

EDEN'S LOCATION

Does it still exist?

Biblical Issues.

This article was written in response to the following question submitted to our question and answer website Ask John Mackay.

If we accept Moses as the author of Genesis then his use of the past tense to describe events such as creation, the fall and the flood, but his use of the present tense to describe the 4 rivers coming out of Eden in Genesis 2, must mean that the Garden of Eden was still there when Moses authored the document around 34/35 hundred years ago. Therefore does this mean the locality of Eden was not destroyed during Noah's flood, and should still be findable today?

John Mackay has answered the question in two parts. The first part deals with the geology of the claimed sites for location of Eden. To read this click [here](#).

We would like to thank the many readers editors and advisor specialists who have critiqued this article over the past 5 months and specially the British author Dr. Bill Cooper for his reviews and for his inspiring 2011 publication; 'The Authenticity of Genesis' released in 2011 and available through Creation Science Movement in UK.

Because this question deals with the relationship of the author Moses to the text of Genesis as shown in English translations, I have listed below two English translations of Genesis 2:10-15 done 400 years apart for comparison. The King James (KJV) and the modern English Standard Version (ESV) as well as New King James Version (NKJV) are used in the body of the answer. We have used **bold type** for words of key interest: **went, is, flowed, flows, goeth** and **put**.

KJV Genesis 2:10-15: *And a river **went** out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. 11 The name of the first **is** Pison: that **is** it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there **is** gold; 12 And the gold of that land **is** good: there **is** bdellium and the onyx stone. 13 And the name of the second river **is** Gihon: the same **is** it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. 14 And the name of the third river **is** Hiddekel: that **is** it which **goeth** toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river **is** Euphrates. 15 And the Lord God took the man, and **put** him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.*

ESV Genesis 2:10-15: *A river **flowed** out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. 11 The name of the first **is** the Pishon. It is the one that **flowed** around the whole land of Havilah, where there **is** gold. 12 And the gold of that land **is** good; bdellium and onyx stone **are there**. 13 The name of the second river **is** the Gihon. It is the one that **flowed** around the whole land of Cush. 14 And the name of the third river **is** the Tigris (old name Hiddekel) , which **flows** east of Assyria. And the fourth river **is** the Euphrates. 15 The Lord God took the man and **put** him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.*

This article deals with that 'never'-popular subject of grammar shown in English translations, as well as locations virtually unknown to many in the west.

Below is a list of contents:

1. WHAT IS THE BASIS OF THIS QUESTION?
2. WHAT IS MY AIM?
3. THE TENSE SITUATION IN EDEN
4. HOW DO WE KNOW MOSES AUTHORED GENESIS?
5. WHO OR WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN INFORMATION SOURCES FOR GENESIS?
 - a. What no man could have recorded based on observation alone
 - b. What Adam could have recorded, based on his observation pre- or post-flood
 - c. What both Adam and eve could have recorded based on their observation
 - d. What could Moses have written?
 - e. How is Genesis constructed?
 - f. One last consideration – the garden in Eden
6. *OCCAM'S RAZOR SOLUTION RE: EDEN'S LOCATION?*

APPENDUM

Section 1 REVEALED SOURCES

Section 2 UNDERSTOOD TENSES IN GENESIS 2

Section 3 MORE ON LANGUAGE

Section 4 A DISPUTED TENSE PLUPERFECT Gen 2:8

Section 5 EXTRA REFERENCES FOR USE OF PRESENT TENSE

Section 6 COMPARING TENSES

1. WHAT IS THE BASIS OF THIS QUESTION?

Since orthodox Jewish Tradition, as well as Jesus Christ in the Gospels and early Church history, all regard Moses as the author of Genesis, then the use the past tense in translating Moses text in Genesis 1-11 into English in the description of some of the events such as creation, the fall, the flood, and Babel, (Genesis 1-11) is regarded as being consistent with them having happened prior to his existence, but the translators use of the present tense to describe the four rivers coming out of Eden (Genesis 2) must surely mean that the rivers were still flowing when Moses authored the document around 34/35 hundred years ago. it would then follow that the locality of Eden had not been destroyed during Noah's flood which had occurred approximately 1,000 years prior to Moses. Therefore, in the absence of any global catastrophic destruction since that time, the general location of

Eden should still be locatable today, regardless of the demise of any garden which may have been at the site.

2. WHAT IS MY AIM?

To resolve the question: *'Is there a better way of explaining the use of present tense in English translations than claiming it represents Moses knowledge of Eden's location during his day?'*

3. THE TENSE SITUATION IN EDEN

Let us review the use of present and past English tenses in Genesis 2:8-15 that give rise to this question (text shown is NKJV):

Genesis 2:8 *The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He **put** the man whom He **had formed**.*

9 *And out of the ground the Lord God **made** every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life **was** also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

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

Now for the puzzle: the previous verses are representative of events which happened in the past while the next verses are presented in present:

11 *The name of the first **is** Pishon; it **is** the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where there **is** gold. 12 And the gold of that land **is** good. Bdellium and the onyx stone **are** there. 13 The name of the second river **is** Gihon; it **is** the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. 14 The name of the third river **is** Hiddekel; it **is** the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river **is** the Euphrates.*

Now the text reverts to past events:

15 *Then the Lord God took the man and **put** him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it.*

It is the use of the English present tense '**is**' prior to each river's name in verses 11-14 which has given rise to the contention that Eden was still there when Moses authored Genesis!

4. HOW DO WE KNOW MOSES AUTHORED GENESIS?

Moses' name is associated with the first 5 books of the Old Testament and his name as author is listed in 4 of them, but it is not in Genesis. He certainly wrote the contents of Exodus 1:1 – Deut. 34:5, based on his own experience or observation, so why is his name associated with the contents of Genesis? Firstly there is the already mentioned combination of Jesus' statements, Jewish Tradition and early church traditions, all of whom regarded Moses as the author of Genesis.

But the most direct evidence we will discuss comes from his 'fingerprints', which show in what are sometimes called edit points. These are statements or comments that are hard to

attribute to anyone except Moses and are seen most visibly when we compare Gen. 6:4 with Numbers 13:33.

Gen. 6:4, in referring to the time before the Flood, states: 'There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.'

The next reference to giants that could give rise to someone saying "**and also afterward**" is recorded in Num. 13:32-33 when the spies reported to Moses stating: "32 And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, 'The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. 33 There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.'"

For the purpose of this article, it does not matter who the giants were in either case. What matters is firstly the fact that there were two sets of giants and they are both described with the same Hebrew word 'nephilim'. Secondly what can also be stated dogmatically is that Moses was there when the post-flood giants were observed, so as someone who was highly educated in Egypt (including the knowledge of writing), he would have been well able to make the editorial comment "**and also afterward**".

5. WHO OR WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN INFORMATION SOURCES FOR GENESIS?

a. What no man could have recorded based on observation alone

Gen. 1:1-1:26 - before Adam was created.

Gen. 1: 31 – 2:3 – potentially revealed to Adam/Moses by God after the event.

Gen. 2:4-2:8a, 9a – third person re-telling of what had happened.

Gen. 2:18 – third person re-telling of what had happened.

Gen. 2:21-22a – third person re-telling of what had happened.

GOD is therefore the only possible original source of the information above.

b. What Adam could have recorded based on his observation pre- or post-fall

Gen. 1: 26 -30 - actual recording of conversation between God and Adam

Gen. 2:8b, 9b-17 - description of Eden and the rivers.

Gen. 2:19b – 20 - Adam re-telling the experience of naming the animals

Gen. 2:22b-25 - Adam's observation of his first meeting with Eve

c. What both Adam and Eve could have recorded based on their observation

Most of Gen. 3, including the section on expulsion from Eden, and on to the point of their deaths, which by then included the use of metals such as iron and copper (Gen. 4:22), and therefore gold, along with what the river did when it left Eden and was still doing. This would have been observed in their 'present tense' to the date of their death (some 930 years later).

d. What could Moses have written?

He spent 40 days on Mt Sinai talking to God, and on one day during that time he was given the two tablets of the Law which includes Exodus 20:11 - "...in six days the Lord created..." It does lead us to ask the question: What did Moses and Yahweh/Jehovah God talk about for the other 39 days? Did God provide Moses the missing details that Adam, Methuselah, Noah, etc. could never have observed nor even deduced correctly – i.e. the first 5 1/2 days of creation?

e. How is Genesis constructed?

Genesis has 10 distinct sections labelled Toledoths which usually start/finish with the phrase: "These are the generations of..." This is first seen in Gen. 2:4. "These are the generations of heaven and earth."

It should be self-evident that only God could have authored and/or authorised Genesis 2:4-5, which reads: *"These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground."*

Note that the name Yahweh/Jehovah God is used in these verses for the Creator. For those unfamiliar with tradition, the word Yahweh is usually written as LORD in English translations, or THE NAME in Jewish translations (HaShem), due to the Jewish tradition of reluctance to pronounce God's Name, resulting in the complete loss of how it should 'correctly' be sounded.

What's this got to do with a discussion on Moses as author/editor of Genesis? The NAME Yahweh/Jehovah was obviously known to Eve, as she is quoted using it in her statement about the birth of Cain (Gen. 4:1-2). We see it used also in Gen. 4: 26 where, in the days of Enosh, men who recognised their need as sinners are said 'to call on the name of THE LORD.' Again, after the flood we read Noah stating: "Blessed be the LORD (Yahweh) God of Shem" (Gen 9:26). And likewise the name YAHWEH is seen even in an Egyptian Hieroglyph in the temple of Soleb erected by Amenhotep 3rd in reference to 'Shasu land of Yahweh'. Shasu is a term which usually refers to the southern Palestine area or the Negev.

Yahweh/Jehovah (LORD) is therefore a word which people had had knowledge of since Eve's time, yet after Moses met with God for 40 days and nights on Mt Sinai, he came to know THE NAME in a very personal way and with a far deeper meaning than anyone prior to that date. Consider the significance of Moses being the first person since Adam sinned to spend so much personal time with God, and to leave a written record of this.

Now note that the 10 Commandments contain the statement in Exodus 20:11 that in 6 days the LORD made the heavens etc. This is part of what Moses was specifically given by God, written by God's own hand (Ex. 31:18), and includes the name Jehovah/Yahweh, a term NOT used in Genesis 1, where the Hebrew word for the Creator God is Elohim. Yet the name Jehovah/Yahweh God appears first in Genesis 2:5, a section which no one without direct access to God as a source could have composed and which is a further link between Moses and Genesis.

In Gen. 6:6 another, Toledoth heading reads: “These are the generations of Noah...”, and Noah is an obvious witness source for much of this information, which would mean that such information would have been used by Moses to construct Genesis in the form we have it.

NOW BACK-TRACK A BIT: there is an unusual comment on Adam's Toledoth Gen. 5:4. ...“This is the book of Adam”, or as some translations put it: “This is the written record of Adam”. Our contention is that Adam, who never went to language school to learn to speak, also never went to prep school to learn to write. He could do both innately because he was made in the image of the speaking/writing God. Therefore, not only is Adam himself the subject of this section, but he should seriously be considered as the source of much of the information for this portion. And as such, he left behind him an oral record of events for sure, and most probably a written record compiled in his old age, of what happened within and without the garden. To do this, he would have recorded that which had happened before he was expelled from the garden and that which he could still observe after his expulsion. To record accurately all that happened, he would have needed to describe events and locations in both past and present tenses. Such records were then transmitted down via Methuselah to Noah to the post-flood world and eventually to Moses, who was used by God to stitch it together and add any new revelations from the Only Witness who had observed it all from the very beginning...the Creator Himself.

f. One last consideration – the garden in Eden

Chapter 2 verse 8 demands that we understand that the garden itself was not Eden. The locality referred to as Eden was a larger geographical area, and the garden is described as on the eastern side of this region. Therefore we should firstly and most accurately refer to it as *‘the Garden in Eden’*. The man was placed in this garden after it was made by God, and was resident till after sin brought about his expulsion (Gen. 3:23).

The origin of the river names is also of relevance. After the Creator had placed the man in Eden's garden, He had given the earth into Adam's control (Gen. 1:28), which included the dominion right of naming its features (as well as the animals: Gen. 2:19). This virtually excludes God as the source of river names in Gen. 2. We know that Moses did not originate labels for these rivers, since descriptive names for these features (Hiddekel, the Tigris, and Phrat, the Euphrates) were in usage well before Moses' day, but the names Pison and Gihon were unknown and unrecorded except in Genesis, and unfound ever since. All of which strongly argues against Moses attributing lost names to two unknown rivers by using a description which is best turned into English as a 'present tense.'

We must also consider the fact that Adam and Eve, having been expelled from the garden, were not however expelled from the rest of Eden. Therefore it was quite possible for Adam to have described the entry of the single river into the Garden in two possible tenses without any inconsistency. He could have used his *‘I was once in Eden memory’* which allows for the use of the past tense 'flowed'. Alternatively it would have been just as accurate for Adam to walk all around the garden for the next 900 yrs or so, to the point where the one river still entered from Eden into the now forbidden place and observe the river still flowing (present tense).

THEREFORE?

At the risk of sounding repetitious, let us again remember that Adam did not leave the Garden in Eden until after sin, so therefore Adam had no pre-fall knowledge of where any rivers went after they left the Garden, or what gold was in any lands distant from Eden.

Therefore his pre-fall knowledge of the river/rivers was limited to the fact that they were part of God's handiwork, and were there before he arrived, and entered the Garden (past tense) where they had already been divided by the Creator (past tense). Hence the correctness of allowing for a mixture of tenses to describe the rivers' entry as 'went' or 'flowed' and 'was parted' (all past tense), combined with Adam's knowledge (gained post-fall), both of where the 4 partings went after they left the garden in Eden, as well as the minerals of any lands the rivers ran through. Adam could have recorded all such post-expulsion information in the present tense up to a maximum of 930 years later, during a time when his descendents are actively recorded as using metals (Gen 4:22).

6. OCCAM'S RAZOR SOLUTION RE: EDEN'S LOCATION?

Occam was a priest who made a very important observation that has become a rule-of-thumb in all science investigations, police work, etc. 'The simplest solution is usually the most reliable.' In this case, the simplest solution seems to be that Moses edited Genesis, including the portion Adam recorded, and he faithfully included tenses as they reflected the original author's 'in-tense-ions'...(forgive the pun). So what are the implications re: the location of Eden in the present world?

MY CONCLUSION

The use of tenses both real and understood in Genesis 1-2, far from rendering the text unusable as some claim, actually help point us to the evidence for it being an original eyewitness account by Adam, as well as a revealed text from the Creator through Moses. They do not demand that Eden existed when Moses, under Jehovah's/Yahweh's guidance, compiled the text into its present form.

It is much more consistent to read both the OT and NT accounts of the destruction by Noah's flood as demolishing the globe, including the Garden of Eden, so that no location for Eden exists on this present planet.

APPENDUM

Section 1

SOURCES FOR GENESIS

Revelation to Adam?

Some have suggested that the original content of Genesis 1 and 2 could have been revealed to Adam. There is no denying there was direct revelation to Adam about things he did not know, particularly concerning the nature of the two trees in the garden. The only possible human source

for this information is, of course, Adam, and the only source for Adam was the information listed as coming from the Creator Himself. However, the text of Genesis 1-3 itself in no way confirms Adam as the source of revealed information about days 1-5.

Revelation to Moses?

Many others claim that all the contents of Genesis 1-5 and perhaps beyond were revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai during the 40 days, as he was receiving the 10 commandments. This is a popular thought but it would seem to be unlikely, as such a source would be less likely to need edit points, such as the one we stressed in Genesis 6:4.

Oral Tradition as a Source?

Having experienced firsthand the accuracy of oral tradition amongst non-literate people when university linguist Dr Allen Hall and I were recording the DVD series *Origin of the Races* and *Real Roots*, we found no problem with an original oral tradition source, but we tended to disregard it due to the presence of attributable edit marks such as Gen. 6:4, which are not a characteristic of oral tradition. So while Adam may have oralized it in the beginning, even for his children's sake, I suspect by the end of his life – and certainly by the time of Moses – it was in a written form that could be detectably edited by Moses.

TOLEDOTHS: There are actually 11 headings "these are the generations of," but the one for Esau (Gen. 36) is repeated, showing female and male lines separately, hence the statement 10 Toledoths.

SATAN: It is of interest to note that in Genesis 3:1-5, the Serpent/Satan is quoted as referring to God without the use of the title LORD (Yahweh). Eve is the only possible human source for this quote.

ENOCH: Despite the fact that Enoch knew God intimately for 365 years, we know almost nothing of conversations between the Lord and Enoch. See Gen. 5:18-24 and Jude 14.

POST-FLOOD RIVER NAMES: Consider how New South Wales in Australia is named after Wales in the UK, similarly New York, New Hampshire, Birmingham Alabama, and so on...

GOD'S NAME: For more on knowledge of God's Name, see discussions on the implications of Exodus 6:1-3.

Section 2

UNDERSTOOD TENSES IN GENESIS 2

A quick check of Young's Literal Hebrew/English Translation Gen. 2:11-14 shows the construction as:

"11 the name of the one [is] Pison, it [is] that which is surrounding the whole land of the Havilah where the gold [is],

12 and the gold of that land [is] good, there [is] the bdolach and the shoham stone;

13 and the name of the second river [is] Gibon, it [is] that which is surrounding the whole land of Cush; 14 and the name of the third river [is] Hiddekel (Tigris), it [is] that which is going east of Asshur; and the fourth river is Phrat (Euphrates)."

Please note that, according to Young, the present tense "[is]" verbs in front of the River Names are not in the text as the verb 'to be' but are 'understood,' i.e. "the first [] Tigris".

In all major English translations, this is written with the formula, “the Name of the first ‘is’ Tigris” and so on for all the rivers. The logic is easy to follow. If you try to substitute a past tense so that it reads “the name of the first ‘was’ Tigris”, it raises the question, “So what is it called now?”

If you try to substitute a future tense so that it reads, “The name of the first ‘will be’ Tigris,” it makes no sense at all, as at the time of compilation by Moses, the river we know as the Tigris was already named, so the only real option is to use the present tense ‘is.’

Likewise when we consult Young for verse 10 we read:

Gen. 2:10 And a river is going out from Eden to water the garden, and from thence it is parted, and hath become four chief [rivers]...

Despite the fact that Young puts it into the present tense, all translations such as KJV etc. use either ‘went’ or ‘flowed’ as an apparent past tense for the origin of the river before it parted into 4 heads as it left the garden, followed by the present tense (but understood) “is.”

Thereafter the same term with the same tense is usually written with the more present tense ‘flow’ or ‘goes’.

The point of this section is simple. Such a use of tenses, both actual and understood, could never be applied by Moses as an author/editor. Only Adam is a contender for such a grammatical construction.

Section 3

MORE ON LANGUAGE

For those who like details, note that a Hebrew interlinear Bible shows the same tense for all the “flow” verbs (Qal Part Masc. Sing.):

So 2:10, yatza (flow out, Eden) is a Qal Part. Masc. Sing.

Then 2:11-13, savav (flow, Pishon, Gihon), again Qal Part. Masc. Sing.

Then 2:14, halakh (flow, Tigris), again Qal Part. Masc. Sing.

Often interpreters “contextualise” their translation. For example:

The ESV reads “flowed” (past tense) for Eden, Pishon & Gihon, but “flows” (present) for Tigris, even though the Hebrew tense is the same.

The NAS, since they are the same tense, reads “flows” for all of them – except for 2:10 (even though the Hebrew tense is the same).

Section 4

A DISPUTED TENSE PLUPERFECT

Also in vv 8 & 19, note that the NIV renders “had planted” & “had formed” (scholars are split on how to render the verb in Hebrew) as a pluperfect tense, referring to the past of the past—that is to say, in a narration set in the past, the event to which the narration refers is already further in the past.

Genesis 2:8

Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. (NIV)

And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. (KJV)

Genesis 2:19

Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. (NIV)

And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. (KJV)

Section 5

EXTRA REFERENCES FOR USE OF PRESENT TENSE

Gen. 22:14 And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

2 Sam. 6:8 And David became angry because of the Lord's outbreak against Uzzah; and he called the name of the place Perez Uzzah to this day.

1 Chron 13:11 And David became angry because of the Lord's outbreak against Uzza; therefore that place is called Perez Uzza to this day.

2 Sam 7:6 For I have not dwelt in a house since the time that I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt, even to this day, but have moved about in a tent and in a tabernacle.

2 Chron 35:25 Jeremiah also lamented for Josiah. And to this day all the singing men and the singing women speak of Josiah in their lamentations. They made it a custom in Israel; and indeed they are written in the Laments.

THE MEANING of the phrase 'and to this day' in the above items is that the item being referred to still existed at the time the author wrote the document and therefore 'present tense usage' was (past tense) accurate. IT DOES NOT MEAN the item is still present as of today when you are reading the document.