The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches

Ziony Zevit

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This is the most far-reaching interdisciplinary investigation into the religion of ancient Israel ever attempted. The author draws on textual readings, archaeological and historical data and epigraphy to determine what is known about the Israelite religions during the Iron Age (1200-586 BCE). The evidence is synthesized within the structure of an Israelite worldview and ethos involving kin, tribes, land, traditional ways and places of worship, and a national deity. Professor Zevit has originated this interpretive matrix through insights, ideas, and models developed in the academic study of religion and history within the context of the humanities. He is strikingly original, for instance, in his contention that much of the Psalter was composed in praise of deities other than Yahweh. Through his book, the author has set a precedent which should encourage dialogue and cooperative study between all ancient historians and archaeologists, but particularly between Iron Age archaeologists and biblical scholars. The work challenges many conclusions of previous scholarship about the nature of the Israelites' religion.

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