

» *Sarah Weston* «

FINDING A PATH OF HER OWN

BORN INTO ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S MOST PROMINENT FAMILIES, SARAH LOPEZ WESTON GAVE UP A LIFE IN THE LAP OF LUXURY TO START ANEW IN LONDON, FINDING SPIRITUALITY AND HER OWN IDENTITY IN THE PROCESS.

BY *SUNSHINE*
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When

Sarah Weston enters a room, her footsteps are light but determined, her gaze curious yet knowing, and her words gentle but full of a refreshing honesty. Sarah emanates the calm of someone who has taken the building blocks of her life, rearranged the pieces, and come up with the perfect fit.

But, she admits, it was not always like this. She remembers “being extremely spoiled growing up, especially in how I would speak to people who I would view as beneath me. I was really rude, not a nice person.” She continues, “I felt I was better than other people.”

Now 34, the only daughter of ABS-CBN chairman Gabby Lopez and first wife Babsie Chuidian Litton, Sarah Weston used to be known in Manila social circles as Nikki Lopez. She remembers a happy childhood where she spent her first eight years in California and her adolescence and teenage years in the Philippines. But by the time she left to pursue a degree at Williams College in the States, she had grown into a “glass half-empty person.” Sarah explains: “Even though I had a lot, I felt I didn’t have anything materially or emotionally. It was like nothing was ever enough. It’s like seeing that someone else always has more than you. And with this view, you are never happy.”

The transformation from Nikki to Sarah could not have been more dramatic.

Seven years ago, her life, on paper at least, looked perfect. Working as a banker in



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STYLED BY ROSANNA LAUREL. MAKEUP BY TATIN YANG. HAIR BY HELEN EGAN

New York City, she had a boyfriend, lots of friends, and life was filled with city activity. Logical and not very emotional by nature, she believed in what was tangible and would make fun of anyone who spoke to her about spirituality.

Today, Sarah lives in London and works full-time as a teacher of Kabbalah. It is this 4,000-year-old spiritual teaching, or “philosophy of living,” which in essence introduced her to her real self. She chose to change her former name to the biblical one because of the affinity she felt towards Sarah, the wife of Abraham.

Sarah’s dedication to this new spirituality may be complete but the journey she took to get there was one she took inch by inch. The initial change took place when she finally asked about a red string a friend was wearing when they had dinner together. “It was the

past, she used to see her parents as providers, she now appreciates how much they have done for her, and can now ask herself, “What can I give to them?”

The way Sarah sees it, spiritual wisdom is the knowledge to change our lives: “It elevates our consciousness so the decisions we make are with more clarity. So instead of going down the route that gives us the most blockages and frustrations, we can take a different route to get to whatever our goals are.”

Seeing her life and herself in a different light also helped her to let go of pain from her childhood that she did not realize she was carrying, such as the effect of her parents’ divorce when she was 14. She remembers, “It was not something I processed emotionally very well. I dove into my school work and did well—that was how I managed it.”

Now living full-time in London, Sarah teaches from four to six public and private classes per week, with anywhere from 20 to 200 people in each class. She compares Kabbalah to “spiritual yoga.” She says, “Everyone comes at a different level and participates in a different way.”

Having introduced Kabbalah to the Philippines in 2008, Sarah is now fulfilling a different variation of a childhood dream—she had always wanted to find a way to help the country she feels is a place of home. It’s an instinct she shares with her father: “I feel like I have my love of country from him—wanting to make the country a better place, doing things that add value, seeing the good in the people.”

Teaching a predominantly Catholic country about this spiritual philosophy is something Sarah really considers her own

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first time I noticed it in two years of her wearing it—I had no idea what Kabbalah was and was curious so I went to a lecture.”

Recalling her first trip to the Kabbalah Centre, Sarah says, “It was then that I saw there was more to life—I guess I was looking for meaning, direction, clarity and was finally ready to find it.”

She explains the spiritual laws that taught her to look at her life through a different lens: “It’s the idea that we are in control of everything in our life, we can make anything happen. It’s this sense of ‘Oh, wow—I created all the chaos in my life.’ I liked the feeling of empowerment; that if I did not like something, I had the power to see things differently and overcome it.” She continues, “The spiritual fabric of life holds the principles of cause and effect. This means everything good or bad that happens to me is either from something in our past or for something in our future.”

She adds, “You can’t plant thoughts of judgment and expect to be happy; you can’t plant a lemon seed expecting a mango tree to grow.”

Although skeptical at first, her commitment strengthened when she applied what she learned and saw concrete changes in her own life. “People reacted to me differently because I was less angry, and this helped my relationships and my family.” Where in the

Weston speaking at a Kabbalah seminar.



Intrigued by the people and ideas she discovered through the Kabbalah Centre, Sarah started spending as much time there as possible, eventually leaving the bank to work as a cashier at the bookstore just so she could learn more. And when a job opened up at the Centre in California, she moved to Los Angeles, first to work on a movie about Rav and Karen Berg, the Centre’s founders, and then to undergo training to teach others about everything she had learned.

It was also through Kabbalah that Sarah met and married her husband Marcus Weston, also a teacher and with whom she shares the same spiritual path. She says, “I feel complete, like a part of me I did not even know was missing is there now. When I see myself through his eyes, I see the best version of myself.”

personal calling. “I feel like with my work now I am my own person. I am doing something that is really mine.” She asserts, “When you know something is right for you, you don’t have to question it.”

With students who also come from all religious faiths, Sarah explains that Kabbalah is a unifying force between religions, not a religion itself. She says, “It is about unity, bringing people together, tolerating people no matter what they believe, and learning things that will improve your life.”

Although Sarah’s feet are firmly planted in a garden of happiness, her philosophical nature ensures there are many things she still dreams of.

She muses, “I’ve always wondered why there is so much charity in the world but nothing changes. We live in a world with more knowledge yet less control. More medications yet more sickness. Greater communication yet people living in the same house feel completely disconnected from each other.”

“I’ve always felt the consciousness of the people can change society. I dream of a world where people are empowered, take personal responsibility, and change.”

Yehuda Berg and Michael Berg, the co-directors of the Kabbalah Centre, will hold talks on August 28 and 29 at the Mandarin Oriental. philippines@kabbalah.com; kabbalahphilippines.com