

BAPTISTWAY ADULT BIBLE STUDY GUIDE®

The Book of Exodus

LIBERATED FOR LIFE IN
COVENANT WITH GOD

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*The Book of Exodus: Liberated for Life in Covenant with God—
BaptistWay Adult Bible Study Guide®*

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How to Make the Best Use of This Issue

Whether you're the teacher or a student—

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. Overview the study. Review the table of contents and read the study introduction. Try to see how each lesson relates to the overall study.
3. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. (You'll see that each writer has chosen a favorite translation for the lessons in this issue. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translation chosen for that lesson, of course.)
4. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the writer's comments. The comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible.
5. Read the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application.
6. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and they can also be used in the class session itself.

If you're the teacher—

- A. Do all of the things just mentioned, of course. As you begin the study with your class, be sure to find a way to help your class know the date on which each lesson will be studied. You might do this in one or more of the following ways:
 - In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying with your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents on page 9 and on the first page of each lesson.

- Make and post a chart that indicates the date on which each lesson will be studied.
 - If all of your class has e-mail, send them an e-mail with the dates the lessons will be studied.
 - Provide a bookmark with the lesson dates. You may want to include information about your church and then use the bookmark as an outreach tool, too. A model for a bookmark can be downloaded from www.baptistwaypress.org on the Adults—Bible Studies page.
 - Develop a sticker with the lesson dates, and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.
- B. Get a copy of the *Teaching Guide*, a companion piece to this *Study Guide*. The *Teaching Guide* contains additional Bible comments plus two teaching plans. The teaching plans in the *Teaching Guide* are intended to provide practical, easy-to-use teaching suggestions that will work in your class.
- C. After you've studied the Bible passage, the lesson comments, and other material, use the teaching suggestions in the *Teaching Guide* to help you develop your plan for leading your class in studying each lesson.
- D. Teaching resource items for use as handouts are available free at www.baptistwaypress.org.
- E. Additional Bible study comments on the lessons are available online. Call 1-866-249-1799 or e-mail baptistway@texasbaptists.org to order *Premium Online Bible Commentary*. It is available only in electronic format (PDF) from our website, www.baptistwaypress.org. The price of these comments for the entire study is \$6 for individuals and \$25 for a group of five. A church or class that participates in our advance order program for free shipping can receive *Premium Online Bible Commentary* free. Call 1-866-249-1799 or see www.baptistwaypress.org to purchase or for information on participating in our free shipping program for the next study.
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and \$20 for a group of five. A church or class that participates in our advance order program for free shipping can receive *Premium Online Teaching Plans* free. Call 1-866-249-1799 or see www.baptistwaypress.org for information on participating in our free shipping program for the next study.

- G. You also may want to get the enrichment teaching help that is provided on the internet by the *Baptist Standard* at www.baptiststandard.com. (Other class participants may find this information helpful, too.) The *Baptist Standard* is available online for an annual subscription rate of \$10. Subscribe online at www.baptiststandard.com or call 214-630-4571. (A free ninety-day trial subscription is currently available.)
- H. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.

Note: The time of the first release of these materials includes Easter. To meet the needs of churches who wish to have a Bible study lesson specifically on the Easter Scripture passages at this time, an Easter lesson is included.

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Writers for This Study Guide

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Introducing

EXODUS: Liberated for Life in Covenant with God

What is the first book in the Bible? Likely you don't need to turn to the front of your Bible to answer, *Genesis, of course.*

In a sense, though, Exodus, not Genesis, is the first book in the Bible. The people of Israel would never have been interested in the message of the first book in the Bible if God had not delivered them from Egyptian bondage and made a covenant with them to be God's people. Indeed, we might never have heard of a ragtag group of people called Israel had God not redeemed them from bondage. This redemption is described in the Book of Exodus.

Baptist Old Testament scholar Dr. Page Kelley put it succinctly, "The Exodus is to the Old Covenant what the resurrection is to the new."¹ He continued by saying, "Israel herself regarded the Exodus as the most significant event in her history."² Such accolades call us to study the book that tells of this significant event.

What is the Book of Exodus about? The Book of Exodus takes up the story of the Hebrew people after Joseph had brought his family to Egypt to escape famine (Genesis 37—50). Over several centuries, the people grew numerous and strong, which was a blessing until "a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph" (Exodus 1:8).³ As this "new king" made life more and more difficult for the Hebrews, "God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Exod. 2:24–25). We can sense from this one verse that God was about to make something happen.

Indeed God did make something happen. God called Moses to lead the people out of bondage. Then, through a series of encounters of Moses with the Pharaoh (king) of Egypt (1:1—15:21), God delivered the people. The first fifteen chapters in Exodus show how Pharaoh engaged in futile opposition to God—and lost.

Then, after some time in the wilderness of Sinai (15:22—18:27), the Hebrews found themselves at a mountain where their lives would be transformed. Here God called the people to enter into covenant with him and to follow his commandments (19:1—24:18). Further, to make concrete God’s relationship with the people, God instructed the people to “construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them” (25:8). The details of this sanctuary are told in the form of instructions (25:1—31:18) and again as the people carried out these instructions (35:1—40:38).

Between the giving of the instructions for the tabernacle and its furnishings and the construction of the tabernacle, the people rebelled, breaking the covenant they had agreed to keep. However, through Moses’ intercession, God gave the people the opportunity to renew the covenant (32:1—34:35).

The Book of Exodus begins with the Hebrews in life-threatening trouble—facing genocide, in fact. As on earlier occasions when it seemed God’s promises were about to be negated (see Gen. 12:1–2; 15:1–6; 18:1–15; 22:1–19; 45:1–15), God acted.

Miraculously, Exodus concludes with the people having been liberated from slavery, “the glory of the LORD” filling the tabernacle, and God leading the people as they journeyed on toward the Promised Land (40:34–38). Between the beginning and the end of Exodus were lessons for the people about following God, and these lessons are yet available to us as we study the book.

Note: Since Easter occurs during the first use of this study, an Easter lesson is provided for classes and churches who wish to study on Easter a Scripture passage related specifically to Jesus’ resurrection.

EXODUS: LIBERATED FOR LIFE IN COVENANT WITH GOD

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Lesson 2 Listen Up Exodus 3:1–14; 4:1–15

Lesson 3	God's Power for God's People	Exodus 5:1–2; 6:1–8; 7:1–5, 14–18; 8:1–3, 16, 20–21; 9:1–4, 8–9, 13–18, 25–26; 10:3–11, 21–22, 28–29; 11:1–5
Lesson 4	A Hurried Meal for a Dangerous Journey	Exodus 12:1–14, 24–27; 13:8–9
Lesson 5	Questions and Faith	Exodus 14:1–4, 10–31; 15:1–2, 20–21
Lesson 6	Making Bitterness Sweet and Emptiness Full	Exodus 15:22—16:18
Lesson 7	Risking Meeting God	Exodus 19:1–12, 16–22
Lesson 8	Core Behaviors of Covenant People	Exodus 20:1–17
Lesson 9	Dealing with the Details of Covenant Living	Exodus 21:1–2, 7–17, 22–27; 22:21—23:12
Lesson 10	Seeing God	Exodus 24
Lesson 11	Earthly Things for Holy Purposes	Exodus 25:1–11, 17–18, 23–24, 31–32; 26:1–2, 7–8; 27:1–2; 29:43–46
Lesson 12	A Broken Covenant and a Fresh Start	Exodus 32:1–19, 30–33; 33:12–17; 34:1–7
Lesson 13	All for God's Service	Exodus 35:4–10, 20–35; 36:2–7
Lesson 14	Finishing and Moving On	Exodus 39:32, 42–43; 40:1–2, 16–17, 32–38

Additional Resources for Studying the *Book of Exodus*:⁴

- Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, editors. *The Jewish Study Bible*. Oxford: University Press, 2004.
- Brevard S. Childs. *The Book of Exodus*. The Old Testament Library. Louisville: The Westminster Press, 1974.
- Walter Brueggemann. "Exodus." *The New Interpreter's Bible*. Volume 1. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.
- John I. Durham. *Exodus*. Word Biblical Commentary. Volume 3. Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1987.
- Peter Enns. *Exodus*. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2000.

- Terence Fretheim. *Exodus*. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1991.
- Roy L. Honeycutt, Jr. "Exodus." *The Broadman Bible Commentary*. Volume 1. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1969.
- F.B. Huey. *Exodus: A Study Guide Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977.
- Page H. Kelley. *Exodus: Called for Redemptive Mission*. Nashville, Tennessee: Convention Press, 1977.
- Page H. Kelley. *Journey to the Land of Promise: Genesis—Deuteronomy*. Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 1997.
- The New Interpreter's Study Bible*. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2003.

NOTES

1. Page H. Kelley, *Exodus: Called for Redemptive Mission* (Nashville, Tennessee: Convention Press, 1977), 5.
2. Kelley, *Exodus: Called for Redemptive Mission*, 5. See references to the Exodus event in Deuteronomy 6:20–25; 26:5–9; Joshua 24:1–7; Hosea 11:1; Amos 3:1–2; Micah 6:3–5; Psalms 77:11–20; 78; 105:26–45; 106; 114; 135; 136.
3. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in "Introducing Exodus: Liberated for Life in Covenant with God" and on the back cover are from the New American Standard Bible (1995 edition).
4. Listing a book does not imply full agreement by the writers or BAPTISTWAY PRESS® with all of its comments.

LESSON ONE

Women and Children First

FOCAL TEXT

Exodus 1:8—2:10

BACKGROUND

Exodus 1:1—2:10

MAIN IDEA

As children faced danger and death, women acted boldly and courageously to overcome Pharaoh's evil plans.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

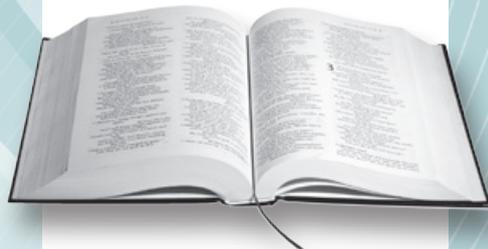
In what ways should we be taking more action to care for children in our day?

STUDY AIM

To describe how women acted courageously to help children being threatened by Pharaoh and to identify ways they will take action to help children

QUICK READ

Exodus highlights the life of Moses, but the story begins with women who risked their lives to protect Israel's children and who set the bar for faith and courage.



After twelve years in South Korea, our lives were deeply planted in that field. Our children grew up there. I enjoyed nurturing relationships with many friends. Our work was rich and productive. So when a change in job assignment moved us to the Philippines, my heart broke.

At first I grieved the loss of our home in Korea and could not imagine finding comparable happiness in the new place. But God knows best. If we had clung to former things, God could never have blessed us with a situation that ultimately proved to be richly satisfying. The heartache gave way to gratitude and joy.

As the Israelites groaned under a burden of slavery as the Book of Exodus begins, they likely would not have recognized their condition as an expression of the Lord's grace. But God saw the wider picture and the better future that lay ahead for them.

Isolated from positive interaction with other cultures as a result of their slavery, the Israelites were able to withstand the influences of foreign religions and maintain their identity. They clung to the covenant God had established with Abraham and upheld their heritage.

EXODUS 1:8–22

⁸ Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt. ⁹ "Look," he said to his people, "the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. ¹⁰ Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country."

¹¹ So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. ¹² But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites ¹³ and worked them ruthlessly. ¹⁴ They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly.

¹⁵ The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, ¹⁶ "When you help the Hebrew women in childbirth and observe them on the delivery stool, if it is a boy, kill

him; but if it is a girl, let her live.”¹⁷ The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live.¹⁸ Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, “Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?”

¹⁹ The midwives answered Pharaoh, “Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive.”

²⁰ So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous.²¹ And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.

²² Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: “Every boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live.”

EXODUS 2:1–10

¹ Now a man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman,² and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months.³ But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile.⁴ His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.

⁵ Then Pharaoh’s daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the river bank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to get it.⁶ She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. “This is one of the Hebrew babies,” she said.

⁷ Then his sister asked Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?”

⁸ “Yes, go,” she answered. And the girl went and got the baby’s mother.⁹ Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you.” So the woman took the baby and nursed him.¹⁰ When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh’s daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, “I drew him out of the water.”

A Forgotten Savior (1:8–10)

Joseph was a national hero when he brought his father's family into Egypt. He kept people alive through a severe famine.

Sadly, heroes fade from view. Charles Lindbergh was internationally admired by my parents' generation, but mention of his name barely triggers my grandchildren's interest now. In the same way, Joseph's accomplishments were quietly assigned to history and gradually forgotten.

Once the protection of Joseph's power and influence disappeared, the Israelites reverted to their original status in Egypt—resident aliens. The honor they had received from association with the nation's savior, Joseph, was replaced by distrust of their foreign habits and eccentric religious practices. In time, their differences fueled the paranoia of a new king who didn't remember or care who Joseph had been.

THE BOOK OF EXODUS

The Book of Exodus is a continuation of the Book of Genesis. Where Genesis ends with Jacob's family entering Egypt, Exodus continues the story by describing the end of their stay there. While the first book reveals God as the only sovereign Creator, the second reveals what happens when people reject God and create gods for themselves.

The beginning of Exodus reports that the Israelites had obeyed God's original command to "be fruitful and increase in number" (Gen. 1:28; Exod. 1:6–7). The Egyptian Pharaoh, who held himself up as a god, opposed this command by ordering the extermination of Hebrew offspring. So from the very beginning, the stage is set for a battle between gods made by human beings and the great *I AM*, God Most High. The Egyptians had deified every element in the natural world. God would prove his power and authority by using nature itself as an instrument of destruction against them.

People today still create false gods for themselves. Whether material goods, relationships, or philosophical ideologies, anything that demands a person's top loyalty is an idol.

A Bitter Development (1:11–14)

In a time when ruling dynasties could be established or destroyed through armed conflict, the Egyptian king, called “Pharaoh” by his subjects, worried that the foreigners in his country might endanger his throne. The Hebrew population was large enough to pose a real threat if they decided to ally with other nations and attempt a military coup. But his concern was tempered by greed. By enslaving the Israelites, Pharaoh could reap the double bonus of subduing a potential enemy and gaining a compulsory work force.

Statistically, the harsh conditions of slave life should have dramatically reduced the Hebrew slave population. Men died faster than they reproduced when working on danger-ridden construction projects (Exod. 1:11). The Israelites, though, defied the odds. Their numbers continued to grow at an alarming rate (1:12). From Pharaoh’s viewpoint, the threat posed by such a large slave population outweighed its economic benefit. He decided on a direct approach for slowing Hebrew growth.

An Intolerable Command (1:15–22)

Pharaoh viewed girls as valuable workers who represented no danger to the stability of his administration. Boys, on the other hand, grew up to be men, and enough men combined could topple governments. In his paranoia, Pharaoh decided to cut off the threat at its source. He ordered the deaths of all newborn males. Such excessive cruelty would not only reduce the population but also plant terror in the hearts of people and render them helpless and meek.

It would have taken an army of midwives to serve a people group as large as the Israelites, but two women stood out as apparent leaders in the profession’s hierarchy. Pharaoh outlined his deadly plan to these women, Shiphrah and Puah (1:15). He ordered, “If it is a boy, kill him” (1:16). These women were probably charged with making sure all midwives followed the king’s deadly instructions.

Egyptian slaves had no rights. In their world, disobedience meant torture and death. Even high-ranking free men would think twice before defying Pharaoh. But Shiphrah and Puah recognized a higher power.

They feared God's anger more than Pharaoh's. With dangerous resolve, the women defied the king's command.

We can't know how much time passed before officials noticed that the Hebrew population was still growing. It could have been months or even years before they realized that baby boys were flourishing along with the girls. Eventually the trend caught the king's attention. He was not happy.

Aware that they might not come out alive, the head midwives once more entered Pharaoh's presence. Even with their lives on the line, the women did not succumb to terror. Their strong faith steadied them, enabling them to answer with a fearless practicality that momentarily stumped the king and diverted his anger.

When Pharaoh's scheme to use the midwives failed, he resorted to full-out infanticide. He ordered his people to take over the job, pulling them in as partners to the crime. Believing Pharaoh to be the incarnation of a god, the Egyptians would have blindly followed his command to throw Hebrew boy babies into the Nile.

Although the midwives ultimately lost their battle to save all of Israel's babies, the efforts prompted by their faith and courage were not in vain. Their stalling tactics protected many children, probably even Moses' brother Aaron among them. Too, because they risked their own lives for the sake of the children, God demonstrated his favor by blessing them with families of their own (1:21).

A Special Child (2:1–10)

Due to the midwives' intervention, the older son of Israelite slaves Amram and Jochebed (6:20) survived Pharaoh's original extermination plot. But by the time their youngest child was born, murder of Hebrew infants was in full force. Yet Jochebed was a determined mother. Like Shiphrah and Puah, she was willing to risk death to save her baby.

Hiding a child in the river was risky. In addition to wild predators, any Egyptian who came across the infant would be bound by Pharaoh's order to kill him. Further, if the baby were traced back to his parents, the parents would be risking their own lives by defying the king's command. There was an exception to the rule, though, and God used it to accomplish his purpose.

THE “BASKET” FOR THE BABY MOSES

The Hebrew word *tevah* (or *tebah*), usually translated *ark*, is used to refer to two entities in the Old Testament. First it identified the boat that saved Noah’s family from the Flood (Gen. 6:14), and then it described the basket that Jochebed, Moses’ mother, made to save Moses (Exod. 2:3). In both cases, it reminds us of God’s protection and deliverance.

Everyone needs God’s protection and deliverance. Whether we are battling persistent sin or obstacles to faith, God still sends vehicles of rescue. What *ark* has God sent to help you in times of trouble? How did you recognize it as God’s protection?

The case of Moses demonstrates God’s tendency to work within people’s cultural understandings. God used Egyptian beliefs and superstitions to create a vehicle for saving the baby and providing him with the experience and training necessary for leading the Israelites from bondage.

The Egyptians had elaborate plumbing systems. Royal households boasted bathing suites with tubs the size of swimming pools. Only one reason would compel a member of the royal family to exchange the perfumed water of indoor pools for the dangerous, polluted shores of the Nile River. That reason was religious ceremony.

Of all the civilizations in ancient history, the Egyptians were the most polytheistic. They worshiped more than 2,000 gods. Not only did they deify things in nature like the sun and sky, but they also believed that concepts such as justice and truth were personified by specific gods.¹

Egyptians believed that all members of the royal family were living gods. In their human forms they acted as intermediaries between people and the deities who lived in the heavenly spheres. On their deaths, it was thought that they ascended to the realm of the gods and took their place in the pantheon (a list or ranking order of a society’s divine beings).

The Nile River itself was one of the greatest gods. Egyptians believed that all life originated from its waters, including the sun god Ra (also spelled *Re*), who had emerged from them on the first day of creation. The god of the Nile, known as Hap or Hapi, was viewed as the father of all beings and creator of everything.

From time to time, members of the royal family were expected to participate in religious ceremonies in the Nile River. It was a means of communing with the great river god and currying his favor. That was the most likely reason for the bathing ritual described in Exodus 2:5. A number of slaves would have formed a human shield in the water around the princess, while others patrolled the riverbank, keeping a sharp look-out for potential danger. That is most likely how the hidden basket was discovered.

Because the baby appeared during a religious observance, he would have been perceived as a gift from the Nile, the god Hapi himself. The princess was delighted by the beautiful infant. But had she not wanted to be stuck with the responsibility of a baby, she would have been compelled to accept it anyway so as to please the Nile god. Not even Pharaoh would dare to anger the river deity by refusing the deity's token of blessing, no matter what form it took. His own religious beliefs bound him to accept the child into his household. So God used Egyptian cultic superstitions to make sure that Moses not only survived but also held a place of honor in the royal court as specially favored by one of the highest gods in the land.

Watching from her hiding place, Moses' sister Miriam assessed the situation and decided to act. For a slave to approach royalty and speak without permission was an automatic death sentence. But whether the princess's heart was softened by the baby or by Miriam's youthful earnestness, the princess pardoned the affront and heard the child out. The girl's act of courage resulted in Moses spending his early childhood with his own birth mother before becoming a member of the royal household and receiving the best education the world of that time had to offer.

Applying This Lesson to Life

Psalm 127 calls children a heritage and reward from the Lord. In almost any world civilization, children represent future hope. Some people groups barely recover when a generation is decimated through natural disasters, such as famine, or by genocide.

All over the world, Christians are rallying to eradicate childhood hunger, disease, abuse, and slavery. In our zeal to protect the physical and mental welfare of global youth, it is imperative that we also address

4. What dangers threaten the safety and well-being of children around the world today?

5. What would you be willing to risk to help children in trouble?

6. In some ways it seems easy to give money, food, or clothing to help meet children's physical needs. How much personal time and effort would you be willing to invest in a child who needs to learn about God?

NOTES

1. For information on ancient Egyptian religion, see Anthony S. Mercatante, *Who's Who in Egyptian Mythology*, 2nd ed., ed. and rev. by Robert Steven Bianchi (New York: Barnes and Nobles Books, 1998). See also John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000); "Egypt," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961), IV: 56–65; and/or "Egypt," *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009).