

In this study we're gonna explore a theological concept called Cosmic Geography. If you're unfamiliar with that, don't feel bad, it's not a very common topic of study, but it's still powerful. Basically, it's the study of how in earth's history and in certain areas on our planet, heaven and earth converged. The supernatural met the natural and something amazing, (and sometimes terrifying), took place. The Bible records many of these events and places, from Sodom and Gomorrah being destroyed to Christ being baptized in the Jordan River. Some of these places held a special significance, even before the event happened. And some of them took on an even deeper significance after the event happened. So, let's dig in...



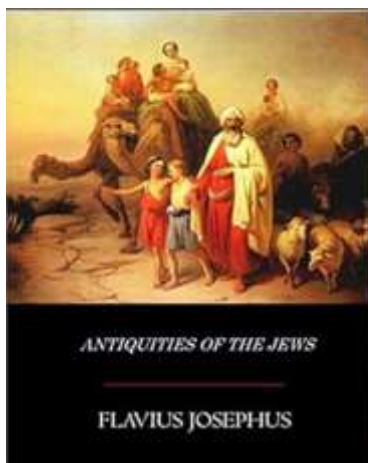
This is Migdal Eder. Migdal Eder is super old. It's so ancient that it's mentioned in the first book of the Bible, (Gen 35:21). That name means TOWER OF THE FLOCK.

This place is extremely interesting and controversial in theological circles. Not just for its exact location, but the details surrounding what happened there. There are facts about it that are agreed upon by respected scholars, and there are facts about it that are debated among those same Biblical scholars. Let's start with the undisputed facts.

About 6 miles from Jerusalem, there was a little town that was really not much more than a village. It didn't have a lot of people that lived there, but most of the people that did live there had a very specific job. They were shepherds. On the outskirts of that little village was this high tower called Migdal Eder, that was used for the protection of the sheep and lambs. That's why it's called TOWER OF THE FLOCK.

It was tall enough that the shepherds could climb on top and see the flock from a good distance away, and in the bottom section it had an enclosed area for caring for the flock that had feeding troughs and whatever else a shepherd of that time might need. So those are the undisputed facts.

Before we get to the disputed facts, or what I want to call THE BIG PICTURE, I think it's important to know why they are disputed. The main reason, (and really only reason), that some scholars call it into question is because the earliest sources that support the BIG PICTURE come about 100-200 years after Christ. Having said that, the reason there's no solid evidence from that exact time is because Jerusalem, along with all the historical records, was destroyed by Rome in 70 AD.



20 years after the destruction of Jerusalem and the surrounding towns and villages, a man named Flavius Josephus wrote a historical account of the Jewish people and their religious customs called "Antiquity of the Jews".

He's our first and earliest source for some of the information in The BIG picture, mainly establishing that this little village and the others around Jerusalem were important to the temple.

WHAT IS THE MISHNA?

- Hebrew: מִשְׁנָה, "repetition", from the verb *shanah* שָׁנָה, or "to study and review", also "secondary"
- First part of the Oral Torah
- The Mishnah teaches the oral traditions by example
- It brings to everyday reality the practice of the *mitzvot* as presented in the Torah which was much needed at the time when the Second Temple was destroyed (70 C.E)
- Aims to cover all aspects of human living
- The Mishnah does not claim to be the development of new laws, but rather the collection of existing traditions.



About 100 years later, a rabbi named Judah ha-Nasi compiled all the oral history and tradition of the Torah that he could find, and wrote what is called The Mishnah, a book that is well

respected by both Judaism and many Christian theologians. That compilation is over 1800 years old and just under 200 years after Christ. It's our second ancient source for THE BIG PICTURE.

As I said, scholars are in disagreement about the details. Some trust the accounts given by Josephus and the Mishnah and later sources, while others dismiss them. I'll present the details and let you decide for yourself. Again, where these scholars agree is the name and location of the village, the main occupation of the people that lived there, and that Migdal Eder, or Tower Of the Flock, was out in the fields of this village. Ok, are you ready for THE BIG PICTURE?



The shepherds of that little village had a special position. They were trained and "ordained", if you will, to raise and watch over the lambs that were destined to be sacrificed at the temple in Jerusalem. But not just any sacrificial lambs.

These lambs were specifically born for the Passover sacrifice. So not only were they to be without spot or blemish, according to Josephus these lambs had to have been born within roughly a 5 mile radius of Jerusalem.

These shepherds served God's temple in Jerusalem and made sure that their flocks met the requirements needed for sacrifice. They were familiar with Messianic prophecies and the intricate laws of shepherding sacrificial lambs. They were well respected and knowledgeable on the prophecies and sacrificial details.

One of the prophecies I'm sure they knew about, one that's kind of amazing, can be found in Micah. And it specifically mentions the Tower of the Flock and the name of this little village the shepherds lived in...

Micah 4:8-9 And you, O **tower of the flock**, The stronghold of the daughter of Zion, To you shall it come, Even the former dominion shall come, The kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem." 9 Now why do you cry aloud? Is there no king in your midst? Has your counselor perished? **For pangs have seized you like a woman in labor.**

When you look at that phrase TOWER OF THE FLOCK in the Hebrew, it says **MIGDAL EDER**. If you continue reading the context of these verses, you'll see that it's a dual prophecy. In one aspect, God is telling Israel that they will go into captivity to Babylon, but through that captivity they will be redeemed. And for some reason He mentions that tower on the outskirts of that little village.

That's weird, until you consider the other aspect of this dual prophecy. God is using Micah to prophesy the coming Messiah who is the True King and Counselor and who is somehow connected with that tower. Notice how God uses the metaphor of a woman in labor to describe Israel.

You may say: "Wait that seems ok, but not very specific about the Messiah and I thought you said the name of the village was mentioned in there"

We're about to get there. First let me set the stage for the big reveal, if you haven't already guessed.

Did you know that the division of chapter and verse aren't in the original manuscripts. Neither the Greek of the N.T. or the Hebrew of the Old? Those verse and chapter numbers were added much later to make it easier to reference and study the Bible. There's nothing wrong with them at all. They're great, it's just that sometimes a new chapter will start in the middle of a concept or topic being explained, and to our English-speaking minds, a new chapter usually means a new topic.

We can sometimes miss that one thing is connected to another thing in the next chapter. But, if you pay close attention, it might jump out at you. These verses in Micah 4 are a great example of this. There are 4 more verses in chapter 4, all speaking of how God will protect Israel. Then the chapter ends and chapter 5 begins. But the topic hasn't changed and the dual prophecy is still being told. In fact, right at the beginning of chapter 5, the focus shifts to the Messiah even more. Let's take a look...

Micah 5:2-4 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting." 3 Therefore He shall give them up, Until the time that she who is in labor has given birth; Then the remnant of His brethren Shall return to the children of Israel. 4 And He shall stand and feed His flock In the strength of the LORD, In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God; And they shall abide, For now He shall be great To the ends of the earth;

Here in chapter 5, we get a vision of the Messiah, "whose goings are from of old, from everlasting" (that's a fancy way of saying He's eternal), and it gives us the name of the place He'll come from... Bethlehem Ephrathah.

These 2 names are used interchangeably for the little village we've been learning about. Bethlehem means "House of Bread", and Ephrathah means

"Fullness of Fruit". A fitting description for the place where the Bread of Life would come forth from. Notice God uses the woman in labor metaphor again, just like He did when talking about the Tower of the Flock, Migdal Eder. Also notice that the Messiah is shown as a shepherd who will feed His flock in the strength of YHVH. Now back to THE BIG PICTURE...

The Mishnah states that the male lambs born at Bethlehem were destined for the Passover sacrifice. These lambs had to be spotless and without blemish, so one of the ways these shepherds were trained to protect them from harm was to take the mother ewe into the enclosed area below the tower when she was ready to give birth. When the baby lamb was born these shepherds would wrap them in swaddling the same way you wrap a new born baby human, so the baby lamb wouldn't hurt themselves and get blemished.

Luke 2:8-12 Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. 10 Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

Now imagine you're a shepherd and you're out in the fields that surround Bethlehem late one night, watching the sheep with some other shepherds, when suddenly, an

angel appears and lights up the sky and tells all of you that the Messiah has been born and the sign to find Him will be to look for a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a feeding trough.

This is conjecture on my part, but I'm pretty sure they had to pass by Migdal Eder on the way to Bethlehem, and I'm pretty sure they were very familiar with those verses that mention Migdal Eder and Bethlehem in relation to the Messiah, so you can do the math. If it were me, that would be the first place I checked, because I know Sister Sally doesn't have a manger in her house.

There's no written record that specifically says Christ was born in Migdal Eder, why would there be? If you're born in the car on your way to the hospital, your birth certificate isn't gonna say "the car" as place of birth. So, while there isn't explicit proof as to the actual birthplace of the KING OF KINGS, there are many, many clues.

1 Corinthians 5:7 *Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.*

1 Peter 1:18-19 *knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

I'll end with those verses and leave it up to you to decide which side of THE BIG PICTURE debate you land on. But either way, we know without a doubt that in the area of Bethlehem, over 2000 years ago, heaven touched earth and created a COSMIC GEOGRAPHICAL location that will be remembered for all of time. AMEN.