

~EUPHRATES (533)

(Eu-phra'tes)

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- The longest and most important river of Southwest Asia, called the *Firat Nehri* in Turkish, a name closely resembling the Hebrew *Perath'* and the Old Persian *Ufratu*. It is first mentioned at;

- And the name of the third river is Hiddekel, it is the one going to the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the **Euphrates**. (Genesis 2:14)

- As one of the four rivers once having had their source in Eden.

.. Boundary Of Israel's Assigned Territory

- In God's statement to Abraham he covenanted to give Abraham's seed the land from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river **Euphrates**.

- On that day Yehowah concluded with Abram a covenant, saying; To your seed I will give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river **Euphrates**. (Genesis 15:18)

- This promise was restated to the nation of Israel.

- And I will fix your boundary from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines and from the wilderness to the River, because I shall give into your hand the inhabitants of the land, and you will certainly drive them out from before yourself. (Exodus 23:31)

- Turn and set out on your way and go into the mountainous region of the Amorites and to all their neighbors in the Arabah, the mountainous region and the Shephelah and the Negeb and the seacoast, the land of the Canaanites, and Lebanon, up to the great river, the river **Euphrates**. (Deuteronomy 1:7)

- See, I do put the land before you people. Go in and take possession of the land about which Yehowah swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give it to them and their seed after them. (**Deuteronomy 1:8**)
- Every place on which the sole of your foot will tread will become yours. From the wilderness up to Lebanon, from the River, the river **Euphrates**, to the western sea your boundary will become. (**Deuteronomy 11:24**)
- From the wilderness and this Lebanon to the great river, the river **Euphrates**, that is, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun your territory will prove to be. (**Joshua 1:4**)
- Even to the east he dwelt as far as where one enters the wilderness at the river **Euphrates**, for their livestock itself had become numerous in the land of Gilead. (**1 Chronicles 5:9**)
- States that certain descendants of Reuben in the period prior to David's reign extended their dwelling as far as where one enters the wilderness at the river **Euphrates**. However, since the Euphrates is some 800 kilometers (500 miles) distant, when traveling east of Gilead
- And in the days of Saul they made war upon the Hagrites, who came to fall by their hand, and so they dwelt in their tents throughout all the country east of Gilead. (**1 Chronicles 5:10**)
- This may mean simply that the Reubenites extended their territory East of Gilead into the edge of the Syrian Desert, which desert continues over to the **Euphrates**. **RS** reads, as far as the entrance of the desert this side of the **Euphrates**, **JB**, to the beginning of the desert that ends at the river **Euphrates**.
- It thus appears that Yehowah's promise was first fully realized during the reigns of David and Solomon when the boundaries of Israel's dominion extended to include the Aramaean kingdom of Zobah and thus reached to the banks of the **Euphrates**, evidently along the section traversing northern Syria.
- And David went on to strike down Hadadezer the son of Rehob the king of Zobah as he was going his way to put his control back again at the river **Euphrates**. (**2 Samuel 8:3**)

- As for Solomon, he proved to be ruler over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines and to the boundary of Egypt. They were bringing gifts and serving Solomon all the days of his life. (**1 Kings 4:21**)
- And David went on to strike down Hadadezer the king of Zobah at Hamath as he was going his way to set up his control at the river **Euphrates**. (**1 Chronicles 18:3**)
- Further, David captured from him a thousand chariots and seven thousand horsemen and twenty thousand men on foot. Then David hamstringed all the chariot horses, but he let a hundred chariot horses of them remain. (**1 Chronicles 18:4**)
- When Syria of Damascus came to help Hadadezer the king of Zobah, David went striking down among the Syrians twenty-two thousand men. (**1 Chronicles 18:5**)
- After that David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus, and the Syrians came to be David's servants bearing tribute. And Yehowah kept giving salvation to David wherever he went. (**1 Chronicles 18:6**)
- Moreover, David took the circular shields of gold that happened to be on the servants of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem. (**1 Chronicles 18:7**)
- And from Tibhath and Cun, cities of Hadadezer, David took very much copper. With it Solomon made the copper sea and the pillars and the copper utensils. (**1 Chronicles 18:8**)
- And he came to be ruler over all the kings from the River down to the land of the Philistines and down to the boundary of Egypt. (**2 Chronicles 9:26**)
- Because of its preeminence, it was often designated simply as the River.
- And Joshua went on to say to all the people; This is what Yehowah the God of Israel has said; It was on the other side of the River that your forefathers dwelt a long time ago, Terah the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they used to serve other gods. (**Joshua 24:2**)

- Now if it is bad in your eyes to serve Yehowah, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve, whether the gods that your forefathers who were on the other side of the River served or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are dwelling. But as for me and my household, we shall serve Yehowah. (**Joshua 24:15**)
- And he will have subjects from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. (**Psalms 72:8**)

• Sources And Course

- Some 2,700 kilometers (1,700 miles) in length, the **Euphrates** has two principal sources. One, known as the **Kara Su**, takes its rise in Northeast Turkey about 100 kilometers (60 miles) from the Southeast corner of the Black Sea.
- The other, the **Murat Nehri**, has its headwaters originating about midway between Lake Van and Mount Ararat. Approximately halfway between the two rivers lies the valley of the Araks River, thought by some to be related to the Gihon River of,
- And the name of the second river is Gihon, it is the one encircling the entire land of Cush. (**Genesis 2:13**)
- The courses of the **Kara Su** and the **Murat Nehri** run fairly parallel in a westerly direction until they unite near the city of Keban, at an elevation of about 610 meters (2,000 feet) above sea level.
- From this point on, the combined streams form the **Euphrates** proper. Having already traversed some 640 kilometers (400 miles) of mountainous terrain from the initial headwaters of the Murat Nehri, the river now turns southward for a distance of some 480 kilometers (300 miles), during which its flow is broken by various cataracts and rapids, until it finally emerges on the Syrian plain at a point North of the site of ancient Carchemish or modern Jerablus.

• Ford At Carchemish

- Carchemish guarded the principal fording place used by armies or caravans crossing from North Mesopotamia into North Syria. Carchemish was a major fortress city that later came under Assyrian control.

- Aha, the Assyrian, the rod for my anger, and the stick that is in their hand for my denunciation! (**Isaiah 10:5**)
- Against an apostate nation I shall send him, and against the people of my fury I shall issue a command to him, to take much spoil and to take much plunder and to make it a trampling place like the clay of the streets. (**Isaiah 10:6**)
- Though he may not be that way, he will feel inclined, though his heart may not be that way, he will scheme, because to annihilate is in his heart, and to cut off nations not a few. (**Isaiah 10:7**)
- For he will say; Are not my princes at the same time kings? (**Isaiah 10:8**)
- Is not Calno just like Carchemish? Is not Hamath just like Arpad? Is not Samaria just like Damascus? (**Isaiah 10:9**)
- Pharaoh Nechoh took the city about **629 B.C.E**, engaging Josiah's army at Megiddo and killing that Judean king while on the way there.
- In his days Pharaoh Nechoh the king of Egypt came up to the king of Assyria by the river **Euphrates**, and King Josiah proceeded to go to meet him, but he put him to death at Megiddo as soon as he saw him. (**2 Kings 23:29**)
- After all this when Josiah had prepared the house, Necho the king of Egypt came up to fight at Carchemish by the **Euphrates**. Then Josiah went out to an encounter with him. (**2 Chronicles 35:20**)
- At that he sent messengers to him, saying; What do I have to do with you, O king of Judah? It is not against you that I am coming today, but it is against another house that my fight is and that God himself said that I should cause disturbance. Refrain for your own sake because of God, who is with me, and do not let him bring you to ruin. (**2 Chronicles 35:21**)
- And Josiah did not turn his face away from him, but to fight against him he disguised himself and did not listen to the words of Necho from the mouth of God. So he came to fight in the valley plain of Megiddo. (**2 Chronicles 35:22**)
- And the shooters got to shoot at King Josiah, so that the king

said to his servants; Take me down, for I have been very severely wounded. (**2 Chronicles 35:23**)

- Accordingly his servants took him down from the chariot and had him ride in the second war chariot that was his and brought him to Jerusalem. Thus he died and was buried in the graveyard of his forefathers, and all Judah and Jerusalem were mourning over Josiah. (**2 Chronicles 35:24**)
- Between three and four years later, **625 B.C.E**, Nebuchadnezzar's troops crossed the **Euphrates** and defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish, initiating the complete decline of any domination by Egypt in Syria-Palestine.
- For Egypt, concerning the military force of Pharaoh Necho the king of Egypt, who happened to be by the river **Euphrates** at Carchemish, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon defeated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, the king of Judah. (**Jeremiah 46:2**)
- Let not the swift one try to flee, and let not the mighty man try to escape. Up north by the bank of the river **Euphrates** they have stumbled and fallen. (**Jeremiah 46:6**)
- And that day belongs to the Sovereign Lord, Yehowah of armies, the day of vengeance for avenging himself upon his adversaries. And the sword will certainly devour and satisfy itself and take its fill of their blood, for the Sovereign Lord, Yehowah of armies, has a sacrifice in the land of the north by the river **Euphrates**. (**Jeremiah 46:10**)
- And never again did the king of Egypt come out from his land, for the king of Babylon had taken all that happened to belong to the king of Egypt from the torrent valley of Egypt up to the river **Euphrates**. (**2 Kings 24:7**)

•• From Carchemish To The Persian Gulf

- The **Euphrates** by Carchemish is only about 160 kilometers (100 miles) from the Mediterranean Sea, however, the river thereafter makes a turn and takes a Southeast course, heading for the Persian Gulf, over 1,100 kilometers (680 miles) distant.

- The middle section of the **Euphrates** reaches from Carchemish down to the city of Hit, in the region of bitumen pits, its flow being strengthened by the waters of the Balikh and Khabur rivers.
- Below Hit the river courses through the fertile Mesopotamian plain, and some 80 kilometers (50 miles) below Hit, in the neighborhood of Baghdad, it draws within 40 kilometers (25 miles) of the Tigris River.
- In this lower section of the **Euphrates**, the river dissipates itself in the extensive marshes and in the ruined canals, and its flow becomes sluggish.
- The **Euphrates** and the Tigris finally unite near Basra, and from this junction to the Persian Gulf the stream is known as the Shatt-al-Arab. According to Pliny and other ancient historians, the **Euphrates** originally had its outlet into the sea separate from that of the Tigris. [\[Natural History, VI, XXVI, 128-131\]](#)
- It is generally believed that the silt deposited by the two rivers has built up the delta region at the head of the Persian Gulf and that the original coastline extended much farther North, perhaps reaching as far as the ancient city of Ur of the Chaldeans, Abraham's early home.
- The **Euphrates** waters reach their lowest point in September and then steadily rise until May, when their normal crest is reached. Because of the melting snows, spring floods occur.
- The annual overflowing of both the **Euphrates** and the Tigris doubtless is the basis for Isaiah's description of Babylonia as the wilderness of the sea.
- The pronouncement against the wilderness of the sea; Like storm winds in the south in moving onward, from the wilderness it is coming, from a fear-inspiring land. ([Isaiah 21:1](#))
- There is a hard vision that has been told to me; The treacherous dealer is dealing treacherously, and the despoiler is despoiling. Go up, O Elam! Lay siege, O Media! All sighing due to her I have caused to cease. ([Isaiah 21:2](#))
- This flooding was controlled in ancient times by dikes and sluices that diverted the waters into irrigation canals and into catch basins. These canals formed an irrigation network between the **Euphrates** and the Tigris that ensured productiveness for most of lower Babylonia.

- Over the centuries the canals generally have become blocked up and clogged, with resultant agricultural deterioration, the accumulation of salts in the soil because of the irrigation waters also contributed to the gradual ruin of the once-fertile valley.

• Major Cities

- Along the **Euphrates's** banks lay many ancient cities, including Ur, Erech, Kish, and Babylon. The rivers course has apparently shifted somewhat to the West so that most of the ancient sites now lie several miles to the East of it.
- The great city of Babylon was originally built so that it straddled the **Euphrates**, and the rivers waters were used to form a broad deep moat encircling the city and also to form a network of canals within the city walls.
- At the time of Babylon's fall in **539 B.C.E**, Cyrus diverted the waters of the **Euphrates** so that his troops could march through the riverbed into the unsuspecting city. Thus, the waters of the **Euphrates** were dried up.
- The One saying to the watery deep; Be evaporated. And all your rivers I shall dry up. (**Isaiah 44:27**)
- The One saying of Cyrus; He is my shepherd, and all that I delight in he will completely carry out, even in my saying of Jerusalem; She will be rebuilt. And of the temple; You will have your foundation laid. (**Isaiah 44:28**)
- This is what Yehowah has said to his anointed one, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have taken hold of, to subdue before him nations, so that I may ungird even the hips of kings, to open before him the two-leaved doors, so that even the gates will not be shut. (**Isaiah 45:1**)
- In symbol, the same thing is prophesied to result from the outpouring of the sixth angels bowl on the great river **Euphrates**, as described at;
- And the sixth one poured out his bowl upon the great river **Euphrates**, and its water was dried up, that the way might be prepared for the kings from the rising of the sun. (**Revelation**

16:12)

- The following chapter describes the destruction of symbolic Babylon the Great, which is said to sit on many waters, these representing peoples and crowds and nations and tongues.
- And one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying; Come, I will show you the judgment upon the great harlot who sits on many waters. (**Revelation 17:1**)
- And upon her forehead was written a name, a mystery. Babylon the Great, the mother of the harlots and of the disgusting things of the earth. (**Revelation 17:5**)
- And he says to me; The waters that you saw, where the harlot is sitting, mean peoples and crowds and nations and tongues. (**Revelation 17:15**)
- And the ten horns that you saw, and the wild beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her devastated and naked, and will eat up her fleshy parts and will completely burn her with fire. (**Revelation 17:16**)
- For God put it into their hearts to carry out his thought, even to carry out their one thought by giving their kingdom to the wild beast, until the words of God will have been accomplished. (**Revelation 17:17**)
- And the woman whom you saw means the great city that has a kingdom over the kings of the earth. (**Revelation 17:18**)

.. A Frontier Visited By Jeremiah

- As the **Euphrates** River served as the northern frontier of the disputed region of Palestine and Syria, over which Egypt and Babylon fought, so in the time of the Persian Empire it served to divide the East from the West, as indicated by the expression beyond the River.
- And the rest of the nations whom the great and honorable Asenappar took into exile and settled in the cities of Samaria, and the rest beyond the River, and now (**Ezra 4:10**)
- This is a copy of the letter that they sent concerning it. To

Artaxerxes the king your servants, the men beyond the River.
And now (**Ezra 4:11**)

- At that time Tattenai the governor beyond the River and Shethar-bozenai and their colleagues came to them, and this is what they were saying to them. Who put an order through to you to build this house and to finish this beam structure? (**Ezra 5:3**)
- Now Tattenai the governor beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai and their colleagues, the lesser governor's that are beyond the River, keep your distance from there. (**Ezra 6:6**)
- And I went on to say to the king; If to the king it does seem good, let letters be given me to the governor's beyond the River, that they may let me pass until I come to Judah. (**Nehemiah 2:7**)
- In time the **Euphrates** also formed the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire.
- The text at;
- This is what Yehowah has said to me; Go, and you must get for yourself a linen belt and put it upon your hips, but you must not bring it into any water. (**Jeremiah 13:1**)
- So I got the belt in accord with the word of Yehowah and put it upon my hips. (**Jeremiah 13:2**)
- And the word of Yehowah proceeded to occur to me a second time, saying; (**Jeremiah 13:3**)
- Take the belt that you got, that is upon your hips, and rise up, go to the **Euphrates**, and hide it there in a cleft of the crag. (**Jeremiah 13:4**)
- So I went and hid it by the **Euphrates**, just as Yehowah had commanded me. (**Jeremiah 13:5**)
- But it came about at the end of many days that Yehowah proceeded to say to me. Rise up, go to the **Euphrates** and take from there the belt that I commanded you to hide there. (**Jeremiah 13:6**)
- Accordingly I went to the **Euphrates** and dug and took the belt

from the place in which I had hid it, and, look! The belt had been ruined, it was not fit for anything. (**Jeremiah 13:7**)

- Has been the subject of some discussion inasmuch as a trip by Jeremiah from Jerusalem to the river **Euphrates**, even at its nearest point some distance South of Carchemish, would represent a trip of over 500 kilometers (300 miles) each way, and the text indicates that he possibly made the trip twice, though the intervening time is not stated.
- A translation by the Jewish Publication Society here simply transliterates the Hebrew word as Perath, and some suggest that the reference is not to the **Euphrates** but to the town of Parah.
- Accordingly I went to the **Euphrates** and dug and took the belt from the place in which I had hid it, and, look! The belt had been ruined, it was not fit for anything. (**Jeremiah 13:7**)
- Near Anathoth, a few miles from Jerusalem. However, the repetition of the name *Perath'*, **Euphrates**, four times in the account evidently shows that the place named had a significant relation to the prophetic picture being enacted, whereas the obscure village of Parah would hardly seem to give particular significance to the event.
- Though some point out that the **Hebrew** word *na-har'* or river, is not used in connection with *Perath'* in this text, it may be noted that it is likewise lacking at;
- And it must occur that when you will have completed reading this book, you will tie to it a stone, and you must pitch it into the midst of the **Euphrates**. (**Jeremiah 51:63**)
- Yet the reference there obviously is to the **Euphrates** River. Hence, there seems to be no good reason for assuming that the account at;
- This is what Yehowah has said to me; Go, and you must get for yourself a linen belt and put it upon your hips, but you must not bring it into any water. (**Jeremiah 13:1**)
- So I got the belt in accord with the word of Yehowah and put it upon my hips. (**Jeremiah 13:2**)
- And the word of Yehowah proceeded to occur to me a second

time, saying; (**Jeremiah 13:3**)

- Take the belt that you got, that is upon your hips, and rise up, go to the **Euphrates**, and hide it there in a cleft of the crag. (**Jeremiah 13:4**)
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- But it came about at the end of many days that Yehowah proceeded to say to me; Rise up, go to the **Euphrates** and take from there the belt that I commanded you to hide there. (**Jeremiah 13:6**)
- Accordingly I went to the **Euphrates** and dug and took the belt from the place in which I had hid it, and, look! The belt had been ruined, it was not fit for anything. (**Jeremiah 13:7**)
- Refers to anything other than the **Euphrates** River.
- It is quite possible that Jeremiah's hiding of the belt near the river took place at least in the general region of the crossing of the **Euphrates** by the Babylonian armies under Nebuchadnezzar in their march that eventually led to the desolation of Judah and Jerusalem.
- At any rate, the trip, or possibly two trips, to the **Euphrates** by Jeremiah certainly should have given impressive weight to the warning message this action was to convey to the spiritually corrupt people of the kingdom of Judah.
- And now what concern should you have for the way of Egypt in order to drink the waters of Sihor? And what concern should you have for the way of Assyria in order to drink the waters of the River? (**Jeremiah 2:18**)
- Your badness should correct you, and your own acts of unfaithfulness should reprove you. Know, then, and see that your leaving Yehowah your God is something bad and bitter, and no dread of me has resulted to you, is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord, Yehowah of armies. (**Jeremiah 2:19**)