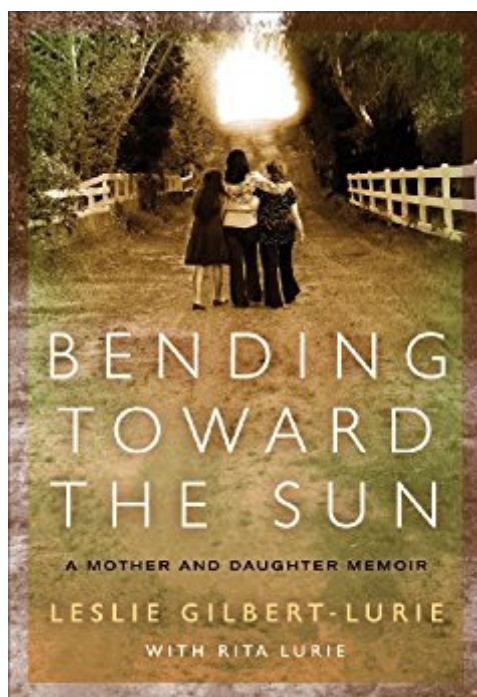


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Bending Toward The Sun: A Mother And Daughter Memoir



Synopsis

A beautifully written family memoir, *Bending Toward the Sun* explores an emotional legacy "forged in the terror of the Holocaust" that has shaped three generations of lives. Leslie Gilbert-Lurie tells the story of her mother, Rita, who like Anne Frank spent years hiding from the Nazis, and whose long-hidden pain shaped both her daughter and granddaughter's lives. Bringing together the stories of three generations of women, *Bending Toward the Sun* reveals how deeply the Holocaust lives in the hearts and minds of survivors and their descendants.

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Customer Reviews

This book has essentially three parts plus one smaller one. The first part is told in Rita's voice. She tells of her childhood in Poland, a country that was largely populated by Jews. Her village was virtually unaffected by the Nazi invasion for the first couple of years. When the S.S. army arrived in approximately 1942, everything changed. As a very young child she and her family stay in an attic for two years. As previously mentioned, Rita witnesses the death of her brother and mother. She is deeply affected by these deaths. In 1944, when the Russians first conquered Poland, the families

emerged from the attic and went from one Displaced Persons camp to another. Isaac, her father, remarries and they immigrate to the U.S. The second section of the book (according to me) is Rita's growing up years. The family lived in New York then moved to Chicago where she eventually met Frank, her husband. They begin their family life in southern California where they add two daughters and a son to the mix. Their children grow and Leslie, the main author comes of age. Section 3 is Leslie's voice. She describes her mother's behavior and her own reaction to her mother. Both women are stunningly honest. A major theme throughout the book is that Rita never had a childhood and was never nurtured. It seemed that she sought nurturing from inappropriate sources, especially her oldest daughter. *Psychological commentary: (I mean, really, you expected it, didn't you?) Given that Rita's most traumatic experiences occurred when she was between the ages of 5 and 8, every so often her interactions with others seem childish and disproportionately immature.

What I Can Tell You: This is a must read! I would have loved reading this book with a friend or book group. The story of Ruchel/Rita is quite amazing and gut wrenching. As her daughter states in the Prologue, Rita's story is very similar to Anne Frank's. Both spent two years hiding during the Holocaust and hid with the help of others who would have been killed had they been found. However, Rita is here to tell about her story and pass on this legacy to her children and the generations after. Besides it being a captivating book it is thought provoking and made me think of my own legacy and past and what I may be unconsciously handing down to my own children. Because, as Leslie mentions, our mother's past or families past, effects and shapes who we are as people. Rita is lucky to have survived such an ordeal that changed history and is still affecting individuals. Leslie, Rita and even Granddaughter Mikaela who has a big voice in this book are very brave to have started the journey of documenting the life and times of Ruchel/Rita. What a gripping story that will sit with me for quite some time. I implore you to check out the book video here. If you decide to read this book, know that you will learn a lot about yourself and your own relationship with your mother. What makes this book even more special is the amount of photos peppered throughout the story. Seeing the smiles and knowing the two years they endured hiding is at times unbearable. My heart breaks for the little Ruchel who just wanted to be held and told everything was going to be OK. I cannot imagine what it was like to lose her mother the way she did. Losing my own at 12 years old to Cancer was horrific.

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