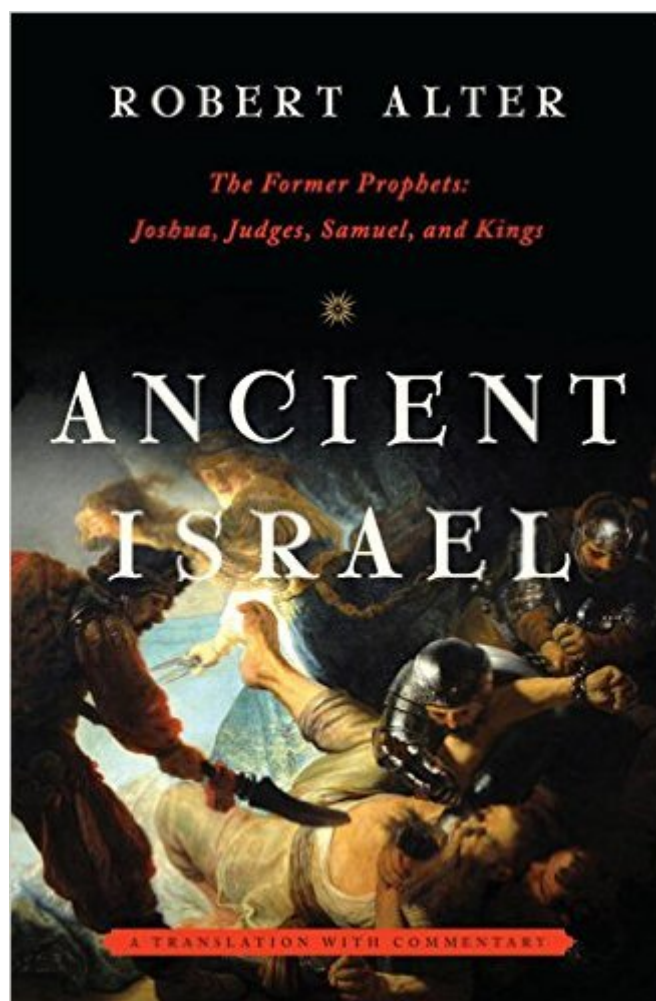


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Ancient Israel: The Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, And Kings: A Translation With Commentary



Synopsis

Robert Alter's award-winning translation of the Hebrew Bible continues with the stirring narrative of Israel's ancient history. To read the books of the Former Prophets in this riveting Robert Alter translation is to discover an entertaining amalgam of hair-raising action and high literary achievement. Samson, the vigilante superhero of Judges, slaughters thousands of Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey. David, the Machiavellian prince of Samuel and Kings, is one of the great literary figures of antiquity. A ruthless monarch, David embodies a life in full dimension as it moves from brilliant youth through vigorous prime to failing old age. Samson and David play emblematic roles in the rise and fall of ancient Israel, a nation beset by internal divisions and external threats. A scattering of contentious desert tribes joined by faith in a special covenant with God, Israel emerges through the bloody massacres of Canaanite populations recounted in Joshua and the anarchic violence of Judges. The resourceful David consolidates national power, but it is power rooted in conspiracy, and David dies bitterly isolated in his court, surrounded by enemies. His successor, Solomon, maintains national unity through his legendary wisdom, wealth, and grand public vision, but after his death Israel succumbs to internal discord and foreign conquest. Near its end, the saga of ancient Israel returns to the supernatural. In Elijah's fiery ascent to heaven many would find the harbinger of a messiah coming to save his people in their time of need. map

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

By and large, Alter's work is a milestone in the art of translation and is in and of itself an instructive

resource for students of the Bible in general, and students of Hebrew in particular. Typically, the practice of translation is viewed through the lens of a false dichotomy: either translations are mechanical, wooden, and "literal" or they are dynamic, thought-for-thought, or otherwise paraphrastic. Alter demonstrates cogently and forcefully that translation is not a game of viewing words as equations to be solved, nor is it the practice of grabbing what the author was trying to say and rendering it in an "abridged" kind of way (see his article in his "Five Books of Moses" entitled, "On the Heresy of Explanation"). As a Hebraist I was immediately gripped by Alter's command of the Hebrew, and stunned by his grasp of the subtle distinctions between literary expressions in the Hebrew text. It goes without saying that what the author has done in this volume and the others of his series is to demonstrate that translation is as much of an art as it is a science; biblical literature often makes sudden and abrupt changes from prose to poetry, and not to mention careful and calculating choices in vocabulary and diction. Translation is just as much about translating art as it is about saying, "this word means this, and that word means that..." Unfortunately the artistry of the text is usually compromised in many English translations because of false assumptions about "literal" versus "dynamic" and paraphrastic translations of the text. In so many ways, Robert Alter is changing the way that scholars and layman alike are viewing the art of translation, especially among those that know Hebrew and Aramaic.

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