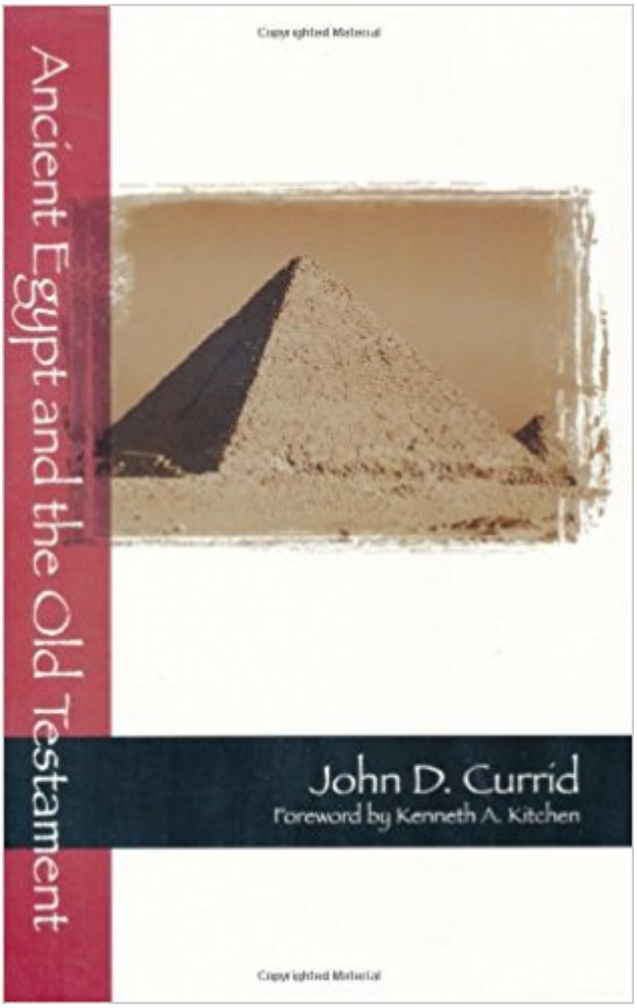
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Ancient Egypt And The Old Testament



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Synopsis

An enlightening guide to Egyptian influences on Israelite history. Includes illustrations.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In 1872 August Eisenlohr observed, 'It has long been the object of Egyptologists to discover in the numerous Egyptian monuments still remaining in stone and papyrus, traces of the Israelites, which might show us the events related in the Old Testament from an Egyptian point of view.' Much has changed since Eisenlohr uttered those words. Many scholars today maintain a less judicious approach, arguing that there was little contact between Egypt and the Bible.This volume will argue vigorously against that prevailing minimalistic approach. The reality is that we do not give the biblical writers enough credit for their knowledge of the ancient Near East and of Egypt in particular. A primary aim of this book is to show many firm point of contact between Egypt and the Bible on a variety of levels.

John D. Currid (PhD, Oriental Institute, University of Chicago) is Carl W. McMurray Professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary. He has served on several archaeological excavations and is author of several books and commentaries.

Lucid articles on the relationship of Egypt with OT. I especially liked the article on Egyptian cosmology in comparison with Genesis and the discussion of the Potipher and Joseph.

In the Foreword to John Currid's book, the eminent Kenneth Kitchen writes that the "whole subject of the interrelations of ancient Egypt and the Old Testament is very much larger than most people realize" and in this book Currid has selected a series of themes. I would agree that this is a most apt description.Currid divides his 13 chapters between an introduction and various portions of the Old Testament. There are six chapters on the relationships between the Pentateuch and Egypt, two on the historical books, one on wisdom literature, and two on prophecy. Currid is widely read on Egyptology and this comes across in his writing. In his chapter called "The Egyptian Setting of the Serpent Confrontation," Currid shows the breadth and depth of his studies in Egyptology. Numerous Egyptian sources are cited showing the meaning of the serpent in ancient Egypt. Then Currid adds the battle of the biblical writers. Aaron's throwing the rod-snake before Pharaoh was an assault on the latter's authority since the serpent was a symbol of Pharaoh's. The reader might want to have a look at the story in Exodus again for the full impact of this.Currid treats the biblical figures as historical figures. Moses or Aaron did this or that, etc. Currid does the same with Potiphar where he concludes that what can be known about Potiphar is "not much." Potiphar's name does not tell us much about the station and function of a person by that name though probably he was not a eunuch. Moreover the name itself "seems to be an anomaly" if the Joseph story occurred in the second millennium; "the name itself is primarily confined to the 1st millennium."One would do well to read Currid's book for what Kitchen said: because the interrelations between Egypt and the Old Testament is much larger than most people think. On that basis Currid's book is thought-provoking reading from cover to cover.

Though this book is almost twenty years old, I don't know of any more recent work that covers the same material, though Kenneth Kitchen's On the Reliability of the Old Testament includes some similar coverage. The Introduction gives a brief overview of the relationship between Egypt and the Old Testament as well as a summary review of Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) cosmologies. The remaining four parts are: Egyptian Elements in the Pentateuch; Contacts Between Israel and Egypt in the Historical Books; Egyptian Wisdom Literature and the Poetical Books; and Egyptian and Israelite Prophecy. The whole book is well done. Currid's treatment is careful and balanced, noting where there is diversity of opinion and giving a fair presentation of differing views. The most important part of the book is the first, in that Currid shows that the biblical cosmogony in the opening chapters of Genesis is much closer in character to that of Egypt than it is to the Mesopotamian cosmogonies. This is particularly important in light of the recent works of such scholars as John Walton, who trace the influences on the opening chapters of Genesis from the Mesopotamian

sources. Such a fundamental misapprehension calls into question the conclusions that Walton draws. Other significant contributions of Currid's work are the treatment of the plagues of Egypt (Exodus 7-10), the Israelite wilderness itinerary (Numbers 33), and the relationship between Proverbs 22-24 and the Egyptian "Instruction of Amenemope." Highly recommended to all students of the Bible, though it should be noted that this is a technical, and would be heavy going for those with little background in the field.

Though I have an MDiv, I knew next to nothing about Ancient Egypt before reading this book. Other than tidbits I picked up along the way (some of which were erroneous), I was a complete ignoramus when it came to Egyptology. In that light, Currid's book is nothing short of amazing. It's obviously super-scholarly; probably half the footnotes cite French or German obscure archaeology journals. That being said, it is clearly-written, captivating, enjoyable, none-too-long, and extremely illuminating for so much of the Old Testament. Next time I preach Genesis, Exodus, 1 Kings, or Isaiah I'll be shamelessly relying on this resource. I'd strongly recommend it to all pastors. My only quibble is the price. It's a bit expensive for a softcover book just over 200 pages.

As other reviews of this book show, this is an area where people's minds are made up and a book like Currid's will either elicit support from those who agree with him or derision from those who don't.Because ancient Egypt's relationship to Israel can be a confusing thing, I appreciated Currid's introduction to the material in an engaging, readable style. I especially found the chapters on Egyptian cosmogonies, the Egyptian setting of the serpent confrontation, the exegetical and historical consideration of the ten plagues of Egypt, and the Egyptian complexion of the bronze serpent to be the most helpful.Archeology being what it is, fragmentary and scattered, there are rarely clear answers to the questions raised. Thus, I found it somewhat humorous that many of the chapters could be summed up by saying, "We simply don't have enough information to verify one theory or the other."Though technical in parts, I enjoyed sitting down and thinking through the relationship between Egypt and Israel. This is a good place to start, whether you agree with Currid or not.

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