

CBT Highlights: Forever My Jerusalem

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By Puah Shteiner

Translated by Bracha Slae

Non-fiction

1987 Feldheim Publishers

This book is a first person account of the battle for, and eventual evacuation of, the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem in 1948. Shteiner relates her memories of life in the Old City as a 4-7 year old. She grew up in a religious extended family who had lived in Palestine for several generations. She and her siblings attended school in the Old City. Her father, a teacher, was very active in providing for the Jews of the Old City and took an active leadership role during the last days there. She describes the family's decision to stay in the Old City during the riots and then the battle itself, ending in the chaotic evacuation of all the elderly, women and children who were left. The men were sent to a prisoner-of-war camp in Trans-Jordan and the families were not re-united until after the end of the war. Most of the families were temporarily settled in the newly evacuated Arab areas of Katamon and Talbia where they had to forage for the necessities of everyday life among the Arabs' abandoned apartments. The Jewish Agency assisted with meals and a few other basics for a time but then the 'refugees' were on their own. The book is largely told from the point of view of a child as this represents Shteiner's truest perspective on the everyday events she is relating. The beginning and end of the book are related from her adult perspective as she returns to re-settle in the newly rebuilt Jewish Quarter.

This would be a great book to read or reread around Yom Yerushalayim or Yom Ha'Atzmaut in order to experience what the situation was on the ground during this time period.