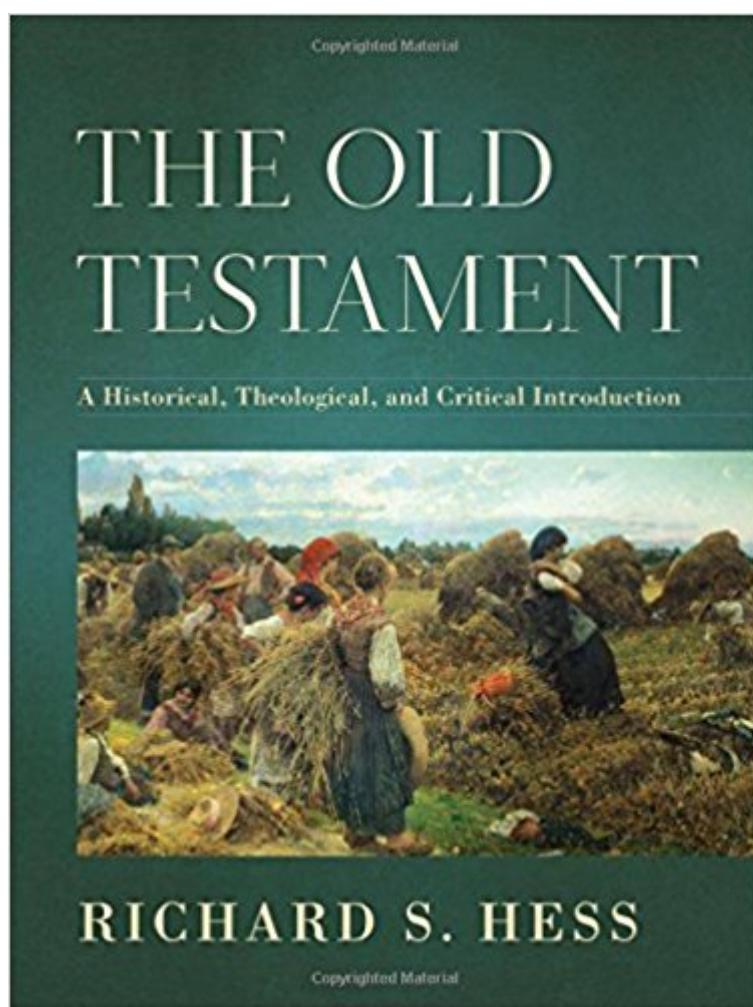


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# The Old Testament: A Historical, Theological, And Critical Introduction



## Synopsis

A Respected Scholar Introduces Students to the Discipline of Old Testament StudiesRichard Hess, a trusted scholar of the Old Testament and the ancient Near East, offers a substantial introduction to the Old Testament that is accessibly written and informed by the latest biblical scholarship. Hess summarizes the contents of the Old Testament, introduces the academic study of the discipline, and helps readers understand the complex world of critical and interpretive issues, addressing major concerns in the critical interpretation of each Old Testament book and key texts. This volume provides a fulsome treatment for students preparing for ministry and assumes no prior knowledge of the Old Testament. Readers will learn how each book of the Old Testament was understood by its first readers, how it advances the larger message of the whole Bible, and what its message contributes to Christian belief and the Christian community. Twenty maps, ninety photos, sidebars, and recommendations for further study add to the book's usefulness for students. Resources for professors are available through Baker Academic's Textbook eSources.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A groundbreaking historical, theological, and critical introduction to the Old Testament that goes far beyond other introductions in terms of breadth, depth, and scope. Hess's engagement with the history of interpretation, his sensitivity to the theological and literary aspects of texts, and his willingness to engage gender, globalization, and postmodern ideologies, make this a must-have for scholars and students. I look forward to using this outstanding book in the

classroom."--Marion Taylor, Wycliffe College, University of Toronto" Hess has produced a truly outstanding introduction to the Old Testament. It provides a thoroughgoing, scholarly presentation of all the books of the Hebrew Bible yet at the same time is accessible for students with its well-structured, articulate text. Moreover, the excellent selection and placement of illustrative materials provides a wonderful undergirding that rightly serves the reader in the learning experience."--K. A. Lawson Younger Jr., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School" Hess offers readers a current, critical, and hermeneutically instructive introduction to the Old Testament. Targeted at the graduate student, this book maps out the content of each book of the Old Testament via its canonical shape, theological import, and the critical scholarship brought to bear throughout the centuries. Particularly noteworthy are Hess's masterful introduction of the discipline of text criticism, his inclusion of premodern criticism, and his investment in issues of gender, globalization, and postmodern epistemology. This weighty volume provides student and professor alike a treasure trove of data regarding what the Old Testament is, what it contains, and why its study is essential to the Christian community."--Sandra Richter, Wheaton College" Among the plethora of introductions presently flooding the market, this new volume from Richard Hess distinguishes itself by its scope; its format; its attention to the full range of comparative, critical, and confessional issues; and its author's widely recognized expertise in all corners of the ancient Near East. The coverage is extensive, but the writing remains accessible. This introduction will serve many for a long time to come as a standard go-to text."--Brent A. Strawn, Emory University

Richard S. Hess (PhD, Hebrew Union College) is distinguished professor of Old Testament at Denver Seminary in Littleton, Colorado, and editor of the Denver Journal. He is the author or editor of more than forty books, including *Ancient Israel's History*, *Israelite Religions*, and *Song of Songs* in the Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms.

Richard S. Hess is Distinguished Professor of Old Testament at Denver Seminary. Hess earned his Ph.D. from Hebrew Union College and has authored numerous books, including *Israelite Religions: An Archaeological and Biblical Survey*, *Studies in the Personal Names of Genesis 1-11*, and commentaries on *Leviticus*, *Song of Songs*, and *Joshua*. Hess is the current editor of the Denver Journal, former editor of the *Bulletin of Biblical Research*, and the associate editor of *Old Testament, archaeology, and maps for the NIV Zondervan Study Bible*. Most recently, Hess has released the present volume, a much-anticipated introduction to the Old Testament. *The Old Testament: A Historical, Theological, and Critical Introduction* is an up-to-date, sizable, and

comprehensive introduction to the OT and the current landscape of OT studies. Hess leaves virtually no stone unturned while he guides the reader through the various layers of the field. The Old Testament is divided into four major parts (Pentateuch, Historical Books, Poetic Books, and Prophetic Books) and covers all thirty-nine of the writings of the Old Testament. Hess opens with a suitable introduction to the structure, canonization, text and textual criticism of the OT. As attention is directed towards the content of the OT, the organization and arrangement of the volume provide readers a unique framework for optimal engagement with each OT book. Each chapter is divided into four major units: (1) Name, Text, and Outline, (2) Overview, (3) Reading, and (4) Theological Perspectives. The third unit (ÃƒÂ¢Ã  ¬Ã  Å“ReadingÃƒÂ¢Ã  ¬Ã  Å•) surveys six methods of interpretation, including, premodern readings, higher criticism, literary readings, gender and ideological criticism, ancient Near Eastern context, and canonical context. The fourth unit (ÃƒÂ¢Ã  ¬Ã  Å“Theological PerspectivesÃƒÂ¢Ã  ¬Ã  Å•) examines the major themes in each book. Lastly, each chapter includes a brief bibliography for further study. There is much to be praised about this volume. The organization and arrangement of each of the chapters is easily at the top of the list. Where Hess does exceptionally well is the ÃƒÂ¢Ã  ¬Ã  Å“ReadingÃƒÂ¢Ã  ¬Ã  Å• section included in each chapter. Not only does the reader have an opportunity to engage with the standard introductory information expected, but Hess surveys the far-reaching hermeneutical landscape that has interacted with the content. Aside from the chapters, Hess has also included a number of sidebar articles, various maps and photos scattered throughout, and a handful of full-color plates in the center of the volume. The book is targeted towards a graduate-level audience and is scholarly and academic in nature. Nevertheless, as usual, Hess is both engaging and accessible, and thus, The Old Testament should find itself useful for a wide readership. Of course, the most praiseworthy aspect of this book is HessÃƒÂ¢Ã  ¬Ã  Å“ability to make the OT exciting and applicable for the student, and thus, indispensable for the professor. The Old Testament: A Historical, Theological, and Critical Introduction by Richard S. Hess contains all the marks of a go-to standard for the field of OT studies. HessÃƒÂ¢Ã  ¬Ã  Å“expertise in ancient Near Eastern studies and his breadth of knowledge in the OT are on full display. The Old Testament is a must-have resource for scholars, students, and interested laypeople alike. It is accessible, extensive, and overflowing with riches. It comes highly recommended!

I do not preach from the Old Testament (enough). I do not understand it to the depth I desire so as to preach from it. I have not grasped the background, the context(s) of passages and the theological principles. I have frequently asked, "Do I have to preach from the Old Testament?" I ask this

because preaching from passages with which you are unfamiliar is intimidating. Richard Hess' *The Old Testament* bridges unfamiliarity to comprehension. He presents the Old Testament in a comprehensible and thorough manner where scholars will find the information enough to peak curiosity for research and students/pastors will be satisfied with the depth to which the author takes the reader. Hess' book is unlike other surveys of the Old Testament. What the reader finds is a methodical, systematized presentation of each book of the Hebrew Bible. In this presentation, the reader will find the "name of the text, outline, overview, pre-modern readings, source criticism, tradition history, literary readings, gender and ideological criticism, Ancient Near Eastern context, canonical context, and theological perspectives" (Genesis, 25-50). I also appreciate the introduction to the formation of the Hebrew Bible and different manuscript tradition(s). Hess also provides a list of "key commentaries and studies" at the end of each chapter to point curious readers to further research. This textbook belongs in the classrooms where Old Testament is taught. Whether they be survey classes at the undergraduate level, graduate religion or seminary classes, or divinity school's, this book is accessible to all students. I might also mention this work makes the Old Testament more accessible to the layperson. Lay people are key to God's kingdom work, and Hess has provided the church a magnificent resource for understanding God's message that is the Old Testament. Disclosure: I received this book free from Baker Academic through the Baker Academic Blogger Review Program. The opinions I have expressed are my own, and I was not required to write a positive review. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.

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