



# Silent Places: Landscapes of Jewish Life and Loss in Eastern Europe

*Jeffrey Gusky, Judith Miller*

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Jeff Gusky, a doctor of emergency medicine, decided at the age of 42 that he wanted to better confront the reality of modern Jewish history. A self-taught photographer who subsequently learned to make museum quality prints, he bought what he calls "a good, journalist-type camera and some lenses" and traveled to Poland—once the home of the largest concentration of Diaspora Jews. He read the instruction manuals on the plane en route.

Over four trips, accompanied each time by a top Polish guide, Gusky traveled through the country, beyond the city ghettos and the sites of concentration camps, into remote villages where Jews had lived and worked for almost 1,000 years before the Holocaust—capturing on film the austere landscapes and the remains of a once thriving Jewish culture.

The silence is deafening: here are Jewish cemeteries full of broken gravestones, ruined synagogues filled with trash and disfigured with graffiti, a Jewish home now used as a public toilet—"where people lived, walked, worshipped, and were, ultimately, exterminated," says Gusky. The doleful, understated clarity of what he saw and photographed captures a poignant sense of loss—making at the same time an indelible connection to the past.

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