



Shades of Sheol: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament

By Philip S. Johnston

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Shades of Sheol: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament By Philip S. Johnston

"For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who can give you praise?" (Psalm 6:5)

- Death is a profound and complex subject. How did the Israelites respond to it?
- The dead apparently went to Sheol. Where and what was it?
- The inhabitants of Sheol are sometimes called "shades." What does this indicate?
- Many ancient peoples venerated their ancestors. Did Israelites do this?
- Did anyone hope for a positive afterlife? If so, in what form?
- What about resurrection? How and when did this belief emerge?

Philip S. Johnston explores these and other issues. He examines Israelite views on death and afterlife as reflected in the Hebrew Bible and in material remains, and sets them in their cultural, literary and theological contexts. Johnston argues in detail that the Israelites were not as preoccupied with the underworld or the dead as some scholars have recently alleged. Instead, their faith that Yahweh was the God of the living, and that Sheol was cut off from him, led eventually to the hope of a positive afterlife. This important study sheds fresh light on Israelite beliefs in an area central to the later development of the Christian faith.

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Shades of Sheol: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament By Philip S. Johnston Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1045994 in Books
- Published on: 2002-09-14
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.25" h x .90" w x 5.50" l, .78 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 288 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"This is a competent, comprehensive and accessible study, which makes a valuable contribution to an important topic." (Richard Harvey, Tutor in Old Testament and Hebrew, All Nations Christian College)

"Fresh data and new interpretations ensure that death and the afterlife remain a lively center of debate within Old Testament study. Philip Johnston has analyzed the arguments in masterly fashion, and his study will be a must-read for anyone interested in knowing what the biblical writers actually say on the subject." (Robert Gordon, Regius Professor of Hebrew, Cambridge University)

About the Author

Philip S. Johnston is director of studies in theology and religious studies and senior tutor at Hughes Hall, Cambridge. He has taught at Belfast, St. Andrews and Oxford. He has published studies of Israelite afterlife beliefs, and has an interest in Israel past and present--along with a commitment to reconciliation. His other books include *Les Psaumes, Interpreting the Psalms* (coeditor with David Firth), *Shades of Sheol* and *The Land of Promise* (coeditor with Peter Walker).

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