



Israelite Religions: A Biblical and Archaeological Survey

Richard S. Hess

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The last several decades have witnessed important discoveries of archaeological and documentary materials from the ancient Near East that shed light on ancient Israel and its religious practices. The study of these extra-biblical materials has had a significant impact on scholarly debates regarding the religion of Israel and the interpretation of the Bible. Until now, however, there have been few introductions that help students consider the importance of these contemporary discoveries and juxtapose them with the biblical narrative to understand ancient Israelite religions. Richard Hess provides just that in this accessible account of the discovery of archaeological and textual materials and the debates that have arisen over their importance for biblical studies. After a general introduction to the study of religion, he surveys the field with regard to ancient Israelite and pre-Israelite western Semitic religious traditions. Hess then turns to consider the biblical literature and how other documentary evidence might enlarge our understanding of ancient Israelite religious practices and beliefs. One of the central scholarly debates concerns the question of when the Israelites developed their monotheistic impulse. After examining the evidence, Hess argues for the early establishment of the monotheistic tradition in ancient Israel. Hess brings a wealth of knowledge to this study, and scholars, students and clergy interested in the contemporary study of the ancient Near East and the Old Testament will welcome the expert guidance provided in this illustrated volume.

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