

# Prof John H. Walton



## SASNES Van Selms Lecture

On behalf of the South African Society for Near Eastern Studies (**SASNES**), we cordially invite you to the open Van Selms Lecture

**Date:** Tuesday, 14 August 2018

**Time:** 19:00

**Venue:** NWU Sports Village, Room G17,  
Potchefstroom

### **Theme:**

**Understanding Torah: Ancient Near Eastern Legal Texts  
and the Cognitive Environment of the Ancient World**

### **Abstract**

A careful assessment of the content and literary setting of the legal collections from the ancient Near East can identify their role and function in the cognitive environment of the ancient world. Such study has indicated that our modern inclination to label them as “laws” is misguided. After forging a more accurate understanding, we can apply what we learn to the legal collections in the Torah from the Hebrew Bible. We will identify numerous similarities in role and function, but will then have to augment that study by factoring in the impact of legal provisions being incorporated into an agreement between suzerain and vassal. Once these diverse ancient Near Eastern documents have been applied to a more nuanced understanding of what the Torah is, we can revisit questions concerning the compilation of such documents in a hearing dominant world where we encounter a culture of scribes and documents rather than one of books and authors.



John H. Walton (Ph.D. Hebrew Union College) is Professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College and Graduate School where he has taught for seventeen years. He has published nearly 30 books, among them commentaries, reference works, text books, scholarly monographs, and popular academic works. He was the Old Testament general editor for the *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* (NIV, NKJV), and is perhaps most widely known for the “Lost World” books (including *The Lost World of Genesis One*, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, and *The Lost World of the Flood*). He served as the general editor for the five volume *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Old Testament*. His areas of expertise include the importance of the ancient Near East for interpreting the Old Testament represented in his monograph, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology*. His forthcoming *Lost World of Torah* will be published in a few months. He and his wife, Kim, have three grown children, all pursuing academic careers.



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