

Being a Heavenly Tribal Messiah in the Middle East - Invisible Mission & Sacrifice

Middle Eastern Heavenly Tribal Messiah
September 2020



An anonymous member whom True Parents sent to a Middle Eastern country as a national messiah submitted this touching testimony. When the national messiah providence began in 1996, True Parents chose eligible people -- Korean and Japanese leaders with more than thirty years' public mission experience and mature Western members with the longest, most pertinent frontline church experience. More than twenty years later, in 2018, Macky Sall, president of Senegal, invited True Mother to his predominately Muslim nation. Looking back at that day of great victory, we cannot help but salute all the arduous efforts and the devotion of the first missionaries and national messiahs.

I went to the Chung Pyung forty-day workshop for national messiahship together with another brother from the city where I was the city leader. I had had many experiences over the years, and I had a spiritual vision when I joined that led me to think that my ultimate destiny was Nigeria. However, the brother from my city confided to me before going to Korea that he would find it extremely hard to accept a Muslim country if one came up. At that point, I had a fleeting sense in my heart that I would have to be "sacrificing" Africa in some way. At the lottery in Chung Pyung I received my country, which is in the Middle East, and that brother got Nigeria. I could feel the hand of God at work.

Other experiences convinced me that the country I received was one that figured in my destiny. A professor from the seminary had been visiting the city where I lived just before the forty days in Korea, and when he heard about the national messiah providence, he advised me that with all due respect for Muslims, living in a strict Muslim country would not be easy! In addition, my father worked all his life in the oil business but had constantly refused work in that part of the world. My grandfather, however, had served in the Middle East during the First World War. In fact the only photograph I have of him is on a camel in the desert.

Getting past the gate

Despite my country being extraordinarily difficult to enter, because of my education and work background I was able to find employment there quite quickly. My wife was five months pregnant with our third child, but the job was single status. Yet we both felt it was important that I go since the other national messiahs at that time could not enter.

I was going from quite an active church life to a place where I would be working and living together with people with whom even just talking about religion in general could be very risky. Risky in the sense that if you were heard by a colleague saying something that could be construed as critical of Islam or intended to convert Muslims to another faith, you could be deported that same day -- if you were lucky -- as actually happened to some people I knew while I was there. If you were unlucky you would face interrogation from the religious police before they deported you.

Environmental dangers

Among Western expatriates in general, there could be a lot of tension and a lot of backstabbing, since getting someone else in trouble could make your own job more secure. The attitudes of westerners towards my mission country were generally somewhat disparaging due to the strict way they interpret and enforce Islam there. Indeed, at the dinner table one day a colleague came out with the extraordinary statement that surely being in the Moonies could not be worse than being here! This stunned me; I struggled not to react too overtly -- but it was a clear sign that the spirit world was active around me.

My first forty days were ones of adjustment to this new kind of life in a place that is sometimes called the

largest open prison in the world, because on arrival your passport is taken away and permission to travel abroad outside contractual holidays is restricted. My work brought me into direct contact with many young people every day, and while this was very enlightening in helping me to understand their society, it was enormously stressful since they always wanted to get involved in religious, political or moral discussions that were not allowed within the work environment. Part of this is genuine curiosity about the West and Christianity, and part is simple youthful exuberance in the baiting of a westerner to get him into trouble.

Worries about home

At the end of the forty days, I had a dream that led me to be very worried about my wife. Arriving at work, I was so distracted that I walked into a wall and cut open my forehead. While I was getting my head patched up, a message came that my wife had been rushed to a hospital with life-threatening high blood pressure, had had an emergency cesarean birth two months prematurely and was quite ill. I asked for permission to return to my home country for a few days to help out, but the company was reluctant to give me permission. They had had the experience quite often in the past of people who had realized early on that here was not the place they wanted to be and had simply not returned using a contrived emergency leave.

Eventually I got permission and flew home for a few days. I will never forget the amazement of my colleagues when I returned as promised. Perhaps this was one of the reasons why, among all the expatriates who started around the time I went, I was the only one to get a name plaque with my name in both English and Arabic. I felt this was a small recognition from the spirit world of a forty-day foundation successfully laid. In a lonely environment like mine, small events like this can be very moving and inspire confidence that we are indeed working with unseen helpers.

So, instead of the weekly battle to prepare the Sunday sermon, prepare lectures and counsel members, my life centered around desperately trying to have a good attitude toward my colleagues, responding with some positive words whenever their country was criticized, and serving others as best I could. For example, even though I was a company designated driver, I tried not to hoard the car, as many of those designated a car did. Rather, I made myself available for trips at inconvenient times to the supermarket or for longer trips through the desert to local towns.

A greater burden on women

Working in such a country can take its toll on the whole family. Wives are generally unwilling to move there owing to the restrictions placed on them while there. (In public, even western women should be covered from the neck down in a black robe, though some -- American women in particular -- tended to feel secure enough to flout this in some areas. The native women, in addition to this, must also have their face veiled.) Fiancées or girlfriends will not get an entry visa. Women cannot drive. Moreover, if a woman is in the company of a male who is not her close relative, without the presence of her husband, it can be very awkward if the religious police should do a spot check. Indeed, my wife joined me for a short period, and she stayed in my room in a house that I shared with three other men. I realized only afterwards that if the religious police had seen her entering or leaving the house she would have been open to immorality charges and I would have been deported. So, many western men are divorced and those with fiancée or girlfriends at some point find themselves facing the dilemma of continuing to have well-paid work and lose the relationship or return home without job prospects and perhaps keep the relationship going. Of the twenty or so westerners where I was, only three of us had intact families.

The blessing in this environment

At the time of the 1997 Blessing Ceremony, I did a seven-day fast and confided in one other colleague that I was doing it. He was doubtful I would survive it; each morning he would ask ever more concerned how it was going. This was a man who used expletives every third word. At the end of the fast his reaction was obvious amazement (mixed with swear words). I never thought I would be grateful to hear expletives expressed towards something I was doing for the church!

Another colleague in the house had a cynical opinion about everything. I was a little worried about his reaction to seeing the Blessing Ceremony on television as problems seemed to come to anyone who said something bad about me or the Unification Church (the one who compared our church to my mission country, for example, was sent home after forty days when it transpired that he had so upset some of his colleagues that his safety could not be guaranteed).

However, miraculously, as soon as the report of the Blessing Ceremony came on TV, he went quiet and while I was praying he would not say anything too bad. He stayed silent for three minutes and after the report carried on with the conversation we were having before the TV report had aired. I liked this man a lot and was happy that he had been protected from possible heavenly retribution.

My mission country bans alcohol and customs and police roadblocks and patrols are unforgiving. So, at this point I should mention the dedication of the only blessed couple in the country, who were there for work and lived in another province, but who volunteered to bring some holy wine into the country among their baby possessions. This entailed not an inconsiderable risk, given that there are dogs specially trained to smell the smallest amount of alcohol. I transported the seed wine through two police roadblocks and eventually made holy juice.

To give some significance to the distribution, I tried to gear the conversation on each occasion to talk about family life and ideals in some way. Given that it is a male-dominated society, for a man to offer another a drink in a work environment is very unusual and inviting men back to your room can create all kinds of problems, so the seemingly simple task of giving out some holy grape juice was fraught with difficulties.

However, a colleague whom I had been avoiding contact with due to his volatile nature, saw the bottle of grape juice and actually asked if he could have some. Afterwards, he said it was very good.

A sources of great tension

Some of the more zealous younger citizens are very keen on witnessing to you so you need to be adept at having a basic dialogue but not let things go too far. At some point you may be confronted with a demand for an explanation as to why you cannot simply convert to Islam, the true religion. Once when I was the only Westerner traveling internally on my country's airline, an immensely tall sheikh, a Sean Connery look-alike, started to give a sermon in English about the benefits of Islam.

I was getting very worried because I felt at some point he might address me directly. As I was praying how to handle this, someone else interrupted and said that one should recite and speak of the Koran only in Arabic, not in English. The speaker duly obliged and continued in Arabic, somewhat defusing the situation -- and then, amazingly, the person next to him became spiritually possessed so he had to sit down to take care of the man who was probably a relative! I gave out the holy wine by carrying the seed bottle with me even up until I left the country the last time.

However, at the airport I had forgotten that I had it in my coat pocket and when I was heading towards the security check I heard a voice telling me to get rid of the bottle quickly. After disposing of the bottle, going through the security check I was asked to remove my coat and it was thoroughly checked.

Dealing with reluctance

I will be going back to my country again very soon, a place that is magical for me in many ways -- not least because (like other national messiahs) I feel the trust Heavenly Father and True Parents have that we will represent them, even if only in some small and seemingly unseen way as is my case. Much of my church life has been pioneer work, so while I have great hope that even my country can welcome True Parents substantially, I also understand that this may not be until some distant time.

To be honest I have mixed emotions, because I am almost completely cut off from other members and from my family until they join me in the months ahead. My opportunities to attend True Parents directly at holy days, in Jardim, or for True Parents' birthday, for example, are almost non-existent. I had visited countries under communist rule and knew some of our members in those countries. My present mission has opened up an appreciation of that aspect of our church history, as I feel I can understand a little more of what some of our underground missionaries went through for a much, much longer period.