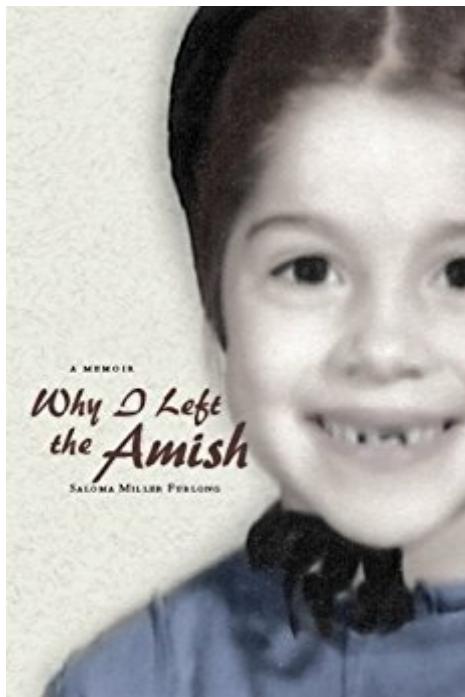


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# Why I Left The Amish: A Memoir



## **Synopsis**

There are two ways to leave the Amishâ "one is through life and the other through death. When Saloma Miller Furlongâ ™s father dies during her first semester at Smith College, she returns to the Amish community she had left twenty four years earlier to attend his funeral. Her journey home prompts a flood of memories. Now a mother with grown children of her own, Furlong recalls her painful childhood in a family defined by her fatherâ ™s mental illness, her brotherâ ™s brutality, her motherâ ™s frustration, and the austere traditions of the Amishâ "traditions Furlong struggled to accept for years before making the difficult decision to leave the community. In this personal and moving memoir, Furlong traces the genesis of her desire for freedom and education and chronicles her conflicted quest for independence. Eloquently told, *Why I Left the Amish* is a revealing portrait of life withinâ "and withoutâ "this frequently misunderstood community.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Millions of Americans met Saloma Miller Furlong in PBS's two-hour American Experience documentary: *American Experience: The Amish*. In one short vignette within the two-hour film, viewers heard from Saloma, saw photos from several points throughout her life and learned what

leaving the Amish felt like for her--in short, very painful yet also liberating. Even at the generous length of two hours, Saloma's real story is more complex than PBS and its expert narrators like Dr. Donald Kraybill (co-author of the wonderful *The Amish Way: Patient Faith in a Perilous World*) could hope to explain. The film suggests that Saloma simply was restless and wanted to continue her education beyond the 8th Grade. In fact, in this recently published memoir, Saloma tells the world "the rest of the story," which involves deep psychological wounds in her father's life that left him a cruel and brutal taskmaster over his children. Worse than that, an older brother who was brutalized by her father wound up becoming a sexual predator in her family--abusing Saloma and her sisters at early ages. Saloma describes this brother as torn in several directions--between his own tortured childhood as a beaten child, the calling of Amish pacifism and forgiveness, and his compulsion toward the serial abuse of others. I won't spoil the outcome, but this is not simply a story of unrelenting tragedy.

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