

**Meroz**

Meroz (MT *Mērōz*, “doom city”; LXX Μηροζ) is a place mentioned only in the Song of Deborah (Judg 5:23), where the inhabitants are cursed because they did not participate in the battle. Meroz might also appear as *mrḥky* in the execration texts (E 24; Posener: 77–78). Septuagint and Vulgate transcribe this

place name as a proper toponym, whereas Jerome translates Meroz with “waters of sacraments,” thus, probably relating it to Aramaic *rāzā*’ “secret” (Jerome, *Nom. Hebr.* 33.7).

Sometimes Meroz is identified as Meron or Megiddo, but this is unlikely. It is debatable whether Meroz was considered to be an Israelite or a Canaanite city. If it was an Israelite city, it would have been cursed due to its absence in the battle. However, other tribes not attending the battle were only rebuked and not cursed. If it was a Canaanite city, it might have been ally to an Israelite tribe and refused to take part in the battle. Perhaps Meroz was situated between Israelite and Canaanite territory, in which case it could be located in the region west of the Tabor, east of the Kishon and north of Taanach.

Several places have been suggested as possible locations for biblical Meroz. Many of the proposed sites were either not settled during the Iron Age or lie too far away to have been involved in the battle: Ḥirbet Mārūs (1990.2710), Kafr Mišr (1898.2277) or el-Muraşşaş (1950.2185). The site el-Mazār (1841.2148), settled in the Iron Age, is another possibility, but it would imply necessarily that the Arabic name evolved by way of metathesis. Meroz has also been identified with Shimron-Meron (Josh 12:20) and Ḥirbet Semūniye (1700.2344). In Byzantine times, Merrous was a village twelve miles from Sebaste near Dothaim, Tell Dōtān (1726.2021) (Eusebius, *Onom.* 128.5). Meroz might thus be identified with el-Ḥirbe (1749.2013), a site with pottery from Iron Age I to Early Roman times, but it is also too far away from the battlefield. However, Meroz may simply be a literary invention (“doom city”) bearing the perfectly appropriate name for a cursed city.

**Bibliography:** ■ Abel, F.-M., *Géographie de la Palestine*, vol. 2 (EBib; Paris 1938). ■ Albright, W. F., “Some Additional Notes on the Song of Deborah,” *JPOS* 2 (1922) 284–85. ■ Alt, A., “Meroz,” *ZAW* 58 (1941) 244–47. ■ Gaß, E., *Die Ortsnamen des Richterbuches in historischer und redaktioneller Perspektive* (ADPV 35; Wiesbaden 2005). ■ Hunt, M., “Meroz (Place),” *ABD* 4 (New York 1992) 705–6. ■ Neef, H.-D., “Meroz: Jdc 5,23a,” *ZAW* 107 (1995) 118–22. ■ Posener, G., *Princes et pays d’Asie et de Nubie* (Brussels 1940). ■ Simons, J. J., *The Geographical and Topographical Texts of the Old Testament* (SFSMD 2; Leiden 1959). ■ Zertal, A., *The Manasseh Hill Country Survey*, vol. 1: *The Shechem Syncline* (CHANE 21/1; Leiden 2004). [Esp. 73, 154]

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