

Toledot Yeshu («The Life Story of Jesus») Revisited

A Princeton Conference Edited by Yaacov Deutsch, Michael Meerson and Peter Schäfer

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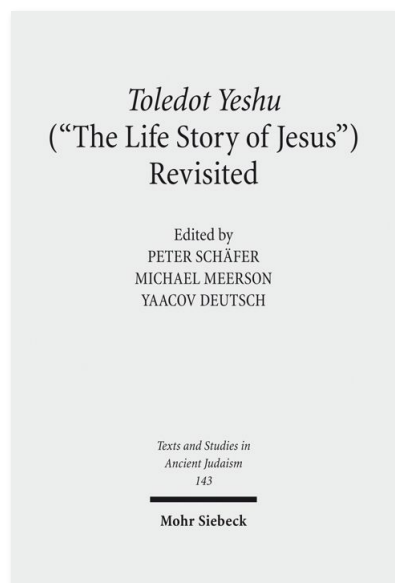
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One of the most controversial books in history, *Toledot Yeshu* recounts the life story of Jesus from a negative and anti-Christian perspective. It ascribes to Jesus an illegitimate birth, a theft of the Ineffable Name of God, heretical activities, and, finally, a disgraceful death. Perhaps for centuries, the Toledot Yeshu circulated orally until it coalesced into various literary forms. Although the dates of these written compositions remain obscure, some early hints of a Jewish counter-history of Jesus can be found in the works of pagan and Christian authors of Late Antiquity, such as Celsus, Justin, and Tertullian. In the Middle Ages, the book became the object and tool of a most acrimonious controversy. Jews, Christians, and atheists - such as Ibn Shaprut, Luther, and Voltaire - quoted and commented on *Toledot Yeshu*, trying to disprove the beliefs of their opponents and revealing their own prejudices. Due to the offensive nature of the book, scholars have until recently paid little attention to *Toledot Yeshu*. In 2007, Peter Schäfer launched a project at Princeton University to prepare a scholarly edition with translation and commentary based on all the available manuscripts (about 150). Along with this project, Peter Schäfer, Michael Meerson, and Yaacov Deutsch organized an international conference, attended by the leading scholars of the subject, to discuss the present state of research. The conference contributions, published in this volume, mark a new stage in *Toledot Yeshu* research.

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