

The Jordan River

□ Joshua 3:13–16

□ Exodus 14:21



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The two principal features in its course are its descent and its windings. From its fountain heads to the Dead Sea it rushes down one continuous inclined plane, only broken by a series of rapids or precipitous falls.

Between the Lake of Gennesaret and the Dead Sea there are 27 rapids. The depression of the Lake of Gennesaret below the level of the Mediterranean is 653 feet and that of the Dead Sea 1316 feet. (The whole descent from its source to the Dead Sea is 3000 feet. Its width varies from 45 to 180 feet and it is from 3 to 12 feet deep.—Schaff) (*Smith's Bible Dictionary*)

The Jordan figures prominently in events recorded in the Bible. It is first mentioned in the Old Testament in the account of Abram and Lot (Gen. 13:10–11). When the two decided to separate, Lot chose to take his herds to the rich plain of the Jordan. Later, Jacob crossed the river on his journey to Aram (32:10). (Erdman's Bible Dictionary)

The Jordan was the final obstacle facing the Israelites before they could enter into the promised land. Moses' dying wish was to cross the river (Deut. 3:23–25), and to do so was Joshua's first command from the Lord (Josh. 1:2). The miraculous dry crossing of the Jordan (chs. 3–4; cf. Exod. 14–15) opened the way for the destruction of Jericho. (Ibid.)

The Jordan remained a military obstacle through the period of the judges into the early Monarchy.

Control of the river's fords was critical in a number of battles (Judg. 3:28–29; 7:24–25; 12:5–6; cf. 1 Sam. 22:3–4; 2 Sam. 17:22; 19:1ff.). Some of the stories of Elijah and Elisha are set in the Jordan valley. There they and their disciples gathered, and in that vicinity the two prophets performed a number of miracles (2 Kgs. 2; 5:1–14; 6:1–7). (Ibid.)

The Jordan is also the backdrop for events recorded in the Gospels. John the Baptist baptized in the Jordan (Matt. 3:1–12), and it was there that Jesus was baptized (v. 13–17). (Ibid.)

Until the first decade of the 21st century, the waters of the Jordan River had been the largest water resource for Israel; lately, desalinated sea water from the Mediterranean has taken over this role. Israel's National Water Carrier, completed in 1964, has delivered water from the Sea of Galilee to the Israeli coastal plain for over four decades, until prolonged drought led to abandoning this solution in favour of desalination. (Wikipedia)



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