

WHERE WAS THE GARDEN OF EDEN?

The first mention of the land of Mesopotamia in the Bible is found in the account of the Garden of Eden where God created the first human beings, Adam and Eve. In **Genesis 2:10-14** we read:

Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads.

The name of the first *is* Pishon, which surrounds all the land of Havilah, where *there is* gold. And the gold of that land *is* good. There *is also* bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river *is* Gihon; it *is* the one that surrounds the whole land of Cush. And the name of the third river *is* Tigris, which goes toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river *is* the Euphrates.

The names of the four rivers that branch off from the river that went through the Garden are the Pishon, Gihon, Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Now since the Tigris and the Euphrates have their sources in the mountainous region of southern Turkey, it is commonly assumed by theologians today that the Garden of Eden is located in that same area.

Regarding the Hebrew for the word riverhead Ernest Martin writes:

Where rivers came together, or a river intersected with a larger river, this juncture was called the HEAD of the river that joined the other. The word 'HEAD' did not describe the source (the beginning) of a river, but it signified a place where it intersected with another river or flowed into the ocean (Solving the Riddle of Noah's Flood, pp. 10-11).

The Hebrew word used for head is rosh, familiar to Jews from the feast day of Rosh Hashanah which means "Head of the Year" (first day of civil new year). Mickelson's Enhanced Strong's Greek and Hebrew Dictionaries has this to say about this Hebrew word:

H7218 ראש ro'sh (roshe) n-m.

1. the head (as most easily shaken), whether literal or figurative (in many applications, of place, time, rank, etc.) [from an unused root apparently meaning to shake]

KJV: band, beginning, captain, chapter, chief(-est place, man, things), company, end, X every (man), excellent, first, forefront, ((be-))head, height, (on) high(-est part, (priest)), X lead, X poor, principal, ruler, sum, top.

It means prime or beginning. Beginning can mean source. Prime or forefront, on the other hand, could refer to a chief or major junction. Other independent instances where the word rosh is used in relation to rivers are needed to determine the correct ancient usage for the term in this verse.

David Rohl in his book "Legend - The Genesis of Civilisation", like most theologians, suggests that the Garden of Eden was in eastern Turkey near the source of the Tigris and Euphrates. I quote now from his abovementioned book which the research that he has provided which supports that conclusion of his:

Down the Garden Path

The location of the Garden of Eden has intrigued the inquisitive and the religious ever since the Bible was first read. Today, few scholars would be brave or reckless enough to suggest that the land of Eden actually once existed - let alone that it was from this place that civilised humankind first emerged. This approach speaks volumes for the attitudes of modern scholarship where caution and outright scepticism now seem to prevail.

In the century which preceded the Second World War, however, things were rather different. Scholars of the Victorian and Edwardian eras seem to have been rather more adventurous (some might say naive) in their thinking and, because of this, a comprehensive synthesis between the biblical text and archaeology was still a laudable aim. Intuition and reasoned speculation were acceptable tools of the ancient historian - so long as ideas were predominantly based on the available evidence. And much of that evidence came from the Bible which was still a principal source book for ancient history.

Over that hundred-year period many Bible researchers attempted to pinpoint Eden's whereabouts on the basis of the description provided in the book of Genesis. There it states that four rivers flowed out from Eden. In Chapter Two of Genesis these rivers are named as:

- (1) the Gihon - winding through the land of Cush;
- (2) the Pishon - winding through the land of Havilah;
- (3) the Hiddekel = Tigris - flowing east of Ashur;
- (4) the Perath = Euphrates - known to everyone.

The geographical clues have always been there but, in spite of this, the various interpretations of this key passage have differed considerably.

Some scholars looked to their counterparts from the Roman world - the historians and early church fathers such as JOSEPHUS, St. AUGUSTINE and St. JEROME. Even in their time the question of the whereabouts of Eden was a subject for speculation and debate. The Jewish historian, Josephus, identified the 'land of Cush', bordering on Eden with the well-known African kingdom of Kush, south of Egypt. As a result, the first of the four rivers which flowed from Eden - the Gihon (from a root meaning 'to burst forth') - was identified as the river Nile.

This seemed to be supported by the fact that both the Ethiopians and the Egyptian COPTS referred to their river as the 'Geion'. However, the renowned nineteenth-century biblical scholar, Friedrich GESENIUS, observed that this name may have itself derived directly from the Alexandrine exposition of the Genesis text.

In other words the river was named after the Gihon precisely because of the association of African Kush with biblical Cush. The Christian communities of Africa had done exactly what the early church fathers were now doing in identifying the Nile with the Gihon.

The Hiddekel (Arab. Diglat) and Perath (Arab. Firat) were the two well-known rivers of Mesopotamia which the classical authors knew as the Tigris and Euphrates.

Thus a broad view of the primeval earthly paradise was established with the land of Eden covering a vast expanse stretching from ancient Sumer in the north to the Nile valley in the south. It then became a straightforward assumption to identify the second river of Eden - the Pishon (from a root meaning 'to spread') - with one of the other great rivers of the region - the Indus or the Ganges - which flow through Pakistan and India respectively.

Whereas Josephus, Augustine and Jerome conjectured that the Ganges was the biblical Pishon, Gesenius opted for the Indus valley as the location of the biblical land of Havilah. His view was soon supported by the discovery of a high civilisation in this region which dated back to early biblical times.

The heart of Eden was therefore identified as the central Levant and, in particular, the Promised Land itself. This was all very convenient with the cross-roads of three faiths - Jerusalem - recognised within the theology of Judaism (and therefore Christianity) as the gateway into paradise on the final Day of Judgement...

Some scholars chose to narrow down the field of search. Colchis (of Jason and the Argonauts fame) was identified with the land of Havilah, 'rich in gold', partly because of the tale of the golden fleece but also on the grounds that the name of its principal river - the Phasis - bore some resemblance to the biblical Pishon...

Sources for Eden

So far I have introduced you to the crucial passage in the book of Genesis which locates the land of Eden at the sources of four rivers - only two of which we are able to recognise with confidence. As we have seen, there have been many attempts to identify the other rivers of Eden, but none have been particularly convincing. Soon we will be focusing on the true location of the earthly paradise by pinpointing those two rivers in the mountain region of western Iran. But first, what about the name Eden itself?

There is an ancient Mesopotamian word edin (Sumer-ian) or edinu (Akkadian) which first occurs in a short narrative concerning a war between the Mesopotamian city-states of Lagash and Umma. The context suggests that this edin is an open plain situated between the two disputing cities - a sort of wasteland or zone without cultivation. On this basis scholars have understood edin to mean 'open plain' or 'uncultivated land' and thus some recognise in it the etymological origins of the biblical Eden.' The term edin also occurs in an important Sumerian epic tale known as 'Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta' - but more on that later.

An alternative view is to see Eden coming from the Hebrew verbal root adhan meaning 'to be delighted'. Thus Eden would mean something like the 'place of delight'?

Let us deal in detail with the four great rivers in reverse order.

(a) The Perath (Sum. Buranun) is the river known to the Greeks (and subsequently to the modern world) as the Euphrates. To Arabs it is the Firat which, of course, harks back to the biblical Perath. It is the longest river in the Middle East (excluding the African Nile). From its sources near Lake Van (close to Erzerum), the Euphrates flows in a great arc for 2,720 kilometres before disgoring into the Persian Gulf to the south of the modern port of Basra.'

(b) The Hiddekel (Sum. Idiglat) is the Hebrew name of the River Tigris. It descends from the high Zagros mountains to the west and south of Lake Van and Lake Urmia, journeying some 2,033 kilometres to the head of the Persian Gulf. In its upper

reaches there are three major streams which flow into the main channel from the north - the Greater (or Upper) Zab, the Lesser (or Lower) Zab and the Diyala. The principal source rises in a small lake, with the modern name Hazar Golu, which is located about sixty kilometres to the west of Lake Van. ' Much further downstream, just to the north of Basra, the Rivers Tigris and Euphrates come together at the modern town of Kurnah, to form the Shatt el-Arab, before emptying into the 'Southern Sea' as the ancient Mesopotamians called the Gulf. The Tigris is the second great waterway of the Mesopotamian alluvial basin. The word Mesopotamia, of course, is Greek for the land 'between the two rivers' - the mighty Tigris and Euphrates.

(c) The identity of the Gihon is a little more difficult to establish but, as Walker discovered, it has to be identified with the River Araxes whose tributaries rise in the mountains to the north of Lake Van and Lake Urmia (also near Erzerum). From there they flow down to join the main channel (known as the Kur) which empties into the Caspian Sea south of Baku.

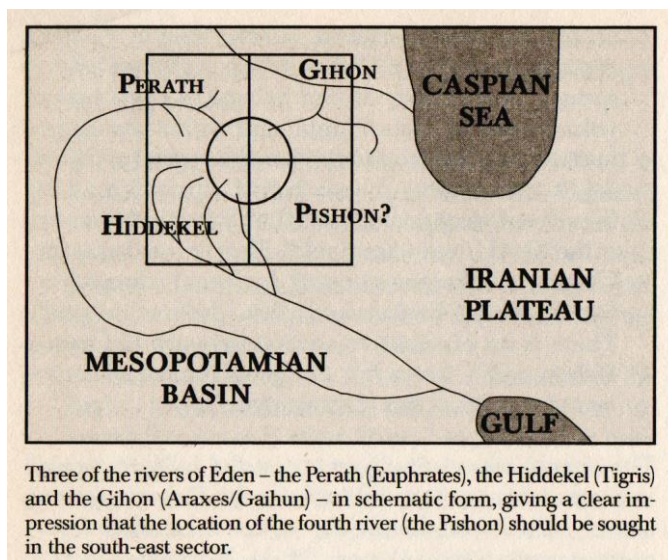
The name Araxes (more recently referred to as the Araks or Aras) and the name Gihon obviously bear no resemblance to each other. Here, then, we seem to have a clear case of a name change which has taken place at some time in the past. So how far back do we have to go to find clues to the original name of the river now known as the Aras? Not very far at all is the answer.

During the Islamic invasion of the Caucasus in the eighth century AD stretches of this third great river were still called the Gaihun. There was, indeed, an inter-mediate stage, before the Gaihun became known simply as the Aras, when the Persians of the last century referred to this major watercourse as the Jichon-Aras.⁶ Interestingly enough, you will find the name Gihon-Aras in early biblical dictionaries and commentaries dating from Victorian times. Today this crucial piece of information has apparently been forgotten and you would be hard pressed to find a modern work on Genesis which links the Gihon with the Aras. So much for modern scholarship!

Victorian scholars not only identified the Aras/ Araxes with the Gihon but also suggested that the classical land of Cossaea, located according to the ancient geographers near Media and the Caspian Sea, was to be identified with the biblical land of Cush through which the Gihon flowed.

(d) Finally, the biblical Pishon is, according to Walker's arguments, the River Uizhun which rises from several springs located near Mount Sahand (a large extinct volcano east of Lake Urmia) and within the Zagros mountain massif around the Kurdish capital of Sanandaj. It outflows into the southern Caspian Sea not far from the modern port of Rast.

The Uizhun is also known as the Kezel Uzun - 'long gold'. Here the ancient name Uizhun, of unknown meaning, has been colloquialised into the familiar Iranian word Uzun ('dark red' or 'gold'). There is no obvious connection between the names Pishon and Uizhun but the geographical overview seems to confirm this identification.



The simple schematic diagram (on the following page) indicates where we should look for the Pishon - having already established the identity of the three other water courses mentioned in Genesis 2:8-14. Working around in anti-clockwise order, we have the Gihon/Gaihun-Aras occupying the north-eastern sector; the Perath/Euphrates flowing out from the north-west; and the Hiddekel/Tigris descending from the mountains in the south-west. This leaves the south-eastern sector as the place to look for the Pishon.

The only great river flowing through this quarter is the Uizhun. Unfortunately, there are no modern topographical features or town-names which appear to retain memories of the biblical name of the river. But, as Walker argued, the name Uizhun itself may hold the key. This is our first opportunity to indulge in the 'name game'.

For a moment let us drop the initial vowel in Uizhun. This leaves us with [...]izhun which, allowing for the usual linguistic variations in vocalisation (sh to s or z and o to u), would be identical with biblical [...]jishon. It appears that, in the Hebrew text of Genesis, the vowel 'U' underwent a conversion to the labial consonant 'P'. Uizhun is thus the original name of the river, stubbornly retained by local tradition into modern times, whilst the Pishon is a biblical corruption of that original name.

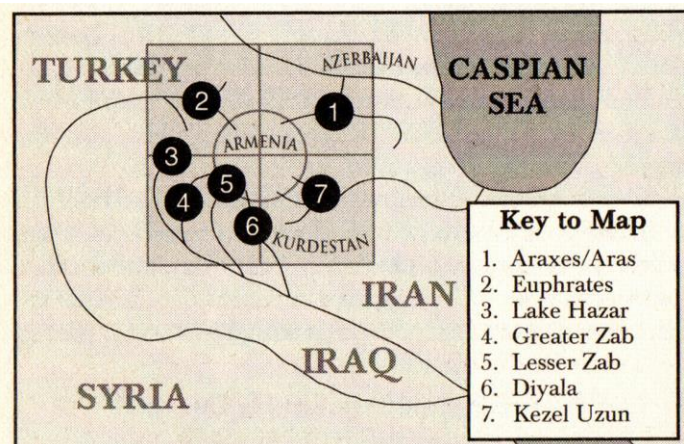
At first glance this may seem a little far fetched, but an example of precisely this kind of fluidity is known. The modern name Pisdeli (ascribed to an ancient occupation mound near the southern shore of Lake Urmia) derives from the ancient Iranian toponym Ush or Uash which was in common use throughout the general region of southern Urmia. Recently discovered contemporary texts confirm that Pisdeli was ancient Uishteri (demonstrating the well-attested changes from tto dand rto lbut, most importantly, also U to P).' So all four of the rivers of Genesis have their headwaters in the Lake Van and Lake Urmia region...

Cush and Havilah

Genesis 2:14 confirms what is already well established - that the River Tigris flows to the east of the heartland of Assyria (biblical Ashur). The very fact that the writer felt the need to record such an obvious geo-political detail should give us the confidence to believe that the other topographical pointers mentioned must also represent the geographical reality of his time. So what of the lands of Cush and Havilah?

Genesis 2:13 describes the River Gihon as winding 'all through the land of Cush'. Are there any classical or modern topographical clues in the general vicinity of the River Aras (formerly Gaihun) which suggest that this region may once have been called the land of Cush?

We have already mentioned Gesenius' observations concerning the land of Cossaea, but there is a much more impressive monument to ancient Cush. To the north of the modern city of Tabriz there is a high mountain pass through which the modern road winds its way up to the towns of Ahar and Meshginshahr. Several of the Aras' tributaries have their headwaters near these Azrail towns. The modern Iranian



The four rivers of Eden flowing out from the four quarters of paradise. Two disgorge into the Persian Gulf whilst the other two empty into the Caspian Sea.

name of the 4,000-metre mountain ridge which separates the valley of Tabriz from Ahar is Kusheh Dagh - the 'Mountain of Kush'.

Genesis 2:11 informs us that the River Pishon winds all through the land of Havilah and that this region is rich in gold.

Although I have been unable to find a general geological report on the river basins of the upper reaches of the Uizhun/Kezel Uzun, it is clear from the isolated information I have gathered that the mineral wealth in the entire region is significant. In recent years gold has been mined in the Ardabil region and a SASSANIAN (third to seventh centuries AD) gold mine has been identified at the village of Zarshuyan near the famous ZOROASTRIAN fire temple of TAKHT-E SULEIMAN. If the Kezel Uzun is the biblical Pishon, then this early gold mine is at the heart of ancient Havilah 'rich in gold'. Interestingly enough, the river which flows down from the extinct volcano of Takht-e Suleiman is called the Zarrineh Rud which means the 'Golden River'. The village name 'Zarshuyan' itself is formed of two Persian words: zar – 'gold' and shuyan – 'washing', strongly suggesting a link to panning for gold in the 'Golden River' (Zarrineh Rud). As we have noted, even the word Uzun in Kezel Uzun can have the meaning 'gold' although its more common colloquial meaning is 'dark red'.

There is no doubt then that the mountain region from which the various sources of the Uizhun/Uzun/Pishon flow could indeed be described as a land once 'rich in gold'. But, according to the author of Genesis, Havilah is also the source of prized stones, in particular 'Shoham stone'. It is not exactly clear which stone this represents. However, recent Iranian research has shown that lapis lazuli, previously thought only to come from Badakhshan in Afganistan, is to be found in the Anguran region, at the heart of the area we have identified as biblical Havilah.

David Rohl has marshalled together some good evidence connecting the names for the Araxes and Kezel Uzun with Gihon and Pishon respectively and some good evidence that Cush and Havilah could be in the region of Armenia.

For the opposing point of view indicating the head is used for the junction nearer to the mouths of these rivers rather than at their sources, I'd like to now quote an article by John Keyser entitled "Newly Discovered – The First River of Eden:

In Genesis 2:10-14 we read: "Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became FOUR RIVERHEADS. The name of the first is PISHON; it is the one which encompasses the whole land of HAVILAH, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good. Bdellium and the onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is GIHON; it is the one which encompasses the whole land of Cush. The name of the third river is HIDEKEL [TIGRIS]; it is the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the EUPHRATES."

While two of the four rivers mentioned in this passage are recognisable today and flow in the same general location as they did before the Flood, the other two have apparently disappeared from the face of the earth.

Great changes occurred in the topography of the earth during the Noachian flood and also at other times in the earth's history since; so it is not that remarkable that some of the pre-Flood geographical features changed or disappeared altogether. As an example of this, scientists have found evidence of floods in Mesopotamia, deep lakes in Africa, grasslands and lakes in Arabia and heavy forest cover along the eastern Mediterranean coast. This provides testimony that a lengthy wet period once enveloped the ancient Near East.

Some researchers, such as Ernest L. Martin, claim that the Karun River (which flows into the Euphrates/Tigris river system) is the Pison, while the Karkheh, which also flows into the Euphrates/Tigris river system, is the Gihon. However, these two rivers are minor in nature and do not fulfill the requirements of the Book of Genesis.

In an attempt to correctly locate and identify the Pishon and the Gihon rivers, we need to closely evaluate Genesis chapter 2.

Garden in Armenia?

Since the Tigris and the Euphrates have their sources in the mountainous region of Armenia, it is usually assumed by theologians today that the Garden of Eden was located in that same area. Therefore, they claim, the Gihon could be the Araxes which flows into the Caspian Sea and the Pison could be the Cyrus which joins with the Araxes.

Smith's Bible Dictionary states: "...most probably, Eden was situated in Armenia, near the origin of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, and in which same region rise the Araxes (Pison of Genesis) and the Oxus (Gihon)" (page 155).

Insight On the Scriptures (Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1988. Page 676) maintains that "the traditional location for the garden of Eden has long been suggested to have been a mountainous area some 225 Km (140 mi) SW of Mount Ararat and a few kilometers S of Lake Van, in the eastern part of modern Turkey." Also: "The Hebrew text points rather, to a location in the mountainous region N of the Mesopotamian plains, the area where the Euphrates and Tigris rivers have their present sources."

Now, is this feasible – is this really so?

While all of this may appear quite reasonable to the average person, the geography is very confusing when this interpretation is applied -- and is actually unintelligible to our modern understanding of the topographical features in the region of Armenia.

Notes Ernest L. Martin: "From what place and what manner did the one major river that supposedly fed the four other rivers have its source? Also, how can one river flowing downstream in a single riverbed (and in a mountainous area) logically be explained as branching off into four main rivers? Only in a delta region near the mouth of a river can one river become four (or more), but the sources of the Euphrates and Tigris today are in the mountains (separated by a mountain ridge) and so most commentators dismiss the idea of most biblical traditionalists as impossible in a geographical sense" (Solving the Riddle of Noah's Flood, pages 7-8).

Martin goes on to say: "In truth, the river system of Moses has such mysterious factors associated with it that most interpreters today throw up their hands and say: 'Only God knows what Moses meant because it doesn't make any sense to us.'"

Do these passages in Genesis have to be so baffling? Can we make sense of these apparent anomalies in the geography of Moses?

The River System of Eden

The main reason the account of the rivers of Eden is so difficult to understand is because the interpreters of the Bible have completely missed the point of what Moses was saying.

Explains Ernest Martin, "In actual fact, they have been reading Moses COMPLETELY BACKWARDS from what he intended. If one looks closely at the matter, Moses was NOT speaking about a major river flowing downstream from some unknown source in

the Land of Eden and then dividing into the rivers Euphrates, Tigris, Pison and the Gihon when it reached the region of the Garden. IN NO WAY! The geographical intention of Moses was directly OPPOSITE from what most people have thought. And this is where the problem has emerged. Moses actually commenced his geographical account of the river system STARTING AT THE PERSIAN GULF and proceeding northward. His direction of interest was UPSTREAM, NOT downstream!" (Ibid., page 8).

Martin goes on to explain that when the Bible talks about the Land of Eden, it is not referring to a small plot of land. It is, in fact, referring to a HUGE region comparable to Old Testament countries such as Assyria, Cush (Ethiopia), Egypt or Canaan! And it was inside this vast territory called Eden that God planted the Garden -- which in itself was quite large. Martin notes that the Garden itself had to be spacious because four rivers could be traced from the Garden into adjacent geographical areas. These regions were NOT small insignificant parcels of land as most people imagine today.

Now let us take note of what Moses said in the Book of Genesis about the river system associated with the Land of Eden and the Garden. "He said that 'a river went out of Eden to water the Garden, and from there [from the garden] it divided and became into four heads' (Gen.2:10). The use of the word 'heads' (Hebrew: rosh) in relation to the four rivers gives the impression to us in the western world that Moses is talking about the HEADstreams or HEADwaters of the four rivers - their sources!"

However, this is NOT what Moses meant! In M'Clintock and Strong's Cyclopaedia (Vol. III, p. 53) we read: "In no instance is rosh (literally, 'head') applied as the SOURCE of a river."

It is very important to understand this point because it is precisely THIS misconception that has given Bible interpreters the most difficulty in trying to comprehend the preflood river system as penned by Moses.

We must realize that in the first ages of the world in Middle Eastern society, THE HEAD OF A RIVER WAS AT ITS MOUTH -- NOT ITS SOURCE!

Let Ernest Martin explain: "Where rivers came together, or a river intersected with a larger river, this juncture was called the HEAD of the river that joined the other. The word 'HEAD' did not describe the source (the beginning) of a river, but it signified a place where it intersected with another river or flowed into the ocean. And so it was with Moses. In his description of this river system, he was simply giving a geographical description of the HEAD (that is, the central 'hub') where the four rivers branched out from one another" (Solving the Riddle of Noah 's Flood, pp. 10-11).

In other words, MOSES' DIRECTION OF THINKING WAS UPSTREAM -- NOT DOWNSTREAM!

A number of scholars, including Professor R.K. Harrison, have understood this. He noted that "probably the most suitable answer concerning the actual location of the Garden of Eden is to think of the river that watered the garden and thereafter became four 'branches' as actually comprising the beginning or juncture GOING UPSTREAM from a point in southern Mesopotamia" (ISBE, new edition, vol. II, p. 17) Emphasis mine).

The bottom line is that Moses understood the four rivers of Eden as coming together to form one river at the Garden - NOT that one river separated to become four rivers! When we understand this concept clearly, then Moses' account becomes sensible. Moses is showing that the Land of Eden had its southern border at the HEAD OF THE PERSIAN GULF and that the Garden itself was located a few miles UPRIVER at the place where the four rivers came together. Explains Ernest Martin:

"The actual river that 'went out of Eden' was the one that left the Garden (where the four rivers became the SOURCE of one major river) and then that one large river ENTERED THE PERSIAN GULF....This shows that Moses was describing his river system going UPSTREAM and the HEAD of the four rivers was where they separated from the one river to provide a vast watershed system that reached to their sources. What we of modern times call the MOUTH of a river, Moses called its HEAD" (Solving the Riddle of Noah 's Flood p.11).

The Ancient Records

When we get these geographical indications of Moses firmly in mind, it becomes quite easy to identify the location of the Land of Eden and the Garden. "Since we are told that the Euphrates and the Tigris were two of the four rivers that came together to form the SOURCE of the one large river that debouched into the Persian Gulf" reminds Ernest Martin, "then the Land of Eden had to have (as its southern boundary) the coastal region of the Persian Gulf" (ibid., p. 12).

The first extra-biblical evidence of the Garden of Eden was discovered by English archaeologist George Smith. When deciphering some Assyrian cuneiform tablets which contained, along with the usual lists of kings and their conquests (and digests of legal codes) several texts of purely literary character included descriptions of the Assyrian version of the Genesis garden. As Smith continued translating the hoard of clay tablets he had unearthed in the library of Assurbanipal at Nineveh, he soon realised that the Assyrian texts were based on an earlier non-biblical literary model; and that the idea of the Garden of Eden, even the word "eden" itself was originally Sumerian.

Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopedia backs this up by stating that "the name Eden is probably connected with EDINN (the Sumerian name for THE PLAIN OF BABYLON), and the author of Genesis may have had in mind the verdant landscape of Mesopotamia" (vol. 8, pp. 311-312).

In the story of Enki and Ninhursag, the Sumerian paradise was actually called TILMUN or DILMUN -- a happy land that was "pure, bright, and fair, where the lion does not make his kill nor the wolf carry off the sheep." S.N. Kramer, in his book *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character*, states that "Dilmun is a land that is 'pure,' 'clean,' and 'bright,' a 'land of the living' which knows neither sickness nor death. What is lacking, however, is the fresh water so essential to animal and plant life. The great Sumerian water-god, ENKI, therefore orders Utu, the sun-god, to fill it with fresh water....Dilmun is thus turned into a divine garden, green with fruit -- laden fields and meadows" (1963. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 147-148).

In this book, Kramer clearly thinks that there are "numerous parallels" between this "divine paradise" myth and the Biblical Garden of Eden. He suggests that Eden, "a garden planted EASTWARD in Eden," may have "originally" been identical with Dilmun, "a land somewhere to the EAST OF SUMER."

The New Bible Dictionary (article, Eden) says that the tablets uncovered by Smith showed this area to be a pleasant place in which neither sickness nor death | were known. Ernest Martin discloses that "it was called 'the land of the living' and the home of the immortals. THIS AREA WAS LOCATED NEAR THE HEAD OF THE PERSIAN GULF."

Researchers Calvin and Delitzsch have argued in favor of Eden's location somewhere NEAR THE HEAD of the Persian Gulf in Lower Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) -- approximately at the place where the Tigris and the Euphrates draw near together. One recent expedition has proposed the site of Hor, in Iraq, where the waters of the Tigris and the Euphrates meet in the marshy delta of the Shatt-al-Arab. This region is about four thousand square miles in area, which makes it about twice the size of the state of Delaware.

Author E.A. Speiser, in search of the Biblical Garden of Eden, refers to DILMUN, "the land of the living," -- which lay near the HEAD of the Persian Gulf. He tries to identify the Pishon and the Gihon with actual rivers not far from the mouths of the Tigris and Euphrates (The Rivers of Paradise. Pp. 175-82 in I Studied Inscriptions Before the Flood, ed. R.S. Hess and D.T. Tsumura. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns).

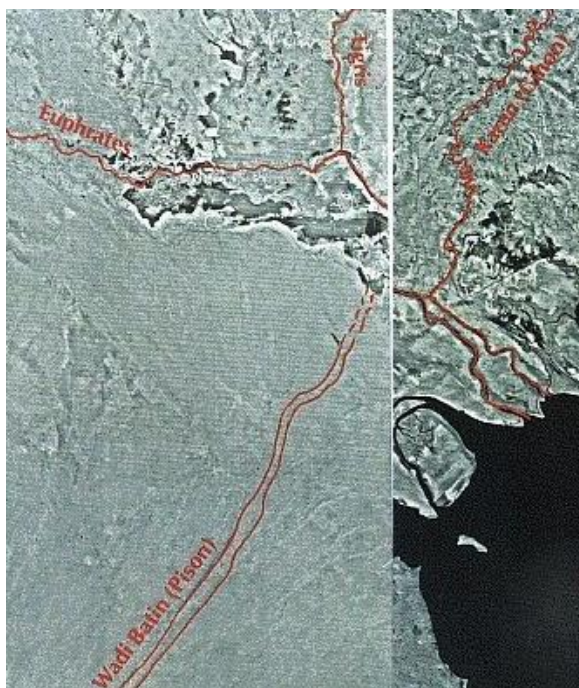
Speiser goes on to say that "the original narrator...has to be visualized as looking FROM THE PERSIAN GULF INLAND" and hence "the 'four heads' (v.10) are meant to be viewed UPSTREAM rather than down."

Whatever the exact location, it is quite clear that the Garden of Eden was located around the northern end of the Persian Gulf. Remarkably, this is exactly where Moses in the book of Genesis said his four rivers came together to form the source of the one river that flowed into the Persian Gulf. Reiterates Ernest Martin: "All of this is easily determined if one realizes that Moses was giving directions about his river system GOING UPSTREAM, DOWNSTREAM!"

An Amazing Discovery!

Boston University scientist Farouk El-Baz had long wondered about the pebbles of granite and basalt that are abundant throughout Kuwait. The problem was that these pebbles are not indigenous to the area. The nearest source for these rocks lies in the Hijaz Mountains -- 650 miles to the west in Saudi Arabia! How did the pebbles reach Kuwait?

Intrigued by this puzzle El-Baz examined photos of the region taken by satellites orbiting the earth, and to his amazement easily detected a dried riverbed (known today as Wadi Al-Batin) cutting through the limestone of north-central Saudi Arabia. He noticed that the riverbed petered out as it reached the sand dunes of central Saudi Arabia.



The Biblical Archaeology Review (July/August 1996) relates that "when he extended the line of the river across the sand dunes...El-Baz noticed that the patterns of the desert's sand dunes 'changed precisely when they crossed this line. To the right (southeast), the dunes appear pockmarked, to the left (northeast) they are striated. Sand patterns like these are created by the circulation of the air in the desert, which in turn is influenced by the topography. Thus, El-Baz realised that something beneath the sand was the source of the variations in the sand. He determined that the river ran underground here, along a fault line" (p. 55).

For a long period of time after the recreation of Genesis 1, the river (in places 3 miles wide) dragged granite and basalt from the Hijaz mountains and dumped the pebbles along its fan-shaped delta, which covered two-thirds of modern Kuwait and part of southern Iraq. In memory of the pebblestrewn region that led him to the river-bed, El-Baz christened his discovery the Kuwait River.

Now the interesting thing is that this ancient river (which gradually dried up sometime after 3,500-2000 B.C.E.) fulfills all the requirements for one of the rivers of Eden! Notice what Genesis 2:11-12 says: "The name of the first [river] is Pishon; it is the one which ENCOMPASSES THE WHOLE LAND OF HAVILAH, WHERE THERE IS GOLD. And the gold of that land is good. BDELLIUM [FRAGRANT RESINS] and the onyx stone are there" (NKJV).

The Land of Havilah

An important key to determine WHERE the river Pishon ran is the phrase "the gold of that land is good." There is only one place in the area that has such a deposit -- the famous site of Mahd edh-Dhahab, the famous "Cradle of Gold." Located about 125 miles south of Medina in Saudi Arabia, huge fissures on the hillside are the remnants of ancient mining that took place as early as 1000 B.C. Adds the Biblical Archaeology Review, "Rediscovered in 1932 by American mining engineer Karl Twitchell, the mine currently produces more than 5 tons of gold a year" (July/August 1996. P. 57).

Another clue in Genesis 2:11-12 is the phrase "Bdellium and the onyx stone are there." The Arabian peninsula is RICH with bdellium and precious stones. In the Bible dictionary Insight On the Scriptures we find the following: "It [Bdellium gum] is obtained from a tree (commiphora africana) found in NW Africa and ARABIA..." (Page 264).

Summing all this up the dictionary goes on to say: "The description of its [Havilah's] resources is considered by some to be TYPICALLY ARABIAN, and it is associated by some WITH A REGION IN ARABIA. On the basis of the Biblical reference to 'the entire land of Havilah,' J. Simons suggests that the term 'Havilah' may take in THE ENTIRE ARABIAN PENINSULA ..."

Further evidence that Havilah was a good portion of the Arabian peninsula is found in Genesis 25:18 and Exodus 15:22: "They dwelt from Havilah as far as SHUR, which is EAST OF EGYPT as you go toward Assyria," and "So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the WILDERNESS OF SHUR."



In our articles Is Jebel Musa the Correct Mt. Sinai? and The Mountain of Moses, we show that the Israelites crossed the Gulf of Aqaba -- not the Gulf of Suez -- and that Mt. Sinai is located in the NW corner of modern-day Saudi Arabia (ancient Midian) -- not the Sinai peninsula. The text of Genesis 25:8 therefore shows that the nomadic Ishmaelites ranged from the land of Midian clear across northern Arabia and into Mesopotamia.

Notes the Insight On the Scriptures (page 1045): Similarly, when King Saul struck down the Amalekites 'from HAVILAH as far as Shur, which is in front of Egypt' (I Sam.15:7), it would appear that the expression 'from Havilah' points to a portion...of the Arabian Peninsula as representing one limit of the territory in which the Amalekites were centered, while the Wilderness of Shur [on the western coast of NW Arabia].. represented the other limit....Thus it would appear that it [Havilah] embraced AT LEAST the NW portion of the Arabian Peninsula and PERHAPS A MUCH LARGER AREA."

With the location of Havilah clearly delineated by the scriptural references and extra Biblical sources, there can be no doubt that the ancient river bed discovered by Farouk El-Baz from the satellite photographs is none other than that once used by the waters of the River Pishon that flowed through the Garden of Eden to the Persian Gulf.

What About the River Gihon?

The other river mentioned by Moses in Genesis 2:13 was the Gihon. Moses mentioned that it was also "circuitous" and encompassed all the LAND OF CUSH. Where did this river flow from?

While most people and most references to "Cush" in the Bible equate Cush with Ethiopia, this is not always the case. Notice what the "Insight On the Scriptures" has to say about the land of Cush:

"The 'land of Cush' referred to at Genesis 2:13 as the land originally encircled by the river Gihon, one of the four heads of the "river issuing out of Eden," is of uncertain location. (Ge. 2:10) The translators of the Septuagint rendered the Hebrew word for "Cush" by the Greek name Ethiopia in this text. The name Cush did become more or less synonymous with ancient Ethiopia at an early time, yet it CANNOT arbitrarily be said that such is necessarily the case at Genesis 2:13. Josephus, following the rendering of the Septuagint, associated the Gihon River with the Nile. (Jewish Antiquities, I, 39 [i, 3])

"However, the Gihon's having had a common source with the Euphrates and the Tigris rivers certainly does not seem to allow for such identification, unless the global Deluge is assumed to have brought about extreme changes in the topography of the area." - Vol. 1, p. 559.

Ernest L. Martin claims that "true to what Moses said, just to the north and east of Babylon were the mountains of the Cassites (mentioned in the early Mesopotamian records and certainly representing the Cushites). This river [the Gihon] also flowed into the Euphrates/Tigris river system in southern Mesopotamia just as Moses stated. It is today called the Karkheh" (Solving the Riddle of Noah's Flood, p. 14).

This idea is echoed by Delitzsch and Speiser who hold that the term "Cush" in Genesis 2:13 is "the eponym of the Kassites" rather than the name for the region of the Ethiopians in Africa and that "only a Kassite context can accord with the phrase 'in the east' of Genesis 2:8." What about it -- does this hold water?

Notes the Bible Dictionary insight On the Scriptures: "Still others suggest that the 'land of Cush' encircled by the Gihon was on the ARABIAN PENINSULA, since the name 'Cushan' is used to parallel 'the land of Midian' at Habakkuk 3:7, Midian being located generally in the vicinity of the Gulf of Aqaba. It is possibly with reference to such an ARABIAN 'CUSH' that Moses' Midianite wife Zipporah is called a 'Cushite.'"

This dictionary then goes on to say that "following the breakup at Babel because of the confusion of language, the main body of Cush's descendants appear to have migrated southward. Whether they reached Africa by first CROSSING INTO THE ARABIAN PENINSULA and then crossing over the Bab al-Mandate or whether they settled initially in Africa AND THEN CROSSED OVER INTO ARABIA is uncertain....The name of Cush's son Seba is associated with E. Africa, WHILE THOSE OF HAVILAH, SABTAH, RAAMAH, AND SABTECA ARE GENERALLY ASSOCIATED WITH REGIONS ON THE ARABIAN PENINSULA."

Under the heading "Cushan" this same dictionary relates the following information: "Cushan appears at Habakkuk 3:7 as paralleling 'the land of Midian' and hence evidently is another name for Midian or relates to a neighboring country. As shown in the article CUSH (No. 2), SOME DESCENDANTS OF CUSH APPEAR TO HAVE

SETTLED ON THE ARABIAN PENINSULA; AND THE NAME KUSI OR KUSHIM WAS ANCIENTLY USED TO DESCRIBE CERTAIN ARABIC PEOPLES OF THAT REGION" (pp. 560-561).

Smith's Bible Dictionary adds that "the Cushites appear to have spread along tracts extending from the higher Nile to the Euphrates and Tigris. History affords many traces of this relation of Babylon, ARABIA and Ethiopia" (article "Cush", p. 131).

While Ernest Martin's location of Cush "to the north and east of Babylon" and that "the mountains of the Cassites" represent the Cushites is a possibility, all the evidence points to the "Cush" mentioned in Genesis 2:13 as being somewhere ON THE ARABIAN PENINSULA.

I have no doubt that sometime in the future an astute scientist like Farouk El-Baz or the probing eye of another orbiting satellite will uncover the course of the ancient River Gihon in the land of modern-day Saudi Arabia.

One website I ran across (<http://www.israel-a-history-of.com/biblical-garden-of-edan.html>) had this to say about the Wadi Al-Batin confirming what is mentioned in the last article:

The Wadi al Batin has enticed scholars for decades as being a possible candidate for the Pishon River, thus connecting Eden with Havilah. The Wadi al Batin breaks to the southwest of the Persian Gulf, along the borders of Kuwait, and into Saudi Arabia. Once in Saudi Arabia, the Wadi is swallowed by vast and massive sand dunes. It was here the Wadi al Batin was thought to have ceased to exist.

However, satellite images have recently produced photographs of a stunning nature. The Wadi al Batin actually continues to the southwest. Pictures revealed dried up river beds buried beneath the massive expanse of sand dunes running through the entire length of Saudi Arabia! The Wadi al Batin emerges as the Wadi Rimah. The Wadi Rimah continues up stream about 80



miles before it splits in two. One branch verges to the northwest, the other to the southwest. These were all once part of the same river system.

The southwest branch of the Wadi Rimah actually continues to the area of the Mahadh Dhahab gold mine! This is in exact agreement with Scripture.

In a History Channel documentary called "The Garden of Eden" that I have one theory shown on it suggests that sea level was much lower before Noah's Flood and that the Persian Gulf was dry and above sea level. This theory places Eden where the Persian Gulf is today with the major river that went through the Garden exiting into ocean where the Straits of Hormuz are today.

The Persian Gulf is relatively shallow averaging 150 feet in depth so this theory is quite plausible. This theory identifies Eden being where the Persian Gulf is today. There are some legends that speak of Eden being located on the island of Bahrain half way down the Persian Gulf.



In Antiquities of the Jews Josephus says that the Pishon was the Ganges and the Gihon was the Nile which implies conveniently that the Garden of Eden was in Israel or even in Jerusalem itself.

There is some legendary evidence in favour of this possible viewpoint. The Gihon spring in Jerusalem was named after one of the rivers of Eden. There is also a legend that speaks of the skull of Adam being buried on the Mount of Olives and the children of Israel crossed the Jordan near the “city of Adam” (Joshua 3:16) which is east of Jerusalem.

Roy Schulz in his book “Exploring Ancient History - The First 2500 Years” writes the following:

The garden of Eden was in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Can one find in geological history, this geographical description of the river system of Palestine and the environs of Jerusalem? Jewish geologists, unaware of what they have discovered, have actually presented a simple sketch of the astounding evidence (on page 35 of E. A. Speiser's "At the Dawn of Civilization") in a geologic map of Palestine. Immediately to the east of Jerusalem in the strata labeled "upper Cretaceous" may be seen in outline the area through which the waters from the garden of Eden flowed. Three of the four parts of the vast stream flowed toward the north and east, the other moved southward. The present Jordan valley and dead sea were not then formed. (Compendium, Volume II. pp. 316-317).

We know great topographic changes have occurred in the past in ancient Israel and some of those occurred at the time of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The plain where the Dead Sea is today we are told was a well-watered plain.

And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* all well watered—before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah—like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you come to Zoar (Genesis 13:10).

Velikovsky felt that the Great Rift Valley was formed then and that before this time the Jordan flowed through the Jezreel Valley into the Mediterranean (<http://www.varchive.org/itb/rift.htm>). That said, the existence of fossil rivers flowing from the vicinity of Jerusalem doesn't prove it was the location of the Garden of Eden.

The Garden, Moses wrote, was planted “**eastward** in Eden” (Genesis 2:8). Is Moses here telling us that the Garden was due east of where he was writing his account from? The top of the Persian Gulf is due east of Mount Sinai.

Even given major topographical changes following the Flood, Josephus' idea of the Nile being the Gihon and the Ganges in India being the Pishon is rather far-fetched due to the enormous distances between these two rivers and the different directions of the Nile and the other rivers.

I am partial to the idea of the Garden of Eden being in the area of Jerusalem as it would add to why Jerusalem is so special to God but I personally find the evidence not convincing enough. Neither the sources nor the end of the Tigris and Euphrates are anywhere near the land of Israel.

One thing to bear in mind, though, is that the scriptures do not tell us how big Eden was and so it is possible that Israel could be within Eden, even if the Garden in its east is located near the top or middle of the Persian Gulf.

The Garden of Eden



So which view of the location of the Garden of Eden is correct? Was the Garden of Eden located near the source of the Tigris and Euphrates or was it near the mouth of these rivers or somewhere else?

My personal humble opinion is that it was, most likely, near to or south of the junction of the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers, possibly well south in the middle of the Persian Gulf which may have been dry at the time with a great river flowing through its midst fed by the four great rivers mentioned in Genesis 2.

Look at any river system in the world and you find rivers come together near the end of the tributary river, not near their source. Rivers connect when they empty into another river at their end not near their source. Today there is no river that connects the Tigris, Euphrates and the other two rivers identified by David Rohl.

Such a river through Eden would have to be a special exception to natural law to split into four rivers near their source and go off and become four great major rivers.

While that is possible, it is more likely the word head as used by Moses here means the major junction where tributaries empty into a greater river. The Garden of Eden, where God created our first parents, Adam and Eve, was, in my humble opinion, located somewhere near the top or middle of the Persian Gulf.