

Zohar – Annotated and Explained, Translation and Annotation
by Daniel C. Matt. Jewish Lights 2002.

The Gift of Kabbalah by Tamar Frankiel, Ph.D. Jewish Lights 2002.

Jewish mysticism, particularly in the guise of Kabbalah, has become fashionable across a broad spectrum of individuals, far beyond the Jewish community which is its natural home. As a result, the true nature of Jewish mysticism, and the core text of the Zohar, may be easily misunderstood and misinterpreted.

Daniel Matt's excellent little volume takes a selection of key texts from the Zohar and provides a brief commentary to the major points in each of them. Combined with the best Short Introduction to the Zohar that I have ever read, Matt's text is an invaluable teaching aid for Rabbis and an excellent, gentle introduction to the Zohar for students and interested lay people alike.

Dr Tamar Frankiel, author of many books on Jewish mysticism, sets out in The Gift of Kabbalah, to use the teachings, concepts and key beliefs of the Jewish mystical tradition as a way of enhancing life in general and helping readers to deal with all its ups and downs. This reviewer is probably too cynical and too English to appreciate some of its more fanciful assertions, but for those prepared to suspend their disbelief this may prove a satisfying read. The chapter on Techniques for Spiritual Growth is, however fascinating, and might prove a useful addition to those who already practice Yoga or other forms of meditation.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh