



# STAR TRACKS

Editor: David Sloves

Vol. 15, No. 4

Shavuot/Summer 2000

## From the Editor's Desk



We made it past January 1, 2000 and already we are packing up for summer camp. I have just come home from semester-ending exercises at our Temple, have already registered the boys for next year, and await the first bill for summer camp.

Little League season is almost over and I better install those two air conditioners I bought - before I have to call my soccer team together.

We move with such hustle and bustle that the passing of time is meaningless, and yet, every day spent is replete with experiences new and unique. "Go placidly amongst the noise and haste" began one of those head shop calligraphys popular in the 1970s. Maybe there is something to that.

When was the last time you saw an art project of your child's? Not glanced at it while emptying a backpack, cooking dinner, and talking on the phone -at once? Why does she use those colors? How did she decide on a subject?

How often do you look not just at a child's grade, but the things written on the test paper? Does he really phrase things the way you do? How did he come to that conclusion? Do you stop talking long enough for your kid's at bat, or do you watch the whole game, to see how gracefully he moves? Gee, my kid did not get a hit, but what a nice relay throw before, huh?

Our challenge for the summer should be to follow that calligraphy - to take the time to stop and appreciate a moment of our child's. Or else we will be paraphrasing the Supremes from the 1960s "Baby, baby, where did the time go"?

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### IN THIS ISSUE

- Prioritizing Adoption Options
- Adoption Leads To E-Commerce
- Adoption Summit Report
- A Sermon on the Elian Gonzales Affair
- Articles on Adoption Law, Adoption Websites, and Local Agency Doings

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### **CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS**

**YOUR** organization needs **YOUR** help. For only a few hours per year you can make a real difference for Stars of David, while gaining great personal satisfaction and the gratitude of your fellow members. Needed -

- **Star Tracks Assistant Editor**, 4 times per year - contact columnists to solicit columns for upcoming issue
- **Distribution chair** - 4 times per year, have newsletters copied, collated, stapled. Apply labels and postage, and put in the mail.

Doesn't sound too hard, does it? Please contact Sue Katz at 1-800-782-7349 or StarsDavid@aol.com to volunteer.



Maryland: House Bill 61, which called for reducing the period during which an adoption can be revoked from 30 to 15 days, was defeated by the House Judiciary Committee. The Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee will have a hearing on Senate Bill 346, which would reduce the revocation period from 30 to 7



**STARS OF DAVID INTERNATIONAL, INC.** is the quintessential nonprofit information/support network for Jewish and interfaith adoptive families. Encompassing all BRANCHES of Judaism, STARS OF DAVID is a family support group, not an adoption agency. For more information/membership contact: Debra Berger, P.O. Box 573, Woodbury, NJ 08096-0573, (856) 384-2764, or SnjSTARS@aol.com

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Original graphic art ©2000, Matthew A. Schwartz  
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Unless expressly stated, all opinions are solely those of the author(s). Subscribers are reminded that this publication is open to the news and views of all our membership. Star Tracks retains the absolute right to accept, reject or edit any submission.

days. For more information about these bills, contact Traci, from RESOLVE of Maryland, at Tracinalex@aol.com.

Oregon: In 1998, Oregon voters approved a law guaranteeing adoptees, upon reaching adulthood, access to their birth certificates with the names of their biological parents. Six biological mothers who had placed their children for adoption challenged this law. They stated that the law was unconstitutional because it violated their privacy and contract rights. The Oregon Court of Appeals recently upheld the law, and this ruling will most likely now be appealed to the Oregon Supreme Court.

Colorado: Beginning September 1, 1999, adoption records, including original birth certificates, will be available to adult adoptees or other relatives of adult adoptees. There are some restrictions that can be initiated by the birth parent or the adoptee. Adoptions finalized before Sept. 1, 1999 will be kept confidential, with non-identifying information still made available.

Tennessee: In 1995, the Tennessee legislature passed an adoption reform statute that included a provision about adoptees having access to birth records. This was challenged in court as violating the U.S. Constitution, and it was challenged again in 1997 as violating the state constitution. In both cases, the courts' final decisions were that the law did not violate any constitutional rights. This law gives those who were adopted in March 1951 or later access to their records and identifying information about their birth parents. The birth parents can request a "contact veto" when they are notified that an adoptee is seeking information. The adoptee would then be prohibited from contacting the birth parents.

For information on state and federal

adoption legislation, contact the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse at 1-888-251-0075 or <http://www.calib.com/naic>



## Color Me Kids! Fund Raiser for the National Adoption Center

Color Me Kids! ([colormekids.com](http://colormekids.com)) manufacturer of T-shirts that 'kids! can color, has created a newly designed shirt "Kittens and Puppy" to raise money for the National Adoption Center ([adopt.org](http://adopt.org)).

Color Me Kids! is donating \$5.00 for each of their "Kittens and Puppy" T-shirt that finds a new home! They are also donating a percentage of all sales for the next three months to the National Adoption Center.

The National Adoption Center is a non-profit organization whose mission is to expand adoption opportunities throughout the United States for children with special needs and those from minority cultures. Some of their supporters include The Dave Thomas Foundation and the Freddie Mac Foundation.

To check out their promotion, please visit <http://colormekids.com>



## International Adoption News

### Cross-cultural connections for Jewish families

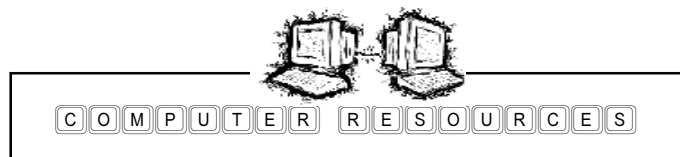
[Editor's Note: The following posting appeared on the website JEWISH-ADOPTION-LIST@MAELSTROM.STJOHNS.EDU ]

The Sino-Judaic Institute promotes friendship and understanding between the Chinese and Jewish peoples and encourages and develops their cooperation in matters of mutual historical and cultural

interest. The Institute focuses much of its work on preserving the cultural heritage of the ancient Jewish community of the city of Kaifeng, Henan. The Sino-Judaic Institute also publishes general information and scholarly materials dealing with all aspects of the Chinese-Jewish experience. Sino-Judaic Institute, 232 Lexington Drive, Menlo Park, CA 94025, (650) 323-1769.

The China Judaic Studies Association promotes Judaic study in China through university courses, seminars, and public lectures on Judaic topics, Judaic conferences, tours to Jewish historical sites, awards to Chinese scholars, the publication of books and articles on Judaism, and the publication of a biannual newsletter. The newsletter editor is Beverly Friend, Ph.D., (847) 635-1848, fax (847) 635-1987, friend@oakton.edu. The association president is Xu Xin, School of Foreign Studies, Nanjing University, Nanjing 210093; xuxin@njnet.nj.ac.cn.

For Jewish activities in Shanghai, go to [www.chinajewish.org](http://www.chinajewish.org);  
for Jewish activities in Beijing go to [www.istarnet.com/sinogogue](http://www.istarnet.com/sinogogue).



## How Adoption Turned Me into an E-Commerce WebMaven !

*By Roberta Rosenberg*

When we began to consider adoption as our best option for growing our family, little did I realize that it was going to be the beginning of a grand new personal and commercial adventure. Silly me, I thought we were just going to adopt a baby!

I was 42 in 1997 and wanted to add more children to our little family of three - me, my husband, Rob, and our then 5-1/2 year old daughter, Hilary. I was keenly aware that I had all these dead relatives who needed a name in this generation. (Hilary was named for my father and his mother.) My brother was unmarried. (Still is, by the way. Email me if you're interested in a

good-looking straight Jewish man in his 40s with a good job.) Our one first cousin and his wife are now well into their 50s, so they weren't going to be any help at all.

I felt the pressure of hundreds of years of tradition weighing heavily upon me. The "ghosts" drew close and begged me to give them new life. How could I say no?

Age and time had caught up with me, however, because while I easily became pregnant, I wasn't able to sustain a healthy pregnancy past the first trimester. By that fall, we had decided to adopt from Korea and just a few days after Halloween, we accepted the referral of our new baby boy, soon-to-be named Spencer Evan Hwan. (I named him for my father's father and my mother's sister. I was making progress.)

Now, truth be told, I'm not an arts and crafts type of person. I hate cooking and loathe cleaning. But even with a more than full-time job as owner of MGP Direct, Inc, a small direct marketing agency, in addition to doting wife and besotted mother - I had a lot of nervous energy that I needed to unload while awaiting my new baby's arrival. So on New Year's Eve 1997, I sat down at my computer with a large cup of coffee and began to develop *Adopting from Korea: A Prospective Parent's Guide to Korean Adoption* ([www.adoptkorea.com](http://www.adoptkorea.com)). I'm proud to say it's become an authoritative source on the subject - it's even listed as one-star "Noteworthy" site in the online version of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*!

A year later in 1998, we found ourselves awaiting the arrival of yet another baby from Korea, this time a daughter. We accepted her referral a week after my mother passed away. Piper Fallon Chae was named for my mother - a speed record for naming and my father's mother's mother - making good on a promise I made to Grandma when I was all of 16 that I would name a third child for Peshel, her mother. (I didn't want to louse up any good karma I had already accumulated.)

And so, while waiting for #2 daughter to come - and because I still don't knit, clean, etc. - I developed *AdoptShope* ([www.adoptshope.com](http://www.adoptshope.com)) and eventually *AdoptShopeBooks* ([www.adoptshopebooks.com](http://www.adoptshopebooks.com)) - e-commerce sites devoted to gifts, books, and resources for families adopting internationally.

by Ari Lev

Often gay and lesbian people question whether it is possible to adopt as an "out" gay person. It most certainly is! There are many agencies that are supportive, and some birth parents explicitly choose lesbian or gay parents. It is easier to be out in domestic adoption situations than international. It is also possible to adopt as a "single person," and if you live in a state with same-sex second parent adoption laws, you can then both adopt your child at a later date.

Many social workers are very comfortable working with lesbian and gay families and know "how" to write up a homestudy that will best suit your family situation.

Following is a list of adoption-based websites and agency information. Please note that even though many of these agencies and facilitators are gay/lesbian friendly, it is always best to interview them yourselves.

Adoptions from the Heart  
<http://www.adoptionsfromtheheart.org/aaadopt.htm>

Interracial Families by Adoption  
<http://www.adopting.org/inter.html>

The Adoption Ring  
<http://www.plumsite.com/adoptionring/>

Pact, An Adoption Alliance  
 3450 Sacramento St., Suite 239  
 San Francisco, CA 94118  
 (415) 221-6957  
 e-mail: [info@pactadopt.org](mailto:info@pactadopt.org)  
<http://www.pactadopt.org/>

Adoption-Link  
 1145 Westgate, Suite 104  
 Oak Park, IL 60301  
 (708) 524-1433  
[alink@theramp.net](mailto:alink@theramp.net)  
<http://www.adoptlink.com/>

Both shops were developed to fill a huge gift and information gap for adoptive families. AdoptShoppe features exclusively designed adoption jewelry, personalized quilts, homestudy document organizers, and other gift items. We're also proud to feature the largest selection of adoption lifebooks, memory albums, journals and keepsakes available anywhere online. AdoptShoppeBooks offers a thoughtful selection of popular adoption books at mostly discounted prices. Reflecting my personal interests (and enjoying the privilege of being the storeowner), our emphasis is on international, older child, Korea and China adoption.

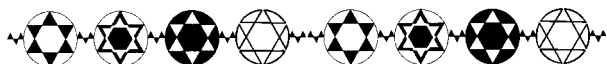
As a Jew, the continuity of family has always been very precious to me and I've been blessed to become a mom through both the joy of childbirth and adoption. The spirits have been placated. No longer nameless, their memory and our remembrance are renewed for another generation.

And boy, oh boy, they would have loved the idea of owning a virtual store that exists only in the mind of its visitors. I can't help but laugh that after 120+ years after all the Rosenbergs came to America (there are numerous Rosenbergs on both sides of the family - and then some), here I am - another Jewish small retailer living above the store.

Adopting from Korea - [www.adoptkorea.com](http://www.adoptkorea.com)  
 AdoptShoppe - [www.adoptshoppe.com](http://www.adoptshoppe.com)  
 AdoptShoppeBooks - [www.adoptshoppebooks.com](http://www.adoptshoppebooks.com)

Address:  
 PO Box 841 Bowie, MD 20718-0841  
 Phone: 301-464-9423  
 Fax: 301-805-7043  
 Email: [Roberta@adoptkorea.com](mailto:Roberta@adoptkorea.com)  
       [Roberta@adoptshoppe.com](mailto:Roberta@adoptshoppe.com)  
       [Roberta@adoptshoppebooks.com](mailto:Roberta@adoptshoppebooks.com)

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Adoption Visions (Leah Kushner)  
Heartweave@aol.com  
<http://www.adoptionvisions.com/>

Friends in Adoption  
fia@vermontel.com  
<http://www.Friendsinadoption.com/>  
802-235-2373

Thursday's Child  
227 Tunxis Ave.  
Bloomfield, CT 06002-1713  
203-242-5941

Alliance for Children  
40 William St., Suite G80  
Wellesley, MA 02181-3902  
(781) 431-7148  
info@allforchildren.org  
<http://www.allforchildren.org/info.html>

Adoption Resource Centre (ARC)  
4701 Pine St., #J-7  
Philadelphia, PA 19143  
Phone: 215/748-1441 1-800-884-4004  
<http://www.adoptionarc.com/>

Chuck Smith (404) 633-6021  
Rainbow Kids

Adopt Cambodia  
Wollwich, ME  
(207)442-7612

Gay and Lesbian Adoption (state-by-state guide to g/l adoption resources)  
<http://www.adopting.org/gaystate.html>

[http://directory.mozilla.org/Home/Kids/Adoption/Gay\\_and\\_Lesbian\\_Parents/](http://directory.mozilla.org/Home/Kids/Adoption/Gay_and_Lesbian_Parents/)  
Wayne Steinman at [glpci@aol.com](mailto:glpci@aol.com) (Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition, International) ask him to send you a copy of GLPCI's adoption resource packet.

New York State has a Waiting Children program, which has a nice webpage too.  
<http://www.adopt.org/adopt/>

International Families  
<http://www.4adoption.com/>

Lifetime Adoption  
<http://lifetimeadoption.com/>

Roots and Wings Adoption Magazine  
<http://www.parentsatlast.com/free.html>



Ari and Sundance Lev are THRILLED to announce the birth and homecoming of their son Eliezer Ranon Lev. He has born on April 4, weighing in at 7lbs 6 ounces, and is strong and healthy and the cutest, sweetest little guy. Shaiyah is very happy to finally be a big brother and has offered to take care of late night feedings, because he "is four and knows how." In Hebrew Eliezer means "God has helped" and Ranon means song or joy, so his name is "God has helped (our) heartsong" or "God has helped (bring) joy (into our) hearts".

## Adult Adoptee Creates Internet Research Resource

*By Sass Stanfield Owner of Adoption.about.com*

I am a 53-year old adoptee and I have ongoing contact with both sides of my birth family. I was born and adopted in Massachusetts by Jewish parents and raised in a Jewish home until my parents died when I was in my early teens. I attended Wheaton College and interrupted my education to marry and have a family.



I completed my undergraduate and graduate degrees in Greece, where I lived for over 20 years and worked as a consultant to the government. While in Greece, I became involved in adoption education, starting informally with Greek adoptive parents and expanding to include adoptees, orphanages (in Greece and Eastern Europe), and birth families. When I returned to the US in 1997 and the opportunity arose to develop

an informational resource about adoption for About.com, it seemed the perfect way to continue the outreach started twenty years earlier, this time as a personal effort.

One of the reasons I was attracted to the About.com format was that it offered a platform for interaction among all those connected to adoption. I have always felt strongly that communication across triad lines will be the key to reform and change in adoption practices and policies. No matter how positive our adoption experience (and mine was very positive), I think we all see room for change and improvement in many areas, but if we cannot come together in dialog and develop a common agenda, we leave ourselves open to influence from those who may have very one-sided views and objectives.

<http://adoption.about.com>

The Adoption site at About.com contains resources and information for expectant parents, those seeking to adopt, adoptees (youth and adult), birth families, and adoptive parents. What I hope to do on an ongoing basis is distill the best of what the Internet has to offer and present it in a useful format to site visitors. I write weekly articles and commentaries on practices, policies, current events, and developing trends, supported by references and links to research, books, and professional resources. The interactive elements of the site include chat rooms, discussion forums, and a mechanism for visitors to submit their own expressions of experience: poetry, prose, commentaries, book and movie reviews, etc. I can be reached every weeknight after 9 PM (ET) in our chat rooms, and by email at [adoption.guide@about.com](mailto:adoption.guide@about.com)

## Adoption Ceremony Information On Line

About.com has a new article on a Jewish Adoption Ceremonies. See

[http://kia.net/family/scripts/sendart.php3?article=3Djc/lifecycle/a\\_ceremony\\_to.phtml](http://kia.net/family/scripts/sendart.php3?article=3Djc/lifecycle/a_ceremony_to.phtml)



**RESOLVE**   
*National Infertility Awareness Week™*

## National Infertility Awareness Week

RESOLVE has big plans for this year's National Infertility Awareness Week (NIAW), which will take place the week of September 17th. One of the major activities of that week will be an Advocacy Day in Washington, DC that will take place on Thursday, September 21st.

The purpose of Advocacy Day will be to bring RESOLVE members and other advocates to Washington to visit their Senators and Representatives and discuss issues of importance to those experiencing infertility. Infertility insurance coverage, adoption benefits and leave equity, and medical research will be the topics of focus, and each participant can choose to discuss the issue(s) that are most relevant to them.

## PRIORITIZING ADOPTION OPTIONS

*By Linda Perilstein, Executive Director Cradle of Hope Adoption Center Silver Spring, Maryland*

There are so many options in international adoption, that the decision making process is often confusing and stressful. Often it's hard to find the ideal adoption situation of bringing home a perfectly healthy newborn from the hospital down the street next week. However, there is an adoption avenue that will work for every family. The hard part is to figure out which one is best for you.



You need to give some real thought to which issues are most important to you. If married, each spouse should make their own list of priorities and then compare notes, and work toward a mutually acceptable "wish list." Some of the categories to think about are:

- Health of the child: Can you accept a child with

medical needs, either minor or major? How much medical and birthparent information do you absolutely need? Will you be comfortable adopting from a country where little background information is available?

- Age of the child: Would you prefer the youngest child possible, without regard to ethnicity, expense, and length of wait?
- Length of the process: Are you interested in the quickest adoption possible, or do you have the patience to wait a bit longer in order to obtain some of your other priorities?
- Cost of the adoption: Is it important to find the least expensive adoption option or are other factors more pressing? \* Length of travel abroad: Would you choose a more costly program or wait longer for a referral in exchange for a short stay overseas? Do you require an escort program, where no international travel is required? Could you adopt from a country that requires two trips?
- Child's ethnicity: How much does it matter that the child looks like you? Can you accept a child from another culture with a different appearance? Can your relatives and community?

Once you have prioritized these factors, and any others that are important to your family, your path toward building your family through international adoption will become clearer. You will then be able to focus your search on programs that meet your top priorities.



## News from Jewish agencies around the country

Recent information was gathered from JFS agencies across the US who offer adoption services. There is a wide range of services offered including educational workshops, consultations, homestudies and ongoing support groups for birth and adoptive parents. Some agencies offer partial services; others provide full service programs, including the placement of children. The following are highlights from programs that

responded to a recent mailing: (listed in alphabetical order by state location).

JFS Phoenix (Arizona) offers a full range of services to adoptive and birthparents. 602-264-9891 Sheryl Baker.

Adoption Connections (California) provides ongoing pre and post-adoptive parent support groups and additional adoptive parent services. They have open domestic adoptions. 415-202-7494 Lynne Fingerman.

JCAN (Colorado) offers a quarterly newsletter, counseling for triad members and a national database of children and waiting parents. 303-573-8113 Steve Krausz.

JFS of New Haven (Connecticut) holds monthly informational meetings. 203-389-5599 Lina Lawall.

JF & Vocational Services (Kentucky) offers a 4 session adoptive parent workshop series several times a year and ongoing support groups. 502-452-6341 Judy Freundlich

JFS of Metrowest (Massachusetts) hosts monthly informational meetings and adoptive parent support groups. 508-875-3100 Dale Eldridge.

JFS of Washtenaw County (Michigan) holds monthly SDI meetings. On 5/14/00 they held an Adoption Fair bringing local adoption agencies together for exchange of information. 734-971-3280 Anya Abranyon.

JFCS of Cherry Hill (New Jersey) offers a monthly support group for adoptive parents and counseling to birth and adoptive parents. 856-424-1333 Marlene Winn.

JFS Metrowest (New Jersey) offers periodic baby care classes and informational workshops. 973-765-9050 Sheila Muster.

Jewish Child Care Association's Ametz Adoption Program (New York and New Jersey) offers monthly How To Adopt workshops and ongoing educational workshops and support groups. Their 3 Stars of David Chapters (New York City, Long Island and Northern New Jersey) hold holiday parties several times a year. They also host an annual Adoption, Infertility and the Jewish Family Symposium, a Single Adoptive Parent

Network and monthly Adoptive Parent Drop-In Center. They have a quarterly newsletter. 212-558-9949 Susan Kupferberg, CSW.

JFS of Rockland County (New York) has begun to offer homestudy and educational workshop services. 914-354-2121 Sylvia Kaufman.

JFS Akron (Ohio) is closing their adoption program as of 6-1-2000.

JFS of Cincinnati (Ohio) has the Adoption Connection which holds monthly support groups for adoptive parents, 2 educational programs a year, holiday parties and a picnic. 513-489-1616 Patty Bonem.

JFS of Dayton (Ohio) held a Leadership in Adoption Conference for triad members 5/5/00. They also have chapters of FCC and FRUA. 937-854-2944 Marilyn Lustig.

JFS of Madison (Wisconsin) offers some counseling and written materials on Jewish adoption issues. 608-278-1808 Barbara Spierer.  
For additional information on any listed service, call the contact person listed.

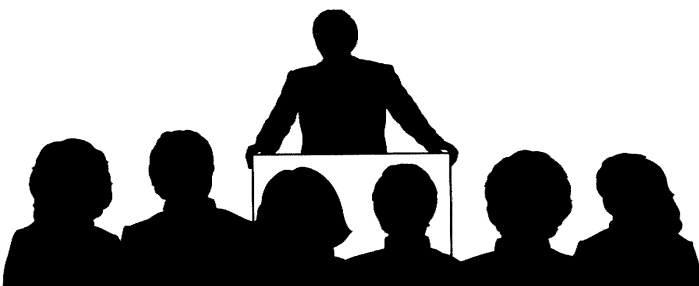
consider the role of the organized Jewish community in adoption. The steering committee for the conference, which was chaired by Bert Goldberg, Exec. Dir. of AJFCA, included directors of 10 of the largest JFS offices, the UJC, and Stars of David.

We met in Seattle just prior to the 28th Annual Conference of the Association. The Summit included tracks on Programmatic and Strategic Issues. Stars of David's national coordinator, Sue Katz, spoke on Starting and Re-Starting an Adoption Program and Programmatic Issues (for agencies that already have an adoption program).

We are thrilled to report that the outcome of the Summit was extremely positive. Association members expressed a very strong interest in working together and in working with Stars of David. They wish to further explore how to form a "National Jewish Adoption Network" in collaboration with SDI. Joint Task Forces were recommended on the following: expansion of programs & services, inter-agency mentoring, joint advocacy, outreach marketing, and ethical issues in adoption. It was further suggested that we develop a joint website, put together a joint resource "library", collect statistical data on adoption, and establish some kind of interactive network (on the Internet). A joint database, a joint listing of services, and a joint calendar of events are also possible. A multi-tiered Listserv was recommended which could serve agency personnel, adoptive parents (Stars of David members), and the general public. It was suggested that we seek outside funding to finance such a joint venture.

The board of directors of the Association is holding its next policy planning meeting in July. At that time they will consider the recommendations that came out of the Summit and will report back to the members of the Association and to Stars of David. We are very hopeful that there will be movement towards the formation of a "National Jewish Adoption Network."

Stars of David exhibited at the Conference and had the opportunity to meet with many of the over 300 attendees. We networked with JFS directors and their adoption staff, shared information, showed off our materials and website, and spread the word about the benefits of our Jewish adoptive family organization.



## CONFERENCES

### Adoption Summit

*By Susan Katz, Vice President  
STARS OF DAVID INTERNATIONAL*

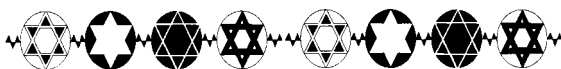
A top level Adoption Summit was held by the Association of Jewish Family & Children's Agencies on Friday, May 5th. The Summit was intended as a one-day senior level program to stimulate thinking in the Jewish community about adoption policy. Intended for decisions-makers only, it was a first attempt to

Linda Lewison, our staff member dealing with Fund Raising and Grants accompanied me to the summit. She did a terrific job of advocating on behalf of Stars of David and collected solid suggestions on ways of professionalizing our organization and seeking financial assistance to do it. We will be working towards that end throughout this year and probably well into the next.

Here's one way that YOU can help. We need to identify members in this organization that are willing and able to help turn this organization into a professional one. We need people with all kinds of skills and with an interest in Jewish adoption that will decide on Stars of David's future direction. We want to put together a true Board of Directors that will guide us in this effort. (Our current Board has primarily functioned as staff). You may volunteer yourself OR you may suggest names of people in the community that YOU think would be excellent candidates for the Board. We must also identify people with fundraising skills and companies and organizations that might be approached for funding. We know that many of YOU have skills and contacts that have been untapped. We must have YOUR help to move forward. Stars of David has reached a crossroads. We MUST get off of the 'kitchen tables' of our current Board and into the Board Room if we want to accomplish our mission of helping to build Jewish families by adoption.

We ask our members, who include some of the finest minds in this country, to join us in this effort.

Please contact Sue Katz with your suggestions at: StarsDavid@aol.com or 847-509-9929.



## Jewish Expo Slated for NYC in Winter World

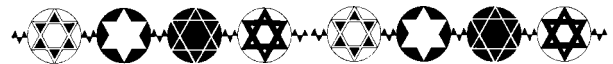
Jewish Expo 2000 is a showcase of products and services targeted to the largest Jewish community outside of Israel. More than 300 companies from around the world will exhibit at the three day event this year expected to draw 37,000 people. The Expo will be held at the magnificent Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in New York City, December 16-18, 2000. It

will be held in advance of Chanukah when the Jewish community looks for what is new in Jewish life.

In addition to the exhibits, World Jewish Expo 2000 will feature nonstop special events including entertainment, fashion and lectures.

The Expo is endorsed by a broad spectrum of Jewish organizations, projecting one of the largest events in consumer Jewish life, uniting disparate and often ideological divergent groups behind a concept which is designed to market, educate, and unite.

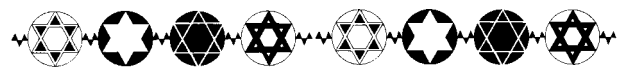
If you have a product or service that you would like exhibit at the World Jewish Expo i.e., Dot com, e-commerce, health, MLM's, home, finance, Technology, music, books, art, Judaica, entertainment, fashion, kosher-food, travel organization, to name a few, contact Lisa Mechanick at [lisa@jewishexpo.com](mailto:lisa@jewishexpo.com) or call 212-643-1623 ext 105, fax 212-643-9164. Include your name address, phone, fax, email and web site info with a few words about your product/service.



## Northwest Airlines Offers Special Rates



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## The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption

By Amy Silberberg, Esq.

[Editor's Note: The following is an Internet posting]

The American Academy of Adoption Attorneys strongly supports ratification by the United States of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption as well as the enactment of US implementing legislation. The Academy urges everyone, who has as their chief concern the best interests of children, to support the substitute amendment to H.R. 2909 that was reported unanimously by the House Committee on International Relations on March 22. On April 13, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted 9-1 to substitute the House text for S.682, recommend passage and approve the Treaty. This is quite significant since H.R. 2909 has changed a great deal from when AAAA had several concerns about some of the original provisions.

The Academy is a nonprofit association of attorneys, judges, and law professors from the United States and Canada. It is dedicated to the study and improvement of adoption laws and practice standards. Our members represent adoptive parents, pre- and post-adopted children, birth parents, adoption agencies and others involved in adoptions. Members of the Academy have been involved in the process of trying to achieve for the first time a formal international and inter-governmental process for approval of intercountry adoptions since before the Hague Convention was sent to the nations in 1993.

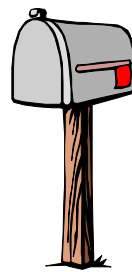
Along with many other members of the United States' adoption community, some of our members were part of the US delegation to the Hague negotiations that resulted in the Convention, were consulted by the US State Department before the Convention and draft implementing legislation were sent to Congress in 1998, and were involved in the open discussions that have resulted in H.R. 2909 and S. 682, as reported. The language of H.R. 2909 and S. 682 implements the Convention's principles into clear, simple, fair, and efficient procedures for all parties to intercountry adoptions. It fulfills the Convention's requirement to establish a minimum set of uniform standards governing international adoptions and it does so in a manner that respects the United State's system of state governed adoptions. Furthermore, it consistently attempts to accomplish the first objective of the Convention, "to establish safeguards to ensure that intercountry adoptions take place in the best interests of the child and with respect for his or her fundamental rights as recognized in international law" in the most

straight forward and least bureaucratic manner possible consistent with being effective and verifiable. Very many people in the adoption community have had a hand in the final product and it represents a broad based consensus of concerned, experienced, and attentive professionals which is unprecedented.

Allan A. Hazlett, President  
American Academy of Adoption Attorneys

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## Letter To STARS OF DAVID



"Parents for International Adoption" (of which we are members) is a new group forming to promote sensible legislation relating to international adoption. As all of you know, the current patchwork of federal and state laws, and some recently proposed federal laws, can complicate and frustrate the otherwise beautiful and profound adoption experience.

There are many organizations that promote the views of adoption agencies, but very few (if any) groups advocating for the tens of thousands of families with children adopted internationally, and the thousands more who are in the process or wishing to adopt internationally. We would like to help unite the voices of all of you through our new grass-roots organization, "Parents for International Adoption", and invite you to join with us.

Some immediate items needing action are: ensuring the federal government does not create an even heavier burden and expense for international adoptions, promoting an increased tax credit, advocating for automatic citizenship and automatic adoption recognition in all states, eliminating Form 864, and eventually streamlining the INS.

Here are a few answers to some likely questions:  
**THE PURPOSE:** "Parents for International Adoption" is a non-partisan coalition of parents whose sole

purpose is to promote and reform legislation for the purpose of reducing the cost and difficulty of international adoption, so more families may be formed by loving parents and children needing homes, while still protecting vulnerable children from exploitation.

**HOW:** “Parents for International Adoption” will send you legislative bulletins about current activity in Congress, and will suggest how you can best advance the cause of international adoption, with sample letters and email that you can send to your legislators.

**E-MAIL CLUTTER:** We will have two email lists for “Parents for International Adoption”. One list will be for sending bulletins and announcements, and the other will be for two-way correspondence between members. If you only wish to keep informed on legislative news and actions, you can just subscribe to the bulletin list. If you wish to become actively involved in discussions on how best to advance the cause of international adoption, you may subscribe to the second list.

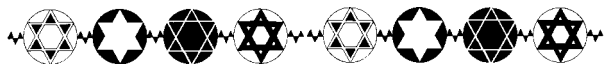
**HELP US BUILD MASS:** We would like you to try and find three other people who might be interested. Again, there is power in our collective numbers.

**FOUNDERS:** The founders are adoptive parents. They are Ralph and Franice Stirling from Washington State, and Wendy and Joe Mazzarella, from Connecticut. Please note this group does not represent or permit membership of adoption agencies. We are looking only for families who have adopted, or are starting the process of adopting internationally. This is first and foremost a parents’ organization.

**TO JOIN:** Send an empty email message to: [pfia-news-subscribe@onelist.com](mailto:pfia-news-subscribe@onelist.com) to receive news bulletins. Send a brief message telling about your current stage in the international adoption process and your interest in legislative reform and/or to [pfia-talk-owner@onelist.com](mailto:pfia-talk-owner@onelist.com) if you wish to join the discussion list.

Thanks for your help, and we look forward to your participation!

Ralph, Franice & Thacia Stirling (born 5/24/97, adopted 4/2/98, Zhejiang, PRC)



## **Elian Gonzales**

*by Rabbi Michael Gold*

*[Editor's Note: The following is a sermon delivered by Rabbi Gold to his congregation. It is reprinted with his permission. To read his weekly sermons, contact his website, <http://www.heartfelt.com>]*

Before dawn this morning, Shabbat Hol HaMoed Pesach, federal agents entered the home of Elian Gonzales’s relatives in Miami and whisked the six year old away. He was flown up to Washington DC and several hours later, reunited with his father. These events, which have dominated the news for weeks, call for a Jewish response. How are we to react to this case? We feel it particularly strongly here in south Florida, with its many Cubans including a large Cuban Jewish population. My initial thought is there are no winners here, with the possible exception of Fidel Castro.

It is sad that gun toting federal agents had to break into a home. If President Carter could get Anwar Sadat and Menachim Begin to agree to peace while hidden away in Camp David, why couldn’t President Clinton bring the fractured sides of Elian’s family to Camp David to reach an agreement? Why were adults splitting this little boy in half?

Of course, the Biblical precedent for this case was the story of King Solomon and the two women who claimed the same baby. Both had given birth, but one baby had died. That mother had stolen the healthy baby in the middle of the night, and then each claimed the baby for her own. This was in the days before genetic testing. Solomon took his sword and recommended that the baby be cleaved in two, each woman receiving half. One mother agreed, the other said, “No, give him to her.” That way, Solomon proved who the true mother was.

In my book *God, Love, Sex, and Family* I wrote about this case. “King Solomon’s threat to cut the baby in half resulted in the real mother’s cry to give up her child rather than injure it. Parental rights were turned aside. A true mother would do nothing to hurt her own child. The lesson of this story is that the child’s self-interest becomes the center of all decision-making.” (p. 212)

The child’s best interest must be at the center of any decision. We cannot speak about the adults’ rights, but

a child's needs. Ultimately that has to be the focus of all conversation. What does this little boy need?

In my mind, the answer is clear. A child needs a mother and a father.(How often have I shared this thought with divorced parents battling over custody and visitation.) In a perfect world, both the father and the mother are an ongoing constant part of a child's life. In this case, the mother died tragically. When the mother is gone, the child needs his father. Elian needed to be returned to his dad.

Is this teaching that a child belongs with his or her parents an absolute? Of course not; there are few absolutes in our tradition. A parent who is abusive or neglectful will rightly have his or her parental rights terminated. Nobody has proven in this case that the father was abusive or neglectful; on the contrary, he appears to be a devoted loving man.

Even if he is a wonderful father, there is another, more difficult question. What happens when a wonderful parent plans to raise a child in a country filled with tyranny and poverty? Do we insist a child go to live with his father, even if the father will raise him in a place we do not approve, or according to a life style we consider harmful? Should we decide that Cuba is such a terrible place to raise a child that we ought to terminate the father's rights?

Such a decision would set an extremely dangerous precedent. Unfortunately, we Jews have been the victims of such decisions. Even today there is a very

ugly case in Italy where a Jewish mother has been denied custody of her children because the courts do not approve of her Orthodox Jewish practice. Tali Dulberg Rosenberg lost custody of her two daughters, and they were given to her ex-husband, an Israeli converting to Christianity. Among the arguments used by the courts is the fact that if the children were sent to live with the mother, they could not eat normal foods. They would have to follow strict dietary laws.

This particular case is being appealed. But it harkens back to the famous case from a century ago of the Jewish merchant Shlomo Mortara, living in Bologna, whose six year old son Edgardo was removed from his home by church officials after he was secretly baptized. The church judged that a Christian home would be in the best interest of the child. Despite a world wide outcry, the parents were never able to regain custody.

Elian belongs with his father. Odds are that the father will return to Cuba with his son, and Elian will grow up there. We may not like it, but unless there is a miracle, that is where Elian will live out his childhood.

However, as a religious Jew, I believe that what goes around comes around. Someday as an adult, Elian will return to the United States. Once he has tasted freedom, even for a few months as a young child, he will not want to stay away for ever. Isn't this the entire message of Pesach. In the end, freedom will win.

Elian deserves to be with his father. He also deserves to live in freedom. We can only pray that someday he will have both.



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