



In 1864,  
Esaia Seele  
traveled  
700 kms  
with his  
oxcart to  
preach Jesus

Missionaries from Lesotho:  
part 3 of 5

# LESOTHO SENDS MISSIONARIES - PART 3

## A self-funded mission by Basotho to the Ndebele (1864)

Esaia Seele led the next trip in 1864 and documented it himself. Seele was an early convert, and the son of one of Moshoeshoe's most trusted counsellors, Khoabane, a chief who had also been converted and baptized. Seele was an ideal messenger to go out: he spoke Dutch fluently and learned French so he could read the (then) untranslated parts of the Bible.

When `Mankopane requested pastors from Moshoeshoe, Seele volunteered to go after the two foreign missionaries had to decline due to prior commitments. Seele made the journey with his own resources, using his own ox-wagon and supplies. He spent several months working with `Mankopane's people, over 700km north of his home base. The method he used was to attract interested people to learn to read, and this then provided an opening to talk about stories and teachings of the Bible as well.

As Seele taught and engaged with the people about the biblical characteristics of God and all He had done for them, many conversations followed with individuals and groups of `Mankopane's followers, of all ages and walks of life. Seele recorded that a series of "healings" took place where a woman, for example, who had been sick for many years became well, while a second mentally disturbed woman also recovered. Both confessed Jesus and this led to many sick people being brought for healing, but Seele told the crowds that he was no healer - he had come to teach, and it was through God alone that the healings had taken place.

As Seele's teachings became more effective and a small congregation of inquirers and believers developed, opposition began to appear with wild stories being spread to damage Seele's credibility in the eyes of `Mankopane. Other opposition arose due to misunderstandings or to issues of cultural practises that were not seen as compatible with those of the church.. None of this opposition seems to have greatly impacted the spread of the message during his 4-5 months there. Eventually at least 56 children and adults became believers and followers of Jesus, meeting regularly for prayer, teaching and worship.

Seele returned to Lesotho during the first half of 1865, after which it was engulfed in war with its neighbour, South Africa. Mabile wrote, as part of the sixth and final instalment in a local newspaper, regarding Seele's journey: "As we have published the news of Esaia's journey at length, it was to cause Basotho Christians to examine these matters carefully. He who has great zeal and faith, who hears the Spirit pressing him to tell of the Gospel, is given surprising power [by God]. Our brother, Esaia, has begun a great work; although it has been taken over by others [Berlin Mission Society], a result of the war which endured for a long time here, and which prevented us from supporting Esaia with other evangelists, this work of his is not for nothing; others there will continue to thank God on earth and in heaven because of him, because of the manner in which he spread the Gospel, to where it had not yet gone, and to strengthen it where it was present. There yonder in Matatiele, the Basotho are many; some are being taught, but others are yet to be. Who will go to bring the Gospel to Sekhukhune, the son of Sekuati, and to other nations? The nations are many, the field is large; some break up the hard ground, others sow, some water, those are the ones needed most of all. Let the Lord send out messengers/servants in this his work."