

Soldier On: A Woman's Memoir of Resilience and Hope

Bracha Horovitz

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Soldier On is a compelling memoir about an Israeli woman's experiences as a soldier, wife, mother, and entrepreneur.

In her poignant memoir *Soldier On*, Bracha Horovitz reflects on her experiences from her childhood in the newly established state of Israel through her marriage and move to the United States, all while exploring how her most difficult moments enabled her to endure future hardships.

Horovitz was born in Israel in 1952 and grew up in a small village just outside of Jerusalem. Her parents had settled there prior to the nation's establishment in 1948. Shaped by the pressure to be an ideal "sabrah" (translation: cactus fruit; the nickname for people born in Israel), Horovitz was expected to continue the work of her parents' generation and help build Israel into a thriving nation. Thus, Horovitz molded herself into an ideal student, excelled in her training and service with the Israeli Defense Force, and even made it to the final rounds of the Miss Israel contest.

From an opening account of a grueling hike as part of her IDF training, the book provides deep insight into Horovitz's life, expressing the overarching theme of persevering through difficult moments well. Horovitz's descriptive and thoughtful prose conveys the turmoil she faced at various moments in her life, with particular emphasis placed on her move from Israel to the United States with her husband and young children and the unexpected birth of a child with severe physical and developmental challenges.

Horovitz manages to pack a full account of her life into a short number of pages, with each sentence in the memoir serving the book's intention of showing what it means to "soldier on." With titles like "Why Not Me?" and "Walls" that provide clues to the content within, each chapter captures Horovitz's perspective as a woman who has endured numerous hardships. The chapters are organized well, too: each includes a unique story that is distinct from the previous chapter and each ends with a powerful paragraph or sentence that sums up the events within it. "Fear Of Vulnerability," for example, ends with "I did not know. I had forgotten to be 'for myself.' But now I could see that I needed to take care of myself to better take care of my family." The chapter that follows details Horovitz's decision to engage in physical activity and take better care of herself after years of focusing on the needs of others. And within the chapters themselves, the memoir makes use of visual breaks to mark changes in the narrative—as between the young Horovitz's invitation to attend a prestigious school in Jerusalem and her first day as a new student—that deserve to be separated but are not distinct enough to warrant being divided into separate chapters.

As a storyteller, Horovitz never strays; her words are powerful and consistent. This helps to make *Soldier On* a compelling memoir about a woman's experiences as a soldier, wife, mother, and entrepreneur; it highlights the power of determination and inner strength in the face of adversity.

GAIL HOFFER-LOIBL (November 30, 2022)

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