



## **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' (1 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.