

[PDF] Foreskin's Lament: A Memoir

Shalom Auslander - pdf download free book



Books Details:

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Author: Shalom Auslander
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Description:

From Publishers Weekly Auslander, a magazine writer, describes his Orthodox Jewish upbringing as theological abuse in this sardonic, twitchy memoir that waits for the other shoe to drop from on high. The title refers to his agitation over whether to circumcise his soon to be born son, yet another Jewish ritual stirring confusion and fear in his soul. Flitting haphazardly between expectant-father neuroses in Woodstock, N.Y., and childhood neuroses in Monsey, N.Y., Auslander labors mightily to channel Philip Roth with cutting, comically anxious spiels lamenting his claustrophobic house, off-kilter family and the temptations of all things nonkosher, from shiksas to Slim Jims. The irony of his name, Shalom (Hebrew for peace), isn't lost on him, a tormented soul gripped with dread, fending

off an alcoholic, abusive father while imagining his heavenly one as a menacing, mocking, inescapable presence. Fond of tormenting himself with worst-case scenarios, he concludes, That would be so God. Like Roth's Portnoy, he commits minor acts of rebellion and awaits his punishment with youthful literal-mindedness. But this memoir is too wonky to engage the reader's sympathy or cut free Auslander's persona from the swath of stereotype—and he can't sublimate his rage into the cultural mischief that brightens Roth's oeuvre. That said, a surprisingly poignant ending awaits readers. (Oct.)

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From Shalom Auslander, author of *Beware of God: Stories* (2005) and a contributor to *This American Life*, reveals his ambivalence about God through fear, black humor, and undirected anger. If *Foreskin's Lament* sounds like a terrible rage against God, it is, in parts, but it coalesces into a fascinating reflection on the role of faith and ritual in modern life. Most reviewers found Auslander's stories about his tormented life refreshing, moving, and humorous—for example, the story of his father building an ark for the synagogue, only to be ostracized, struck a high note. However, a few criticized Auslander's tendency to mask real anger and deep questions with comedy. Beneath the humor, however, lies a reflective memoir on religion's powerful hold—and why, sometimes, it's so hard to shake it off.

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