



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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