

THE INTERCONTINENTAL CHURCH OF GOD

SPECIFIC BIBLE STUDIES - BIBLE FOODS - WATER

SUBJECT: Bible Foods - Water

WATER

WATER (Heb. mayim; Grk. hudor). Frequently mentioned in Scripture both as an element in fertility and as a drink.

Supply. The long rainy season in Palestine means a considerable rainfall, and while it lasts the land gets a thorough soaking. But the land is limestone and very porous. The heavy rains are quickly drained away, the wadis are left dry, the lakes become marshes or dwindle to dirty ponds. On the W of Jordan there remain only a few short perennial streams, of which but one or two, and these mere rills, are found in the hill country. Hence the water of running streams and fountains, as opposed to that of stagnant cisterns, pools, or marshes, is called living water (Gen 26:19, marg.; Zech 14:8; John 4:10-11; 7:38; Rev 7:17). In the hot countries of the East the assuaging of thirst is one of the most delightful sensations that can be experienced (Ps 143:6; Prov 25:25), and every attention that humanity and hospitality can suggest is paid to furnish travelers with water. Public reservoirs or pools are opened in several parts of Egypt and Arabia. Sometimes water is so scarce that it must be paid for (Num 20:17,19; Lam 5:4).

Peculiar Usages. Among the optical illusions that the deserts of the East have furnished is the mirage. This phenomenon of "waters that fail," was called by the Hebrews sharab, i.e., "heat," and is rendered "the scorched land" (Isa 35:7); properly, "And the mirage shall become a pool," i.e., the desert that presents the appearance of a lake shall be changed into real water.

Figurative. Water occasionally is used for tears (Jer 9:1); hence, figuratively, trouble (Ps 66:12) and misfortune (Lam 3:54; Ps 69:1; 119:136; 124:4-5); persecution (88:17); hostile armies (Isa 8:7; 17:13). Water is used for children or posterity (Num 24:7; Isa 48:1, see marg.); for clouds (Ps 104:3); for the refreshing power of the Holy Spirit (Isa 12:3; 35:6-7; 55:1; John 7:37-38); divine support (Isa 8:6); the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit (41:17-18; 44:3; 36:25); water poured out, the wrath of God (Hos 5:10); and of faintness by terror (Ps 22:14). Deep water is used of the counsel in the heart (Prov 20:5) and of the words of the wise (18:4). Water "spilled on the ground" is a figure of death (2 Sam 14:14), its instability figures a wavering disposition (Gen 49:4). "Stolen water" (Prov 9:17) denotes unlawful pleasures with strange women. The difficulty of stopping water (17:14) is a symbol of strife and contention, while its rapid flowing away represents the career of the wicked (Job 24:18, see marg.; Ps 58:7).

(From The New Unger's Bible Dictionary)

WATER

(wo'-ter) (mayim; hudor):

(1) The Greek philosophers believed water to be the original substance and that all things were made from it. The Koran states, "From water we have made all things." In the story of the creation (Gen 1:2) water plays an elemental part.

(2) Because of the scarcity of water in Palestine it is especially appreciated by the people there. They love to go and sit by a stream of running water. Men long for a taste of the water of their native village (1 Chron 11:17). A town or village is known throughout the country for the quality of its water, which is described by many adjectives, such as "light," "heavy," etc.

(3) The rainfall is the only source of supply of water for Palestine. The moisture is carried up from the sea in clouds and falls on the hills as rain or snow. This supplies the springs and fountains. The rivers are mostly small and have little or no water in summer. For the most part springs supply the villages, but in case this is not sufficient, cisterns are used. Most of the rain falls on the western slopes of the mountains, and most of the springs are found there. The limestone in many places does not hold the water, so wells are not very common, though there are many references to them in the Bible.

(4) Cisterns are usually on the surface of the ground and vary greatly in size. Jerusalem has always had to depend for the most part on water stored in this way, and carried to the city in aqueducts. A large number of cisterns have been found and partially explored under the temple-area itself. The water stored in the cisterns is surface water, and is a great menace to the health of the people. During the long, dry summer the water gets less and less, and becomes so stagnant and filthy that it is not fit to drink. In a few instances the cisterns or pools are sufficiently large to supply water for limited irrigation.

(5) During the summer when there is no rain, vegetation is greatly helped by the heavy dews. A considerable amount of irrigation is carried on in the country where there is sufficient water in the fountains and springs for the purpose. There was doubtless much more of it in the Roman period. Most of the fruit trees require water during the summer.

(6) Many particular wells or pools are mentioned in the Bible, as: Beersheba (Gen 21:19), Isaac's well (Gen 24:11), Jacob's well (John 4:6), Pool of Siloam (John 9:7), "waters of Nephtoah" (Josh 15:9).

(7) Washing with water held a considerable place in the Jewish temple-ceremony (Lev 11:32; 16:4; 17:15; 22:6; Num 19:7; Ex 30:18; 40:7). Sacrifices were washed (Ex 29:4; Lev 1:9; 6:28; 14:5).

(8) The lack of water caused great suffering (Ex 15:22; Deut 8:15; 2 Kings 3:9; Ps 63:1; Prov 9:17; Ezek 4:11; Lam 5:4). S

(from International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia)