



The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry, 1932-1945 (Studies in Jewish History)

By Leni Yahil

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When *The Holocaust* first appeared in Israel in 1987, it was hailed as the finest, most authoritative history of Hitler's war on the Jews ever published.

Representing twenty years of research and reflection, Leni Yahil's book won the Shazar Prize, one of Israel's highest awards for historical work. Now available in English, *The Holocaust* offers a sweeping look at the Final Solution, covering not only Nazi policies, but also how Jews and foreign governments perceived and responded to the unfolding nightmare.

The Holocaust is astonishingly comprehensive. Yahil weaves a gripping chronological narrative that stretches from the Norwegian fjords to the Greek islands, from Amsterdam to Tehran--and even Shanghai. Her writing is balanced, objective, and compelling, as she systematically explores the evolution of the Holocaust in German-occupied Europe, probing its politics, planning, goals, and key figures. Yahil uses her command of the many relevant languages to marshal an impressive array of documentary and statistical evidence, driving her narrative forward with telling details and personal accounts--such as a survivor's description of her perseverance during a death march, or the story of the *Struma*, a boat that sank with over 700 Jewish refugees when the British refused to receive it in Palestine.

Along the way, she destroys persistent myths about the Holocaust: that Hitler had no plan for exterminating the Jews, that the Jews themselves went peacefully to the slaughter. Though Yahil finds that Nazi policies were often inconsistent, particularly during the years before the war, she conclusively demonstrates that Hitler was always working toward a final reckoning with world Jewry, envisioning his war as a war against the Jews. The book also recounts numerous uprisings and acts of resistance in ghettos and concentration camps, as well as the activities of Jewish partisan units. Yahil describes the work of Jews in America, Palestine, and world organizations on behalf of Hitler's victims--often in the face of resistance by the Allied governments and neutral states--and explores the factors that affected the success of rescue efforts.

The Holocaust is a monumental work of history, unsurpassed in scope and insightful detail. Objective yet compassionate, Leni Yahil brings together the countless diverse strands of this epic event in a single gripping account.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Winner of the Shazar Prize for Jewish history, Israel's equivalent of the Pulitzer Prize, this monumental, engrossing narrative is arguably the most comprehensive account of the Holocaust to date. Tracing the Nazis' rise through their combination of tight control and improvisation, Yahil shows why Europe's Jews were sorely unprepared for Hitler's persecution and absolute tyranny. In the Jewish councils (the Judenrat), which nurtured the illusion that intercession with Germans could save at least a remnant of Jewry, this professor emeritus of Hebrew University sees one of the principal reasons for the Jews' helplessness. A masterful prose stylist, Yahil makes the unbearable readable. Proceeding country by country, he describes the deportations and liquidations, the inhuman slavery in the death camps, as well as ghetto uprisings, rescue attempts and the world's inadequate responses to impending tragedy.

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From Library Journal

Translated from the Hebrew original, which won Israel's Shazar Prize for Jewish History in 1987, this massively detailed history of the Holocaust is now the most comprehensive one-volume treatment available on the subject. Yahil, professor emeritus at Hebrew University, has written a masterful, meticulous book integrating the best of world scholarship with her own research of the last two decades to create a first-rate synthesis showing the gradual evolution of the "Final Solution." She is particularly adept in portraying discrete Jewish experiences in different European locations as they evolved over time in response to complex, continuously changing sociopolitical circumstances. Her narrative framework is frequently punctuated by conceptual discussions in which the reader sees a deliberate historian at work weighing evidence. With at least as much detail as Martin Gilbert's *The Holocaust* (LJ 2/1/86), but more analytical, this takes its place alongside such one-volume works as Lucy Dawidowicz's *War Against the Jews* (LJ 4/1/75) and Yehuda Bauer's *History of the Holocaust* (LJ 5/1/82). An outstanding book, at once a sweeping history and, for some themes, an encyclopedic resource.

- *Benny Kraut, Univ. of Cincinnati*

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Review

"This is an excellent book for undergraduate courses on the Holocaust. It is clear and concise, and sensitive, and it covers all the necessary areas."--Marsha Rozenblat, University of Maryland

"A remarkable accomplishment; the most complete and up-to-date work on the subject. The research is broad and deep in a wide array of languages."--Marvin Swartz, University of Massachusetts

"Great volume, a definitive work. I will use it in the future if not next semester."--Matthew Gore, Western Kentucky University

"This is a very ambitious opus. The author shows deep insight into the life and thinking of the Jews before and during the Holocaust."--Vera Laska, Regis College

"An engaging and comprehensive study surveying a wide range of Holocaust material with careful focus."--Dr. Eugene C. Kreider, Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary

"In this new one-volume history of the Holocaust, Leni Yahil addresses the needs of the current generation of Israelis for whom the Holocaust has "no direct bearing on their own reality" and for whom the "aberrant and abysmal elements of the Holocaust" are totally foreign....The author constructs a solid response to the accusations of Jewish passivity....In almost every chapter there are important but little known facts which broaden the reader's perspective....Nevertheless, this book-the first concise history to explore in depth not only Hitler's war against the Jews but the Jewish struggle to prevail-is a fine addition to Holocaust history."--Brana Gurewitsch, Hadassah Magazine

"Thoughtful, thorough, and judicious."--The New Yorker

"A major contribution to the ever-growing field of Holocaust studies....The appearance of such a work is, in fact, long overdue....Yahil's penetrating re-examination of the fate that overtook European Jewry...compels us to contemplate anew an event that can never be forgiven or forgotten, a history that is not past but present, a history that remains both prophecy and warning."--The Chicago Tribune

"Monumental and panoramic....A remarkable achievement....An ambitious undertaking, encyclopedic in its scope, its text smooth and highly readable....Has the makings of a standard work, a helpful reference to all students of the Holocaust, and accessible in its polished style to laymen."--The Boston Sunday Globe

"Huge, and hugely compelling."--The Christian Science Monitor

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Warren Zeigler:

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