

# Resources for Discovering the Literacy, Conceptual, and Historical Context of the OT

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Archaeological endeavors in the Middle East go as far back as Napoleon's ventures into Egypt (1798), where he took with him a team of specialists to record its ancient wonders and marvels. The Rosetta Stone (1799) was discovered; the study of its three languages provided an unexpected key to the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphics by Thomas Young (1819) and Jean-Francois Champollion (1822). When this success was reported, it stirred new interest in the ancient world. In fact, it opened a veritable floodgate of interest into the wonders of the Ancient Near East (ANE) and, especially, into the light those wonders might shed upon the best known and greatest religious, literary, and historical production of the ANE—the Bible. The ancient Akkadian Semitic language was soon deciphered (Rawlinson, 1845) using the Behistun Inscription (518 B. C.) that was, interestingly, also inscribed in three languages. Other ancient languages were also soon deciphered.

After that, "biblical archaeology," a subset of Syria-Palestinian archaeology, soon prospered and drew worldwide attention. Archaeologists, scholars, and treasure hunters were amazed at the discovery of creation stories, flood stories, legal documents, law codes, ancient civilizations (e.g., Hittites) and additional languages, religious and theological epics and rituals, sacrificial rituals, plans for tabernacles, plans for temples, palaces, wisdom literature, covenants and covenantal

forms, war stories and manuals of religions, birth stories of famous kings, king lists, pagan prophetic activity, annalistic literature, omen literature, and much more. These massive and revealing discoveries have over the decades pulled back the curtain of antiquity and revealed the ANE world of the Old Testament. These texts and artifacts have helped shape and set the agenda for the study and understanding of the Old Testament.

Since the Old Testament is an ANE monumental document itself—an ANE book and artifact—this is not really surprising. The growth of archaeological methodology has been slow, and the placing of the ANE discoveries into distinct archaeological eras has been laborious. The results have influenced biblical studies and have led to a better understanding of the biblical texts and their world. Although these divisions are constantly under further refinement, some key eras have been labeled: the *Bronze Age* (Early Bronze, 3200-2200 B.C.; Middle Bronze, 2200-1550 B. C.; Late Bronze 1550-1200 B.C.), *Iron Age* (roughly 1200–586 B.C.), *Persian Age* (538–332 B.C.), *Greek (Hellenistic) Age* (332-68 B.C.), and *Roman Era* (68 B.C.). Many of the major texts and artifacts that have been discovered and that touch upon the Old Testament in some significant way are listed in the chart below. Most of these items are texts, but even texts must be interpreted, to say nothing of the challenge of interpreting a mute artifact. In the list below, canonical compositions, monumental inscriptions, and archival documents are included.

The methods, perspectives, and approaches employed to do archaeology have made significant progress over the past two centuries. The scientific study of ancient “tells” (mounds of dirt and cultural debris compacted together to form strata over the centuries and millennia that witness to the various times when these tells were occupied by humans) began with W. F. Flinders Petrie (1890) in Palestine when he adopted and used methods H. Schliemann had used at ancient Troy in modern day Turkey. According to this approach, the various strata or layers of occupation of a tell are unearthed, analyzed, placed in a broad context and interpreted.

From Petrie’s day to about 1950 archaeology in Palestine flourished. “Treasure hunting” was now over and appropriate goals, concerns and scientific techniques, tools, purposes, skilled experts,

and improved record keeping developed. From 1950 until today an architectural approach and method pioneered by Wheeler-Kenyon (the extensive use of case balks) continued to evolve. Today a combination of these methods is usually employed. But, more than ever, multicultural and interdisciplinary activities are plugged into these basic methodologies. Scholars from many disciplines now take part in an archaeological expedition (paleographers, linguists, osteologists, geologists, zoologists, pottery experts, surveyors, satellite technology, technical dating devices, etc.), and archaeological teams are often international in flavor. More recently “surface surveying” examines whole regions; these surface surveys have proven quite productive, and large areas of Syria-Palestine have been covered with good results that help indicate where more detailed excavations would be most fruitful.

Archaeology at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century is enjoying, but is also frustrated by, a huge information explosion of both artifacts and texts. These artifacts and texts must be deciphered and interpreted by persons living in our era and competent to exercise judgment in doing so. Every item must be placed into its larger Syria-Palestinian context and, for biblical studies, must be cautiously placed in a proper relationship to relevant biblical materials. Properly identified and interpreted archaeological materials may *illustrate, illuminate, demonstrate, and (sometimes at some level) confirm or challenge* certain aspects of a biblical text and its worldview. And, it remains humbling to realize that the context of a given text or artifact may never be totally available to us. Moreover, usually these same texts or artifacts cannot be used at a theological level to “prove” the specific religious/theological claims of a biblical text, but may surround a particular text with a supportive world that illuminates and suggests strongly the veracity, historically and theologically, of the text in question. These materials can make plausible and confirm certain historical perspectives and claims of biblical texts.

The following list is not complete, and there is no other way to experience these texts except to read them. All the texts listed below are available in English translation and reading them begins to open up a window of perception that illuminates and illustrates many of the texts of the Old Testament. On the literary level alone, these texts illustrate the multiplicity of literary genres through which the Old

Testament world is richly and effusively presented. On the other hand, an encounter with these texts also, just as helpfully, reveals the contrasts that the documents of the Old Testament exhibit when set against their ANE counterparts, both in thought and in form and style.

*(See table on the following pages.)*

*Key Ancient Archaeological Texts and Artifacts  
Relating to the Old Testament*

<b>Title/Topic</b>	<b>Date Found/ Published</b>	<b>Date of Artifact</b>	<b>Provenance</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Ancient Sources (English Translation)</b>	<b>OT References</b>
Enuma Elish	1848-76	Ca. 1000 B.C.	Nineveh, Ashur, Kish	Akkadian: Hymn: cosmology, Marduk, creation, ordering of creation, humans created.	COS 1.111; ANET, 60-72, 501-3; RANE #6	Gen. 1-2
Gilgamish Epic	1872; 1930, 1933	1900 B.C.	Sumer, Babylon	Sumerian; Akkadian: flood, death, divine/human, Utnapishtim, search for life, Babylonian Noah.	COS 1.132; DBA ANET, 72-98 OTP, <b>11-20</b> ; RANE 66-70	Gen. 3, 6-9. Noah, Ark
Sumerian King Lists	1923	Ca. 18th Cent. B. C.	Sumer	Sumerian: Kingship from the gods; Kings before flood, long life spans; illustrates literary structure of O. T.	ANET, 265-66 RANE, #45 ROT, 423, 441-47 OTP, <b>21-32</b>	Gen. 5; Gen. 1-11; cf. kingship in Deut., 1 Sam. 8, 12
Hymn to Enlil	1959	2000-1595 B. C.	Nippur	Sumerian: A powerful hymn to the god over the gods, Enlil, in Nippur, in the temple Ekur. He is praised as the shepherd and keeper of all mankind, all things. The gods cannot look upon him.	ANET, 573-76 Cf. RANE, #74	Illustrates the praise given to gods; cf. various Pss in OT
Hymn to Shamash	1889, 1901	Late 2d Millennium B. C.	Babylon	Akkadian: Hymns that praise the sun god, Shamash, who is the keeper of justice, including just weights and measures.	COS 1.117 RANE, #75 ANET, 387-89	OT concern for justice, just business dealings; Lev. 19:15; Deut. 25-13-16

Memphite Creation	Ca. 1830	2700 B.C.	Memphis, Egypt	Egyptian: Creation by heart/tongue, creation spoken into creation through senses; god Ptah.	COS 1.15; RANE 62-65 ANET, 4-6 OTP, 3-6	Gen. 1-2
Ra and The Serpent	1936	2400 B.C.	Thebes, Egypt	Egyptian: Pictures the Sun and a Serpent in opposition to each other; Ra creates in communion with his heart and humans come from his tears; serpent goes on its belly.	OTP, 28-31 ANET, 6-7 COS 1.9; 1.21	Gen. 1:1-2:4a Gen. 3
Seven Year Famines (Famine Stele)		2700 B.C. (text: Ptolemaic Era)	Sehel Island	Egyptian: 7 years of famine motif; theological issues between Pharaoh/god involved; tradition is found elsewhere as well.	ANET, 31-2 COS 1.53	Gen. 12:41
Beni Hassan	1902-1904	2000 B.C	Beni Hassan, Egypt	Picture: Presents a group of 37 people coming to Egypt from Palestine to sell eye paint. Helps recreate, illustrate, and illuminate the world of patriarchs. Some suggest patriarchal culture and dress is well illustrated here.	AOT, 94	Possible culture, lives, appearance of patriarchs Gen. 12-50
Tale of Two Brothers	1855	1225 B.C.	Egypt	Egyptian: Brother rejects advances of sister-in-law.	ANET, 23-25 COS 1.40	Gen. 39; Joseph
Dream Interpretation	1935	1300 B. C. (or much earlier, 2000 B. C.)	Thebes	Egyptian: A short list of how to interpret a dream that concerns oneself in a dream.	ANET, 495 COS 1.33	Gen. 40-41 and Joseph's dream interpretations

Dream Omens/ Oracles	1954	Ca. 1350 B.C.	Ugarit	Ugaritic: Seems to attempt to conceive the world in terms of dreams.	COS 1.93	Shows the importance of dreams in the ANE and in the OT: prophets, revelation
	1850	Ca. 1050 B.C.	Cairo	Egyptian: A dream sent from a god reveals to Thutmose IV that he will be king if he removes sand from Sphinx.	ANET, 449	
	1871	648 B. C.	Ashur	Akkadian: A seer's dream/vision reveals to Ashurbanipal that as king Ishtar would favor him and give him success in war and politics.	ANET, 451	
Gudea Temple Instructions	1877, 1900	Late 3d Millennium B.C.	Sumer	Sumerian: Two cylinders give the dream conditions under which Gudea received a command and instructions to build a temple for his god Ningirsu of Lagash. It is an extensive temple building document.	COS 2.155 ANET, 268-9 ANETOT, 63	Cf. 2 Sam. 7-8; 1 Kgs. 6 and also the instructions for the Tabernacle in Exod. 25-31, 35-40
Sargon Legend		3d Millennium B. C.	Sumer	Akkadian: Sargon I, rescued from river in a reed basket; certain other comparisons and contrasts to Moses' birth and rescue.	COS 1.133; RANE 75-6 OTP, 55-8 ANET, 119	Exod. 2
Construction of New Temple	1906	13th Century B.C.	Hattusus	Hittite: A record describing the construction of a new temple setting for a goddess.	COS 1.70	Cf. construction of Tabernacle and Temple in OT (Exod., 1 Kgs., Ezra)
Rituals Against Reptiles	1929-37	1350 B. C.	Ugarit	Ugaritic: Records requests to 12 gods to render serpent's venom powerless, but only the final 12th ritual is effective.	COS 1.94	Various refs. to serpents in OT, but note Num. 21:4-9; Deut. 32:33
Hittite Treaties	1903-10	1400-1200 B.C.	Anatolia; Hattusus (Turkey)	Hittite: Illustrates covenantal forms evidenced in covenants of ANE and OT. Rameses II & Hattusilus III's covenant is a good example out of many (30+).	ANET, 199-206, 529-41; 659-61 COS 2.17-8; 2.82; 2.127-9; RANE 97-100 OTP, 49-54	Deut., Josh. 24; Exod. 19-24

Laws of Hammurabi	1901	1750 B.C. (and earlier)	Susa	Akkadian: ANE laws that parallel (contrast & compare) Mosaic Laws; includes prologue and epilogue.	ANET, 163-79 OTP, 62-7; RANE 111-14 COS 2.131	Deut. 12-26 Exod. 20-24 Lev. 16-26, etc.
Merneptah Stele	1896	1209 B.C.	Thebes, Egypt	Egyptian: 1st mention of Israel outside of OT. Pharaoh Merneptah; huge monument recording massive campaigns of this Pharaoh.	ANET, 376-78 OTP, 81-4 Cos 2.6 RANE #50	Joshua; entrance into Canaan (ca. 1400/1200 B.C.)
Herem: A Thing Devoted	1906	13th Century B. C.	Hattusus	Hittite: Records installation of Storm god and things and persons “devoted” to him for destruction/use. Mesha Inscription describes Mesha’s devotion of Nebo to his god Chemosh for destruction.	COS 1.72 Cf. Stele of Mesha, Moabite Stone below and entries there; also found at Mari	Similar to the “herem” or ban in Joshua of the cities/peoples “devoted to the Lord”
Hittite Laws	Ca. 1893	1650-1200 B.C.	Hattusus	Hittite: Laws that compare/contrast to OT laws; contain casuistic laws arranged by topics; scapegoat laws and levirate laws present.	OTP, 70-2 ANET, 188-196 COS 2.19 RANE 115-16	Exod. 19-24; Deut. 12-26 Lev. 17-26, etc.
Urim and Thummin	1906	1250-1200 B.C.	Hattusus	Hittite: Omen text relating the use of extipicy/bird omens to discover the god’s will using a “favorable/unfavorable” options scheme.	COS 1.78	Use of Urim and Thummin, Exod. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Deut. 33:8; Ezra 2.63; Neh. 7:65
Urim and Thummin	1992	650 B. C. 833, 823 B.C.	Assur, Assyria	Akkadian: First text describes a divination process using two stones, one white, one black. Second text describes use of lots to choose a limmu leader in Assyria.	COS 1.127 COS 2.1130	Use of Urim and Thummin, Exod. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Deut. 33:8; Ezra 2.63; Neh. 7:65; Esth. 3:7



Urim and Thummin		Ca. 1287	Egypt	Egyptian: During the time of Rameses II, this text describes how a god could indicate his desire by a visible sign, yes/no.	ANET, 448	Use of Urim and Thummin, Exod. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Deut. 33:8; Ezra 2.63; Neh. 7:65
Story of Aqhat	1929-37	1350 B.C.	Ugarit	Ugaritic: Illustrates Canaanite literature, poetry, gods, religion, importance of royal heir; mentions Noah, Job, Danel.	OTP, 85-94 ANET, 149-55 COS 1.103 RANE #19	Judg.; pre-Israel cultural and religious aspects of Canaan; patriarchal need for heirs; Daniel in Ezek. 4; 14; 28; Dan. 1-12
Gezer Alphabet/Calendar	1908	900 B.C.	Gezer	Canaanite (old Hebrew): Oldest example and illustrates writing, letters of that era; agricultural cycles.	OTP, 104-8 ANET, 320 COS 2.85 RANE 171	Agricultural picture of OT is helpful; linguistic data helpful
Travels of Sinuhe	1916	1800-1000 B.C.	Egypt	Egyptian: This narrative includes descriptions of Canaan and Syria and the people; it is considered a novella by many; promotes Egyptian life; shows an Egyptian "in exile" in Canaan.	ANET, 18-22 COS 1.38 OTP, 129-33 RANE 76-82	Gen. 12-50; Joseph esp. Literary, cultural insights
Travels of Wenamun	1899	1090 B.C.	Egypt	Egyptian: Travels of Wenamun includes descriptions of Canaan and insights into culture, religion, prophets; some burial customs; caution is needed since it is semi-fictional.	ANET, 25-9 COS 1.41 OTP, 323-30 RANE #83	Gen. 34; general cultural milieu in certain sections of patriarchal narratives
Shoshenk I, Inscription	1825	920 B.C.	Egypt, Karnak Temple	Egyptian: Shoshenk (Shishak) raids/invades/quells Palestine, removes wealth from Jerusalem; provides lists of cities in this area, including Israelite cities.	ANET, 242-43, ROT, 63-4 AOT, 300-2 ATSHB, 390	1 Kgs. 11:40; 14:25-28

Stele of Mesha, King of Moab Moabite Stone	1868	850 B.C.	Dibon, Moab	Moabite: Omri, Ahab, and King Mesha listed, house of David (possible); national theology of Moab toward their god Chemosh is set forth to compare/contrast to Israel's; use of "devoted to destruction" (cherem) is present.	ANET, 320-1 COS 2.23 OTP, 157-9 RANE #51; ROT, 92-3	Deut. 7:26; Josh. "cherem" 6:17, 40; 1 Kgs. 11:44 (16:21-28)- 2 Kgs. (3:4) 25:30
Black Obelisk	1846	827 B.C.	Calah, Assyria	Akkadian: Describes successor of Shalmaneser III; Jehu, Ahab involved; Jehu (or envoy) pays tribute to Shalmaneser.	OTP, 122-24 COS 2.113f ANET, 281 RANE #4	1 Kgs. 19:16; 2 Kgs. 8:7-15; 9:1-13; 10:31-36
Annals of Sargon II	1843-54	Ca. 722 B.C.	Khorsabad, Assyria	Akkadian: Sargon II conquers Samaria; takes 27,290 prisoners and many chariots; deported Israelites.	OTP, 127-29 RANE #42 ANET, 284-87 COS 2.118	2 Kgs. 17:3-6; 18:11
Siloam Inscription	1880	701 B.C.	Jerusalem	Hebrew: Describes completion of Hezekiah's tunnel; incidentally records the earliest use of <i>matres lectionis</i> in Hebrew.	OTP, 130-1 RANE, 171-2 ANET, 321 COS 2.28	2 Kgs. 20:20 2 Chr. 32:30
Sennacherib Prism	1830	701 B.C.	Nineveh	Akkadian: Describes Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem and raiding of 46 other cities.	ANET, 287-88 COS 2.119b OTP, 139-40 RANE, #43	2 Kgs. 18-20 Isa. 36:1-39:8
Lachish Ostraca	1935 1938	589-586 B.C.	Tell ed Duwer/ Lachish	Hebrew: Over 19 letters describe the plight of those under siege by Assyrians and also give glimpses of royal military administration and personal issues; reading is evidenced as a skill and a portion of a prophet's name may refer to Jeremiah.	ANET, 321-22 COS 3.42 a-f OTP, 134-36 RANE #56 ATSHB, 460	1 Kgs. 17:19; 19:7 Jer. 26:20-22; 34:6-7 Language and literary issues are gleaned from these meager documents

Kuntillet Ajrud Texts (Graffiti)	1975-76	9th-8th Century B.C.	Northwest Sinai	Hebrew, Phoenecian: Texts illustrate well the syncretism and trafficking in strange gods that the prophets of Israel railed against; graffiti-like figures of the Egyptian God Bes on jars; Yahweh name with "his" consort mentioned.	ROT, 413-15, 588-89 IR, 283-89	Illuminates the mixed nature of the religion of certain Israelites' beliefs in the OT; Yahweh/Baal identity seems likely; influence of Asherah in OT illuminated
Baruch's Seal	1975	Ca. 600 B.C.	Jerusalem	A clay seal found with Baruch's name; other seals (bullae) bear names found in Jeremiah.	AOT, 364	Jer. 36; 40
Babylonian Chronicles	1887	745-to late Seleucid era B.C.	Babylon	Akkadian: Yearly records covering reign of Nabopolassar and first 13 years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign: deportation of Jehoiachin in 597 B.C. Certain years of the chronicle are especially helpful: 727, 722, 681, 605, 598/97, and 539. Cyrus' conquest of Babylon is recorded.	ANET, 301-7; 563-4 COS 1.137 OTP, 182-4 RANE #49	1 Kgs. 2:10; 11:43 2 Kgs. 17:3-6; 18:8-12; 19:37; 20:12; 24:1-7, 10-17; Jer. 37:1; Dan. 5:30; 6:28
Nabonidas and His God	1956	556-539 B.C.	Harran	Akkadian: Depicts the last Babylonian king in his "apostasy" worshipping the moon god Sin.	ANET, 312-14; 562-3 COS 1.89	General background of Babylonian period: Daniel's exile, 4; Dan. 5, Belshazzar
Babylonian Administrative Document	1938	595-568 B.C.	Babylon	Akkadian (cf. Chronicles above): Certain documents describe the good fortune of Jehoiachin, exiled king of Judah, and his recognition at the court of Evil-Merodach, Babylonian king in 561 B.C. along with several other persons.	ANET, 308 ATSHB, 378-9	2 Kgs. 25:27-30
Nabonidus' Recognition of Sin as Supreme God	1976	6th Century B. C.	Ur, Ziggurat of Ur	Akkadian: Records Nabonidus' rebuilding of Zizzurat of Ur and his recognition of Sin ("gods") as god of gods, which demotes Marduk. Belshazzar, his son, is mentioned.	COS 2.123B	Background of pre-exilic period in Babylon; Dan. 5

Nabonidus Chronicle	1882	556-539 B. C.	Babylon	Akkadian: Relates the stay of Nabonidus, last king of Babylon, in Tema and his final return to Babylon; fall of Babylon; fate of Nabonidus.	ANET, 305-7 COS 1.89 (cf.)	Dan. 5 Belshazzar; background for Daniel and Babylonian era
Cyrus Cylinder	1879	518 B.C.	Babylon	Akkadian: Records conquest of city of Babylon 586/7 B.C. and gives his theological explanation of the events. His policies allowed Jews and all other conquered peoples to return to their homelands and rebuild temples and worship.	ANET, 315-16 COS 2.124 OTP, 193-95 RANE #44	Dan. 5:30; 6:28 II Chron. 36:22-23 Ezra 1:1-4; 6:1-15 Isa. 44:26-8
Elephantine Papyri	1907	5th Century B.C.	Elephantine, Egypt	Aramaic: Describes religious, everyday, and political life among Jews who fled to Egypt after fall of Jerusalem. Communication with Jews in Samaria and Judah. Temple in Egypt built/demolished. Dream report is recorded on an ostracon.	ANET, 222, 491, 548-9 COS 3.51; 3.52; 3.53;3.68, 3.88	cf. Ezra, Neh., Hag., cf. Daniel 2; 4; 7:28; 10; Jer. 42-44
Dead Sea Scrolls	1947	3d Century B.C.-1st Century A.D.	Northwest corner of Dead Sea	Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek: Some of oldest copies of OT mss and many extra-canonical documents; documents help us understand the state of OT mss in this era and the social-religious structures of this era.	<i>Dead Sea Scroll Bible</i> ; The Dead Sea Scrolls in translation, Vermes, etc.	Insights into various ways this group interpreted the biblical texts for their era; linguistic insights
The Shipwrecked Sailor	1927	2040-1640 B. C.	Egypt (original provenance unknown)	Middle Egyptian: Narrates a story of a sailor's misfortune but eventual recovery and deliverance; fictional elements illustrate a moral to follow.	COS 1.39 AEL, 1:211-14 ATSHB, 257-8	Narrative style and beauty; literary devices, features of OT world
Balaam Inscription	1967	700 B.C.	Deir 'Alla, Jordan	Dialect of Aramaic: The name Balaam, a "good prophet" in this text, recalls the Balaam of the OT. He also dies as a result of his actions as does Balaam in OT. Theological issues in general are raised.	COS 2.27 OTP, 124-6 RANE, #91	Lamentations Num. 22-24; 26; Gen. 6-8

Annals and Stele of Thutmose III	1940	1468 B.C.	Egypt	Egyptian: Describes his siege of Megiddo and other battles in Palestine using an Egyptian daybook scribal tradition. Divine intervention by god Ashur using a "star" or "light" is recorded.	ANET, 234-41 COS 2.2A, 2.2B OTP, <b>142-45</b> ROT, 175, 541-42	OT battle reports: Sam – Kgs; Josh. 1-6, 7-11; esp. 10:28-42; 11:10-14
Battle of Qadesh; Annals of Rameses II	1928, 1935	1275 B.C.	Egypt: On major temples in Egypt and Nubia	Egyptian: Description of the Battle of Qadesh in Syria; some find early "deuteronomistic" type theology in Rameses's attitude and actions toward his god, Amun. Use of numbers: millions, hundreds of thousands, etc. and idioms like a "locust-swarm" in number are informative.	COS 2.5 ROT, 255-56 ANET, 255	General background of divine intervention in war; deuteronomistic theology; hyperbolic use of numbers
Annals of Rameses III	Ca. 1800	Ca. 1200 B.C.	Egypt	Egyptian: Describes battle(s) of Rameses III with the Sea Peoples including the future Philistines.	ANET, 262-3 OTP, <b>151-54</b> ROT, 140-43; 535-6	Judg. 13:1-16:31; 1-2 Sam, Samuel/David stories
Weidner Chronicle	1926	Late 2d Millennium	Ashur and Sippar	Akkadian: A "theology of history" is embedded in these texts from Mesopotamia. The Marduk Temple and Babylon and their treatment is the key to historical success. Many see its historiography similar to the books of Josh.-2 Kgs.	COS 1.138 RANE #47	Evaluation of kings in OT historiography of Israel and ANE: Kings, Chronicles
Limmu (official) list Assyrian Eponym Canon	1941	910-612 B.C.	Assyria	Akkadian: A list across 300 years that records a selected official for each year. Both relative and absolute chronology (763 B.C. eclipse) are made possible with this list.	ANET, 274 COS 2.1131	OT dating by correlation: kings, events, etc.
Annals of Shalmaneser III	1846, 1861	Ca. 850-824 B. C.	Ashur	Akkadian: Describes the incursions of Shalmaneser III into Syria-Palestine. Ahab of Israel and Hadadezer of Syria are mentioned.	ANET, 276-81 COS 2.113A-H OTP, <b>176-81</b>	1 Kgs. 16::29-22 2 Kgs. 9:1-10:33

Annals of Sargon II	1843, 1852-4	721-706 B. C.	Khorsabad	Akkadian: These are illustrative of annalistic records kept by the Assyrian kings; the mention of broken treaties, idols and their indwelling gods, eunuchs, and tribute picture the political/religious inner-workings of the historical/religious thinking of those eras.	COS 2.118A ANET, 284-87 OTP 127-9 RANE #42	General historiography; 2 Kgs. 17:1-24; 18:1-2; Isa. 10:27-32; 14:4b-21; 20:1
Annals of Tiglath-Pileser IV (Pul)	1906-7	744-727 B.C.	Calah (Nimrud), Assyria	Akkadian: Records 17 years of this king's reign who founded the Neo-Assyrian Empire. His encounters with Israel are significant.	COS 2.117 ANET, 282-4 OTP, 125-6 RANE #41	Kings: Menahem, Pekah, Hoshea, 2 Kgs. 15-16; Isa. 7: 8:1-10; 2 Chr. 28:16-21; etc.
Mari	1933	18th Century B.C.	Mari (Tell Hariri) on Middle Euphrates River	Akkadian: Correspondence between famous kings: Zimri-Lim and Babylon; Habiru noted; conditions during patriarchal eras probably reflected. Prophetic texts and activity. Religious perspectives revealed. Includes female prophetesses. Contain various genres of archival materials; concept of herem is mentioned.	OTP, 318-22 ANETOT, 78 RANE #79 ANET, 482-3, 623-26	Sets forth a context for Israel's prophets for contrast, comparison overall. Terms for prophets are helpful; several other general concepts, such as herem
Emar	1972-76, 78	1550-1200 B.C	Emar on Euphrates River	Akkadian: Especially important for its ritual and religious texts. Legal texts are present. The <i>Zukru Festival</i> marking new beginnings for the year is especially important for a Syrian perspective on such a festival. Also kissu festivals are recorded for recognition of god(s).	COS I.123; I.126; 2.137 IR, 114-123	Especially: Lev. 8:30; 23; Num. 28-29; Deut. 16; 31; 32 Nabu, = OT term for prophet; cf. Passover, Unleavened Bread

Nuzi Tablets	1925-31	15th Century B.C.	Nuzi	Hurrian (dialect of Akkadian): Texts describe various social, religious, legal customs on familial and political levels. Often private documents. Private family pictures of Hurrians in Mitanni. Reflects practices from before <i>and</i> after the 15th century.	ANET, 219-20 COS 3.121 AOT, 102-3 RANE #14.	Provides a large backdrop for OT. Baal references and cult. Also Elijah, Elisha cycles.
Ugarit (Ras Shamra)	1929-37	15th Century B. C.	Ugarit	Ugaritic: Hundreds of tablets that help understand the religious milieu there and perhaps in Canaan. The Baal Cycle, Tale of Aqhat, Tale of Kirtu, are key religious texts, but many other texts are relevant: sacrifice, cult, ritual, mythology, pantheons, royal roles, tabernacle, culture—all these and more are included.	COS 1.88; 1.104 IR, 95-6; 97, 98-109, 204-5, 164-5, 156-7, 228, 328-9 OTP, <b>263-74</b>	Provides a broad window for OT pagan religious practices: Baal refs. and cult; Elijah and Elisha cycles; literary significance; Baal/Yahweh contrasts and comparisons are helpful
Amarna Letters and Tell El-Amarna Tablets	1887	1550 - 1150 B.C.	Tell-el-Amarna	Akkadian: Letters (540) from kings in Palestine seeking help from Pharaoh Akhenaton against enemies & from Amenophis III. Habiru appear. Includes Canaanite words and phrases. "God of my father" mentioned in one text.	OTP, 77-80 IR, 94-5 TSB, Excursus 7.1 RANE 166-68	Reflect conditions in Canaan before or during Israel's arrival in Joshua & Judges. "God of my father" text
Ebla Archives	1968, 1974-76	Ca. 2500 B.C.	Ebla, Syria	Sumerian, Eblaite: A huge cache of texts that picture an important part of the pre-patriarchal biblical world in many areas of culture and history. "God of fathers" noted, various gods, some family deities.	OTP, <i>240-3</i> IR, 82-3, 148	Reflects larger world of Middle East in pre-patriarchal eras Gods of OT tied to Ebla gods is possible. Designation Nabi'utum, "prophet" attested.

Instructions of Ptah Hotep	1900	Ca. 2500 B.C.	Egypt	Egyptian: Gives the wisdom of one of Egypt's greatest wise men, who teaches his son using metaphor/analogy on how to succeed in life and vocation.	OTP, <b>283-88</b> ANET, 412-14 ATSHB, 67 RANE 182-4	Parallels in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes; esp. Prov. 2, 6, 23, 25, 26
Atrahasis Epic	1880	18th Cent. B.C.	Assyria	(Sumerian: original) Akkadian: Creation in place, multiplication of life, flood. Humans created to serve in hard labor for gods. God sends flood to wipe out a noisome humanity. A king builds a boat and rescues himself and humanity; a new era or beginning is recorded. (Also, the Eridu Genesis inscription).	COS 1.130 OTP, 31-40 RANE #5 ANET, 104-5, 512-14. ATSOT, 313	GEN. 1-11, esp. Ex. 2
Instructions for Amenemope	1926	7th-6th Century B.C.	Thebes, Egypt	Egyptian: This wisdom didactic literature encourages self-control, kindness, altruism, lack of covetousness. Its 30 chapters also stress the ideal man. Its composition was in the Ramesside era.	OTP, 274-82 COS 1.47 RANE #69 ANET, 421-25	Esp. Prov. 22-23; 24
Ludlul Bel Nemeqi	1929, 1960	2d Millennium B.C.	Babylon	Akkadian: The sufferings of a noble Babylonian are somewhat reminiscent of the biblical Job. He, like Job, is restored.	COS 1.153 ANET, 434, 596-600 RANE #64	Job Wisdom Pss.
Lament over City of Ur	1888	Ca. 2000 B.C.	Nippur	Sumerian: A person that laments the fall of the city of Ur, capital of Ur III empire, making it an early "genre" like Lamentations. A sense of abandonment by the gods is strong. Gives insights into Sumer.	COS 1.166 ANET, 455-63; 611-19 OTP, <b>247-55</b> RANE 222-25	Jer., Ezek., Lamentations (over) Jerusalem; Babylon; Ur from which Abraham came
Hymn to Aten (Son Disk)	1891; 1911-14	14th Century B.C.	Amarna, Egypt	Egyptian: A poem that praises the sun with terminology that recalls Psalm 104.	COS 1.28 ANET, 369-71 OTP, 257-61 RANE, #73	Psalms 104



Negative Confessions of Innocence	1937	500 B.C. and back to 2500 B.C.	Egypt	Egyptian: Shows a deceased person asserting their innocence by giving an exhaustive list of what they have not done.	ANET, 34-6 COS 2.12 OTP, 219-22	Background for the OT's assertion that after death, each person will be judged
Mortuary Texts (Pyramid Texts, Coffin Texts, Book of the Dead, Tomb and Grave Inscriptions)	Various	2550 B.C. and after	Egypt	Egyptian: Various texts reveal what the ancient Egyptians thought about the final state of the deceased.	COS 2.8-14	Contrast and Comparison with the OT concept of Sheol, etc. and the final state of the deceased
Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld	1937, 1942	1st half of 2d Millennium B.C.	Nippur	Sumerian: The goddess descends into the netherworld and its character and contents are encountered along the way.	ANET, 52-57 COS 1:108	Cf. OT description of Sheol
Ishtar's Descent to Netherworld	1949, 1917	1st Millennium B.C.	Ashur, Nineveh	Akkadian: Borrows and transforms to some extent the Inanna classic text.	COS 1.108 ANET, 106-8 ANETOT, 45	Cf. OT description of Sheol
Middle Assyrian Laws	1903	12th Century B.C.	Assyria	Akkadian: Laws of the Middle-Assyrian Empire ca. 12 <sup>th</sup> Century B.C.	COS 2.132 ANET, 180-8 OTP, 114-23 RANE, #31	Various laws in OT: Exod. 19-24; Deut. 12-26; Lev. 17-26
Lipit-Ishtar Laws	1948	19th Century B.C.	Babylonia	Sumerian: A collection of laws to compare/contrast to biblical laws; they also contain a prologue and epilogue.	COS 2.154 ANET, 159-60 RANE #106-109	Various laws in OT: Exod. 19-24; Deut. 12-26, etc.
Murashu Tablets	1898, 1904	5th Century B.C.	Nippur	Akkadian: Describes economic transactions between Murashu and Sons (Babylonian company) with Jews who remained in exile and other persons. Illustrates post exilic issues.	GS, 209 ATSHB, 41 ABD, 4:927-8	Insights in exile period, 538-404 B.C. Ezra-Neh.

Babylonian Theodicy	1960	Early 1st Millennium B.C.	Babylon	Akkadian: A sufferer and a companion engage each other in dialogue about life; classic issues of universal wisdom literature.	COS 1.154 ANET, 601-4 OTP, 223-28 RANE #65	Job, Eccl.
Dialogue of Pessimism	1960	Early 1st Millennium B.C.	Babylon	Akkadian: A slave and his master discuss the lack of real value in anything. Death is as good an option as any and is inevitable.	COS 1.155 ANET, 600-1	Job
Egyptian Love Poetry	1932, 1945	11th-14th Century B.C.	Egypt	Egyptian: Fifty items in monologue form report in sensual exotic language.	ANET, 467-69; RANE 192-3 OTP, 297-301	Song of Songs (Solomon)
Specific Love Songs	1985	11th-14th Century B. C.	Egypt	Egyptian: May be entertainment songs; boy, girl verbal exchanges featured and some monologue.	COS 1.49, 50, 51, 52	Song of Songs (Solomon)
Love Song to King	1947	2000-1500 B.C.	Nippur	Sumerian: A long song composed by a priestess in honor of the king, Shu Sin.	ANET, 496	Song of Songs and Love hymns in general in OT
Ritual of Opening/ Washing of the Mouth	1960;2001	1st Millennium B.C.; Old Kingdom	Babylon; Egypt	Akkadian; Egyptian: These are the classic texts describing the production of an image (idol) in Babylon and earlier (1600 B.C.) in Ur III to the beginning of its oracular life and the opening of the idol's mouth in Egypt.	ANETOT, 58. ATSHB, 147-49	Isa. 6; Isa. 40-55; idolatry in general in prophets; purification of prophets lips
Tell Dan Inscription	1993-4	Ca. 850 B.C.	Dan	Aramaic: This inscription contains the first reference to David outside the OT. The phrase is "house of David."	COS 2.39 OTP, 160-61 RANE #54 ROT, 17, 92 IR, 62, 199	Historical reign of David: 1-2 Sam., 1 Kgs., etc.; 1 Kgs. 19:16-17; 2 Kgs. 9-10; Hos. 1:4

Yavneh Yam (workman's plea)	1960	Late 7th Century	Mesad Hashavyahu	Hebrew: This short letter on an ostracon contains the request for a fieldworker to have his cloak returned to him which his supervisor had confiscated unjustly.	COS 3.41 RANE #58 OTP, 331-32	Ex. 22:25-5; Deut. 24:12-17; Prov. 14:9; 25:20
Sumerian Proverbs	1980, 1997	2600-2000 B.C.	Sumer/ Assyria/ Babylon	Sumerian: Illustrates the ancient nature and subject matter of proverbs in the Ancient NE across cultures.	COS 1.174; 1.175	Proverbs; Ecclesiastes (Proverbs)
Hittite Proverbs	1960 1984 1986 1992	13th Century (?)	Hattusas	Hittite: Various proverbs scattered throughout Hittite literature and a bilingual wisdom text.	COS 1.81, 82	OT proverbs in general, Proverbs, Jer. 31:29; Ezek. 18:2
Wisdom of Ahiqar	1906	700-650 B. C.	Assyrian Court	Aramaic: In addition to an intriguing Assyrian court tale, the words of this wise court official give proverbial instructions for training children, piety, humility, and maintaining controlled speech.	ANET, 427-30 OTP, 283-88 RANE #70	Court story and historical narrative; proverbs and wisdom literature; cf. also Judg. 9:8-15; 2 Kgs. 14:9; Prov., Job, Eccl., and Joseph, Daniel, Mordecai.
Neo-Assyrian Prophecy	1912 1916	8th-7th Century	Assyria	Akkadian: Texts record how prophets/prophetesses functioned under Esarhaddon/Ashurbanipal. Ishtar intercedes for her favored king and also does battle for him.	RANE #80 ANET, 449-51; 605-6 ATSHB, 227-29	Illustrates functions of prophecy, prophets outside Israel
Prophecies of Neferti	1900	Ca. 1990 B.C.	Egypt	Egyptian: Neferti relates the downfall of the king to Pharaoh Snefru (2680-2564 B.C.) and predicts the rise of the great Pharaoh Amenemhet I (1991-1960 B.C.).	OTP, 235-40 ANET, 444-46 COS 1.45; RANE 210-12 ATSHB, 245	Cf. Dan. 2-6; 1 Kgs. 13

Zakkur Inscription	1907-8	800 B.C.	North Syria	Aramaic: Zakkur, king of Hamath, gives due recognition to his god, Baal-Shamayin. Shows devotion to a god by a faithful king. Mentions Ben-Hadad, son of Hazael, historical figure from the OT.	ANET, 655-56 COS 2.35; RANE 163-5	Kgs. 15; 19; 20; 2 Kings. 6; 8; 13
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This list of key ANE texts and artifacts has helped scholars paint, with a broad brush at least (and in some cases with some detail), a broad backdrop of worldviews that were present during the time of the Old Testament across the centuries and millennia—worldviews that help place the Old Testament into a context that enables us to better understand its history, its literary qualities, and even its theological claims and perspectives. From this impressive accumulation of ANE data, some scholars have attempted to present at least preliminary contours of the world of the Old Testament. This is buttressed firmly by the facts from this huge cache of ANE materials that make the reliability of the Old Testament arguably firm and trustworthy, especially so given the literary and historiographical perspectives of its narratives. Certain of these materials show Israel as a fellow participant in the ANE of her day, yet also distinct from that world at crucial points where they intersect. She shared in the worldviews of those cultures and eras. But just as firmly certain materials, texts and artifacts, show striking contrasts between Israel and the world in which she lived—a world in which she believed that her God, Yahweh, guided her and desired for her, through her placement in that culture, to point the surrounding nations to the LORD, the God of creation, history, culture, politics, economics, sociology, psychology, nature; that is, to the God of gods. The column labeled “Ancient Sources” provides readers with ample materials that will enable them to read the primary materials in English translation. The primary and secondary list of resources below includes further discussions of these materials and their significance for the study of the OT. In addition, taken as a whole, the secondary resources direct readers to exhaustive listings of many more ancient texts/artifacts for the study of the OT and its conceptual world.

## ***Primary Texts Relating to the Old Testament (in English Translation)***

Bill T. Arnold & Bryan E. Beyers, *Readings from the Ancient Near East: Primary Sources for OT Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002). (RANE)

William W. Hallo, ed., K. L. Younger, Jr., assoc. ed., *The Context of Scripture*, 3 vols. (Boston: 2003). (COS)

Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 3 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971-80). (AEL)

James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3d ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969). (ANET)

## ***Secondary Sources that Discuss and Provide Additional Readings of Primary Materials and Old Testament***

David W. Baker & Bill T. Arnold, eds., *The Face of Old Testament Studies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999). (FOTS)

John D. Currid, *Doing Archaeology in the Land of the Bible: A Basic Guide* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999).

David N. Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Commentary*, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992). (ABD)

Rachel S. Hallote, *Death, Burial, and Afterlife in the Biblical World* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001). (DBA)

Richard S. Hess, *Israelite Religions: An Archaeological and Biblical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007). (IR)

Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998). (AOT)

David M. Howard, Jr., & Michael A. Grisanti, eds., *Giving the Sense: Understanding and Using Old Testament Historical Texts* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003) (GS)

K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2003). (ROT)

Victor H. Matthews & Don C. Benjamin, eds, *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991, 1997 [cited in italic pagination], 2006 [cited in bold pagination]). (OTP)

Anson R. Rainey and R. S. Notley, *The Sacred Bridge* (Carta, Jerusalem: Carta, 2006). (SB)

Suzanne Richard, *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003). (NEA)

Kenton L. Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub., 2005). (ATSHB)

John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006). (ANETOT)

John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989). (AILCC)