



Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition

Gershom G. Scholem

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The description below refers to an alternate Paperback edition, which can be found at http://www.amazon.com/dp/0873341783/ref=dp_bookdescription?_encoding=UTF8&n=283155 This little book presents Gershom Scholem discoveries in the area of Jewish Gnosticism which go behind of what he already did in his “Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism”. Here, Scholem presents a radical re-evaluation of traditions embedded in Hekhalot Books preserved in Rabbinic circles which had retained deep attachment to Pharisaism. Having underrated the antiquity of these texts, most scholars thus were unable to properly evaluate the phenomenon. Gnosticism, a religious movement that believed in mystical esotericism for the elect derived from illumination and the acquisition of the knowledge of heavenly things, now seems to have been close to the very core of Judaism in Roman Palestine and according to Scholem must be ascribed to either the Tannaitic or the early Amoraic period. Did the differentiation of the highest God and Demiurge, supposedly God of Israel, preceded the rise of Christianity and possibly served as a point of departure for certain Christian heresies? Scholem shows that documents of Christian Gnosticism presuppose the existence of basic conceptions of Merkabah Mysticism and derides scholars who look toward Iranian sources...

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