

Obeid, Hamad Elias (1899 or 1890–1987)



Hamad Elias Obeid, pioneer literature evangelist, itinerant preacher



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Christopher Mark Hynum, MD, MPH (Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California, U.S.A.) retired in 2018. Prior to his retirement, he worked as a physician, physician supervisor, and as a chief medical officer. He spent two years as a college student at Middle East College, Beirut, Lebanon and five years in Saudi Arabia, working for an oil company. He now volunteer teaches in the Biology Department of Middle East University, Beirut, Lebanon.

Hamad Elias Obeid was a self-supporting literature evangelist and itinerant preacher in the Middle East during the early history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He preached the Advent message with zeal for over 50 years in people's homes, stores, and markets, laboring with both the common folks and high government officials.

Obeid was born in 1889 (or 1890) in Beit Obeid, Zgharta, North Lebanon. He completed two years of pre-college education at the American School in Tripoli but then transferred to the University of Hikmy (Sagesse University). Obeid intended to become a lawyer. However, in 1912, at the age of 22, he emigrated to Cuba to work in a family business. He stayed in Cuba for the next 20 years and married his first wife, Marian. They had two children.

It was in Cuba that Hamad Obeid became a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He was noted to be a persuasive speaker who spoke four languages (Arabic, French, Spanish, and Assyrian). The church leaders asked him to become a full-time salaried minister. Obeid declined, but he supported the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a lay member and literature evangelist for the rest of his life.¹

After his wife died in 1931 (or 1932), Obeid returned to Lebanon to share his faith with his compatriots and began colporteur work in the Middle East. Traveling to Jerusalem, Palestine, Obeid sold books and shared the Advent Message. In 10 weeks he placed 700 books throughout the city. He subsequently worked in Jordan, Egypt, Hejaz (now part of Saudi Arabia), Iraq, and Syria. During this time he met with King Abdullah of Jordan and

Hamad Elias Obeid

From Manoug H. Nazarian, *The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lebanon 1897-1997* (Beirut, Lebanon: East Mediterranean Field, 1999).

later the future kings, Faisal and Saud, of Saudi Arabia.²

In 1936, Obeid traveled with Pastor Shukry Nowfel (the first ordained Lebanese pastor) to Tartous, Syria. He was financially supported to take this trip by Mousa Al Baroudi in Beirut, Lebanon. They were introduced there to Hanneh (Jana) Srour, the sister of Mousa Al Baroudi's wife. After Bible studies, Pastor Shukry baptized Hanni Srour, an early convert in Western Syria. After assisting with the establishment of a church in Western Syria, Obeid returned in 1939 to Lebanon, where he lived for the rest of his life. He married again, and his second wife's name was Hanneh. They had seven children.³

From 1938 until February 1963, Obeid continued to travel throughout Lebanon, placing books and publications in homes and sharing the Adventist message. Despite the difficult conditions of World War II and subsequent unrest in the country, he was still able to work intermittently from 1941 to 1955 and afterward regularly until February 1963. Traveling all over Lebanon, Obeid was also known to be a friend of both Suleiman Franjeh, president of Lebanon (1970-1976), and Riad Solh, Lebanese prime minister (1946-1951).⁴

Hamad Elias Obeid passed away on April 21, 1987. He was 97 years old. The funeral service took place in the Bouchrieh Seventh-day Adventist Church in Beirut, Lebanon. He was buried in the Obeid Cemetery, Beit Obeid, in Zgharta, North Lebanon.⁵

SOURCES

Katrib, Gabriel and Melanie Wixwat. "Syria." *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, March 5, 2021. Accessed November 23, 2022. <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=9E01&highlight=syria>

Middle East Division Mid-Year Committee 1968 Minutes. Beirut, Lebanon, May 17, 1968. Accessed November 13, 2022. <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Minutes/MED/MED19680501.pdf>

Nazirian, Manoug H. *The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lebanon 1897-1997*. Beirut, Lebanon: East Mediterranean Field, 1999.

NOTES

1. Manoug H. Nazirian, *The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lebanon 1897-1997* (Beirut, Lebanon, East Mediterranean Field, 1999), 18.
2. Ibid.; Middle East Division Mid-Year Committee Minutes, Beirut, Lebanon, May 17, 1968, accessed November 13, 2022, <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Minutes/MED/MED19680501.pdf>.
3. Ibid.; Gabriel Katrib and Melanie Wixwat, "Syria," *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, March 5, 2021, accessed November 23, 2022, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=9E01&highlight=syria>.

4. Ibid. Middle East Division Mid-Year Committee Minutes, May 17, 1968.

5. Nazirian, 19.

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