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This very impressive volume is lavishly illustrated with maps, photographs, and charts. It is the successor to *The Macmillan Bible Atlas*, later updated and issued under the title *The Carta Bible Atlas*. The present work contains twenty-five chapters covering the history of the Levant from the Early Bronze Age (fourth millennium B.C.E.) to the Bar Kokhba Revolt (132–135 C.E.). The first three chapters lay the ground for what is to come. Chapter 1, “Dimensions and Disciplines,” presents the discipline of historical geography with special emphasis on physical geography, historical philology, and toponymy. It also discusses briefly the field of archaeology and its contributions to the understanding of the ancient Near East. Chapter 2, “The Ancient World View,” examines some examples “of the world view expressed by major cultural elements in the Ancient Near East, including the Israelites” (25). Chapter 3, “The Land Bridge,” takes a look at the eastern Mediterranean littoral as described in ancient sources and depicts its topography and climate, two very important historical and cultural factors.

Starting with chapter 4, “The Dawn of History: Early and Intermediate Bronze Age,” each historical period and some major historical events are described in detail in separate chapters. These include: “Amurrite Dominance: Middle Bronze Age” (ch. 5); “Conquest and Confrontation: Late Bronze Age I” (ch. 6); “The Amarna Age: Late Bronze Age II” (ch. 7); “The Ramesside Age: Late Bronze Age III” (ch. 8); “Crisis and Transition: Twelfth Century BCE” (ch. 9); “Survival and Renewal: Eleventh Century BCE” (ch. 10);
“Territorial States: Tenth Century BCE” (ch. 11); “Regional Conflicts: Ninth Century BCE” (ch. 12); “Window of Opportunity: Early Eighth Century BCE” (ch. 13); “Imperial Domination: Mid-Eighth to Mid-Seventh Centuries BCE” (ch. 14); “Crisis and Turmoil: Late Seventh to Early Sixth Centuries BCE” (ch. 15); “Persian Domination: Late Sixth to Fourth Centuries BCE” (ch. 16); “Alexander and the Early Hellenistic Period” (ch. 17); “The Hasmonean Struggle for Independence: 167 to 142 BCE” (ch. 18); “The Hasmonean Kingdom: 142–76 BCE” (ch. 19); “Hasmonean Decline and the Rise of Herod: 67 to 37 BCE” (ch. 20); “Herod and His Sons: 37 BCE to 6 CE” (ch. 21); “Historical Geography of the Gospels” (ch. 22); “The Early Days of the Church: First Century CE” (ch. 23); “The First Jewish Revolt against Rome: 66 to 74 CE” (ch. 24); and “The Bar Kochba Revolt: 132 to 135 CE” (ch. 25).

The chapters are followed by lists of abbreviations (401–2); references (403–32); and an index (433–48). The front and back inside covers feature a chronological overview of the ancient Near East from 1668 B.C.E. to 150 C.E. This is divided into four charts, each separated into columns representing the major cultures or political powers in the periods under review and each illustrated with major objects or features appropriate to the period or event mentioned. The first chart, “1668–1200 BCE,” compares the chronologies of Mesopotamia, Anatolia and Syria, Palestine, and Egypt; the second chart, “1200–750 BCE,” includes Mesopotamia, Aram-Tyre, Palestine (divided into Judah and Israel), and Egypt; the third chart, “750–300 BCE,” contains Mesopotamia and Persia, Aram, Palestine (Judah/Judea and Israel), Egypt, and the West; the fourth chart, “300 BCE–150 CE,” features East, Palestine, Egypt, and West. Each of the charts contains a tremendous amount of information.

As described by the authors in the foreword, this work is an “awesome task.” Each chapter contains not only a verbal presentation of the materials but also colorful maps, charts, plans, and photographs of objects, features, and sites. The presentation includes modern and ancient references in red, original texts in light blue, and their translation into English in dark blue. This provides the reader with a much smoother reading “by obviating the need to refer to footnotes or backpages whenever such knowledge is desired and yet allows the eye to skip over information when not wanted. The type size and the nature of the different texts provide the same service, if at somewhat lower level, also to those who may find it difficult to discern color” (publisher’s note).

As a brief example to illustrate the richness of the material and its presentation, I selected a short chapter, “Window of Opportunity: Early Eighth Century BCE” (214–24). The first subchapter, “Aram-Damascus’ Period of Supremacy,” is divided into three parts—“Against Israel”; “Against Philistia and Judah”; and “Against Hamath”—outlining the relationships between Aram-Damascus and the other entities. This is done with the help of Bible
citations and direct quotations in color. The second subchapter, “Adad-Nirari’s Last Campaign to the West,” relies on work done by scholars such as E. Kraeling and A. K. Grayson and uses direct quotations (in color) from ancient documents. Following the third subchapter, “Period of Assyrian Weakness,” comes the subchapter “The Resurgence of Israel and Judah.” Similarly to the first subchapter, this one is also divided into segments such as “Israel Tips the Scales against Damascus”; “Judah Reconquers Edom But Is Defeated by Israel”; Israel Expands Its Territory”; “Judah’s Unprecedented Expansion”; and “Turmoil in Israel.” In addition to direct colored biblical citations, each is sprinkled with references to other biblical sources and with Hebrew terminology, particularly names. Some of the Hebrew names are compared with the way they appear in the Septuagint. Furthermore, the illustrations for this subchapter include four colorful maps (“The Wars of Amaziah and Jehoash”; “The Conquests of Jehoash and Jeroboam II, c. 790–782 BCE”; “Uzziah’s Successes, 782–750 BCE”; and “Israel and Judah in the Days of Jeroboam II and Uzziah, Mid-8th Century BCE”). The historicity of the two latter personalities is illustrated by a photograph of the “(Belonging) to Shema’ servant of Jeroboam” seal and of the Aramaic inscription concerning the reburial of King Uzziah’s remains. The maps illustrate the military movements of the different forces and contain references to biblical events with citations. Thus each map can be treated as a subchapter by itself. The chapter ends with four excursuses: “The Zakkur Inscription”; “The Samaria Ostraca”; “The Prophet Amos—Political Critique”; and “Kuntillet ‘Ajrud.” These are accompanied by photographs, maps, and charts. The presentation is very similar to that of the chapters themselves, that is, with colored direct quotations and citation of references. By the time one finishes reading a chapter, one feels as if he or she has covered a lot of ground.

This atlas is a tremendous piece of work and probably will replace many resource and reference books that have been previously in use. The beautiful maps, tables, photographs, and the careful research that went into all of this make this volume a must for everyone who cares about biblical history and the history of the ancient Near East. The use of colors and different fonts enable the reader to zero in on certain points in the text that otherwise might be lost.