Shalom Auslander was raised with a terrified respect for God. Even as he grew up and was estranged from his community, his religion and its traditions, he could not find his way to a life where he didn't struggle against God daily. Foreskins Lament reveals Auslander's youth in a strict, socially isolated Orthodox community, and recounts his rebellion and efforts to make a new life apart from it. Auslander remembers his youthful attempt to win the blessing bee (the Orthodox version of a spelling bee), his exile to an Orthodox-style reform school in Israel after he was caught shoplifting Union Bay jeans from the mall, and his fourteen mile hike to watch the New York Rangers play in Madison Square Garden without violating the Sabbath. Throughout, Auslander struggles to understand God and His complicated, often contradictory laws. He tries to negotiate with God and His representatives—a day of sin-free living for a day of indulgence, a blessing for each profanity. But ultimately, Shalom settles for a peaceful cease-fire, a standoff with God, and accepts the very slim
remaining hope that his newborn son might live free of guilt, doubt, and struggle. Auslander's combination of unrelenting humor and anger—one that draws comparisons to memoirists David Sedaris and Dave Eggers—renders a rich and fascinating portrait of a man grappling with his faith, family, and community.

After reading the book and knowing about a child's struggle with his faith, family and friends, I have to be honest and say I feel better about my life. Shalom Auslander is a relatively unknown author and these, his memoirs are his triumphant introduction to the world of life storytelling.

What's so special about him? Well he's a kid who grew up in an orthodox Jewish family in the New York neighbourhood of Monsey. Of course many people would question the special nature of this author considering the area he grew up in contains a large orthodox Jewish community. So at least most kids experienced the same type of trauma, trials and tribulations as he did in his young life. I do doubt, however, that anyone could tell of their Jewish childhood exploits in as fantastic a way as is told by Shalom.

Shalom is the Jewish word for peace (I learned that from this book) but Auslander was a kid and is now an adult very far from at peace with himself and his Lord. He looks at life in a cynical and hateful way, but fills that image with a dark humour crippled with laughter at some of his inner mindful conflicts. He hates his father, but he feels bad for his father. He wishes him dead and hopes god will fulfill that wish if this young Jew will commit sins such as swearing or touching himself as he so elegantly puts it.

Recalling his childhood can to the reader seem as if it was both a traumatic and enlightening experience. The torture of his bullies and his Rabbi mentors made him hate his religion and his god. That's not saying he abandoned it, just know that his Rabbis and his family made him think god was out to get him. This cynicism is made much worse in his adult life when he finds out his wife, Orli is pregnant. Will they both die? or will the babymiscarry or will she give birth and Orli dies leaving him to look after the baby? Well, you'll just have to read it to find out.

This may be a bit too dark to some and a bit too cynical for others. What's so delightful about all of this is that even with the harsh stories told about his God, or the threatening treatment by his Father towards Shalom and his Brother, you can't help but feel the love behind the words. He may say numerous times in the book that he wanted his father dead, and that's amongst many other angry observations, but the fondness of the outbursts of anger at the sheer absurdity of it all give off the aura of warmth and affection. Even a kid in an orthodox Jewish background, he's a kid who's dealt with things we all have at some point.

We've all had our first crush, we've all had a negative experience with one of our teachers and god knows don't we all have that relative we don't get
along with. Either way Shalom is a special writer and is someone who can put his hilarious hatefilled monologues onto paper and have them appear in the same way as if you were saying them in your own head. Its a delightful read and something that I would recommend to anyone with a sense of humour.

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