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TITLE INFORMATION

SEVEN SPRINGS

A Memoir

Ellen Blum Barish

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BOOK REVIEW

Barish reflects on a childhood accident that forever changed her life as well as her later-in-life embrace of Judaism.

In 1972, when the author was 12 years old, she was involved in a terrible car accident. Two friends and fellow passengers, Jenny and Caroline, were severely hurt, and their mother was gravely injured and died years later from resultant complications. The author's injuries were comparatively minor—a bandaged forefinger and a missing tooth that was quickly restored to its proper place, “as if the dentist had erased all visual evidence that I had ever even been in an auto accident.” However, as Caroline put it, a “cone of silence” was lowered over the whole affair; Barish's father ordered the author never to discuss it. Much later, at her 20-year high school reunion, the author saw Jenny again, broached the forbidden subject, and began a slow process of confronting the unmanaged trauma and healing from it, as well. It also led her, she says, “to something I now understand as faith”—specifically, the Judaism that both her parents inherited but didn't practice and in which neither showed any interest: “God wasn't recognized in the house I grew up in.” Over the course of this remembrance, the author movingly recounts her spiritual renewal, which she took so seriously that she eventually became a religious school teacher. Barish notes that she was always a “dutiful diarist” and is now a journalist, which isn't surprising given the rigorous fashion in which she documents the facts of her life and builds a gripping narrative. In addition, the author presents a thoughtfully lively view of Judaism that focuses on the faith as more of an “ongoing conversation” than a body of inelastic laws.

A wise, candid, and emotionally powerful memoir.

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