



The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World (Context of Scripture)

By William W. Hallo

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The "first half of history" covers the interval between the invention of writing in Sumer and the floruit of classical Greece. During these two and a half millennia (ca. 3000-500 BCE), the Near East is the primary locus of written documentation, and thus the place where the emergence of humanity's achievements can be followed in detail. Two centuries of persistent exploration of the Near East have led to the recovery of much of this documentation, and the recovery continues at an unabated pace. The discoveries made in the field, and their interpretation in the scholarly literature, are brought to the attention of a wide public in three volumes, prepared by leading scholars in all the principal language areas of the ancient Near East. The first volume, *Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, is devoted to "literary" texts - those responses to the world about them by which the creative minds of antiquity sought to come to terms with their environment, real or imaginary. The second volume, *Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World*, emphasizes "historical" texts: the monuments in which the rulers attempted to memorialize their achievements and lesser mortals expressed their loyalty or piety. The third volume, *Archival Documents from the Biblical World*, incorporates "economic" texts - the unassuming records of daily life which nonetheless go far toward permitting the reconstruction of social, legal and commercial institutions that concerned the majority of humanity. All these canons, monuments and documents provide the context in which Biblical literature flowered. They have therefore been selected in part to illuminate the comparisons or contrasts with specific Biblical passages that have been identified in the scholarly literature. These passages are identified in each selection, and in the extensive bibliography provided. Other selections have been made to illustrate the range of the ancient documentation, or to highlight new discoveries. Elaborate indices are designed to call attention, not only to Biblical parallels, but to those among the ancient sources themselves. This authoritative three-volume reference work is an invaluable research tool and essential reading for all those engaged in the study of the Hebrew Bible in its ancient Near Eastern context.

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Editorial Review

Review

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Oswald Loretz, "Ugarit Forschungen, 1996.

"Given the high quality of this compendium, one of the editor's hopes for this series would seem to be well founded, namely, the *The Context of Scripture* "will become a standard reference work in college, seminary, and university libraries well into the twenty-first century.'

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About the Author

William W. Hallo is the William M. Laffan Professor of Assyriology and Babylonian Literature (since 1976; at Yale since 1962) and Curator of Babylonian collection (since 1963) at Yale University. He holds degrees from Harvard (BA, 1950), Leiden (Candidatus Litterarum Semiticarum 1951) and Chicago (MA 1953 and Ph.D. 1995 in Near Eastern Languages and Literatures). He is author or co-author of *The Book of the People* (1991), *Scripture in Context* (4 vols. 1980-1991), *Heritage: Civilization and the Jews* (2 vols. 1984), *Sumerian Archival Texts* (1973), *The Ancient Near East: A History* (1971), *The Exaltation of Inanna* (1968), and *Early Mesopotamian Royal titles* (1957). He previously taught at Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, and has been Visiting Professor at Kassel (Germany), Columbia University and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. **K. Lawson Younger, Jr.**, Ph.D. (1988), University of

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