

Preface

The study of ancient Near Eastern history in general has become a highly complex matter involving unfamiliar original languages, a long series of important archaeological discoveries, and an appreciation of the characteristics that distinguish the Oriental outlook on life from its Western counterpart. Because the Hebrews drew to a large extent upon the contemporary cultural patterns of Near Eastern life, the history of the Israelites can best be understood by placing the narratives of the Old Testament against a background of what is known about the culture and archaeology of the period covered.

The present work is an attempt to trace the outline of this history and to bring such cultural, archaeological, and sociological discoveries to bear upon the Old Testament narratives as will illumine some of the more obscure events, and place others firmly within the framework of ancient Near Eastern life. There are numerous unanswered questions connected with the history of Old Testament times, of course, and while modern archaeological discoveries have done much to clarify and resolve certain difficulties, they have as yet been unable to provide a final answer to some of the more pressing problems with which the student of Old Testament times is confronted. The author has endeavored to outline these difficulties when they occur as fairly as possible without imposing an undue burden of detail upon the text.

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