The Four Rivers

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Genesis 2:10-14: "10 And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it was divided into four headwaters. **11** The name of the first [river] was Pishon; it wound through all the land of Havilah, where there was gold. **12** And the gold of this land was good; there was bdellium, and the onyx stone. **13** And the name of the second river was Gihon; it wound through all the land of Cush. **14** And the name of the third river was Hiddekel; it flowed along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river was Euphrates.**"**

This paragraph about the rivers interrupts the flow of the narrative. It could not have been part of what Jehovah shared with Adam as they walked and talked in the Garden. During the 1,400+ years between Creation and the Flood, people were reproducing much faster than they were dying. By the time of the Flood, there must have been many hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of inhabitants on this planet. Once the fallen pair was expelled from the Garden, their descendants would have spread out in all directions. They built towns and gave names to their towns, as well as their areas. I take it that this paragraph about the rivers was included to give some idea of the extent of the human population before the Flood, including its geographical distribution.

But why are gold, bdellium and onyx mentioned? Well, evidently gold came to be viewed as having special value early on, functioning as a sort of money. Bdellium is a plant with aromatic gum, perhaps a type of cosmetic, indicating that people were already paying attention to that sort of thing. Onyx is a pretty semi-precious stone that would have ornamental value (not useful for building). So this paragraph also mentions the development of cultural values.

Whoever wrote this paragraph would have done so a long time after the Fall. (It would have been part of a document that was preserved in Noah's Ark, along with other pre-flood literature, which was delivered to Moses in due time.) But why was it inserted precisely here, along with the creation of the Garden? Well, where else would it fit? After the fallen pair was expelled, there is only one further mention of the Garden, in Genesis, giving the location of Cain's descendants. In any case, it is where it is, presumably because the Holy Spirit told Moses to put it there.

Noah's Flood totally destroyed the surface of the earth at that time. After the Flood the surface was totally different. That is why it is impossible to know the location of Eden. It would be natural for Noah and his sons to reuse names they had known before the Flood; in this case the Tigris (Hiddekel) and Euphrates rivers, whose headwaters are not far from Ararat.