

MY TESTIMONY  
AND  
LOVE ISRAEL MINISTRIES  
(ITS ORIGIN AND CURRENT ACTIVITIES )

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INTRODUCTION

I rejoice that God has given me the privilege of being with you at this LCJE conference. Some of our prayer partners and friends in Japan wanted to attend this conference, but they could not make it. Therefore, on their behalf I extend their Japanese shalom to all of you attending this gathering.

I thank God for giving me this opportunity to introduce our mission to you. God created me to be His servant to serve His Chosen people through helping them turn back to Him through faith in Yeshua, their God and Messiah. God made me the founder and president of the first mission in Japan devoted exclusively to the Jewish people. Our mission was formed in 1988. It is evangelical and interdenominational. We call ourselves Love Israel Ministries, for we believe that God would have us express His love to the Jewish people in Israel and to the Jewish people worldwide. Our dominant concern is that they come to faith in Yeshua, and we have planned our activities to this end.

I am currently a student in the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary, and am enrolled in its Jewish program. This past June I came to America for the first time.

Just before coming to America, I was a graduate student of Tsukuba University in Japan. I went to Israel in the summer of 1988 to study at the Hebrew University and to research Jewish evangelism in Israel. In 1989 I returned to Jerusalem to continue this work. I became acquainted with some of the leaders of

Jewish believers in Israel and also with missionaries from other countries. They provided me with much helpful information. I wrote a Master's thesis in the Japanese language entitled "An Analysis of the Debate over the Necessity of Jewish Evangelism in Contemporary Israel: Focused on the Theological Problems." It was published by Love Israel Ministries in order to assist Japanese Christians who are interested in Jewish Evangelism. I hope while at Fuller to revise and translate this thesis into English.

Unfortunately, there are still few Japanese Christians who realize the role of Israel in the redemptive purpose of God and the Church's present missionary responsibility to the Jewish people. Because of this, in January of 1990, I translated into Japanese both the Willowbank Declaration (1989) and the section of the Manila Manifesto related to Jewish evangelism. My concern was twofold, that Japanese Christians might know the perspective of evangelicals worldwide on Jewish evangelism and that their understanding of the Jewish people might be biblically informed. These translations will be published soon.

## MY TESTIMONY

Let me tell you how God guided me to become involved with the Jewish people. I particularly would like to share with you some details of the origin and current activities of Love Israel Ministries.

I was born in 1956 in a non-Christian family in Kobe, Japan. My father was a high-school English teacher, and my mother was a pediatrician. Although I had no direct contact with Christians, God gave me opportunities to acquire a basic knowledge of Christianity through books. I read a children's book of Bible stories, a biography of Jesus Christ, and some novels for young people written by western Christian authors.

When I was ten years old, I was given a tract on the street that advertised a Bible correspondence course designed for children. I enrolled. Shortly after finishing this course, my father gave me a Gideon Bible which had been given to him at his school. Since Japanese Gideon Bibles usually have the English and Japanese texts in parallel columns, my non-Christian father thought that the book would be useful for my future English study. That very day when I began reading the Bible for the first time was the day of my conversion. I was eleven years old. After I read Matthew, Mark, and half of Luke, and put the book down, I found myself challenged by the preface and the last page's invitation to make a decision for Christ. I realized, "I must decide now whether or not I will accept Christ as my Savior." After an hour's consideration, I decided to believe in Him, signed my name, and prayed as the Gideon notation indicated. My heart was suddenly filled with relief and peaceful joy -- something that I had never experienced before.

I was an only child, and my family expected a great deal of me. When I was an elementary school pupil, my parents encouraged me to excel in every way: in studies, sports, art, music and leadership. I tried my best, and I was often praised by my teachers and by those around me. But I was becoming tired of this unending struggle.

One of my problems was that I didn't like arithmetic. Teachers and parents said, "Among your studies this subject is very important for your future. If you study hard, you can go to good schools and become a doctor like your mother." But I thought that to study for my own benefit was selfish and meaningless, and that life was vain. If I must eventually die anyway at the end of my life, it would be better for me to die just then so that I wouldn't have to make any further efforts to live.

After I believed in Jesus, however, God brought new purpose into my life. It was to live for the glory of God. Once I realized what this great purpose was, I was

given new power to live. I then began to realize that I existed for God and for His world.

I didn't have any real opportunities, however, to go to church for three years following my conversion. I was very busy being trained as a competitive swimmer. I became the junior-high school champion in Kobe city in 100m free style. I also won a gold medal in the medley relay in Kinki region which includes seven prefectures. My body then was very strong. At the age of fourteen, however, my lack of care for my health and over zealous training in the winter led to a severe illness. This prevented further swimming lessons. This ended my dream to become one of the top ten in Japan in 100m free style the following year. I was terribly disappointed. But this changed my life. I now had considerable free time and began to attend church. This was God's grace to me. My family was quite unhappy that I went to church, but after Christians in the church and I prayed, my mother finally allowed me to be baptized. I was sixteen.

When I was a high school student, I prayed that God would show me the future direction of my life for Him. I abandoned my plan to be a doctor like my mother, because my grades in mathematics had deteriorated. During this time I read many Christian books including the biographies of famous missionaries and evangelists. These introduced me to a variety of possible ministries, but I remained uncertain as to my own future. I wanted to do the most important thing from God's perspective because I had been created by God's love and was given only one life to live for Him. He showed me that among all the commandments in the Bible, the most important is that I love God with all my heart, soul, strength and mind. In response, I sought to love Him with my whole being. For me, to love God also meant to chose the hardest work for God. I therefore decided to become a missionary.

I went to Tsukuba University. There I was free to arrange my own curriculum and deliberately chose classes that would be helpful in my future ministry. My major

was education. My graduation thesis was about biblical love in contrast with the Japanese understanding of educational love. This thesis became foundational to Love Israel Ministries.

My interest in the Jewish people began while back in high school. Since Jesus was Jewish and the writers of the Bible were virtually all Jews, it was natural that I began to think about the Jewish people even though at that time I had no direct contact with any of them. After all, there are only several hundred Jewish people living in Japan today. But you can be sure that I saw Jewish people on Japanese TV and read books about them.

In 1979 God gave me my first opportunity to visit Israel. This was a goodwill trip for six Japanese young people and provided us with many occasions to meet Jewish people face-to-face. It was jointly sponsored by the Ministry of Education of the Japanese Government and an association of Israeli mayors. This trip coincided with the visit of Jimmy Carter and Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem. The atmosphere was electric, filled with peace and joy. I was impressed by the Israelis and felt that they were really "The Chosen People of God." I discussed the Christian faith with some of them, but sadly I was not able to find any believers in Jesus among them. From this time onward I began to pray for the salvation of the Jewish people. I was 22 years old.

You might wonder how I came to be a representative of Japan on this particular occasion. I found that posters had been placed in major Japanese companies and universities calling for volunteers for this goodwill trip. I applied because I liked the aim of this unique trip. It was to build friendship between Israelis and Japanese, and not just an occasion for visiting Israel's holy places. Looking back I can see that God wanted to place the Jewish people on my heart. What better way to do this than to give me three weeks of exposure to a variety of Jewish people living in many parts of the state of Israel.

After I graduated from the university, I wanted to enter a theological seminary, but my father did not allow me to. It was not God's time. Then I sought to become a professional singer hoping thereby to share the gospel with many people. God gave me an opportunity to sing in an amateur singers' contest on a secular TV program. The announcer referred to my testimony using photos of me and my church before I sang. This was an unusual opportunity for Christian witness because this popular program was broadcast all over Japan. And I'm sure God wanted to proclaim His Son, Jesus, through TV to those who otherwise would have no chance to hear of Him. Although I won a prize in the contest, I felt that I should not seek to become a secular singer. I abandoned my plan and was deeply depressed. A close friend and my father thought I needed professional help.

But my Lord who is always merciful surprisingly opened the way for me to become a Christian radio evangelist. I worked as an announcer for Trans World Radio (KTWR). I prepared and delivered weekly evangelistic messages to young people and interviewed for broadcast missionaries, pastors and various Christian guests. This ministry was very interesting and I believe God blessed my programs very much. But I worked too hard. During the following two years my health began to break down and I thought that it was God's will for me to end this ministry. Shortly after finishing my last program, I came down with severe cold and sore throat. It so happened that one of my friends asked me to share the gospel with her fiancé. He was full of questions and I talked to him for six hours! But my throat problem became acute and I lost my voice. Incidentally, he soon became a Christian by the grace of the Lord, but for the next eight months my vocal cords remained paralyzed.

What was I to do? I prayed, and God led me to a small Bible school for one year. This school was very non-western in its approach to preparing people for Christian ministry. This school was sponsored by the Kirisuto Kyodai Dan, a

denomination with which I had had almost no previous contact. Since I couldn't speak, my activities were very limited. But I learned to pray and to serve my fellow students. During this period of silence the Lord dealt with me about using my voice to honor His name. I prayed, "Lord, if you give me back my voice, I will only use it to please you!"

At this Bible school, deeply steeped as it was in the holiness tradition, I became exercised over my sinfulness. God led me to fast and pray, and to seek His deliverance. My problem was very personal: How could anyone as unworthy as I felt myself to be ever become a useful servant of God?

One day I was praying in my assigned private prayer room. My heart was dark, but waiting upon God. Suddenly God pierced my heart and fixed within it two words. I recognized them as coming from I Cor. 1:30. The two words were "righteousness" and "holiness." I saw these words God had written in my heart clearly and indelibly. I was filled with joy and I could only worship my Lord. Jesus was my righteousness and my holiness! His precious blood completely covered my sins, though I deserved eternal punishment! It was then that I recognized and confessed that my greatest sin had been my underestimation of the power of Jesus' blood.

Since then I have been freed from the burden of sin. Instead, I have felt God's burden for the world, having gradually come to realize that I was a bride of Christ. Because He had taken away all my sins, I dedicated my whole being to Him. Since He already carried all my burdens, His love in my heart made me free to share in His burden. Ever since I have prayed that He might love, suffer, and pray for the world through me. In other words, I began to look at the world from His perspective.

But was I truly surrendered to the Lord? Did I really want to do His will? I still continued to seek His will for my life. It was at just this time that I went through

a physical crisis involving considerable pain. God used this crisis to make me totally surrender to him. I had wanted to do many different things for God before this, but from that time I completely surrendered to God. He made me ready to embrace whatever He wanted me to do. He brought me to the place of utter abandonment to do His will, and that alone.

I found that the Kirisuto Kyodai Dan denomination had been praying for the salvation of the people of Israel ever since 1932. Therefore it was natural that in the daily morning and evening prayer meetings at the Bible school, the Jewish people were always the object of their concern. I personally became burdened that despite their nearly 60 years of accumulated prayers almost nothing had been done specifically for the Jewish people besides regular offerings to a Jewish mission. This was largely due to their lack of current information.

Actually, few English publications on Jewish evangelism are sent to Japan. Those that are received are not always read. The problem is two fold. First, although many Japanese study English, the great majority generally find the language of English publications to be difficult to understand. Some people can read them with the help of a dictionary, however, this is very time consuming. Therefore few English publications are thoroughly read. Second, those whose English competence allows them to more easily read this material are frequently so busy with their more demanding tasks that they do not have time for these publications. Moreover there are few Christians who understand the theological style of English publications on Jewish evangelism. What then must be done? These publications need either to be translated into Japanese or their substance excerpted and made available to Japanese Christians. Unfortunately, few books on Jewish evangelism have been translated. Upon realizing this situation, I began to think that God was calling me to do something to meet this need.



I realized I had to become more proficient in English for this ministry. After I finished the one-year course at the Bible school, I began to study English at a training school for simultaneous interpreters and translators, and I also taught English in Kobe, my hometown. One day, when I was 28, my father told me that I had to leave home if I persisted in my determination to be a missionary. I prayed, "O God, if you really are calling me to be a missionary to Israel, please let me know. Please give me your word." That very night God mercifully directed me to Isaiah 49:1-6. When I read these verses I was filled with amazement and overwhelming joy. Here was evidence that He had both created me and called me to serve Israel, that is the Jewish people worldwide. I found His calling to be good, perfect and acceptable to me. But I thought, "I am only a gentile woman; what can I do for Your Chosen people?" Also I wanted to make it sure that He had really spoken to me. Two months later, God directed me to Esther 4:13-16. This further strengthened my conviction that I should serve Israel. Therefore I prayed like Mary, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as You have said" (Luke 1:38). I have known no uncertainty since then. This was the culmination of ten years of waiting for His call. My spirit now became fully assured as to His will for my life.

After I received God's call, I decided to join the Kirisuto Kyodai Dan because the spiritual training I had received at its Bible school had been so excellent. Furthermore, I was also greatly influenced by the students and teachers. They were very sincere in their walk with God. This denomination is middle-size as Japanese churches go and has about 80 congregations scattered throughout Japan, having its Wesleyan-Arminian theological heritage. This denomination still doesn't have an English name. One of the reasons is it was not directly formed by a western mission. Nishinomiya Church is located between Osaka and Kobe, and the pastor Teruo Kodaira, one of the leaders of Kirisuto Kyodai Dan, understood my sense of divine call, and welcomed me. I became a member of his congregation which is biblically based, active and well-balanced in its teaching and ministry. It has a vision to send

missionaries overseas. By the grace of God this congregation under his leadership began to underwrite my ministry.

## THE ORIGIN AND CURRENT ACTIVITIES OF LOVE ISRAEL MINISTRIES

I prayed that God would open to me further opportunities to secure training for this ministry. Things developed slowly. In 1986 God led me to move from Kobe to Tokyo and then to Tsukuba for graduate study. I began to attend the local Kirisuto Kyodai Dan congregation. I was asked to teach a class on Israel. This teaching opportunity marked the beginning of a pattern of holding seminars on Israel. One of my students, Fumiko Ito, attended the lectures with her five children. I was amazed! She had to drive three and half hours each way from distant Kanuma city. She videotaped these lectures and circulated them among her friends. Her outreach developed into the Love Israel Ministries Information Service. I made and distributed a catalog of my videos, cassette tapes, and written materials so that people could write in their orders. As a result Christians in various parts of Japan began to contact me with their questions about Israel and Jewish evangelism.

I began to think about forming a mission society. Because I was unable to meet the increasing demands on my time and strength, God gave me volunteer co-workers for this ministry. Fumiko Ito became my faithful secretary and supporter, and her family also proved to be most helpful. Love Israel Ministries was organized and her home provided us with an office.

Nishinomiya Church also became a supporting center of Love Israel Ministries. Through its assistance we have been able to send news letters to more than 1000 people all over Japan. Some of them have become faithful supporters. Among them are several preparing for a career ministry on behalf of the Jewish people.

In order to inform Japanese Christians about Jewish evangelism, God has given me three specific ministries: conducting seminars, writing articles for Christian newspapers, and speaking over Christian TV.

Upon invitation, I conduct seminars in various churches, schools and other Christian organizations. I discuss Israel and Jewish evangelism, as well as give evangelistic messages and share my testimony. The major themes of the seminars are: God's Love for the People of Israel; The Essentiality of Prayer for Israel; The History of Jewish Evangelism; A Biblical Evaluation of the Two-Covenant Theory; The Messianic Jewish Movement in Israel; The Responsibility and Possibility of Japanese Christians becoming involved in Jewish Evangelism; etc. Since I provide Japanese Christians with what may be their first time to think about Jewish Evangelism, I also include a general introduction of Israel and the Jewish people.

Admittedly, Israel is still not well known to many Japanese. My task in the beginning stage is to stir their interest in the beautiful country, unique culture and wonderful people of Israel. Therefore I do not begin with these heavy lectures. I have introduced audio-visual media into my ministry, along with song and dance using Israeli music. I have also translated Israeli songs into Japanese as well as songs written by Messianic Jews. I show slides and exhibit Jewish religious items such as tallit, kippah and shopher so that people can not only see them but also touch them. Sometimes I serve Jaffa orange juice or canned grapefruit,<sup>2</sup> and even the grape juice used in communion services which is specially produced by Israeli Messianic Jews. By these means the Japanese people can even "taste" Israel.

On occasion I have been asked to write articles concerning Jewish evangelism for publication in a major evangelical Christian newspaper and other Japanese periodicals. Considerable positive response has resulted from this and we have become very busy, responding to the people who have contacted us.

Last June a TV evangelist invited me to join him in his telecast. I spoke about my ministry and emphasized the importance of Jewish evangelism. This was recorded on Harvest Time, and was broadcast in America as well as in Japan. As a result, the host of the telecast, Pastor Kenichi Nakagawa, and I are planning to hold seminars on Israel and Jewish evangelism for Japanese Christians in the near future.

In order to encourage the Japanese people to support Jewish evangelism materially, God has led us to encourage them to send three kinds of things to Israel: monetary offerings, aid packages, and used stamps. We have sought to channel their funds to Messianic Jewish congregations and to mission agencies working among the Jewish people.

I have asked Japanese Christians to send aid packages to Israel and thereby support evangelism among its needy Jewish people. This ministry has rapidly grown in popularity. There are three reasons for this: first, since many Japanese homes have surplus clothing and lack storage space, they would like to share this clothing with those who need them; second, although many people would like to give away good used clothing, few missions, churches and other welfare organizations in Japan have programs for collecting used clothing. Also it is rare that requests for clothing come from overseas to Japan; third, accordingly most Japanese can't find where clothing donations are accepted. Therefore both Christians and non-Christians have been happy to establish contact with those willing to receive their gifts. Although I haven't advertised this particular program very much, more than one-hundred packages have already been sent by our faithful volunteers. Among them we have become acquainted with the owner of a dry-cleaning shop. He regularly sends to Israel neatly pressed quality clothing which his customers have failed to collect after some months. The other clothing we send is also in good condition. We continue to look for more addresses of Jewish related organizations to whom we might send this

clothing. We send these packages anywhere in the world where there is need in order to help the cause of Jewish evangelism and needy Jewish people.

Collecting and sending used stamps to raise funds for a Christian organization in Israel has been another activity which enables both Christian and non-Christian children, as well as adults to cooperate with Christian ministries in Israel. Gathering stamps is also a good way to keep Israel in their thoughts and prayers. Each time they snip off stamps from envelopes, they may remember Jewish people. And we believe this can eventually cultivate a love and burden for the Jewish people in the hearts of many Japanese children. We would like to find more organizations throughout the world who could benefit from our sending them used stamps. In addition, one of our supporters has been seeking the addresses of those to whom he might send Russian New Testaments for the Russian Jews. He has also written English tracts which he is willing to send to those who can use them.

Thus God has led Love Israel Ministries to involve many kinds of Japanese people in supporting Jewish evangelism and Christian ministries in Israel.

Inevitably, such ministries require considerable funding because the cost of shipping is very high. This fact caused us to begin wondering how we might increase our service fund.

During my second trip to Israel, I began to explore the possibilities of bringing Israeli goods into Japan. Actually, we formed a support group to handle products developed by Messianic Jews and others. These were sold to Japanese people to acquaint them with Jewish believers and Israeli culture to cultivate a positive regard for Israel. Messianic music cassettes, Bible art cards, mezuzah, Jerusalem candles, Jaffa orange juice, and some health foods such as Spirulina-- all of these are items that Japanese people are willing to purchase. Love Israel Ministries has in this way been partially financed in order to send aid packages to Israel and to provide

financial assistance to Israeli Messianic Jewish congregations. We also collect offerings for this purpose. To augment our service fund, some volunteers have created and donated their own hand-written Japanese scrolls and cards of Bible verses concerning the salvation of Israel. Since coming to America I have been looking for Messianic Jewish products made here which Japanese people might be willing to purchase.

Apart from this support group which is directly responsible for financing Love Israel Ministries, I am personally largely supported by my non-Christian father. Without his assistance I could not have been able to pursue my education or engage in research on Jewish Evangelism. And without Fumiko Ito, my loyal co-worker who also supports me financially, I could not have developed and continued this ministry for the Jewish people. I am particularly grateful to God for them both.

Though I earlier had not the opportunity to study at a theological seminary, my father finally allowed me to study at Fuller Theological Seminary. This has truly been God's miracle! I need this sort of training in order to accomplish three things: first, to build a sound biblical basis for Love Israel Ministries; second, to teach Japanese Christians about Israel and Jewish evangelism more adequately; and third, to establish good relationships between Japanese evangelical churches and Messianic Jewish congregations, as well as missions to Jews.

Despite the many demands on my time, I would like to complete the M. A. program in Jewish Studies and also get a Ph.D. in Missiology at Fuller if this is God's will. I really need your prayers so that God will enable me both to study and to serve in ways pleasing in His sight. I would also like to serve as a missionary to the Jewish people in America and Israel, so that I might in the future be better equipped to train missionaries for Jewish evangelism in the seminaries of Japan.

During my ministry in Japan, I have increasingly found that many people within the churches of various denominations have begun to pray for the salvation of the Jewish people. Does this growing interest have eschatological significance?

Since arriving in America, God has already given me opportunities to speak on Jewish evangelism in Japanese churches in Southern California. Reactions have been uniformly good.

At present staff members of Love Israel Ministries serve in Tokyo, Kanuma and Nishinomiya, as well as in Pasadena. We still don't have any full time or hired staff, and everything is still being done by faithful volunteers who are willing to devote their time, money and energy to the salvation of Jewish people. I am very happy with them, and thank God for them all. But we still pray for more volunteers and supporters, especially in Pasadena because we need much help to develop our ministry in America as well as in Japan. Our offices and working centers are widely scattered particularly those in Japan. This means the management of the organization needs much prayer. Although our workers only infrequently meet face-to-face, we keep praying for each other, cooperating together and working unitedly for the same purpose. And God has linked us together by His love. We believe that only when we love each other with the love of God, will we become an effective instrument through which He can lavish His love upon the Jewish people.

God has been using me as one of the pioneers in this field of Jewish evangelism in Japan. When I decided in 1988 to write a thesis on Jewish evangelism, I had almost no teachers, no research materials, no relevant books, and of course no contacts with Jewish believers. But God has helped me gather together the beginnings of a research library for the mission.

Because Japanese Christians have long lacked up-to-date information on Jewish evangelism, we are determined to acquaint their churches with the activities of

western Jewish missions. And we have translated their prayer requests into Japanese so that Japanese people can pray more specifically than before. We are currently in the process of establishing a resource center for Jewish evangelism so that Japanese Christians can readily get information or literature on this ministry.

When I began conducting seminars on Jewish Evangelism in 1987, I found that seminars on this theme were infrequent in Japan, although in 1971 Dr. Charles E. Fineberg and Dr. Daniel Fuchs visited Japan to speak at the Kirisuto Kyodai Dan "Holiness Conference." Also Dr. Joseph Shulam, the leader of Netivyah Congregation in Jerusalem visited Japan. To my knowledge few Messianic Jews came to Japan besides them. But this year several guest speakers on Jewish evangelism will visit Japan. Indeed, this very month Dr. Jay Rawlings of Israel Vistas in Israel spoke in Japan. In July Dr. Kai Kjaer-Hansen, the International Coordinator of LCJE and Bodil F. Skjoett, Jerusalem, will speak in Japan. In November Kenji Uchiyama, a Japanese serving in Ohev Israel, a Messianic Jewish congregation in Washington D.C., will come to speak. Can we believe that God is beginning to make Jewish evangelism a dynamic movement in Japan?

God has truly given me a large vision and has led us step by step. Nothing has been accomplished without the Lord. We marvel at what He has done. And we know that He will accomplish much more for us and through us. His love is the source of strength and the motivation for Love Israel Ministries and His faithfulness has wondrously led us. Please pray for Love Israel Ministries so that God may continue to enable us to serve the Jewish people according to His will.

We Japanese Christians are eager to learn a great deal from those of you who have engaged in Jewish evangelism for a long time. Only 0.8% of the total Japanese population is Christian. So then, please pray that more Japanese people will be saved by the gospel, and that more Japanese Christians will participate with LCJE in Jewish Evangelism throughout the world. Thank you. Glory to God!