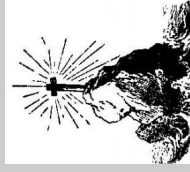


# THE WATERS OF HIS EARTH

## Part VII: The Dead Sea



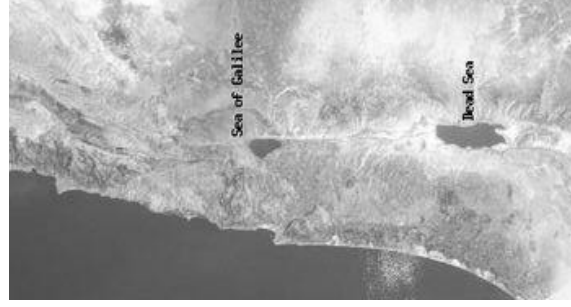
### The Dead Sea

The Dead Sea, situated south of the Sea of Galilee, is one of the most unique bodies of water in the world. In Hebrew, the lake is called *Yam ha-Melah* which means “sea of salt” or *Yam ha-Mavet* which means “sea of death”. It measures 18 km wide by 75 km long.

The shoreline of the Dead Sea is the lowest point of dry land on earth, with an elevation of 1,300 feet below sea level. Since it is the lowest point, no water drains from the Dead Sea, it only evaporates.

The lake is famous for its salt content.

The water is has a greasy feel to it and stings to taste it on the tongue. The Dead Sea is 10 times saltier than the oceans of the world. The salinity ranges from 26% to 35% and is increasing year by year as seven million tons of water per day evaporate leaving less water and more salt behind. The salts include not just sodium chloride (table salt), but also high concentrations of magnesium and potassium chlorides. The amount of water in the Dead Sea is shrinking rapidly as the flow from the Jordan is diverted for other uses, so studies are underway to see if water can be brought into the Dead Sea from the Mediterranean through a canal system. There is a very real possibility that the sea could dry up otherwise.



Because of the high salt content, there is no aquatic life of any kind in the Dead Sea (including plant life), although there are trace quantities of bacteria and fungi. There are animal species living in the hills around the lake, however. One can find camels, hares, jackals, foxes, and some

leopards. Many birds inhabit the area of the Dead Sea too and nature reserves have been established to protect the wildlife. In the picture to the left, you can see the salt-encrusted shoreline.

### Benefits of the Sea

Although the Dead Sea is deadly to plants and aquatic animals, it is certainly not deadly to humans. In fact, people have been studying the health benefits of the Dead Sea region for hundreds of years. It's the largest “natural spa” in the world. It's mineral springs and cosmetic “black mud” bring visitors to the place every year. The likes of Aristotle, King Solomon, the Queen of Sheba, and Cleopatra were all familiar with the medicinal qualities of this salty body of water. Doctors today still prescribe soaking in the waters of the Dead Sea for certain skin ailments.

Because of the extra atmospheric protection at 1,300 feet below sea level, the effects of sun on your skin are less dramatic and serious sunburns are less common.

As you would expect, salt products form the industry of the Dead Sea. As early as 1929, a company was founded that began producing potash from the brine of the lake. In 1952, the Israeli government began operations to extract potash as well as other minerals.



## Biblical Water

**OLD TESTAMENT** – In the Old Testament, the city of Jericho was located near the northern end of the Dead Sea. The Jordan River delta was some of the most fertile land in all Judea. Jericho, of course, was an important city in the history of God's Children of Israel. After God had led the Israelites out of captivity in Egypt, He brought them back up to the land He had promised them. He told them to enter the land and take possession of it. At Jericho, God gave the city into the Israelite's hands, the beginning of His promise to Israel fulfilled.

**Joshua 6:1-5** And Jericho was completely shut up because of the sons of Israel. None went out and none came in. And the LORD said to Joshua, See, I have given Jericho into your hand, and its king, and the mighty men of war. And you shall go around the city, all the men of war. Go around the city once. So you shall do for six days. And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of ram's horns in front of the ark. And the seventh day you shall go around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall be when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout. And the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall go up, each man straight before him.



The southern end of the Dead Sea was the site of the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. These cities were so wicked that God decided to bring judgment on them for their sins. The only believers in Sodom and Gomorrah were Abraham's nephew Lot and his family. The Lord told Lot to take His family and leave the area because it was going to be destroyed. The lesson of Sodom and Gomorrah teaches us both of God's justice and His mercy. In His justice, He brought special judgment on the sins of these wicked cities. In His mercy, He spared those who trusted in Him.

**Genesis 19:24-25** Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire, from the LORD out of the heavens. And He overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

*\*Brimstone* is an old word for sulfur. To this day, sulfur is found in great quantities on the shores of the Dead Sea. The very smell surrounding the sea being a reminder of this famous event so long ago.

**NEW TESTAMENT** – The ministry of John the Baptist is connected with the Dead Sea region. The “Wilderness of Judea” where he baptized those who went out to him lies between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea.

**Mark 1:4-7** John came baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And all the land of Judea, and those of Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a leather girdle about his loins. And he ate locusts and wild honey. And he proclaimed, saying, There is One coming after me who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down to loosen.

John prepared the hearts and minds of the people for the coming of Jesus, their Savior. The people living around the Dead Sea were some of the first to hear that the Lord had been born and was coming to them. It's rather interesting that the “Dead” Sea came to be associated with Jesus, the giver of *life* through the forgiveness of sins and His resurrection from the dead!



## Resources

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead\\_Sea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead_Sea)  
<http://www.bibleplaces.com/deadsea.htm>  
<http://www.jafi.org.il/education/noar/sites/deadsea.htm>  
<http://www.deadsea.co.il/>