

Water of Life

VIDEO NOTES

Various forms of water play a significant role throughout the entire Bible. Why? The biblical authors portray God's Life as water which is now available through Jesus and the Spirit of God. This is what our theme video, Water of Life, is all about.

These notes go a level deeper than we can cover in a five-minute video. In the following pages, you'll be introduced to key concepts, passages, and images that will enable you to gain a better understanding of the water of life theme throughout the Bible.

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Hovering Over the Face of the Waters

In the opening scene of the Bible, creation is depicted as a subduing of chaotic waters by means of God's Spirit. The waters on their own are *tehom* (chaos, disorder), but under the influence of God's Spirit they become the potential for life and abundance. Let's take a look at Genesis 1:2.

2a and the land was **wild** [tohu / נוֹהָת] and waste
2b and darkness was **on the face of the deep abyss** [tehom]
2c and the wind/spirit of God was hovering **on the face of the waters** [hamayim]

GENESIS 1:2

These three lines work in parallelism, matching the key terms in order to contrast them.

- In the place of "darkness" is its opposite "spirit of God" which, through the spoken word of God, will bring about "light"
- The double "on the face of the" (עַל פְּנֵי הַ-) highlights the two parallel terms for waters, which refer to the same reality (ocean waters) but with two different interpretations:
- 2b: When darkness is present, the waters are threatening and destructive;
- 2c when God's spirit is present, the waters are controlled and can be life-giving.

"Water is commonly conceived [in the Bible and ANE literature] as a symbol of the oppositional forces of life, an ambiguous symbol of life and death... Water is symbolic of death when it is uncontrolled (too much or too little), and of life, when it is controlled, because it provides growth and fertility. This summarizes the movement from Genesis 1:2 to 2:10-14, from the chaotic waters of the dark abyss to the fructifying rivers of Eden. In the Hebrew Bible, this decisive control of the waters is the prerogative of God who is sovereign over death and life... In this sense, "deep abyss" signifies the negative or threatening aspect of the waters, while "the waters" represent the positive aspect of water under control."

MICHAEL MORALES, TABERNACLE PREFIGURED: COSMIC MOUNTAIN
IDEOLOGY IN GENESIS AND EXODUS, 54-55.

Separating the Dry Land

Let's jump to day 3 of creation, where the dry land appears:

Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let **the dry ground** appear"; and it was so.

God called **the dry ground "land"**, and the gathering of the waters He called "seas;" and God saw that it was good.

GENESIS 1:9-10

The picture we are to imagine involves the waters receding from a mound of dry land and gathering into waters that surround it. This picture is assumed in the following biblical phrases:

PHRASE	SCRIPTURES
"the ends/edges of the land"	<p><i>"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the dome declares the work of his hands... Their line has gone out through all the land And their utterance to the edge of the world...</i></p> <p>PSALM 19:1-4</p> <p><i>'Now these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed: I was looking, and behold, there was a tree in the midst of the land and its height was great. ¹¹'The tree grew large and became strong, and its height reached to the sky, and it was visible to the end of all the land.</i></p> <p>DANIEL 4:10-11</p> <p>Other references: Isaiah 26:15; 41:9; Jeremiah 16:19; Psalms 19:4; 48:10; 65:5; 67:7; Job 28:24; 37:3; 38:13; Daniel 4:11; Acts 13:47</p>
"the four corners of the land/ the four winds of the heavens"	<p><i>And He will lift up a standard for the nations And assemble the banished ones of Israel, And will gather the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth.</i></p> <p>ISAIAH 11:12</p> <p>Other references: Ezekiel 7:2; Zechariah 2:6; 6:5; Rev 7:1</p>
"Land upon the seas/waters"	<p><i>The land is the Lord's, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it. For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the rivers.</i></p> <p>PSALM 24:1-2</p> <p><i>[Give thanks] to Him who made the heavens with skill, For His lovingkindness is everlasting; To Him who spread out the land above the waters, For His lovingkindness is everlasting</i></p> <p>PSALM 136:5-6</p> <p><i>"You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the land beneath or in the water under the earth.</i></p> <p>EXODUS 20:4</p>

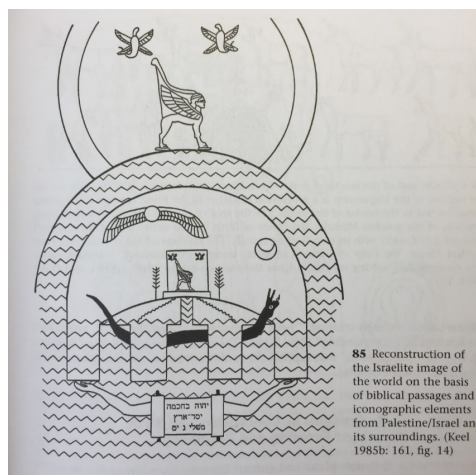
<p>The “pillars” that uphold the land over the waters</p>	<p>He established the land upon its foundations, So that it will not totter forever and ever.</p> <p>PSALM 104:5</p>
	<p><i>“When I select an appointed time, It is I who judge with equity.</i></p> <p><i>“The land and all who dwell in it melt; It is I who have firmly set its pillars. Selah.</i></p> <p>PSALM 75:2-3</p>
	<p><i>“He raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the ash heap To make them sit with nobles, And inherit a seat of honor; for the pillars of the land are the Lord’s, And He set the world on them.</i></p> <p>1 SAMUEL 2:8</p>
	<p>⁴ <i>“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the land? Tell Me, if you have understanding, Who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it? “On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, When the morning stars sang together And all the sons of God shouted for joy?</i></p> <p>JOB 38:4-7</p>
	<p>Other references: 2 Samuel 22:16; Psalm 75:3; 104:5; Job 9:6; 38:4; Zechariah 12:1</p>

Visualizations of the Biblical Cosmos

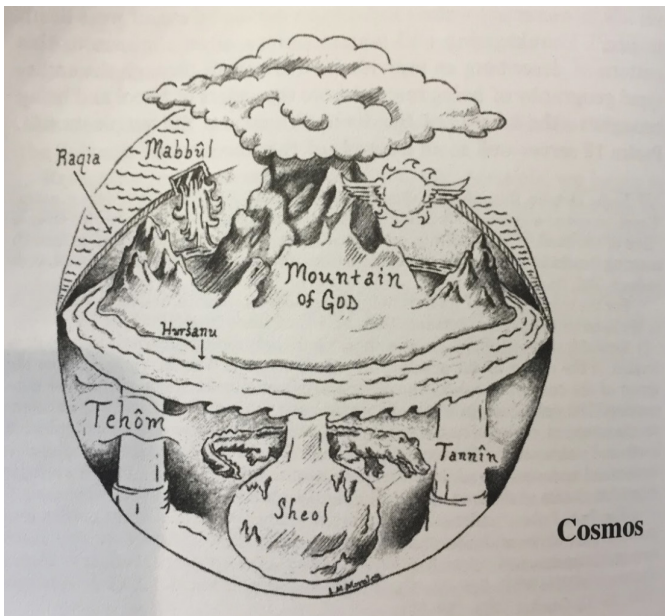
You can probably already tell the ancient understanding of the cosmos is different than our modern conception. Let’s look at a couple images to enable us to grasp their visualization of the Biblical Cosmos.



From John Walton, *The Old Testament Today*



From Othmar Keel, *Creation: Biblical Theologies in the Context of the Ancient Near East*



From Michael Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?*

"Mabbul" = waters above the dome

"Raqia" = the dome

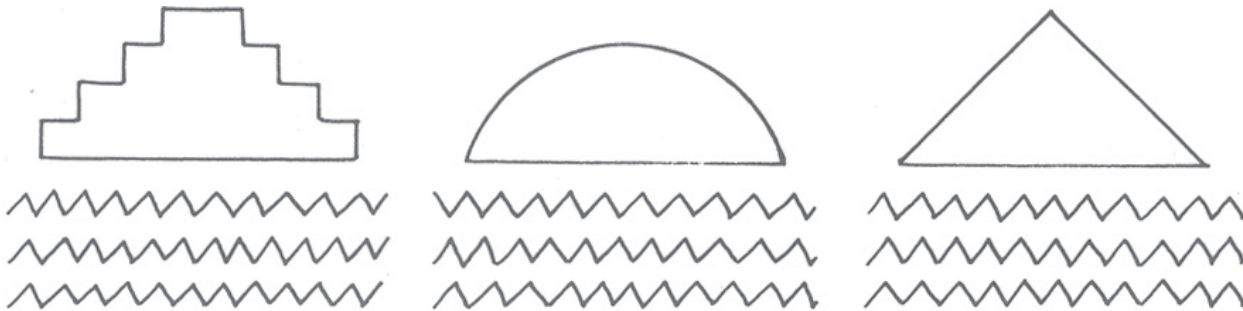
"Hurshanu" = the encircling sea

"Tehom" = the deep waters under the land

"Sheol" = the grave

"Tannin" = the sea monster

Egyptian Conceptions



147. Various Egyptian representations of the primeval hill, the first entity to rise from the water of Chaos. The world evolved from the primeval hill. Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*, trans. Timothy J. Hallett (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 114.

There are many commonalities between the Israelite conception of the cosmos and other ancient cultures. Namely, when the dry land emerges, it sits atop the waters (supported by pillars). According to the Hebrew Scriptures, the springs and rivers become the gift of God's order—the "tamed" waters of chaos now made to serve God's purposes. This explains the focus on the "river of Eden" which waters the garden and, after leaving the garden, splits into four (four points of the compass) to water the regions of the earth.

Because Eden is portrayed as the archetypal temple (see Temple theme video), the image is that from "heaven and earth united" flows the life-source of the entire cosmos. One of the rivers is called "Gihon" which is the name of the spring that provided water for Jerusalem, and for the temple itself. In the next section, let's look closer at the rivers found in Genesis 2.

The Rivers of Eden

There are four rivers described in Genesis 2:10-14. The description of these primordial rivers in Eden has an intentional literary design. Each river is described with decreasing length, imitating a spring running out over the land.

¹⁰ Now, a river went out from Eden to water the garden; and from there it separated and became four heads:		
1	A	¹¹ The name of the first is Pishon (פִּישׁוֹן = "leaper/springer") it goes around the whole land of Havilah, which has there gold ¹² and the gold of that land is good; there are the bdellium and the onyx stone.
	B	
	a	
	b	
	a'	
2	A'	¹³ and the name of the second river is Gihon (גִּיחוֹן = "gusher") it goes around the whole land of Cush.
	B'	
3	A'	¹⁴ and the name of the third river is Tigris; it goes east of Assyria.
	B'	
4	A'	and the fourth river, it is the Euphrates.
	B'	

Each of the names is associated with various regions of the ancient biblical map:

RIVER	REGION	PEOPLE GROUPS AND EMPIRES
Pishon	Havilah = South and East of Canaan, the NW edge of the Arabian desert	Cainites, Ishmaelites, Edomites, Arabs
Gihon	Cush = Southern Egypt, the upper Nile, Ethiopia	Egyptians and Ethiopians
Hiddeqel	Assyria = The Tigris River	Assyria
Euphrates	Babylonian flood plains	Babylon

This Eden-sourced river prepares the reader to view each of these regions (Egypt, Jerusalem and surroundings, Mesopotamia) as extensions of the Eden's life-giving waters, places that are graced with the life of Eden. This makes perfect sense of the "Eden" analogies applied to Canaan (Genesis 13:10), Mesopotamia (Genesis 11:1-4), and Egypt (Genesis 13:10; 45:18, 20).

Pishon [Genesis 2:11-12]

The Pishon is given the longest description, which prepares the reader to understand the significance of future stories:

- "Goes around the land of Havilah": where Ishmael's descendants will settle (Genesis 25:18) and where Hagar will wander in her flight from Sarah (Genesis 16:7)

- “Good gold” + “aromatic resin” + “onyx stone”: these are all associated with the symbolic “Eden-gifts” given to Israel in their wilderness wanderings:
 - “Gold” for the tabernacle
 - “Aromatic resin” (בדולח) the appearance of the manna (Exod 16:33 and Num 11:7)
 - “Onyx stone” (אבן שהם): the stones in the high priest’s ephod (Exod 25:7; 28:9)

Gihon [Genesis 2:13]

The Gihon is the second river listed and is associated with the land of Cush.

- “Cush” has multiple referents in the Hebrew Bible
 - Southern Egypt (= modern Ethiopia): 2 Kings 19:9; Esther 1:1; 8:9; Psalm 68:31; Isaiah 18:1; 20:3-5; 45:14; Ezekiel 29:10; 30:4-5, 9; Nahum 3:9
 - The son of Ham, who has as his descendants people of southern Egypt: Genesis 10:6-7; but this very Cush is the father of Nimrod, who goes East to Mesopotamia to build the empires of Assyria and Babylon.
- The name of “Gihon” spring/river is only elsewhere associated with the spring that supplies water to Jerusalem and the temple (2 Chronicles 32:30; 33:14), which is where Solomon was crowned king of Israel (1 Kings 1:33, 38, 45).

Hidequel and Euphrates [Genesis 2:14]

The Hidequel and Euphrates are associated with the two Mesopotamian empires:

- The Tigris flows “to the east of Assyria”
- The Euphrates is left to the reader’s imagination, which should be drawn toward Babylon.

Eden as a Cosmic Mountain

The depiction of Eden as a high place, from which flows a river of divine life that provides life for all of the nations, is foundational for the biblical storyline. Eden is “heaven on earth” in the form of a cosmic high place, where the life of heaven is one with earth. How do scholars come to this conclusion? Let’s look at three key texts.

1. Eden is a high enough place for a river to flow out to water various distant regions of the land.

Now, a river went out from Eden to water the garden; and from there it separated and became four heads...

GENESIS 2:10

2. Eden is referred to by later biblical authors as a “mountain”.

*“You were in **Eden**, the **garden of God**...you were on the **holy mountain of God**.”*

EZEKIEL 28:13-14

3. The Jerusalem temple, which was designed as “heaven/Eden on earth,” was built on Mt. Zion, a high hill which is constantly likened to Eden.

*“Blow the trumpet in **Zion**, sound the alarm on **my holy mountain**...before them [the army] the land is like the **garden of Eden**; behind them, a desert wasteland.”*

JOEL 2:1-3

4. The heavenly Jerusalem, that is, renewed Eden on earth, is described as a high mountain garden-city that flows with the river of life.

*There is a **river** whose streams make glad **the city of God**, the holy place where the Most High dwells.*

PSALM 46:4

*Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise, in **the city of our God, his holy mountain**.*

*Beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth, like **the heights of Zion is Mount Zion, the city of the Great King**.*

PSALM 48:1-2

*And wherever the **river** goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish. For this water goes there, that the waters of the sea may become fresh; so everything will live where the **river** goes.*

EZEKIEL 47:9

*And in that day The **mountains will drip with sweet wine**, And the hills will flow with milk, And all the brooks of Judah will flow with water; And a **spring will go out from the house of the Lord** To water the valley of Shittim.*

JOEL 3:18

*“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a **mountain great and high**, and he showed me **the holy city**, Jerusalem coming down **out of heaven from God**.” “Then he showed me a **river of the water of life**, clear as crystal coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb.”*

REVELATION 21:10 AND 22:1

"In Genesis 2-3 Eden is not explicitly described as a mountain, but this can be best understood by a careful reading of many biblical texts that symbolically identify Eden with Zion. Through the temple ritual on Mt. Zion, the cosmic images of Eden became an earthly reality. Genesis 2:10-14 mentions the four great rivers that proceed from Eden and water all the earth. One of these cosmic streams is the Gihon, which appears only elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible in reference to the main source of Jerusalem's water... This connection between the Gihon of Eden and of Jerusalem is not the result of fuzzy or illogical mode of thought on the part of the biblical authors. This symbolic matching reflects Zion's cosmic and spiritual importance... The image of Jerusalem's cosmic stream is no more inappropriate than similar imagery applied to Jerusalem in Psalm 48:1-3 ("Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the entire earth, Mt. Zion in the far north") or Isaiah 2:1-4 ("Mt. Zion will be raised up as the highest of all mountains on earth"). In the symbolic world of Israel's temple liturgies, ordinary space became sacred space, the meager water spring of the city became a cosmic river, and the little knoll of Jerusalem became Mt. Zion, the highest mountain on the earth, and Jerusalem a peripheral city in the ancient world, became the center of the earth (Ezek 38:12)."

GARY ANDERSON, "THE COSMIC MOUNTAIN: EDEN AND ITS
EARLY INTERPRETERS IN SYRIAC CHRISTIANITY," 192-93.

Separated from the Waters of Life

Once humanity rebels and is banished from the garden, people are separated from the waters of life; but God continues to reach out to people in surprising moments of grace, often by springs (Hagar and Ishmael in the wilderness in Genesis 16) or wells (Abraham's servant and Rebecca in Genesis 24; Jacob and Rachel in Genesis 29; Moses and Zipporah in Exodus 2; Israel at Marah in Exodus 15). These are little "Eden gifts" appearing in the wilderness.

But the prophets hoped for a day of new creation, where the Jerusalem temple would become the place from which God's water of life would go out and recreate the world. Here are several prophetic snippets envisioning this renewal:

*For behold, in those days and at that time,
When I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem,
And in that day
The mountains will drip with sweet wine,
And the hills will flow with milk,
And all the brooks of Judah will flow with water;
And a spring will go out from the house of the Lord
To water the valley of Shittim.*

JOEL 3:1,18

The Lord will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing.

ISAIAH 51:3 (NIV)

"The desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of everyone who passes by. "They will say, 'This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.'

EZEKIEL 36:34-35

It will come about that every living creature which swarms in every place where the river goes, will live. And there will be very many fish, for these waters go there and the others become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes.

EZEKIEL 47:9

In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. For it will be a unique day which is known to the Lord, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light.

And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter.

And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one.

ZECHARIAH 14:6-9

The Water of Life in the Gospel of John

As we arrive in the Gospels, we see that Jesus is God and the reality toward which all of Israel's history points. The Gospel of John makes several intentional connections to Jesus as the water of life. Let's take a look.

Jesus is the Tabernacle [John 1:1-3,14]

John opens his Gospel with a bold claim: Jesus is the tabernacle and therefore the source of the water of life.

<p>And the Word became flesh, and dwelt (Grk. ἐσκήνωσεν) among us, and we saw his glory (Grk. δόξα), glory as of the one and only from the Father...</p> <p>JOHN 1:14A</p>	<p><i>"Have them make a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell (Heb. shakan) among them.</i></p> <p><i>According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle (Heb. mishkan // Grk. τῆς σκηνῆς) and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it.</i></p> <p>EXODUS 25:8-9</p> <hr/> <p><i>I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an eternal covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling place (Heb. mishkan // Grk. κατασκήνωσις) will be with them and I will be their God and they will be my people</i></p> <p>EZEKIEL 37:26-27</p>
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Jesus Offers Living Water to the Woman at the Well [4:7-15]

The next story clearly connected to the water of life theme is when Jesus encounters the woman at the well. In a shocking turn of events, he offers the woman living water—from *himself*. This passage is full of connections to previous parts of the biblical narrative:

- The mention of “the well of Jacob” (πηγή του Ἰακωβ) in 4:6 assumes an entire network of Scriptural texts that are connected by a design pattern going back to the river of Eden and the future temple of the messianic age.
- **Genesis 2:6:** “A spring/flow (Heb. תַּא / Grk. πηγή [!]) came up from the ground and watered (Grk. ποτιζειν) the face of the land. // Gen 2:10-14: “A river went out of Eden to water (Grk. ποτιζειν) the garden, and from there it divided and became four heads...”
- This divine source of living water that gave life to Eden went out from Eden and is encountered by characters throughout the story of Genesis in the form of “wells” and “springs”:
 - **Genesis 16:7,14:** Hagar encounters the angel of Yahweh at a “spring of water” (Heb. עין המים / Grk. πηγή ὕδατος), and she calls the spring “Well of the living One who sees me” (Heb. באר לחי ראי / Grk. φρέαρ οὗ ἐνώπιον εἶδον).
 - **Genesis 21:19:** Hagar’s eyes are opened in the wilderness to see a “well of water” (Heb. באר מים), but in LXX “a well of living water” (Grk. φρέαρ ὕδατος ζῶντος).
 - **Genesis 21:25,30:** Abraham dug a well near Beersheba and had to contend with Abimelech.
 - **Gen 24:11:** Abraham’s servant meets Rebekah at a 24:11 a “well of water” (Heb. באר מים/ Grk. φρέαρ ὕδατος).

- **Genesis 26:12-25:** Isaac sows an abundant harvest in the land of Gerar, and discovers many wells that his father had already dug (26:18) and he must quarrel with the Philistines over who truly owns the wells. Finally, his own well (26:22) provides “fruitfulness in the land.” (// Eden).
- **Genesis 29:1-12:** Jacob flees to Haran and meets Rachel at a “well in the field” (Heb. באר בשדה), but there is a “great stone on the mouth of the well” (29:2). Jacob must roll back the stone so that the shepherds can water the flock.
- Wells and springs of water are often provided by God for Israel in the wilderness:
 - **Exodus 15-16:** Moses and the nation of Israel have several interactions with water as they flee Egypt.
 - **Numbers 21:** The Israelites discover a well in their wilderness wanderings.
 - **Numbers 21:16-18:** *From there they continued to Beer, that is the well where the Lord said to Moses, “Assemble the people, that I may give them water to drink (Grk. καὶ δώσω αὐτοῖς ὕδωρ πίνειν).” Then Israel sang this song: “Spring up, O well! Sing to it! The well, which the leaders sank, Which the nobles of the people dug, With the scepter and with their staffs.” And from the wilderness they continued to **Mattanah**.*
 - The well provides them with water to journey on to Mattanah (מתנה), which is the Hebrew word for “gift.”
 - Jesus seems to allude to this tradition when he says to the Samaritan woman: “If you knew the *gift* (Grk. δωρεαν) of God...you would have asked [me] to give you living water” (John 4:10).
- In the prophets, these themes are projected forward into the hope of the new Eden/Jerusalem/Temple (See **Joel 3:18; Ezekiel 47:1,9,12; Zechariah 14:8**).
- The story of Jesus meeting the woman at the well also fits into a design pattern in Genesis of men meeting their wives at wells of water
 - **Genesis 2:10-14, 18-24:** God provides a wife for *human* in Eden near the spring of the river

- **Genesis 24:** Abraham's servant goes to Haran and meets Rebekah at a well:
 - **24:11:** The servant arrives at a "well of water" (Heb. באר מים / Grk. φρέαρ ὕδατος), and prays (24:13) that God would send a young woman to "draw water" (Grk. ἀντλήσαι ὕδωρ).
 - **24:17-18:** The servant meets Rebekah and says "Water me with a little water from your jar" (Grk. Πότισόν με μικρὸν ὕδωρ ἐκ τῆς ὑδρίας σου) and she responds, "Drink, my lord" (Grk. Πίε, κύριε).
- **Genesis 28-29:** Jacob's well experience:
 - **29:1-12:** Jacob meets Rachel at the well, over which is a "great stone" (Heb. אבן / Grk. λίθος). Jacob removes the stone and he waters (Grk. ποτιζειν) Rachel's flocks (29:10)
 - **28:10-22:** In the story preceding Jacob's meeting of Rachel, Jacob had just left Beersheba (= "well of seven" from Abraham's well in Gen 21:25, 30), and he takes "stones of the place" (Grk. τῶν λίθων τοῦ τόπου, 28:11) and falls asleep upon them. In his dream, the stones become the foundation of a temple that unites heaven and earth (// Eden), and God promises to Jacob the divine blessing of Eden (28:13-14), so Jacob builds a stone pillar and calls the place "house of God" (Heb. בית אל / Grk. οἶκος θεοῦ / Eng. *beth-el*).
- **Exodus 2:** Moses meets Zipporah at a well.

What do we make of all these links? In the woman at the well story in chapter 4, John has brought together all two networks of scriptural patterns:

1. The Eden-River // Wells of living water // The house of God // the New Eden-Temple river
2. The Man and Woman becoming One in Eden to fulfill God's purpose.

Interpretive Note: Jewish interpretive traditions noted the design pattern of Abraham (Gen 21) and Isaac (Gen 26) discovering wells that release the blessing of Eden in their exile, and so they read the story of Jacob's dream (Gen 28:10-22) and his discovery of the well in Haran (Gen 29:1-12) as mutually interpretive:

Pirquei de Rabbi Eliezer (ch. 35): Rabbi 'Aqiba said: Every place where our forefathers went, the well went in front of them, and they dug three times and found it before them. Abraham dug three times and found it before him, as it is said, "And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham" (ibid. xxvi. 18). And Isaac dug in the land (of Canaan) four times, and found it before him, as it is said, "And Isaac's servants digged in the valley" (ibid. 19). And it is written about Jerusalem, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem" (Zech. xiv. 8). This refers to the well which will arise in Jerusalem in the future, and will water all its surroundings. Because they found (the well) seven times, he called it Shib'ah (seven). Jacob was seventy-seven years old when he went forth from his father's house, and the well went before him. From Beer-Sheba as far as Mount Moriah is a journey of two days."

Targum Neofiti to Genesis 28:10 (the list of five miracles that happened in "the place"): And the second miracle: the stones which our father Jacob took and placed under his head-pillow, when he arose in the morning he found all of them had become one stone. This is the stone which he erected as a pillar and he poured oil over the upper part of it. And the third miracle: when our father Jacob raised his feet to go to Haran the earth shrank before him and he was found dwelling in Haran. And the fourth miracle: the stone which all the pastors had come together to roll away from over the mouth of the well and could not, when our father Jacob came he raised it with one hand and gave to drink to the flock of Laban, his mother's brother. And the fifth: when our father Jacob raised the stone from above the mouth of the well, the well overflowed and came up to its mouth, and was overflowing for twenty years—all the days that he dwelt in Haran."

Jesus offers the water of life at the feast of tabernacles [John 7:37-38]

Let's look at the hyper-literal translation of this curious passage:

*If someone is thirsty, let them come to me
and let them drink the one who believes in me
just as the scripture says, "Rivers from his belly will flow living water."*

7:37B-38 HYPER-LITERAL TRANSLATION

Key Interpretive Questions:

1. Whose belly will flow with water? The believer's (from the previous statement)? Or an unmarked subject assumed in the quotation?
2. What exactly is the wording of the Scripture quotation, and what is its source?

Two Interpretive Options:

OPTION 1	OPTION 2
<p>The believer is the source of the living water (NIV, so also NASB, ESV, NRSV).</p> <p><i>"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.</i></p>	<p>The believer drinks the water, which comes from a source indicated in the Scripture quotation (NLT).</p> <p><i>"Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.'</i></p>

What is the source of the Scripture quotation in John 7:38?

It is not a proper citation, but a thematic summary of a number of scriptural texts triggered by the allusion to Isaiah 55: Jesus is the source of divine provision for whoever will come to him in repentance, so that they can participate in the New Exodus.

JESUS' CALL TO THE JEWISH LEADERS	THE PROPHETS' CALL TO REPENTANCE
<p><i>"Yet a little time I am with you, then I return to the one who sent me. You will seek me, but you will not find me.</i></p> <p>JOHN 7:33-34</p>	<p>Seek the Lord while he can be found, call upon him, as long as he is near.</p> <p>ISAIAH 55:6</p>
<p><i>If anyone is thirsty, let them come to me! and the one who believes, let them drink!</i></p> <p>JOHN 7:37-38A</p>	<p><i>Hoy! Anyone who is thirsty, come to the waters! And you who have no money come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost!</i></p> <p>ISAIAH 55:1</p>

Scriptural Matrix #1: Jesus is the true and ultimate temple, which will flow with living water into the new creation. **But**, this does not explain the reference to “his belly.”

<p><i>If someone is thirsty, let them come to me and let them drink the one who believes in me just as the scripture says, “Rivers from his belly will flow living water.”</i></p> <p>JOHN 7:37B-38</p>	<p><i>And in that day The mountains will drip with sweet wine, And the hills will flow with milk, And all the brooks of Judah will flow with water; And a spring will go out from the house of the Lord To water the valley of Shittim.</i></p> <p>JOEL 3:18</p>
	<p>1 The man brought me back to the entrance to the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east...</p> <p>9 “It will come about that every living creature which swarms in every place where the river goes, will live. And there will be very many fish, for these waters go there and... everything will live where the river goes.</p> <p>12 “By the river on its bank, on one side and on the other, will grow all trees for food. Their leaves will not wither and their fruit will not fail. They will bear every month because their water goes out from the sanctuary, and their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing.”</p> <p>EZEKIEL 47:1, 9, 12</p>
	<p>And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter.</p> <p>ZECHARIAH 14:8</p>

Scriptural Matrix #2: Jesus is the rock in the wilderness, when it was struck in order to provide God’s people with living water as they journey to the promised land. This explains the reference to “his belly,” in that John is setting Jesus’ crucifixion on analogy to the struck rock in the wilderness.

<p><i>If someone is thirsty, let them come to me and let them drink the one who believes in me just as the scripture says,</i> “Rivers from his belly will flow (LXX ρειω) living water.”</p> <p>JOHN 7:37B-38</p> <p><i>Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?” But He was speaking of the temple of His body.</i></p> <p>JOHN 2:19-21</p> <p><i>“But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.”</i></p> <p>JOHN 19:34</p>	<p>15 He split the rocks in the wilderness And gave them abundant drink like the ocean depths. 16 He brought forth streams also from the rock And caused waters to run down like rivers... 19 Then they spoke against God; They said, “Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? “Behold, he struck the rock so that waters flowed (LXX ρειω) out, And streams were overflowing;</p> <p>PSALM 78:15-16, 19-20</p> <p>He opened the rock and water flowed (LXX ρειω) out; It ran in the dry places like a river.</p> <p>PSALM 105:41</p> <p>They did not thirst when He led them through the deserts. He made the water flow out of the rock for them; He split the rock and the water flowed (LXX ρειω) out.</p> <p>ISAIAH 48:21</p>
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Note: There existed an ancient Jewish interpretive tradition that equated the God of Israel with the rock of Meribah that provided water for the people.

MOSES STRIKES THE ROCK IN THE WILDERNESS	YAHWEH IS ISRAEL'S ROCK
<p>Then the Lord said to Moses: "Behold, I will stand before you there upon the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. He named the place Massah and Meribah.</p> <p>EXODUS 17:6-7</p> <p>The Lord spoke to Moses, "Take the rod, and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may give its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink."</p> <p>So Moses took the rod from before the Lord,</p> <p>Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank. But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." Those were the waters of Meribah</p> <p>NUMBERS 20:1-13</p>	<p>The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice.</p> <p>DEUTERONOMY 32:4</p> <p>They remembered that God was their Rock.</p> <p>PSALM 78:35</p> <p>Let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation.</p> <p>PSALM 95:1</p> <p>Is there a God beside me? There is no Rock I know of none. Jesus is the Rock in the wilderness that was struck to provide water.</p> <p>ISAIAH 44:8</p> <p>Our ancestors drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was the Messiah.</p> <p>1 CORINTHIANS 10:4</p> <p>Aramaic Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) to Numbers 21:19: And because it (the well) was given to them as a gift, it turned to ascend the high mountains with them, and from the high mountains it descended with them to the valleys, going around the entire camp of Israel and giving them drink, each and every one of them at the door of his tent</p>

"Jesus is associating himself with the rock of Meribah, which will be "struck" (that is, killed) in order to supply life-giving water for his people... Supporting this is John's report about the piercing of Jesus' side on the cross (John 19:34). Many commentators have discerned a thematic linkage between John 7:37-39 and 19:34, such that the water and blood flowing from Jesus' side after being struck by the spear is a symbolic fulfillment of Jesus' words about living water. It also makes sense of the future tense of "will flow" in John 7:37. The wording about the flow of water and blood in 19:34 seems calculated to recall Jesus' words in 7:38 in order to indicate the symbolic fulfillment of this promise at the moment of his death."

GERRY WHEATON, THE JEWISH FEASTS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL, 156-57.

How can we land the plane with the variety of Scriptures so far? It would appear the author wants the readers to see Jesus as the giver of the water of life (John 4 woman at the well; John 8 “whoever comes to me will never thirst) and the crucifixion is where Jesus pours out the ‘water of life’ when he is pierced by the soldier. Let’s take a closer look at this passage in the next section.

Jesus Dies as the New Temple [John 19:34-35]

The imagery found in chapter 19 is the climax of the series of “water” and “blood” images in the Gospel of John.

- **Blood [the word itself αἷματος and related images]**
 - **John 1:12-13:** But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.
 - **John 1:29:** “The next day [John the baptist] saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”
 - **John 6:53-56:** “So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.”
- **Water**
 - **John 1:32-33:** John testified saying, “I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. “I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’
 - **John 2:6, 9:** Now there were six stone jars of water set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each... When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew)...
 - **John 4:13-14:** Jesus answered and said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”

- **John 7:37-39:** Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and let the one who believes in me drink. As the Scripture has said, ‘From his belly will flow rivers of living water.’ ” Now, he said this about the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified.
- **Key Hebrew Bible texts for the water imagery**
 - **Ezekiel 47:1-2:** Then he brought me back to the door of the house; and behold, water was flowing from under the threshold of the house toward the east, for the house faced east. And the water was flowing down from under, from the right side (ימין) of the house, from south of the altar. He brought me out by way of the north gate and led me around on the outside to the outer gate that faces east. And behold, water was trickling from the south side (שמאל).
 - The Old Greek translators of Ezekiel also use the word for “**side**” (πλευρα) to render the “sides” of Ezekiel’s temple (Heb. 26 ,9 ,8 ,7 ,6 ,41:5: (צלע).
 - “In Jesus’ death the ‘inner chamber’ of his body/Temple is opened, releasing the waters of the Spirit. While one temple is in the process of being destroyed (his body), a new Temple is being raised. Architectural imagery is employed to convey a theology of the Spirit who dwells within Jesus and will now dwell within the disciples. The waters of Ezekiel’s Temple issued forth into the land, vivifying (Ezek 47:9), nourishing, and healing (Ezek 47:12). The new Temple, endowed with the Spirit, will be an ongoing source within the world of life-giving waters (John 4:14; 7:38) and cleansing from sin (John 20:23).

Revelation 21-22

The closing chapter of Scripture portrays a renewed cosmos. We see the new creation is permeated by the river of life, coming from the throne.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

REVELATION 21:1-2

Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

REVELATION 22:1-2

In Genesis 2:10 a river “flowed from Eden” to “water the garden,” but “life” was restricted to the “tree of life” (2:9; 3:22-24). Here there is not only the “tree of life” but ποταμὸν ὕδατος ζωῆς (potamon hydatos zōēs, the river of the water of life—anarthrous in order to stress the theological force of the idea). In Genesis the river flowed “out of [ἐκ, ek, in the LXX] Eden,” but here it flows “out of [also ἐκ] the throne.” Eden has become one with the city. The background is not only Genesis but also Ezekiel 47:1-12, where a river flows from the south of the altar in the renewed temple and turns everything it touches fresh, even salt water, so that living creatures and fish flourish. Ezekiel 47 provides the primary background for Revelation 22:1-2, and it pictures the life-giving presence of God among his people in the renewed temple as an Edenlike river flowing from the renewed temple. Also, in Zechariah 14:8 “living water will flow out from Jerusalem” on the “day of Yahweh.” ... While the river in Genesis 2 flowed out of the garden, and the river in Ezekiel 47 flowed out of the temple, this river flows “from the throne of God and the Lamb.” Thus, the source of this river is God himself.

GRANT R. OSBORNE, REVELATION, BAKER EXEGETICAL COMMENTARY
ON THE NEW TESTAMENT (GRAND RAPIDS, MI: BAKER ACADEMIC, 2002), 769.

Sources

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