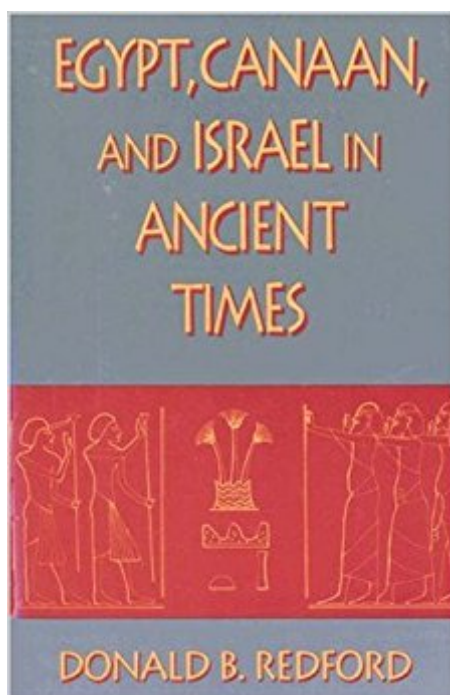


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# Egypt, Canaan, And Israel In Ancient Times



## Synopsis

Covering the time span from the Paleolithic period to the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., the eminent Egyptologist Donald Redford explores three thousand years of uninterrupted contact between Egypt and Western Asia across the Sinai land-bridge. In the vivid and lucid style that we expect from the author of the popular *Akhenaten*, Redford presents a sweeping narrative of the love-hate relationship between the peoples of ancient Israel/Palestine and Egypt.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Redford ( *Akhenaten* , LJ 11/1/84) presents a study of the political, cultural, and religious relationships among the peoples of Egypt, Assyria, and the Levant during the 3000 years from the Paleolithic period to the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. What distinguishes this study is the perspective of an Egyptologist who approaches the subject of ancient Egypt and Israel without the usual preconceptions and emphases found in the studies emanating from biblical studies scholars. Further, Redford highlights the dissimilarities and long-lasting distinctions between the disparate cultures which bordered the Sinaitic frontier, rather than stressing Egyptian origins of segments of Israelite culture frequently advanced by other Egyptologists. Highly recommended for research collections and for students and scholars of Near Eastern history and archaeology, ancient Egypt, and biblical studies.- Paula I. Nielson, Loyola Marymount Univ. Lib., Los Angeles Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Winner of the 1993 Best Scholarly Book in Archaeology Award, Biblical Archaeological Society"

the best Egyptological tradition. . . . This is a work written by a master in Near Eastern studies."--Jean-Pierre V.M. Herubel, Digest of Middle East Studies "Attractively presents for the lay reader a wealth of research on the peoples and localities of ancient Palestine."--Journal of Palestine Studies "In his ability to understand the fragmentary data of ancient history, and in constructive use of imagination, Redford has few equals in the field. . . . One of the finest histories of the ancient Near East."--The Times Literary Supplement

My son and his wife, both of whom are Ph.D. archaeologists focused on the Levant, recommended this book to me as essential to my researching a series of novels. My research library for this project has grown to over 60 essential books, and this book earned its way near the top. Redford's writing style is clear, precise, and enjoyable. I highly recommend this book to anyone wanting an overview of the Levant in the bronze and iron ages. It has also been widely used as a textbook, which is a form of professional imprimatur.

Redford does yeoman's duty bringing Israel's neighbors into proper context so as to help us all understand the way other nations and cultures brought pressures to bear on the development of God's chosen people. Read this, and you'll really up your game, comprehension-wise!

Naturally as an Egyptologist Redford relates the history of the Near East from the angle of Egyptian activity and thought, beginning from pre-dynastic times and following through to Assyrian empire, focusing mostly on Egyptian intercourse with Syria-Palestine, whether that be in the form of its control over its peoples, trade relations with them, or hostility towards them. (or in the case of the Hyskos, subordination) The origins of several Semitic groups, including the Israelite community, and those of different stock are explained, and there is a tangent of two chapters on the influence of Egypt on the Israelites in the political, ideological, cultic and literary spheres. All the events discussed acuminate with Nebuchadrezzar's destruction of Jerusalem, and an epilogue of two pages ends on a kind of cheesy note. But forgiving this, \*Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times\* is anything but a cheesy work. This is knitty-gritty historiography which far from 'attractively presents for the lay reader' anything. (see the review comment on the back cover by the \*Journal of Palestinian Studies\*) Nothing about Redford's book, excepting the pictures, maps, and tables perhaps, is 'lay'. That is, unless the laity in perspective are scholars who just aren't Egyptologists. Those unaccustomed to this kind of reading, with all its jargon and impressive eloquence, will find it overbearingly pedantic. Otherwise, you'll love it, as I did, and it will be easy enough to follow along.

The footnotes are usually short and to the point, citing references with little or no comment, so no real worries about a choppy read, eyes moving constantly athwart between main text and footnote. (I hate that for myself) I would like to have seen provided a chronological chart for the periods discussed. I have other ready resources for this, but of course not everyone would. I wouldn't mind a bibliographical list either. I only gripe with the fact that Redford gets a little caustic when he addresses biblical studies, and gives off the impression that all or most biblical scholars are 'apologists' for the historicity of the biblical tradition. This is misleading and in some cases I would say unfair. His passion for his own field erupts through the pages at this point, as is evident, e.g., from the first-person pronouns (268 & 421, when the norm of self-reference everywhere else is 'the present author') and remarks such as: 'At least we can thank such writers for providing us with comic relief.' [n.113, p.310] I don't think he should have crossed so antipathic to a field he's not an expert in...then he would not have made a mistake such as: 'The absence of the Exodus tradition from early Biblical material should also be noted.' [n.76, p.410]; but then not long later: 'Despite the lateness and unreliability of the story in Exodus, no one can deny that the tradition of Israel's coming out of Egypt was one of long standing. It is found in early poetry (e.g., Exod. 15) and is constantly alluded to by the prophets.' [412] My guess for such a contradiction is that he wrote the footnote some distance prior to discovering and writing the fact of the latter (despite their spatial closeness in the text) and never emended his error. However, on most counts I agree with the points he's making about biblical literature. I'll be holding on to this one. Fun Facts:\* There are multiple trivial flaws in this book of the humorous kind, like the sentence (64) ending with a comma ['...and perhaps disease, With all this...']; or the sentence (213) being interrupted by a period when it should have been a comma ['In fact, in the schematized scenes of tribute bringing. Syrian ornamental vases often stand symbolically...']; or the curious 'J. J. Rowley' for the proper 'H. H. Rowley'. (n.11, p.260)\* Redford states: 'The patient and observant reader will have noted that, up to this point in our study, no mention has been made of Israel' (257). This is false (172 & 237)\* Redford cites his wife, Susan Redford, once in n.63, p.271.

## A great history book

This book is very informative, and obviously extremely well researched. It is formatted with footnotes like a textbook, and that's what it felt like. Note the author comes from a secular perspective, which may be a little off-putting to Jews and Christians, but the content is certainly unimpeachable.

Redford has probably read every ancient inscription and has knowledge of every archaeological site in Egypt-Middle east - as well as knowledge of every language written then. For the serious scholar of the region, book a must, both for its detail and his debunking of past popular "reasoning" about events in the area. For the casual reader, at times irritatingly challenging - he uses proper and place names often with no previous reference and maps are very sparse, and in tiny print. However, the overall sweep of history he presents is fascinating, but the sidebars - often for pages - into minutiae a bit hairpulling - but, then again, one can skip these sections.

Very interesting book. Redford is at the top of his game. However, this is a very academic written book. It is not for a first time reader who has little or no knowledge of Ancient Egypt, Israel, or Canaan.

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