



Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books (The IVP Bible Dictionary Series)

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Edited by Bill T. Arnold and Hugh G. M. Williamson, the *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books* is the second volume in IVP's Old Testament dictionary series. This volume picks up where the *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* left off--with Joshua and Israel poised to enter the land--and carries us through the postexilic period. Following in the tradition of the four award-winning IVP dictionaries focused on the New Testament, this encyclopedic work is characterized by in-depth articles focused on key topics, many of them written by noted experts. The history of Israel forms the skeletal structure of the Old Testament. Understanding this history and the biblical books that trace it is essential to comprehending the Bible. The *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books* is the only reference book focused exclusively on these biblical books and the history of Israel. The dictionary presents articles on numerous historical topics as well as major articles focused on the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah. Other articles focus on the Deuteronomistic History as well as the Chronicler's History, the narrative art of Israel's historians, innerbiblical exegesis, text and textual criticism, and the emergence of these books as canonical. One feature is a series of eight consecutive articles on the periods of Israel's history from the settlement to postexilic period, which form a condensed history of Israel within the *DOTHB*. Syro-Palestinian archaeology is surveyed in one article, while significant archaeological sites receive focused treatment, usually under the names of biblical cities and towns such as Jerusalem and Samaria, Shiloh and Shechem, Dan and Beersheba. Other articles delve into the histories and cultures of the great neighboring empires--Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia and Persia--as well as lesser peoples, such as the Ammonites, Edomites, Moabites, Philistines and Phoenicians. In addition there are articles on architecture, Solomon's temple, agriculture and animal husbandry, roads and highways, trade and travel, and water and water systems. The languages of Hebrew and Aramaic, as well as linguistics, each receive careful treatment, as well as the role of scribes and their schools, and writing and literacy in ancient Israel and its environs. The *DOTHB* also canvases the full range of relevant extrabiblical written evidence, with five articles focused on the various non-Israelite written sources as well as articles on Hebrew inscriptions and ancient Near Eastern iconography. Articles on interpretive methods, on hermeneutics and on preaching the Historical Books will assist students and communicators in understanding how this biblical

literature has been studied and interpreted, and its proper use in preaching. In the same vein, theological topics such as God, prayer, faith, forgiveness and righteousness receive separate treatment. The history of Israel has long been contested territory, but never more so than today. Much like the quest of the historical Jesus, a quest of the historical Israel is underway. At the heart of the quest to understand the history of Israel and the Old Testament's Historical Books is the struggle to come to terms with the conventions of ancient historiography. How did these writers conceive of their task and to whom were they writing? Clearly the Old Testament historians did not go about their task as we would today. The divine word was incarnated in ancient culture. Rather than being a dictionary of quick answers and easy resolutions readily provided, the *DOTHB* seeks to set out the evidence and arguments, allowing a range of informed opinion to enrich the conversation. In this way it is hoped that the *DOTHB* will not only inform its readers, but draw them into the debate and equip them to examine the evidence for themselves.

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Editorial Review

Review

"*DOTHB* should be in the library of every Bible student and teacher, as well as every institution engaged in biblical education. IVP's series of dictionaries stands as a landmark accomplishment for biblical scholarship." (William D. Barrick, *The Master's Seminary Journal*, Spring 2008)

"A complement to the Dictionary on the Pentateuch and an essential resource for all serious students of the OT. This Dictionary along with its companion volume will reward all who want to explore the world of the OT in greater depth and be better informed for teaching others." (Ian Birch, *Connect* (Baptist Union of Scotland), December 2008/January 2009)

"This volume provides up-to-date scholarship not only on all the historical books but also world studies relevant to the material covered. An excellent companion for study of a section of the Old Testament canon often neglected." (Arie C. Leder for *Calvin Theological Journal*, November 2007)

"The quality of the articles is excellent. The articles were accessible, succinct and fair. This is a very helpful resource for students of the Bible at all levels, especially to those who are interested in historical books of the Old Testament, history and culture of ancient Israel and ancient Near East, and issues involved in reconstructing what happened in the past. I highly recommend it." (Uriah Y. Kim, *Reviews in Religion and Theology* 14, no. 2, 2007)

"Contains fairly even and well-balanced entries that provide a panoramic view of the present landscape in this segment of scholarly research on the historical books, the history of Israel, and relevant archaeological evidence. The contributors to the dictionary, however, do not merely present but also evaluate data. . . . This affordable reference work can benefit all who desire to gain something from its clear presentation of the material, whether undergraduates, graduate students, or scholars." (Steven J. Schweitzer, *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 69, 2007)

"This reference work is intended for an audience spanning the gamut from students and pastors to professors and researchers. . . . This volume is highly recommended." (Beth M. Sheppard, *American Reference Books Annual* (2006 Edition), volume 37)

"Quite simply, this is an excellent work of reference. Its list of articles has been carefully chosen, and includes all the important ones for understanding the Historical Books of the Old Testament in a wide range of perspectives: methodological, literary, geographical, archaeological, historical, religious, major personalities. Equally well chosen are the authors of the articles, who represent among the best in contemporary biblical scholarship internationally, many of them already well known for their work on the topics they here write about. The articles themselves are concise and yet comprehensive, presenting in lucid fashion the information about their topics, with very helpful bibliographies of relevant scholarship. But more than the presentation of information, the articles dig seriously into the problems of how that information has been and can be interpreted. They offer, thus, a real exposure to the challenges and debates that have made up the study of the Bible in the past and the present." (Peter Machinist, Harvard University, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations)

"The publisher of *DOTHB*, the latest volume in the comprehensive series on the Old and New Testaments

and their backgrounds, is to be commended on this magnificent achievement. The editors have distinguished and well-deserved reputations in biblical studies, while the authors, some better known than others, are uniformly well-qualified and in the forefront of our field. The list of contributors and articles is comprehensive, if not exhaustive, and those read by the present writer, across the spectrum of history, archaeology and theology, are first-rate both in terms of fair-minded scholarship and reader-friendly literary quality. Authors and editors alike are to be congratulated for a stellar accomplishment. As a person with some experience in the reference work business, I can recommend the new arrival with utmost enthusiasm." (David Noel Freedman, Editor-in-Chief, The Anchor Bible Project)

"One of the best dictionaries I have encountered, this volume on the Historical Books of the Old Testament is a veritable gold mine of information, clearly and competently presented. The treatments are rich and complete, accessible to any reader. Some of them provide as fine a concise guide to the topic under consideration as can be found. Not only does the volume take up obvious and important topics, such as the main historical figures, historical issues and biblical books; it also engages hermeneutical, theological and linguistic matters. In some cases, while the essay is focused on the Historical Books, it will serve as a way into the topic within the whole of Scripture. The authors come from a wide spectrum of points of view, but they all work to present a broad and full picture of the issues under discussion. A valuable reference tool for anyone working in the Scriptures." (Patrick D. Miller, Princeton Theological Seminary)

"It is quite a testimony to a dictionary to say I could hardly resist the temptation to read it through from "Aaron" to "Zerubbabel." History, archaeology, everyday life, theology, religion, geography, critical theories, hermeneutics--it's all there, in articles written by a very wide range of top scholars and younger experts. It is a marvelous volume." (John Goldingay, David Allan Hubbard Professor of Old Testament, Fuller Theological Seminary)

"With entries ranging from 'agriculture' to 'Zion traditions,' *DOTHB* attempts a 'total context' treatment of the Historical Books of the Old Testament. Since these books are concerned with much more than 'history,' this approach is absolutely right, and is admirably carried through. I am particularly pleased to see the level of awareness of recent developments in biblical and archaeological study in many of the articles. This is a very valuable addition to the IVP dictionary series." (Robert P. Gordon, Regius Professor of Hebrew, University of Cambridge)

"An invaluable guide to the Historical Books which sums up current thinking on all the major issues. Readers can rely on this work for the best in today's scholarship." (John Barton, Oriel and Laing Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture, University of Oxford)

"Given the dramatic developments in the study of ancient Israelite history and historical writing over the past two decades, the publication of an up-to-date dictionary is a most welcome development. Arnold and Williamson have assembled a well-respected international team of scholars to provide readers with clear, concise and helpful overviews of a variety of relevant topics." (Gary N. Knoppers, Head, Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies, The Pennsylvania State University)

"This dictionary clearly recognizes the distinction between history as what happened in the past and history as a written record of the past, and gives sustained attention to each. Students will profit immensely from concise statements of the historical issues and from the fair presentation of all major points of view. The bibliographical references should stimulate those who want to dig deeper, and the dictionary format will surely please those who want to and/or need to focus their reading. At a time when so many issues in Israel's history are contested, this dictionary provides a reliable and competent guide." (Ralph W. Klein, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago)

About the Author

Bill T. Arnold is Director of Hebrew Studies and Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages at Asbury Theological Seminary. He is the author of several books, including *1 & 2 Samuel*, *Encountering the Book of Genesis* and (with John H. Choi) *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. He coedited *The Face of Old Testament Studies*.

H. G. M. Williamson is Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford University, on the faculty of The Oriental Institute and a Fellow of the British Academy. He is the author of several books and numerous articles on the Old Testament, including commentaries on 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, as well as *The Book Called Isaiah* and *Studies in Persian Period History and Historiography*.

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