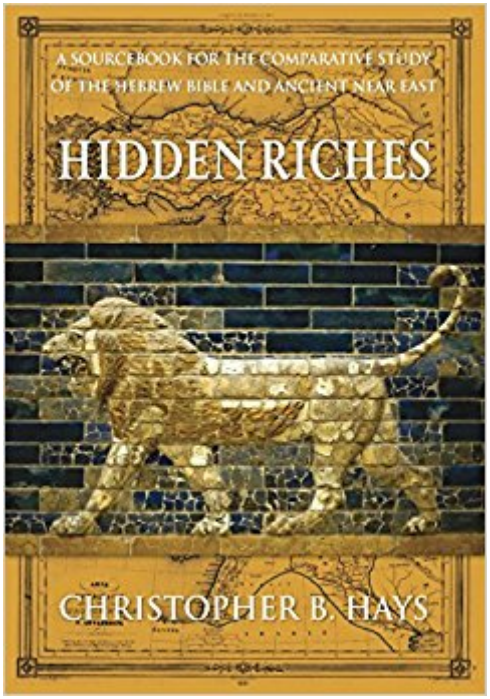
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Hidden Riches: A Sourcebook For The Comparative Study Of The Hebrew Bible And Ancient Near East



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Synopsis

This study considers the historical, cultural, and literary significance of some of the most important Ancient Near East (ANE) texts that illuminate the Hebrew Bible. Christopher B. Hays provides primary texts from the Ancient Near East with a comparison to literature of the Hebrew Bible to demonstrate how Israel's Scriptures not only draw from these ancient contexts but also reshape them in a unique way.Hays offers a brief introduction to comparative studies, then lays out examples from various literary genres that shed light on particular biblical texts. Texts about ANE law collections, treaties, theological histories, prophecies, ritual texts, oracles, prayers, hymns, laments, edicts, and instructions are compared to corresponding literature in the Pentateuch, Prophets, and Writings of the Hebrew Bible. The book includes summaries to help instructors and students identify key points for comparison. By considering the literary and historical context of other literature, students will come away with a better understanding of the historical, literary, and theological depth of the Hebrew Bible.

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Customer Reviews

"Hays has produced a sophisticated yet accessible volume that meets its goals in exemplary fashion and will be useful for a variety of audiences. Most especially, the book is a gift to students and teachers seeking to explore comparative study at various levels. The special features noted aboveÃ¢â ¬â •from orienting prolegomena to reflection questions to annotated translationsÃ¢â ¬â •make this volume a treasure trove of information with a special focus on

resourcing both seasoned and emerging scholars. In fact, Hays has written much more than a sourcebook for textual comparison. By couching specific case studies within broader discussions of culture, religion, scribalism, and society, Hays exemplifies a framework for understanding the biblical literature, and without explicitly doing so, the book makes a compelling case for the value of the comparative method for Hebrew Bible study in general."Ã¢â ¬â •Review of Biblical Literature"Hays's Hidden Riches is now the benchmark single-volume introduction for students discovering comparative methodologies between the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near Eastern literature. It will provide students with a solid and nuanced foundation on which to base comparative work, one that has learned from past scholarship while incorporating contemporary fruits. Most of all, H. fosters in students an appreciation of the Bible in its historical contexts. Teachers and scholars must use this work broadly and should look forward to its future incarnations." Ã¢â ¬â •Catholic Biblical Quarterly"While Hidden Riches can and will spark ideas for scholarly analysis, the deliberate blend of primary sources, method, discussion, and reflection makes HaysÃ¢â ¬â„¢s volume an ideal classroom resource." Ã¢â ¬â •Expository Times "Hidden Riches is a skillfully curated introduction to comparative study of the Hebrew Bible. Hays provides expertly translated text selections, helpful introductions to each, questions for reflection, and bibliographical suggestions, all of which contribute to a deeper understanding of the Hebrew Bible. Hidden Riches is an ideal textbook for both undergraduate and master's students."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Jeffrey Stackert, The University of Chicago"This collection of ancient Near Eastern texts for the study of the Hebrew Bible is wonderful! For each ancient Near Eastern text paired with a biblical text, the author provides a very engaging and helpful discussion followed by thoughtful study questions. IdealÃ¢â ¬â ¢and most highly recommendedÃ¢â ¬â ¢for a semester introduction to the Hebrew Bible."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Mark S. Smith, Skirball Chair of Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Studies, New York University"Christopher Hays's work represents an important contribution to the approach known as 'Scripture in context.' The strength of this book is in its organization, as Hays skillfully builds context from a broad range of Near Eastern materials, each placed carefully within the comparative framework of Scripture. As such, it represents an invaluable resource for the study of biblical as well as cognate literature."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Matthew J. Suriano, The Joseph and Rebecca Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Studies, University of Maryland"This is a most helpful resource for the study of the Bible in its ancient Near Eastern context, since it not only provides the most relevant comparative material, but also critically assesses it and its biblical counterparts. Hays's specialization in both biblical studies and ancient Near Eastern studies has yielded a thorough and reliable tool for students and teachers alike."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Konrad Schmid, Professor of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Judaism, University of

Zurich"In Hidden Riches, Christopher B. Hays provides an erudite yet accessible treatment of many ancient Near Eastern texts, examining each in relation to comparable biblical texts. But far from exhibiting the ’parallelomania’ of yesteryear, Hays’s comments take a balanced and well-studied approach, serving to introduce readers to important interpretive issues surrounding these texts in contemporary critical scholarship. The author’s astute questions for discussion and suggestions for further reading lead both introductory and more advanced students into the broader world of thought in which the Bible took shape, filling a long-standing lacuna in classroom-oriented textbooks."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Jeremy M. Hutton, University of WisconsinÃ¢â ¬â œMadison

Key Selling Points: Shows how the Hebrew Bible was shaped by Ancient Near East texts, addressing literary, historical, and cultural contextsOffers Hebrew Bible texts with side-by-side comparison to Ancient Near East textsIdeal for introductory courses in Hebrew Bible

Great book, very useful text comparisons. Accessible for people no matter what their level of study. Would have liked to see more on the alternative dating, the book took a clear stance rather than presenting opposing views. That could just be my preference though.

This is a well written books on the subject. I believe that people interested in Assyriology will have a nice time reading this book.

very good

new book

This is an excellent way to get acquainted with some of the most important Ancient Near Eastern texts that form the milieu of the Hebrew Bible. The texts are very usefully analyzed, with copious pointers to the relevant scholarship. It makes a nice complement to "From Gods to God" (by Shinan and Zakovitch), which ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ unlike Hays ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ is entirely free of anachronistic Christian theological perspective.

Until now, readers wanting to examine the Hebrew Bible in context have not had an easy time. The simple issue of finding a guided discussion of primary sources has posed several problems. James PritchardÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s works are dated, can be expensive, and reflect translations that

alienate beginning students (even using "thou" at times). Victor Matthews and Don Benjamin tried to remedy this problem with _Old Testament Parallels_, but their volume is self-admittedly more paraphrase than translation, and it fails to tackle "so-what" questions. Bill Arnold and Bryan BeyerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s _Readings from the Ancient Near East_ avoids the problem of paraphrasing, but it likewise omits a guided discussion of what readers actually encounter. Several books collect texts from a single geographic region or language (e.g., Miriam LichtheimÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s three-volume _Ancient Egyptian Literature_). However, these works fail to bring together texts from biblical IsraelÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s many contexts. A key exception is William Hallo and Lawson YoungerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s _The Context of Scripture_. Unfortunately, this work is extremely expensive. Moreover, appearing in three large volumes, it does more to overwhelm the beginner than introduce salient examples.HaysÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s book wonderfully avoids all the shortcomings listed above, providing a much needed resource. It is arranged in canonical order (Pentateuch, Former Prophets, Latter Prophets, Writings). Non-introductory chapters contain the same sections:1. Each chapter begins by listing composition information (e.g., date, location, language) of both a biblical text and a similar piece of ancient Near Eastern literature.2. Each chapter provides an accessible, reliable, and recent translation of the extra-biblical source. The author includes several of his own translations (e.g., "The Birth Legend of Sargon"). Rather than quoting a snippet of ancient sources, Hays allows readers to gain a much better sense of the overall flow of primary sources by reproducing them as completely as possible.3. Next, the author offers highly useful discussions. These are level-headed, fair, insightful, and readable. They show the author to be one of the rising stars in biblical studies. Perhaps the authorÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s greatest strength is his ability to combine his extensive knowledge of linguistic, cultural, historical, and theological issues. In an age of over-specialization, Hays possesses the unique ability to move beyond the stuffy, solitary silo to the enormous fields of fresh grain all around.4. Each chapter then contains a series of reflection questions. They are certain to generate lively discussion that causes students to engage in critical reflection. Moreover, these questions are open-ended and non-sectarian, allowing the book to be used in a wide variety of contexts (e.g., confessional, secular, and pluralistic classrooms alike).5. Finally, each chapter concludes with suggestions for additional study.I teach at a mainline seminary, and I have decided to assign this textbook. I look forward to the ways this book will help my students think more deeply about the Bible and its surrounding cultures. ItÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s an excellent resource and a significant contribution to our fieldÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •one that will serve students and teachers well for decades to come.

Christopher Hays (Fuller Theological Seminary) provides a succinct and clear introduction and sourcebook for comparative studies of the Hebrew Bible and ancient Near Eastern literature. Having found its origins in his work as a masterÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s student at Princeton Theological Seminary in a class about direct engagement with primary texts, he works to elucidate and make alive the world of the Hebrew Bible.Part one provides a helpful introduction to both his work and the history of comparative studies. Chapter one explores how, poetically put, he hopes that people learn to breathe oxygen of the context of the Hebrew Scriptures, resulting in a clearer and sharper image of the Hebrew Scriptures (4). Of course, his analysis is not intended to be ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“liberalÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“secularÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“evangelicalÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•, or ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“conservativeÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•; rather, it is intended to discuss the academic issues in a manner honest to scholarship and also provide discussion questions which may further oneÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s own studies. Furthermore, Hays provides, and does not assume, critical issues surrounding the composition of the Hebrew Scriptures, a point that permits one to fully grasp his analysis from any level. At last, he provides primary texts with authoritative translations, and an up-to-date bibliography by which one may study certain topics further.Chapter two explores the history of comparative studies and surrounding issues. Namely it covers the earliest discoveries of ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“OrientalistsÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• in from the European colonialism of the 17th century to the decipherments of Ugaritic and Akkadian in the 19th and 20th centuries. Following, Hays summarizes the methodological approaches of various scholars as they regarded the uniqueness of the Bible. Based off the work of William W. Hallo, he argues for comparative studies as from a contrastive approach that decenters ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“the Bible in order to grasp the way it takes part in a much larger cultural matrixÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (36). In effect, Hays notes that one may know the biblical text for the first time (37).The next four sections of the book, the remaining chapters, cover the Pentateuch, former prophets, latter prophets, and writings. Within each section are certain pieces of literature for comparison. For example, in chapter seven, Hays compares the Laws of Hammurabi and the Covenant Code. While more texts are available through the world, he only selects one or two texts and provides a bibliography for further study and more primary texts. Each selection is complete with a Bible reading and at least one primary source reading. Following each primary source, Hays discusses the critical issues surrounding the texts and illustrates how certain ancient Near Eastern literature elucidates elements within the Bible. In his comparative analysisÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ he presents the full views of subjects without adhering to any point of certainty. In essence he does well to compare the texts without

asserting biblical superiority, an easy possibility for confessional scholars.While each chapter was effective in their presentation of the text and historical critical issues, there were a few points where potentially valuable information was lost. First, in Enuma Elish, Table VII, Hays excludes many of the fifty names for Marduk. For an undergraduate or masters student seeking to understand such a portion of text, it creates an inconvenience by which one must seek another translation. While his exclusion of AnsharÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s sending Ea and Anu to defeat Tiamat or the repetition of TiamatÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s preparation is reasonable, exclusion of MardukÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s fifty names leave out a treasure trove of data regarding how people viewed their highest deity.Also, aside from the chapter divisions by genre type, there is no further systematization to help one retain concepts found throughout the literature and analysis presented. In essence, Hays operates differently from John Walton (2006) who provides his own analysis of the ancient Near East, the cognitive environment, and categories for understanding. For the undergraduate reader, Hays work alone is inadequate in that while his comparative analysis is fantastic, there is not enough detail to help the reader organize information to retain. With this work, one should be accompanied by something like WaltonÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament.Beyond these two critiques, Hidden Riches was a joy to read for the neutrality. Again in contrast to Walton, Hays writes for a less conservative audience and provides one with the primary resources and guidance, the discussion questions, to consider the information independently. Though dense at some moments, Hays makes clear the various text critical issues, not assuming one already knows the issues. Additionally, he, as determined by his methodology, maintains respect of both the Hebrew Scriptures and ancient texts. Theological assertions about the Hebrew Scriptures are rare and, if present, only utilized as a comparison of Hebrew religions and ancient Near Eastern religions.In sum, Christopher HaysÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ exquisite work opens the literature of the ancient Near East to graduate and undergraduates alike. Although he doesnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t directly provide categories to help illustrate the cognitive environment, the nature of his methodology for comparative studies allows one to finish reading his work with a sense of the ancient genres within which the Hebrew Scriptures are located. As a result of reading Hays work one begins to be able to grasp the cultural matrix and complex dynamics between ancient Israel and its neighboring groups.ORIGINAL AT: TheBiblicalReview.wordpress.com

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