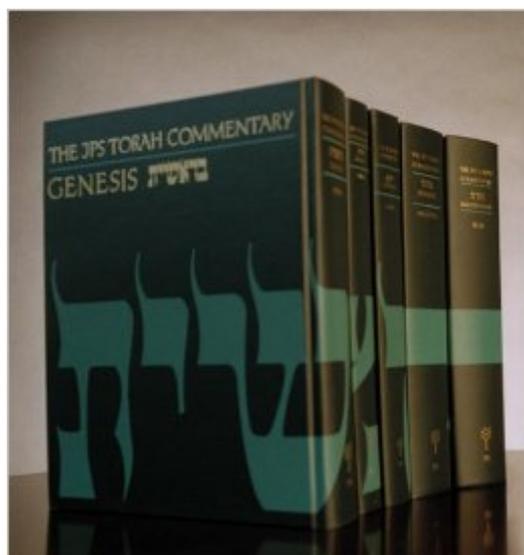


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JPS Torah Commentary, 5 Volume Set



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Book Information

Hardcover: 548 pages

Publisher: The Jewish Publication Society; 5 book set edition (May 1, 1996)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0827603312

ISBN-13: 978-0827603318

Product Dimensions: 19.5 x 15 x 6.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (15 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,692,676 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #306 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > Sacred Writings > Torah](#) #1142 in [Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Religious Studies > Judaism](#) #1459 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > History](#)

Customer Reviews

Of the five commentaries in the JPS series on the first five books of the Bible, Milgrom's is the best. Milgrom's commentary reveals a healthy respect for classical Jewish commentators but doesn't hesitate to address and add modern Biblical research. Milgrom excels when explaining the more obscure portions of Numbers, such as the rituals, calendars, and sacrifices. In addition to his verse by verse commentary, Milgrom adds lengthy excurses, exploring in more depth the issues raised in the commentary. For example, his insights into the meaning of "tzitzit" - the fringes attached to four cornered garments - are outstanding. Milgrom argues that attaching the linen tzitzit with the dyed blue thread (techelet) to one's garment as required by the text, rendered the garment "shaatnez" - a

forbidden combination of wool and linen. Milgrom notes that "shaatnez" is generally forbidden to be worn, but was permitted to be used in the construction of the Tabernacle and the clothing of the priests. By allowing, indeed requiring, every Israelite to attach shaatnez tzitzit to the corners of his/her garments, the Bible was drumming into the people the mandate that they be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Similarly, Milgrom's treatment of the paradox of the Red Cow, whose ashes purified those rendered impure by contact with the dead but rendered impure those who handled them is a tour de force of modern Biblical scholarship. On almost every page, you will enjoy reading insights you may never before have come across. This book is a treasure for anyone willing to spend the time it requires.

Like all the volumes in the JPS Torah commentary series, this volume is simply the best in its area. It contains the complete Hebrew text of Genesis, the JPS's new English translation, and an extensive original commentary that illuminates the text like a 1000 watt searchlight. On average, each four or five lines of text gets a full page of explanation and commentary, so every subject gets covered in detail. Like all the JPS Torah commentators, this work uses traditional rabbinic commentaries, and the Mishna, Midrash and Talmud. But it doesn't end here: The commentary goes on to make good use of literary analysis and comparative Semitics; intertextual commentary relating each book to other biblical books, and evidence from modern archaeological discoveries.

So far, I've read three other JPS Torah commentaries (Prof. Sarna's commentaries to Exodus and Genesis, and Prof. Levine's to Leviticus). Compared to the other three, this one is: 1. Much more detailed and technical- especially the essays in the back of the book, which are highly focused on literary structure (for example, drawing parallels between how two portions of a text are phrased). 2. Less reverent, and more focused on contradictions within the Torah text and the likelihood of varying traditions having made their way into the Torah. A tradition-minded reader who does not believe in the Documentary Hypothesis will be more disturbed by this book than by the other JPS commentaries. 3. Longer. The other books are somewhat interchangeable with a congregational Chumash- this one, not so much. On the other hand, I think this book might be more useful for scholars.

Written, of course, for Jewish readers and scholars, this is nonetheless a thorough commentary. It discusses almost every issue in the book of Numbers. What is not discussed in the commentary proper is addressed in the incredible number of excursuses. This is actually what convinced me to

purchase the commentary. It also has good discussions on the language issues in both the commentary proper and in some of the other articles. It would make a good addition to your library and comes highly recommended.

The book of Numbers contains critical information about the history of Israel and the God of Israel. No one who follows YHVH should be without a deep understanding of this text, and Jacob Milgrom provides plenty of material to help readers understand the message of Numbers.

Because of the degree of specialty of each of the writers (each are specialists on the Law), a decent (at least some) amount of Hebrew knowledge is key, to allow the reader to evaluate decisions made by the authors. It is also key to remember that these commentaries (following after the aims of JPS) are thoroughly Jewish and track the development of understanding for the passages discussed, though not necessarily to the detriment of the series. A great work, worth the shelf space of any Rabbi, Preacher, or Scholar. rq ladonai kvd

This series offers commentaries on the first five books of the Torah, the five books of Moses, by four knowledgeable highly respected modern scholars. The comments are well-written, insightful, and easily understandable even by non-scholars, even though they draw on both modern and ancient in-depth biblical studies. For example, why did the holiday of Yom Kippur fall on the tenth day of the month while other biblical Jewish holidays fell either on the first or fifteenth of the lunar month, on the beginning of the growth of the moon or when it was full. Dr. Sarna explains that the tenth was also considered to be a significant day in ancient Israel and he cites examples.

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