This book is a collection of inscriptions dating back to the First Temple period. They originate from kingdoms on both sides of the River Jordan: Judah and Israel, Philistia, Edom, Ammon, and Moab. The inscriptions from Judah and Israel were written in Hebrew, the others in languages or dialects similar to Hebrew, thus making them accessible to any reader of Hebrew. The types of inscriptions are manifold: stelae; documents written in ink or painted on stones, potsherds, and even plaster.

The inscriptions illuminate different facets of the scribes' lives. Not only do they throw light on the history of the land, they reveal much about the socio-religious beliefs and customs of its inhabitants, the royal and local administration, and more. The inscriptions are direct evidence to the Hebrew spoken in Israel and Judah in ancient times. They attest to the linguistic affinity between the Judaean and the Israelite Hebrew and also show their differences. The other inscriptions are the sole testimony to the languages of Israel's neighbors—the Philistines, Edomites, Moabites and Ammonites—and to the language spoken by those who dwelled in the Valley of Succoth. Some of these are evidence, albeit sparse, of the literature these people had, but was lost to us. Documents of special note include the Stela of Masha, king of Moab, and the “Book of Balaam, Son of Beor,” which in both content and style approach the biblical literature.

*Echoes from the Past* is the fruit of labor of Shmuel Ahituv, well-known historian and Bible scholar. Translated from the Hebrew by the renowned scholar Anson F. Rainey, this handbook has been revised and expanded to include over 220 inscriptions. Each is illustrated by a photograph and/or facsimile, with transcriptions in square Hebrew letters and in pointed Hebrew. Every item, or group of items, is preceded by introductory remarks, followed by translations, interpretations and references. A new appendix on the Aramaic Tel Dan inscription is included, as well as a Glossary of Personal Names, and indices.

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