



# Christmas for Joshua

*Avraham Azrieli*

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## **Christmas for Joshua** Avraham Azrieli

Life couldn't be better for Rusty Dinwall—a heart surgeon, amateur pianist, and volunteer synagogue president. But when his daughter's wedding takes an unexpected turn, life spins out of control, shattering everything he believes in. A dramatic story with memorable characters, Christmas for Joshua tackles the conflicts inherent to interfaith marriage, modern parenting, and religious intolerance, taking the reader on an entertaining and thought-provoking journey through a uniquely American Christmas experience. Praise for Avraham Azrieli's previous novels: "The Jerusalem Inception is beautifully and superbly narrated." Norm Goldman, Bookpleasures. "Boldly realistic plotlines and genuine, well-developed characters. Highly recommended!" Yahoo News/Politics. "Protagonist Jerusalem "Lemmy" Gerster, is the quintessential recruit." NY Daily News. "The Jerusalem Assassin is a thoroughly compelling portrait of humanity at its best and worst. Drawn straight from the headlines of living, breathing history, the action in The Jerusalem Assassin both entertains and enlightens the reader, an impressive task that not many authors can achieve." Josee Morgan, Apex. "The Masada Complex brims with gritty authenticity ... a genuine treat!" David Liss, author of Conspiracy of Paper, winner of Edgar. "Riveting portrayal of global intrigue!" Stella Pope Duarte, author of If I Die in Juárez, winner of the 2009 American Book Award. About the Author: Avraham Azrieli served as an officer in the IDF Intelligence Corps before graduating from Columbia Law School in New York. His previous novels are The Masada Complex, The Jerusalem Inception and The Jerusalem Assassin. [www.AzrieliBooks.com](http://www.AzrieliBooks.com)

## **Christmas for Joshua Details**

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# **From Reader Review Christmas for Joshua for online ebook**

## **Remy Benoit says**

A Book for All Seasons and All Faiths!

We are each raised with the beliefs of our nuclear families, extended families, and our fore-bearers. Beliefs seem to be written in stone, and when we try to find our own way, we all too often meet stern resistance from our mates, from our children, from the family, and all others who are entrenched in their positions and fear that our changing our path threatens them.

Ah, but sometimes we meet someone who does not fit into the framework of our family's way; the beliefs of our family. Then the field is ours alone to plow.

Dr. Christian Dinwall, also know as Rusty, was the child of a Christian woman, a father he did not to grow up with as he was lost in Viet Nam. And then he met Rebecca, a Reform Jewish woman. Rusty converts. Not only does he convert, but becomes president of the Reform Synagogue where he feels welcomed; where he has found religious answers that he sought; where he feels he has made lifelong and friends he can count on for anything, just as he feels they can always count on him.

But, what happens when his daughter decides to marry into the Orthodox Jewish faith and follow the ancient and specific ways of Halacha? Suddenly Rusty's world turns upside down and all those nagging relics of his wife's way of worship, of his own, come charging to the foreground, upsetting the very core of he and his wife's and his friends existence.

Rusty now seeks to find a path to compassion, cooperation, sharing of two paths of life and beliefs.

What havoc can a Christmas tree and lights stir into this kosher pudding? You have no idea!

This is a tale you will never forget; a tale for all seasons, for all faiths, seemingly for all time.

This is a tale that will make you ask how you would react in a situation similar if it was your faith, your mores being tested.

This is a tale that will make you ponder if so many believe in one God how can we deliberately and continually smash to smithereens every attempt to bridge the gap that is ever constructed? How do we face the idea that despite the path we have chosen, we still sometimes find that we are a stranger in a strange land, one we thought we knew at the very level of soul?

So, is Rusty Rusty? Is he Jewish? Is he Christian in more than just the name he was baptized with?

This is a Christmas tree that you can decorate any time of year; these are lights that will light up things unseen.

This is an absolutely must read and ponder, once in a lifetime book. I cannot recommend it highly enough to anyone with any interest at all in adding trusses to the bridges that will heal the divisions of faith.

Bravo! So beautifully written, so painfully real.

Shalom!

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## Steven says

An engrossing see-saw battle between Love and Religion

“Christmas for Joshua” by Avaham Azrieli is a poignant and enchanting novel painting the picture of a man torn between Love and Religion. The protagonist Dr.Dinwall Rusty sets out on an odyssey to explore the meaning of religion and love in a man’s life. His self introspective journey takes him towards many sojourns, but ultimately he discovers that Love is his Final Destination. Rusty’s commitment for Love is complete as he walks into Judaism to marry the love of his Life-Rebecca. Much Later, he chooses to walk out of Judaism to facilitate the triumph of his daughter’s love.

After converting to Judaism to marry Rebecca, Rusty observes all the rites of the religion studiously and even becomes the President of their King Solomon Synagogue. Just when the life seems honky-dory, Rusty is rocked out of his wits by a zealot Rabbi who declares him a pagan. He is rudely banished from his only daughter’s marriage. What follows is a traumatic and heart breaking quest to discover himself. It finally leads him and his wife to Vietnam in service of deprived people. Rusty’s selfless Love gets much-deserving recognition when his grandchild born on Christmas day is named after his father Joachim.

The fact that novel has been penned in first person makes it all the more attractive. Avaham Azrieli leaves no stone unturned to beautifully describe the customs of Jews.

At the end of the novel, I graduated as a much- matured person

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## Patricia says

Rusty Dinwall, M.D. faces an evaluation of religious faith, family values, and life principles in Christmas for Joshua by Avraham Azrieli. Struggling with possible break-up of his marriage Rusty begins evaluating the important things in his life. Recalling that he changed religious faiths to marry Rebecca, Rusty wonders if his only daughter converted her religious faith in to marry the man she loves. Constant assessment of family values intertwined with life principles plagues constantly. What should he do or be willing to do?

The author shows evidence of much research. Numerous musical facts are revealed in an effort to draw community together. Jewish history is skillfully blended into the story. Biblical facts are sprinkled in various areas. Other facts are used also as the story blends, weaves, and throws curves to the reader. Yet the book reads easily.

Vivid detail allows the reader to see and feel the various scenes captured in the story. Conversations convey emotions. Reader feels love, hate, loyalty, obedience, fear, and greed. Confusion and intense pain stab the reader in unexpected ways.

Christmas for Joshua by Avraham Azrieli offers a quick read. It also offers a few thoughts for pondering.

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## **Emma Wilden says**

### **When Faith and Reality Clash!**

Avraham Azrieli comes up again with a book that touches the heart. 'Christmas for Joshua' is a tale that unravels the chaos when religious faith and reality clash. The story is based on Rusty who converts his religion from Christianity to Judaism in order to marry a Jewish girl Rebecca. Little does he know that being a half Jew will bring upon him the biggest sorrows of his life- missing his only daughter's wedding and being ridiculed for being a half Christian and half Jew. What more, he is the President of the synagogue and has devotedly served the synagogue all his life.

This story sheds a whole new light on the topic of religion being linked with happiness and satisfaction in real life. It takes different turns after Rusty has to face a lot of dicey situations even after being a devout Jew. Debra, his daughter is about to marry a man belonging to a strict Jewish family and when they come to know of Rusty being a converted Jew, they do not allow him to be a part of Debra's wedding. Not only that, he is hurt by her in-laws' behaviour towards him and is deeply saddened by the fact that his devotion to Judaism is not taken into consideration. To get rid of his frustration unknowingly he clings to his memories of being a Christian and remembers that Christmas used to be the happiest time of his life. This book tests every man's religious faith and you do not need to be Christian or Jew to understand the pain of the protagonist, you just need to have your heart in the right place.

Avraham Azrieli is at his best again with this sensational book which will drive you towards your deep faith in God and the strong claws of orthodoxies and make you realise the difference between being faithful and being orthodox.

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## **Tyra says**

This book is about a good man with noble intentions, a heart surgeon, a father and devoted husband who sacrificed his faith, his belief in Christ, his love for Christmas and converted to Judaism for his wife, only to be ridiculed by his daughter's snotty orthodox new family.

First of all I was really mad on Christian Dinwall aka Rusty's behalf because at the end of the day we are ALL the same in GOD'S eyes. We are all humans regardless of our race or religion. The fact that they refused to let him participate in his only child's wedding ceremony made me see 'red' on his behalf.

Plus the BS they put him thru and the persuasion to become a 'real Jew' only ridiculed the Jewish belief/faith in my opinion.

Then his wife...OMG, I felt like hitting her across the head to make her see how ridiculous and insensitive she was.

Then Rabbi Rachel...omg I hope she gets what she deserves.

I know it's only a book but things like this happen in real life. This book made me understand some Jewish traditions and beliefs better.

This book is a FANTASTIC read, got me making side comments to myself and to people around me, while I read it. It really got to me.

I am sure the Vietnamese would appreciate Dr Christian Dinwall (I refuse to call him Rusty, lol) for the awesome human being he is and not his faith...as for his wife and new in-laws...no comment.

I have read several of Avraham's books but this one got me really emotional. A must read!!!

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### **Emilya says**

Christmas for Joshua is the first short novel I've enjoyed in a long time. It is an intricately woven tale of honest, revered (and yet often flawed) characters. Even the characters that are not ultimately integral to the overall story are intriguing and well developed. This makes the read not only entertaining but flow with an ease that many stories do not. There are no jarring interruptions, only growth of the main characters and a sense of understanding of the world the lead lives in by introducing the colorful people he encounters. The main story line is an imaginative yet realistic look at religion, family and the ultimately inevitable changes that occur in your life without your "consent." Rusty Dinwall, our narrator, is likeable and charming without being smarmy or over played. It should also be noted that Azrieli carefully walks the thin line between taking your audience's knowledge for granted and treating them like they are ignorant. Many of the terms and phrases used were foreign to me but the author manages to explain them without beating me over the head or saying, "this is what that phrase means." This made the story pleasing not only from a character, over all arch and conflict point of view, but also from a learning-something-new point of view. I highly recommend Christmas for Joshua for any audience of any religion or any story style interest.

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### **Alex Corker says**

Christmas for Joshua is the story of a man named Christian 'Rusty' Dinwall. Set in America, he and his wife follow the Jewish faith, a faith that he had changed many years ago after meeting his wife and converting from Christianity. He gave up any beliefs of christianity to be with her. His daughter then turns his world upside down when she marries a kosher jew, a similar religion with much stricter guidelines. His family do not believe that Rusty is a 'real' Jew and banishes him from sight. From there, all that he and his wife's beliefs are thrown into chaos. His wife wants to change their entire beliefs to be with their daughter where as he is trying to find the balance between what he knows and what he gave up so many years before.

This is an enchanting story of a man struggling with two very different religions, Christianity and Judaism. For anyone who does not understand the Jewish faith this is an excellent read. It is a sad tale of a mans fight with his family and his faith. You feel sorry for him and you want to help him find a solution but as with religion it is always a hard subject to grasp.

The author has written this story so well that it will leave you with a smile and a certain feeling of warmth. It will also bring a feeling of unity, through religion and family.

I enjoyed this book immensely and would recommend it to anyone. Five starts all round.

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## **Matt says**

Azrieli returns with another stellar piece of work, less political in its outward sense, but equally as powerful. When Rusty Dinwall learns that his daughter has chosen to marry an Orthodox Jew, he finds himself in a bind. At the wedding, things take a turn for the worse and his Reform Jew lifestyle is put into question. While he struggles with this, he is bombarded with a number of decisions he's made over the past three decades and how it affects his everyday life. Crises of faith abound and Rusty returns to his roots to find himself, taking those around him on an adventure few will forget. Azrieli examines powerful parallels and paradoxes within the Jewish religion and its relationship with Christianity in this novel whose premise sounds cute, but whose content runs deep and passionately on three sides. A must-read for Azrieli fans and those who want to think ahead of their holiday celebrations.

Azrieli has become my go-to author on the plight and struggles of the Jews, in a fiction setting. He illustrates the struggles within the various forms of Judaism and does so in a scholarly way, without preaching or inculcating. While I am used to his political backdrop, the story here flows well in a familial setting, filled with its own family politics that pushes the story along in a powerful and yet sentimental way. Struggles abound and while there is no international war in the making (see Azrieli's previous work), the plot and narrative make it, perhaps, his best work to date.

Kudos, Mr. Azrieli for this completely different and powerful work. I am so glad to have stumbled upon you and hope to be blessed with the rest of your work.

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## **Nickster214 says**

I recently found Avraham Azrieli, and because I enjoy a good thriller the rest of his novels--"The Jerusalem Inception", "The Jerusalem Assassin", "The Masada Complex", etc.--were right up my alley, so I figured I'd go ahead and give this a shot as well, and while this novel was definitely a change of pace I found that I enjoyed it just as much (if not more) as his thrillers. Even though this novel was shorter than the others it actually ended up taking me longer to read, I found myself wanting to slow down and really digest the book instead of sitting at the edge of my seat waiting to see what happens next, mostly because this was a more adult novel (and by adult I mean thoughtful). Azrieli's signature themes and styles are still very much in the book as well. The backdrop of religion as a source of conflict, excellent characterization, and thoroughly researched content, all still shine in this novel, and by switching out spies and espionage with families struggling with religious differences we get an experience that while different from his previous works, feels all the more real. After reading this novel Azrieli went from an author that I'd happily read for some quick entertainment, to one whose works I will actively seek out and try to learn from. You can see the growth and level of maturity increase the author has had, and while there might be a few hiccups in the pace (and ending) of the story, the content found is more than worth picking up.

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## **Terri says**

"Christmas for Joshua" by Avaham Azrieli is the story of Rusty Dinwall, a convert to Judaism for the love of his wife Rebecca. Rusty is a prominent doctor who also serves as the president of the board for his local synagogue. He and his wife seem to be leading a calm, loving life until they find out that their daughter

Debra is marrying an Orthodox young man that she met in college. While the Dinwalls had raised their daughter in a Reform congregation, Debra has decided that she also wants to live in an Orthodox way.

Although the marriage is a sudden event, Rusty and Rebecca are okay with it. Until Rusty's life turns upside down at Debra's wedding. After that, Rusty is put on a spiritual journey that helps him better understand and accept where he has come from and where he wants to be. It's not easy, and not everyone understands what he is going through, but it is a journey that he must make, no matter what the consequences may be.

While this is a very different book than the other novels the author has penned, it still has the same intensity and draws the reader in until the very last page. It is not a thriller or adventure like his other books, but it is a journey that takes the main characters through questioning their most basic feelings on love, religion and how it all comes together with family and friends. It is certainly an interesting story that I would recommend to anyone.

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### **Sitara says**

Avraham Azrieli has once again come up with a very engaging yet heart warming read that portrays the life of a couple where one leads Jewish faith but is of Christian roots and the other, a true Jew. This poignantly told story unveils the intricacies of being Christian and being accepted as a Jew even after following the Reform Jewish values meticulously. There are honest moments in this book where you sincerely get tugged at your heartstrings, where you empathise the protagonist, Rusty Dinwall and where you desperately yet willing take his stance of bringing the Jews and the Christians together. Rusty Dinwall is a heart surgeon who lives with his ever supportive wife, Rebecca in Arizona. Despite his mother being a pious Christian devotee, Rusty takes the spiritual path of embracing the Jewish faith. But what we will find charming in this amateur pianist is his sense of righteousness, his quick wits and his adorable sense of humour.

And most of all, we will be smitten by the good intentions with which he plans and executes, the otherwise quirky events. The couple's only daughter Debra is equally charming and is sure to find a place in your heart. She announces her marriage with Mordechai; who comes from a religiously fanatic Orthodox Jewish family, over a Skype video conference. And it is the marriage day that harshly brings the whole world around the happy Rusty crashing down as he has to face the cruel truth of acceptance in the Jewish community.

Christmas for Joshua is a book that will keep you thinking, long after you have read the book, on the conflicts faced by couples of interfaith marriage. It is also a pleasure to those who have love for the written word because, trust me, they are some drool worthy paragraphs that you would love to ruminate on and memorize.

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### **Susan Keefe says**

I loved the character of Rusty Dinwall from the very first page. He is a well-respected, compassionate man, a heart surgeon, and a loving husband and father.

Indeed, after falling in love with Rebecca, over twenty years before, he even renounced Christianity, embraced her Jewish faith, and is now president of his local Reform synagogue. A happy and contented man



leading a devout life, and helping others.

This story begins on Thursday September 24th, it is Rosh Hashanah Eve (Jewish New Year). Rusty and his wife Rebecca are looking forward to a Skype call that evening from their daughter Deborah who is away at university, and cannot join them for the celebrations. However, Deborah is not alone when she makes the call, and introduces them to her future husband Mordechai, an Orthodox Jew.

Deborah and Mordechai announce that they will be marrying on 20th December in New York, and then coming back to her home in Arizona for their honeymoon.

Although initially surprised at the swiftness of the wedding, Rusty and Rebecca arrive in New York excited at the forthcoming celebrations.

With their daughter happy and radiant nothing, it would seem could possibly spoil such a perfect day, that is, until Rabbi Mintzberg arrives. When the elderly orthodox Rabbi announces Rusty is a shaygetz (not a full Jew), Rusty is shocked at his words, and dismayed at the ramifications they will have on such a special day.

Reeling from the repercussions, hurt, confused and surprised at the reactions of those around him, he suddenly discovers that religious intolerance is evident even within the same faith. Searching for answers, and pondering his past, Rusty decides that he is going to make the young couples celebration of their marriage in his local Reform synagogue, a night to remember, which it is, in more ways than one...

As a parent, it is easy to understand both Rusty and Rebecca's reactions, and ways of coping to the news of Deborah's rapid marriage, and her decision to become an Orthodox Jew. Their natural reaction is to protect her but as an adult does she need their protection?

This book highlights very clearly how hard things can be for mixed faith families at special occasions, specific times of the year, and at family celebrations, which should be happy. However it also celebrates the strength of marriage, and commitment couples should make to each other.

This book is very different to the other spy thrillers I have read by this talented author, however, I have to say it is simply a wonderful story which is uplifting, yet heart rendering at the same time, and I would highly recommend it, whatever religion you follow.

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## **Pasha says**

\*\*\*Spoiler Alert\*\*\*

Mr. Azrieli has one serious flaw: you can easily tell which characters he loves and which - not really. The ones he loves, he justifies everything they do. They are perfect. It was kind of fun in his thriller works, but when he attempts a more serious writing, it is a problem.

Rusty, Debra, Mordehai are perfect, lovable, great personalities. Rusty's wife, both rabbis and a priest are monsters. Their personalities completely make no sense to me. Rusty's wife just decided to change their lives 180 degrees after one conversation with Mordechais relatives. 20 years together and then one conversation,

and she is convinced. The female rabbi turned out to be a psychopath, bipolar person. She storms out of the house, sends hostile emails, makes people throw stones in the windows. Then she apologizes. And the priest, who turned out to be an anti-semitic of 19th century. Not the liberal, present day anti-semitic, who claims to be anti-zionist and blames Israel for all the wrong-doing in the world. No, the real anti-semitic who blames Jewish conspiracy to corrupt Christmas. Add to this controlling of the banks and media, and we have a typical Arab sheikh and not the person who lives in a rich liberal community. Come on. The first half was interesting to read, but the rest of the book lost touch with reality. IMHO.

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### **John says**

Azrieli is an Israeli author who writes contemporary novels for the spiritually inclined. His effort "Christmas for Joshua" was recommended to me by a friend, despite the fact that she knows I'm not terribly religious. When I first saw the title, my response was "thanks, but no thanks," but she insisted and so I acquiesced.

To my surprise there was much to like here. The story is focused around a father, Rusty, a man who converted to Judaism from Christianity early in life to marry his wife, and the impending marriage of his daughter, Debra.

I don't like to give away too much in my reviews, but there's a number of complex issues here handled with delicacy and care. Debra falls in love with an Orthodox man, worrying her father as to the understood strictness of that sect, especially concerning women. At the wedding, his own faith is tested when the groom's parents doubt his religious "purity," catalyzing an internal struggle for meaning vis-a-vis the already fruitful wedding narrative.

Azrieli does a fantastic job contextualizing this in a contemporary setting, making the family's struggles, particularly the father's, seem tangible and realistic. It brings to mind some of the best films made on the topic of racial purity, notably WEST SIDE STORY and even the HARRY POTTER series. I was happily surprised when I finished reading the book. I learned a lot about religions that aren't my own, and it was also an engrossing character study.

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### **Pam Warner says**

Very thought provoking. I liked it but didn't love it.

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