

# New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis

## Preface

The editors are pleased to present *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (NIDOTTE) as a resource for teachers, ministers, and Bible students. The *Dictionary* contains four distinct parts: the Guide to Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, some three thousand lexical and topical entries, an integrative cross-reference system, and extensive and useful indexes. In the organization, the choice of articles, and the collaboration with several hundred authors representing a great variety of backgrounds, the editors have been united in their commitment to provide the reader with a useful reference work. The result is a dictionary that stands apart from many other dictionaries.

Seven features set this *Dictionary* apart from other theological dictionaries of the Old Testament.

(1) The introductory essays open up to the reader the larger field of biblical hermeneutics and interpretation (see Introduction, A. Methodology). One will find here a framework for using the information given in the *Dictionary*.

(2) The reader will benefit from understanding the meaning of words in relation to other words (see Introduction, B. Semantic Fields and Words). Each Hebrew word is part of a larger range (semantic field). The meaning of a word in a text can be nuanced better in relation to other words. The three thousand entries cover the most common roots in the Hebrew language of the OT, as well as many common and less common words.

(3) The reader can access the Hebrew words by a numbering system that bridges the use of concordance and lexicon.

(4) In the topical section (see Topical Dictionary) one will find a wide range of topics (in the order of the English alphabet). These include personal and geographical names, as well as epochs, peoples, concepts, and a theology on each book of the OT. In addition, one will be able to reference the lexical studies by some two thousand “subjects” (together with a lexical reference, including number) that open the usefulness of the lexical studies of the *Dictionary* to the reader (see Introduction, C. Topics). These entries are important to the understanding of the message of the OT.

(5) The Index of Semantic Fields is intended to be a useful key to the entire set (see Introduction, D. Index).

(6) Readers who look for some guidance in the use of this *Dictionary* as a key to the interpretation of the OT will benefit from the article 11. Several Illustrations on Integrating the GUIDE With *NIDOTTE* in *Doing Old Testament Exegesis and Theology* at the end of the Guide (see also 8. Principles for Productive Word Study).

(7) This set complements its NT counterpart, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (NIDNTT)*, edited by Colin Brown).

The four main divisions of this *Dictionary* can be used separately and in an integrated fashion. (1) The Guide to Old Testament Theology and Exegesis can serve as a textbook in a course on hermeneutics or exegesis, but is also part of the dictionary project. Each of the first ten articles delineates aspects of the exegetical and theological enterprise, and the last article is suggestive of ways of interacting with the Guide as well as with the lexical/topical articles. (2) The Lexical Articles form the substance of the *Dictionary*. Nearly all articles include a list of entries with words that have

some degree of synonymy (semantic field) that encourages further study of these words. It is our hope that this system of cross-references as well as the common cross-references found between the articles will aid the reader in locating the appropriate entries and in creating an interest for further exploration. (3) The Topical Dictionary, together with the cross-references to the lexical entries and semantic fields, takes up names of people and places, words, concepts, and events that help one to look at the biblical text from different perspectives. (4) The Index of Semantic Fields is a necessary supplement to the *Dictionary*, as it opens up all of its parts by listing the semantic fields. For additional uses, see Introduction to the dictionary.

The main concern of the editors of *NIDOTTE* lies with the advance of the interpretation and theological understanding of the OT as Scripture. It is our hope that *NIDOTTE* will encourage the study of the OT and that the OT will maintain its place as a vital part of the Christian canon, so that the churches throughout the world will experience a renewal through the faithful teaching, preaching, and use of the OT. While the authors of the articles in *NIDOTTE* have made suggestive connections between the Testaments, their main concern lies with the interpretation and theological understanding of the OT. Yet the careful reader is encouraged to make connections between the OT and NT. The connections are manifold; they are verbal, thematic, and textual. We trust that *NIDOTTE* and *NIDNTT* will together enhance the study and interrelationship of OT and NT

As General Editor of this set, I close by expressing my gratitude to the **associate editors**—Tremper Longman III (Westminster Theological Seminary); Elmer A. Martens (Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary); Eugene H. Merrill (Dallas Theological Seminary); Richard D. Patterson (Liberty University); Bruce K. Waltke (Regent College); John H. Walton

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I conclude with a personal reflection. During the eight years of this project, I had a unique privilege of working with a wonderful team of gifted editors and scholars. I am most grateful for this experience. Yet, the project was not without its difficulties. From beginning to end I was reminded of the fragility of humanity. At the beginning of the project two distinguished South African scholars passed away (Dr. Charles E. Fensham and Dr. D. H. Odendaal). During the project some of my friends and contemporaries—Dr. Raymond B. Dillard (Westminster Theological Seminary) and Dr.

Gerhard Hasel (Andrews University)—went to be with the Lord. In God’s providence they were prevented from finishing their articles. I greatly missed the input of Gerhard Hasel, who had begun to serve as editor. Robert Alden, Joyce Baldwin, Roland K. Harrison, and Elmer B. Smick also passed away, having left a legacy in the articles that are incorporated in the *Dictionary*. Other contributors and would-be contributors experienced death in their immediate family, serious illness, and tragedies that affected their contribution(s) in one way or another.

May God grant his blessing on all those involved in this project and on all who use this *Dictionary*.

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