Toledot Yeshu ("The Life Story of Jesus") Revisited

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A Princeton Conference

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Peter Schäfer, Michael Meerson,
and Yaacov Deutsch

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Acknowledgments

The essays published in this volume are the fruit of a seminar and conference on *Toledot Yeshu* conducted at Princeton University. The seminar, directed by John Gager, Michael Meerson, and Peter Schäfer, took place in the fall term of 2009, culminating in an international conference on November 15–17, 2009, organized by Yaacov Deutsch, Michael Meerson, and Peter Schäfer. Both the seminar and the conference are related to the Princeton University *Toledot Yeshu* project, funded by the Mellon Foundation, which is now in the last stages of preparing an edition and translation with brief commentary of all the available recensions of *Toledot Yeshu*. All the essays are revised versions of the conference papers, with the exception of Sarit Kattan Gribetz's essay, which was presented at the seminar.

First and foremost, we thank the participants of the seminar and conference for their contributions to what we believe marks a new stage in *Toledot Yeshu* research and for allowing us to publish them in this volume. Aaron Kachuck, graduate student in the Department of Classics, helped us in editing the articles. Princeton University's Department of Religion and Program in Judaic Studies extended, as always, Princeton's legendary hospitality and made the conference an enjoyable and memorable event for all the participants. The Mellon Foundation generously funded the conference, and Mohr Siebeck took care of the publication in their customary smooth, fast and professional way. To all of them we express our deep gratitude.

Princeton, Berlin, Jerusalem, May 2011

Peter Schäfer
Michael Meerson
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Introduction

Peter Schäfer

Modern research on *Toledot Yeshu* – that enigmatic late antique-medieval tract whose origins are shrouded in history's mists – began with Samuel Krauss' monograph *Das Leben Jesu nach jüdischen Quellen*, published more than a century ago.[1] Krauss' analysis of the manuscripts available to him at the time, of the text's history, and of its main motifs, has had a lasting influence to this day; almost all scholars writing about *Toledot Yeshu* still take him as their point of departure, and humbly add further details rather than attempt to fundamentally change the picture drawn by him. It was almost seventy years later when the next step was taken with William Horbury's 1970 Cambridge dissertation *A Critical Examination of the Toledoth Yeshu*, which was, however, unfortunately never published.[2] The dissertation soon became the much sought-after insider tip of *Toledot Yeshu* research, jealously guarded by the lucky ones who succeeded in obtaining a copy and all the more eagerly searched for by the unlucky ones

[1] Berlin: S. Calvary, 1902; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1977, 2006. Krauss supplemented his monograph with an impressive array of articles, published between 1904 and 1939. See "Jesus in Jewish Legend," *EncJud* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1907), 7: 170–73; "Fragments araméens du Toldot Yéschou," *REJ* 62 (1911): 28–37; "Neuere Ansichten über 'Toldoth Jeschu,'" *MGWJ* 76 (1932): 586–603 and 77 (1933): 44–61; "Une nouvelle recension hébraïque du Toldot Yêšū," *REJ* 103 (1938): 65–90; "The Mount of Olives in Toldot Yeshu," *Zion* 4 (1939): 170–76 (in Hebrew).

[2] Luckily, Horbury did publish an important series of articles; see his "The Trial of Jesus in Jewish Tradition," in *The Trial of Jesus: Cambridge Studies in Honor of C. F. D. Moule* (ed. Ernst Bammel; Naperville: Allenson, 1970), 103–21; "Tertullian on the Jews in the Light of *de spec.* xxx. 13," *JTS* 23 (1972): 455–59, reprinted in idem, *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), 176–79; "The Revision of Shem Tov ibn Shaprut's *Eben Bohan*," *Sefarad* 43 (1983): 221–37; reprinted in *Jews and Christians*, 261–75; "Christ as Brigand in Ancient Anti-Christian Polemic," in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* (eds. Ernst Bammel and Charles F. D. Moule, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 183–95; reprinted in *Jews and Christians*, 162–75; "Jews and Christians on the Bible: Demarcation and Convergence (325–451)," in *Christliche Exegese zwischen Nicaea und Chalcedon* (eds. Johannes van Oort and Ulrich Wickert; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1992), 72–103, reprinted in *Jews and Christians*, 200–25; "The Depiction of Judaeo-Christians in the Toledot Yeshu," in *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature* (eds. Peter J. Tomson and Doris Lambers-Petry, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 280–86; "Rabbinic Perceptions of Christianity and the History of Roman Palestine," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 165 (2010): 353–76 = *Rabbinic Texts and the History of Late-Roman Palestine* (eds. Martin Goodman and Philip Alexander, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 353–76.

who were less successful. Professor Horbury has finally decided to put an end to this and is working now on a revised edition of his dissertation for publication. And the third decisive step was reached when Riccardo Di Segni published his groundbreaking article "La tradizione testuale delle Toledòth Jeshu: Manoscritti, edizioni a stampa, classificazione,"[3] soon to be followed by the monograph *Il vangelo del ghetto*.[4] Di Segni, with his meticulous evaluation of many manuscripts and their classification according to different groups (the Pilate, Helena and Herod recensions) in particular, put the research into the *Toledot Yeshu* manuscript tradition and the transmission of its various versions on a completely new level.[5]

Twenty five years after Di Segni, the time has finally come to take stock and to provide the scholarly world with a full picture of the *Toledot Yeshu* evidence, that is, to lay the foundations for a more informed study of *Toledot Yeshu* by preparing an edition of all the available manuscripts and further clarifying the text's complicated history.[6] This ambitious task has been tackled by the Princeton University *Toledot Yeshu* project: we have collected, transcribed, and translated all the available manuscripts and are now in the process of preparing a sophisticated database that will help us to unravel the secrets of *Toledot Yeshu*'s origins and reception history and ultimately lead to the publication of a synoptic edition supplemented by an electronic database on a CD. In order to place this project in the context of current *Toledot Yeshu* research, we decided to convene an international conference with those scholars who have been working on *Toledot Yeshu* recently or who have expressed their keen interest in the conference topic. As always with such conferences, not all of the colleagues on our list could accept the invitation, but we are confident that the voices assembled in this volume reflect a representative cross-section of ongoing *Toledot Yeshu* research.

If the conference and the evaluation of the various recensions in the Princeton *Toledot Yeshu* project have made one thing clear, it is the fact that there never was

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[3] *Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 50 (1984): 83–100.

[4] Rome: Newton Compton, 1985. See also his article "Due nuovi fonti sulle Toledoth Jeshu," *Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 55 (1990): 127–32.

[5] Further progress in *Toledot Yeshu* research was made by, among others, Günter Schlichting, *Ein jüdisches Leben Jesu* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1982); Hillel I. Newman, "The Death of Jesus in the *Toledot Yeshu* Literature," *JTS* 50 (1999): 59–79; Yaacov Deutsch, "New Evidence of Early Versions of *Toldot Yeshu*," *Tarbiz* 69 (2000): 177–97 (in Hebrew).

[6] Out of c. 150 known *Toledot Yeshu* manuscripts, only very few were published. In addition to the aforementioned publications by Krauss, Horbury, and Deutsch, see Abraham Harkavy, "Leben Jesus," *Hebräische Bibliographie* 15 (1875): 15; Elkan N. Adler, "Un fragment araméen de Toldot Yéschou," *REJ* 61(1910): 126–30; Louis Ginzberg, ed., *Genizah Studies in Memory of Doctor Solomon Schechter (Ginze Schechter)* (3 vols.; New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1928), 1:329–38; Michael Higger, "Ma'aseh Yeshu," *Chorev* 3 (1936): 143–52 (in Hebrew); Zeev Falk, "A New Fragment of the Jewish Life of Jesus," *Imm* 8 (1978): 72–9; Daniel Boyarin, "A Revised Version and Translation of the 'Toledot Yeshu' Fragment," *Tarbiz* 47 (1978): 249–52 (in Hebrew).

a *Toledot Yeshu* Urtext back to which all the existing versions can be traced.[7] The romantic search for the one and only Urtext is an idea that has mislead scholars in many areas of Jewish Studies (and, of course, not only there), and *Toledot Yeshu* is a prime example of this futile exercise. What we can establish are various foci or nuclei, snapshots as it were, that can be fixed in place and time; but these snapshots on no account represent fixed points of a unilinear and monocausal chain of development originating from a given *Urtext* and leading to all the branches of the text tradition. We even don't know at which point in history the snapshots begin embodying something that justifiably so might be called "*Toledot Yeshu*," that is, a fully developed narrative deserving this title. Or, to put it differently and more precisely, there may well have been *different* nuclei representing *different* macroforms of *Toledot Yeshu* at *different* times and places.

A first cluster of contributions deals with *Toledot Yeshu*'s manuscript traditions and its multiple versions. The earliest known physical evidence of a peculiar version of *Toledot Yeshu* is preserved in the Aramaic fragments from the Cairo Geniza. The earliest of these fragments can be dated to the tenth century, but there can be no doubt that the narrative they transmit is earlier. One way, probably the safest way, to determine the date and provenance of this narrative is to examine the fragments' language, that is, the Aramaic dialect they use. Michael Sokoloff undertook this task and has come to very interesting and remarkably unambiguous results. Recently, Willem Smelik has claimed that *Toledot Yeshu* was originally composed in third-fourth century Palestine (more precisely in the Galilee) in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, was then transferred to Babylonia, where it received an updating in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, and was finally brought back to Palestine and converted to Late Jewish Literary Aramaic.[8] In constant dialogue with Smelik, Sokoloff contests Smelik's findings and concludes that *Toledot Yeshu*'s Aramaic is a mixture of Jewish Babylonian and Targumic Aramaic and that its vocabulary clearly points to Jewish Babylonia as its provenance. Its time of composition, he proposes, was "towards the middle of the first millennium CE."

An important nucleus of *Toledot Yeshu* traditions has come down to us in certain quotations to be found in the writings of Agobard, bishop of Lyons, and his successor, Amulo, in the first half of the ninth century. Peter Schäfer reevaluates these references and, providing a detailed comparison with the Aramaic fragments, confirms Di Segni's assessment that both share many characteristics and hence belong to the same recension (Di Segni's Pilate group). With regard to the narrative of Yeshu's conception and birth, which is so conspicuously missing in the Aramaic fragments and in Agobard/Amulo, he argues that it wasn't part of

[7] This insight is not new, but confirms what Di Segni wrote already in 1985; see his *Il vangelo del ghetto*, 217 f.

[8] Willem F. Smelik, "The Aramaic Dialect(s) of the Toldot Yeshu Fragments," *Aramaic Studies* 7 (2009): 39–73.

their version and must have been added at a later stage.[9] He then puts Agobard's and Amulo's *Toledot Yeshu* in the broader context of the two bishops' statements about the Jews in contemporary Carolingian society, and concludes that the Jews in the Carolingian Empire under Louis the Pious not only were well aware of a version of *Toledot Yeshu*, but made public and even aggressive use of it.

Turning to the famous Strasbourg manuscript that figures so prominently in Krauss' *Leben Jesu*, William Horbury locates the manuscript in an eighteenth-century Galician Karaite milieu and then proceeds to determine earlier stages of the text as presented in the Strasbourg copy. He finds evidence that the Strasbourg text must have been identical with texts that were current in France and Spain in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and are now lost. But certain elements or microforms in the Strasbourg text lead him back in time much earlier. The first microform is the list of the new Christian festivals substituting the old Jewish ones, which he locates, following Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra,[10] in fourth or early fifth century Palestine or Syria. Second – noticing that, of all the Hebrew manuscripts of Di Segni's Helen group, only Ms. Strasbourg incorporates the Talmudic narrative of the trial and execution of five disciples of Yeshu (an important element of Di Segni's Pilate group, which is well known from the Aramaic fragments) into its *Toledot Yeshu* version – he suggests a link between the Strasbourg text and the much earlier version preserved in the Aramaic fragments from the Cairo Geniza. Finally, he proposes that even the birth story, which opens the Strasbourg manuscript and which Di Segni and Schäfer consider to be a medieval addition, in fact represents a much earlier element of the *Toledot Yeshu* narrative. Hence, he concludes that the Pilate group of the Aramaic fragments and Agobard / Amulo originally contained the birth story and that the Strasbourg manuscript echoes this early version.

One of the most baffling recensions of *Toledot Yeshu* is the one published in 1705 by the Christian scholar Johann Jacob Huldreich (Huldricus), together with a Latin translation and annotations. It was much neglected in *Toledot Yeshu* scholarship, presumably because of its complexity and unique characteristics, and Adina Yoffie deserves credit for again drawing our attention to it. Comparing the Huldreich version with the other *Toledot Yeshu* versions, she argues that it combines some very early parts of the *Toledot Yeshu* tradition known from the earliest Hebrew manuscripts and even the Aramaic fragments with high medieval and very late Slavic elements. Altogether, she concludes, the Huldreich

[9] See also Di Segni, *Il vangelo del ghetto*, 33, 113, 127–218, and Peter Schäfer, "Jesus' Origin, Birth, and Childhood according to the Toledot Yeshu and the Talmud," in *Judaea-Palaestina, Babylon and Rome: Jews in Antiquity* (eds. Benjamin Isaac and Yuval Shahar, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), forthcoming.

[10] Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, "An Ancient List of Christian Festivals in *Toledot Yeshu*: Polemics as Indication for Interaction," *HTR* 102 (2009): 481–96.

version was composed in the fifteenth or sixteenth century at the earliest by an unknown author or a group of authors.

Finally in this first group of contributions, Michael Stanislawski forces his way through the even more neglected thicket of Yiddish *Toledot Yeshu* manuscripts. Briefly surveying the known Yiddish manuscripts, he determines that a manuscript at the Jewish Theological Seminary of New York (JTS Ms. 2211) differs from the other Yiddish manuscripts in that it doesn't follow any single or stable Hebrew text; rather, it combines different and often contradictory sources and displays clear traits of what Stanislawski calls the "Ashkenization" of the *Toledot Yeshu* tradition. Mary's portrayal as a prophetess gone wrong in particular, which diverges considerably from the other *Toledot Yeshu* versions, can be read as a subversion of the Marian cult prevalent in the Christian society of Central and Eastern Europe in the late seventeenth century.

A second cluster of contributions makes an attempt to locate *Toledot Yeshu* in its broader cultural context. Pierluigi Piovanelli compares certain motifs in the *Toledot Yeshu* with the *Book of the Cock*, a Christian apocryphal text from Late Antiquity that is preserved in Ethiopic but was originally written in Greek, probably in the second half of the fifth century. This book, he argues following Hillel Newman,[11] belongs to a roster of late antique Christian apocryphal texts that *respond* to polemical Jewish stories such as those found in *Toledot Yeshu*. In his view, this brings us if not to an Urtext of *Toledot Yeshu* but nonetheless to a more or less well developed "first edition" of *Toledot Yeshu* already circulating at the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century C. E. Furthermore, following Ernst Bammel[12] and William Horbury, he sets out to track down the hypothetical prehistory of *Toledot Yeshu* in the second and third century. Here, it is the conspicuously positive depiction of Judas in particular, which *Toledot Yeshu* shares (more precisely which the Aramaic fragments of *Toledot Yeshu* share) with the newly discovered *Gospel of Judas* (before 180 C. E.) and the *Book of the Cock*, that leads him back into the second century C. E. He concludes with the (not so) rhetorical question: "(W)hat if the earliest *Toledot Yeshu* stories were the *oral* product of Jewish communities that were living, probably in Syria-Palestine,[13] in close contact and connection with a group, or multiple groups, of Jewish Christians?"

Quite a different picture arises from Eli Yassif's article. Taking seriously the fact that *Toledot Yeshu* is a fully developed narrative (as opposed to the fragmentary nature of Talmudic references) with its own textual autonomy (as

[11] See above, n. 5.

[12] Ernst Bammel, "Christian Origins in Jewish Tradition," *NTS* 13 (1966–67): 317–35, reprinted in idem, *Judaica. Kleine Schriften* (2 vols.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986), 1: 220–38; idem, "Origen *Contra Celsum* i. 41 and the Jewish Tradition," *JTS* 19 (1968): 211–13, reprinted in *Judaica*, 194–95; idem, "Der Jude des Celsus," in *Judaica*, 265–83.

[13] Here following Smelik rather than Sokoloff.

opposed to the genre of midrash) he determines that these features are typical of the early Hebrew narratives first produced in the Middle Ages. The emergence of autonomous narratives that coincides with the emergence of works devoted to specific disciplines (such as *Midrash Aseret ha-Dibrot* and *The Alphabet of Ben Sira*) starts in the eighth century and originated in Islamic Babylonia. This, Yassif claims, is the cultural milieu to which *Toledot Yeshu* belongs: it was written by young Jewish scholars in and around the Babylonian *yeshivot* in Jewish Iraq in the second-third century of Islam. He bolsters this underlying hypothesis with a number of more detailed analyses: *Toledot Yeshu* is a typical Volksbuch whose different versions are not textual mutations of one Urtext but, rather, autonomous compositions belonging to different communities; it has a well-defined hero, who, however, is not a victim but a villain; like the novella, it displays an unexpected turning point or Wendepunkt that drastically changes the protagonist's life – the theft of the Ineffable Name and its successful magical use, which, although well known in Jewish folklore as early as the rabbinic period but of considerably greater interest in Geonic Babylonia, becomes the hallmark of Jewish superiority to Christianity; it exhibits a novella-like interest in the erotic; and it is critical of the hierarchical norms of Jewish society.

In his article "The *Toledot Yeshu* in the Context of Jewish-Muslim Debate," Philip Alexander addresses the much neglected question of *Toledot Yeshu* within the Islamic context, that is, its *Sitz im Leben* not only in the Jewish-Christian but also in the Jewish-Muslim debate. In other words, locating *Toledot Yeshu* in the triangle between Muslims, Christians, and Jews, he asks where the tract stands in relation to the Muslim "Gospel" and what this might tell us about its circulation among Jews in the Muslim world. After a meticulous discussion of the physical evidence of *Toledot Yeshu* manuscripts in the Muslim world and the tract's relationship with both the Christian and the Muslim "Gospel," he proposes: having originated as an anti-Christian tract in Aramaic in late antiquity (presumably in the Galilee) – that is, as a Jewish anti-Gospel – *Toledot Yeshu* was taken to the East, where is was reworked and played an important role in the Jewish-Christian debate in late Sasanian Babylonia. With the rise of Islam, it gained new life in buttressing a distinctive Jewish identity not just against Christianity, but now also against Islam.

In the following contribution, Sarit Kattan Gribetz explores the ways in which *Toledot Yeshu* employs tropes and images from the Book of Esther and attempts to place these literary allusions into their broader socio-historical context. She proposes that the parallels with the Book of Esther not only serve to highlight specific common motifs but in fact relate the overall narrative themes of the Book of Esther to *Toledot Yeshu*. Hence, since the association between Haman, Jesus, Purim, and anti-Christianity can be traced as early as the late fourth/early fifth century, a certain nucleus of *Toledot Yeshu* must have been present at this time. In a last step, she ventures the tentative conclusion that *Toledot Yeshu* even might

have been used as a type of megillah, that is, to be recited and performed, similar to the use of the Book of Esther on Purim. As for the date of this public performance she discusses the ninth of Tevet, Christmas, Easter and Purim as possible days, with Christmas as the most likely candidate (at least for the later sources).

Most of the contributions to the volume focus on the exploration and explanation of certain motifs or subjects in *Toledot Yeshu*. Michael Meerson boldly tackles some of the most conspicuous ones related to Yeshu's death and burial: the fork on which Yeshu was suspended, the cabbage "tree" on which he was hanged, and his burial in an aqueduct. The fork (*furca*), as opposed to the cross, is peculiar to Agobard's version of the *Toledot Yeshu*, and Meerson suggests that, at Agobard's time, the fork as a tool of death penalty had long since replaced the cross. In using the term *furca*, Agobard therefore deliberately ignores the tradition of the crucifixion and displays his acquaintance with Roman legal and punitive practices as published in the sixth century *Corpus Iuris Civilis*. The cabbage stalk is the most bizarre of all *Toledot Yeshu* motifs claiming that all the trees which the rabbis tried out to hang Yeshu upon them immediately broke, thanks to Yeshu's magical powers, and that only the cabbage plant – because Yeshu forgot to include it in his curse of the trees – finally accepted his body and did not break. For the first time taking the cabbage stalk seriously and not trying to explain it away, Meerson looks into the botanical make-up of the cabbage and finds out that the wild cabbage, contrary to our modern perception, in its second year shoots out an unusually high stem and that, for this reason, it was considered – as early as the fourth century B. C. E. – to be a "tree-herb." More importantly, he points to the fact that the wild cabbage could be identified with the wild mustard and that it is precisely this plant that is mentioned in Matthew 13:31 f. as the smallest of all seeds which grows into "the greatest garden plant and becomes a tree." Hence, while in the New Testament the wild mustard/cabbage signifies the triumph of Christianity, in *Toledot Yeshu* it is used to signify Christianity's ultimate failure – Yeshu's humiliating death on the cabbage tree. As to the other strange peculiarity of Agobard and the Aramaic fragments, Yeshu's burial in an aqueduct or a water reservoir, Meerson suggests that it is a faint echo of the aqueduct built by Pilate that not only was paid for by Temple money but cut its way through a cemetery that was in use during that period. In his conclusion, Meerson first draws our attention to that fact that *Toledot Yeshu* indeed contains many traditions that at the time when they coalesced into their literary form were no longer understood by the scribes and their readers but (sometimes) can be traced back to their late antique origin and, second, warns us not to mistake the date of a specific detail or motif in *Toledot Yeshu* for the date of the composition as a whole.

Ora Limor and Israel Yuval turn to the enigmatic figure of Judas Iscariot who, thanks to the discovery of the *Gospel of Judas*, has attracted much attention. They compare the image of Judas in *Toledot Yeshu*, the Legend of the Finding of

the Cross, and the Golden Legend and start from the basic assumption that Judas represents the Jewish people and that his behavior represents the Jewish attitude to Christianity and its savior. Always presented as a subversive figure, Judas can act clandestinely either in order to destroy Christianity and to save Judaism or, vice versa, to destroy Judaism and to save Christianity. It is obvious that *Toledot Yeshu* is a prime example of Judas in his first capacity, presenting a clear counter-narrative to the New Testament: in burying Yeshu in a cesspool Judas mocks the cult of the Christian holy place by transforming the Holy Sepulcher into a latrine (the authors suggest that this motif reflects a Jewish answer to the Crusader experience); the late Huldreich version, created in a German-speaking environment, transmits a curse in which Judas curses Yeshu (not the other way around) and makes fun of Yeshu; and the version published by Krauss[14] even describes a pogrom perpetrated by the Jews against the Christians in Jerusalem (the authors argue that this motif, rather than echoing the famous slaughter inflicted upon the Christians by the Jews in 614 C. E. after the Persian conquest of Jerusalem, is a product of medieval Jewish fantasy).

In the Legend of the Finding of the Cross, a Jew by the name Judas discovers, on Queen Helena's request, the location of Jesus' cross, whereupon he converts to Christianity and (renamed Kyriakos – "of the Lord") brings about the conversion of all Jews. In *Toledot Yeshu*, Judas, knowing the location of Yeshu's body, reveals it to Helena – not in order to support Christianity but, on the contrary, to refute the Christian claim that Jesus had been resurrected from the dead, that is, to expose Jesus as a swindler and impostor. The authors suspect that *Toledot Yeshu* was familiar with the Legend of the Finding of the Cross, which became known to the Jews in the fifteenth century. Finally, the authors point out that the much more negative image of Judas in the Golden Legend (appearing in Europe in the twelfth century and broadly disseminated), where he is depicted as almost pathologically distorted, doesn't find a response in Jewish sources. They attribute this striking fact to the worsening of relations between the Christian majority and the Jewish minority during the High Middle Ages, when the Jews preferred to ignore their Christian neighbors rather than to answer them.

A similar subversive role is played by Simon Peter, the primary founder of Christianity as an authentic faith for the Christians – and an underground double-agent of the rabbis who ultimately saves Israel by bringing about the final separation of Christianity from Judaism for the Jews. John Gager follows the traces that this strange figure has left in *Toledot Yeshu* and related Jewish sources (*Megillat Ta'anit*, Rashi, Rabbenu Tam, the Nishmat prayer, *Mahzor Vitry*) and finds the blueprint of Peter the false believer and double agent in no less a source than in the Gospel of Mark. Then, addressing the question of how *Toledot Yeshu*'s Peter became a refined poet of liturgical texts (*piyyutim*), he refers to the apocryphal

[14] Krauss, "Une nouvelle recension," 65–73.

letter of Peter to James that serves as an introduction to the Homilies which are part of the Pseudo-Clementines. It is there, he argues, that we encounter a Christian text with Peter as the author of liturgical compositions and as the fierce defender of Judaism, a Peter who embodies the main message of *Toledot Yeshu*: to reclaim as Jews the major figures of foundational Christianity. Finally, in an appendix, Gager summarizes his views regarding the notoriously difficult dating problem of *Toledot Yeshu*:

We must imagine smaller as well as larger blocks of materials that show up in different versions and traveled in separate channels; individual elements in these channels reach back as far as the early second century. As to the Simon Peter complex in *Toledot Yeshu*, one version took shape somewhere between the fifth and the seventh centuries in the regions of eastern Christianity (Syria to Babylonia). The bits of information gathered by scholars should not taken, however, as evidence of a single, stable and integrated *Toledot Yeshu* narrative, but, rather, as pointing to accounts with different elements at different places and times. In particular, we must pay attention to the Eastern and Western setting of certain motifs, with the Peter story most likely originating in the West. Most importantly, we must dismiss the notion of a *Toledot Yeshu* Urtext, that is, of a single point of origin for the *Toledot Yeshu* composition.

Another figure who plays a prominent role in *Toledot Yeshu* is (Queen) Helena, but her identity is blurred and encompasses at least three women bearing the name Helena (or its cognates), namely Queen Helena of Adiabene, Helena Augusta the mother of Constantine and Helen the lover/spouse of Simon Magus; a fourth contender is the Hasmonean Queen Salome Alexandra, although she doesn't bear the name Helena. Galit Hasan-Rokem pursues this polymorphous figure as a prime example of both the variability and the inconsistency exhibited in *Toledot Yeshu*, reading *Toledot Yeshu* as a palimpsest and arguing for a disparate rather than related and coordinated existence of the *Toledot Yeshu* versions. Of the three Helenas, the Helen of Simon Magus is the least significant in *Toledot Yeshu*, whereas Helena of Adiabene and Helena Augusta are almost equal competitors as regards possible historical references. Both share, however, with each other (and to a certain degree with Simon Magus' Helen) the explicit connection with Jerusalem, certain sexual motifs, a strong association with conversion, and great generosity for religious institutions. Yet, ultimately, it is the imagined map of Jerusalem that Hasan-Rokem identifies as the birthplace of the composite Helena figure presented in *Toledot Yeshu*. The central role of Helena as a palimpsest in *Toledot Yeshu*, Hasan-Rokem concludes, may be understood as an encoding of the palimpsest Jerusalem, with the polymorphic Helena subverting unanimous and all too self-confident statements of its ownership.

A last cluster of contributions deals with the reception history of *Toledot Yeshu*. Yaacov Deutsch summarizes the Christian reception of *Toledot Yeshu* in the High Middle Ages and the early modern period, pointing out that, ironically,

Toledot Yeshu is the unique example of a Jewish text the information about which in Christian sources is richer than the information in Jewish sources. He begins by stating that it is highly unlikely that prior to the ninth century there existed a composition that included most of the stories appearing in the manuscripts and printed editions known to us from the Middle Ages and onward and that the motifs scattered in earlier sources served as building blocks for the *Toledot Yeshu* literature rather than being evidence of a composition "*Toledot Yeshu*." The earliest version of *Toledot Yeshu* which, however, does not contain the birth narrative, can be found in the Pilate group of the Aramaic manuscripts to which Agobard and Amulo are closely related. The next nucleus in Christian sources appears in the thirteenth century in a collection of Hebrew passages from Paris and in the writings of the Anonymus of Passau (ca. 1260), followed by the famous lengthy quotation in Raimundus Martinus' *Pugio Fidei* (around 1280), which corresponds to the manuscripts of the Helen group but (in contrast to them) lacks the birth narrative; another Latin translation was published by the Viennese cleric and historian Thomas Ebendorfer (d. 1464). With the number of Christian references to *Toledot Yeshu* growing rapidly in the fourteenth and fifteenth century, parts of *Toledot Yeshu* were printed for the first time by Christian scholars in 1470 and 1520, followed by the first printed edition of the full text with Latin translation by Johann Christoph Wagenseil in his notorious *Tela Ignea Satanae* of 1681 and by Johann Jacob Huldreich in 1705.

Briefly contrasting with this picture emerging from the Christian sources the available Jewish sources, Deutsch notices that the latter up to the seventeenth or even eighteenth century only rarely refer to *Toledot Yeshu*; conspicuously, with only one exception (Ibn Shaprut's *Even Bohan*) all of these references belong to the Helen group of manuscripts. From the combined Christian and Jewish evidence he concludes that the Helen group was created sometime during the twelfth or the thirteenth century and from then on became the dominant version of *Toledot Yeshu*; he doesn't find proof that prior to the twelfth century *Toledot Yeshu* was a comprehensive narrative that described Jesus' life from birth to death. The latest version of *Toledot Yeshu* is the one known as the Herod group with its primary witness in the text published by Huldreich in 1705.

The last paper by Paola Tartakoff adds a very different perspective: the function that *Toledot Yeshu* served in the context of Jewish-Christian relations in the Crown of Aragon in the mid-fourteenth century. She analyses the story of a certain Jew by the name of Alatzar who converted to Christianity and took the new name Pere. Pressed by his Jewish friends, Pere publicly renounced Christianity and, tied to the stake and already beginning to burn, was rescued by the inquisitor. He then renounced Judaism for a second time and denounced his Jewish friends for having re-Judaized him. In the subsequent inquisitorial trial, *Toledot Yeshu* played an important role as the Jews' major tool to convince Alatzar/Pere of Jesus' true origin as a bastard conceived through adultery. Tartakoff places

this trial in its historical context and argues that the *Toledot Yeshu* narrative was indeed used in the medieval Crown of Aragon not only to re-Judaize apostates but even to force a repentant apostate to unveil *Toledot Yeshu* in public and hence to instigate open confrontation with Christians. This result, in turn, deepens our understanding of the text itself since we need to take into consideration that the *Toledot Yeshu* narrative might have been molded to suit particular goals and hence been subjected to a creative process shaped by the ever changing circumstances of Jewish life.

It goes without saying that many of the questions raised by the enigmatic and elusive text *Toledot Yeshu* have not been addressed in the pages of this volume, let alone been answered. But we hope that, in presenting the papers of our conference to the public, we at least succeed in reopening the scholarly discourse and encouraging new questions and answers.

The Date and Provenance of the Aramaic *Toledot Yeshu* on the Basis of Aramaic Dialectology

Michael Sokoloff

The Publication of the Aramaic Texts

While a late Hebrew version of *Toledot Yeshu* has been known for centuries,[1] only very little of the original Aramaic version was available until the late nineteenth century. The first published Aramaic fragment appeared in אבן בוחן, a polemic work of Šemṭob ibn Šapruṭ, who lived in Spain in the latter part of the 14th cent.[2] In 1875, Abraham Harkavy published a page of an Aramaic version.[3] In 1902, Samuel Krauss, in his comprehensive book on *TY*, published two pages from an unidentified Cairo Geniza manuscript.[4] In 1911, Elkan N. Adler published a fragment from his personal collection[5] which Krauss republished the following year, together with an additional fragment belonging to Adler.[6] In 1928, Louis Ginzberg published a large amount of the Aramaic text from two manuscripts in the Taylor-Schechter collection.[7] In 1970, William Horbury republished the first page of Ginzberg's first fragment which the latter was unable to read, together with many corrections to the other pages of this fragment.[8] In

[1] For our knowledge of this composition until the twentieth century, see *LJ*.

[2] The text was reprinted in *LJ* 147 from a now lost manuscript, formerly in Breslau. See now: José –Vicente Niclós, ed., Šem Ṭob ibn Šapruṭ, *"La piedra de toque": Una obra de controversia judeo-cristiana: introduccion, edición critica, traducción y notas al libro I* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1997). In light of the Aramaic texts from the Cairo Geniza, it is clear that the author had a much longer Aramaic text similar to them, but that what he cites was an abridgment.

[3] See Abraham Harkavy, "Leben Jesus," *Hebräische Bibliographie* 15 (1875): 15 (published from St. Petersburg Evr. IIA 105/9, #64109 in The Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, Jerusalem).

[4] See *LJ*, 143–44.

[5] See Elkan N. Adler, "Un fragment araméen de Toldot Yéschou," *REJ* 61(1910): 126–30 (JTS 2529, Adler 2102).

[6] See Samuel Krauss, "Fragments araméens de Toldot Yéschou," *REJ* 62 (1911): 28–37 (= Mss. A, B).

[7] See *GŠ1,* 329–38 [publication of two fragments: 1. T-S Misc. 35.87 (= Ms. H); 2. T-S Misc. 35.88 (#19674 in The Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, Jerusalem).

[8] See Horbury, 116–21. As anyone who has ever dealt with Ginzberg's edition of the fragments of the Palestinian Talmud from the Cairo Geniza can attest, his copies were notoriously inaccurate.

1977, Zeev Falk published an additional page belonging to the first manuscript published by Louis Ginzberg,[9] and Daniel Boyarin republished it a year later with many corrections.[10] Finally, in 2000, Yaacov Deutsch published two new Hebrew texts of *TY* which differ from the medieval version, and which are, in fact, a translation of the Aramaic original. He included in this article a composite republication of most of the previously published Aramaic material.[11]

Previous Discussions of the Aramaic Language of the Texts

In their publications of the Aramaic texts, Harkavy and Krauss made no attempt at analyzing the Aramaic language of the text in order to determine its date and provenance. Ginzberg in his introduction to his publication of the *TY* Aramaic text in *GŠ1*, was the first scholar to relate to these issues, and he correctly pointed out that the Aramaic language of the text was linguistically a composite of TA and JBA. However, as will be seen further on, in spite of this, most of his specific lexicographical and philological comments were either incorrect or unfocused.[12]

The present writer added several linguistic observations concerning the language of the text in notes to Boyarin's article. However, the most thorough attempt by far to analyze the Aramaic language of this composition is to be found in a recently published article by Willem Smelik.[13]

In order to understand Smelik's suggestions for the date and provenance of *TY*, it will be helpful to first outline briefly Jewish Aramaic dialectology during the first millennium CE:

Aramaic was divided during this period into two major dialect areas which are termed MWA and MEA, each of which was further divided into dialects along confessional grounds. The two major Jewish dialects, JPA and JBA, are known to us mainly from literary texts of Rabbinic literature, and to a lesser extent, also from a body of non-Rabbinic and epigraphic texts.

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[9] See Zeev Falk, "A New Fragment of the Jewish 'Life of Jesus,'" *Tarbiz* 46 (1977): 319–22 (in Hebrew). Its siglum is T-S NS 298.56.

[10] See Daniel Boyarin, "A Revised Version and Translation of the 'Toledot Yeshu' Fragment," *Tarbiz* 47(1978): 249–52 (in Hebrew).

[11] See Yaacov Deutsch, "New Evidence of Early Versions of *Toldot Yeshu*," *Tarbiz* 69 (2000): 177–97 (in Hebrew). Deutsch reprinted in this article the texts published by Ginzberg-Horbury and Falk-Boyarin, and in the present study, Aramaic *TY* will be cited according to the page and line numbering of this edition.

[12] It is the opinion of the present writer who has reviewed all of Ginzberg's philological studies that his philological conclusions were on the whole erratic.

[13] See Smelik, Aramaic Dialect. Smelik has been working on this text for the past few years in the framework of the project "Late Aramaic: The Literary and Linguistic Context of the Zohar" in the Zohar Workshops centered at University College, London (See http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hebrew-jewish.home/zoharws.php.).

In addition to these two literary dialects which were based on the vernaculars of the Jewish communities of Eretz Israel and Babylonia, two other Jewish literary Aramaic dialects are relevant to our discussion:

1. TA, the dialect in which the official Targumim to the Pentateuch and the Prophets, known respectively as TO and TJ, were composed. The date and provenance of this dialect is still debated by scholars,[14] but it is clear that during the Talmudic and Geonic Periods it was known and employed only in Babylonia. Its base is a form of Official Aramaic of the late Second Temple Period.

2. LJLA, the dialect in which the late Targumim to the Writings and the Pseudo-Jonathan Targum to the Pentateuch were composed. While its basis is JPA, it contains a strong admixture of JBA and TA elements, as well as including many loanwords from both Persian and Akkadian.[15]

Smelik's conclusions can be summarized as follows[16]:

1. The provenance of *TY* is Palestine, and it was originally composed in JPA of the third-fourth centuries CE;

2. At some later date, *TY* was transmitted in an oral or written form to Babylonia;

3. The JBA elements in *TY* do not derive from the original composition, but are rather the result of a later Babylonian updating of the narrative and the elimination of the JPA elements;

4. After the original Palestinian composition received its JBA form, it was brought back to its Palestinian homeland where it was converted to LJLA.

Linguistic Analysis of the Vocabulary of *TY*

The arguments in Smelik's article are based mainly on several morphological and lexical features found in the Aramaic *TY* texts. Indeed, his startling conclusion – viz. that the text originated in Palestine, was transmitted to Babylonia where it underwent a partial transformation, and then was returned to Palestine where further morphological changes took place – seems complicated to say the least, and, to my mind, insupportable in light of the linguistic evidence. As will be seen, he has placed an inordinately strong emphasis of one morphological feature of *TY* occurring in one manuscript, and – following Ginzberg's incorrect philological remarks – also on several supposed JPA lexical features. In the following analysis, the present writer will deal with the morphology and vocabulary

[14] See Christa Müller-Kessler, "The Earliest Evidence for Targum Onkelos from Babylonia and the Question of its Dialect and Origin," *Journal for the Aramaic Bible* 3 (2001): 181–98.

[15] See Stephen A. Kaufman, "Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and the late Jewish Literary Aramaic," in *Studies in Bible and Exegesis* (eds. M. Bar-Asher et al., Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1993 [in Hebrew]), 3: 363–82.

[16] See Smelik, Aramaic Dialect, 69–73.

of *TY* in order to show that it is permeated by JBA and TA[17] to such an extent that it is extremely improbable to contend that it was originally written anywhere else except in Jewish Babylonia. As to the time of its composition, the absence of known morphological elements from Geonic JBA and the presence of morphological elements from TA point to its having been composed sometime before the Geonic Period. While the present writer cannot give a plausible explanation at present for the occurrence of occasional JPA morphological forms found in one manuscript of *TY*,[18] it is his opinion that they cannot refute the overwhelming evidence of JBA morphology, vocabulary, and syntax in *TY* to suppose an original Palestinian provenance for this composition.

1. Morphology[19]

The morphology of *TY* is overwhelmingly that of JBA with an admixture of TA.

1.1 Verbal forms

1.1.1 Synthetic participial forms[20]: JBA – 1sg. עבידנא (189:27); בעינא (190:2); לחישנא (190:8); מפיקנא, קרענא (192:7); 2sg. יהבת (192:6); 1pl. יכלינן (K29:15); שבקינן (186:21); 2m.pl. אתיתון (195:14);[21] יכליתון (K29:18); משכח{י}תון (194:16); צביתו (189:5).

1.1.2 Infinitive forms of derived conjugations:

a. TA[22] – לאחתא (194:21); לאמתא (190:1); לאפקא (190:7); לאצלבא (193:11).

b. JBA[23] – לאחותיה (G337:11).

1.1.3 Af. of √אתי as -אתי – JBA[24] – אתיוה (191:21); אתייה (191:26).[25]

1.1.4 3rd pers. imp. w. -נ/-ל prefix[26] – JBA – 3m.sg. ליטעום (191:2); עני<ני>{ינ] (191:3); 3m.pl. ליבדו (191:5).

1.1.5 Perfect *qětīla*-forms TA[27] – ילידת (191:20); סליקית (195:16; K29:21).

1.1.6 M.pl. participle of III-*y* verbs – TA[28] – הוו צבן (194:21).

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[17] Note also that the only direct citation of a Targumic text in *TY* is from Onkelos לא תבית נבילתיה על צליבא TO Dt 21:23 (see 195:12).

[18] In essence, the only distinct JPA morphological form which actually occurs is the 3m.pl. pf. verb with 3m.sg. suff. -ניה which occurs in Ms. G alongside the JBA forms. Aside from this one point, this manuscript is just as characteristically JBA as all the others.

[19] The examples cited in the following sections are representative but not exhaustive.

[20] See Eps, *GBA*, 40 ff.

[21] This form was incorrectly analyzed by Smelik, Aramaic Dialect, 57, as a pf. The entire phrase reads: אם אתיתון מחר "if you come tomorrow."

[22] See Dalman, *GJPA*, 81

[23] See Eps, *GBA*, 49.

[24] This is a typical JBA form (see *DJBA*, 178, Af. #2, w. lit.). JPA employs either אייתי or אייטי (see: *DJPA*, 80 ff.).

[25] But once איתיאו (G336:4), the TA form [Dalman, *GJPA*, 358).

[26] The statement of Smelik, Aramaic Dialect, 56 that the prefix -ל occurs in JPA to express volitional modality is completely incorrect. This prefix never occurs in accurate JPA texts.

[27] See Dalman, *GJPA*, 260.

[28] See Dalman, *GJPA*, 350.

1.1.7 *t*-verbal stems: In addition to the retention of *t* as in TA and JPA, there are many more examples with its assimilation as in JBA.

a. w. *t* – אתהפיך (191:13); איתחזור (G336:11).

b. w. assimilation of *t*[29] – תיבעל (192:5); איפתחי (193:26); איפתח (194:2; G336:16); אחדרו (195:1).

1.1.8 2m.pl.imp. vb. w. *n* – TA, JPA[30] – תאת]ון[(194:15); תחזון (194:18); תשכחון (195:15); תדעון (195:16).

1.1.9 2m.sg. imper. of √אזל – JBA[31] – זיל (196:2; G336:10).

1.1.10 3m.pl.pf. All forms have the classical ו- ending found in TA and often in JBA but not in JPA,[32] e. g. אזלו (186:9); אשכחו (186:11).

1.2 Nominal forms[33]:

1.2.1 M.pl. forms. The dominant morpheme is י- as in JBA, while only a few examples of ין-

(abs.) and יא- (det.) as in TA and JPA occur.

a. w.ין- TA, JPA – גברין (186:11); גוברין (189:9).

b. w. י- JBA – E. g. כתאבי דחרשי (186:19); ירחי (190:23); כ[ת]בי ואגרי (190:26); נימוסי (191:6); יומי (191:1; 9); רחמי (191:10); ירחי (191:30); מילי (192:11); שעי (193:9); det. w. יא- TA, JPA – מיליא (189:27); חרשיא (192:30); מיתיא (196:3).

1.3 Pronominal forms:

1.3.1 3m.sg. suff. pron. TA[34]: עלוהי (188:26); תלמידוהי (186:30); JBA: תלמידיה (186:28); כרעיה (195:22); ידיה דישו (186:20).

1.3.2 Poss. suff. endings TA, JPA[35] – 3m.pl. בהון (191:11); דיניהון (192:22); JBA[36]: 3 f.pl. כולהי מדינתא (190:26).[37]

1.3.3 3m.sg. acc. suff. ending fol. 3m.pf. Several types occur in *TY*:

a. JBA [38]ה- – וה<י>{ו}את (188:21); קטלוה (188:27); אסקוה, צלבוה (G337:3).

b. TA [39]הי- – איתוהי (186:14); חנקוהי (187:22); צ[לבוהי ורגמוהי] (188:14); קברוהי (194:26); אשכחוהי (194:31) קברוהי (G337:14); זקפוהי וקטלוהי (H 335b:5).

c. JPA [40]ניה- – צלבוניה (G336:2); אחתוניה (G337:14); אשכחוניה (G338:2).

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[29] See Eps, *GBA*, 50 ff.

[30] In JBA, there is no final -*n*.

[31] See *DJBA*, 100. The initial *aleph* is retained in both TA and JPA (see Dalman, *GJPA*, 300; *DJPA* 43).

[32] See Dalman, *GJPA*, 254.

[33] It may be noted here that the form ברתתיה (191:14) does not have a "pleonastic ending" as stated by Smelik, Aramaic Dialect, 69. As correctly understood by Deutsch in his edition, the scribe added an interlinear ר to correct the first erroneous תי״ו in בתתיה to the correct ברתיה.

[34] See Dalman, *GJPA*, 204.

[35] See Dalman, *GJPA*, 204.

[36] See Eps, *GBA*, 124.

[37] But incorrectly: כולהון מדינאתא (191:7)

[38] See *MALBT*, 59.

[39] See Dalman, *GJPA*, 387.

[40] See Dalman, *GJPA* 381. Note that all of the examples occur in Ms. G.

1.3.4 3m.sg./pl. acc. suff. ending fol. 3m.pf. – TA, JPA[41] – שדרינון (186:8); כתבינון (186:25); טענונון, אובל>ו<נון (G336a:1).

1.3.5 3 f.sg. acc. suff. ending fol. 3m.pf.III-*y* vb. – JBA, TA – אחיה (192:18)[42]; אתייה (194:7); קריה (195:7).

2. Syntax

2.1. קא + participle – This syntagm is employed only in JBA[43] – קא מטעי (186:13; 29); קא ילדת (191:22); קא ילדה (192:2); […] קא (192:29).

2.2 *qĕtīl lĕ-* syntagm – JBA[44] – לא חזי לי כתא[בי אלין] (186:27).

2.3. Indeterminate forms of nouns – As in JBA, the determinate forms are always employed, except in specific syntactic usages, e. g. אם דכר אם נוקבה (190:17); בכל עדן ובכל ש[עה] (191:12).

2.4. Position of deictic pronouns – As in JBA these are always placed before the noun,[45] e. g. ההוא עוברא (191:13).

2.5. Use of acc. marker -ית – This syntagm is used in TA and JPA.

a. Independent[46] – איתי ית פגרי (195:18) = מחוי ית פגריה (K29:22)

b. W. pron. suff. – טעינו יתהון (193:5); צלבו יתי[ה] (193:8); לאצלבא יתיה (193:11); למיצלב יתיה (193:12); יסקון יתיה (194:10); תפשו יתהון (195:1); צלבתון יתיה (195:5); גרר יתיה (195:22); איתי יתיה (195:18); תשכחון יתי (195:15); אטעי יתהון (195:13); אנא מיתי יתיה (K29:22); דנו יתיה (335b:5).

2.6 Use of acc. marker -ל – This usage is common in all of the Middle Aramaic dialects.

a. alone – מצבענא נסבו ליוח[נן] (G336:1); אנא קרענא ליה לכרסה (192:7); מפיקנא ליה ממעי אימיה (197:8); etc.

b. w. proleptic pron. – איתוהי ליוחנן מצבענא (186:14); אתייה ליישו (191:26); בזעה לכרסה (192:14); אסקוה ליישו רשיעא (G337b:3); etc.

2.7 Use of independent poss. pron. -דיל and -דיד – Both forms are employed in the texts. The former is used in TA and the latter in JBA and JPA.[47]

3. Vocabulary

The following analysis of the vocabulary of *TY* shows that most words which are peculiar to a particular MA dialect are found either in JBA or another MEA dialect.[48] A large number of additional words are known specifically from TA. The following are the examples:

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[41] See Dalman, *GJPA*, 385.

[42] In JPA, the end. is תה-, e. g. תניתה (Dalman, *DJPA*).

[43] See *DJPA*, 976.

[44] See *DJBA*, 612.

[45] See *GJPA*, 368.

[46] Smelik, Aramaic Dialect, 54, incorrectly states that *TY* does not use this independent form.

[47] See *DJBA*, 327; *DJPA*, 145.

[48] Smelik, Aramaic Dialect, 60, suggests that הנא is borrowed from Syriac ܗܵܢܵܐ. This is entirely unlikely. The passage reads: דין הנא ישו בן פנדירא (K29:25), where it is a clear corruption

3.1. JBA Vocabulary

1. אחד בשושיפא "to grasp in a towel/garment" (194:6) – Similarly, Šemṭob ibn Šapruṭ's אבן בוחן text reads: נקטיה ר׳ יהודה בשושיפא דסדינא (LJ 147:24). This phrase is exactly like the Geonic phrase דנקיט ליה בסודרא או בשושיפא.[49]

2. אחד ל- pe. "to hold back, retain" (191:24; 29) – The text reads: אית בעמא דיהודאי דאחדין לולדא במעי אימיה תריסר ירחי{ה} "there are among the Jewish people those who retain the fetus in the mother's womb for twelve months." This meaning of √אחד pe. is known elsewhere only from Syriac.[50]

3. איניש "someone, person" (191:2) – This form is characteristic of MEA,[51] occurring in JBA and Ma.[52]

4. אית ב- "to contain, have" – The text reads: אית בעמא דיהודאי (191:23). This is a JBA usage.[53]

5. אלהא רבא "great God" (K29:26; 335b:6) – The phrase is known from JBA.[54]

6. אמאי "why" (192:2) – This word occurs only in JBA, while JPA has למה.

7. אמר מילא "to recite an incantation" (G336:15; 193:23) – While this idiomatic phrase is documented in both JPA[55] and JBA,[56] its use here with the abs. form מילא may point to a MWA origin.

8. בההיא שעתא "at that time" (194:12) – In contrast to Smelik,[57] this adverbial expression does not reflect LJLA, but is perfectly good JBA and occurs often in texts.[58]

9. אתרואתא "places" (191:8) – This is the JBA pl. of the noun אתרא, occurring also in the other MEA dialects,[59] as opposed to the pl. אתרין in the MWA dialects.[60]

10. בעו רחמי מן מרי{ה} דרחמי "they prayed to the Lord of Prayers" (191:10) – This is a thoroughly JBA expression composed of two idiomatic expressions.

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from הוא. The examples given in *DJBA*, 385 are in square brackets and also indicate that this word is a corruption.

[49] See *DJBA*, 1126. Ginzberg's attempt in *GŠ1*, 337, n. to l.1, to understand this word as a cock's crest should be completely rejected. Besides the fact that the parallel quoted here from אבן בוחן supports the known meaning of this word (*DJBA*, 1126), his attempt to connect this word semantically with Aramaic כרבלתא is far-fetched to say the least.

[50] Cf. ܐܚܕܗ ܠܐܝܙܓܐ ܬܠܬܐ ܝܘܡܝܢ he held the messenger back for three days, Paul Bedjan, ed., *Gregorii Bar-Hebraei chronicum syriacum* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1890), 390:21 (*SL*, 25, mng. 3).

[51] It occurs also in Ma עניש *MD*, 353.

[52] See *DJBA*, 119. Contrary to Smelik, Aramaic Dialect, 44, this is not a phonetic change from אינש, but probably reflects Official Aramaic איש which later disappeared. JPA only has אנש.

[53] See *DJPA*, 127, mng. c.

[54] See *DJPA*, 133.

[55] See *DJPA*, 305, mng. 3b.

[56] See *DJBA*, 669, mng. 5.

[57] See Smelik, Aramaic Dialect, 60.

[58] See *DJBA*, 1168.

[59] See *DJBA*, 179.

[60] See *DJPA*, 81.

Both the word רחמי "prayer" as well as the phrase בעא רחמי "to pray" are well attested in JBA[61] and are also found in Ma.[62] As to the expression מרי דרחמי, Ginzberg pointed to the Hebrew expression בעל הרחמים "Merciful One" occurring once in Mishnaic Hebrew in *Leviticus Rabbah* and contended that it is an Aramaic calque of this phrase instead of the more common Aramaic רחמנא.[63] The Hebrew phrase there reads in its entirety: אין בעל הרחמים נוגע בנפשות תחילה "the Merciful One does not smite the souls first" (LevR 17:4, ed. M. Margulies, p. 378:2). While this is clearly is an epithet of God, it is also certain that its literal meaning from the context is "Lord of Mercy." However, in view of the first part of the Aramaic phrase in *TY*, it is clear that this cannot be its meaning in this text where it should rather be translated as "Master of Prayers." To the best of my knowledge, this Aramaic phrase is unattested anywhere in JBA; however, its Hebrew equivalent is known from a Babylonian Seliḥot prayer from the Geonic Period: מכניסי רחמים הכניסו רחמינו לפני בעל הרחמים "May the ones who bring in prayers bring in our prayers before the Master of Prayers,"[64] i. e. the angels are implored to be intercessors in bringing the congregation's prayers before God, who is the Master of Prayers.[65] Moreover, we should also note that this exact phrase actually occurs in Ma, another MEA dialect: יא מאריא ראהמיא יא מאריא באואתא "O Lord of prayers, O Lord of petitions" Lidzbarski, ML 188:1.[66]

11. גנאה "owner of a garden" (186:10)[67] – The form known from JBA is nearly always גינאה,[68] although גנאה is also attested. Note that the variant form גננא (193:24) is found also in JPA and in Sy.[69]

12. הכי "so" (187:29; 188:12) – A typical JBA word that is not found in MWA.[70] The Sy form הכן (189:10)[71] is employed once.

13. הנך אינשי "those people" (194:30) – This is a typical JBA phrase.[72]

14. הפך pa., itpe. "to transform, be transformed" – The texts read: וכיון דהפיך קב"ה להההוא עוברא אבנא "when God transformed that fetus into a stone" (191:18); ואתהפיך ההוא עוברא דהוה במעי ברתיה דקיסר והוה אבנא "that fetus which was in his

[61] The MWA dialects only have the meaning "mercy" for this word (*DJPA*, 521).

[62] See *DJBA,* 1069, mng. 3.

[63] See *GŠ1*, 329, n. to l.12 (He is followed in this interpretation by Smelik, *Aramaic dialects*, 68.) For the use of רחמנא as an appellation of God in JBA, see *DJBA*, 1069.

[64] See Israel Davidson et al., eds., *Siddur R. Saadja Gaon* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1970 [in Hebrew]), 357:21; Daniel Goldschmidt, ed., סדר הסליחות כמנהג ליטא וקהילות הפרושים בארץ ישראל, (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1965), 16:16.

[65] Note that in the following line God is called: שומע תפלה.

[66] See *MD*, 251.

[67] The original meaning is "gardener."

[68] See *DJBA*, 281.

[69] See *DJPA*, 133; *SL*, 249.

[70] See *DJBA*, 382.

[71] See *SL*, 342. The form הכן occurs also in JPA (see *DJPA*, 165), where it is a defective spelling for הכין. This is unlikely here since *TY* employs plene orthography.

[72] See *DJBA*, 388. Note, however, that the more classical Aramaic form אלין, well known also from TA, occurs in the conflated phrases אינשי אלין (195:13) and כתאבי אלין (186:24).

daughter's womb was transformed into a stone" (191:13). This meaning is attested in JBA,[73] but not in JPA.

15. השתא "now" (195:17) – This word occurs only in JBA.[74]

16. חדר, הדר itpe. "to encircle" (195:1; 191:13) – This root appears occasionally in Geonic JBA with *ḥ*.[75] The morphology of the itpe. form with assimilation of *t* as well as its meaning agree well with the attested form in JBA.

17. טען בפרזלא "to place iron manacles upon s. o." (193:6; G336:1) – This specialized meaning of פרזלא is found in MEA only in JBA[76] and in Sy.[77] The meaning of טען ב- "to place upon s. o." is documented for JBA.[78]

18. כולי עלמא "everyone" (189:10) – This is a ubiquitous term in JBA[79] not found in JPA which uses כל עמא.[80]

19. כל מידי "anything, whatever" (190:2) – This is a common phrase in JBA.[81]

20. כנא דכרובא "stalk of a cabbage" (194:9[82]; G337b:4[83]) – In spite of the incongruous small size of this plant, this reading – which occurs twice in the Aramaic text as well as in the later Hebrew tradition of *TY* – should not be emended to חרובא as was done by Smelik.[84] The text here brings to mind the tradition concerning Haman who was hanged on a thorn bush,[85] something which is especially relevant in light of the comparisons in the midrashic literature between Haman and Jesus.

21. מאי "what" – This form of the pronoun is ubiquitous in JBA[86] both alone (189:23) and w. a fol. noun, e. g. מאי אסותא "what kind of healing" (K29:12).[87]

22. מארותא "lords," pl. of מריא (186:24) – This form used in JBA[88] as opposed to the pl. מרין found in JPA.[89]

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[73] See *DJBA*, 388 ff.

[74] See *DJBA*, 391.

[75] See *DJBA*, 363. This has no connection with JPA which empoys חזר.

[76] See *DJBA*, 930, mng. 3 (from Anan).

[77] See *SL*, 1235, mng. 2.c.1.

[78] See טענוה כולי עלמא בשיראי *Qid* 73a(21) (*DJBA*, 511, Pe., mng. 2).

[79] See *DJBA*, 560.

[80] See *DJPA*, 410.

[81] See *DJBA*, 560.

[82] This is the correct reading of the text (see Horbury, 120), and not דברושא as read by Ginzberg and followed incorrectly by Smelik, Aramaic Dialect, 68.

[83] Incorrectly cited by Smelik, ibid., as קנא דכרובא.

[84] See Smelik, ibid., 68. There is only one suggested interchange of this type in JBA, viz. סירכא (see *DJBA*, 809) and an *ad hoc* emendation on that basis in light of the strong textual tradition of כרובא is extremely unlikely. A later Hebrew version of *TY* preserves the tradition found here: עד שהביאו עץ שלכרוב ותלו אותו עליו (*LJ* 120:21).

[85] See *Esther Rabbah* 9:2 (14b) and *SYAP*, 182–83.

[86] See *DJBA*, 634.

[87] See *DJBA*, 635, mng. d.

[88] See *DJBA*, 707

[89] See *DJPA*, 329.