

Foreword

SOME YEARS AGO, I began to study the Torah. As my facility with the text grew, I pursued the midrashic literature of the rabbis, and the interpretations of the classic medieval commentators. Eventually, I began to inquire about mystical commentaries on the Torah. I turned to the *Zohar*, seeking an English translation of its original Aramaic. I soon learned that previous translations not only were incomplete but also had been undertaken in the early twentieth century. Therefore, they did not reflect the enormous advances in scholarship since made by Gershom Scholem and his students. It was at this point that I realized how much I wanted to be able to study the *Zohar* from an English translation that would draw upon the research and scholarship of the past half-century. I determined to sponsor such a translation; the book you hold in your hands is the result.

By its nature and purpose, the *Zohar* is difficult to penetrate. For hundreds of years it was inaccessible to all but a few. Furthermore, after the Sabbatean episode of the seventeenth century, the Jewish community became concerned about the potency of mystical ideas; leaders were anything but eager to promulgate the *Zohar*. Even with the rise of Hasidism as a mystically based movement starting in the eighteenth century, the *Zohar* remained a closed book. Consequently, bringing the *Zohar* to the English-reading public was—and continues to be—a complex, challenging task.

The words that can express my appreciation to Daniel C. Matt are found on every page of his translation of the *Zohar*. His scholarship, his artistry, and his poetry speak for themselves. You, the reader, are in his debt.

The odyssey of the past nine years, which will continue for some years to come, has been shepherded through a tangle of legal and administrative steps with the able and devoted skill of Glen Miller.

Professor Arthur Green, who co-chairs the Academic Committee for the Translation of the *Zohar*, has been a thoughtful and faithful counselor from the inception of the project.

My husband Tom, while not a student of the *Zohar*, recognized the magnitude and the importance of this project. He has kept us ever vigilant and focused with his insightful questions and thoughts and his constant support.

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From conception through gestation and finally to birth, this project would not have been realized without the wisdom, knowledge, and nurturing of Rabbi Yehiel Poupko. He is my teacher and my friend, and it is to him that this edition of the *Zohar* is dedicated.

It is with a sense of fulfillment and awe for Daniel Matt's remarkable accomplishment that my family and I now present the *Zohar* to the English-reading public, with the hope that the radiance that flows from this great work and from the Jewish mystical tradition will bring light to those who seek it.

Margot Pritzker