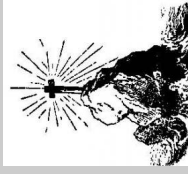


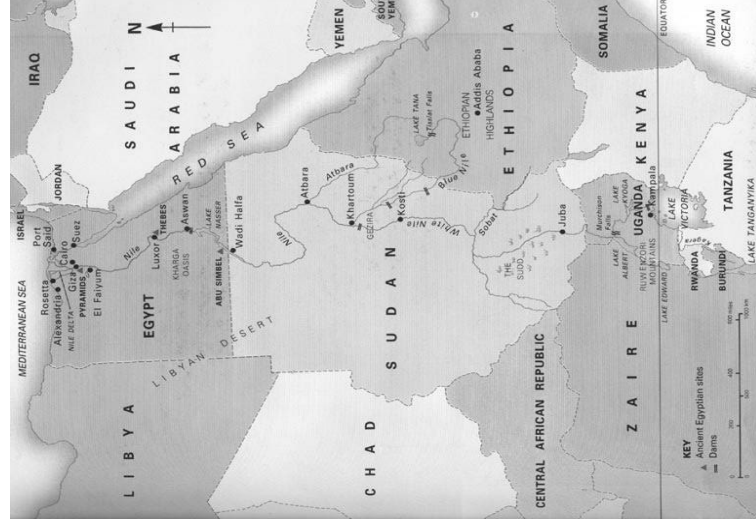
# THE WATERS OF HIS EARTH

## Part VI: The Nile River



### The River Nile

Along with the Tigris and Euphrates, the Nile is another great river of the Bible lands. “Nile” comes from the Greek word *nelios* which means “river valley.” It is the longest river in the world, stretching some 4,000 miles. It flows from south to north toward the Mediterranean Sea, touching the countries of Berundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt.



The Nile has two main sources. The White Nile river forms near Lake Victoria in Uganda. The Blue Nile river's headwaters are near Lake Tana in Ethiopia. These two rivers flow north to Khartoum in Sudan where they join to form the main body of the Nile. One other tributary, the Atbara, joins the Nile further north and contributes about 1/8 of the water supply. The Nile discharges about 300 million cubic meters of water per day into the Mediterranean. That's a *lot* of water!

The land surrounding the Nile is mostly desert. Even in Egypt, 63% of the population live in the delta region where the country is more hospitable. In ancient times (and even today), anyone who lived in these areas of the world at all lived along the Nile. It's waters meant life. Before the famous Aswan Dam was finished in 1970, the Nile would flood annually, depositing rich soil on the banks and in the flood plains that was tremendously important for the farming community. (Now, farmers in the Nile region must use far more fertilizer to grow their crops, making its production much more expensive than before.)

The story of Joseph in the Old Testament has connections to the annual flooding of the Nile. Sometimes in a given year, the Nile would not flood enough or deposit enough good soil and the crops would fail. When Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream correctly regarding the 7 good years followed by 7 years of famine in Egypt (Genesis 41), it would also have meant that there would seven years of “good flooding” followed by seven years of “bad flooding” during which the crops would grow little or not at all.

Most of the weather around the Nile is very hot and dry with sand storms being the danger instead of rain and snow.



As far as wildlife, the Nile is known for its crocodile population. The crocodiles are the main predator in the region and although 70% of their diet is

fish, they can eat nearly anything that comes within their reach. The males can grow up to 18 feet long in some cases and weigh up to 1500 pounds.



The most common bird on the Nile is the Fishing Eagle, which is a relative of the Bald Eagle and is similar in appearance.

The Nile also supports hundreds of other various species of wildlife.

## Biblical Water

The Nile plays its role in Scriptural events too, particularly in the Old Testament. We've already mentioned how the river no doubt played a role in the famine during Joseph's time. It was that famine which brought Joseph's relatives down from Palestine to the land of Egypt.

That same Nile was there 400 years later after the Israelites had grown to a nation of over 1 million people living in Egypt. By this time, they were under the stern hand of a wicked Pharaoh who forced them into slave labor. Realizing that Israel was going to demand freedom before too long, Pharaoh (probably Thutmose III) determined to weaken them by putting to death every newborn Hebrew male. The midwives were ordered to kill the boys, but being God-fearing women, they refused to do what Pharaoh had ordered and tried to spare the children they could.

**Exodus 2:1-10** Now a man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him. Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the river bank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to get it. She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said. Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" "Yes, go," she answered. And the girl went and got the baby's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him. When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, "I drew him out of the water."

Moses was the leader whom God would use to bring His people out of their slavery in Egypt and return them to the land He had promised to give to Abraham and his descendants. Moses at first did not want this responsibility (Genesis 4), but God said, "I will help you speak and teach you what to say."

Moses went to Pharaoh (probably Amunhotep II) and began to demand the release of the Israelites. Here again, the Nile played a role. When Pharaoh refused to let the people go, Moses' brother Aaron performed a miraculous sign before him.

**Exodus 7:19-21** The LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt—over the streams and canals, over the ponds and all the reservoirs—and they will turn to blood. Blood will be everywhere in Egypt, even in the wooden buckets and stone jars.'" Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded. He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed into blood. The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink its water. Blood was everywhere in Egypt.

After many more signs and wonders, including the plague of the death of the firstborn, Israel finally left Egypt. What role must the Nile have played in their departure? We aren't told for sure, but perhaps we can picture the Israelite nation feverishly filling up their containers with water from the Nile as they prepared to leave Egypt's grasp. The exodus of the Israelites from Egypt is a testament to this day of the mighty power of God to free His people and keep His promises.

The freeing of the slaves from Egypt reminds us of an even greater freedom won for us by our Lord Jesus Christ many years after the Nile was turned to blood. When our Lord rose from the dead, it meant that we too would one day rise from the dead. "Because I live, you will live also" (John 14:19b). Freed forever from the grasp of our sinful nature, from the temptations of the devil and the world, we will live with our Jesus forever in heaven!

Come, ye faithful, raise the strain of triumphant gladness;

God hath bro't His Israel into joy from sadness.

'Tis the spring of souls today: Christ hath burst His prison

And from three days' sleep in death as a sun hath risen.

*(Lutheran Hymnal, 204:1)*

## Resources

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nile>

[http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/pictures/Crocodylus\\_niloticus.html](http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/pictures/Crocodylus_niloticus.html)

<http://www.mbarton.net/Nile/>