

## How I Became the First Jewish Unificationist

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My relationship with Heavenly Father goes back to the first time I became aware of guardian angels when I was five years old. It was probably much before that time, but this is as far back as I can remember.

My mother had become very ill, and I remember watching her being treated by two doctors as she lay on a cot in the back of the shoe store my father had on the South Side of Chicago. I was the youngest of six children, and we all lived in the four-room apartment in the back of the store. Suddenly, a voice inside me said, "Don't worry, you don't need to be afraid; we're taking care of you from up here!"

My parents had come from Russia, both Orthodox Jews, in 1905, during the Russo-Japanese War. My father had been working for my mother's family, who were quite affluent for Jewish people in Russia. When my parents arrived in Chicago, my father had one Canadian nickel (they had first gone to Canada) in his pocket. When my mother became very ill, my older sister, who was only 14, had to drop out of high school to take care of the whole family.

I lived in Chicago, growing up without fear because of that early experience. Before the U.S. entered the Second World War, I had a strong desire to serve my country by joining the Army as a W.A.C. However, my mother became seriously ill again, and I had to take care of her at home. However, she had cancer and became worse, and died on October 29, 1943.

Soon afterward, saying nothing to the rest of my family, I enlisted in the Army. As it turned out, I believe this was what God had wanted me to do, as I was able to get an education under the G.I. Bill of Rights.

I served in the Signal Corps, Military Intelligence Department, and as an Occupational Counselor, from August 1944 to July 1946. After being discharged, I went to live in Los Angeles with an older brother and his family and enrolled in Los Angeles City College under the G.I. Bill.

During my first term, my sociology class was assigned a book to read called *Looking Backward*, written by Edward Bellamy, and published in 1888. As I was reading this prophecy of an ideal world to come in the year 2000, I suddenly recognized this as a true world and knew intuitively that I would see it come into existence during my own lifetime. This was in 1947. I also realized that the world I was living in was a false world that was never meant to exist. This incredible new world came alive as I was reading.

### Meeting my spiritual parent

From that point on, my destiny was assured. I spoke about the book for 18 years to anyone and everyone but found no one who could accept this, as I did, as a true prophecy. During this time I married twice and had two sons. A year after my second divorce, in Chicago, I met my spiritual mother Eileen Welch (now

Lemmers). Her son was in my younger son's room at public school, and we met at Open House, where she was the volunteer Room Mother. We exchanged business cards, and she called me at work the next day and invited me to her apartment with my son, Norman. After an impromptu musical, she sang and I played the accordion, I invited her to my apartment. The third time we met was at her apartment. Just after I had entered, she turned to me and said, "You know, there's an international family building an ideal world." I immediately replied, "You know, that's what I've been waiting for, for 18 years!" With that one sentence, I knew my search had ended, and this movement was where I belonged. This happened on October 15, 1965, the most important date in Bellamy's book.

A month after I met Eileen I had an accident and while I was in the hospital I read David S.C. Kim's translation of the Principle, Individual Preparation for His Coming Kingdom, completing it in three hours (a minor miracle). I had been raised an Orthodox Jew and was not interested at all in Christianity; however, I could see clearly in the book that this was based on the original Hebrew concept of God and the Messiah.

Seven months after I had read the book, Eileen asked me to write to David Kim and let him know how much I liked the book. By that time, Eileen had taught me much about the Principle through informal discussions, mostly about the Old Testament. I wrote a letter to Mr. Kim, explaining that I wanted to help in any way I could to further this movement in Chicago. I was unable to offer any money, since I was raising two sons alone, but told him that I was an expert typist, had studied to be a Spanish teacher, and had done some editing. He answered my letter quickly and asked if I would edit his book for a better translation to the Western world. I was stunned by his trust in me when we had never even met, he being at that time in Utah and I in Chicago. This began a very deep and trusting relationship that has endured to this very day, and I accepted this as my first official mission in the movement which was to become the Unification Church in 1972 when Father came to the United States.

### **Spiritual experience**

On Yom Kippur, the day of Atonement for all the Jews in the world, in the autumn of 1966, I was home from work and was directed by God to work on the book. I was sitting at my kitchen table, editing the Mission of Jesus, when suddenly my kitchen filled up with a white mist and my spirit was taken to the place where Jesus was being crucified. I saw the entire scene from a distance but knew what was happening, and I cried out in horror, "My God, my people, what are we doing? We're making terrible mistake-he's our brother!" I was weeping as though my heart would break, and suddenly I was brought back to the kitchen and reunited with my body, and the light disappeared. The entire experience lasted but a few seconds, but my life was completely changed. I remained in my chair, sobbing uncontrollably for some time. After I had regained my composure, I realized that something rare and profound had happened to me, and I began to ask God why He had given me this experience, since I had not asked for a sign I knew I was in the right place, and had already accepted Jesus. I understand that God does nothing without a reason, and I persisted in wanting to know the reason for my experience.

### **A historical role**

When I went to see Father and Mother on True Parents' birthday in February 1969, when they came to conduct the Blessing of 13 couples-the first in the United States I met others in the family at Upshur House in Washington, DC for the first time, and it suddenly dawned on me that I was the first Jewish person in the world to join the church. That was the first answer to my question. Then other reasons came to me for my extraordinary spiritual experience: It could only happen on Yom Kippur, when God could call me to repent for all the Jews in the world for the right reason. Furthermore, my verbal repentance was needed to open the spiritual barriers in the spirit world so that other Jews could join the Family. Another reason for this was that I was working on a Holy Book, and was not qualified. I had never been baptized

in a Christian church, so I was given a spiritual baptism and rebirth to Jesus and the Holy Spirit in order that the work I was doing could be an acceptable offering to God.

Then, I began to ask God why He had chosen me to be the first Jewish member. Surely, I thought, He could have found someone more capable among the 14 million Jews on earth. The answer came—one of my ancestors had been at the crucifixion, and the words I spoke were what that person (male or female I still don't know) said at the time it happened. The repentance expressed at that time made the condition for me to be chosen. I realized that even my name, Sarah, was predestined; just as the first Jewish woman, Abraham's wife, I had to be named Sarah as the first Jewish member of the Third Israel.



*Sarah Witt Unification Theological Seminary students*

In the middle of June 1974, I was invited to attend the last 100-day Leaders Training Seminar at Belvedere. I immediately accepted. After taking a 3-month leave of absence from my job as a proofreader for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, and finding a suitable apartment for my two sons (20 and 23 years old), I flew to Belvedere, arriving on August 4, 1974. During my training, I had the opportunity to participate in the Madison Square Garden Campaign and the 7-day Fast across from the United Nations. On November 1, the workshop site was moved from Belvedere to Barrytown. In February 1977, I returned to Barrytown and have since been on the Staff here at the Seminary. I wrote and recorded a radio program consisting of a series of 36 fifteen-minute tapes—a commentaries based on Divine Principle. The program, of which the writing and editing took about 18 months to finalize, has been aired on WKNY, a Kingston, New York station, since January 1980 on Sunday evenings. Since the tapes were finalized, I have been doing public relations and various other projects at Unification Theological Seminary.