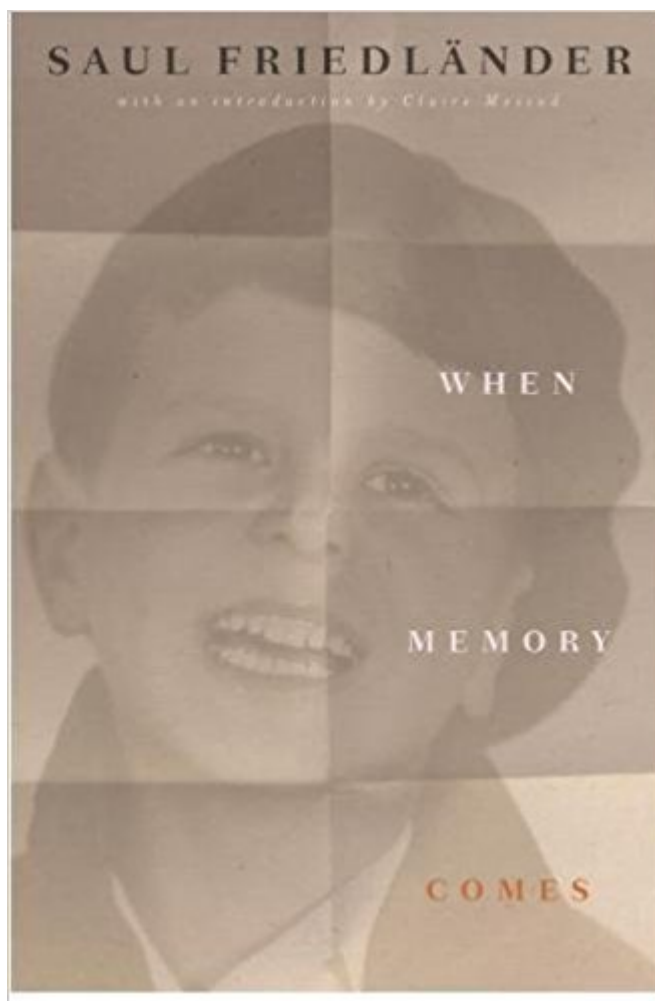


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# When Memory Comes



## Synopsis

A classic of Holocaust literature, the eloquent, acclaimed memoir of childhood by a Pulitzer-winning historian, now reissued with a new introduction by Claire Messud. Four months before Hitler came to power, Saul Friedländer was born in Prague to a middle-class Jewish family. In 1939, seven-year-old Saul and his family were forced to flee to France, where they lived through the German Occupation, until his parents' ill-fated attempt to flee to Switzerland. They were able to hide their son in a Roman Catholic seminary before being sent to Auschwitz where they were killed. After an imposed religious conversion, young Saul began training for priesthood. The birth of Israel prompted his discovery of his Jewish past and his true identity. Friedländer brings his story movingly to life, shifting between his Israeli present and his European past with grace and restraint. His keen eye spares nothing, not even himself, as he explores the ways in which the loss of his parents, his conversion to Catholicism, and his deep-seated Jewish roots combined to shape him into the man he is today. Friedländer's retrospective view of his journey of grief and self-discovery provides readers with a rare experience: a memoir of feeling with intellectual backbone, in equal measure tender and insightful.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 192 pages

Publisher: Other Press (November 8, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1590518071

ISBN-13: 978-1590518076

Product Dimensions: 5.8 x 0.8 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 10 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #359,210 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #292 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > History #293 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Ethnic & National > Jewish #397 in Books > History > World > Religious > Judaism

## Customer Reviews

"Friedländer undertakes an evocative journey into his past that is likely to leave many a reader shaken." — Amos Elon, New York Times Book Review "A beautifully written (and beautifully translated) memoir of a tragic childhood." — New Yorker "A work of eloquence and compassion." — John Skow, Time "A tender elegy which moves from the

Israeli present to the European past, from fear to memory, in a mosaic of Proustian images." —•New Republic"The most remarkable feature of *When Memory Comes* is its composure, an elegance that is unnerving. Friedländer describes his experiences in lean, graceful sentences; his language seems armored against the dissolution it describes." —•Leon Wieseltier, *The New York Review of Books* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Text: English, French (translation) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

One of the most moving stories to come out of the Holocaust. Friedlander takes us back to the years leading up to World War II, from the period of his childhood to his contribution to the establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948. The reader travels with him as he struggles with the memories of his past to his rediscovery of who he is as a Jewish young man. The reader will be drawn into his or her own past to discover how one's memory of the past forges one's present reality. Barry R. Leventhal, Ph.D. Distinguished Senior Professor Former Provost and Academic Dean Southern Evangelical Seminary

This tale of a young boy, who makes his way without any family through Nazi occupied France and then onto a career as a leading historian, is gripping.

Fascinating, well-written account of youth and early career of an eminent historian. Be sure to reach the next volume, just published.

excellent service. This memoir is outstanding. I am reading his second memoir - *When Memory Leads*

Great book, tragic story

This book completely wowed me. Wonderful insight into a history that I did not know and beautifully written. It was informative non fiction and yet compelling

In the autumn of 1977 Saul Friedländer, aged 45 and then living in Israel, felt the need to sort

out the several identities he had had during his traumatic childhood and adolescence: born as Pavel in Prague in 1932 into a secular German-speaking Jewish family as Pawel; fleeing with his parents in 1939 to Paris, where he became Paul; in 1940 fleeing with them into Vichy France; when the round-up of Jews begins in 1942, his parents – who would be deported to Auschwitz – sent him into hiding to a strict Catholic boarding school in Montluçon near Vichy, where he was known as Paul-Henri-Marie Ferland and where he became a fervent Catholic; re-discovering his identification as a Jew in 1946 while still a devout Catholic; being given a religious Jew from a shtetl background as a guardian (he is never named) and spending the holidays with him and his family in Paris (he merely says that “people did their best to give me back a perfect Jewish identity as soon as possible” while still for a while attending the Catholic school in Montluçon as a boarder in term-time, celebrating Passover with that family, but not able to eat the meat dish because it was Lent!). But his Catholicism faded; he moved from the Catholic school to the prestigious Lycée Henri IV in Paris; he became a Zionist and joined the Betar, the Irgun’s youth movement. In 1948, ten days before he was to take his baccalaureate and twenty days after the proclamation of the State of Israel, he embarked on the Altalena, the ship hired by the Irgun and carrying weapons for the Irgun as well as 940 immigrants. The immigrants disembarked at Kfar Vitkin. (Shortly afterwards the Israeli government, fearing the Irgun was aiming to create a rival army to the Israeli Defence Force, ordered the Altalena to be attacked and sunk.) In Israel he would take the name of Shaul. Every now and again, as if he needs a break from his painful efforts to remember, he interrupts the story by switching to the time in 1977 when he was writing the book and describes and comments on a smattering of his experiences there. Forty years later he will describe his life after 1948, as a distinguished historian of the Holocaust, in another book, *Where Memory Leads* (see my review). This is just an outline of a story movingly told, with graphic details of his surroundings and of his experiences and with wider reflections on repressed memories, repressed identities, childhood, love, loss and guilt.

Dr Friedlander has created a work that stands above the many others of published Holocaust memoirs in its unforgettable poignancy and as a story of courage. His achievement is couched in the most beautiful language, and is above all the ultimate revenge – a story of recovery and meaningfulness out of unbearable trauma. I salute a great writer and academic.

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