

that even God cannot break into. God is free to work in the world in unusual ways. However, the biblical evidence suggests that whenever God does so, there is a reason that is consistent with his purposes for his world and for his people. Thus the theist holds that the ultimate framework for consistency or coherence is to be found not in the material realm that science investigates, but rather in the character and purposes of God, who created that realm. This is why biblical "wonders" are not simply arbitrary events; they are "signs" that say something about God and his purposes.

C. F. D. Moule argues that the only worldview tenable for a consistent theist is that "the only ultimate regularity is to be looked for not within the material realm by itself but in the character of a personal God. It is of his character that the material realm is a manifestation: and what is possible and probable in it is better measured by what is known of the character of God than by what is observed on the much narrower scale of the purely mechanistic" (Moule, 16).

See also MAGIC AND DIVINATION.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY.** **M. G. Abegg Jr.**, "גַּזְּרָה," *NIDOTTE* 1.823-27; **C. Brown**, *Miracles and the Critical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Exeter: Paternoster, 1984); **R. P. Carroll**, "The Elijah-Elisha Sagas: Some Remarks on Prophetic Succession in Ancient Israel," *VT* 19 (1969) 400-415; **W. Eichrodt**, *Theology of the Old Testament* (2 vols.; OTL; London: SCM, 1964); **N. L. Geisler**, *Miracles and the Modern Mind* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992); **R. D. Geivett and G. R. Habermas**, eds., *In Defense of Miracles* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997); **J. Gray**, *I & II Kings* (2d ed.; OTL; London: SCM, 1970); **P. A. Kruger**, "גַּזְּרָה," *NIDOTTE* 1.331-33; idem, "גַּזְּרָה," *NIDOTTE* 2.879-81; idem, "פֶּלֶא," *NIDOTTE* 3.615-17; **C. S. Lewis**, *Miracles* (London: Fontana, 1966); **S. V. McCasland**, "Signs and Wonders," *JBL* 76 (1957) 149-52; **J. L. McKenzie**, "God and Nature in the Old Testament," *CBQ* 14 (1952) 18-39, 124-45; **C. F. D. Moule**, "Introduction," in *Miracles: Cambridge Studies in Their Philosophy and History*, ed. C. F. D. Moule (London: Mowbray, 1965) 3-17; **A. Nur and E. H. Cline**, "Poseidon's Horses: Plate Tectonics and Earthquake Storms in the Late Bronze Age Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean," *Journal of Archaeology Science* 27 (2000) 43-63; **J. P. Ross**, "Some Notes on Miracle in the Old Testament," in *Miracles: Cambridge Studies in Their Philosophy and History*, ed. C. F. D. Moule

(London: Mowbray, 1965) 43-60; **P. E. Satterthwaite**, "The Elisha Narratives and the Coherence of 2 Kings 2-8," *TynBul* 49 (1998) 1-28; **L. I. J. Stadelmann**, *The Hebrew Conception of the World: A Philological and Literary Study* (AnBib 39; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1970); **Y. Zakovitch**, "Miracle (OT)," *ABD* 4.845-56.

E. C. Lucas

## MIZPAH

A number of Mizpahs (variant Mizpeh) are known from the Historical Books of the Hebrew Scriptures. This is not surprising, as the root from which the name derived, *sph*, connotes a location with a good view, from which one can keep close watch on activities in the area; it might suitably be rendered "lookout point." Thus it is similar to Hebrew place names derived from a local topographical context, such as the various sites compounded from *Ramah* ("height") or *Gibeah* ("hill") and their variants. However, unlike these more generic topographic terms, *Mizpah* can have a more restricted, military meaning. In Isaiah 21:8, for example, a lookout stands upon his *mispeh*, keeping watch for riders.

1. Identification
2. Approaches to the Study of Mizpah
3. The History and Archaeology of Mizpah of Benjamin
4. Other Mizpa/ehs

### 1. Identification.

The most important Mizpah of the Bible is that located just north of \*Jerusalem in the tribal territory of Benjamin. In the twentieth century there were two leading candidates for Mizpah of Benjamin: Nebi Samwil and Tell en-Naşbeh. Initially, textual references integrated with general topographic considerations were the only criteria available to judge between the two. In this early period Nebi Samwil was the leading contender for the Mizpah identification, based on its prominent position and the association of the prophet Samuel's name with the tomb at the site (McCown, 23-44). However, archaeological investigations at both sites have tilted the balance sharply toward Tell en-Naşbeh. Any site that is to be identified with Mizpah must contain material from Iron Age I (c. 1175-950 BCE), and especially from the sixth century BCE, when Mizpah achieved its greatest significance. Nebi Samwil, however, possesses little Iron Age I material but

contains substantial Iron Age II (c. 950-586 BCE) remains beginning only with the eighth century BCE, scanty material from the Persian period (c. 586-323 BCE), and more substantial material only after that (Magen and Dadon, 62-65). Its published material remains fail to match up with the history expected of the site based on textual references. On the other hand, Tell en-Naşbeh, excavated between 1926 and 1935 by W. Badè (Zorn 1997b), does contain material from Iron Age I and impressive remains from Iron Age II, and reaches the peak of its architectural and artifactual development precisely in the sixth to fifth centuries BCE. Finally, those who champion Nebi Samwil have not come up with a satisfying identification for Tell en-Naşbeh, if it is not Mizpah.

## 2. Approaches to the Study of Mizpah.

Some scholars approach the study of early textual references to Mizpah in Judges and Samuel with great misgivings (Arnold). They see the prominence of Mizpah in these tales not as a reflection of a real Iron Age I village, but as an attempt by writers working after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE to provide a cultic pedigree for the Mizpah of that era, when, they believe, Mizpah replaced Jerusalem as the religious center of Judah. It is crucial, however, to recognize that this supposed late cultic prominence is based chiefly on only two brief passages, both of which are subject to different interpretations.

The key verse, Jeremiah 41:5, occurs in the context of the coup attempt launched by the Davidic malcontent Ishmael against the Babylonian-appointed administration led by Gedaliah. There it states that "eighty men arrived from Shechem and Shiloh and Samaria, with their beards shaved and their clothes torn, and their bodies gashed, bringing grain offerings and incense to present at the temple of the LORD" (NRSV). The question is where this house of the Lord was located. Some have suggested that these pilgrims were on their way to make their offerings at a newly constructed temple in Mizpah. The argument runs that if Mizpah was the new capital for all of Judah, it should have its own cultic center. The location of a late cultic center at Mizpah is said to gain support from 1 Maccabees 3:46, where Judas and his army gather for prayer and fasting before battle. There it is noted that "Israel formerly had a place of prayer in Mizpah." Finally, supporters

of the exilic cult site at Mizpah note that the Judges-Samuel stories that mention Mizpah also mention cultic activities such as communal gatherings, prayer and fasting that are suggested to be characteristic of the exilic period and later, but not of the Iron Age.

Against these arguments it must first be noted that there is no unambiguous reference to a cult site at Mizpah in the exilic era. Moreover, among all the people associated with Gedaliah's administration, no priests or other cultic personnel are mentioned at all, save for the prophet \*Jeremiah (Jer 41:3, 16; 43:5-6). The only postexilic priests attested in contemporary sources are in Jerusalem (Lam 1:4). While the terminology used to describe cultic activities at Mizpah in Judges and Samuel may be late, and there is no guarantee that these are *only* late activities, these may simply be late elaborations of known earlier events for which there were few details. Although \*Solomon's temple had been destroyed and ritually contaminated, there is no reason to suppose that surviving cultic personnel did not have the means and rituals necessary to purify the site. If such means did not exist, the site never could have been properly cleansed. Finally, Tell en-Naşbeh has yielded no evidence in its sixth to fifth century occupation level of a major cult facility. The abundant artifactual remains (figurines, a small incense altar, fragments of cult stands) point to no more than domestic cultic activity, not a major religious center.

## 3. The History and Archaeology of Mizpah of Benjamin.

**3.1. Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Iron Age I (c. 1200-950 BCE).** Mizpah first appears as one of fourteen settlements in the tribal allotment of Benjamin north and west of Jerusalem (Josh 18:26) (*see Tribes of Israel and Land Allotments/Borders*). The dates assigned to the composition of the Benjaminite boundaries and settlement lists are varied and range throughout the monarchic period. What is most important to note is that a Benjaminite province/territory is already attested in the bureaucracy established by Solomon (1 Kings 4:18), and certainly some sort of boundary and accompanying list of settlements would have been needed for tax purposes and military enrollments.

Mizpah figures prominently as a gathering point for the Israelite tribes in the stories of the civil war against \*Gibeah (Judg 19-21), in the

battles against the \*Philistines (1 Sam 7:1-14), as one of three stations in the yearly circuit of \*Samuel (1 Sam 7:16) and in the election of \*Saul (1 Sam 10). There is no need to see here the hand of an exilic or later editor attempting to exalt the position of Mizpah. Mizpah would have been a natural place for forces to assemble for a battle against a Benjaminitic town or to face the inroads of the Philistines, who seem to have favored attacks into the central hill country in this general vicinity. No doubt these stories were shaped by later editors for religiopolitical reasons (e.g., the outrage at Gibeah coupled with the assembly at Mizpah is a counterweight to the election of the Gibeahite Saul at Mizpah), but there is little reason to dismiss the basic elements of these tales as completely unhistorical. Of the cultic activities that take place at Mizpah in these stories (swearing oaths, water libations, prayer, fasting, animal sacrifice), oaths and sacrifices have secure contexts in the Iron Age and earlier, the water libation is unique, and fasting for various reasons occurs in a variety of preexilic contexts. That is, most of the activities said to take place at Mizpah do not have to be exilic insertions at all.

Archaeological remains from this period are sparse in Tell en-Naşbeh Stratum IV and consist primarily of scores of rock-cut cisterns and silos that are typical of Israelite settlement sites in the central hill country (Zorn, *NEAEHL* 3.1098-99). Typical Iron I cooking pots (Wampler, 29, pl. 46:979, 982-983), storage jars (Wampler, 4, pl. 2:16-23, 26-28) and locally produced Philistine bichrome pottery (Wampler, pl. 86) also attest to occupation at this time.

**3.2. Kings, Hosea and Iron Age II (c. 950-586 BCE).** For a site located on the contentious border between the northern and southern kingdoms, Mizpah is mentioned very seldom during the monarchic era. During the war between Baasha of Israel and Asa of Judah in the early ninth century BCE, Asa was able to seize building materials brought by Baasha in an effort to push his border south to the vicinity of Ramah and use them to counterfortify Mizpah and \*Geba on his own northern border (1 Kings 15:22).

A Mizpah is mentioned in Hosea 5:1 in a broad context condemning the priests and rulers of Israel and Judah. It is uncertain if this is Mizpah of Benjamin, Mizpah of Gilead, or another Mizpah. Since the condemnations are aimed in parallel at the two countries, and Tabor

in the north is mentioned in the same verse, it seems more likely that Mizpah of Benjamin in the southern kingdom is meant.

Isaiah 10:27-32 records the route of march of an invader approaching Jerusalem from the north. Instead of taking the main hill country road past Mizpah, the attacker takes the secondary route through the Michmash pass—perhaps a testimony to the toughness of the defenses of Mizpah.

The archeological remains from Tell en-Naşbeh Stratum III attest to a thriving hill country town. The initial phase of occupation consists of a belt of mostly three-room houses arranged around the periphery of the site, with the broad back rooms of the dwellings forming a sort of casemate wall (*see* Architecture). Facing the entrances were the doorways to other dwellings further up the slope, with additional buildings stepping up beyond these. These were mostly modest structures, averaging no more than 60 m<sup>2</sup> (Zorn, *NEAEHL* 3.1099-1100, 1101; 1997c, 35). No clear remains of monumental public structures were identified. At some point a massive inset-out wall was built around this settlement, but lower down the slope (Zorn 1999). At the northeast corner of the site was an immense inner and outer gate complex (Zorn 1997a). This fortification system likely should be attributed to Asa's building campaign. Just inside this new wall on the south were a band of storage silos, while on the north the intramural space served to draw off water through drains in the city wall. The settlement numbered probably around nine hundred inhabitants (Zorn 1994, 44). Mizpah's importance as a border fortress is also confirmed by the eighty-six royal *mlk* stamped storage jar handles recovered there (McCown, 156-64, pl. 56:1-14) (*see* Hebrew Inscriptions).

**3.3. Jeremiah, Nehemiah and the Babylonian/Persian Period (c. 586-400 BCE).** Mizpah reached its zenith following Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE, when it was elevated to be the capital of the \*Babylonian-appointed administration initially led by Gedaliah. Personnel associated with his administration included Judean and Babylonian soldiers, military officers, royal women, eunuchs and the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 40:6; 41:3, 10, 16; 43:6). Gedaliah also encouraged refugees to return from neighboring lands (Jer 40:7-12). His term of office, however, was cut short when he and

many of his followers were assassinated by Ishmael, a member of the Davidic line, with the connivance of the \*Ammonite king (Jer 41:1-3; 2 Kings 25:25). The coup ultimately was foiled by elements loyal to Gedaliah, but the damage had been done, and a number of leading Judeans then fled to Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them (Jer 41:11-17).

The remains from Tell en-Naşbeh Stratum II dovetail nicely with the textual material (Zorn 2003; 1997c, 31-38, 66; *NEAEHL* 3.1101-2). The previous Iron Age town was systematically leveled and replaced by an entirely new architectural arrangement. At least six spacious four-room houses (over twice the size of typical Stratum III houses) have been identified, along with what may be remains of a Babylonian-style residence, and other structures. The inner gate of the gate complex was demolished to make way for new housing. Jar handles stamped with *m(w)sh*, probably from a royal estate at Mozah, found throughout Benjamin but most prominently at Tell en-Naşbeh, suggest the limited resource area upon which the postwar administration could draw (Zorn, Yellin and Hayes). Mesopotamian-style coffins (Zorn 1993), a dedicatory cuneiform inscription (Vanderhooft and Horowitz) and an ostrakon bearing a Mesopotamian name written in Hebrew characters attest to the Babylonian influence at the site (Zorn 2003, 436-37). Finally, the beautiful seal of "Ja'azaniah, the Servant of the King," bearing the image of a rooster in a fighting stance, should be mentioned (McCown, 163, pl. 57:4-5). Found in a tomb reused in the Byzantine period, the owner of this seal may be the officer of the same name mentioned in the texts (2 Kings 25:23; Jer 40:8). The settlement's inhabitants numbered probably around 450 (Zorn 1994, 44).

Mizpah retained some importance down into the fifth century BCE, as attested by Nehemiah 3, where Mizpah is said to have had its own district and two rulers (Neh 3:15, 18), and seems to have been, at least in part, under the special jurisdiction of the Persian governor of the Beyond-the-River province. This is well matched by the archaeological remains from Mizpah (Zorn 2003, 443-44). Jar handles marked by Yehud stamp impressions show that Mizpah was part of the Judean subprovince (McCown, 164-65, pl. 57:1-3, 13-14, 17-20). Pottery with wedge and circle decorations points to trade with \*Arabia (Zorn 2001), while Attic wares (McCown, 175-78, pl. 59-

60) and an imitation bronze tetradrachm (McCown, 174, pl. 102:1) attest to some connections with Greece, at least until the close of the fifth century BCE, when Naşbeh was destroyed by unknown assailants. This date is confirmed also by the pottery found on the floor of one of the houses (Zorn 2003, 42).

**3.4. Maccabees and the Hellenistic and Later Periods.** The last reference to Mizpah is in 1 Maccabees 3:46, where Jewish forces under Judas gather for religious observances before their battle with the Seleucid army at Emmaus. Mizpah was chosen because of the earlier cultic associations noted above. Little about the nature of Mizpah in the Hellenistic period can be gained from this brief text. Archaeological remains from Stratum I point to an agricultural estate. These include a wine press, field tower, two kilns and scattered walls (Zorn, *NEAEHL* 3.1102). Occupation off the main site continued into the Byzantine era, as is attested by the remains of a small church and tombs.

#### 4. Other Mizpa/ehs.

**4.1. Mizpah in Gilead.** In the story of Jacob's flight from Laban in Genesis 31, Laban overtakes Jacob in Gilead. After a parlay, they go their separate ways, but not before setting up sacred stones and a pillar as a witness to their agreement. The pillar is named Mizpah (Gen 31:49). This is likely the same Mizpah that features in the story of Jephthah's war in Gilead against the Ammonites (Judg 10:17; 11:11, 29, 34).

**4.2. Mizpah in Harmon.** In Joshua 11 Jabin, king of Hazor, gathers together a great coalition to resist the Israelite advance under Joshua. Among these are forces from the land of Mizpah beneath Mount Hermon (Josh 11:3). After the Israelite victory some of the Canaanite forces are chased as far the valley of Mizpah (Josh 11:8).

**4.3. Mizpeh in the Shephelah.** Among the towns located near \*Lachish in the Judean Shephelah was another Mizpeh (Josh 15:38).

**4.4. Mizpeh of Moab.** During the period of David's flight from Saul, he went to Mizpeh of \*Moab and deposited his parents with the king of Moab (1 Sam 22:3).

See also CITIES, TOWNS AND VILLAGES.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. P. M. Arnold, "Mizpah," *ABD* 4.879-81; I. Magen and M. Dadon, "Nebi Samwil," [Hebrew] *Qadmoniot* 118 (1999) 62-77; T. L.

**McClellan**, "Town Planning at Tell en-Naşbeh," *ZDPV* 100 (1984) 53-69; **C. C. McCown**, *Tell en-Naşbeh Excavated Under the Direction of the Late William Frederic Badè, 1: Archaeological and Historical Results* (Berkeley, CA: Palestine Institute of Pacific School of Religion and American Schools of Oriental Research, 1947); **D. Vanderhooft and W. Horowitz**, "The Cuneiform Inscription from Tell en-Naşbeh: The Demise of an Unknown King," *TA* 29 (2002) 318-27; **J. C. Wampler**, *Tell en-Naşbeh Excavated under the Direction of the Late William Frederic Badè, 2: The Pottery* (Berkeley, CA: Palestine Institute of Pacific School of Religion and American Schools of Oriental Research, 1947); **J. R. Zorn**, "Estimating the Population Size of Ancient Settlements: Methods, Problems, Solutions and a Case Study," *BASOR* 295 (1994) 31-48; idem, "An Inner and Outer Gate Complex at Tell en-Naşbeh," *BASOR* 307 (1997a) 53-66; idem, "A Legacy of Publication: William F. Badè and Tell en-Naşbeh," *BAR* 23.4 (1997b) 68-69; idem, "Mesopotamian-style Ceramic 'Bathtub' Coffins from Tell en-Naşbeh," *TA* 20 (1993) 216-24; idem, "Mizpah: Newly Discovered Stratum Reveals Judah's Other Capital," *BAR* 23.5 (1997c) 28-38; idem, "Naşbeh, Tell en-," *NEAEHL* 3.1098-1102; idem, "A Note on the Date of the 'Great Wall' of Tell en-Naşbeh: A Rejoinder," *TA* 26 (1999) 146-50; "Tell en-Naşbeh and the Problem of the Material Culture of the 6th Century," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, ed. O. Lipschits and J. Blenkinsopp (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003) 413-47; idem, "Wedge- and Circle-Imprinted Pottery: An Arabian Connection," in *Studies in the Archaeology of Israel and Neighboring Lands in Memory of Douglas L. Esse*, ed. S. R. Wolff (SAOC 59; Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago; Atlanta: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2001) 689-98; **J. R. Zorn, J. Yellin and J. Hayes**, "The M(W)H Stamp Impressions and the Neo-Babylonian Period," *IEJ* 44 (1994) 161-83.

J. R. Zorn

## MOAB, MOABITES

Moab is the plateau to the east and northeast of the Dead Sea, the home in the Iron Age of a nation-state of the same name, whose chief deity was Chemosh (Num 21:29). The northern half of the plateau, essentially the area between Madaba and the Arnon River, had several population groups, including parts of the Israelite tribes of

Reuben and Gad and tribal elements of the \*Ammonites. This demographic pattern is consistent with the etiological account of Genesis 19:30-38, which indicates that the Moabites were related to the Israelites and the Ammonites through Lot, Abraham's nephew. References to Moab in the Historical Books of the OT largely concern reminders of prior dealings with Israel and/or describe struggles between Moab and Israel or Judah for land and economic control.

1. Moabite-Israelite Relations in the Premonarchical Period
2. Moabite Relations During the Reigns of Saul and David
3. Moabite Relations During the Reign of Solomon
4. Moabite Relations with Israel and Judah During the Divided Monarchy
5. Moabite Relations with the Persian Province of Yehud

### 1. Moabite-Israelite Relations in the Premonarchical Period.

In the context of a covenant renewal ceremony, Joshua reminds his hearers of the Moabites, whose king Balak had failed in an attempt to gain the upper hand against Israel (Josh 24:8-10). Balak sought to hire Balaam, a well-known seer and diviner, to curse Israel (Num 22-24). References to Balak and/or Balaam for illustrative purposes occur several times in the OT and in later Jewish and Christian literature.

In Judges 11:12-28 Jephthah, one of Israel's \*judges, addresses an Ammonite king who had attacked Israel in an attempt to expand his territorial control. Jephthah was from Gilead, a forested area on the hills east of the Jordan River, where Israelites lived among several different population groups. He reminds the king of previous relations between Ammon, Moab and Israel (see Num 20:14-21; 21:21-32; 22-24). Jephthah too cites the story of Balak's fruitless effort to thwart Israel, although in contrast to Joshua 24:9-10, he makes the point that Balak never entered into conflict with Israel.

In the exchange with the Ammonite ruler it is not obvious why Jephthah refers to Moab and to its deity Chemosh. Some interpreters have seen the references as a clumsy or confused effort on the part of an editor in compiling the account (so Moore, 283). A compiler's confusion is possible, but so are other explanations. First, the exchange between Jephthah and the \*Ammon-