

reader to the vast primary and secondary literature of Jewish mysticism. These notes enable one to understand the Zohar's underlying symbol system, as well as to trace the development and ramifications of key words and concepts. All this is done with admirable scholarly rigor and objectivity.

The main feature of Matt's work, however, is the Zohar text itself. Set in lines like open verse, the words of the Zohar retain their poetic, elusive aura of resplendent mystery. Matt displays considerable literary sensitivity in his translation of the material. Listen to a passage on the Creation:

*When the King conceived ordaining
He engraved engravings in the luster on
high.
A blinding spark flashed
within the Concealed of the Concealed
from the mystery of the Infinite,*

*a cluster of vapor in formlessness,
set in a ring,
not white, not black, not red, not green,
no color at all. . . .*

(p. 49)

The translator here combines, with dazzling virtuosity, philological scholarship, literary acumen, and a gently hovering mystical sensibility.

Some Bostonians may recall that, while the translator was working for his Ph.D. at Brandeis University, he was also a member of Havurat Shalom, the spiritual community in Somerville. Matt's Zohar translation reminds us of the power which comes from the fruitful union of mind and spirit, and should serve as a model for the translation of other primary texts of Jewish mysticism. ✧

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work is a riddle which ought to be decoded. I think of it more in terms of sensations. If the reader experiences the story, if I manage to elicit certain feeling in him, my goal is accomplished."

With the range of characters portrayed

and the spectrum of emotions evoked in this book, that goal is accomplished indeed. ✧

Leora Zeitlin is a reporter for the Brookline Chronicle.

BOSTON'S JEWISH BESTSELLERS

1. *An Interrupted Life*, by Etty Hillesum (Pantheon)
2. *Him With His Foot In His Mouth*, by Saul Bellow (Harper & Row)
3. *In the Land of Israel*, by Amos Oz (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich)
4. *The Haj*, by Leon Uris (Doubleday)
5. *From Time Immemorial*, by Joan Peters (Harper & Row)
6. *A Vanished World*, by Roman Vishniac (Farrar Straus & Giroux)
7. *The Transfer Agreement*, by Edwin Black (Macmillan)
8. *Against the Apocalypse*, by David Roskies (Harvard University Press)
9. *Reflections of Nazism*, by Saul Friedlander (Harper & Row)
10. *Halakhic Man*, by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (Jewish Publication Society)

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