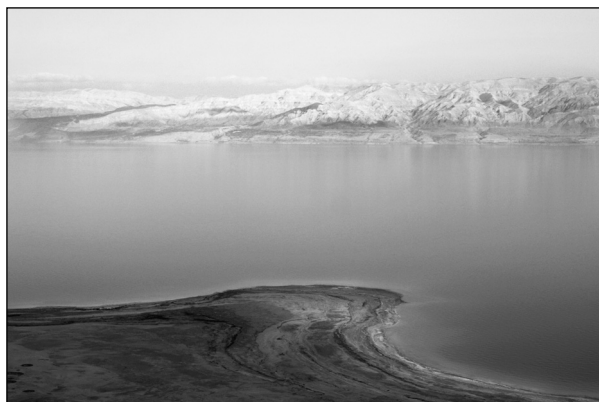


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*Cover illustration:* A view of the Dead Sea seen from the Israeli shore. © David Shankbone. This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. For further details, see Michael G. Ezersky and Amos Frumkin, C. R. Geoscience 349(1), 2017, pp. 1–11.

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\* This paper was invited by the Editor-in-Chief as part of a series of guest papers by laureates of the 2015 prizes of the French Academy of Sciences.