku: Okay.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: And I'd like add it.

Adu Worku: Sure.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Uh, the impact to Seventh-day Adventist mission or Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ethiopia, I have pointed out the educational impact, the medical impact. But the last one I wanted to mention was the evangelistic impact. Uh, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ethiopia has established mission work in the North, in the West, in the Center, in the South, and in the East; all over the country. And God has blessed the evangelistic work in Ethiopia. It's growing very fast and it is bringing members into the Church in a quite large number. Uhh, there are about 200,000 members right now in Ethiopia, but more, what impacts me more than the number is the kind of life they lead. After accepting the Gospel, a cleaner life, a healthier life, a longer life, a happier life. So, the Gospel is bringing blessings to Ethiopia in three different ways, is what I would really like to mention.

Now going back to your uh, other question, the question you just asked me, about my books. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) And uh, what inspired me to write them and how I did my research, find the material to write, and so on. To begin with, why did I write? I'm not really a writer by profession. It is just out of my own desire, of my own wish, and uh, great urge within myself to write about the Seventh-day Adventist Work in Ethiopia. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.)

Why, why did I get this, where did I get this? You know, I read. I, I am very, very interested in reading. I am a very good reader, I think. I keep on reading (**Adu Worku:** I know, I know you are.) and reading and reading. Yeah, I like to read. And when I read, I read about mission developments in other countries. How the mission work was started in different parts of Africa and the World and how it developed. And this is there, it's documented, it's written. And I looked back to the history of the Church in Ethiopia about 100 years and there is nothing, so to speak.

Adu Worku: In the record.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

In the record about the history of the work. Oh yes, there was a book by Hanson the title of the book was "For God and the Emperor." That was about his impression when he came to Ethiopia - a first hand impression - and then his wife working in the palace, and that's all about it. And there was another one by Thorpenburg, "Africa has my heart." Thorpenburg's book is better than Hansen's book. At least it tells you when the work in Asmara was started, in Addis, in Quera, and so on and so forth - it tells you the

people who started it. That part of it was helpful. But, apart from that, I searched and searched and searched in vain. I couldn't find any systematically recorded history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. And I said to myself, why? Why? God has been working in this country for 100, almost 100 years and He has done so much for us, and there is nobody to record it? Why? Because, if this history is written down and recorded, it will be useful for researchers, it will be useful for the following generations, it will be inspirational even for the present generation to work harder. A Church like the Seventh-day Adventist Church, worldwide known, having lived in this country, worked in this country for so many years and no history book. So I started thinking. I said, "Instead of simply criticizing others for not writing, why don't I try myself? Do my best. That's all what's required." So I started thinking. I started writing, but the problem is, no primary sources for this history. I looked and looked and looked and couldn't find. The best thing I could find was the minutes in the Ethiopian Union. And there are no minutes during the Italian period. There were some minutes before the Italian and the after the Italians, there was. There was uh, in fact a well-kept, uh, systematically kept, record of decisions made. But that tells you only uh, new decisions or uh, changing old decisions, uh, and the minutes doesn't tell you really the history of the work as such. What was the next best solution for me? The next to the best is to find people who were here when the work started. Who are still alive. I searched for those people. I found an old man by the name of ??? Artur Deressa [VTS_02_5.VOB 16:44] from Gimbi who was living in Addis, and he was with the missionary Jensen when they established the Gimbi station. In fact, he was the man instrument for most of the government work uh, done in behalf of the mission. And so, I tried to get him. It wasn't easy to get him. And he was not altogether willing either. He had some complaints about the mission, so he didn't want me to get all the story properly, but I had to be very wise in talking to him. And, uh, I had to gently talk around the topic and then uh, inspired him a little bit, and then uh, I said to him, "Well, you have done a good job. You know, if it were not for you, maybe Gimbi hospital would not be established. You have done a marvelous job." So, why...how do you understand ??? [VTS_02_5.VOB 17:47]? And so, little by little, he opened up. And I got first time information about Gimbi. How it was started. In fact, not only Gimbi, he went back. ??? [VTS_02_5.VOB 17:58] back. They didn't start in Gimbi, but they started in a place called Domi ? [VTS_02_5.VOB 18:03]. Some, about 20 or 25 kilometers away from Gimbi. That's where they started. But they found that the place was infested with malaria. And their carpenter died right there. So the rest of them had to leave Domi and come to Gimbi. And this man was very helpful in that respect. Got some information from him. But fortunately, uh, as far as the North, Northeast was concerned, I am right from that area. I know all the Ethiopians who were there from the beginning - the pioneers. But the most interesting source of information I found was Alec...? Name [18:49]. He was my source of my information about Aleca Zacharias (?) and he was also my best source of information about the Seventh-, the beginning of the Seventh-day Adventist work in Northwest Ethiopia. So, I ...he was only one. But there were many others, also. For different questions, I had to find different people (**Adu Worku**: Mmm hmmm) around. And write down because they were there when the thing was started. So, this is what I do. Go around from place to place, from village to village, even the very places where the mission work was started and get the information from there. And, uh, after this, what I found very helpful was a bunch of notes prepared by uh, Manuel Sorensen.

Adu Worku: He was an historian.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: He was, sir, he's...

Adu Worku: And that did help.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Yes, sir, he is an historian. And he has written the best of all the missionaries I have, have uh, uh, contacted or have known about. He's the one who wrote the best. The others, they came to the place, they were urgently needed, they were so busy going to working and they did a good job. But they did not have time to write, it seems to me. They didn't write. Men like, um, Dr. Stedeen [VTS_02_5.VOB 20:21] who lost his wife there, worked during the time of the Italians. Marvelous job. Men like Dr. Anderson, Merlin Anderson [VTS_02_5.VOB 20:28]. A very Godly man. Who came right back after the Italian were driven out. All these men have their wonderful work, but they did not write it. So, what did I do? I found these notes were helpful from Sorensen and I took as much information as possible from those notes. That I found very helpful. So, Adu, more or less, those were my sources of information, my research - going from place to place, from one person to another, asking them, and, uh, soliciting their cooperation. And many of them were willing. They were more than willing to cooperate and I had to do it that way.

Adu Worku:

Now, you told me in a previous conversation that, uh, the Ethiopian Institute of, uhm, Ethiopian Studies ...

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Oh, Institute of Ethiopian Studies... (**Adu Worku:** Institute of Ethiopian Studies...uh...)

Adu Worku: Uh...(**Truneh Wolde Selassie:** Yes.) you had some materials from journalists, was it?

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Oh, yes, oh yes. That was particularly so about Chez Zacharias. (**Adu Worku:** I see, ok.) When I was writing about Chez Zacharias, I found firsthand information from that library. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) Institute of Ethiopian Studies. There we find many, many primary sources written by different individuals about topics that concern Ethiopia. But I didn't find anything about the Seventh-day Adventist mission work in the Ethiopian Studies Institute, what I found was about Aleca Zacharias. I found information written by a man who was there at the court in Emperor Menorek's ? [VTS_02_5.VOB 22:27] court when Chez Zacharias appeared before the emperor, when he presented his case twice. And he has written even the day, the hour, the minute he was conducted. I wa... rejoiced. I rejoiced and rejoiced and rejoiced when I found that information. So, so good. So that was very, very helpful in that area. But you know, as far as the uh, the other mission work is concerned, the information I got from *you* which you collected for *me*, from this library, from PUC, I wish... (**Adu Worku:** You wish you had...) I wish I had that before I wrote my book. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm.) There is a lot there. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm.) That should have been included in my book. You see, I didn't have any chance to come to PUC and do my research. Neither did I have any money or chance to go to Washington D. C. to the General Conference office to do my research. Maybe that's what I should have done. Maybe that's what somebody should have sponsored me to do. Go to Europe, the division office, our division office, to the

General Conference, or to Loma Linda, or to PUC here, and do my research here. I would have found a *lot* of information. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm.) But I had not the chance. I did what I did with what I could find locally.

Adu Worku:

And, and, just for the record, um, this is, this was not sponsored by the Church or any organization. This was a labor of love and, and uh, you paid for everything...time, money, and uh, and all that. And we are, we are in your debt. Uh, we want you to know. Um, I have a personal question.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Yeah, that's true. Uh, uh, just one sentence or two on what you said. When I was doing my research and my writing of this book, I didn't do it during the day time. Because in the office during the day, you cannot write anything. People come and go. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm.) You cannot just settle down and write something productive. You don't do that. So, what did I do? I have to get up early in the morning, 4 o'clock was a good time. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm.) Get up at 4 o'clock, go to the office, and write. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm.) I didn't have even my breakfast. It was my good wife, who was working in the hospital, which was not far away from the Union office, used to come to me about 7:00-7:30 with my breakfast. (**Adu Worku:** Wow.) So, that's, uh, (**Adu Worku:** Wow.) the way I wrote it. Go ahead with your next question.

Adu Worku:

The question I have is, um, many Ethiopian, educated Ethiopian Adventists that you and I have known left Church work. Some of them even left the Church all together. But you stayed – steadfastly I might add – in spite of challenges, frustrations, and [END VTS_02_5.VOB] in your administrative responsibilities a-, and so on. What made the difference for you to stay? (**Truneh Wolde Selassie:** Mmm...mmm) Why'd you stick around?

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Well, Adu, as you have said, there was a temptation of leaving God's work and working elsewhere. There was a time when I was seriously thinking about this. Then I had to come back to myself. And I said to myself, "How am I going to live with myself if I do that? If I leave the Lord's work and work elsewhere? Will I really have peace of mind? Will I really have satisfaction? Will I really feel accomplishment by doing that?" That was, that one thing that kept coming to my mind. Coupled with that, I always kept in my mind what my father has said when I was just a young boy. He said, "I have given my boy to the Lord." That's what he announced in the Church. They used to say that in those days. Many parents. "I have given, I have dedicated my child to the Lord." That was a statement they made with a sincere heart, with a really meaning. And I have known, I have known this all the time. And I said to myself, "If I leave the Lord's work, I will be breaking my father's covenant with God. That will be sin against me." And then these texts in Matthew 16:26 kept on coming to my mind. "Strengthen my hands. What charity profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Now that's a question. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm.) And that question was what's on my mind. I said, "What will I gain if I go? I may get more money, more salary, but that doesn't mean much (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm.) in terms of being happy, (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm.) in terms of feeling productive." Because

of all these things, all the temptations that were coming to me from inside as well outside the Church, I could resist under the help of God. I said to myself, "No. No way. I must stay in the Lord's house. I must stay in the Lord's service. I must be about my Father's business. Yes, all these temptations are coming to me just because there is a devil. And the devil is fighting me. And I should not be defeated. I should defeat the devil." Therefore, I kept on saying to myself, "Stay here!" I stayed here. And the longer I stayed, I enjoyed it the more. And the more I saw the product of my work, fellows like yourself, my, uh, some of my students are doing now. I felt this is worth going through the problem. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm.) It is worth saying "no" to this world and saying "yes" to Jesus Christ. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm.) And that's what I did.

Adu Worku: Thank you. That's wonderful. You have dedicated uh, a lot of your, your personal and professional life to the cause of young people - as an educator, as an evangelist, as an administrator. It is becoming increasingly difficult in the Western world, and in the United States in particular, where I live now, to keep young people in the Church. How is it in Ethiopia? Do you have any advice as to what may work, may not work, might transfer, I know we are worlds apart, but probably there are some common interests among young people and what works in one area may work in another. What are your views on this?

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Well, to begin with, let me tell you. I love young people.

Adu Worku: And I know they love you back.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Thank you. That's right. I hate to say it, but I'm glad you said it. They love me, I love them. I really have faith and confidence in young people. Even the small ones when they come to my school, I have a respect. Looking at the child, I say to myself, "someday, this small boy or this girl, will be somebody great." There may be a scientist, a medical doctor, a historian, an administrator in this child. And I've always kept that in my mind in my days as teacher and administrator. I always thought that what I'm doing today would walk and talk tomorrow. What I am doing today will be the future of Ethiopia. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm.) The whole country depends on the, on its young people. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm.) Therefore, I have a very, agree... very... love and respect for young people. This is one. Two, what might be helpful is this: I always have felt that I must make these young people feel that this work we are doing for God is their work. Belongs to them. It's not belong to the missionaries. The missionaries, God bless them, they came here, they started the work, and we are still called Seventh-day Adventist Mission, but this is Ethiopia, Ethiopia belongs to the Ethiopians and you young people, you are the leaders of tomorrow. You are the preachers, the doctors, the nurses, administrators of tomorrow. And I usually, wherever I get the chance, I give them that message. And I believe that many of them believed in me and accepted this challenge and took a challenge upon themselves and have become workers. I believe this is another secret to make our young people feel that the belo... work belongs to them. It's not, it doesn't belong to somebody else. It doesn't belong to the President of the Union, or the departmental men. No, it is our church. Everybody's church, especially the young people who are the leaders of tomorrow. If you in-, uh, inculcate this idea in their minds, young people would be willing

to take that challenge. And this I think, we can recommend this wholeheartedly. Every Church, every Seventh-day Adventist Church should try to make their young people feel that the Church belongs to them; the future belongs to them. They should make them feel that they are ... without them, the Church is dying. The Church will die. They're very true (?) [VTS_02_6.VOB 8:38]. In countries where the young people are not involved in the work, is what you see. You see only older people in the Church. And when the older people die, the Church is closed. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm.) Why? Because there are no young people to take their places. And so, uh, in Ethiopia at the moment, I'm very happy to say, that the young people are on fire for the Lord. They really are. You know, usually, in the Church, it is the parson who plans the spiritual program, the religious program for the Church, mostly. But in Ethiopia and Addis it is our ... ? [VTS_02_6.VOB 9:16] the pastor supervises, but it's the young people who plan the spiritual program for the Church. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm.) Once a month, they always have a day of fasting and prayer. And they encourage all of us, even older ones, not to miss it. We go there, I never miss a chance whenever I am there because the program they prepare is so attractive; is rich, is full. Once you try it, you don't want to stay away from it. So these young people feel this is their Church, they prepare a *very good* program.

Adu Worku: So, involvement is the key, it sounds like.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Absolutely! Absolutely! Involvement! Not only after they have graduated from the college, no! Right from elementary school days, when they are young. Help them to be a part of the Church. Help them to take part in the activities of the Church. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm.) Help them feel that this is their church. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm. Mmm hmmm.) If we succeed in doing that, the Church will continue to grow. It will not die. It will expand.

Adu Worku:

So involvement in the sense of ownership. (**Truneh Wolde Selassie:** Yes.) Very, very important, um, concept. I'm going to jump to uh, to history, Ethiopian history that, uh, has impacted - political history in particular - that has impacted your life, the life of the nation, and the life of the Adventist Church. You have lived through three successive Ethiopian governments. Emperor Gov... Haile Selassie's government, [VTS_02_6.VOB 11:07] Mengistu Haile Mariam's Communist government, and the current government. You have seen it all. And you have witnessed, witnessed its impact. Tell us about...about that.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Yeah, Adventism under these different governments. Adventism under Emperor Haile Selassie, Adventism under Derg, and Adventism under the present government. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm.) Uh, Adventism at the time of the emperor had a very good chance of making impacts - had real good freedom. As far as the Southern (?), the Western, and the Southeast part of the country so concerned, they had freedom to go anyplace, anywhere there. To preach, establish schools, clinics, and so on; they were welcome in many ways, particularly establish new schools and health facilities. In that, the government was very, very cooperative. I'm glad you asked this question because there is something I forgot, came to my mind. When we built the Dessie Adventist Mission Shcoo... uh, Hospital, the land was given free and the money for building it was given by the government. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm) The

Seventh-day Adventist Church did not put a penny into the building expenses of that building. It is the Ethiopian government, the Emperor, gave the money. Not only that, when the Debre Tabor Hospital was built, he gave 30,000 Maria Theresa? [VTS_02_6.VOB 12:59] dollars for the building of that hospital. And Araz Caza? [VTS_02_6.VOB 13:06] gave 20,000 Maria Theresa? dollars for the building of that. So under the Emperor, the Seventh-day Adventist eh, work was really appreciated, welcomed, because there was a big need. There was educational need, a crying ?? [VTS_02_6.VOB 13:26] need, there was medical need, and here came these missionaries offering both, and the government accep- ...accepted that with open hands. The only problem we had at the time of the Emperor as a Church is that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was not happy with us. They didn't like us.

Adu Worku: And it was the state church at the time.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: And it was a state church.

Adu Worku: Mmm, hmmm.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

And many of these persecutions in Begimda ? [VTS_02_6.VOB 13:56] were inspired mostly by the Coptic Christians. They feel that we are Catholics. And the Catholics were the ones who came to Ethiopia in the sixteenth century and uh, converted Susinias, the Emperor, and the country became, under decree, a Catholic country, and the church, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, refused to accept it. And because of that, there was a civil war between the government and the churches. Many thousands lost their lives. And so they feel that missionaries are just like that.

Adu Worku: Every missionary is a Catholic.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Every missionary is a Catholic. They call us wateric wateric ? [VTS_02_6.VOB 14:36] (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm.) To them we are Catholics. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm.) We are causes for disunity (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm.) as far as they are concerned. Therefore, they had a reserve about us. In fact, whenever they got a chance, they wanted to just wipe us out. That was the only problem we had. Other than that, the government was friendly and helpful in many ways and progress was being made. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm.) Now come to the time of the Derg. Time of the Derg was...

Adu Worku: The time of the Communists.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Yes, that's the time of the Communists. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm, hmmm.) A terrible time. A very bad time. I don't want even to mention it and to go back and think about it. No freedom whatsoever. No freedom for speaking, no freedom for preaching, no freedom for writing. Everything was communistic. You have to speak like communists. You have to live like communists. You have to work, act like communists. That was a terrible time. They nationalized many of our churches. We had four hospitals in Ethiopia, three of them were taken away from us; they were nationalized by the Derg. Even some of our schools were taken away from us. So, what love can I have for this government? What is my recollection, my memory

of the government, of the Derg government of 17 years? This was very harsh, t'was very dark, cooled manneurs ?[VTS_02_6.VOB 16:14]. I have nothing good to say because I have nothing good I know about them. It was a bad time. Difficult time. Now coming back to the third regime, the government we are having now, the present government. There is one thing I can say. In Ethiopia today, state and church are separated. Government, unless there is a real, real need, unless there is a big danger, government does not involve itself in the affairs of churches. A church minds its own business and the state minds its own business, but when there are dangers in the churches, either churches or mosques, when there are problems, the government doesn't just fold its hands and look on. No. They intervene. Preserve lives, keep peace, keep order. And uh, now we can preach in the streets, we can preach in the football stadium, we can preach in the churches, in the countryside, anywhere, now there is that freedom. So this is what I've witnessed under the different governments about our work.

Adu Worku:

Mmm, hmmm. I have a more personal question. Um... you are in your early 80's. You retired 18 years ago. You're not paid for all your efforts that it, it looks and sounds like you are busier than you were when you were tied down with a specific job, assignment, either as an administrator or a teacher in a location and all that. You travel widely, both in the country and overseas. You officiate on weddings and funerals. You uh, conduct evangelistic meetings and I can go on and on. Now, I'm chronologically considerably younger than you. I'm not sure I could keep up that kind of ... that kind of busy schedule. I want to know, and I am sure many people would want to know, what your secret is. You're physically fit, you're mentally alert, you have high energy, and, and all that. So, you know, what, what contributes to this kind of robust life?

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Well, thank you for the complements. And, uh, as you have mentioned, this is not the first time people have asked me about this very questions. Uh, many times people have asked and I have uh, answered the question uh, the best I know how...and I put them this way. Number 1. I feel that, uh, I am blessed with good genes from my parents, (**Adu Worku:** Mmm.) particularly, I feel from my mother (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) because I know my father aged quickly, quickly, quickly. T'was not uh, uh, he did not reach my age. He died at the age of 63, but he was old by 63. My mother, on my mother's side, although she died early, but I know her brothers and her sister, they lived longer. And they didn't show any sign of uh, age uh, until very, very old. Very old age. So, it seems to me that uh, God has blessed me with uh, uh, good parents, what I have inherited from my mother's side particularly. This is what I feel. Secondly, I am blessed with a very strong faith, faith in God. I have faced many, many problems in my life, but I have learned to trust God. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) I always do my best to solve problems, but when I face problems that I cannot solve, I don't worry about them. I just give them over to the Lord, and said "Lord, I have done what I can, this is beyond me, here it is." I have learned to do that. And God has never failed me. To answer that kind of question whenever I have given him. So this trust in God gives me piece of mind. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) I can sleep well. Nothing disturbs me during the night. I, when I sleep, I sleep. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm.) No worries. I don't carry the worries of the day into the night. I believe my faith, my trust in the Lord is helping me a lot in that respect to stay younger and stronger. Thirdly, God has blessed me with a very good wife. She's a nurse and a midwife. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm

hmm.) She knows how to prepare food. She knows how to run a house clean. Our house is always clean. Our food is clean. It's well prepared. And she knows what I like. (**Adu Worku:** Hmm.) And I, that has helped me a lot. When I had operation in Loma Linda, lung cancer, I have to take radiation treatment, chemotherapy. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) I have seen people who started taking chemotherapy, but who could not manage - had to stop. But my body was so strong, that it didn't affect much. I was able to go through it and I came out all right. So I have a strong body because I lead a good life. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) This is my third reason. And fourth reason I believe, is exercise. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) I walk every day about 5 miles a day. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) I, there was not a day that passes by without walking. I have to walk. Go out for walking. Adding ? [VTS_02_6.VOB 23:36] exercise is very good. Exercise every part of my body. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) Keep on walking and walking and walking. That's good. And this exercise helps me stay younger and stronger. But finally, as the body requires exercise, so does the mind. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) I exercise my mind every day. Never a day passes for me without reading from the Bible. I read my Bible every day. I read my Sabbath School [lesson] faithfully – whether I'm teaching or not teaching. It doesn't matter. I study for myself. Besides the Bible, I read other books as well. I love history. I love biography. I read those, very faithfully. And this helps me keep younger and let me tell you, Adu, maybe you already have proved it, and others can prove it. Reading the mi...reading the Bible keeps your mind sharp. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm.) There is, I believe, some power that comes to anyone who reads the Bible, through the Word that comes to the mind of the reader. There is power in it. And those who read the Bible faithfully, will remain for a long time with a clear mind, like S.H.M. [H.M.S.] Richards, the founder of the Voice of Prophecy. Remember? (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) He died at the age of 92, and he died with a clean mind. See? (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) And I can mention many others like him. As the body requires exercise, so does the mind. If the mind is exercised, the body is exercised, and they are well fed, you have trust in God, then ??? [VTS_02_6.VOB 25:47] about the genes we inherit from our par... who have ... [END VTS_02_6.VOB] no say on that. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) Uh, it's the right person who is born from parents who have a good set of genes. But that, we cannot do anything about. But about the others we can do something. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) That will keep us younger.

Adu Worku: Thank you. There is a song, one of my favorites, "There is pow'r, pow'r..."

Truneh Wolde Selassie: "Wonder working pow'r..."

Adu Worku: Yeah.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: "In the blood! Precious blood of the lamb." (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) Absolutely, correct.

Adu Worku: Now you told me, you know, I just remembered conversation we had about one of your neighbors, because, through you, he knows many of our Adventist people. Apparently, he attends funerals, Adventist funerals, and picked up on something very important, uh, saying, "How is it when I come to funerals in your community, the dead are 80, 90, 100, and we bury our young? What makes the difference?" This is basically what you told him. Uh...

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

That's right, exactly! I remember the name of the man, A...? Verati? [VTS_02_7.VOB 1:13]. He was a minister, government minister under the Derg. And he's a good friend of ours - very good friend. So whenever relatives of ours die, he comes to the funeral. And when he asked about them, it's just that you have [1:28] said now, this man died uh, 89, 90, 92, 95, 96, even 100. And then he had been wondering about for a while, he said, "Now, tell me pastor what is the secret?" And I told him what I told you now. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) That's why. And what I didn't tell you now, but I told him, was another... one more point, which I will mention. That is...the Seventh-day Adventist in Ethiopia believe in education. Every Seventh-day Adventist, every Seventh-day Ad eh, Ethiopian Seventh-day Adventist teaches his children. There is no one who doesn't teach his children. Even the poor woman, a single mother, does anything possible for her to educate her children. And those children whom the parents educated, going through ?? [VTS_02_7.VOB 2:25] difficulties, now are educated, they are coming back, they are adding good positions, they are helping their parents, those who were in the countryside now go to the cities where they have medical facilities, where they live a cleaner life. They are like you, yourself. You are a living testimony, you brought your parents from Magdamoch? [VTS_02_7.VOB 2:44], from Tattras [VTS_02_7.VOB 2:45], to Debre Tabor. They were living in a modern house, they were getting good food, (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) they were having clean house, and there was a hospital there. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) So they lived more than 80. How old was your father when he died?

Adu Worku: My father died at 93 and my mother at 95.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: There you are! That's the proof of what I am saying here.

Adu Worku: Mmm hmm.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: That's why.

Adu Worku:

Yeah. Thank you. We are getting to the end of our conversation. I have thoroughly enjoyed it. But I have a couple more questions to go. With all your successes, and all your achievements, and there are many, your life has not been without challenges. You have experienced life threatening situations, losses, near misses, and all that. You have kept your faith, you're still going strong. Tell us about those, those, uh...you already told us about the early death of your mother, (**Truneh Wolde Selassie:** Mmm hmm.) but there was an interesting story when you were a shepherd that you encountered. Start there and just tell us what happened that could have snuffed your life out.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Yes, Adu, my village life as a shepherd boy, I had to go out to the mountains, to the jungles, looking after cattle. On a particular occasion.... You know, I used to go to school in the morning and go to the farm in the afternoon. Father told me that the cows, the goats, the sheep were out, the mules, on the mountain. I went for search. I found all of them except the mules, which I couldn't find. And after searching for a while, I could see them from a distance. And the sun was setting. It was getting dark and I was running to reach those mules. And when I reached the mules and started driving them homeward, these mules started galloping, running and I was following from behind. And all in a sudden I heard a

roaring. And I was standing there, and I saw a leopard coming out from the jungle, frightened by these horses, by the mules jumping, running around I think. The mules ran away, the leopard was between me and the mules. I, I could see him! He was standing there, and looking at me. I really was frightened! I didn't know what to say. The only thing that I did was I just lowered my head and I offered a simple prayer. I said, "God, save my life today." That's all. When I looked up, this leopard returned back, the direction he came from. I, instead of following the mules, and going that way, I went back the other way, the opposite direction. And I took another tour, up

Adu Worku: Wrong detour.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

A detour, and came back home safely. That's one incident where I saw the hand of God saving me. The second one was in the village where I was born, not far from the village is the river Tika? [6:08] - the Tika river, (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) you know, (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) where you have detoured school today. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) That's a big river. Especially at the beginning of the year - New Year time. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) All the young people went to the river to swim. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) I had never swam before that time. And I followed these young people, I went to this river. And these young people, most of them are older than me. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) They took off their clothes and they jumped into the river. I saw them jumping in - swimming. And I thought it was something to do. I took off my clothes and I jumped in.

Adu Worku: And you didn't know how to swim.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

I didn't know how to swim. I had never been in the water of that kind before, never. The next thing I found out was I was drowning. Water in my mouth, water in my nose. I was fighting for dear life. There was one man who recognized that I was drowning. Had been swimming and he was outside the river - was lying there, and he saw me from a distance. He jumped in, he sa... rescued my life. Alto Wolde Gooday? [VTS_02_7.VOB 7:10], that was his name. That was the second life threatening situation from which God saved me. Third, I had many car accidents. The first one when I was a student in Debre Tabor. The car accident was caused simply because the driver didn't know how to drive a truck. He was driving against the fence, barbed wire fence. And he was hitting one of the poles, and that pole was breaking, and as the pole was breaking, on this side was the truck, on this side was the fence, barbed wire fence, I was in the middle. I was caught. If you see here, my side, you see a big mark here. And that was scar, scratched and bruised by the wire... and when the wire broke, he kept on driving and there was a big eucalyptus tree and I hit my head against the eucalyptus tree and fell I down. For three days I was unconscious. I was in the Debre Tabor hospital. I was a student there. After three days, I woke up and I found out where I was. But nothing lasting, nothing bad happened to me that was lasting. This was the second one. The third one, I was driving from Adu Savaba [8:38] to Akaki, about 20 km distance. And I was, as I was driving, I saw at the place called Galite??? [VTS_02_7.VOB 8:47], I saw many people standing.

Adu Worku: Now this was during the communist era.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: The communist era.

Adu Worku: Mmm hmm.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

And then when I saw these people, I looked round and I saw two of our teachers from the school who were on the bus. The bus was broken down. Was standing there and the people were without any transport. So, I said to these teachers, "Get up on the back." I had uh, the school's pick-up. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) In the front, there were two ladies next to me and the back was empty. I told the teachers to get up, and others also who were on the truck. And as I was driving, not very far, I heard them banging on the top of the uh, car. Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! I stopped. When I stopped, two men came on this side [gestures on his left] with revolvers in their hands. One of them leveled his revolver against my head, just like that. And I could see that he had his finger on the trigger and he was going to pull it. And I thought that was the end. And these ladies who were sitting next to me, they were shouting, they said, "Why?! Why?! Why?!" eh, they don't tell them why. But then he said, "Get out." I got out from the car. He said, "Go ahead!" I was walking. And as I was walking, the day students of my school, who were living in that area, came running. Lots of them! They came and they surrounded these two men, who were taking me away. They said, "Why do you do that? He's our principal. He's the principal of our school. The principal of our school. Why do you do that?" And that man re..., seemed to recognize something at that moment and he took back his revolver and put it inside here and just walked away. Two of them. They walked away.

Adu Worku: Did you find out why they did that?

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

I didn't find out why, why they did it, but I was really surprised. So the following morning, I went to the office, the local government office. I said, I told them what happened. Already they had known what had happened. And the man told me, Mr. Truneh, it's just one thing that saved your life yesterday. When these two men came to you, if you had removed your hands from the steering wheel, they would have shot and killed you. But because your hand was still there, they felt that you didn't have any revolver. Apparently, they were waiting for somebody who was supposed to be against the revolution, against the communist government, they were watching for that man. And they thought that's me.

Adu Worku: So this was a case of mistaken identity.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: They mistaken me!

Adu Worku: [clicks tongue]

Truneh Wolde Selassie: They were really going to shoot me.

Adu Worku: Wooow!

Truneh Wolde Selassie: And, that's how God saved my life.

Adu Worku: Whoof!

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

And there are many, but let me teh..., mention at least one more. It was 1989. I was here visiting my children. And I felt pain over here [rubs left arm]. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) One of my daughters, who is a medical doctor, she called her sister and said, "Take him to the hospital immediately!" She thought there must be some problem with my heart. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) They took me to the hospital, to Stanford, (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) where my daughter is working. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) There, they x-rayed my heart and uh, they saw my heart was okay - was no problem. But then, the radiologist said, "There is something on your lung."

Adu Worku: Lung?

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Yes.

Adu Worku: Mmm hmm.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Not your heart, but is something on your lung. And he told me how big it is in centimeters. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) And it's a tumor. And, uh, then my daughter asked the hospital, I had, I had no insurance, (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) and she asked if they could be, if I could be taken care of. They said, "No, he doesn't have any insurance." (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) But my daughter, the medical doctor, who is a graduate of Loma Linda, had some of the people there in the hos... in Loma Linda, who were her friends, told them about it. And they said, send him to Loma Linda. We'll do free. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) I went to Loma Linda...Dr. Azuk, who is the department chair, (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) the thoracic surgery, (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) was my doctor. They removed the tumor from my left lung, they took half of my lung out, (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) they told me it's third degree cancer. And my chance of survival for many years was very limited - even for 5 years - to live for 5 years. Very small percentage, I don't know what it was, a chance.

Adu Worku: And how long has it been?

Truneh Wolde Selassie: It has been now more than 15 years.

Adu Worku: Mmm hmm.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Since that happened.

Adu Worku: Mmm hmm.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

And it was these, during these last 15 years I wrote my three books and also the fourth book, translated Doug Bachelor's book. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) It was during these three months, three uh, 15 years I conducted so many evangelistic efforts in this country, in Europe, London, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Ethiopia - different parts. God has been with me and He has extended my life...

Adu Worku: For a reason.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: For a reason, for a mission. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) I, I ... this is how I feel. (**Adu Worku:** Yeah. Mmm hmm.) And I praise him for it.

Adu Worku: Amen! Um, I want to take you back to an earlier event. And that is the destruction and the ransacking of the Adventist Community in Gubda in 19- uh, forty...

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Thirty-eight, Ethiopian ?? [VTS_02_7.VOB 15:16], forty-five, (**Adu Worku:** ...forty-five) forty-six...

Adu Worku: About 14... 1945, June of 1945.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: That's right , yes.

Adu Worku:

You were out in the field, on the farm and you came home at night as we often did - those of us who were farm boys. (**Truneh Wolde Selassie:** Mmm Mmm.) You didn't know what was going on. What actually happened? When was the first time you were aware that all was not well?

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Huh, difficult to say when. Because as soon as we reached the village uh, Tumorlah, uh, ???'s [VTS_02_7.VOB 15:52] brother (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) was with me, (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) when we were not right in the village, but some distance from the village, we heard a lot of sound, commotion, (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.), people were crying, screaming, and uh, we don't know what was. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) So we left our oxen, our farming implements somewhere, there. And we went to the village. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) And when we were got to the village, both of us were arrested immediately.

Adu Worku: You were grabbed.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Yeah, we were grabbed. They arrested us.

Adu Worku: Mmm hmm.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

The other man had a gun with him. They arrested his gun, they took his gun, arrested him, and me also. And we didn't know what was going on. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) That's what we saw. Who is doing it, why they are doing it, we didn't know. And the next thing I found out was that, um, there was shooting going on - a lot of shooting. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) I didn't know who was doing the shooting. And then it was raining, started raining.

Adu Worku: The beginning of the rainy season.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Yes, (**Adu Worku:** Wow.) and I couldn't get to my home. I stayed outside ... ??? [VTS_02_7.VOB 17:01] all

night. In the morning when I woke up, there were these men who came here...who came to invade us, they were taking all the things we had in the house. Everything we had in the house was taken – including the grain we had in the house. Our food, our clothes, whatever implements we had, every tool was taken out. And then they started taking all the cattle, the mules, the goats, the cows. Everything was taken. The last thing they did was burn down all the houses. There was not a single house left. It is after that I found out that these were people who were invading us because they were against our religion and they were told that we are rich, we have plenty, clothes supplied by the mission, ??? [VTS_02_7.VOB 18:01] money bup...sup... by the mission, and these people were interested in ??? [there is skipping in the sound at this point to 18:11].

Adu Worku: Now for the record, the government got involved and there was some restitutions.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Yes. That's right. The government, his majesty heard about it and immediately ordered a governor of ?? [VTS_02_7.VOB 18:26] to look into it, into the matter and correct everything that needs to be corrected. The army was sent out (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) to the camp.

Adu Worku: The perpetrators were arrested...

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Arrested.

Adu Worku: Arrested and, and uh,...

Truneh Wolde Selassie: That's correct? [VTS_02_7.VOB 18:38] they were arrested and (**Adu Worku:** Executed.) two of them were hanged.

Adu Worku: Mmm hmm.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: They were executed, two of the leaders (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) were executed. And the others ha... who had taken our cattle, they had to return to us cattle for cattle, head for head. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) They did. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.)

Adu Worku: So there, there was a good ending to it...

Truneh Wolde Selassie: That's correct.

Adu Worku: ...as it were.

Conclusion: [VTS_02_7.VOB 19:00]

Adu Worku: We have uh, reached the end point. I have one more, um, point of interest. All the things that you have been and you have done, you would be the first one to admit, wasn't...were not done alone. There were some sacrifices shared by the family, eh, or other things I'm sure that provided the support. You've already mentioned the role your wife has played in writing the books, but uh, there are

other also, so, I'm going to give you the time now to uh, to pay your um, uh, respect, gratitude, uh, in fact, I will give you bragging rights, even. I think you have a right to brag about the fam-, the kind of family you have. So, the time is yours. I'd like to say, "Welcome." I'd like to say "Thank you for giving us this time." You have come a long way to, to make this possible. I feel honored to be part of it. This is a record, I am sure that many will benefit from. So, the rest of the time is yours.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Thank you very much, Adu, for giving me this time. For three minutes, four minutes, maybe, to brag about my family. My support. Um, I'll try to be brief. You are absolutely right. I have not been able to do what I have done if not for my wife. She stood with me, stood behind me in the thick and in the thin. She has a very good mind. God has given her a very analytical mind. Whenever I [a] faced problem, she's my counselor. She's my advisor. There was a time when we had a problem in the Church in Ethiopia, Adu, ??? [VTS_02_7.VOB 21:20], the president of the General Conference, this was a very nasty letter I wrote, because the situation was nasty. And he came all the way to Ethiopia and did nothing for us. And I wasn't happy with him. But after I finished writing, I read it to her, and [she] said, "Don't send it."

Adu Worku: (laughs)

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

I said, "Why? I have spent so much time preparing the letter and it has a message in it." And she said, "No," she said, "Don't. I'm telling you don't send it. It's not right for you to do that." I accepted her advice. I tore it to pieces because blaming somebody, or really telling somebody the wrong he has done, may have a reaction to which we weren't born. It's good to know want to be building, ?? [22:10] it won't be teaching, that's her advice. This I mentioned as an example, but there were many, many times and many occasions who, when the situation was so bad that I have benefitted from her advice and her willing sacrifice in many ways.

And then my children, from the oldest to the youngest. There are four of them. They are wonderful children. They are, I wish, my oldest could understand Amharic, because I have composed a poem about each one of them (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) which is descriptive. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) Very descriptive. The oldest one is just like, mother like. She looks, people tell me, who know my mother, she looks like my mother. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) And her behavior is just like mother. For her sisters and her brother, she will always was protecting - a guardian for them. So I watched her and I said, "[something in Amharic]." [23:21 to 23:27] (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) I think you can translate the way you like: (**Adu Worku:** {laughs} I lost...) "I lost my mother when I was just a ba-, a small boy, but I have found her love after I became 30." That's B?? [23:37], the first daughter.

The second daughter is a very clever girl, but helpful. She would like to help people, she has this gift of talking to...if you meet, if you meet her for the first time, in five minutes you'll be friend with her. She has that ability. Talk to people and gain their confidence. And about her also, another poem ?? [24:03].

The third daughter is very clever, clever girl. And uh, when she graduated at Oakwood, she graduated with honors.

Adu Worku: Mmm hmm. She's smart.

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

Smart. And as a foreigner, for a foreigner to come here and uh, graduate with honors, it is not an easy thing, but she did. And I felt overjoyed. I said, "something in Amharic [END VTS_02_7.VOB 24:29]" (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) And uh, medical doctor also

Adu Worku: Translation.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Yeah, translation, yeah.

Adu Worku: Translation.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Translation. Ha!

Adu Worku: You made us proud...

Truneh Wolde Selassie:

You are always serious and always purposeful, and now this, because you are successful, the whole family is proud of your work. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) That's the gist of it. And the other one, uh, I am, time is against me, so I cannot mention all the...but, she also graduated with honors from Loma Linda

Adu Worku: The Medical doctor

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Yes, the medical doctor. And I was proud of her and all that she did. And so, but my only complaint with her, my family was...had only 3 girls and 1 boy. I was wishing that there would be two boys and two girls. (**Adu Worku:** [laughing]) But only one boy. (**Adu Worku:** [laughing]) And so, I, I, I, said about her, "???" [END VTS_02_7.VOB 25:28]" which means, I had only one boy and I was looking for a second boy, and when Altrune ?[25:38] replaced my wish for a second boy, she has become a boy, a brother to my son. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) And, uh, the last one Ampachew – gentleman. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) Very gifted. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) Gifted with his brain, with his hands. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) [END VTS_02_7.VOB 25:45] A wonderful man. And, uh, what I said about Ampachew, uh, "Ampachew ... ?" [VTS_02_8.VOB 00:04] (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) Ampachew was born at the last but he has become the crown of the family, (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) the pride of the family. (**Adu Worku:** Mmm hmm.) So God has blessed me with a good wife and wonderful children and I thank Him for that.

Adu Worku: Mmm hmm. Amen. Again, I thank you. And this concludes our conversation, wonderful conversation. God bless.

Truneh Wolde Selassie: Thank you very much Adu. God bless you. I admire you, I respect you, I love you.

Adu Worku: Thank you, I love you, too.

Photo Montage

Truneh's birth village (Feres Meda) and Birth Village of Ethiopian Adventism – NW Ethiopia

Truneh as a young man (2 photos) – unlabeled

Ethiopian Adventist Training School, Kuyera

Truneh's First Year of Teaching at Debre Tabre

While at Avondale Truneh was chosen to be the representative international student for Rotary International.

Photos of Truneh (5 photos) – unlabeled

Ordained to the Gospel Ministry, 1969

Avondale 30-year Class Reunion where Truneh was one of the guest speakers

Sister Lekemyelesh

Married, September 1963

Elder Truneh Wolde Selassie and wife Sister Lekemyelesh Kassa

Truneh and children Wayneab, Eden, Hirut

Truneh with his family: Hirut, Eden, Lekemyelesh, Wayneab, and Ampachew

Hirut, a registered nurse and Dad

Dad – Hirut – Mom

Dad and Wayneab, a medical doctor

Dad and Eden, a business woman

Eden and Jeremy

Tigist and Ambachew, engineer

The Grand Family

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