

integrated. The authors also sensibly urge a reordering of historical study that makes “biblical history” a subdiscipline of the “history of ancient Israel and Judah.”

TAWNY HOLM  
PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

---

*Israelite Religions: An Archaeological and Biblical Survey.* By RICHARD S. HESS. Grand Rapids, Mich.: BAKER ACADEMIC, 2007. Pp. 423, illus. \$34.99.

This book is a careful review of the archaeological and biblical evidence regarding ancient Israelite religions. The plural in the title stems from the recognition that recent findings reflect a more diverse situation than the early monotheism assumed by scholars of a few decades ago. On the other hand, the author often favors a more traditionally conservative interpretation, which stresses the historical reliability of the biblical text. Moreover, he seems to have in mind an audience that shares this view, although he is usually quite willing to explore many of the questions raised by the evidence.

The book is mainly organized around a biblical timeline that follows the sequence of the Torah through the Former Prophets. This approach assumes that each part retains primary evidence from the biblical period to which it relates. The work is divided into twelve chapters, the first three of which deal with introductory matters, such as definitions of “Israelite” and “religion,” various approaches to the study of religion, and a review of past scholarship. Chapters 4 and 5 examine pre-Israelite religion in West Asia: Syria and Egypt in chapter 4 and Palestine and Jordan in chapter 5. Chapters 6 to 11 then survey Israelite religions throughout the major eras of the Hebrew Bible, starting with two long chapters on the traditions of the Pentateuch and ending with a short chapter on religions in the exilic and postexilic periods. The core of the book is found in chapters 8–10, in which biblical evidence is set beside material culture and epigraphic evidence for early Israel, the United Monarchy, and the Divided Monarchy. Chapter 12 is devoted to a brief summary of the author’s conclusions. The book is well illustrated and indexed, with an extensive bibliography of about fifty-five pages.

Of special note in Hess’s early chapters is an excursus on the Documentary Hypothesis of the Pentateuch in chapter 3, which illustrates his tendency to push back as far as possible in time the evidence for a Yahwistic cult. He concludes that, while the Hebrew of the Torah/Pentateuch leaves the impression that it was composed in the first half of the first millennium B.C.E., it “may preserve traditions of greater antiquity than commonly asserted” (p. 58). In chapter 6, on the narrative and legal strands of the Pentateuch, and chapter 7, on the priestly and cultic strands, the author asserts that this material is “foundational” and “largely undated or archaic” (p. 207). However, the author often places more confidence in a robust mid-second-millennium B.C.E. Yahwism than the evidence can bear. With regard to his later chapters, Hess uncritically accepts the Bible’s portrait of a United Monarchy under Saul, David, and Solomon in the tenth century B.C.E. (something widely debated among other scholars because of the sparse extrabiblical evidence for it), and does not address the issues that arise from the tendency in recent scholarship to date much of the Hebrew Bible, including its historiographic portions, to the Persian period.

Hess’s survey of non-Israelite religions is much appreciated, as is his detailed review of onomastics and inscriptions in ancient Israel and Judah. His own expertise in Bronze Age texts and names is manifest here, as elsewhere. In the chapters dealing with the emergence of Israel through to the end of the Divided Monarchy (chapters 8–10), the review of cultic sites, epigraphic evidence, and iconography is quite thorough. Hess surveys both the biblical and extrabiblical evidence for beliefs in multiple deities, and traces the evolution of Israelite beliefs from the variety that came out of earlier West Semitic ideas to a distinctive Yahweh-alone stance. He deals in sufficient detail with the significance of finds such as the Kuntillet ʿAjrud inscriptions and the Khirbet el-Qom blessing as indications that some Israelites worshiped female deities like Asherah. Nevertheless, although both henotheistic Yahwism and a diverse polytheism co-existed for some time until after the exile, Hess

emphasizes pieces such as the seventh-century Ketef Hinnom amulets to demonstrate the strength of Israelite monotheism.

While the presentation of the evidence is quite thorough, it is unavoidable that some sections will soon need updating due to new archaeological and other findings that continue to add to the discussion. One thinks especially of the excavations and discoveries at eleventh-century Khirbet Qeiyafa twenty miles from Jerusalem, which have been subject to much polemic recently in regard to religion in the transitional period of Iron Age I to II and the reliability of the Bible's portrait of a United Monarchy. For a new examination of family and household religion, see R. Albertz and R. Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012); and for religious diversity, especially poly-Yahwism, within the distinct nations of Judah and Israel, see F. Stavropoulou and J. Barton, *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2010).

In sum, Hess succeeds in his stated goal: "The purpose of the present study will be to identify the major sources relevant to questions of Israelite religion in the biblical and extrabiblical texts, and in the archaeology of Israel. Rather than a final answer to the questions, this work seeks to provide a beginning point for the reader in the detailed but key questions of early Israelite religions" (p. 79). Still, the main reader that Hess has in mind is probably someone who approaches the subject from a traditionally conservative point of view. For that reader, the book will be very provocative, and that is a significant consequence of this work. Moreover, for the reader of the Bible who is already well versed in critical theories of scholarship, the book is still an excellent source for a fairly comprehensive overview of the evidence.

TAWNY HOLM  
PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

---

*Homeland and Exile: Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Bustenay Oded.* Edited by GERSHON GALIL, MARK GELLER, and ALAN MILLARD. Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum*, vol. 140. Leiden: BRILL, 2009. Pp. xxiv + 643. \$262.

This volume honors Bustenay Oded on his seventy-fifth birthday. Oded retired from the University of Haifa in 2002 after teaching there since 1966, but his long career as a leading scholar of the history of ancient Israel has continued well past his retirement and includes his work, *The Early History of the Babylonian Exile (8th–6th Centuries B.C.E.)* (Haifa: Pardes, 2010 [Hebrew]). This collective volume in his honor offers thirty contributions that include some new text editions or revised interpretations and many valuable perspectives on solving various problems or reframing certain issues in the fields of Hebrew Bible and ancient Near Eastern Studies.

The book begins with a short preface of two pages, followed by a bibliography of Oded's work. There is, unfortunately, no general introduction to the volume, an omitted feature that some readers will lament as a missed opportunity by the editors to provide context and perspective on the contributions individually and as a whole. The rest of the book is divided into two parts: Part one, "Ancient Near Eastern Studies," with fourteen chapters, and part two, "Biblical Studies," with sixteen chapters. Contributions in each part appear in the alphabetical order of the authors' last names.

Part one begins with a contribution by B. Becking (pp. 3–12), in which he gives a new interpretation of the seven-line Moabite inscription from Bêt Har<sup>o</sup>š (first edited in S. Ahituv, "A New Moabite Inscription," *ISMA* 2 [2003]: 3–10). Also in this section are two text editions: B. Faist's edition of a new Neo-Assyrian sale document featuring an Elamite deportee (pp. 59–69), and J. Novotny and G. Van Buylaere's edition of Sîn-šarru-iškun's Cylinder B, an inscription recording this king's restoration of a temple (probably Ezida) in Calah (pp. 215–43). Matters concerning the Assyrian military or administration are treated by F. M. Fales ("The Assyrian Words for '[Foot] Soldier'," pp. 71–94);