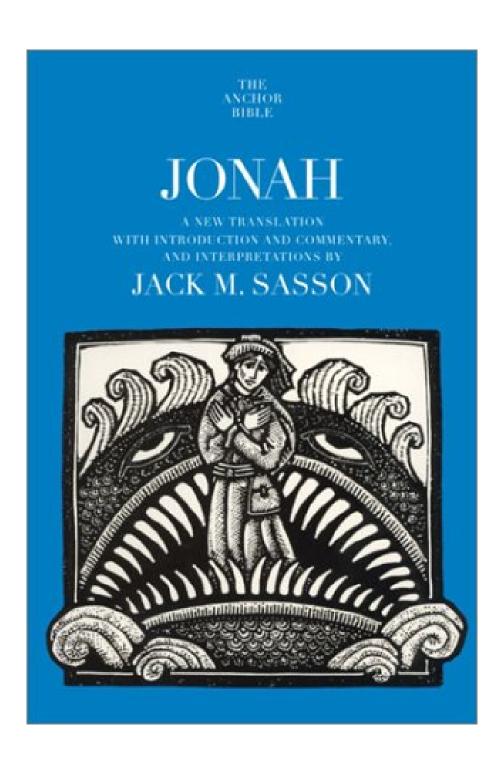


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29 of 30 people found the following review helpful.

In the best tradition of Anchor Bible Commentaries

By Tupper

Sasson's commentary on the book of Jonah follows in the best tradition of the Anchor Bible commentary series. While Sasson is a leading scholar, he avoids the hypertechnicality that permeates some modern Bible commentaries. Sasson is quite fair to the commentators that have proceeded him. In a lengthy introduction, he reviews the various interpretations given the book of Jonah as, for example, irony, comedy, allegory, parable, etc., giving each approach its due. Sasson also reviews the scholarly arguments over the dating of the book. Sasson comments on each chapter, verse by verse, and does an excellent job of showing themes that run through the book. In addition, relying upon sources from the ancient world, Sasson sheds light on many of the mundane activities described in the book, such as seafaring and travel. As is customary with Anchor Bible commentaries, Sasson includes a lengthy bibliography.

Even if you end up disagreeing with Sasson's own interpretation, you will surely find enlightening his generous approach that includes so many other viewpoints. This is an excellent book for anyone desiring an intensive study of one of the world's best known big fish stories.

22 of 23 people found the following review helpful.

Excellent discussion of a misunderstood book

By Gary M. Greenbaum

Jonah is perhaps one of the least understood books of the Bible, with most people unable to get by the "whale" (actually, dag gadol, or great fish). The book contains fascination interaction between men and God, which Sasson brings out well.

Not only does Sasson go phrase by phrase through the four-chapter book of Jonah, discussing the book, discussing sources, but he provides us with an excellent translation, and lengthy introduction and postscripts. You'll read about the millenia-old debate as to whether Jonah is historical or not.

Sources from Jewish, Christian, secular, and other traditions are used.

Anyone from beginner to expert will get something out of this book, and it really doesn't matter what religion you are. I have no idea what religion Sasson is a member of. Jews may have a slight advantage in the discussions of Masoretic cantillation, since many learn them in preparation for Bar Mitzvah, but it really isn't necessary for a good understanding of what Sasson is getting at.

A good source for the reference library, or for anyone interested in learning more about the Book of Jonah

than the 51 verses in the Bible.

11 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

A net full of fish to choose from

By Amazon Customer

This commentary was written with many helpful and informative comments concerning the Ancient Near Eastern history and culture. Many of the things discussed are fairly original. So this is one of those go-to commentaries.

As I was preparing a sermon on it though I had to disagree with Sasson's main unique contribution about why Jonah was angry or depressed. Sasson brings up a great point in that it seems strange that Jonah would want to die if what he was really mad at was that God was compassionate. Sasson offers what he prematurely thinks is the best solution, but I believe it makes things more complicated.

Sasson says that the reason why Jonah is upset is because God did not use him like God normally uses prophets. Jonah was not involved in the process other then as a tool for God's own hidden purposes. Apparently God knew something he was not telling Jonah, and Jonah mad at that and felt useless. The reason Jonah fled in Chapter 1 was because he was scared of possibly getting killed by the Assyrians, and the reason given in Chapter 4 was not the real reason, but an excuse.

The main problem with this theory is that it ignores verse 11 of chapter 4 where God brings up why He is justified in being concerned about Ninevah. If what Sasson sayas is true then God should be addressing Jonah's concern about being a pawn in a divine chess game.

Also it seems just as likely that Jonah was taking seriously what God prophesied through him in 2 Kings 14. God desired Israel to be saved, not completely destroyed, so how else could this happen unless, in Jonah's thinking, Assyria was wiped out. So then Jonah wanting to die makes perfect sense because he would have been the scourge of Israel after leading their bitter enemies to repentance!

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