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Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

Ed. by van Oorschot, Jürgen / Gertz, Jan Christian

Together with Grätz, Sebastian / Becker, Uwe

In cooperation with Davies, Graham / Heintz, Jean-Georges /

Jeremias, Jörg / Köckert, Matthias / de Pury, Albert / Römer,

Thomas Chr. / Sæbø, Magne / Schmitt, Hans-Christoph /

Schwienhorst-Schönberger, Ludger / Segal, Michael / Van

Seters, John / Wanke, Gunther / Waschke, Ernst-Joachim

4 Issues per year

CiteScore 2017: 0.13

SCImago Journal Rank (SJR) 2017: 0.151

Source Normalized Impact per Paper (SNIP) 2017: 0.775

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Jonah as a Philosophical Book

Etan Levine

Published Online: 2009-10-27 | **DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.1515/zatw.1984.96.2.235>

30,00 € / \$42.00 / £23.00

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acteristics which speak for its continuity, individual examples of it evince very varied styles and freshness and originality of approach. It can have been no heavy-handed and lifeless formalists who kept alive the visions, hopes and insights of the prophetic movement. Prophets they themselves may not have been. But they appear to have been not altogether unworthy servants of «His servants the prophets».

Starting from von Rad's designation of certain passages in the Books of Chronicles as «Levitical Sermons», the paper asks whether criteria can be established by which a genre «Sermon» might be delimited, and then investigates how far Zech 1 2-6 and chapters 7 f. fit such a form-category. Recent claims that it is impossible to establish such a genre as «Sermon» and also that the passages in Chronicles are seldom attributed to Levites are allowed. Nevertheless, exposition of an agreed authoritative scriptural «text»; a re-iteration of accepted theological teaching and an urgent call for response from the hearers, are to be seen as hallmarks of «preaching». The appearance of these in both the passages in Chronicles and in Zechariah, together with stylistic devices such as the rhetorical question, play on words and illustration, in addition to marked parallels in ideas and vocabulary, suggest that Zechariah's visions and oracles were preached in the second temple by just those circles which were also responsible for the «sermons» in Chronicles.

Jonah as a Philosophical Book

By Etan Levine

(University of Haifa)

Introduction

The Book of Jonah consists of only 48 verses. The narrative framework consists of folkloristic motifs that were the common property of ancient cultures (e.g. the unwilling prophet, the great fish, the proverbial city of evil, the magical number three, the calming of the angry sea)¹. Within this framework there is a very specific message. Like the ancient Greeks, the Hebrews knew better than to confuse the medium with the message²; like other biblical legends³, the story of Jonah was more than it presented itself to be.

¹ see M. Gaster, *Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament*, 1971, and Cornelia Courtler, «The «Great Fish» in Ancient and Medieval Story», *Transactions of the American Philological Association* LVII (1926). Also cf. R. B. Dixon, *Oceanic Mythology*, 1916, and S. D. Goitein, «Some Observations on Jonah», *JPOS* 17 (1943), 63-87. For background data, see Elias Bickerman, *Les deux erreurs du prophète Jonas*, *RHPR* 1965, and R. H. Bowers, *The Legend of Jonah*, 1971.

² see David Daube, *Ancient Hebrew Fables*, 1973. For juridical-conceptual data, cf. J. J. Hinkelstein, *The Goring Ox; Some Historical Perspectives on Deodands, Forfeitures,*

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Published Online: 2009-10-27

Published in Print:

Citation Information: Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, Volume 96, Issue 2, Pages 235–245, ISSN (Online) 1613-0103, ISSN (Print) 0044-2526, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/zatw.1984.96.2.235>.

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