

DEAD SEA

In Hebrew "Sea of Salt," the Dead Sea is a hyper saline lake that is truly one of Earth's unique places. It is the lowest spot on earth (1,290 feet below sea level) and has the highest mineral content of any body of water in the world. Truly a priceless national treasure, the Dead Sea boasts mounds of crystallized salt formations that dot the shoreline creating breathtaking natural sites. Nothing grows in the immediate area. Animal life, as we know it, is impossible; hence its name, the Dead Sea.

The Dead Sea area has become a major center for health research and treatment for several reasons. The mineral content of the water, very low content of allergens, reduced ultraviolet component of solar radiation, and the higher atmospheric pressure each have specific health effects. The black mud found in vast quantities has scientifically-recognized curative qualities. Biblically, it was a place of refuge for King David. It was one of the world's first health resorts (for Herod the Great), and it has been the supplier of a wide variety of products, from balms for Egyptian mummification to potash for fertilizers. People also use the salt and the minerals from the Dead Sea to create cosmetics and skin care products.

The Dead Sea does not figure prominently in the biblical narratives. Its most important role was as a barrier, blocking traffic to Judah from the east. An advancing army of Ammonites and Moabites crossed a shallow part of the Dead Sea on their way to attack King Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 20). Ezekiel has prophesied that one day the Dead Sea will be fresh water and fishermen will spread their nets along the shore (Ezekiel 47:10).

