



Sinai and Zion

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A treasury of religious thought and faith--places the symbolic world of the *Bible* in its original context.

Sinai and Zion Details

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From Reader Review Sinai and Zion for online ebook

Corinne E. Blackmer says

Made good points about Sinai (the desert of the Theophany) and Zion (Jerusalem and beyond) as the essential coordinates that explain and elucidate the Hebrew Bible, but very drily written. Writer struck reader as somewhat of a prig.

Mishehu says

For the wildly under-initiated, this book -- short though it is -- is no gentle introduction. The first two-thirds, which focuses on the pentateuch, I mostly managed to follow, and found quite interesting. The last third focused on various other Biblical texts (Prophets, etc.), and presupposed a deep familiarity with them that I, alas, don't have. So the trees were mostly lost on me and, with them, large swaths of the forest. Even so, I did find it rewarding to read this book and get as much from it as I managed to. And I appreciate the praise it has received from scholars in the field. It is a very skillful piece of exegesis.

Charles says

Offers a really compelling way of reading the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible. Levenson takes two primary motifs--Sinai and Zion--and uses them to illuminate what's going on in the canonical books. One of those works that prevent you from ever reading certain texts in the same old way again. Levenson's perspective as an Orthodox Jew can energize Christian readings.

Shawn Brace says

As with Levenson's other books I've read, he writes on this topic with one foot in higher criticism, and one foot in a synchronic reading of the Hebrew Bible, discussing in its final literary form. When he writes from the latter perspective - which is probably the majority of time in this book - his insights are compelling and significant.

In particular, he does a great job tracing the covenant theme throughout the Hebrew Bible, beautifully noting how the Mosaic law and God's love are not at odds. Christians need to hear this.

Unfortunately - and this was only a minor treatment of his - it seems he suffers from reading the Apostle Paul's attitude toward the Mosaic law through the lens of Luther (which is understandable, since the average Christian today has inherited this mistaken view of Paul and the law, and widely disseminates this wrong view), rather than through the lens of Paul. Simply point, Paul doesn't actually have any hostility toward the law, anymore than the Hebrew Bible - with which he was intimately acquainted and committed to - did.

But, again, Levenson only touches on this briefly - and we can't blame him, as a Jew, for putting his finger on a prevailing - though wrong - caricature of Paul and the Christianity he helped spawn.

Matt says

Rich theology of OT Judaism that demonstrates the complex nuances that distinguish and yet conjoin the theology of Sinai and the theology of Zion. Highly recommended for those interested in a significantly deeper understanding of the theological overtones of the First Testament.

Matthew says

Helpful book, but not as accessible as I had hoped for. Pretty technical book that assumes you have some foundational understanding of the concepts covered.

Ron Tenney says

This is my second time through this book. I am interested in Old Testament Studies. I enjoyed re-reading this book because Levenson does an excellent job of describing both the ancient religious meaning associated with Moses as well as the nature of the covenant between God and Israel.

RC says

Levenson presents an excellent introduction to the Jewish faith as it is represented in scripture. In Sinai & Zion he takes a clear look at the two mountains and the traditions which arose from Jewish experience of them and details their symbolism, meaning, and theological trends which arose: Sinai, the mountain of the conditional covenant, Moses, and the twelve tribes and the complex relationship it has to Zion, the mountain of David, the unconditional covenant, and the southern monarchy.

He offers a detailed analysis of their relationship, the subtleties of their interactions, and a needed corrective to a predominant view of biblical Judaism by contemporary Christian scholars, theologians and many lay people.

Brent says

I read this to see why Jeff Lindsay of the Mormonity blog had found it worthwhile. It's not a quick read and so I'll spend more time studying it. Among other things, it presents insights into what the ancient temple was about in the Jewish religion, and that seems to be a lot of what Mormon temples are about. Certain of the Psalms relate to the temple in ways of which I had been unaware.

KC says

This was not quite as accessible as I would have liked, but it covers some profound material.

Its three main sections deal with (1) Sinai, the origin of the covenant identity of Israel, (2) Zion, the prototypical society capable of communion with God, centered around the Jerusalem temple, and (3) the interplay between the two, they being complementary poles on a single axis.

It is perhaps no wonder that two of the most prominent old testament figures, namely Moses and David, each have their own covenant, each grounded on these opposite poles. Navigating the space from, to, and in between Sinai and Zion seems to be the foundation of the Jewish experience, and is notably also the groundwork for contextualizing Christ and the new covenant, as well as a major portion of latter-day saint theology.
