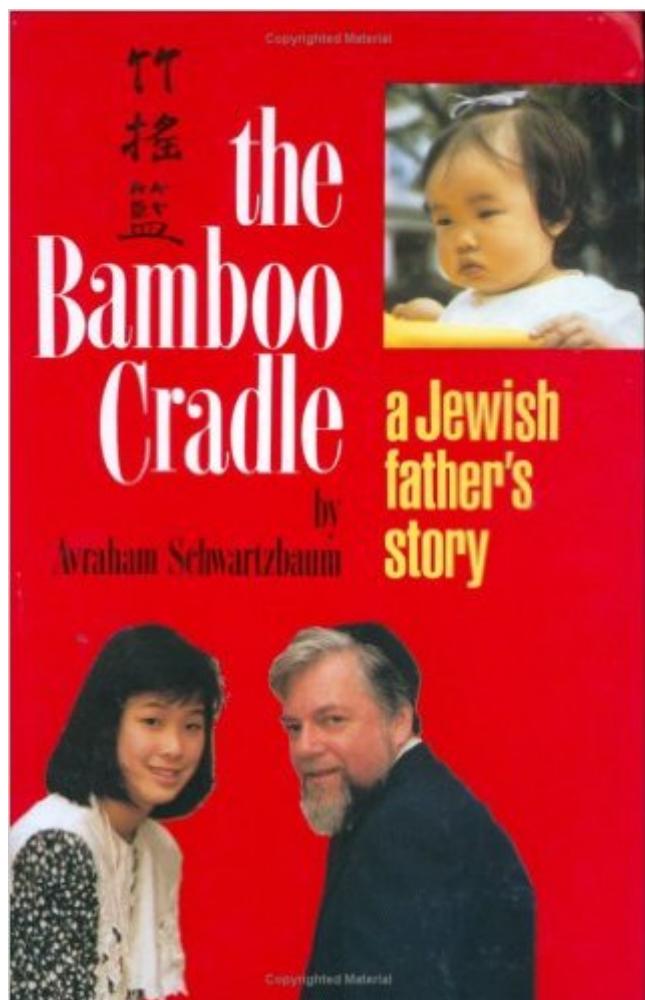


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The Bamboo Cradle: A Jewish Father's Story



Synopsis

Adopting a Chinese baby leads an American professor and his wife to the discovery of their own Jewish heritage. An absorbing, true story to read and re-read. .

Book Information

Hardcover: 248 pages

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Customer Reviews

If you have adopted or are adopting (I am in the process myself) this is the book for you. It is a most fascinating tale, and will make you realize that the miraculous does happen - in the most unusual ways. A fairly irreligious Jewish couple, who are having trouble conceiving, live in China because the husband has a Fulbright scholarship. One day he is in a train station and hears a baby cry - she was left abandoned under his seat, in a bamboo cradle. The couple adopt her, and when they return to the U.S. a Rabbi informs them that he will not convert the child to Judaism unless she is raised Orthodox. The couple tries to become Orthodox, and eventually take to it like a duck to water. (And there are more wonderful surprises!) The story is unbelievable, and their love for their beautiful Asian daughter is invincible. The only problem I had with the book is that eventually the husband (who is the author) throws in religious language all the time - "God willing", "It is up to Hashem" (God) etc., until I wanted to throw the book out. But still, the story is so unique and loving that it overcomes the book's flaws. Shows you how love for a child absolutely knows no geographic, national, or ethnic boundaries. And, by the way, the daughter herself writes a chapter at the end which is a wonderful touch.

A childless, not particularly religious, Jewish couple is living in Taiwan working as professors and studying Chinese. One day Avraham, the husband, takes the subway to work as usual. He stumbles

across an abandoned (Chinese) baby and their lives are irrevocably changed. As new parents their priorities begin to change. They start becoming more religious and return to the US. After they become orthodox Barbara, the wife, gives birth to several sons and they move to Israel. It was at this point that I became concerned about Devorah, their Chinese daughter. This was back before adopting Chinese daughters became commonplace. In spite of being sheltered by a strong loving family, Devorah experiences prejudice and bullying for the first time. I wondered if Devorah, who was completely estranged from her native culture, would find acceptance and an eventual husband in this orthodox Jewish setting. Bearing in mind that Devorah's father had publicly spoken out against Jews marrying non-Jews I felt this placed Devorah in a very precarious position. None of these issues is addressed. I read this book more than a decade ago when it first came out. I would recommend that Avraham Schwartzbaum write an updated version. Tell us how Devorah is doing now; address the issues of mixed families and non-Caucasian converts to Judaism. So many Westerners have adopted Chinese daughters that if Schwartzbaum were to reflect on the situation and offer some advice he would probably find a broad audience. By the way, I heard from a reliable source that Devorah did marry and start a family.

A young Jewish couple move to Taiwan for educational purposes. One day Mr. Schwartzbaum sees an abandoned baby at a train station. He takes her home and sends her to an orphanage to be taken care of. His good deed of the day was done and he would continue on with his life. Little did he know how this little princess would change the lives of him and his family. When the Schwartzbaums saw the awful conditions in the orphanage, they decided to adopt her and bring them home. But there were two hurdles to overcome; one their baby's Asian looks were very different than her new parents and second while her adoptive parents were traditional Jews she was not Jewish. After their arrival in the US the Schwartzbaums' set out to convert their new daughter whom they named Kim Davra after her paternal (adoptive) grandfather. They decided on an Orthodox conversion so "she'll be Jewish by everyone". There was a catch though, in order for their daughter to undergo an Orthodox conversion her parents must commit to living a religious lifestyle. This was a difficult decision and after much deliberating (and a conservative conversion) Kim Davra immersed in the mikva and became Devora, a Jewish child. 11 months later after several years of childlessness, the Schwartzbaum's gave birth to their first son. Their family eventually makes aliyah to Israel where Devora is subject to even more stares (her Asian looks are more common in the US) and nosy questions, and uncomfortable situations (for example in a Chinese restaurant, fellow customers thought she was the waitress). Ironically a close family friend whom they meet in Israel, introduces

Devora to her husband, an American born boy.

I had heard about this book years ago since I know some of the family members discussed in the book. I'm not sure that this book would have universal appeal; but, for me, I found it very interesting and informative.

This is a story that really speaks to the heart and soul. It is a personal story that we are privileged to share. I highly recommend it! Enjoy!

First and foremost, this book is AMAZING. I spent time in the Far East and have grown in my connection with Torah and G-d during my travels. Bamboo Cradle is a book you want to give to anyone new coming into Judaism. It is a book that inspires and asks many good questions like ethnicity, adoption, and growth within Torah Judaism. Highly recommended if you know any geriem or Jews with Asian family. But this book is for all searchers for a greater connection with Hashem and Torah.

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