

Directions to Eden, Please?

Turkey ~ Part 1 ~



When I was young and summer days grew warm and long, I used to swim in the cool of the Maitland River, fish in its murky shadows, and canoe under its leafy canopy. The Maitland River isn't a famous river and you've likely never heard of it but perhaps you *have* heard of these 4 well-known rivers from the beginning of time, written of in Genesis 2:10-14: "*Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers. The name of the first is Pishon... The name of the second river is Gihon... The name of the third river is Tigris...*"

Wait! Now imagine that the Bible then named the very river that coursed near your home. "*And the fourth river is the*" Wouldn't you catch your breath if you read that verse in the Bible and realized, "That's the very river I swim in on summer afternoons!?" There *are* children today who do indeed read in the Bible of the river that streams just outside their house! The stories of the Bible happen in *real*, actual places on Earth. God's story, through the ages, is rooted in **geography**. The words of Scripture are firmly rooted in the ground of our world, places you can see and touch and experience today. I can't wait to experience those rivers and mountains and lands with you!

Of course, geographers pack their bags before embarking on a Holy Land exploration, but the most important elements of a journey simply cannot be tucked into a suitcase. Firstly, wise travelers have observing *eyes* that are focused to truly see the sights. Secondly, astute adventurers nurture strong *memories* to net their adventures and keep them as their own. And thirdly, geographers of wisdom carry with them a healthy *faith*. A growing faith gives our heart eyes to see the evidence and face of God everywhere we travel. With our trio of essentials, let us depart!

The Bible begins with the story of geography: the story of Earth, and its creation...and it begins with a garden. The Bible reads, "*Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east.*" (Gen. 2:8). This is the first mention of an exact, geographical location on our Earth. It speaks of a real garden that once existed: the Garden of Eden. If I cracked open my Bible, could I find a map that told me where the Garden of Eden is today? No! No modern map can show us where to find the ancient Garden of Eden. Perhaps we could, however, gather some ideas regarding its location from the Bible and its clue of those four rivers: "*Now a river flowed out of Eden...and became four rivers...*" (Gen. 2:14). Since Eden means "delight" in Hebrew, we will need to look for a place of delight! Let's begin in a place where children today can eat a candy called "Turkish Delight". These children live in the middle eastern country of Turkey...and one of the rivers that flowed through the Garden of Eden begins in that country. Might Earth's very first inhabitants, created masterfully by God's own hand, have walked through the dark green valleys of this country? Why not hop on a flying carpet to see where the Garden of Eden may have been in Turkey?



The Turkish Flag: The star and crescent are Muslim symbols.



More than 250,000 people visit the 4,000 shops of Istanbul's Grand Bazaar every day, the world's most famous bazaar. The oldest part of the Bazaar was built in 1461 under Mehemt the Conqueror. Today's shoppers carry home purchases of such goods as jewelry, pottery, spices and carpets.

Tales of *floating* carpets are merely the stuff of fantasy, but our carpet is as real as the Garden of Eden once was. We'd find such a carpet in Turkey...but where exactly are we? Hold a globe in your hand and spin till you find where God has intersected the Mediterranean Sea, and the continents of Europe and Asia; there you will pinpoint Turkey. Now that you've landed, let's make our way to the crowded Turkish Grand Bazaar in the city of Istanbul (Can you locate Istanbul in the northwest corner?) A **bazaar** is the Persian word for market, and it is here in the Grand Bazaar of Istanbul that we would find our ornate Turkish carpet called a *kilim* (KEE-lim). Here, in alleys so narrow one can hardly squeeze through, stringing along more than 65 streets, merchants from over 4,000 shops shout out to passing shoppers trying to sell their colorful wares. Some shopkeepers of the Grand Bazaar grab our arms, tugging us into their stalls, while others tickle our ear with whispered prices especially negotiated for us. In one shop selling carpets, I imagine our fingers reaching out to feel the dark hues and naturally dyed colors. Perhaps the shopkeeper, Ahmet, may roll the kilim out for us, chuckling, "*Evet, evet,*" (Yes, yes in Turkish) teasing us that our carpet may float away, sweeping us up over the Grand Bazaar and all of the city of Istanbul. Imagine: a dip and a dive, a launch and an upward lunge, and here we would be, on our own kilim,

looking down at the country of Turkey below us!

With your eye on your globe and Turkey far below, what image can you form out of the shapes you see? I imagine a strange creature with the Sea of Marmara as an eye. Can you pinpoint where Istanbul and the Grand Bazaar might be?

Turkey covers an area of 301,400 square miles (780,626 square kilometers) which is about the size of the states of Texas and Virginia combined. While we may have an easy overview of the entire country from our carpet, Turkey actually spans about 1000 miles (1,609 km) from end to end. We'd have to start driving before the sun rose and drive long after sunset, to cross the entire country.

This is a photograph taken of Turkey from a satellite up in space. Looking down from way above, what shapes do you see in Turkey's geography? The different shades of green tell us where plants, trees and vegetation are growing in the landscape. The blue areas are the seas and lakes. The white areas above the land are clouds. *Photo courtesy of visibleearth.nasa.gov*



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From your carpet roost, you surely noticed the four great bodies of water bordering Turkey: the Mediterranean Sea, the Aegean Sea, the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea. What makes these bodies of water *seas* and not oceans or lakes? A **sea** is a stretching expanse of salty water that is usually a reaching arm of ocean, butting into a continent of land. If you look carefully, you'll find that the Mediterranean Sea, for instance, is really just an arm of the Atlantic Ocean that God has allowed to reach into the lands of Africa, Europe and Asia. Out of the Mediterranean Sea stretches another arm, the Aegean...and out of the Aegean Sea extends the arm of the Sea of



God drew a thread of blue water, the Bosphorous Strait, to separate the continents of Europe and Asia. Bridges now span the Bosphorous Strait, but a 1,400 m. rail tunnel, running 55 m. underneath the Strait, is currently being built. *Photo courtesy of visibleearth.nasa.gov*

Marmara...which reaches out even further as the Black Sea. This arm of seas from the Atlantic Ocean is a long-reaching arm indeed! (Our travels will lead us to seas that are *not* connected to oceans at all, but are entirely surrounded by land, called **land-locked seas**. Such a body of water is nearly always a body of *salty* water. (An exception is the Sea of Galilee.) A lake, on the other hand, is a large body of usually fresh water surrounded by land.)

Wave-tossed by this quartet of seas, the country of Turkey is actually like a bridge between the two continents of Asia and Europe. Yes, all that separates these two continents is a sliver of water—with the city of Istanbul on either side of the ribbon of blue waves. Istanbul, Turkey's largest city of 9.5 million people, is the only city in the whole wide world built on *two* continents! (You may have heard of Istanbul's long ago name, Constantinople, in your study of history?) That thread of water, which separates the city into East Istanbul and West Istanbul; and separates Europe from Asia, is one of the most important trade waterways in the world: the Bosphorus Strait. It is the connecting waterway for ships from the Black Sea

to sail on out to the Sea of Marmara, then to the Aegean...and onto the Mediterranean, and out into the Atlantic Ocean.

Although the Bosphorous is a **strait** of water, that doesn't mean it flows perfectly straight, without winding around bends and curves. Actually, the word **strait** has nothing to do with "straight", but means it is a narrow channel of water that God created between two landmasses. This narrow strait joins two larger bodies of water. Try thinking of it this way: have you ever squeezed on a long, thin balloon? Just as a skinny balloon bulges out into large shapes when you squeeze it in the middle, so the strait of water "squeezed" by the two landmasses swells into two larger bodies of water on either side! Looking at your globe, or map, of Turkey, can you determine which two larger bodies of water bulge out of the squeezed (only 0.5 to 2.8 mi. [660 to 4,500 m.] wide!) Bosphorus Strait? Yes, the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea!

Recall that little Maitland River that I used to play in? Big old Hereford cattle use to wander down its banks to lap up the quenching cool or sometimes splash across to the other side of the river. The Greeks had a story about their god Zeus supposedly hiding a cow in the silvery, narrow waters of the Bosphorus Strait. Thus, in the Greek language, "Bosphorus" means the "the cow crossing-place". (That makes it rather easy to remember that the Turkish city of Istanbul, is on the

Bosphorus strait—the *cow* passage!) You are not likely to not see any cows swimming down there in the Bosphorus Strait but you will probably see streams of cars crossing over top of the strait on the Bosphorus Bridge, the 12th longest suspension bridge in the world, and this stretch of steel allows one to drive from the continent of Europe right into Asia.



Named after the “cow crossing-place,” a cow would no longer have to swim the Bosphorous, but be driven across one of the massive bridges that span the Bosphorous Strait!

Field Notes

What an amazing start to finding the Garden that was there in the beginning! Are you enjoying your carpet ride? Have you ever seen someone perched on a floating carpet speaking tales of adventure onto a mini-recorder? You may stay seated on the carpet and I'll be the mini-recorder, listening to your field notes!



Press Record and talk to me...

~ **about how the geography of Earth connects to the stories of the Bible:**...What important place from the Bible might have been located in Turkey? What are three essentials that a geographer brings to every exploration?

~ **about Turkey's location on a globe:** What does the country look like from above and what of its size? What bodies of water border Turkey? Which continents? Tell me what you learned about seas. Tell me more about where you found your kilim.

~ **about the Bosphorus Strait:** What does its name mean? What is a strait? What does a strait connect? Name the bodies of water the Bosphorus Strait connects. What kind of bridge spans the Bosphorus Strait?

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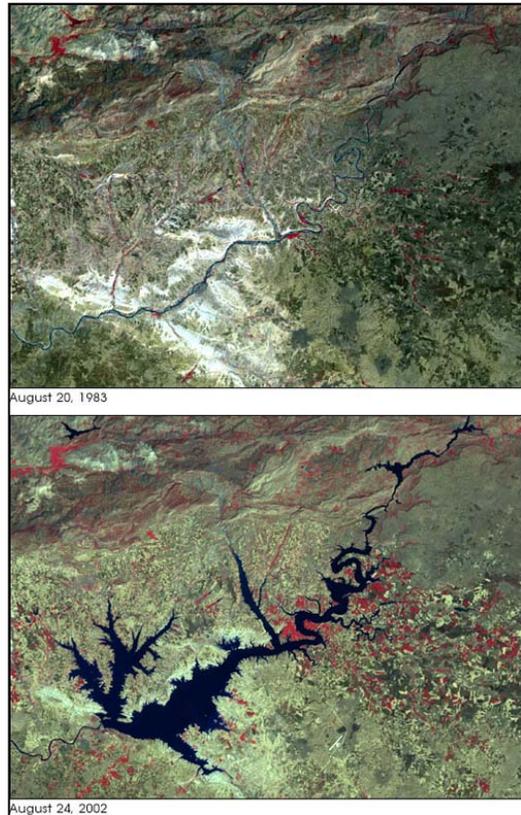
The Black Sea region of Turkey is beautiful and temperate. The seasons are not extreme, but moderate, and rain is plentiful. Hasn't God created excellent growing conditions for many crops such as hazelnuts, tea, tobacco and cherries?

While you may not see any cows crossing the Bosphorous Strait, if you look across Turkey (*see previous aerial photograph of Turkey*), can your keen eyes determine where you might find cows in this country? Cows in Turkey like to chew exactly what cows liked to chew along the banks of my little Maitland River: lush, green grass. Rich green grass is waiting for us if we soar east from Istanbul up along the northern coast of Turkey. You will notice how the skies are gray with rain clouds here but the coastal mountains below us are deep green. Indeed, here along the Black Sea you may actually see many cows grazing to produce Turkey's very best milk and butter. The climate of this area of Turkey is what we call **temperate**. A **temperate climate** is an area with weather that is not too cold and not too hot - but just right! In temperate

regions, like here on the Black Sea coast of Turkey, changes between seasons are not extreme with searing hot days followed by freezing cold days, but subtle, with moderately warm days giving way to moderately cool days.

As the warm air blowing in off the Black Sea rises over the north coast of Turkey, rain clouds are formed, which creates rainfall year round, almost 8 feet (2.4 m) of rain during a year; four to six times the rainfall in other regions of Turkey. (That amount of rain is as high as you sitting on your Dad's shoulders!) The rain clouds that God sends off the Black Sea make these steep mountain slopes verdant and lush with grass and crops. Imagine looking over our carpet's edge to see the Turks on this mountainous northern coast bringing in harvests of cherries from what some believe to be the world's oldest cherry orchards, the gathering of billions of hazelnuts, and expansive tea and tobacco plantations. Four in every ten Turks live by working in God's land growing crops or grazing herds of livestock such as goats or cattle. As we peer over carpet's edge, deeply inhaling those aromas of teas and drying tobaccos, drifting in on the sea breezes up through this garden-like area of Turkey, we can't help but sing praise to our God who owns "the cattle on a thousand hills" (Ps 50:10), and who "care[s] for the land and water[s] it...enrich[ing] it abundantly" (Ps. 65:9)!

From high up in space, can you see how the Euphrates once coursed through Turkey....and how a man-made dam, the Ataturk, has changed the Euphrates? *Photo courtesy of visibleearth.nasa.gov*



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Speaking of fertile, lush gardens, can you spot the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers down there in the southeast of Turkey? Recall these words from God's Word "Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers...The name of the third river is Tigris; ...And the fourth river is the Euphrates."(Genesis 2:10,14) Today, we know relatively little of the first two-mentioned rivers of Eden but we may ponder over the two other named rivers, the Euphrates and Tigris. The name Euphrates itself comes from a root word that means "to gush forth" and we can see that it does just that as the river winds and meanders its way through steep canyons and gorges. As you gaze down on the Euphrates, one can imagine how Abraham must have felt when God said to him "Unto thy seed have I given this land ...unto the great river, the river Euphrates." [Genesis 15:18] This great river is the northeastern boundary of the Promised Land and the site of such great historical events



The course of the Euphrates River is one border of Mesopotamia, "the land between two rivers". The Euphrates River also marked one of the boundaries of the land promised by God to Abraham and his descendants. In the Old Testament, the very important Euphrates River is referred to simply as "The River" (*ha-nahar*).

Photo courtesy of holylandphotos.org

as the battle between Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon and Pharaoh Necho II of Egypt in 605 BC. (Jer 46:2).

The Tigris River, on the other hand, comes from a word that means "the river that goes," which it certainly does, coursing throughout Turkey faster and with a greater volume of water, than the Euphrates. The Euphrates and Tigris Rivers both begin high up in a rugged region of Turkey called Anatolia. (Can you locate the Anatolian Plateau stretching across the center of Turkey?) From way up in space, we see this vast central region of the Anatolia as dry and rolling.

Thus, we aren't surprised that in the Greek language Anatolia means: "Land of the Mother Sun." The Anatolia is what geographers refer to as a plateau. A **plateau** is like a mountain without a peak. Similar to a mountain, the center Anatolian Plateau of Turkey rises high in the air; but unlike a mountain, God creates plateaus with a relatively flat top. A plateau can be regarded as a flat-topped mountain, or an oversized table of land rising up out of the landscape. Think of the Anatolian Plateau as a table rising up out of the central interior of Turkey, a *tableland*, where the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers begin and course down through its rugged terrain.

The lands that lie in between the winding Tigris and Euphrates Rivers are known as the Mesopotamia. **Mesopotamia** literally means "the land between two rivers". Oft times the Mesopotamia is also referred to as the "Cradle of Civilization". I picture this part of Anatolia, meaning "the land of the mother sun", as having two arms, the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, which cradled Earth's very first towns, farms and society, born here in the Mesopotamia, "the land between the two rivers".

Take a look down there at the southeastern Anatolian Plateau where historians believe that our planet's very first homes were built and farms were cultivated. Ever since the dawn of time, this sweeping Anatolian Plateau has been the birthplace of a chain of civilizations and peoples whom

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God has used in mighty ways to write the world's history. The Hittites of the Bible lived here. The Persians, Romans, and Byzantines ruled here. It was in the Mesopotamia that the first metal was ever made. Copper, the first metal ever used by mankind is still mined here in Turkey, near the Tigris River. When we read in the Bible of how Adam and Eve's son was a farmer and that their great-grandson's great-grandson worked with metal, we wonder if the Garden of Eden itself was once indeed here, somewhere in Turkey, lying between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Did the very first people ever to walk the dust of this earth, Adam and Eve, indeed first walk here, in the Turkish Mesopotamia, between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers? In all truth, we simply do not know. The global flood of Noah's day dramatically and catastrophically changed the landscape of our world. Are these two rivers of Turkey the same rivers of the Biblical Garden of Eden? Some suggest not: The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers of Turkey today flow on top of thousands of feet of fossil sediments believed to be from Noah's Flood. Thus, it is argued, these two rivers are not the same rivers of the Garden of Eden. Then why do they have the same names, you ask? The Maitland River that coursed near my house was named after a long ago Governor, Sir Maitland. And it may be that the families who settled this part of Turkey after the flood named these two rivers after the long-ago rivers they remembered flowing out of the Garden of Eden. The original Tigris and Euphrates Rivers of the Garden of Eden fed and watered Adam and Eve's paradise, just as the modern Tigris and Euphrates Rivers do today for great areas of Turkey.

Peer over our carpet's edge and see a young girl dipping her pail in the Euphrates; watch 2 boys watering their cattle at river's edge and another man netting mullet fish. Since the beginning of time, water has been a necessity for living. All **rivers**, like my little meandering Maitland River, or the great Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, provide drinking water for livestock and people, irrigation for crops, a means to transport goods, navigable travel routes, and a source of food. Thus, all through history, humanity has founded towns, out of which has grown prospering cities, close to where God has allowed water to run.



Ataturk Dam dramatically alters the original flow of the Euphrates River. The Dam may benefit some in Turkey with hydroelectric power and water to irrigate farms...but it has left others below the dam with much less water. What a difference a dam has made!

Industrious beavers often built dams of sticks and mud across my Maitland River.

But what we see as we gaze carefully down from our floating kilim, are definitely not beaver-built structures stretching across the rivers. Nor were these here in the day of Adam and Eve. Do you see the massive concrete **dams** spanning the width of the rivers? More than 20 such dams are built over both rivers to generate electricity for the Turkish people and to irrigate over 17 million square miles of Turkey's land in need of water. While the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers may be dammed up to benefit families in Turkey, dams actually leave *less* water for other families down river.

How God created our Earth—geography---weaves through the stories and peoples of the past, powerfully effects where and how people live on this globe today, and influences the family of humanity's future. The God-designed geography of Turkey, with its Bosphorous Strait, its Anatolian Plateau, its temperate coastlines, and the course of its rivers, such as the Tigris and

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Euphrates, determines where families live, what they eat around their tables, how they work and what they do. God formed humanity out of the dust of the Earth, and for all of our days, we are intimately connected to the dust under our feet, to the geography of Earth.

We've explored some of the highlights of Turkey's geography, but we have yet to visit Turkey's highest—and most secretive--point, its spinning whirling dervishes, its underground cities to crawl through, its magnificent churches and its camel wrestlers to shake your heads over. So hold on to your carpets---oh, the places we'll go!

Field Notes



I can't wait to hear your memories and field notes from our first ride through Turkey!

Press Record and talk to me...

~ about the Black Sea Region:

What of its climate? What is grown in this region?

~ about the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers:

Do you remember what their names mean? Where do they begin? Tell me what you think about these rivers and the rivers of the Garden of Eden. How do the rivers help the people of Turkey today?

~ about plateaus (or tablelands): Once you have described a plateau - what famous plateau lies in the center of Turkey? Can you find it on your map?

~ about Mesopotamia: What does its name mean? What else is it sometimes called? Why? Can you name some of the people groups that started here?





Travel Log

Using your globe or atlas, draw an outline map of Turkey.

As we travel, let's make record in our very own travel log of the places we've visited and the unusual sights we've seen! Make your map large enough to hold all of your discoveries!

Don't worry about making a perfect map, just do your best. Drawing the basic shape yourself will help you remember it better.

Map Notes: Let's record the locations of:

- **Istanbul**
- **Sea of Marmara**
- **Mediterranean Sea**
- **Aegean Sea**
- **Black Sea**
- **Bosphorous Strait**
- **Anatolian Plateau**

Extra:

- **Tigris River**
- **Euphrates River**
- **Mesopotamia**

If you'd like, draw pictures or symbols on your map representing:

The Grand Bazaar (perhaps a picture of your own floating kilim?)

Bosphorus Bridge (if you draw a cow in the river, that may help to remember the story of the river's name!)

Cherry trees or baskets of tea on the Black Sea coastline (recall this as one of the oldest orchards in the world?)

Dams on the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers

Travel Notes: Geographers write what they've seen in order to share the adventure with others—and so they can revisit the places in memories! **On the next page of your travel log, record three important sights you want to remember from your tales of Turkey.**





~art ~books ~food ~music ~poetry

Bringing It Home

Simple ideas to bring the world to your door

Music

Music captures so much of a land and people. Introducing your children to Turkish music is a simple way to transport yourselves around the world: a bit like your own flying carpet! Why not check out these sites while your young geographers notebook and map and let the music play while they recount their travels?

You can hear a wide selection of Turkish music at these sites:

(The Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture)

<http://www.discoverturkey.com/english/kultursanat/muzik.html>

(National Geographic)

<http://worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com/worldmusic/view/page.basic/home>

(click on Middle East and then Turkey)

Also, you can check your local library for Turkish classical music (called *sanit*) or traditional folk music.

Art

The Turks are known for their brilliant colors and intricate geometric designs in textiles and tiles.



Perhaps you'd like to try weaving your own kilim:

<http://www.allfiberarts.com/library/aa01/aa040201.htm>

Or, try your hand at decorating a Turkish Tile:

<http://www.papermandalas.com/turkishtile.htm>

