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## Egypt

### Wearing Egypt

#### PART I

Up in my Granny's attic bedroom, corners piled high with musty books, I sifted through tattered pictures of a time before my own time when my grandfather roamed far away lands. Slipping out of the stack, a graying photo fell to the floor. I bent over to pick it up. My bespectacled grandfather, hands on

hips, posed before a mammoth pyramid of stones rearing up out of the desert. My grandfather was in Egypt! What mysterious sights had he beheld in those pyramids? Were the Egyptians he had met on his travels much like the Egyptians I read of in history books? Did he too travel up the Nile, like the dazzling pharaohs of the past? I ran my



*Photo of Nile River by Marc Ryckaert, licensed under CC BY 3.0.*



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fingers over his coins and stamps from Egypt. Egypt wasn't simply an ancient, mummified civilization, contained in the yellowed pages of old history books. Egypt was alive, in rich, living color, beckoning explorers to come breathe the enchanting air of the land of the pharaohs today.

Asia. Egypt literally stretches into two continents.

Let's begin our exploration of Egypt in its Sinai Peninsula. Derived from Latin words "*paene insula*" meaning "almost island," a **peninsula** is just that: a narrow strip of land almost made into an island by the water surrounding it on three



*Photo of the pyramids at Giza by Ricardo Liberato, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.*

When Grandfather wore his khaki pants and shirt, green belt buckled around his waist, safari hat crowning his head, he actually looked just like the country of Egypt. As Grandfather donned his four pieces of clothing, so God clothes Egypt in 4 geographical regions. With his sandy-colored shirt and pants, Grandfather resembled the tawny sand dunes of Egypt's Western and Eastern Deserts, his belt of green like the slithering, fertile Nile, and his rust red safari hat crowned his head like the red mountains of the triangular Sinai Peninsula!

Slightly larger than the Canadian province of British Columbia, Egypt holds an interesting seat on the Earth's surface. Egypt is considered a country of the Middle East, yet nearly all of it lies in the continent of Africa. The rusty, barren peaks of Egypt's Sinai Peninsula lie in the continent of

sides. Looking at the map of Egypt on the next page, can you name the bodies of water that make the Sinai a peninsula?

If a sea were called the Red Sea, what color might you envision such a body of water? Ironically, God painted the Red Sea sapphire blue. It is the red rock of the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula reflecting upon the lapping waves that give this body of water its name, the Red Sea. To me, the Red Sea seems to reach with two arms, one the Gulf of Aquaba, and the other, the Gulf of Suez, to embrace the Sinai Peninsula. (A **gulf** is a large area of ocean (or sea) that is partially enclosed by land.) Which perspective is yours? When you look at the map of this region, do you see what I see? Or do you see the Sinai Peninsula and mainland Egypt wrapping around to embrace the Red Sea,



forming the Gulf of Suez? It is just as Proverbs 8:29 says of our God: *“He set for the sea its boundary so that the water would not transgress His command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth.”*

As the seas follow the Lord’s command, so Moses followed God when He led the twelve tribes of Israel into Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula over 3,500 years ago, as we read in Exodus 19:1, *“...after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day they came into the wilderness of the Sinai.”* The origin of the name Sinai is thought to be related to the Babylonian moon god, “Sin.” With more camel trails than roads through its central region, Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula does in many ways, resemble a landscape as foreign and as barren as the moon. Today, simple towns of thatched roof huts fringe the Sinai Peninsula’s coasts, as do luxurious vacation destinations, offering scuba and snorkeling gear for underwater explorations through coral reefs and exotic marine life.

We, however, will pass by these seaside resort towns of palm trees and pools, to follow the harsh, dusty trail into the interior of the Sinai where Moses and the Israelites may have journeyed. Our trek leads us southward to the foot of towering, rugged *Jabal Musa* - meaning Mountain of Moses - oft times referred to as Mount Sinai. Is this gnarled mountain the Mount Sinai we read of in Exodus 31:18? *“When he had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God.”* While the events recorded in the



*Photo of the Nile Delta in Egypt is courtesy of NASA on [visibleearth.gov](http://visibleearth.gov).*

Bible are indeed true, geographers and historians are not certain exactly where Mount Sinai of the Bible now stands. However, since the time of Helena of Constantinople, *Jabal Musa* has been considered the true Biblical Mount Sinai, and thousands of pilgrims travel the world over to ascend to its peak.

As dawn breaks, we sit high on our camel mounts, riding up to what may be the exact geographical location of God’s awesome, blazing descent to speak the law to Moses. From Mount Sinai’s summit, can you see the ruddy crest of *Jabal*





*Photo of the summit of Mount Sinai by Mohammed Moussa, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.*

*Katrinah* to the south, the highest point in all of Egypt, over 2642 ft [8,668 m.] high? (Observant as you are, have you figured out the Arabic word for mountain? Yes, *jabal*!)

In the warmth of morning, we join the tourists in the wearisome descent down the 3,700 rock-hewn steps from Mount Sinai's peak, eyes fixed on the craggy red mountains casting shadows all around. Did Moses, tablets of the Ten Commandments in hand, see a similar scene four thousand years ago of mountains with Israeli tents huddled about its base?

Bedouin children, with their coal black hair and jet black eyes, gather around us at the rocky foot of *Jabal Musa*, selling trinkets and necklaces.

When I wear my Mount Sinai necklace, with its watery blue heart purchased from Mount Sinai's Bedouin children, I often wonder where those nomadic Bedouins of Egypt have wandered now... and pray they too encounter God in the Sinai wilderness.

Tucked near the base of Mount Sinai stands St. Catherine's Monastery, built fifteen hundred years ago; the oldest operating church in the world today. If you'll listen, you can hear the old language—Byzantine Greek—spoken during the five services a day. It is quite a surprise as no culture has spoken Byzantine Greek in more than a thousand years! In addition to the church, St. Catherine's includes a library with the world's second largest collection of religious manuscripts.



(Have you ever traveled to such a remote location to visit a library? Once the ruler of Russia borrowed a very precious manuscript from St. Catherine's library and he never bothered to return it, but sold it to a museum! The long over-due manuscript happens to be the text from which the King James Version of the Bible was translated!) Within the honey colored stone walls of the monastery, we stand stilled before a sinewy bush shading a well, considered by some to be Moses' Burning Bush. The monks of St. Catherine believe a wild raspberry bush, much like one you might find in the woods, to be the actual bush Moses encountered ---but it used to be located on the other side of the small walkway. Yes, they moved the Burning Bush! Is this the very bush out of which God's voice thundered? We'll never know for certain, but we stare at this shrub, trying to imagine what Moses might have felt when he heard the voice of the Lord speak on that unforgettable day.

North of Mount Sinai, we discover Colored Canyon gouged out of the Sinai Peninsula. A **canyon** is a narrow **chasm** or valley with steep **cliff** walls, cut into the Earth's surface by running water. Today, no water runs through this twisting canyon. Did Moses and the Israelites also squeeze through these narrow canyon walls flanking sixteen stories high on both sides? Perhaps they too ran their fingers along the rocks striped soft shades of pink, orange and yellow and praised our creative Creator God who carved these stones with torrents of water.

After our morning of hiking and exploring the Sinai's rugged Jabal Musa and Colored Canyon, we welcome the opportunity to sit with the Bedouins and refresh with some strong herbal

tea. The Bedouin have a centuries old tradition of generous hospitality---a newcomer in such isolated regions is always welcome! We sit in the **mag'ad** or 'sitting place' section of the Bedouin tent, while behind the woven curtain, known as a **ma'nad**, the women cook and receive female guests in the **maharama**, 'the place of the women.' As we bid farewell, our Bedouin friends offer us their cell-phone number. (Yes, modern-day technology even extends to such desolate places like the Sinai and to nomadic people like the Bedouin.)



*Bedouin shepherd by Ed Brambley, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.*





*Don't you wish you could visit Egypt for real just like my Grandfather did? Would you like to own a red safari hat like his?*

#### PRESS RECORD AND TALK TO ME

◇ **About the Sinai Peninsula:**

*What is a peninsula? What bodies of water surround the Sinai Peninsula? Is the Red Sea red? What color are its waters? What color are the rocks around it? What is the other name for Jabal Musa? What important Biblical event may have happened here?*

◇ **About St. Catherine's Monastery:**

*How old is the church? What language is spoken here? Tell me about its library. What famous manuscript was "borrowed" from St. Catherine's? What famous bush would we find within the monastery's walls?*

◇ **About Colored Canyon:**

*What is a canyon? Can you describe how God carved and colored the canyon?*

To explore the next geographical region of Egypt, point your **compass** east and head out of Sinai. As Moses and the Israelites discovered, we find ourselves on a coastline, not at all surprising for a peninsula. Although we are traveling further west into Egypt, and the Israelites were headed in the opposite direction *out* of Egypt, we wonder: where exactly did God miraculously part the waters of the Red Sea so that Moses and the Israelites might cross on dry ground? If you gathered several maps charting the route of the exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt, none of the maps may agree on the route! Some chart the phenomenal crossing at the northern tip of the Gulf of Suez, while others argue that Moses led the Israelites across the entire Sinai Peninsula to cross the Gulf of Aquaba. Still other historians suggest God wondrously made a way across a swampy region north of the Gulf of Suez called the "Reed Sea."

We may not know the exact Egyptian location of the crossing but we are certain that God indeed wrought a breathtaking miracle such that thousands upon thousands of Israelites passed through walls of water into glorious freedom!

As no miraculous route appears to afford us a dry crossing of the Gulf of Suez, we opt for the land route, trekking through the Isthmus of Suez. An **isthmus** is a narrow strip of land connecting two larger pieces of land. The Isthmus of Suez connects the Sinai Peninsula with the rest of Egypt. But here we again meet with a waterway.

Have you ever spent an afternoon at the beach digging a channel from the water's edge then watching the water trickle up your little canal? What if your **canal**, which is a man-made river, took a span of 10 full years to dig and required the assistance of 1.5 million friends? Such is the case of the world's longest, lockless canal of water cutting across the Isthmus of Suez. Parting the desert with its ribbon of blue water, the Suez Canal is one of the world's most striking short cuts. Imagine you had a shipload of goods in the Red Sea and wanted





*USS America (CV-66), an American aircraft carrier in the Suez Canal. by W. M. WELCH, in the public domain.*

to deliver those goods to Haifa in Israel. Haifa may not be that far geographically from the Red Sea, but the only natural way to sail a ship into Haifa's harbor is to take the long way around Africa's tip, up Africa's east coast, and ride the waves of the dazzling Mediterranean Sea into the harbor. The Earth's geography can make travel between destinations less than direct and rather laborious. To avoid the long route around Africa, you could do what was done for hundreds of years: dock your ship on the shores of the Gulf of Suez and carry the goods across the arid desert to ships waiting in the Mediterranean Sea. Wearied by either option,

you might decide to dig a shortcut canal through the desert. That 120 mile [193 km] canal would save you the 6,000 mile [9,656 km] trip around Africa—what a worthwhile short cut!

The pharaohs first endeavored to create this canal from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean but the winds whipping across the Egyptian desert gradually clogged any attempts, just as blowing sands would eventually fill in your miniature canal on the beach. Other leaders down through the ages, such as Ptolemy, Cleopatra and Napoleon tried to finish the project, but failed. The present day Suez Canal, carved out of the desert well over one hundred



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years ago, is supported with stone, cement and steel to prevent the canal from slowly eroding away. Truly a modern-day engineering wonder, the Suez Canal plunges to a depth of 70 ft [21 m]; that is 7 times deeper than your community pool!

Do you see that special ship called a **dredger** down in the canal? With its big hoses sucking up sand and dirt from the bottom of the canal, dredgers are making the canal even deeper and wider so more ships can take advantage of this shortcut. More than 15,000 ships chug up this canal every year, an average of 50 ships per day, crossing between the Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea in less than 16 hours. (Check the tag on your shirt. Was it made in a distant country? If so, it may very well have passed through the Suez Canal before it reached

your hands!) These mammoth ships we see streaming up the blue waters do not freely take the shortcut from the Indian to Atlantic Ocean, however; the bigger the ship, the higher the toll fee charged by the government of Egypt. We wave to the cargo and oil tankers being piloted down the canal by especially trained captains, and decide that instead of driving through the darkened road tunneled underneath the canal, we'll cross the Suez Canal via the world's longest swing bridge. A line of cars patiently waits on the bank as the bridge mechanically swings out of the way to allow the gigantic ships clear passage. When the bridge swings back into place, our line of cars streams across the Suez Canal into Egypt's second geographical region: the Eastern Desert.



*Red Sea Anemonefish in Red Bubble Anemone. Photo by prillfish, licensed under CC BY 2.0.*

Often called the Arabian Desert, the Eastern Desert gradually slides from jagged mountains punctuating its Red Sea coastline down to the cliffs lingering over the Nile River. Our exploration of the Eastern Desert drops us into deep **ravines**, called **wadis**, that cut through the rising, rocky hills, and over shifting golden sands, brushed with a hint of red, a reflection of the minerals in the limestone rocks. In our trek we do not, however, encounter many Egyptians or any permanent settlements. Who can grow crops or raise animals in a desert where it does not rain?

The Eastern Desert may not produce bushels of wheat, but it does produce barrels of oil. Towns spring up where the Eastern Desert meets the Red Sea since oil was discovered

in this region over 100 years ago. Far out on the Red Sea and Gulf of Suez, oil rigs pump oil up from deep under the seafloor. Close to the shoreline, wells drilled into rock below the Eastern Desert produce heavy oil. That first oil well drilled by the Egyptian government into the Eastern Desert produced only 25 barrels of crude oil per day. Today, while you eat and sleep, Egyptian oil wells will fill more than 750,000 barrels of oil. Countless Egyptian families will buy food and clothes and more, based on the sale of those oil barrels. God created Egypt's geography to include a natural resource like oil underneath the desert sands. Even in this region of the world, God made a way for families to work and live and play!



*White-eyed Gull at the Red Sea. Photo by Alexander Vasenin, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.*





*What a fascinating landscape we've come through so far! Are you enjoying the camel ride?*

### PRESS RECORD AND TALK TO ME

◇ **About the Isthmus of Suez:** *How has God created an isthmus? What does the Isthmus of Suez connect? Tell me about the Suez Canal . How does the Canal help people deliver goods? What does a dredger do? Describe the bridge that allows people to cross the canal.*

◇ **About the Eastern Desert:** *Would we find lots of people in this area? Why or why not? What is produced in the Eastern Desert? How does this help Egyptian families? What happens if the oil spills? Why must people be careful with the geography of a region?*

With God-given resources, however, comes God-expected responsibility. While spilled milk at the dinner table may be easily wiped up, spilled oil in areas like the Red Sea may kill birds and marine life. Paying a small fee to visit one of the stunning beaches in the town of Hurghada on the Eastern Desert shoreline, we sight numerous White-eyed Gulls flying overhead. Just off the coast of Hurghada, a string of small islands is the largest breeding station for White-eyed Gulls in the world. Now, however, these black-headed gulls with a striking brush of white feathers accentuating their eyes, struggle to survive because of **polluting** oil spills on the Red Sea where the gulls feed. Adventuresome tourists such as you and I may unknowingly harm the geography of a region; our hotels destroying nesting sites, our garbage polluting the landscape, and our presence inadvertently causing the destruction of coral reefs in the Red Sea. Ps. 19:1 trumpets “*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.*” God created this world to glorify Himself. Caring for God’s world—its geography, animals and plants—brings glory to God. Egypt’s government is diligently working toward laws and management plans to ensure the care and protection of God’s creation.

Before riding our camel further westward across the rugged Eastern Desert towards Egypt’s third geographical region, let’s visit a Hurghada street vendor for a hearty meal of **tamiya**. Forming a handful of soft, cooked fava beans into a patty, the street side chef fries the patties up in a frying pan of sizzling hot olive oil. Offering a “*Shukran*” (thank you) to the vendor for the crispy bean cakes that will refresh us for the trip westward, we are ready to embark, like Grandfather, for the famed Nile River, and the wonders of the heart of Egypt. I can hardly wait!

# 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. Or use the map provided for you on the CD-ROM.*

## Map Notes:

*Let's record the locations of:*

- ◇ Sinai Peninsula
- ◇ Gulf of Aquaba
- ◇ Gulf of Suez
- ◇ Jabal Musa (or Mt. Sinai)
- ◇ EXTRA: Jabal Katrinah
- ◇ EXTRA: Red Sea
- ◇ Tuz Golu

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

- ◇ The Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai
- ◇ Bedouin children (*perhaps a blue heart?*)
- ◇ St. Catherine's Monastery (*a stack of books to represent the library? A church? Don't forget the Burning Bush!*)

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



*Trajan cartouches taken by Rémi, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.*



# Bringing It Home

## SIMPLE IDEAS TO BRING THE WORLD TO YOUR DOOR

### *Using These Forms:*

ART | BOOKS | FOOD | MUSIC | POETRY



### Art:

Make a cartouche: A **cartouche** is an oval shaped ring enclosing the written name of ancient Egyptian pharaohs. The word *cartouche* was given to this oval-shape by Napoleon's soldiers, who thought it looked like a gun cartridge (*cartouche*). Inside the oval is the Pharaoh's name written in hieroglyphs.

**You can make a cartouche for your name here:**

<http://www.kidzone.ws/cultures/egypt/hieroglyph.htm>

### Play Senet:

Would you like to play a game that may have been played by the Pharaohs and other Egyptians? Archaeologists have discovered evidence that ancient Egyptians enjoyed board games just as you and I do. Senet is one of those discoveries. It is a simple game that involves throwing sticks and moving pieces along a board.

**You can print your own senet board here:**

[http://www.tabula-rasa.info/JamesAdams/treasure\\_trove/senet/printableSenetBoard.htm](http://www.tabula-rasa.info/JamesAdams/treasure_trove/senet/printableSenetBoard.htm)

**Or you can play online here:**

<http://www.ancientegypt.co.uk/life/activity/main.html>

### Music:

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

**Enjoy an hour of ancient Egyptian music here:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GI6dOS5ncFc>

**Some beautiful instrumental examples are here:**

<http://www.aldokkan.com/mp3/mp3.htm>

# 8

## Egypt

### Navigating the Nile

#### PART II

**H**ave you ever stood on your head so that up was down and down was up? Of course, to everyone else, your down was up and your up was down. Now that you are completely confused, come see why Egypt's up is down and down is up.

Generally, we speak of places in southern locations as being “down south.” In Egypt, however, the southern region of the country is unexpectedly called, Upper Egypt. Why, you ask? Egypt's south is “up” because the Nile River flows from mountains in Southern Africa DOWN stream



*Nile River in Egypt. Photo taken by Michael Gwyther-Jones, licensed under CC BY 2.0.*



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to the Mediterranean Sea in the North. Since southern Egypt lies Upstream it is referred to as “UPPER Egypt.” On the other hand, we normally refer to northern locales as “up north.”

But not so in Egypt: the northern region is actually named Lower Egypt since it lies downstream. Can you now explain why Egypt's up is down and down is up?

While the direction a river flows depends simply on where mountain ranges are, we tend to think all rivers flow in the same direction as the rivers we live near. If you were an Egyptian living on the north-flowing Nile River, you might think that the rest of the world was upended. One Egyptian Pharaoh, Tuthmosis I, described the great south-flowing Euphrates River as “the inverted water that goes downstream in going upstream.” The poor Pharaoh sounds as confused over south flowing rivers as we may be over north flowing rivers! In Egypt, it is the mighty Nile, covering one sixth of the earth's circumference, that determines upper and lower—and all of life.

Step on board for a cruise down the Nile that will change forever how you see Egypt!

In the dim before dawn, we wake early on the deck of our **felucca**, a traditional Egyptian sailboat, to watch as the Nile riverbank stirs to life. Do you hear the blaring chant of the muezzin in a hidden village mosque calling sleepy Egyptians to prayer? A kingfisher skims inches above the waters. The felucca's triangular white sail billows in a gentle gust of wind. Did you catch a glimpse of the pure white egrets standing stock still in the bulrushes clumped along the water's edge? On the riverbank, a brown humpbacked cow chews its cud under the shade of a date palm. Further down the river, fishermen in a small rowboat haul in their nets of catch. Don't you almost want to crane your ear for the baby's cry, to peer over the railing in hopes of sighting a glimpse of a bobbing basket? For this is the same Nile River that carried baby Moses to the feet of the Pharaoh's daughter. The waters of the Nile have known Aristotle and Alexander the Great, Mark Anthony,



*Feluccas are a common means of transport up and down the Nile. Photo by Wouter Hagens, licensed CC BY-SA 3.0*



Cleopatra and Julius Caesar. Can you envision While the direction a river flows depends simply on where mountain ranges are, we tend to think all rivers flow in the same direction as the rivers we live near! I, covering *one sixth's* of the earth's circumference, Joseph, second in command only to the Egyptian Pharaoh himself, floating down these same waters, past the towering pyramids? Isn't it hard to imagine this magnificent Nile running red with blood during one of God's Ten Plagues? Jesus, the Christ Child, journeyed here to Egypt and her regal river. The longest river in the world, the Nile may transport you and me back through the pages of history and the Bible, but for Egyptians today and for thousands of years of history, the Nile River has been the essence of existence, the life breath of the desert.

Coursing almost 1,000 m [1,600 km] through the heart of Egypt, the Nile river forges a gorge of green growth 10 growth 10 miles [16 km] across at its widest point. (The word Nile comes from the Greek word that means "*river valley*.") Today nearly all of Egypt's 77 million people live within a slender 12 miles [19 km] of the Nile River, only a narrow 4% slice of Egypt's land.

Through the mist rising off these waters, we see women in dark **burqa** gowns, (a loose robe worn by Muslim women, covering them from head to toe, with veiled holes for their eyes) carrying laundry from mud-brick houses with flat straw roofs down to the Nile. Sons of the **fellahin** (farmers), not much older than you, herd sheep and goats to drink Nile waters before leading them out to graze. A boatman, heading south, rows slowly against the Nile's northerly stream. Today, as in the sweep of Egyptian history, we see the waters of the Nile River as Egypt's wash tub for families, as its garden hose for thirsty crops, as its highway, carrying boatloads of tourists, sugarcane, and cotton bales across the country. Yet this magnificent river has changed with the march of time. If you will travel south, to Upper Egypt, you'll discover how.

Near the city of Aswan, (can you locate that on your map?) you can't miss seeing one of the world's most massive structures, the Aswan High **Dam**, rising 364 feet [111 m] out of the depths of the Nile. It would take three 12 story apartment buildings, stacked on end from the Nile's riverbed, to reach the height of this enormous granite wall



View of Lake Nasser. Photo by Ad Meskens, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.

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corking the Nile! Taking ten years to construct, one billion dollars to fund, and using enough rock to build seventeen Great Pyramids, the Aswan High Dam, straddling 2.3 miles [3.7 km] across the river, is Egypt's heavy net to capture the Nile.! The **reservoir** formed by the dam is one of the world's largest man-made lakes, the 312 miles [502 km] wide Lake Nasser.

For thousands of years, the Nile, swollen from rains in southern Africa, annually overflowed its banks, flooding the entire valley. In modern times, the Nile swamped the basements of homes in the northern city of Cairo. When the Nile ebbed away, it gifted Egyptians with four million tons [3.6 million metric tons] of rich silt spread over their fields. But the Bible records how God sometimes chose not to raise the Nile: *"He will smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the [Nile] shall dry up... and the scepter of Egypt shall depart"* (Zech. 10:11).

When the Nile did not flood the valley, the power of Egypt indeed departed: crops withered in the fields and tummies ached for food. Not long ago, Egyptians decided to capture the annual flood with a dam across the river and release the water steadily over the course of the year. The thunder of foaming white waters that now roars continuously through the dam, not only aids faster travel of boats down the Nile, but generates electricity used throughout the country. Without the annual flooding of the Nile, the Egyptian fellahin now plant three seasons of crops, have more fields to cultivate, and irrigation of crops such as cotton, onion, rice and potatoes is much easier. The Aswan High Dam has changed the flow of the Nile and the face of Egypt.

While people may have good reasons for changing the God-given geography of a place, there are often harmful outcomes. As the Aswan



*The Aswan High Dam in Egypt. Photo licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.*



High Dam inflated Lake Nasser with the Nile River, more than 90, 000 poor Egyptian peasants were forced to pack up what little they owned and move out of the way of the rising waters. The lake formed by the dam also threatened to flood some Egyptian treasures that couldn't be easily moved, such as the stone temple of Abu Simbel. Would the four 66 ft. [22 m] high statues of Ramses, (that's as high as 12 tall men standing one on top of each other!) that had guarded the entrance to the temple for thousands of years drown in the rising waters of Lake Nasser? Heroic rescuers from all over the world rushed to save Abu Simbel's great temple and the four statues, cutting each into hundreds upon hundreds of blocks, hauling the sections to the new lake shore, and reassembling the puzzle of pieces. (It took ten years to complete the rescue mission!)

Some effects of the Aswan High Dam, however, cannot be altered: the rich silt God intended to fertilize the parched desert land during the annual floods now lies trapped behind the dam at the bottom of Lake Nasser. Egyptian farmers, clad in flowing **galabeas** (an ankle-length loose shirt), can be seen today spreading a million tons

of artificial fertilizer on their fields as a substitute for the natural nutrients that God once deposited on the dry floodplain. Pharaoh's daughter may have bathed in the Nile, but today one warily avoids these waters. The construction of the Aswan High Dam has increased the population of a tiny **parasitic** worm that can penetrate the skin of anyone swimming in contaminated water. With no dry spells between floodings, the parasitic worms thrive, making infected children especially sick with fever. God designed the world in an intricate balance; when we alter His creation in hopes of making it better in some ways, we often inadvertently make it worse in other ways.

The massive Aswan High Dam captures floodwater during the rainy seasons and releases the water throughout the year. The dam also generates tremendous amounts of electric power for Egyptians – more than 10 billion kilowatt-hours every year. That's enough electricity to power one million color televisions for 20 years.

Across the river, children wave to us from the balcony of their cruise ship, one of the hundreds that sail the Nile River. Egyptian merchants paddle their rowboats out to the larger cruise ships,



*A Cruise Ship on the Nile River. Photo by Ad Meskens, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.*



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tossing up towels emblazoned with pictures of famous Egyptian monuments. The tourists barter for a deal, tossing down money in return for a keepsake from Egypt. Nearly 500 years *before* the birth of Jesus, there were tourists sailing up and down the Nile, pursuing the wonders of already ancient Egyptian civilization. A tourist named Herodotus, possibly history's earliest recorded travel writer, wrote his own field notes of his Egyptian excursion: "*Egypt is the gift of the Nile.*" Today tourism is one of Egypt's main industries. Everywhere, we see sightseers streaming from one ancient Egyptian wonder to the next. We also see armed tourist police monitoring travelers' safety and safe-guarding the all-important business of tourism.

During our northward sail down the Nile, the captain of our small felucca docks often and we slip under the dappled shade of a date palm tree. Egypt is the world's top producer of dates. In some fields, a crop of cabbages grows in the shade of the date palms.

We often see millions of harvested dates spread out like a pebbly carpet, drying in the Egyptian sun. With woven baskets at their feet, veiled Egyptian women diligently sort through the rug of dates by hand. As you bite into your next date, remember that Egyptian woman: perhaps it was she who sorted your date!

On our sail towards the Egyptian city of Luxor and the Valley of the Kings, do you notice that none of the mud houses of the fellahin villages



Valley of the Kings, Luxor, Egypt. Photo by Wouter Hagens, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.



have windows of glass, but merely have open spaces in the walls? Call “*Assalaamu aleikum*” (ah-sah-LA-moo ah-LAY-koom) (Arabic for “hello”) to the young girl collecting cow dung for fuel in the open hearth of her family’s outdoor kitchen. While your family may cook dinner outside on the BBQ during the summer months, rural Egyptians cook dinner outside year-round!

Near Luxor, we drift past fields where electric pumps bring water to irrigate crops, and donkeys pull two wheeled carts heaped with sugar cane. Together with other tourists from around the world we line up in the Valley of the Kings to see the ancient tombs of Egypt’s long dead pharaohs. Can you hear the commentary of our guide over the voices of the other German, Italian, and Spanish guides educating their own groups of explorers? Travelers come to descend the steep ramps down into the stuffy burial chambers. The walls of the pharaoh’s tombs still radiate today with the original paintings from thousands of years ago!

The site nearly every tourist comes to Egypt to see lies further north on the Nile, near the city of Cairo. (Can you locate Cairo on your map?) Outside of Cairo looms the world’s most enormous and renowned grave markers, weathered by thousands of years of Egyptian sands. Perhaps you have visited quiet cemeteries, kneeling to run your hands across names carved in granite headstones? Nothing you have ever seen in a cemetery prepares you for this breathtaking burial site. The famous French general, Napoleon, came to these sands outside of Cairo, looked up at the towering, indescribable gravestones and declared, “From atop these pyramids,



*What an exciting trip down the Nile! There are so many beautiful and surprising sights along the river.*

### PRESS RECORD AND TALK TO ME

- ◇ **About the Nile River:** *Which direction does the Nile flow? What direction do rivers usually flow? Can you describe the beginning of our ride on the waters? What kind of boat were we in? What kinds of animals did we see? What famous baby floated on the Nile in a basket? Why do the majority of Egypt’s peoples live close to the Nile?*
- ◇ **About the Aswan High Dam:** *Can you describe it? What Lake is formed by the Dam? Before the Dam was built, what would happen to the Nile’s rising waters? What happens now? How has that affected the land?*
- ◇ **About tourism:** *Which kind of ships sail up and down the river each day? Who rides on them? Tell me about the merchants who row out to the ships. Do all these visitors help or hurt Egypt?*
- ◇ **About the fellahin villages:** *What is a fellahin? What do their houses look like? How do some of the villagers prepare their food?*



*View from Cairo Tower. Photo by Raduasandei, in the public domain.*

forty centuries look down upon you.” If you lined end to end each freezer-sized stone of this grave-marker end to end, the stones would pave a one-lane road stretching from San Francisco on the southwest coast of the United States to New York City on its northeast coast! These are the **Pyramids** of Giza.

Weighing more than 15 billion pounds [nearly 7 billion kg], with each side of its base measuring the length of 2 ½ football fields, the Great Pyramid is where the royal mummy of Pharaoh Khufu (Cheops) once rested in death. Camel-mounted tourist police ensure no sightseers attempt to climb the gravestones of the pharaohs. You may, however, step down the steep, tunneling ramp into the bowels of the Great Pyramid, your hand touching the massive

polished limestone sides. Did an Egyptian Pharaoh, centuries ago, touch this same stone? Standing in the deathly still and bare King’s Chamber where Khufu once laid, doesn’t your mind return to Ecclesiastes 3:11 which reads “[God] has also set eternity in the hearts of men” (NIV)? This mind-boggling monument, one of the most famous structures on the whole planet and the work of more than a hundred thousand ancient Egyptians, stands as a magnificent witness of how the hearts of all people beat with a God-given desire for eternal life.

Have you ever buried your body in heavy sand with only your head and toes poking out? That is how the world’s largest single-stone statue, the Great Sphinx, remained for thousands of years in front of Khufu’s pyramid: the lion-like





*The Great Pyramids of Giza took more than 20,000 workers to build. Photo by Barcex, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.*

body of Sphinx hidden under the sand with only its man-like face sticking up! The tons of sand God sweeps across the Egyptian deserts have actually preserved the **Sphinx** through the centuries. Under its blanket, the soft limestone has been protected from erosion by a constant barrage of wind-blown grains of sands. **Erosion** is the movement of soil particles by water, wind, ice and general weather. Through the process of erosion, God constantly reshapes the landscape of our earth, carving soil with streaming water, sculpting shorelines with crashing waves, and sweeping sands across the desert—which bury, and protect the Sphinx!

Looking up at the Sphinx's 13 ft. ([4 m.]) wide face, you immediately notice that it is missing something important – its nose! Did the Sphinx

lose its nose because of erosion? Just like we don't know who the Sphinx's face is carved to look like, when it was built, or who built it, we also do not know for certain what happened to its nose. Few believe the legend that Napoleon's French soldiers blasted the nose off with a stray cannonball, but some suggest a devout Muslim cut the nose off when he discovered Egyptian peasants worshipping the Sphinx. We do know, however, that the statue is now eroding away right before our very eyes, chips of limestone falling off under the blazing the heat of the Egyptian sun and the drifting smog of Cairo.

If you'll shift your gaze from the 2,500,000 limestone blocks of Pharaoh Khufu's (Cheops) tomb and from the 65 ft [20 m] high Sphinx, can you see the dwarfed houses of a Cairo





*What do you get when you put a head of a man with a body of a lion A sphinx. Photo in the public domain.*

suburb just several hundred meters away? The children playing soccer - Egypt's favorite sport - in the shadow of the pyramids, live right over there in those houses. Cairo, Egypt's capital city spills over, nearly right to the feet of the Great Sphinx himself!

Because of the emphasis on the poor farther down, I'd like to read more about ordinary Egyptians...what do you think?

As modern-day tourists wander through the remnants of ancient Egypt, so do modern and ancient ways mingle in the city of Cairo. Here in one of the most populated cities in the world, and the largest city on the African continent, we spot camels and donkey carts sharing the clogged streets with careening cars driving "wherever

they can find space." Drivers are unconcerned about traffic safety as they believe regardless of their efforts, whatever happens will be Allah's will. As with everything in Egypt—"Inshallah" (If it pleases Allah!.) We carefully weave our way through ten widths of cars just to make it to the other side of the street.

Look at all of the apartment buildings that line the streets! Swarming Cairo has more people seeking a place to live than it has living accommodations. More than 100,000 people live in every square mile of Cairo ([or 2.6 sq km]), making it one of the most crowded cities in the world!. Thus, valuable land is used to build apartment buildings for many families instead of a single house for only one family.



With few yards to play in, children relax with their families out on balconies in the cool of the evening after dinner. And dinner is served late— at 10:00 p.m. or even later!

In this tangle of high rises and buses, we discover some of the most valued ancient Egyptian treasures. Do you recall how all the tombs we visited were empty? That is because all of the treasures are here in the Egyptian Museum of Cairo. Take a long look; no cameras are allowed in this sprawling museum of marvels. You have only your memory to focus on the hair of Ramses' mummy or the gold funerary mask of King Tut.

In this city of opposites, mummified Egyptians lie in ancient storehouses of dazzling wealth, while across town from the museum some Egyptians make their homes on trash heaps or in amongst the grave markers of a cemetery.

Mokattam is Cairo's garbage dump where the **zabaleen** (garbage collectors) families live in the

trash piles, their children playing in the rubbish heaps. But there is work to do in Garbage City, Cairo. Girls and boys sift through the 2,000 tons [1,814 metric tons] of garbage dumped here each day, digging for materials to recycle or sell. Carved out of a nearby mountainside is a church that seats 20,000 people where city dwellers gather to praise the God who “*raiseth up the poor out of the dust*” (Ps. 113:7).

Not far from Garbage City is the City of the Dead – which is very much alive. Amongst the tombs of Egypt's past rulers, we see laundry strung up to dry, and grave markers used as desks and shelves. Tens of thousands of Egyptians make their home in the quiet of these cemeteries since families can't find affordable places to live in crowded Cairo.

As you read these words, an Egyptian child may be playing in their backyard across from the pyramids, a fellahin boy may be bringing the goats



*The Egyptian Museum on Tahrir square in Cairo. Photo by Gérard Ducher, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.5.*



## Field Notes

*Now we have seen some of Egypt's most famous and ancient sights. Were you as amazed as I was?*

### PRESS RECORD AND TALK TO ME

- ◇ **About the pyramids:**  
*What and who were they built for? How big are they? Could we climb to the top of one of them? Could we go inside one?*
- ◇ **About the Sphinx:**  
*Please describe it to me.  
What has been happening to the Sphinx over time?  
What important feature is it missing?*
- ◇ **About Cairo:** *Are the houses of Cairo far away from the ancient monuments? What might we see in the Egyptian Museum? Tell me about Mokattam. What do the zabaleen do there? Can you describe the City of the Dead? Why do people live in places like Mokattam or the City of the Dead?*



*Cairo at night. The largest city in Africa. Photo by Maro Tharwat, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.*

to drink at the Nile's edge, while his sister cooks flatbread in the family's outdoor oven. While you sleep tonight, Nile waters will still roar through the Aswan High Dam on their course from Upper to Lower Egypt, just as it has for millennia, painting the Egyptian desert green with life. When you wake tomorrow morning, you may wash your face with a washcloth made in Egypt and the date in your breakfast muffins may have grown in the sunshine beside the Nile. The land of ancient wonders, Egypt is a land very much alive today—this very day—pulsing with the current of the Nile.



*The Abu Simbel temples were created during the reign of Ramesses II. Photo taken by Dennis Jarvis, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.*



# Travel Log

USING YOUR GLOBE OR ATLAS, DRAW AN OUTLINE MAP OF TURKEY



## Map Notes:

*Let's record the locations of:*

- ◇ Nile River
- ◇ Aswan High Dam
- ◇ Lake Nasser
- ◇ Luxor
- ◇ Cairo



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

- ◇ A felucca on the Nile
- ◇ Aswan High Dam
- ◇ Date trees along the riverbanks
- ◇ Groups of tourists in Luxor
- ◇ The Pyramids of Giza
- ◇ The Sphinx
- ◇ Mokattam (*perhaps a garbage can? Or a family with a bag of goods to recycle and sell?*)
- ◇ City of the Dead (*a tombstone?*)

**Challenge Mapping:** Can you point out the following on your map? Upper Egypt and . Lower Egypt.

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

# Bringing It Home

## SIMPLE IDEAS TO BRING THE WORLD TO YOUR DOOR

### *Using These Forms:*

ART | BOOKS | FOOD | MUSIC | POETRY



### Books:

Your local library will probably have many books available about ancient Egypt. Here are three good titles to look for. (A caution for younger children: nearly all books on this time period contain pictures of mummies in various states. Parents may want to preread for sensitive children.)

#### **Exploring Ancient Egypt with Elaine Landau** *by Elaine Landau*

An enjoyable book with cartoon figures as “guides.” Elaine Landau takes children on a tour through many of Egypt’s most famous archaeological discoveries. *Appealing to all ages.*

#### **Secrets of the Sphinx** *by James Cross Giblin*

A beautiful and detailed book, Giblin explores the facts, myths and strange stories surrounding the Sphinx. The book is divided into separate chapters, so parents can pick and choose what information to share with their children. *Appealing to all ages.*

#### **The Day of Ahmed’s Secret** *by Florence Parry Heide*

Detailed watercolors bring the life, sounds, and smells of exotic Cairo to life in this story of Ahmed who has learned the secret of writing his name in Arabic. Young readers will experience the sense of the bustling city and its ancient past. A beautiful selection. *Gr. 1-5*

### Poetry:

***May I walk every day unceasingly on the banks of my water, may my soul rest on the branches of the trees which I have planted, may I refresh myself in the shadow of my sycamore.***

*Egyptian tomb inscription, ca. 1400 BC*

***“And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had Possessions therein, and grew and multiplied exceedingly.”***

*Genesis 47:27*



## 9

# Egypt

## Digging for Good Dirt

### PART III

**L**ike my father, his father, and his grandfather before him, I was born and raised on a farm. As far back as our family tree stretches, our family has always been dirt-lovers, growing crops to live off the land. When I grew up and ventured into the world, looking for a place of my own, I too looked for good dirt to grow crops. Dirt is what God fashioned us from, what we walk and live on, and yet we hardly even notice it under our feet. But where God formed different kinds of dirt determines not only the location and the way we live, but also the very course of history. Never belittle the value of dirt!

The family of Jacob knew the worth of good dirt. Forced by drought and famine to leave Canaan (modern-day Israel), Jacob's children - who were farmers too - came down into Egypt looking for rich soil. Their flocks of sheep and herds of cattle required lush pastures to feed on. Where does a seeking farmer find productive land in the shifting sand dunes of Egypt? One of Jacob's sons, Joseph, had a suggestion: "[W]hen Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?' that you shall say, 'Your servants' occupation has been with

*livestock from our youth even till now, both we and also our fathers,' that you may dwell in the land of Goshen..."* (Gen 46:34 NKJ).

There's our clue: if we find Goshen, we've found fertile, Egyptian soil! Carefully scanning our map, we realize there is no longer any area named "*the land of Goshen*" in Egypt.



Agriculture in Egypt. Photo by Ben Barber, USAID, public domain.





*The Nile Delta is one of the oldest intensely farmed areas on the earth. Photo courtesy of NASA, in the public domain.*

The name of this region is now the Nile Delta, but its soil today remains much like the rich, productive land Jacob's sheep once grazed upon. Let's explore the riches of the Nile Delta today!

In Lower Egypt, slightly down-river from crowded Cairo, the Nile River fans out into streams that flow to join the waters of the Mediterranean Sea. Just like you, every river has a mouth, and the Nile is no exception. A river's **mouth** is the last lower portion where it flows into a larger body of water. When the mouth of the Nile River meets the Mediterranean, it opens wide, leaving tons of sand and soil that has been carried from upriver. This sediment-rich area is called a **delta**.

When I learned Greek, I daily recited the Greek alphabet; *alpha, beta, gamma, delta*. Interestingly, the wide-open river mouth that deposits silt is actually named after the Greek letter Delta since both are shaped like a triangle. Called an "arcuate (arc-shaped) delta," the Nile delta is one of the world's largest, stretching more than 150 miles [240 km] wide, from the industrial city of Port Said near the Suez Canal all along the Mediterranean coastline to the ancient city of Alexandria. Can you guess what the Nile Delta looks like from up in space? You might see the triangular shape of a spreading green palm tree in the desert sands with the Nile River Valley looking like its slender trunk



or you might envision the shape of Egypt's famed lotus flower. Whichever plant-shape you see, we know the delta is a place where *many* plants grow!

On the farm where I live today, our corn crop grows in only about 10 inches [25 cm] of topsoil. **Topsoil** is the top layer of soil fertile enough with organic matter to sufficiently feed plants. Whereas our farm's topsoil is only inches deep, the Egyptian ***fellahin*** (farmers) in the Nile Delta measure their topsoil in feet—50 to 75 ft [15 - 22 m] deep of rich loamy earth! The most fertile soil in all Africa, we find Egyptian farmers growing crops such as cotton, rice, barley, wheat and maize in the 100 mile [160 km] long delta.

The rich soil of the Nile Delta greatly prospered Jacob's family for hundreds of years, as we read in Genesis 47:27: *"And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew and multiplied exceedingly."* Today, we see less Egyptian fellahin working the farmland

of the delta region for several reasons. Firstly, there is less delta farmland due to the growth of sprawling cities. Secondly, with much silt trapped behind the Aswan High Dam, the delta region is shrinking, resulting in erosion of land along the Mediterranean coastline. Finally, the water we see irrigating the delta fields, a practice that now happens year-round instead of waiting for the annual flood, causes a build up of salt in the soil, leaving more delta land unproductive.

Yet still, the delta region is home to more than half of all Egyptians, with more than 34 million people living and working here. In the county where we live and farm, an average of 33 people lives in each square kilometer. If you visited a farm in the delta, and asked how many neighbors the Egyptian family had, they would inform you that they have 1,360 neighbors! Indeed, the Nile Delta is among the most densely populated farming areas to be found anywhere in the world.



*The Aswan High Dam. Photo taken by Jordan Busson, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.*

## A Child's Geography

Although highly populated today, the delta was the region from which all the Israelites once packed their bags and left Egypt. The delta had been spared from many of the Ten Plagues that God had sent upon the country: *“Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail”* (Ex. 9:26). Then, in the middle of one night, the Israelites quickly gathered their belongings, and without even giving their bread time to rise, they began their Exodus out of the Nile Delta area and the land of Egypt.

The departure of the Israelites from Egypt, however, is not the end of Egypt hosting God and his people. In the first book of the New Testament we read, *“ [Joseph] took the young child and his mother by night and departed into Egypt... that it might be fulfilled by the prophet saying, ‘Out*

*of Egypt, have I called my son’ “* (Matt. 2:14-15). While the Christ Child Himself lived only a few short years in Egypt before returning to Israel, the Christian Church has been a part of this country for more than nineteen centuries. Mark the Evangelist, who wrote the oldest of the four gospels, traveled to Egypt to share the hope of Christ with Egyptians. He died in the Delta city of Alexandria on the Mediterranean Coast, and over his grave today stands the soaring arches of the largest cathedral not only in Egypt, but in all of Africa. Isaiah 19:19 wondrously prophesies of Mark’s work in Alexandria on Egypt’s northern border, *“In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord.”*



Alexandria is a port city on the Mediterranean in Egypt. Photo by David Evers, licensed under CC 2.0.





*Cairo's Coptic Museum holds artifacts of Christianity's long history in this land of the pharaohs. Photo by Néfermaât, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.5.*

In the midst of the land of Egypt, we indeed find an altar of worship to the Lord, just as God's prophet foretold. Some of the world's first monasteries, places of worship, were built out in the lonely Egyptian desert. Today more than 8 million Egyptians, or about 1 out of every 10, are Coptic Christians. (Coptic comes from the Greek word meaning "Egypt.")

Throughout the delta, we find businesses and schools quietly closed on Fridays, as they are in all Islamic countries, as this is the weekly Muslim holy

day. However, the same day finds Coptic churches full of singing children attending classes about Jesus. Yes, Coptic Christians go to Sunday School on Friday! Coptic Christians also do not celebrate Christmas on December 25th, as you may, but rather on January 7th, following the Gregorian calendar. You definitely won't find snow falling on an Egyptian Christmas, but if you peek into a Coptic Christian's home during the holidays you will find Christmas trees trimmed with flashing lights, perhaps not all that different from yours.

## Field Notes

*The Delta region must be an incredibly beautiful place. Would you like to visit some day?*

### PRESS RECORD AND TALK TO ME

#### ◇ About the Nile Delta

**region:** *What was this area called in the Bible? What is a river's mouth? What is a delta? What shape is the Nile Delta? What might it look like from space?*

#### ◇ About farming in the

**Delta region:** *Why do plants grow so well in here? What kind of crops do the farmers grow? How have dams and cities affected farming? What happens when the farms are irrigated regularly rather than waiting for the annual floods?*

#### ◇ About the people of the

**region:** *What is a fellahin? How many Egyptians live here? Can you tell the story of the Israelites and their exodus from Egypt? Which gospel writer died in Alexandria? What do you remember about the Coptic Christians?*



*Windy weather carries dust over Egypt and Saudi Arabia. NASA*

If we shake the dirt of the Nile Valley and Delta off our sandals, we have only the last region of Egypt left before us to explore: the vast Western Desert. Covering two thirds of Egypt, the Western Desert equals the combined size of *seven* European countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland! Let's head west into the heat and captivating wonders of the Western Desert, one of the world's last frontiers.

Wait! Do you see that brown wall of dust blowing our way? We'll need to postpone our departure until the settling of the **khamsein**, a hot northern wind that whips the desert into a blinding storm of sand. Pull a handkerchief over your face to ease your breathing. If your nostrils begin to fill with sand, just watch how our skilled Egyptian guide, Amr, snorts water in through his nose, then blows out to clear the sand.

With the passing of the sandstorm, we'll pack our camels with tents, food and water for a trip like no other. In sharp contrast to our exploration of the craggy red mountains of the Sinai Desert or the rocky terrain of the Eastern Desert, our camel **caravan** into the Western Desert leads us into an endless plain of sand dunes and barren plateaus.





*Traditionally decorated camel against background of Great Pyramids. Photo by Mstyslav Chernov, CC BY-SA 3.0.*

The dirt of our farm, or any Egyptian delta farm, yields up crops. The Western Desert sand under our camel's hooves, however, will not yield any produce because it is the driest part of the larger Sahara desert that drifts across the northern part of Africa. If it rained today in the Western Desert it might not rain again in that same location for thirty years. (How old would you be the next time it rained?) The Bible declares: *"Who [but God can] cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man;"* (Job 38:26). Wherever and whenever rain falls anywhere in the desert, it is the work of our Omnipotent God.

Our camels can survive two weeks in the summer and up to two months in the winter without water, but we certainly can't. That is why all desert travelers journey from desert oasis to oasis. An **oasis** is an island of green vegetation growing up around a spring of water in an ocean

of sand. Occurring in lower areas or **depressions**, one finds an oasis where underground rivers coursing beneath the desert sands are close to the surface, resulting in **springs**. You may ask what creates the low area or depression in the desert. Actually, it is just what we've experienced: a sandstorm. God sends roaring winds to create storms severe enough to move 100 million tons of sand and dust. That is the equivalent of loading up 2.5 million tractor trailers! Wind is the means by which God *"turneth the...dry ground into watersprings"* (Ps. 107:35), eventually sweeping the desert down to the **water table** so an oasis grows up in the desert!

Seven main depressions are scattered in different parts of the Western Desert. All but one of these lower areas are considered oases with springs of water bubbling up and Egyptian families making their home here.



## A Child's Geography

Southwest of Cairo, we trek across golden sands rippling out as far as the eye can see. Under the beating sun, we think of the words of Psalm 139:17, “*How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand.*” Who can grasp that God’s thoughts toward us are more than the countless grains of sands stretching out before us? Journeying further into dunes pebbled with spiky black shards of basalt, we quench our burning thirst with a sip of mint tea. Like natural pyramids rising up out of the desert around us, the coppery-colored sand dunes are now encased in a crumbling of black stones. This is the starkly dramatic Black Desert.

What is that you see ahead in the expanse of barren brown and blacks? There, like a green haven of life, emerges our first oasis, Bahariya, and one of its several mud brick villages. Bone-

tired from our camel ride, why don’t we sit down in the humble restaurant for a hearty bowl of lentil soup, with chicken, rice, beans, and zucchini in a tomato sauce? Friendly villagers sit at nearby tables, drinking tea and playing dominoes. Feeling refreshed, we wave good-bye to the oasis dwellers to head south out of the Bahariya into a landscape of sand waves dusted in black. Riding atop our camel mount for hours, you’d almost wonder if this landscape isn’t the surface of some distant planet. If you strain your eyes, what do you see ahead? Dazzling blue-white crystals, shimmering in the setting sun, spectacularly jut out from the sand around us. Amr announces that this is Crystal Mountain, where mountainous outcroppings of **quartz** stunningly push up out of the hard desert sands. Don’t you want to scramble down from our camels to run your fingers over these shimmering cascades of crystals?



*The beauty of the Black Desert is breathtaking. Photo by Ahmedherz, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.*





*Photo of Crystal Mountain by Nearodney, in the public domain.*

After hours of exploring columns of quartz crystals, we spread out our bed rolls here for a night of camping in the Western Desert. There is no sound of traffic or people anywhere; the quiet of the desert fills our ears. Amr, turban wrapped around his head, says people either love the emptiness of the desert, or are scared by its loneliness. Which are you?

The creeping cold of the desert night sets in, and Amr lights a fire to warm us. Look up at the brilliant carpet of stars blanketing the velvety black sky. We think of our God who *“tellethe the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names”* (Ps. 147:4). Doesn't your heart fill with adoration for our Creator?

When we rise in the morning, remember to shake out your shoes to make sure no scorpions or poisonous snakes have made their bed there during the night! Spellbound by dawn's light reflecting off the quartz outcroppings, we journey further south, watching as the color of the sand begins to shift and change, much like the sand dunes themselves. From a burnt toast shade to a lightly toasted tone to an almost white color, we have left the Black Desert and met the White Desert...out in the middle of the Western Desert.

A sea of white sand now overtakes, spotted with small lumps of white **limestone** rock. It almost looks like snow has fallen in this blazing

hot desert! Do you notice the chalky white rocks becoming larger? Doesn't it seem more like we are drifting with icebergs than riding a camel through the Egyptian Desert? Look over there at the bizarre rock formations! Standing like 10-15 ft [3-4.5 m] tall giant mushrooms, the limestone “stems” have eroded away from years of wind blasting its surface with sand. Like a natural art gallery, we marvel over the vast array of beautiful and bizarre rock shapes, showcases of God's handiwork with wind.

We pass half a dozen donkeys as we arrive in the oasis of Farafra, one of the most isolated places in Egypt. Riding by the mud-brick houses of the Bedouin, we can't help but notice their brilliant blue colors, with verses from the Koran, the Muslim's holy book, painted over their doorways. But why are all the houses decorated with simple wall paintings of camels and cars? As you might adorn your fridge with drawings from a special trip, Muslims consider a journey to **Mecca**, their holy city in the Middle Eastern country of Saudi Arabia, to be of such importance, that they adorn the outside of their house with scenes from the trip!

An Egyptian farmer living in this quiet oasis, Saad Ali waves to us as he walks out to the fields of trees growing produce like olives, dates, figs, oranges and apricots. At home, we run bathwater after a day





*The White Desert in western Egypt Photo by Daniel Fafard, in the public domain.*

of farming in the fields, but Saad Ali can take a dip in the hot springs of the oasis after his fieldwork. Not only does Saad Ali's family eat food produced in the oasis town, but his wife also handmakes her own beautifully embroidered clothes. Every daily requirement of living is harvested or crafted in the oasis instead of supplies needing to be brought hundreds of miles across the searing hot desert.

After feasting on an omelet, pita bread and white cheese, we travel further south, crossing a corner of the Great Sand Sea. The size of England, the Great Sand Sea is a vast expanse of unbroken sand dunes in

the southwest corner of Egypt. Do you have enough water bottles to trek out across the world's third-largest dune field? I hope so! There is not a single source of water in 150,000 square miles [390,000 sq km] of the Great Sand Sea, and certainly not one farm of good dirt. If, however, we endured the suffering hot journey to the southern shore of the Sand Sea, we would look down and see tiny pebbles of pale green glass scattered across reddish sand. A hundred miles from the nearest tree, we've discovered the world's only known field of **silica glass**. Some of the glass chunks, polished by ceaseless winds, weigh as much as ten pounds [4.5 kg]. The glass is a mystery. Researchers are not certain how God uniquely created it in this waterless sea of sand.

Traveling on south into Dahkla, an oasis fed by more than 600 springs and ponds, we pass farms growing rice and peanuts. Let's stop before a field of Egyptians harvesting wheat with **sickles**, the young girls collecting the **sheaves**. Boys pile the sheaves onto a wagon which a donkey will haul to the village. Doesn't it feel like we have stepped 3,000 years back in time?

Days of riding through this desert and its glaring sun, makes us feel very small and God so very, very grand. All of the fascinating dirt and sand we've



*Desert Glass, Libyan Desert, Egypt. Photo by Claire H, licensed CC BY-SA 2.0.*





*Views along the River Nile. Photo by Michael Gwyther-Jones, licensed under CC BY 2.0.*

traversed has been nothing short of captivating. Only God could make the ground under our feet in such creative ways! Finally loping into one of Egypt's largest oases, Kharga, we find ourselves in a modern city of 60,000 people. A railway line and bus service connect the 93 mile [150 km] long Kharga to other Western Desert oases and the rest of Egypt. Our circuit of several Western Desert oases is drawing to a close.

Traveling the paved road out of Kharga through the desert back towards the life of the Nile River Valley, we pass through the Valley of the Melons. Don't those huge, circular boulders lay scattered over the desert floor look rather curious?

In God's hand, everything is just as He intended: the craggy red ground of the Sinai Peninsula, the oil resources deep under the Eastern Desert, the winding life-line of the Nile and its fanning delta, and the strange spectacles of the Western Desert. As His Word declares, *"Who [but God] has put all the earth's dirt in one of his baskets, weighed each mountain and hill"* (Isaiah 40:12 MSG)? He is the Creator of the good dirt of our farm and of the Egyptian delta, of you reading these words and of the boy piling sheaves of wheat in the desert oasis. And He wants all our hearts to be good dirt producing an overflowing harvest of good things (Matt. 13:23) whether we live in Egypt or anywhere else on this glorious, spinning globe! No, never underestimate the value of good dirt!

## Field Notes

*The Western Desert is one of the most mysterious places on earth, but our camels seemed right at home, didn't they?*

### PRESS RECORD AND TALK TO ME

#### ◇ **About Western Desert:**

*How large is the desert? What is a khamsin? Can you describe this desert? How often does it rain here? How do travelers survive the unending sand and heat?*

#### ◇ **About an oasis:** *Can you describe one for me? How is an oasis created? Why do people build their homes around the oases?*

#### ◇ **About the colorful sights:** *Can you describe the natural pyramids of the Black Desert? What is Crystal Mountain? Where does the White Desert get its name? Can you tell me about the white limestone rocks?*

#### ◇ **About Farafra:** *What do the houses look like? What kinds of things are made and grown here?*

#### ◇ **About the Great Sand Sea:** *Why is it called this? What might we see scattered across the sand?*

# Travel Log

USING YOUR GLOBE OR ATLAS, DRAW AN OUTLINE MAP OF TURKEY



## Map Notes:

Let's record the locations of:

- ◇ Nile Delta
- ◇ Port Said
- ◇ Alexandria
- ◇ Western Desert
- ◇ Bahariya
- ◇ Farafra
- ◇ Great Sand Sea
- ◇ Dahkla
- ◇ Kharga

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

- ◇ **Farmers working in the delta** (*a plow? Some crops?*)
- ◇ **Coptic monasteries in the desert** (*a building? Or a cross?*)
- ◇ **A khamsin** (*a swirl of dust across the desert?*)
- ◇ **An oasis** (*a palm tree?*)
- ◇ **The Black Desert** (*black dots on the sand?*)
- ◇ **Crystal Mountain** (*make it sparkle!*)
- ◇ **The White Desert** (*shade it white*)
- ◇ **Silica glass in the Great Sand Sea** (*can you draw chunks of glass?*)
- ◇ **Boulders in the Valley of the Melons** (*stones like melons?*)

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



# Bringing It Home

## SIMPLE IDEAS TO BRING THE WORLD TO YOUR DOOR

### *Using These Forms:*

#### ART | BOOKS | FOOD | MUSIC | POETRY

#### Food:

**Hummus** is a dip made from chick peas (or garbanzo beans) and *tahini*, a sesame seed paste. Hummus is found in the deli section of most grocery stores, but you can make your own with this recipe. Perhaps listen to some Egyptian music and imagine being in the Land of the Pharaohs while savoring your treat!



*Photo of hummus by Donovan Govan, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.*

Serve with cut up veggies, chips, or flat bread.

*2 cloves garlic*  
*¼ cup lemon juice*  
*¼ cup water*  
*14 oz canned chickpeas (garbanzo beans)—rinsed and drained*  
*½ cup tahini*  
*1 teaspoon salt*

Blend together in a food processor or blender. Adjust seasonings to taste.

**Fig or Date Balls** (also called Tiger Nut Sweets) is an ancient recipe. Some say it dates back to 1600 B.C. A variation of this recipe was found on an **ostraca** (a clay tablet with writing on it). Wouldn't it be fun to eat just like the ancient Egyptians did?

*1 cup almonds*  
*1 cup walnuts*  
*1 package of figs or dates*  
*Pinch cinnamon*  
*Pinch nutmeg*  
*Honey for dipping*

Put almonds in the blender or food processor and grind to very small pieces. Put these pieces in a small bowl and set aside. Chop walnuts in blender or processor until very small. Add figs or dates and continue blending. You may need to add a little water to help the mixture blend. Add cinnamon and nutmeg and continue blending until ingredients are combined. Roll mixture into one inch [2.54 cm] sized balls – your hands will be sticky and messy! Dip in honey and roll in the ground almonds.

## Go into all the world...

### *a walk of prayer*

**W**hat a privilege to walk among the wonders of Egypt! Such a diverse and beautiful land is truly a gift from God. And we've discovered that Egypt is full of **boys and girls** who are much like us. They were created by a God who loves them dearly—just as He loves you.

**Will you and your family join me in praying for the Egyptian people?**

Lord, give us Your love for the peoples of the world, and help our family to live in a way that shows our love for them. Father, we think of magnificent Egypt with all its rich history, and how Egypt's ancient peoples longed for eternal life. May Your name and Your hope be known in this land of seekers.

~We pray for the great city of **Cairo** and its millions of residents. **From the richest executive to the smallest of the zabaleen**, You know and love them all. We pray for spiritual provision for all of Cairo's people. We particularly remember the **poor** in this massive city. May they find Your kindness day to day. Please provide food and clothing, shelter and healthy bodies for them.

~We pray for **peace between Muslims and Christians** in Egypt. Reveal Yourself to them, Lord. May they learn to walk in Your steps of peace.

~We pray for **Coptic Christians** who have a long history of faith in the land of Egypt. May their hearts be encouraged to follow after You, proclaiming the hope of Jesus in their communities.



~We pray, Father, for the millions of **tourists** every year who visit the antiquities of ancient Egypt. May their journey kindle in them a passion for eternal life in Your Son. May those who stand atop Mount Sinai reflect on Your holiness...and the hope of a Savior.

~We remember those whose lives have been affected by dramatic geographical changes over the years. We think of those who were forced to move after the **Aswan Dam** was built and who now struggle in poverty. We remember the **Nile Delta farmers** who are fighting salty soil to grow healthy crops. Even in the midst of change, You are a God who provides. We ask for Your help.

We love you, Lord, and the people who are living in Egypt today. May the Light of our Savior dawn over all nations today. Draw us all closer to You, Father. In Jesus name, Amen.



## 10

## Iraq

## Tell-ing the Past!

## PART I

Several times a week you drive down the road, but where on earth was the wheel invented? You are reading, carefully and well, the words on this page right now, but where on earth do these words have their roots? Many times a day you look up on the wall to tell the clock's time, but where on earth was it decided that an hour has sixty minutes? You might be surprised to discover that the introduction of the wheel, the earliest writing system, called **cuneiform**, and the very first clocks all originated from one Middle Eastern country. Did you know that much of how you live today, wherever you are in the world, has its roots in ancient Iraq?

Looking at our globe, can you find Iraq at the northern end of the Persian Gulf? (Do you remember that a gulf is a large body of water almost completely surrounded by land?) Slightly larger than the state of California, or about the size of the South American country of Paraguay, Iraq is nearly entirely landlocked, or surrounded by land, except for the mere twelve miles [19 km] of coastline along the Persian Gulf. If you were looking from space, what shape do you see in the outline of Iraq's borders? Does it look like the

head of a big-eared dog, lapping up the waters of the gulf?

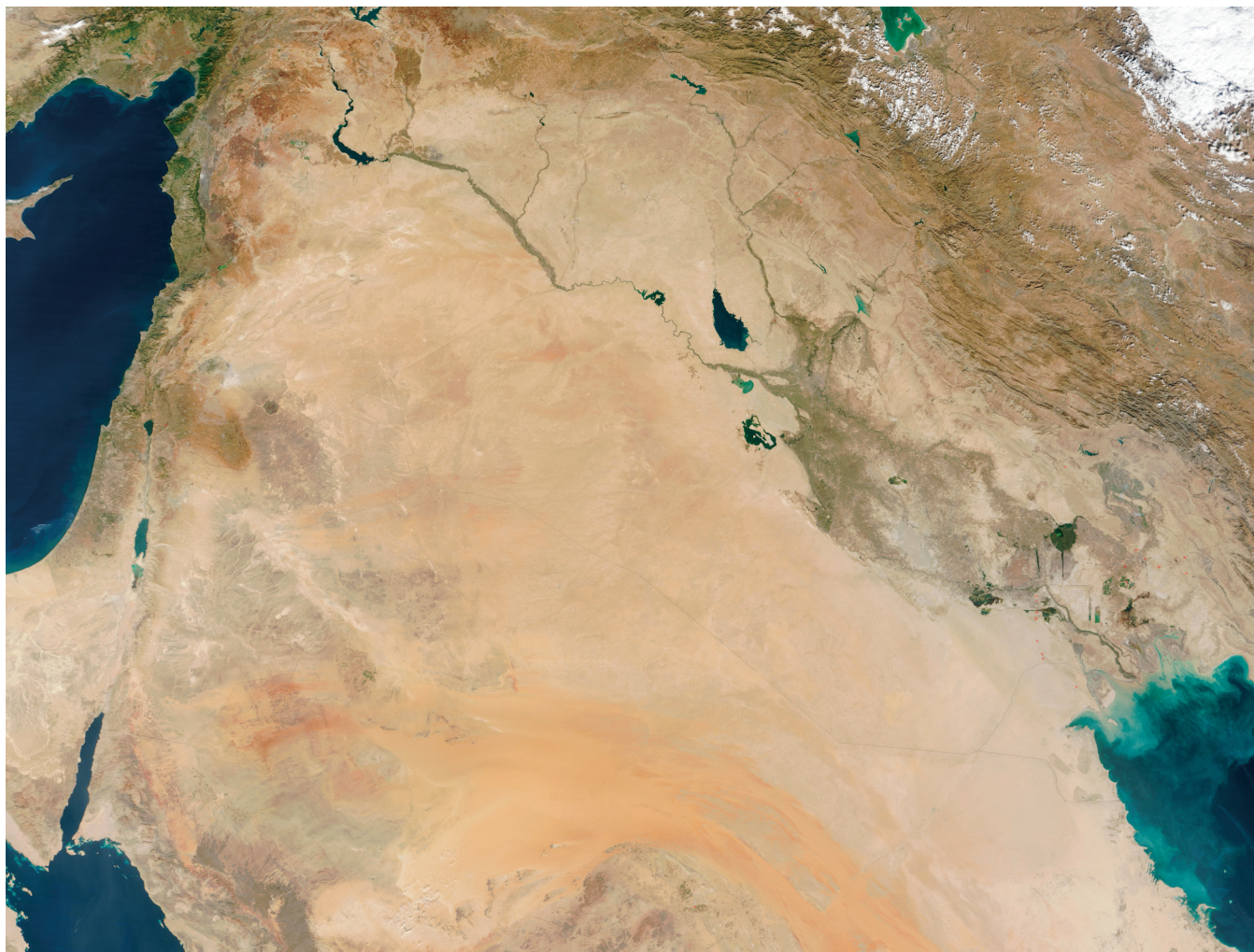
If you'll slip your finger up along your globe from the Persian Gulf, what two rivers do you discover meeting 100 miles [160 km] off the coast? We saw those two rivers begin in the mountains of Turkey: The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers! The Tigris River flows directly out of the



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snowy mountaintops of Turkey into Iraq, while the Euphrates winds out of Turkey and through the country of Syria before slithering across Iraq. The land of Iraq lies within Mesopotamia, the "*land between the rivers*," the cradle of civilization.



Where might the Tigris and Euphrates rivers run? Photo by Jeff Schmaltz, [visibleearth.nasa.gov](https://visibleearth.nasa.gov).

Since the Tigris and Euphrates are two of the four rivers named as flowing out of the Garden of Eden, some have suggested that the Garden of Eden once blossomed in ancient Iraq. In fact, if you traveled to the dusty Iraqi town of Qurna, where the two rivers meet, you would find beside the Tigris River right next to the Garden of Eden Hotel, a gnarled old tree sometimes called “Adam’s Tree.” Welcome to what the townspeople call *Jadan Adan*—the Garden of Eden. Is this tree, rising up out of the cracked concrete with children climbing its bare branches, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil? Probably not. Because it is unlikely that today’s Tigris and Euphrates Rivers are the same Biblical rivers spoken of before the Flood, no one

is certain where the actual Garden of Eden once flourished, either here in Iraq, in modern Turkey, or elsewhere. We do know, however, that as early as Noah’s great-grandson, Biblical events were taking place on the soil of modern Iraq. After the Ark landed on Mount Ararat in Turkey, Noah’s descendants migrated south into the country. The tenth chapter of Genesis tells the story: “*And [Noah’s son] Ham [begat] Cush... And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth... And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh in the land of Shinar. Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city of Rehoboth, and Calah...*” (Genesis 10:6-10).



You didn't read the name Iraq in those verses, did you? Actually you won't find the name Iraq in the Bible, but every time you read of Shinar, Chaldea, Babylon and Assyria, you are actually reading of places that are in the land we now call Iraq. Some even suggest that the name Iraq has its roots in one of these Genesis 10:10 cities: Erech. Those cities established by Noah's great-grandson, Nimrod, such as Babel, Accad and Calneh, were some of the very first cities in the whole world, and they grew up out of the soil of Iraq.

A city close to where I live has the most famous (and tallest) tower in the world but perhaps the tower that rose up in one of Nimrod's cities is even more famous? Do you know the name of that ancient Iraqi tower? Genesis 11 relates how the inhabitants of a city attempted to build a tower that would reach to the very heavens but God came and confused their speech. Since workers could no longer understand each other, the building ceased and *"therefore was the name of it called Babel because Jehovah did there confound the language of all the earth and from thence did Jehovah scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth"* (Gen. 11:9). From ancient Iraq's tower of Babel the peoples of the world, now speaking different languages, dispersed throughout the earth. When your neighbor down the street introduces himself with, "Bonjour! Je m'appelle Monsieur Voyer!" you may remember how the beginning of different languages began in Iraq!



*The Tower of Babel was painted in 1563 by Pieter Brueghel. Painting public domain.*

Did you know that the land of Iraq today can TELL us many things from thousands of years ago? Obviously the geography of Iraq cannot literally speak—but it is *tell*-ing us about long ago cities, like that of Babel. Humps of land, called **tells**, are actually mounds of rubble from destroyed, long-forgotten cities. **Archaeologists** dig in the tells in search of remains and artifacts to discover how people lived long ago in Iraq. Let's get our feet planted in Iraq and see what its land is *telling* us today!

Our plane circles Iraq's capital city of Baghdad, on the western bank of the Tigris River, waiting for a clearing in the dust storm so we might land. Can you see through the reddish haze of dust shrouding the city? Just think of homekeepers throughout Baghdad dusting the fine film of sand off their furniture several times a day, only to have more sand sift in through cracks around windows and doors! This is a **sharqi**, a southeasterly wind (sharqi means "easterly" in Arabic). Blowing in from the Persian Gulf in early summer and early winter, the sharqi whips up severe sandstorms

## Field Notes

*I've heard so much about Iraq, but not these things! Are you excited to discover the actual locations of events in the Bible?*

### PRESS RECORD AND TALK TO ME

- ◇ **About Iraq's geography:** *What is Iraq surrounded by? Are any bodies of water near the country? Which two rivers slide through Iraq? What other names is Iraq called in the Bible? What famous ancient tower was built here?*
- ◇ **About Tells:** *What is a tell? What kinds of things can we learn from a tell?*
- ◇ **About Baghdad:** *Why is this city important to Iraq? What is a sharqi? What is a shamal? What might you buy in a Baghdad souk? What is the city like today?*



*Ruins in Ur, Iraq, the hometown of Abraham. Photo by M. Lubinski, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.*

that can destroy houses, crops and uproot trees. The sharqi rages stronger than the mid-June to mid-September wind, the **shamal** that blows through Iraq nearly incessantly during the summer. Unlike the sharqi, the shamal blows in from the north, bringing blistering heat and such dry air that clouds cannot form. With no cloud cover, the summer sun beats relentlessly down on Iraq. Today, in the early winter temperatures of 52°F [11°C] we pull on our jackets, relieved that we aren't visiting Iraq on a smothering 93°F [34°C] summer day!

After finally landing in Baghdad, a city of more than 4 million inhabitants, we make our way past its ancient mosques, their intricate minarets pointing to the skies, open only to worshipping Muslims. We drive past noisy **souqs (souks)** (marketplaces) where Iraqi women in colorful scarves buy dates, jewelry, and spices of all colors, while a group of young men browse through music CDs. Wandering past the *Souk al Safafir*, Baghdad's famous copper market, we see craftsmen heating, beating and decorating copper. Did you also catch a glimpse of the crumbling fragments of the mud-brick wall that once encircled this 1,300-year-old city, making Baghdad known as the City of Peace? Driving past piles of rubble and buildings half demolished by bombs, we see that Baghdad has not known peace in its recent history



but war and hardship. Mothers huddle children close, trying to escort them home safely from school; fathers search for work; but do you see workers hammering on the construction of new buildings?

A revived Baghdad is rising in an era of hope.

Under a palm tree outside Baghdad's Iraq Museum, we meet our guide, Mr. Jamal Anour, a tall man with black hair, and his son, Abdel and daughter, Thuraya. Before we set out to uncover the wonders of ancient Iraq buried in today's Iraqi soil, the Anours graciously invite us to walk home with them for lunch. Be careful as you sit down on the floor of the Anour's small living room to eat that you do not show the soles of your feet! Most Iraqis would find that disrespectful. Mrs. Anour, wearing the traditional long black cloak called an **abaya** over her clothes and a black scarf over her hair, asks our preference: rice and a hearty stew? Or **kebabs** of lamb, beef, goat or

poultry? Iraqi's assent to the Muslim Koran allows for the eating of **halal**, or lawful, meats such as these. You won't find pork in any dish however, as it is considered **haram**, or forbidden. Even if you are left handed, you must be careful not eat with your left hand since the left hand is considered by Middle Easterners as the hand of toilet functions and thought to be unclean!

After lunch, Mr. Anour drives us south out of Baghdad across the dusty plain towards the ruins of Nimrod's city of Babylon. Known only in folklore for many years, ecstatic archaeologists discovered the actual remains of Babylon along the banks of the Euphrates, buried in the mud from floods. Do you see the walls of sun-baked bricks growing up ahead of us? Abdel pipes up to say that amongst those bricks are the ruins of the *Etemenanki ziggurat*. A **ziggurat** is a pyramid-like tower, sometimes reaching as high as 300 ft [91 m], with a temple on top, where ancient



*The ziggurat at Aqar Quf. Photo by DVIDSHUB, licensed under CC 2.0.*



Iraqis worshipped. A Sumerian word, Etemenanki means the “House of the platform of Heaven and Earth.” While more than 30 ziggurats have been discovered in the Middle East, not much of the once massive Etemenanki remains. Thuraya explains that under Etemenanki archaeologists have found the remains of even earlier ziggurats. Is it true, as some suggest, that the buried remains of one such ziggurat in these Babylonian ruins are the actual remains of the biblical Tower of Babel? Perhaps!

Abdel calls for us to come and see the modern reconstruction of the famous *Ishtar Gate* of Babylon, brilliant blue in the Iraqi sunlight. Can't you imagine Daniel or Nebuchadnezzar once walking under its arch? (The original tiled panels of striding lions that decorated the first Gate have long since been excavated from the Iraqi soil and

now stand in a museum in Europe, thousands of miles away from Iraq!)

The original Ishtar Gate protected Nebuchadnezzar's 700-room palace, whose walls we can still run our fingers along. Was it in this room that Daniel asked the King's steward if he might eat only vegetable and water for ten days? Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abdenego, along with the exiled Israelites, lived a term of captivity in this ancient Iraqi city. Did they too stand next to these palace walls, looking up at the thousands of trees, shrubs and flowers that once grew on the ledges of the palace walls? For here is where Nebuchadnezzar built the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, for his wife Amytis. (Of course, the gardens did not hang in mid air from ropes, but were overhanging from palace balconies.)



*The Ishtar Gate Replica in Hillah, Iraq. Photo by Osama Sarm, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.*





*The lion was a symbol of the goddess Ishtar. Photo by Josep Renalias, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.*

Amytis longed for the mountainous landscape of northern Iraq where she had been raised as a child. To ease her homesickness, Nebuchadnezzar built these spectacular terraced gardens, resembling a mountainous, lush countryside. Like Amytis, don't you too find that the geography of where you live—hilly or flat, rocky or fertile—becomes the landscape you most comfortably call home?

As Mr. Anour leads us through what was once Nebuchadnezzar's throne room, we pause to touch these walls, and think of King Belshazzar who, while drinking irreverently out of the golden goblets taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, saw the "*fingers of a man's hand [that] wrote...upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace*" (Dan. 5:5)! What a wondrous act God worked on these ancient walls of Babylon.

As we wander through the honey-colored brick walls, don't you wonder how these walls built thousands of years ago have stood the ages so well? With thick Arabic accents, Jamal and Abdel beckon us to step close to notice that the bricks close to the bottom of the walls are Nebuchadnezzar's original bricks, stamped with praises to his name. Yellow bricks higher in the wall are not ancient but very new, laid only recently by order of an Iraqi leader named Saddam Hussein, who had begun to build a new Babylon on the remains of ancient Babylon. In these bricks, can you read the **inscription** of the words, translated from the Arabic, "This was built by Saddam Hussein, son of Nebuchadnezzar, to glorify Iraq." Standing in this place, the echo of Nebuchadnezzar's proud words ring in our hearts, "*Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the*



## A Child's Geography

*house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?"* (Daniel 4:30). Don't you too await the day when we peoples no longer strive for our own renown but when "*all nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name*" (Ps. 86:9)?

Mr. Anour, Abdel and Thuraya are anxious to let another Iraqi tell speak to us further south in Iraq, Tell al-Muqayyar. From miles across the desert the message of the tell drifts towards us. How can you miss the massive ziggurat rising up out of the desert? Mr. Anour explains that at this ziggurat, more than 4,000 years old, ancient Iraqis worshipped the moon god, Nanna, in Sumerian mythology. But if you look around, there isn't another house in sight! It's hard to believe that about 2,000 years before the birth of our Savior, what lies under this mound of dirt may have been the world's largest city of its time: Ur with a population of 65,000 people.

Thousands of years ago, in the city whose remains are now under our feet, you could have stopped a little boy running through the narrow streets and asked him where he was from. He might have said, "I am Abram and I am from... um..er..um...yes, UR!..of the Chaldeans." In Genesis 15:7 God says to Abram: "*I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees...*"

Ur was the hometown of the patriarch Abraham before he migrated north to Haran, Turkey. Did Abraham once sit here and watch with sadness as his townspeople climbed these steps to worship a false deity? Is Ur's idol worship what caused God to lead Abram away from this part of Iraq? While we may not be certain, we know God and His Word are true. Interestingly, Ur's ziggurat in southern Iraq actually attests clearly to the truth of Scripture!



*One of Saddam Hussein's palaces atop a hillside, overlooking the Euphrates river and the ruins of the ancient city. Photo taken by a U.S. Military Soldier, PD.*



For many years, scholars thought Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon, and the Bible was surely wrong in naming Belshazzar last king of Babylon. However, clay cylinders found at Ur's ziggurat bore an inscription of Nabonidus closing with a prayer for his son Belshazzar—the same Belshazzar of the Bible's book of Daniel. The Bible was right! Digging about in Iraq today proved that God's Word had indeed recorded accurately the kings of ancient Iraq.

Mr. Anour and his children urge us northward across Iraq, to a mound of dirt on the east banks of the Tigris River, near the modern-day city of Mosul. (Can you locate Mosul on your map?)

Thuraya can't wait to inform us of the name of this tell: Tell Nebi Yunus, which means "Prophet Jonah." Why on earth would there be a heap of dirt named "Prophet Jonah" in Iraq? That is because you are standing where legend claims the biblical Prophet Jonah was buried...and where the "*exceedingly great city*" (Jonah 3:3) of Nineveh once stood!

Looking across this immense area of more than 1,800 acres of ruins, can you imagine what this teeming city of more than 100,000 people may have looked like when the Prophet Jonah arrived here? We walk up the mammoth dusty ramp and under the massive arch of one of



*Do you think one of these smiling Iraqi children might be Abdel? Photo in the public domain.*



## A Child's Geography

Nineveh's 15 towering gates. Don't you wonder what fainthearted Jonah thought as he passed under one of these colossal gates into the city? Wouldn't he have been a sight to behold with his hair and skin bleached white by his time in the great fish's stomach? No wonder the Ninevites believed Jonah's prophecies of God's impending wrath and chose to repent. This ancient city in Iraq is the site of the one of the most astounding spiritual revivals the world has ever seen!

Standing here surveying the ruin-mounds of tell "Prophet Jonah," Mr. Anour tells us how, hundreds of years after Jonah's lifetime, an ancient Iraqi, Berosus, wrote the history of a fish-man named Jonah who surfaced from out of the

sea to give heavenly wisdom to man. Doesn't that sound much like the story of Jonah and Nineveh that we find in our Bibles today?

As we further explore the ruins, Mr. Anour declares that one of the greatest book lovers of all time once walked where we now walk. The ancient Iraqi King Assurbanipal was the world's very first librarian. Today one can visit museums to read the more than 23,000 clay tablets of stories and writings Assurbanipal collected in the world's first library, founded in Nineveh. To think: your local library is a descendent of that long ago Iraqi library!

As we wander back to the jeep, we marvel what the Iraqi tells have told us. It is hard to fathom that the same Iraqi soil we have walked today has



*Hundreds of thousands of Shiites make their way across the newly-rebuilt Sarifiyah Bridge in their annual pilgrimage to the Kadhamiyah shrine. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Lorie Jewell, in the public domain.*





*Map of Iraq. Map courtesy of Central Intelligence Agency, in the public domain.*

been the stage of many great historical events: many of the world's very first cities were founded in ancient Iraq, the birth of different languages took place in Iraq at the Tower of Babel, and Abraham's hometown was Ur, an ancient Iraqi city. One of the world's first empires, under Nebuchadnezzar, was formed here. Ancient Israelites, like Daniel and his friends, lived here during the captivity, and God wrought the most stunning revival in history in Nineveh of ancient Iraq. Before we go, Abdel quickly adds that all the events of the book of Esther also took place in this amazing country!

Doesn't our walk through the remains of ancient Iraq whet your appetite for a tour of modern day Iraq? The tells have told the past-- Mr. Anour and his children promise us to show and tell even more wondrous sites in the next adventure of modern-day Iraq. Hold on to your hat!

## Field Notes

*Exploring this part of Iraq has been so exciting! Wouldn't you have loved to see Nebuchadnezzar's palace? Or his hanging gardens?*

### PRESS RECORD AND TALK TO ME

- ◇ **About the customs and culture of Iraq:** *If we were to share a meal with an Iraqi family, what must we remember not to do when we sit down? What kind of food might we eat? What other manners must we remember? Can you describe Mrs. Anour's clothes?*
- ◇ **About Babylon:** *What is a ziggurat? Tell me about the Ishtar gate. What does it look like? What did it protect in ancient times? Which men from the Bible might have walked through this gate? What did Nebuchadnezzar build for his wife in Babylon?*
- ◇ **About Tell as-Muqayyar:** *Which ancient city lies beneath this mound? Who lived there?*
- ◇ **About Nineveh:** *Do you know a Bible story about Nineveh? What does the name "Nebi Yunus" mean? What would a book-lover want to know about Nineveh?*

# Travel Log

USING YOUR GLOBE OR ATLAS, DRAW AN OUTLINE MAP OF TURKEY



**A**s 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:*

- ◇ Persian Gulf
- ◇ Tigris River
- ◇ Euphrates River
- ◇ Qurna
- ◇ Baghdad

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

- ◇ **"Adam's Tree" at the Garden of Eden Hotel** (*in Qurna*)
- ◇ **Souks at Baghdad** (*perhaps some bright fabrics? CDs? Jewelry?*)
- ◇ **Ziggurats at Babylon** (*pyramid-shaped towers*)
- ◇ **Ishtar Gate** (*bright blue!*)
- ◇ **Tell Nebi Yunus** (*perhaps a big fish to remind us of Jonah?*)

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





# Bringing It Home

## SIMPLE IDEAS TO BRING THE WORLD TO YOUR DOOR

### *Using These Forms:*

#### ART | BOOKS | FOOD | MUSIC | POETRY

##### Art:

Art like the picture at left was common in ancient Arab countries. It is called **bas-relief** and it is made by cutting away part of the background on a piece of clay, leaving a design or sculpture in the foreground. Would you like to make your own bas-relief sculpture?



*Bas-relief of a person holding a poppy and an ibex*

You will need clay (Traditional clay needs firing in a kiln, or you may use self-hardening clays, or craft clays that bake in the oven, even play dough for a more temporary craft.), a rolling pin, a sculpting tool to cut the clay (such as toothpicks, knives, skewers, or actual clay tools), and a design to sculpt. (A simple shape such as a star may be best to start with.)

Begin by rolling your clay into a square or rectangle (about 6 in. x 6 in. [15 cm x 15 cm] will do), being sure to leave about an inch [2.54 cm] or more thickness for carving. Using a toothpick or knife, trace the outline of your design onto the clay. Begin to sculpt by cutting away part of the depth of the background (about  $\frac{1}{4}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch [.6 cm - 1.2 cm]) surrounding your design. **DO NOT CUT AWAY THE WHOLE BACKGROUND.** You want your design to

look as though it is rising out of the background, not a free-standing form. (Tip: use your finger and a tiny bit of water to smooth surfaces or to “glue” segments back together.)

Once the outline is cut away, take some time and add details to your sculpture.

Finally, you can make your background as detailed or as plain as you like. Try scoring some wavy lines into the surface, or a pattern of dots. Follow the package directions for your clay once the project is complete.

##### Music:

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

##### **You will find a wide selection of samples here:**

[http://worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com/worldmusic/view/page.basic/artist/content.artist/ahmed\\_mukhtar\\_46405](http://worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com/worldmusic/view/page.basic/artist/content.artist/ahmed_mukhtar_46405)

[http://iraqimusic.com/index\\_maqam.htm](http://iraqimusic.com/index_maqam.htm)

# Iraq

## River Ride!

### PART II

**H**ave you ever opened a cold can of the fizzing soda, Mountain Dew? Well real mountains don't make droplets of mere dew; actual mountains make streaming, coursing

*rivers!* Rivers begin their life high up in mountains, as a trickle of melting snow, or sparkling cold water bubbling from a mountain spring. The trickle becomes a stream coursing down a gully, which



*Canyon in Rawanduz in northern Iraqi Kurdistan. Photo by Jim Gordon, licensed under CC BY 2.0.*





*Shatt-al-Arab River in Basra in the northern part of Basra city. Photo in the public domain.*

merges with other gully streams. Smaller streams, named **tributaries**, meet larger streams, with many tributary streams forming a river. Spilling down into valleys, the river, always restless and moving, eventually snakes its way across the breadth of a country, until it finally slips away into the sea. Iraq has mountains, mountains make rivers, rivers make life flourish...until finally the river slips out to meet the sea. Think of that grand story the next time you drink a Mountain Dew: how mountains DO make more than dew—they make rivers!

Do you see Mr. Anour, Abdel and Thuraya calling us up to the mountains of northeastern Iraq? For if we are going to go tracking the waters that flow down into the two of history's great rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, we'll have to tie on our mountain boots and go hiking!

Like sky-high fences, Iraq's two main mountain chains define its borders with its neighboring

countries. The Taurus Mountains ripple between Iraq and Turkey while the Zagros Mountains crease and crimp along Iraq's border with Iran. (Can you feel the rise of those two Iraqi mountain chains on your globe?) Abdel and Thuraya deeply breathe in the cooler air of this mountain region. Do you see the snow melting on these towering peaks? There begins the life of gurgling rivers. As these rivers birthed in the mountains grow larger, they gouge deep cuts, called **gorges**, into the rocky landscape, in their rush to join other rivers and streams, which form tributaries. Tributaries that course down out of the Zagros Mountains flow into the Tigris River. It is just as the prophet Isaiah wrote: "*On every lofty mountain and on every high hill there will be streams running with water...*" (Isa. 30:25).

Waving to two Kurdish boys, Mr. Anour calls "*Rozhbash*," meaning 'hello' in Kurdi. The boys, jackets pulled tight as they herd their family's





*The Tigris River. Photo by Bjørn Christian Tørrissen, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.*

flock of sheep up a grassy mountainside, return our greeting with an echoing “*Bashem!*” The valleys of the north eastern mountains are dotted with the homes of the majority of Iraq’s Kurdish people. The fourth-largest ethnic people group in the Middle East, 2 out of every 10 Iraqis are **Kurds**.

Did you know that the Kurds are thought to be descendants of the Medes—yes, the same Medes who, along with the Persians, had the unchangeable laws written of in the book of Daniel (Daniel 6:8)!

While the Kurdish people have always had their own language, tradition and culture, Iraqi Kurds have not had their own lands for a long, long time. The governments of the Middle Eastern countries have often treated the Kurds cruelly, refusing to acknowledge their unique community. Only recently, and after many years of struggle, have the Kurds formed the region of Iraqi Kurdistan, meaning “*the land of the Kurds*,” in northeastern Iraq. This

region, while part of Iraq, is governed solely by the Kurdish people. Thuraya also points out that the first State President of Iraq, after a war that overthrew longtime leader Saddam Hussein, is a Kurd. President Talabani, the first non-Arab to lead an Arab nation, has promised that he will work co-operatively with all Iraqis—Kurds and Arabs, Muslims and Christians—to rebuild a new and strong Iraq after years of hardships.

While many Kurds live and work in Iraqi cities, Mr. Anour explains that

some Kurds still live a semi-nomadic lifestyle, spending the harsh winters in the **foothills** of these Zagros Mountains. (Foothills, like the feet of mountains, are the hilly land between the lower slopes of mountains and an area of plain.) Come the warmth of spring, these Kurdish families move higher up the mountain slopes to their summertime dwellings called kapras. Their flocks of goats and sheep nibble on the lush grasses fed by melting snows and rains. These pastures are fed by the more than 40 inches of **precipitation** that falls each year in the Iraqi mountains, much of it as snow. (Forty inches is about 3 and a half feet or 1 meter—how tall are you?) This precipitation also waters crops such as wheat and barley that grow in the shelter of the valleys. The rest of Iraq receives such little rainfall, much of it is classified a desert.

Not only does more precipitation fall in this region, but the natural forests of oak trees that clothe these mountainsides are the only ones in the entire country. Many of the trees that



once shaded Iraq have been cut down for use as firewood, and previous governments destroyed many mountainside forests where Kurds once hid from persecution.

Why is that Kurdish boy cutting all of the branches off that oak tree over there? Abdel tells us that Kurds have the habit of **pollarding** the oak forest, cutting nearly all of the tree's branches back to the trunk. Doesn't the Kurdish boy diligently collect the oak branches up into piles? These oak branches will be winter feed for his family's herd of hardy native cattle. Abdel assures us that new branch shoots will sprout up from this tree, its trunk growing fatter from the pollarding. Mr. Anour adds that the Kurdish villagers are careful to preserve the forests since they need the oak trees to feed their flocks when deep winter snows blanket the mountains of Iraq. Wise stewards of God's creation heed the words of Revelation 7:3, *"Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees..."*

I can recall as a child watching my white-haired Granny bend over unfolded yards of muslin to snip out shapes of Raggedy Ann and Andy dolls from the fabric. Holding the doll Granny stitched out of the muslin and untangling its red yarn hair, I never dreamed that the doll of muslin was related to a city in Iraq!

Fields of cotton and sugarcane wave in the wind as we pass by on our way to this northwestern city, on the fringe of Iraq's mountain region. Mr. Anour tells us the story of the city's name: Long ago, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Europeans were introduced to a closely woven, unbleached white cloth, that breathed well, perfect for wearing in hot, dry climates. The name of the material? The Europeans called it *mosulin*, after the city where they thought the material originated: Mosul, Iraq. (Do you see Mosul on your map?) Actually, **muslin** is thought to have been woven first in Asia, further to the east.



*The leaning Al-Hadba minaret in Mosul, Iraq. Photo in the public domain.*



### Field Notes

*This part of Iraq sounds very beautiful. I would love to see the rivers gushing down from the mountains, wouldn't you?*

#### PRESS RECORD AND TALK TO ME

- ◇ **About northeastern Iraq:** *Which two mountain chains roll through Iraq? What is a gorge?*
- ◇ **About the Kurds:** *What is the Kurdish area called? Have the Kurds always had their own land? How many Iraqis are Kurds? What is life like for the people who live in the Zagros foothills? How much rain falls in this area? What famous Iraqi is a Kurd?*
- ◇ **About Mosul:** *What does the name come from? What city is across the river from Mosul? Can you describe some of the buildings we might see in town?*

Springing up along the caravan (trade) route between Asia and Europe, the city of Mosul came to weave its own fine cotton. Now when you see sheets and curtains, dresses and dolls made from muslin, you'll always remember that the fabric is named after the Iraqi city of Mosul!

Does this area of Iraq look familiar? Yes, Mosul lies just opposite ancient Nineveh, on the west bank of the Tigris River. Isn't it intriguing that modern-day houses perch on the riverbanks opposite the remains of long ago Nineveh? The impressive remains of Mosul's ancient city walls further add to the scene's fascination. Abdel points to an unusually shaped Muslim shrine or **mashad** also towering over the Tigris River. Who can miss that white pyramid-shaped roof atop a honey-colored octagonal base? Mr. Anour tells us that the **mashad** was built nearly 800 years ago in honor of a Muslim religious leader. But Mr. Anour promises to show us an even more unusual building in this modern city with an old feel. Thuraya is the first to spot the structure in downtown Mosul: why it looks like the leaning Tower of Pisa! Called *Al-Hadba*, this soaring minaret does look like it is about to topple over! Doesn't the decorative brick pattern of the Al-Hadba remind you of an intricate carpet design? Mr. Anour then guides us down winding back streets to the *Ma Toma* (St. Thomas) Church where the bones of St. Thomas are said to be buried. Yes, Thuraya says, Mosul is the home to more Christians than any other city in Iraq.

Thuraya declares that her stomach is growling and she would love satisfy it with **kibbeh**, small dumplings filled with minced lamb or beef, nuts, raisins and spices. **Dolma** is what Abdel is hungry for, grape leaves stuffed with rice, raisins, meat and parsley. Chuckling, Mr. Anour suggests a treat of Iraq's most famous dish: **matzgouf**. Who can resist the fish dish made of carp caught from the Tigris River? According to tradition, only men are allowed to cut the carp open, smoke it then stuff it with peppers, spices, onions and tomatoes, before grilling it over an open fire. Smacking our lips after the last bite of mazgouf, Mr. Anour offers us each a **zlabiya**, a sweet pastry that looks like a pretzel. With tummies full of such tasty fare, we are ready to explore Iraq's next geographical region: the plains.





*Dolmas. Photo by Heidi Bauer, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.5.*

Traveling south out of Mosul towards the plains of the Tigris and Euphrates River, our curiosity is piqued over the large steel pipeline that stretches out as far as the eye can see. Did you know that liquid gold runs through these pipes? For the oil that pumps through the pipelines near Mosul and Kirkuk, (and in the country's southwest), is indeed Iraq's greatest source of wealth. One of the largest producers of oil in the whole world, Iraq's new growth is funded by the sale of millions of barrel of oil to the world community. The industries where you live quite likely use oil that came from Iraq—and thus your community is helping Iraqi families rebuild lives of hope after years of war and struggle.

Perhaps every time you go up a flight of stairs you do what I did as a child, counting each step aloud: 12, 13, 14! Did you know that Iraq has its own steppes? The geographical term '**steppe**' refers to a dry, grassy plain, usually without trees. Before us the mountains of Iraq's north give way to the rolling upper steppes, with the Tigris faithfully slipping from its mountain heights down through these hills. The Tigris (called the *Dijlis* in Arabic) and its major tributaries carve deep valleys through this grassy plain region on its slide down Iraq.

Ahead of us rises the upper plain city of *Tikrit*. (Can you locate that on your map?) Did you know that Saladin, the great Muslim general





*Al Başrah Oil Terminal. Photo by U.S. Navy Specialist 2nd Class Lenny M. Francioni, in the public domain.*

who battled against the Crusaders during the Middle Ages, was born in the Iraqi town of Tikrit? Is that the remains of his magnificent palace up there on the rise overlooking the Tigris River? Mr. Anour shakes his head. No, that is what was once the palace of a recent Iraqi leader, *Saddam Hussein Abd al-Majid al-Tikriti*. Wouldn't that be a hard name to write when you were five years old? Interestingly, Iraqis do not have a last name or surname like you or I do. For instance, Saddam was the name his mother gave him, Hussein was the first name of his father, Abd al-Majid was his grandfather's name, and can you guess where the name al-Tikriti comes from? Yes, it means that he was born or raised in (or near) the city of Tikrit! (What might your name be if you lived in Iraq?)

Mr. Anour tells us that while the land of Iraq has been blessed with abundant natural resources like oil, natural gas and phosphates which could make the country wealthy, families like these of Tikrit live very poorly due to war

and political situations. In stark contrast to some of the luxurious palatial mansions lived in by previous government officials, we drive by Iraqi children playing outside on piles of rubble in front of simple flat-roofed houses made of sun-baked bricks. Nearly half of all Iraqis experience a very low standard of living, and less than 2 out of every 100 Iraqis live as well as you or I do. Remember that tasty mazgouf we ate in Mosul? Mr. Anour shares how one out of every four Iraqi children under the age of five fall asleep with gnawing, hungry tummies.

But, Abdel interjects, most children do go to ***madrassa***, or school, free of charge. Do the schools in your neighborhood have washroom facilities? Nearly half of all Iraqi students today attend a school that does not have a washroom, an effect of wars. Thuraya explains that students still go to school daily to listen intently to ***Ostath's*** (teacher's) lessons, with all classes divided into boys sitting on one side of the classroom and



girls on the other. Children, no matter how or where they live in the world, are just like you: they too have curious questions and a thirst for learning!

I have slept in a barn, in a tree house, on a beach and in a tent, but I have never slept on the roof of a house. As Mr. Anour drives us farther south into the lower plain region, Thuraya explains that many Iraqis sleep outside on their flat roofs on hot summer evenings. Abdel chimes in that Iraqi children often stay up until midnight or later to enjoy the cool—but that is because they often take a nap in the heat of the afternoon. Would you like that?

Mr. Anour has led us south of the old ruins of Babylon, to the city of Najaf on the banks



*Photo of Iraqi school girls. Photo in the public domain.*

of the Euphrates River. Do you notice that the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers continue to follow us on our travel south through Iraq? The Rivers fall endlessly, even now as you read these words, down Iraq's slope towards the Persian Gulf. I am



*Wadi-Al-Salaam, in Najaf, Iraq. Photo by Hadi Abdulwahhab Tabatabaee, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.*





*Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf, Iraq. Photo in the public domain.*

sure you haven't missed the fact that nearly all of Iraq's people congregate in cities on the banks of the life-giving Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.

Look at that vast desert plain on the outskirts of Najaf with domes and tombs stretching out for mile upon mile ahead of us! Actually, it stretches for 6 miles [10 km], informs Mr. Anour. This is *Wadi al Salaam*, the Valley of Peace, the largest graveyard in the whole world. While Najaf maybe one of Iraq's biggest cities, population nearly 600,000, its hallowed cemetery, nearly 1,400 years old, is

the resting place of millions. Why does Najaf have the world's largest cemetery? Mr. Anour says it is not unusual to see minibuses traveling to Najaf from all over the Middle East and Asia with stretchers on the roof rack, often draping the deceased in the national flag. Devout Shiite Muslims the world over pray that their family will one day bear them to Najaf for burial.

Iraqi Muslims are either *Shiite* Muslims or *Sunni* Muslims, two groups that arose after Muhammad's death. Sunni Muslims thought future leaders should be chosen from



Muhammad's followers while Shiites believed that the leaders should be descendants of Muhammad's cousin, Ali.

Najaf is the site of Ali's tomb, the first leader of the Shiites. Ali requested that, when he died, he be buried in Najaf because Muslim tradition claimed that Abraham had once visited the area and declared that all who were buried there would enter paradise. We watch crowds of Shiite Muslims, men draped in **throbes**, an ankle length robe with long sleeves, women covered in black abayas, making their pilgrimage from all over the world to Ali's Mosque, its golden dome glittering brilliantly in the sunshine.

Do you know the other famous ancient visitor that Muslim tradition claims walked the soil of Najaf? According to their lore, one of Noah's sons refused to board the Ark, but instead chose to perch himself atop a mountain that covered modern-day Najaf. But, so the story goes, the mountain crumbled, the son drowned in the flood, and the river that appeared in place where the mountain once stood eventually dried up. Hence, the meaning of the name of Najaf: dry river.

We laugh with the Anours over the irony of the name 'dry river' for a city on the banks of the great Euphrates! Hasn't this Iraqi exploration with the Anours been a river ride? From the mountainous beginnings of the Tigris' tributaries, to trickling and gurgling and winding our way down the gradual descent of Iraq's steppes and upper plains into its lower plains. Yes, "by the rivers of Babylon, there we [have] sat down" (Ps. 137:1) to praise our great God who has "caused waters to run down like rivers" (Ps. 78:16) and one day, "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:8). While we give God all the glory, make sure you hold your place on those Iraqi rivers—they have more unforgettable places to sweep us off to!

## Field Notes

*It is so important to learn about the lives of other people around the world. I think I would like to visit an Iraqi family and share some of their delicious-sounding food! Would you and your family like to join me?*

### PRESS RECORD AND TALK TO ME

- ◇ **About Iraqi food:** *What is dolma? How might someone fix matzgouf for us? When would be the best time to eat zlabiya?*
- ◇ **About Tikrit:** *Whose palace stands in Tikrit? Have you ever heard of Saddam Hussein? What is life like for most of the Iraqis in this area? Tell me about the schools. Where do some people sleep during the hot summers?*
- ◇ **About Najaf:** *What is Wadi al Salaam? Which famous Shiite Muslim is buried in Najaf? Can you explain the difference between Sunni and Shiite Muslims? What does the name Najaf mean? How does the name fit the city*

# Travel Log

USING YOUR GLOBE OR ATLAS, DRAW AN OUTLINE MAP OF TURKEY

*We've seen things today that simply must be mapped, so that they will never be forgotten!*



## Map Notes:

*Let's record the locations of:*

- ◇ Taurus Mountains
- ◇ Zagros Mountains
- ◇ Kurdistan
- ◇ Mosul
- ◇ Kirkuk
- ◇ Tikrit
- ◇ Najaf



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

- ◇ **Kurdish flag over Kurdistan** (*red, white, green striped with yellow sun in center*)
- ◇ **Goats and sheep in the Zagros foothills**
- ◇ **Al-Hadba** (*remember the Tower of Pisa?*)
- ◇ **Oil pipelines outside of Mosul**
- ◇ **Life in Tikrit** (*a hot sun and kids on roofs? A school building?*)
- ◇ **Ali's Mosque** (*a glittering golden dome?*)

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



*The official flag of Iraqi Kurdistan, and the unofficial flag of Kurds around the world, is dominated by a blazing sun with 21 rays at its center. The number 21 is tied to the ancient religious tradition of the Kurds, called Yazdani. Public domain.*



# Bringing It Home

## SIMPLE IDEAS TO BRING THE WORLD TO YOUR DOOR

### *Using These Forms:*

ART | BOOKS | FOOD | MUSIC | POETRY



### Books:

New books are being written about Iraq all the time, so be sure to check your local library for new titles. Here are a couple to get you started:

#### **The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq** by Jeanette Winter

Tells the true story of Alia Muhammad Baker, an Iraqi librarian who tries to save as many books as she can before her country is destroyed by war. *Grades 2-4*

#### **Alia's Mission: Saving the Books of Iraq** by Mark Alan Stamaty

Another version of the story above for older readers. This graphic novel is packed with intricate black, white and grey illustrations. *Older readers: grades 5 +*

#### **Kiss the Dust** by Elizabeth Laird

An historical novel set in Iraq, this book tells the story of a Kurdish refugee family trying to escape from Saddam Hussein's regime. \*\*\**Older readers 10 +*

### Poetry:

The people of Iraq love poetry! If you and I were to walk down an Iraqi street together we might hear people spontaneously creating poems just for fun. One man tells of spending the evening with a Bedouin man who recited thousands of lines of ancient poetry from memory!

***Blessed is the one who said  
I know the road which leads to it;  
Blessed is the one whose lips uttered  
the four letters:***

***"Iraq, Iraq, nothing but Iraq."***

*~Saadi Youssef (2004)*

# Iraq

## Mixing Water and Oil?

### PART III

When I was a kid, my brother and I spent many leisurely summer afternoons under the leafy umbrella of our Manitoba maple digging canals, shoring up islands, and floating boats in our sandbox lakes. The garden hose fed our maze of water channels and our imagination fed adventures of miniature boats and villagers. When our Mother called from the back step, we'd break down the dams, let the waters flood our island towns, and run across the lawn for dinner.

Do you know that some Iraqis live in real life what my brother and I only imagined? We've seen fascinating sights in our explorations of the mountains of northeastern Iraq, and the rolling steppes of the upper plains of the Tigris-Euphrates River Valley. But wait until you see the places the Anour family will show us today!

Leaving Najaf (Do you recall the sights we saw in Najaf?), we watch the flat, unchanging landscape flash past our window. These lower plains of the Tigris and Euphrates River, says Mr. Anour, cover



*Landscape of Iraq. Photo in the public domain.*





*Iraqi farmers must irrigate their fields with river waters. Photo by Jeff Vanuga, in the public domain.*

almost one third of Iraq. Abdel asks if we know how these plains were built up? From the same rivers that have sustained life here for thousands of years. While the Tigris and Euphrates have brought drinking water and waters to irrigate crops, sometimes they carried tremendous amounts of water—and mud. Melting snows high up in the mountain tops combined with heavy spring rains have caused the Tigris to rise more than 1 ft [30 cm] per hour, flooding areas of the plain more than 33 ft [10 m] deep. (That means if six tall men stood one atop the shoulders of each other, the last man would barely have his nose above the rising flood waters!) Centuries of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers flooding, depositing clay, sand, rocks, and silt in the region, have created this extremely flat alluvial plain. **Alluvial**

means deposited by running water—and that is the creative way our God has shaped this plain!

Look out your window at the robed farmers working these fertile fields of heavy alluvial soils. We don't see any Iraqi farmers scanning the horizon for rain clouds. Because Iraq's weather systems bring little rainfall from the sky, farmers know they must irrigate their fields with river waters. Centuries of Iraqi families irrigating this way have caused 2 out of every 3 fields to have **soil salinity**, a serious condition where soil contains too much salt to grow crops. Thus, there are fewer farmers today working the fields of Iraq than once toiled here a few decades ago. Much like the ancient era, however, we still spot Iraqis forming bricks out of the alluvial soil and using it for constructing their homes and buildings.





*Marsh Arabs poling in a marshuf. Photo by Hassan Janali, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in the public domain.*

Traveling further into southern Iraq, the barren plain ebbs away before us and a shimmering plain of *water* appears! How incredible that God would create a water landscape in the middle of desert plains! This, Abdel announces, is the Marshlands of Iraq. From reeds growing up out of the clear waters here, it is easy to understand that **marshes** are a type of wetland, but different than swamps since no trees grow here. How did God create such a marshland in the desert? Thuraya offers an explanation: since the lower plains are so flat, both the Tigris and Euphrates meandered in sinuous loops, eventually dividing into distributaries. Occurring mainly in a delta, a **distributary** is a river that branches off from a major river before it meets the sea. Far from the Persian Gulf, just south of Al Nasiriyah, the Euphrates River did indeed split and weave into a

braided pattern. As farmers use the rivers' waters to irrigate their fields, the reduced water flow contributed to the rivers splitting into an array of shallow waters in its final stretch towards the Persian Gulf. Thus the Marshlands emerged where the rivers splinter off into many branches, stretching from Samawah on the Euphrates and Kut on the Tigris all the way south to Basrah. (Can you locate those cities when you look at a map of Iraq?)

Mr. Anour tell us of the Marshes in a long ago summer, not unlike the summer my brother and I flooded the sandbox, when he visited his uncle Hassan in these marshlands south of Qurna (the same town boasting "Adam's Garden"). Uncle Hassan would help him into the **mashuf**, the long, flat bottomed boat made out of reeds, and together they would pole along winding narrow



canals, like water highways through the 15 ft [4.5 m] high reeds. Every bend in the water canal offered a new sight: the splash of the smooth-coated otter, a herd of black water buffalos, or several wild boars on the run. A flock of pelicans, powerful wings thumping, would take flight overhead. The sun would set crimson to the song of croaking frogs. Another curve in the canal would bring him home to a young cousin sitting in front of his house made of reeds, fishing for **bunni**, a carp-like freshwater fish. What would it be like to sit on the front step of your house and fish for your dinner?

Uncle Hassan and his family were **Ma'dans**, a semi-nomadic Iraqi people who have lived in the marsh for thousands of years—some say since

the time of the Garden of Eden. The Ma'dan, residing in one the lushest environments on earth, are a living link between today's Iraqis and ancient Mesopotamians.

Have you ever heard the saying that 'No man is an island?' Each Ma'dan family, however, lived on their own island, much grander versions of the islands I made as a child in our sandbox. To build his house, Uncle Hassan would enclose an area of the marsh, and fill it with hand-woven reed matting and mud until the surface was above water and dry—an island of their own! Every year he would add more layers of reeds to strengthen the platform's foundation. Some older islands might protrude six feet [2 m] above the water.



*The interior of an Iraqi mudhif. Photo by Hassan Janali, in the public domain.*





*Sacred Ibis. Photo by Bernard Gagnon, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.*

As Uncle Hassan's young visitor, Mr. Anour was received at the cathedral-like guesthouse called the **mudhif**. Made from the few building supplies the marshes have to offer: reeds, mud and buffalo dung, the mudhif's fantastic vaulted arches housed Marsh tribal gatherings. Uncle Hassan paid a kind of tax to the **sheik**, or leader, of his Ma'dan tribe, to care and maintain the mudhif. With lacy windows woven into the reed mat walls for sunlight to softly filter through, Mr. Anour sat in the cool, carpeted mudhif, eating yogurt mixed with rice and dates while he visited.

Looking out across the plain of water today, we certainly do not see the vast marshes of the extent of Mr. Anour's childhood memories. Over there are the ruins of a village, abandoned like a shipwreck, beached on cracked, salt-caked soil.

Where did all of the waters of the marshlands go?

For various reasons, Mr. Anour answers, past governments built massive engineering works, dams and dikes that diverted the flow of the Euphrates and drained away the life of the Marshes. The heron and ibis flew away. The goitered gazelle and the striped hyena wandered away, never to return. Thousands upon thousands of Ma'dan families gathered their few belongings and set out to make their life elsewhere, many leaving the country of Iraq altogether. The relatively few Ma'dan families who remained learned how to "dry farm." But where will Iraqis throughout the country find fish for their tables? One of the world's greatest wetlands, and a way of life thousands of year old, had been drained away by man's own hand.





*Commercial oil tanker AbQaiq readies itself to receive oil at Mina-Al-Bkar Oil terminal (MABOT), an off shore Iraqi oil installation. Photo courtesy of U.S. Navy Photographer's Mate 2nd Class Andrew M. Meyes, in the public domain.*

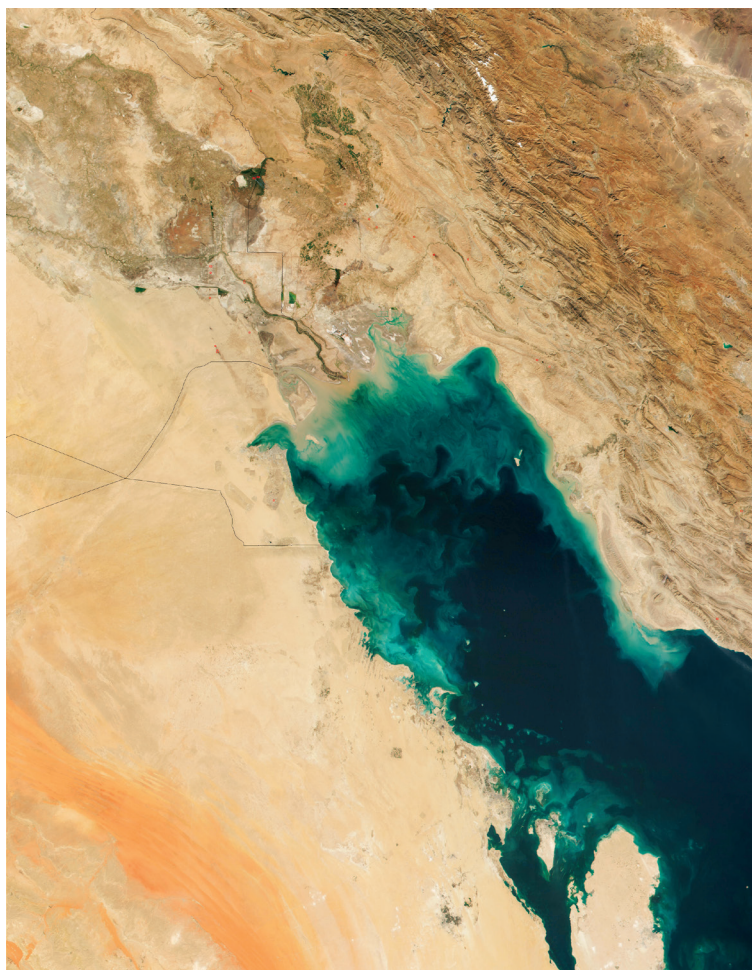
But, consoles Thurayra, there are flickers of hope for the Marshes and the Mad'an. The marshlands we see today, 20% the size of what the marshes once were, are the result of new Iraqi leaders opening the dams and waters, once again flooding portions of the marshlands. Abdel says there are still questions: Is the water too salty for reeds to grow? Have the dams in countries to the north, like Turkey, restricted the flow of the rivers so that there simply isn't sufficient water to revive the marshes? Do the Ma'dan families desire to return to their life upon the water and reeds? These are questions that only time will answer. Some things we can already know with certainty: we can destroy the home God created for us much faster than we can repair it. We've also come to realize that the complex balances our all-wise Creator God established in the various regions throughout His world cannot be easily recreated by human beings.

## Field Notes

*Can you imagine living on your very own island? What a wonderful world God has created for us to discover!*

### PRESS RECORD AND TALK TO ME

- ◇ **About the Iraqi plains:** *What happens to the landscape when the Tigris fills with melting snows? Does this area receive much rainfall?*
- ◇ **About the Marshes:** *Can you tell me how marshlands are created in this desert? What is a mashuf? What sights would we have seen if we had taken a mashuf ride? Tell me about the Ma'dan. What are their homes like? How do they build them? Do the Ma'dan still live in the marshes? Why not? What new skills are the Ma'dan trying to learn today?*



*The Persian Gulf. Photo by Jacques Descloitres, NASA, PD.*

Have you watched a DVD this week? Walked on carpet? Carried a plastic jug? Held a toothbrush, wrote with plastic pen, ridden in a car? If you have, you may thank God for how He created Iraq. Each of the products involved in those activities are derived from oil. Your every day life, wherever you live in the world, is greatly impacted by what the Anour family will show us next!

Driving across the flat-panned desert south of **Basrah**, there are no houses or trees as far as the eye can see. All that rises on the landscape are rusted tanks, like rotting teeth, scattered here and there. Large pipes shoot like thick snakes straight across this barren landscape. Mr. Anour explains that in this southeastern border region that Iraq shares with Kuwait is one of the

most productive oil fields in the world. But why the rusting tanks, you ask? The abandoned, hole-riddled tanks, says Abdel, testify to the fact that nations have marched into this land with armies to wrangle and wrestle over what lies under the ground. What lies trapped far below our feet in this barren, empty land are some of the world's richest resources: oil. What an astounding feat of God that oil exists deep down in our Earth at all!

As a child, I used to dig deep in our sandbox for just the right texture of mud for a double batch of mudcakes. While the following may sound like an interesting recipe, it's actually a simple explanation of how God created **oil**: Take tons of tiny animals and plants, place them near a hot fire, cover them and then let them sit. However easy that may sound, only God could orchestrate such a series of events. First of all, God allowed mud to bury tiny animals and plants faster than they could decay.

(Might this have happened during the Flood?) Then God designed it such that these **sediments** were at just the right depth—7,500 to 15,000 feet [2,286 m—4,572 m]—for heat and pressure to slow-cook the **organic** material into oil. Next, God collected the oil in a rock with many pores in which to hold the oil, much like a sponge holds water. (A **pore** is a small open space in the rock.) To ensure that the oil didn't leak away, God capped the stone with an impermeable roof of shale or salt. Isn't our God breathtaking in His creative chain of events to cook up oil in the deep depths of the earth? And, interestingly, He chose to create the world's oil primarily in the Middle East.

In the oil fields of southern Iraq, and in those we saw earlier in the northern region near Mosul,



Iraqis have drilled down into the porous rock and are pumping out over 2.5 million barrels of heavy black oil every day. That is a tremendous amount of oil for a country the size of the state of California to pump out of the earth every 24 hours! Only the Middle Eastern country of Saudi Arabia pumps full more barrels of oil in a day than Iraq. Yet our world consumes mind-boggling amounts of oil every day. Thuraya tells us that if you poured the 20 million barrels of oil that the United States of America alone consumes in one *day* into 1 gallon [3.7 liter] cans, the line of cans would encircle the earth at the equator almost 6 times. That is nearly 147,000 miles [236, 573 km] of oil cans, every single day!

To help provide oil to meet the world's demand, Iraqis are looking for more oil under their feet, (including in the drained marshes). As people cannot create more water, neither can they create cost-effective oil. And as important as oil

is to driving cars to work and operating tractors to grow food, Mr. Anour suggests that future armies may not wrestle over the control of oil in the Middle East, but over another limited resource that only God can make, and even more necessary for living: water.

Have you ever tried to mix oil with water? The two do not mix very well, do they? But Mr. Anour takes us to Iraqi waters where oil and water meet!

Palm trees sway in the breezes, cars stream past. Buildings with arched windows line the streets. This, says Abdel, is the southern city of Al-Basrah. One of Iraq's largest cities, Basrah, congregates on the shores of the river, Shatt-al Arab, a river formed by the joining of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. (Can you find Al Basrah on the Shatt-Al Arab on your map?) We wave to the boy biking past the towering chimney stacks of a Basrah oil refinery, puffing clouds of grey. The size of a large village, mazes of pipes connecting



*Landscape of Iraq. Photo by Vladimir Lysenko, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.*



## Field Notes

*Isn't it amazing that God hid such resources under the ground of Iraq?*

### PRESS RECORD AND TALK TO ME

- ◇ **About oil:** *What "recipe" does God use to make oil? How much oil does Iraq pump each day? How much oil does the US use each day? What things in your own home might have been made with Iraqi oil?*
- ◇ **About al-Basrah:** *What does the maze of pipes, tanks, and towers we see produce? Why do ships gather in the waters of this port city? How does the oil get from the land to the ships? Where do the ships go after they are loaded?*

tanks and towers, the oil refinery turns the oil pumped from under the Iraqi soil into gasoline for vehicles all over the world. Some ocean-going vessels chug their way up the Shatt-al Arab, docking in Basrah, Iraq's only port city, to fill their hulls with oil. If we will come south of Basrah near the mouth of Shatt-al Arab, we see monstrous tankers saddling alongside platforms arching out of the blue gulf waters. While we watch the tankers load, other ships lining up for their turn, Thuraya tells us that two huge pipelines run underneath the waters, connecting the platforms to oil pipelines on the mainland. This is where oil meets water. When these two offshore platforms are operating at full capacity, declares Abdel, they load as much oil as the country of France uses in one day!

Shall we hop on one of the tankers, wave goodbye to Mr. Anour, Thuraya and Abdel, and the country of Iraq and head for home? We landed in Iraq's capital city of Baghdad and we would leave on an oil tanker south of Basrah. We have our memories of the gracious Anour family touring us through sites of long ago Babylon, Ur, and Nineveh. We hiked into Iraq's northern mountains to follow the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers as they spilled down through the highlands, streamed through the sloping plains, branched out through the delta, to here, at the Persian Gulf, where oil meets water. If you're returning to North America, an ocean voyage of 41 days on the waves, sailing around the Horn of Africa, would dock you back in the southern United States. A few days later might find Iraq's oil at the gas station right around the corner from your house. Amazing as it is, it may be that the next tank of gas that fuels your vehicle may have just made that very journey from distant Iraq!

With its oil and water, ancient Biblical sites and modern-day cities, highlands and lowlands, Iraq may be a country of interesting opposites in the far away mystery of the Middle East, but it too is a country in the very middle of the Bible, in the middle of the world's industries and economies and perhaps, in the middle of your heart. The Anour family certainly hopes so!



# Travel Log

USING YOUR GLOBE OR ATLAS, DRAW AN OUTLINE MAP OF TURKEY

*We've seen things today that simply must be mapped, so that they will never be forgotten!*



## Map Notes:

*Let's record the locations of:*

- ◇ Al Nasiriyah
- ◇ Al-Basrah
- ◇ Shatt-al Arab

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

- ◇ **Marshes** (*perhaps some island homes for the Ma'dans? Or a mashuf among some reeds?*)
- ◇ **A maze of pipes and tanks to pump oil in the desert near Basrah**
- ◇ **Ocean-going tankers in the port of Basrah**

**Challenge mapping:** Can you chart your trip home from Iraq on the tanker? If you are returning to North America, make sure you travel around the Horn of Africa!

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



# Bringing It Home

## SIMPLE IDEAS TO BRING THE WORLD TO YOUR DOOR

### *Using These Forms:*

ART | BOOKS | FOOD | MUSIC | POETRY

### Food:

Hospitality is very important to Iraqis. If you were a guest in an Iraqi home your host would make sure you had plenty to eat. Happily, the way to show proper appreciation for your hosts' hospitality is by overeating! Perhaps you might like to make a big pot of *Ma'mounia* – a dessert that has been around since the 9<sup>th</sup> century – and invite some guests over to practice your own hospitality.

### **Ma'mounia**

*3 cups water*

*1 cup sugar*

*1 tsp lemon juice*

*½ cup sweet butter*

*1 cup semolina (cream of wheat or you may use wheat flour)*

*whipped cream*

*1 tsp ground cinnamon*

Put sugar and water in a large saucepan over low heat, and stir constantly until sugar dissolves. Bring mixture to a boil while adding lemon juice. After syrup boils, reduce heat and let simmer until syrup thickens slightly (about 10 minutes).

In another saucepan, melt butter and add semolina. Stir until semolina is lightly fried, then add the syrup from the other pan, and let the mixture



*Dates taken by Hans Hillewaert, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.*

simmer another 10 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and let cool 20 minutes. Spoon ma'mounia into individual serving bowls, top with whipped cream, and sprinkle with cinnamon. Serves 4.

The Iraqi landscape is full of **date** palm trees, which means plenty of yummy dates to enjoy. Here are some simple ways to try dates at home:

First, try eating them plain. You might find you like the sticky sweetness! Chop some and mix with different nuts and chopped bananas for a snack. Or try cutting them up and using them in place of chocolate chips or raisins in cookie recipes.



# Go into all the world...

## *a walk of prayer*

**W**e hear so much about Iraq on the news – and now we have had a glimpse of Iraq for ourselves! I am so glad we have taken time to journey to this land. We've found that Iraq is full of boys and girls who are much like us. They were created by a God who loves them dearly—just as He loves you.

**Will you and your family join me in praying for the Iraqi people?**

Lord, give us Your love for the peoples of the world, and help our family to live in a way that shows our love for them. .hear about Iraq all the time, but now we have learned of its beauty and history for ourselves. May our hearts be full of love for Iraq, as Your heart is.

~We pray for **peace. May the conflicts and war that have torn Iraq apart end.** We pray for new hope for the Iraqi people. We ask that one day soon Iraqi families would wake to peaceful and prosperous days.

~We pray for **the Iraqi leaders who are making decisions about the future.** May they have wisdom as they build a new country. May they have foresight and strength to make the right choices. May the **citizens** who follow them have courage to do what is best for their nation.elievers.

~We pray for **the young people** who are being raised even today, **young men and women who will decide the future course of Iraq.** May they be filled with Your wisdom and go in the direction You desire for them.



~ We pray for **Iraqi Christians**, bringing the hope of Jesus to war-torn communities and weary people. Show them how to best reach out, in Your love, to meet the needs of their neighbors. Strengthen these brothers and sisters in Christ to be brilliant beacons of the gospel of Grace.

~We ask for **safety and health for the families** who live in Iraq. May their needs be met and may Your protection surround them.

We love you, Lord, and the people who are living in Iraq today. May the Light of our Savior dawn over all nations today. Draw us all closer to You, Father. In Jesus name, Amen.