

Nigri, Moyses

Salim (1914–2010)

THE BRAZILIAN WHITE CENTER – UNASP

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Moyses Salim Nigri, 1978.

Photo courtesy of Brazilian White Center - UNASP.

Moyses Salim Nigri was served as a pastor, administrator, and the first Latin American to be a vice-president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.¹

Early Years

Moyses Salim Nigri was born August 8, 1914, in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil² the son of Selim Mouscha Nigri³ and Erina Vieira Nigri, who also had a daughter named Malaquê.⁴ Although being born August 8,⁵ a Saturday, his parents did not register him until two days later, since his father was Jewish and wouldn't go to the registry office on a holy day. As the establishment did not open on Sundays, it was only possible to register him Monday,

August 10.⁶

Born in the city of Sidon, Lebanon, located in southern Beirut, Moysés' father moved to Brazil in 1911.⁷ He was part of the large wave of immigration that took place at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the early twentieth centuries. In 1872 a census conducted in Brazil found that Africans, Portuguese, and Germans formed the majority of the foreign population in the country. In addition, Italians comprised about 6,000 people. However, the immigration surge brought 32,000 immigrants to Brazil in 1887. Along with the 1888 *Lei Áurea* [Golden Law] sanction, the number increased to 92,000.⁸

The country's increasing urbanization required a free workforce to perform tasks that slaves couldn't do.⁹ It was in this context that many Middle Eastern Jews immigrated to Brazil, settling especially in Rio de Janeiro, which at that time was the nation's political and administrative center. There, in search of a more prosperous life, many Syrian and Lebanese entered the ranks of city's retail commerce and founded their own businesses.¹⁰

Moysés' father was part of this group that sought to find new life opportunities.¹¹ Selim had an entrepreneurial eye, and as soon as he reached Brazil, he opened a small tie factory. Because of the demand, it didn't take long before he realized that he had to expand production. He put an advertisement in the newspaper in search of a seamstress. Erina Vieira applied for the job.¹²

A native of Rio and Catholic, Erina was of Portuguese descent and had studied at the Rio de Janeiro French Nun School. She spoke fluent French, which helped in communicating with Selim, since he only spoke Arabic, Hebrew, and French. As the two of them worked by themselves, they fell in love and married April 16, 1913. In 1914, a year later, Moysés was born, and in 1916, Malaquê.¹³ The Nigri's family lived, along with some Lebanese relatives, in a townhouse located on Alfândega Street in Rio de Janeiro. The ground floor, once the tie factory, became the Nigri, Primos and Cia Fabric Store, a business organized by the father and other relatives.¹⁴

Cultural differences between Christianity and Judaism often caused conflicts in the Nigri family. In 1922, because of his grandfather's death, family history changed its course. According to Jewish tradition, Selim had to go to Middle East in order to take care of inheritance details. At first, the trip was supposed to last three months, but it ended up being three years, and, when he came back, he brought with him shocking news. As the firstborn, Selim became responsible for taking care of his mother and sister. In addition, on Selim's arrival in Lebanon, he learned about a marriage agreement made by his father, that required his son to marry a young woman previously selected to become his wife. Even knowing that Erina was a devout Catholic, and that she would never accept bigamy, he agreed to marry the girl.¹⁵

During the period that he was in Lebanon, Moysés' father only communicated with his mother through three letters, one a year. It was not an unusual thing since he was a man of few words. However, although his Jewish relatives in Brazil knew about the new marriage, Erina only learned about it when Selim returned, which caused their separation on September 6, 1924. Even though Selim claimed that he could provide for both families, Erina

decided to break up with him. Nevertheless, he assured her that they wouldn't lack a single thing, that he would provide education and clothing until Moysés and Malaquê both married.¹⁶ After that, though Erina met many suitors, she didn't marry a second time and never saw Selim again, who established a new family and had eight more children.¹⁷

The Family's Conversion

In 1925,¹⁸ afraid of spending all the money she had received from the divorce settlement, she decided to move to the city of Nilópolis, Rio de Janeiro—a place remote from the city's center, where the cost of living would be lower and had housing that matched her financial situation. After seeing one of the region's properties, Erina decided that she would buy and build her house there, which happened shortly afterward.¹⁹ Near her new house was a public water tap. One day, when Moysés and his mother approached it, they saw a man speaking about Jesus. As a Catholic, Erina understood that God loved her, but her marital separation and the hard times she was going through prompted her to ask the man, "If God is love, then why does he allow human suffering?" Joviniano de Oliveira was an Adventist literature evangelist. As he listened, he got a little surprised, since very few people would pay attention to what he was saying, and because he didn't have a convincing answer at the time.²⁰

But realizing that Erina needed a response, he asked for her address so that he could visit her later and discuss the matter. Since she was divorced, she was wary and didn't consider it appropriate to receive a strange man at home. Thus, she just pointed toward her house and told him that it was in that direction. A week later, Joviniano knocked at Moysés' house and offered her a magazine. Erina, though keeping it, requested that he never return. However, he eventually did return with another magazine. And since she had become interested in what she had read in the previous periodical, she then invited him in.²¹

The magazine dealt with such topics as Sabbath keeping and not eating unclean animals, and contained a few lessons about God's sanctuary. It caught her attention, given that they made her see similarities between Judaism and the new Christian religion the magazine presented.²² After talking a bit more with the literature evangelist, she learned that the Seventh-day Adventist Church published the periodical. Erina began to feel more comfortable about sharing the hardships they were going through and, thus, Joviniano started visiting them often, always bringing books and magazines.²³

Through time, Erina increasingly became convinced about the Adventist faith and started reading the Bible daily, along with a Bible studies book. As a result, she started connecting what she was learning with what she already knew about Catholicism and Judaism and decided to observe the Sabbath even though she had never attended an Adventist Church.²⁴

In 1926, Moysés and his family returned to the city of Rio de Janeiro, but Joviniano continued to visit them. Though he came by for years, the literature evangelist only invited them to an Adventist Church in 1932. Moysés

never discovered why it took so long, but on their first visit they felt greatly welcomed. Right at the front door they met Isaura Peixoto, a Bible instructor who promptly offered to study the Bible with them and answer the family's questions. He and his mother learned more about other Bible themes, such as the human condition in death. In addition, the church's hospitality motivated them to attend it not only on Sabbaths, but also on Sundays and Wednesdays.²⁵ On August 06, 1932, the family was baptized. Pastor Eli M. Davis, president of the Rio-Minas Gerais Mission, conducted the ceremony at the Méier Adventist Church in Rio de Janeiro.²⁶

Between 1928 and 1931,²⁷ Moysés studied at a boarding school called Brazilian Baptist College. Afterward, he attended a commercial college,²⁸ graduating in 1933 with a degree in business administration.²⁹ At first, Moysés thought that, in the future, he would take care of his father's business. But time went by and Selim Mouscha Nigri made no indication that he would be working with his son. Thus, the young man started to consider another job option³⁰ and, about the same time, Eli M. Davis told him that the Rio-Minas Gerais Mission needed an office assistant.³¹ After thinking about the offer, Nigri decided to accept it and, in 1934,³² he started working at the mission.³³

Studying at Brazil College and Engagement

Despite Pastor Rodolpho Belz's constant urging for him to study in an Adventist school,³⁴ Moysés' interest only emerged with the musical program that the Adventist College Graduates Association (ADCA) presented at the Rio Central Church in 1933. The group consisted of a team from the Brazil College (now referred to as UNASP-SP) of teachers and students, among them Domingos Peixoto, E. Dorner, Luiz Waldvogel, and Isolina Waldvogel. They played flutes, recited verses, and presented images of the college, inviting the youth to study at Adventist schools.³⁵

Although his sister Malaquê had already been studying there, Moysés knew that their financial condition wasn't in his favor. But, in September 1934, Pastor Davis invited him to travel with him to São Paulo to attend his daughter Enola's graduation.³⁶ Without a second thought, he gathered all his savings and went to Brazil College. There, the graduation ceremony, the environment, and especially a talk by a student Siegfried Julius Schwantes, captured his interest.³⁷ The experience so impressed him that he said to himself and to God, "If it were possible, he would like to study at the Brazil College and become a minister of God's Word, rather than sitting behind a counter, wrapping books, and typing the whole day."³⁸

After returning to Rio de Janeiro and resuming his daily work routine, Pastor Davis asked Moysés if he had any desire to study at Brazil College. Fairly amazed with the question, Moysés didn't flinch and answered positively, but also replied that it would be financially impossible given that he earned only 200*réis* per month, and needed to assist his mother with house expenses.³⁹ Then, after a few days, Davis mentioned the matter a second time, bringing news that the mission had voted on a financial plan that would pay him for one year of college. He would only have to afford the travel and book expenses. Moysés accepted the offer and left for Brazil College.⁴⁰

at the beginning of 1935.⁴¹

Arriving there, he put his things in the dormitory and went to enroll. Since he was an accountant with some experience, he presented his CV, having in mind finishing the theology program in only two years.⁴² At the time, Ellis R. Maas was the program's director, and he at first questioned the idea. After a small chat, though, he granted Moysés' request.⁴³ Later, after attending that year's graduation ceremony, listening to the appreciation speech, and taking part in the farewell party, Moysés changed his mind and decided to stay at the college for three years.⁴⁴

The first months were very hard on him, since he greatly missed his family and home in Rio de Janeiro. Many times, he considered leaving college and returning home.⁴⁵ In addition, the books were expensive, classes were long, and working in the garden was hard. As time passed, Moysés began adjusting to the boarding school's daily routine and, at the end of 1935, he was already used to it.⁴⁶

After the first school year, Moysés decided to sell books in Rio de Janeiro. Although being a merchant's son, he didn't inherit his father's entrepreneur talent, which made canvassing a great challenge. During those vacations, José Augusto Vallado saw his friend's hardships and offered his more promising territory to Moysés. Thanks to him, Nigri was able to earn the necessary amount for the college's 1936 tuition.⁴⁷ In the same year, Moysés became editor-in-chief⁴⁸ of the *O Colegial* [The College's Review], director of the Grupo dos Doze Apóstolos [Twelve Apostles Group] and of the Grupo dos Missionários Voluntários [Missionary Volunteers Group].⁴⁹ The *O Colegial* periodical had as its aim spreading the benefits of Adventist education to the Christian community⁵⁰ as well as recounting events at Brazil College.⁵¹ It was also in 1936 when he met his wife-to-be, Maria Alida Miss Baar.⁵²

Adventist boarding schools, though they encouraged theology students to get married before entering the ministry,⁵³ had strict rules about contact between boys and girls.⁵⁴ Besides placing male and female dormitories widely distant from each other and restricting the opposite gender from entering the other dormitory, the schools had many other regulations. They forbid any kind of physical contact, whether holding hands or hugging and kissing. During religious or cultural gatherings, boys and girls sat in different wings, separated by the central wing—an area reserved solely for teachers, employees, and relatives. Many times, the cafeteria and the classroom were the only places where people from the opposite sex could talk. However, even inside the cafeteria regulations decreed where the students could sit depending on their sex.⁵⁵

With all these regulations, Moysés faced many difficulties meeting Alida, who, besides working as the librarian, was also a world history teacher and dean of women. When he returned to college after canvassing, he found himself assigned to Alida's table at the cafeteria⁵⁶ and they started getting interested in one another. Discreetly, they gazed at each other and changed a few words without anyone on the table noticing the relationship that both craved. Six weeks later a rotation in the table assignments placed Moysés in another group. However, while they didn't want to stay apart from each other, at the same time he had to uphold Miss Baar's irreproachable

reputation as a dean.⁵⁷

One morning, without anyone knowing, they met at the central building staircase to talk about their feelings. After this encounter, they kept communicating through notes, which Moysés hid inside borrowed library books. Since Alida was the one in charge of loaning out the books, they were able to continue their relationship. But, as their interest in each other grew, their secret became impossible to keep. Eventually, everyone started commenting about their relationship.⁵⁸

Maria Alida Miss Baar had been born in Riga, Latvia, and had graduated at Friedensau Missionary College in Germany. Thus, she had an academic background, was a church employee, missionary,⁵⁹ and spoke many languages. Upon moving to Brazil, she became well known within the Adventist Church. Baffled, Moysés found himself facing many criticisms, mainly because of his social standing. Besides Alida being 10 years older than him, Moysés was a young man from Rio de Janeiro, a theology student who spoke only Portuguese, and was basically unknown within the church.⁶⁰ After learning about the situation, Moysés' mother also didn't approve the relationship, so, the couple thought of breaking up. Nevertheless, despite so many objections, some did support their relationship. For example, João Meier promoted Moysés as a dean assistant and was always encouraging the couple to continue dating.⁶¹

During his 1936 vacations, Moysés once again went canvassing. Concerned about his prospects, he realized the difficulties that he would have to face, even though he had succeeded during the previous vacations. Regardless, he knew that literature evangelism was like a "hard knocks school" that would shape his character to overcome hardships and to prepare him for a life as a pastor. Besides canvassing, he also began a kind of internship in the São Paulo Conference. At the invitation of Pastor Rodolpho W. Belz, he would preach and visit along with regional district pastors for two weeks.⁶²

Eager to meet Alida again, Moysés gave expression to his feelings through a few sonnets.⁶³ After returning to college, they soon got engaged. Though Sophie, Alida's mother, also didn't fully approve of their relationship, she was later willing to support them after a long talk. During their simple engagement ceremony, in which only Moysés, Alida, and Sophia were present, they were happy for the decision they were about to take despite the many hardships they might face.⁶⁴ At the end of 1936, Moysés graduated from the theology program at Brazil College and represented his class as its speaker.⁶⁵

Marriage and Ministry

On February 21, 1938, Moysés Salim Nigri and Alida Miss Baar married. Pastor Meier, who had always supported them, performed the ceremony.⁶⁶ Both ceremony and celebration took place on the Brazil College campus.⁶⁷ Together, Moysés and Maria Alida had four children: Rejane Erina, Elmano Moysés, Cássia Alida, and Hélivia Meryan.⁶⁸ On February 23, the couple boarded the German ship *General Ozório* at Santos harbor and three days later landed in northeast Brazil,⁶⁹ the site of his first assignment. In August 1938, after six months serving in

Recife,⁷⁰ leadership chose them to do mission work in João Pessoa and the surrounding area in the state of Paraíba.⁷¹

Nigri considered this change as a great challenge, for they were replacing Pastor José Rodrigues dos Passos, who had done an excellent job in baptizing 40 people during a series of meetings. In addition, Passos was also responsible for opening the first Seventh-Day Adventist Church in the city. Thus, Moysés' great fear was how to replace an experienced pastor. One of the ways he found of appearing a bit more mature and of looking more like Pastor Passos, was to grow his mustache. During the rest of his life, his mustache became one of his trademarks.⁷²

Moysés Nigri had difficulties planting new Adventist churches in the João Pessoa region. In Campina Grande, for example, he conducted his first series of evangelistic meetings. However, in addition to his lack of experience, many Catholic and Protestant churches prevented people from attending the sessions.⁷³ Despite this, the affection of those people influenced him greatly.⁷⁴ Northeastern culture impressed him every day, through its heroic, comic, and satirical folklore, as was the case of Lampião—a noteworthy and rebellious leader, who fought against social injustices.⁷⁵ Their two older children, Rejane Erina and Elmano Moysés were born in João Pessoa, the first December 6, 1938, and, the second, November 15, 1940.⁷⁶

Moysés assisted pastor and pioneer Jerônino G. Garcia in developing the Adventist Church in other states of the northeastern region besides Paraíba. Pastor Garcia believed that education was an excellent method of evangelizing, and with Moysés' assistance, he founded many schools in Recife, state of Pernambuco.⁷⁷ In addition, the Northeast Mission educational department sent many resources so that 1941 would set a record for the church there regarding the number of organized schools and enrolled students. By the middle of that year, seven schools had started, enrolling 150 children. One of the many teachers who came to take charge of the classrooms was Malaquê Nigri,⁷⁸ Moysés' sister, who in 1939 married Pastor Jairo Tavares de Araújo.⁷⁹

The state of Paraíba was one of the places where an Adventist school opened. A member of a small Adventist group from Baixa Verde arrived in the city of Recife. Baixa Verde was located in the Campina Grande region, state of Paraíba, which was part of Moysés' district. He requested Pastor Garcia to send an Adventist teacher to their area so that, besides teaching students during the week, he could assist in preaching for Sabbath worship services.⁸⁰ The school began shortly after and, although pastors Garcia and Moysés encountered persecution because of their Adventist faith, the SDA Church continued to develop in the region.⁸¹

During the beginning of 1941, the mission transferred Nigri to Recife, where he took over the Sabbath School, lay activities, volunteer missionary, and educational departments.⁸² Altogether, Moysés worked in Northeastern Brazil for four years before returning to the São Paulo Conference, where he became director of the Sabbath School and missionary work departments.⁸³

On December 17, 1941, their third child, Cássia Alida, was born as soon as they arrived in São Paulo. Shortly after the biennial conference meeting, Moysés assumed leadership of the educational, youth, and temperance

departments. He served in these areas until 1943, when he was appointed to be pastor of the São Paulo Central Church.⁸⁴ Before taking over the position, on February 27, 1943, administration ordained Moysés at Brazil College.⁸⁵

The next year, Nigri received a call to the Paraná-Santa Catarina Conference where, according to the conference vote, he would be the new president. Nevertheless, he didn't want to abandon his commitment to the São Paulo Central Church, having accepted the position only six months earlier. He made his decision after careful thought on the matter. Considering it unfair to leave the congregation only after a few months, he declined the invitation.⁸⁶ Later, on September 2, 1945, their last child was born--Hélvia Meryan.⁸⁷

In 1947 leadership chose Moysés to chair ADCA, the same body that had been responsible for fostering his interest in Adventist education in 1933.⁸⁸ At the end of 1949, through the encouragement of Walter Schubert, the South American Division ministerial secretary, Moysés attended the first extension course of what would become Andrews University held in the South American Division. It took place at the Uruguay Academy, Progreso, Uruguay.⁸⁹ The plan was to prepare and train Moysés so that he could better serve the church.⁹⁰ Moysés would pastor the São Paulo Central Church from 1943 to 1950.⁹¹

In 1950, the same call that he had refused six years before now came again. This time, Moysés accepted it and assumed the leadership of Paraná-Santa Catarina Conference, headquartered in the city of Curitiba.⁹² Although having already worked as director of different departments inside the church organization, it would be the first time that he would serve as an upper level administrator.⁹³ Thus, the continuing education course that he had done before had been of great value.⁹⁴

At the end of 1951, after two years as conference president, Moysés received a call to be president of the South Brazil Union Conference (USB). Among the many people nominated, he was the least experienced to replace Pastor Rodolpho Belz. Surprised, Moysés and Alida began to worry about the major responsibilities that they would have to carry.⁹⁵ Besides USB, he also chaired Brazil College's administrative board, a position he held for 11 years.⁹⁶ Interestingly, Moysés Nigri was the second Brazilian to lead the South Brazil Union Conference. At the time, the union comprised territory of what would now be the states of São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, Paraná, Mato Grosso, and Goiás. The states of Mato Grosso do Sul and Tocantins did not yet exist.⁹⁷

In 1962, the General Conference appointed Moysés as South American Division (SAD) executive secretary, headquarters located in Montevideo.⁹⁸ In the beginning, he struggled because of the Spanish language, mainly involving his sermons, but little by little he learned to speak it. During the eight years that he worked at SAD headquarters, the Inca Union Mission frequently invited him to preach in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador.⁹⁹

Vice-President of the General Conference (1970-1980)

On June 11, 1970, Moysés and Alida went to the United States for the fifty-first Seventh-Day Adventist Church General Conference Session in Atlantic City, New Jersey. As soon as they arrived, many told them that Moysés was one of the nominees for the position of a General Conference vice-president. At first, they didn't pay attention to such comments. However, denominational leadership now sought to internationalize the administrative positions of the GC. Thus, posts once held only by North Americans or native-English speakers, would now open to individuals from other countries. As Moysés walked through the corridors of the GC Session, he happened to bump into Robert H. Pierson, who told him that the commission was considering him as a potential vice-president. If Nigri wanted to accept the position, he would have to attend the nominations meeting Sunday morning.¹⁰⁰

Nigri found himself caught up in an emotional struggle during the whole intervening Sabbath. Early Sunday, he and his wife read a passage from the devotional book *Pensais nestas coisas* [Think ye on these things],¹⁰¹ which said: "From the depths of discouragement and dismay Job stands up in the heights of the implicit trust in God's mercy and saving power."¹⁰² Moved by it, Alida put her hands on his shoulders and said, "Come on, Pastor Pierson is waiting for us." Thus, for the first time in Seventh-day Adventist Church history, a South American became a GC vice-president at denominational headquarters in Takoma Park, Washington D.C.¹⁰³

After Moysés assumed the position of a GC vice-president, Pierson created the role of administrative vice-president.¹⁰⁴ The numerous meetings and commissions conducted at the world church headquarters required greater coordination. The GC had five vice-presidents who usually had responsibility for overseeing such meetings. Now, Pierson raised the number of vice-presidents to six.¹⁰⁵

In 1974, Duncan Eva, who had been East African Union executive secretary, assumed the new administrative position. But, because the job restricted him to his office desk, he asked for a replacement. Administration nominated Moysés for the position, and in 1975 the GC Session in Vienna, Austria, elected Nigri as world church administrative vice-president. Moysés served in the position for five years. His role involved guiding directors or secretaries in their respective jobs and developing solutions for the various issue and problems brought to the meetings.¹⁰⁶

Every year, the GC convenes a council to approve the SDA church's world budget, which also discusses the many requests from administrative regions. During the 1978 council, Pierson, along with his wife and doctors, suddenly announced his official retirement from the GC presidency because of health issues.

As administration prepared to nominate a new president, Frederick Webster informed Moysés Nigri that he would temporarily hold the position of acting president. According to a document voted in Vienna, the five vice-presidents would in turn fill the role until the election for a new president.¹⁰⁷ Thus Nigri assumed the responsibilities of GC president in an interim way. Not long afterward, Neal C. Wilson was elected as General Conference president.¹⁰⁸

Retirement

In 1980, Moysés ended his service at world church headquarters in Takoma Park, sold his house, and settled all financial matters so that he could return to Brazil.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, due to his children's persistence and by the fact that no direct flight existed between Washington, D.C., and São Paulo, the couple decided to remain in Miami.¹¹⁰ (Even after retiring, Moysés would work as member of the General Conference executive committee until the next Session in 1985.¹¹¹) Miami also gave them an opportunity to assist in establishing a Brazilian church (the current Miami Temple Church).¹¹² The retirement ceremony took place in 1980 at the fifty-third GC Session.¹¹³

Soon after they moved to Miami, Moysés received an invitation from John Wolff to work as secretary of the SAD field from 1980 to 1984. Thus, Nigri was able to live in Santo André, São Paulo, in order to fulfill the division responsibilities while going to Miami from time to time. During these four years, he conducted weeks of prayer, baptisms and church services in such countries as Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador.¹¹⁴

In 1988, Alida and Moysés celebrated 50 years of marriage, inviting many friends and relatives.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, a few years later, she started having serious health problems resulting from a lung infection. On October 24, 1995, she passed away, leaving a letter to be read at her funeral.¹¹⁶

After Alida's death, Moysés tried to ease the pain of his loss through the company of his children and friends and by reading many books. However, as time went by, he started wondering whether he should live with his children or marry once again. Though he became interested in a widow whom he had met a while before, she courteously refused his proposal and said that she would pray for him to find a new partner.¹¹⁷

When the UNASP-SP convened administrative meetings in 1997, Nevil Gorski invited Moysés to present three devotionals at a restaurant near the school. Thus, on Friday morning, a longtime friend teacher, Dilza Garcia, told him that she knew a person suitable for a possible relationship. Carolina was single, worked as a nurse, and was a teacher at UNASP-SP. Dilza pointed her out to him during the lunch after the meeting, Nigri and Carolina talked for many hours. In the end, they exchanged numbers, and she promised to call him later.¹¹⁸

At the end of the workday, everybody would wait for a college bus. Since Moysés took longer saying goodbye to his friends, he ended up getting on the last bus, the one Carolina took. As he climbed aboard, he noticed that the only seat available was beside her, which, therefore, enabled them to keep talking until their destination. They agreed on a later meeting at the mall to get to know each other better.¹¹⁹

During one of their first dates, afraid of creating a possible rumor about him being in a "dalliance,"¹²⁰ he went straight to the point and asked Caroline if she was willing to get married. Although she didn't answer, she kept meeting him. Moysés would always insist on an answer, while Caroline felt reluctant. It went on like this until Valentine's Day when he invited her to dine at a restaurant in the Morumbi district in São Paulo city. Moysés

gave her a bottle of perfume and she presented him with an Italian tie along with card that, at last, said yes to the marriage proposal. They started planning their marriage for December of 1997.¹²¹

The ceremony took place December 17, 1997, at the Riacho Grande Adventist Church in São Bernardo do Campo, São Paulo. Alejandro Bullón, at the time the South American Division ministerial secretary, preached the wedding sermon, and the local church pastor, Ronaldo de Oliveira, officiated at the vows and blessing. Friends and family from all over Brazil filled the church. Moysés' older daughter, Rejane, escorted him to the altar, and the bride's brother, João, escorted her.¹²² The São Paulo Adventist Choir Association (ACASP), which Caroline had belonged to for 15 years, participated in the wedding. Conducted by Flávio and Dilza Garcia, about 60 choristers sang for the wedding.¹²³

Late Years

On the morning of October 24, 2005, Moysés started an autobiography. Even with the limitations imposed by his Parkinson's disease, he typed out copy during the week, and a friend of the couple – Ivone Deane – would transfer the typewritten texts to a computer whenever she could. Moysés worked hard to finish the book.¹²⁴

During that time, he attended the reopening of the Brazilian Ellen G. White Research Center and the National Center of Adventist History, located at Brazil Adventist University–UNASP-EC. The event took place November 14, 2009, and, besides sharing some ministerial experiences with the theology students, Moysés donated many personal items to the center.¹²⁵

On February 20, 2010, Moysés preached his last sermon. Pastor Assad Bechara had invited him to speak at the Open Arab Community, located in the city of São Paulo. His message had as main focus on Christ's return. He said: "Jesus is returning! Are you prepared? I have been asking God to let me live for 100 years so that I could see Jesus returning in the clouds. I cannot believe to the contrary, but I think this is my last sermon."¹²⁶

As they returned home, though tired, Moysés couldn't sleep because of his autobiography manuscript, and he wanted to add some more details. Thus, he decided to organize it that evening, even though Caroline insisted that he should wait until morning. Moysés worked until 2:00 a.m. Returning to his room, he fractured his femur and collapsed to the floor in his home's laundry room. The local fire department took him to the hospital emergency room. He asked his wife to finish his book herself if he couldn't get up anymore.¹²⁷

After emergency care, Moysés was transferred to São Paulo Adventist Hospital, where he was hospitalized for 11 days. Dr. Roberto Queiroz conducted the surgery and, though it was successful, Moysés' body didn't react as expected. Thus, on the evening of March 3, Carolina asked pastors Assad Bechara, Kleber de Oliveira, and Márcio Felipe to anoint her husband in the presence of the family.¹²⁸ Then, on March 4, 2010, a few hours after his anointing, he died at the age of 95 from kidney and heart failure.¹²⁹ Carolina finished the autobiography in 2011 and published it in 2014.¹³⁰

Contribution

Moysés Salim Nigri served the world Seventh-Day Adventist Church as office assistant, pastor, and administrator. He worked for 43 years and five months, initially serving the Rio-Minas Gerais Mission for a year, which enabled him to study at Brazil College and become a pastor. Throughout his ministry, he contributed to the dissemination of the Adventist faith through establishing many churches and schools in the states of Paraíba and Recife.

As a leader, he directed various departments, such as educational, youth, and Sabbath School. In addition, he headed the Paraná-Santa Catarina Conference and worked as South American Division secretary. He was the first Latin American to hold the position of General Conference vice-president, which involved him traveling all over the world. During his fruitful ministry, he baptized about 600 people, conducted more than 170 weddings, and dedicated about 40 children.¹³¹

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