

*Abstract*

What impact did the Eichmann trial have on knowledge of the Holocaust among people in Israel, North America, and many other parts of the world? Had there been a «depth of silence» about the Holocaust prior to the trial and was it broken by the trial? This paper examines this question by looking at the adoption of the word Holocaust as the term for the Third Reich's annihilation of approximately six million Jews. The paper argues that the application of a singular word for this historical episode can be used as a marker to measure when knowledge of it and a willingness to grapple with it was evident in the scholarly world and beyond. As part of tracking the application of this word to this historical event, the paper also examines how the Holocaust was treated by various historians during the 1950s and 1960s. It explores how the Holocaust was initially treated as an historical event, e.g. as a link in a chain of antisemitic events or as something sui generis and unprecedented. Finally, it traces the initial growth of Holocaust studies as an integrated field of study about the annihilation to the Jews and examines some of the fundamental questions that arose at the outset of the creation of the field among them, who were the victims: Jews, disabled, political opponents etc. or just Jews?

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