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Wedding Song: Memoirs Of An Iranian Jewish Woman (HBI Series On Jewish Women)



Synopsis

Farideh Goldin was born to her fifteen-year-old mother in 1953 and into a Jewish community living in an increasingly hostile Islamic state—prerevolutionary Iran. This memoir is Goldin's passionate and painful account of her childhood in a poor Jewish household and her emigration to the United States in 1975. As she recalls trips to the market and the mikvah, and as she evokes ritual celebrations like weddings, Goldin chronicles her childhood, her extended family, and the lives of the women in her community in Shiraz, a southern Iranian city. Her memoir details her parents' "courtship" (her father selected her mother from a group of adolescent girls), her mother's lonely life as a child-bride, and Goldin's childhood home which was presided over by her paternal grandmother. Goldin's memoir conveys not just the personal trauma of growing up in a family fraught with discord but also the tragic human costs of religious dogmatism. In Goldin's experience, Jewish fundamentalism was intensified by an Islamic context. Although the Muslims were antagonistic to Jews, their views on women's roles and their treatment of women influenced the attitude and practices of some Iranian Jews. In this brave and dispassionate portrayal of a little-known corner of Jewish life, Farideh Goldin confronts profound sadness yet captures the joys of a child's wonder as she savors the scenes and textures and scents of Jewish Iran. Readers share her youthful adventures and dangers, coming to understand how such experiences shape her choice.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"This powerful book is strongest in its depictions of Goldin's large extended family, some of whom struggled against tradition while others fought to maintain it." —Hadassah

The strength of *Wedding Song*, however, is not only in the autobiographical plot, but in the skillful way Goldin weaves the story and its topics together: blood lines, the older generation, the battle for education, the Jewish ghetto, and the final crunch of marriage are all explored in the context of place and time. . . . It is the vividly described ritual and spiritual events that add the most to this memoir. . . . Goldin's prose is clear, intense - practically tangible." —Jerusalem Post

Big questions about the role of religion in society and the nature of family loom behind the dark moments of Goldin's memoir, and equally satisfying are the windows into Iranian Jewish culture." —Antioch Review

A narrative of women's abuse in Iran from her grandmother's generation to her own. . . . During college, Goldin broke with her community and fled to America. Now, in writing this book, she has broken with them once again." —Lilith

The tale is told with skill, flavor, and drama." —The Virginian-Pilot

In a society where a woman's greatest ambition was thought to be the acquisition of a husband, Goldin found her own path, refusing to relinquish the things that were important to her." —Women's Review of Books

A remarkable, often painful portrayal of a culture that Westerners cannot conceive of having existed as recently as the 20th century." —Jewish Book World

Goldin's experiences reaffirm the bonds of family and legacy and make for an absorbing read." —Jewish Chronicle (Pittsburgh, PA)

"I have been haunted by Farideh Goldin's *Wedding Song* since the day I read it. It is an honest book, and a brave one. Goldin weaves stories of her childhood into the larger backdrop of her Jewish-Iranian culture. As she moves between her memories and the stories of her family, it becomes apparent that her story cannot be separated from her mother's story, from her grandmother's story. And at the same time, her own survival depends on pulling the stories apart. In its structure and content, *Wedding Song* brilliantly captures this conundrum — this need to separate the personal from the political, the individual from the collective, all the time knowing that something precious disappears in the separation. Goldin's writing is sometimes spicy and sometimes sad, but always compelling. It's like an ornate braid, so many individual, colorful strands coming together to form a breathtaking whole. Her memoir is full of anger and compassion and insight. A stunning and powerful debut." (Sheri Reynolds, author of *The Rapture of Canaan*, an Oprah Book Club pick)

I recently read this book for a college class. This book follows the author Farideh Goldin through her

life as a little living in Iran. You see a world that many people never think about or comprehend. Being a male, made parts of the book awkward to read because she starts off talking about her period and how women dealt with that monthly biological clock. I am also Jewish and there are parts of the book that talk about practices in Jewish culture that I thought had been stopped decades ago. The book doesn't follow chronological order which actually makes it easier to read, just sometimes events seem impossible until you realize that the last chapter she was 13 now she is 6. The book comes off with such authenticity that there are times where you just wish she were making parts of it up for entertainment purposes. This is a book I would recommend for readers who want to see the world through a completely new perspective, are interested in much more orthodox Jewish lifestyles, or just something different. This is a book to read, keep, and read again.

This was a lovely but profoundly sad book. It was a satisfying read until the end when her life after escaping Iran, her wedding, and life after coming to America were barely touched upon. It was very interesting however, to learn about the culture and history of the Persian Jewish community of the prior century, fascinating.

This is an unvarnished account of what it was like for a woman to break free of an oppressive patriarchal culture, and for a Jew to liberate herself from a brutally anti-Semitic society. Anyone who still has any illusions of how women and Jews are treated in traditional Islamic cultures like Iran should read this book and learn the truth.

The book is alright, it's more like a diary. It's not the kind of book I would like to keep in my book collection, since it's a personal family life of someone I don't know. But if you are curious of the Judeo-Persian way, this book is good. It has a helpful glossary of words that are used in the book, for those who don't understand Hebrew or Farsi.

Farideh Goldin's book is a compelling memoir about growing up in a Jewish family in Iran prior to the Islamic revolution. She reveals the inside of a culture that is hard to believe existed in the mid-twentieth century. It should be read in conjunction with Dalia Sofer's novel, *The Septembers of Shiraz*, which deals with a Jewish family's ordeal in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution.

I loved Roya Hakakian's *Journey from the Land of No*, so I ordered this book since the topic is similar. I enjoyed Goldin's book just as much. Although Goldin's writing is not as polished and

professional as Hakakian, she lived in a far more backwards region of Iran, thus the story was even more incredible. I felt as if I were transported back in time by Goldin. I recommend this book to everyone.

It was magnificent. It was heartrending, heartening. I felt myself slip into their lives and see what they saw, feel what they felt...yearnings, grief, hopes.

Of all things, how would you like to be a Jew in Iran? The young girl was an outcast in her own family, as the only daughter with her brothers being the favorites. She cherished her friendships, which she enjoyed until she realized she was "different." Gradually, as things worsened in Iran, the Jews were being victimized in the schools and in the communities. Most Jews didn't consider going to Israel as an option because Iran was their home, the language, the Iranian customs, etc., were what they had grown up with. This is a very different look at the situation. I've read many Iranian books and enjoyed the different twist.

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