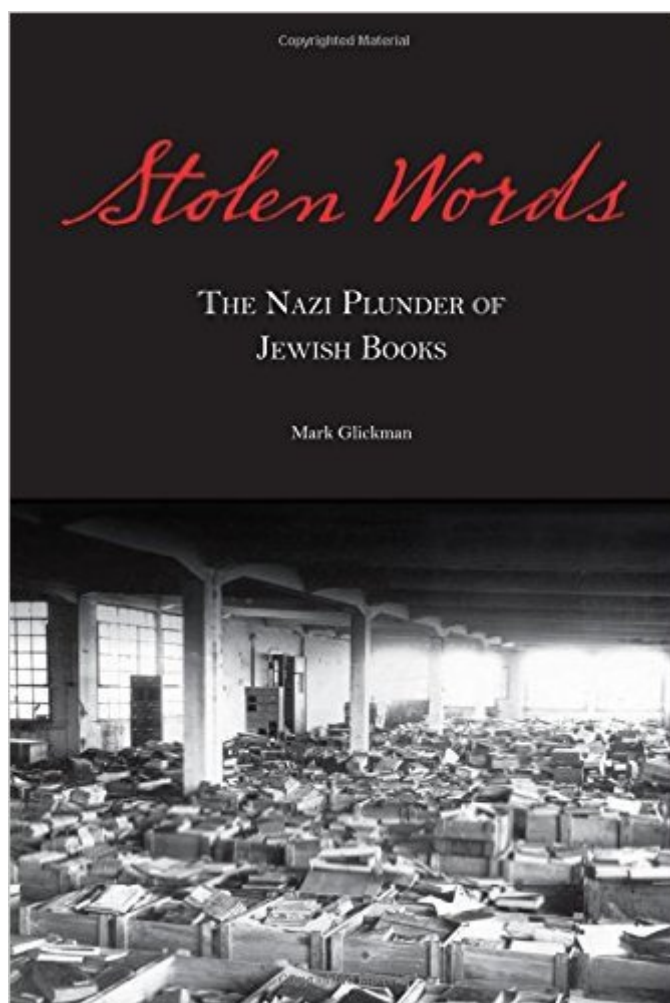


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Stolen Words: The Nazi Plunder Of Jewish Books



Synopsis

Stolen Words is an epic story about the largest collection of Jewish books in the world—tens of millions of books that the Nazis looted from European Jewish families and institutions. Nazi soldiers and civilians emptied Jewish communal libraries, confiscated volumes from government collections, and stole from Jewish individuals, schools, and synagogues. Early in their regime the Nazis burned some books in spectacular bonfires, but most they saved, stashing the literary loot in castles, abandoned mine shafts, and warehouses throughout Europe. It was the largest and most extensive book-looting campaign in history. After the war, Allied forces discovered these troves of stolen books but quickly found themselves facing a barrage of questions. How could the books be identified? Where should they go? Who had the authority to make such decisions? Eventually the military turned the books over to an organization of leading Jewish scholars called Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc.—whose chairman was the acclaimed historian Salo Baron and whose on-the-ground director was the philosopher Hannah Arendt—with the charge of establishing restitution protocols. *Stolen Words* is the story of how a free civilization decides what to do with the material remains of a world torn asunder, and how those remains connect survivors with their past. It is the story of Jews struggling to understand the new realities of their post-Holocaust world and of Western society's gradual realization of the magnitude of devastation wrought by World War II. Most of all, it is the story of people—of Nazi leaders, ideologues, and Judaica experts; of Allied soldiers, scholars, and scoundrels; and of Jewish communities, librarians, and readers around the world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is not an easy book to describe, but it is a very good one, and parts of it are outstanding. The writing is excellent, the research seems thorough, and as a rabbi, Glickman has a heightened understanding of the importance of books, learning and religious texts to Judaism. The photos are helpful, although the book could use more. Here's a sample of his prose, which also describes the importance of study: "Personal moments of transcendence might be moving, but what really counts is what God said to the Jewish people collectively. And what God said to the Jewish people collectively is called Torah. To study Torah, therefore, is to study a thunderous moment of divine revelation, To study Torah is to hear the voice of God."The first half of the book is the best, describing the relationship of books to Jewish culture, and it has some fascinating detail about manuscripts, early printing in Hebrew, and how printing helped the standardization of texts, which in turned helped a sense of Jewishness in the widely dispersed communities making up the world of Judaism. Among other things, there's an excellent account of the early days of Hasidism. One outstanding feature is actually fiction, a fictional account of a visit to a real Jewish library in pre-war Vilna (the Strashun Library); sections of the visit mix with the first chapter. The fictional visit will have an impact on any reader, but if the reader loves books, he or she will be drawn deeply into Glickman's book.

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