

Peter Schäfer

The Origins of Jewish Mysticism

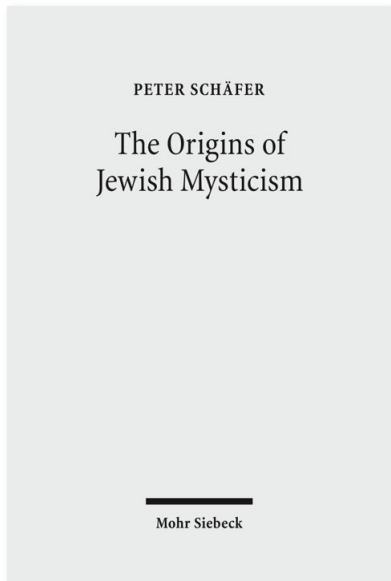
[The Origins of Jewish Mysticism]

Published in English.

This book provides the reader for the first time with a history of pre-kabbalistic Jewish mysticism. It covers the period from the Hebrew Bible (Ezekiel) up to Merkavah mysticism, the first full-fledged mystical movement in late antiquity. Many scholars have dealt with Merkavah mysticism proper and its ramifications for classical rabbinic Judaism, but very few have paid full attention to the evidence of the Hebrew Bible, the apocalyptic literature, Qumran, and Philo. It is this gap between the Hebrew Bible and Merkavah mysticism that Peter Schäfer wishes to fill in a systematic and reflective manner. In addressing the question of the origins of Jewish mysticism, he asks whether we can rightfully and sensibly speak of Jewish mysticism as a uniform and coherent phenomenon that started some time in the mythical past of the Hebrew Bible and later developed into what would become Merkavah mysticism and ultimately the Kabbalah. Instead of imposing a preconceived notion of »mysticism« on a great variety of relevant literatures, belonging to different communities at different times and on different places, the author proceeds heuristically and asks what these literatures wish to convey about the age-old human desire to get close to and communicate with God.

Peter Schäfer has dedicated much of his scholarly life to the history of Jewish mysticism. *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* summarizes his views in an accessible way, directed at specialists as well as at a broader audience.

Peter Schäfer Geboren 1943; 1968 Promotion; 1973 Habilitation; 1983-2008 Professor für Judaistik an der Freien Universität Berlin; 1998-2013 Ronald O. Perelman Professor of Jewish Studies und Professor of Religion an der Princeton University; 2014-2019 Direktor des Jüdischen Museums Berlin.



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