

# Guddaye, Tebeje (1916–1992)

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MANDEFRO ALEMAYEHU

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Tebeje Gudadaye was an Adventist pastor and church administrator in Ethiopia.

## Early Life

Tebeje Gudadaye was born on February 24, 1916, in the village of Ferese Meda Begemider, Ethiopia. His parents were Mr. Guddaye Adem and Mrs. Ethune Yeha. He was the ninth of the eleven siblings, eight boys, and three girls.<sup>1</sup>

As a youngster, he was convinced that he needed to be educated and dreamed of studying at a modern school. He had heard about the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) mission school in Eritrea and, with the help of his uncles, at the age of 7, along with his older brother Dessie, and some other friends of similar age, left his village and headed to Eritrea on foot. The journey took more than a month. Beside his formal education, he learned the Italian and Tigrian languages there.<sup>2</sup>

After completing the fourth grade, the maximum level of education allowed by the colonizers, young Tebeje came back home. While most relatives were glad to see him return, he soon travelled to Addis Ababa to continue his education at the SDA School in Addis Alem, a suburb of Addis Ababa, where he completed grade eight and learned the Oromo language.<sup>3</sup>

Tebeje accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and was baptized in 1937 in the Fersemeda Tequen River. He had received the Seventh-day Adventist message from his parents, and his father was one of the founders, a well-known elder of the village who was martyred on June 29, 1946, at the Gbuda SDA Church in North West Ethiopia for his faith together with Mr. Bogale, the father-in-law of Pastor Tebedje.<sup>4</sup>

## Joining the Ministry in the Adventist Church

Pastor Tebeje started his ministry by teaching at the newly established Debre Tabor SDA Mission Boarding School where there was also a hospital. His career was interrupted by the 1935 Italian invasion, and he was captured by the Italians but was able to escape and joined a resistance force and opposed the Italians in every way he could.<sup>5</sup>

Tebeje was married to his lifelong partner, Mrs. Debritu Bogale, in 1937 at Feres Meda and was blessed with eight children, four boys and four girls. Then, he moved his family to Debre Tabor and resumed his career as a teacher. He was then called to serve as chaplain for the Empress Zewditu Memorial Hospital in Addis Ababa. While working as a chaplain, he translated the SDA hymnals into Amharic, and soon the first Amharic songbooks were printed. After serving for four years in the hospital in 1951, he became an ordained pastor.

Tebeje served as president of the North Western Ethiopia Field of the SDA Mission in Debre Tabor for seven years. While serving there, he also attended the 1958 SDA General Conference at Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A. He was then called back to Addis Ababa to serve as pastor of the Addis Ababa SDA Church for four years.<sup>6</sup>

Pastor Tebeje was also the president of the Northern Field SDA Mission in Asmara, where he had originally begun his formal education. After serving for six years there, he was called back to Addis Ababa to serve as administrative secretary of the SDA Ethiopian Union Mission. He was offered an honorary degree to justify his salary for the higher position he was called to. However, he refused this because he thought he should go to college to earn his degree even though he was very knowledgeable and was well read and self-taught.<sup>7</sup>

## Retirement and Final Years

In 1977 after 43 dedicated years of service, he retired from active service in the Ethiopian Union Mission and settled at Akaki, a suburb of Addis Ababa, close to the SDA Mission School.<sup>8</sup>

After he retired, he continued to teach Bible classes and worked as a chaplain for the SDA School at Akaki for many years. When his health deteriorated, he moved with his wife to the United States to receive better treatment and settled in Walla Walla, Washington, where his daughters, who are nurses, lived and took care of him until he passed away at the age of 76 on August 7, 1992.<sup>9</sup>

His wife Debritu Bogale passed away from cancer on March 19, 1995. Both of them were buried at Mount Hope Cemetery in Walla Walla, Washington. They had received all the modern treatments possible at the hospitals and were also well cared for by their daughters. A chapel has been built in his memory, called the "Pastor Tebedge Guddaye and Debritu Bogale Memorial Chapel" at the Hogganvik Memorial SDA School in Debre Tabor, which was recently completed and dedicated.<sup>10</sup>

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### SOURCES

Woldeselassie, Truneh. *Adventism in Ethiopia: The Incredible Saga of the Beginning and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventist Work in Ethiopia* (2005).

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### NOTES

1. Sewmohn Tebeje (Tebeje Gudadaye's son), interviewed by Solomon Dessie in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on December 11, 2023.
2. Truneh Woldeselassie, *Adventism in Ethiopia: The Incredible Saga of the Beginning and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventist Work in Ethiopia* (2005), 179.
3. Sewmhon Tebeje (Tebeje Gudadaye's son), interviewed by Solomon Dessie in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on December 11, 2023.
4. Woldeselassie, 208.
5. Ibid., 202.
6. Woldeselassie, 26-27.
7. Ibid., 20-21
8. Sewmhon Tebeje (Tebeje Gudadaye's son), interviewed by Solomon Dessie, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on December 11, 2023.
9. Solomn Dessie (son of Tebeje Gudadaye's elder brother), interviewed by Mandefro Alemayehu in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on December 11, 2023.
10. Sewmhon Tebeje (Tebeje Gudadaye's son), interviewed by Solomon Dessie in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on December 11, 2023.

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