



# **Too Deep Were Our Roots: A Viennese Jewish memoir of the years between the two world wars**

*Sonia Wachstein*

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Born just before World War I, Sonia Wachstein's earliest memories of her childhood in Vienna revolve around her family's house looking out over the peaceful Vienna Woods. She also recalls a post-war time of rampant inflation and unemployment. Long an intellectual and cultural capital, the city was also a place where the well-established Jewish community prospered.

But as the European political situation changed during the 1920s and 1930s, life for the assimilated Jews in Vienna began to change. Propelled by the rise of the Nazi party in Germany, and later by the Nuremberg laws, Sonia's family and friends face increasing discrimination. Her travels to England, Italy, and Palestine—where there is little mention of the "Jewish problem"—underscore the dangers of ingrained anti-Semitism. When Austria is occupied by the German army in 1938, Sonia faces the tough choice of deciding whether to stay or leave—before it is too late to do so.

This riveting first-person account includes the stories of Bernhard Wachstein, Sonia's father, a prominent Jewish scholar; her brother Max, a doctor who is sent to Dachau; and many other friends and family members. And woven throughout are the themes of roots and identity, and the stark question: "what is to be done when homeland is no longer home?"

69 illustrations.

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