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# Sexual Violence against Jewish Women during the Holocaust (HBI Series on Jewish Women)

*From Brand: Brandeis*



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**Finalist for the National Jewish Book Award**

Using testimonies, Nazi documents, memoirs, and artistic representations, this volume broadens and deepens comprehension of Jewish women's experiences of rape and other forms of sexual violence during the Holocaust. The book goes beyond previous studies, and challenges claims that Jewish women were not sexually violated during the Holocaust.

This anthology by an interdisciplinary and international group of scholars addresses topics such as rape, forced prostitution, assaults on childbearing, artistic representations of sexual violence, and psychological insights into survivor trauma. These subjects have been relegated to the edges or completely left out of Holocaust history, and this book aims to shift perceptions and promote new discourse.



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## **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

Sadly, Hedgepeth and Saidel may be asking too much of their readers: three hundred pages chronicling the literal and metaphorical rapes of women (who were often subsequently murdered) is a visceral discomfort few will be willing to undertake. But these essays, describing experiences of forced sex, "sex for survival," prostitution, sterilization, abortion, and general sexual humiliation, add greatly to what is known about the lives of Jewish women during WWII. Much of the content here is a philosophical extension of first-person accounts of sexual torture. One essay on victim psychology demonstrates how trauma can render the first-person unreliable. Several essays deal with WWII sexual violence as depicted in fiction and film. Taken together, these essays illustrate how this subject is discussed, or not, across the globe. The fact that this exhaustive volume represents the first set of essays on the subject written in English underpins a fundamental truth held by the editors: while English-speaking countries are comfortable discussing these horrors, the fates specific to the murdered women and survivors of sexual assault are considered by many to be too shameful for discourse.

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## **Review**

"Saidel and Hedgepeth knew rape was not documented in the same way as the number of trains that traveled to a concentration camp, but they sought out scholars from seven countries and collected 16 essays, drawing upon oral histories, literature, psychoanalysis, eyewitness reports and diaries. The stories of rape and sexual abuse began to emerge as if they were old photographic film waiting for the right chemicals, and long-erased pictures of Jewish women who had suffered sexual abuse began to emerge."—Cindy Cooper, *Women's E-News*

"This revelatory anthology would be crucial as long-overdue truth even if it were unique, but the suppression of its truth probably left us even less prepared for sexual abuse in Bosnia, Rwanda, the Congo—and more. Rochelle and Sonja have given us the greatest gift: a truth of history that can keep us from repeating its suffering."—*Gloria Steinem, reported in The Forward*

"Saidel and Hedgepeth demonstrate that there is ample documentation of the most vicious sexual abuse in the heart of 'civilized' Europe during the Holocaust. In their excellent collection, they go far in shining a spotlight on this fraught topic."—*Women's Review of Books*

"The subject of sexual brutality against women in the Holocaust has been pretty much neglected; this book is a vital addition to women's history, Jewish history and the history of the world."—*Na'amat Woman*

"These essays, describing experiences of forced sex, 'sex for survival,' prostitution, sterilization, abortion, and general sexual humiliation, add greatly to what is known about the lives of Jewish women during WWII. Much of the content here is a philosophical extension of first-person accounts of sexual torture. . . . These essays illustrate how this subject is discussed, or not, across the globe. The fact that this exhaustive volume

represents the first set of essays on the subject written in English underpins a fundamental truth held by the editors: while English-speaking countries are comfortable discussing these horrors, the fates specific to the murdered women and survivors of sexual assault are considered by many to be too shameful for discourse.”—*Publishers Weekly*

“The rape and sexual abuse of Jewish women during the Holocaust have been long overlooked. But when researchers probed, stories began to emerge as if they were old photographic film waiting for the right chemicals.”—*Haaretz and Jewish Journal*

“After a pre-eminent Holocaust scholar questioned whether sexual violence had really occurred during WWII, scholars Sonja Hedgepeth and Rochelle Saidel got working on the recently published *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During The Holocaust*, the first book on the topic in English, which comprises 16 essays examining the rape, forced prostitution, sexual slavery, forced abortion and sterilization that took place during the war. While the Holocaust has been examined from myriad perspectives in both academia and popular culture, sexual violence, which was largely directed against women, has received little attention. Hedgepeth and Saidel, along with a small group of academics and writers, are fighting to change that.”—Haaretz.com—*Haaretz.com*

#### Review

“The Holocaust horrors suffered by males and females alike have been rightly memorialized in histories and museums, but the sexual violence suffered by females has rarely been recorded. Perhaps we would have been better able to prevent the rapes in the former Yugoslavia and the Congo if we had not had to wait more than sixty years to hear the truths that are anthologized in *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women during the Holocaust* by Sonja Hedgepeth and Rochelle Saidel. We owe them and the authors they assembled a debt of gratitude for a well-documented warning that sexual violence is a keystone of genocide.” (Gloria Steinem, feminist writer and organizer, co-founder of the Women’s Media Center)

“Challenging conventional interpretations by highlighting evidence that has been ignored, downplayed, or even silenced, *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women during the Holocaust*, a book as courageous as it is sensitive, significantly expands scholarship about the Holocaust’s extremity and intensifies imperatives to resist every kind of sexual abuse.” (John K. Roth, Edward J. Sexton Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and Founding Director, Center for the Study of the Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights, Claremont McKenna College)

“This book touches upon a deeply troubling and too long ignored topic. The Nazis used a wide variety of means to humiliate, degrade, and torture Jews. Rape and sexual abuse were among them. Sadly, it was not only the Nazis and their allies who abused Jewish women. Jews, non-Jewish prisoners, and even liberators did as well. The editors and contributors to this volume deserve great credit for addressing this painful topic.” (Deborah E. Lipstadt, Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish and Holocaust Studies, Emory University)

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##### Belia Gillespie:

The book *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women during the Holocaust* (HBI Series on Jewish Women) make one feel enjoy for your spare time. You should use to make your capable considerably more increase.

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#### **Toni Sargent:**

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