

Contents of Chapter 1 Jerusalem – The Center of the Garden of Eden

Where Was the Garden of Eden?	2
The Heavenly Pattern for the Garden of Eden	3
The Garden of Eden Located in the East	6
Mesopotamia and Turkey Do Not Fit the Biblical Description	8
The Four Rivers/Headwater Sources of Eden	9
Earthquakes Change River Courses, Submerge Rivers, and Bring Underground Rivers to the Surface	12
Genesis 2:6 Reveals an Underground Water Source	13
The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers	15
The Gihon River	16
The Pishon River	19
Biblical Prophecies about a River Flowing from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea and Mediterranean Sea	21
Psalms 46 and 124 Speak of a River Flowing from Jerusalem	23
Ezekiel Links the Garden of Eden to the Holy Mountain of God in Jerusalem	26
Recent Discovery of an Ancient Underground River in India	27
Jerusalem and Israel's Limestone Deposits Provide the Right Conditions for Underground Rivers	27
Update: Recent Discovery of "the Largest Underground River Ever Found in Israel"	31
Earthquake Will Open Water Channel Under the Temple Mount	32
Jerusalem - The Center of the Garden of Eden and Promised Land	34
The Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden	37
The Heavenly Jerusalem and the Land of Eden	38
"Gan Eden" Signifies God's Protection of Jerusalem	41
Creation and God's Master Plan of Redemption	42
God Placed Jerusalem at the Center of the World	44
Additional Documentation – The Discovery of the Underground Saraswati River in India	50
References	55

The Rod of an Almond Tree in God's Master Plan (Online Edition)

by Peter and Christie Michas with Robert Vander Maten

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Messengers of Messiah, 7231 Boulder Avenue #164, Highland, CA 92346 USA

Tel. 909-425-8751 – www.messengers-of-messiah.org - christiem@messengers-of-messiah.org

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Chapter 1

Jerusalem – The Center of the Garden of Eden

The Land of Israel is situated in the center of the world, and Jerusalem in the center of the Land of Israel, and the Holy Temple in the center of Jerusalem... (Midrash Tanhuma, Kedoshim 10).¹

WHERE WAS THE GARDEN OF EDEN?

The Garden of Eden is generally thought to have been located in Mesopotamia, the land of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. According to Jewish legend,² the Garden of Eden was located in the Land of Israel, Arabia, or the center of Africa.³ According to *The World Book Encyclopedia*:

¹ "Towards the Eternal Center: Israel, Jerusalem, and the Temple", Online Exhibit at JTS, <http://www.jtsa.edu/prebuilt/exhib/etercen/index.shtml>

² A legend is "a story handed down for generations among a people and popularly believed to have a historical basis" (*Webster's New World Dictionary*). The legendary city of Troy was proven to be an actual city. Legends often contain a core of truth.

³ Ellen Frankel and Betty Platkin Teutsch, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols*, p. 45.

A river flowed from the garden, and divided into four streams. Two of these are supposed to be the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The other two, called Pison [Pishon] and Gihon, have not been identified, but may be the Nile River and the Persian Gulf.⁴

According to *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, some have identified the Pishon and Gihon with the Indus River in India and the Nile River in Egypt.⁵

The Word of God provides major clues that we believe reveal and confirm the exact center of the Garden of Eden. Its precise location is central to God's Master Plan of Redemption from the Book of Genesis to the Book of Revelation, fitting God's prophetic plan in every detail.

THE HEAVENLY PATTERN FOR THE GARDEN OF EDEN

According to Genesis 2:8, God planted a garden "toward the east" in Eden:

And the LORD God planted A GARDEN TOWARD THE EAST, IN EDEN; and there He placed the man whom He had formed (Genesis 2:8, emphasis added).

According to Malbim:

Mi-kedem may mean 'in the east' — and it may mean 'prior to.' In respect of the last, our Sages have made the statement (Pesachim 54a): Seven things were created prior to the creation of the world... [including] Gan Eden [the Garden of Eden], since it says, *Mi-kedem*. The two meanings can be thought of as corresponding, respectively, to a spatial reference direction and a temporal one (or rather: one that is independent of time, being that 'prior to world' is tantamount, according to our current understanding, to: unrelated to temporal duration). Consistent with this ambiguity in meaning — which is taken as

⁴ *The World Book Encyclopedia*, Vol. 6, pp. 47-48.

⁵ Merrill C. Tenney (Editor), *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 2, p. 200.

implying that to both meanings must correspond aspects of reality — is the statement: *'JUST AS GOD CREATED A GAN EDEN ON EARTH... HE CREATED A GAN EDEN ON HIGH'* (emphasis added).⁶

The Word of God confirms that there exists a Heavenly Garden of Eden, also called Paradise, as well as an Earthly Garden of Eden.

'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of THE TREE OF LIFE, WHICH IS IN THE PARADISE OF GOD' (Revelation 2:7, emphasis added.)

And just as there is a Tree of Life in the Heavenly Garden of Eden, there was a Tree of Life in the Earthly Garden of Eden. Therefore, we can see that the Heavenly reality forms the pattern for the Earthly reality. The Garden of Eden on Earth was God's dwelling place where He directly communed with Adam and Eve until their sin spiritually separated them (and all humankind) from their Creator (Genesis 3).

And like the Garden of Eden, the Earthly Sanctuary where God dwelled was based upon the specific pattern of the Heavenly Sanctuary. The Word of God confirms this Heavenly pattern for the Tabernacle, the portable sanctuary where God dwelled among the Israelites during the period after the Exodus and before they entered the Promised Land. God gave specific instructions to Moses for the construction of the Tabernacle:

"And let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I am going to show you, as THE PATTERN OF THE TABERNACLE AND THE PATTERN OF ALL ITS FURNITURE, just so you shall construct it" (Exodus 25:8-9, emphasis added).

"Then you shall erect THE TABERNACLE ACCORDING TO ITS PLAN which you have been shown in the mountain" (Exodus 26:30, emphasis added).

⁶ Zvi Faier (Translator), *Beginning and Upheaval*, pp. 197-198.

This pattern was retained in the Temple once it was built in Jerusalem as the permanent dwelling place of the LORD God. The Heavenly Tabernacle/Temple was revealed to the apostle John:

And THE TEMPLE OF GOD WHICH IS IN HEAVEN WAS OPENED; AND THE ARK OF HIS COVENANT APPEARED IN HIS TEMPLE [SANCTUARY], and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm (Revelation 11:19, emphasis added).

After these things I [John] looked, and the TEMPLE [SANCTUARY] OF THE TABERNACLE OF TESTIMONY IN HEAVEN was opened (Revelation 15:5, emphasis added).

Messiah Yeshua⁷ (Christ Jesus) entered the Heavenly Sanctuary as the High Priest of the New Covenant:

Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary, and in THE TRUE TABERNACLE, WHICH THE LORD PITCHED, NOT MAN (Hebrews 8:1-2, emphasis added).

God chose Jerusalem as His dwelling place on Earth. The Earthly Jerusalem is also based upon the Heavenly Jerusalem. In a vision, God showed the apostle John the New Jerusalem that will come down out of Heaven. The Word of God tells us that the New Jerusalem is the Tabernacle (dwelling place) of God:

And I [John] saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw THE HOLY CITY,

⁷ We use the Hebrew name of the Messiah, *Yeshua*, which is the shortened form of the name *Yehoshua* (Joshua), meaning “The LORD’s Salvation” or “The LORD is Salvation”.

NEW JERUSALEM, COMING DOWN OUT OF HEAVEN FROM GOD, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “BEHOLD, THE TABERNACLE OF GOD IS AMONG MEN, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them (Revelation 21:1-3, emphasis added).

The Word of God shows us that what is in Heaven forms the pattern for what is in the Earth, especially when it comes to God’s dwelling place on Earth. God first dwelled on Earth in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. The place God chose to plant the Garden of Eden is central to God’s Master Plan of Redemption in the most precise and profoundly prophetic way.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN LOCATED IN THE EAST

According to the Word of God, the Garden of Eden was located “in the east” (NIV), “toward the east” (NASB, Amplified), “eastward” (KJV):

Now the LORD God had planted a garden **IN THE EAST, IN EDEN**; and there he put the man he had formed (Genesis 2:8, NIV, emphasis added).

And the LORD God planted a garden **TOWARD THE EAST, IN EDEN**; and there He placed the man whom He had formed (Genesis 2:8, NASB, emphasis added).

And the LORD God planted a garden **EASTWARD IN EDEN**; and there he put the man whom he had formed (Genesis 2:8, KJV, emphasis added).

From what perspective is the Word of God written in order to ascertain what “the east” refers to? God inspired Moses to record His Words in the Book of Genesis during the period of time immediately following the Israelite Exodus out of Egypt. Therefore, it is logical to assume that the reference point for “the east” be taken in the context of the Israelite Exodus. Significantly, the Israelites left Egypt and journeyed eastward toward the Land of Canaan, the land God had

promised to the descendants of Abraham, the land that became known as Israel.

According to *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*:

QEDEM (“EAST”) already occurs in the Egyp.[tian] *Romance of Sinuhe* (c. 1900 B.C.) as A LAND NEAR CANAAN where Bedouins were seen. In Genesis 29:1 Jacob journeyed to the territory of the people of the E in Paddan-aram, northern Mesopotamia. Judges 6-8 includes ... Arabs who fought Israel with the Midianites and Amalekites. (See Jer 49:28; Ezek 25:4, 10.) Job 1:3 describes Job as the “greatest of the children of the east.” Some think that NORTHERN ARABIA, EDOM, OR MOAB PROVIDES THE SETTING OF THE BOOK, A LOCATION WHICH FITS ISAIAH 11:14 also (emphasis added).⁸

With regard to the mention of northern Arabia, it is significant to note that the Word of God tells us that Mount Sinai, where the Israelites received the Ten Commandments, is located in Arabia (Galatians 4:25). The actual site has been discovered in northern Arabia.⁹

The land of Midian was located east and southeast of Canaan.¹⁰ Moses fled from Pharaoh to Midian and spent forty years there before returning by God’s command to lead the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt. While tending Jethro’s flocks, Moses came to the mountain of God, Horeb, also called Mount Sinai (Exodus 3:1).

Isaiah 11:14 refers to the “sons of the east”, in particular, Edom, Moab, and Ammon:

And they will swoop down on the slopes of the Philistines on the west; Together they will plunder the sons of the east; They will possess Edom and Moab; And the sons of Ammon will be subject to them (Isaiah 11:14).

⁸ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 2, p. 180.

⁹ Robert Cornuke and David Halbrook, *In Search of the Mountain of God: The Discovery of the Real Mount Sinai*. Larry Williams, *The Mountain of Moses: The Discovery of Mount Sinai*.

¹⁰ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 4, p. 220.

Isaiah is referring to the enemies of Israel. The Philistines lived in the western coastal plain of Canaan (Israel). Edom was located south of the Dead Sea, Moab and Ammon east of the Dead Sea. These are areas located within and to the south and east of what is today Israel.

From the above discussion and references, we can see that the lands of the east are closely associated with the Land of Israel. Considering that Israel, specifically Jerusalem, is the focal point of God's Master Plan of Redemption, this is no coincidence.

The designation of Israel as a land of the East is retained to this day. Israel is located in the region referred to as the Near East (eastern Mediterranean, including Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, and the Arabian Peninsula) in contrast to the Far East (including China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, etc.). The Middle East originally referred to the region between the Near East and Far East. Today this designation generally includes Near Eastern countries as well as the typical Middle Eastern countries such as Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, etc.

After the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, their son Cain settled in an area east of Eden:

Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, EAST OF EDEN (Genesis 4:16, emphasis added).

The location of the land of Nod is unknown. However, the Word of God tells us that Cain built a city (Genesis 4:17). Possibly the oldest city in the world is Jericho, located in Israel and dating to 8000-7000 B.C. In contrast, the oldest Mesopotamian civilization, Sumer, dates back to 3300-3000 B.C. The Mesopotamian civilizations such as Babylon emerged after Noah's Flood.

MESOPOTAMIA AND TURKEY DO NOT FIT THE BIBLICAL DESCRIPTION

Another fact against the Garden of Eden being located in Mesopotamia is that it does not fit the Biblical description. The Word of God describes four rivers rising out of one river, not four rivers flowing into one river (Genesis 2:10-14).

According to *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*:

For the claim seems irrefutable that the picture given in [Genesis 2] vv. 10-14 is that of a single strong stream issuing forth ... and then subdividing into four branches ... No comparable situations that may be discovered correspond geographically to what is depicted here. The reverse often occurs that a number of streams in confluence combine to make one stream. THE SUBDIVIDING OF A STREAM IS, AS FAR AS IS KNOWN, TO BE FOUND ONLY IN DELTAS, WHICH IS NOT WHAT IS BEING DESCRIBED HERE. TO TRY TO MAKE OF THE PISHON AND GIHON TWO OF THE CANALS THAT IN DAYS OF OLD CONNECTED THE TIGRIS AND THE EUPHRATES DOES NOT SEEM A HAPPY SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM. THESE CANALS ORIGINATED AT A MUCH LATER DATE (Vol. 2, p. 200, emphasis added).

Turkey has also been proposed as the location of the Garden of Eden, but this does not fit the Biblical description of the Gihon and Pishon rivers, which as we shall see were located in the areas of what are today southern Egypt/northern Sudan and Saudi Arabia respectively.

For all of the reasons we have presented, our search leads us to the Land of Israel as the place of the Garden of Eden.

THE FOUR RIVERS/HEADWATER SOURCES OF EDEN

Genesis 2:10-14 provides specific information regarding the four rivers of Eden:

Now A RIVER FLOWED OUT OF EDEN to water the garden; and FROM THERE IT DIVIDED AND BECAME FOUR RIVERS [LITERALLY “HEADS”]. The name of the first is Pishon; it flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there. And the name of the second river is Gihon; it flows around the whole land of Cush. And the name of the third river is Tigris; it flows

east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates (Genesis 2:10-14, emphasis added).

The first key point is that a river flowed OUT OF EDEN, NOT NECESSARILY MEANING OUT OF THE GARDEN ITSELF. We believe that Eden included a larger territory that we refer to as the Land of Eden. The Garden of Eden was located within the Land of Eden.

The phrase “from THERE it divided” is usually interpreted as referring to the river flowing directly out of the Garden of Eden. Thus, the interpretation is that a river flowed out from the Garden of Eden, where it divided into four other rivers. For this reason, people are looking for the Garden of Eden in a place where four rivers are located, two of those rivers being the Tigris and Euphrates. And that is why so many people think that the Garden of Eden must have been located in Mesopotamia, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

However, “THERE” may not refer to the Garden of Eden but to the Land of Eden instead. If this is the case, the river flowed out of the Land of Eden, where it divided into four rivers or headwater sources BEFORE any of those water sources reached the Garden of Eden.

We believe that we find an essential clue to solving the mystery in the *ArtScroll Tanach Series* commentary for Genesis 2:10.

Hirsch comments that some criticize the geographical description in this verse because it has been taken to refer to a river which divides into four streams, and no such river has been found... But ראשִׁים [RASHIM] DOES NOT MEAN BRANCHES BUT FOUR SEPARATE HEADS. THE RIVER STARTS AS A SINGLE STREAM... IT EVIDENTLY DISAPPEARS INTO THE GROUND AND SPRINGS UP AGAIN IN FOUR DIFFERENT LOCATIONS AS FOUR SEPARATE RIVERS (emphasis added).¹¹

¹¹ Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz (Translator), *Genesis*, ArtScroll Tanach Series, Vol. I (a), p. 96.

If Hirsch is correct, the river flowing out of Eden becomes an underwater headwater source and at four points removed from the original source emerges as four sources of flowing water. We also need to consider the possibility that not all four of the water sources may have emerged at the surface, but perhaps continued to flow underground, including to the Garden of Eden.

Significantly, the Hebrew word *rashim* may be translated variously as “rivers”, “heads”, and “headwaters”, as we see in different English versions of the Bible:

Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four RIVERS [*rashim*] (Genesis 2:10, NASB, emphasis added; *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible* notes the literal meaning “heads”).

And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four HEADS [*rashim*] (Genesis 2:10, KJV, emphasis added).

Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and there it divided and became four [RIVER] HEADS [*rashim*] (Genesis 2:10, Amplified, emphasis added).

A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four HEADWATERS [*rashim*] (Genesis 2:10, NIV, emphasis added).

The English translations show the various possible meanings of the word *rashim* and this needs to be taken into consideration in looking for the main river and four connected sources of water. Therefore, we are looking for FOUR SEPARATE RIVERS/HEADWATER SOURCES THAT SHARED A COMMON HEADWATER SOURCE SOMEWHERE WITHIN THE LAND OF EDEN, NOT THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

EARTHQUAKES CHANGE RIVER COURSES, SUBMERGE RIVERS, AND BRING UNDERGROUND RIVERS TO THE SURFACE

We also realize that changes in the surface features of the land may have altered and obscured the original flow and pattern of these rivers and headwater sources. Geologists verify that many alterations in the earth's surface features have occurred over time, sometimes very rapidly with dramatic transformations of the landscape.

In this regard, earthquakes can change the course of rivers and even cause a river to become submerged, as well as causing a submerged river to be brought back to the surface. A good example of this is the 26 January 2001 Indian earthquake that resulted in an underground river reemerging at the surface. According to an article published in the 15 February 2001 issue of *Nature*, titled "Indian earthquake raised underground rivers":

The 26 January [2001] EARTHQUAKE that killed thousands in Gujarat state BROUGHT BURIED WATER CHANNELS TO THE SURFACE of the drought-ridden Rann of Kutchh district, researchers report. The new water sources were revealed by images from Indian remote-sensing satellites that pass over the country every five days. ... Janardhan Negi, a senior scientist at the National Geophysical Research Institute in Hyderabad, says THE EMERGENCE OF OLD RIVER CHANNELS IS NOT SURPRISING, AS THE AREA USED TO BE A DELTA OF THE RIVER INDUS BEFORE IT WAS SUBMERGED DURING AN EARTHQUAKE IN 1819 (emphasis added).¹²

Israel, the Mediterranean Sea region, and the Middle East are very seismically active. The Jordan River Valley in Israel is part of the Great Rift Valley that runs north to south about 4,000 miles from Syria (north of Israel) to central Mozambique in East Africa. This rift is located on the northeastern edge of the African tectonic plate; to the east is the Arabian plate; to the north is the Eurasian plate. The movement of these massive tectonic plates resulting in major earthquakes could easily cause major changes in the earth's surface features, including changing

¹² <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v409/n6822/full/409752a0.html> - *Nature*, "News in Brief".

the courses of the four rivers/headwaters of Eden.

The prophet Zechariah describes a future earthquake splitting the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:4). As a result, water will flow out of Jerusalem into the Mediterranean Sea and into the Dead Sea (Zechariah 14:8). The prophet Ezekiel tells us that the flow of water comes from under the ground of the Temple Mount (Mount Moriah), and that the water flowing from it will turn the saltwater Dead Sea into a freshwater lake teeming with life (Ezekiel 47:1-12).

We will show why we believe these future rivers flowing out of Jerusalem are connected to the Gihon and Pishon rivers of the Garden of Eden.

GENESIS 2:6 REVEALS AN UNDERGROUND WATER SOURCE

In Genesis 2:6, we find one of the most important keys to understanding the unknown water sources of the Garden of Eden:

But a mist [FLOW] USED TO RISE FROM THE EARTH AND WATER THE WHOLE SURFACE OF THE GROUND (Genesis 2:6, NASB, emphasis added).

but STREAMS CAME UP FROM THE EARTH AND WATERED THE WHOLE SURFACE OF THE GROUND (Genesis 2:6, NIV, emphasis added).

The Hebrew word אֶד (*ed*) is translated “mist” in most English versions of the Bible. However, as noted in *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible*, this word can also be translated “flow”. The NIV version translates the word as “streams”, conveying the meaning of flowing water. Clearly, the Word of God describes water flowing from an underground source.

According to an article written by Lawrence E. Stager in *Biblical Archaeology Review*:

the soil is watered not by rainfall but by the flow of freshwater that rises from below: “A flow would well up from the ground and water the whole surface of

the soil” (Genesis 2:6).³ God then plants a garden in Eden... (E.A. Speiser’s translation, in *Genesis*, Anchor Bible 1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), p. 14).¹³

This meaning is also confirmed by the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) that was used by Greek-speaking Jews at the time of Messiah Yeshua. The Hebrew word is translated into the Greek word *πηγη* (*pege*).

According to *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*:

PEGE USUALLY REFERS TO A SPRING OF WATER (Jn. 4:6 [2x]; Jas. 3:11; Rev. 8:10; 14:7; 16:4), though it can include any flow of liquid. In Mk 5:29 *pege* refers to the woman’s *flow* of blood that miraculously stops after the woman touches Jesus’ [Yeshua’s] garment [*tallit*, prayer shawl] (emphasis in capitals added; information in brackets added).¹⁴

Significantly, the Word of God describes this flow of water from an underground source in the context of God forming man from the dust of the ground, planting a garden, and placing the man He had formed in it:

but STREAMS CAME UP FROM THE EARTH AND WATERED THE WHOLE SURFACE OF THE GROUND—the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. NOW THE LORD GOD HAD PLANTED A GARDEN IN THE EAST, IN EDEN; AND THERE HE PUT THE MAN HE HAD FORMED (Genesis 2:6-8, NIV, emphasis added).

According to *The Torah Anthology*:

¹³ Lawrence E. Stager, “Jerusalem as Eden”, *BAR*, May/June 2000, p. 37.

¹⁴ William D. Mounce, *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*, p. 678; *Strong’s Concordance* # 4077.

... the Pishon fed into the Gichon [Gihon] River, which followed a subterranean course into the Red Sea.¹⁵

Whether or not it is the case that the Pishon fed into the Gihon is uncertain. But the main point here is that the Pishon and Gihon could have been underground (subterranean) water sources rather than surface rivers. This understanding is consistent with the Biblical description of an underground water source in the context of the Garden of Eden. So, while the Tigris and Euphrates rivers are surface rivers, we must also consider underground water sources to reveal the mystery of the Garden of Eden.

We believe that the Pishon and Gihon flow underground today and may have flowed underground since the time of Adam and Eve. Whether or not they have ever flowed at the surface is unknown. Either way, we believe that the Pishon and Gihon shared the same headwater source as the Tigris and Euphrates, located in eastern Turkey, north of Israel.

THE TIGRIS AND EUPHRATES RIVERS

The Word of God clearly identifies the Tigris and Euphrates as two rivers of Eden:

And the name of the third river is Tigris; it flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates (Genesis 2:14).

There is no problem correctly identifying these two rivers:

The **Euphrates River** is the western of the two great rivers that define Mesopotamia, the other being the Tigris River. **THE TWO RIVERS HAVE THEIR SOURCES WITHIN 50 MILES OF EACH OTHER IN EASTERN TURKEY** and travel southeast through northern Syria and Iraq to the head of the Persian Gulf (emphasis added).

¹⁵ *The Torah Anthology*, Vol. 5, p. 178.

They form a great river system ... of the Middle East.

The Euphrates ... is formed by the confluence of two branches, the Karasu River, (which rises in the Armenian Highlands of today's eastern Turkey north of Erzurum) and the Murat River, (which issues from an area southwest of Mount Ararat, north of Lake Van).

Though less than 30 percent of its drainage basin is in Turkey, it receives approximately 94 percent of its water while within Turkish highlands.¹⁶

Both rivers originate in eastern Turkey, flow southeastward, and join in southern Iraq before emptying into the Persian Gulf. The Euphrates River (about 1700 miles long) and the Tigris River (about 1180 miles long) form the extensive and historic Tigris-Euphrates River System, which is the major portion of what has been referred to as the "Fertile Crescent".

In ancient times, this crescent-shaped region stretched from the eastern Mediterranean Sea, including the Jordan River valley, to the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to the Persian Gulf. This extremely fertile area is also known as the "Cradle of Civilization" because it was the birthplace of the world's oldest known civilizations such as Sumer and Babylon. This area includes parts of what are now Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq.

THE GIHON RIVER

Unlike the Tigris and Euphrates, the locations of the Gihon and Pishon are unknown and have been the subject of much speculation.

And the name of the second river is Gihon; it flows around the whole land of Cush (Genesis 2:13).

¹⁶ <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Euphrates>

According to *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*:

It would appear that originally *Kush* [Cush] referred to a piece of territory lying between the second and the third cataracts¹⁷ of the Nile.¹⁸

Today the Aswan High Dam is located at the First Cataract of the Nile in southern Egypt. The Second Cataract is now submerged under Lake Nasser in southern Egypt.¹⁹ The Third Cataract is in northern Sudan, south of Egypt. Therefore, the Gihon River has a connection to the area of what is today southern Egypt or northern Sudan.

For this reason, some identify the Gihon with the Nile River. But the Nile does not share a common headwater source with the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in order to fit the Biblical description. However, the Gihon that shared a common headwater source with the Tigris and Euphrates may have had a connection to the land of Cush in another way.

According to the first-century Jewish historian Josephus, there was a popular belief at his time that an underground river joined the Nile River and the Sea of Galilee. An unusual fish, a catfish, scientific name *Clarias lazera* (Arabic Barbut, Hebrew Sfamnun, meaning Mustached Fish), may provide evidence of this link:

This is an unusual fish, the sole representative of its African family. It is the largest of the original fish in the lake [Sea of Galilee], growing to a length of 1,25 [1.25] meters [4.10 feet], and may weigh up to 10 kilogram [sic] [22 pounds]. ... Josephus Flavius refers to the catfish by its Greek name of “Korakinos”, meaning Water Raven; he notes that it is found in the Nile. In his opinion, this fact supports the popular belief that there was AN

¹⁷ “The **cataracts of the Nile** are shallow lengths (or **white water rapids**) of the **Nile River**, between **Aswan** and **Khartoum**, where the surface of the water is broken by many small boulders and stones protruding out of the river bed, as well as many rocky **islets**. In some places, these stretches are punctuated by **whitewater** and are perhaps well characterized as **rapids**, while at others the water flow is smoother, but still shallow.”

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cataracts_of_the_Nile

¹⁸ Vol. 1, p. 1047.

¹⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cataracts_of_the_Nile

UNDERGROUND CONNECTION BETWEEN THE NILE AND THE LAKE
[SEA OF GALILEE], AND THAT IT EMERGED FROM BELOW THE
GROUND AT THE LARGEST SPRING AT TABGA (emphasis added).²⁰

If true, this underground channel provided a conduit by which this catfish migrated from the Nile to the Sea of Galilee. Could this be the Gihon River? Tabgha is located on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee, two miles west of Capernaum. Today, six of the seven ancient springs of Tabgha have been discovered.²¹ Interestingly, Josephus and the Septuagint identified the Gihon River with the Nile.²² An underground channel/river could be the link between the Gihon and the Nile.

The Word of God refers to the Gihon in regard to the Garden of Eden and in regard to an underground spring in Jerusalem. Could there be a link?

So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the Cherethites, and the Pelethites went down and had SOLOMON RIDE ON KING DAVID'S MULE, AND BROUGHT HIM TO GIHON. Zadok the priest then took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, "Long live King Solomon!" (1 Kings 1:38-39, emphasis added).

"And Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have ANOINTED HIM KING IN GIHON, and they have come up from there rejoicing, so that the city is in an uproar. This is the noise you have heard" (1 Kings 1:45, emphasis added).

It was Hezekiah who stopped the upper outlet of THE WATERS OF GIHON and directed them to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all that he did (2 Chronicles 32:30, emphasis added).

²⁰ Mendel Nun, *The Sea of Galilee and Its Fishermen in the New Testament*, p. 10.

²¹ Bible Places.com - <http://www.bibleplaces.com/tabgha.htm>

²² Geoffrey Wigoder (Editor), *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, p. 368.

The Gihon Spring flows under the southeastern hill of Jerusalem, west of the Kidron Valley, where the City of David was built. In Old Testament times, the Gihon Spring provided a substantial supply of water to the city. Water from the Gihon Spring was also mixed with the ashes of the Red Heifer to produce the “waters of purification” necessary for ritual purification.

Is it just coincidence that this spring was named Gihon, or could there be a connection between the Gihon Spring and the Gihon River that watered the Garden of Eden? Is it possible that they share(d) the same source?

THE PISHON RIVER

The name of the first is PISHON; IT FLOWS AROUND THE WHOLE LAND OF HAVILAH, where there is GOLD. And the gold of that land is good; the BDELLIUM AND THE ONYX STONE are there (Genesis 2:11-12, emphasis added).

The Pishon River flowed through “the whole land of Havilah”, a land rich in gold, bdellium (aromatic gum resins), and onyx. Most scholars place Havilah in western Arabia.²³ In fact, an extremely rich gold mine called the “Cradle of Gold” (Mahd edh-Dhahab) is found there, as well as remnants of an ancient mine thought by some to be King Solomon’s mine.²⁴ Bdellium and precious stones are found southwest of this gold deposit in what is today Yemen.²⁵

The land of Havilah was located southeast of the land of Canaan (Israel). Could the Pishon River have flowed from the Land of Israel to the land of Havilah in ancient times, either as a surface river or as an underground river?

Could water from such an underground source currently be flowing in the area of the Dead Sea?

²³ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 3, p. 48.

²⁴ James A. Sauer, “The River Runs Dry—Biblical Story Preserves Historical Memory,” *BAR*, July/August 1996, pp. 54, 57, 64.

²⁵ Sauer, p. 64.

In 1993, Jacob Ben Amir reported that an annual flow of 140 million cubic meters of freshwater was discovered flowing under the northern end of the Dead Sea.²⁶

The Dead Sea, the lowest place on the earth's surface (1300 feet below sea level), is referred to in the Bible as the "Salt Sea" or "Sea of Arabah". The Dead Sea is several times saltier than seawater and unable to support life. It is part of a region called the Arabah that:

refers to the great rift valley running S from the Sea of Galilee including the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea and extending all the way to the Gulf of Aqabah. ... The Dead Sea is sometimes also referred to as the "Sea of the Arabah" (Deut 4:49; Josh 3:16; 12:3; 2 Kings 14:25). ... The Arabah as a whole is over 200 m[iles] in length and falls naturally into three geographical regions, namely the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea region and the area S of the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba.²⁷

The northern half of the Arabah is a fairly fertile, well-watered plain due to the streams that flow into the Jordan River. The area of the Dead Sea and south of the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba is desert but in the past was also fertile like the northern portion of the Arabah.

And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw ALL THE VALLEY OF THE JORDAN, THAT IT WAS WELL WATERED EVERYWHERE—*this was* BEFORE THE LORD DESTROYED SODOM AND GOMORRAH—LIKE THE GARDEN OF THE LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar. So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan; and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other. Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom (Genesis 13:10-12, emphasis added).

²⁶ "Freshwater Was Discovered in the Northern Part of the Dead Sea" by Jacob Ben Amir, March 26, 1993. (Robert Vander Maten's Israeli guide translated the Hebrew article into English.)

²⁷ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1, pp. 233-234.

The Arabah has been a barren desert ever since Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction. These cities of the southern Dead Sea area would have required an adequate freshwater source. Did the Pishon River once flow at the surface through the Arabah and Havilah or provide springs from an underground channel? Did a catastrophic earthquake destroy the cities and change the course of the river so that it became submerged or was an underground channel cut off from its source?

BIBLICAL PROPHECIES ABOUT A RIVER FLOWING FROM JERUSALEM TO THE DEAD SEA AND MEDITERRANEAN SEA

The prophet Isaiah tells us that a time will come when waters will break forth and streams will flow in the Arabah:

The wilderness and the desert will be glad, And the Arabah will rejoice and blossom; Like the crocus It will blossom profusely ... For WATERS WILL BREAK FORTH IN THE WILDERNESS AND STREAMS IN THE ARABAH. AND THE SCORCHED LAND WILL BECOME A POOL, AND THE THIRSTY GROUND SPRINGS OF WATER; In the haunt of jackals, its resting place, Grass becomes reeds and rushes (Isaiah 35:1-2, 6-7, emphasis added).

The prophet Joel prophesies of water flowing from the area of the Temple ("the house of the Lord") that it will provide water for the valley of Shittim, a region just northeast of the Dead Sea.

And it will come about in that day That the mountains will drip with sweet wine, And the hills will flow with milk, And all the brooks of Judah will flow with water; And A SPRING WILL GO OUT FROM THE HOUSE OF THE LORD, TO WATER THE VALLEY OF SHITTIM (Joel 3:18, emphasis added).

The prophets Ezekiel and Zechariah also prophesy that water will flow from the Temple area to the Dead Sea and Mediterranean Sea:

Then he brought me back to the door of the house [of the Lord - the Temple]; and behold, water was flowing from under the threshold of the house [Temple] toward the east, for the house [Temple] faced east. And the WATER WAS FLOWING DOWN FROM UNDER, FROM THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE HOUSE [TEMPLE], FROM SOUTH OF THE ALTAR (Ezekiel 47:1, emphasis added).

And it will come about in that day that LIVING [FLOWING] WATERS WILL FLOW OUT OF JERUSALEM, HALF OF THEM TOWARD THE EASTERN SEA [DEAD SEA] AND THE OTHER HALF TOWARD THE WESTERN SEA [MEDITERRANEAN SEA]; it will be in summer as well as in winter. And the LORD will be king over all the earth... (Zechariah 14:8-9, emphasis added).

During the Messianic Age/Millennial Kingdom (“the LORD will be king over all the earth”), water will flow from under the Temple Mount. The flow will create two rivers: one flowing to the Dead Sea, another flowing to the Mediterranean Sea. The amount of fresh water will be so great that it will bring life to the Dead Sea, which is now so salty that no life can survive in it.

It is interesting to note that Ezekiel refers to the river from Jerusalem as literally “two rivers”:

Then he said to me, “These waters go out toward the eastern region and go down into the Arabah; then they go toward the sea, being made to flow into the sea, and the waters of the sea become fresh. And it will come about that every living creature which swarms in every place where THE RIVER [LITERALLY, “TWO RIVERS”] goes, will live. And there will be very many fish, for these waters go there, and the others become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes” (Ezekiel 47:8-9, emphasis added).

According to the *Zondervan Illustrated Backgrounds Commentary*:

In designating “the river” the Hebrew uses the dual *nah layim* (“two rivers” or “two streams”).

[Ezekiel describes] the miraculous torrent that will produce an ecological renewal of the Dead Sea and the entire desert region south of Jerusalem.²⁸

We also recall from above that according to *The Torah Anthology*, “the Pishon fed into the Gichon [Gihon] River, which followed a subterranean course into the Red Sea.”⁶ Is it possible that the water flowing from the Gihon under the Temple Mount contains the waters of the two underground water sources, the Gihon and the Pishon?

PSALM 46 SPEAKS OF A RIVER FLOWING FROM JERUSALEM

Is the river originating from under the city of Jerusalem what was prophesied in Psalm 46?

There is A RIVER WHOSE STREAMS MAKE GLAD THE CITY OF GOD [JERUSALEM], THE HOLY DWELLING PLACES OF THE MOST HIGH (Psalm 46:4, emphasis added).

We believe that it is because of the context of Psalm 46 (further explained below).

The description of this future Earthly reality fits the pattern of the eternal Heavenly reality, the New Jerusalem of the New Heaven and New Earth:

And I [the apostle John] saw A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM, COMING DOWN OUT OF HEAVEN FROM GOD, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, THE TABERNACLE OF GOD IS AMONG MEN, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them ...” And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.” And He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha [Aleph] and

²⁸ *Zondervan Illustrated Backgrounds Commentary*, Vol. 4, p. 497.

the Omega [Tav], the beginning and the end. I WILL GIVE TO THE ONE WHO THIRSTS FROM THE SPRING OF THE WATER OF LIFE without cost” (Revelation 21:1-3, 5-6, emphasis added).

And he showed me A RIVER OF THE WATER OF LIFE, CLEAR AS CRYSTAL, COMING FROM THE THRONE OF GOD AND OF THE LAMB, in the middle of its street. And ON EITHER SIDE OF THE RIVER WAS THE TREE OF LIFE, bearing twelve kinds of [or crops of] fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations (Revelation 22:1-2, emphasis added).

The Tree of Life is on both sides of “the river of the water of life”. The “water of life” arises from “the spring of the water of life” that is the source of the river. Following the same Heavenly pattern, there are many trees on both sides of the river flowing out from under Ezekiel’s Temple, the Temple that will stand during the Messianic Age/Millennial Kingdom (Ezekiel 47:7).

Significantly, Ezekiel describes the water flowing from the southeast area of the Temple:

Then he brought me back to the door of the house [of the Lord – the Temple]; and behold, water was flowing from under the threshold of the house toward the east, for the house faced east. And the WATER WAS FLOWING DOWN FROM UNDER, FROM THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE HOUSE [TEMPLE], FROM SOUTH OF THE ALTAR (Ezekiel 47:1, emphasis added).

Ezekiel describes water flowing from the front (east) of the right (south) side of the Temple, that is, the area of the southeastern corner of the Temple. This is significant because the southeastern corner was where the vessel containing water for the washing of the priests was located in the Tabernacle and in Solomon’s Temple. In the Tabernacle, the vessel was called the Bronze Laver

and it was placed between the Tent of Meeting and the Altar (Exodus 30:18).²⁹

In Solomon's Temple, the vessel was called the "sea" and supported by bronze oxen (2 Chronicles 4:2-6; 2 Kings 16:17). The Bronze Sea was placed on the southeast corner of the Temple.³⁰ It was filled with water from the Gihon Spring that provided flowing ("living") water for purification. This same pattern is shown in water flowing from the southeastern area of the Temple, and this water rises up from the Gihon Spring.

Psalm 46 describes a time of trouble for Israel, a time when the earth will shake and change:

God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; Though its waters roar and foam, Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. Selah (Psalm 46:1-3).

The Word of God describes great earthquakes occurring just before and at the time of the Second Coming of Messiah Yeshua, including an earthquake that splits the Mount of Olives, east of the Temple Mount (Zechariah 14:4-5). A powerful earthquake could certainly result in water flowing from the Temple Mount, creating a river that flows out to the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, as prophesied by Ezekiel and Zechariah.

The description in Psalm 46 fits the time of judgment that will come on this world before Messiah Yeshua's return. God will judge the nations who come against Israel, and destroy the Islamic enemies that seek to wipe Israel off the map in the War of Gog-Magog/Armageddon (Ezekiel 38-39; Revelation 16:16).

Psalm 46 also describes God dwelling in Jerusalem and bringing true peace in the world (Psalm 46:5-9). God says that He will be exalted among the nations and in the entire earth (Psalm 46:10).

²⁹ Shalom Dov Steinberg, and Moshe Miller (Translator), *The Mishkan and the Holy Garments*, p. 119: The washstand (laver) was placed between the altar of burnt-offering and the front of the Tabernacle, a little to the south. "The washstand was moved a little toward the south, as is taught in the tractate *Zevachim* 59a".

³⁰ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 3, p. 882.

This refers to the Messianic Age/Millennial Kingdom, the literal establishment of God's Kingdom on Earth, with Messiah Yeshua (God the Son) ruling from Jerusalem, the seat of His Throne.

Jerusalem will be at the center of God's Master Plan of Redemption during the Messianic Age, just as Jerusalem has always been at the center of God's Master Plan of Redemption: from the beginning in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Even, to Messiah Yeshua's First Coming, and to Messiah Yeshua's Second Coming. The Messianic Age is referred to as the Millennial Kingdom in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 20:3).

According to a Jewish legend (ancient oral tradition), Adam was created from the dust of Mount Moriah.³¹ Today Mount Moriah is the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. God chose Jerusalem as the place of His dwelling from the beginning in the Garden of Eden to the time of the Messianic Age.

EZEKIEL LINKS THE GARDEN OF EDEN TO THE HOLY MOUNTAIN OF GOD IN JERUSALEM

The prophet Ezekiel links the Garden of Eden to “the holy mountain of God”:

“...You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. YOU WERE IN EDEN, THE GARDEN OF GOD; Every precious stone was your covering... On the day that you were created... You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I [God] placed you there. YOU WERE ON THE HOLY MOUNTAIN OF GOD...” (Ezekiel 28:12-14, emphasis added).

The “holy mountain of God” is Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. God chose Mount Moriah as the place where His Temple would stand. The First Temple and the Second Temple stood on Mount Moriah. Ezekiel's Temple will stand on Mount Moriah during the Messianic Age/Millennial Kingdom. The prophet Ezekiel received the revelation from God that the Mountain of God—Mount Moriah—was located in the Garden of Eden. This is a direct link that fits with what the rest of the Word of God shows us about this connection.

³¹ Alan Unterman, *Dictionary of Jewish Lore and Legend*, p. 141.

RECENT DISCOVERY OF AN ANCIENT UNDERGROUND RIVER IN INDIA

Recently, an ancient underground river was discovered in India. According to legend, the Saraswati River was an underground river that for a time flowed at the surface. This discovery is well documented by Richard Mahapatra in the article “Saraswati Underground”, November 15, 2002, *Down to Earth*.³² (The article in most of its entirety is quoted at the end of this chapter under the section “Additional Documentation”.)

This amazing discovery shows that ancient underground rivers that once flowed at the surface do exist. The following is a summary of the key points relevant to our proposition that the Gihon and Pishon flow underground:

1. Ancient literature (legends) telling of an ancient river that once flowed at the surface and providing detailed information to help locate the underground river.
2. Scientific discovery of the underground river via satellite images, remote-sensing images, geophysical survey, drilling for water and soil samples, dating of underground samples, etc.
3. A once fertile region with adequate water for the development of various civilizations until the river’s water source was cut off, resulting in desertification of the area.
4. Tectonic activity (including earthquakes) probably causing the river to be cut off from its water source, resulting in the river drying up and over time being buried under desertification sands and alluvium.
5. Signs of an underground river: the existence of an underground source of freshwater present in contrast to saline groundwater in the area; freshwater wells that never dry up in an area of saline underground water.

JERUSALEM AND ISRAEL’S LIMESTONE DEPOSITS PROVIDE THE RIGHT CONDITIONS FOR UNDERGROUND RIVERS

The right geological conditions do exist in the Land of Israel, including Jerusalem, for the formation of underground rivers. The conditions necessary for the formation of caves and

³² <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/print/15455>

underground rivers are the same. Underground rivers and caves form in rock that can be dissolved by groundwater. Limestone more easily dissolves in rainwater and groundwater than other rocks. Limestone in its various forms (limestone, dolomite, chalk) is very abundant throughout Israel, including Jerusalem.

The largest and most common types of caves, both worldwide and in the Holy Land in particular, are solution caves which result from the action of underground water. Most of these caves are in LIMESTONE BECAUSE NO OTHER ROCK EQUALLY ABUNDANT AT THE EARTH'S SURFACE IS SO READILY DISSOLVED. Calcite (calcium carbonate), which is the chief constituent of LIMESTONE, INCLUDING THE JUDEAN LIMESTONE WHICH CROPS OUT OVER LARGE AREAS OF ISRAEL and Jordan, is dissolved by groundwater containing carbon dioxide. Some of this carbon dioxide is taken up by rain water falling through the air, but much comes from the air in soil containing decaying humus which contains 300 times more carbon dioxide than the air of the atmosphere. As dissolved carbon dioxide reacts with water to form carbonic acid, water passing through soil rich humus may become strongly acidic. It is by the action of this water that most caves have been formed. Particularly in dense, jointed limestone, WATER IS CONCENTRATED ALONG RESTRICTED PLANES rather than being disseminated throughout the rock. ...

Caves are formed just below the water table in regions where the water table remained stable for a long time. They have a CHARACTERISTIC PATTERN OF PASSAGES WHICH ARE USUALLY HORIZONTAL, even where the limestone beds are steeply inclined, except in regions where the originally horizontal attitude of the cavern network has been tilted during later mountain building deformation. ...

Most caverns are composed essentially of horizontal and some vertical passageways. Passage width and height varies from upwards of 30 meters

[approximately 98 feet] to the smallest penetrable dimensions. Where not modified by collapse, the cave cross sections are tubular or rectangular in shape, but others are irregular in cross section. ...

The ABUNDANCE OF LIMESTONE CROPPING OUT IN ISRAEL and Jordan—the JUDEAN LIMESTONE MADE UP MAINLY OF MASSIVE HARD BEDS OF LIMESTONE [CALCIUM CARBONATE] AND DOLOMITE [CALCIUM MAGNESIUM CARBONATE] with some softer chalky marls, shales and gypsiferous strata—and the semi-arid climate, resulted in an abundance of caves throughout the region. With the successive downward movement of the JORDAN RIFT VALLEY (EARTHQUAKES q.v.) the base level of the streams draining into this tectonic depression has been lowered and the water table lowered. The resultant cutting down of valleys exposed caves on valley sides, such as the cave of Adullam in which David took refuge (1 Sam 22:1), and insured that the caves were relatively dry so that they could be used for habitation (Gen 19:30) or for burial (23:19). The branching pattern of some caves made them suitable for places of burial, particularly if the entrance was small and could easily be sealed (John 11:38, 39) (emphasis added).³³

In 2007, *National Geographic News* reported the discovery of a 95-mile long underground river in Mexico:

Divers exploring a maze of underwater caves on Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula have identified what MAY BE THE LONGEST UNDERGROUND RIVER IN THE WORLD. The waterway twists and turns for 95 miles (153 kilometers) through the region's limestone caverns... the PENINSULA IS LARGELY MADE OF LIMESTONE, A SOFT AND POROUS ROCK THAT IS EASILY ERODED BY SLIGHTLY ACIDIC RAINWATER, WHICH CARVES OUT UNDERGROUND PASSAGES as it courses to the Caribbean Sea. The pathways range from jumbo-jet-size rooms with long stalagmites and stalactites

³³ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1, section "Cave", pp. 767-769.

to narrow slits that divers must blindly squeeze through. The PASSAGES ARE COMPLETELY FLOODED WITH WATER ... “BUT THE WATER ISN’T JUST FLOWING THROUGH THESE UNDERGROUND RIVERS ... 98 PERCENT OF THE WATER IS ACTUALLY TRAPPED IN THE ROCK,” Bogaerts, the diver, said. The Yucatan’s natural hydraulic system sustained the Maya for centuries and today is the main freshwater source for the region’s booming tourism trade.³⁴

This is a good example of the proven existence of a previously undiscovered underground river in limestone deposits, the same kind of deposits common throughout Israel.

Water is prophesied to flow from under the ground out to the surface from the Temple Mount, creating a river that flows all year round, part to the Dead Sea and part to the Mediterranean Sea (Ezekiel 47:1-12; Zechariah 14:8). The prophet Zechariah describes a future earthquake that splits the Mount of Olives (east of the Temple Mount) and results in water flowing from Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:4, 8). The prophet Ezekiel pinpoints the source of water flowing from under the Temple Mount (Ezekiel 47:1).

Can this be from any source other than the Gihon Spring? And as previously referenced, it is possible that both the Gihon and Pishon merge at some point underground so that the water flowing from Jerusalem actually has water from both sources.

Springs are a common type of river source and are formed by groundwater rising to the earth’s surface and flowing away.³⁵ The Jordan River flows from Mount Hermon in the north, through the Sea of Galilee, to the Dead Sea in the south. There are four headwater sources for the Jordan River, all near Mount Hermon. Three of the headwater sources are springs and one is a river.³⁶ Various springs are also found throughout Israel.

³⁴ John Roach, “World’s Longest Underground River Discovered in Mexico”, *National Geographic News*, March 5, 2007 - <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/pf/90563880.html>

³⁵ <http://science.jrank.org/pages/5886/Rivers-River-systems.html>

³⁶ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 3, p. 685.

Therefore, in order to correctly identify the Gihon and Pishon, it is important to understand that underground water sources (springs and/or underground rivers) may be involved. And as previously explained, earthquakes can certainly affect the flow of water from a spring, changing the flow rate, opening up or closing off the water flow from its underground water source.

UPDATE: RECENT DISCOVERY OF “THE LARGEST UNDERGROUND RIVER EVER FOUND IN ISRAEL”

On June 6, 2011, the article “Beneath Jerusalem, a river runs deep” was posted at *The Jerusalem Post* website. At the time of this revision (May 2014), the article by Arieh O’Sullivan, same title, dated June 9, 2011, is now posted at *The Media Line*.

According to this article:

Excavators digging for a new railway station deep under the surface of CENTRAL JERUSALEM HAVE DISCOVERED WHAT GEOLOGISTS SAY IS THE LARGEST UNDERGROUND RIVER EVER FOUND IN ISRAEL. ...

“We found a nice but small underground river,” Professor Amos Frumkin, head of the Cave Research Unit of the Hebrew University’s Department of Geography, told *The Media Line*.

“IN TERMS OF ISRAEL, IT’S THE LONGEST UNDERGROUND STREAM THAT WE HAVE EVER SEEN. It is a kind of canyon that has been cut by the stream of the water over a long period of time, maybe millions of years,” Frumkin said. ...

Frumkin and his team were called upon by Israel Railways after its engineers chanced upon a cave while excavating an 80-meter (260-foot) shaft close to the city’s main convention centre and central bus station that is being drilled for a huge, underground station that will serve the high-speed Jerusalem-Tel Aviv railway.

“When they reached the depth of 75 meters [246 feet] they cut into this cave accidentally. The water started flowing into this shaft and they had some problems until they found some engineering solution and called us,” Frumkin said. ...

Frumkin said the cave appears to have developed after water seeped in from the surface and dissolved the underlying limestone. While other major caves have been discovered in Israel, this was the only one with running water.

“This is the longest one with an active stream flowing through it. All the other stalactite caves in Israel are without any stream of water today. They are just dripping water from the ceiling and the stream that formed the cave have [sic] long vanished because of the geological and hydrological changes in the mountains,” he said.

“This one is still active in terms that the stream which was forming the cave is still active and this is not very common in Israel” (emphasis added).³⁷

The discovery of this underground river/stream under the center of Jerusalem shows the possibility for the Gihon and Pishon to exist as underground waterways, as we have proposed.

EARTHQUAKE WILL OPEN WATER CHANNEL UNDER THE TEMPLE MOUNT

Israel lies in a very seismically active region of the world. According to seismologists, Israel is due for a major earthquake:

Israel is one of the countries of the world where a DEVASTATING EARTHQUAKE (THAT IS, OF A MAGNITUDE OF SIX OR HIGHER ON THE RICHTER SCALE) OCCURS with some frequency; indeed, according to

³⁷ http://themedialine.org/news/print_news_detail.asp?NewsID=32399

statistics, one occurs ON AVERAGE EVERY 80 YEARS.

The last deadly earthquake struck the Land of Israel in July 1927, damaging Jericho, Nablus, Ramle, Jerusalem and many rural locales. In January 1837, a strong earthquake occurred in the Galilee, and killed thousands of people in Safed and Tiberias. In Safed alone the number was estimated at 2,400.

Some of the local quakes have been accompanied by a tsunami. The most notorious of these combined disasters took place in 1546: Some 40,000 people were killed – quite a large number considering the sparse population in the area at the time. This tsunami was described by an eyewitness in Jaffa as “the sea receding to the distance of a day’s walk from the shore, and afterward a huge wave swept over the shore and anyone who wasn’t hurt by collapsing buildings was washed into the sea and drowned.”

Dr. Avi Shapira, the chairman of the inter-ministry steering committee for earthquake preparedness, asserts that **A STRONG EARTHQUAKE CAN BE EXPECTED HERE WITHIN THE NEXT 50 YEARS. THAT IS, IT COULD HAPPEN TODAY, TOMORROW, 10 MINUTES FROM NOW, OR 10 YEARS FROM NOW.** A powerful quake in Israel is therefore not a question of “if”, but rather a question of “when” (emphasis added).³⁸

The Word of God refers to past and future earthquakes. Earthquakes are also linked to prophetic events such as the crucifixion and resurrection (Matthew 27:51-54; 28:2). Great earthquakes are prophesied to occur in Israel and the world during the War of Gog-Magog/Armageddon in association with Messiah Yeshua’s Second Coming:

“And it will come about on that day, when Gog comes against the land of Israel,” declares the Lord GOD, “that My fury will mount up in My anger. And in My

³⁸ <http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/week-s-end/before-the-next-big-shake-up-1.331116>

“Before the next big shake-up” by Amiram Cohen, *Haaretz*, December 17, 2010.

zeal and in My blazing wrath I declare that on that day there will surely be A GREAT EARTHQUAKE IN THE LAND OF ISRAEL (Ezekiel 38:18-19, emphasis added).

And in that day His [the Lord's] feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and THE MOUNT OF OLIVES WILL BE SPLIT IN ITS MIDDLE FROM EAST TO WEST BY A VERY LARGE VALLEY, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south (Zechariah 14:4, emphasis added).

And in that hour there was A GREAT EARTHQUAKE, AND A TENTH OF THE CITY [JERUSALEM] FELL; AND SEVEN THOUSAND PEOPLE WERE KILLED in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven (Revelation 11:13, emphasis added).

And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was A GREAT EARTHQUAKE, SUCH AS THERE HAD NOT BEEN SINCE MAN CAME TO BE UPON THE EARTH, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty. And the great city was split into three parts, and THE CITIES OF THE NATIONS FELL... (Revelation 16:18-19, emphasis added).

It will be an earthquake that opens the channel of water from under the Temple Mount, forming a river that flows out of Jerusalem into the Dead Sea ("eastern sea") and Mediterranean Sea ("western sea"), as previously explained (Ezekiel 47:1; Zechariah 14:8-9).

JERUSALEM - THE CENTER OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN AND PROMISED LAND

We believe that the land promised to Abraham and his descendants, referred to as the Promised Land, is the same area as the Garden of Eden, with Jerusalem as its center. The Word of God and the Biblical prophetic pattern for the Garden of Eden show this.

God made a covenant with Abraham:

First described in Genesis 15 and 17, the Abrahamic *b'rith* [covenant] was later repeated to Isaac (Gen 26:3, 24) and to Jacob (28:15; 35:12). It was marked by particularism: God's choice of this one Heb. family as the recipients of His redemption and as the medium for its eventual communication to "all the nations of the earth" (22:18). Accompanying material promises included a numerous seed [descendants] (12:2; 13:16), through whom would come the future Messianic testator (22:18), and the land of Canaan (12:7; 13:15).³⁹

As to the area of land that God promised to Abraham's descendants:

On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying "To your descendants I have given THIS LAND, FROM THE RIVER OF EGYPT AS FAR AS THE GREAT RIVER, THE RIVER EUPHRATES..." (Genesis 15:18, emphasis added).

God repeated this promise to the Israelites prior to their entrance into the Promised Land:

"Every place on which the sole of your foot shall tread shall be yours; your border shall be from the wilderness to Lebanon, and from the river, the river Euphrates, as far as the western sea [Mediterranean Sea] " (Deuteronomy 11:24, emphasis added).

As the Israelites were about to enter the Land of Canaan (Land of Israel), the Promised Land, God told them this land was especially cared for and blessed by Him:

"FOR THE LAND, INTO WHICH YOU ARE ENTERING to possess it, is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, where you used to sow your seed and water it with your foot like a vegetable garden. But the land into which you

³⁹ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 1008.

are about to cross to possess it, a land of hills and valleys, drinks water from the rain of heaven, A LAND FOR WHICH THE LORD YOUR GOD CARES; THE EYES OF THE LORD GOD ARE ALWAYS ON IT, from the beginning even to the end of the year” (Deuteronomy 11:10-12, emphasis added).

God called the Land of Israel “the land of milk and honey” due to its exceptional fertility:

“So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land TO A GOOD AND SPACIOUS LAND, TO A LAND FLOWING WITH MILK AND HONEY ... (Exodus 3:8, emphasis added).

The valley of the Jordan River was described as being like the “garden of the Lord”:

And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all THE VALLEY OF THE JORDAN, that it was well watered everywhere—this was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah—LIKE THE GARDEN OF THE LORD ... (Genesis 13:10, emphasis added).

We believe that this reference to the fertility of the valley of the Jordan “like the garden of the LORD” shows that the Promised Land was the same area as the Garden of Eden, with Jerusalem at its center.

Isaiah prophesies concerning the restoration of Jerusalem and the Land Israel, saying that God will make it like “the Garden of the Lord”:

Indeed, the LORD WILL COMFORT ZION [JERUSALEM]; He will comfort all her waste places. And her wilderness He will make LIKE EDEN, And her desert LIKE THE GARDEN OF THE LORD; Joy and gladness will be found in her, Thanksgiving and sound of a melody (Isaiah 51:3, emphasis added).

The Promised Land as the Garden of Eden, with Jerusalem at its center, fits the prophetic pattern. Jerusalem is the focal point of God's Master Plan of Redemption. Where God began His plan of redemption is where God will bring it to complete fulfillment during the Millennial Kingdom, restoring what was lost in the Garden of Eden.

THE TREE OF LIFE AND THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN

Jerusalem as the center of the Garden of Eden fits the Biblical description and prophetic pattern, as well as Biblical prophecies. This means that the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil were located in Jerusalem. In the following chapters, we will show that the prophetic pattern of God's Master Plan of Redemption reveals that the Tree of Life was located on Mount Moriah, the place God chose as His dwelling place on Earth. This is where God fellowshiped with Adam and Eve and this was the place God chose for His Temple.

The prophetic pattern also shows that the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was located on the Mount of Olives, directly opposite Mount Moriah (Temple Mount). As we will show, it was on the Mount of Olives that Adam and Eve committed the first sin, and in this same place Messiah Yeshua paid the final and complete price for their sin and the sins of all humanity. The summit of the Mount of Olives became the site of the Red Heifer sacrifice, the holiest of all the Temple sacrifices. The Word of God explicitly states that Messiah Yeshua was crucified at the place called "outside the camp"/"outside the gate", a specific place located outside the Eastern Gate of the Temple Mount on the Mount of Olives, where the Day of Atonement sacrifices were burned (Leviticus 16; Hebrews 13:11-12).

We will show why we believe Aaron's rod – the rod that miraculously budded and was a sign of God's redemption and salvation – was a branch from the Tree of Life. Jewish sources trace the history of Aaron's rod as it was passed down the line of Adam, Enoch, Methuselah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and to Moses. God then commanded that Aaron's rod be placed in front of the Ark of the Covenant ("the Testimony", Numbers 17:10) as a sign. There are clues in the Word of God showing that King David was led by God to place Aaron's rod on the summit of the Mount of Olives, where this supernaturally living branch grew into the tree upon

which Messiah Yeshua was crucified as the ultimate, holiest, all-sufficient and final atonement for humanity's sin (Jeremiah 1:11; the crucifixion was on a tree, Galatians 3:13).

THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM AND THE LAND OF EDEN

The prophetic pattern of the Heavenly Jerusalem is revealed in the New Jerusalem that comes down out of Heaven:

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me THE HOLY CITY, JERUSALEM, COMING DOWN OUT OF HEAVEN from God... The city was LAID OUT LIKE A SQUARE, AS LONG AS IT WAS WIDE. He measured the city with the rod, and found it to be 12,000 STADIA IN LENGTH, AND AS WIDE AND HIGH AS IT IS LONG (Revelation 21:10, 16, NIV, emphasis added).

In Revelation 21:16, the ancient Greek and Roman unit of linear measure, the *stadion* (plural, *stadia*), is used in the measurement of the New Jerusalem that comes down out of Heaven. Since one stadion is approximately 607 feet⁴⁰ (185 meters), this converts to approximately 1380 miles (2,220 kilometers). The NIV commentary and *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* round the number up to 1400 miles.⁴¹ The NASB translates “fifteen hundred miles” but this is not as accurate a conversion of the distance.

When we compare the dimensions of the New Jerusalem to the Land of Eden, that includes the territory of the four rivers of Eden as described in Genesis 2:10-14, we discover an amazing parallel: THE DIMENSIONS OF THE LAND OF EDEN WITH JERUSALEM AS ITS GEOGRAPHIC CENTER ARE THE SAME AS THE NEW JERUSALEM THAT WILL COME DOWN OUT OF HEAVEN!

⁴⁰ Webster's New World Dictionary (“stadium” from “stadion”).

⁴¹ *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, Vol. 4, p. 368.

The Land of Eden includes what is today Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Greece and part of the Balkan Peninsula north of Greece, Iraq, western Iran, and Saudi Arabia. We see that the boundaries of the Land of Eden are described by the four rivers/headwaters of Eden. The northeast area of the Land of Eden would be the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates; the southern boundary would be in southern Egypt, where the Gihon was said to flow in the ancient land of Cush; the southern boundary extends eastward into Saudi Arabia, where the Pishon was said to flow in the ancient land of Havilah. To complete the square, the northwestern area of the Land of Eden would extend to be inclusive of Greece and part of the Balkan Peninsula north of Greece, in what used to be the ancient land of Macedonia.

Furthermore, there is great prophetic significance in the numerical description of the New Jerusalem based upon the Scriptural significance of the number twelve (12,000 or 12 x 1000):

Twelve is a perfect number, *signifying perfection of government, or of governmental perfection*. It is found as a multiple of all that has to do with *rule*.⁴²

The number twelve in the Word of God signifies the governmental order of God, for example, the Twelve Tribes and the Twelve Disciples. For this reason, the number twelve is also highly significant in regard to the New Jerusalem that descends from Heaven, which has twelve foundations, twelve gates, and twelve pearls.

The New Jerusalem is laid out in a square. The Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple followed the same Heavenly pattern of a square (20 by 20 cubits, 2 Chronicles 3:8). The Temple Mount Square for Solomon's Temple including courts was 500 cubits by 500 cubits.⁴³ The entire Temple precincts of the future Ezekiel's Temple of the Messianic Age/Millennial Kingdom is also laid out in a square, the total sacred area measuring 500 reeds by 500 reeds, about 5,100 feet or nearly one mile square (Ezekiel 42:16-20).⁴⁴

⁴² E. W. Bullinger, *Number in Scripture*, p. 253.

⁴³ Leen Ritmeyer, *The Quest: Revealing the Temple Mount in Jerusalem*, p. 144.

⁴⁴ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 5, p. 640.

The New Jerusalem is a perfect cube. The Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and in Solomon's Temple followed the same Heavenly pattern of a perfect cube (20 cubits by 20 cubits by 20 cubits, 1 Kings 6:20).⁴⁵ The Holy of Holies of the future Ezekiel's Temple will be the exact same dimensions.⁴⁶ As previously explained, the Heavenly Tabernacle was the pattern for the Earthly Tabernacle. The Holy of Holies was the holiest place of the Tabernacle/Temple. It was where God dwelled above the Mercy Seat (cover) of the Ark of the Covenant.

The New Jerusalem that descends from Heaven is described as the dwelling place of God and the Lamb of God, Messiah Yeshua:

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me THE HOLY CITY, JERUSALEM, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. ... And I SAW NO TEMPLE IN IT, FOR THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, AND THE LAMB, ARE ITS TEMPLE [SANCTUARY]. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for THE GLORY OF GOD HAS ILLUMINED IT, AND ITS LAMP IS THE LAMB (Revelation 21:10-11, 22-23, emphasis added).

Here again we see the pattern of God's dwelling place in Jerusalem: on Mount Moriah, the Temple Mount, with Adam and Eve; in Solomon's Temple that was indwelled by the Glory Cloud/Shekinah (2 Chronicles 7:1); in the future Ezekiel's Temple that will also be indwelled by the Shekinah (Ezekiel 44:4). The Earthly dwelling place of God follows the pattern of the Heavenly Tabernacle, the New Jerusalem.

According to rabbinical writings, God will reveal the location of the Garden of Eden during the Messianic Age.⁴⁷ We are rapidly approaching the end of "the times of the Gentiles" and the

⁴⁵ <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=862&letter=H>

⁴⁶ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 5, p. 639.

⁴⁷ Frankel and Teutsch, p. 46.

beginning of the Messianic Age, the Millennial Kingdom.⁴⁸ The signs of Messiah Yeshua's Second Coming to establish His Throne in Jerusalem are all around us. We believe that God is already beginning to more clearly reveal the true location of the Garden of Eden because the coming of the Messiah is so near.

“GAN EDEN” SIGNIFIES GOD’S PROTECTION OF JERUSALEM

The Hebrew word *gan* in *Gan Eden* (Garden of Eden) does not refer to a garden in the usual sense, as a plot of ground cultivated with vegetables or flowers.⁴⁹ *Gan* conveys the meaning of a guarded or protected enclosure.⁵⁰ This has special significance with regard to Jerusalem as the center of the Garden of Eden.

According to the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, *gan* refers to an “enclosure” or “garden”, “a plot of ground protected by a wall or hedge.”⁵¹ The word is derived from the verb *ganan*, meaning to “defend”, “put a shield about”, and “protect”:

The verb and its derivatives occur about 130 times. The basic idea of the verb is
TO COVER OVER AND THUS SHIELD FROM DANGER.

GANAN IS USED ONLY IN REFERENCE TO THE PROTECTIVE GUARDIANSHIP OF GOD. Of its eight occurrences, six have to do with the Assyrian crisis in the days of Hezekiah. Isaiah assured the king that GOD WOULD CARE FOR JERUSALEM like a mother bird hovering with wings spread over her young in the nest (Isa 31:5). GOD WOULD PROTECT JERUSALEM in this crisis for his own sake and for the sake of David (Isa 37:35). The DELIVERANCE OF JERUSALEM would demonstrate to the world that God was faithful to his promises and mighty to deliver his people from their

⁴⁸ “The times of the Gentiles” began with the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple by the Romans in A.D. 70 and will continue until the Millennial Kingdom (Luke 21:24 “and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled”.)

⁴⁹ *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, Vol. 1, p. 29.

⁵⁰ We thank Abraham “Pitch” Maayan, our Israeli tour guide, for this understanding.

⁵¹ R. Laird Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, pp. 168-169.

oppressors. Zechariah twice uses the same verb to describe THE DIVINE PROTECTION OF GOD'S PEOPLE IN THEIR WARS against the sons of Greece (9:15) and of JERUSALEM IN THE LAST DAYS (12:8) (emphasis added).⁵²

The word *ganan* specifically refers to God's protective guardianship of Jerusalem. In Zechariah 12:8, this word appears in regard to God's divine protection of Jerusalem in the final battle against Israel's enemies. Nowhere else on Earth is God more concerned, nor has He done and will continue to do more, than in Jerusalem.

CREATION AND GOD'S MASTER PLAN OF REDEMPTION

The Creator reveals His existence, His power, and His nature through His Creation:

because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since THE CREATION OF THE WORLD HIS INVISIBLE ATTRIBUTES, HIS ETERNAL POWER AND DIVINE NATURE, HAVE BEEN CLEARLY SEEN, BEING UNDERSTOOD THROUGH WHAT HAS BEEN MADE... (Romans 1:19-20, emphasis added).

THE HEAVENS ARE TELLING OF THE GLORY OF GOD; And their expanse is DECLARING THE WORK OF HIS HANDS (Psalm 19:1, emphasis added).

Evidence of the Creator is present throughout Creation. There is order, natural laws, narrow and specific requirements for the existence of the universe and life itself; repeating patterns throughout Creation; the complex genetic code and the irreducible complexity of life from a single cell to the complex interrelationships necessary to sustain all life on this planet. There is purpose and meaning in Creation that cannot be the result of random forces and random events. Indeed, from the scientific point of view: "Intelligent design—the idea that an intelligent cause,

⁵² Harris, Vol. 1, p. 168.

rather than undirected process, best explains key features of life and the universe”—is the most logical explanation for all that is.⁵³

What we see in Creation is also what we see in the Word of God and Biblical prophecy. There is a definite design and pattern that exists, revealing the existence, nature, and purpose of our Creator and Redeemer, the Lord Messiah Yeshua. God established the Biblical prophetic pattern and timetable in the Biblical Holy Days (Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles). Bible prophecy is detailed and specific. All Bible prophecy reveals and confirms the Messiah’s identity.

The Word of God reveals that God ordained that Jerusalem would be His dwelling place on Earth. Jerusalem is the focal point of all Biblical prophecy—from the Garden of Eden, to God’s Holy Temple, to God’s Throne during the Messianic Millennial Kingdom. If God foreknew Jeremiah the prophet, He certainly foreknew that Jerusalem would be the place of His Throne:

“BEFORE I FORMED YOU IN THE WOMB I KNEW YOU, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations”
(Jeremiah 1:5, emphasis added).

There is profound meaning and significance in the prophetic pattern of God’s Master Plan of Redemption. God foreknew that the center of the Garden of Eden would become the holy city of Jerusalem, and that the place of Adam and Eve’s first sin and separation from God would become the place where God would provide the ultimate sacrifice for redemption and restoration of humanity to God. It is no coincidence that the dimensions God established for the Land of Eden are the same as the New Heavenly Jerusalem. From the moment of Creation, God established His prophetic plan and pattern, according to which all Biblical prophecy is fulfilled.

⁵³ Stephen C. Meyer, *Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design*, back cover jacket.

GOD PLACED JERUSALEM AT THE CENTER OF THE WORLD

Jerusalem is the focal point of God's Master Plan of Redemption. Jerusalem is the focal point of all Bible prophecy: past, present, and future. Jerusalem is the spiritual center of the world. According to Jewish legend, Mount Moriah (the Temple Mount) is:

the center of the world, site of the *Even Ha-Shitiyyah*, the Foundation Stone, toward which all the subterranean wellsprings of the world flow.⁵⁴

Interesting that "subterranean wellsprings" should be mentioned in light of our concept of the Gihon and Pishon being underground water sources. That the Foundation Stone of the world, and indeed all Creation, was established in Jerusalem also fits the prophetic pattern.

The Word of God reveals that the very Gate of Heaven is above Jerusalem. Jacob, Abraham's grandson and father of twelve sons who gave rise to the Twelve Tribes of Israel, had a dream in which the "house of God" and the "gate of heaven" were revealed to him:

Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. And he came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place. And he had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And behold, I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." Then Jacob awoke from his sleep

⁵⁴ Frankel and Teutsch, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols*, p. 116.

and said, “Surely, the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.” And he was afraid and said, “HOW AWESOME IS THIS PLACE! THIS IS NONE OTHER THAN THE HOUSE OF GOD, AND THIS IS THE GATE OF HEAVEN” (Genesis 28:10-17, emphasis added).

Jacob called the place where he had the dream Bethel, meaning “house of God”, referring to the dwelling place of God. Here the Temple would be built in the city that would become known as Jerusalem. Here Jacob saw the Gate of Heaven open, with angels ascending and descending above the very place God had chosen from the foundation of the world to be His dwelling place.

In a vision, the prophet Ezekiel saw the Shekinah—the Glory Cloud, the manifestation of the Divine Presence—move eastward from the Holy of Holies in Solomon’s Temple to the threshold of the Temple, then to the Eastern Gate, and finally to the Mount of Olives, where it stood above the mountain until ascending into Heaven (Ezekiel 10; 11:23). The Gate of Heaven above Jerusalem fits the pattern that we have seen that God chose Jerusalem as the place on Earth to dwell with humanity.

We have shown that the site of Jerusalem was the center of the Garden of Eden, the center of the Promised Land, and the geographic center of the Land of Eden. Furthermore, God placed Jerusalem in the center of the world. God Himself declares that He placed Jerusalem at the center of the nations:

“Thus says the LORD God, ‘THIS IS JERUSALEM; I HAVE SET HER AT THE CENTER OF THE NATIONS, with lands around her’” (Ezekiel 5:5, emphasis added).

Recently, with the advent of modern computers, it has been possible to determine earth’s geographical center:

...the geography of the continents and islands is so intricately complex that there was no feasible way of calculating their center until the advent of the high-speed

digital computer. ... The problem is basically to determine that point on the earth's surface, the average distance from which to all other points on the earth's land surfaces is a minimum. This point is defined as the earth's geographical center.⁵⁵

It would have been essentially impossible to determine the center of the earth's land masses before the advent of modern computers, but this has now been done. A computer study sponsored by ICR over 30 years ago determined that the sum of the distances from a point in the "Bible lands" to all other increments of land areas on earth would be smaller than from any other point on the earth's surface. Not only is this region (and PROBABLY JERUSALEM ITSELF, IF WE HAD PRECISE INFORMATION ON THE EXACT SHAPE OF THE CONTINENTS AND THEIR CONTINENTAL SHELVES) THE GEOGRAPHIC CENTER OF THE EARTH, but it is also the spiritual center (emphasis added).⁵⁶

God literally placed Jerusalem at the earth's geographical center. Not only is Jerusalem the spiritual center of the world, it is also the physical center of the world.

Just as God has placed Jerusalem at the center of the nations and peoples of the world today, God placed Jerusalem at the center of the nations and peoples of the ancient world—all for His plan and purpose. Jerusalem and the Land of Israel were placed according to God's Master Plan of Redemption at the crossroads of the civilizations of the ancient world (we have replaced the word "Palestine" with "Israel" in the following quotation):

The emergence of powerful and enduring civilizations in Egypt and Mesopotamia gave strategic importance to [Israel]. [Israel] was a "land bridge" linking the two great cultural centers. The major international route, the International Coastal Highway, crossed portions of [Israel]. This geographical fact is crucial to the history of [Israel]. As part of the corridor connecting Egypt

⁵⁵ Henry Morris, Ph.D., "The Center of the Earth" - <http://www.icr.org/article/50/>

⁵⁶ Henry Morris, Ph.D., "The Center of the Earth" - <http://www.icr.org/article/5634>

and Mesopotamia, [Israel] possessed a strategic importance far greater than its size or relatively few resources might suggest. [Israel] sat astride the vital economic and military arteries of the Near East. Historically, this meant two things: (1) the people living in [Israel] felt the imprint of many cultures, and (2) the major powers sought to control this small land.⁵⁷

Most importantly, from ancient times the Word of God has gone out from Jerusalem to the whole world. Jerusalem continues to be the focal point of God's unfolding prophetic plan.

The most powerful kingdoms of the ancient world (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome) all came into contact with the Israelite Nation. With the rise of Islam in the 7th century, the Land of Israel and Jerusalem came under Islamic dominion. Not until the Turkish Ottoman Empire fell as a result of World War I was Islamic rule of Jerusalem and the Land of Israel ended. Jerusalem has been at the center of world events from ancient times to the present.

What happens in Jerusalem affects the entire world. The Battle of Armageddon (the War of Gog-Magog) breaks out over Jerusalem, when Israel's Islamic enemies attack hoping to wipe the Jewish nation off the map. But God will defend Jerusalem and destroy all the enemies of Israel. And God will set up His Kingdom with His Throne in Jerusalem with His Son, Messiah Yeshua, as King Messiah to rule for one thousand years (Revelation 20:3).

The Lord says that He will return to Jerusalem to dwell:

“Thus says the LORD, ‘I WILL RETURN TO ZION AND WILL DWELL IN THE MIDST OF JERUSALEM. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain’ ”
(Zechariah 8:3, emphasis added).

The Lord and King Messiah Yeshua will return to Jerusalem and establish His Throne during the Millennial Kingdom. At that time, a great earthquake will split the Mount of Olives:

⁵⁷ Thomas V. Brisco, *Holman Bible Atlas*, p. 4.

And in that day His [the LORD's] feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south (Zechariah 14:4).

Jerusalem will literally be elevated geographically as a result of this great earthquake:

All the land will be changed into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; but JERUSALEM WILL RISE AND REMAIN ON ITS SITE from Benjamin's Gate as far as the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses. And people will live in it, and there will be no more curse, for JERUSALEM WILL DWELL IN SECURITY (Zechariah 14:10-11, emphasis added).

Jerusalem will also be elevated among all the nations as the Throne of the Lord and King Messiah Yeshua during the Messianic Age:

And it shall be at the end of days, that THE MOUNTAIN OF THE LORD'S HOUSE SHALL BE FIRMLY ESTABLISHED AT THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAINS, AND IT SHALL BE RAISED ABOVE THE HILLS, and all the nations shall stream to it. And many peoples shall go, and they shall say, "Come, let us go up to the Lord's mount, to the house of the God of Jacob, and let Him teach us of His ways, and we will go in His paths," for OUT OF ZION SHALL THE TORAH [GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS]⁵⁸ COME FORTH, AND THE WORD OF THE LORD FROM JERUSALEM. And he shall judge between the nations and reprove many peoples, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift the sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Isaiah 2:2-4, emphasis added).⁵⁹

⁵⁸ The word *Torah* means "instruction". Christian Bibles inaccurately translate Torah as "Law". The Torah primarily applies to the Five Books of Moses but also to the entire Word of God. The Torah is the Word of God, God's guidance and instruction for humanity.

⁵⁹ A. J. Rosenberg, *Isaiah: A New English Translation*.

‘So many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD’ (Zechariah 8:22).

And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:16).

At the end of the Millennial Kingdom, when this world passes away and the final judgment takes place, the Eternal State begins, with the New Jerusalem as God’s dwelling place where all those who love Him and are redeemed by Messiah Yeshua’s blood of the New Covenant will dwell together for eternity. Messiah Yeshua tells the apostle John:

‘He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of THE CITY OF MY GOD, THE NEW JERUSALEM, WHICH COMES DOWN OUT OF HEAVEN FROM MY GOD, and My new name’ (Revelation 3:12, emphasis added).

The prophet Jeremiah prophesied concerning the New Covenant God said He would make:

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I WILL MAKE A NEW COVENANT WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND WITH THE HOUSE OF JUDAH ... this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I WILL PUT MY LAW WITHIN THEM, AND ON THEIR HEART I WILL WRITE IT; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE” (Jeremiah 31:31, 33, emphasis added).

Messiah Yeshua, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, tells us:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever

believes [trusts] in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16, NIV).⁶⁰

Jesus [Yeshua] said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6).

God desires that every human being come to the Heavenly Jerusalem, His Eternal Kingdom:

But you have come to Mount Zion and to THE CITY OF THE LIVING GOD, THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and to Jesus [YESHUA], THE MEDIATOR OF A NEW COVENANT, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel (Hebrews 12:22-24, emphasis added).

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

THE DISCOVERY OF THE UNDERGROUND SARASWATI RIVER IN INDIA

In the above section “The Recent Discovery of an Ancient Underground River”, we summarize the key points of Richard Mahapatra’s article, “Saraswati Underground”, November 15, 2002, *Down to Earth* (<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/print/15455>). The article follows in most of its entirety for those who are interested in all the details. Emphasis is added in capital letters for those portions of greatest significance to our study:

SATELLITE IMAGES, SUPPORTED BY A FOUR-YEAR DRILLING EXERCISE, WHICH WAS GUIDED BY ANCIENT LITERATURE, HAVE ESTABLISHED THAT THE RIVER SARASWATI IS NOT A MYTH. It was a

⁶⁰ The Greek word *monogenes* means “unique, one and only of a kind”, not “only-begotten”, a common mistranslation.

huge river that died a premature death about 5,000 years ago, and is now buried 60 metres [approximately 197 feet] below the ground. A map of all the channels discovered so far leads one to conclude that it was probably 1,500 km [approximately 932 miles] long, three to fifteen kms [approximately 1.9 to 9.3 miles] wide, and about five metres [approximately 16.4 feet] deep. The river probably crisscrossed the present-day states of Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan. S C Sharma, regional director, cgwb [Central Ground Water Board], says it continues to flow to the sea at a rate of 20 meters [65.6 feet] a year.

The prospect of rediscovering the Saraswati was triggered off by digital photographs sent by the American satellite Landsat. To the surprise of many scientists, the photographs showed the presence of underground water in a definitive pattern in the Jaisalmer area. It was during this time that scientists started speaking of a large palaeo[ancient]-channel in Rajasthan that could well belong to a big river.

REMOTE SENSING IMAGES of the isro [Indian Space Research Organization] and the Geological Survey of India (gsi) ALSO FOUND THE EXISTENCE OF PALAEO-CHANNELS OF A MIGHTY RIVER in seven to eight places, all lying on the west of the Aravalli ranges. The images pointed to the possibility that the river started at the foothills of the Aravallis and shifted westward in stages. The river seems to enter Rajasthan in Ganganagar district, with its tail ends in Bikaner and Jaisalmer districts, a few kilometres from the Rann of Kutchh.

Further, a GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY undertaken by the rgwd [Rajasthan Groundwater Department] in the Tanot and Longewala areas indicated the EXISTENCE OF COURSE SEDIMENTS in the depth range of 30 [approximately 98.4 feet] to 60 [approximately 196.9 feet] metres pointing to the possibility of the EXISTENCE OF A RIVER in the region.

...S. Kalyan Raman, member of the new project committee, is clear that he is working on the Saraswati. "The Harappan civilisation existed on the banks of the Saraswati. Nearly 2,000 of the 2,600 Harappan sites that have been discovered are situated on the old palaeo-channels of Saraswati." K K Srivastava, divisional chief of rgwd's research, design and development division, puts it differently, "It is a cooperative exercise involving both history and science."

THE FIRST EVIDENCE OF THE ANCIENT UNDERGROUND CHANNELS CAME IN THE 1930s, when scientists Haren and B C Gupta from the gsi spoke of the channels. They claimed that they might belong to the river Saraswati. Bimal Ghose, former scientist at Central Arid Zone Research Institute (cazri), Jodpur, also made a reading based on the topography map of Rajasthan. He confirmed that THE ANCIENT CHANNELS WERE A DEAD RIVER THAT COULD WELL BE THE SARASWATI. It may be mentioned here that ANCIENT LITERATURE AND TEXTS AND THE GEOGRAPHICAL HISTORY OF THE REGION WERE CONSTANT BASES OF REFERENCE IN THESE STUDIES.

The Rigveda, for example, mentions a mighty river that originates in the Himalaya and flows south-westwards. The Mahabharata speaks of a river that disappeared underground near the present-day town of Sirsa in Haryana. Besides, the geographical history of THE NOW ARID WESTERN RAJASTHAN POINTS TO THE FACT THAT THE REGION USED TO BE GREEN AND DID NOT LACK WATER RESOURCES. Barely 10,000 years ago, the whole region was host to a big river system, which attracted civilizations like the Mohenjodaro and Harappa.

Archaeological findings also indicate that a major river originating primarily from the same source as the present Sutlej flowed through northern Rajasthan, Bahawalpur and Sindh. The course of the river was southeast of the Sutlej's present course. Some scholars working on ancient literature also suggest that the

Saraswati flowed along the present course of Luni river in Rajasthan, and shifted westwards progressively. Baldeo Sahai, one of the members of the new research project says, “Latest research indicates that the Saraswati was a perennial [continuously-flowing] river connected to the Bander Poonch glacier in the Himalayas.”

rgwd scientists say that the desertification of western Rajasthan started only 5,000-6,000 years ago. After the Ice Age, it is believed that the area had some massive glaciers, which flushed it with fresh water for thousands of years. Due to marine tectonic activity, the area from the Rann of Kutchh to Bikaner was submerged by seawater. This was the beginning of the desertification process.

THE TECTONIC ACTIVITY IS ALSO SAID TO BE THE REASON BEHIND SARASWATI'S DELINKING FROM ITS SOURCE OF WATER. Consequently, it is believed, the river dried up and was buried under desertification sands and alluvium.

In the early 1980s, rgwd scientists were amazed by the fact that fresh water was available in many places of the Jaisaimer district, and some wells never dried up. This aroused considerable interest, for Jaisaimer's water is known to be saline. Investigations revealed that about 100 metres [approximately 328 feet] away from the site of the fresh water, the groundwater was saline. Some of the cgwb's observation stations for monitoring groundwater have fresh water in the depth range of 30-40 metres [approximately 98.5-131 feet]. “These are located in a linear pattern in the northeast-southeast direction, and never go dry”, says S C Sharma, “During drilling operations, ALLUVIAL SEDIMENTS were found at a depth of 78-100 metres [approximately 256-328 feet], pointing to the EXISTENCE OF A FLOW CHANNEL. It also points towards the EXISTENCE OF A FRESH WATER SOURCE along the inferred palaeo-channel”, says K K Srivastava.

Extensive surveys showed that there was A BIG WATER CHANNEL 60-70

metres [approximately 197-300 feet] UNDERGROUND, and the WATER WAS MOVING VERY SLOWLY TOWARDS THE SEA. Drilling work to trace these channels were started in Jaisaier. The second stage of the operations is in the Bikaner-Kolait region, upward of Jaisaier. There are palaeo-channels in all 10 districts of western Rajasthan, and these have been mapped to prepare the river's ancient course.

The course of the river is yet to be traced completely, though. Besides, it is believed that, like any other major river, the Saraswati also changed its course frequently. This would explain the very large number of channels buried underground.

Once the fact that the channels do exist was established, rgwd commissioned the Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad and barc [Bhabha Atomic Research Centre], Bombay to determine the age of the water and soil. A team of scientists led by S M Rao of barc's isotope division studied the samples collected from different depths. barc's dating suggests that the samples are as old as 20,000-40,000 years. The youngest samples date back to 2,500 years. These findings place the samples in the 'marine transgression' age, when the desertification of Rajasthan started. The groundwater today contains more tritium, a radioactive material, due to atmospheric nuclear tests conducted in the 1960s and 1970s by the us and the erstwhile ussr.

rgwd, in a proposal to the rgnmdw [Rajiv Gandhi National Mission for Drinking Water], outlined the utility of the project. This report suggests that once the channels are demarcated, and their course traced, they could contribute substantially towards solving the water crisis in arid western Rajasthan. "Transporting water through palaeo-channels would reduce the cost of water transportation drastically, because we do not need to build a canal. It would also reduce wastage due to evaporation", says S C Sharma. The channels could also double up as storage facility for surplus monsoon water.

Officials say that the defence ministry has also shown interest in the project, as it could mean adequate water supply to its soldiers stationed on the India-Pakistan border. Whether the large amounts of data available with the army is utilised or not, the findings of the two projects on Saraswati are worth waiting for.

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