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The Global Magazine Vol. 2 No. 3 July, 2025



New Jerusalem

Israel Terhemba Ikyereve

1971-2025



New Jerusalem with his group



Israel Terhemba Ikyereve

From Robber to Global Gospel Minister

The Story of New Jerusalem

At a time, no one could ever imagine that Swange Music would ever be played in the church. It was considered secular, profane, vulgar and indecent. However, it was the most popular dance among the Tiv. Swange was the first to foist its flag internationally as the music of the Tiv people of Central Nigeria, the appeal of which transcended and gained widespread fascination, if not acceptance. One man has brought the profane into God's sanctuary with an acceptance that cuts across all the Christian denominations in the land. This development occurred in a dramatic manner. The man at the centre of this unprecedented new Swange narrative, Israel Ikyereve, tells the story.

Can you please introduce yourself?
My name is Ikyereve, Israel Terhemba. I hail from Mbamo, Kpav, Shitile, Katsina-Ala Local Government of Benue State.

What do you do for a living?
I'm a Gospel Artiste. I praise God

with my songs.

How did this come about?
I would say I knew God superficially for quite some time because I used to go to church, and I even belonged to the Sunday school called *Makeranta U Iyange Memen* (MIM), and other societies in our church, the *Nongo u Kristu u i Ser Sha Tar (*N.K.S.T). I went to Sokoto State and stayed in Gada Local Government. I was there for a year and a half. From there, I went to Birnin-Kebbi which was then in Sokoto State. I was there for four years after which I came back home, to Benue State. While I was away, I stopped going to church mainly because there was no N.K.S.T denomination where I stayed while away from my state. So I forgot the doctrines of the church. I came back to Makurdi in 1989 but I wasn't comfortable among the Tiv people so I went back, this time to Jalingo, Taraba State. While there, I first lived at Dan Anacha where I learnt mechanic work. While in Sokoto, that was the work I started learning.

When were you born?
I was born on December 25, 1971, on Christmas day.

How long did you stay in Benue State before leaving for Sokoto?
I lived in Tiv land until I finished primary school in 1984 at Sati-Agirigi, my home town in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area.

Did you proceed to secondary education?
No. I didn't. I left my home town in 1984 to go and live with my brother who was a policeman in Sokoto, where I learnt mechanic work. I came back home in 1989 and lived at home for two years. In 1991, I left again for Dan Anacha. In 1994, I left for Jalingo. It was at Jalingo that the



New Jerusalem with his mother, Martha Ujiir Ikyereve (who is alive)

Lord arrested me in 1995; precisely on March 16, 1995. While at Dan Anacha, I was doing my mechanic work but there were no customers so I stopped working and joined a group of young men who were armed robbers.



New Jerusalem, left, with a friend

How did they initiate you into their gang?

Since I was idle, I joined them and we would go about in the mornings drinking the local beer, *burukutu*. It was while we were drinking that we got talking and I got to know them. One was from Ugbema, and the other from Biam. I started sitting out with them and we grew fond of ourselves. Later, I discovered that these boys were thieves and fraudsters. So, they initiated me into the business and we started doing it together. This was in 1992. We were in this business until I left for Jalingo in 1994. While in Jalingo, I met another group superior to the former one at Dan Anacha. I would say the ones in Dan Anacha were beginners. I began working with them. With my new group, we went for a robbery operation on 14th March, 1995 in Dan Anacha. The operation was carried out on the 15th and on the 16th, at dawn, I left Dan Anacha for Jalingo. I returned with a lot of money in my pocket to Jalingo.

Anytime we set out for our operation, we usually had a tactical plan, similar to the line-up in a football match which specifies the role of each player. In my group, we had a rule that we would never touch what we called exhibit; ours was strictly cash. This is because we knew that it is the exhibit that is traceable. We never took things like motorcycles, cars, radio or the like. We were only after the money, the cash. We said that cash was not an exhibit. One of our gang members we used to call Tobias on this fateful operation made away with a very big radio set from the house where we went for an operation. He didn't come back with us because he was afraid that we would collect the radio and discard or destroy it. So he went his way. The usual strategy in armed robbery is that there is always a meeting point where a roll call is taken to ensure that all members of the gang returned safely. On that fateful day, the boy who took the radio was not at the meeting point. This was a problem so everyone was apprehensive because he had to return before we could walk freely again because if he was caught, he would lead the police to all of us. I

then left for Jalingo but I was not at ease because we had not seen one of our gang members so I was very apprehensive while in Jalingo.

I left one morning to see one of my relatives from Shitile. He was the accountant of the Police Pay Office in Taraba State. Since he was a policeman, we made deliberate efforts to be close with him. This accorded us some respect and protection and we also got favours from him when we ran into trouble. I went to his house to speak to him. On my way back, I stopped by at a place where Indian hemp was being sold at *Kasuwan Yarwa, Angwa Sarki*. I bought some with cigarettes and smoked. I had a charm that was called *Sabani* in Hausa. The charm acted like a fortune teller. But it was not like the ordinary fortune tellers. If you were a fortune teller and you wanted to know your fortune, you would have to go to another fortune teller to tell you. This charm I had could predict my fortune. It was an Islamic charm. It wasn't a charm obtained among the Tiv people.

“So this charm was called *Sabani* meaning exchange. If you were looking for me with bad intention or that something was wrong, with this charm you would never find me. We would just be exchanging on our paths.”

Where did you get this charm from?

I got it at Potiskum. I was taken there by a friend. That's where I got it from. It was called *Sabani* in Hausa. *Sabani* means, for instance, I take off from a different location and you take off from another location and our paths cross without our knowledge and we go looking for ourselves; if I were talking to you in Hausa, I would say *mun yi sabani a hanya*, meaning, we exchanged on the road. So this charm was called *Sabani* meaning exchange. If you were looking for me with bad intention or that something was wrong, with this charm you would never find me. We would just be exchanging on our paths. On the other hand, if you were looking for me for a good cause, you would find me. This charm used to also communicate with me. If I set out to go somewhere and it said I should not go there, I would not.

How much did you pay to acquire this charm?

Then it was not even expensive. We were three that acquired the charm. I had one, one of our gang members



Tahav Agerzua, left, presents Christmas hamper to New Jerusalem and wife, Msendoo, Dec. 25, 2021

called Pasar, had one, another person, whom we used to call Robostic. Robostic later repented and gave his life to Christ and took the name, Joseph. He is presently a car painter in Calabar, Cross River State. On that fateful day, I was on the run as the charm had told me that I was going to be caught. Since I had enough money on me, I planned to go to a hotel and hide there. In fact, my cut from the money we stole from Dan Anacha was N23, 000. Then the highest denomination was 50 naira notes. I had a lot of money at the time.

How did you and your gang get the information that led to that particular operation?

Armed robbers usually have informants; we got our information from an informant. We were told that one man had sold his parked scrap vehicles and rice. Our informant was on the look-out and the day that this man sold a lot of his rice was the day we were informed that he had just returned from making robust sales and that we should come. So we came to Dan Anacha and waited for him to finish his sales. An informant is usually a person who is close to the victim and who does the monitoring. This particular man was a big marketer of rice. He could take about 40 to 50 bags of rice to the market without returning with any home. Since there were no banks then, definitely he had to carry the money home.

Did the informant know where the money was kept or did you have to look for it upon arrival?

We looked for it. When we went,

When I returned after the operation, my own charm told me that even in the hotel, I would be caught. So I said to myself that let me just go and board a vehicle and go to the far north where I lived before but the charm still told me that even in the garage, I would be caught.

three of us did not go into the house for the reason that we might be recognized because we were well known in that town so we did not go into the house

What was your role in this operation?

I was to provide cover for those who were inside the house in case of any problem. That day, I and Joseph who is now in Calabar and one other person that I have forgotten now, we were to provide cover for those inside. Those that were to go inside the house first sent one person to get inside. When he went inside the compound, he found the occupants of the house sitting outside. He then asked them for the direction to the house of Awe. Awe was our code name for notifying those outside to come into the house, that the coast was clear; but you see, that it was very confusing for those to whom the question was asked. When that kind of question was asked, the people would go thinking about Awe and then we would come in and take them unawares. This code name was also used to notify the gang that the mission was successful and we were to leave or to alert the gang that there was a problem and the mission needed to be aborted. Once the code name was mentioned, we had to act appropriately. So our member who went inside had no problem finding the money. They had not hidden the money because they just returned from the market. He found it and took it. There were no gunshots; the operation was peaceful. I mentioned Pasar earlier as one of those we went to acquire this charm together. He had another charm that could tell the exact location of money in a house we entered and he could just go in and go there straight and get the money. He could perceive money through odour. That was also acquired through a charm.

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before but the charm still told me that even in the garage, I would be caught. Everywhere I went, this charm told me that I would be caught. So I roamed on the bike I hired for a while and everywhere I wanted to go my charm would say I would be caught. I then remembered a Tiv man called Steven Kungwa from Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State. He was a staff of the Urban Development Board at that time. Though I was an armed robber, I had sought employment with the board. When I thought about him, I said let me go to him and speak to him concerning my employment; maybe it was time for me to start working. I was going to his office in a hurry and at the same time looking for a place to hide.

When I got to his office, he was seated in a big office swinging chair reading a big Bible. For seven years, I had not looked into the Bible talk less of reading it and going to church. When I saw him, I asked within myself that, "So, people in these kinds of positions still see the truth in the Bible?" This was the first question that arose within me. I thought that for someone who is not even from Taraba – a Tiv man for that matter, to rise through the ranks to become a Director in Taraba State, he must have gotten it through charms. I just had all these thoughts running within. So he turned and spoke to me calmly and stated that the interview for the work had been moved forward. I was prompted to speak to him about my problem. So I told him that the employment was not really what brought me to his office. I told him that I was an armed robber and that I had charms on me. This was the first man I ever confessed to. At that time I heard that Father Hyacinth Alia used to conduct deliverance for such cases and take such charms and so I told the Director that I wanted to go back home and submit all those things to Fr. Alia. So the man told me that going home was too far that this kind of thing was too urgent and needed to be treated urgently. He said that in this town too we could handle the matter. He was a member of the N.K.S.T but he told me that he had

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somewhere he would direct me to and all my problems would be solved. He told me to take a bike and go to a market known as Maiagwai in Jalingo. He said, when I got to Maiagwai, I should ask after one Tiv woman who had a provision store and inquire from the woman the direction to Better City Church of God which he wrote on a piece of paper and gave me. The woman was his wife. So I took a bike and on my way, my charm still told me that I was going to be caught. Then I started praying to God. I told Him I was coming to His bosom for help, and that He should please help me.


Pastor Thomas Fwatsan

So when I reached the provision store, the woman too was reading a small Bible, a pocket Bible and I was surprised. I asked within me that so people see good in the Bible? That was how God was connecting me. I asked for direction from the woman and she directed me. She told me that the Pastor doesn't go anywhere and that he would be in the office. At that time, his office was a hut but now he has a better place. When I reached the place I thought I had gone to the wrong place. I reasoned that my problem was bigger than this round hut. So I knocked on the door and the Pastor responded that I should come in. When I bent to enter into the room, it was as though someone had pushed a heavy load off my head. That was the first experience I had. I felt really light when I entered the hut. So I sat down and for the first time in seven years, he asked me a question: "Can I help you?" I wanted to speak but I couldn't, it was just tears streaming down my eyes. He then left me in the hut. When he came back he gave me a scripture that I will never forget. He told me, "Gentleman, do not cry. God has said in His Word that He is the God of all flesh, is there anything too hard for Him?" That was the first scripture that the man gave me and the scripture registered within me. I thought, "So there is nothing too difficult for God and so let me open up."

I told the Pastor that I was an armed robber and that I had a lot of charms, that I had done a lot of bad things. Then I told him that I wanted to come out of that kind of life. I told him that the previous day I had gone for an operation and that it was that morning that I got back from the place. It was that morning that I returned to Jalingo that the crisis

within me started. I told him all these and I told him I had come to surrender all these things. I found out that he had written the name Israel and kept it on the table. When I was done speaking, he pointed to the name and told me that he was supposed to be at a friend's wedding but that while he was about taking his bath to go for the event, God asked him to stay back in the office that He was arresting someone and bringing to him and that he should give the name Israel to that person. He explained that that was why the name was written and placed on the table. He also said that immediately I entered the hut, God told him that I was the person. He said I should narrate everything to him, I shouldn't be afraid. After he said all these, I felt even lighter. He then read some other scriptures from the Bible to me. What happened after then I do not know but when I regained consciousness, I discovered I had scattered things in the whole hut. There was dirt all over me. I must have rolled on the ground as I woke up under a chair. While I was unconscious, I found myself looking at a stream flowing with clear water in a beautiful place, well landscaped, a beautiful site. On the other side of the stream, there were people singing and waving at me but I was on the other side but there was no way I could get to their side. That was what I could remember seeing.

So when I regained consciousness, the man came in to check on me. All the money I had on me, all the 50 naira notes I had on me were scattered all over the hut. The Pastor had picked them all up and put them on the table. He pointed to the money and said, "Look at your money." I replied, "That money is blood money; I will not touch it." I refused to touch the money. The cigarette I had on me also fell and he also put it on the table for me. He also pointed it out to me but I refused to touch it. I made a vow that beginning from that day I would never touch a cigarette again. The pastor told me that God directed him to tell me that I should sit under him and be discipled by him. I stayed with the pastor for five and a half years. I didn't go anywhere else; I didn't do any work. Every day, I

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would wake up and be studying the word of God with the pastor. This man left me in the third year for mission work in Gembu but later came back. He publicly stated in the church that he had served God for 17 years and that God had never spoken to him mouth to ear but that in my case when he went to Gembu God spoke to him in the bathroom mouth to ear asking him to come back and disciple the boy He brought to him. That was why he came back. So the man came back and discipled me for five and a half years. After the discipleship, he told me with his own mouth that it was over. These days if someone discipled a person, he would want that person to work with him but the man told me that God told him to release me to go to Tiv land.

What is the pastor's name?
His name is Pastor Thomas Fwatsanu.

Where is he from?
He is Jukun from Maanya, that is his village, but he was in Jalingo at that time doing God's work. He is currently in Abuja. He has a big ministry in Abuja but at that time, he was just beginning. He taught me how to live by faith, believing that you have received even what you haven't seen. In fact, that was what that man imputed into me. There were days we woke up and there was no food but the man encouraged me to have faith, that there would be food and I would see that real food would come as though it was brought by a raven. This was what I learnt from this man for the five and a half years I stayed with him. After these years, he asked me to go back home, that God asked him to release me.

Before I came back home, I dreamt. In my dream, I was on my way home when I came across a

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scene where some Tiv people were held hostage on the road by Jukun. Some were slaughtered while others were not. I had spent five and half years with this man; I could speak a little of Jukun because he used to speak Jukun with his children and I picked up some things. So when I got to the place, I spoke the little Jukun I knew and I requested for the people who were not slaughtered and they agreed and handed them over to me. While I was taking them along with me, the people were wondering the kind of man I was that those people listened to me and agreed to release them to me. I then told them that I was sent by God to liberate them. Then I left those people and went my way. I woke up and was pondering over this dream. Soon after, the pastor came and told me that God told him to release me to go to Tiv land. When he told me, I did not hesitate. I sold the property that I had in my room to raise some money and in a week's time, I headed home. In 1995 when I got converted and was being discipled, I used to spend nights in the church. The church did not have window covers or doors; what it had was just the roof.

One day while I slept in the church, God told me in 1996 that He was the one who showed Tiv the "trumpet weed" used to make their famous trumpet. The part that goes into the mouth of the trumpeter is what makes a difference. So God said He was the one who showed the Tiv man that weed and that He had a purpose for the revelation. However, the Tiv man took the trumpet He showed him and went about playing



Mama Martha Ikyereve, with her excellence award of 40years consistency in choir , New Jerusalem, and Ior Ikyereve presenting his book on Zuzu to Rev. Dr. M.T. Adagba, resident Pastor, NKST Central, Katsina-Ala.



Bishop Terdoo Angbagh
Founder: ***Victory Bible Church***

secular music, praising other gods and using the trumpet for other purposes. God told me that it was only the Tiv man that He gave the mystery of playing the local drums with a stone and it was for a reason. He said that the time was coming when He would raise stones to worship Him because human beings would be disobedient. These were the things God told me in 1996. When I set out to return God told me that I should come and bring back to Him the instruments He had given to the Tiv people which they have been using for secular purposes, that such instruments were to be used for His praise and He in return would make the Tiv nation abundantly fruitful. This was the message I received from God while I set out to come home. When I returned in 2001, I was employed by Michael Manger in Katsina-Ala to work with the National Union of Road Transport Workers. While I was at work I would always be reading my Bible most of the time. God told me to prepare for the work that He gave me. I prayed earnestly while spending nights at Victory Bible Church. When I came back in 2001, I also slept in the church for two years.

Was it a branch of the same church at Jalingo?

No, it wasn't. The Victory Bible Church in Katsina-Ala is a denomination founded by Reverend Terdoo Angbagh. When I came back I prayed for two days for God to direct me where I would fellowship. On a Saturday, God directed me to the church where they were holding a crusade and instructed me to fellowship there. I have remained there with them; even now, I'm still with them, though I'm not stable. At that time, Victory was a deliverance ministry. But what I learnt from that man in Jalingo was not deliverance. What I learnt was holiness and faith. Those were the things I learnt from that man. He taught me how to live a righteous life and a life of faith. So when I got home, God was doing a deliverance work at Victory and so I also joined in. It was at Victory that I learnt how to fast for three days – dry fasting. I then engaged in a three-day dry fasting weekly at Victory. After that, God then asked me to go and evangelize at Turan in Kwande Local Government. Then I went to Turan, in the interior part and began my mission work.

During this mission work at Turan I used to write songs and develop a pattern in my mind. The first song that God began speaking to me about Swange clearly was this song: "Or ngu er We ga o..Ter Yehovah kuma Tor shagba ka u Wou…," and each time I sang this song, the only rhythm that played out in my mind was Swange – the type played at the *burukutu* joints. One day, I took a drum and tested with the song. It fit perfectly but I stopped because I contemplated in my mind if this would be accepted by my people. My father in the Lord from Jalingo then called me and I spoke with him. While I was at Jalingo, about two or three prophets came and told me that God had deposited the gift of singing in me and so he was nursing it. So he said he had a plot in Abuja and that he would sell and give me the money to record an album. He tried to sell the land but got no buyer. This was a property in Abuja at give-away price. There was a policeman who said he wanted to buy the land and spoke with my father in the Lord. When we got to the place, his wife told us that the man was called the night before urgently and that he went to London. Then my pastor sat for a while and then turned to me and said that the time had not yet come and that I should go back home.

When I came back, I went to God in prayer and God reminded me of the trumpet He told me about. He reminded me that I wanted to record an album without the trumpet and



Evangelist John Igo Begha

that as far as there was no trumpet in that album, it wasn't going to be recorded. I came back and started searching for a trumpeter. There was a man named Aondo in Katsina-Ala; he's late now. I tried all I could to draw him close but I could not succeed. Sometimes, I would take him out and give him some money and teach him some songs. He would play them quite well but he was a drunk and he also smoked heavily. He drank 'ogogoro' to the excess. On top of this, he lived with a mistress at Mbagen in Buruku Local Government. He used to spend nights at the mistress' house. Each time I needed him, I would have to go to that house. Then I turned to God that obviously, this is not the man, so please show me somebody else. I then prayed for God to bring a trumpeter my way. I prayed this prayer for five and a half years. On one fateful day, in the course of a discussion I mentioned that I was looking for a trumpeter and then one man said he knew of a trumpeter who was into Gospel Music and that he was at Mbagen and that his name is John Igo Begha. He told me this

thing but I didn't really pay attention for over a year.

One day, I was invited with my band for a programme in Gboko. At this time, we only played drums and sang. We would directly translate Tiv songs into English and sing. People really enjoyed them. Because of this, we had invitations. When I returned to Benue and started this thing, there was this boy who was a wheelbarrow pusher when I used to work in the garage. Each time I saw this boy in my office, the Spirit of God would nudge me that this boy had a gift of singing. One day, I called him and spoke with him and as God would have it, he was a Pentecostal fellow. So I recorded all the songs I wrote at the time into a small tape recorder and gave it to him to listen to them. He had a very fine voice and then we would begin to sing. We began to sing together and move around. This time, we didn't have drums. One day, a lecturer gave me N1, 000. I took this money and constructed a hanger that could accommodate three drums but I didn't have one drum. One day, God told me not to despise the days of little beginnings and that I should go on with what he has shown me. I didn't have money so I took the rug I had in my room which I bought at N7,500 and sold it for N3,000. I went to Gboko and bought drums and returned to Katsina-Ala. I put them on the hanger and then began moving around with it. When I was invited for an occasion, I would take the drums along and would be playing while singing because I was alone. Later, that young man came along and began backing me up and we became two. I



New Jerusalem with his group

bought a gong for him and then he began playing the gong and singing while I played the drums and also sang.

Is he still with you?

Yes he is. He is in school at the moment. He would be available to feature in the next album. He has featured in all the songs we have recorded. I think it is only in my wife's recording in which I didn't sing that he too did not sing. His name is Tertsea Agende. So we started moving around together, singing. On that day, there was an event in Gboko and, we used to act too, so we staged a drama and people were excited about it. The title of the drama was 'Study to be Approved.' I had a programme at Turan where I was doing my mission work so, I took a break and went there. When I came back they told me that they had found a trumpeter, an expert trumpeter and that he was a gospel artiste. When they told me this, the next day I set out with them and we traced the house of this man in Mbagen, close to Abwa and then we found him. He is a genuine believer. He used to play the trumpet with secular musicians like Orshio. He told me of how he has played the trumpet nationwide but God arrested him. God really arrested this man because up till now, that man wakes up by 4 a.m and prays till daybreak. Since I have known him, that has been his lifestyle. I was amazed at this discovery. This man told me that when he repented he had drums that he used to play at the *burukutu* joint but that he didn't want to use them there anymore. For the trumpet, he said he dedicated it for the praise of God and he was looking for drummers with whom he could play. I told him that he needed to search no more. Then we started collaboration. I would go to his house, he would come to mine; we would play together and he was very happy. We would sing, praise God and pray together. That was how we started.

One day we were invited for a programme where we went and sang in Tiv and English. It was Pastor Dan Mou that convened the meeting. After we finished ministering he called me and said that this was the kind of thing that 'Zule Zoo' are doing in the secular world. He said that he was pleased with the way we



Rev Dr. Dan Mou

ministered and that these songs needed to be packaged but that I should wait until he got to Abuja; he would talk to his pastor in Katsina-Ala so that we would go and see him. When he convened a meeting in Abuja, he then invited us. That was our first ministration outside the state. We went for this meeting with our trumpeter. While I was going for that meeting, my spirit was telling me to get ready to record an album. So I informed my team that we were going to record in Abuja, so we prepared all the songs that we would record.

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The programme began on a Thursday. We performed on that day but didn't get any response from the man. Same thing on Friday. On Saturday, immediately after our ministration, the man just stood up and said that though he did not consult his wife, the Spirit of God asked him to announce to us that any studio of our choice was open for us to record and he would foot the bills. Ours was just to go in and record. He asked if we would go back to Benue before coming back. I said no, we were prepared. The programme finished on Sunday. On Monday, we were at the studio. It was there that we recorded "Chineke Idinma", "Shagba ka u Wou" because I wanted to try out Swange and hear how the Tiv people would react. I recorded nine tracks in that album. One was Western, another was Swange, the other was Pentecostal music. I played several rhythms, even *Biamegh*. Then I released the album to hear what Tiv people would say and do. When I released that album, I released it that it should be pirated in Benue State for three years. I just sat back. When I entered a vehicle, I would just give it to be played so I would hear what people would say. There were a lot of reactions from people. Nobody knew where the album came from and I would just sit quietly. I never told anyone that I was the one. Then I used to walk the streets eating groundnut, so if I said I was the artiste, the Tiv people wouldn't regard it. So God helped us to release this album. So this album began spreading.

I want to speak on how we even got sponsorship. One day, a Pastor



L-R: Former Gov. Ortom, wife Dr. Eunice Ortom, son Israel, New Jerusalem and wife Msendoo and others

convened a prayer retreat and requested us to accompany him and lead people to praise God at the retreat. We had received an award in Gboko from ***OnTiv*** Magazine on Saturday and went back. We were tired and the man told us that the retreat was to begin on Sunday. So, I told him that we could not make it. When I got home, I had a change of mind and decided to embark on the journey. I gathered my team and called the man and he told me that he had hired a bus to go to Makurdi for the retreat and that the vehicle was virtually empty. So he said that since I had changed my mind, we should come and join him so that we can go. When we got to Makurdi, the retreat was at Judges' Quarters in Samuel Ortom's residence. We were served food and then we headed for Gbajimba. We went to his Gbajimba residence where we prayed and praised God all through the night. The next morning when Ortom stood up to talk, he didn't start talking about the convener of the retreat, he started speaking about the Swange he heard. He asked about the artiste. Then I stood up. He said from that day onward, the ministry was no longer mine, but his. That the ministry was given to him but he didn't have the time to do it so he has lent it out to me. That I should come to him whenever I encountered challenges. It was after then that he spoke concerning the person who had convened the meeting. On that day, the convener of the meeting anointed Ortom.

Do you remember the name of the

man?
Yes. Pastor Terfa Noryila.

Is he alive?
Yes. He is alive. This year too he went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. So we went for this retreat and returned. While we were returning, Ortom gave us money generally but also called me into the room and gave me money specifically. One month later, Sam Dam Ayali came to Katsina-Ala to look for me. He was told that I was in Gboko and he received my phone number. By this time, I had a phone. He then told me that Ortom wanted to see me. At that time, Ortom was Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, National Auditor. He said that the National Auditor wanted to see me and that I should go to Makurdi. So I left for Makurdi but I did not meet him as he had gone back to Abuja. He left 20,000 for me that I should prepare towards a meeting of praise and worship at Agasha which he wanted me to be part of. I returned home and prepared with my team and we attended that meeting. We praised God all through the night till day break. All the traditional rulers in Guma were invited to that meeting. In the morning Ortom requested that we should be taken to the hotel where he lodged. There, I told him about sponsorship and my plan to record another album. He said there was no problem and he went back to Abuja and sent some money to me which I used in recording the album with the songs, "Baba Oluwa e she" and "Lu ana


Oliver Aye

man ana..." with the rhythm of Oliver Aye, then I played Swange.

The first Swange I played was without the trumpet because I wanted to conceal part of my objective. I played Swange without the trumpet and sang. But in this second album, I introduced the trumpet in the first song which took the lead. The trumpet called the songs while we responded. It was track number five in that album. So I brought it to Ortom and asked him to listen to it and make comments. He told me that he came across just one error. He said that I should have played that track five as a medley with same music but different songs until the end of the album. He said that he usually left the track five on repeat. He said that I shouldn't play those other rhythms and concentrate on Swange and do a medley with this rhythm until the end. In fact, he was the one who sold the idea of



Orshio Adakever

concentration on Swange to me. He said that when I was ready I should let him know. So he gave me money and I left. But this time I didn't want to do the Swange that we at New Jerusalem call "Swange One". I went to the real Swange that the likes of Orshio Adaaker called "Apollo 16." It was this one that I took up as a challenge to praise God, not forgetting the trumpet and damning the consequences. Then I recorded the third track, "Shav Amar," with the trumpet but we were skeptical if it would be accepted by the society. To my greatest surprise, Benue people and beyond celebrated that track. They were excited and enthusiastic.

Can you mention a few persons who celebrated this album?

I have received a lot of testimonies. There was a woman who saw me somewhere and when she got to know that I was New Jerusalem, she ran and bumped into me, thanking me. She said she had kept malice against her husband and children for several months. One day her husband went out and bought that album and brought it home and played. She was surprised because it was Swange but then the songs were songs of praise to God. All of a sudden, she found herself dancing together with her husband and children and that was the end of the malice. They embraced one another and the album became something they listened to on a daily basis. She said that was why she bumped into me the way she did and that she wanted to thank me saying that that song has healed the wound that was existent in their family. That was the first testimony I received about that album.

The second person was Senator George Akume. When he heard it, he sent for me. Then it was Zaki who was his ADC. Zaki called me that the Senator wanted to speak with me. He asked if I was New Jerusalem, I said yes. He asked if I was the one that played the songs in that album, I said yes. He said that really, God has given me a gift to bring comfort to the hearts of people. By this time, he was bereaved. His brother, His Royal Highness Chief Indyer Akume, the Ter Tarka was dead. He



New Jerusalem, left, Senator Akume, wife, Hon. Regina Akume JP+ and others

wanted me to come and praise God with him at the funeral. It was at the funeral that we got to meet one on one. He told me that he had two favourite songs or tracks in the album. One of the songs that says "I'm not keen on the things of the world, step back my soul let me seek the face of the Lord." The other says, "You've done well to us God of hosts, you are worthy to be praised." He told me that these were the two songs that touched him. Another testimony was from a lady from the Customs, Mrs. Rhoda Ako, she's late now. When I was introduced as New Jerusalem, Rhoda Ako jumped up. She told me that when she was relieved of her appointment in the Customs prematurely, she would have died if it was not for the comfort she derived from the album *Shav Amar*. The testimonies are so numerous. Another man told me that he is a retired army captain. I'm yet to meet him but we speak through the phone. He said he is a retired Captain who lives at Aliade. That since his retirement, he never went to church but one day he went somewhere and heard one of the songs urging all to prepare to meet and give account of themselves to God which caught his attention. According to him, he couldn't sleep as he thought about his life and gave his life to Christ and began going to church again.

How many albums do you now have?

I have eight audio albums and one video album, making it nine.

Can you recall their names?

The first was *Uwu, Ter u hemba*; the second, *Shie kuma, Tiv nder nen;* the third, *Shie kuma, Shav Amar*, the fourth, *Shie kuma, Let us pray*; the

fifth, *Onkasev mba Shion* also called *Ukwelegh*; the sixth, *Beraka Africa*, the seventh, *Mzough u Onkasev Shion*, the eight and the last one, *Ruamabera u Atindigh*. (As at Sept., 2019)

You've mentioned your wife as part of your music. How did you meet her?

While I worked with my trumpeter for about two years, I discovered that his daughter was in Gboko schooling at College of Agriculture, Yandev. During the period that I was moving around with her father, her two younger sisters also accompanied us. My wife's younger sisters always accompanied us but I never saw my wife. My father-in-law, you will recall, is my trumpeter. At times, her younger sisters would use my phone to call her but I never knew her, I'll be honest with you. The first day I saw her, what attracted me, to tell the truth, was that in my house we had musical instruments. You know the thing about musical instruments is that they don't just exist; it's from the blood or lineage. There were these instruments in my family, but there was no trumpet. But we had the drum with stone in my house. When I saw the trumpet in this man's house, I was thinking of how I could get a trumpeter. I approached the first and second sons but they declined to play the trumpet for me. All the boys refused to play the trumpet because, according to them, it is not something good. But since I was bent on getting a trumpeter, I began wooing the lady. I was wooing the lady as well as a trumpet for myself because I really needed the trumpet. She accepted me eventually and we got married.



ISRAEL IKYEREVE (NEW JERUSALEM) PERFORMING WITH WIFE AND OTHERS

At what point did you start seeing this lady?

Her dad and I went to Gboko where he invited me to accompany him to his brother's house. He said his daughter, who eventually became my wife, lived there. When we got there, I saw her and she was so beautiful and I was attracted to her, even physically. I said within me that since we were already becoming a family, let me go ahead and solidify the bond. That was how we began.



Mrs Deborah Msendoo Ikyereve with New Jerusalem group receives OnTiv award from Mrs Helen Agaigbe

My wife didn't offer any strong resistance. Her sisters had already travelled with me to several cities – to Lagos, Abuja and the likes. When she heard this, she knew that this man had a vision. To be honest, she too had a vision. That was how we met and began courtship and eventually got married. My father-in-law gave me his daughter free of charge. He refused to receive dowry from me but he was pressurized to receive the little token that he collected. That was how we met and got married.

Did your wife tell you how she got involved with gospel music?

When my wife lived in Gboko, she fellowshipped with Power Revival Church where she was one of the choir leaders. She is a lover of music. She was born into a home where there was music. Till now, when I write songs, my wife edits them. I do not know how to edit, but I compose. So my wife edits my songs. She would correct me while singing so that it would fit perfectly. That is the extent to which I know that God has given her that talent. We work in the studio together and her contributions are remarkable.

Have you received any awards?

I received my first award from ***OnTiv*** Magazine. We were given that award to commend us on the fact that we used the Tiv accent to sing in English. We received another award from Tiv Varsity Organization based in Gboko. I received another award from Benue Talented Artistes. I received another award from a group of persons but I've forgotten till I check the award. I received another award from the Benue State Government in 2016.

What is the scope of your audience?



Wantaregh Paul Unongo and others appreciate New Jerusalem & wife

I would say my music has audience in Nigeria mostly. I had the opportunity to go to Israel and while crossing the Sea of Galilee, the people from Benue who were in the boat said that they must listen to New Jerusalem while crossing. So I would say that my music has gained audience in Israel also.

I see you with dancers. Can you tell us about the dancers?

I started with just singing and drumming but I discovered that while we sang and played, our listeners would dance. When we experimented with dancers, we discovered that the audience increased. I discovered also that the Tiv people love dancing and that if I left dancers out, I would be leaving a vital component so decided to include that aspect as well. While I lived in Katsina-Ala, I got young boys and girls from the Department of Theatre Arts from the College of Education, Katsina-Ala. These were the people I started discussions with and also engaged. Some have left but I still have two with me presently.

Can you point out any benefit that you have obtained from obeying God by becoming a gospel artiste?

I now know that truly it was God who spoke to me. If I ventured into this thing and nothing significant happened I would have asked questions like truly, did God speak to me? I would also have been looking for something else to do. Truly, when we started, things were really difficult but with God's help, we had a breakthrough and then I realized that truly it was God who sent me. One day, Paul Unongo told me that there was an unanswered question in Tiv land, a question that even he, Paul Unongo, had been unable to answer. He stated that incidentally,

as little as I was, God worked through me to answer that question. I asked him what the question was. He said that the Tiv people were losing their culture under their watch and attempts to resuscitate it proved ineffective. Whatever way he tried to bring it back, the people would say he had started practicing witchcraft and the people misunderstood the whole thing, so he too grew weary. One day, he heard a song and it was the famous Tiv Swange – pleasing to the ear and as he listened more carefully, he heard that the songs were songs of praise to God and he said of a truth, someone has answered this question. He said he concluded that of a truth, God has blessed me with wisdom to answer this question. Of a truth it was God and it was He who directed me each step of the way, not any man. It was not even by my own wisdom. As I obeyed, I saw and I'm seeing results. God told me three important things for the Tiv people. He told me that the Tiv people are worshipping Him but that there are so many divisions and factions and that my music would unite the Church; that is what God showed me. The N.K.S.T had their own songs; the Catholics had theirs, and the Pentecostals had theirs and all that. But now, whether the N.K.S.T or the Catholics or the Pentecostals, anywhere I am called, I go. I minister and we all worship God irrespective of denomination including those that do not even go to church. I know that this is uniting the church. I think if you criticize New Jerusalem publicly, I think those who would be against would be more. I see that our music has really impacted lives positively.



...with Tor Tiv, Professor Ayatse, CFR

Do you have any message or advice for the Tiv people apart from those you have offered in your music?

The way God helped me was to take me away from home while I was a child; I grew up in the north. Sometimes I would sit and discover that I do not have the mentality of a Tiv man. If I had the mentality of a Tiv man, I wouldn't have progressed. The Tiv man is an arrogant man. Once he starts gaining a little recognition for his work, he becomes puffed up with pride, and

that was the same thing Satan did and the Bible states that God resists the proud. When I started, God told me specifically not to become puffed up with pride and that He was going to lift me up. So many people, when they see me, wonder is this New Jerusalem? The first thing I want to say to the Tiv people is that arrogance is something that God hates and we the Tiv people have a lot of pride. That is the first. There is something I learnt from the North. The Northerners believe in little beginnings, but the Tiv man does not think of beginning little. He wants to hit it big from the onset. That is why he collects loans and starts businesses that do not succeed. He doesn't start small. For instance this music, I told you that I sold my rug and bought three drums in Gboko for N3, 000. I started small. But today, even if I want a set of drums, I will buy them. So my message to the Tiv people is not to despise the days of little beginnings. A Northerner begins selling groundnuts today and graduates into something big tomorrow; an Igbo man begins selling sachet water and graduates into something big tomorrow. They may begin with a corner shop and then a filling station all because they do not despise the days of little beginnings. We, the Tiv people, despise the days of little beginnings. We feel too big to begin little. Today, some of my friends look at me and remember how they laughed at me when I started.

“I started small. But today, even if I want a set of drums, I will buy them. So my message to the Tiv people is not to despise the days of little beginnings. A Northerner begins selling groundnuts today and graduates into something big tomorrow; an Igbo man begins selling sachet water and graduates into something big tomorrow.”

Have you made money from this music?

I would say yes. I give God gratitude because as it stands now, I do not have another job, so to say, but I'm able to fend for my family, pay our children's school fees, look after my mum and do things here and there. I've not done all I wish to do but the ones I've done have been a result of the money I get from this music.

How many children do you have?
I have three children. Two boys, and a girl. (As at September, 2019)

Why do you sing in other languages in addition to Tiv?
The major aim of our songs is to evangelize. We want this gospel to be heard by other people who do not understand the Tiv language in which we sing. We captivate them with the Tiv rhythm and when they become interested, we then try to use their language so that they can also hear the message we are trying to pass across. In this manner, the gospel is spread. When we sing only in Tiv, our audience is limited. It is a common adage in my language that, "A blind man does not let the groundnuts he's frying to get burnt twice," which is why we decided to use other languages so that we can reach as many as possible. This explains why we sing in English, Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo hoping that we can reach as many as possible with the basic message that God is good.

Have you got feedback from these people who understand your songs in these other languages?
I've heard many testimonies. There was a time I was invited for a programme in Niger State where we sold one of our albums, "Beraka Africa," massively. When I came back, I received phone calls from people requesting for copies of the album in which Hausa was used and you know that they wouldn't know if Hausa was used if they didn't understand it. I received so many calls from Niger State requesting for copies of that album. I also remember some policemen who used to move around with Senator



... with wife Msendoo and children, Iwanger Beraka, Shiekuma Bethel, Kernenter Isaac & Ortom Revival



Some of New Jerusalem albums

George Akume who were not Tiv, they used to request that I give them the copies of that album in which Hausa was used. Those are the kinds of things I hear so I know that people listen to the songs in the other languages and appreciate them. These are a few testimonies I have received. There are many others I can share if we had the time.

Do you do anything else for a living apart from gospel music?

Yes. David was a musician but he was also an agriculturist, a musician and a shepherd. So when you say you are a musician and you just rely on music alone without any other thing, your blessings may be limited. As a musician, you need to have something else also that you are doing. Before I began singing, my main source of income was gardening. Gardening was the first occupation that God gave to man. All these trees, flowers and all that we see around, we have been made to understand from the Bible in Jesus' words that Solomon in all his glorious array could not compare his glory with that of the flowers in the field which neither dress nor are dressed. When I got to understand this, I began to place more value on flowers and gardening because no man can ever have more glory than the glory of these flowers because none on earth will ever be like King Solomon.

How did you begin gardening?

I began in Katsina-Ala when I came back and didn't have any other thing doing, I met one Idoma man who was fondly called Barrister. I met him in Makurdi and he was a gardener. So I used to sit with him and learn from him. He taught me

the rudiments of gardening and gradually, I picked up and then I would go back to Katsina-Ala and practice. I sought his advice on some issues from time to time and he always corrected me when I was wrong. I was the first person to start a flower garden in Katsina-Ala. I grew the garden and even built public toilets where people eased themselves and paid. It was from this garden that I raised money to produce my first album.

Do you have any flower garden at the moment?

My garden is now in Makurdi along Makurdi-Gboko road just before Gyado Villa on your way from Gboko into Makurdi. I have received a lot of patronage. This year I've sold thousands of palm trees. The Governor of Benue State has requested that I plant palm trees for him. When he came to know that I was into gardening, he bought palm trees from me and gave me the assignment of planting them for him. I'm happy with my decision to raise a garden in Makurdi. I was dedicated to this cause right from the beginning. I bent down and got soil from the gutter, put into polythene bags and gradually the garden is where it is today. As you can see I have not been affected by the economic hardship caused by Covid-19. This is because of this garden. It has sustained me. As a result of the lockdown, there were no more festive occasions at which my services are required and for which I get paid but this garden has sustained and it's still sustaining me up till date.

Why did you choose the name New Jerusalem as your brand?

The name which is derived from Revelation 21 was divinely revealed to me in 1996. It is stated in that chapter that in the new city, God would dwell among his people. In that city, there would be no sickness, death or pain. There would be no Christian denomination there. This is what fascinated me most. The objective of my music is to break down the barriers of denomination and I thank God that my songs and music have been widely accepted across all the Christian denominations in the land.



Agerzua, Rev. Terseer Alumunku, New Jerusalem & wife Msendoo and Titus Chur



New Jerusalem (arrowed) with others during a palm tree planting campaign.



...presenting some of his albums to JKN Waku



...with Evangelist Obadiah Orkor



...Evangelist Nicholas Kenabu



...Best Swange Dancer, 2019, Blessing Nev on Christmas Day 2023

NEW JERUSALEM TAKES A BOW AT 53

Christian gospel music legend, Israel Ikyereve, better known as New Jerusalem, has passed at the age of 53 years.

His wife, Deborah Msendoo Israel Ikyereve, stated that her husband transited at the Benue State University Teaching Hospital Makurdi at about 1 am on Saturday, 7th June, 2025 as a result of what she described as brief illness.

As a Performing artiste, his legendary accomplishments include turning the sensual, secular Swange music and dance into sacred praise and worship renditions.

Mr. Ikyereve, a self confessed armed robber turned gospel preacher, has fostered unprecedented church unity especially in Tiv land with his music.

Although his music compositions are multilingual, the bulk of it remains in his mother tongue - Tiv.

Born in Katsina-Ala local government area 53 years ago on 25th December, 1971 Israel Ikyereve has no doubt carved a niche for himself in the Christian music industry.

His career has been tremendously complimented by his wife, Deborah, who is a composer, performer and editor in her own right, as well as his father in-law, Evangelist John Igyo Begha, a renowned trumpeter.

Israel and Deborah who are blessed with four children have produced 12 albums.

FUNERAL NOTIFICATION IN RESPECT OF

Evangelist Israel Terhemba Ikyereve

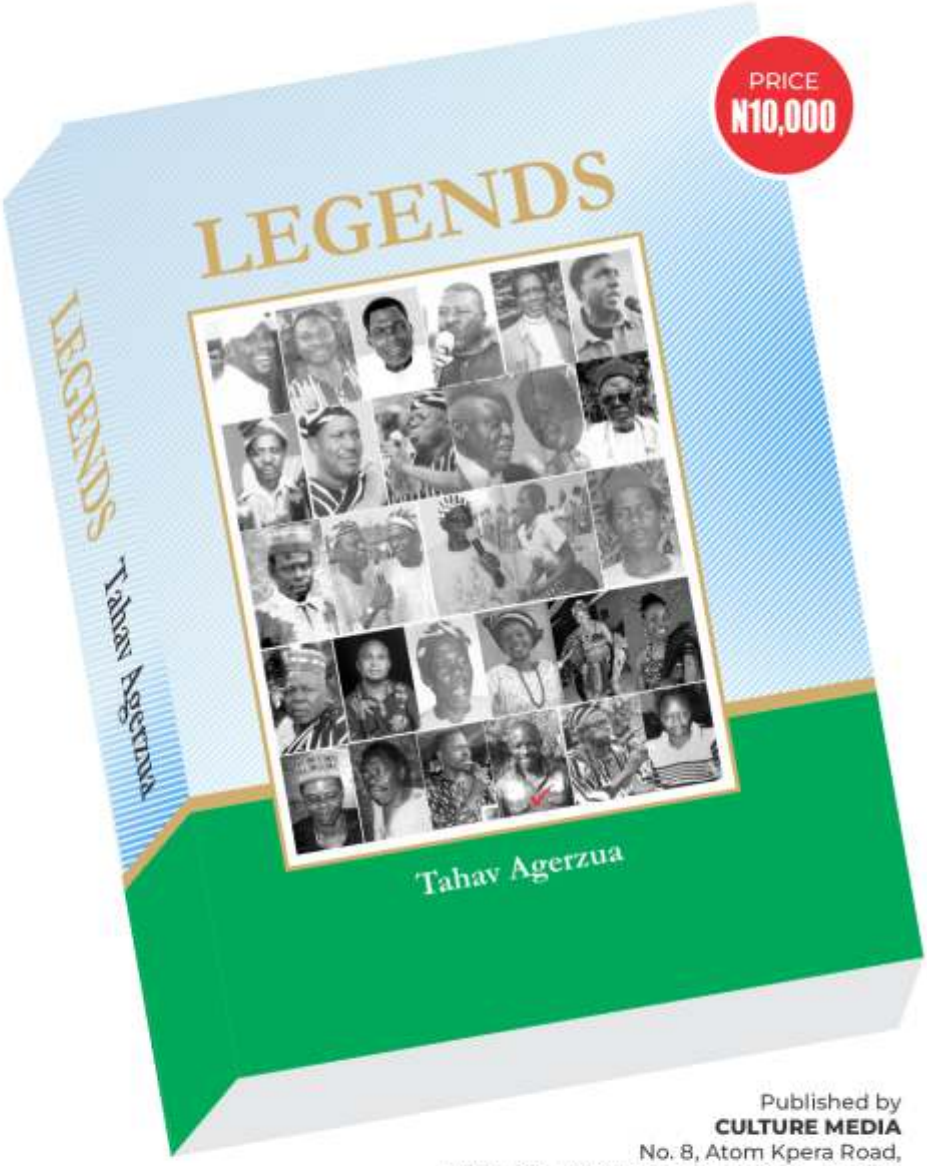
The management of New Jerusalem Singers and the Family of Ikyereve Akume of Mbamo, Kpav, Shitile in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State has released the funeral program of their beloved son, husband, father and brother, Evangelist Israel Terhemba Ikyereve, JP – founder and Director of the New Jerusalem Group who departed this life on 7th of June, 2025 at the Benue State University Teaching Hospital, Makurdi, after a brief illness.

A statement signed by Deputy Superintendent of Police, DSP Emmanuel Ikyereve, retired, indicated that his remains will be laid to rest on Saturday, July 5, 2025, in his ancestral home, Mbamo, Sati-Agirigi, Katsina-Ala LGA, Benue State.

The program stated that there will be Service of Songs on Thursday, July 3, 2025 at Mission House International, No. 9, Gboko Road, Makurdi, from 5:00pm – 8:00pm; as well as Commendation Service at same venue on Friday July 4, 2025 between 9:00am and 11:00am.

It specified that Christian Wake will hold at Ikyereve Village, Mbamo, Sati-Agirigi, Katsina-Ala LGA, Benue State, from 6:00pm - Dawn while Funeral Service and Interment will be on Saturday, July 5, 2025 at same place between 7:00am – 10am.

The statement invited the general public to join in honoring what it described as the memory and impactful legacy of Israel Terhemba Ikyereve.



Published by
CULTURE MEDIA
No. 8, Atom Kpera Road,
High Level, Makurdi, Benue State - Nigeria
Tel: +234 703 121 6041, 806 564 1424



... with wife Msendoo and children, Iwanger Beraka, Shiekuma Bethel, Kernenter Isaac & Ortom Revival

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Publisher
www.power-magazine.com
No 8, Atom Kpera Road, High Level
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ADVERT RATES

Inside front & back page	- N170,000
Inside full page	- N150,000
Inside half page	- N100,000
Other Positions	- Negotiable

POWER
The Global Magazine Vol. 2 No. 3 July, 2025

No one ever imagined that Swange Music would be played in the church. It was considered secular, profane, vulgar and indecent. However, it was the most popular dance among the Tiv. Swange foisted its flag internationally early as the music of the Tiv people of Central Nigeria, the appeal of which transcended and gained widespread fascination, if not acceptance. One man brought the profane into God's sanctuary with an acceptance that cuts across all the Christian denominations in the land. This development occurred in a dramatic manner. The man at the centre of this unprecedented new Swange narrative, Israel Ikyereve, tells his story as published in my book LEGENDS.

This excerpt is an honour to his enduring legacy.

