

RECENT BOOKS ON THE HISTORY OF ANCIENT ISRAEL

Many books have appeared in the first years of the third millennium by authors who deal with the history of ancient Israel and are more willing to explore it with the help of archaeology and other historical methods. In doing so, they may be at considerable variance with those who persist in following the main lines of the way the history of Israel and Judah is told in the Bible. What follows is a sample of these authors.

One could start with a number of books by Grabbe, beginning with his more recent volumes. His books offer an excellent overview of a field that is changing rapidly, and are a solid introduction to the various interpretations presently proposed by scholars: Lester L Grabbe (2008); Lester L Grabbe (2007); Lester L Grabbe (2005); and already: Lester L. Grabbe (1997). Or compare the classic treatment by Miller and Hayes (2006).

Finkelstein and Silberman (2001), and Finkelstein and Silberman (2006), are drawing the consequences of archaeological discoveries concerning the early period of the monarchy. Their interpretation tends to lower the beginnings of the Israelite and Judaeon monarchies by about one century (9th instead of tenth). This threatens long-held opinions about the origin of Israel, and especially the biblical text. Needless to say, many authors react in a forceful manner, for instance Dever 2003. For a more sober assessment, see Finkelstein, Mazar, and Schmidt (2007). Closely related to Finkelstein's work and influential is Naaman: see his collected essays in vol. 3 of Na'aman (2006).

More general works, reflecting on the intellectual conditions and political significance of the writing of an ancient history of Israel are: Liverani (2005); Banks (2006); and Moore (2006)

The social history of ancient Israel is part and parcel of this inquiry in the evolution of Israelite political conditions. The most recent significant work on this aspect of Israel is: Kessler (2006). It is now available in English: Kessler (2008).

Finally, and most important, Toorn 2007 explores in a comparative fashion how the Bible came to be as a product of a professional culture and within the context of a small state caught in imperial structures.

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