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# Foreskin's Lament



## Synopsis

Shalom Auslander was raised with a terrified respect for God. Even as he grew up, defying and eventually being cast out of his community, he could not find his way to a life in which he wasn't locked in a daily struggle with Him. *Foreskin's Lament* is a rich and fascinating portrait of a man grappling with his faith, his family and his community. "Bracing and witty . . . Never, frankly, can there have been a more blasphemous book . . . *Foreskin's Lament* somehow expresses the ideas of Richard Dawkins in the tone of David Sedaris. You can read it for the humour, you can read it as reportage into a secretive and bizarre world, you can read it as a personal tale of triumph over adversity, or you can just read it for the misery. It doesn't really matter. But do read it" William Sutcliffe, *Independent on Sunday* "One of the funniest books I've ever read, killingly so" Hilary Spurling, *Observer* "Exceptional . . . very, very funny" *Time Out* "Painfully poignant and hilariously noir" *Jewish Chronicle* "By turns hilarious and devastating . . . Few books are laugh-out-loud funny. This one is" Naomi Alderman, *Sunday Times* "America's hottest, funniest, most controversial young Jewish memoirist . . . blackly hilarious, groundbreaking" *The Times*

## Book Information

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Shalom Auslander grew up in the 1970s and 80s in Monsey, New York, in an Orthodox Jewish family, with all that entailed: the arcana of kosher dietary restrictions; the uniform of the Orthodox Jew--tzitzis and peyis and yarmulke; the mind-numbing boredom of Sabbath, when most worthwhile human activity is forbidden by Jewish law."It was forbidden to watch TV, it was forbidden to write, it was forbidden to draw, it was forbidden to color. It was forbidden to play with trains because they used electricity. It was forbidden to play with Legos because it was considered building. It was forbidden to play with Silly Putty because if you pressed it against a newspaper it would transfer some of the ink to itself, and so it was considered printing."More specifically, Auslander grew up in an unhappy Orthodox Jewish family. His father was belligerent and volatile and given to threats involving amputation. His mother wallowed in misery and home decorating. It's hardly surprising that in adulthood Auslander has complicated relationships with both his family and God, the latter an angry entity who, much like Auslander's father, specializes in inconsistent and disproportionate punishments. But Auslander still believes. He believes, for example, that God keeps a particularly careful eye on his misdemeanors, and he is always expecting God to screw him over. Auslander writes about his fallings-out with both family and God in his very readable memoir *Foreskin's Lament*. (The reason for the title is made clear about halfway through the book.) He describes the various ways he acted out against both as a teenager; his back-and-forthing on the question of keeping kosher; his self-imposed, frankly shocking acts of penance.

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