

MOUNT ARBEL

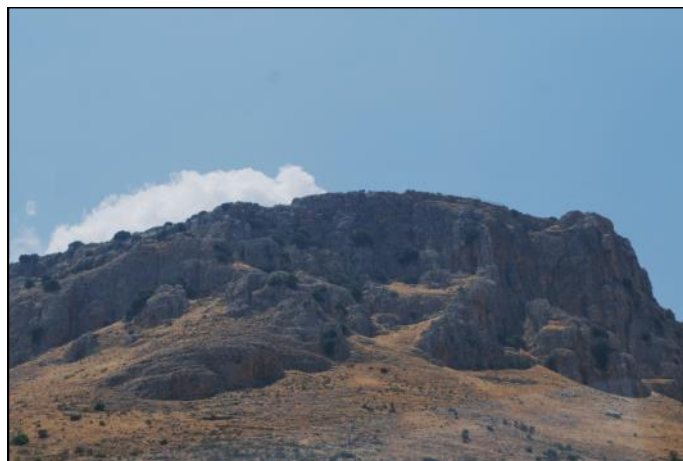
Mount Arbel is located on the west side of the Sea of Galilee between Migdal and Tiberias. Below Mount Arbel is a stream bed (Wadi Arbel) that is dry most of the year. This wadi separates Mount Arbel from Mount Nitai, which is farther west. The cliffs on the north side of Mount Arbel overlook the Plain of Gennesaret. From this vantage point, one can see the Druze community of Hamam to the west. To the north, the modern town of Migdal is visible. Just below the mountain to the northeast is Migdal Junction, the site of ancient Magdala (the hometown of Mary Magdalene). Farther north is Kibbutz Ginosar, where the Galilee Boat was discovered. Continuing along the coast, one encounters Tabgha, the traditional (but incorrect) site of the feeding of the 5,000, and Capernaum, the base of operations for Jesus' ministry.



Mount Nitai and Mount Arbel
(from Mount Arbel)



Mount Arbel and Mount Nitai
(from the Sea of Galilee)



Mount Arbel



Hamam (a Druze Community)



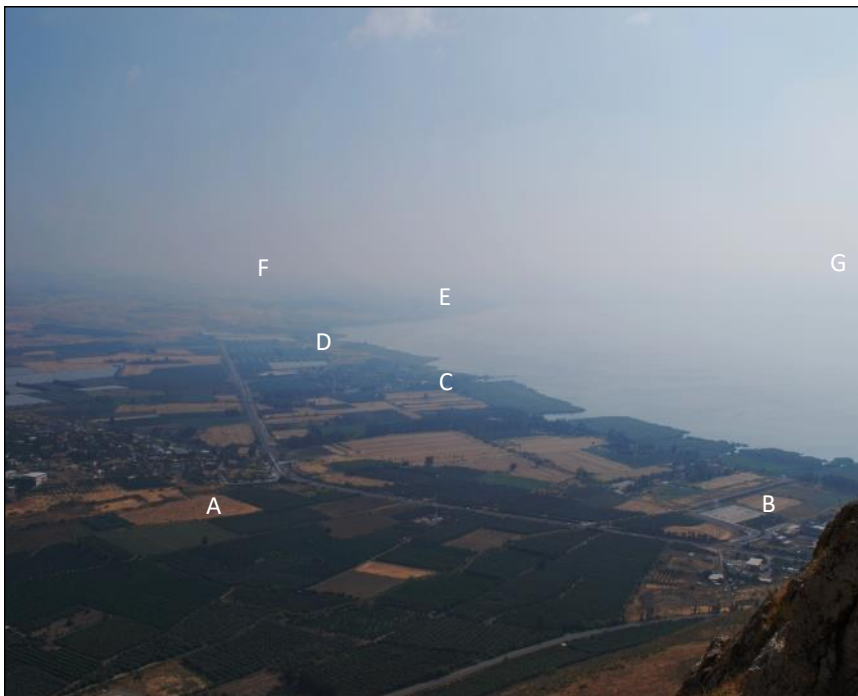
Hamam and Migdal



Migdal and Ginosar



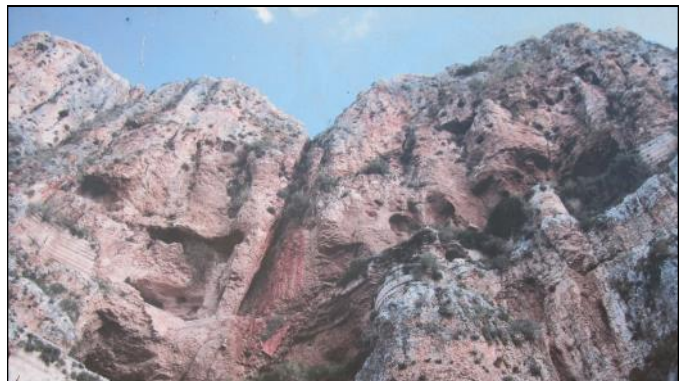
Ginosar (Site of the Galilee Boat)



- CITIES**
- A Migdal
 - B Magdala (Migdal Junction)
 - C Ginosar
 - D Tabgha
 - E Capernaum
 - F Chorazin
 - G Bethsaida

Only one reference in the Bible seems to allude to Mount Arbel. Actually, the reference is to Beth Arbel, which may refer to Arbela, a town located on the mountain. This site is mentioned in Hosea 10:14, where the prophet told about Israelite women and children being pushed over the cliffs to their death: “The roar of battle will arise against your people, so that all your fortresses will be devastated—as Shalman devastated Beth Arbel on the day of battle, when mothers were dashed to the ground with their children.” “Shalman” may be an abbreviation for Shalmaneser V, the Assyrian king who besieged Samaria (725-722 B.C.).

Mount Arbel has natural caves that were used over the centuries by those hiding from their enemies. In 161 B.C., a Seleucid general named Bacchides killed Maccabean supporters who had sought refuge in the caves (Josephus *Antiquities* 12.11.11; 1 Maccabees 9:2). In 38 B.C., Herod the Great attacked supporters of his rival Antigonus, who were hiding in the caves. His soldiers were lowered down in chests from the top of the cliff. They flushed their stubborn enemies out of the caves with fire brands and killed them. Preferring death to slavery, one man killed his own family, pushed them off the cliff, and then he himself jumped from the cave (Josephus *Wars* 1.16.2-4).



Arbel Cliffs



An ancient road also ran between Mount Arbel and Mount Nitai, connecting the Sea of Galilee to other villages and towns in the region. Traveling southwest through the Netofa Valley, one could reach destinations such as Cana, Sepphoris, and Nazareth. Jesus would have likely walked on this road when traveling between Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee. He may

have visited Arbel when he toured the cities of Galilee: “Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness” (Mt. 9:35). One can imagine sitting on the mountain during the first century and watching Jesus travel through the land to minister to those in need. The ruins of a synagogue can be found on Mount Arbel, although they are dated from the fourth century A.D.—much later than the time of Christ.

The Druze. More modern cliff dwellings at Mount Arbel were built by the Druze. This religious group has about 100,000 people residing in Israel, with 18,000 of these living in the Golan Heights. The largest Druze community in Israel, Daliyat el-Carmel, is found on Mount Carmel. Outside Israel, the Druze also live in Syria and Lebanon, having a total population of about one million people. The Druze religion began as a monotheistic faith about A.D. 1000, blending elements of Islam with Greek and Hindu philosophy. When this movement first began, there was a brief period of proselytizing. However, from about A.D. 1050, it has been closed to converts. Since the Druze believe in reincarnation, they feel that everyone has already had an opportunity to join their faith. The Druze religion is secretive; only members have access to their religious books. Interestingly, the men wear pants with a pouch because they believe the Messiah will be born to a man!



Druze Man from the Golan Heights