



Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah

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Understanding of the religious beliefs and practices of the ancient Israelites has changed considerably in recent years. It is now increasingly accepted that the biblical presentation of Israelite religion is often at odds with the historical realities of ancient Israel's religious climate. As such, the diversity inherent to ancient Israelite religion is often overlooked?particularly within university lecture halls and classrooms. This textbook draws together specialists in the field to explain, illustrate and analyze this religious diversity. Following an introductory essay guiding the reader through the book, the collection falls into three sections.

The first focuses on conceptual diversities. It deconstructs common assumptions about Israelite religion and reconstructs Israelite perceptions of the nature of the religious world. The second section examines socio-religious diversities. It studies the varied social contexts of ancient Israelites, exploring the relationship between worshippers' social locations and their perceptions and experiences of the divine. The third section deals with geographical diversities. It seeks to understand how geographical distinctions engender certain characteristics within Israelite religion and impact upon religious perceptions.

Underpinning each essay in this volume is a shared concern to: (1) explore the ways in which worshippers' socio-cultural contexts shape and colour their religious beliefs and practices; (2) assess the role, benefits and limitations of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament in reconstructing ancient Israelite religion.

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