

S(h)ibboleth: Circumcision and Jewish Survival during the Shoah

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In Nazi-occupied Europe, even with authentic papers, linguistic fluency, knowledge of Christian prayers and practices, and an Aryan appearance, for Jewish males, anatomy was destiny: a male Jew, bearing the singular mark of (male) Jewish difference, circumcision, was ever at risk. Scenes of its threatened exposure, efforts to avoid such situations, and responses when they were unavoidable, play significant roles in survivor testimony and memoir literature. Yet, to date, there has been no extensive scholarly study of the manifold ways circumcision impacted Jewish survival; instead, Holocaust Studies, by treating it as an unfortunate – and assumed – condition of most Jewish males, has marginalized its significance. For the past several years I have been researching the written, audio, and audiovisual archives to uncover the numerous and diverse effects of this “condition” on Jewish men’s – and women’s – choices, experiences, feelings, Jewish-, gender- and self-identities during the Shoah and after. In this talk I will provide an overview of those effects as well as take up the relation of circumcision to the problem of identifying the Jews as a race prior to and during the Third Reich as well as in the formation of Third Reich racial policy.

Moderator: Dr. Johannes Dafinger, FB Geschichte

Jay Geller is Professor of Modern Jewish Culture, emeritus, at Vanderbilt University (Nashville, Tennessee, US). He is the author of *On Freud’s Jewish Body: Mitigating Circumcisions* (2007, Fordham), *The Other Jewish Question: Identifying the Jew and Making Sense of Modernity* (2011, Fordham), and *Bestiarium Judaicum: Unnatural Histories of the Jews* (2018, Fordham). His lecture draws upon his current research on circumcision and Jewish survival during the Shoah.

Datum und Uhrzeit: Dienstag, 28. März 2023, 17 Uhr c.t.

Ort: Raum 2.205 Unipark, (Erzabt-Klotz-Str. 1, Salzburg)

Eintritt frei