



**Study guide for  
EDEN**

## EDEN

Eden (ee' dehn) Garden of God. "Eden" is probably derived from the Sumerian-Akkadian edinu, meaning "flatland" or "wilderness." The similarity to the Hebrew verb adan , meaning "delight" or "pleasure," resulted in the Septuagint's translation of the expression "garden of Eden" as "garden of delight," hence paradise

"Eden" appears twenty times in the Old Testament but never in the New Testament. Two usage's refer to men (2 Chronicles 29:12 ; 2 Chronicles 31:15 ). Twice the name is used to designate a city or region in the Assyrian province of Thelassar (Isaiah 37:12 ; 2 Kings 19:12 ). Ezekiel 27:23 mentions a region named Eden located on the Euphrates. Amos 1:5 refers to the ruler of Damascus as holding the scepter of the house of Eden.

The fourteen remaining appearances relate to the idyllic place of creation. In Genesis (Genesis 2:8 ,Genesis 2:8,2:10 ,Genesis 2:10,2:15 ; Genesis 3:23-24 ; Genesis 4:16 ) the reference is to the region in which a garden was placed. Though details seem precise, identification of the rivers which flow from the river issuing forth from Eden cannot be accomplished with certainty. The Euphrates and the Tigris can be identified, but there is no agreement on the location of the Pishon and the Gihon.

Joel 2:3 compares Judah's condition before its destruction with Eden. In Isaiah 51:3 and Ezekiel 36:35 , Eden is used as an illustration of the great prosperity God would bestow on Judah. These exilic prophets promised that the nation God restored after the Exile would be like Eden's garden. Ezekiel also refers to the trees of Eden (Ezekiel 31:9 ,Ezekiel 31:9,31:16 ,Ezekiel 31:16,31:18 ) and calls Eden the garden of God (Ezekiel 28:13 ).

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## EDEN

EDEN, GARDEN OF (גֶּדֶן, gan-eden; “garden of luxuries”). The place where the first human beings, Adam and Eve, lived after being created by God. They were subsequently expelled from the Garden for disobeying Him—commonly referred to as “the fall,” which brought about the entrance of sin and death into all creation (Rom 5:12).

### Biblical Relevance

The garden of Eden is the site in which God placed His human creation, Adam (אָדָם, adam), and shortly thereafter, Eve (חַוָּה, chawwah). Within the garden, which can be adequately described as a fertile oasis, two trees existed: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden after disobeying God and eating fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Adam took the fruit from Eve, who had been tempted to consume it by a serpent—later associated with Satan (Gen 3:1–7; Wray and Mobley, *The Birth of Satan*, 68–70).

Of the two biblical accounts of creation (Gen 1:1–2:4a; 2:4b–3:24), only the latter is concerned with the garden of Eden (see Documentary Hypothesis). The first account bears no mention of the garden of Eden, but describes God’s giving the earth over to the man and the woman as theirs (Gen 1:28–30)—much like in the *Enuma Elish*, where the gods gave the duties they had formerly performed to man (ANET 72–79; 83–90; etc).

“Eden” is often assumed to be the name of the garden, but the original Hebrew suggests that the garden is within a region or area known as “Eden” (Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 61). In Genesis 2:8, 10, גֶּדֶן (eden) is a place name. In Genesis 2:15; 3:23, 24, the larger phrase גֶּדֶן־עֵדֶן (gan-eden) appears. This may point to the fact that Eden may have been larger than just the garden itself. The location of either Eden or the garden is ultimately unverifiable. Two of the four rivers mentioned in Gen 2:10–14 can be located today (Tigris and Euphrates), yet the location of the other two (Pishon and Gihon) is still debated. Because of the reference to the Tigris and the Euphrates, it is reasonably supposed that the garden was located somewhere in Mesopotamia (Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 161). Yet, it is also debated whether modern geography would have resembled the ancient topography (Speiser, “The Rivers of Paradise,” 175–82; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 66–67).

The term גֶּדֶן (eden) is used 13 times in the Old Testament, but its context varies. The term also appears in Isa 51:3; Ezek 28:13; 31:9, 16, 18; 36:35; Joel 2:3. Isaiah 51:3 is in relation to גֶּדֶן־יְהוָה (gan-yhwh), the “Garden of the Lord,” and Ezek 28:13 has גֶּדֶן־אֱלֹהִים (gan-elohim), the “Garden of God,” describing the king of Tyre being expelled from the garden much the same way Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden of Eden. Ezekiel 31:8–9 also equates Eden with the “Garden of God,” describing a luscious, peaceful place with flowing springs and abundant fertility. The imagery is not unlike ancient Mesopotamian and Canaanite myth, describing the dwelling place of a deity (Kramer, “Dilmun, the Land of the Living”).

In intertestamental writings (4 Ezra 3:6; Jubilees 4:9–33; 4:23–25; 1 En. 24–25; 28–32; T. Levi 18:1–14), the imagery of the garden of Eden is expanded upon and has become associated with the concept of paradise (Old Persian: pairi-daeza, meaning “enclosure” or “park”). In 2 Enoch 8:1, paradise is located in the third level of heaven—known as shehaqim—where the Israelite patriarchs reside (Lumpkin, *The Books of Enoch*; Apoc. Mos. 40:2; Apoc. Ab. 21).

## Adam and Eve in the Garden

Adam and Eve were placed in the garden and given the commission to be fruitful and multiply. As bearers of the “image of God,” they were given supremacy over all that God had made, employed to rule over and subdue all of creation (Gen 1:26–28). God had given them complete freedom to enjoy the garden, yet they were warned to abstain from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:15–17). Within this framework, obedience to God’s command would have led to salvation and blessing, whereas disobedience would result in death (Gen 2:17).

## The Fall and Removal from the Garden

After eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden and kept outside by a guardian cherub and a flaming sword (Gen 3:23–24). The biblical narrative unfolds on a trajectory towards the anticipated return to the paradisiacal state that God originally intended for creation, but supersedes the original in glory. The prophet Isaiah declares that the Lord’s comfort of His people is like the transformation of Israel’s wilderness to Eden (Isa 51:3). Although creation currently “groans” and eagerly waits for redemption (Rom 8:19–22), one day creation will be set free from its bondage when God climactically restores it from the effects of the fall and comes to dwell among His people again (Rev 21:1–3)

## Etymology

The garden of Eden has a disputed etymology, although the Septuagint translates גֶּן־עֵדֶן (gan-eden) as “the garden of luxuries” in Gen 3:23, 24. Some believe the word עֵדֶן (eden) came from the Akkadian word *edinu*, meaning “plain, steppe, wilderness” (Lewis, “Localization,” 170–71). This explanation is difficult because the Akkadian word is very rare; the equivalent word *šeru* is preferred (Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*).

Another explanation involves the Ugaritic root word *’dn*, which can mean “delight, abundance” (CTA 12.2.53–4), but the fact that it can also carry additional meanings makes it a tenuous fit (CTA 3.3.30; 4.2.17; 4.5.68–69). On a statue of Haddu-yis’ī found in northern Syria, an inscription in old Aramaic contains the word *m’dn mt kln* (meaning “one who provides for all the land”), although the true meaning of the word *m’dn* is also debatable (Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*; Millard, “The Etymology of Eden”). The expression comes from a list of epithets of the deity Ba’al Hadad, the giver of plenty in the Canaanite pantheon (Millard, “The Etymology of Eden”).

References abound in ancient Near Eastern literature regarding divine gardens; it is certainly no accident that the descriptions of the garden of Eden are almost identical to them (ANET 38; 83). In Ugaritic myth, the high god El dwells at “the source of the (two) rivers, in the midst of the (double) deep” (CTA 3.2.14–15). Life-giving water is also described in Ezek 47:1–12; Zech 14:1–21; Joel 3:16–18 as coming from Mount Zion. The main feature of the garden of God theme is the presence of the deity, and in another Ugaritic myth, El’s dwelling place is called *phr m’d*, or “appointed assembly” (CTA 3.5.12–17; 4.4.20–24), much like the assumed divine assembly with which God converses (Gen 1:26; 3:22; Wray and Mobley, *The Birth of Satan*, 48; Mullen, *The Divine Council*). The similarities are impressive; the garden of Eden is not meant to be just a habitation for humanity, but a divine dwelling place where humanity is in the presence of God (Soggin, “The Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis”).

## The Site of Eden

The garden of Eden is described as containing the headwaters of the Pishon, the Gihon, the Tigris, and the Euphrates rivers. While the Tigris and Euphrates are still easily located, the Pishon and Gihon have been lost to antiquity, although many have attempted to locate them (Neiman, “Gihon and Pishon”). W.F. Albright argued that Eden lay far to the west, believing the Pishon and Gihon were the Blue and White Nile rivers (Albright, “The Location of the Garden of Eden”), although this assertion has come under scrutiny. The Gihon is also the name of a

spring in Jerusalem, though the link between it and the river of Genesis is unconvincing (1 Kgs 1:33, 38)

The site of Eden is given in Gen 2:8 as מִן־מִזְרָח־הַיָּם (mi)מִזְרָח (qedem), “in the East,” but it can be translated as “in the old” as well (Psa 77:6, 12; Prov 8:22–23). After Adam and Eve were dismissed from Eden, they moved eastward. Two popular proposals for the location of the garden are lower Mesopotamia (perhaps in the present-day Persian Gulf; Zarins, “The Early Settlement of Southern Mesopotamia”) or Armenia (see the discussion in Day, *Creation to Babel*, 27–32).

### **The Garden as “Temple”**

The portrayal of creation in Gen 1–3 can be seen as utilizing imagery and symbolism associated with the tabernacle and temple. Several reasons for this exist in relation to creation, as well as the creation of the garden itself. Many ancient writers understood the entire universe to be God’s temple. Isaiah 66:1 (ESV) states, “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool, what is the house that you would build for me? And what is the place of my rest?” The point here is not that God has no need for a temple, but that all of creation is truly God’s temple (compare Philo, *On the Special Laws* 1.66; Josephus, *Jewish War* 3.7.7). Because of this association, the temple was often understood as the microcosm of creation (Levenson, “The Temple and the World,” 285; Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, 123). The relationship between the temple and creation is further reflected in the relationship between the garden of Eden and creation; pointing to the garden of Eden as the prototypical temple.

The identification of the garden of Eden as the first temple can be seen through its physical descriptions. The garden of Eden is oriented eastward (Gen 2:8), just as the tabernacle and the temple are (Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 86). Rivers are described as flowing out of the future Jerusalem temple (Ezek 47:1–12; Zech 14:8), which reflects the description of the garden in Gen 2:10–14 (Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 74).

An Akkadian ritual records the command to sprinkle a temple with water from the Tigris and the Euphrates for purification, which might further reflect cultic assumptions regarding these rivers (ANET, 338–84). Gold and onyx, mentioned in Gen 2:11–12, are used extensively to decorate the sanctuaries and priestly garments in Exod 25:7, 11, 17, 31 (Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 23).

This connection can also be seen through the activities that take place in the garden. In Genesis 2:15, Adam is commissioned to “work/serve” (עבד, 'bd) and “keep/guard” (שמר, shmr) the garden. These terms, when used elsewhere in the Pentateuch, are associated with the tabernacle (Num 3:7–8; 8:26; 18:5–6; see Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 67). Furthermore, God “walked” with Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen 3:8), which elsewhere refers to God’s presence within the tabernacle (Lev 26:12; Deut 23:15; 2 Sam 7:6–7; see Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 66).

The frequent usage of cherubim imagery in the tabernacle and the temple (Exod 25:18–22; 26:31; 1 Kgs 6:23–29) may reflect the original cherub placed east of the garden after Adam and Eve fell (Gen 3:24; see Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 86). Furthermore, the fact that the cherub was to “guard” the entrance to the garden suggests that Adam’s “guarding” was also protecting sacred space (Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel*, 20; Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 70). Walton suggests that another echo of Eden could be the menorah outside the holy of holies, which was designed after the tree of life (Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, 125). Subsequent Jewish tradition also understood the garden of Eden as the holy of holies (Jubilees 8:19).

Other parallels with ancient Near Eastern literature corroborate the theme of temple imagery through the theme of rest. In fact, the temple was understood to function principally as a place of rest for the deity (Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, 196). In the Akkadian epic *Enûma Eliš*, the hero Marduk defeats the chaotic waters—called Tiamat—cumulating in the building of

a temple within the newly created realm. This temple is called a “place of comfort and rest” (Enûma Eliš, VI: 48–75). In the Ugaritic Baal Myth, the dwelling of the high god ‘Ilu is upon a mountain (The Ba’lu Myth 1.iii). Similarly, Eden is also described as a “mountain” in Ezek 28:13–14, which is significant given the association of mountains with temples throughout ancient Near East sources.

In light of all these parallels, it is possible to suppose that the garden of Eden was understood to be the archetypal temple of God. “Genesis 2 is not trying to develop the idea that Eden is the place of God’s presence, or the holy of holies of the cosmic temple. Those are givens that are simply assumed by author and audience” (Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, 125).

“EDEN, GARDEN OF” D. A. Neal & John Anthony Dunne, *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*