

Houses for sale: An Ark, a Beehive, a Fairy Chimney, and a Salt Pan!

Turkey ~ Part 2~



Tucked in the corner of a high cupboard in my kitchen is a red, heart-shaped plate, the perfect plate on which to eat birthday cake, or Valentine's Day cookies, or just "I love you" meals. The back of the plate reads in black letters: "Made in Turkey." Somewhere in Turkey, a Turk made the heart-shaped plate on which I eat. The Turk and I have never met, but I

think of him every time I pull down that red heart dish. And I think I, too, am falling in love with God's land of Turkey and her people. Are you?

I doubt that Noah and his family had any heart-shaped plates, but I would hazard a guess that they loved this land more than you and I both! Who wouldn't, after rocking and rolling on the waters of a worldwide flood for months and months and months?! When God caused the flood waters to recede, I imagine Noah and his family fairly tumbled out of that ark to kiss the land of Turkey, for this grateful family had landed on top of...well, there it is right now!

Pull-up on the carpet, so we don't collide with that magnificent snow-capped mountain, down there along the northern border of Turkey! That icy, craggy peak below us is the highest mountain in the country: the Great Mount Ararat. While we may never know where the Garden of Eden bloomed on Earth, or where the first Tigris and Euphrates rivers once coursed, Turkey's Mount Ararat is the very first geographical place referred to in the Bible that we can locate today with any degree of certainty. Mount Ararat is the location the Bible records as the resting place of Noah's Ark after the Global Flood. Genesis 8:4 reads, *"In the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat."*



Mount Ararat is known in Turkey as *Aghri Dagh*, which means the Mount of the Ark. Rising up near Turkey's border with the neighboring country of Iran, the Iranian call the mountain *Koh-I-Nuh*, meaning the Mountain of Noah. Photo courtesy of allaboutturkey.com

Now, strain your eyes for a glimpse of ancient wooden beams. Very recent pictures of Mount Ararat taken from a satellite in space have discovered an ark-like shape submerged in the ice and snow. The description in the Book of Genesis tells us the ark was six times longer than wide (300 cubits by 50 cubits). The irregular shape seen in the satellite photographs of Mount Ararat is very

similar to that 6:1 proportion! Perhaps the space pictures have merely captured an image of an unusual rock formation—or maybe we are very close to uncovering Noah's ark after all this time!

The children who live today at the base of the looming, volcanic Mount Ararat, in the village of Dogubayazit, tell visitors that they indeed live in Noah's countryside. (Can you imagine saying that?) For down through the ages, fathers and mothers in this region of Turkey have gathered children on their knees to tell them the story of Noah and the ark with its cargo of antelopes and gorillas and butterflies and flamingos, and all the other marvels of the animal kingdom, perched high atop Ararat. This story of God's goodness and His love for Noah—and of all humanity—leaves the Turkish children of today, living in the shadow of the mountain, to exclaim all good things as being the “the luck of Noah!” I think Noah would rather call such good things the “Grace of God!”

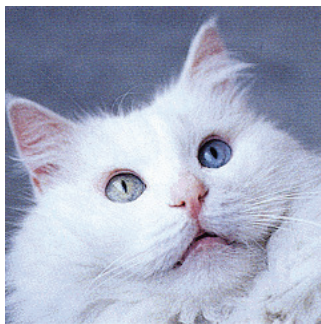


Lake Van is Turkey's largest lake. Fed by sulfur springs, the lake is very salty, making the water unusable for drinking or farming. Would you be surprised to see a cat swimming here?

At home on my childhood farm, we marveled at the grace of God experienced by our barnyard cats. Incredibly, those cats survived all manner of near scrapes and accidents. Our travels now take us to a strange occurrence that is far more incredible than nine-lived farm cats. It is a glorious feat of our Creator God!

South of Turkey's highest mountain, Mount Ararat, we find Turkey's largest and deepest lake, the triangular-shaped Lake Van. It's not surprising that few cities dot this desolate region of Turkey; yet it is unusual to find so few cities surrounding an all-important water source. That is because Lake Van is one very salty body of water and salty water does little to help thirsty animals or crops in the fields. Since Lake Van is fed by **sulfur** springs and has no apparent outlet to flow into, it keeps growing saltier and saltier! In the chill of winter, you won't find any ice skaters on Lake Van as you would at many frozen lakes. Although the winters in this part of Turkey are bitterly cold, the high salt content keeps the lake from freezing.

However, if you squint your eyes, you may catch a glimpse of something that is most startling and incredible here at Lake Van. Look closely and you may see a white and red-haired cat swimming down there among the islands. Known as the Swimming Cat, or named a *van kedi* in Turk, Van cats, as they are called, are one of the rarest breeds of cats in the world. In this region of



The beautiful and unusual *van kedi* has bi-colored eyes.
Photo courtesy of allaboutturkey.com

temperature extremes, you may never see skaters on a blustery winter day, yet the relentless summer heat may allow one to witness Van cats cooling off with a dip in the salty Lake Van water. Yes, a cat that likes to swim!! Our God is a God of surprises! While other cats have three types of hair, God especially created the Van cat with only one type of hair, which feels like soft cashmere or rabbit fur that dries quickly when wet—which is especially beneficial if you are a swimming cat with an unusual love for water! When the bitter winter descends in this region of Turkey, the Van cats grow a thick coat to withstand the harsh weather. If a Van cat down there in the lake turns to catch a glimpse of you up on your carpet, you'll never forget its gaze—for a Van kedi has one amber eye—and one blue eye! Our incredible Creator God has created a cat with a penchant for swimming—and an astonishing, unforgettable set of

two-colored eyes. Such multi-colored creation sets us in mind of the rainbow that God once arched across this Turkish sky and Noah's Ark up on Mount Ararat, doesn't it?



The village of Haran, where Abraham and his family once lived, still has beehive-shaped mud houses, just as it would have thousands of years ago. *Photo courtesy of holylandphotos.org*

Slipping further south now, deep down into the Turkish Mesopotamia, we gaze down on the treeless plateau. A dark haired boy and his father herd a flock of Angora sheep to a muddy waterhole for a drink outside a small rural village. A mother wearing a white hair kerchief walks down a dusty dirt street with a baby propped on her hip. This is Haran, one of the oldest continuously inhabited places on Earth—and the home of Abraham. God's word reads "*Terah took his son Abram, his grandson, Lot, son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law, Sarai, the wife of his son Abram...to Haran [and] they settled there*" (Genesis 11:31). Abraham's address once read: Abraham: Haran, Turkey.

At one time the junction of the Damascus road and the highway between Nineveh and Carchemish, Haran was also the place where Abraham's father, Terah died, (Genesis 11:32), where God spoke to Abraham about following Him to a promised land, where Rebekah's brother, Laban once had his home (Genesis 27:43), and where Jacob fled to escape the fury of his brother, Esau (Gen 27:41-43). In captivating Turkey, children like you live today where Noah first climbed from the ark and walk on the same dirt streets of Haran where Abraham and his descendants once walked with their flocks!

As you look across the landscape from Haran, you will see rolling hills, horse-drawn carts, goats, and sheep, and girls in brightly colored dresses, their hair covered in scarves. (Some say there may now be more farm animals than people in Haran!) What you won't see in Haran are trees. Without trees, you will not find any houses built of wood. So, how do the families of Haran build their homes? It is thought that for at least the last 3,000 years houses in Haran have been built the same way: out of the dirt of the Earth. People use what God has given them where they live, to build their homes and make a living. Without trees, people make houses of mud!



These beehive houses stay cool in summer and warm in winter. Some houses even have electricity and cable television! *Photo courtesy of holylandphotos.org*

As a kid, I made mud pies, mud balls, mud cakes, but never mud houses! The mud houses of Haran are the most memorable houses you may ever see. Not square, not with flat roofs, or with peaked roofs, but like...beehives! For thousands of years the mud houses of Haran have been built like beehives with conical roofs. These homes seem to be an extension of the land they are settled on, growing right up out of the dirt. Why do the people of Haran build such seemingly strange houses?

Again, the geography of a place determines how people live: Haran is very hot in summer and cold in winter—and these beehive-shaped homes stay cool in summer and warmer in winter. Do not be fooled by the rustic appearances, however. These mud houses have electricity and some even have cable television! If we stepped out of the beating sun of Haran's streets and into the cool shade of a bee-hive house, we would find Turkish carpets hanging on the walls, and laying on the floors. We could sit as Turks traditionally sit, on pillows on the carpet, and share with this family a simple lunch: a hunk of cheese made from sheep's milk, a few slices of salami with *pide*, a broad, round and flat kind of bread made of wheat, washed down with the traditional Turkish drink, *ayran*, made of yoghurt and water. (If you were to walk into a McDonald's in Istanbul, you could order ayran alongside your Big Mac! Or you could also order the Turks other favorite drink: a coke!)



Care to have an Ayran?
In Turkey's rural areas, a host's standard drink for guests is an ayran. "We have come to drink your ayran" say the guests.

Field Notes



What a fascinating ride we've had so far! Are you imagining life in a beehive house as I am? I'm so excited to hear about what you have seen!

Press Record and talk to me...

~ **about Mount Ararat and the ark:** What is that region like today? Has the ark been found? Can you locate Mount Ararat on your map?



~ **about Lake Van:** What is unusual about Lake Van? Why don't more people live around the lake? Can you ice skate there in the winter? Why not? Tell me about the amazing creature that swims in the lake.

~ **about Haran's mud houses:** What do they look like? Why do the people build them in this way? How does geography affect where people live? Who in real life once lived in or passed through Haran? Describe life in Haran today.



After lunch, we swoop further to the West, where we find the bustling city of Tarsus. The Turkish town of Tarsus was once an important sea port on the brilliantly blue Mediterranean sea but because of the **silting** up, Tarsus is now located some 9.3 miles [15 km] away from the lapping

waves of the Mediterranean Sea and its sandy beaches. Over time, God's command of the winds and waters actually shapes and changes the geography of this world!



Cleopatra's Gate named for the Egyptian Queen who visited Tarsus around 40 B.C. It is believed that Cleopatra disguised herself as the Greek goddess Aphrodite and sailed through the gate to meet Marc Antony, a Roman leader. The city of Tarsus is also the birthplace of the Apostle Paul. *Photo courtesy of holylandphotos.org*

You may have read of the bustling city of Tarsus before? This city of narrow, cobblestone streets rising up out of the cotton fields of the Mediterranean region of Turkey was the birth place of the Apostle Paul. In Acts 21:39, Paul says, "*I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city.*" Tarsus was certainly a significant city, hosting such famous historical figures as Alexander the Great, Cleopatra, Marc Antony, Julius Caesar and Cicero! Leaning over the edge of our carpet, we see Tarsus situated on the edge of a fertile plain, cedar groves surrounding its rising buildings. A **plain** is an expanse of level, or nearly level, land. (Do you remember what we geographers call a plain that rises up out of

the landscape like a table? Yes, a plateau or tableland!) In general, plains may be more suitable for farming than elevated plateaus like the Anatolia or steep mountains, such as the rugged Taurus Mountains running like a fence between these narrow Mediterranean coastal plains and the Anatolia. Orange and lemon trees, lush banana trees, and waving fields of wheat and barley grow up out of the rich soil. Rice and cotton are also bountiful where precious water is irrigated upon the land. In the fields where the Apostle Paul once walked, we may now see **combines** harvesting soft white balls of cotton to make **textiles**, fabric and clothing, one of Turkey's most important industries. (One of my favorite pair of cotton pants has a tag reading: Made in Turkey. I'm amazed to think that those pants first began as a cotton plant growing up out of this Turkish dirt!)

As we fly over the Mediterranean coast, white sails wave at us from boats bobbing on the brilliant blue water, and numerous productive farming villages quietly dot the coastline. Dropping closer, strange, bizarre shapes rising up out of the landscape catch our eye...stranger than mud houses, stranger than beehive-shaped houses. We've stumbled into the land of the Fairy Chimneys in the Cappadocia region of the Anatolian Plateau. (Look for Lake Tuz, and the area between Konya and Kayseri on your map of Turkey.)

No bees lived in the beehive houses of Haran, and neither do any fairies live in the Fairy Chimneys of Cappadocia, but if you imagined there were such things as fairies, would they have houses with chimneys like these strange rock formations? Only our imaginative Creator God could have dreamed up anything as fantastic as these cone-shaped rocks in the Cappadocia!

If you've ever worn a cap outside to protect yourself from the sun's beating rays and pelting raindrops, you'll understand a bit of the structure of these unique formations.

God created these strange Fairy Chimneys from the deposits spewed forth from volcanoes on the Anatolian Plateau: first a thick layer of ash fell, then a dust that compressed into a stone called tuff and, lastly, a thin layer of lava that hardened into a sturdy **basalt** stone. Over time, God has allowed the outer layer of basalt to crack, and His winds and waters have weathered and washed away the

stone into strange shapes. Finally, He sculpts a fairy chimney when a small cap of the original basalt sits atop a cone of tuff. Like when you don a cap, God leaves a cap atop the cone to protect it from eroding or weathering away. When He eventually sends winds that undercut the cap, the cap falls off the fairy chimney, and the chimney itself soon weathers away into nothing....which, thankfully, does not happen to you when you take off your cap!



Cappadocia's "fairy chimneys" are a popular tourist destination. Made of basalt, these conical structures are shaped by wind and water through a process called erosion.

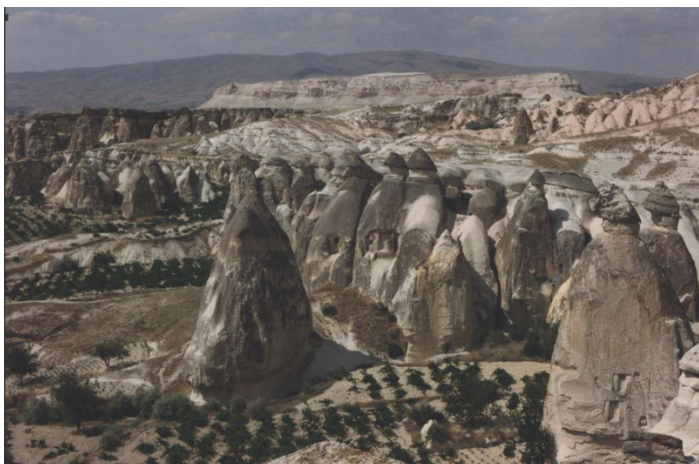
Ironically, the Fairy Chimneys are in a region of Turkey called Cappadocia—a name which actually has nothing to do with caps but means “the land of beautiful horses.” Let’s slide off our floating kilim and ride a sleek thoroughbred horse up through what some consider Turkey’s most spectacular scenery. If you feel afraid in dark, small places, you may want to stay with our beautiful horse instead of exploring into the shadows of the Fairy Chimneys.

When I was young, my brother, sister and I would head up to the haymow in the barn to make mazes of tunnels and secret rooms dark and deep within the mountain of bales. Riding our horse up through Cappadocia, we would hardly imagine that underneath these mountains and towers of Fairy Chimneys lay tunnels eight levels deep with whole cities of underground rooms!

The Hittites of the Old Testament were the first people to carve into the soft rock of the Fairy Chimneys to create granaries for their grain stores. Geography, how God forms the land, benefits people down through the ages; the constant cool of the dark caves was the perfect temperature to preserve grains. But no one dug out actual houses in which to live in this brittle, tawny-colored tuff until after the time of Jesus, when persecuted Christians sought hiding places from the Roman Empire. In the three hundred years after Jesus, tens of thousands of new Christians carved bedrooms and stables and churches and flourmills into the Fairy Chimneys—and deep down away into massive underground cities. Perhaps as many as 60,000 New Testament Christians lived in the mazes and labyrinths of low twisting passages leading to room upon room: a whole community of people, living deep underground! The Fairy Chimneys became the Christian’s chimneys. God had created the geography of the land to provide perfect homes for these new believers. In the hot Turkey summers, these caves and tunnels were a cool relief, and in bitter winters, the Fairy Chimneys and underground cities of Cappadocia provided protection from the winds and cold.



If you'd like to experience what those early Christians felt living in the underground Cappadocian cities, there are Fairy Chimney hotels that will let you even sleep here in an underground room of your own! What do you think that would be like?



The Fairy Chimneys with their “caps.” In this same region are amazing underground cities, originally developed by the ancient Hittites.

it is much shallower, with a depth of only 3-6 feet [1-2 m]. In the summer, the sun's heat evaporates much of the water making it possible to walk across the whole lake, hardly getting your legs wet! Don't forget your shoes though; otherwise you'll spend your day shrieking “Ow! Ow! Ouch!” as those sharp, hard salt crystals poke at the bottom of your feet. Because it is not very deep, the salt crystals caked to the bottom of the lakebed gleam a brilliant white, making Tuz Golu look like a huge salt pan—with a pink haze hanging over it. The haze comes from particular pink **algae** that grow in this water, the only life that can live under such salty conditions. People however, do live near Lake Tuz, working in mines to process most of the salt that is used in Turkey. God's imaginative geography not only creates beauty—like that glorious pink hue of Tuz Golu mirroring the brilliance of the sunset—but also provides families and peoples with the resources necessary for living—from the time of Noah, to today.

From the dizzying heights of Mount Ararat, to the dark depths of underground cities and houses carved into the rock of Fairy Chimneys, Turkey is the home of new beginnings. Stepping out on Mount Ararat, Noah and his family begin a new life in the new world after the Global Flood. From his mud, beehive-shaped house in Haran, Old Testament Abraham made a new start in his quest after God. Setting out from his coastal village of Tarsus, New Testament Apostle Paul brought a new religion of hope to ears that had never heard. And deep within the Fairy Chimneys of Cappadocia, early Christians hid from old

Before we check in for the night, let's sail a bit further north into the Central Anatolian Plateau to Tuz Golu, where you will see a sight that simply must not be missed. As the sun is setting pink in the sky, do you notice the lake below, gleaming with its own hues of white and pink? If you could speak Turkish, you'd know that Tuz means “salt” and Golu means “lake.” Tuz Golu is Turkey's second largest lake, after Lake Van, but it is one of the largest salt lakes in the world! Lake Tuz is fed by salt springs and, with no drainage outlet, the salt content keeps increasing as water evaporates, leaving the salt behind. While saltier than Lake Van,



Doesn't our view from a spacecraft window clearly show how Lake Tuz is like a salt pan? Two major rivers, groundwater, and surface water feed Lake Tuz, but the lake has no drainage outlet. The lake becomes very salty during the summer with most of water in the lake drying up, leaving an average of a foot [30 cm] thick salt layer! Three mines near the lake process and refine the salt for people to use. *Photo courtesy of visibleearth.nasa.gov*

powers and ways to grow a strong faith in a world after Jesus. With such fascinating stories, who wouldn't pull down their heart-shaped, Made-in-Turkey plate, and feel a genuine love for the country of Turkey—and He who created it all, our Glorious God?!

Field Notes



Weren't those Fairy Chimneys amazing? I'm not sure I'd want to sleep underground though. Would you? I'm ready to hear all about your trip!

Press record and talk to me...

~ **about Tarsus and the Mediterranean coastal plains:** What is a plain? What crops grow in this region? Which Apostle was born in Tarsus? Can you name any other famous people who visited there? How has God changed the geography of Tarsus over time?



~ **about the Fairy Chimneys:** Describe one to me. How does God form a Fairy Chimney? Can you name the region in which they are found? Tell me about the underground cities. Who lived there? Why?

~ **about Toz Golu:** What color is it? Why? What other unusual characteristics does the lake have? Why do people live near Toz Golu? Tell me about salt. Take me on an imaginary walk across the lake.





Travel Log

Using your globe or atlas, let's add the following locations to your map of Turkey. We've seen things today that simply must be mapped, so that they will never be forgotten!

Don't worry about making a perfect map, just do your best. Drawing the basic shape yourself will help you remember it better. Or you can use the map provided for you on the CD-ROM.

Map Notes: Let's record the locations of:

- **Mt. Ararat**
- **Lake Van**
- **Haran**
- **Tarsus**
- **Cappadocia**
- **Tuz Golu**

If you'd like, draw pictures or symbols on your map representing:

The Ark (*perched right on top of Mt. Ararat*)

Van kedis or Van cats (*swimming in Lake Van!*)

Beehive houses

Fairy chimneys

Crops growing on the coastal plains (*there are a lot to choose from, just pick a couple of your favorites*)

Underground cities

Salt shaker (*on the shallow Lake Tuz*)

(Challenge Mapping: Can you point out the following regions on your map: Black Sea Region, Central Anatolian Region, And Mediterranean Region)

Travel Notes: Geographers write what they've seen in order to share the adventure with others—and so they can revisit the places in their memories! **On the next page of your travel log, record three important sights you want to remember from your tales of Turkey.**



~art ~books ~food ~music ~poetry

Bringing It Home

Simple ideas to bring the world to your door

Books

The Hungry Coat *by* Demi

In this Turkish folk tale, Nasrettin Hoca (a medieval philosopher and folk hero) finds his friends treat him differently when he is wearing an old coat and decides to teach them a funny lesson. **all ages*

The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers *by* Melissa Whitcraft

Follow the Tigris and Euphrates through the Middle East, learning history and geography along the way. ***Read aloud or older readers*

Turkey *by* Tamra Orr

Take an indepth look at Turkey's history, peoples and places. ***Read aloud or older readers*

Poetry

*The aim in learning is
To understand God's Truth.
Because without knowledge
It is wasted hard labour.*

~Yunus Emre (1238-1320)

(Yunus Emre was a thirteenth century whirling dervish from Anatolia.)

