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“SOME WORTHLESS AND RECKLESS FELLOWS”: LANDLESSNESS AND PARASOCIAL LEADERSHIP IN JUDGES

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INTRODUCTION

This essay is an attempt to explore certain aspects of three provocative tales in the book of Judges—the rise to power of Abimelek in ch. 9 and Jephthah in ch. 11, and the actions of the landless Danites in ch. 18—and to interpret these stories in light of what evidence we possess regarding the existence of so-called *habiru*¹ groups in the 2nd millennium BCE and in light of some anthropological theory regarding the behavior of “parasocial” bands in the formation of (at least) short-term political and military structures in the Near East.² The preponderance of ideological readings of Judges in the last 20 years may leave one with the mistaken impression that the book has value only as a kind of cultural or theological foil, meant to demonstrate the disastrous results of violence and power in a “backwards” ancient context.³ As stimulating as these

¹ For the sake of standardization and convenience, I have rendered this term as “*habiru*” throughout the essay. The nature of the cuneiform script could produce various permutations of this term, and thus possible readings include *‘abiru*, *‘apiru*, *ḫabiru*, *ḫapiru*, *ḫabiru*, and *ḫapiru* (in Akk. cuneiform, *ḫ* could represent three distinct guttural sounds, *ḫ*, *ḫ*, and *‘*, and the *ab* sign could also be read as *ap*). Although some Egyptian and Ugaritic evidence suggests that the second consonant was a “p” and the first letter was an *‘ayin* (thus, *‘apiru*), Bottéro (“*Ḫabiru*,” *RLA* 4, [1972], 14–27) points to several instances where the cuneiform can *only* be rendered as *ḫabiru*. All lines of argumentation in this regard have been met with opposition, and there is currently no consensus on the spelling or etymology of the term. See M. Salvini, *The Ḫabiru Prism of King Tunip–Teššup of Tikumani* (Roma: Istituti editoriali e poligrafici internazionali, 1996), 10–11; M. Greenberg, *The Ḫab/piru* (AOS, 39; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1955), 2–11; O. Loretz, *Ḫabiru - Hebräer: eine sozio-linguistische Studie über die Herkunft des Gentiliziums ‘ibrī vom Appellativum habiru* (BZAW 160; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), 18–88; N.P. Lemche, “Habiru, Hapiru,” *ABD* vol. 3, ed. D.N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6–7; W.H.C. Propp, *Exodus 19–40* (AB, 2A; New York: Doubleday, 2006), 748.

² I borrow the category of the “parasocial” leader from the Assyriologist M.B. Rowton, the meaning of which is discussed in detail below.

³ See, e.g., M. Bal, *Death & Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988); R. Ryan,

studies are, commentators have sometimes ignored important historical and anthropological data embedded within the book of Judges' depiction of certain figures and institutions, which, despite their overtly theological and legendary coloring in the present form of the book, provide a glimpse into the chaotic world of a nation in the process of political and social stabilization.⁴

In this study, therefore, I argue that the presentation of bands of mercenaries, brigands, landless groups, and the careers of some pre-monarchic leaders have instructive parallels with what we know (or may surmise) regarding the activities of habiru-like bands in the Amarna letters, the Idrimi inscription, and other texts, and that the activities of such groups in Syria-Palestine at the close of the 2nd millennium are reflected in the narrative of the book of Judges.⁵ It

Judges (Readings: A New Biblical Commentary; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 1997); B.G. Webb, *The Book of Judges: An Integrated Reading* (JSOTSup 45; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987). For a collection of studies on narrative criticism, deconstructive, structuralist, postcolonial, and gendered reading of Judges, see the essays in *Judges & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, 2nd edition, ed. G.A. Yee (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), and for a study on the reception history of the book in medieval and modern periods, see D.M. Gunn, *Judges* (Blackwell Bible Commentaries; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2005).

⁴ In general, I follow those who, like J.A. Hackett ("There Was No King in Israel: The Era of the Judges," in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, ed. M.D. Coogan [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998], 132–64) and S. Niditch in her new commentary (*Judges* [OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008], 6–8), take the book of Judges seriously as an historical source for pre-monarchic Israel. See also the cautious comments of B. Tidiman in *Le Livre des Juges* (Vaux-sur-Seine: Édifac, 2004), 22–25, 33–39, and the still useful, though somewhat dated, studies in *Judges*, Vol. III of *The World History of the Jewish People*, ed. B. Mazar, esp. 129–63, and also J.A. Soggin, *Judges* (OTL; London: SCM Press, 1981), 169, who thinks that the story of Abimelek in 9:1–6 contains "important historical information." Other scholars still deeply concerned with history may, of course, not see the book of Judges as (primarily) preserving accurate memories of the pre-monarchic period; cf. T. Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 136, where Römer asserts that the period of the Judges "is nothing other than a literary invention of the Deuteronomistic school," and M. Brettler, *The Book of Judges*, (Old Testament Readings; London: Routledge, 2002), where the book is read as a political tract in favor of the Davidic kingship.

⁵ For a strong denial of the continuity between habiru and Hebrew, see A. Rainey's reviews of N.K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, and O. Loretz, *Habiru-Hebräer*, both in *JAOS* 107 (1987), 541–43 and 539–41, respectively. Rainey's more recent statements on the topic appear in "Whence Came the Israelites and Their Language?," *IEJ* 57 (2007), 41–64 and "Shasu or Habiru: Who Were the Early Israelites?" *BAR* 34/6 (2008), where Rainey asserts that the habiru-Hebrew connection is "silly," and the result of "absurd mental gymnastics" by "wishful thinkers who

would be something of an understatement to affirm that the questions regarding the relationship between the term “Hebrew” (עִבְרִי) and the *habiru* are complex and have been the occasion for profound disagreement over the past century.⁶ There are those who

tend to ignore the reality of linguistics.” Rainey’s basic linguistic critique, which seems perfectly valid as far as it goes, is that the only possible root for the 2nd millennium term is *‘p-r, and the lack of elision of v₂ in the cuneiform examples demonstrates either v₁ or v₂ was long, thus nullifying the supposed development of the stative *‘*abiru* > ‘*ēher*, ‘*ibri* (on analogy with Arab. *malik*, Phoen. *milk*, Akk. *malku/maliku*, pl. *malkū*); as Rainey points out, this linguistic argument had already been made by Borger in 1958. See Rainey’s review of Loretz, 541. Cf. F.M. Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 69 n. 57.

One may, of course, sidestep the linguistic issue by arguing that either the term “Hebrew” is some kind of uniquely (or imperfectly) derived form of the word *habiru* that does not adhere to certain rules of consonant change, or that the terms existed simultaneously in Palestine in such a way as to facilitate their conflation on a social level. The term “Hebrew” (עִבְרִי/ם) appears 34 times in the HB, in 32 different verses (if one accepts Na’aman’s emendation for 2 Sam 20:14, then 35x in 33 verses; see his “*Habiru and Hebrews: The Transfer of a Social Term to the Literary Sphere*,” in *idem, Canaan in the Second Millennium B.C.E.* [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005], 262–69); eighteen times in speaking of “the Hebrews” in the mouths of foreigners (always Egyptians or Philistines), or spoken by “Hebrews” as a self-identification to foreigners, or by the narrator in the context of identifying Hebrews *vis-à-vis* foreigners (Gen 39:14,17; 40:15; 41:12; 43:32; Exod 1:15,16,19; 2:6,7,11,13; 1 Sam 4:6,9; 13:19; 14:11; 29:3; Jon 1:9); six times when speaking of stipulations for owning a “Hebrew” slave (Exod 21:2; Deut 15:12[2x], Jer 34:9[2x],14); six times YHWH is called “the God of the Hebrews” (Exod 3:18; 5:3; 7:16; 9:1,13; 10:3); and four times in other circumstances: (a) in Gen 14:13, Abram is called “Abram the Hebrew”; (b) in 1 Sam 13:3, Saul blows a trumpet and wants all “the Hebrews” to hear of Jonathan’s victory over the Philistines; (c) in 1 Sam 13:7, “some Hebrews” cross the Jordan and go over to Gad and Gilead, apparently in fear of the Philistines (?), and earlier in 1 Sam 13:6, “the Israelites” are mentioned, suggesting that “the Hebrews” are a group separate from “the Israelites”; (d) in 1 Sam 29:3, the Philistines call David and his men “Hebrews,” but Saul is then referred to as the king of “Israel” (but cf. 1 Sam 4:6,9; 13:19; 14:11?); and (e) 1 Sam 14:21 clearly distinguishes the Hebrews from the Israelites. Thus, the Bible itself indicates variation in the use of the term, suggesting confusion or tension within the corpus over time.

⁶ Besides the studies of Gottwald and Mendenhall (cited below), Assyriologists and biblical scholars have attacked the problem from many different angles. See, e.g., M. Liverani, “Farsi *Habiru*,” *Vicino Oriente* 2 (1979), 65–77; M. Weippert, *The Settlement of the Israelite Tribes in Palestine: A Critical Survey of Recent Scholarly Debate*, trans. J.D. Martin (Naperville: SCM Press, 1971), 63–126; Greenberg, 92; Loretz; R. Borger, “Das Problem der ‘*apiru* (*Habiru*),” *ZDVP* 74 (1958), 121–32; E. Chiera, “*Habiru and Hebrews*,” *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 49/2

have, on linguistic grounds, pointed to the very real problems in the Hebrew-habiru connection, though, as A. Kuhrt aptly argues, the linguistic link between the two terms should have never been the linchpin for the sociological and literary comparisons among disaffected groups in the 14th – 12th century BCE setting.⁷ Of course, the landmark studies of G. Mendenhall and N. Gottwald seized upon just such sociological comparisons, particularly regarding the putative transformation of the habiru (or similar groups) into Hebrews at the beginning of Israel's existence in the hill country of Israel in the 13th – 12th centuries BCE.⁸

(1933), 115–24; R. de Vaux, “Le Problème des Hapiru après Quinze Années,” *JNES* 27 (1968), 221–28; J.C.L. Gibson, “Observations on Some Important Ethnic Terms in the Pentateuch,” *JNES* 20 (1961), 217–38; E. Lipinski, “L’esclave hébreu,” *VT* 26 (1976), 120–24; J.L. Myres, “The Habiru, the Hebrews, and the Arabs,” *Man* 47 (1947), 78–79; J. Wansbrough, “Gentilics and Appellatives: Notes on Aḥābīš Qurayš,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 49 (1986), 203–10; K. Koch, “Die Hebräer vom Auszug aus Ägypten bis zum Großreich Davids,” *VT* 19 (1969), 37–81.

⁷ See A. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East, c. 3000—330 BC*, vol. II (Routledge: London, 1995), 436: “what scholars have stressed increasingly in recent years is that the [habirus became Hebrews] hypothesis does not depend crucially on the linguistic link. Rather, what is important is that the evidence for the existence of groups of social outcasts, such as the ‘apiru/habiru, provides the basis for a more fruitful analysis of the origins of Israel which solves many of the problems raised by the other two approaches [i.e., conquest and “peaceful infiltration” theories] and is more consistent with current sociological analyses. It also makes it possible to set Israel’s development within the general context of socio-political change in the wider world of the Near East.” Along these same lines, see also the comments of M. Chaney, “Ancient Palestinian Peasant Movements and the Formation of Premonarchical Israel,” D.N. Freedman and D.F. Graf (eds.), *Palestine in Transition: The Emergence of Ancient Israel*, ed. (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1983), 57. Though Rainey prefers to correlate the early Israelites with Shasu moving out of the steppeland of Midian—a proposition that is at least equally problematic as the habiru-Hebrew connection—he has also recently stated that, “sociologically, it can be said that Jephthah and his militia had become like the Late Bronze Age ‘apiru men” (A. Rainey and S. Notley, *The Sacred Bridge: Carta’s Atlas of the Biblical World* [Jerusalem: CARTA Jerusalem, 2006], 140). For examples of the complicated relationship between the way Egyptian scribes used the designations habiru and Shasu, see, N. Na’aman, “The Town of Ibirta and the Relations of the ‘Apiru and the Shasu,” *Göttinger Miszellen* 57 (1982), 27–33.

⁸ The prevalence of habiru elements in the 14th cen. BCE Amarna Letters, combined with the decay and collapse of the LB city states in the 13th cen. and the rise of Israel in the 13th – 12th cen., led some, including Mendenhall and Gottwald, to correlate the withdrawal of “peasants” from putatively oppressive Canaanite political structures with the beginning of the formation of the Israelite tribes. See G. Mendenhall, “The Hebrew

Apparently, according to the biblical texts, bands of social outcasts, debtors, mercenaries, and malcontents survived well into the period of the monarchy (see 1 Sam 22:1–2; 2 Sam 20; 1 Kgs 11:23–24), demonstrating the fluidity with which the formal monarchic structure could be adopted—or become unglued. Though David’s rise to power and connection to gangs of brigands has been amply studied, far less attention has been given to the appearance of similar groups and phenomena in the book of Judges; past studies comparing habiru-like bands with groups in the Hebrew Bible have not delved deeply enough into the details of the narratives in Judges, leaving important aspects of short-term parasocial leadership, geography, and mythic or folkloric patterns underexplored.⁹ This essay, then, seeks to fill these gaps with a close examination of the relevant biblical materials. My argument will proceed in three parts. First, I review three stories in Judges wherein apparently landless, peripheral actors come to occupy the main stage of military action and power. Next, I engage with the problem of habiru bands and other disaffected groups in the ancient Near East as a background for the final portion of the paper, where I return to the Judges narratives in question to argue that characters such as Abimelek and Jephthah can be instructively categorized as parasocial leaders whose existence fits nicely within known categories of social change in the Levant. By extension, I contend, the narrative of the book of Judges may be read as the most sustained literary product in the ancient Near East depicting a world of habiru-like actors generating political transformation.

Conquest of Palestine,” *BA* 25 (1962), 66–87; N.K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250–1040 B.C.E.* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979). For Mendenhall, Israel’s emergence was a “specifically religious” phenomenon (86), and the early Israelite communities “regarded sociological factors and economic or political power as of secondary concerns of human beings” (87), whereas, for Gottwald (*passim*), economic factors play the prominent role and Yahwism grows out of the egalitarian, revolutionary nature of Israelite social and economic structures.

⁹ Some exceptions which have proven influential regarding my formulation of this topic and the ideas presented here are L. Stager’s “The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel,” *BASOR* 260 (1985), esp. pp. 24–28, and Na’aman’s “Habiru and Hebrews.” See also Na’aman’s most recent statement on the topic, “David’s Sojourn in Keilah in Light of the Amarna Letters,” *VT* 60 (2010), 87–97, as well as “Habiru-Like Bands in the Assyrian Empire and Bands in Biblical Historiography,” *JAOS* 120 (2000), 621–24. Note that Liverani (“Farsi Habiru”) was one of the first to point out the similarity between habiru groups and some social configurations in the Bible.

THREE BANDS IN JUDGES

In Judges 9, 11, and 18, we encounter three distinct narrative scenes in which a band of mercenaries or socially peripheral individuals plays a key function. A brief examination of these scenes will allow us a glimpse into what we will come to identify as “parasocial elements” in the rise of individual leaders in Judges, and also provide some demonstration of the formative role these elements are said to provide in fomenting short-term, local, charismatic leadership structures in the biblical narrative.

ABIMELEK’S MERCENARIES AND GAAL’S KINSMEN

Judges 9 narrates some tumultuous events in the putative three-year pre-monarchic monarchy of Gideon’s (Jerubaal’s) son Abimelek. The extent to which Judges chs. 8–9 attempt to present either Gideon or Abimelek as a true “king,” a מלך, is somewhat ambiguous. For example, consider the extended narrative in which Gideon pursues the Midianites in ch. 8. After receiving no help from the residents of Succuth and Penuel in his military quest—for which the inhabitants of the two towns are subsequently punished (8:16–17)—Gideon captures the Midianite kings Zebah and Zalmunna and interrogates them regarding the whereabouts of the men they supposedly killed at Tabor (8:18). Zebah and Zalmunna respond by describing the appearance of the slain men: “They are just like you, like the appearance of the sons of the king (מלך).”¹⁰ Indeed, the men killed at Tabor resemble Gideon physically, for, as Gideon informs us, they were his brothers (8:19). The reference to a מלך in v. 18 foreshadows the request that follows upon Gideon’s victories: in 8:22, the Israelites demand that Gideon take on a more exalted leadership role. The repeated use of the verb משל (“rule”) instead of מלך in the demand (and in Gideon’s negative response) only barely hides the fact that the people are asking for a hereditary, monarch-like series of rulers in Gideon and his sons (גם אתה גם בנך) גם בן בנך.¹¹

Gideon piously refuses the offer and his progeny quickly descend into a struggle for ascension. The opportunist Abimelek succeeds in convincing the Shechemites that they must choose between appointing a single ruler (viz., Abimelek) or face the vicissitudes of a seventy-man council of rulers (comprised of Abimelek’s brothers) (9:2).¹² The citizens of Shechem are quick to oblige. Ab-

¹⁰ Or perhaps, “...like royalty.”

¹¹ Note that the verb משל is used to describe the rule of a king in Isa 19:4.

¹² אבִי־מֶלֶךְ was originally conceived as a theophoric PN (possibly “my father [=YHWH] is king,” as correctly noted by Boling, *Judges* [AB 6A; Garden City: Doubleday], 162–63). But, as Niditch (115) points out, the title is doubly ironic, since Abimelek cannot claim divine legitimation for his role as king from any divine מלך, and his human father, Gideon, had

imelek is explicitly made king (מֶלֶךְ) with relatively little fanfare in 9:6, and Abimelek receives seventy pieces of silver from the local Ba'al Berith temple treasury. "Some worthless and reckless fellows" (אֲנָשִׁים רִיקִים וּפְחֹזִים)¹³ are promptly hired, and these individuals presumably aid Abimelek in murdering the seventy competing brothers in 9:5 (Jotham alone escapes the slaughter and fatally curses Abimelek for his tactics in 9:7–20). The phrase אֲנָשִׁים רִיקִים וּפְחֹזִים appears only here (in 9:4),¹⁴ and very little is said regarding the origin or identity of this motley band of Abimelek's hired followers.¹⁵ One might suppose these mercenaries had already lived in the vicinity and formed a private army for Abimelek at Arumah, where we find the king dwelling at the beginning of rival bandit-leader Gaal ben Ebed's attempted insurrection.¹⁶ The identity of

refused the title of מֶלֶךְ. For the motif of seventy descendents elsewhere in Judges, see 12:14. One cannot help but connect the scene here in 9:1–6 with that in 2 Kgs 10:1–7, where Ahab's seventy sons are killed and delivered over to Jehu. See also the 8th cen. BCE Panamuwwa II inscription (*KAI* 215, line 3), where 70 heirs to the throne are exterminated, as pointed out by Soggin, 168. As Na'aman, "David's Sojourn," 91–92, notices, the phrase X בעלי ("lords of X") is a decidedly *negative* label in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Judg 20:5; Josh 24:11; 2 Sam 21:12), and so the description of the Shechemite council as the בעלי שכם in Judg 9:2,6 already colors these figures pejoratively.

¹³ Soggin translates this phrase as "adventurers"; Boling, *Judges* (165) goes with "idle mercenaries," and Niditch (112) notes that the Vaticanus (which is *Kaige* in Judges) tradition has "cowardly," which is only partially correct, since the full reading is *ἀνδρας κενους και δειλους* ("empty/morally vacant and cowardly men"). Furthermore, Niditch asserts that the Old Latin has "fearless" here, though this reading is not clear to me; in the marginal notes of Brooke/McLean (*The Old Testament in Greek*, Vol. I Part IV. Joshua, Judges and Ruth [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917]), 826, the OL is listed as *uagos* ("vagrant, wandering, roaming"), whereas the Ethiopic translates as "in/of the fields" (i.e., "peasants"?). At any rate, the awkwardness in the MT—reflected by the various interpretations given in non-Hebrew traditions—is to preferred, and we will return to some more specific possibilities for what אֲנָשִׁים רִיקִים may be below.

¹⁴ אֲנָשִׁים רִיקִים on its own appears in Judg 11:3 (discussed below) and 2 Chr 13:7, where the description is used in parallel with בני בליעל ("scoundrels," as in Deut 13:14; Judg 19:22, 20:13; 1 Sam 2:12, 10:27, 25:17; 1 Kgs 21:10,13, etc.). פְּחֹזִים ("reckless ones") occurs only here and in Zeph 3:4; cf. Gen 49:4 and Jer 23:32.

¹⁵ J.L. McKenzie, *The World of the Judges* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 138, makes the interesting suggestion that Abimelek's band of hired men were remnants of a band already hired and used during the life of his father, Gideon (see Judg 8:4).

¹⁶ Some translations (e.g., NJPS, RSV) have chosen to read the MT's בתרמה (a *hapax legomenon*) in 9:31 as a reference to a location, "at Tormah" (see also Niditch, 113), which is probably incorrect. Note that the reading in the Lucianic and Hexaplaric traditions, *μετα δωρων* ("with gifts," which agrees with the OL, *cum muneribus*), probably does not make sense here (as

Gaal and his kinsmen (אחייו) is also ambiguous. Are these “kinsmen” literally relatives, or do they, too, comprise some kind of recruited army? Things end badly for both Abimelek and Gaal (and not without the help of YHWH’s “evil spirit” in 9:23), as Gaal is driven out of Shechem in 9:40–41 and Abimelek falls at the sword of his servant—or so he would have us say—in 9:53–54.

JEPHTHAH’S OUTLAWS

Much could be said, and indeed much has already been written, about the Jephthah narrative in Judges 11. Jephthah’s infamous vow, shrewd political dealings, and musings on history and theology all make for interesting commentary, but here we are interested only in 11:1–3, where Jephthah’s seemingly inauspicious background is described. Because Jephthah is the son of Gilead¹⁷ and a prostitute (אשה זונה)—and/or because he is a גבור היל—his presence proves to be upsetting to the “natural” sons born of Gilead and his unnamed wife, prompting the brothers to send Jephthah into exile and thus shrewdly narrowing the pool of male inheritors.¹⁸ Jephthah flees to the land of Tob, where he becomes the leader of a band of outlaws (אנשים ריקים, “worthless fellows”).¹⁹

noted by Soggin, 187), though the agreement of the OL and the Lucianic tradition suggests *μετα δωρων* was in fact the OG reading. Vaticanus has *εν κρυψη* (“in secret”), which is possibly an attempt to translate בתרמה as if it were to be derived from תרמית (“deceit,” as in Jer 8:5, 14:14, Zeph 3:13; see G.F. Moore, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Judges* [ICC; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1895], 259 n. 31) or the reading of an original Heb. text that had בסתר (as in 2 Sam 12:12), which would make sense within the narrative (i.e., Zebul does not want Gaal to find out that he is acting subversively to overthrow Gaal as ruler of Shechem). As pointed out by C.F. Burney, *The Book of Judges* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1970), 281 n. 31, it may be best to simply amend בתרמה to בארומה (see 9:41). Thus, Abimelek does not travel from the mysterious Tormah to Arumah, but rather he simply is to be found at Arumah in v. 41. See also the thorough note, with sources, in W. Richter, *Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Richterbuch* (Bonn: Peter Hanstein Verlag, 1963), 255 n. 40.

¹⁷ Boling, *Judges* (197) thinks “Gilead” here could refer to either a person named Gilead or anyone from the territory Gilead, citing Josh 17:1,3, as does Soggin (204).

¹⁸ Soggin’s claim (204) that the explanation in v. 2 is “banal” and that the “verse can be deleted without affecting the context” is too dismissive. See the further analysis of Jephthah’s situation as a social and mythical reflex of an historical pattern of (dis)inheritance in the ANE below. The fact that Jephthah “had no patronym, and no Gileadite future,” as rightly noted by Boling, *Judges* (197) is indeed important to our story.

¹⁹ Judg 11:3: ויתלקטו אל יפתה אנשים ריקים. The root לקט is only elsewhere used to speak of gathering grain, with the exception of 1 Sam 20:38 and Gen 47:14 (where objects are gathered up like grain). See Exod 16:4,17,21, Lev 19:9, 23:22, Num 11:8, 2 Kgs 4:39, Ruth 2:2,3,16,17. Thus,

Jephthah's merry men promptly form an apparently self-sustaining community of bandits; the force of the verb ויצאו, "they went out with him" (11:3), would seem to imply that "they went out *raiding/pillaging* with him."²⁰ As the story goes, the elders of Gilead beg Jephthah to come back, and Jephthah returns from Tob to become "head" (שרא) of the Gileadites in their struggle against the Ammonites (11:4–11);²¹ after a lengthy speech (11:12–27) and the ill-fated vow (resulting in the sacrifice of his own daughter), Jephthah leads the people to victory. The tale then comes to a rather ignominious end, culminating in the inter-tribal war between Gilead and Ephraim and Jephthah's unremarkable death (12:1–7).

THE LANDLESS DANITE MOB

Judges 18 opens by briefly describing a strange situation concerning the tribe of Dan.²² After the narrator informs us that there was no king in Israel during those troublesome times,²³ we find out that

ויתלקטו may hint at something of the power of Jephthah's leadership abilities in such a situation, i.e., these socially peripheral individuals were quickly gathered, like sheaves of grain, into Jephthah's orbit (though it is not clear that these individuals represented "the dregs of society," as asserted by Boling, *Judges*, 197). Vaticanus translates אנשים ריקים here fairly literally (*ανδρες κενוי*, as in 9:4 above), but it is interesting to note that the OL has *latrones* ("mercenary soldiers") and another Greek manuscript (cursive w, Athens, Bibl. Nat. 44) has *λησται* ("robbers, bandits," or even "revolutionaries, insurrectionists").

²⁰ So NRSV. Boling (*Judges*, 196) simply translates: "They went with him." To be sure, more common (and specific) terminology for raiding parties and plundering in the HB includes the verbs גודל (גודל), "raiding party," as in 1 Sam 30:15,23; 2 Sam 4:2; 2 Kgs 6:23, פשט (strip, raid; see Judg 9:33, 20:37; 1 Sam 27:8; Job 1:17; 1 Chr 14:9–13, 25:13), בזז, בוז, שולל, etc. But compare the use of יצא in military contexts in, e.g., Gen 14:8; Exod 17:9; Num 1:3; Deut 20:1,10, 24:5, 28:7, 29:6; Josh 11:4; Judg 2:15, 5:4, 20:20; 1 Sam 18:30, 19:8, 29:6; 2 Sam 11:1, 18:2,6; 2 Kgs 19:9; Isa 37:9; Amos 5:3, etc., and also Phoenician *yš'*, "to march out," as in a military expedition: *nšht 't sby hys'm w'zrnm*, "I defeated my enemies who came forth (to fight me) and their allies" (C.R. Krahmalkov, *Phoenician-Punic Dictionary* [Studia Phoenicia XV; Leuven: Peeters, 2000]), 213. Cf. *BDB*, 422.

²¹ As noticed by V. Matthews, *Judges & Ruth* (NCBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 118, the elders first offer to make Jephthah their קצין (war chief or military commander), but after the initial refusal, Jephthah's promised status is upgraded to שרא, a more exalted title.

²² Note that Dan is called a "clan" (משפחה) in Judg 13:2.

²³ This narrative device also appears in Judg 17:6, 19:1, and 21:25, and reminds us that, in the present form of the book, the narratives concentrated in chs. 17–21 are associated with the pressing issue of kingship—a need already expressed in the story of Gideon and Abimelek in chs. 8–9.

“in those days the Danite tribe was looking for a permanent territory for itself in which to dwell, since, up until that time, no territory had come to them among the (other) tribes of Israel.”²⁴ The Danite solution to this problem sounds familiar to the story told in Josh 19:40–47, though the form that appears in Judges is more detailed. Here, the Danites send five individuals to spy out prospective land. Having set their sights on Laish, a spacious, rich, isolated, and vulnerable territory (18:7,10), the Danites muster a six-hundred man mob (18:11),²⁵ kidnap Micah’s Levite priest (18:5–20), and annihilate the inhabitants of Laish (18:27). The area is then renamed “Dan,” “after their ancestor, Dan” (18:29). Why we need to be told the reason for the Danites naming the territory “Dan”—the rationale for the name would seem obvious, and no other such explanation is given for the naming of any other tribal territory—is a bit of a mystery.²⁶

If we look only to the biblical materials, then it is difficult to determine why it is that the tribe of Dan does not have a landholding like the other tribes.²⁷ At first glance, Dan would seem to fall regularly into Israel’s history with its own normally allotted place in the lists of tribes; the eponym Dan is the son of Rachel’s maid, Bilhah, in Gen 30:4–6, and Dan is mentioned in the putatively archaic blessings of Gen 49:16–17 and Deut 33:22. The name of the Danite tribe made its way into the stereotyped geographical formulation “from Dan to Beersheba”²⁸ and Dan is the site of one of Jeroboam’s reviled golden calves and cult-sites in 1 Kgs 12:29–30. In the census of Numbers 1, Dan (1:38–39) proves to have the second most fighting men (behind Judah), and in the list of encampments in Num 2:31, the camp of Dan was to set out last in

On the role of kingship and leadership more generally in Judges, see Y. Amit, *The Book of Judges: The Art of Editing*, trans. J. Chipman (Leiden: Brill, 1999), esp. 59–117.

²⁴ Cf. Judg 1:34, where it is said that the Amorites had denied the Danites access to the קנע , thus forcing them into the hill country.

²⁵ The number 600 is a schematic representation of a decently sized fighting force, especially for relatively small-scale operations; see Judg 3:31, 20:47; 1 Sam 13:15, 14:2, 23:13, 27:2, 30:9; 2 Sam 15:18.

²⁶ But see the explanation given by M. Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1991), 69–70.

²⁷ See the very good note in Moore, 387 n. 1.

²⁸ Judg 20:1; 1 Sam 3:20; 2 Sam 3:10, 17:11, 24:2, 15; 1 Kgs 5:5; “Beersheba to Dan” in 1 Chr 21:2 and 2 Chr 30:5. This formula need not imply that the territory of Dan was fixed at an early date, but may rather point to the religious significance of the location when the phrase was fixed, as pointed out by N. Wazana, *All the Boundaries of the Land: The Promised Land in Biblical Thought in Light of the Ancient Near East* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2007), esp. ch. 2. I came to this study by way of the review by S.E. Holtz, RBL 09/2008 (accessed online at <http://www.bookreviews.org>).

the order or marching regiments (see also Num 10:25). Perhaps most interesting, and most pertinent for our problem, is the material in Joshua 19. When lots are cast to determine tribal landholdings in Joshua 18–19, Dan receives the seventh lot in 19:40. Inexplicably, however, Josh 19:47 laconically reports that the territory of Dan “went out (נצט) from them” (= was stolen?). To regain the land, Dan is said to have marched over to *Lasbem* (not Laish, as in Judges 18), annihilating the inhabitants of the city and renaming the territory “Dan,” “after the name of their ancestor, Dan” (just as in Judg 18:29).

It hardly seems plausible (from either an historical or literary standpoint) that the Danites would find themselves without land twice, and be forced to exterminate the inhabitants of two different cities.²⁹ To be sure, such variances between Joshua and Judges are not unknown elsewhere—see the admissions of defeat in Judg 1:19–36, as opposed to the impression of total victory in given in Joshua 12, and the like. In fact, in Judg 1:34 we are told that *the Amorites* forced the Danites back into the hill country, and this explanation is perhaps meant to provide the bridge over to the situation that occurs in Judges 18. The author of Judg 2:20–23 seems to make a theological virtue of historical necessity on a much grander scale, claiming that YHWH had voluntarily decided *not* to drive out the inhabitants of the land (due to the peoples’ sin, no doubt [2:1–3:6]). The problem with the Deuteronomistic explanation in Judg 1:34 is even more apparent when we realize the author of Judges 18 betrays no knowledge of the putatively earlier situation in either Joshua 19 or Judg 1:34.³⁰ The Danites must seek out

²⁹ Both Laish and Lashem have a ל and a ש in the name, though it is not certain whether textual errors have artificially obscured the identity of one of the names (i.e., that they were originally identical).

³⁰ I assume, with the majority of commentators, that the theological framework in Judg 1–3:6, as well as various other statements in the book, are Deuteronomic additions to an earlier core of materials. For a summary discussion of these issues, see, e.g., the essays in G.N. Knoppers and J.G. McConville (eds.), *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000), esp. 112–259; R. Boling, “Judges, Book of,” *ABD*, vol. 3, ed. D.N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), esp. 1115–16; Niditch, 10–11; Römer 1–44 (where the history of a “Deuteronomistic History” is nicely reviewed). At any rate, the story in ch. 9 shows no obvious trace of Deuteronomistic activity (J. Gray, at least, sees two *pre*-Deuteronomistic strands in Judg 9:1–27; see *Joshua, Judges and Ruth* [London: Nelson, 1967], 97), whereas the stories in chs. 11 and 18 are thought to bear Deuteronomistic influence. See A.F. Campbell and M.A. O’Brien, *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History: Origins, Upgrades, Present Text* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000], 189, 197, 207. For Judges 9 specifically, cf. E. Jans, *Abimelech und sein Königtum: Diachrone und synchrone Untersuchungen zu Ri 9* (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 2001). For M. Noth’s important statement on DtrH as a whole, see *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien. Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden*

land, and indeed, as the narrator explicitly states in 18:1, they had not even been given an allotment in the first place.

PARASOCIAL GROUPS AND THE HABIRU PHENOMENA

The three preceding stories from the book of Judges all prominently demonstrate the presence and decisive impact of socially disaffected individuals and groups. In the Gideon and Jephthah narratives, we read of individuals who rely on bands of supporters who appear, at least at first glance, to be mercenaries or socially peripheral elements (perhaps criminals or outcasts of some kind), and the story in Judges 18 presents an entire segment of Israel's core tribal configuration, the tribe of Dan, in a state of wandering landlessness. For our purposes here, it will be useful to characterize the propertyless or mercenary elements in these three stories with the phrase "parasocial groups," a description first proposed for various elements of ancient Near Eastern society (including the *habiru*) over thirty years ago by M.B. Rowton.³¹ It must be clearly noted at the outset that our use of the term "parasocial" in this context is not to be confused with the use of the same term in the field of social-psychology, though there are possibly some interesting (albeit nebulous) points of contact between modern psychological studies of parasocial interaction and our material at hand. In current sociological and psychological discourse, "parasocial interaction" describes a pattern of correspondence in which an individual treats a "mediated representation of a person" (e.g., an image on a computer or television screen) as if the person him/herself

Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament, 3rd ed. (first published in 1943; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967). According to Boling, *Judges* (258), the Danite migration is a Deuteronomic device, "presented as the providential solution to the problem of Micah's establishment" (that is to say, retribution for the idolatry of Micah and his household in ch. 17). See also E.A. Mueller, *The Micah Story: A Morality Tale in the Book of Judges* (Studies in Biblical Literature 34; New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 76, 125.

³¹ See M.B. Rowton, "Dimorphic Structure and the Parasocial Element," *JNES* 36 (1977), 181–98; "Dimorphic Structure and the Problem of the 'apiru-ibrim,'" *JNES* 35 (1976), 13–20. The former article, where the "parasocial" label is first proposed, is the thirteenth in a series of sixteen essays exploring the issue of dimorphism and the interaction between tribal and urban society in the ancient Near East; see the full list of essays in "Dimorphic Structure and Topology," *Oriens Antiquus* 15 (1976), 17–18, n. 4. The viability of Rowton's characterization of the "parasocial element" has been affirmed more recently by J.D. Schloen in "The Exile of Disinherited Kin in *KTU* 1.12 and *KTU* 1.23," *JNES* 52 (1993), 210, though there have been very few studies that use Rowton's terminology for understanding biblical texts.

were actually present in the representation.³² In our use of “parasocial” here, the “para-” element may indicate a position “from the side of,” or “outside of,” or originating from the periphery of, what one might see as the “normal,” organized social sphere.³³ In the spirit of the Greek *παρα*, we may also invest the term “parasocial” with another nuance appropriate to our three passages in Judges, viz., para- can denote a person or direction from which action proceeds, or indicate one who originates or directs social change. Indeed, even a cursory reading of Gideon’s or Jephthah’s actions reveals a parasocial leader as the mediator of change, who conveys a message or action or socio-political arrangement between two parties. This element of mediation combined with placelessness is essential to Rowton’s definition of “parasocial,” of which more must be said later.³⁴

THE 2ND MILLENNIUM HABIRU PHENOMENA

Before proceeding to a deeper examination of the origins and function of parasocial movements in Judges, some space must be devoted to understanding the rise and significance of one such prominent parasocial group in the ancient Near East, the so-called habiru groups in Mesopotamia and Syria-Palestine in the 2nd millennium. Indeed, any discussion of parasocial elements in the Levant must be based, to some extent, on a proper assessment of the scholarly progress made over the past century in elucidating the origin and function of individuals/groups characterized as “habiru”

³² See the early study of D. Horton and R.R. Wohl, “Mass communication and para-social interaction: Observation on intimacy at a distance,” *Psychiatry* 19 (1956), 215–229, and the more recent work of S. Rafaeli, “Interacting with Media: Para-Social Interaction and Real Interaction,” in B. D. Ruben and L. A. Lievrouw (eds.), *Mediation, Information, and Communication: Information and Behavior* (vol. 3, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Press, 1990), 125–81, as well as the discussion and other sources cited in E. Schiappa, P. Gregg, Peter, and D. Hewes, “The Parasocial Contact Hypothesis” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, New Orleans Sheraton, New Orleans, LA, May 27, 2004), http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p112503_index.html, accessed 10/9/08 and C. Nass and S. Shyam Sundar, “Is Human-Computer Interaction Social or Parasocial?” (published online, 1994), http://www.stanford.edu/group/commdept/oldstuff/srcct_pages/Social-Parasocial.html, accessed 10/9/08).

³³ The assumption of a “normative,” static social sphere—against which one may define abnormal, parasocial groups—is admittedly an oversimplification.

³⁴ In “Dimorphic Structure and the Parasocial Element,” Rowton (181) characterizes the parasocial element as one aspect of an “uprooted social element of tribal as well as urban origin...It is not easy to define that social element with precision. It had one foot in tribal society, the other in urban society, and did not fully belong either to one or the other. In a sense it is both peripheral and intermediate between the two...”

in the cuneiform record. In what follows, then, I will not provide a radically new view of any particular aspect of the habiru phenomena, but rather, I attempt to give a *précis* of the important aspects of the debate toward illuminating a connection between the behavior of such parasocial groups and the appearance of certain kinds of stories and descriptions in Judges.

The West Semitic designation *hab/piru* first came to modern scholarly attention in 1888, when the Amarna Letters were discovered. H. Winckler was quick to identify the habiru specifically with people in the Amarna letters designated logographically as SA.GAZ,³⁵ but later discoveries soon showed that references to the habiru were to be found in many 2nd millennium ancient Near Eastern texts. Over 250 sources mention the habiru,³⁶ and the habiru phenomena seems to have died out at the end of the 2nd millennium BCE. Geographically, references have been found from Egypt (the last references to contemporary habiru are from Ramses IV, c. 1166–60 BCE)³⁷ to Anatolia, Iran, and Sumer. The habiru first appear in texts from the Assyrian trading outpost at Kanesh (19th century BCE), where they are prisoners or palace staff members, but it is impossible to say whether the habiru were considered part of the local population or Assyrians.³⁸ Some texts explicitly presented the habiru as outlaws, such as at Mari, where they were considered a serious problem and even conquered an entire city,³⁹ while other OB sources portray habiru as mercenaries or dependents of some kind.⁴⁰ At Nuzi, the term is most frequent in private contracts where the habiru has no firm juridical status and must bind himself to a citizen of Nuzi for service.⁴¹ In Alalakh, the habi-

³⁵ “Die Hebräer in den Tel-Amarna-Briefen,” in *Semitic Studies in Memory of Prof. Dr. Alexander Kohut* (Berlin: S. Calvary & Co., 1897), 605–09; on the SA.GAZ logogram, see also Greenberg, 88–90.

³⁶ Most passages are listed and translated in Greenberg, 15–60.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 56–57, and the brief reference in Propp, 748.

³⁸ Lemche, 7.

³⁹ Greenberg, 18. Na’aman (“Habiru and Hebrews”) discusses several Mari letters that seem to illuminate the habiru in an interesting way. In ARM 14.50, a certain Ami-ibal is accused of being a deserter, but claims to have migrated (*hbr*) away from his homeland because of an invading army, and had only recently returned. ARM 14.72 presents the case of Addu-šarrum, who is accused of defecting from the Babylonian army after his troops came to Mari, but Addu-sharrum claims he was actually a habiru, i.e., a voluntary migrant (defection is a crime, migration is not). Na’aman (“Habiru and Hebrews,” 256–57) thus claims to differentiate between the terms *munabtum* and *habiru*; the former term is more general, and denotes “various types of runaways, even slaves who ran away from their masters,” while the latter “were regarded as migrants” and thus not criminals.

⁴⁰ See Salvini, 10–11.

⁴¹ The role of the habiru as “client” may have come to dominate the meaning of the term in some time periods and regions. In *From Epic to*

ru are portrayed as foreigners or even outlaws, as in the Idrimi text, where Idrimi claims to have spent seven years living with the habiru (discussed further below).

Over a century of research on the topic has shown that it is probably unwise to correlate the habiru with a single social status, ethnicity, or label for all regions throughout the 2nd millennium.⁴² Though the term was initially thought to be solely an *ethnic* designation, the Egyptologist W. Spiegelberg long ago suggested the habiru were a *social* entity, viz. nomads living in the Syrian desert and Syro–Palestine.⁴³ The social nature of the term was confirmed by B. Landsberger and J. Bottéro, who translated “habiru” as “fugitives” or “refugees”;⁴⁴ the Sumerian SA.GAZ (SAG.GAZ, GAZ) is most likely the equivalent of the Akk. *šaggāšu(m)*, “murderer” (or, it is simply translated into Akk. as *ḥabbātu(m)*, “brigand”), and most Assyriologists currently consider “habiru” as a social designation for fugitives who lived outside their home states, and/or outlaws who lived in bands of brigands. Whether and when “habiru” was ever a purely ethnic designation is unclear, but the term certainly comes to be a pejorative social marker for those who are refugees, fugitives, and outlaws. Those who escaped from debt slavery (either illegally or through a release edict) may have comprised a large portion of the habiru, and the large number of petty states in the LB age may have contributed to habiru-like bands, since criminals or debt–slaves could easily escape to nearby, yet distinct, political entities for asylum from their captives. Many treaties of the Late Bronze age attest to a growing phenomenon of refugees and escapees, as many such documents provide for extradition of habiru elements.⁴⁵ Other reasons for becoming a habiru may have been

Canon (69 n. 57), Cross argues that “‘*apiru* means ‘client,’ or ‘member of the client class.’” In Weberian terminology (M. Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, trans. H.G. Gerth and D. Martindale [New York: The Free Press, 1952], 32–36) it is the *metic* (resident alien in the Greek city states), i.e., the *ger* (גר) that plays the role of the client, the foreigner who has no rights and who attaches himself to a patron for provision and legal protection.

⁴² See Chaney, 79: “The Amarna ‘*apiru* are better served by recognition of...intrinsic ambiguity than by attempts to force them into a straightjacket of political, social, or lexicographical consistency.” This statement could be applied to habiru in most texts and time periods.

⁴³ “Der Name der Hebräer,” *OLZ* 10 (1907), 618–20.

⁴⁴ See Bottéro, *Le Problème*, 160.

⁴⁵ Documents from Ugarit and Anatolia attest to the status of habiru as either foreigners or brigands, and a treaty between the kings of Ugarit and the Hittites mentions an agreement to “extradite citizens who have deserted their own state to seek refuge in territories known as *ḥabiru/ḥapiru* land. Such entities in the political treaties become quite frequent in this period; the phenomenon testifies to a growing concern because of the increasing number of persons who chose to live as *ḥabiru/ḥapiru*” (Lemche, 8).

wars, natural disasters, famine, prolonged military service, or any other social catastrophe.⁴⁶

The Amarna letters provide the most important evidence of the *habiru* (comprising nearly half of all known references to the group), at least concerning their activity in Syria-Palestine.⁴⁷ Two schools of thought have emerged regarding the *habiru* in the Amarna texts. Most argue that the status and activity of the *habiru* were similar to those of *habiru* elsewhere in the ancient Near East. In favor of this argument is the fact that references to the *habiru* indicate they are concentrated in certain territories, mostly around mountainous regions, and thus the *habiru* comprise a distinct, recognizable group. Others, however, argue the term is used in the Amarna letters as a pejorative label for social outcasts and for those who stand in opposition to the Egyptian government in the region.⁴⁸ This latter option has the advantage of explaining the fact that the Amarna Letters refer to *habiru* not as fugitives or foreigners *per se*, but rather as members of rival states, or heads of those rival states; thus, the author of the letters simply sees the *habiru* as enemies, or wishes to portray them as outlaws. An Egyptian text from the 14th century references an Egyptian military campaign against *habiru* living around Beth-Shan (*ANET*³, 255), and the sheer number of references to the *habiru* in the Amarna texts would seem to indicate that the *habiru* phenomena was widespread and significant.⁴⁹

These references to *habiru* in the Amarna texts (most of which were written during the reign of Amenhotep IV, c. 1353–36 BCE) are particularly revealing regarding the extent to which the

⁴⁶ Na'aman, "Ḥabiru and Hebrews," 253.

⁴⁷ See Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992). The term 'Apiru (as Moran transliterates it) appears about 104 times, in 53 different letters (listed here by EA number): 67:17; 68:18; 71:21,29; 73:29,33; 74:29,36; 75:10,27; 76:18; 77:24,29; 79:10,20; 81:13; 82:9; 83:17; 85:41,73,78; 87:21; 88:34; 90:25; 91:5,24; 104:54; 111:21; 112:46; 116:38; 117:58,94; 118:38; 121:21; 130:38; 132:21; 144:26,30; 148:43,45; 179:22; 185 (*passim*); 186 (*passim*); 189 rev. 11,17–8; 195:27; 197:4,11,30; 207:21; 215:15; 243:20; 246 rev. 7; 254:34; 271:16; 272:17; 273:14,19; 274:13; 286:19,56; 287:31; 288:38; 289:24; 290:13,24; 298:27; 299:18,24,26; 305:22; 313:6; 318:11. For studies of the *habiru* in the Amarna letters, see, e.g., Greenberg, 32–49; Bottéro, *Le Problème*, 85–118; shorter studies include W.F. Albright and W. Moran, "Rib-Adda of Byblos and the Affairs of Tyre (EA 89)," *JCS* 4 (1950), 163–68; G. Mendenhall, "The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine," *BA* 25.3 (1962), 66–87; W. Moran, "Join the 'Apiru or Become One?," D.M. Golomb and S.T. Hollis (eds.), *Working with No Data: Semitic and Egyptian Studies Presented to Thomas O. Lambdin* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns), 209–12.

⁴⁸ See, e.g., G. Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation: The Origins of the Biblical Tradition* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 122–41, and Liverani, "Farsi Ḥabiru."

⁴⁹ As also noted by Lemche, 8.

habiru were perceived as a powerful military and social force. Many different local rulers complain of imminently threatening habiru activities, such as Rib-Hadda, who is constantly worried that everyone is “joining” the habiru (e.g., EA 68:18),⁵⁰ or that all of his towns have joined the habiru and are now hostile to his rulership (116:38) (a similar complaint is made by Zimreddi of Sidon in 144:26). The gravity of the habiru threat comes through not just in the claims of the Syro-Palestinian vassals, but also in a list of captured cities mentioned by Mayarzana of Ḥasi (185). The habiru were apparently not simply a Gutianesque marauding force, but rather were open to negotiation and persuasion. Effort was expended to “gather together” or rally habiru forces (85:78; ‘Abdi-Aširta is accused of rallying habiru in 74:23–30), and at least two letters (104:54, 298:27) demonstrate that covenants and deals were made with the habiru, implying some organized, formal leadership structure among these bands with which one might negotiate. Other references indicate that the habiru could be hired (112:46), and the sons of a certain Labayu—who apparently created an autonomous kingdom for himself, with habiru aid (289.24), based out of Shechem—were accused of hiring habiru (246 rev. 7, 287:31) (though Labayu claims not to have known of such activities in 254:34).

DETribALIZATION AND PARASOCIAL GROUPS

In the work of M.B. Rowton we find a fascinating and provocative attempt to understand the 2nd millennium habiru phenomena as part of a broad pattern of social and topographical change in Syria-Palestine and the ancient Near East generally. Rowton’s main interest is to explore the manner in which parasocial elements arise not just from the collapse of urban structures, or from the frustration of urban outcasts (*pave* Mendenhall, *et al.*), but also from *de-tribalized* elements of a society. Old alliances can dissolve and new tribes can coalesce in conditions of major societal disruption and discontinuity. The communal associations formed during such times can be rather fluid; legends form quickly, leaders rise and fall on the waves of volatile sentiments, as can entire states. A fascinating example of the rapidity with which parasocial leaders can take power and of the speed with which legends can form around their

⁵⁰ EA and line numbers here refer to Moran’s edition. See also Moran’s short article, “Join the ‘Apiru or Become One?’” in D.M. Golomb (ed.), *Working with No Data: Semitic and Egyptian Studies Presented to Thomas O. Lambdin*, Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 209–12, where Moran takes up the problem of translating the oft-repeated phrase *nenpušū ana* (SA.)GAZ(.MEŠ) in the letters. Though some have suggested the expression is an Egyptianism, meaning “to be transformed into/become an habiru,” Moran affirms his translation “to be joined to/gained for the habiru.”

actions is given by Rowton regarding a certain Bacha Saqqao, “Son of a Water-carrier.” When the actions of pre-WWII Afghani leader Amanullah Khan (ruled 1919–1929) created “profound tribal unrest,” Bacha Saqqao seized upon the situation and garnered tribal support, capturing the throne and ruling for nine months as “king Habibullah.” Less than a generation after Bacha Saqqao died, literary accounts of his insurrection had already embellished his actions into tribal legend.⁵¹

For Rowton, *habiru* bands are best described in terms of detribalization, though it should be duly noted that this dichotomy between tribal and urban (non-tribal) societies is often overdrawn.⁵² However, one may easily overlook the fact that, in Rowton’s analysis (and to his credit), *reintegration* of the supposed detribalized elements is also an important part of the detribalization scheme, thus mitigating the stark contrast that would seem to be drawn between “tribal” and “non-tribal” groups.⁵³ Rowton’s un-

⁵¹ Rowton, “Dimorphic Structure and the Parasocial Element,” 193, and L. Duprée, *Afghanistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 120, 452 (cited by Rowton).

⁵² A better evaluation of the Iron Age data is given in L. Marfoe’s important article, “The Integrative Transformation: Patterns of Sociopolitical Organization in Southern Syria,” *BASOR* 234 (1979), 1–42. For Marfoe (35), “culture change should not be seen so much in terms of ‘breaks’ and ‘continuities’ as in shifts in balance between dynamic social systems...change should not be viewed as alternation between phases of static equilibrium, each characterized by a dominant sociopolitical structure, but in terms of sociopolitical organisms composed of small units, which are continually changing and which are tied politically by a variety of elastic sociocultural bonds.” The putatively fluid transfer of allegiance from city state to *habiru* bands in the Amarna period (hinted at above, and noted by Marfoe, 9) provides a good example of the shifts and balances that could influence sociopolitical power at the end of the LB period. See also Rowton’s comments to this effect in “Dimorphic Structure and Topology,” 29–30, and the modern anthropological study of P.C. Salzman, *Culture and Conflict in the Middle East* (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 2008), 176–97.

⁵³ See Rowton, “Dimorphic Structure and the Parasocial Element,” pp. 183–90. For a brief critique of Rowton’s tribal/non-tribal dichotomy, see J.D. Schloen, “The Exile of Disinherited Kin,” 210. The implications of this dichotomy have been felt in the study of the emergence of Israel’s monarchy, where it is sometimes assumed that “alien,” “pagan” monarchic structures intruded upon pristine tribal life and disrupted tribal sociopolitical structures. See e.g., a typical statement of G. Mendenhall (*Ancient Israel’s Faith and History: An Introduction to the Bible in Context*, ed. G.A. Heaton [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001], 103–04): “The centralization of political control was facilitated by a process we might call ‘sacred politics’...a religious value system that had once provided a basis for unity among a large group of diverse people from different tribes and clans was disappearing, being replaced by a more cynical attitude that only the political monopoly of force could coerce people into uniformly ‘cor-

derlying insistence, it seems, is simply that there were indeed important differences between urban and rural life, and that parasocial leaders act as mediators between those who existed as ill-defined fringe elements in newly constituted parasocial tribal structures and urbanites whose political control, while not completely non-tribal and not unconnected to rural zones, stands in tension with parasocial elements and their leaders. “Parasocial element” is thus a kind of shorthand for tribal society in flux, and the parasocial leader is the genius of capitalizing upon socio-political change.⁵⁴

Taking up some of Rowton’s themes, N. Na’aman has observed that what is “common to all the people designated as ‘Ḥabiru’ is the fact that they were uprooted from their original political and social framework and forced to adapt to a new environment.”⁵⁵ Economically disenfranchised tribal members (even in sedentary communities) are often willing to leave the tribe to find work and food elsewhere, forming small bands (often with a mostly egalitarian structure, but perhaps with a single, strong leader) that then commit predatory acts. Na’aman claims these bands would have subsequently become “mainstream,” in a sense, and settled down with families, etc., and even re-tribalized themselves or entered into the service of a larger state. “In general,” Na’aman concludes, “the phenomenon of the Ḥabiru can be described as a circular process, one in which people were uprooted from the society in which they were born, lived for a while as foreigners in another country, and then were absorbed into their new environment.”⁵⁶ Moreover, as Stager has pointed out, we need not imagine all of the seemingly disaffected militants of the Iron Age as rebellious “peasants.” Social and agricultural conditions in the rapidly closing frontier of the pre-monarchic period hill country were such that even younger sons of prominent, wealthy families may have run into significant troubles in securing free land and property for themselves *vis-à-vis* the strict implementation of primogeniture laws in

rect’ behavior,” so that religious values under the monarchy merely “legitimized the new political order.” Cf. the more nuanced views in Stager, “The Archaeology of the Family,” 24–28 and sources cited therein. There was nothing inevitable about Israel’s transition to having a full-time מלך (as noted by A.D.H. Mayes, *Judges* [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985], 89) and one does not need a precipitous decline in pure YHWHism to account for change in ancient Israel.

⁵⁴ In Rowton’s words, “during their formative period, for at least a few generations...[newcomers to the re-integrated tribal structure] would hardly amount to genuine tribes. At their inception most would be little more than a band, often a predatory band, the larger groups a tribal rabble of heterogeneous splinter groups and individual families” (Rowton, “Dimorphic Structure and the Parasocial Leader,” 183–84, 192). In these situations, the parasocial leader becomes an important figure.

⁵⁵ Na’aman, “Ḥabiru and Hebrews,” 253.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 255.

such families.⁵⁷ Some of these aggressive “soldiers of fortune”—which Stager compares to the *juventus* of 12th century CE France—may have had their roots in powerful families and clans, but their status within the family made bands of young men (such as the one rallied by David in 1 Sam 22:2) an attractive option for the acquisition of wealth in a situation wherein certain individuals were denied the benefits of inheritance, either by reason of their age-rank among the sons of the family or some other reason.⁵⁸

RE-EXAMINING JUDGES 9, 11, AND 18 AS DEPICTIONS OF LEVANTINE PARASOCIAL GROUPS

I am now prepared to return to Judges 9, 11, and 18 and offer some comments regarding the affinities between parasocial groups and the situation of Abimelek, Jephthah, and the Danites summarized earlier. To begin, we might reconsider the meaning of the interesting phrase אֲנָשִׁים רִיקִים (translated tentatively as “worthless fellows” above) in both the story of Abimelek and Jephthah.⁵⁹ Here, the plural adjective רִיקִים (from רִיק, [physically] “empty”) may indeed carry the adjectival and nominal meaning of “worthlessness,” “vanity,” “a trifling matter,” and so on—a somewhat idiomatic force that can be found in many other passages where the term is used.⁶⁰ However, in Judg 9:4 and 11:3 we should read the designation as something more concrete, reflecting the literal force of רִיק: רִיקִים = “empty men,” i.e., *landless*, or *unemployed* men.⁶² For this meaning, one may compare רִיק with the Akk. *rāqu*,

⁵⁷ Stager, “The Archaeology of the Family,” 25–27. Cf. the comments of Chaney, 71–73, who prefers to see habiru-like activity (especially in the Amarna letters) as part of a broader paradigm of “social banditry” among the mobile contingents of peasant society. For this analysis, Chaney points to the following studies of E.J. Hobsbaw: *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: Norton, 1965); *Bandits* (New York: Delacorte, 1969); “Social Banditry,” H.A. Landsberger (ed.) *Rural Protest: Peasant Movements and Social Change* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1973).

⁵⁸ Stager, “The Archaeology of the Family,” 26–27. Regarding the comparison with the 12th cen. French *juventus*, note that Stager relies on the work of G. Duby in *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. C. Postan (Berkeley: University of California, 1980).

⁵⁹ As noted earlier, in Judg 9:4 the full phrase is אֲנָשִׁים רִיקִים וּפְהוּזִים.

⁶⁰ See, e.g., Lev 26:20; Deut 32:47; Isa 30:7; Isa 30:7, 49:4, 65:23; Jer 51:58; Hab 2:13; Pss 2:1, 4:3, 73:13; Job 39:16; Prov 12:11, 28:19.

⁶¹ As in Gen 37:24, 41:27; Judg 7:16; 2 Kgs 4:3; Isa 29:8; Jer 51:34; Ezek 24:11; Neh 5:13, etc.

⁶² Schloen, “The Exile of Disinherited Kin,” 210 n. 9 translates the phrase as “propertyless men” though no explanation is given for this reading, and Burney, 308–09 n. 3, suggests that רִיקִים here may refer to those who “lack the qualities which command success in the leading of a

“to be empty, to be idle, to lack work,” or the adj. *rāqu*, “empty,” but also “without work,” “unemployed,” and “empty handed,” i.e., having nothing.⁶³ Thus, the phrase may have originally indicated *those without property*, while it could also, by extension, be transferred to the ethical realm of values to refer to moral emptiness or a vacancy of social value generally.⁶⁴ If so, we would thus have an instance where a term indicating an individual of a low social status was simultaneously used (or came to be used) as a pejorative description of individuals who would supposedly behave in a similar manner as the “low-class” individual.⁶⁵

This understanding of the individuals in Abimelek’s and Jephthah’s respective bands (i.e., that they are landless or otherwise dispossessed) comports well with Stager’s analysis of the developing situation in pre-monarchic Israel, where the problem of disaffected and landless males is given an important place in the system of patrimonial authority and religion.⁶⁶ Abimelek’s patrimonial

regular life...and possibly also...a lack of material goods such as property and tribal status.” Note also the study of G. Mobley, *The Empty Men: The Heroic Tradition of Ancient Israel* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), who also draws on this image of the אנשים ריקים as warriors and brigands.

⁶³ *CAD* vol. 14 (R), 176–78.

⁶⁴ Words designating “full,” “empty,” etc., often take on moral connotations. It is preferable to have a “high” standing over a “low” one, to be “enlightened” rather than “in the dark,” and to be “full” (of a good thing!) rather than “empty.” Admittedly, the concept of emptiness (as in an empty jar or an empty city) is not always an appropriate equivalent to the idea of *owning* nothing, and other terminology is used in the HB to speak of the propertyless. Burney, 309 n. 3, notes that in post-biblical Hebrew ריק “comes to denote *intellectual* vacuity,” or is used as a general form of contempt (e.g., Matt 5:22, *Paxa* = ריקא). Burney, 271 n. 4, also points to the Arabic and Aramaic equivalents of פהז (Judg 9:4), which mean “be insolent” and “be lascivious,” respectively, thus suggesting “that the original idea may have been to *overpass bounds, be uncontrolled*” (see the reference to water in Gen 49:4).

⁶⁵ See, for instance, the only other use of this phrase outside of Judges, in 2 Chr 13:7 (as noted above), where the phrase does not seem to refer to the landless, but rather is a simply pejorative term to refer to individuals hostile to the Davidic line. In English, the word “peasant” may be comparable to the phenomenon under consideration here—“peasant” has (or had) a technical, socio-economic meaning, but can also be used as a derogatory metaphor for one without manners or education. Michal’s dismissal of David’s wild dancing in 2 Sam 6:20 also employs the designation ריק/רק when Michal claims David has revealed himself “like one of the רקים is uncovered,” which could perhaps be translated, loosely, as “like a naked blundering peasant.”

⁶⁶ Note that Stager (“The Archaeology of the Family,” 25–27) also points to other organizations serving as a “safety valve” for a society’s excess of young/unmarried males (who need not all be “disaffected” or “landless”), such as the office of the “steward” (נער) and also the priesthood.

competition with his brothers forces him into an underdog position from which he must cajole and kill his way into prominence, reflecting the disastrous problems of inheritance and succession of authority inherent in large, wealthy families. When one cannot count on one's own family, town, or clan for assistance, turning to parasocial groups was a viable and attractive option; apparently, some of the Amarna period vassals found themselves similarly stranded, at which point payment to and agreements with habiru bands were the quickest road to stability and power. In this respect, the warlord battle between Abimelek and Gaal over the city of Shechem, instigated by Gaal in Judg 9:26–29, is reminiscent of the struggle involving Labayu and his sons to gain control over the exact same territory revealed in the Amarna texts (see also EA 289).⁶⁷

The story of Jephthah's rise to power offers some interesting parallels to Abimelek's own actions, and, though lacking some of the gritty details of Abimelek's dealings, the sparse account of Jephthah's background in 11:1–3 is nonetheless a striking description of the typical parasocial leader (even if only in literary terms) in the ancient Near East.⁶⁸ Consider, for example, the inscription of Idrimi (c. 1500 BCE), in which the pattern of rejection, exile, contact with a parasocial group, and return is narrated in a tantalizingly brief format.⁶⁹ An unnamed "evil" (*mašiktu*)⁷⁰ forces Idrimi's family

⁶⁷ See also the comments in Soggin, 170.

⁶⁸ For a nice statement of the literary and structural affiliations between Abimelek's and Jephthah's careers, see T.J. Schneider, *Judges* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 164–65, and also McKenzie, 145. On the mythic and folkloristic aspects of Jephthah's story, see the brief comments in Matthews, 117. The basic pattern of flight, recognition by kin, formation of a band of men, and the transformation from fugitive to leader upon return home is a literary structure present in several stories, notably Idrimi of Alalakh, David, and Jephthah (as pointed out by Matthews and also E.L. Greenstein and D. Marcus, "The Akkadian Inscription of Idrimi," *JANESCU* 8 [1976], 76–77).

⁶⁹ The authoritative edition is M. Dietrich and O. Loretz, "Die Inschrift der Statue des Königs Idrimi von Alalah," *UF* 13 (1981), 201–268; see also G.H. Oller, *The Autobiography of Idrimi: A New Text Edition with Philological and Historical Commentary* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1977). For further commentary, see, e.g., N. Na'aman, "A Royal Scribe and His Scribal Products in the Alalakh IV Court," *Oriens Antiquus* 19 (1980), 107–16; J.M. Sasson, "On Idrimi and Šarruwa, the Scribe," in D.I. Owen and M.A. Morrison (eds.), *Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians in Honor of Ernest R. Lacheman* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 309–24; and H. Klengel, "Historischer Kommentar zur Inschrift des Idrimi von Alalah," *UF* 13 (1981), 269–78.

⁷⁰ Besides meaning "bad," "evil," or "badness," *mašiktu/mašiktu* could even refer to a "bad reputation," thus suggesting the reason the *mašiktu* is not specified is because the family is somehow at fault. See *CAD* vol. 10 pt. 1, 323–24, e.g., [*ina pi*] *nišēšuma ma-sik-ta isi*, "he has a bad reputation

to leave their paternal home (the *bū abīya*, as Idrimi calls it in the first-person narrative) and reside at Emar with maternal relatives (lines 3–6).⁷¹ At Emar, conflict arises, presumably regarding issues of inheritance (the brothers, who are all older than poor Idrimi, are apparently concerned with becoming the *mār ašarēdi rabi*, the “pre-eminent son” or “primary heir”) and Idrimi is forced to flee. In the land of Canaan, Idrimi dwells with the habiru for seven years (line 27), and in the seventh year gathers up an army and returns (with the help of the brothers?) to claim the throne in Alalakh. Whereas the elders of Gilead invite Jephthah back because of the Ammonite threat (Judg 11:4–11), it is not clear whether Idrimi’s actions are overtly aggressive or whether there is some collusion with the brothers and other individuals to organize his triumphant return (the former seems more likely).

J.D. Schloen sees a mythological reflex of this pattern, which he calls “the exile of disinherited kin,” in the Ugaritic texts *KTU* 1.12 and 1.23. Here, one can detect a motif of hostility between Baʿl (a high-status member of ʿEl’s divine household) and disinherited divine maidservants.⁷² The astral deities Dawn and Dusk play the role of the parasocial element and seem to rebel against ʿEl (the passages in question are quite obscure), though in the end Schloen argues that even disinherited and rebellious kin are still kin, and thus are not to be harmed.⁷³ The connections among disinheritance, flight, and conflict for interested parties within the family seem to be deeply-embedded elements of ancient Near Eastern storytelling in the second half of the 2nd millennium, indicating something of their increasing social relevance during the Late Bronze and early Iron Age Levant and the role of the parasocial element as a powerful factor in negotiating these conflicts of power.

One particular geographical element of Jephthah’s exile deserves further comment in light of our discussion of habiru-like elements Judges: his location of exile in Judg 11:3, Tob.⁷⁴ It is only

among his own people.” In the Idrimi text lines 10–16, the author makes it seem as though Idrimi’s flight is voluntary and calculated (and that he is the only one thinking about inheritance rights), though one gets the distinct impression that the opposite must be the case.

⁷¹ Recall that in Judg 9:1–3, Abimelek’s appeal to the elders of Shechem is an appeal to his *maternal* uncles, and to the entire clan of his mother’s family. Also noted by Soggin, 169–70.

⁷² Schloen, 217.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 219–20. Notice that Jephthah’s brothers do not physically harm him in Judges 11, nor does Jephthah enact retribution upon his family when he returns. For an analysis of disinherited kin—Jephthah in particular—in ANE law, see the older study of I. Mendelssohn, “The Disinheritance of Jephthah in the Light of the Lipit-Ishtar Code,” *IEJ* 4 (1954), 116–19.

⁷⁴ Heb. *Ṭôḥ* is to be identified with eṭ-Ṭayibeh, southeast of Ed-

in this chapter and in 2 Sam 10:6 that the land of Tob is mentioned, and, interestingly, the story in 2 Samuel 10 paints a similar picture of Tob's inhabitants.⁷⁵ David's attempt at political reconciliation after the death of the Ammonite king ended in humiliation, as David's messengers were sent away in a state of half-shaven and half-clothed disgrace (10:4). Fearing possible reprisal from David, the Ammonites attempt to shore up their military by hiring help, viz., 20,000 soldiers from the Arameans of Beth-rehob and Zobah, one thousand men from the king of Maacah, and 12,000 men from Tob (10:6). Whereas earlier in the Deuteronomistic narrative a band from Tob (i.e., Jephthah and his men) was called into action against Ammon, the Ammonites were later able to employ mercenaries from this same area against the Israelites.

Indeed, Tob may have been a difficult area to control for either Israelite or Aramean powers, due to its position 20 miles east of the Jordan and due to topographical factors. In his study of the role of topography in the habiru phenomenon—the first (and only, to my knowledge) study of its kind regarding the habiru—Rowton proposed that the preponderance of woodland (high shrub-land, i.e. Italian *macchia* or French *maquis*) areas in Syria-Palestine, especially in the 2nd millennium, would have made military control of many areas difficult or impossible.⁷⁶ The density of such woodland realms has proven to be a formidable factor even for modern equipment, much less Bronze Age tools, and Rowton points to correlations between pockets of habiru activity in the Amarna period (in areas such as Shechem, northern Lebanon, and the area between Beth-Shan and Shechem) and the presence of densely wooded areas near these locations.⁷⁷

It seems impossible to say with certainty whether Tob provided such a wooded environment above and beyond other nearby locales, but it is certainly the case that Shechem continued to be a stronghold because of its geographical position and topographical features (so much the better for habiru purposes), and it is not unreasonable to surmise that Tob's location allowed it to remain

rei/Der-ā and northeast of Ramoth-gilead in Aram. Tob (Tubu) replies favorably to the Pharaoh's request for supplies in EA 205, and is known from a geographical list of Thutmose III (no. 22). See Rainey and Notley, 140.

⁷⁵ See the brief comments on Tob and this Aramean conflict in B. Mazar, "The Aramean Empire and Its Relations with Israel," *BA* 25 (1962), 98–120. Compare Jephthah's role as traveler/mediator between the outlying area of Tob and Gilead with Rowton's comments about the role of parasocial leaders in this capacity in "Dimorphic Structure and the Parasocial Element," 185, 195, and Na'aman's remarks on the need for habiru-like bands for a stable home-base in "David's Sojourn," 95.

⁷⁶ M.B. Rowton, "The Topological Factor in the *Hapiru* Problem," *AS* 16 (1965), 376.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 381, 383.

un-cleared or un-cultivated (and thus un-eroded) longer than other areas further west in Israel's highlands. Therefore, one simple conclusion based on the reference to Tob in these two contexts and in light of Rowton's thesis is that Tob was a known staging ground for parasocial groups, i.e., a type of uncontrolled, boundary area where the socially disenfranchised could live in a relatively autonomous fashion.

Finally, what are we to make of the origins of the tribe of Dan in light of their violent activities and landless position in Judges 18? Is it possible to suggest that the Danites were originally an independent type of parasocial group, assimilated directly into Israel's story of settlement and tribal structure? To be sure, there are significant differences between the presentation of the Danites *vis-à-vis* the other episodes we have been considering; as I have already mentioned, Dan's status as a landed tribe among the other tribes is ambiguous, and the Danites have no named leader in the biblical narrative. Many commentaries shrewdly avoid the topic of Dan's origin or sociological status, and Dan's place within Israel's history has remained an open topic for conjecture since (at least) Y. Yadin's 1968 article, wherein it was argued that the Danites were a Greek element (the Danuna, Homer's *Danaoi*, a contingent of Sea Peoples listed in accounts of Ramses III).⁷⁸ Such arguments have faltered, however, on the archaeological data, which show no evidence of the occupation of Sea Peoples at Tel Dan during the specific time periods in question.⁷⁹

Other problems exist with Yadin's thesis, to be sure, and yet the topic is a difficult one that calls for either theories that go beyond the biblical text itself or a reexamination of the biblical materials for new angles. One such attempt, made by Stager, relies on an alternative translation of the short saying regarding Dan in the putatively archaic "Song of Deborah": וּדָן לְמָה יִגֹּר אֲנִיּוֹת. Following Robertson Smith's analysis of גַּר as kinship terminology, Stager translates the phrase as "And Dan, why did he serve as client on ships?"⁸⁰ That is to say, the Danites were serving as גַּרִים, a

⁷⁸ Y. Yadin, "And Dan, Why Did He Remain in Ships?" *Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology* (1968), 9–23. See, earlier, M.C. Astour, *Hellenosemitica: An Ethnic and Cultural Study in West Semitic Impact on Mycenaean Greece* (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1965), 45–53, 69–112. Yadin's theory is taken up anew by O. Margalith, *The Sea Peoples in the Bible* (trans. O. and S. Margalith; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1994), and see also some comments by M. Sakellariou, "Who Were the Immigrants?" in G. Cadogan and J. Langdon Caskey (eds.), *The End of the Early Bronze Age in the Aegean* (Leiden, Brill: 1986), 130–31. Cf. B.J. Stone's critique of Margalith's work in this regard in *JQR* 88 (1997), 108–112.

⁷⁹ See L. Stager, "Archaeology, Ecology and Social History: Background Themes to the Song of Deborah," in J.A. Emerton (ed.), *Congress Volume: Jerusalem 1986* (Leiden: Brill), 221–34.

⁸⁰ L. Stager, "The Song of Deborah: Why Some Tribes Answered the

“client-tribe” perhaps along the lines of the *habiru* who could be defined in terms of their status of dependency on an economic or social patron of some kind.⁸¹ Like Asher, then, the Danites would have been in a position of “economic dependence on non-Israelite groups in the maritime trade,” thus explaining their reluctance to join the Israelite highlanders in battle against Canaanite lords.⁸² The fact that Dan is mentioned at all in Judges 5, however, would seem to indicate that they were viewed as part of the Israelite tribes in some sense at the time of the poem’s composition (which may have been as early as one to three centuries after the first “Israelites” were established in the hill country). And yet Dan’s place in the early poetry reveals a group with a proclivity to violence, whose origins and existence, like the *habiru* and other parasocial groups, are bound up with their ability to crouch by the roadside (Gen 49:17) and leap forth like a lion (Deut 33:22).

CONCLUSION

Although a few bands of landless men running around in the book of Judges do not, in and of themselves, constitute sound evidence for a *habiru* revolution and the concomitant historicity of these kinds of stories in the book of Judges, the social and literary parallels between the actions of characters in Judges 9, 11, and 18 and known parasocial elements in the ancient Near East are striking and deserve serious consideration. It is possible that these stories of parasocial activity and subversive military maneuvers were constructed to provide an apologetic literary model for David’s similar actions and rise to power in 1 Samuel, but it is equally plausible that the stories of David’s parasocial days fell in line with memories of a well-known pattern of comparable leaders and activities stemming from Israel’s earliest existence in the land. I would argue that the latter is more plausible, and toward this end, this study has sought to show how some details of these three tales in Judges can be brought into a mutually illuminating dialogue with what is currently known about the existence of certain changes following the collapse of societal structures in the ancient Near East (particularly the pan-Mediterranean and Near Eastern collapse of the Late Bronze systems).

Call and Others Did Not,” *BAR* 15 (1989) (accessed online at <http://www.basarchive.org>). The question of the relationship between the Danites and ships (אֲנִיֹּת) is unclear. If the Danites represent some connection with a Mediterranean migration (see Astour, cited above), then the memory of their arrival or departure on, and association with, ships could be preserved in Judg 5:17 (which, nevertheless, does not speak of such things directly).

⁸¹ See note 41 above.

⁸² Stager, “The Song of Deborah.”

The objective here has thus not been to demand that the textual materials in Judges 9, 11, and 18 require some vaguely historical connection to the late 2nd millennium habiru phenomena, but rather that close attention to the narrative details regarding Gideon's and Jephthah's rise to power and the acquisition of land by the Danites can be made historically relevant and meaningful in light of what we can surmise regarding the historicity and anthropology of habiru-like groups in Israel-Palestine during the pre-monarchic period (c. 1200–1000 BCE).⁸³ My goal here has simply been to show that these “worthless and reckless fellows” served a more decisive and formative role in the pre-monarchic period than some have previously recognized, as their violent actions would provide the model for the rise of the monarchy's most transformative figure, David, the last great parasocial warlord at the end of the 2nd millennium.

The actions of these landless individuals and their charismatic leaders in Judges was indeed a “normal” aspect of transitional life on the frontier of the Levant in the late 2nd millennium, and the constant presentation of the book of Judges and the actions of its characters as abnormal or degenerate by some commentators obscures the important fact that, normally, transitions of the type described in Judges are brutal or even obscene.⁸⁴ The Abimelehs, Jephthahs, and Danites run rampant through such landscapes of terror and change, and the authors of Judges acutely recognized the inevitability of the failure and dissolution of old systems—indeed, of all organized systems—whether they be political, social, or economic. In its most poignant moments, the book of Judges presents violence and social upheaval as a creative force in the birth of new social, political, and religious realities; the tribes—even under the monarchy—form, at their most stable, an “ordered anarchy,” to borrow a phrase from Evans-Pritchard's famous description of the Nuer political system.⁸⁵ If some version of the habiru-Hebrew hypothesis is accurate on the sociological level, and if the origins of

⁸³ Consider the words of Paul Ricoeur, quoted by Stager in “The Archaeology of the Family,” 1, regarding the task of historians *vis-à-vis* texts: one should not succumb to “the methodological illusion whereby the historical fact is held to exist in a latent state in documents and the historian to be the parasite of the historical equation. To counter this methodological illusion, one must assert that in history the initiative does not belong to the document but to the question posed by the historian. The latter has logical precedence in the historical inquiry.”

⁸⁴ See, e.g., the typical comment by D.I. Block, *Judges, Ruth* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 245: “The Book of Judges portrays a degenerate Israelite society. Little that transpires in the book is normal or normative.”

⁸⁵ E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (first published in 1940; New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 5.

the biblical and the historical Israel lie with the indigenous hill country population of Canaan at the beginning of the Iron Age, then it is the book of Judges (and its continuation into Samuel), in its depiction of banditry, parasocial leaders, and land-grabs, that provides the Hebrew Bible's best glance into the historical beginnings of the nation in its pre-monarchic condition.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ I owe a debt of gratitude to the anonymous reviewers, as well as my colleagues Jonathan Kline and Adam Strich, for the helpful suggestions they offered in response to earlier versions of this paper. Obviously, all remaining errors are my own.