



Gratz Insider, November 2012 - Story Continuation

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## **Professor Joseph Davis: Explaining the Bible and Beyond from A to Z**

The *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* (EBR), published by De Gruyter, will include entries for every person, place or thing mentioned in the Bible—literally and figuratively, from A to Z. According to Dr. Joseph Davis, Gratz College professor and modern Judaism editor for the EBR, this work “is about the Bible, everything you might want to know about the Bible, Biblical archaeology, the New Testament, chariots in the Bible, cypress wood in the Bible and so on.”

One of the particularly unique aspects of this project is the “reception” part, which includes the broader cultural reach of Biblical references. Circumcision in music, cherubs in literature and Biblical chariots in film are examples of the cultural breadth of the EBR. Davis, who has been an EBR editor since 2008, explains, “The ‘reception’ is the whole story of how people have interpreted the Bible, retold its stories, developed its rituals and ideas and laws, translated it, commented on it, argued about it, argued against it, put it to music, etc.”

The EBR is a groundbreaking endeavor because, according to Davis, there is nothing else out there that puts all of this information together in the same place. Exciting, yes, but enormously labor intensive too. There are over one thousand authors and almost 30 editors contributing to what is expected to be a 30-to-35-volume series that will be available in print and online, probably to be purchased primarily by college libraries. The EBR editors have varying areas of expertise, including Judaism, Christianity, Islam and other religions, as well as music, literature, film and the visual arts.

As an editor, Davis is responsible for recruiting authors for this project. While he has enlisted some experts from across the country and around the world, he has also garnered support from the Gratz community. For example, Dr. Marsha Edelman, an adjunct professor of music and education at Gratz, has written numerous entries on Jewish music for the EBR. Davis has also pulled some Gratz alumni into the project and has a Gratz student on board as well.

As Davis and his colleagues push on with this mammoth project, they are always seeking new authors to contribute entries to the EBR. So, to any Bible scholars or art and culture connoisseurs out there, Volume E is up next.

*For more information on the Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception, consult the De Gruyter website at [www.degruyter.com/view/db/ebr](http://www.degruyter.com/view/db/ebr).*