



Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible

By John H. Walton

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Much of the Old Testament seems strange to contemporary readers. However, as we begin to understand how ancient people viewed the world, the Old Testament becomes more clearly a book that stands within its ancient context as it also speaks against it. John Walton provides here a thoughtful introduction to the conceptual world of the ancient Near East. Walton surveys the literature of the ancient Near East and introduces the reader to a variety of beliefs about God, religion, and the world. In helpful sidebars, he provides examples of how such studies can bring insight to the interpretation of specific Old Testament passages. Students and pastors who want to deepen their understanding of the Old Testament will find this a helpful and instructive study.

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Editorial Review

From the Back Cover

"Comparisons between the culture of biblical Israel and the other cultures of the ancient Near East have long been a fundamental part of biblical scholarship, but more often than not, they have been presented in piecemeal, isolated fashion. In his new book, John Walton offers a much broader reach, giving us arguably the most extensive review of these cultural comparisons now available together with a serious meditation on what the enterprise of cultural comparison is all about in biblical study. One may not always agree with his views, but invariably one will come away challenged to rethink the purpose and value of such comparisons for understanding the Hebrew Bible and its world."--Peter B. Machinist, Harvard University

"As no other author has done, Walton penetrates beyond the simple comparisons often made to bring back intelligence about the contexts and constitution of the ancient world, stressing the ideas Israel and its contemporaries held in common--such as 'deity is on the inside, not the outside' of life--and discussing accounts of creation, views of history and of the future. Yet Walton repeatedly demonstrates how Israel's faith was distinct, its God revealing his will by writing his law on his people's hearts, a metaphor from divination implying that they reveal his law to others. That's one of many cases where interpretation gains from 'comparative exploration.' This book deserves the attention of all serious Bible teachers and students."--Alan R. Millard, University of Liverpool

"This book is a must read for serious students of the Old Testament. John Walton has employed his extensive background and experience to write this excellent survey of the interface between the ancient Near East and Israel. I especially appreciate his sidebars on 'Comparative Exploration,' which enable readers to 'zero in' on the comparative topic of their choice relatively easily. The book is thoroughly readable yet very scholarly. Thus, beginning students, seminarians, and the interested public will find gold mines of conceptual information in this excellent work."--Mark W. Chavalas, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse

"John Walton has produced an important and useful guide to entering into some of the major worldviews and value systems found in ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Israel. As a unique contribution to the study of that era, his work both introduces readers to this thought world and bridges the gaps between ancient Near Eastern texts and the perspectives of the Bible. Walton's engaging style makes this an ideal introductory text for these important areas of Bible backgrounds."--Richard S. Hess, Denver Seminary

About the Author

John H. Walton (Ph.D., Hebrew Union College) is professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College. He is the author or editor of numerous books, including *A Survey of the Old Testament*, *Old Testament Today*, and *The I.V.P. Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*.

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