



The Ancient Near East (An Essential Guide)

John L. McLaughlin

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The cultures of the great empires of the ancient Near East from Egypt to Mesopotamia influenced Israel's religion, literature, and laws because of Israel's geographic location and political position situation. Anyone who wishes to understand the Old Testament texts and the history of ancient Israel must become familiar with the history, literature, and society of the surrounding kingdoms that at times controlled the region. Brief in presentation yet broad in scope, *Ancient Near East* will introduce students to the information and ideas essential to understanding the texts of the Old Testament while clarifying difficult issues concerning the relationship between Israel and its neighbors.

Abingdon Essential Guides fulfill the need for brief, substantive, yet highly accessible introductions to the core disciplines in biblical, theological, and religious studies.

The only way humans can know God's Word is through human words that arise in human cultures. Without knowledge of ancient cultures, no words about God can be understood deeply. Without knowledge of ancient cultures, biblical interpretation can be distorted, mistaken, or even wrong. John McLaughlin has written a wonderful book in clear English that describes literary works and cultural worlds of major civilizations in antiquity that have bearing on the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible. He explains basic concepts, terminology, and texts to help students, scholars, and even perhaps preachers who want to understand God's word expressed through human words.

--Kathleen M. O'Connor, William Marcellus McPheeters Professor of Old Testament, emeriti, Columbia Theological Seminary

In this work, John McLaughlin offers a special invitation to readers of the Bible to comprehend biblical writings in a fresh way by showing how they relate to the literatures of ancient Middle Eastern empires and peoples. Chapter-by-chapter, this book gives a tour of the ancient lands and their texts, showing the rich and deep parallels that they share with the Bible. The chapters walk readers through Mesopotamia and Egypt, through the Hittite and Persian empires, to Greece and finally to Israel's immediate neighbors. Without needing any background, readers will be able to enjoy new discoveries about Israel and its Scriptures.

--Mark S. Smith, Skirball Professor of Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Studies, New York University

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