



Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament with Supplement

James B. Pritchard (Editor)

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This anthology brought together the most important historical, legal, mythological, liturgical, and secular texts of the ancient Near East, with the purpose of providing a rich contextual base for understanding the people, cultures, and literature of the Old Testament. A scholar of religious thought and biblical archaeology, James Pritchard recruited the foremost linguists, historians, and archaeologists to select and translate the texts. The goal, in his words, was "a better understanding of the likenesses and differences which existed between Israel and the surrounding cultures." Before the publication of these volumes, students of the Old Testament found themselves having to search out scattered books and journals in various languages. This anthology brought these invaluable documents together, in one place and in one language, thereby expanding the meaning and significance of the Bible for generations of students and readers. As one reviewer put it, "This great volume is one of the most notable to have appeared in the field of Old Testament scholarship this century."

Princeton published a follow-up companion volume, *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament* (1954), and later a one-volume abridgment of the two, *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (1958). The continued popularity of this work in its various forms demonstrates that anthologies have a very important role to play in education--and in the mission of a university press.

Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament with Supplement Details

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Author : James B. Pritchard (Editor)

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Autumn Kotsiuba says

No, I didn't read through all 744 pages. This is meant as a reference book above all. I focused most of my attention on the cosmology stories, but I looked through the law books and love poetry too. Why is learning about the way ancient people thought so interesting? Anyways, this would be a great book to own, or to refer to those who ask "Wait....you mean Genesis isn't the first flood story?" Uh, no. Learning about the context in which the oral stories of the OT began is just important as the stories themselves. My knock is that these are all excerpts; I wanted to get into the nitty gritty of the similarities and differences. I was also hoping for some Persian insights (Zoroastrianism plays a larger role in ancient religion than many people give it credit for), but oh well. Still a fantasist beginning resource.

Ken says

This book is priceless for any student of ancient history or home educating family. It includes translations of all the major Egyptian, Hittite, Babylonian, Assyrian, Sumerian texts from 500 BC to 2348 or so.

James F says

This is a huge book -- 8 1/2 x 11 inch pages and small type for the text, smaller for the introductions to the selections and almost at the limit of readability for the notes. If it were printed in normal type and in a normal size book, it would run to two or three thousand pages. Needless to say, it's taken me a while to read. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, usually cited as *ANET*, was long the standard reference in translation for those of us who don't read Middle Egyptian, Sumerian, Akkadian, Aramaic and Hittite. Although the title mentions the Old Testament, the editor takes "relating to" in a very broad sense; the book contains excerpts from most of the important texts which were available and translated at the time it was written, from the *Enuma elish* and the *Epic of Gilgamesh* to the Macedonian conquest (other than the Bible itself). It is arranged by topics, such as "Creation Myths", "Legal Documents", "Historical Inscriptions", "Didactic and Wisdom Literature", "Proverbs", "Prayers", etc.; within each topic, it begins with the Egyptian, then the Sumerian and Akkadian, then the Hittite, and then the Aramaic texts (and a small number of South Arabian texts); and within each language it is roughly chronological.

The translations are by leading scholars of the time, among others John A. Wilson for Egyptian, S.N. Kramer for Sumerian, William Albright, Albrecht Goetze for Hittite, etc., and were very reliable for the period. The third edition reprints the material from the first two editions (1950 and 1955) together, then adds a supplement (arranged the same way) of materials found or translated between 1955 and 1969.

I read the two volume paperback abridged edition of *ANET* in the 1970's, but never had access to the full book until I found it at a library booksale a few years ago, and I've been meaning to find time to read it since. The main problems with the book are that it is divided into so many sections that there is no real feeling for development over time (it was really intended more as a reference than for reading through) and that some of the excerpts are too short; and of course the translations (and more importantly, the interpretations) are now

over fifty years old. I've read the Egyptian material in more complete editions (some more recent, some even less) and have recent anthologies of the Sumerian and Akkadian texts on my reading list for early next year, and the Hittite materials for later on; but *ANET* still gives the most complete general overview of the whole region over the longest time span that I know of.

Barnaby Thieme says

This is the essential compendium of source material for anyone interested in studying early history in the Levant.

First published in 1950, *ANET* has not yet been surpassed in its breathtaking scope of translations of Sumerian, Egyptian, Babylonian (Akkadian), Assyrian, Hittite, and Ugaritic written material. Despite the title, this collection is certainly not limited to material pertaining to the Bible, but includes literature, poems, philosophical material, legal documents, treaties, spells, hymns, historical documents, and more. Some well-known entries include the Akkadian creation fable *Enuma elish*, the Sumerian *Gilgamesh* fragments, "Inanna's Descent into the Underworld", and the Code of Hammurabi.

The translations are scholarly and tend toward strictly-literal rather than literary. Owing the nature of the source material many texts are riddled with lacunae. Introductions and explanatory notes are useful but some familiarity with the history and context of these pieces definitely helps.

Some collections have been better-translated by now (i.e. Jacobson's Sumerian translations surpass Kramer's pioneering work included here), but there's simply nothing else like it. This is not the only book on ancient near-eastern literature that I would want, but I would wish to be without it either.

Vanttefan says

this is a huge collection of textual documents which are all related to the stories of the Old Testament. it involves, not only myths, legends, but also the legal texts and historical information. It is a very good useful tool book and reference.
