



Why I Joined the Mormon Church

By Jewish Converts

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By
JEWISH CONVERTS

A Jewish lady who had been reading literature of the Mormon Church, and was much interested expressed the thought that she would like to talk with some Jewish people who had joined the Mormon Church. Since none resided in the city in which she lived, we asked a few recent converts to write and tell her of what appealed to them in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We asked for copies of their letters with approval to print them in a tract that might be used by our missionaries in their efforts to present the message to the Jewish people. For certain family reasons we are withholding the names, which may be had upon request.

A certified public accountant and business counselor whose activities are nation-wide:

“Dear Mrs. :

“I have been requested to write you with respect to the Church. It is thrilling for me to get a request of this kind. With all my mind and energy I believe this gospel to be true.

“In January of 1953, the only thing I knew about Mormonism was a word called polygamy. That month

I met an individual who introduced me to the subject of Mormonism. It was the first time I ever discussed religion with anyone that was not dogmatic, loud or smug. It was reassuring to find someone who did not make a mystery of the Bible or religion and could logically discuss the subject. The usual cliches were missing, the vile language when you disagreed or asked questions was gone, and the abrupt ending of a discussion due to differences of opinion was certainly not evident. Hence, for the first time in my life, a discussion of religion did not seem distasteful and I was interested enough to want to know more about the subject.

“How does one go about this? The logical thing was to do some reading. I asked for some literature and began to read. The more I read, the more questions I asked. Strangely enough, I got answers without evasiveness. The answers made sense. My desire to read the Mormon literature became quite intense and I no longer was interested in reading anything else but the tax literature necessary for my work. I decided that if it were the truth, I did not want to miss it, and if it were not true, I could trust my own mind to determine that. I learned that faith could be had through logic.

“In addition to the reading, I began to meet Mormon people. Here again was something different. I can remember the first remark I made after my first visit to Sunday school. I said, ‘You know, these people look just the way Mormon people should look. Their faces have a look of intelligence and bear a testimony that they have the true gospel.’ It was a joy to see the youngsters get up and speak. It was no wonder that the adults were such wonderful public speakers. From the time the children can express themselves they are permitted to participate in Sunday school meetings, and as they grow older they develop into fine public speakers. The meetings are not dominated by one individual, such

as a priest, rabbi or minister. Everyone participates. The Mormon Church has no paid clergy. This permits of free expression and the fear of losing one's job is not present. How important this is can be judged by one who has seen the clergy of other faiths prostitute themselves for the jobs they hold.

"The 'word of wisdom' advises against the use of tobacco, strong drink, tea and coffee. After 130 years, medicine is today substantiating Joseph Smith's revelation. The importance of observing the 'word of wisdom' in this day of juvenile delinquency is especially important to parents of teenagers. Mormon parents do not worry themselves sick as to what their youngsters are doing when they are with other youngsters. They know that the heartaches one reads about in the daily papers will not touch them. It is as natural as breathing for their children to abstain from drinking, smoking and the other vices which bring these tragedies into the lives of parents. The Church devotes much time to the moral education of its children.

"I firmly believe that at one time the Jewish people practiced the gospel as the Mormon people do today. The Lord prophesied that the time would come when Judah would no longer hear His words. Why this should be so surprising I do not know. We profess to believe the Old Testament, which is a record of God's words to his children, through his servants, the prophets.

"The Jewish conception of God is erroneous. All through the Old Testament we read of anthropomorphic God and yet through false interpretation we are taught about another God—one without parts and passions. We may as well go back to worshipping a golden calf or the sun. I am sure that He is displeased. Time does not permit me to go into all the contradictions, superstitions, and customs that the Jewish people practice today, which are contrary to the teachings or have never been

mentioned in the Old Testament. God does not speak truth in one place and a falsehood in another. He is truthful always. It is only our interpretations that are incorrect.

“Many of my friends have often said that the Mormon Church is quite small numerically. I remind them that the Lord, when He made his covenant with Abraham said, ‘I choose thee not because you are the greatest in number but because you are the fewest in number.’ I admit that all churches may practice some of the teachings of the Lord but not all of the teachings. The Mormon Church, in addition to the Bible, has a prophet on earth today, has other scripture, and is thus able to teach all of the gospel correctly without misinterpretation that is prevalent in all the other churches on the earth today. No other church claims revelation today.

“I trust, Mrs., that these few words may give you the confidence to continue with your study of the gospel. I do hope that I may have the pleasure of meeting you some day so that we may discuss the subject.”

A doctor who recently joined the Mormon Church:

“Dear Mrs. :

“From the headquarters of our church in Salt Lake City I learned that you are interested in meeting a Jewish convert to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly known as the Mormons.

“I know that you must have many points you’d like to discuss with me and I am happily looking forward to a return letter from you.

“In the meantime, with your permission, I’d like to tell via this letter a few of the things in my heart. The prophets of the Old Testament or the ‘Torah’ tell us that without a prophet the people go astray. Our

people, the Jews, have not had a prophet for approximately 2500 years. Did God turn His face away from the Jews? Yes, because He permitted the Temple to be destroyed and the people lost their lord. The Jews of today follow the same doctrine and type of leadership as of that day. Hence, no one has come from God, as did Moses, and say, 'Thus sayeth the Lord,' and correct them. That is no one whom they have accepted. In our day, the Lord sent Joseph Smith.

"As evidence of that, the Mormon religion is the only one basically involved in the gathering of Israel. The Mormon faith is the only one that even discussed the Aaronic Priesthood or (the Cohens).

"Never did anyone who did God's work ever get paid for it. The Mormon Church is the only one that exists without paying its officers.

"In Ezekiel, the 37th chapter, there is mention of two sticks with writing upon them, one for Judah the other for Joseph. The book of Judah is the Bible. The one of Joseph is the Book of Mormon.

"I testify to you that 'Mormonism' is the only true Church upon the earth today. By that I mean it has divine revelation, has the authority to act in God's name and does so free of charge."

An industrial designer and artist whose grandfathers were both Rabbis:

"Dear Mrs.:

"The missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints forwarded your name and address to the Church headquarters in Salt Lake City. In the letter they mentioned you are seriously investigating their message, and would like to communicate with a Jewish convert to the gospel they preach.

"Despite the fact we have never met, I feel we have two important things in common: a bond and a problem.

"This bond, one may say, was formulated before the creation of the world, sanctioned by the presence of God with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, strengthened by Moses in the wilderness, tempered by trials and tribulations through the ages, and glorified by a humble Jewish carpenter who claimed He was the Son of God and could emerge victorious in a battle with the grave. It is a bond that men from Pharoah of Egypt to Adolph Hitler have tried to break and failed miserably. This is the bond between the Children of Israel.

"The problem in common is in itself simple and yet far-reaching beyond the questions of this life. As a Jewish investigator of Christianity your anxieties and doubts must be great. Relatives and friends will add to your confusion. This portion of your problem is easy for me to understand as both of my grandfathers were Rabbis. I had never reached confirmation due to a divorce in my family. It will be impossible for a stranger to comprehend your entire situation; however, as it is a common problem I must rely on my own experience.

"First, Jesus either was or was not what He claimed to be. It was much more difficult for me to accept Him as the Son of God and Savior of the world than to accept the possibility of God again opening the heavens, ordaining a modern-day prophet, and bringing forth new scripture. I was not willing to accept or trust any man's word for the answer. Too many uncomplimentary historical facts pertaining to incidents between so-called Christian nations and non-believers, not to mention the personal experiences still fresh in my mind, made me doubt. Even after numerous discussions with the missionaries, many of my questions seemed unanswered. Deciding to investigate for myself, I started a study of the New Testament which was claimed to be a record of the life, ministry, and death of the Jewish preacher.

"It was during this careful reading of the book that

it became more and more evident to me that this Jesus was more than a mere radical preacher. Regardless of the ridicule and trouble experienced at the hands of local religious authorities, He did perform miracles and seemed to possess powers far beyond those of mortal man. Too many unbiased witnesses testified of these events to ignore them. The philosophy He preached was far in advance of that given through Moses and yet not contradictory to the Ten Commandments. Instead of an eye for an eye, He preached turn the other cheek. Instead of sacrifice and burnt offerings, He asked for the sacrifice of a broken heart and contrite spirit in the individual. In all His preaching there appeared nothing to justify His terrible death. His claim to be the Son of God, which was the basis of this so-called guilt of blasphemy, was never disproved. On the contrary, the fearful persecutions and tribulations of the Jewish people since that time seemed to testify of their guilt and not His, in departing from the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It was noted in the Old Testament that the children of Israel never suffered while in harmony with their God. Their suffering only occurred when they departed from the ways of their fathers. They had prophets of old to guide and direct them; yet today and for the past two thousand years they have had no prophet. Surely, it is not because they have no need of one.

“Studying the prophecies of Jesus it was noticed that the Jews’ persecutions and trials were foretold to the letter by this Stranger of Galilee, as history itself will bear out. The description of His resurrection from the dead was an event the magnitude of which has never been equaled anywhere in history. Even with all this evidence I was very hesitant to fully accept the recorded scripture pertaining to the ministry of Jesus.

“The study completed, the words of the missionaries

impressive but not by any means totally convincing, there was only one place left for a very confused heart to turn for counsel. The ultimate source of all wisdom—God—himself. I asked Him the questions that were destroying my peace of mind and troubling me so greatly and requested a sure and infallible means of recognizing the answer. No vision was obtained, no glorified beings were seen, no heavenly voices were heard. Deep down in the recesses of my mind a feeling that this man Jesus was, as He claimed, the Son of God and the Christ of the world, was made manifest in a sure and positive manner. It did not strike as a bolt of lightning, it was not what one would call a spectacular sensation, but rather a quiet, calm and peaceful experience. It was small in scope yet extremely penetrating; in fact, so much that it seemed as if a long hidden knowledge had suddenly been uncovered and revived in my mind. This knowledge of Jesus being the Christ has continued to grow and enlarge ever since.

“All this probably sounds very unconvincing to you, and I certainly cannot blame you for your feelings. You will never be converted by anything I or any missionary may ever say or do. By hearing the preaching a desire to investigate and believe might be created, but only God and God alone can open your mind to comprehend the purpose in eternity of the being, Jesus Christ. This great gift of understanding is from our Eternal Father, and He will gladly give it to you if you but ask with a sincere heart.

“This humble testimony I can leave with you. Since becoming a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints I have never been happier. The knowledge that it is possible to possess my family through all eternity, easily compensates for all earthly riches or scorn by relative or friend.”

A prominent attorney at law:

"I have your letter asking if I would be willing to write a letter giving my reasons as a Jew for joining the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, with the thought that the letter might be used in missionary work among the Jewish people.

"I am pleased to do so, although the first thought that occurred to me was one of reservation—how could I prevent such a letter from giving the impression that I regard myself as 'saved' or somehow better or superior to others. So I thought I'd say at the outset that I have only love and respect for my people. In fact, one of the reasons I'm pleased to write this letter is in the hope that more of them may see fit to accept the gospel and receive the peace and joy that have come to me.

"One of the first things that impressed me about the Mormon teachings was their literal acceptance of the scriptures, including the Old Testament. I had been taught that it was mostly folklore, poetry, and history, etc., but that there wasn't any unified doctrine running through it—rather that you could find authority in it for any conflicting interpretation.

"One of the first surprises I had was to find that when the Mormon teachings were applied to the scriptures, they just seemed to fall into place. On looking into the matter further I found also that one reason there seemed to be so much general confusion about the scriptures was because people put their own interpretation on them rather than accept their literal statements. And it was only when they were accepted at face value that they fell into the simple, beautiful and satisfying pattern that we call the gospel, that answers the vital questions of where we came from, why we're here, and where we may go.

"Realizing that the scriptures made sense when accepted literally—and only then—seemed to open a won-

derful door to me. If they did present a unified pattern perhaps they could really be relied upon to answer the above questions from the point of view of Judaism. But I found that the Old Testament led directly to the New Testament and the Book of Mormon. And, taking the Old Testament at face value, it would seem that it should be so. If God does not change and He had prophets and current scriptures in former times, you'd expect them to continue. And I was impressed by the fact that the Mormon Church claims both prophets and modern scripture.

“Another thing that impressed me was that the Jews in Old Testament times were in very much the same position that the Mormons are in today. They claimed to be the only people who had the priesthood of God or the authority to act in the earth in God's name, and perform sacred ordinances in temples. In fact, as you know the priesthood in those days could only be held by descendants of Levi, one of the sons of Jacob. And apparently the Lord supported them in that stand as witness the incidents of Korah and Uzziah in the Old Testament.

“Even in New Testament times there were priests among the Jews, as distinguished from rabbis who are merely teachers and claim no priestly authority. Yet today there are no priests in Judaism claiming authority from God. But the Mormons not only claimed to have priesthood and authority from God, but there appeared to be a great number of well-attested incidents in which the intervention of the Lord recognized the authority of his servants in ancient days.

“Another thing that greatly impressed me was the Mormon teaching about God—particularly that He is a personal God. I'd never been able to quite conceive of the sort of God I'd been taught about—a formless, shapeless influence. And I'd never done much praying,

perhaps partly because praying to such a God did not have very great significance to me, although I was able to get a considerable spiritual lift from it. But when I learned to whom I was praying, my prayers had a new meaning, and I made them a daily habit.

"I read the Book of Mormon and was impressed with it beyond words. I definitely felt that it was not the work of man's learning or ability, but that it was scripture of the same order as the Bible.

"My feeling then was that I would make the Mormon philosophy my own (which I suppose I had already done) and live by it, but without joining the Church. I felt that it didn't matter what church a person belonged to, and I could have the benefits of the Mormon way of life without joining a Christian religion, which would mean terrible disgrace and hurt to my family and myself.

"However, I didn't feel right about that, and soon realized that what I was doing was trying to dictate terms to the Lord rather than accept Him as the scriptures indicated. Apparently what the Lord required was complete surrender to Him, evidenced by baptism into His Kingdom in the earth, performed by those who had authority to do so. I was satisfied that the Mormon Church was the only Church that had the gospel and the authority from God to perform that ordinance. The Mormon Church, of course, claims to have received these by direct visitations from the heavens as in biblical times. It was also of interest to me that the members of the Mormon Church claim to be descendants of the Israelites of old.

"After a great deal of prayer and what I suppose is called 'soul searching,' I finally applied for baptism into the Mormon Church, having a definite feeling that it was the only thing I could do. I thought my former life was happy, and I'm sure it was. But as I've tried to serve the Lord a deep and abiding joy has come into my

life that makes what I once thought was happiness seem pale indeed.

"I've never regretted the step I took, but have been most grateful to the Lord that He gave me the testimony and the strength to do it.

"I sincerely hope the above few thoughts and comments will be of value in helping some to bring the sweet joy of the gospel into their lives as it has come into mine."

The son of a wealthy Jewish industrialist and farmer in Germany, who himself graduated from the Munich Technical College with a Doctor in Science, and at present a research assistant at the University of Utah, a man of wide experience and travel, having spent some time in Palestine, and the author of the book, "Peace to a Jew":

"I accepted the doctrines of the Church out of traditional and rational reasons. Traditional—I found here the only true continuation of the moral and social law of Moses, translated into a modern way of life. And rational—the L. D. S. doctrines form a logical and practical answer to all quests and help me to make life worthwhile and happier to live."

**Testimony of a prominent Jewish woman
—a graduate pharmacist:**

"On August 17, 1953, I had the great privilege of being baptized and confirmed a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and becoming a sister in the Gospel. I wish to state I am of Jewish ancestry

born of goodly parents. My father and brothers were physicians and surgeons. I am a graduate pharmacist.

“My husband, who passed away in 1953, was a cantor and musical director, and was associated with the Synagogue since his childhood. He and I were both brought up under the strictest Mosaic laws and in spite of all that we had a desire to study the life of Christ. In fact, my husband wrote the music for ‘The Pilgrimage Play,’ arranged the music for the ‘King of Kings,’ ‘Sign of the Cross,’ and worked on many other religious musical scores. His latest symphony was ‘St. Paul on the Road to Damascus.’

“He loved and understood the life of the Nazarene, Jesus the Christ. He and I studied together the non-Jewish faiths and loved it.

“Ever since I was a young woman I have always had compassion for anyone who needed help and courage. I always tried to assist them in the best way I knew how. Finally, the time came when my husband passed away and I then needed help for the first time.

“At the time of my husband’s illness and passing, a fine Latter-day Saint woman came to see us whom I had befriended for many years. She was the first Latter-day Saint I had the pleasure of knowing. To know her was to love her.

“When I was called to pass through these sorrowful experiences I went to Honolulu to see my daughter and there try to seek help in overcoming my sorrow. I went to the Synagogue but did not receive consolation in satisfaction. In my meditation I then decided that I must try to find the Mormon Church. While I was looking in the telephone directory for the address, a knock came at my door. There, standing in my doorway, were two young men. I asked them what I could do for them and they stated they were missionaries representing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, more com-

monly known as the Mormon Church. I told them I was just looking up the address of the Church. To me this was a miracle that God led them to me at this opportune moment. They spent many hours over a period of time explaining the Gospel to me. Never had I met such clean-cut, gracious young men interested in such worthwhile things. They invited me to attend Church and that evening a convert from Ireland spoke. I was deeply impressed with his testimony.

"After this meeting I had the privilege of meeting the speaker's employer from Los Angeles, California. He graciously extended an invitation for me to meet him to discuss the Gospel further. He helped to clarify many points of doctrine for me. I must say I was deeply impressed to see how the Gospel was applied in the life of a successful business man. One who was interested in spiritual, worthwhile things also, and with a desire in his heart to help others along the way of life.

"I studied diligently and, finally on August 17, 1953, I entered the waters of baptism, was confirmed a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and received the laying on of hands for the Gift of the Holy Ghost. I shall never forget this ecstatic day.

"Since then the sad moments have turned to peace, joy and tranquillity. I am deeply grateful that I have learned the purpose of life and am happy to acknowledge to the world that I have taken upon myself the name of Jesus Christ by becoming a member of His Church. It is difficult for me to explain the feeling of complete happiness that has come over me as a result of this step which I have taken. I feel that I have indeed captured 'heaven on earth.'

"I testify to my people that this is indeed the true Church, and all those who will humble themselves and go down in the waters of baptism can receive that same divine testimony and conviction as I have, that this is truly God's 'marvelous work and a wonder.'"