War, Memory, and National Identity in the Hebrew Bible

Jacob L. Wright

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The Hebrew Bible is permeated with depictions of military conflicts that have profoundly shaped the way many think about war. Why does war occupy so much space in the Bible? In this book, Jacob Wright offers a fresh and fascinating response to this question: War pervades the Bible not because ancient Israel was governed by religious factors (such as "holy war") or because this people, along with its neighbors in the ancient Near East, was especially bellicose. The reason is rather that the Bible is fundamentally a project of constructing a new national identity for Israel, one that can both transcend deep divisions within the population and withstand military conquest by imperial armies. Drawing on the intriguing interdisciplinary research on war commemoration, Wright shows how biblical authors, like the architects of national identities from more recent times, constructed their groundbreaking new notion of peoplehood in direct relation to memories of war, both real and imagined. This book is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

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For Tamara Cohn Eskenazi,
a model of courage, wisdom, humanity, and friendship.

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Preface

Most of the work underlying this book was completed five years ago, and it expands upon the approach that I developed when working on King David. Since then, the world has witnessed populistic upheavals and nationalistic ferment on a scale that I never imagined having to face in my lifetime. Although I did not write this book in response to the current political climate, my work demonstrates the power of a written, national narrative that fosters both veneration of the nation's laws and a sense of kinship and solidarity capable of bridging deep divides. The national identity constructed in the biblical narrative is far removed from the xenophobic, insular, chauvinistic discourse that, with the help of villainous leaders, is gaining traction both at home and abroad.

This book is a prelude to a more ambitious monograph, also to be published by Cambridge University Press, that I wrote for a broad audience after finishing the work on my Coursera course (The Bible's Prehistory, Purpose, and Political Future). In that volume, I tell the story of the rise and fall of Israel's kingdoms, provide a new model for the formation of the biblical corpus, and explore the strategies that the biblical scribes adopted in an effort to fashion what has proved to be one of the most influential paradigms of the nation.

The present work would not have been completed without the encouragement and inspiration provided by my colleagues and students. I am fortunate to have exceptionally capable and gracious editors: Beatrice Rehl and Eilidh Burrett. The Mellon Foundation and the Digital Publishing in the Humanities initiative at Emory University (under the direction of Sara McKee) awarded a generous grant that made it possible

to publish this work in an open access format on the Cambridge University Press platform.

I dedicate this book to my dearest friend, Professor Rabbi Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, who has been a joy to know and learn from for many years now.

Introduction

Wellhausen, War, and the Creation of a Nation

> Both then and for centuries to come, the supreme expression of a nation's life was war. War is what makes peoples; it was in this capacity that the solidarity of the Israelite tribes originally expressed itself, and as a national activity, it was also a sacred one.[1]

In brilliantly formulated books and essays that exposed a broad readership to the historical study of the Bible and ancient Israel, the German scholar Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918) established an influential yet highly problematic historical paradigm, according to which Israel evolved into a people or nation as it competed with its neighbors on the battlefield. The nation would go on to establish monarchies and kingdoms that safeguarded its interests. Eventually, however, the armies of the world's first empires conquered these kingdoms, and when they did, they also destroyed Israel's national identity. What sprouted up in the nation's place was an unpolitical, religious sect called Judaism, and this supersession of *the nation of Israel* with *the religion of Judaism* has shaped the basic contours and larger purpose of the Hebrew Bible.

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[1] Julius Wellhausen, *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte*, 10th ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004 [1894]), 23. (Many passages from this work appeared earlier in his 1878 *Geschichte*, his 1881 article on "Israel" in the ninth edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and then more fully in his 1883 *Prolegomena* and the multiple editions that followed.) All translations are my own. For the original German formulations and a wider survey of Wellhausen's reconstruction of Israel's transformation from a nation to a religion, see "Wellhausen on the Nation" on my Academia.edu web page. (That piece was originally part of a lecture delivered at Princeton University in 2008, later published as an article in *Prooftexts* [see n. 12 below], from which it was struck due to length constraints.)

In this book, I take on Wellhausen's paradigm and demonstrate that it proves to be woefully inadequate as a way of understanding not only ancient Israel's history but also the political theology unfurled in the biblical narrative.[2] What propels the formation of this narrative is the conviction that a people is greater than the states that govern it, and that a nation can survive, and even thrive, under conditions of foreign rule.

DEFEAT AND THE BIRTH OF A NEW RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

Throughout his writings, Wellhausen made war the engine of change in Israel's history. War brought an end to this people, but long before it had also given birth to them: "The war camp was the cradle of the nation, and also its earliest sanctuary. There was Israel and there was Yhwh."[3] As soul and body, the two belonged together – "Yhwh the god of Israel, and Israel the people of Yhwh"[4] – setting the conditions for all that was to follow. A god came into existence ("before Israel, there was no Yhwh"), and rival tribes and clans united under his aegis to wage battle against common enemies.[5] National life and religious life were inseparable, and war was the supreme expression of both. In response to military threats posed by its neighbors, the nation eventually formed kingdoms that endured for centuries, and a national consciousness endured as long as these kingdoms could continue to fight under the banner of their national deity.[6]

Wellhausen was confident that the natural symbiosis between the nation and its warring god would have persisted for much longer had it not been for the rise of imperial powers, beginning with the Assyrians:

They destroyed peoples as if they were nests, and as one gathers eggs, they collected the treasures of the world. No flapping of the wings, no opening of the

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[2] Unfortunately, a good introduction to political theology from a non-Christian perspective – one that does justice to the important discussions on the topic in a wide array of religions, from Confucianism to Islam – has yet to see the light of day. One must consult individual studies, such as Andrew F. March, "Genealogies of Sovereignty in Islamic Political Theology," *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 80 (2013), 293–320.

[3] Wellhausen, *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte*, 24.   [4] Wellhausen, 24.

[5] Wellhausen, 23.

[6] The prominent place Wellhausen assigns to war in Israel's history, and many of the features of his account, must be viewed in relation to the decades of military conflict that catalyzed Germany's national unification; see Paul Michael Kurtz, "The Way of War: Wellhausen, Israel, and the Bellicose *Reiche*," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 127 (2015), 1–19. In this context, leading German intellectuals began to examine the role played by war in the formation of peoples and states, as well as their national cults.

beak or chirping helped. [See Isa. 10:14.] They crushed the national individualities of antiquity, they tore down the fences in which these nations nourished their customs and beliefs. They commenced the work that was carried on by the Babylonians, Persians, and Greeks, and completed by the Romans. They introduced into the history of nations a new concept – that of the world empire or, more generally, the world. Confronted with this concept, the nations lost their spiritual center. The raw fact they suddenly faced would ultimately destroy their illusions . . . .[7]

The campaigns conducted by these empires devastated all that ancient peoples held to be true, forcing them to invent new identities. In the case of ancient Israel, the new identity was a nonpolitical one:

Through its destruction at the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians, the nation became essentially a community held together by the cult. The precondition for this religious community was foreign control, which forced Jews from the political sphere into the spiritual.[8]

Israel went into exile as "a nation or people" but returned as "an unpolitical and artificial construct," built on a "Mosaic theocracy" that shapes both the final form of the Pentateuch and Judaism as a religion. Stated succinctly, "the Jewish church emerged as the Jewish state perished."[9]

According to Wellhausen, those who (unknowingly) laid the foundation for this inferior and synthetic form of collective life were perspicacious prophetic figures, such as Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. Standing on the margins of their societies, they realized that the petty states of the southern Levant wouldn't be able to repel the onslaught of the imperial powers that loomed on the horizon. To save their people, they did something that's counterintuitive: instead of offering divine comfort, they proclaimed a radical rupture of the primordial bond between Yhwh and his people Israel. Displeased with the nation's behavior, Yhwh was no longer leading it into battle; now he was going to war *against* it, wielding foreign armies as the rod of his anger.

By interpreting military defeat as divine punishment, the prophets asserted that the relationship between Yhwh and his people was conditional, bound by the contractual terms of a "covenant." If it hadn't been

[7] Wellhausen, *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte*, 106.   [8] Wellhausen, 20.
[9] Wellhausen, 169n1. The political situation in German-speaking territories at the end of the nineteenth century must be borne in mind to appreciate Wellhausen's pronounced antipathy to multinational empires and his ambivalent relationship to the Christian church (he took potshots at the latter through the proxy of Judaism); see comments in the Conclusions to the present volume.

for this covenant and the innovative political theology that emanates from it, Israel wouldn't have survived.

Thus far, Wellhausen's work presents few problems; indeed, his analysis of the sources is exemplary, just as the synthesis of his findings is often breathtaking. But he went further. According to his reconstruction, the prophets' audacious assertion had an unanticipated yet enduring impact, producing over time a religious community that, in contrast to the wild and free nation that preceded it, is characterized by a tedious performance of cultic rites and a slavish allegiance to lifeless laws.

Wellhausen's categorical distinction between the political nation of ancient Israel, on the one hand, and the religious community of Judaism that usurped the nation, on the other, has deep roots in European intellectual history.[10] Yet thanks to the elegance and intellectual force of his writings, it reverberates in the thought of scholars far and wide. Thus, one of the most widely used textbooks in North American colleges and seminaries for the past sixty years, John Bright's *A History of Israel*, describes the new form of corporate life that emerged in the postexilic period as a "religious community marked by adherence to tradition and law," which replaced the "national-cultic one" that had flourished before the Babylonian conquest.[11]

NATION AND STATE

The present study offers a rejoinder to Wellhausen, and it does so by demonstrating that the generations of scribes who composed and collected the writings we know today as the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament were profoundly political in their orientation. Their aim was not, as Wellhausen contended, to transform Israel from a people into a religious sect after the fall of the state. To the contrary, these scribes sought to construct a robust and resilient national identity capable of withstanding military defeat and the encroachment of colonizing powers.[12] Rather than Wellhausen's polarity of nation and religious

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[10] One of the most important antecedents to Wellhausen's paradigm is the work of Wilhelm M. L. de Wette; see James Pasto, "Who Owns the Jewish Past? Judaism, Judaisms, and the Writing of Jewish History" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1998).

[11] John Bright, *A History of Israel: With an Introduction and Appendix by William P. Brown*, 4th ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000 [1959]), 349.

[12] I set forth the kernel of this idea in my essay, "The Commemoration of Defeat and the Formation of a Nation," *Prooftexts*, 29 (2009), 433–472, and developed it in *David and His Reign Revisited* (enhanced e-book on the Apple iTunes website, published 2013) and

community, what we witness in the formation of the biblical corpus is the groundbreaking discovery of a distinction that we take for granted today – namely, between *nation* and *state*.[13]

David, King of Israel, and Caleb in Biblical Memory (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[13] Many contemporary theorists insist that the nation is a product of modernity, but I find their arguments to be (often severely) myopic, with a view of antiquity that reduces its political complexity to little more than tribes, empires, and religions. For a critique of these modernist prejudices, see Anthony Smith, *The Antiquity of Nations* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004).

A state may be defined by a polity with institutions of government and a territory that can be conquered and destroyed. Nation, by contrast, may be defined as a political community that is held together by shared memories and a will to act in solidarity. It is fundamentally a work of the collective imagination; see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991 [1983]). A nation may lay claim to a homeland, but it doesn't have to occupy it. Its corporate identity may have originated in the context of a unified state, but it doesn't currently have to possess statehood (a "stateless nation"). In fact, a national consciousness may emerge among its members after the demise of statehood or among populations of neighboring states who consider themselves to be "one people."

In my work, I use the term nation in the sense of a (diverse) body of people who share a homeland, legal traditions, calendar, festivals, canons of literature, and so on; see the dated but still highly useful overview of various approaches in Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1944). I tend to follow the "ethno-symbolists" (including John A. Armstrong, Anthony Smith, and John Hutchinson), who employ the following criteria: self-definition, including a collective proper name; shared myths and memories of origins, election, etc.; a distinctive common public culture; a historic patrie; and common rights and duties for all members.

Many biblical scholars prefer to use the term "ethnic," rather than "national," when describing the corporate identity of the people of Israel that we find formulated variously in biblical texts. I find this usage confusing inasmuch as a nation may, and often does, include multiple ethnicities. Thus, for ancient Israel, the Transjordanian communities were ethnically distinct from communities in the Negev or in the central hill country.

In comparison to nations, ethnicities are more tangible, often involving distinct dress, diet, dialect, endogamous marriage, etc. National identities are much more fragile, depending on an *esprit de corps* and a shared consciousness among its members – *Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl*, (lit. a feeling of belonging) – even if that consciousness is often weak and fails to mobilize collective action. In the famous formulation of Ernst Renan, "A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received . . . ." Its identity is shaped not only by what it remembers but also by what it forgets. "Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties and require a common effort" (see his essay, "What is a Nation," originally delivered as a lecture at the Sorbonne in 1882 and reproduced in Homi Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (New York: Routledge, 1990), chap. 2, at 18–19.

The political theologies of "Yhwh's people" that we find in the Hebrew Bible may have paved the way for the birth of religions – in the forms of the Christian church, Islam, and some (in particular, modern) variations of Judaism.[14] However, the formation of the Hebrew Bible itself must be studied as an experiment in nation-making if it is to be properly understood. This experiment is arguably one of the earliest and most elaborate of its kind, and throughout history defeated and colonized populations have often imagined themselves as peoples and nations by looking to the biblical model of Israel.[15]

The anonymous scribes who curated the biblical corpus bracketed an era of the monarchy, presenting it as a turning point in their people's history. In the framework of an extensive prose narrative, they sought to demonstrate how Israel, by virtue of a covenant with its god, became a people long before it established a kingdom. Although their narrative runs counter to what we know today about Israel's political evolution, they wanted their readers to understand that, with the help of their narrative and the divine laws embedded in it, a vanquished and exiled population can unite and flourish as a nation even when imperial domination prohibited the reestablishment of the sovereign state and political independence that their narrative ascribes to the legendary reign of King David.[16]

As a project of peoplehood and nation-making, the formation of the biblical corpus is unprecedented. Nowhere else in the ancient world do we witness a people's effort – and such an elaborate and collaborative effort

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[14] On the origins of religion as a concept, see Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013) as well as the important questions David Frankfurter raises about Nongbri's approach to second-order "re-descriptive" categories in his review of the book in *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 23 (2015), 632–634. On Islam as a religion, see Shabbir Akhtar, *Islam as a Political Religion* (London: Routledge, 2011) and Jonathan P. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). On Judaism as a religion, see Leora Batnitzky, *How Judaism Became a Religion: An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

[15] See the classic work on the topic by Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[16] This narrative emerged over many centuries but was decisively shaped by two conquests: first, the Assyrian conquest of the Northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE, and second, the Babylonian conquest of Judah in 597 and 587 BCE. The eventful span of time between these two moments of defeat witnessed the germination of many of the most important ideas in biblical literature; see Carly Crouch, *The Making of Israel: Cultural Diversity in the Southern Levant and the Formation of Ethnic Identity in Deuteronomy* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

at that – first to document and depict its own defeat and then to use this history as a means of envisioning a new political order, one that recognizes the nation as an entity distinct from the state that governs it. The scribes who engaged in this effort were convinced that their communities would survive colonization by imperial powers when all of their members could claim a piece of the pie, when they had not only a spiritual vision but also a material incentive to take an active part in the collective life of a nation. As they reimagined Israel's corporate identity, these scribes asked themselves what it meant to be a people. Their responses to this foundational question – formulated in the widest array of genres: law, narrative, songs, laments, prophecies, wisdom, and love poetry – charted new territory in political theory as much as in theology. To be sure, the authors of our texts were political thinkers.[17]

The biblical project was set in motion when Judean scribes, working at the court in Jerusalem, asserted that two rival states – the Northern kingdom of Israel and the Southern kingdom of Judah – had their origins in an earlier "United Monarchy." This was above all an affirmation of political unity. Demonstrating that Yhwh had chosen David and his descendants to rule the nation, their account beckoned the population of the Northern kingdom to turn, or *return*, to Davidic rule. Yet even if it was statist in its agenda, this older work, with its affirmation of a political unity, inspired others, especially members of the defeated Northern kingdom, to think in terms of a nation that transcends the borders of its kingdoms. Diminishing the role of the throne, these circles composed counternarratives that tell the story of a large family that evolved into a diverse nation and existed for centuries before the establishment of the monarchy.

Over time, and especially after the fall of the Southern kingdom some 130 years after the fall of its Northern counterpart, the larger national perspective in these counternarratives took hold in wider circles. As it did, these counternarratives were joined to the older account of Israel's monarchies, which was in turn thoroughly reworked from the perspective of the former. The new, expanded national narrative grew to its present proportions as it was supplemented with law codes and didactic stories

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[17] I refer anachronistically to "biblical scribes" frequently throughout this study. The expression should be understood as "the generations of ancient, anonymous scribes who produced the corpus of literature now known to many as 'the Hebrew Bible' and 'Old Testament'." On conventional rubrics and their ideological lineages, see the first chapter of Eva Mroczek's *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

that address all aspects of what it means to be a people, and what a people needs to prosper.

Without the special relationship between two (defeated) kingdoms, there would be no Bible. North and South had long been divided, and they had repeatedly come to blows in long civil wars. What first ignited the biblical project was a vision that the populations of these two rival kingdoms could be one people. Many comparable cases of nation-making can be documented throughout history (e.g., Germany and Italy during the nineteenth centuries), and visions of a national unity that transcends political borders have often inspired similar projects of peoplehood.

The Bible's genesis presupposes not only the division between North and South but also the rise of the world's first empires. By demonstrating the limits of native sovereignty, the programs of destruction and deportation pursued by Assyria and Babylonia provoked the defeated (first in the North and then some 130 years later in the South) to reevaluate what they took for granted and to devise new strategies of collective survival. Instead of abandoning world affairs and political engagement, the biblical scribes worked to consolidate their communities and mobilize them as members of a nation.[18]

FROM THE PRIESTLY SOURCE TO EZRA-NEHEMIAH

To understand how Wellhausen could deny the national-political character of Israel's postdefeat identities, one must appreciate his analytical approach.[19] As a German source critic, he reconstructed social and historical developments in Israel and Judah by identifying the hands of multiple authors in the biblical text and assigning their work to stages in Israel's

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[18] An analogous critique of Wellhausen is developed in Jeffrey Stackert, *A Prophet like Moses: Prophecy, Law, and Israelite Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). Whereas Stackert provides (superb) analyses from a "documentarian" approach, which Wellhausen did much to develop, I argue that the Pentateuchal narrative evolved in stages as a result of smaller "supplements." Likewise, Stackert is more interested in Wellhausen's concept of religion (treating the complex relationship between prophecy and law), while I am more interested in Israel's national identity and the way it was negotiated among competing circles via "war commemoration." Stackert makes a compelling case for expanding the study of the Hebrew Bible from theology to the field of religion. I support his appeal, even if my work most frequently engages with research in Jewish studies and political theology.

[19] See Reinhard G. Kratz, "Eyes and Spectacles: Wellhausen's Method of Higher Criticism," *Journal of Theological Studies*, 60 (2009), 381–402.

social evolution. Thus, he argued that what we now call the "Priestly source" is not earlier but rather later than all other materials in the Pentateuch. As such, this source and the laws it contains represent the final stage in Israel's putative transformation from a national-political to a religious-cultic community: "The Priestly codex is characterized by a complete indifference with respect to all matters of the state and the nation. As a theocracy, its function is the cult; it has nothing to do with government, because this role is left essentially to foreign powers."[20]

What remains unaccounted for in this approach is the way in which the Priestly source has been integrated into a larger literary work that is undeniably national and political in character. Perhaps this source was once independent, but today we know about its existence thanks to a feat of modern scholarship that restored its basic contours by carefully dissecting it from other parts of the Pentateuch, which, in its transmitted forms, is the blueprint for a nation, not a religious community.

This Pentateuch portrays the birth of a people, their liberation from tyranny, and their voyage to a new homeland; it also contains multiple law codes that bear on all aspects of their corporate life as a nation. As a work that evolved over centuries, it has a pronounced polyphonic and multi-layered quality, like most biblical texts. As we will see throughout this study, the new consistently supplements rather than supplants the old. If Israel had gradually shed its national character and evolved into a religious community, as Wellhausen claimed, one would have to explain why the biblical scribes worked in this supplementary manner. Why didn't later generations do more to erase and diminish Israel's "national past," instead of preserving and embellishing it in sundry and significant ways?

Wellhausen connects the Priestly source to late prophetic writings and the book of Ezra-Nehemiah, yet it's difficult to see how these texts lend weight to his historical paradigm. Prophetic writings, both early and late, reflect an acute interest in not only domestic politics but also world affairs. It would be surprising if such were not the case; after all, these writings originated among a small people who were caught in the interstices of world empires and whose homeland lay on the Levantine land bridge, where the armies of these empires repeatedly confronted each other.

As for Ezra-Nehemiah, this book portrays Judean exiles returning from Babylon and struggling to rebuild their national life under conditions of foreign domination. They now live not only according to their own native laws but also in keeping with those imposed upon them by their imperial

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[20] Wellhausen, *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte*, 20n1.

overlords. The returnees realize that any attempt to reestablish the monarchy would provoke the ire of these overlords, and hence their leaders focus their efforts on public institutions and communal activities conceded to them by the empire. Admittedly, many of these institutions and activities may be classified as cultic or religious, but religion and politics are hardly antithetical.

Moreover, while the temple and priests figure prominently in Ezra-Nehemiah, its lengthiest section relates to the construction of Jerusalem's ramparts. The building project is repeatedly interrupted by assaults from neighboring peoples, and the workers must take up arms to protect themselves until the wall is finished. When exhorting them to carry on, Nehemiah, the non-priestly governor who leads them, uses rhetoric that reminds us of battle speeches from America's Revolutionary War: "Have no fear of them. Remember the Lord, the mighty and awesome one, and fight for your kin, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes" (Neh. 4:14 [HB 4:8]). The only way to maintain Wellhausen's paradigm is to ignore texts like these along with the social context in which they were written and read.

WAR COMMEMORATION

Wellhausen was correct to assign a leading role to war in the formation of Israel's national identity, yet the way in which he did so is untenable. Yes, war was a major factor in the consolidation of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, as it was for any ancient state. And yes, the military campaigns conducted by imperial armies eventually destroyed the state in the form of these two kingdoms. However, if these campaigns simultaneously destroyed the nation, as Wellhausen contended, one would be hard pressed to explain the pervasive presence of war in biblical texts, both early and late. The Hebrew Bible is suffused with stories of war not because the kingdoms of ancient Israel and Judah were unusually bellicose; the reason is rather that its authors were engaged in a concerted effort to construct a new national identity for Israel, and nations commonly define and redefine themselves by appeal to memories of wars and battles fought in their pasts.

As the most extreme form of cultural trauma, war has an incomparable impact on collective life. Yet when it comes to the formation of national identities, the actual experience of military conflict is less determinative than the shared memories of that experience. War monuments and war memorials in all forms (including works of historiography and national

hymns) serve as spaces in which political communities negotiate belonging and status by commemorating the wartime sacrifice and service of its members.

Competing with hegemonic memories are "counter-memories" created by marginalized members of the community who, by reminding the nation of their record of sacrifice, lay claim to respect and rights in society.[21] Thus, as a monument that "both commemorates and attests to the lack of previous commemoration," a thirteen-foot bronze statue of a Black soldier was set up in Baltimore in 1972, and in his outstretched arm he solemnly holds a long list of wars fought by African Americans in US history, for which astonishingly few monuments or memorials had ever been built.[22] Memory battles make and mold a nation's identity, and when dissent and disputation cease, a national consciousness withers and wanes.[23]

The politics of war commemoration is one of the most promising candidates for interdisciplinary research in the humanities.[24] Yet due to modernist prejudices, on the one hand, and disciplinary narrowness, on the other, past scholarship has unfortunately failed to appreciate the important ancient precursors to this modern mode of political discourse. My research redresses this situation by demonstrating the extent to which the Hebrew Bible represents a work of war commemoration.

Among the many survival strategies adopted by Jewish communities living under foreign rule, war commemoration has long occupied a central place. Thus, a wide array of Jewish sources from Greco-Roman times commemorate the military valor of Jewish soldiers and the crucial contributions they made to the Ptolemies' conquest and control of Egypt. The memories created by Jewish authors served the interests of their communities in securing not only imperial privileges but also protection in an

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[21] On the concept of "counter-memory," which Michel Foucault developed in the 1970s, see Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1993) and Reiko Tachibana, *Narrative as Counter-Memory: A Half-Century of Postwar Writing in Germany and Japan* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998). For its application to commemoration and memorials, see James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

[22] See Rebecca Kook, *The Logic of Democratic Exclusion: African Americans in the United States and Palestinian Citizens in Israel* (Lanham: Lexington, 2002), 116–117.

[23] See John Hutchinson, *Nations as Zones of Conflict* (London: Sage, 2005).

[24] See T. G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper (eds.), *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration* (London: Routledge, 2000) and the wide range of journals that were established a decade ago, from *History and Memory* to the *Journal of Australian War Memorial* and, most recently, the *Journal of War and Culture Studies*.

often hostile environment. The same use of war commemoration can be witnessed among Jewish populations in many other times and places, from China to the Ottoman Empire. With the emergence of the modern nation-state, war commemoration assumed a new urgency. Allegiance to the crown was now replaced by membership in the nation, and as they affirmed their belonging and struggled for acceptance in the face of growing hatred and xenophobic assaults, Jewish communities fashioned many monuments (both literary and physical) to their disproportionate wartime service and sacrifice.

While in both the empires of antiquity and the nation-states of modernity war commemoration has played a key role in Jewish survival, my work has demonstrated something quite remarkable: It wasn't only after Jews had already become a people that war commemoration began to play this role in Jewish history; no, war commemoration constituted the very process by which Israel became Israel. The scribes who produced the biblical writings demarcated the boundaries of the nation (belonging) and negotiated the rank of its members (status) by constructing memories of great wars and battles, and by identifying who contributed to these war efforts or who shirked their obligations.

Therefore, it's not war itself, as Wellhausen claimed, but war *commemoration* that has served as an engine for Israel's ethnogenesis as a people and the Bible's evolution as a corpus of literature, and we can trace a direct line of continuity from modern Jewish cultures to the emergence of Israel's national identity in biblical writings via this political activity.[25]

PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE PRESENT BOOK

In prior studies, I defined the genre of war commemoration in biblical literature and compared it to memorials from past to present. Those studies treat the way in which scribes addressed concerns in their societies

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[25] For a discussion of the Greco-Roman texts mentioned here, see my chapter "Surviving in an Imperial Context: Foreign Military Service and Judean Identity" in Oded Lipschits et al. (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 505–528. I have studied the role of military service and war commemoration in Jewish survival from antiquity to modernity in several previous works; see the second chapter of both *King David and His Reign Revisited* and *David, King of Israel*, as well as the article just cited, the essay in *Prooftexts* (see n. 12 above), and two literary studies: "War Commemoration and the Interpretation of Judges 5:15b–17," *Vetus Testamentum*, 61 (2011), 1–16, and "Deborah's War Memorial: The Composition of Judges 4–5 and the Politics of War Commemoration," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 123 (2011), 516–534.

by evoking memories of David and the wars he had fought centuries before. In the present volume, I turn my attention from the dynamics of statehood to the politics of peoplehood. In a fourfold exposition, I show how scribes constructed Israel's national identity by commemorating battles and wars fought in the formative years of its history as a people.

Part I treats the earliest encounters between Israel and its future neighbors as depicted in the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy. As a newly formed nation of refugees making their way to the Promised Land, Israel has to cross the borders of various peoples. In each instance, it sends petitions for permission to pass peaceably through their lands. Despite the Israelites' efforts to avoid conflict, the petitioned peoples consistently prove to be inhospitable, coming out against them to wage war.

The texts are complex and have a number of agendas, including a concern to establish rightful claims to surrounding territories. What they all have in common, though, is an essential component of war commemoration: they appeal to memories of military conflicts in the past to address political problems in the present. One of the most illustrative cases is that of the Edomites, and we examine a wide range of biblical texts whose authors either malign the memory of this southern neighbor by documenting their misconduct in wartime or respond to these aspersions by constructing counter-memories of past reconciliation.

The biblical scribes used war commemoration to negotiate relations not only *between* the nation and neighboring peoples but also *among* the members of the nation itself, and in Part II we consider one of the most contentious issues of internal relations in biblical texts: the status of the Transjordan. If the Jordan River marks the nation's eastern border as assumed, or argued, by most biblical texts, then how should one view the communities across the Jordan that claim affiliation with the nation? How did they come to live there? And is the territory they occupy on a par with the Promised Land?

We explore the responses to this question found in what I call the "Narrative of the Transjordanian Tribes," which begins in the book of Numbers and reemerges at key points in the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua. The authors of this narrative are not univocal in their defense of the Transjordanian communities, but they agree on several points: 1) that the members of these communities (although perhaps not their territories) belong to the nation; 2) that they demonstrated their solidarity by crossing the Jordan and fighting in the nation's vanguard; and 3) that they performed this service and sacrifice for their Israelite kin without taking possession of any of the territories conquered in Canaan. While early

iterations of this account underscore the *fraternal character* of these wartime contributions, later additions, penned by Priestly scribes, present the participation of these tribes as *fidelity to Yhwh's command*. In the tension between these competing rationales we begin to sense the profound political-theological dimensions of biblical war commemoration.

Part III plumbs these dimensions by considering how a paradigmatic case of war commemoration – the story of Rahab the harlot saving Israelite spies in return for being saved from the destruction of her city – offered early Christian and Jewish communities a symbolic framework for addressing their own issues, ranging from soteriological disputes to conditions for conversion. In exploring the formation of Rahab's story, we will witness how ancient scribes seized on a suggestive detail in an older narrative and fashioned from it what I call a "parable of peoplehood."

With fear and courage as its central themes, Rahab's story is woven into the seams of a major division of the biblical canon, offering not only an archetype of an outsider who honorably enters the national fold but also a basis for evaluating the behavior of native members of the nation. Among these native members were the Gibeonites, and we will see how the biblical scribes used war commemoration to identify this prominent population as outsiders who infiltrated Israel's ranks through a dishonorable act of duplicity.

We turn, finally, in Part IV, to the most monumental example of biblical war commemoration, the Song of Deborah from the book of Judges. Extraordinarily complex and exquisitely structured, the song celebrates simultaneously a military victory over Israel's foes and a collective identity that unites its members. This identity is a thoroughly national one, distinguished by the civic virtue of volunteerism. The battle lines are drawn between "the kings of Canaan" with their professional armies, on the one side, and "the people of Yhwh" led by "a mother in Israel," on the other. In cataloguing the names of those who volunteered to fight along with those who dodged their wartime duties, the song negotiates both belonging and status among the members of a nonmonarchic political community.

Our study of the song maps the formation of this literary monument and its place in the wider biblical narrative. It also explores the important part played by women in war commemoration, paying special attention to the figure of Jael, a Kenite woman who defies her husband's political alliances and performs a heroic deed on behalf of her people.

As the work of generations of scribes, the texts we will be studying evolved over time. I engage in the compositional reconstruction of some

texts, but my aim is to do so in an easy-to-follow and engaging manner, always with an eye to the larger intellectual payoff. The medium of communication is an important aspect of war commemoration, ranging from stone to song. The biblical scribes worked with stylus and scroll to create what I call a "movable monument," and the fabric and texture of what they produced is an important part of their nation-making project. As we will see, the study of war commemoration offers us a historically concrete, comparative context for understanding the diachronic growth of biblical texts.[26]

This work has its origins in a course on political theology taught at Candler School of Theology and Emory University. In turning it into a book, I've kept my students in mind – both those who have worked directly with me at Emory and the more than 50,000 individuals who, from Dhaka, Bangladesh to Atlanta, Georgia, have learned "virtually" with me in my ongoing Coursera course. I am grateful to underwriting from the Mellon Foundation that made it possible to offer the book gratis in an open-access format on the Cambridge University Press platform.

In this book, as in the classroom, I guide readers through wide swaths of biblical texts, illustrating the kinds of questions and concerns that inform my own approach as a professor of biblical studies. Each chapter corresponds to a week of classroom instruction, growing successively more complex. I introduce the reader to methods of diachronic analysis, as well as diverse materials that bring a wider perspective to the ancient biblical accounts. Even though I am not always successful, I try not to get bogged down with technical matters or be distracted for too long by "inside baseball" with colleagues in the field. I have kept the notes to a minimum (especially in Parts I and II), providing what I deem to be essential reading, even if it is occasionally in other languages.

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[26] In this study, I use the term "diachronic" to describe the perspective of the text's evolution; by contrast, I use the term "synchronic" to describe the perspective of the text in its transmitted forms. For more on this distinction and the ways it is applied to languages in linguistic theory, see Anna Ramat Giacalone, Caterina Mauri, and Piera Molinelli (eds.), *Synchrony and Diachrony: A Dynamic Interface* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2013).

REFUGEE MEMORIES: NEGOTIATING RELATIONS AND BORDERS WITH NEIGHBORING STATES

The Pentateuch presents the newly liberated nation of Israel as a band of refugees trekking through the wilderness on its way to the Promised Land. As they approach their destination, marching from the south up through the Transjordan, they come into contact with a wide array of neighboring peoples: the Edomites, the kingdom of Arad, King Sihon and the Amorites, King Og of Bashan, King Balak of the Moabites, and the Midianites. The Israelites send messengers to request permission to pass through these peoples' respective territories, promising not to tarry within their borders and to pay for any food and water that they might consume. Yet instead of being treated hospitably, the fledgling nation is consistently harassed and assaulted.

The memories of Israel's first encounters with its future neighbors bear on a long-standing convention of international relations, according to which a state is expected to permit passage to the armies of its allies, while refusal to do so was a sign of enmity. In this first part of our study, we begin by surveying and studying these Pentateuchal accounts in Chapter 1, before focusing our attention on the emblematic case of the Edomites in Chapter 2.

Although we do not engage in detailed textual analyses in these two chapters, we will witness how the Pentateuchal accounts evolved from exchanges between scribes working over generations. The myriad voices inscribed in the literary monument they created is a characteristic feature of war commemoration produced in contexts that are not governed by a monolithic authority, and the fall of Israel's and Judah's kings created de facto the conditions for the vibrant exchanges memorialized in the texts that we examine here.

1

Passages to Peace

In 1757, when the Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Friedrich II, allowed Swedish armies to pass through his territory, he incurred the wrath of the Prussian throne to which he owed fealty. As a consequence, the duke was forced to take refuge in the Hanseatic city of Lübeck.

The history of warfare knows countless parallels to this scenario. In most cases, the permission to pass through a country was coupled with provision by that country of alimentary succor for the army. From antiquity to modernity, food and water for troops and horses constituted a conventional obligation that both allies and vassals were expected to meet when a campaigning force traversed their country.[1]

In his monumental and immensely influential 1625 work *De jure belli ac pacis* (The Rights of War and Peace), Hugo Grotius devoted many pages to the passage of armies through the territories of third parties. Summoning a wide range of ancient and medieval sources, he began his disquisition with, and assigned great weight to, texts from the Pentateuch. The issues he addressed include the question of whether a campaigning army may be allowed to stay for an extended period in a foreign country or purchase provisions from its inhabitants. Grotius concluded that the right to cross neighboring lands must be granted if another route is not practicable. A commander should first formally request permission to pass through a neighboring

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[1] The provisioning of troops is a standard vassal obligation or, more generally, an opportunity for a community to demonstrate loyalty, as can be seen not least from Josephus's *Jewish War* 1.5, 8.1, 9.4, 13.8, 20.3, and passim.

territory, but when it is not conferred, he may proceed, resorting to force if necessary.[2]

The deliberations of the Dutch jurist have directly informed subsequent discussions of rights of passage in international law, and the illustrations he provides from sundry times and places render it likely that the scribes responsible for the Pentateuchal texts he cites had ancient military conventions in mind, even if these scribes appear to have invented ad hoc a range of scenarios for their national narrative.

The texts in question purport to recount Israel's earliest encounters with its future neighbors. By constructing memories and counter-memories of these encounters, the biblical scribes not only explained how Israel came to occupy various territories in the Transjordan; they also addressed issues presented by peoples on their borders.[3]

PASSAGE DENIED

The book of Numbers narrates Israel's long and eventful voyage through the wilderness that separates Egypt from the southern Levant.[4] In an uninhabited wasteland they are left to themselves and their own internal issues. But in the final stages of their journey, as they draw near to the Promised Land, they come into contact, for the first time, with the

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[2] Grotius refers to an episode recounted by Plutarch when the Athenian general Cimon, coming to the assistance of Sparta, led his troops through the lands of the Corinthians without giving them prior notice. The Corinthians reproved him: "When one desires to enter a house, it is usual to knock at the door and wait for admission!" (see Book Two, 2.22–24 and 3.1–19). The issue of army passage is directly related, for navies, to the "rights to the seas" – Grotius himself wrote an important book on this issue, *Mare Liberum* (The Freedom of the Seas), published in 1609 – and now, for air forces, to "flyover rights."

[3] The biblical texts discussed here have had a direct impact on European notions of just war; for example, John Locke drew directly on them when developing the ideas in his *Second Treatise of Government* (1689). At the most basic level, the biblical accounts present an alternative to the campaigns conducted by the imperial powers of their day. Instead of seizing all the territories that lay in their path, the Israelites strove to skirt the borders of their future neighbors and went to great lengths to avoid conflict with their neighbors. As a band of refugees, they were making their way to their homeland, and their intention was to occupy solely their divinely appointed borders. For help in thinking about the implications of our findings in Part I for political theology, see John Haskell, *Political Theology and International Law* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

[4] On compositional issues related to the episodes from Numbers (and their literary pendants in Deuteronomy), see Stephen Germany, *The Exodus-Conquest Narrative: The Composition of the Non-Priestly Narratives in Exodus-Joshua* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

kingdoms that occupy the regions surrounding their homeland, and these confrontations with outsiders present unprecedented problems.

The first civilization they face is the southernmost kingdom of Edom, whose inhabitants are identified as the descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Israel's ancestor, Jacob. Straightaway, Moses sends messengers to their king with the following petition:

Thus says your brother Israel: "You know all the troubles that we've suffered. Our ancestors went down to Egypt, where we lived a long time. The Egyptians oppressed us and our ancestors. When we cried to Yhwh, he heard our voice, and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt. We reside now in Kadesh, a town on the edge of your borders. Let us please pass through your territory. We will not traverse field or vineyard, nor will we drink water from any well. We will go along the King's Highway, not veering to the right hand or to the left, until we exit your borders." Num. 20:14–17[5]

Notice that the subject of the petition is not Moses but "your brother Israel." By removing himself from the picture and recalling his people's sojourn and suffering in Egypt, Moses, as the fictive author of the petition, showcases his diplomatic savvy and rhetorical skills: the Edomites should understand that the supplicant is not an army on its way to conquer new territories but rather their own kin returning as refugees to their homeland after years of affliction in a foreign land.

Although the Israelites are the Edomites' own flesh and blood, they do not so much as ask for a drop of water from the Edomites' wells or a handful of grain from their fields. Even so, this kingdom denies them passage and threatens to take up arms against them. Giving their kin yet another chance to demonstrate compassion, the Israelite messengers insist that their people would keep to the beaten pathway and pay for any water that they or their livestock would drink. "We ask only for passage on foot – it is but a small matter" (Num. 20:19). Their repeated appeal fails to arouse pity, however, and the Edomites now march out with a host of heavily armed troops. "Thus Edom refused to grant Israel passage through their territory, and Israel turned the other way" (Num. 20:21).

In the next encounter with a foreign people, the Israelites do not have the chance to ask for permit of passage. The king of Arad (a city on Judah's southern frontier) hears about their arrival and immediately attacks them. Before retaliating, the Israelites make a pact with Yhwh that they will not take possession of Canaanite towns in the region if he grants them victory:

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[5] Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

When the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the Negeb, heard that Israel was coming by the way of Atharim, he fought against Israel and took some of them captive. Then Israel made a vow to Yhwh and said, "If you will indeed give this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their towns." Yhwh listened to the voice of Israel and handed over the Canaanites. They utterly destroyed them and their towns, so the place was called Hormah [a wordplay on "utterly destroyed"]. Num. 21:1–3[6]

This episode resembles the way in which the Amalekites, without prior provocation, attack the Israelites soon after they leave Egypt (Exod. 17:8–16).[7] The difference is that the Amalekites are identified as landless marauders, so that when Israel retaliates, there are no cities to be destroyed, as in the war with Arad, or territory to be conquered, as in the impending conflicts with Sihon and Og. Nevertheless, the commemorative purpose of all the accounts we discuss here is made most explicit in the Amalekite episode, which concludes with Yhwh commanding Moses to "write this as a memorial in a scroll" and with Moses building an altar as a monument to the perpetual war between Yhwh and his enemy. Later, in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses reminds the nation of the Amalekites' aggression, commanding future generations to "erase the memory of Amalek from under heaven; do not forget!" (Deut. 25:17–19).[8]

After the war with Arad, the Israelites voyage onward until they arrive at the Amorite kingdom of Sihon. Before stepping foot in his territory, they request permission to traverse his borders:

Then Israel sent messengers to King Sihon of the Amorites, saying, "Let me please pass through your land. We will not turn aside into field or vineyard, nor will we drink water of any well. We will stick to the King's Highway until we have exited your borders." Num. 21:21–22

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[6] This episode in 21:1–3 appears to have been interpolated. (The same can be said of the account of Aaron's death and investiture of his son Eleazar in 20:23–29.) Notice how the reference to Israel's arrival at Mount Hor in 20:22 continues with the statement that they circumvented the land of Edom in 21:4. (For texts connected with this one, see Num. 14:45; Josh. 12:14; Judg. 1:17.) The pact between Israel and Yhwh in 21:1–3 is part of a larger dispute about when and where the wars of conquest commenced (see the discussion in Part II). A helpful historical survey of this region is provided in Ido Koch and Lidar Sapir-Hen, "Beersheba-Arad Valley During the Assyrian Period," *Semitica*, 60 (2018), 427–452.

[7] Although the Amalek episode differs from the other texts treated in this section, its authors may have intended it to serve as the lens through which these texts are to be read.

[8] On the remarkable formulation "erase the memory of Amalek from under heaven; do not forget!" and the dynamics of memory-making in the Amalek texts, see Alana M. Vincent, *Making Memory: Jewish and Christian Explorations in Monument, Narrative, and Liturgy* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2014).

This petition is similar to the one they had conveyed to the king of Edom. (The chief difference is that Moses is missing from this account, as in the preceding episode with the king of Arad.[9]) Once again, the enemy ruler refuses to grant permission, and he mobilizes "all his people to engage Israel in battle in the wilderness." As in the case of Arad, his assault is unsuccessful, yet this time the Israelites take possession of his country. The narrator makes it clear that when the Israelites seized land from the Amorites, they did not encroach on Ammonite territory:

Sihon came to Jahaz and fought against Israel. But Israel put them to the sword and took possession of their land – from the Arnon to the Jabbok, as far as the Ammonites, for Az marked the boundary of the Ammonites. Israel took all those towns. Israel settled in all the towns of the Amorites, in Heshbon, and in all its dependencies. Num. 21:23b–25[10]

As the Israelites venture northwards, they approach the territory of Bashan, and when its king attacks them, he meets the same fate as Sihon:

Then they turned and went up the road to Bashan. There King Og of Bashan came out against them, he and all his people, to do battle at Edrei. But Yhwh said to Moses, "Do not be afraid of him, for I have given him into your hand, with all his people, and all his land. You shall do to him as you did to King Sihon of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon." So they killed him, his sons, and all his people, until there was no survivor left; and they took possession of his land. Num. 21:33–35[11]

Finally, the nation arrives in the steppes of Moab near the Jordan River. The encounter with Moab is different from the preceding ones: it is much longer, spanning three chapters (Num. 22–24); the Israelites do not

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[9] The Edomite account, in which Moses has removed himself from the petition, establishes a pattern for the narration in the following episodes inasmuch as Israel as a collective body is the subject of the latter. (Notice how Israel becomes the subject of the narrative already in 20:19.) Whether this synchronic impression corresponds to the diachronic development is another matter.

[10] The addition of 21:26–30 defends Israel's occupation of these territories from any accusation that it was occupying the Moabites' land. The narrator cites what appears to be an ancient and familiar poem (cf. the lament in Jer. 48) to demonstrate that the king of Moab had forfeited these lands to *the Amorites* (from Heshbon), with whom Israel engaged in battle.

[11] The paragraph is widely thought to represent a late insertion based upon the account in Deuteronomy 3; see the treatment of this passage in Germany, *Exodus-Conquest Narrative*, 241–276, as well as Ludwig Schmidt, "Sihon und Og in Num 21,21ff.* und Dtn 2,24ff.*: Ein Beitrag zur Entstehung des Buches Numeri" in Christian Frevel, Thomas Pola, and Aaron Schart (eds.), *Torah and the Book of Numbers* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 314–333.

directly petition the Moabites for permission to pass through their territories; and there is no military confrontation.

Having witnessed all that the Israelites had done to the Amorites, and fearing that Israel's large numbers would "surely lick clean all that is about us as an ox licks up the grass of the field," the Moabites form a military coalition with the Midianites. Yet instead of coming out to attack the Israelites, the Moabite king, Balak, hires a soothsayer or seer named Balaam to perform rituals of execration and pronounce imprecations on them.

His plans prove futile. Yhwh sends Balaam with messages of reproach for Balak along with awe-inspiring descriptions of Yhwh and his people. Thanks to the deity's strength, Israel is a fierce lion who feasts upon its prey and a wild ox who devours enemy nations. When the infuriated Balak commands Balaam to try again, the seer's words only grow more eloquent:

> Word of Balaam son of Beor,
>> Word of the man whose eye is true,
> Word of him who hears El's speech,
>> Who beholds visions from Shaddai,
> Prostrate,
>> But with eyes unveiled:
>
> How fair are your tents, O Jacob,
>> Your dwellings, O Israel!
> Like palm-groves that stretch out,
>> Like gardens beside a river,
> Like aloes planted by Yhwh,
>> Like cedars beside the water;
> Their boughs drip with moisture,
>> Their roots have abundant water.
>
> Their king shall rise above Agag,
>> Their kingdom shall be exalted.
> El who freed them from Egypt
>> Is for them like the horns of the wild ox.
> They shall devour enemy nations,
>> Crush their bones,
>>> And smash their arrows.
>
> They crouch,
>> They lie down like a lion,
> Like the king of beasts;
>> Who dare rouse them?

> Blessed are they who bless you,
>> Accursed they who curse you!
>>> Num. 24:3–9, JPS[12]

Upon hearing the awe-inspiring description of his enemy, Balak sends Balaam away. As he leaves, he finally delivers the commissioned imprecations; however, he pronounces them not on the Israelites but on the Moabites and other peoples.[13]

All the texts just surveyed likely represent supplements to an older, simpler itinerary that traces Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan (see the discussion in Part II). Like the battle monuments and war memorials that dot national landscapes, biblical scribes implanted these commemorative accounts across the span of their national narrative. Yet what prompted them to do so? To answer this question, we need to consider a number of other texts.

MOSES'S CONFLICTING MEMORY

Numbers constructs memories of the nation's first encounters with its neighbors, and in Deuteronomy we can witness how later generations of scribes contested them with counter-memories.[14] This new account presents Moses, on the eve of both the invasion and his own death, delivering a series of prebattle addresses to the nation. In his first address, the departing leader recounts Israel's history from Sinai (Horeb) to the present, referring extensively to the events depicted in Numbers. His overarching purpose is to demonstrate that the Israelites had enjoyed Yhwh's direct assistance up to this point and therefore had no reason to be anxious about their future as they prepared, in his absence, to cross the Jordan and invade Canaan.

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[12] JPS refers to the New Jewish Publication Society of America version of the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible), published in 1985.

[13] On the place of Balaam in the wider narrative(s), see Jonathan M. Robker, "The Balaam Narrative in the Pentateuch/Hexateuch/Enneateuch," in Frevel, Pola, and Schart, *Torah*, 334–366.

[14] Admittedly, this statement needs to be nuanced inasmuch as at least one of the memories in Numbers (the episode with Og in 21:33–35) may presuppose the corresponding account in Deuteronomy. See Jan Gertz, "Kompositorische Funktion und literarhistorischer Ort von Deuteronomium 1–3" in Markus Witte et al., *Die deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerke in den Büchern Genesis bis 2. Könige: Neue religions- und redaktionsgeschichtliche Perspektiven zur jüngsten "Deuteronomismus"-Diskussion* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 103–123.

As Moses pursues his agenda, his recollection of these events differs, often substantially, from the depiction in Numbers. Whereas the latter presents Israel politely petitioning various peoples for permission to pass through their country, in Deuteronomy Moses claims that Yhwh had actually commanded him to harass and "provoke" (*g-r-h*, Hitpael) some of these peoples so that they would engage in battle! In introducing this startling new information, Moses reports that he had nevertheless requested permits of passage, as if he was uneasy with Yhwh's orders. In fact, his rendition of the petitions makes them sound even more polite and peaceable. The reason why they refused Israel passage, he explains to his audience, is that Yhwh had hardened their hearts. Hence, instead of responding hospitably toward Israel, they came out and fought them, only to suffer devastating defeat.

Moses begins his account of these events by describing how the Israelites, when traveling through the Transjordan, had circumvented the Edomites' territory as long as they could. When describing this encounter, he avoids the name "Edomites," as if it would evoke negative associations; instead, he refers to them as "the descendants of Esau who live in Seir" and "our brothers/kin." He also recalls how Yhwh instructed him to avoid anything that might incite their aggression:

Then Yhwh said to me: "You have been skirting this hill country long enough. Now turn northwards, and instruct the people as follows: 'You will be passing through the territory of your brothers, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. Though they will be afraid of you, *be very careful not to provoke them*. For I will not give you of their land so much as a foot can tread on; I have given the hill country of Seir as a possession to Esau. Any food you eat you shall obtain from them with payment of silver; even the water you drink you shall procure from them with silver.'" Deut. 2:2–6 (emphasis added)

In describing how Yhwh eventually instructed the nation to cross Edom's borders, Moses has nothing to say about a petition for passage or about how the Edomites attacked them, as depicted in Numbers. The impression he leaves is that Israel actually did pass through this country and that the Edomites, "our brothers" (Deut. 2:8), would have provided food and water for them gratis if Israel hadn't insisted on paying for it.[15] The contrast to the account in Numbers couldn't be starker.

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[15] *Pace* Jeffrey H. Tigay (*The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy* [New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1996], 25), the statement in Deuteronomy 2:7 may be an attempt to explain not *how* the Israelites could purchase provisions but *why* they had to do so if Israel "had lacked nothing" (i.e., received manna from heaven).

What follows this episode in Moses's memory are the encounters with the Ammonites and Moabites. As in the case of the Edomites, Yhwh commands Israel not to do anything that would "provoke" a military conflict (Deut. 2:8–23). These instructions take a dramatic turn as the nation approaches the kingdom of Sihon. Moses claims that Yhwh had determined to give Sihon's territory to Israel and had enjoined him to "begin the conquest" by "provoking" this king to wage war with Israel (Deut. 2:24–25).

The way in which Moses fulfills these orders is to do nothing other than send messengers requesting a permit of passage.[16] The words of the petition embellish the version in Numbers; for example, the messengers insist that they would pay for food and water. Moreover, in an attempt to persuade Sihon to grant Israel safe conduct through his territory, Moses appeals to the precedent set by the Edomites and Moabites:

Let me pass through your country. I will keep strictly to the highway, turning off neither to the right nor to the left. What food I eat you will supply for silver, and what water I drink you will furnish for silver; just let me pass through – as the descendants of Esau who dwell in Seir did for me, and the Moabites who dwell in Ar – that I may cross the Jordan into the land that Yhwh our god is giving us. Deut. 2:28–29

Here, Moses states explicitly that the Edomites, along with the Moabites, granted Israel license to pass through their borders.[17]

Over the centuries, readers have attempted to harmonize these contradictory accounts. The Samaritan Pentateuch inserted lines from the Numbers account right before Deuteronomy 2:8 so that the Edomite king threatens to assault Israel with the sword; as a result, the verse has to be understood as reporting that Israel passed *around* Edomite territory instead of crossing *through* it.[18] Medieval Jewish interpreters likewise

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[16] Notice the way in which the scribes have integrated the new into the old: First, Yhwh commands Moses to begin to take possession of Sihon's land (2:24–25). This is followed by an (embellished) account of the petition to Sihon (2:26–29). Sihon's refusal is then explained by Yhwh to be a part of his larger plan to dispossess him of his territory: "See, I have begun to deliver Sihon and his land to you. Begin and occupy! Take possession of his land!" (2:30–31). Thereafter, the events in Numbers are recounted: Sihon comes out and attacks Israel, only to forfeit his territory to them (2:32–37).

[17] According to Deuteronomy 2:37, Israel also did not encroach upon Ammonite territory.

[18] The formulation of Deuteronomy 2:8 already represents a problem inasmuch as it seems to suggest that Israel did not, in fact, pass through Edom's borders. The interpretation of this verse is complicated by the possibility that the entire Edomite pericope in verses 4–7 was added at a later point. The text of the Samaritan Pentateuch is available online; for the relevant passage, go to: www.stepbible.org/?q=version=SP|reference=Deu.2.

attempted to demonstrate that the accounts are not conflicting. For example, the Iberian scholar Ibn Ezra (1089–ca.1167), noticing that Deuteronomy 2 avoids the name "Edom," argued that the "descendants of Esau" permitted Israel passage, while "the king of Edom," who controlled the "King's Highway" (Num. 20:17), displayed belligerence. Critical scholarship, especially that of earlier generations, has often explained the contradictions by assigning these contradictory accounts to two separate source documents, each of which has a distinctive understanding of Israel's history.[19]

What all these approaches fail to appreciate is how the divergent accounts bear witness to a vigorous scribal contest of memory and countermemory, in a manner characteristic of the polyphonic war commemoration that we will be exploring throughout this study. As we shall see, the dispute over Israel's passage through Edom would have had direct ramifications for the ancient readers' stance toward a southern neighbor that came to occupy vast stretches of ancestral Judean lands after Judah fell to the Babylonians in 587 BCE.

Admittedly, the omission of any reference to the Edomites' animosity makes good sense given the rhetorical purposes of Moses's address in Deuteronomy: Israel should not be anxious about the impending campaign in Canaan, because their presence intimidates their enemies. Moses describes the encounter with the Edomites to prove his point, suggesting that this people feared Israel and hence did not come out against them. However, this rhetorical purpose does not explain why Yhwh instructs Israel to provoke war with some peoples and to avoid conflict with others. Nor does it account for the different image of the Edomites in Deuteronomy: while Numbers polemicizes against the Edomites, Deuteronomy argues in their favor.

COMMEMORATION AND LEGISLATION

The authors of Deuteronomy embedded a lengthy law code (chaps. 12–26) in Moses's prebattle addresses, and a section of this code bears directly on our interest in war commemoration:

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[19] See the discussion of scholarship in David A. Glatt-Gilad, "The Re-Interpretation of the Edomite-Israelite Encounter in Deuteronomy II," *Vetus Testamentum*, 47 (1997), 441–455; Wolfgang Oswald, "Die Revision des Edombildes in Numeri xx 14–21," *Vetus Testamentum*, 50 (2000), 218–232; J. Maxwell Miller, "The Israelite Journey Through (Around?) Moab and Moabite Toponymy," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 108 (1989), 577–595.

No Ammonite or Moabite shall be admitted into the Congregation of Yhwh. None of their descendants, even in the tenth generation, shall ever be admitted into the Congregation of Yhwh. Since they did not meet you on the road with food and water during your journey from Egypt,

> *and since they hired Balaam son of Beor, from Pethor of Aram-naharaim, to curse you, [But Yhwh your god refused to listen to Balaam. Yhwh your god turned the curse into a blessing for you. For Yhwh your god loves you.]*

you shall not seek their welfare or prosperity as long as you live.

You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your kin. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, for you were a stranger in his land. Children born to them of the third generation may be admitted into the Congregation of Yhwh. Deut. 23:4–9[20]

The lines cited here are an excerpt from a section of rules regulating membership in the "Congregation [*qâhâl*] of Yhwh." The rules are consistent with the positive attitude toward the Edomites in Moses's prebattle address, while assuming that at least some would be inclined to "abhor" them. In proscribing contempt for this people and permitting membership to their third-generation descendants, Deuteronomy appeals here to a fraternal ethic without saying anything about Israel being granted passage through their territory or provisioned in transit.

This omission is all the more noteworthy since the preceding lines refer precisely to these expectations of hospitality as the reason for excluding Ammonites and Moabites from the Congregation of Yhwh. The book of Numbers has nothing to say about these two peoples denying Israel rights to cross their territory. Likewise, in Deuteronomy 2 Moses recalls that the Israelites went out of their way to skirt its borders and were ordered by Yhwh not to provoke a conflict with them.[21]

While the *qâhâl* regulations in Deuteronomy 23 most likely did not originate in complete isolation from the narrative in Numbers, it's difficult to discern a clear sequence of composition.[22] Read against the backdrop of the laws in Deuteronomy 23, the episode in Numbers suggests that the Edomites not only failed to provision their kin with bread and water, even when Israel promised to pay for it; they also waged war against them. The

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[20] The indented and italicized section, which adds a new reason along with three tangential remarks, was likely added by a later hand, as scholars have postulated over the years; see the discussion in Eckart Otto, *Deuteronomium 12–34* (Freiburg: Herder, 2016), as well as Markus Zehnder "Anstösse aus Dtn 23,2-9 zur Frage nach dem Umgang mit Fremden," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie*, 52 (2005), 300–314.

[21] In Deuteronomy 2, Moses has nothing to say about the incident with Balaam.

[22] While the Edom account in Numbers seems to be older, it may have been expanded with elements from similar texts and in reaction to views set forth not only in Deuteronomy but also in Genesis (discussed in Chapter 2).

reader should draw a conclusion: if the Ammonites and Moabites are to be banned from the *qâhâl* for an infraction of hospitality, the nation should rethink its fraternal stance toward the Edomites, who were not only inhospitable but outright hostile. This polemical posture directly undermines Deuteronomy's explicit injunction: "Do not abhor the Edomite, for he is your kin."[23]

A late addition to the book of Ezra-Nehemiah reveals how some circles in the postexilic period applied Deuteronomy 23 to issues of their time:

At that time the Book of Moses was read for the hearing of the people. It was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the Congregation [*qâhâl*] of God because they did not meet Israel with bread and water, and because they hired Balaam against them to curse them (but our god turned the curse into a blessing). When they heard this teaching, they separated all the mixed multitude from Israel. Neh. 13:1–3

This paragraph has been prefaced to Nehemiah's memoirs, which describe the measures he took as governor to safeguard Judah from deleterious alliances with its neighbor, such as intermarriage with Ammonites and Moabites (Neh. 13:23, see also 13:28). The first thing Nehemiah recounts is how he forced Tobiah, a Transjordanian leader identified several times as an Ammonite, to relinquish his property within the precincts of Jerusalem's temple. Against the backdrop of the paragraph cited above, Tobiah's expulsion is to be understood not as a conflict between two personalities on Judah's political stage but as one piece of a larger reform undertaken by the entire community after studying "the Book of Moses" and learning about the Ammonites' and Moabites' inhospitable conduct at a crucial moment in the nation's history.[24]

DAVID IN THE WILDERNESS

To challenge clear-cut rulings such as those in Deuteronomy 23, one had to creatively fabricate more favorable memories of Israel's neighbors. An example of this memory-making is found in the book of Samuel. When the insurgent Absalom seizes his father's throne, he forces David and his

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[23] Juan Manuel Tebes, "'You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite, for He Is Your Brother': The Tradition of Esau and the Edomite Genealogies from an Anthropological Perspective" in Ehud Ben Zvi (ed.), *Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures III* (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2008), 175–216.

[24] See Jacob L. Wright, *Rebuilding Identity: The Nehemiah Memoir and Its Earliest Readers* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 315–319. We will revisit this important episode with Tobiah in Part II.

supporters to evacuate the capital and seek refuge in the Transjordan. Famished and fatigued, they are eventually met by a delegation of three Transjordanian dignitaries, one of whom is an Ammonite prince. The delegation brings the refugees not just bread and water (as in Deut. 23:4–9; Neh. 13:1–3) but also an extraordinary assortment of fine viands (wheat, barley, meal, parched grain, beans, lentils, honey and curds, lamb, and cheese) along with precious gifts (2 Sam. 17:27–29). The depiction of these exiles as "famished" and "fatigued," trekking through the "wilderness," brings to mind the Pentateuchal passages we just surveyed. Thus, Moses commands Israel to blot out the memory of the Amalekites – the landless marauders who attacked the nation right after the exodus – because they "surprised you on the march, when you were *famished* and *fatigued*, and cut down all the stragglers in your rear" (Deut. 25:18, emphasis added).

The parallels in language, scenario, and commemorative function are obvious. By appealing to a competing memory of hospitality, one related to the greatest figure in Judah's history during his trials and tribulations, scribes could make a case for a more inclusive policy toward neighboring populations: Perhaps the Ammonites, along with the Moabites, had failed to provide bread and water to the nation as it passed its borders, but when Judah's beloved king and his followers were wandering in the wilderness, it was the leaders of Transjordanian kingdoms who brought them not only bread and water but all manner of costly comestibles.[25]

In my books on King David, I compare this episode to the many memories of representative individuals and groups providing succor to David and his men during his rise to power and then later when he is exiled from Jerusalem. The narrative of David's wilderness wanderings has much in common with the account of the exodus conquest (e.g., the itinerary framework). While one relates to a pivotal period in the formation of the nation, the other relates to a pivotal period in the formation of the state. Their sequence in the national narrative reflects the primacy that the biblical narrative attaches to the people rather than the palace.

In one of the most dramatic episodes in David's rise to power, Nabal the Calebite refuses to provide succor to David and his troops: "Should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?" (1 Sam.

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[25] A memory of Moabite hospitality in the book of Samuel (1 Sam. 21:3–4) tells how "the king of Moab" granted asylum to David's parents during the time when he was being hounded by Saul.

25:11). As David mounts an attack on Nabal's house, his wife Abigail saves the day by sending a generous supply of assorted foods to the warlord and his men: two hundred loaves of bread, two pithoi of wine, five dressed sheep, five seahs of parched corn, a hundred raisin cakes, and two hundred cakes of pressed figs. Like the actions of Jacob when he confronts Esau and his troops (discussed in Chapter 2), Abigail sends the donkeys bearing these gifts before her arrival. When she intercepts David on the warpath, she utters an eloquent speech (longer than that of any woman in the biblical narratives), in which she calls her husband a "wretched fellow" and mocks his name.

In Part IV, we will explore the similar account of Jael, who directly defies her Kenite husband's politics. She does so, however, not by feeding a future king but by assassinating a Canaanite general, who, under the rule of the king of Hazor, attacks Israel right before it attempts to establish the first king of its own.

WAR MEMORIES AS CASUS BELLI

The scribes who invented memories of the nation's earliest encounters with neighboring peoples understood that these memories had direct implications for a whole host of political issues. Thus, they could influence the postexilic community's posture toward individuals in their midst, as we saw in Nehemiah's account. Or they could have an impact on larger territorial disputes, and even provide the *casus belli* for a military confrontation, as we will see now in two texts.

In the account of Jephthah from the book of Judges, the memories and counter-memories found in the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy play a key role in prebattle negotiations with the Ammonites. As they prepare for war, Jephthah and the Ammonite king argue at length about the course of events leading up to their conflict. Jephthah demands an explanation for the Ammonites' bellicosity, and in response, the foreign ruler claims that Israel, on its way from Canaan to Egypt, seized a large portion of their territory – "from the Arnon to the Jabbok and the Jordan." Jephthah contests the claim with a detailed review of those events in Israel's early history:

Israel did not take away the land of Moab or the land of the Ammonites, but when they came up from Egypt, Israel went through the wilderness to the Red Sea and came to Kadesh. Israel then sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, "Let us pass through your land." But the king of Edom would not listen. They also sent to the king of Moab, but he would not consent. So Israel remained at Kadesh. Then

they journeyed through the wilderness, went around the land of Edom and the land of Moab, arrived on the east side of the land of Moab, and camped on the other side of the Arnon. They did not enter the territory of Moab, for the Arnon was the boundary of Moab. Israel then sent messengers to King Sihon of the Amorites, king of Heshbon, and Israel said to him, "Let us pass through your land to our country." But Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory. He gathered all his people together, encamped at Jahaz, and fought with Israel. Then Yhwh, the god of Israel, gave Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they defeated them. So Israel occupied all the land of the Amorites who inhabited that country. They occupied all the territory of the Amorites from the Arnon to the Jabbok and from the wilderness to the Jordan. So now Yhwh, the god of Israel, has conquered the Amorites for the benefit of his people Israel. Do you intend to take their place? Judg. 11:15–23

Jephthah is the son of a harlot and, after being banished from his home, becomes a warlord with a band of marauders. Later, when the Ammonites attack Gilead, he is summoned back to his place of origin, and there he manages to rise to the highest seat of authority. What's remarkable about his story is that its authors depict him as a social outcast and bandit who not only displays firsthand knowledge of Israel's written history but also synthesizes competing perspectives in these texts with the expertise of an experienced scribe.

Jephthah's understanding of his people's history follows the contours of the account in Numbers while integrating aspects of the (revisionist) view articulated by Moses in his own eve-of-battle address in Deuteronomy.[26] The warlord modifies the Numbers narrative on certain points (e.g., he adds a petition for passage sent to, and rejected by, "the Moabite king"). He also fleshes out the underlying rationale as he makes a case against the Ammonites. For example, Numbers cites older poetic sources to prove that Israel took possession only of Amorite lands and did not (directly) expropriate Moabite territories (Num. 21:14–15, 26–30). Although Jephthah's response to the Ammonite king confuses the Ammonites with the Moabites in several respects (e.g., he identifies Chemosh as the national deity of the Ammonites rather than the Moabites), he makes sophisticated use of the Numbers narrative to argue that Israel, during the days of the exodus, had not traversed the Ammonite country and had conquered only territories belonging to the Amorites. On this point, Jephthah reinforces the position that Moses sets

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[26] In Deuteronomy 2:10–12, 20–23, a redactional layer can be isolated that tells how Yhwh had actually fought on behalf of the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites in order to give them their lands, as he was about to do with respect to Israel.

forth in his speech in Deuteronomy – namely, that the nation had circumvented the Ammonites (Deut. 2:37).[27]

The exchange with the Ammonite king sheds light on the larger political issues (with the Moabites!) that informed the composition of the conquest accounts in Numbers. The authors of the Jephthah account were less interested in justifications for war than matters related to the borders of Israelite possessions in the Gilead. Their debate on the legitimacy of Israel's claims to conquered lands continues long after the downfall of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah: the rabbis argued, in keeping with the apologetic thrust of the biblical texts, that (portions of) Ammonite and Moabite territory could be conquered by the generation of the exodus because the Amorite ruler Sihon had already wrested it from these neighbors (*b. Gittin* 38a).

Another example of memories serving as a *casus belli* is found in the book of Samuel, where the prophet approaches King Saul and declares to him Yhwh's instructions:

I am the one whom Yhwh sent to anoint you over his people Israel; now listen to the words of Yhwh: "Thus says Yhwh of the Hosts – I will punish Amalek for what they did in opposing Israel when they were on the road coming up out of Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have. Do not have pity on them. Kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey." 1 Sam. 15:1–3

The account of Saul's war against the Amalekites illustrates Deuteronomy's injunctions to "remember what Amalek did to you on the road from Egypt" and to be sure "to not forget to blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven" (Deut. 25:17–19; see also Exod. 17:14, 16). The account goes on to present Saul warning the Kenites, who live among the Amalekites, to remove themselves from the line of fire. The king grants special protection to this people because they, in contrast to the Amalekites, had showed hospitality (*ḥesed*) to the Israelites when they were coming out

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[27] From a diachronic perspective, Jephthah's reading of the Numbers narrative may anticipate the view that has been subsequently ascribed to the more authoritative figure of Moses in Deuteronomy 2. On the relationship of Jephthah's account to passages from the Pentateuch, see the synchronic analysis by Dieter Böhler, *Jiftach und die Tora: Eine intertextuelle Auslegung von Ri 10,6–12,7* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2008), as well as the diachronic analysis by Germany, *Exodus-Conquest Narrative*, 244–276. That the account reflects a postexilic Judean land claim in the Transjordan is suggested in Friedrich-Emanuel Focken, *Zwischen Landnahme und Königtum: Literarkritische und redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Anfang und Ende der deuteronomistischen Richtererzählungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014).

of Egypt. In Part IV, we will revisit this text and attempt to discern what its authors may have been referring to.

Thus, just as the denial of passage could precipitate military aggression, the contested memories and commemoration of these events could serve as a *casus belli*. Throughout history, states have justified their decisions to go to war by appealing to memories of prior, unwarranted aggression. Many kingdoms of the ancient Near East stored detailed documentation concerning relations with competing powers, and even if these records related to events from centuries before, they came in handy when rulers sought a (legitimate) reason for declaring war or establishing an alliance.[28]

Notably, the biblical memories of Israel's relations with other peoples continued to exert their political and didactic force long after the demise of its kingdoms. The reason for this is that, as we shall see throughout our study, the architects of these memories have consciously crafted them for the needs of a larger audience than the rulers of states.

PERMITS OF PASSAGE IN AN AGE OF EMPIRES

During the most formative period in the Bible's history, the practice of independent armies requesting passage through the territories of third parties was already long passé. In the final years of their existence, the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were vassals to suzerain powers in Mesopotamia and Egypt. As in the case of the Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin with which we began this chapter, kings from the ancient Near East required their vassals, by means of verbal oaths and written treaties, not only to allow troops to traverse their territories but also to provision them with food and supply their own soldiers to serve on the campaign. Failure to do so was promptly punished, as was any effort to aid and abet enemy forces by permitting them to cross one's borders – the crime committed by the Duke.

As these imperial powers evolved and subjugated surrounding king-doms, they created an administrative system consisting of satrapies and provinces whose governors they directly appointed. In his memoirs from the fifth century BCE, the Judean governor Nehemiah tells how he and his retinue made their way from the Persian court to the province of Judah,

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[28] A superb case study, from the perspective of Hittite scribal activities, is provided in Itamar Singer, *The Calm Before the Storm* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 731–766.

not only with imperial cavalry and soldiers but also with royal letters (a "passport" or "orders of safe conduct") that charged other provincial governors to grant him passage until he arrived in his homeland (Neh. 2:7–9). From both Greco-Roman sources and recently discovered cunei- form documents from Mesopotamia, we know much about the network of roads connecting all points of the expansive Persian Empire (with stations and depots strategically located along the routes), and we've even recovered some of the actual authorizations and receipts for the food provisions that were paid to the armies and emissaries who traveled these routes.[29]

Such were the conditions of the Pax Persica, which stand in direct continuity with the administrative innovations introduced by Assyria (the Pax Assyriaca) and which continued to the days of the Roman emperors (the Pax Romana). It was in this age of empires that our biblical texts were being composed. The geopolitical structure instituted by these superpowers was, however, ill-suited to the biblical project of war com- memoration, which explains why our scribes invested their imagination in a world of petty states that jockeyed for control long before imperial powers (re-)emerged to make their influence felt across the southern Levant.

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[29] A selection of the relevant materials is reproduced in Amélie Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire: A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid Period* (New York: Routledge, 2007), pt. 4. For comparative perspectives on travel in the ancient Near East, see Rocío Da Riva, Martin Lang, and Sebastian Fink (eds.), *Literary Change in Mesopotamia and Beyond and Routes and Travelers Between East and West: Proceedings of the 2nd and 3rd Melammu Workshop* (Münster: Zaphon, 2019).

Edom as Israel's Other

Our investigation in Chapter 1 revealed diverse and competing memories of Israel's earliest encounters with its neighbors. The disparities are especially noteworthy in the case of the Edomites. In this chapter, we explore a number of other texts related to this population, as they illustrate how the biblical scribes engaged in war commemoration when negotiating relations with surrounding peoples. We begin with the story of Jacob and Esau in the book of Genesis and then proceed to survey the memories of the Edomites constructed throughout the biblical corpus. By combining these literary witnesses with external evidence from archeological research, we will be able to appreciate with more nuance both the kinds of issues and the scribal responses that shaped a wide variety of biblical texts.

ISRAEL'S FIRST HOMECOMING

The book of Genesis addresses issues posed by the Edomites through the proxy of their ancestor Esau, the twin brother of Jacob/Israel. Already *in utero*, the relationship between the two boys is characterized by strife and rivalry, and when Jacob, with the help of his mother, purloins the paternal birthright due to Esau, he must flee to save his own skin. During their years of separation, Esau becomes a mighty warrior, while Jacob grows into a wealthy patriarch, with many children, servants, and livestock.

Eventually, Jacob decides to move his family back to the land of his birth. As he prepares for his homecoming, he sends servants ahead to greet his brother in the hopes of gaining his favor (Gen. 32:4–6). The entreaty communicated to Esau resembles the one Moses sends to the Edomite king

(Num. 20:14–17), recounting developments over a period in which Jacob/Israel and Esau/Edom had become separated. The petition falls on deaf ears, and just as the Edomite king arms his people to fight the Israelites during the days of Moses, Esau musters a band of 400 warriors and marches out to confront Jacob's clan.

Jacob responds to Esau's aggression by separating his camp (*maḥaneh*, a term with military connotations) into two divisions and attempting to placate Esau's anger with a gift (*minḥāh*) of his flocks. (Throughout the story, the authors play with the Hebrew terms "camp" and "gift," which differ only in the order of two consonants.) During the night, Jacob engages in a wrestling match with a mysterious stranger, and the contest transforms the patriarch as he prepares to meet his brother. His competitor changes his name from Jacob to Israel, who subsequently declares that "I've seen God face to face, and my life is rescued" (Gen. 32:31).

When Jacob meets Esau the next morning, he bows seven times. The respect he shows his brother provokes a change of heart. Esau runs and embraces Jacob, falling on his neck and kissing him amidst mutual tears. "Accept this gift from me," Jacob insists, "for I have seen your face as I have seen the face of God, and you have received me favorably" (Gen. 33:10). After reluctantly accepting a portion of the flock Jacob offers him, Esau volunteers to escort Jacob's clan to their destination. In the end, Jacob diplomatically turns down the offer, and the brothers part ways on peaceful terms.

The substratum of this account from Genesis may predate the episode with the Edomites in the book of Numbers, yet over time it has evolved into a complex counter-memory to the hostility portrayed in Numbers: long before the days of the exodus, when the Edomite king harassed the Israelites as they were making their way to their homeland, Esau had called off his troops and offered to deploy them to help Jacob's clan find safe passage to this same land. As one side in this tug-of-war-commemoration, the story of Esau's rapprochement with and solicitude for Jacob in Genesis affirms the possibility that fraternal relations between Israel and Edom could be reestablished in the present.[1]

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[1] On the rarely treated relationship between this account and the one in Numbers, see Dennis T. Olson, *Numbers*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: John Knox, 1996), 131; Elie Assis, *Identity in Conflict: The Struggle Between Esau and Jacob, Edom and Israel* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2016); and Christian Frevel, "'Esau, der Vater Edoms' (Gen. 36,9.43): Ein Vergleich der Edom-Überlieferungen in Genesis und Numeri vor dem Hintergrund der historischen Entwicklung" in Mark Brett and Jakob Wöhrle (eds.), *The Politics of the Ancestors,*

MEMORIES OF EDOMITE AGGRESSION

The tale of these fraternal twins is a study of opposites. "Esau was a skillful hunter and a man of the field, while Jacob was a mild man, one who dwells in tents" (Gen. 25:27).[2] Although the brothers ultimately part in peace, Esau's pugnacious character mirrors the bellicose proclivities attributed to the Edomites in a number of biblical texts. Thus, the book of Samuel portrays a figure named "Doeg the Edomite" perpetrating a massacre at the town of Nob on King Saul's behalf (1 Sam. 22:9–23). Describing how an Edomite took sides against the beloved hero David and contributed to the destruction of an Israelite town, this tale would have incensed readers who were already inclined to think of the Edomites as an especially violent and vicious people.[3]

The books of Samuel and Kings present Saul and David subjugating the Edomites (1 Sam. 14:47; 2 Sam. 8:13–14). After David's death, "Yhwh raised an adversary against Solomon, the Edomite Hadad, who was of the royal family of Edom" (1 Kings 11:14–22). Later, the Edomites break away and establish a king of their own. In retaliation, the Judean kingdom sends chariot divisions against them, but the campaign is unsuccessful. "Thus Edom has rebelled against Judah's sovereignty until the present day" (2 Kings 8:20–22; see also 2 Kings 14:7 and 16:6). Judean resentment resounds throughout these records of Edom's rise.[4]

In an oracle from the book of Amos, Yhwh promises to reestablish "the fallen booth of David," which will seize territory from the Edomites and "all the other nations called by my [i.e., Yhwh's] name" (Amos 9:12).[5]

Exegetical and Historical Perspectives on Genesis 12–36 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 329–364.

[2] The description feminizes Jacob and reminds us of Jael, "the most blessed of women in tents"; see the discussion in Part IV, as well as Robert S. Kawashima's incisive remarks on the character of Jacob in his essay "Literary Analysis" in Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen (eds.), *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 83–106. On the Jacob account more broadly, see Yair Zakovitch, *Jacob: Unexpected Patriarch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

[3] That the tale is about Doeg qua Edomite is clear from the way in which Saul's guards refuse to attack the priests at Nob (or Gob – see Chapter 9) so that Saul commissions Doeg to do it. In fulfilling his commission, Doeg massacres not merely the eighty-five priests there but also all the women, children, and animals.

[4] On the kingdom of Edom, see Juan Manuel Tebes, "The Kingdom of Edom? A Critical Reappraisal of the Edomite State Model" in Ianir Milevski and Thomas E. Levy (eds.), *Framing Archaeology in the Near East: The Application of Social Theory to Fieldwork* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2016), 113–122.

[5] Similarly, the Song of Deborah speaks of Yhwh coming from Edomite territory (see Judg. 5:4 and the discussion in Part IV).

This same work begins with a series of oracles against the nations, in which Edom is harshly censured for participating in the trade of war captives. "Edom pursued his brother with the sword, repressed all pity [alternatively: "destroyed wombs"], maintained his anger perpetually, and preserved his fury forever" (Amos 1:6–12).[6]

Pronouncements of judgment upon Edom, similar to that in Amos, appear repeatedly in prophetic writings, often as retribution for Judah's/Zion's fate.[7] For example, Ezekiel proclaims:

Thus said the Lord Yhwh: Because Edom acted vengefully against the House of Judah and incurred guilt by wreaking revenge upon it–therefore, thus said the Lord Yhwh: I will stretch out my hand against Edom and cut off from it man and beast, and I will lay it in ruins; from Tema to Dedan they shall fall by the sword. I will wreak my vengeance on Edom through my people Israel, and they shall take action against Edom in accordance with my blazing anger; and they shall know my vengeance, declares the Lord Yhwh. Ezek. 25:12–14

Unwarranted brutality in wartime is a common theme in the broadsides against the Edomites.[8] Psalm 137, an appeal not to forget Jerusalem, accuses the Edomites of taking pleasure in the rape of the city during the days of the Babylonian conquest:

> Remember, Yhwh, the children of Edom on the day of Jerusalem,
> the ones who cried, "Strip her, strip her to her very foundations."
> Ps. 137:7

The short book of Obadiah consists of a single pronouncement of divine judgment on Edom, and the imprecation is vindicated, once again, by appealing to the memory of Edomite actions against their own kin in wartime:

> For the slaughter and violence done to your brother Jacob,
> shame shall cover you,
> and you shall be cut off forever.
>
> On the day that you stood aside,
> on the day that strangers carried off his wealth,

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[6] See Carly L. Crouch and Jacob L. Wright, "Military Crimes" in Brent Strawn et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 46–53.

[7] See Bert Dicou, *Edom: Israel's Brother and Antagonist: The Role of Edom in Biblical Prophecy and Story* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994).

[8] As seen in Ezek. 35:15; Isa. 34, 63; and perhaps implicitly in Joel 4:19 and Mal. 1:4; see also the discussion of a wide range of Edomite texts in Claire R. Matthews, *Defending Zion: Edom's Desolation and Jacob's Restoration (Isaiah 34–35) in Context* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1995).

 and foreigners entered his gates
and cast lots for Jerusalem,
you too were like one of them.

But you should not have gloated over your brother
on the day of his misfortune;
you should not have rejoiced over the people of Judah
on the day of their ruin;
you should not have boasted
on the day of distress.

You should not have entered the gate of my people
on the day of their calamity;
you should not have joined in the gloating over Judah's disaster
on the day of his calamity;
you should not have looted his goods
on the day of his calamity.

You should not have stood at the crossings
to cut off his fugitives;
you should not have handed over [betrayed] his survivors
on the day of distress.

<div align="right">Obad. 10–14, NRSV[9]</div>

Edom's lack of brotherly love manifested itself concretely in their purloin-ing of Jerusalem's wealth, their glee on the "day of Judah's calamity" (a play on "Edom"), and their slaughter/betrayal of war refugees.[10]

THE POLITICS OF SCAPEGOATING

Thus far, we've seen how biblical scribes reproached the Edomites by constructing memories of their unbrotherly behavior in wartime. These memories reflect deep misgivings toward Edom, an attitude to which Deuteronomy responds with its injunction not to abhor Edomite kin. The fervor of these exchanges begs the question: What is it about this population that elicited such a vigorous volley of texts?

The Edomites must have long occupied the attention of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, but the increased attention they receive in advanced stages of the Bible's composition history must be appreciated against the backdrop of events in years directly before and after the Babylonian

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[9] NRSV refers to the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, published in 1989 by the National Council of Churches.

[10] The glee theme is found elsewhere (e.g., Ezek. 36:5). On these texts, see Ehud Ben Zvi, *A Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Obadiah* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1996).

conquest. During this period, Judah surrendered much of its southern territory (beginning just north of Hebron) to the Edomites/Idumeans. Several documents found at Arad in the south of Judah, which probably date to 598/597 BCE, refer to Edomite incursions into the region and the crimes perpetrated by this population against Judah at a time of weakness.[11]

While the memories of Edom's wartime transgressions likely have a basis in historical realities, they appear to have been embellished and inflated for the sake of polemic. It's noteworthy that the Babylonian sources and the oldest biblical depictions of the demolition refer only to the Babylonians and fail to mention Edomite involvement. The book of Jeremiah, moreover, reports that Judeans had sought refuge in a number of places, including Edom, whence they returned after hearing that the king of Babylon had taken measures to repopulate Judah.[12] Why then do so many of the biblical texts we have just surveyed accuse the Edomites of betraying Judah?

In several insightful studies, Juan Manuel Tebes interprets the biblical polemics against Edom from the perspective of "stab-in-the-back" myths (*Dolchstoßlegende*) that emerged in Germany after 1918. According to this scapegoating notion, culpability for military defeat is assigned to others, such as "Bolshevist Jews," who were accused of acts of double-crossing and betrayal. According to Tebes, "Someone had to be responsible for [Judah's] terrible defeat. As in similar post-war defeated societies, minority groups inside the society, such as members of other ethnic communities or followers of different religions, were singled out as the cause of the national downfall. Late Iron Age Judah housed several foreign peoples, but only one upon whom could be placed the burden of guilt: the Edomites."[13]

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[11] For an accessible account of this dramatic history, see Itzhaq Beit-Arieh, "Edomites Advance into Judah: Israelite Defensive Fortresses Inadequate," *Biblical Archaeological Review*, 22 (1996), 28–36.

[12] See Jer. 40:11, which appears to have been secondarily prefaced to the statement in 40:12. On Edom at the time Judah's defeat, see Jason Dykehouse, "Biblical Evidence from Obadiah and Psalm 137 for an Edomite Treaty Betrayal of Judah in the Sixth Century BCE," *Antiguo Oriente*, 11 (2013), 75–128.

[13] Juan Manuel Tebes, "The Edomite Involvement in the Destruction of the First Temple: A Case of Stab-in-the-Back Tradition?," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 36 (2011), 219–255, at 247. See also Tebes, "La memoria colectiva judía sobre Edom y su rol en la formación de la identidad nacional judía en la antigüedad," *Antiguo Oriente*, 14 (2016), 65–98; Tebes, "Memories of Humiliation: Cultures of Resentment Towards Edom and the Formation of Ancient Jewish National Identity," *Nations and Nationalism*, 25 (2017), 124–145.

While this scapegoating interpretation is certainly suggestive, there's a problem with it: none of the biblical texts claim that Judah *lost* the war with Babylon *because* Edom betrayed them. Making the marginalized Other responsible for one's own defeat is essential to the stab-in-the-back notion, and that's simply not the case in the biblical memories of Edom. In constructing these memories, scribes were engaging in a form of war commemoration on display throughout the biblical corpus. (Thus, as we saw in Chapter 1, a series of Pentateuchal passages cast aspersions on Israel's neighbors by fabricating memories of their aggression during their first encounters.) Though undeniably political and polemical, the memories of Edom do not engage in scapegoating.

Indeed, what's really remarkable is the consistency with which biblical narratives, prophecies, laments, etc. assign culpability to their *own* communities. By interpreting defeat as divine punishment for the nation's wrongdoing, these texts make the trauma of imperial subjugation the springboard for inventing a new form of peoplehood capable of withstanding the loss of their political sovereignty.[14]

While taking umbrage at the failure of their kin to display brotherly love at vulnerable moments in the nation's history, the biblical scribes refrained from making the Edomites responsible for their defeat. In contrast to the strategy adopted by many German intellectuals after 1918, these scribes did not nurture a new national identity with claims that things would have turned out much differently were it not for a minority in their midst. While they malign the memory of the Edomites, they also hold their polemics in check: "Do not abhor the Edomite, for he is your brother."

JUDEAN IRREDENTISM

Their pain, our gain. Though most likely exaggerated in biblical texts, the Edomite reaction to Judah's downfall in 587 BCE would have been positive (just as Judah was likely jubilant after Israel's downfall in 722 BCE). What prompted Edom's elation was less a deep-seated enmity between the two peoples than the prospect of territorial aggrandizement:

On the origins of the *Dolchstoßlegende*, see Alan Arkush's critical review of A Deadly Legacy: German Jews and the Great War, by Tim Grady, *Jewish Review of Books*, Winter 2019.

[14] See Wright, "Commemoration of Defeat." I flesh out the ideas expressed in that essay in my forthcoming book with Cambridge University Press.

the collapse of Judah's kingdom under Babylonian domination permitted Edomite encroachment on ancestral Judean lands.

Edom's territorial expansion provoked an "irredentist" posture in many Judean circles. (The term originated among the nineteenth-century Italian *irredentista* who sought to "redeem" to their homeland all Italian-speaking districts under Austro-Hungarian rule.) Thus, the punishment Obadiah envisions for Edom's war crimes is forfeiture of their territories to the exiles who live there. The "House of Jacob will take possession of those who dispossessed them," and these territories are referred to as "the towns of the Negeb" and "Mount Esau" (Obad. vv. 17–20). The same irredentist perspective informs the book of 1 Esdras (an alternative version of Ezra-Nehemiah from the late Hellenistic period). In this history, the Persian king Darius decrees that "the Idumeans [Edomites] are to give up the villages of the Jews that they held," after he had just been reminded of his vow to rebuild Jerusalem and its temple that "the Edomites burned when Judah was laid waste by the Chaldeans" (1 Esd. 4:45, 50).[15]

The epigraphic record from both pre-exilic times and the Persian-Hellenistic period reflects conditions of Edomites moving into the Negeb and northward, settling in what had been part of southern Judah. The territory came to be known as "Idumea." Just as Edomites/Idumeans were integrated into Judean society (as reflected in the figure of Doeg from the book of Samuel), many Judeans lived in Idumea.[16] For the late fifth and especially the fourth century BCE, we have almost two thousand Aramaic ostraca (short texts inscribed on pottery shards) from this region, which attest to generally harmonious relations, if not a symbiosis, between these populations. Even so, the memory of Judah's past sovereignty in the region would have endured, feeding irredentist longings and provoking the kind of accusatory salvos that we find in our biblical texts.[17]

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[15] The oracles in Jeremiah 49 express a similar irredentist perspective in relation to the Ammonites, who are said to have seized territories from the tribe of Gad in the Transjordan; the immediately following section addresses the fate of Edom.

[16] A register from Ezra-Nehemiah, dating probably to the Hellenistic period, asserts that "some Judeans lived in Kiriath-Arba and its villages" (Neh. 11:25). The author likely intended to use an antiquated name for Hebron in what is a nostalgic description of Judah's borders; see Jacob L. Wright and Zev Farber, "'Kiryat-Arba is Hebron …' But is it?," TheTorah.com website, https://thetorah.com/kiryat-arba-is-hebron-but-is-it/ [2016].

[17] See Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Ostraca from Idumea*, 3 vols. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2014–2018); Israel Stern, "The Population of Persian-Period Idumea According to the Ostraca: A Study of Ethnic Boundaries and

Although these texts refer to the Edomites' behavior during the destruction of Judah by the Babylonians, many were written in the Persian and Hellenistic periods, when anti-Edomite animus escalated. (Thus, the book of Judith, which is clearly a Hellenistic work, tells how the Edomites formed an alliance with other peoples in the Levant against the Israelites and betrayed them to their enemies.[18]) In the second century BCE, the irredentist aspirations were realized: as Judah began to regain its native military strength, the Maccabees undertook campaigns against "the descendants of Esau" and reconquered what had become Idumean territories.[19]

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS

Our survey of biblical texts related to the Edomites has direct implications for theories of the Pentateuch's formation. It seems highly improbable that one and the same source would have told about the happy reunion between Jacob and Esau (Gen. 32–33) and then later depicted the Edomites taking up arms against Israel when they requested passage through their lands (Num. 20). It wouldn't be surprising if one massive and complex work like the Pentateuch has competing views. We naturally assume that it, like any other ancient saga, is the product of a plurality of authors and incorporates earlier sources with discordant attitudes and conflicting perspectives. Yet what is less disturbing in a complex work like the Pentateuch becomes much more conspicuous and irritating when two texts with very different attitudes, as in the case of Genesis 32–33, and Numbers 20, are assigned to a single shorter document (such as the "Elohist").

Many contemporary defenders of the Documentary Hypothesis are especially emphatic about the *independence* of the older sources, insisting that their authors were not familiar with each other's work.[20] One might

Ethnogenesis" in Yigal Levin (ed.), *A Time of Change: Judah and Its Neighbours in the Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 205–239.

[18] Jth. 7:8–22; cf. the coalitions in Neh. 4:1–3 and Ps. 83:6–9; notice that Esau marries a woman named "Judith" in Gen. 26:34.

[19] Aryeh Kasher, *Jews, Idumaeans, and Ancient Arabs* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1988). Reported in 1 Macc. 4–6; 2 Macc. 10–12. Josephus describes Upper Idumea in terms of the following towns: Hebron (*Ant.* XII–XIII. 12.8.6; *Wars* 4.9.7), Halhul (*Wars* 4.9.6), Bethsura (*Ant.* 12.9.4), Marissa (*Ant.* 13.9.1; *Wars* 1.2.5), Dura (*Ant.* 13.9.1; *Wars* 1.2.5), Caphethra (*Wars* 4.9.9), Bethletephon (*Wars* 4.8.1), and Tekoa (*Wars* 4.9.5).

[20] See, e.g., Baruch Schwartz, "How the Compiler of the Pentateuch Worked: The Composition of Genesis 37" in Evans, Lohr, and Petersen, *Book of Genesis*, 263–278.

then attempt to attribute Genesis 32–33, to one source and Numbers 20, to a different one. Yet it beggars belief to suppose that the accounts emerged in isolation from each other, as they bear many marks of cross-pollination: Both are about a voyage of Jacob/Israel to their homeland. Both present the protagonists (Moses and Jacob) sending messages to the other party, recounting events after an earlier point of separation (Jacob's departure from his family; Israel's sojourn in Egypt). Both Esau and the Edomite king come out against Jacob/Israel with troops prepared to inflict injury. Yet Esau, in contrast to the Edomite king, eventually offers to assign his warriors to guard Jacob's clan until they arrive at their destination.

If these texts are ascribed to the same document, one might attempt to understand them as being etiological, reporting that the ancestors of Israel and Edom once got along but that their descendants were inclined to cross swords. The problem with this solution is that it fails to take seriously the various and profound ways in which Genesis differs from the narrative in Exodus-Joshua: Genesis offers a modus vivendi with outsiders, and it depicts Egypt extending generous hospitality to Jacob's family when they migrate as refugees from famine-stricken Canaan. In glaring contrast to Genesis, the narrative in Exodus-Joshua begins with Egypt pursuing a program of genocide against Israel. The same antipathy characterizes relations between Israel and most other peoples in these books. Time and again, the nation is forbidden to enter into treaties with Canaan's inhabitants; it is to give them no quarter as it takes possession of their land. Genesis articulates both a vision of, and concrete strategies for, peaceful coexistence that couldn't be more at odds with the general animus toward outsiders in Exodus-Joshua.[21]

CONTESTING MEMORIES

The tale of Jacob's rapprochement with Esau is a complex account with an ideological agenda. Symbolically, it treats Israel's relations with the Other, personified in the patriarch's twin brother. Yet it also relates to a particular population. If Esau and Jacob could "kiss and make up" after years of enmity, then a future reconciliation with Edom is possible. Numbers 20, on the other hand, rejects this conciliatory stance with a counter-memory in which the Edomites fail to display fraternal

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[21] See the classic work on this compositional chasm: Konrad Schmid, *Genesis and the Moses Story: Israel's Dual Origins in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2010).

solicitude. Their behavior at a critical moment in Israel's history – and their failure to comply with standard conventions of wartime – justifies belligerence toward them in the present, in keeping with the rationale treated in Chapter 1 under the rubric "War Memories as *Casus Belli*."[22]

Perhaps some scholars will persist in the effort to press these rival memories into the confines of a single source or demonstrate that they belong to different sources that were drafted without any knowledge of each other. But such endeavors prove to be misguided when confronted with the abundance and heterogeneity of the texts related to the Edomites' wartime conduct throughout Israel's history, as well as the many analogous war memories for other neighbors examined in this book.

A more tenable approach takes seriously the extent to which texts gradually accumulate layers of editorial accretions, reflecting the perspectives and concerns of different times and places.[23] Thus, it seems likely that the portion of the account in Numbers 20 that overlaps with Genesis 32–33, telling how, after sojourning in a foreign land, the Edomites' kin are now voyaging back to their homeland (Num. 20:14b–16, 18–19), represents a late scribal supplement. If so, the account of the Israelites' petition to the Edomite king would provide a perfect form-critical parallel to the petition they make to Sihon in the following chapter (Num. 21:21–23).

Though it's much less tidy, this mode of supplementation reflects more faithfully the often contradictory and cluttered character of demotic war commemoration and other decentralized forms of social discourse. Such

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[22] The Masoretic text has *puncta extraordinaria* over the Hebrew word for "kiss" in Genesis 33:4, and the rabbinic interpretation of this word reflects the contest of memories that we've studied in Part I. While some rabbinic interpreters claimed that Esau's embrace was authentic and heartfelt, others maintained that the text describes not a fraternal *kiss* (נשק) but a vengeful *bite* (נשך). The second, harmonistic option is in keeping with the documentary approach that ascribes both Genesis 33 and Numbers 20 to the same source. On the rabbinic interpretations, see Albert I. Baumgarten, "Why Is Esau's Kiss Dotted?," TheTorah.com website, www.thetorah.com/article/why-is-esaus-kiss-dotted [2018].

[23] In all fairness, it should be noted that recent proponents of the documentary approach allow for and theorize this polyphony, albeit reducing it to one compiler and four completely independent sources. Thus, Baruch Schwartz contends that "the compiler" treated these sources as already holy and thus unalterable: "What is certain is that by taking upon himself, along with the task of merging the source documents into a single continuous text, the maximal preservation of the documents in their given form, the compiler of the Torah demonstrated that he attached far greater importance to the verbal inviolability of the sources than he attached to the plausibility, consistency of content and exegetical clarity of the final product" (Baruch, "Compiler," 274). For more on this point, see Chapter 4, n. 11.

contestation of memories is well attested in contexts where cultural-political expressions are not monopolized by a single power. While examples abound in modernity, in antiquity we can witness a "war of memories" not only in the biblical corpus but also in the ancient Aegean world, whose competing states vied for status, membership, and honor in a larger political community. What's remarkable about biblical war commemoration is that while it, too, presupposes a political community larger than its two member states (Israel and Judah), it flourishes among anonymous scribes in the period following the *downfall* of these states (in 722 BCE and 587 BCE, respectively).[24]

We don't know much about the social location of these scribes, but three facts are indisputable: 1) there were many of them; 2) they often did not share the same perspective; and 3) they created a corpus of texts that palpably, even if only partially, preserves their plurality.

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[24] For an illustration of this "war of memories" from the ancient Aegean world, see the Conclusions to this volume.

KINSHIP AND COMMANDMENT:
THE TRANSJORDANIAN TRIBES
AND THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

The conquest of the Promised Land is not a historical event but a work of scribal imagination, evolving over centuries. We know today that the manner in which Israel occupied its homeland was not only less bellicose but also more protracted and complex than the united invasion portrayed in biblical accounts. The populations that the Bible embraces under the name Israel were, by and large, *indigenous* inhabitants of the Cisjordan and Transjordan. In a very real sense, the Israelites were Canaanites.

The biblical scribes were working at a far remove from the historical events, however, and even if they had knowledge of them, the actual political negotiations and cultural processes by which Israel became Israel were not relevant to their interests. As a project of peoplehood, the Bible owes its existence to the collaborative efforts of visionaries, working over generations to construct a new and more resilient collective identity that could unite communities ravished by imperial armies. This identity was a national one and, in keeping with the construction of national identities in various times and places, it was negotiated by appeal to pivotal military conflicts in the past, both real and imagined.

More than any other military conflict commemorated in the biblical corpus, the campaign that scribes from Israel and Judah imagined their ancestors to have conducted when they took possession of the Promised Land became the foundational event in the nation's collective past. As it evolved into a grand war monument in narrative form, it came to serve as a battleground itself, offering an expansive framework in which generations of scribes would contend with each other over fundamental matters pertaining to membership and status in the national community.

One of the most contentious issues treated in this framework was the presence in the Transjordan of communities that had long affiliated with Israel. Positive and negative attitudes toward these communities stand side by side in the narrative, and the amount of attention scribes devoted to the issue makes it an especially instructive case for our study of war commemoration and the formation of a nation.

Much of the Pentateuch identifies the Promised Land with Canaan – that is, the territory west of the Jordan (the "Cisjordan"). Likewise, the book of Joshua presents the conquest of the Promised Land as beginning when the nation crosses the Jordan from the east and invades Canaan. If this is the case, what about the territories on the eastern side of the Jordan (the "Transjordan")? The region had long been home to communities and personalities that had played an important part in the nation's history. In fact, none other than the great prophet of Yhwh, Elijah, hailed from this eastern region. So, what about the Transjordanian communities that identify with Israel? Are they equal members of the nation?

In Part I, we examined the way in which the biblical scribes used war commemoration to negotiate relations between Israel and the kingdoms on its borders. These borders posed a more basic problem, and in addressing it the biblical scribes once again resorted to sophisticated forms of war commemoration, as we shall see now in Part II. We begin our investigation in Chapter 3 by comparing the different ways the narrative in Exodus-Joshua maps the Promised Land and portrays the wars of conquest. This survey will demonstrate the centrality of an account from the book of Numbers that we study in Chapter 4. The account depicts two of Israel's twelve tribes petitioning Moses to occupy territories on the eastern side of the Jordan; their petition incenses Moses and, in responding to his outrage, the tribes affirm the bipartite basis of their filiation with the nation: kinship and commandment. We continue our investigation in Chapter 5 with the texts in Deuteronomy and Joshua that document these tribes' wartime service, culminating in a dramatic turn of events in which Israel comes close to waging war against them. To conclude our investigation, Chapter 6 reflects on the relationship between kinship, narrative, and law, both in these texts and in the biblical corpus more broadly.

3

Mapping the Promised Land

The Bible contains competing maps of Israel's homeland. According to the most common one, the Jordan marks Israel's eastern border. The region on the other side of this river may be home to some Israelite communities, but their territories are not properly part of the Promised Land. Competing with this map is another one that expands Israel's borders to embrace the Transjordanian territories. Texts that adopt this cartography assert that the monumental wars of conquest, fought during the days of Moses and Joshua, commenced prior to the crossing of the Jordan. These rival maps bear directly on questions of belonging and status for communities that affiliated with Israel, and in this first chapter of Part II we compare the conceptions of the conquest that inform these maps.

THE JORDAN AS THE NATION'S BORDER

The reader of Numbers and Deuteronomy cannot help but notice how the narrative, structured as the itinerary of Israel's odyssey from Egypt to Canaan, has one penultimate destination in sight and toward which it ineluctably advances – namely, "the plains of Moab across the Jordan from Jericho" (Num. 22:1).[1] This location is the final camping place for the Israelites, from which they send out spies to reconnoiter Jericho, cross the Jordan, and eventually take possession of the Promised Land (Josh. 2:1, 3:1). It is also where Moses, in Deuteronomy, delivers his valedictory address to Israel.[2]

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[1] See also 26:3, 26:63, 33:48–50, 35:1, 36:13.   [2] See Deut. 1:5, 29:1, 32:49, 34:1.

The line demarcating the Pentateuch from the Former Prophets (Joshua-Kings) is drawn precisely at this point in the narrative, where the nation crosses the Jordan and commences the conquest. By severing the first five books from those that follow, the Pentateuchal laws and promises can continue to have validity long after the loss of the territorial sovereignty that Israel secured during the days of Moses and Joshua. The Pentateuch sets forth the command to conquer the land, as well as the criteria for maintaining possession of it. Following it, the Former Prophets tell how it was conquered but then later, because of the nation's wrong-doing, forfeited to foreign control. In this canonical structure, the Prophets witness to the abiding veracity of the Torah.[3]

The division of Pentateuch and Prophets may be compared to the way this literature maps territory. Just as the Jordan marks the canonical boundary between the Torah and the Nevi'im, it also constitutes the territorial border to what is referred to as "Canaan" (Num. 32:32; Josh. 22:9, 10) or "the territory that Yhwh has given the Israelites" (Num. 32:7). Likewise, the texts often draw a distinction between the inhabitants of the Transjordan and those of the Cisjordan; only the latter are consistently designated "Israelites."[4]

The book of Numbers identifies the Promised Land in two different ways. A host of texts include the Transjordan within Israel's borders. While the Israelites do not initially plan to occupy this country and ask for permission to travel through it, as we saw in Part I, they end up conquering it after its rulers, Sihon and Og, deny them passage (Num. 21; see also Num. 32). The block of material related to the seer Balaam and his subverted curses (Num. 22–24) presupposes Israel's presence in lands east of the Jordan.

In contrast to this view, most other texts in Numbers confine the wars of conquest to Canaan. When Moses sends out the first group of spies to reconnoiter the land, they go up from the south toward Hebron and northwards; nothing is said about the Transjordan (Num. 13:21–24). Later in the book, after the death of the exodus generation, Moses delineates the nation's borders (34:1–12), and when he does, he defines the

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[3] In keeping with this Torah/Nevi'im (Pentateuch/Prophets) division, the final lines of the former declare that "never has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses" (Deut. 34:10–12). Likewise, Malachi 3:22, the conclusion of the Nevi'im, reminds the reader to heed the Torah of Moses.

[4] See, e.g., Num. 32:17; Deut. 3:18; Josh. 22:11–34 (yet notice how also Judg. 20–21 presents the "Israelites" over against the "Benjaminites").

eastern boundary as running along the Jordan from the eastern slopes of the Sea of Galilee (Kinneret) down to the Dead Sea:

[T]he boundary shall continue downward and abut on the eastern slopes of the Sea of Kinneret. The boundary shall then descend along the Jordan and terminate at the Dead Sea. That shall be your land as defined by its boundaries on all sides. Num. 34:11–12

A brief caveat (34:13–15) that follows this passage addresses the situation in the Transjordan. Moses now asserts that his earlier directions apply only to nine and a half tribes, since two and a half tribes (Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh) had "already taken their inheritance beyond the Jordan at Jericho eastward, toward the sunrise." If the passage originally did not include this caveat, we could explain the way verse 12 reads like a conclusion ("That shall be your land as defined by its boundaries on all sides"), while what follows feels like an afterthought and addendum. That the Jordan is Israel's eastern border is assumed also in Numbers 32, a text that we will consider in Chapter 4.

   With few exceptions, the same view is adopted in Deuteronomy. Throughout the book, the Jordan looms large on the horizon. It's in anticipation of crossing this river that Moses delivers his protracted prebattle speeches and proclaims a prodigious new law code. Israel is warned that it will forfeit its right to remain in its homeland if it fails to heed the code, and this threat relates solely to the territories *west* of the Jordan:

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today: You shall certainly and quickly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess; your days shall not be long on it, for you shall be utterly wiped out. Deut. 4:26

Yhwh's marching orders, with which the book begins, do not even mention the Transjordan when laying out an expansive description of the land that he promised to the nation's ancestors:

Yhwh our god spoke to us at Horeb [Sinai], saying: "Your residence at this mountain has been long enough. Turn and make your way to the hill country of the Amorites and to all their neighbors in the Arabah, the hill country, the Shephelah, the Negeb, the seacoast – the land of the Canaanites and the Lebanon, as far as the Great River, the Euphrates. See, I've placed the land before you. Go, take possession of this land that Yhwh swore to your ancestors – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – to give them and their seed after them." Deut. 1:6–8[5]

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[5] For the "hill country of the Amorites" as referring to the Cisjordan, see Num. 13:29; Deut. 1:19, 27, 44.

Moses later orders the nation, as soon as it crosses the Jordan (27:1–8), to write the Laws on plastered stones atop Mount Ebal (located in the heart of the West Bank at Nablus/Shechem).

In these texts, we cannot help but wonder about the tribes in the Transjordan. Are their territories not also part of Israel's homeland? Are the communities that take up residence there not equally members of the nation? While Moses keeps his gaze firmly fixed on the Jordan and the country that lies west of it, he does at least refer to Israel's wars on the eastern side of the river. The significance of these events, however, has little, if anything, to do with the territories themselves. Their enduring meaning is to be found instead in the lessons and motivation they provide for the nation as it prepares for the campaign that really matters – the one undertaken in Canaan, on the western side of the Jordan.[6]

THE WADI ARNON IN DEUTERONOMY

As our study will continue to demonstrate across a wide span of texts, biblical war commemoration is characterized by a plurality of competing perspectives. Thus, as Moses reflects on Israel's recent history in the second chapter of Deuteronomy, he diminishes the significance of the Jordan as a boundary. According to the view advocated in this passage from the book, the wars of conquest began not at the Jordan, but at a wadi in the Transjordan called the Arnon (today called Wadi el-Mojib).[7]

The book of Numbers presents the Israelites conquering and occupying the kingdom of Sihon in the area from the Arnon northwards to the Jabbok (the Zarqa River).[8] Their reason for doing so is that Sihon had attacked them, as we saw in Part I. When Moses retells the story in Deuteronomy, he claims that after all the warriors of the exodus generation were dead, Yhwh delivered to him these marching orders:

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[6] On the Bible's competing maps of Israel's homeland, see Nili Wazana, *All the Boundaries of the Land: The Promised Land in Biblical Thought in Light of the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013).

[7] The Wadi el-Mojib originates in the mountains of Gilead and winds through a deep ravine for some eighty miles before it falls into the eastern side of the Dead Sea in line with Engedi. On the historical role of the region in Israel's history, see Israel Finkelstein, Ido Koch, and Oded Lipschits, "The Biblical Gilead," *Ugarit Forschungen*, 43 (2011), 131–159.

[8] The Zarqa has springs at ʿAin Ghazal (a site dating back to the Neolithic) and runs through deep ravines for some sixty-five miles before emptying into the Jordan. The Arnon and the Jabbok are two of the three main tributaries that enter the Jordan between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea (the other being the Yarmouk River to the north).

Up! Set out and cross the Wadi Arnon! See, I have delivered into your hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land. Begin and occupy! Provoke him to engage in battle! Deut. 2:24

Later in his address, Moses claims that Yhwh reissued the same orders:

And Yhwh said to me: See, I have begun to deliver Sihon and his land to you. Begin [and] occupy, so that you may take possession of his land! Deut. 2:31

Nowhere in Numbers are we told that Yhwh issued such a command. Moreover, Numbers 32, which we study in Chapter 4, recounts how two of Israel's twelve tribes petition Moses to settle in the very same region. Far from being a command from Yhwh, their desire to live there initially presents a major moral problem, and Moses harangues them at length for even contemplating it as an option. In the end, he accedes to the tribes' entreaty, yet the length and complexity of the text leave no doubt that its authors were troubled by the presence of an Israelite population in the Transjordan.

The natural borders demarcated by rivers and bodies of water frequently serve also as political borders. In ancient battle accounts, a military engagement officially commences when a belligerent crosses a waterway. (For armies from Mesopotamia, the crossing of the Euphrates conventionally marked the launch of a western campaign.[9]) Yet why were the scribes who reworked this first speech in Deuteronomy so deliberate in memorializing the nation's history in this way? They could have had Moses ignore the wars in the Transjordan or at least interpret them as a prelude to the conquest. By doing so, his address would have been more in harmony with what we have seen to be the dominant view in these texts. How then are we to explain the fact that the speech now shifts attention from the Jordan to the Arnon?

As a battle orator with a clear political agenda, the Moses of Deuteronomy is not unique. The naming of wars, and the status of battles in relation to these wars, are often highly contentious matters.[10] In our case, the reason why scribes shifted attention from the Jordan to the Wadi Arnon is, I suggest, twofold. First, in keeping with the rhetorical function already noted, the crossing of the Arnon anticipates the Jordan. This

[9] See the examples collated in K. Lawson Younger, Jr., *Ancient Conquest Accounts: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical History Writing* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990).

[10] See Ashplant and Dawson, *Politics of War Memory*; Walter Laqueur, "Memory and Naming in the Great War" in John R. Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 150–167.

speech, with its counterpart in the framing sections of Deuteronomy, is a kind of eve-of-battle address that aims to boost national morale. The recounting of past triumphs against two Transjordanian kings, Sihon and Og, serves as a demonstration of Yhwh's power in assisting Israel for the larger campaign in Canaan (3:21).[11]

Yet the success after crossing the Arnon does more than merely foreshadow the victories east of the Jordan. In addition to this rhetorical purpose, there's a second, polemical reason for the shift. The emphasis on the command "begin" (*hāḥēl rāš [lārešet 'et-'arṣô]* in 2:24, 31) reflects a larger ideological concern that prompted scribes to revise history. By including the battles against Sihon and Og among the monumental wars of conquest, and by shifting the boundary from the Jordan to the Arnon, these parts of Moses's speech elevate the importance of the eastern territories and ascribe to them the status of the Promised Land.

The Transjordan is the setting for the final passage of Deuteronomy, and thus of the Torah. It is there that Moses, in his dying days, ascends Mount Nebo and surveys the land promised to the nation's patriarchs. Notably, the first region that Yhwh shows him is Gilead, a prominent eastern region:

Moses went up from the steppes of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the summit of Pisgah, opposite Jericho, and Yhwh showed him the whole land: Gilead as far as Dan; all Naphtali; the land of Ephraim and Manasseh; the whole land of Judah as far as the Western Sea; the Negeb; and the Plain – the Valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees – as far as Zoar. And Yhwh said to him, "This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, 'I will give it to your offspring.' ..." Deut. 34:1–4

At this lookout point, Moses meets his death and is buried by Yhwh. A series of competing Pentateuchal texts present his death and burial outside the land as punishment for his sins in the events surrounding the first spy mission (Num. 14:20–25) or alternatively for his wrongdoing in striking the rock (Num. 20:12). These explanations evolved with the Pentateuchal narrative and reflect its shifting emphases. The earliest texts simply locate Moses's death (at the consummate age of 120 years), along with the place where the deity buries him, in the land of Moab, without identifying either as divine retribution (see Deut. 31:1–6). Indeed,

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[11] As commentators often point out, the language in Deuteronomy 2:24–25 is very similar to Joshua 4:24 and 5:1, where it refers to the crossing of the Jordan. See the discussion in F. Langlamet, *Gilgal et les récits de la traversée du Jourdain (Jos., III–IV)* (Leuven: Peeters, 1969), 72–76.

the claim that Moses was buried – by Yhwh himself – in the Transjordan may represent an attempt to validate the presence of communities in the region that affiliated with Israel.[12]

The book of Joshua, as a whole, severely undercuts the significance of the Transjordan, directing readers' attention from the eastern to the western bank. The narrative begins with Yhwh's directions to Joshua: "Moses, my servant, is dead. Now prepare to pass over this Jordan." Soon thereafter Joshua sends out spies to reconnoiter Canaan. Later the nation crosses the river, and the ceremonious entrance into Canaan is reported in great detail. Upon setting up camp, the Israelites construct a monument that connects the parting of the Jordan with that of the Red Sea. In this way, the authors build a literary bridge from one event to the other, dissociating all the events "in the wilderness" from those in the Promised Land.

Once the nation has crossed the river, the men perform rites of circumcision, an act described as the repudiation of the Egyptian reproach they had borne in their flesh up to this point. At this time, manna also ceases and the nation celebrates Passover. In keeping with Canaan's special status, the captain of Yhwh's (heavenly) armies appears to Joshua on the eve of battle after crossing the Jordan. Finally, after Israel's first victories, Joshua builds an altar on Mount Ebal and, in keeping with Moses's exhortation, inscribes the Laws on them.[13]

The book presents these and many other momentous events as happening in Canaan, not in the territories of the Transjordanian tribes. Their special character reinforces the Jordan as the border of the Promised Land.[14]

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[12] On both Sihon and the place of Moses's death, see Angela Roskop Erisman, "Transjordan in Deuteronomy: The Promised Land and the Formation of the Pentateuch," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 132 (2013), 769–789. Honorific burial by the king is depicted in a wide array of ancient Near Eastern texts. With Michael J. Chan, I discuss these texts and their significance for the interpretation of Deut. 34; see "An Honored Burial for a Faithful Servant" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, San Francisco, November 2011, available on my Academia. edu web page).

[13] This narrative (perhaps originally consisting of just 8:30, 31b–33a, 34) is likely older than Moses's commands in Deuteronomy 27:1–7.

[14] For example, when military coalitions form against Israel, they consist solely of rulers from the Cisjordan (see esp. Josh. 9:1, as well as chaps. 10 and 11). Joshua has the military chiefs place their feet on the necks of these kings as he declares: "Thus shall Yhwh do to all the enemies against whom you fight!" (10:24–25). Such does not happen with the kings

Like other biblical books, Joshua is neither neat nor simple. It contains a set of strategically placed texts that depart from the focus on Canaan and call attention to the tribes of Israel living beyond the Jordan:

> 1:12–18 – A reminder to Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh to cross over and fight for the other Israelites.
>
> 4:12–13 – A short notice that these two and a half tribes did cross over armed for battle.
>
> 12:1–7, 13:7–33, 14:3–4 – References to the lands east of the Jordan that these tribes occupied.
>
> 22:1–34 – A complex account of the Transjordanian tribes being relieved of their military duty and returning to their wives and children.
>
> 24:8 – A brief reference to the settlement of the Transjordan by the nation as a whole.

This series of texts was likely added in the final stages of the book's composition. Most scholars today agree that the earliest editions of Joshua consisted solely of material from chapters 1–12. Without the paragraph in 1:12–15, the notice in 4:12–13, and the revision of chapter 12, these early editions of the book would have completely ignored the eastern territories. As for the second half of the book, the historical review in chapter 23 never refers to the eastern territories. To the contrary, it explicitly names the Jordan as the eastern border:

See, I have given to you, by your tribes, [the territory of] these nations that still remain, and that of all the nations that I have destroyed – from the Jordan to the Mediterranean in the west. Josh. 23:4

The following chapter contains a second address from Joshua, and this time the commander retells Israel's history of conquests by beginning with Israel's battles against the Amorites on the eastern side of the Jordan:

I brought you to the land of the Amorites who lived beyond the Jordan. They engaged in battle with you, but I delivered them into your hands. I annihilated them for you, and you took possession of their land. Josh. 24:8

Sihon and Og. Indeed, the book of Joshua constitutes a veritable "History of Cisjordanian Wars," and as such points up the nonexistence of a comparable "History of Transjordanian Wars."

The two speeches thus present competing views of the nation's past. While the first ignores the territories east of the Jordan, the second is more expansive in its historical purview.[15]

The core narratives of Joshua are circumscribed by two frames: an outer one relates to Torah observance for the nation as a whole (1:1–9 and chaps. 23–24), while an inner one treats the issues posed by the eastern tribes and their allegiance to the Torah (1:10–18 and 22:1–34). The book also consists of two equal parts: whereas in the first half all Israel comes together to fight as a united nation, in the second half they disband in order to take possession of their respective tribal territories. The sequence of assembling and dispersing is repeated in chapters 23–24, where the tribes come together one final time to declare the Torah to be their perpetual point of unity, before Joshua sends them back to their respective territories.

Thus, in its final form(s), the book still presents itself as a history of the invasion and occupation of Canaan (i.e., the territory west of the Jordan), yet it widens the pool of protagonists to include the Israelite tribes that reside in the Transjordan. What unites the latter with "all Israel" is affirmed at both ends of the narrative (1:12–18 and 22:1–6) – valorous service for their Cisjordanian kin ("brothers") and allegiance to the laws of Moses. The former is a "fraternity in arms," while the latter is loyalty to shared statutes, resembling what is called in German political theory *Verfassungspatriotismus* (lit. patriotism to the constitution). I will expand on these points in the coming chapters.

CONTESTED TERRITORY

Our survey thus far has focused on the Pentateuch and Joshua, yet, throughout the wider biblical corpus, many texts identify the Transjordan as not only an integral part of Israel's homeland but also as the site of crucial events in the nation's history – and in the lives of the patriarch Jacob, the judge Jephthah, and the prophet Elijah, to mention only the most obvious examples.

Competing maps, which exclude the Transjordan from that nation's sacred homeland, were widely embraced in the Second Temple period.[16]

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[15] This observation apart, a growing number of scholars agree that the two addresses in chapters 23–24 evolved from of an exhortation to fear Yhwh that did not include a review of the nation's past.

[16] A useful discussion of these texts is provided by Moshe Weinfeld, "The Extent of the Promised Land: The Status of the Transjordan" in G. Strecker (ed.), *Das Land Israel in biblischer Zeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 59–75.

For example, Ezekiel's "Temple Vision" (chaps. 40–48) has expansive portions of the southern Levant as part of Israel's territory, but when it comes to the eastern border, it draws a line "between the Gilead and the land of Israel, with the Jordan as a boundary … " (47:18).[17] Similarly, the Nehemiah Memoir identifies the prominent Transjordanian leader Tobiah as one who possesses property in the temple at Jerusalem, has many allies (through *connubium et commercium*) in Judah, and bears a name that reflects reverence of Yhwh. Yet the Memoir also maligns this figure as a foreigner (an Ammonite) who opposes the restoration of "the children of Israel" (Neh. 2:10). From the Hellenistic period, the book of 1 Maccabees portrays Gilead as a home to Jewish communities, even though it is not a hospitable place: after hearing of the Maccabees' triumphs, "the Gentiles of the Gilead" assault "the Israelites who lived in *their* territory" (1 Macc. 5:9, emphasis added). In response, one of the brothers, Simon, undertakes a rescue operation and escorts these communities to Judah.[18]

Also, many of the rabbis denied the sacred status of the Transjordan. Thus, in a commentary on Deuteronomy, Rabbi Simeon excludes the Transjordan from the law of first fruits. The reason is that the law begins, "*When you arrive* in the land that Yhwh your god is giving you" (Deut. 26:1–2, emphasis added); in the narrative, Israel had yet to cross the Jordan. The Transjordan represents territory that "you conquered by yourself" (see Num. 21:23–35), rather than received from Yhwh as a part of the promise made to the patriarchs (*Sifre* 299 and 301). His scriptural argument thus draws directly on our texts. Despite a long history of Jews dwelling in the Transjordan, the modern state of Israel, for both political and religious reasons, ultimately did not lay claim to territories in this region.

Hitherto, our study has examined how biblical scribes engaged in war commemoration to address political issues posed by the nation's neighbors. The battle accounts in Numbers 21 trace Israel's territorial claims in the Transjordan to the time of Moses, and what prompted the composition of these accounts were, inter alia, disputes with neighboring polities that laid claim to the same territory.[19] In keeping with the polemical-

[17] The case of Ezekiel is noteworthy since the book stands in close proximity to Priestly writings, which we examine in Chapter 4.

[18] The account of the Jews seeking refuge in a fortress and then sending messengers to the Cisjordan in search of help is similar to the account of Saul rescuing the refugees at Jabesh-Gilead in 1 Samuel 11.

[19] The taunt-song of Numbers 21:27–30 and the poetic oracles of Balaam in chapters 22–24 witness to such disputes with neighboring powers. The overlap between the taunt-song

apologetic character of these passages, the enemies are consistently depicted as initiating military aggression, which in turn leads to Israelite occupation.[20]

In the remaining chapters of Part II, we explore a different use of war commemoration. Our investigation will show how biblical scribes made a case for the belonging of disputed members of the nation by constructing memories of their exceptional wartime service. While the accounts in Numbers 21 appeal to memories of foreign aggression to argue for the nation's longstanding territorial claim in the Transjordan, the texts that we are about to study construct war memories to advocate full-fledged membership for the communities that occupy the Transjordan.

Our objective is to discern the various ways these texts construct the bonds of filiation that hold together the communities from both sides of the Jordan. As we shall see, their authors sought to transcend territorial divisions by affirming that the nation is united not only by fraternity but also by fidelity to one deity, to the laws revealed by that deity to one prophet (Moses), and to worship of that deity in one place.

and Jeremiah 48 suggests a late composition; see Erasmus Gaß, *Die Moabiter: Geschichte und Kultur eines ostjordanischen Volkes im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009).

[20] The same apologetic interest that prompted the *composition* of these texts also informs their *use* in depictions of later territorial disputes, as we see, for example, in the contest between Jephthah and the Ammonite king discussed in Chapter 1. I treat the polemics against the Transjordan in *David, King of Israel*, chap. 5.

4

The Nation's Transjordanian Vanguard

Running throughout the books of Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua is an extended narrative that explains how two (and a half) of Israel's twelve tribes came to occupy territories east of the Jordan, instead of settling in Canaan with the rest of the nation. Featuring multiple episodes and dramatic developments, this Narrative of the Transjordanian Tribes (abbreviated hereafter to "NTT") depicts 1) their initial petition to take up residence in the Transjordan, which provoked vilification from Moses; 2) their later crossing of the Jordan and service on the front lines for the nation during the conquest of Canaan; 3) the recognition Joshua paid them for their contributions before he released them from service to return to their families; and 4) the large altar they built thereafter at the Jordan that almost caused a civil war between them and their kin in Canaan.

In what follows, we examine Numbers 32, the first and most important episode of the NTT. Our treatment of this text will strive to be as simple as possible, but the details are crucial to understanding how scribes engaged with each other around central questions of belonging and Israel's national identity. As noted in the introduction to this volume, our reconstruction of texts is not a preliminary matter but rather an indispensable part of our interest in both the dynamics and texture of biblical war commemoration.

THE NARRATIVE OF NUMBERS

In Numbers 21, Israel not only vanquishes the enemies who assault them but also settles in their territories. With respect to Sihon and the Amorites, for example, we are told:

Israel put [King Sihon of the Amorites] to the sword, and took possession of his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok. ... And Israel settled [*wayyēšeb*] in all the towns of the Amorites, in Heshbon, and in all its villages. Num. 21:24–25

Settlement is also reported for Jazer and its villages (21:31) as well as the realm of King Og of Bashan (21:35). Given that the reader has already been told that Israel took up residence in these Transjordanian towns and villages, the account in Numbers 32 presents three difficulties: First, it does not presuppose that the nation is already living in the region. Second, only two of the twelve tribes wish to settle in this region. Third, their desire to settle there enrages Moses. The battle accounts in chapter 21 depict the settlement as having already taken place; moreover, it was undertaken by the entire nation and didn't face opposition from Moses.[1]

To address issues posed by Israelite communities in the Transjordan, the authors of Numbers 32 had no other choice than to tell the fuller story, as it were, of how part of the nation came to possess homes beyond Canaan's borders. In this new account, Reuben and Gad seek permission to settle in the conquered territories of the Transjordan, yet instead of shirking their duties to the nation, they agree to fight in the vanguard when the Israelites cross the Jordan and invade Canaan.[2]

The detailed itinerary recorded in Numbers 21:10–20 brings the Israelite camp all the way to the vicinity of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho and the place where Moses dies (Deut. 34:1). From here, they can move on to the plains of Moab (Num. 22:1) and to Shittim (Num. 25:1) and then, after the death of Moses, cross the Jordan in order to commence the conquest of Canaan (Josh 2:1, 3:1).

As observed in Chapter 3, the narrative is moving with an ineluctable force toward this final rest stop before Israel crosses the Jordan. One

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[1] Source-critical analyses, such as those by Ludwig Schmidt ("Die Ansiedelung von Ruben und Gad im Ostjordanland in Numeri 32,1–38," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 114 [2002], 497–510) and Joel Baden (*J, E, and the Redaction of the Pentateuch* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009], 141–153), augment the incoherency between chapters 21 and 32 by assigning *both* of these texts to the Elohist. Their reconstructions overlap in many respects with that of Horst Seebass, "Erwägungen zu Numeri 32:1–38," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 118 (1999), 33–48. See now also Liane Feldman, "The Composition of Numbers 32: A New Proposal," *Vetus Testamentum*, 63 (2013), 408–432, and Olivier Artus, "Numbers 32: The Problem of the Two and a Half Transjordanian Tribes and the Final Composition of the Book of Numbers" in Frevel, Pola, and Schart, *Torah*, 367–382.

[2] I suggest that this synchronic reading of the narrative corresponds, essentially, to its diachronic development. The text may have a non-Priestly substratum, but it is itself a supplement to an older narrative thread.

therefore has good reason to conjecture that the narrative's oldest substratum consists of a basic itinerary connecting Egypt to Canaan with a minimal number of episodes in between. Seen in this way, much of Numbers and Deuteronomy represents a massive yet secondary block of material that has been interpolated, piecemeal, into the older narrative.

The Transjordanian battle stories in chapter 21 and the Balaam material in chapters 22–24, while relatively early texts, were probably not included in this older narrative. Yet even if the battle stories in chapter 21 appear to be supplementary, they are presupposed by chapter 32 and therefore must predate the latter. Most scholars agree that the remaining texts, which separate the battle stories in chapter 21 from the lengthy account in chapter 32, represent either supplements to an independent "Priestly source" (see the discussion later in this chapter) or additions made in the Pentateuch's final compositional stages.[3]

COMPOSITION OF NUMBERS 32

Coming now to the composition of chapter 32, a number of clues indicate that the account has evolved from an older and much smaller core. Provided below is a literal translation of the text, arranged to show the results of my analysis. The indented material is what I identify as supplementary layers of the account, while the nonindented parts in boldface are what I ascribe to an older substratum. Isolated insertions are marked in italics:

> 1 Now the Reubenites and the Gadites owned a very large number of cattle. [They looked at the land of Jazer, *and at the land of Gilead,* and behold the place was a place for cattle. *Possibly part of the original iteration, linked to Numbers 21:31–32; see discussion.*]
>
> **2 The Gadites and the Reubenites came and said to Moses,**
>> to Eleazar the priest and to the leaders of the congregation saying: 3 "Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo, and Beon 4 – the land that Yhwh subdued before the congregation of Israel is a land for cattle; and your servants have cattle." 5 They said,
>
> **"If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants for a possession; do not bring us across the Jordan."**

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[3] The battle accounts in chapter 21 have been (heavily) supplemented, yet most were likely added earlier than the Balaam material in chapters 22–24. This would explain why Balaam is not mentioned in Deuteronomy 1–3, in contrast to the references to him and Balak in the historical reviews of Joshua 13 (see v. 22), Joshua 24 (see v. 9) and Judges 11 (see v. 25), which were likely composed after the first iterations of Deuteronomy 1–3.

6 Moses said to the Gadites and to the Reubenites, "Shall your brothers go to war while you dwell here?"

7 "Why will you discourage the hearts of the Israelites from going over into the land that Yhwh has given them? 8 Your ancestors did this, when I sent them from Kadesh-Barnea to see the land. 9 When they went up to the Wadi Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the hearts of the Israelites from going into the land that Yhwh had given them.

10 Yhwh's anger was kindled on that day and he swore, saying, 11 'Surely none of the people who came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, because they did not fully follow me.' (12 That is, no one except Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua son of Nun, for they fully followed Yhwh.)

13 And Yhwh's anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness for forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of Yhwh had disappeared. 14 And now you, a brood of sinners, have risen in place of your ancestors, to increase Yhwh's fierce anger against Israel! 15 If you turn away from following him, he will again abandon them in the wilderness. Indeed, you will have destroyed this entire nation."

16 They approached him and said, "We will build sheepfolds here for our flocks and towns for our little ones. 17 But as for us, we will march as shock troops before the Israelites, until we have brought them to their place. Our little ones will stay in the fortified towns because of the inhabitants of the land. 18 Yet we will not return to our homes until all the Israelites have obtained their inheritance. 19 We will not inherit with them on the other side of the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance will come to us on this side of the Jordan to the east."

20 Moses said to them,

"If you do this – if you take up arms to march to war before Yhwh, 21 and all those of you who bear arms cross the Jordan before Yhwh, until he has driven out his enemies from before him 22 and the land is conquered before Yhwh – then after that you may return and be free of obligation to Yhwh and to Israel, and this land shall be your possession before Yhwh. 23 But if you do not do this, you will have sinned against Yhwh. And know your sin – that it will find you out.

24 Build towns for your little ones, and folds for your flocks; but do what you have promised."

25 Then the Gadites and the Reubenites said to Moses, "Your servants will do as my lord commands. 26 Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our livestock shall remain there in the towns of Gilead. 27 But your servants will cross over, everyone armed for war, to do battle for Yhwh, just as my lord orders." 28 Moses gave command concerning them to Eleazar the priest, to Joshua son of Nun, and to the heads of the ancestral houses of the Israelite tribes. 29 And Moses said to them, "If the Gadites and the Reubenites, everyone armed for battle before Yhwh, will cross over the Jordan with you and the land shall be subdued before you, then you shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession; 30 but if they will not cross over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan."

31 The Gadites and the Reubenites answered, "As Yhwh has spoken to your servants, so we will do. 32 We will cross over armed into the land of Canaan before Yhwh, but the possession of our inheritance shall remain with us on this side of the Jordan."

33 **And Moses gave to them** – to the Gadites and to the Reubenites and to the half-tribe of Manasseh son of Joseph – **the kingdom of King Sihon of the Amorites**, and the kingdom of King Og of Bashan, **the land and its towns, with the territories of the surrounding towns.**

34 The Gadites rebuilt Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer, 35 Atroth-Shophan, Jazer, Jogbehah, 36 Beth-Nimrah, and Beth-Haran, fortified cities, and folds for sheep. 37 The Reubenites rebuilt Heshbon, Elealeh, Kiriathaim, 38 Nebo, and Baal-Meon (some names being changed), and Sibmah; and they gave names to the towns that they rebuilt.

39 The descendants of Machir son of Manasseh went to Gilead, captured it, and dispossessed the Amorites who were there. 40 Moses gave Gilead to Machir son of Manasseh, and he settled there. 41 Jair son of Manasseh went and captured their villages, and renamed them Havvoth-Jair. 42 And Nobah went and captured Kenath and its villages, and renamed it Nobah after himself.

According to my analysis, the earliest edition of the account was only a quarter of the size of the present text. Such dramatic growth for a biblical text wouldn't be surprising, but what evidence is there to justify reconstructing the text as I've done?

A still popular approach in biblical studies attributes the remarkable length of this account not to textual growth but to the combination of independent documentary sources. Supporting this approach are a number of ostensible repetitions or doublets. For example, there seem to be two beginnings to the story: the first in verses 1a and 5, and the second in verses 2–4.

In conducting my analysis, I tested this approach and was initially convinced of its merits. I even published a piece arguing that the account is a synthesis of two independent versions.[4] But further analysis has revealed a different composition process: instead of weaving together separate narrative threads, the scribes produced the account by *adding* lines to a base text. What propelled this activity of supplementation – often referred to using the German term *Fortschreibung* – was the scribes' concern 1) to expound upon what they deemed to be the text's salient points and 2) to correct lines that, in their estimation, might leave the reader with a false impression.

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[4] Jacob L. Wright, "Redacting the Relationship of the Transjordanian Tribes," TheTorah .com website, https://thetorah.com/redacting-the-relationship-to-the-transjordanian-tribes/ [2015]. I was (inexcusably) unaware of the excellent studies by Feldman ("The Composition of Numbers 32") and Artus ("Numbers 32") when writing that piece and failed to engage with them.

The account begins by setting the context for the tribes' petition to settle east of the Jordan. The unstated question addressed in the first lines is: What was it about these two tribes in particular that occasioned their petition? Why wouldn't the other ten tribes have wanted to settle there? In response, the narrator sets forth two historical "facts" that the reader needs to know: 1) the Reubenites and Gadites boasted large herds, and 2) these eastern territories were ideal for cattle.

If this first verse (or at least the first half of it) was part of the original account, it would be difficult to explain why the scribe in the very next verse renames the subject, instead of including the simple formulation "and they said" (a single word in Hebrew and the most common in biblical narratives), as in verse 5. According to the prose style of biblical narratives, the renaming of a subject is repetitive unless the intervening details cause confusion about the subject's identity. In this section, we were told who the actors are just two lines earlier, and they are still the ones performing the action in the directly preceding line. But if the account had originally begun in verse 2, there would have been no way for a later scribe to compose a new introduction without first identifying the subject, even if it produced an infelicitous repetition with what follows.

Notice that in verse 1a the scribe changes the order of "Reubenites and Gadites." This order runs contrary to the remainder of the account, yet it conforms to the canonical order of the tribes. The introduction in verse 1a likely belongs to a late, if not the latest, compositional stage. (Given what we observe in other biblical and ancient Near Eastern texts, this assertion is unsurprising.[5]) Notice also that the tribes only have cattle in verse 4, whereas they have "a very large number" of cattle in verse 1a.

THE SHIFTING CONTEXTS OF THE ACCOUNT

The earlier supplement in verses 2b–4 harmonizes the account with the expectations of Priestly circles. Here, as so often in the Pentateuch, these circles wanted their readers to understand that – in keeping with the theocratic model of governance they promoted – the tribes knew their petition needed to be presented not only to Moses but also to the priest Eleazar and leaders of "the congregation." The Priestly imprint can be felt not only here but also in Moses's initial denunciation (vv. 7–14), in his

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[5] For a study of this editorial strategy, see Sarah Milstein, *Tracking the Master Scribe: Revision Through Introduction in Biblical and Mesopotamian Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

later consent (vv. 20–23), and in his instructions to Eleazar and Joshua (vv. 25–32).

Now, if Priestly circles went to great lengths to bring this account into conformity with their theocratic agenda, it follows that these circles did not draft its earliest iteration. This is a consequential point. There can be no doubt that much of the Pentateuch derives from (Priestly) scribes working in the employ of the temple. They began their work perhaps shortly before the destruction of the Judean kingdom in 587 BCE, but they appear to have flourished during the Persian period, when a new temple assumed a central role in Judah's governance as an imperial province. One of the earliest products of their literary activity is what scholars have long identified as a brief, yet highly nuanced, narrative of Israel's early history. This narrative was likely not a supplementary layer but an independent source, which was eventually added to older materials to create the Pentateuch.[6]

If the first drafts of our account are not the product of Priestly circles, where would they have originally appeared in the narrative of Numbers? According to my reconstruction, the account begins with two tribes approaching Moses and presenting a petition: "If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants for a possession; do not bring us across the Jordan."[7] To what place are the tribes referring when they speak of "this land"? The additions explicitly name the desired territory because over time it had become necessary to do so: as the account grew, so did the rest of the book, and the massive amount of supplementary material in the preceding ten chapters distanced it from its original setting.

As noted above, what may be an older narrative thread, consisting of a brief travel itinerary, locates Israel in "the plains of Moab on the other side of the Jordan [and] Jericho" (Num. 22:1). This is where Moses dies at the end of Deuteronomy and where the conquest of Canaan will commence in the book of Joshua. The continuation of this travel itinerary specifies the place as Shittim ("And Israel dwelt in Shittim," Num. 25:1a); this place is not mentioned again until the conquest of Jericho (Josh. 2:1,

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[6] In its present form, the Pentateuch consists disproportionately of Priestly materials. Some of these texts were added directly to the originally independent "Priestly source," but many others were composed in the framework of the emerging Pentateuch. For a treatment of recent research, see Germany, *Exodus-Conquest Narrative*.

[7] As often noted, the form of the narrative, with parties approaching Moses and voicing a petition, bears a striking resemblance to the account of Zelophehad's daughters in Numbers 27. The latter, however, is more thoroughly Priestly in its formulations.

3:1). If these lines in Numbers 22:1 and 25:1a are older, then the location would have changed between Numbers 21 and Numbers 32, and we would expect the narrator to have renamed the territory instead of referring simply to "this land." This observation may indicate that the author of our account didn't see a problem with linking "this land" to "the plains of Moab on the other side of the Jordan [and] Jericho." Alternatively, it may indicate that something is missing in our analysis.[8]

A possible solution presents itself in Numbers 32:1b: "They looked at the land of Jazer, and at the land of Gilead, and behold the place was a place for cattle." The last (and likely oldest) reference to Jazer in the wider narrative appears in a brief paragraph at the end of chapter 21, which describes Israel taking up residence "in the land of the Amorites" and Moses sending out a battalion "to spy out Jazer." In carrying out their mission, the unnamed subjects capture its villages and dispossess the Amorites who were living there (see vv. 31–32). [9] If chapter 32 originally began in verse 1b, the account may have been conceived as the direct sequel to the conquest of Jazer described in chapter 21.

The problem with this suggestion is the presence of what some scholars deem to be older lines from the travel itinerary in 22:1 and 25:1a, yet it's possible that these lines represent (early) additions that function as literary links to the accounts of Moses's death and the conquest of Jericho. The statement in 25:1a that "Israel dwelt in Shittim" is in tension with the similar statement in 21:31 that "Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites." The matter is further complicated by 22:1, which reports that "the Israelites journeyed, and they camped in the plains of Moab on the other side of the Jordan [and] Jericho." The first clause is formulated with late (Priestly) language, but without it, Israel would still be dwelling "in the land of the Amorites." Moreover, in the account of Moses's death in Deuteronomy 34, what is likely the oldest line (v. 5) describes the location as "the land of Moab," whereas what many deem to be an editorial line (v. 1) uses the language of Numbers 22:1 ("the plains of Moab" and "Jericho"). Therefore, while Numbers 22:1 and 25:1a may be relatively old, their formulation renders them unreliable as

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[8] That Numbers 22:1 and 25:1a represent older parts of the exodus-conquest narrative is argued by Reinhard G. Kratz; see his *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament* (London: T&T Clark, 2005).

[9] Most scholars deem this paragraph to be older than the episode with Og of Bashan (vv. 33–35), which likely is original to Deuteronomy 3 and was added late to Numbers 21; see Chapter 1, n. 11.

fixed points in any attempt to discern the stratification of the exodus-conquest narrative.[10]

There's plenty of room for debate on these matters. The distance separating the tale of the Transjordanian tribes from the conquest accounts in chapter 21, and the tensions between these texts, are problems that face all diachronic approaches. Any reconstruction involves huge blocks of diverse materials spanning the books of Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua, and it's unlikely that the original threads connecting early episodes in the sources were transmitted for centuries without being altered. The older edition of the tale appears to have been very concise and probably does not belong to a source – or at least not to one of the conventionally demarcated documents (Yahwist, Elohist, etc.). It's more likely that this older edition was composed as a supplement to the conquest accounts in chapter 21 and stood in close proximity to them before the intervening materials were composed.[11]

TRIBES BEFORE KINGS

Numbers 32 features many finely nuanced details (especially with respect to geographical details) that we must necessarily pass over in this book. But several are eminently relevant to our interest in the politico-theological dynamics of war commemoration.

In the earlier version, we are not told why the tribes make their petition. The Priestly expansions to the introduction answer that question with the

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[10] Even if Numbers 22:1 and 25:1a are parts of this original thread, they do not read smoothly in direct sequence and presuppose the presence of the Balaam account or some episode between them. The expression "plains of Moab" appears frequently and consistently in (post-)Priestly texts.

[11] Feldman's E and P accounts ("The Composition of Numbers 32") are, by and large, parallels, which leads one to ask: Why did a redactor go to the trouble of synthesizing them, obscuring in the process the nuanced differences that they may have had originally? (My analysis offers a rationale for the duplication by identifying an intentional polemical response in the Priestly account.)

The notion that "the compiler" preserved four separate sources almost completely intact because he deemed them to be "sacrosanct" (see reference to the work of Baruch Schwartz in Chapter 2, n. 23) raises the problem that rearranging a holy text (by splicing it into bits and pieces and then synthesizing it with other supposedly sacred sources) constitutes a radical violation of its integrity. The approach presupposes an understanding of the text's sacrality as inhering in its discrete words and phrases. Aside from the historical problems posed by this understanding, practitioners of this approach must consistently posit the conscious erasure of words and phrases. Even if the erasure was confined to a minimum, it severely undermines the foundational assumption guiding this approach.

two "facts" that we discussed above (i.e., the country was well suited to cattle, and these tribes had cattle). In making these claims, the scribes drew information from the older edition of the story, which presents the eastern tribes declaring that they will "build sheepfolds for their flocks and towns for their little ones" before they march off to battle for the nation (vv. 16–19). Later, Moses reiterates their declaration when accepting the proposal: "Build towns for your little ones, and folds for your flocks; but do what you have promised" (v. 24).

What might have prompted Priestly scribes to ascribe large herds to the two tribes? At the most basic level, the additions fill a conceptual gap in the text: the tribes' petition makes better sense now that we know they left Egypt with a lot of cattle. Moreover, the Song of Deborah in the book of Judges refers repeatedly to herds and flocks when it formulates an indictment against the Transjordanian tribes, and this indictment, as we shall see, bears remarkable affinities to the question that Moses asks the tribes in our text.[12]

But there is likely more going on here. Without the additions, the account would leave the reader wondering about what motivated the tribes' petition. Were they trying to shirk their wartime obligations in the same way they turned a deaf ear to Deborah's call-to-arms? This, indeed, is the first thing Moses asks when he begins his indictment in verse 6. The Priestly scribes effectively exonerated the tribes of this dishonorable intention, first by reframing the petition (vv. 2b–4) and then by prefacing a new line to the introduction (v. 1; drawn perhaps from Deut. 3:19).

We have to take a step back to appreciate the historical fiction: the kings of Israel had conquered territories east of the Jordan, and over time these territories came to be thought of as places where early Israelite communities had once lived.

The Mesha Stele, arguably our most important extrabiblical artifact bearing on the history of the Hebrew Bible, provides invaluable clues for understanding ancient Israel's political relationship to the Transjordan. Discovered in 1870, the inscribed monument was set up in circa 840 BCE to commemorate the military triumphs and building projects of the Transjordanian ruler Mesha as he enlarged his kingdom of Moab.

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[12] Our account in Numbers may have been directly occasioned by the indictment of the Transjordanian tribes in the Song of Deborah, where they are chastised for "dwelling/ remaining" with their flocks instead of responding to joining Deborah's war effort; see Chapter 6, n. 2, as well as the discussion of the Transjordanian tribes in Chapters 11 and 12.

In the Bible, Gad is the name of one of Jacob's twelve sons whose descendants occupied territory in the Transjordan. According to Mesha's account, however, the people of Gad had dwelt in a territory called Ataroth from time immemorial. Later, Mesha claims, a king of Israel (likely Ahab's son Jehoram) came and laid claim to this territory, fortifying its chief city Ataroth (Khirbet Ataruz), but, with the help of his national deity, Mesha captured the city and "killed all the warriors of the city for the welfare of the god Chemosh and Moab." (Recently, an altar was discovered at Ataroth bearing an inscription that may bear on these events.) On the basis of Mesha's account, it seems likely that the territory and people of Gad came to be identified with Israel in the ninth century, when rulers of the Omride dynasty conquered the region and fortified Ataroth.[13]

The book of Samuel dates Israel's first appearance in the Transjordan to the inaugural moment of Saul's reign, more than a century before the reigns of Omri and Ahab. An Ammonite king had attacked the Transjordanian town of Jabesh-Gilead. Desperate for help, the inhabitants of this town seek military assistance from their Israelite neighbors across the Jordan, and in response Saul ventures across the river to rescue them (1 Samuel 11). Read on its own, the account suggests that these inhabitants were not Israelites.[14]

A biblical manuscript discovered at Qumran, as well as the retelling of the events by Josephus, reveal how later scribes attempted to reconcile the account in Samuel with the book of Judges, which describes the razing of the city. In the "new and improved" versions of the story, Saul embarks on a mission to save "the Israelites who lived beyond the Jordan." These Israelites are identified explicitly as members of the tribes of Gad and Reuben, and they flee to Jabesh-Gilead for refuge after the internecine warfare depicted in Judges 21 had depopulated the town.[15]

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[13] On Israel's presence in the Transjordan during the Iron Age, see Gaß, *Die Moabiter*; Jeremy M. Hutton, *The Transjordanian Palimpsest* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009); Bruce Routledge, *Moab in the Iron Age* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

[14] The story of Saul's reign concludes by commemorating the bravery of Jabesh-Gilead, which sends every one of its "valiant men" across the Jordan to retrieve the bodies of Saul and his sons after they fall in battle against the Philistines. The account of that rescue operation (see 1 Sam. 31:12) signals to the reader that the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead were not Israelites, as they are depicted cremating the bodies of Saul and his sons. For a discussion of the texts and how the town came to be identified as Israelite in the larger narrative, see Wright, *David, King of Israel*, 66–77.

[15] See Frank M. Cross, "The Ammonite Oppression of the Tribes of Gad and Reuben: Missing Verses from 1 Samuel 11 Found in 4QSamuela," in Hayim Tadmor and Moshe Weinfeld (eds.), *History, Historiography and Interpretation* (Jerusalem: Magnes,

The evidence from Qumran presupposes the work of earlier genera-
tions to integrate the Transjordanian communities into the nation's nar-
rative. The ancestral stories in Genesis identify Gad and Reuben as the
names of two of Jacob's twelve sons; as such, they are the ancestors of two
tribes, also called Gad and Reuben, that were part of the people of Israel
during the exodus. The account in Numbers creates a clever fiction to
explain how these tribes came to settle in the Transjordan instead of
crossing over the Jordan with the rest of the nation: during the nation's
tenure in Egypt, Gad and Reuben had developed into tribes that possessed
large herds, and since the land in the Transjordan was exceptionally suited
to cattle, they had petitioned Moses for permission to settle in this terri-
tory. With respect to Ataroth, the account claims that the Gadites built
this city at the time of the conquest – centuries before the reigns of Israel's
kings.

THE NATION'S AVANT-GARDE

When the Transjordanian tribes respond to Moses in the older version of
Numbers 32, they promise to lead the way into battle, serving in the
perilous role of the vanguard: "But as for us, we will march as shock
troops before the Israelites until we have brought them to their place."

The vanguard battalion or "avant-garde" conventionally consists of
the most skilled, fearless, determined, and loyal units of an army. In many
ancient Western Asian armies, leaders were called *ālik pani* (lit. the one
who goes at the front). The title could be borne also by the king and/or
a deity (often in personal names), as a reflection of the unmatched martial
valor attributed to royal and divine warriors. Vassal kings and their
troops frequently were expected to take this position at the front as
a way of demonstrating their willingness to die for the suzerain, demanded
of them in many vassal treaties.

In our account, the eastern tribes vow to leave their flocks, children,
and women behind and cross the Jordan armed for battle (v. 17). The

1983), 148–58; Eugene Charles Ulrich, *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus*
(Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978); Alexander Rofé, "The Acts of Nahash According to
4QSam^a," *Israel Exploration Journal*, 32 (1982), 129–33; Nadav Na'aman, "The
Pre-Deuteronomistic Story of King Saul and Its Historical Significance," *Catholic Biblical
Quarterly*, 54 (1992), 638–58; Frank Moore Cross et al. (eds.), *1–2 Samuel*, Discoveries in
the Judean Desert 17 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Compare the addition of
this prologue to the way the authors of the book of Judges have superimposed a twelve-
tribe framework on older accounts; I treat this matter in Part IV.

primary purpose of these statements about flocks, children, and women staying behind is neither to address logistical matters nor to gender the battlefield as a space for the performance of manhood.[16] That these three groups would not participate in combat goes without saying for the scribes who composed these lines.[17] The statements concern rather the motivation for the tribes' participation: By leaving their flocks and families back in the sheepfolds, houses, and towns of Jazer and Gilead, they demonstrate that they didn't have their eyes set on the lands and houses they would receive as a reward for their wartime service. Instead of being impelled by a material incentive, they risk their lives out of solidarity with their Cisjordanian kin, who did not yet have properties and houses of their own.[18]

When they render service during the invasion of Canaan, the eastern tribes do not need to be coerced with the threat of corporal punishment or harsh penalties – the common mechanisms of conscription in the ancient Near East.[19] In Joshua 1, where anyone who fails to perform military service is threatened with the death penalty, it is not the officers of the troops who pronounce this judgment, but rather the members of the Transjordanian tribes, who speak for themselves. Collectively, "the Reubenites and the Gadites" express their solidarity, affirming that everyone will bear arms across the Jordan.[20]

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[16] The gendering of space in relation to the battlefield and home/bed is discussed in Part IV.

[17] While Numbers 32 mentions women only once and in passing (see v. 26), Deuteronomy 3:19 and Joshua 1:14 (which is likely a quotation of Deut. 3:19) place women first in their lists of those who do not contribute.

[18] See esp. 32:18–19. Cf. Thucydides's *History* 1.74, where an Athenian embassy reminds the allies of their different motivation for fighting: "We assert, therefore, that we conferred on you quite as much as we received. For you had a stake to fight for; *the cities which you had left were still filled with your homes, and you had the prospect of enjoying them again.*" Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Richard Crawley, ed. Donald Lateiner (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2006 [1986]), 48 (emphasis added).

[19] For example, the Hammurabi Code (§§ 26 and 33) lays down the death penalty for soldiers (*rēdû*) who fail to go on a military expedition or who hire substitutes in their stead, as well as for officers who allow substitutes in their ranks, tolerate desertion, or recruit deserters.

[20] See Num. 32:21, 27–28; Deut. 3:18; Josh 1:14, 18. As Rashi noted on the use of the singular "he said" in Numbers 32:25 (*kūlām kᵉ'îš 'eḥād* [all together as one]), the text presents the Transjordanians acting in unity when they willingly offer themselves. The expression *kᵉ'îš 'eḥād* occurs in two prominent texts (Judg. 20 and 1 Sam. 11) in reference to the people uniting for war. In both of these texts, the Transjordan is a central issue, and in the first, the representative town of Jabesh-Gilead fails to mobilize with the rest of Israel.

   A similar objective informs the composition of Joshua 22:1–9, which tells how the eastern tribes collected the reward for their service. As they return to their homes and families, Joshua not only blesses them; he also loads them down with "much wealth, very much livestock, silver, gold, bronze, and iron, as well as a great quantity of clothing" (22:7b–8). By presenting the war spoils as an added bonus rather than as a condition of the pact made with Moses, these texts, as we shall see in Chapter 5, eliminate any basis for assuming that the Transjordanians fought for financial gain, and they make it clear that Joshua formally recognized the Transjordanians as full-fledged members of the nation: they had contributed selflessly to the campaign and hence deserve a handsome share of the booty seized from their own enemies (Josh. 22:8).

KINSHIP AND COMMAND

When dramatically amplifying the account in Numbers 32, the Priestly circles continued to affirm the Transjordanian tribes' membership among the people of Israel. Yet in making a case for them, they did something surprising: they expanded Moses's indictment into a lengthy and shrill denunciation of the tribes' petition.

   The older version of the account begins with Reuben and Gad expressing their desire to dwell in the Transjordan. Moses responds to their petition with a single accusatory question: "Shall your brothers go to war while you dwell here?" (v. 6). The narrative continues, in verse 16, with the tribes "drawing near" to Moses and explaining their petition.[21] In the expanded Priestly versions, Moses is enraged by their petition and proceeds to harangue them at great length (vv. 7–15) for "discouraging the people from passing over into the land that Yhwh gave them."

   In his new, lengthy indictment, Moses evokes the pivotal moment in the nation's past when the spies discouraged the Israelites from entering the land. "And now you, a brood of sinners, have risen in the place of *your ancestors*, to increase Yhwh's fierce anger against Israel! If you turn away from following him, he will again abandon them in the wilderness; and you will destroy all this people" (vv. 14–15, emphasis added). The

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[21] The verb for "drawing near" (Hebrew root *n-g-š*) is used here, as often elsewhere, to present a formal entreaty (see, e.g., Josh. 14:6, 21:1; Gen. 18:20–23). (Notice the formulation of the Gileadite women's action in Num. 27:1.) What bears out my reconstruction here is the failure to name the subjects in verse 16 after such a lengthy passage (vv. 7–14).

comparison serves a clever rhetorical function. By accusing the two tribes of the same sin that an early generation of Israelites had committed, Moses's fulminations remove any room for doubt that the Transjordanian communities are descendants of the exodus generation and thus full-fledged members of Israel. Both share culpability with respect to the conquest of Canaan. Whereas a new generation of the nation is poised now to take possession of the land west of the Jordan, these two tribes persist in the sins of a generation that was consigned to death in the wilderness.

Moses's accusations – both in the older version and in the later Priestly editions – reflect what appear to have been widely shared misgivings toward the Transjordanian tribes (and the various communities represented by these tribes in the narrative).[22] The scribes who created Numbers 32 addressed this sentiment in their ranks by taking it seriously and having Moses himself share it. Ultimately, however, they undermine it by having the tribes vigorously repudiate Moses's charges.

The older version of the account never even mentions Yhwh and emphasizes national solidarity. Responding to Moses's question, the tribes declare that they will not abandon their "brothers" and will serve as a vanguard for the nation. The Priestly expansions assume an ethos of fraternity, yet they highlight a different purpose for fighting: The tribes now serve as a vanguard *for Yhwh*, and they do so in conformity with *Moses's command*. Failure to participate in the war effort constitutes a violation of Mosaic authority.

The Cisjordanian campaign has now been redefined as a holy war. Yhwh conquers "the land" for himself by "driving out his enemies before him." What was originally an offer of the tribes to fight as the nation's avant-garde now begins as a command by Moses and ends with a pact obligating these tribes to participate. Military service is no longer a gesture of fraternal solidarity but an act of obedience to Yhwh, with the nation's

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[22] In *David, King of Israel*, I study the wide array of texts attesting to the ways in which biblical scribes used war commemoration to negotiate relations with the Transjordan; the examples range from Bani the Gadite among David's most valiant warriors in the book of Samuel to the poetic descriptions of Gadite and Reubenite troops in the book of Chronicles. The memory of these tribes lives on in the imagination of the rabbis, who claim that they were the first to be exiled (*Lam. Rab.* 1.5). The rabbis follow Moses in being incensed by their request in Numbers 32; however, the tribes are said to have redeemed themselves by crossing the Jordan and helping their kin so that they were permitted to participate in the dedication of the tabernacle (*Num. Rab.* 13.19). Likewise, the rabbis locate the place of Moses's burial in Gadite tribal lands (*b. Soṭah* 13b) and identify the prophet Elijah as a Gadite (*Gen. Rab.* 71).

deity assuming the place of its members. The Transjordanians now fight as Yhwh's vanguard.

In his negotiations with Reuben and Gad, Moses stipulates that because they participated in the Cisjordanian campaign, the territories they occupy in the Transjordan will have the status of "possession before Yhwh" and the tribes themselves will be "exempt of obligation to Yhwh and to Israel" (vv. 20–23). The word for "exempt" is *nāqî* (lit. clean), a technical term that appears elsewhere in contexts of military and civic obligations owed to *the state*.[23] Here, it appears in a context that describes failure to fight "before Yhwh" as "sin" against the deity: "But if you do not do this, you will have sinned against Yhwh – be sure your sin will find you out!" (v. 23).

The account does more than strike a balance between the competing views of the Transjordanians; it also fuses fraternal obligations with the law laid down by Moses: "Your servants shall do as my lord commands" (v. 25), and "whatever Yhwh has spoken to your servants, that we shall do" (v. 31). Fidelity to Mosaic law comes to supplement, rather than supplant, kinship obligations.[24] What makes Israel a people is a shared sense of kinship, while what unifies them as a nation and guarantees their longevity in their homeland is compliance with the divine commandments.[25]

The authors of our account rediscovered and reaffirmed a basic insight that guides the compositional history of the Pentateuch and Former Prophets: A feeling of fraternity and national belonging frequently fails to provide sufficient motivation for collective action. In any large and diverse community, bonds are easily formed between subgroups, while loyalty to the larger body is more difficult to inspire. (Thus, notice in Num. 16:1 the presence of Reubenites in Korah's rebellion against Moses's authority.) The ancient scribes who composed our account were convinced that a common deity, and a common law code that represents the will of that deity, had the capacity to surmount primordial rivalries and provide a broader foundation on which their communities could coalesce into a thriving nation.

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[23] See, e.g., Deut. 24:5; 1 Kings 15:22.

[24] See also Deut. 3:18–20; Josh. 1:12–15, 22:1–9.

[25] According to Numbers 32:30, if they fail to abide by this commandment, they do not forfeit their right to call themselves Israel; instead, they are punished with the loss of property. This difficult statement probably refers to the loss of individual tribal allotments. Loss of property, in addition to corporal punishment/execution, is a common punishment for failure to render military service in ancient Near Eastern states.

PERFORMING PEOPLEHOOD

When the communities of Israel and Judah were reconstituting themselves under foreign rule, they rarely had opportunities to take up arms for their native interests. Yet through war commemoration, biblical scribes could continue to tap the potential of armed service as the most basic mode of what I call "performing peoplehood." To belong to a people, one must fight in their ranks, and it's the task of war commemoration to identify who rendered this service and sacrifice, as well as who dodged their duties to the nation. This is precisely what the older version of Numbers 32 does.

After empires subjugated the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, new modes of national participation emerged. Among the most basic were communal construction projects, and this fact explains the prominence of building accounts in the Pentateuch (the tabernacle) and Ezra-Nehemiah (the temple and city walls).[26] Alongside building projects, activities that we might call cultic or religious – worship of Yhwh and fidelity to Mosaic law – became paramount, and in Numbers 32 we can witness how Priestly scribes affirmed this point as they embellished an older war memorial.

Numbers 32, therefore, serves two purposes. The first is the negotiation of belonging via war commemoration. This purpose informs the account's foundational stratum, which is past- and narrative-oriented. The second purpose, which was introduced in the Priestly reworking of the account, is didactic and normative, with Yhwh and his commandments affirmed as the basis of Israel's national identity. These two purposes correspond not only to the two basic strata in the composition of Numbers 32 but also to two fundamental stages in the formation of the biblical corpus. They are the subject of more focused attention in the following chapters.

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[26] I treat this shift from battles to building in *David, King of Israel*, chap. 10.

5

A Nation Beyond Its Borders

In the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua, the NTT resumes at key moments, raising a basic question: Why would Judean scribes, during the postexilic period, go to the trouble of expanding the Pentateuch and book of Joshua with memories of the Transjordanian tribes? Critical interpreters of these texts typically claim that the scribes were attempting to explain how Israelite communities came to occupy territories in the Transjordan and that these scribes were working under the assumption that solely Canaan was the Promised Land. This formalistic explanation may be valid, but it's incomplete: it does not take into account the real-life political issues posed by the Transjordanian communities, and it fails to do justice to the complexity and nuances in these texts.

As we will continue to see, the NTT is engaged in a battle over the identity of important communities that reside in territories that many considered to be outside Israel's homeland. The status of these communities was a highly contentious matter, and for this reason the first episode of the NTT consists of unusually prolix exchanges: by depicting an enraged and hostile Moses hurling sharp invectives at the tribes of Reuben and Gad, Numbers 32 provides a literary occasion for these eastern communities to repudiate accusations against them and affirm, in a thorough and eloquent manner, the allegiance that motivated the decision of their ancestors to take up residence in the Transjordan.

In the present chapter, we examine how the NTT wends its way through the Hexateuch, culminating in another lengthy episode (Josh. 22) that consists of similar vociferous exchanges between the eastern tribes and the nation's leader. Compared to the opening sequence (Num. 32), the final episode goes further by denying the territories occupied by

the eastern tribes a special, let alone sacred, status. These tribes live beyond Israel's borders, even if their members belong to the nation. The texts that we study in this chapter identify the basis of this national belonging, and in so doing, take on the complex issue of diaspora-homeland relations.[1]

MOSES'S MEMORY IN DEUTERONOMY

As Israel prepares to cross the Jordan in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses recalls the deal he made with the tribes of Reuben and Gad. He claims that he assigned the Transjordanian territories to the two tribes at the time Israel conquered them (as if Numbers 32 stood in immediate proximity to Numbers 21). He says nothing about the dispute with these tribes and neglects to mention his directions to Eleazar, Joshua, and the tribal heads.[2] He also reminds the tribes of their obligation to march as a vanguard *for their Israelite kin*, not specifically *for Yhwh* (as in the Priestly editions of Numbers 32):

At that time, I charged you, saying, "Yhwh your god has given you this country to possess. You must go as shock troops, warriors all, in the vanguard of your Israelite brothers. Only your wives, children, and livestock – I know that you have much livestock – shall be left in the towns I have assigned to you, until Yhwh gives your brothers rest such as you have, and they too have taken possession of the land that Yhwh your god is giving them, beyond the Jordan. Then you may return each to the homestead that I have assigned to you." Deut. 3:18–20

This paragraph belongs to a section (vv. 12–20) that retells, at length yet with many modifications, the events from Numbers 32. The entire section appears to be a supplement. Notice how the reference to "these two kings" in verses 21–22 forms the direct continuation of verses 8–11 (see also 2:24–3:7). The literary join is severed, however, by the section related to the Transjordanian tribes:

3:8 So at that time we took from the two kings of the Amorites the Transjordanian lands, from the Wadi Arnon to Mount Hermon – 9 the Sidonians call Hermon Sirion, while the Amorites call it Senir – 10 all the towns of the tableland, the whole of Gilead, and all of Bashan, as far as Salecah and Edrei, towns of Og's kingdom in

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[1] This observation has been developed recently and forcefully by Rachel Havrelock in *River Jordan: The Mythology of a Dividing Line* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

[2] One must bear in mind that throughout his speech, Moses presents himself as the primary instigator and actor in all episodes of Israel's history. It's not surprising, then, that he takes responsibility for the Transjordanians' initiative.

Bashan. (*11 Now only King Og of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Repahim. His bed, an iron bedstead, can still be seen in Rabat of the Ammonites; it is nine cubits long and four cubits wide, by the standard cubit.*[3])

[vv. 12–20]

3:21 And I charged Joshua at that time: "Your own eyes have seen everything that Yhwh your god has done to these two kings; so Yhwh will do to all the kingdoms into which you are about to cross. 22 Do not fear them, for it is Yhwh your god who fights for you."

In verse 21 Moses exhorts Joshua to be fearless, beginning with a reference to Sihon and Og: "Your own eyes have seen everything that Yhwh your god has done to these two kings; so Yhwh will do to all the kingdoms into which you are about to cross." After the lengthy and detailed paragraphs treating the allocation of the Transjordanian lands in verses 12–20, the formulation "these two kings" in verse 21 is too far removed from its antecedent. According to conventional biblical narrative style, we would expect the scribe to have repeated the names "Sihon and Og" after so many verses. Instead, we read "these two kings," and the reason is likely that this line originally stood in close proximity to verse 8, which it naturally follows.

It seems quite probable, then, that earlier editions of Moses's speech in Deuteronomy 1–3 commemorated the conquest and settlement in the Transjordan, but had nothing to say about the Transjordanian tribes. If such is the case, the authors of these first iterations of Moses's speech may not have known Numbers 32, which in turn lends weight to the impression that the remaining references to the Transjordanian tribes are late additions to their contexts (e.g., Deut. 4:41–43).

At the other end of the book, Moses mentions the Transjordan as he exhorts the nation to remain faithful to the covenant they made with Yhwh. The conquest and settlement of this region is the final of three moments (or stages) in the nation's past when Yhwh performed wondrous feats (the other two being the exodus from Egypt and the wilderness wanderings). If Yhwh has hitherto blessed Israel and granted it victory over its enemies, the nation's future prosperity requires fidelity to the covenant:

When you reached this place, King Sihon of Heshbon and King Og of Bashan came out to engage us in battle, but we defeated them. We took their land and gave it to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh as their heritage.

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[3] Verse 11 represents one of the many anecdotal, (proto-)aggadic glosses in Deut. 1–3, and their supplementary character has long been noted in scholarship.

Therefore, observe faithfully all the terms of this covenant, that you may succeed in all that you undertake. Deut. 29:6–8

The distribution of the eastern territories among the Transjordanian tribes is memorialized here as both an important chapter in the nation's history and concrete historical proof of the covenant's validity. From this point until the final episode in Joshua 22, the NTT will add to Reuben and Gad the half-tribe of Manasseh, which was supplied secondarily to Numbers 32:33–42. Likewise, it will continue to cite Moses's orders to these tribes to cross the Jordan and participate in battle.

AFFIRMING ALLEGIANCE IN JOSHUA

The composition of the NTT has dramatically shaped the contours of the book of Joshua. In the opening chapter of this book, Joshua addresses the nation on the eve of the invasion, and as he does, he reminds the Transjordanian tribes of their obligation to pass over the Jordan and fight in the vanguard of Israel (in keeping with the older version of Numbers 32). Here, Moses's successor reiterates the instructions he delivered in Deuteronomy 3:18–20, making only slight changes:

Then Joshua said to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, "Remember the word Moses the servant of Yhwh commanded you when he said: 'Yhwh your god is giving you rest, and he has granted this territory to you.' Let your wives, children, and livestock remain in the land that Moses gave you on this side of the Jordan; but as for you, you shall cross over as shock troops, all mighty warriors, in the vanguard of your brothers. You shall assist them until Yhwh has given your brothers rest, such as you have, and they too have taken possession of the land that Yhwh your god has given to them. Then you may return to the land on the east side of the Jordan, which Moses the servant of Yhwh assigned to you as your possession, and you may possess it." Josh. 1:12–15

As so often in the NTT, the eastern tribes affirm their commitment to obey the commandments issued by Moses and Joshua. Now, however, they announce that the death penalty awaits anyone who defies their orders:

They answered Joshua, "We will do everything you have commanded us and we will go wherever you send us. We will obey you just as we obeyed Moses; let Yhwh your god be with you as he was with Moses! Any man who flouts your commands and does not obey every order you give him shall be put to death. Be now strong and resolute!" Josh. 1:16–18

This lengthy episode of the NTT is easy to identify as a supplement to the book's older introduction in 1:10–11.[4] Its presence at the very beginning of the book witnesses to the importance of the Transjordanian issue. It also obviates the need to interpolate multiple references to the eastern tribes throughout the narrative. Even so, several chapters later the narrator confirms that they crossed the Jordan in the vanguard of the nation. The second line underscores the large number of warriors who took part, yet instead of marching as a vanguard for the nation, they cross over "before Yhwh," as in the Priestly edition of Numbers 32:

The Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh went across armed in the vanguard of the Israelites, as Moses had charged them. About forty thousand shock troops went across, before Yhwh, prepared for war in the steppes of Jericho. Josh. 4:12–13

The short passage may be the work of two different scribes, since the second line (v. 13), when read independently of the preceding line (v. 12), could be interpreted as referring to the number of Israelite troops in general. However, the formulations "shock troops" and "before Yhwh" appear frequently in reference specifically to the eastern tribes in our texts, and therefore it's more likely that the second line was composed at the same time as, or after, the first.

THE DIVISION OF THE LAND

At its core, the book of Joshua commemorates "the conquest" as the wars Joshua conducted in Canaan, i.e., in territories on the western side of the Jordan. As such, this work points up the absence of a corresponding book that celebrates the nation's triumphs in the Transjordan. To compensate for this absence, later scribes expanded the book with a number of prominent passages, such as the ones we discussed in the preceding section. We find other important supplements in the numerical accounts found in chapters 12–14.

In keeping with the polemic against kingship in this work, the scribes drafted two registers of vanquished monarchs, the first relating to the conquests of Moses in the Transjordan (12:1–6) and the second to the conquests of Joshua in the Cisjordan (12:7–24). While the second

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[4] *Pace* Germany, *Exodus-Conquest Narrative*, 314–317, who argues for the priority of 1:1–2. Joachim J. Kraus argues convincingly why 1:17–18 does not represent the response from the officials in 1:10–11; see his *Exodus und Eisodus: Komposition und Theologie von Josua 1–5* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 117–125. I discuss the development of this narrative in Part III.

lists the names of thirty-one kings (explicitly tallied in the final line, v. 24b), the first consists of only two: Sihon and Og. These enumerations presuppose and systematize all the battles reported in the narrative up to this point, and an earlier edition of the book may have terminated here. We are told in 12:7 that Joshua divided the conquered territories in the Cisjordan among "the tribes of Israel," and the formulation of the verse leaves the impression that its author did not have the other accounts of tribal allotments contained in the following chapters. Moreover, it seems reasonable to assume that a different scribe added the first list (recording the Transjordanian conquests) at a later point: 12:7 leaves the impression that all "the tribes of Israel" settled in the Cisjordan (see already 11:23); the first list ends, however, by reporting that "Moses, the servant of Yhwh, gave [the land] to the Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh as their possession" (v. 6).[5]

The latter half of Joshua, beginning in chapter 13, recounts the division of the land among the nation's twelve tribes. The narrator goes to great lengths to clarify that the conquered land was being divided solely among nine and a half tribes, since Moses had already assigned territories to two and a half tribes on the east side of the Jordan:

Now the Reubenites and the Gadites, along with the other half-tribe, had already received the shares which Moses assigned to them on the east side of the Jordan .... Josh. 13:8

The remaining twenty-five verses of chapter 13 describe precisely what lands the two-and-a-half tribes inherited collectively and then separately.

The first lines of chapter 14 form what appears to be an older introduction to the following tribal registers, and it appears to have been expanded with a reminder that two and a half tribes had already received their territories from Moses. Notice how the italicized portion severs the sentence that frames it:

These are the allotments of the Israelites in the land of Canaan that were apportioned to them by the priest Eleazar, by Joshua son of Nun, and by the heads of the ancestral houses of the Israelite tribes. The portions were by lot. As Yhwh had commanded through Moses ...
that is, for the nine and a half tribes, for the portion of the other two and a half tribes had been assigned to them by Moses on the other side of the Jordan. He had not assigned any portion among them to the Levites; for whereas the descendants of Joseph constituted two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim, the Levites were

[5] See the discussion in Thomas B. Dozeman, *Joshua 1–12: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 482–500.

assigned no share in the land, but only some towns to live in, with the pastures for
their livestock and cattle. As Yhwh had commanded Moses
    ... so the Israelites did, and they apportioned the land. Josh. 14:1–5[6]

Aside from sporadic (secondary) references throughout the remaining
registers, the next time we hear about the eastern tribes is in chapter 22,
the final episode in the NTT. The account tells how these tribes, after
serving alongside the Cisjordanian Israelites in battle, provoke the latter to
rise up in arms against them. The *casus belli* is a massive altar that they had
built near the Jordan. Deeming the construction to be "treachery" and
potentially rivaling Yhwh's tabernacle, "the Israelites" mobilize for mili-
tary action, planning to lay waste the Transjordanian territories. Because
of its length and importance, this episode merits more attention.

HONORING WARTIME SERVICE

Joshua 22 describes little action, while devoting a lot of space to verbal
exchanges. In this respect, the authors adopted the same narrative strategy
as employed in Numbers 32. In each case, representatives of Israel begin
with lengthy indictments that appeal to key moments in the nation's past.[7]

    The account begins inauspiciously with the nation's leader summoning the
eastern tribes for the purpose of discharging them to their homes across the
Jordan. As he does, he pays tribute to their exemplary wartime contributions
during the conquest, commending them for their obedience and allegiance:

Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of
Manasseh, and said to them, "You have observed all that Moses the servant
of Yhwh commanded you, and have obeyed me in everything that
I commanded you. You have not forsaken your brothers these many days –
indeed to this very day – but have faithfully kept the charge of Yhwh your
god. Now Yhwh your god has given rest to your brothers, as he promised
them. You may therefore return to your homes, to the land of your holdings
beyond the Jordan that Moses the servant of Yhwh assigned to you. But be
very careful to fulfill the commandment and teaching of Moses, the servant of
Yhwh: to love Yhwh your god and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his

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[6] This smaller expansion in chapter 14 likely preceded the larger insertions in chapter 13.
    The redundancy here would have been necessitated by the composition of a new introduc-
    tion in 13:1–7. The latter ends with a reference to the nine and a half tribes that may have
    elicited the lengthy excursus in 13:8–33.

[7] The translation of Joshua 22 in what follows is adapted from the JPS (1986) version. For
    a helpful approach to the chapter, see Elie Assis, "For It Shall Be a Witness Between Us:
    A Literary Reading of Josh 22," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*, 18 (2004),
    208–231.

commandments and hold fast to him, and to serve him with all your heart and soul." Then Joshua blessed them and dismissed them, and they went to their homes. Josh. 22:1–6

According to Joshua's evaluation, the tribes have fulfilled their military obligations during the conquest of Canaan. In the opening chapter of the book, he reminded them of Moses's commands, and here he commends them for both heeding those orders and fulfilling their duty to their brethren. As they now prepare to return to their homes across the Jordan, Joshua enjoins them to continue to heed the charge they had received from Moses, which has been reformulated in Deuteronomistic diction: They must love Yhwh their god, walk in all his ways, keep his commandments, and serve him with heart and soul. The profusion of these tropes affirms devotion to Yhwh and the Torah as the foundation of Israel's national identity, especially for them as members of communities residing beyond the nation's borders. What's notable is how the address connects this theme of law to kinship: the Transjordanians demonstrated their fidelity to Yhwh's law by contributing to a war effort for their Cisjordanian "brothers."

Before departing and leaving "the Israelites" in the land of Canaan, the eastern tribes receive unexpected and rich rewards for their service:

Furthermore, when Joshua sent them off to their homes, he blessed them and said to them, "Return to your homes with great wealth – with very much livestock, with silver and gold, with copper and iron, and with a great quantity of clothing. Share the spoil of your enemies with your brothers."

So the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh left the Israelites at Shiloh, in the land of Canaan, and made their way back to the land of Gilead, the land of their own holding, which they had acquired by the command of Yhwh through Moses. Josh. 22:7b–9

The first versions of this account likely concluded with this joyous farewell.[8] Providing a beautiful example of biblical war commemoration, the authors of the NTT have called attention here, one last time, to the service rendered by the eastern tribes during the conquest of Canaan.

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[8] Originally, this first part may have consisted only of 22:1–6, which concludes with the tribes returning to their homes; if so, verse 7a would be an early addition to the conclusion before the composition of verses 7b–9. Whatever the case may be, with its emphasis on obedience to Moses and fulfillment of fraternal obligations, all of 22:1–9 has the same tenor as the older version of Numbers 32 and the Deuteronomistic parts of the NTT, while the continuation in verses 10–34 is consonant with the Priestly reworking of Numbers 32.

FROM CELEBRATION TO CRISIS

The lengthy continuation (22:10–34) is easy to recognize as a later composition. While verses 1–9 are loaded with the lexicon of Deuteronomy, this second part has a pronounced Priestly imprimatur and portrays a dramatic shift from celebration to crisis.

On their way home, the eastern tribes build an altar by the Jordan. Its construction provokes outrage among the Israelites, who prepare to wage war against them:

When they came to the region of the Jordan in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh built an altar there by the Jordan, a great and conspicuous altar. A report reached the Israelites: "The Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh have built an altar opposite the land of Canaan, in the region of the Jordan, across from the Israelites." When the Israelites heard this, the whole congregation of the Israelites assembled at Shiloh to make war on them. Josh. 22:10–12

Gathering at the holy city of Shiloh, the Israelites decide first to dispatch emissaries to the Transjordan. Just like Moses in the first episode of the NTT (Num. 32), the delegation doesn't wait for an explanation and launches an elaborate excoriation that appeals to the nation's past:

The Israelites sent Phinehas ben Eleazar, the priest, to the Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh in the land of Gilead, accompanied by ten chieftains, one chieftain from each ancestral house of each of the tribes of Israel; they were every one of them heads of ancestral houses of the contingents of Israel. When they came to the Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh in the land of Gilead, they spoke to them as follows:

"Thus saith all the congregation of Yhwh: 'What is this treachery that you have committed this day against the god of Israel, turning away from Yhwh by building yourselves an altar and rebelling this day against Yhwh! Is the sin of Peor, which brought a plague upon the community of Yhwh, not enough for us? To this very day we have yet to cleanse ourselves from it. And now you would turn away from Yhwh! If you rebel against Yhwh today, tomorrow he will be angry with all the congregation of Israel.

"'If it is because the land of your holding is unclean, cross over into the land of Yhwh's own holding, where the tabernacle of Yhwh dwells, and acquire holdings among us. But do not rebel against Yhwh, and do not rebel against us by building for yourselves an altar other than the altar of Yhwh our god. When Achan son of Zerah violated the proscription, anger struck the whole community of Israel; he was not the only one who perished for that sin.'" Josh. 22:13–20

When the accused are finally allowed to speak, they protest even more vigorously than they did in Numbers 32, insisting that they have, once again, been misunderstood. Instead of a place for sacrifices that would

compete with Yhwh's one true altar, they constructed this replica to serve as a memorial witnessing to future generations:

The Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh replied to the heads of the contingents of Israel. They said, "God, Yhwh God! God, Yhwh God! He knows, and Israel too shall know! If we acted in rebellion or in treachery against Yhwh, do not vindicate us this day! If we built an altar to turn away from Yhwh, if it was to offer burnt offerings or meal offerings upon it, or to present sacrifices of well-being upon it, may Yhwh himself demand a reckoning.

"To the contrary: we did this thing only out of our concern that, in time to come, your children might say to our children, 'What have you to do with Yhwh, the god of Israel? Yhwh has made the Jordan a boundary between you and us, O Reubenites and Gadites! You have no share in Yhwh.' In such ways your children might prevent our children from worshiping Yhwh.

"So we decided to provide a witness for ourselves by building an altar – not for burnt offerings or other sacrifices, but as a witness between you and us, and between the generations to come – that we may perform the service of Yhwh before him with our burnt offerings, our sacrifices, and our offerings of well-being; and that your children should not say to our children in time to come, 'You have no share in Yhwh.'

"We reasoned: should they speak thus to us and to our children in time to come, we would reply, 'See the replica of Yhwh's altar, which our fathers made – not for burnt offerings or sacrifices, but as a witness between you and us.' Far be it from us to rebel against Yhwh, or to turn away this day from Yhwh and build an altar for burnt offerings, meal offerings, and sacrifices other than the altar of Yhwh our god that stands before his tabernacle." Josh. 22:21–29

As in Numbers 32, the remonstration of the eastern tribes absolves them of any wrongdoing in the eyes of their accusers. The delegation responds by declaring that they now know that Yhwh is in their midst and that these tribes had, in fact, "saved the Israelites" – not from their Canaanite foes, as these tribes had done before, but from their own god, who was about to punish the nation:

When the priest Phinehas and the chieftains of the community – the heads of the contingents of Israel – who were with him heard the explanation given by the Reubenites, Gadites, and Manassites, they approved. The priest Phinehas son of Eleazar said to the Reubenites, Gadites, and Manassites, "Now we know that Yhwh is in our midst, since you have not committed such treachery against Yhwh. You have indeed saved the Israelites from punishment by Yhwh." Josh. 22:30–31

The emissaries then return to "the Israelites in Canaan," and after hearing their report, the Israelites relinquish their plans for punitive action against the land occupied by the tribes:

Then the priest Phinehas son of Eleazar and the chieftains returned from the Reubenites and Gadites in the land of Gilead to the Israelites in the land of

Canaan and gave them their report. The Israelites were pleased, and the Israelites praised God; and they spoke no more of going to war against them to ravage the land in which the Reubenites and Gadites dwelt.

The Reubenites and Gadites named the altar ["Witness"], meaning, "It is a witness between us and them that Yhwh is [our] god." Josh. 22:32–34

In the end, a civil war is avoided, but the reader is left wondering: What exactly is the relationship between the Israelites and the Transjordanian tribes?

NATION VERSUS TERRITORY

The first thing to notice about this final episode in the NTT is that it insinuates that the Transjordan does not belong to Israel's god and is (ritually) unclean. In the first section of the chapter, which celebrates the Transjordanians' contributions, the territory of the eastern tribes is designated as the land of their "holding" (*'aḥuzzāh*; see vv. 4, 9). This technical term refers to territory they receive from Yhwh as an award for their military service, as reiterated throughout Numbers 32. In contradistinction to these texts, Phinehas asserts in this polemical account that if the eastern tribes consider the land they "hold" to be "unclean/defiled" (*ṭāmē'*), they should cross the Jordan and take up residence in "the land of Yhwh's own *holding*, where the tabernacle of Yhwh dwells, and acquire *holdings* among us" (v. 19, emphasis added; cf. Num. 32:30).

At the beginning of the account, we are told that the altar stood "opposite the land of Canaan, in the region of the Jordan, across from the Israelites" (v. 11). Similarly, when the tribes explain their motivation for building an altar near the Jordan, they mention the fear of discrimination and exclusion for future generations: "In time to come your children might say to our children, 'What have you to do with Yhwh, the god of Israel? For Yhwh has made the Jordan a boundary between you and us, O Reubenites and Gadites!'" (vv. 24–25). We learn in the conclusion that the Israelites were preparing "to ravage *the land* in which the Reubenites and Gadites dwelt" (v. 33, emphasis added).[9]

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[9] This military aggression is reminiscent not only of the war conducted by the Israelite tribes against Benjamin in Judges 20–21, but also of the Sacred Wars fought by the Amphictyonic League in defense of the sanctuary at Delphi (600–590, 448, 355–346, 339–338 BCE). The destruction of the land in our account is noteworthy since the belligerents in the Sacred Wars focused their aggression against the land as well; the laws of the league explicitly addressed these ecocidal tendencies. On the subject of ecocide, see Jacob L. Wright,

From these and similar statements, we see how the account distinguishes between *the country* east of the Jordan, which may be just as unclean as other foreign lands, on the one hand, and *the communities* living in that country who belong to the people of Israel, on the other hand.[10] The nation is therefore larger than, and transcends, its territorial borders.

Although the Transjordanians are distinguished from the Israelites in this account, their offenses have direct ramifications for the welfare of the nation as a whole. In setting forth their charges, Phinehas and the tribal chiefs compare the sin in building the altar to the transgressions of Peor (Num. 25). Aside from reminding the reader of the debacle that occurred in what became the territory of Reuben, the point seems to be that the sin of one member brings punishment upon all members. As noted with respect to Moses's accusations in Numbers 32, the comparison does more than simply inculpate the Transjordanians; it identifies them as full-fledged members of the nation. Israelites in the Cisjordan must concern themselves with the actions of these Transjordanian communities (who are not called "Israelites") because they have direct implications for their own well-being: "If you rebel against Yhwh today, he will be angry with the entire congregation of Israel tomorrow" (v. 18).

A similar point is made by the intrabook reference to the sin of Achan after the battle of Jericho: "Did not Achan ben Zerah break faith in the matter of the devoted things, and wrath fall upon the whole congregation of Israel? He did not perish alone for his iniquity!" (v. 20). The account of Achan's transgressions in Joshua 7 is a tale of collective responsibility, the punishment of the entire community for the sin of one of its members. As the sociologist Émile Durkheim observed, the problems presented by collective punishment pertain ultimately to larger questions of belonging, and they have extraordinary pedagogical potential inasmuch as they provoke reflection on "the ties that bind" and the mutual obligations that shape a community's identity. In the various ways societies confront

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"Warfare and Wanton Destruction: A Reexamination of Deuteronomy 20:19–20 in Relation to Ancient Siegecraft," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 127 (2008), 423–458.

[10] For use of the expression "unclean lands" in reference to foreign lands, see Amos 7:17; Hosea 9:3–5; Zech. 2:16. Baruch Levine makes a good case that the original formulation of the passage did not present the altar as being built *west* of the Jordan (*Numbers 21–36* [New York: Doubleday, 2000], 505). Notice, for example, how the multiple clauses in verse 11, which appear to be glosses, define the location of the altar. Moreover, the uncleanness of the Transjordan is underscored in what appear to be the same literary layers that (re-)locate the altar in Canaan.

these problems, they express competing ideals of communal solidarity and social cohesion.[11] The case of Achan dovetails with the larger concerns in this account raised by the Transjordanians' relationship to the Cisjordanians. By asserting that their actions will bring judgment on all Israel, the emissaries identify the eastern tribes as integral parts of the nation.[12]

With respect to the altar itself, the eastern tribes repeatedly insist that they did not build it to be used for actual sacrifices or offerings – although their statement in verse 27 is confusing. As a replica of Israel's one and only divinely sanctioned altar that stood before the tabernacle, it was to serve as a monument reminding future generations that the communities on the eastern side of the Jordan "have a portion in Yhwh."

The account not only witnesses to a conflict over the status of the populations in the Transjordan, and to the existence of groups in the Cisjordan who argued that Yhwh made the Jordan a boundary to the land of Israel. It also shows that some factions in this dispute (such as the authors of our text) appealed to Yhwh veneration as the basis for this unity. Such veneration, our account argues, must honor the one divinely sanctioned altar, which was part of the tabernacle before being erected in Jerusalem. The eastern tribes had thus built a memorial in the likeness of the nation's physical point of unity.

ONE YHWH, ONE ISRAEL

Our text belongs to a program of national unification and cult centralization that produced the foundational creed for Israel's corporate identity: "Hear O Israel, Yhwh is our god, Yhwh is one!" (Deut. 6:4). By proclaiming the unity of the various Yhwhs worshiped in diverse communities, this groundbreaking declaration laid the theological and cult-historical cornerstone for efforts to transcend political and territorial differences in favor of national unity: One Yhwh, one Israel.[13]

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[11] Émile Durkheim, *Moral Education: A Study in the Theory and Application of the Sociology of Education* (New York: Free Press, 1973), originally published as *L'éducation morale* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1925).

[12] Notice that also in Phinehas's final statement (v. 31) the actions of the eastern tribes determine the fate of Israel.

[13] On the unification of Yhwhs by this text, see Jeremy M. Hutton, "Local Manifestations of Yahweh and Worship in the Interstices: A Note on Kuntillet ʿAjrud," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*, 10 (2010), 177–210. On deities worshiped by Iron Age communities that affirmed affiliation to Israel, see Hutton, "Southern, Northern, and

The same goes for the identification of other deities with Yhwh. Abundant archeological evidence reveals that the cults of El, Elyon, Shaddai, and other deities were more deeply rooted in the Transjordan than that of Yhwh. The composition histories of the Balaam account, the Elijah cycle, and other biblical texts witness to a redactional process by which these deities came to be identified with Yhwh, with their names now being understood as alternative designations for this deity.[14]

In past scholarship, the unification of Yhwh worship and the identification of other deities with Yhwh has, for the most part, been treated as a preexilic, Iron Age phenomena. However, this theological-political project continued to be pertinent in the postexilic period, when Jerusalem competed with communities in Samaria, the Transjordan, and elsewhere. In Joshua 22, the Transjordanians finish their retort by affirming their allegiance to the one altar of "Yhwh, our god." In the final line of the account, they name the altar "Witness," because "it is a witness between us that Yhwh is God" (v. 34). The altar here represents not only fidelity to the nation's one god but also cultic unity. We saw how the first part of the chapter, where Joshua celebrates the contributions of the eastern tribes, emphasizes love for Yhwh and his commandments. By contrast, the second part introduces a crisis as a way of championing the cause of priests in Jerusalem, for whom worship at Yhwh's one altar was the *condicio sine qua non* of Torah observance.

In his Memoir from the mid-fifth century BCE, Nehemiah reports that the family of a prominent Transjordanian figure named Tobiah had not only intermarried with priests in Jerusalem but also possessed a pied-à-terre in the temple precincts there (see esp. Neh. 13:4–9). On the basis of this text, some scholars claim that Tobiah – whose name expresses devotion to Yhwh – may have worshiped at Jerusalem and that he recognized the altar there to be the only authorized one. If so, he would have adhered to the priestly expectations expressed in the second half of Joshua 22.[15]

Transjordanian Perspectives" in Francesca Stavrakopoulou and John Barton (eds.), *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah* (London: Continuum, 2010), 149–174.

[14] On the identification of deities, see Mark Smith, *The Early History of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); Smith, *The Memoirs of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004); Smith, *God in Translation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008). Smith draws on Jan Assmann's notion of translatability set forth in, inter alia, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). See also Benjamin D. Sommer's notion of fluidity and fragmentation in *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[15] See, e.g., Ulrike Schorn, *Ruben und das System der zwölf Stämme Israels* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1997); Ronnie Goldstein, "Joshua 22:9–34: A Priestly Narrative from the

It's noteworthy that this Transjordanian figure is Nehemiah's arch-nemesis. (When Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem, the first thing he does is expel Tobiah from the temple precincts.) In the Judah-centric program promoted by the Nehemiah Memoir, religious devotion to Yhwh has little meaning in and of itself; what's more important is that the people of Judah develop a sense of kinship and practice the special obligations that ensue from it. In Chapter 6, we conclude Part II by considering the role of kinship in relation to law and narrative.

Second Temple Period," *Shnaton*, 13 (2002), 43–81 [in Hebrew]. On Neh. 13:4–9, see my analysis in *Rebuilding Identity*, 191–203.

6

Kinship, Law, and Narrative

The first question that Moses rhetorically poses to the tribes in the NTT expresses a principle of national belonging that lies at the heart of our investigation: "Shall *your brothers* go to war while you reside here?" (Num. 32:6, emphasis added).[1] Later, Joshua reminds the Transjordanian tribes of their promise to accompany their brothers/kin until they have successfully taken possession of their land (Josh. 1:12–15). In the end, he discharges the warriors after commending them for their faithful service on the battlefield: "You have not forsaken *your brothers* these many days, indeed to this very day, but have faithfully kept the charge of Yhwh your god. Now Yhwh your god has given rest to *your brothers*, as he promised them. You may therefore return to your tents in the land of your holding . . . ." (Josh. 22:1–6, emphasis added). After returning to their homes in the Transjordan, the eastern tribes eventually forget about their kin in the west and, by the time of Deborah, are no longer willing to contribute to the nation's war efforts.[2]

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[1] The line is often cited now by Israeli media in relation to the ultra-Orthodox who do not serve in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) yet expect not only full citizenship rights but a disproportionate share of social welfare.

[2] In the Song of Deborah and Numbers 32, the verb "reside" (*y-š-b*) appears in an indictment of the Transjordanian tribes for dodging their duties to the nation. Read on their own, both Moses's and Deborah's queries presuppose and affirm the belonging of the Transjordanian communities they censure. Yet when these texts are read sequentially as part of the wider narrative of Genesis-Kings, the reader should understand that these eastern tribes had originally made a significant contribution to the conquest of Canaan, but after returning to their homes in the Transjordan, they eventually forget about their kin in the west and, by the time of Deborah, are no longer are willing to contribute to the nation's war efforts.

Our investigation in the preceding chapters has demonstrated how later generations of scribes reworked the NTT, expanding this fraternal rationale for the tribes' wartime service. Originally, what motivates the eastern tribes' participation in the conquest of Canaan is a sense of kinship; the members of the nation are "brothers in arms." Yet, thanks to the contributions of later scribes who left their imprint on the NTT, what motivates the tribes is now not only the unspoken, instinctual expectations of kinship/brotherhood but also, and more fundamentally, an allegiance to the explicit commandment of Yhwh spoken through Moses.

In modern times, the codification of law and the use of it to undermine hierarchical-aristocratic structures have been crucial to the emergence of national communities. In the context of Israel's and Judah's wars with imperial powers, a body of written law had a central role to play: When the state was still intact and mobilizing for battle, it could promote solidarity by regulating power and privileges among rival groups and institutions. But when the nation was defeated and dispersed, and a native king and army were no longer there to defend its territorial borders, the law could demarcate communal boundaries and provide a unifying political vision.

In this final chapter of Part Two, we begin by exploring, with the help of comparative texts, the conceptual bond between kinship and military service. Given the limitations of ethnicity as the basis of national identity, our investigation will take us to a political theory that emerged in post-1945 Germany, which offers an alternative to an ethnic or cultural framework for national belonging. Thereafter, we examine how a national narrative can inculcate a sense of kinship and affection for the law, and consider what makes a text truly sacred.

FROM STATE DIPLOMACY TO NATIONAL BELONGING

The themes of fraternity and wartime service, which we discovered in the substratum of the NTT, run hand in glove throughout a long history of social-political discourse extending from antiquity to contemporary times.[3] A paradigmatic case is found in 1 Maccabees, which cites a letter

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[3] A recent example is the 2007 IDF Code of Ethics, which lays down rules resembling the US military ideals of mutual responsibility and never leaving a wounded comrade in the field: "The IDF servicemen and women will act out of fraternity and devotion to their comrades, and will always go to their assistance when they need their help or depend on them, despite any danger or difficulty, even to the point of risking their lives."

that Jonathan (the Judean high priest and military commander who succeeded his father Judas) sends to the Spartans requesting their military assistance. Rather than formulating his request directly, Jonathan claims to be interested merely in renewing, after many years, the old "friendship and alliance" (*philia kai symmachia*) and "family ties/fraternity" (*adelphotetos*) between the Judeans and their brothers, the Spartans. He refers to an earlier letter, from the end of the fourth century BCE, sent by the Spartan king Arius to Jerusalem, apparently also petitioning for military assistance:

Already in times past the high priest Onias received a letter from Arius, who was king among you. As the appended copy shows, it stated that you are our brothers. Onias welcomed the envoy with honor, and received the letter, which contained a clear declaration of alliance and friendship. Though we have no need of these things – for the holy books in our hands are our source of strength – we are seeking to renew our family ties and friendship with you, so that we may not become estranged from you. Considerable time has passed since you sent your letter to us, yet we remember you constantly on every occasion, both at our festivals and on other appropriate days, at the sacrifices that we offer, and in our prayers, as it is right and proper to remember brothers. 1 Macc. 12:7–11 (NRSV)

In response, the Spartans send a letter in which they claim to have researched and discovered in the written record that indeed "the Spartans and the Judeans are brothers (*adelphoi*) and of the family of Abraham (*ek genous Abraam*)."[4] The correspondence differs from earlier agreements with Rome in which "the assembly" (*plēthos*) of the Jews becomes "friends and allies" (*symmachoi kai philoi*) of the Romans, without saying anything about brotherhood (see 1 Macc. 8:17–32).[5]

Though most likely fictive, the Spartan correspondence superbly illustrates a typical scenario of statecraft: 1) one party faces a military threat and needs the assistance of another; 2) the political exigencies lead to an alliance; 3) and the alliance directly fosters fraternity between the two parties as they construct – with the help of careful research – a narrative of their shared past and heritage.

[4] See the classic discussion in Michael S. Ginsburg, "Sparta and Judaea," *Classical Philology*, 23 (1934), 117–122. Subsequent scholarship has raised serious questions about the authenticity of the correspondence, which situates Jonathan at the center of geopolitics.

[5] On the form of this agreement, see D. A. Bowman, "The *Formula Sociorum* in the Second and First Centuries BC," *Classical Journal*, 85 (1989–90), 330–336; L. T. Zollschan, "Politics and the Orality of Roman Peace-Making" in Craig Cooper (ed.), *The Politics of Orality* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 171–190.

In his commentary on these letters, Jonathan Goldstein compares the statement that the Spartans share property with the Judeans – and hence are implicitly willing to contribute their resources to the Judean war effort – to two biblical texts referring to shared resources and fraternity.[6] In 1 Kings 22, a king of Israel urges Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to go to war with him against the Arameans in order to take back Ramoth-Gilead, a strategic site in the Transjordan. In response, Jehoshaphat affirms, "I am as you are. My people are as your people. My horses are your horses" (v. 4). Similarly, in 2 Kings 3, King Jehoram mobilizes his troops to reassert Israelite hegemony over the Transjordanian kingdom of Moab. He sends Jehoshaphat a letter, asking him to join him on his campaign, to which the Judean king responds once again: "I will go: I am as you are. My people are as your people. My horses are as your horses" (v. 7). These declarations play on the double meaning of "people," which in Hebrew, as in many other languages, can bear the meaning of not only population or subjects but also troops or nation in arms.

Other texts use the language of unity. For example, the Hittite ruler Muršili II (1343–1295 BCE) writes to Talmišarruma of Aleppo, "May all of us together and our house be one [*gabbani u bītni lū ištēn*]!" Most often, such declarations of oneness are found in the context of preparations for a joint military operation.[7] Terms of fraternity and oneness belong to the vernacular of ancient international diplomacy. One of the most consistent features of the Akkadian treaty tradition is the expectation that partners will participate in each other's war efforts and come to each other's defense. The treaties and official correspondence are suffused with the rhetoric of "brotherhood" (*aḫḫūtu*) and "close friendship" (*rā'īmūtu*).[8] Thus, when the Hittite king Hattušili III (1267–1237 BCE) writes to his Kassite ally Kadašman-Enlil II of Babylon, he refers, as does Jonathan in 1

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[6] Jonathan A. Goldstein, *1 Maccabees* (New York: Doubleday, 1976).

[7] See Mark Smith, "'Your People Shall Be My People': Family and Covenant in Ruth 1:16–17," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 69 (2007), 242–258. The texts quoted in this section are all taken from Paul Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant: A Comprehensive Review of Covenant Formulae from the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1982), 99–103.

[8] The letters are collected and translated in the first half of William L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore: Hopkins, 1992). See also B. Lafont, "Relations internationales, alliances et diplomatie au temps des royaumes amorrites: Essai de synthèse" in Jean-Marie Durand and Dominique Charpin (eds.), *Mari, Ébla et les Hourrites: Dix ans de travaux; Actes du colloque international (Paris, mai 1993): Deuxième partie* (Paris: ERC, 2001), 213–328.

Maccabees, to a past history of friendship and fraternity: "When your father and I established close friendship and became brothers, we spoke thus: 'We are brothers: We should be the enemy of one who is an enemy to anyone of us, a friend to the one who is a friend of anyone of us.'" One should not dismiss this talk of brotherhood as mere rhetoric. A letter from Šaušgamuwa, the king of Amurru, to Ammittamru II, king of Ugarit (1260–1235 BCE), asserts, "My brother, see, we, you and I, are brothers, sons of one and the same man; brothers we are!" Šaušgamuwa would have likely protested any etic distinction between "constructed" kinship and "real" consanguinity.

Fraternity *between* two separate polities/peoples brings with it obligations and a moral imperative, just as it does *within* a political community. The obligations differ only in degree, not in quality. In both cases, they are understood to derive from a kinship that long precedes the moment in which a contribution or action is called for. This explains why treaties are understood to reaffirm bonds that are already long-standing. Moreover, the ratification of international treaties in the ancient world was often accompanied by blood rites, commensality, and intermarriage, which otherwise characterize familial/national bonds.[9]

Throughout the biblical corpus, we can study how scribes applied standard diplomatic parlance of states to their project of creating a form of peoplehood that is capable of withstanding the loss of statehood. The actors are no longer kings and diplomats but rather groups and communities within a political community. In forging this new concept of peoplehood, the biblical scribes drew heavily on official diplomatic language between kings. Thus, the story of Ruth uses language that is much the same as King Jehoshaphat's formal declarations cited above. Establishing a point of departure for the narrative, Ruth proclaims to her mother-in-law:

For where you go, I will go. Where you stay, I will stay. Your people shall be my people, and your god my god. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Ruth 1:16–17[10]

Using the rhetoric of vassalage, the Moabite protagonist makes a pledge to join the people of her mother-in-law. As in the book of Genesis, the story of Ruth directs attention away from rulers and

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[9] The far-reaching ramifications of treaties for kinship relations and political-ethnic boundaries explain the anxiety of many biblical authors with respect to alliances between Israel and other peoples.

[10] For the overlap between Ruth's and Jehoshaphat's pledges, see Smith, "Your People."

diplomacy to humble, quotidian matters in the private lives of families and widows. It portrays how personal relationships built on *ḥesed* (generosity, hospitality, or loving kindness) redound to the strength of the entire nation.[11]

The biblical writers developed the principles of kinship and national belonging in sundry and impressive ways. Thus, what the authors of Genesis achieve through narrative (creating a family from what were originally unrelated clans), the authors of the Holiness and Deuteronomic codes express through divine command: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself – I am Yhwh!" (Lev. 19:18).

In the book of Joshua, Israel is a united people in arms, with a common history that precedes military action. Canaan, on the other hand, is inhabited by numerous city-states ruled by monarchs; with their professional armies, they form coalitions with other kings solely for the purpose of fighting Israel. This polarity – Canaanite *states* versus the Israelite *nation* – must be borne in mind when interpreting the NTT as a whole, which repeatedly presents the eastern tribes affirming their primordial fraternity with the people of Israel as they prepare for war against the kings of Canaan.[12]

CONSTITUTIONAL PATRIOTISM

The authors of the NTT addressed long-standing issues of belonging posed by the Transjordanian communities by commemorating their service on the front lines, and in so doing, they synthesized narrative, kinship, and law – the three defining features of the national identity articulated throughout the biblical corpus. The story told by these scribes (narrative) depicts Transjordanians fighting for their Cisjordanian brethren (kinship) in keeping with the Mosaic commandment (law). In the framework of their impressive narrative, fidelity to the law doesn't supplant fraternal solidarity; it supplements it.

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[11] This point is developed at length by Tamara Cohn Eskenazi in her commentary (coauthored with Tikva Frymer-Kensky), *Ruth: The JPS Bible Commentary* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2011).

[12] At the other end of the biblical narrative, and drawing on themes from the book of Joshua, Nehemiah tells how Judah's neighbors form a military alliance for the purpose of assailing Jerusalem and interrupting the construction of the wall. In preparation for the onslaught, Nehemiah assembles a militia force from Jerusalem's inhabitants and exhorts it to "fight for your brothers, sons, daughters, wives, and homes" (4:8; cf. 1 Macc. 5:32 and passim).

The tension in the NTT between fraternity/kinship, on the one hand, and fidelity to (divine) law, on the other, brings to mind the notion of constitutional patriotism (*Verfassungspatriotismus*), which the political scientist Dolf Sternberger and the philosopher Jürgen Habermas formulated in the aftermath of the terror perpetrated by the Third Reich. According to this postnationalistic conception of citizenship, what must unite citizens of a state is their allegiance to a collectively ratified constitution, not culture, language, descent, kinship, or ethnicity. It's the constitution, not a primordial ethnic community, that is the object of identification, affections, and obligations.

Even though Sternberger formulated the concept in 1979, in honor of the thirtieth anniversary of the new West German constitution, the underlying notion can be found at work already in other times and places. As Sternberger himself pointed out, both Switzerland and the United States are ethnically diverse states (the former with four official languages) that celebrate, in annual civic rituals, the signing of formal declarations. (In the United States, it's the Declaration of Independence of 1776, and in Switzerland the Bundesbrief of 1291.) Habermas traces the origins of this concept beyond the social contract theories of Hobbes and Rousseau back to Aristotle's republican thought, without acknowledging that the concept is treated extensively in the Hebrew Bible.[13]

Constitutional patriotism, however, has serious limitations as an alternative to a historical or cultural basis of identification. Josef Joffe, publisher-editor of *Die Zeit*, observes that a legal document can hardly "deliver a reason for attachment to a particular country, let alone obligation to that state." Although Sternberger points to the example of the United States, American identity has commonly appealed to a collective experience in the past – liberation from monarchic oppression – to foster a sense of solidarity and mutual obligations (on this point, see the discussion of Whitaker's war sermon in Part III). "Constitutional patriotism is the interchangeable loyalty to rules that can be demanded by every liberal constitutional state. Affection, however, is the answer to the question: Why am I living under this law and not another?"[14]

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[13] On the origins of this concept, see Jan-Werner Müller, *Constitutional Patriotism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[14] Josef Joffe, "Deutsch und Stolz," *Die Zeit*, March 22, 2001. For other critiques, see Bernard Yack, "The Myth of the Civic Nation," *Critical Review*, 10 (1996), 193–211; Thomas Mertens, "Cosmopolitan and Citizenship: Kant Against Habermas," *European Journal of Philosophy*, 3 (1996), 328–347; David Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Joffe's observations with respect to history are perceptive. The law means little if it is not embedded in a shared past that the members of the community create through a collaborative effort of political imagination. Law requires a story; nomos needs narrative. Hence the title of Rogers Smith's superb study *Stories of Peoplehood*.[15] A people needs a past, and especially stories about that past. Without narration, there is no nation.

how does a text become sacred?

While the biblical scribes developed, with staggering sophistication, the notion of fidelity to a body of written law, they appear to have realized what the citizens of many countries today are still learning – namely, that when a constitution is not accompanied by a sense of kinship, it's empty and ineffective, and that the best way to foster a sense of kinship is through a narrative that preserves and honors the diverse stories of its members.

If it's difficult for a modern democratic constitution to inspire its citizens' affection and devotion, as Joffe pointed out, how much more so for a declaration of the singular deeds of a dead monarch or defunct dynasty? Consider the epilogue to the famous Code of Hammurabi:

Hammurabi, the king of righteousness, on whom Shamash has conferred right (or law) am I. My words are well considered; my deeds are not equaled; to bring low those that were high; to humble the proud, to expel insolence. If a succeeding ruler considers my words, which I have written in this my inscription, if he do not annul my law, nor corrupt my words, nor change my monument, then may Shamash lengthen that king's reign . . . .[16]

Although Hammurabi's laws are majestic in their formulation, and although they champion ideals of social justice, they were completely forgotten until modern historians rediscovered them among the ruins of ancient societies. Why so? They fell into oblivion because, like so many other monarchic display inscriptions from the ancient Near East, they are all about the king and his unparalleled achievements and status. The laws are embedded in a narrative, but that narrative is all about royal power. It's not the story of a larger people, as we find in the Bible. The audience it

[15] Rogers Smith, *Stories of Peoplehood: The Politics and Morals of Political Membership* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[16] *The Code of Hammurabi, King of Babylon*, trans. R. F. Harper (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1904), 43.

addresses is the community of (present and future) kings, not a national community.

Steven Grosby notes that this monarchic text, like so many others of its kind, "exists today as an objective symbolic configuration ... . It is not 'animated' by being constantly 'reactivated' in the minds of a number of individuals ... . It is not 'alive' by being part of the shared 'mental environment' of each of many individuals."[17] Even though Hammurabi's laws were exceptional in the ancient world for their wide reception and their potential for "activation," Grosby's observations about this text's inability to awaken and strengthen a corporate consciousness are to the point. Without being anchored in a people's common story, the laws failed to create, let alone sustain, a reading public that claimed fidelity to them and placed them at the center of its collective life.

But what about the countless cuneiform and hieroglyphic texts from the ancient Near East that claim to contain the very words of the gods or that were once deemed to be sacred themselves? Our knowledge of these texts today is due solely to the valiant efforts of archeologists to excavate them from layers of destruction and of philologists to decipher the dead languages in which they are written. Why is that so?

Reviewing a scholarly publication in the *Wall Street Journal*, Sarah Ruden notes that what really matters is not a text's claim to be holy but the its ability to convince a reading community that it is indeed holy:

No words were more self-consciously and thunderously "holy" than the curses inscribed on pharaohs' tombs as warnings, but these must merely have entertained the robbers who sacked every funerary hoard they could find. What's at issue isn't a writer's intention that a text be holy, or any authority's treatment of it as holy, but the broad assent that the text can win for its holiness.[18]

If a text manages to win a community's broad assent to its own claim to be holy, to contain the very "Word of God," and if the members of that community make the text the center of their familial and collective lives even in the absence of a king or state authority that ensures such broad and robust assent, then there must be something in those holy words that the members of the community deem relevant to their own concerns. And indeed the kinds of stories, laws, proverbs, prophecies, psalms, laments,

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[17] Steven Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality: Ancient and Modern* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 110.

[18] Sarah Ruden, review of *How the Bible Became Holy*, by Michael L. Satlow, *Wall Street Journal*, July 11, 2014.

and love poetry that we find in the biblical corpus bear directly on diverse matters of both communal and individual life.

One would be hard pressed to find a more dramatic illustration of "the broad assent that the text can win for its holiness" than the account in Nehemiah 8–10. After defeat and destruction, the inhabitants of Judah ("all the people") come together and express their longing for "the book of the law of Moses." Later, the nation's story is recounted in one of the longest prayers in the Bible, and, in response to the past portrayed in that prayer, all members of the community "join their kin" in a covenant to follow Yhwh's commandments. In these scenes, there is no king who looms above the crowd – only a scribe who has devoted himself to studying Yhwh's law and teaching it to the nation (see Ezra 7:10).[19]

A NORMATIVE PAST

Another question that has to be considered is authority. Hammurabi's laws are not legally binding or absolute; rather, they are one piece of a larger royal performance of power. By contrast, biblical law and its supporting narrative are about the activation of a national community. What must ultimately prevail, according to the dominant political theology articulated in our biblical texts, is the divine will as expressed in laws revealed to the nation (not the king) after it had been liberated from tyranny. Without memories of that liberation, generated and sustained by the collective imagination, the law loses it plausibility and authority. Owing to this intuition, biblical law is transmitted and interpreted in the framework of a narrative of national liberation, in contrast to the legal corpora collected and displayed by Mesopotamian kings.

Stretching from the creation of the world in Genesis to the destruction of Jerusalem in Kings, the biblical narrative establishes the veracity of the Torah's claims about itself – that the nation will suffer defeat and the loss of its homeland if it fails to abide by the Torah's instructions and implement its vision of a flourishing society. However, the narrative's raison d'être cannot be reduced to an attempt to construct a "normative past."[20]

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[19] On the ways in which Neh. 9 functions as a historical prologue to the pact in Neh. 10 (resembling the form of Hittite treaties), see Wright, *Rebuilding Identity*, 212–220.

[20] The discussion in this chapter is presented at greater length, and with special attention to the conditional and volitional character of the covenant, in Jacob L. Wright, "The *Raison d'Être* of the Biblical Covenant: Assessing Mendenhall's Emphasis on Kinship," *MAARAV*, 24 (forthcoming). On the concept of normative past, see Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006). While the

Its purpose is more ambitious – namely, to foster a sense of kinship and solidarity among the nation's members and to inspire affection for, and loyalty to, a god who liberated and blessed them with a homeland.

Beginning with the stories of two kingdoms that were once one, scribes, working across a span of centuries, created a narrative that now begins with the story of a family that evolved into a nation. That narrative existed and evolved for generations before it came to serve as a framework for Yhwh's instructions to the nation in the form of divine laws. Even if these laws are not coeval with the surrounding narrative, Yhwh is central to the latter, which, in its final forms, tells the story of a long and intimate relationship between him and his people. Antecedents to this narrative may have been nontheological, but the formation of the narrative, evolving from the combination and synthesis of older works, presupposes Yhwh's perspective.

As the covenant between Yhwh and Israel becomes ever more central to this narrative, the deity develops a more robust personality. This personality is on display from the very first chapters of Genesis, which portray Yhwh struggling with his creation in a series of trials and errors. He eventually decides to take a new route, working through an aged couple to bring a people into existence. History becomes the story of the relationship between this nation and its deity, and that relationship is conceived of as a love affair: Yhwh is the husband, Israel his wife, and the covenant their marriage contract. Hosea presents the restoration of this relationship after a divorce. The couple reunites, and this reunion is accompanied by a change in Yhwh's heart: he declares his intention to take her to a place of solitude and pursue her with tenderness. "Therefore, I will now allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her . . . . There she shall respond as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt" (Hos. 2:14–15).

Here and throughout the prophets, a future is imagined in which the nation and Yhwh return to the early, innocent, happy days of their life together. Those days exist only in the minds of a community

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question of authority is certainly central to the origins and evolution of the larger biblical narratives, and while Assmann's concept of normative past nicely captures the problems facing a community that no longer has a king/state of its own, the imagination of ideal pasts by biblical scribes (whether it be the time of the exodus and conquest or the days of the United Monarchy) grows out of an intuition that informs narrative constructions from both defeated peoples and powerful rulers: persuading a public to reinstitute something that (allegedly) once worked is easier than persuading it to try something completely new.

that imagines them, and inasmuch as the past is mythic, then the return to it is nothing less than the beginning.[21]

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[21] Although the biblical project is a thoroughly political-theological one, we must not lose sight of the fact that other writings that are consciously and thoroughly nontheological have made their way into the biblical corpus. The most obvious example is the book of Esther, which has nothing whatsoever to say about a divine presence. It portrays the Jewish people as a far-flung nation, inhabiting a massive international empire, yet still united by "their laws" (*dāt*), which are "different from those of all other peoples" (3:8); the role of the deity has been assumed fully by law. Efforts to domesticate the book by theologizing its message (e.g., Jonathan Grossman, *Esther: The Outer Narrative and the Hidden Meaning* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011]) have a long history. Alternative editions of the works, transmitted in Greek, feature repeated and lengthy prayers along with descriptions of other acts of piety.

RAHAB: AN ARCHETYPAL OUTSIDER

W hen Jericho's walls come tumbling down, the Israelite troops storm the city and annihilate every living thing, "both men and women, young and old as well as oxen, sheep, and donkeys." Yet there is one family whose lives they spare, that of a harlot named Rahab, and the reason they make an exception for her is that she had previously placed her life on the line for them.

In the days before, a pair of Israelite spies had embarked on a reconnaissance mission in Canaan and ended up in her house. When the king of Jericho found out, he demanded that Rahab deliver the men into his custody. Yet instead of complying with his demands, she concealed the spies on her roof and blatantly lied to the king. Her bold decision to ally herself with Israel imperiled her future and that of her family, but she was certain that doing otherwise posed a greater risk. When she sent the spies away in safety, she revealed to them her confidence in the power of their god. Convinced of the imminent demise of Canaan's kingdoms, she made them swear that they would rescue her and her entire family during the impending invasion.

Rahab is more than "a hooker with a heart of gold."[1] Indeed, her story is a poignant parable of wartime contributions and belonging: by assisting Israel's war effort, she secures protection and a prominent place in a new

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[1] Sometimes called "a tart with a heart," this stock character of irony is widely represented in literature, drama, and music. See the entry on the Art & Popular Culture website: www .artandpopularculture.com/Hooker_with_a_heart_of_gold. In *God's Leading Lady* (New York: Berkley Books, 2002), T. D. Jakes suggests that Rahab "may be the original hooker with the heart of gold" (p. 127).

society. As a prostitute, she moves from the margins of a Canaanite city-state to the center of the Israelite nation. The narrator marks the social transition in spatial terms: Her house is located "on the outer side of the city wall, and in the wall she resided." She occupies a space between the inhabitants of Jericho and those on the city's horizon. At the moment the wall falls, she abandons the fringes of this Canaanite city and moves to "the midst of Israel," where "she lives until the present day."

This is a story of hope and survival. After hearing about the power of Israel's god, Rahab sees the writing on the wall. Yet instead of consigning herself to the fate of those around her, she finds a way to preserve her life and the lives of her family. The plan she adopts involves considerable risk, but also the promise of a new future. Recognizing the imminent demise of the status quo in Canaan, she casts her lot with the people of Israel and ends up playing a pivotal role in the history of this novel nation. Her actions presage the hope that inspires the prophets, who respond to the devastation of their societies by discerning a new dawn on the horizon.[2]

Recounted in the first chapters of Joshua, the Rahab story provides the yardstick for evaluating the actions of others in the book. Thus, whereas Rahab bravely risks her life, the Gibeonites (identified as an indigenous population from Canaan) procure a place "in the midst of Israel" by performing a contemptible act of subterfuge. As outsiders in relation to the covenant, both enter the national fold by means of a pact guaranteeing special protection. But in the case of the Gibeonites, the pact is later broken when the nation's first king pursues a program of genocide against this population.

The Rahab story appears on the seams between the Torah and the Former Prophets, which it introduces. In this strategic position, it treats issues of national identity and belonging in an indirect and safe manner insofar as its protagonist doesn't represent a particular population (in the way that, for example, Esau represents the Edomites). We will see that Rahab's purpose is broader: she is the archetype of the outsider who becomes an insider, and the authors of her story wanted their readers to

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[2] We will see that Rahab's story has often been read in terms of *faith*, yet perhaps a better lens is *hope*, which is also an alternative meaning for the "thread/cord" (*tiqwāh*) that Rahab hangs in her window. Hope is in many ways a biblical invention and a Jewish gift to human civilization ("somewhere over the rainbow . . . "), and it stands in stark contrast to the tragic vision that has long dominated cultural productions from East to West; see Alan Mittelman, *Hope in a Democratic Age: Philosophy, Religion, and Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

pay close attention to both her words and her deeds as she negotiated the terms of her survival.

In what follows, we begin, in Chapter 7, by comparing Christian and Jewish interpretation of the Rahab story. Then, in Chapter 8, we investigate the story's origins and its purpose in the wider biblical narrative. Finally, in Chapter 9, we turn our attention to the Gibeonites and witness how the biblical memories and the archeological data related to this group shed light on both the figure of Rahab and the account of the conquest that her story inaugurates.

7

Between Faith and Works

Rahab has a long and complex afterlife in the history of biblical interpretation. For the rabbis, she represents the prototypical "righteous proselyte" who, despite her Canaanite descent and fame as a *fille de joie*, becomes a full member of Israel. For the first Christian interpreters, her story illustrates foundational theological principles, such as the relationship between faith and works.

These differing approaches reflect an abiding tension between Christian and Jewish approaches to the Bible, both ancient and modern. Because that tension bears directly on our central concern with "war and national identity," we will compare a number of early readings of the biblical account. In doing so, we will deepen our appreciation of the ideals, ethos, and concerns that shaped biblical war commemoration as a politico-theological discourse, as well as the competing understandings of "belonging" in early Jewish and Christian communities.

THREE EARLY CHRISTIAN INTERPRETERS

Next to Joshua, who was seen as a prefiguration of Jesus, Rahab stands out as one of the leading biblical personalities in the imagination of early Christian interpreters.[3] The Gospel of Matthew even identifies her as an ancestress of Jesus. A gentile saved from the divine judgment poured out on a pagan city, she embodies central themes in the theology of the early church.

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[3] On Joshua in the early Christian imagination, see Zev Farber, *Images of Joshua in the Bible and Their Reception* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016).

Recently, a number of biblical scholars have ended this long-standing veneration of Rahab. Viewing her now as a *collaboratrice* who joins forces with colonizers, these scholars consciously adopt the perspective of indigenous peoples – in Palestine, New Zealand, South Africa, North America, and other places. For example, Lori Rowlett compares the biblical account to Disney's *Pocahontas* and subjects it to a penetrating postcolonial critique.[4]

Rahab's recent ill repute represents, to be sure, a drastic departure from the high honor that she has enjoyed since the emergence of Christianity. To begin this chapter, we examine several of the earliest Christian texts, showing how they interpret Jewish scriptures in line with a new theological program. I have confined the discussion to these works because they are the earliest ones to refer to this biblical figure, they feature numerous points of contact, and they illustrate the potential of biblical war commemoration for Christian theological construction.[5]

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[4] Lori L. Rowlett, *Joshua and the Rhetoric of Violence: A New Historicist Analysis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); Rowlett, "Disney's Pocahontas and Joshua's Rahab in Postcolonial Perspective" in George Aichele (ed.), *Culture, Entertainment and the Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 66–75. See also Mitri Raheb, "Jericho zuerst" in Dorothee Sölle (ed.), *Für Gerechtigkeit streiten: Theologie im Alltag einer bedrohten Welt* (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser, 1994), 174–179; Viola Raheb, "Ringen mit und um Rahab: Bibelarbeit zu Rahab (Jos 2,1–24; 6,17.22–25)" in Sonja Angelika Strube (ed.), *Fremde Frauen* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2010), 60–67; Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2000); Dube, "Rahab Says Hello to Judith: A Decolonizing Feminist Reading" in Fernando Segovia (ed.), *Toward a New Heaven and a New Earth: Essays in Honor of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2003), 142–158; Dube, "Rahab is Hanging Out a Red Ribbon: One African Woman's Perspective on the Future of Feminist New Testament Scholarship" in Kathleen Wicker (ed.), *Feminist New Testament Studies: Global and Future Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 177–202; Judith E. McKinlay, *Reframing Her: Biblical Women in Postcolonial Focus* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2004), 37–56; Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, "Postcolonial Perspectives on Premonarchic Women" in Robert B. Coote and Norman K. Gottwald (eds.), *To Break Every Yoke: Essays in Honor of Marvin L. Chaney* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2007), 188–199; Marcella M. Althaus-Reid, "Searching for a Queer Sophia-Wisdom: The Post-Colonial Rahab" in Lisa Isherwood (ed.), *Patriarchs, Prophets and Other Villians* (London: Equinox, 2007), 128–140; Suzanne Scholz, "Convert, Prostitute, or Traitor? Rahab as the Anti-Matriarch in Biblical Interpretations" in Mishael Caspi and John Greene (eds.), *In the Arms of Biblical Women* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2013), 153–186.

[5] See A. T. Hanson, "Rahab the Harlot in Early Christian Tradition," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 1 (1978), 53–60. Evidence of the possible genetic influences includes the emphasis on hospitality or (in 1 Clement and James) the point that Rahab sent the spies in the opposite direction from that of the king's men.

FIRST EPISTLE OF CLEMENT

Written to the church at Corinth in the wake of a communal crisis, the First Epistle of Clement is one of the earliest Christian writings and is likely older than a number the New Testament books. The lengthy work refers extensively to the Jewish scriptures as it seeks to demonstrate "how from generation to generation the Master hath given a place of repentance unto them that desire to turn to Him" (7:5).[6] The twelfth chapter rehearses the biblical account of Rahab, quoted here in the elegant translation from 1869 by J. B. Lightfoot:

For her faith and hospitality Rahab the harlot was saved. For when the spies were sent forth unto Jericho by Joshua the son of Nun, the king of the land perceived that they were come to spy out his country, and sent forth men to seize them, that being seized they might be put to death. So the hospitable Rahab received them and hid them in the upper chamber under the flax stalks. And when the messengers of the king came near and said, *The spies of our land entered in unto thee: bring them forth, for the king so ordereth:* then she answered, *The men truly, whom ye seek, entered in unto me, but they departed forthwith and are sojourning on the way;* and she pointed out to them the opposite road. And she said unto the men, *Of a surety I perceive that the Lord your God delivereth this city unto you; for the fear and the dread of you is fallen upon the inhabitants thereof. When therefore it shall come to pass that ye take it, save me and the house of my father.* And they said unto her, *It shall be even so as thou hast spoken unto us. Whensoever therefore thou perceivest that we are coming, thou shalt gather all thy folk beneath thy roof and they shall be saved; for as many as shall be found without the house shall perish.* And moreover they gave her a sign, that she should hang out from her house a scarlet thread, thereby showing beforehand that through the blood of the Lord there shall be redemption unto all them that believe and hope on God. Ye see, dearly beloved, not only faith, but prophecy, is found in the woman.[7]

While Clement's rendering hews closely to the original story, it departs from it in several telling ways. His larger purpose is to explain why "Rahab the harlot was saved." The salvation he envisions, however, is far removed from – and a theologically rarefied form of – the survival of Rahab's clan among the people of Israel in the territory that they conquer. While Clement begins with the biblical story, he interprets the deliverance in the framework of a distinctively Christian soteriology, which we can observe *in statu nascendi* in the writings of the early church.

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[6] See Donald Alfred Hager, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome* (Leiden: Brill, 1973).

[7] J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Clement of Rome* (London: Macmillan, 1869), 60.

Clement begins by declaring that Rahab was saved first by "faith/belief" (*pistis*). While central to Christian writings, a doctrine of salvific faith, as we will see, is foreign to the account in Joshua – both in its older Hebrew form and in the Greek translations undertaken by Jewish scholars in the Greco-Roman period.[8]

But Rahab wasn't saved by faith alone according to Clement; she had also demonstrated exceptional "love of strangers" (*philoxenia*). The church father is referring here not to Rahab's profession but to a set of social expectations relating to the treatment of strangers and guests that sociologists study under the rubric of "hospitality." Practiced widely throughout ancient Mediterranean societies, hospitality is central to the moral vision of both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, and an important theme of Clement's Epistle.[9] When the king of Jericho learns about the spies at Rahab's home, he sends soldiers to seize and execute them. It's at this point that "the hospitable Rahab" receives the men and hides them.

The scarlet cord that Rahab displays in her window, in keeping with the spies' instructions, carries special significance as a prophetic "sign" in Clement's interpretation. The color signifies "that through the blood of the Lord there shall be redemption unto all them that believe and hope on God." The reference to "hope" here is noteworthy, as it's closely related semantically to the Hebrew word for cord (*tiqwāh*). This clue and others suggest that Clement may have been influenced by early Jewish interpretation, and a number of leading nineteenth-century scholars even thought that he was born Jewish.

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[8] On the concept of faith in the early church, and the shift from trust and faithfulness to belief in doctrines, see Teresa Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith:* Pistis *and* Fides *in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). On a similar move to *fides qua* in medieval Judaism (from "believe in" to "believe that"), see Menachem Kellner, *Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought: From Maimonides to Abravanel* (New York: Oxford, 1986); Kellner, *Must a Jew Believe Anything?*, 2nd ed. (London: Littman, 2006).

[9] Thus, Abraham receives a son in his old age as a reward for "his faith and hospitality" (10:7), and Lot is saved from Sodom because he displays "hospitality and godliness" (11:1). Our study of "passages to peace" in Chapter 1 demonstrated how the biblical scribes used hospitality as the basis for negotiating relations with neighboring peoples. The contemporary study of hospitality takes its point of departure from the research of the anthropologist and hispanicist Julian Pitt-Rivers in the mid-twentieth century. On hospitality in the social world of the ancient Mediterranean, see Andrew E. Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels: Early Christian Hospitality in Its Mediterranean Setting* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005).

LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

Alongside Clement, two writings from the New Testament construct memories of Rahab to illustrate the efficacy of faith.[10] The eleventh chapter of the Letter to the Hebrews includes Rahab in a monumental tribute to prominent figures from the Jewish scriptures who, "by faith" (*pistei*), demonstrated that "God had provided something better for us" (11:40). The intended audience consists of those who "look to Jesus" as "the founder and perfecter of our faith" (12:2). The author declares that "by faith, Rahab the harlot did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had received the spies in peace" (11:31). As in Clement's letter, faith is tethered to hospitality, even if the term *philoxenia* doesn't appear here.

In the preceding verse, we are told that "by faith, the walls of Jericho fell after the people marched around them for seven days." In keeping with the same line of reasoning, Rahab's reception of the spies testifies to her faith inasmuch as the destruction of Jericho was still a future event. For faith, according to the proem of the pericope, is "the confidence of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (11:1).[11]

The author of this account commemorates Rahab's deeds, along with others from Israel's past, in an effort to show that, despite appearances, all were actually seeking "a heavenly country" or "city that God has prepared for them." In this way, the author denationalizes Israel's heroes and transforms them into prototypes of a new transnational "people of God" (11:25). Like so many others, this early Christian writing reorients the thoroughly political complexion of the Jewish scriptures in the direction of a de-territorialized, denationalized, eschatological future. Whereas the book of Joshua depicts a war fought by the people of Israel, whom Rahab joins in solidarity, the book of Hebrews sees in Rahab's story an anticipation of the impending divine judgment upon the unrighteous. Because of

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[10] The two New Testament writings discussed here, along with Clement, espouse ideas on faith that have been controversial in Christian theology (and later esp. in Protestantism) due to their putative proximity to "Jewish works-righteousness." This fact imparts to them an added value for our study, since even they, as we shall see, are far removed from the political dimensions of the biblical account and Jewish interpretations thereof. For a classic comparison of these three works, see Benjamin W. Bacon, "The Doctrine of Faith in Hebrews, James, and Clement of Rome," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 19 (1900), 12–21.

[11] Compare the final lines (regarding hope and Rahab's prophetic gift) in the text of 1 Clement cited in the preceding section.

her faith, we are told, she did not perish with "those who were disobedient." What was once national and political is now universal and ethical.

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

The Epistle of James is a sapiential treatise, written in exquisite Greek, that may have been composed for, and circulated among, "Jewish-Christian" communities in Palestine. One section treats the subject of faith, and it uses the example of Rahab to establish the importance of "works" against those who were apparently claiming that faith is all one needs: "You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. Was not Rahab the harlot justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by another road?" (2:24–25). As with 1 Clement and Hebrews, this early Christian writing emphasizes Rahab's hospitality ("she welcomed the messengers").

That the author appeals to the story of Rahab may be because it had already served as an important prooftext in theological debates. Rahab's profession of Yhwh's power is one of the lengthiest and most forceful in the Hebrew Bible, as we will see later in this chapter. By drawing on the account, writers in the early church could buttress a soteriology that prioritized belief and confessions of faith. Perhaps responding to the antinomianism inherent in Paul's theology of faith, the Epistle of James seizes on the account in order to argue, a fortiori, that even it attributes Rahab's rescue to her "works" rather than her bold and elaborate asseveration.

The author of James proceeds to translate these facts into Christian theological categories: "a person is justified by works rather than faith alone." Belief or creeds are not enough: "You believe that God is one? Good for you! Even the demons believe in fear and trembling" (2:19). This argument comes remarkably close to Rahab's declaration that "dread of you has fallen on us, and all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before you, for we have heard how Yhwh dried up the waters of the Sea of Reeds . . . " (Josh. 2:9). As I will show, this declaration is not "a confession of faith," but rather an acknowledgment of indisputable facts, without any redemptive value in and of itself.

CHRISTIANS AS READERS OF THE JEWISH SCRIPTURES

The Jewish scriptures assumed very different meanings, as they were read and interpreted in communities whose social constitution and collective

concerns differed in many ways from the communities that produced them. In the case of Rahab, writers in the early church pressed her story into the service of sophisticated debates on soteriology. What gets obfuscated in these debates is the extent to which the account in Joshua relates to membership of the political community of Israel.[12]

The Christian writings take for granted that a Canaanite could join the "people of God." Given the church's multiethnic constellation, Rahab's Gentile identity undoubtedly predestined her to a long afterlife in Christian literature.[13] Yet the three interpreters we looked at are not interested in how this figure, as an archetypal alien, secured membership among the people of Israel by demonstrating allegiance to the nation during a momentous war effort. Instead, they use her story to teach ideals of community (such as hospitality) and to address theological matters (such as sin, divine judgment on the disobedient, justification, and eternal salvation) that transcend national boundaries. Something is thus not only lost but also gained in their adaptation: as these thinkers engaged in their own project of peoplehood, a paradigmatic case of war commemoration from the Jewish scriptures proved to be a powerful theological framework for articulating fundamental doctrines and addressing concerns that faced the church as an emerging *transnational* community of faith.

What I wish to get at in the present study is nothing less than the raison d'être of the Jewish scriptures. According to a leading trajectory of critical scholarship, the Hebrew Bible reflects the emergence of a religious or cultic community of "Yahwists" from the ashes of national defeat. Following Wellhausen, many scholars distinguish between a national existence during the time of the monarchy, on one side, and nonnational religious community living under foreign imperial hegemony, on the other (see the Introduction to the present volume). But this division is severely undermined by the evidence that the battlefield persists in the final strata of the Hebrew Bible (in stark contrast to the New Testament) as a preferred narrative space. Memories of war and martial conflict course through the veins of these writings because they are crafted for a community with a political and territorial orientation.

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[12] In chapter 11 of *David, King of Israel*, I treat a similar move in the reception history of the figure of Caleb among Christians and Muslims.

[13] Her identity as a Gentile may have been one of the reasons for her inclusion in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus (Matt. 1:5). The authors seem to have identified these women (Tamar, Ruth, the wife of Uriah, and Rahab) as Gentiles.

Although widely viewed, especially by its Christian interpreters, as scripture for an emerging religious sect, the Hebrew Bible has, I maintain, a much more ambitious agenda, serving as the blueprint for a new kind of nationhood. The New Testament authors adopted and adapted this blueprint in keeping with their own interest in creating a spiritual community of faith. To state the difference simply: The Hebrew Bible is a project of creating one nation, while the New Testament is a project of creating a community whose members hail from all nations. Likewise, the Hebrew Bible is about creating an identity that is capable of withstanding national defeat, while the New Testament is about creating an identity capable of withstanding Jesus's death and delayed return.

The literary corpus we know today as the Hebrew Bible is ultimately a rabbinic project. The Jewish sages from the first centuries of the Common Era were the ones who defined the contours of this corpus by excluding such works as 1 and 2 Maccabees.[14] But even if the rabbis had not played a crucial role in the shaping of the Hebrew scriptures, they stand in more direct continuity than the New Testament writers with the scribes who created this corpus. Admittedly, the destruction of the temple marks a traumatic cultural rupture with which rabbinic Judaism had to come to terms in various ways. Yet this rupture pales in comparison with the radical departure from the Hebrew Bible represented by the worship of Christ. For the early church, the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth constitutes the turning point in history, and the New Testament writings owe their existence in large part to the hermeneutical struggle with the problems, and prospects, presented by this discontinuity with the Jewish scriptures.

JOSEPHUS

A good candidate for comparison with early Christian readers is the *Antiquities* of the Jewish priest, military commander, and historian, Flavius Josephus. His pleonastic retelling of the account, which overlaps on many points with rabbinic interpretations, underscores the political nature of the negotiations between Rahab and the spies.[15]

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[14] The fundamental way in which 1 Maccabees departs from the ethos articulated in this corpus is treated in Jacob L. Wright, "Making a Name for Oneself: Martial Valor, Heroic Death, and Procreation in the Hebrew Bible," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 36 (2011), 131–162.

[15] See Christopher Begg, "The Rahab Story in Josephus," *Liber Annuus*, 55 (2005), 113–130, and the response to Begg's essay by G. J. Swart, "Rahab and Esther in Josephus: An Intertextual Approach," *Acta Patristica and Byzantina*, 17 (2006), 50–65.

Following the lead of the biblical account, Josephus explicitly links Rahab's honored place in Israel to the *memory* of her wartime contributions. In a particularly prolix passage (even by Josephus's standards), Rahab pleads that as soon as the nation conquers the land, the spies *remember* the danger she had undergone for their sakes. If the king had caught her, he would have executed both her and her family. As a reward for her bravery, she demands that they swear to preserve her and her family's lives as soon as they have finished conquering Canaan. The spies agree to reward her "not only in words, but in deeds [*ergoi*]."

But when the tumult was over, Rahab brought the men down, and desired them as soon as they should have obtained possession of the land of Canaan, when it would be in their power to make her amends for her preservation of them, to remember what danger she had undergone for their sakes; for that if she had been caught concealing them, she could not have escaped a terrible destruction, she and all her family with her, and so bid them go home; and desired them to swear to her to preserve her and her family when they should take the city, and destroy all its inhabitants, as they had decreed to do; for so far she said she had been assured by those Divine miracles of which she had been informed. So these spies acknowledged that they owed her thanks for what she had done already, and withal swore to requite her kindness, not only in words, but in deeds.[16]

The spies instruct Rahab to keep her family and possessions in her house during the battle, and to mark her residence with scarlet threads so that the soldiers could more easily identify it; if she failed to do so, they would be relieved of their obligations. Later, Joshua communicates to the high priest and senate (*gerousia*) what the spies had sworn to Rahab, and these organs of government in turn officially approve the oath.

Instead of stripping the narrative of its martial materiality and reducing it to an illustration of a timeless theological principle, Josephus preserves its national character. While he shadows the biblical *Vorlage*, he also accentuates its political features. For example, he highlights the formal-legal qualities of the pact and its *quid pro quo* rationale.[17] In recounting the battle of Jericho, he claims that Joshua formally avowed his gratitude to Rahab, granted her landholdings, "and held her in high esteem ever afterwards." These details embellish the biblical depiction and anticipate

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[16] Josephus, *Ant.* 5.1.5–15, in the translation by William Whiston (1737).

[17] Here, Josephus seems to have in view a legal question found in later rabbinic interpretation – namely, that Rahab saved only two men but demands that her entire family be rescued, which makes the deal lopsided. In response, Josephus shows that it was a quid pro quo arrangement inasmuch as Rahab jeopardized the lives of her entire family, whom the king would have executed along with Rahab.

later rabbinic legends discussed in the following section. The conferral of property rights is, nevertheless, consonant with the biblical authors' concern to show how, after the conquest, Joshua equitably distributed the land among all members of the nation, and what warrants the embellishment is the statement in the biblical account that Rahab "has continued to dwell in the midst of Israel until this day" (Josh. 6:25).

Josephus's rendering of Rahab's eloquent utterance about Israel's god is especially telling. The historian has reduced a speech, which encompasses three long verses in the biblical account, to a brief line that explains Rahab's confidence in Israel's victory: " . . . for she knew all [what would happen] because she had been instructed by signs [*sēmeiois*] of God." Reminiscent of the claims in later Christian and Jewish literature that Rahab possessed the gift of prophecy, this little statement in Josephus's retelling has fully replaced Rahab's eloquent declaration in the biblical text, with its climatic peroration: "For Yhwh your god, he is god in the heavens above and on the earth below!" (Josh. 2:11).

The fact that Josephus downplays the significance of Rahab's pronouncements about Israel's god, and empties them of any independent merit, is undoubtedly related to the great space he devotes to depicting how this woman risked her life, and that of her entire family, by hiding the spies. What justifies the honored place she and her family enjoy in Israel's national territory and its collective history are not her *words* but rather her *works*.[18]

RAHAB AND THE RABBIS

Rabbinic interpretation elicits sympathy for Rahab by maintaining that she had been forced into a life of sex trafficking as a child. The proof for this surprising claim is that she had heard the news about the Egyptians' demise, which happened forty years earlier. At that time, they surmise, she must have been at least ten years of age, and now at fifty, she was still working as a prostitute. She owed her enduring career to her extraordinary beauty. (The rabbis counted her among the four most beautiful women who ever lived, the others being the matriarch Sarah, David's wife Abigail, and Queen Esther.) Rahab's beauty was so legendary that simply repeating her name twice would immediately bring sexual

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[18] With respect to the relationship between war commemoration and the theological discourse on faith and works, it's worth noting that the *Iliad* and a host of other Greek texts use the term "works" (*ergoi*) to describe valorous deeds on the battlefield.

release.[19] The spies seek her out because her fame had spread far and wide. Since every minister and prince visited her, she was better informed than anyone else. Yet Yhwh's fame had also spread throughout the land and, despite her extraordinary beauty, the men of the land had lost their virility along with their courage upon hearing of his extraordinary might.[20]

The rabbis regarded Rahab's utterance as the consummate affirmation of the power of Israel's god by a Gentile, outdoing any other across the entire span of sacred scripture. Because she acknowledges the presence of their deity both in heaven and on the earth, they deemed Rahab's statement to be even more radical than the profession by the Aramean general Naaman in the book of Kings: "Now I know that there is no god in all the earth except in Israel" (2 Kings 5:15).

Few contemporary biblical scholars would agree with the ancient sages on this point, and rightly so: the words of Naaman constitute one of the most sweeping monotheistic statements in the entire Bible, going far beyond Rahab's monolatrous avowal. Yet the rabbis gave pride of place to Rahab instead of Naaman, and their reason for doing so was that this foreign general, while revering their god, was not interested in becoming a member of their people. The biblical account portrays him importing soil from Eretz Israel and placing it under the altar he builds to Yhwh. This religious reverence, even if it is exclusive to Israel's god, sufficed neither for the biblical writers nor the rabbis. One needed to make a resolute and unswerving commitment to throw his or her lot in with the people of Israel.[21] Such is what Rahab does. By hiding the spies, she risks her life and

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[19] See the exchange between Rav Nachman and Rav Isaac in *b. Meg.* 15a. On the nonprudish character of Jewish and Muslim sacred writings, in contrast to their Christian counterparts, see Ze'ev Maghen, "Dancing in Chains: The Baffling Coexistence of Legalism and Exuberance in Judaic and Islamic Tradition" in Jonathan Jacobs (ed.), *Judaic Sources and Western Thought: Jerusalem's Enduring Presence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 217–237.

[20] See n. 29 below for the scriptural formulation that informs this reading. On Rahab in early Jewish literature, see Judith Baskin, "The Rabbinic Transformations of Rahab the Harlot," *Notre Dame English Journal*, 11 (1979), 141–157; Amy H. C. Robertson, "Rahab and Her Interpreters" in Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Rindge, and Jacqueline Lapsley (eds.), *The Women's Bible Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 109–112; and Tamar Kadari, "Rahab: Midrash and Aggadah," *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*, February 27, 2009, Jewish Women's Archive, https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/rahab-midrash-and-aggadah.

[21] The biblical authors satirize Naaman. An altar must be built on Israel's soil, if not also in Jerusalem, yet Naaman tries to have the best of both worlds by bringing soil from the land of Israel to his own country. For the issue of unclean land and altar, see the discussion of Josh. 22 in Chapter 5. With respect to rabbinic interpretation, the *Mekilta* identifies

physically demonstrated her allegiance to this nation. Moreover, she performs this action at an uncertain time, when the Israelites had yet to win a battle against Canaan's superior forces and superbly fortified cities.

The rabbis interpreted the concluding statement – "she has continued to dwell in the midst of Israel until this day" (Josh. 6:25) – to mean that she converted and became a "righteous proselyte" (*gēr ṣedeq*), with most, if not all, the rights and obligations of Jews by birth.[22] Rahab is not mentioned elsewhere in scripture, yet the Jewish sages used midrash to mine the biblical genealogies for traces of her descendants. In the process, they "discovered" that she is the ancestress of Israelite priests and prophets (including Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Huldah), and that she even became Joshua's wife.[23] In this way, they eliminated any doubt that the people of Israel fully embraced her in their fold.

CONVERSION AND NATURALIZATION

Whereas Rahab's identity as a Gentile gave her an advantage in Christian sources, it was naturally a problem for Jewish interpreters. Membership of Israel was decided primarily by descent. Although this criterion may seem chauvinistic, what gave rise to it was not racial prejudice but rather the perception that intermarriage severely undermined the effort to create a form of peoplehood that could survive the loss of statehood. As long as one could take for granted the persistence of a powerful territorial state, intermarriage would not pose much of a problem and actually might benefit political alliances. But after imperial armies erased the nation's territorial borders, one had to *do* something to be a Jew. Enculturation of the nation's members in Israel's collective memories – which fostered the formation of the biblical corpus – now assumed an unprecedented role in identity formation. And given the role of parents in enculturation and education, matters surrounding marriage took on a new importance.

Naaman as a *gēr ṣedeq* who outranks Jethro (*Mek. Rab. Ish.*, Amalek 1), but the Talmud (*b. Giṭ.* 57a) denies this status and designates him as a *gēr tôshāv* ("resident alien").

[22] *p. Ber.* 4.4; *b. Zeb.* 116a–b; *b. Meg.* 14b; *Num. Rab.* 8.9; *Sipre Num.* 78; *Sipre Zuta* on Num. 10:28; *Ruth Rab.* 2.1; *Eccl. Rab.* 5.6, 8.10.

[23] Her marriage to Joshua is likely a later tradition based on the earlier connection to Huldah (see *b. Meg.* 14b). Similarly, the genealogy of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew presents her and a figure named Salmon as the parents of Boaz (who produces the next descendant with Ruth); the divergent spelling of her name has been used historically, yet unjustifiably, to dispute this reading.

Tackling the problem of intermarriage, the postexilic Judean leader Nehemiah observed that the children of these mixed unions no longer "knew how to speak Judean/Jewish" (Neh. 13:24). As an antidote to this problem of "cultural literacy," Jewish communities enacted strict measures against intermarriage.[24] In Greco-Roman times, Jewish identity came to be defined legally by birth, and later specifically birth from a Jewish woman (i.e., matrilineal descent). All these developments were ultimately elicited and sustained by a realization that procreation and education were the most reliable means of fostering the growth of the Jewish people.

But what about non-Jews who desire to enter the national fold? The rabbis responded to this question by creating a ritual for conversion, and when they did, they studied the lives of such biblical figures as Jethro, Ruth, and Rahab.[25] Of course, the biblical accounts do not depict these figures converting to a religion such as "Yahwism."[26] When the ancient sages spoke of conversion, they did not mean an assent of faith or confession of belief followed by baptism, as in Christianity. True, they stipulated that the convert has to testify with a verbal declaration and be immersed in water, but the procedure as a whole is more reminiscent of what we today call "naturalization" – the process by which one becomes a member of a political community.[27]

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[24] The expression was coined by E. D. Hirsch, Jr., in *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987). Matrilineal descent is not biblical (but see Ezra 10); it appears to have emerged among the Tannaim, through the influence of Roman law, and at a time of social upheaval. Matrilineal descent is, after all, a more practicable criterion, since one cannot always be sure who the father is, especially in times of turmoil. On the subject, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

[25] On the origins of conversion in the Hellenistic period, see Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*. Some Hellenistic Jewish writings (e.g., Jubilees) deny the option of conversion; see Christine E. Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Matthew Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion: Genealogy, Circumcision, and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). On conversion in rabbinic sources, see Moshe Lavee, *The Rabbinic Conversion of Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

[26] It doubtful that "Yahwism" has ever existed outside the minds of modern academics and corresponds to a self-conscious community from antiquity.

[27] In *Transforming Identity: The Ritual Transition from Jew to Gentile; Structure and Meaning* (New York: Continuum, 2007), Avi Sagi and Zvi Zohar treat the question of whether and how an individual can become a member of the Jewish people without religious conversion.

The declaration that the Jewish convert makes is much more akin to the oaths of loyalty pronounced by citizens of nation-states than to the creeds cited by members of transnational communities of faith, whether it be the Christian church or the Muslim *ummah*. The convert, like the naturalized citizen, takes upon him- or herself the obligation to abide fully by a code of laws. It also became customary by the first century CE to require male converts to undergo circumcision. This fleshly ritual expresses the principle that one becomes a member of the people in a physical sense, in keeping with Israel's character as primarily a political, not cultic, community.

The discontinuity between the biblical accounts of outsiders joining Israel, on the one hand, and the rabbis' approach to conversion, on the other, pivots on the issue of land and location. Rahab, Jethro, and Ruth not only utter unambiguous statements about Israel's god but also, and more decisively, join themselves to the people of Israel in their national territory. Remember that Naaman, in contrast to these respectable figures, stays in his country and builds there an altar to Yhwh on soil imported from the land of Israel.

Rabbinic Judaism charts a new course. Living in an age when the Jewish people no longer enjoyed political sovereignty, and when many of its members had been exiled from their homeland, the rabbis sought a means to establish belonging in their communities without requiring residence in the territories that the nation had long inhabited. By omitting the criterion of territorial residence, the sages did not mean to dismiss the importance of place in the construction of Jewish identity. Indeed, their prayers and hopes remained resolutely fixed on a return to Zion. But in the meantime, they adopted and expanded a core tenet of biblical nationhood: the possibility of being a people even when many of the communities constituting this people did not inhabit, let alone exercise sovereignty over, its national homeland.

For these reasons, Ruth's statement, not Rahab's, came to be recognized as the quintessential expression of the Jewish convert. Naomi repeatedly exhorts Ruth and her sister to go back to their people and gods in Moab. But whereas her sister takes leave of Naomi, Ruth "cleaves" to her and utters the declaration of allegiance that we already considered in Chapter 6:

Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you. For where you go, I will go. Where you stay, I will stay. Your people shall be my people, and your god my god. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus and more may Yhwh do to me if anything but death parts me from you. Ruth 1:16–17

Ruth's declaration expresses her determination to make Naomi's people and god her own, and to follow her wherever she goes. Naomi's wanderings lead the two back to the land of Judah, but because the declaration leaves the destination open, it lent itself easily to the project of peoplehood that the rabbis inherited from their biblical predecessors and modified for the Jewish diaspora.

THE REPENTANT RAHAB

In contrast to Ruth, Rahab served as an illustration of the power of repentance for the rabbis. According to their expositions, she belonged to a people about whom it was written, "You shall not save even one soul alive" (Deut. 20:16), but because she "brought herself near," the deity also "brought her near." If an exception was made in the case of this Canaanite, "how much more will the Holy One be receptive to Israel, his beloved people, when they act in accordance with his will?"[28]

Although Rahab's occupation as a harlot likely wouldn't have been a cause for consternation among the earliest biblical readers, it began to elicit opprobrium in a culture that had been shaped by the spread of Hellenism. The rabbis were confident that Rahab relinquished her life of harlotry once she became a member of Israel, even if this life was what had brought her to Israel in the first place. She knew that the tidings of Israel's victories had zapped the Canaanites' strength because she had personally witnessed the shriveling effect of Israel's triumphs on their manhood.[29] After forty years of prostitution, she not only repented but also demonstrated her solidarity with Israel by hiding the spies. As a reward for her deeds, she was welcomed among the people of Israel and went on to become, as noted, the ancestress of many of the most important figures in the nation's history.

Whereas prostitution is never proscribed in biblical law, later generations, from the Greco-Roman period and thereafter, condemned this profession, suggesting that she was nothing other than an innkeeper or

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[28] *Sipre Num.* 78, *Sipre Zuta* on Num 10:28. On repentance in biblical and rabbinic Judaism, see David A. Lambert, *How Repentance Became Biblical* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[29] See *b. Zeb.* 116a-b; *Pesiq. R.* 40.3–4; *Pesiq. Rab. Kah.* 13.4. As the rabbis point out, Rahab's statement in Joshua 2:11 is literally "no longer did a spirit *rise in a man* because of you" (emphasis added), which is more specific than the similar statement in 5:1 ("there was no spirit in them").

the proprietress of a tavern.[30] However, in the ancient Near East, as in the American Old West, taverns and inns were establishments in which men not only could find a meal and bed but also form political alliances and engage in sexual activity.[31] In reporting that the men went to the house/inn of a prostitute and "slept there," the narrator leaves it open whether the men had intercourse with Rahab. The authors of the account, who were neither prude nor prurient, may simply not have been interested in the question: the spies enter the house of a prostitute because it promises to be a place where news circulates, and they are interested in learning about the psychological condition of the land's inhabitants, not the physical condition of its fortifications.[32]

Alternatively, the authors of the account may have intended to cast Israelite men in an unfavorable light. According to this option, the story lampoons the spies by presenting them as less honorable than Rahab: upon arriving in Jericho, the men head immediately to a house of pleasure, yet its proprietress turns out to have only one thing on her mind – the power of Israel's god and the impending invasion of Canaan.[33]

Josephus notably avoids the use of "harlot" when describing Rahab. (He has the spies less interested in the enemy's psychological condition than in inspecting the ramparts and fortifications; when the sun goes down, they repair to "a certain inn" to find refuge for the night.) While prostitution was widely accepted in the Greco-Roman world, prostitutes themselves were forbidden to marry and were banned from public

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[30] Some may have appealed to a different root for "prostitute" that was used to describe the preparation of food (*zûn*, rather than *zānah*). The latter is in keeping with the "inn-keeper" (*pûndeqîtā*) in Targum Jonathan; however, this Aramaic term is used repeatedly in the Targum to translate "prostitute." On the Hebrew term in biblical texts, see Hannelis Schultz, "Beoabachtungen zum Begriff der *zônâ* im alten Testament," *Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 102 (1992), 255–262.

[31] On the social world of the ancient Near Eastern tavern, see Kelly J. Dixon, "Saloons in the Wild West and Taverns in Mesopotamia: Explorations Along the Timeline of Public Drinking" in Steven N. Archer and Kevin M. Barton (eds.), *Between Dirt and Discussion* (New York: Springer, 2006), 61–79.

[32] In Chapter 8, I flesh out this approach, which is also widely adopted in rabbinic interpretation.

[33] See Yair Zakovitch, "Humour and Theology or the Successful Failure of Israelite Intelligence: A Literary-Folkloric Approach to Joshua 2" in Susan Niditch (ed.), *Text and Tradition: The Hebrew Bible and Folklore* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1990), 75–98; Frank M. Cross, "A Response to Zakovitch's 'Successful Failure of Israelite Intelligence,'" in Niditch, *Text and Tradition*, 99–104. A more extended study of the comedic elements in Rahab is provided by Melissa A. Jackson in *Comedy and Feminist Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible: A Subversive Collaboration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

ceremonies.[34] However, there's likely another reason why Josephus omits her title: if Rahab is not a harlot, she cannot serve as an illustration of a repentant convert, and this serves Josephus's interest in filtrating out many of theological elements in the account. Writing for non-Jewish audiences, the historian eliminated Rahab's declaration about Yhwh's superior power and, in so doing, made it more palatable for his Roman readers.

The rabbis, however, refused to pick and choose from a text whose sacred meanings, they were convinced, could only be discovered by taking seriously all the facts of scripture. Instead of tossing aside details that bothered them, they found a way to connect Rahab's occupation as a prostitute to the unequivocal words she speaks and the commendable deeds she performs.[35]

FROM RAHAB TO PAUL

The prototypical convert in Christianity is the Apostle Paul – an individual who had made a name for himself by violently persecuting Christian communities before he was "blinded by the light" on the road to Damascus. After turning his life around, he quickly ascends to a position of authority in the early church (see Gal. 1:13–14). Later Christian tradition, beginning with the book of Acts, embellished accounts of this persecution; the aim was, not least, to demonstrate that even an archenemy of the church, with blood on his hands, could not only be forgiven but also rise to the highest ranks of leadership.

It's inconceivable that the United States or any other national community would grant citizenship – let alone a public office – to one who had a history of terrorizing them. In the same way, it makes sense that the scribes who produced the Jewish scriptures, and their rabbinic successors, cast aspersions on Naaman (a foreign general with a record of assaulting

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[34] See Allison Glazebrook and Madeleine M. Henry (eds.), *Greek Prostitutes in the Ancient Mediterranean, 800 BCE–200 CE* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011).

[35] Amy H. C. Robertson offers a stunning reading of the Rahab story against the backdrop of its rabbinic interpreters: "Are we to imagine that she could have acted on this faith earlier, but chose not to? Could a 50-year-old woman, a harlot of 40 years, have found a different role in Canaanite society if the social order had not been overturned with the destruction of Jericho? On the contrary, it is more realistic to imagine that, at her core, Rahab herself has changed very little. Instead, the world around her changed – thanks in part to her savvy and bravery – and these changes meant she was no longer stuck in her social role" ("Rahab the Faithful Harlot," TheTorah.com website, https://thetorah.com /rahab-the-faithful-harlot/ [2019]).

Israel) when articulating norms for integrating outsiders into their national fold.[36]

Paul the persecutor is the polar opposite of Rahab the prostitute. Their stories are archetypal, each for a new kind of community: the former for the transnational community of the church, and the latter for the national community of Israel. Faith is the means by which one enters the former, while acts of solidarity and allegiance are the test of membership for the latter. This difference explains why Rahab, in contrast to Paul and Naaman, doesn't rue a record of violence against the people she later joins. She demonstrates exceptional hospitality from the very beginning. And when she's granted an honored place in the nation's midst, the reason is not because she recognizes the power of Israel's god; after all, the inhabitants of Canaan do the same, as she divulges to the spies. A special place of honor is awarded to her rather because she risks her life and the lives of her family for the nation, and then follows through with legal actions to secure special protection.

I do not want to deny the central place that faith occupies both in this story and in the wider national narrative. When Abraham and Sarah – and later the nation after the exodus – embark on a journey to the land of promise, they act in confidence that Yhwh will meet his end of the bargain. What's determinative is action, yet this action is not mere obedience; it's impelled by confidence (Gen. 15:6) that the other party 1) will be "faithful" in keeping the promise or pact (Deut. 7:9) and 2) has the capacity to do what's required. Since Rahab is an outsider to the covenant, these two sides are bifurcated: when she hangs the scarlet cord in her window, she trusts that Israel will keep the pact that she has made with the spies, just as she is confident that Yhwh has what it takes to conquer Canaan.

This chapter has demonstrated the ways in which war commemoration, as a political activity, evolved for theological purposes in formative Judaism and Christianity. In Chapter 8, we turn our attention to the biblical account interpreted by these early readers. Our aim will be to understand the evolution of the Rahab story and the various functions it serves in the biblical narrative.

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[36] The enemy general Naaman has a past similar to Paul's, but Naaman does not even become a member of Israel, let alone assume a leadership role comparable to the one Paul occupied in the church.

8

The Composition of the Rahab Story

From the fourth century CE, and increasingly in the sixth and seventh centuries, Christian pilgrims began visiting the Holy Land with the express aim of finding Rahab's house in Jericho.[1] While the search has long since been abandoned, a number of influential scholars over the past century – including Ernst Sellin, Albrecht Alt, Martin Noth, Volkmar Fritz, Klaus Bieberstein, Ed Noort, and Michael Coogan – have argued, or assumed, that the author(s) of the account knew of a population group that traced itself to Rahab and resided near Jericho. These "Rahabites" are said to have fabricated a legend about their eponymous ancestor's bravery and her contribution to Israel's conquest of Canaan. Likewise, the Rahab story in Joshua is said to have originated as an explanation of why this particular clan of Canaanites became members of Israel in blatant contradiction to Deuteronomy's command to annihilate all the land's inhabitants.

There's a problem with this thesis: the figure of Rahab is not associated with any particular group or clan in the biblical corpus. Admittedly, a number of cities bear a similar name, yet we lack a good reason to connect them to Rahab.[2] In *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities*, Christine Hayes links Rahab to the Rechabites whom the prophet Jeremiah praises (Jer. 35), but the identification is improbable: In

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[1] H. Donner, *Pilgerfahrt ins Heilige Land: Die ältesten Berichte christlicher Palästinapilger (4.–7. Jahrhundert)*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2003).

[2] For example, Rehov, Rehavat Ir, or modern Rehavia; see also Neh. 7:4, which provides an important clue to the origins of Rahab's name (lit. wide/open; similarly, *reḥob* means open space, plaza, street).

Hebrew, "Rahab" is not spelled the same way as "Rechab," and it has a different meaning and etymology.[3]

Scholars who read the story as an apologia for the "Rahabites" usually rely on the statement in Joshua 6:25 that "she/it still dwells in the midst of Israel until the present day." Although "her family" may be an implicit subject of the verb "dwell" in the Hebrew, and although many translators make this explicit, it is clear from the next line that the subject must be Rahab. The statement is not meant to be taken literally; nothing is being said here about a particular population group.[4]

Instead of understanding Rahab as the eponymous ancestor of an ancient clan (similar to Caleb and the Calebites), we would be better served by interpreting her as a paradigmatic Other. Just as she came to be the prototypical proselyte for the rabbis, she figures in the biblical account as an archetypal outsider who successfully achieves membership among the people of Israel. Inasmuch as she is not associated with any one clan or community, this liminal figure from Canaanite society could serve as a safe proxy for outsiders from various times and places.

The use of legends as arguments for tolerance is an abiding feature of historical fiction through the ages. (For example, Jean Racine's lesser-known play featuring the biblical queen Esther from 1689 was read as an apology for religious tolerance and a polemic against the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.[5]) Of central importance to our study of war commemoration and national identity, the biblical legend links Rahab's continued presence "in the midst of Israel" to her contributions at a defining moment in the wars of conquest: "for she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho" (Josh. 6:17, 25). The account sets forth a principle of inclusion, one that Rahab illustrates through both words and deeds.

THE RAHAB STORY AS A NARRATIVE FRAME

The Rahab story is delivered in two installments. The first episode is found in chapter 2 and portrays her saving the spies; the second episode appears at the end of chapter 6, where the spies save Rahab and her family. In the narrative of Joshua, these two episodes bracket a foundational period of

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[3] Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 21.

[4] As we saw in Chapter 7, the rabbis discovered clues in scripture indicating that Rahab was rewarded with an honorable status in Israelite society and became the ancestress of many national leaders; unlike modern scholars, however, they didn't understand Rahab to be the eponymous ancestor of a group that called themselves "Rahabites."

[5] See René Jasinski, *Autour de l'Esther racinienne* (Paris: Nizet, 1985).

miraculous triumph, which commences with the crossing of the Jordan and concludes with the conquest of Jericho.[6] At a time of the year when the Jordan was most dangerous to ford, the Israelites cross on dry ground. They mark the crossing with a number of ritual-commemorative activities: construction of a monument with stones from the Jordan; circumcision of the males; celebration of the Passover; and cessation of manna and consumption of crops in Canaan. Portrayed as a divine triumph over the inimical forces of chaos, the desiccation of the Jordan mirrors the crossing of the Red Sea, on the one hand, and anticipates the miraculous collapse of Jericho's walls, on the other.[7] In contrast to these events, the subsequent subjugation of Ai is achieved through natural means (a clever stratagem), and the nation must first suffer devastating defeats:

> **The Rahab Story in Joshua 1–8**
> Chapter 1: Yhwh's marching orders to Joshua
> **Chapter 2: Rahab saves the spies**
> Chapters 3–4: Crossing of the Jordan
> Chapter 5: Rituals celebrating transition to the promised land
> **Chapter 6: Conquest of Jericho, with the spies saving Rahab**
> Chapters 7–8: Battle of Ai, which begins with Israel's defeat

The section of the narrative framed by the Rahab story devotes disproportionate attention to the cult. The river recedes when the priests bearing the ark enter it, and the walls of Jericho fall when seven priests marching with the ark blow their seven shofars. This material likely represents the work of priestly scribes at the Jerusalem temple who revised an older, much shorter report of the crossing of the Jordan and conquest of Jericho. In this new and improved edition of the account, cultic personnel and paraphernalia play an indispensable role. In stark contrast to the narrative it frames, the Rahab story commemorates the contributions of a Canaanite prostitute and declares that she later enjoyed a place of honor in Israel's midst (6:25). Undoubtedly, the account of this pivotal moment in the nation's past would have scandalized priestly sensibilities. We know from numerous Pentateuchal texts that priests were highly anxious about the camp's purity, and it was presumably a scribe of

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[6] Similarly, the Song of Deborah, together with the Song of the Sea from the book of Exodus, demarcates "bookends" around a special epoch of Yhwh's activity within the national narrative; see the discussion in Chapter 10.

[7] The link is made explicit in the formulation of Rahab's words about Egypt in 2:9–11 and the narrator's statement about the Jordan in 5:1. Notice how Psalms 114 synthesizes the two events.

priestly pedigree who made sure to point out that when the spies rescued Rahab and her family, they placed them outside "the camp of Israel" (6:23).[8]

THE PLACE OF THE RAHAB STORY IN THE NARRATIVE

The book of Joshua begins with the nation's new leader commanding the officers to prepare the nation for the crossing of the river, which will take place "in three days":

Joshua commanded the officers of the people, "Pass through the camp and command the people: 'Prepare your provisions; for in three days you are to cross over the Jordan, to go in and take possession of the land that Yhwh your god is giving you to possess.'" (1:10–11)

We encounter this same group of officers at the Jordan crossing, which is said explicitly to have occurred precisely after this time period:

After three days the officers went through the camp and commanded the people, "When you see the ark of the covenant of Yhwh your god being carried by the levitical priests, then you shall set out from your places and follow after it . . . ." (3:2–3)

The similar formulations in these two passages have misled some scholars to assume that they form an older running narrative into which the Rahab story was inserted at a later point.[9] The interpretation does not hold up to scrutiny: In the first passage the officers are to pass through the camp *immediately* and command the people to prepare for the Jordan crossing three days from then, while in the second passage the officers *wait three days* before marching through the camp and issuing orders to the people. Instead of forming a coherent, older narrative thread, the two texts actually contradict each other, and the opposite compositional scenario suggests itself: what we have here is a later scribal attempt to synthesize the Rahab story with the later narrative of the Jordan crossing, with the

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[8] On many of the passages from Joshua discussed in this chapter and Chapter 9, see Farber, *Images of Joshua*, as well as the commentary by Dozeman, *Joshua 1–12*.

[9] This interpretation assumes that the description of the Jordan-crossing is an older part of the narrative; see Carl Steuernagel, *Übersetzung und Erklärung der Bücher Deuteronomium und Josua und allgemeine Einleitung in den Hexateuch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1900); and, more recently, Erhard Blum, "Überlegungen zur Kompositionsgeschichte des Josuabuches" in Ed Noort (ed.), *The Book of Joshua* (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 137–157; as well as Joachim J. Krause, *Exodus und Eisodus: Komposition und Theologie von Josua 1–5* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 197–274.

formulation "in/after three days" implying the exact duration of the reconnaissance mission (see 2:16, 22).[10]

The Rahab story appears both to be *older* than the narrative of the Jordan crossing, and to have *grown in stages* to its present proportions. According to my analysis, its earliest iteration told the backstory to the battle of Jericho and was prefaced directly to it. Both the Rahab story and the battle account represent older portions of chapters 1–7, and they gradually drifted apart as later scribes composed the disparate materias related to the crossing of the Jordan in chapters 3–5.[11]

The Rahab story was composed for, and added directly to, the battle account in chapter 6. As we shall see, it was originally much shorter and did not necessitate the follow-up episode in chapter 6. Recently, Joachim Krause has taken a different approach, arguing that the Rahab story is relatively unified and represents a late development in an older narrative of the Jordan crossing in chapters 1–5.[12] However, we can more easily explain the literary evidence if we accept 1) that the Rahab story originated as an early preface to the account of the Jericho battle, and 2) that the narrative of the Jordan crossing in chapters 1–5 represents a later compositional stage.

With regard to the second episode of the Rahab story in chapter 6, the battle account reads more smoothly without the lines related to Rahab; not surprisingly, scholars have long declared them to be supplementary. Below, I have arranged the text to show how the Rahab story presupposes redactions of the battle account. As in the narrative of the Jordan crossing, one redaction assigns an indispensable role to the priests and their trumpets, while, in keeping with the Deuteronomistic program of destruction (ḥerem), another redaction develops the description of the city's demolition. The oldest substratum of this section is in boldface, while the later lines related to Rahab are indented. Even

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[10] How these older parts of the book of Joshua came to be connected to the exodus account is an important issue that deserves separate treatment. One possibility presents itself in Joshua 3:1: "They set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan. . . . They stayed the night there before crossing over." While all of chapter 1 appears to be later, the paragraph in verses 10–11 is likely its oldest section.

That the conquest begins with the crossing of the Jordan rather than from the south (as we would expect for the account of Israel coming up from Egypt) is a major problem, one that is explained variously in the Pentateuch; see Wright, *David, King of Israel*, 194–197.

[11] A portion of the account of the battle of Ai (8:3–29) seems to be older, and, when appending it to the narrative, scribes expanded it with themes from the preceding chapters.

[12] See Krause, *Exodus und Eisodus*, as well as Blum, "Überlegungen."

though the latter are not differentiated below, they likely do not all stem from the same hand.

Compositional Strata in Joshua 6:14–26

14 . . . **on the second day they marched around the city once and then returned to the camp. They did this for six days. 15 On the seventh day they rose early, at dawn, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times. It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times. 16 And the seventh time,** when the priests had blown the trumpets, **Joshua said to the people, "Shout! For Yhwh has given you the city.**

17 The city and all that is in it shall be devoted to Yhwh for destruction.
Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers we sent.
18 As for you, keep away from the things devoted to destruction, so as not to covet and take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel an object for destruction, bringing trouble upon it.
19 But all silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are sacred to Yhwh; they shall go into the treasury of Yhwh."

20 **So they raised** – the trumpets were blown; when the people heard the sound of the trumpets, they raised – **a great shout, and the wall fell down flat. Thereafter the people charged straight ahead into the city and captured it.**

21 They devoted to destruction by the edge of the sword all in the city, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys.
22 *Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the prostitute's house, and bring the woman out of it and all who belong to her, as you swore to her."*
23 And the young men who had been spies went in and brought Rahab out, along with her father, her mother, her brothers, and all who belonged to her. They brought out all her clans, and they set them outside the camp of Israel.

24 **They burned down the city and everything in it.**
Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of Yhwh's house.
25 But Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, Joshua spared. She has lived in the midst of Israel ever since. For she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

26 **At that time Joshua made an oath: "Cursed before Yhwh be anyone who tries to rebuild this city, Jericho. At the cost of his firstborn he shall lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest he shall set up its gates!" So Yhwh was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout the country.**

We will touch upon several notable features of this second episode, yet before doing so, we need take a closer look at the first episode – the account of Rahab hiding two Israelite spies, lying to the king, and then negotiating protection for herself and her family.

A CITY BESIEGED

Strangely, the Rahab story has nothing to say about the spies' activities of scouting or espionage. The first episode begins with Joshua secretly dispatching the men with orders to "go view the land and Jericho." However, when the men go, the only thing they manage to do is "enter the house of a prostitute named Rahab and spend the night there" (2:1).[13] The king learns that Israelites had infiltrated the city with the intention of "searching out the whole land." He quickly establishes that they are residing in Rahab's place and sends soldiers to seize them there.

The succinct narration in 2:1–7 shows, rather than reports (as in vv. 8–14), the heightened state of alarm that Israel's arrival had provoked among the inhabitants of Jericho. Despite the precautions that Joshua and the spies take to conduct a clandestine mission, their arrival doesn't go unnoticed. The narrator implies that all the inhabitants of the country are well aware of Israel's presence on Canaan's eastern border and nervous about an imminent invasion.

This is precisely what Rahab spells out to the spies in an extended scene that stands at the center of the account:

But before [the two spies] lay down, she came up to them on the roof. Then she said to the men: "I know that Yhwh has given you the land, and that dread of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are faint because of you. For we have heard how Yhwh dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites that were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. When we heard it, our hearts melted. No longer does a spirit rise in any man because of you! Yhwh your god is indeed god in heaven above and on earth below. "Now then swear to me by Yhwh – for I have dealt kindly with you; you in turn must deal kindly with my father's house and give me a sure sign – that you will spare my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death." The men said to her, "Our life for yours! If you do not tell this business of ours, then we will deal kindly and faithfully with you when Yhwh gives us the land."[14] Josh. 2:8–14

[13] On the comedic qualities of the story, see Chapter 7, n. 33.

[14] It's possible that the first line (v. 8) was added at a later point to make the scene a flashback, taking place "before they lay down." (The verb is the same as that used at the end of verse 1.) Notice that the spies agree to spare Rahab's life on condition that she does not tell anyone about what they were up to. Had the conversation taken place after she speaks to the king, this condition would not make sense: Wasn't Rahab's act of hiding the men and deceiving the king already enough to merit the protection she solicits here?

This scene is likely secondary. As scholars have long observed, the first part of story (vv. 1–7), which ends with Rahab sending the pursuers on a wild-goose chase, continues naturally in the description of Rahab letting the spies down on a rope from her window (vv. 15–16, 21–23):

1 Then Joshua son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, "Go, view the land, and Jericho." So they went and came to the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab, and they spent the night there. 2 It was told to the king of Jericho: "Some men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the land." 3 Then the king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for it is only to search out the whole land that they have come." 4 But the woman took the two men and hid them. Then she said, "True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they are from. 5 When it was time to close the gate at dark, the men left. I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you can overtake them." [6 *She had, however, brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax that she had spread out on the roof.*] 7 So the men pursued them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. As soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut.
    [vv. 8–14]
    15 Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was in the city wall, and in the city wall she resided. 16 She said to them, "Make for the hills so that the pursuers do not chance upon you. Hide there for three days until the pursuers return, and then go your way." . . . 21 Thereafter she let them go, and they left. [*She tied the crimson cord in the window.*] 22 They left and they went into the hill country and stayed there three days, until the pursuers returned. The pursuers had searched all along the way and found nothing. 23 Then the two men returned and came down again from the hill country crossed over, and came to Joshua son of Nun, and told him everything that had happened to them. [24 *They said to Joshua, "Yhwh has delivered the whole land into our hands, and indeed all the inhabitants are faint because of us.*]

Not only does the scene in verses 8–14 sever the narrative at this juncture; its language and ideas stand out as an anomaly in the context of the chapter. Acclaiming Yhwh's hand in Israel's history, Rahab uses formulations and concepts that presuppose an advanced stage in the formation of the wider biblical narrative, as we saw in our discussions of Sihon and Og ("two Amorite kings," vv. 8–14) in Parts I and II. The only other place in the account where we find this language is the final line (v. 24), which appears to have been composed as a new conclusion that integrates Rahab's exact words into the spies' debriefing.[15]

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[15] The older conclusion in verse 23 focuses on what had happened to the spies at Jericho. The addition of verse 24 shifts the attention to the contents of Rahab's declaration, which describes the angst that had pervaded *the entire land*.

The second part of verse 21, which presents Rahab hanging a crimson cord from her window, interrupts the flow of the narrative and is easy to identify as an editorial gloss. It presupposes the supplementary material related to the logistics of Rahab's rescue (vv. 8–14 + 17–21).[16]

The announcement in verse 6 that Rahab had concealed the spies *on the roof* provides an additional clue that the scene in verses 8–14 is secondary. The narrator has already reported in verse 4 that "the woman took the two men and hid them." (Where she hides them is not said.) While verse 4 flows effortlessly in the narrative and must be part of the earliest version, the announcement in verse 6 is poorly placed. It was likely added by the same hand that composed verses 8–14, which begin with Rahab going up to the men *on the roof*.

The Masoretic text at 2:4 is literally "she hid him," and the unexpected singular may be an echo of Exodus 2:2, where Moses's mother "hid him" (using the same verb). Just as the story of the exodus begins with the courageous defiance of the Egyptian king by Moses's mother as well as by his sister and the Hebrew midwives, the story of the conquest begins with the courageous defiance of a Canaanite king by a woman. In each case, the women not only act without the help of males but also protect them as passive objects. These parallels may help us understand why later scribes seized on the originally brief account and embellished it: without husband and children, Rahab works maternally to protect the spies, covering them under her stalks of flax and then lying to the king's men as to their whereabouts. Moreover, the description of her letting the spies down by a rope brings to mind the scene in 1 Sam. 19 in which Michal lets David down by a rope from her window when he, like the spies, is fleeing for his life from a king. In keeping with an assault on hegemonic masculinities that can be identified in many biblical texts, these narratives undermine pretensions of male self-sufficiency by depicting valiant women acting surreptitiously. In their crucial contributions to the nation's history, they orchestrate directly, and physically, the lives of male figures.[17]

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[16] Notice the *Wiederaufnahme* of "they left" in verses 21a and 22a. On the secondary nature of the logistics and reference to the crimson cord, which has inspired Christian allegorical readings, see Kratz, *Composition*, 201.

[17] We revisit this point in relation to the book of Judges in Part IV. On Rahab as a queer figure who lives on the margins and sees and acts differently from those in her society, see Erin Runions, "From Disgust to Horror: Rahab's Queer Affect," *Postscripts*, 4 (2008), 41–69; Billy Klutz, "Queers in the Borderlands: Rahab, Queer Imagination, and Survival," *The Other Journal*, September 21, 2015, https://theotherjournal.com/2015/0

While the scene in verses 8–14 is most likely supplementary, Rahab's statements in it about the fear that had consumed Canaan are consistent with the rhetorical purpose of the older account. We are told in verse 7 that as soon as the men took off in pursuit of the spies, the city gate was closed after them. Israel's arrival obviously had struck fear into the heart of Jericho's inhabitants and king. Likewise, chapter 6 begins by reporting that Jericho was on lockdown, which Yhwh interprets as a portent of the city's imminent downfall:

Jericho was shut up tightly because of the Israelites; no one went out and no one came in. Yhwh said to Joshua, "See, I have handed Jericho over to you, along with its king [and soldiers]. You shall march around the city, all the warriors surrounding the city . . . ." Josh. 6:1–3

Before the composition of all the disparate material related to the crossing of the Jordan in chapters 3–5, the Rahab story would have segued directly into the battle account. The latter tells how Jericho was "shut up tightly because of the Israelites," and the Rahab story provides a glimpse from the inside on why this was so.

The battle account focuses on the city's wall. The remains of an impressive system of fortifications at Jericho could be seen be passers-by in antiquity, and they can still be witnessed today. Although the city was conquered in the sixteenth century BCE during an Egyptian campaign in the region, the authors of the biblical account point to the ruins as physical evidence for – and a monument to – Israel's inaugural triumph after invading Canaan. This historiographical purpose explains why the authors do not present Joshua engaging the enemy in the field, as he does at Ai in the immediately following episode.[18]

9/21/queers-in-the-borderlands-rahab-queer-imagination-and-survival/. On Rahab and Michal, see Adriane Leveen, *Biblical Narratives of Israelites and Their Neighbors: Strangers at the Gate* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

[18] The account of the battle at Ai has its own commemorative-historiographical function – namely, to explain "the great heap of stones that until this day still stands there," with the location being described as "the entrance of the city gate." This is likely the original reference in the name "Ai," and 8:29b, which describes the city as an "eternal tell of desolation," is likely a product of a later reworking that brings the account in line with the demolition of Jericho in chapter 6. (Notice also the supplementary character of 8:2a and 8:8.) The Achan story in chapter 7 is, as most agree, a late preface to the older battle account in chapter 8. On the premeditated and deliberate destruction of these and other cities, including their iconic architecture and memories, see Jacob L. Wright, "Urbicide: The Ritualized Killing of Cities in the Ancient Near East" in Saul Olyan (ed.), *Ritual Violence in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 147–166.

If the first and most basic purpose of the Rahab story is to explain why Jericho was "shut up tightly," and therefore why the nation attacks the city in an unconventional manner, we can explain why the spies, instead of continuing their espionage activities, immediately make their way back to Joshua and "tell him everything that had happened to them" (2:21).[19] They terminate their reconnaissance mission because it had already provided them with all the intelligence they needed: panic had seized Jericho, and as Yhwh spells out for Joshua, this panic is handwriting on the wall that the city would soon fall.

EDIFICATION OF A DEFEATED NATION

The aim of the espionage mission, as I pointed out in Chapter 7, was not to inspect the military establishments in Canaan but to assess the psychological state of the local population. This aim explains why the spies visit the house of Rahab. Due to her private intercourse with diverse clientele, the proprietresses of bordellos and taverns were privy to news and rumors from abroad and intimately aware of the locals' disposition. For example, according to Hammurabi's laws, "if criminals [or conspirators] plot in the house of a tavern keeper [*sabitum*], and she does not capture those criminals and deliver them to the palace, the tavern keeper shall be put to death."[20]

Presupposing these associations, the supplements to the story portray Rahab approaching the Israelite men before they go to sleep. She divulges to them that the land's inhabitants were shaking in their sandals in fear of Israel and its god. Her statement divulges the deflation of Canaan's male inhabitants: "When we heard it, our hearts melted. No longer does a spirit rise in any man because of you! Yhwh your god is indeed god in heaven above and on earth below."[21]

Signs, oracles, prophetic performances, speeches, and rituals that motivate the army or its leaders for an impending engagement are all important features of biblical war commemoration. In addition to serving an immediate narrative function, this discourse on fear and courage has a larger didactic purpose. Thus, Rahab's reference to the memories of Sihon's and Og's defeat resembles the use Moses makes of these same memories throughout Deuteronomy, as he rouses the nation on the eve of

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[19] The Hebrew literally means all that had found them, which is a play on the pursuers searching for them (see vv. 5, 16 and 22).

[20] Law 109. See Dixon, "Saloons."   [21] See n Chapter 7, n. 29.

war.[22] Like Moses's orations in Deuteronomy, a new ending to the Rahab story plays a rhetorical role by having the spies draw a conclusion for Joshua: "Yhwh has given the entire land into our hands; indeed, all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before us!"

Two chapters from the book of Numbers tell of the initial scouting mission conducted by the preceding generation soon after leaving Egypt. The spies' objective was to find, and to bring back to the national assembly, a sign confirming that Israel would claim certain victory. Likely composed much later than the first iteration of the Rahab story, the account in Numbers differs from this story above all in the failure of the mission. The scouts bring back an "evil report" that demoralizes the nation, and, as punishment, Yhwh sentences the entire generation to death in the wilderness. Paralyzed by fear, the nation stands no chance of victory. The same goes conversely for their enemies, and such is the case as a new generation prepares to invade angst-filled Canaan in the time of Rahab. If even this non-Israelite knew that Canaan was about to be wiped out, all the more reason for Israel to eschew disbelief, which had brought forty years of wandering in the wilderness.

More than any other biblical account, the story of Gideon from the book of Judges is characterized by a profusion of prebattle signs and oracles. Its distinctive quality is due to the work of later scribal hands that transformed a "mighty hero" into an exceedingly trepidatious farmer.[23] At every step of the way, Gideon needs signs and demonstrations that he and his men could overpower the enemy. On the eve of battle, the fretful warrior goes down with his servant on a reconnaissance mission into the enemy camp. There, they overhear a soldier describing his dream about the collapse of a tent, which his fellow interprets as a portent of their own defeat: "This is nothing other than the sword of Gideon ben Joash, a man of Israel. Into his hand God has given Midian and all the army!" Gideon had already witnessed many signs that he would triumph over the Midianites and this last sign is what finally emboldens him to begin the battle (Judg. 7:10–15).

As we observe in the Gideon account, the news brought by the spies in the Rahab story galvanizes Joshua's resolve on the eve of invasion. The

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[22] Moses refers to them throughout chapters 2–4 and then resumes this theme in 29:6 and 31:4. The eve-of-battle addresses provided the framework in which later scribes inserted the Deuteronomic law code (parts of which are much older than the speeches).

[23] I treat this scribal transformation in "The Evolution of the Gideon Narrative" in Saul M. Olyan and Jacob L. Wright (eds.), *Supplementation and the Study of the Hebrew Bible* (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2018), 105–124.

nation's leader has already received an oracle of divine encouragement (1:1–9) and will witness yet another divine sign right before the battle (5:13–15).[24] The character of Joshua does not suffer from Gideon's lack of courage; to the contrary, he, like Rahab, is a paragon of valor.

The intended audience of our texts would have been faced with the prospect, and then the fact, of forfeiting to foreign armies the land Joshua had conquered. These texts were written and rewritten for the edification of a defeated nation, and as such, they participate in an elaborate biblical discourse on faith and fear.[25]

BELIEF AND ACTION

According to Klaus Bieberstein, a Roman Catholic biblical scholar from Germany, the authors of the Rahab story highlighted the harlot's "confession of faith" and placed it at the center of the account as an illustration of Isaiah's verdict "If you do not believe, you will not stand" (Isa. 7:9).[26] Because Rahab believes, she survives, becoming thereby a living "monument" (*Denkmal*) that witnesses to the nexus between faith and salvation. Bieberstein agrees that the Rahab story participates in a struggle to define Israel's collective identity, yet it does so, according to his interpretation, by pointing to verbal confessions and "faith/belief" (*Glaube*) in Yhwh as the basis for belonging.

While this reading may be consistent with influential iterations of Christian theology, it's difficult to reconcile with the logic of the text itself. Belief isn't the condition for Rahab's rescue, let alone her inclusion among the people of Israel. To be sure, the biblical scribes portray Rahab as being confident that Israel will conquer the land, and this confidence stands out

[24] The oracle in 1:1–9 has been secondarily prefaced to the older introduction in 1:10–11 (*pace* Germany, *Exodus-Conquest Narrative*, 314–318). It has grown in stages, serving as a preamble to not only the conquest story but also (various editions of) the Former Prophets (Joshua to Kings). Joshua 5:13–15 was likely inserted between the Rahab story and the battle account as yet another sign to Joshua that Jericho would certainly fall, since the captain of Yhwh's army was present. Due to several obvious parallels between this story and that of Moses's commission in Exodus 3, it seems reasonable to interpret the two texts as a scribal attempt to connect Joshua and the conquest of Canaan to Yhwh's first apparition to Moses and his promise to bring Israel to a new land.

[25] I treat the subject of fear with Sara Kipfer in "Fear (not)! Emotion and Ethics in Deuteronomy," *Journal of Ethics in Antiquity and Christianity* (forthcoming).

[26] Klaus Bieberstein, *Josua – Jordan – Jericho: Archäologie, Geschichte und Theologie der Landnahmeerzählungen Josua 1–6* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995). When it's not isolated from its context, this oft-quoted line from Isaiah can hardly bear the theological weight it is frequently forced to carry.

against the account of the first espionage mission during the days of Moses. At that time, Yhwh condemned an entire generation to die in the wilderness for its lack of faith:

And Yhwh said to Moses, "How long will this people spurn me, and how long will they not believe (in) me [and] all the signs I performed in their midst." Num. 14:11

Here, as elsewhere, Israel's refusal to believe in Yhwh's power elicits divine punishment. It would be a flagrant non sequitur, however, to conclude that these texts identify faith as the criterion for membership, as if Israel were a "community of believers."

Twice in the second episode of the Rahab story, the authors name the heroine's actions in hiding the spies as the reason for the special treatment she – together with all her family and clans – receives from the conquerors (6:17b, 25b). Even if these lines are late additions to the account, one must explain why their authors did not mention the words she spoke as a testimony to her belief in Israel's god. It might be argued, in line with the early Christian writings discussed in Chapter 7, that Rahab's underlying faith prompted her to hide the Israelite men. Even so, the account in Joshua identifies solely her deeds as the grounds for her and her family's salvation; in stark contrast to many later interpreters, it says nothing about these works as tangible testaments to her "faith."

Rahab's report about the fear that had engulfed the local population culminates in a declaration: "Yhwh your god is indeed god in heaven above and on earth below." (2:11b; cf. Deut. 4:37–39). As we noted in Chapter 7, these words resemble the avowals of Jethro and Naaman. All three figures do not simply state the facts; they also express solidarity. Even if Jethro returns to his own country instead of joining the people of Israel, his declaration reinforces the special quality of his relationship to the nation, which is celebrated in the rituals of commensality with its leaders (Exod. 18:12).[27] Rahab's statement about Israel's god, in the same way, does not in and of itself qualify her for inclusion among the people of Israel. But if she is to be included, she must both demonstrate her loyalty through her

[27] In Part IV, we examine the Jethro story in relation to the Kenites as "fellow travelers" with Israel. On the commonalities between Rahab and Jethro in rabbinic imagination, which imagines them as equally promiscuous in their respective roles as prostitute and priest, see David J. Zucker and Moshe Reiss, "Judaism's First Converts: A Pagan and a Prostitute," TheTorah.com website, https://thetorah.com/judaisms-first-converts-a-pagan-priest-and-a-prostitute/ [2017].

actions and interpret them with her words. (Her statement likely belongs to the same compositional level as the lines added to Joshua 6 that describe the honored place she assumes in the nation.)

Consider again the example of Ruth. When Boaz grants special privileges to this Moabite, she is taken aback and wonders why. Boaz responds by pointing to her record of solidarity with Naomi and, by extension, with the people of Israel as a whole:

> All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. May Yhwh reward you for your deeds. And may you have a full reward from Yhwh, the god of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge!" Ruth 2:11–12

As in Rahab's case, Ruth's reward, both from Boaz and from Yhwh, is merited by her deeds, whereas the words she speaks to Naomi at the beginning of the narrative are the means by which she proclaims her intent and motivation. Even if they are indispensable, they are not the grounds for her inclusion.

In Chapter 7, we compared Rahab's statement to the testimonies and oaths of loyalty required for naturalization in modern nation-states. The difference is that Rahab's testimony revolves around Israel's deity; today, one swears allegiance to a flag. This difference turns out to be not so stark if we remember that the national flags of modernity evolved as secularized incarnations of the deities and religious symbols under whose aegis ancient states operated. The project of peoplehood that the biblical writers conceived has a thoroughgoing theological dimension. The fact that the biblical writers ascribed a central role to their deity does not mean, however, that the form of peoplehood they envisioned is more akin to an assembly of believers than a national body. Even so, a deity that transcends political divisions offered an ideal common point for competing communities to consolidate as one people and form a more perfect union (see the discussion in Part IV).

A NEW COVENANT

The complexity of Rahab's identity may be embedded already in the earliest formulations of the account, but as the story evolved, the intertextuality with other biblical texts assumed a sharper profile. We notice this not only in Rahab's testimony but also in her extended negotiations

with the spies.[28] It's obvious to Rahab that no one stands a chance of surviving the impending devastation and that Canaan's future clearly lies with Israel. Hence, she not only hides the men but is also eager to persuade them to make a pact with her. She fears that Israel would annihilate her entire family, and we, as readers, know this is what they are about to do, in keeping with the command in Deuteronomy to annihilate all the Canaanites (see Deut. 7 and 20).

Many passages in Joshua do not reflect knowledge of Deuteronomy, and the earliest portrait of Rahab did not present her Canaanite identity as grounds for execution. The present shape of the book, however, is explicitly and repeatedly linked to its predecessor. For example, the Gibeonite account (chaps. 9–10), which we explore in Chapter 9, presupposes the command to annihilate the Canaanites. In this narrative framework, the final form of the Rahab story demonstrates the possibility of suspending the Mosaic decree in the case of someone who stands in undivided solidarity with Israel and proves his/her loyalty when push comes to shove.

The scribes who reworked the account devoted a lot of space to the oath that Rahab demands from the spies (2:8–14, 17–21; see also 6:22), and the reason seems to be that they wanted to address the way in which Rahab becomes part of Israel. Their account reveals paradigmatically how a non-Israelite secures protection and privileges via a proven record of loyalty (notice the length and shrewdness of her lines to the king's men), which merits a contractual guarantee in the form of an unbreakable oath. Prompting their editorial work was the insight that eloquent affirmations about the power of Israel's god, and even courageous displays of loyalty, are of limited value if they do not culminate in legally binding guarantees

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[28] Notice how the spies' statement about the oath (Josh. 2:14, 20) is cut asunder by a lengthy section (vv. 15–19) that fleshes out the dramatic meat on the skeletal narrative. Interrupting them mid-sentence, Rahab sends the two men away with directions on how to elude the king's soldiers. But after she lets them down from her window, they continue their instructions, speaking now at much greater length (vv. 17–20). Later, we read that she "let them go" (v. 21, 23*), without reference to either the window of her house or the wall (cf. v. 15).

When later readers, such as Josephus, retell the story, they fill in its gaps by reporting that the men first came to Jericho, surveyed its fortifications, and then only later entered the house of Rahab. Of course, they simplify the lengthy departure scene and harmonize its many contradictions. Aside from being fascinating subjects for study in their own right, these retellings help us in reconstructing the prehistory of biblical accounts, for it is often the case that we fail to notice important diachronic clues in these accounts until we compare them with their retellings.

of protection. Such pledges define and formalize the mutual obligations that constitute the bedrock of a political community.[29]

When creating this complex account, the scribes couldn't help but echo Sinai. Throughout Exodus and Deuteronomy, Yhwh appeals to a record of protecting and saving the nation as the basis for the covenant he makes with the nation. Similarly, Rahab begins by recalling these same salvific deeds of Yhwh (2:9–11), and then makes a case for her own covenant with the nation (beginning with the appropriate formula "and now," 2:12). In making her case, Rahab invokes her act of "loyalty/hospitality" (ḥesed). Since she risked her life and the lives of her family to save the spies, they now should reciprocate with a quid pro quo, swearing to show her "loyalty" and to "save" her and her family (2:12–13).

In making this new covenant, Rahab demonstrates superb negotiation skills, and perhaps we are to understand that she owes these skills to her profession. The pact with the Israelite men is just as much about her (and her family's) survival as transactions with clients. The difference is that the former is more enduring and transformative, as she now moves from the margins of one society to the center of another.

INCLUSION VERSUS INTEGRATION

We established that Rahab's belonging presupposes both her deeds and her words. But what more can we say about the nature of the belonging that she procured? In Chapter 7, we saw how Josephus and the rabbis claimed that she was fully integrated into Israelite society, eventually marrying Joshua and becoming the ancestress of important figures in the nation's history, and the Gospel of Matthew does something similar by grafting her into the family tree of Jesus. Thus, both Jewish and Christian readers imagine Rahab being fully integrated into the life of the nation, but does the account in Joshua suggest that she became a full-fledged member of Israel?

We are told that the spies, after following through with the pact and rescuing Rahab's family, "left them outside the camp of Israel" (6:23). Although they are no longer a part of the city destined for destruction, they are kept separate from the rest of the nation and not allowed to dwell

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[29] See the important study of the subject by Michael Walzer, *Obligations: Essays on Disobedience, War, and Citizenship* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970); as well as the critical review by Robert Horowitz, "Obligations: Essays on Disobedience, War, and Citizenship," *Cornell Law Review*, 171 (1970), 171–175.

alongside its members. This line, as I suggested earlier, is likely a gloss added by a priestly scribe who was disturbed by the notion that a Canaanite harlot and her family could have so easily entered the (sacred) space of the camp and thereby jeopardized Israel's welfare. In contrast to this gloss, the final statement about Rahab proclaims resoundingly:

As for Rahab the prostitute, and the house of her father, and all that belonged to her, Joshua saved them alive; she lives *in Israel's midst* to the present day, because she hid the messengers Joshua had sent to spy out Jericho. Josh. 6:25

If Rahab came to live in Israel's midst, are we to understand that she became a full-fledged member of the nation?

The term "midst" is used often in the book, recurring at key moments in the narrative: Yhwh performs wonders in the Israelites' *midst* at the crossing of the Jordan (3:5) and proves that he dwells in their *midst* by driving out the seven nations that dwell in the Promised Land (3:10). Israel sets up a monument in the nation's *midst* for future generations (4:6). In the episode that immediately follows the statement about Rahab, a figure named Achan wrongly keeps some of the war spoils for himself; because these banned items were found in Israel's *midst*, they cause a devastating defeat for the nation (7:12–13). That many indigenous outsiders, like Rahab, dwell in their *midst* is affirmed in the account of Joshua reading the words of Moses to the assembly (8:35). The account of the Gibeonites in chapters 9–10 plays heavily on this theme. It presents a population that lives in Israel's *midst* tricking the people into thinking that they were actually from far away (9:7, 16, 22). By means of such subterfuge, they make peace with the Israelites and secure rights to continue dwelling in their *midst* (10:1). In addition to Rahab and the Gibeonites, others continue to live in Israel's *midst* because various tribes failed to drive them out (13:10, 16:10). Finally, in his valediction, Joshua implores Israel to put away the foreign gods that are in their *midst* (24:23).

The term "midst" is thus used in Joshua in reference to things that are separate from Israel while having an intimate relationship with it – whether deities or proscribed war spoils. When applied to peoples and populations, the term does not suggest that the group has become one with Israel. The statement about Rahab may suggest, then, that she was embraced into Israelite society and given an honored place in Israel's national memory, even while not becoming a full Israelite. But given that, ideally, the deity dwells in the *midst* of Israel, the use of the term is likely used here to draw attention to the place of honor Rahab occupies in the nation. This brings to mind Moses's father-in-law, whose story we

treat in Part IV. An outsider too, he should join the nation as a fellow-traveler, serving as its "eyes" and seeking out places where it should camp; the place he is offered is at the head of the camp, with the deity leading the nation through the wilderness (see Num. 10:29–32, 33–36). What makes Rahab special, however, is that she still occupies her privileged place "until the present day."

The sociological distinction between *inclusion* and *integration* proves useful here. If Rahab and her family were included within Israel without being fully integrated, they could be recognized as a group with a protected and privileged status. Such seems to have been the case with the Gibeonites. By means of a formal pact, the Israelites pledge that they will not annihilate this population, and they guarantee its members sanctuary within their society. The book of Samuel presents King Saul violating this oath when he "attempts to wipe out [the Gibeonites] in his zeal for Israel and Judah," and the bloodguilt incurred by this king eventually results in a famine that Yhwh inflicts upon Israel. Given several points of overlap with the Rahab account, these Gibeonite texts merit a closer examination, which we undertake in Chapter 9.

9

Rahab's Courage and the Gibeonites' Cowardice

According to the analysis presented in Chapter 8, the two sides of Rahab's character – her words and her deeds – evolved together. Instead of representing a particular clan (the "Rahabites"), as some scholars claim, this Canaanite woman serves as an archetype of the outsider who secures a place in the national fold through an act of courage and loyalty.[1]

While we cannot say much, if anything, about Rahab's origins and the prebiblical legends that may have grown up around her name, we can establish what purposes her story serves in the wider narrative: Originally, it had little to do with her identity as an outsider, serving instead to explain why Jericho was "shut up tightly because of the Israelites, with no one going out or coming in" (Josh. 6:1). The story grew to its present proportions as later writers expanded it, both to teach the nation lessons of fearlessness and to address issues posed by contested populations.

The Gibeonites, who are the subject of two chapters in Joshua, were one such contested population. The commonalities between this group and Rahab make their differences all the more telling: Both call attention to Israel's impressive triumphs over two kings in the Transjordan, and both manage to secure a place in the nation's "midst." Yet while Rahab does so through surreptitious actions that are both courageous and commendable (at least, from the perspective of the intended readership), the Gibeonites secure their protected place through an act of pusillanimous duplicity.

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[1] Rahab is notably never called a "Canaanite," perhaps because in the context of the book this term has an ethnophaulistic sense deemed unfitting for such an exemplary character.

The account of the Gibeonites' treachery illustrates the dynamics of war remembrance that we are exploring in our study. Instead of defending this population by commemorating the loyalty and bravery of its members in wartime, the biblical scribes challenged their belonging and privileges by creating a memory of unheroic conduct.[2] Yet what was it about the Gibeonites that rankled the authors of Joshua? To answer this question, we need to consider a number of clues from both the material-cultural record and the biblical corpus.[3]

ARCHEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL EVIDENCE

At the site of Gibeon (Tell el-Jib), archeologists have unearthed more than ninety jar handles bearing the Hebrew impression LMLK (meaning for the king) and dating to the late eighth to mid-seventh centuries; most are identified as "late types." Another twenty-four were found at Beeroth (Khirbet el-Burj). Several of the handles from Gibeon were originally part of massive wine pithoi. Recently, a tax bulla that reads "For the king, from Gibeon," dating perhaps to the reign of Manasseh (697–643 BCE), was uncovered in Jerusalem. In addition to these finds, forty-one jar handles with concentric stamps (mid-seventh century; 14.5 percent of all those excavated) were found at Gibeon, with fifty-six jar handles bearing the name Gibeon.[4]

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[2] For this type of negative war memorializing, see my study of the Ziphites and Keilah in *David, King of Israel*, chap. 4.

[3] An older, yet still useful, discussion of the range of historical and exegetical issues posed by the Gibeonites is the work of Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Gibeon and Israel: The Role of Gibeon and the Gibeonites in the Political and Religious History of Early Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972). For a discussion of the role played by the Gibeonite region in the kingdoms of the North (Israel), see Israel Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom: The Archeology and History of Northern Israel* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013).

For the historical importance of Gibeon in the late monarchic period and thereafter, see Frédéric Gangloff, "La zone rurale centrale de Benjamin après l'invasion babylonienne de 587 av. J.-C.: Un marché régional et international prospère en plein effondrement de Juda," *Res antiquae*, 10 (2013), 257–272; Oded Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005); Diana Edelman, "Gibeon and the Gibeonites Revisited" in Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans Revisited* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 153–168. For the biblical texts, see John Day, "Gibeon and the Gibeonites in the Old Testament" in Robert Rezetko, Timothy Henry Lim, and W. Brian Aucker (eds.), *Reflection and Refraction: Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 113–137.

[4] The figures I present here are from Oded Lipschits, Omer Sergi, and Ido Koch, "Royal Judahite Jar Handles: Reconsidering the Chronology of the lmlk Stamp Impressions," *Tel Aviv*, 37 (2010), 3–32. On the classification and dating of LMLK impressions, see the treatments by Oded Lipschits ("Judah Under Assyrian Rule and the Early Phase of

More than a century before native potters impressed Judean royal seals on these jar handles, an Egyptian scribe had inscribed the name Gibeon in a memorial account of the cities encountered by the Egyptian pharaoh Sheshonq during his campaign in the southern Levantine (ca. 926/5 BCE). The site of Tell el-Jib was occupied from the Early Bronze Age, but attained unprecedented levels of prosperity during Iron Age IIB and IIC (corresponding roughly to the eighth and seventh centuries, respectively). A thick wall enclosed the crest of the High Place, and a large pool with water conduits witnesses to impressive architectural expertise. In addition, the city boasted a thriving wine industry during the eighth and seventh centuries BCE, with cellars that could house 95,000 liters of wine.[5]

On the biblical landscape, the Gibeonites inhabited a tetrapolis consisting of the towns of Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-Jearim (see Josh. 9:17). The towns of Chephirah and Beeroth are mentioned very rarely in biblical literature. A list from the Persian-Hellenistic period mentions them together with Kiriath-Jearim as several of the places to which Judean exiles returned (Ezra 2:25; Neh. 7:29). Beeroth gets bad press in a passage from the book of Samuel that describes how two men from this town entered the house of Saul's son, Ish-bosheth, and brutally murdered him in the night; when David hears about it, he condemns their deed and commands his servants to execute them (2 Sam. 4).[6]

Kiriath-Jearim is remembered as the place where the ark of Yhwh was domiciled for some twenty years, and recent excavations conducted by Israel Finkelstein and Thomas Römer have revealed a massive cultic platform at this site. When David centralizes his kingdom, he transfers the palladium to Jerusalem from "the house of Abinadab on the hill" (2 Sam. 6:1–5, 14–15, 16–19). Whereas the text locates this hill in a town called Baale-Judah, another account (1 Sam. 4–7) goes to great lengths to

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Stamping Handles") and Andrew Vaughn ("Should All of the LMLK Jars Still Be Attributed to Hezekiah? Yes!") in Zev I. Farber and Jacob L. Wright (eds.), *Archeology and History of Eighth Century Judah* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2018), available in open access format at www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/pubs/9780884143482_OA.pdf.

[5] James B. Pritchard, "Gibeon" in Ephraim Stern (ed.), *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, 4 vols. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society & Carta, 1993), 2: 511–14; Hanan Eshel, "The Late Iron Age Cemetery of Gibeon," *Israel Exploration Journal*, 37 (1987), 1–17. On the Gibeon-Bethel plateau, see Finkelstein, *Forgotten Kingdom,* 37–62.

[6] The passage may have originally consisted of only verses 5–12; see the discussion in Wright, *David, King of Israel*, 130–131.

identify Abinadab's house in Kiriath-Jearim and to explain how the ark ended up there: After the Philistines capture it in battle, it wreaks havoc among them, so they send it back to Judah. When it arrives in the town of Beth-Shemesh, it continues to inflict many deaths. Wondering who could "stand/serve before Yhwh, this holy god," the people of the town petition their neighbors in Kiriath-Jearim to take it off their hands. When the citizens of Kiriath-Jearim do so, they station it in "the house of Abinadab on the hill" and consecrate his son to guard it.[7] It remains in the town happily for twenty years (1 Sam. 7:1–2).[8] The claims made in this account of the ark – perhaps representing an older source – would, of course, have pleased the (Gibeonite) inhabitants of Kiriath-Jearim.[9]

With respect to Gibeon, "a massive city, like one of the royal cities" (Josh. 10:2), the biblical texts reflect a range of attitudes. A document in the Nehemiah Memoir commemorates a Gibeonite contribution to the construction of Jerusalem's wall (Neh. 3:7). The book of Chronicles identifies Gibeon as the place where the tabernacle had been erected (1 Chron. 16:39, 21:29, and passim). The book also describes a warrior from Gibeon leaving Saul and becoming one of David's elite warriors (1 Chron. 12:4). Two passages link "the father/founder of Gibeon" to the line of Saul (1 Chron. 8:29–40, 9:35–44); the Gibeonites accordingly belong to Saul's extended clan. This is not a good thing, since, in the version of history told in Chronicles, Saul serves as a contemptible foil to the heroic David.[10]

Older texts present a similarly ambivalent image of Gibeon. A chapter in the book of Samuel depicts a bloody battle fought "at the pool of Gibeon" between the warriors of David and Saul after the death of the latter (2 Sam. 2; see also 2 Sam. 20:8). The book of Jeremiah alludes to this battle by locating another deplorable instance of internecine conflict "at the waters of Gibeon" (Jer. 41:12; cf. v. 9). The same book (chap. 28) depicts a Gibeonite prophet named Hananiah, who, as a prominent figure

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[7] Cf. "hill of Kiriath[-Jearim]" in Josh. 18:28; and see Nadav Na'aman, "A Hidden Anti-David Polemic in 2 Samuel 6:2" in David S. Vanderhooft and Abraham Winitzer (eds.), *Literature as Politics, Politics as Literature: Essays on the Ancient Near East in Honor of Peter Machinist* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 321–328.

[8] Chronicles harmonizes the two texts in Samuel (see 1 Chron. 13:5, as well as Josh. 18:28). The difference of opinion as to whether Kiriath-Jearim is located in the tribal territory of Benjamin or Judah may be related to this account of the ark residing there.

[9] On the ark narrative in Samuel, see now Peter Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes im Alten Testament und in den Texten vom Toten Meer* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009).

[10] On these texts, and on Saul as a foil to David in Chronicles more generally, see Wright, *David, King of Israel*, chap. 10.

in Jerusalemite society, enjoys the respect of elite (priestly) circles. However, he denies the veracity of Jeremiah's message; consequently, Yhwh sends Jeremiah to curse him, and he dies soon thereafter. The rabbis interpreted this prophet's Gibeonite origins in line with Joshua's curse (see Josh. 9:23).

RELATIONSHIP TO JERUSALEM'S TEMPLE

A number of biblical texts bespeak Gibeon's importance as a cultic place, with a long history of royal patronage. We've already considered the ark narrative, which commemorates the respected role played by Kiriath-Jearim. The book of Kings honors Solomon as the one who built the temple in Jerusalem, but it also claims that long before he undertook the building project, he went regularly to Gibeon to sacrifice: "For that was the principal shrine; Solomon had offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar" (1 Kings 3:4).[11]

Another prominent text reflecting Gibeon's cultic significance is 2 Samuel 21, which we examine in greater detail later in this chapter. The story describes a famine and David's attempts to placate Yhwh. When the drought had not relented for three years, the king learns, in an oracle from Yhwh, that the cause was "Saul and his house, because he had incurred bloodguilt by killing Gibeonites." We are not told when Saul committed the atrocities, but one is reminded of the time when he slaughtered the priests at Nob (1 Sam. 21–22).[12] David asks the Gibeonites what he could do for them so that they would "bless the possession of Yhwh." Although this expression may be just a way of describing reconciliation between the Gibeonites and (the rest of) Israel, it may refer to a special priestly prerogative to pronounce a benediction on the people. (The collective blessing of Israel is to be pronounced by the sons of Aaron, according to Numbers 6.) In response to David's inquiry, the Gibeonites ask that they

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[11] This account vexed later readers, who expected Solomon to have worshiped solely in Jerusalem: "He loved Yhwh and followed the practices of his father David, yet he sacrificed and offered at the various shrines [on the high places]" (v. 3). The authors of Chronicles corrected this censure. In their account, Solomon visits the shrine in Gibeon because the sacred tabernacle stands there until Jerusalem becomes the final and sole place of sacrifice; Gibeon is thus the direct precursor to Jerusalem (1 Chron. 16:39–43, 21:29; 2 Chron. 1:3, 13).

[12] If Nob is a misspelling of Gob, as widely assumed, then 1 Samuel 21–22 would be yet another illustration of biblical polemics surrounding the Gibeonites. David's priest Abiathar (if not also Ahitub) would have hailed from a Gibeonite guild, according to this narrative thread.

be given seven of Saul's sons, whom they intended to impale "on the mountain before Yhwh," and, with David's assistance, this is exactly what they do. The cultic-ritual character of the slaughter is underscored by the statement that it occurred for the entire span of the barley harvest.

The Gibeonites' cultic connection is reflected elsewhere in the biblical corpus. Thus, the book of Isaiah (28:21) compares Yhwh's might to the hill of Perazim (see 2 Sam. 6:8) and to the valley of Gibeon. Likewise, material from Joshua, also treated later in this chapter, assigns to the Gibeonites tasks at "the house of my god" and "the altar of Yhwh, in the sacred place that he would choose" (Josh. 9:24, 27). Although menial tasks, the responsibility is nevertheless cultic, and as we shall see, there's a very good reason why the authors would have wanted to diminish the nature of their priestly roles. Moreover, the following account of the battle at Gibeon, which is generally agreed to be older, presents Yhwh engaging directly in combat by both hurling stones from heaven and stopping the sun in the sky; the latter aspect reflects the "solarization" of Yhwh, whose wars are commemorated in "the Scroll of Yashar" (Josh. 10:11–14).[13]

All these texts assert a special relationship between Yhwh and the Gibeonites. They claim that Yhwh's ark resided in Kiriath-Jearim for many years; that Solomon sacrificed frequently to Yhwh at Gibeon and had one of his most important divine encounters there; that the Gibeonites appeased the divine wrath at harvest time by slaughtering Saul's son on the "mountain of Yhwh"; and that Yhwh manifested his power at Gibeon in special ways.

On the basis of the material just discussed, one would assume that the Gibeonites were members of Israel. However, two texts in our survey emphatically deny that such is the case. The first appears in the account of David and the ritual slaughter Saul's descendants; the second is the tale of the Gibeonites' first encounter with Israel during the days of Joshua. In what follows, we treat these two closely related texts in tandem.

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[13] On the solarization of Yhwh (attested also in the final line of the Song of Deborah, the subject of Part IV), see Joel M. Lemon, *Yhwh's Winged Forms in the Psalms: Exploring Congruent Iconography and Texts* (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2011). Regarding "the Scroll of Yashar" as a work of war commemoration, I am preparing a short piece on the topic to be published with a work of poetry purporting to be the contents of this venerable work. In the meantime, see Kristin De Troyer, "'Is This Not Written in the Book of Jashar?' (Joshua 10:13c): References to Extra-Biblical Books in the Bible" in Jacques van Ruiten and J. Cornelis de Vos (eds.), *The Land of Israel in Bible, History, and Theology: Studies in Honour of Ed Noort* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 45–50; Farber, *Images of Joshua*, 116–118.

FROM JOSHUA TO SAUL

The account of David permitting the Gibeonites to perform a ritual slaughter of Saul's male progeny (2 Sam. 21) begins with a statement about the origins of this population. As most scholars agree, the statement must have originated as a marginal gloss before being incorporated into the introduction. Notice how it's interjected into the narrative; in most modern translations, it is placed in parentheses:

2 **So the king [David] called the Gibeonites and said to them:**
    (Now the Gibeonites are not Israelites; they are instead part of the Amorites. Although the Israelites had sworn to them [protection], Saul attempted to wipe them out in his zeal for the Israelites and Judah.)
    3 *David said to the Gibeonites,* **"What shall I do for you . . . ."**

The supplement declares, in the most straightforward terms, that the Gibeonites are Amorites, not Israelites. They lived among the Israelites because the latter had entered a pact with them. However, Saul had violated the pact and sought to wipe out this indigenous population. What motivated his genocidal campaign, the supplement explains, was his xenophobic zeal for his own people. It's noteworthy that Saul, as a Benjaminite from the town of Gibeah, hails from a region that was home to the important Gibeonite sites mentioned earlier in this chapter.[14]

The account of Saul's reign in the book of Samuel pivots on an episode in which Yhwh's prophet commands him to annihilate the vicious Amalekites, both the people and their animals, because they treated Israel most inhospitably at the time of the exodus.[15] Saul, however, defies these battle orders by granting immunity to the Amalekites' king and destroying only the worthless livestock (1 Sam. 15). Consequently, he forfeits his throne to David, who is busy fighting Amalekites when Saul and Jonathan fall dishonorably in a battle with the Philistines on Mount Gilboa (2 Sam. 1:1).

While Saul fails in his campaigns against these and other enemies of Israel, he easily executes eighty-five priests of Yhwh from the town of

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[14] See the discussion of the region in William M. Schniedewind, "The Search for Gibeah: Notes on the Historical Geography of Central Benjamin" in Aren Maeir and Pierre de Miroschedji (eds.), *I Will Speak the Riddles of Ancient Times: Archeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday*, vol. 2 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 711–721.

[15] In Part I, I treat this text and others that relate to the moral expectation of granting hospitality to refugees on the road, and in Part IV, I discuss this text in relation to the Kenites, whom Saul spares from his genocidal program.

Nob/Gob, together with all the inhabitants and animals that live there (1 Sam. 21–22); the connections between this town and the Gibeonites have long been noted.[16] With respect to that pact mentioned in 2 Samuel 22:2, the book of Joshua tells how Israel swore to the Gibeonites that they would permit them to live in their midst (chap. 9). In the context of the wider narrative of Genesis-Kings, the reader should understand the statement "the Israelites had sworn to them [protection]" as a reference to this episode in the book of Joshua.[17]

The Gibeonites are depicted in chapter 9 as a population that joins the nation later. Since neither they nor their ancestors were present at Sinai, they are not members of the covenant and, as in the case of Rahab, have to be grafted in by a secondary pact of protection made directly, and deceitfully, with the nation (rather than with Yhwh). In the case of the Gibeonites, however, the pact fails to provide protection after the nation's first king seizes power. When Saul embarks on his nationalistic program of genocide, the people fail to stand in his way and enforce the pact of protection made directly with them. Even if that pact was made under false pretenses, it was sworn in the name of Yhwh, and Yhwh is not reluctant to enforce it. He chooses to do so by punishing the land with a famine.

AN EARLY MEMORY OF JOSHUA

It seems quite likely that this episode in Joshua 9 was composed secondarily as a prologue to the battle story in the following chapter.[18] In fact, the battle story may be one of the oldest texts within the book, and the event

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[16] The rabbis already connected the two stories (see *b. Yebam.* 78b). Whatever the case may be, the supplement in 2 Samuel 21:2 makes Saul's crime not the vicious persecution of the Gibeonite priests but the violation of a pact that accorded the Gibeonites a protected (albeit inferior) status in Israelite society.

[17] The Joshua passage may have been composed to tell the prehistory of the pact mentioned in 2 Samuel 21:2. However, the concise formulation leaves the reader wondering what exactly "the Israelites had sworn to them." (Modern translations resolve this discrepancy by adding "to spare them.") It is also improbable that a scribe responsible for this gloss would have made such a bold assertion, implying, for example, that non-Israelites served as priests at Yhwh's altar where Solomon worshiped (1 Kings 3:4).

[18] In chapter 9, Joshua and the Israelites consider wiping them out but cannot do so because of their pact. In chapter 10, they come to their aid against a coalition of enemy forces. Not only is the transition unusually abrupt; Israel could have circumvented their pact and still fulfilled the command to destroy the inhabitants of the land by allowing others to do it for them and not coming to their rescue. See Farber, *Images of Joshua*, 86–122; Zev I. Farber and Jacob L. Wright, "The Savior of Gibeon: Reconstructing the Prehistory of the Joshua

itself appears to have been commemorated in an earlier work featuring the wars of Yhwh (see "the Scroll of Yashar" in 10:11). Most of the material in Joshua appears to have been created ad hoc for the exodus-conquest narrative, yet the battle story, when isolated and read independently from its present context, identifies Joshua neither as Moses's successor nor as the commanding officer who leads Israel across the Jordan. Like Gideon, Jephthah, Saul, and David, the hero is a local warlord who commands his own private army. He saves a beleaguered population thanks to the miraculous intervention of Yhwh; the name Joshua, after all, means "Yhwh saved/saves."

The story's substratum depicts a scenario that is strikingly similar to Saul's rescue of Jabesh-Gilead as portrayed in 1 Samuel 11. In both cases, an enemy first besieges a town; in response, its residents send a message for help; and finally, the hero answers the call and marches up promptly with an army to "save" them. The difference between the accounts is that Saul musters a militia force from Israel's farmers, while Joshua fights with what seem to be his private corps of professional warriors. In keeping with a typical scenario of martial "saviors" in the ancient world, Joshua just happens to conquer a region as he lends a hand to those in dire straits.[19] By executing five kings who had formed a military coalition against Gibeon, he then extends his territorial claims from their original borders in the central hill country.

The older battle story in chapter 10 does not present a sharp distinction between Israelites and all others ("Canaanites"); in fact, the name "Israel" is found solely in what appears to be a secondary stratum. In contrast, the account of the pact in chapter 9 clearly identifies the Gibeonites as non-Israelites. Specifically, it calls them "Hivites," linking them to the "seven nations" that Yhwh commands Israel to exterminate in Deuteronomy. If they survived the conquest, it was only through a contemptible act of deceit.[20]

Account" in Christoph Berner and Harald Samuel (eds.), *Book Seams in the Hexateuch I* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 295–310.

[19] See Wright, *David, King of Israel*, 52–53 and 66–74; Farber, *Images of Joshua*, 109–115.

[20] See also Josh. 11:19. Note however the contradiction to 9:1 (the Hivites attack the Hivites!). The identification of the Gibeonites is likely secondary, for the purpose of identifying them as an accursed nation. In "The Sanctuary of the Gibeonites Revisited," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*, 9 (2009), 101–24, Nadav Na'aman attempts to explain how the Gibeonites were actually Hivites, missing the polemic purpose of the identification. I differ with Na'aman on a number of points, most importantly that this text originated in the direct wake of Josiah's reforms. The text

The battle story also presents the Gibeonites in a positive (or at least neutral) light. The city of Gibeon is described as "a massive city, like one of the royal cities, … and all its men were heroes/warriors" (v. 2).[21] Its extraordinary might is suggested further by the large coalition of Canaanite kings that besieges it. In contradistinction to chapter 10, the new account in chapter 9 portrays the Gibeonites as cowardly and duplicitous. When they hear what Joshua did to Jericho and Ai, they devise a scheme to save themselves: Disguised as travelers from a distant country, they send delegates to make a treaty with Israel. They know that Joshua is intent on taking possession of a clearly circumscribed territory and would not target them as enemies if he thinks they come from abroad. Reflecting this rationale, the laws of Deuteronomy demand the annihilation of all who dwell in Canaan, yet permit peace treaties with those who reside afar off (Deut. 20:10–18).[22]

After Joshua makes a pact with the Gibeonites, their true identity comes to light: Instead of voyaging from a foreign land, they turn out to be a Canaanite population residing in Israel's "midst." When summoned to give account for their actions, the Gibeonites explain that they feared for their lives since they knew Yhwh had commanded Israel to destroy all the inhabitants of the land. Rather than violating their treaty and assaulting the Gibeonites, as Saul does, Joshua allows them to live in the nation's midst. But to ensure that they will not occupy a place of honor, he pronounces a curse on them: "Never shall one of you be 'cut off' from being a slave – hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my god!" (v. 23).

THE COMPOSITION OF JOSHUA 9

The account of the pact in Joshua 9 denigrates the Gibeonites and denies them a primordial connection to the people of Israel. Whereas the true Israelites came out of Egypt during the exodus under Moses, these are

likely originated at a later time, and the polemics against the Gibeonites are only indirectly related to Josiah, if at all.

[21] The earliest iteration of the account in chapter 10 likely began in verse 5, yet portions of verses 1–4 (such as part of v. 2) may have been added at an early stage. These first four verses appear to have been amplified first with Ai, then with Jericho, and finally with the pact between Gibeon and Israel. On compositional issues in Josh. 9–10, see Dozeman, *Joshua 1–12;* Volkmar Fritz, *Das Buch Josua* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994); J. Alberto Soggin, *Joshua: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972).

[22] I am not sure if Joshua 10 presupposes specifically Deuteronomy 20:10–18.

indigenous inhabitants of Canaan who managed to weasel their way into the national fold when Israel was already in the land. The account also explains how the Gibeonites came to serve in a cultic capacity: instead of assigning them to an illustrious position at one of the largest shrines in the region (1 Kings 3:4) or to a special role as guardians of the ark of Yhwh (1 Sam. 7 and 2 Sam. 6), Joshua formally condemned them, during their first encounter with Israel, to the most menial of cultic tasks (see Deut. 29:10).

If the Gibeonites were allowed to perform respected priestly roles at an important shrine, the recognition they would enjoy would incite fierce competition with priests in Jerusalem. The latter have left their unmistakable imprimatur on Joshua 9. As we observed in relation to Joshua 22 in Part II, they take the opportunity here to reaffirm to their readers that there was only one place that Yhwh chose for his altar.

Below I present the results of my diachronic analysis of the text. The indented portions belong to the secondary strata, while the earliest edition is in boldface.[23]

Reconstruction of Joshua 9

1 Now when all the kings who were beyond the Jordan in the hill country and in the lowland all along the coast of the Great Sea toward Lebanon – the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites – heard of this, 2 they gathered together with one accord to fight Joshua and Israel.

3 **When the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai,**

4 they on their part acted with cunning:

they went and prepared provisions,

and took worn-out sacks for their donkeys, and wineskins, worn-out and torn and mended, 5 with worn-out, patched sandals on their feet, and worn-out clothes; and all their provisions were dry and moldy.

6 **and went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal, and said to him**

and to the Israelites, "We have come from a far country; so now make a treaty with us." 7 But the Israelites said to the Hivites, "Perhaps you live among us; then how can we make a treaty with you?" 8 They said to Joshua,

"We are your servants." And Joshua said to them, "Who are you? And where do you come from?" 9 They said to him, "Your servants have come from a very far country, because of the name of Yhwh your god; for we have heard a report of him, of all that he did in Egypt, 10 and of all that he did to the two

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[23] For the sake of presentation, I have distinguished solely two layers here. Yet, given the number of duplications, it is possible that, in addition to many supplements, we have two independent recensions that have been spliced together. Notice the way that much of the secondary portion of the text deflects attention away from Joshua and is more priestly in orientation. The problem with this solution is that some things are repeated more than twice. On past proposals and their problems, see Dozeman, *Joshua 1–12*, 407–411.

kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, King Sihon of Heshbon, and King Og of Bashan who lived in Ashtaroth. 11 So our elders and all the inhabitants of our country said to us, 'Take provisions in your hand for the journey; go to meet them, and say to them, "We are your servants; come now, make a treaty with us." '

12 Here is our bread; it was still warm when we took it from our houses as our food for the journey, on the day we set out to come to you, but now, see, it is dry and moldy; 13 these wineskins were new when we filled them, and see, they are burst; and these garments and sandals of ours are worn out from the very long journey." 14 So the leaders partook of their provisions, and did not ask direction from the LORD.

15 **And Joshua made peace with them, guaranteeing their lives by a treaty.**

And the leaders of the congregation swore an oath to them.

16 **But when three days had passed after they had made a treaty with them, they heard that they were their neighbors and were living among them.**

17 So the Israelites set out and reached their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-Jearim. 18 But the Israelites did not attack them, because the leaders of the congregation had sworn to them by Yhwh, the god of Israel. Then all the congregation murmured against the leaders. 19 But all the leaders said to all the congregation, "We have sworn to them by Yhwh, the god of Israel, and now we must not touch them. 20 This is what we will do to them: We will let them live, so that wrath may not come upon us, because of the oath that we swore to them." 21 The leaders said to them, "Let them live." So they became hewers of wood and drawers of water for all the congregation, as the leaders had decided concerning them.

22 **Joshua summoned them, and said to them, "Why did you deceive us, saying, 'We are very far from you,' while in fact you are living among us?**

23 Now therefore you are cursed, and some of you shall always be slaves, hewers of wood and drawers of water for the House of my god."

24 **They answered Joshua, "Because it was told to your servants for a certainty that Yhwh your god had commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land before you; so we were in great fear for our lives because of you, and did this thing. 25 And now we are in your hand: do as it seems good and right in your sight to do to us."**

26 This is what he did for them: he saved them from the Israelites; and they did not kill them.

27 **On that day Joshua made them hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of Yhwh, to continue to this day, in the place that he should choose.**

As a late text placed at an early point in the biblical narrative, Joshua 9 provides a lens through which to read all the subsequent depictions of the Gibeonites. Moreover, it invites the reader to infer that if the Gibeonites had no cultic role before they were assigned to lowly tasks at the altar of Yhwh, then they must have built their renowned shrine and achieved their prominent priestly status after they abandoned their assignments at

Yhwh's one true altar.[24] When read in sequence, this late text contradicts many others related to the Gibeonites. (For example, it would not make sense for Yhwh to appear to Solomon at Gibeon if its shrine were illicit.) But such is the nature of biblical literature: Instead of *deleting* problematic texts, redactors more frequently *added* new texts in an effort to tip the weight of evidence in their favor. And what better place to attack the Gibeonites than right before Israel's first encounter with them during the conquest?

FROM SAUL TO DAVID

Having now explored the compositional history of the Joshua 9–10, we can return to our discussion of 2 Samuel 21. We've seen that Joshua does not break his oath after learning that the Gibeonites deceived him. In contrast, Saul goes out of his way to harass the Gibeonites. By doing so, he flouts the protection Joshua originally promised them. It is up to David, as Saul's successor, to make reparations.[25]

An ancient oath provides little protection unless it is guaranteed by effective divine curses. Fortunately, the Gibeonites have a special relationship to Yhwh, and the oath eventually makes itself felt in the form of an enduring famine. After three years of dismal harvests, David finally turns to an oracle to learn what caused it. When he discovers, conveniently, that not he but his predecessor Saul was at fault, he summons the Gibeonite leaders to determine how he could make atonement so that they would "bless the heritage of Yhwh." The Gibeonites are initially reluctant to request anything, but, with David's prodding, they eventually ask that seven of Saul's male descendants be impaled on a hill at his hometown in Gibeah. David accedes to their request, and the ritual execution is performed "on the mountain before Yhwh" during the first days of the harvest. The act appeases the deity, and the famine ceases thereafter.

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[24] This text is by no means an isolated instance of insults hurled from priestly circles in Jerusalem. Indeed, these circles were responsible for a wide array of biblical texts that defend their own status and assail their competitors. See Wright, *David, King of Israel*, chap. 8.

[25] It's tempting to approach the text with a "hermeneutic of suspicion," as if it were a pro-Davidic apology that exonerates him from his execution of Saul's descendants. But such a reading is actually naive inasmuch as it must assume that the text was written by spin doctors in David's or Solomon's court.

Reconstruction of Older Account in 2 Samuel 21

There was a famine during the reign of David, year after year for three years. David inquired of Yhwh, and Yhwh said, "It is because of Saul and the bloodguilt of his house that he incurred by killing the Gibeonites." 2 The king summoned the Gibeonites and said to them:

> (Now the Gibeonites are not Israelites; they are instead part of the Amorites. Although the Israelites had sworn to them [protection], Saul attempted to wipe them out in his zeal for the Israelites and Judah.)— 3 David said to the Gibeonites,

3 *David said to the Gibeonites,* "What shall I do for you? How shall I make atonement, so that you will bless the heritage of Yhwh?" 4 The Gibeonites said to him, "We have no claim for silver or gold against Saul and his household, and we have no claim on the life of any other man in Israel." And he said, "Whatever you say I will do for you." 5 And they said to the king, "The man who massacred us and planned to exterminate us, so that we should not survive in all the territory of Israel, 6 let seven men from his descendants be handed over to us, and we will impale them before Yhwh in Gibeah of Saul, 'Yhwh's chosen one.'" And the king replied, "I will do so."

> 7 The king had pity on Mephibosheth son of Jonathan son of Saul, because of the oath before Yhwh between the two, *between David and Jonathan son of Saul.*[26]

8 The king took Armoni and Mephibosheth, the two sons that Rizpah daughter of Aiah bore to Saul, and the five sons that Merab daughter of Saul bore to Adriel son of Barzillai the Meholathite, 9 and he delivered them to the Gibeonites, who proceeded to impale them on the mountain before Yhwh. All seven of them perished at the same time; they were put to death in the first days of the harvest, *at the beginning of the barley harvest.*[27]

> . . .

14b The deity heeded the land after this.

This is a highly disturbing episode, and it is placed next to others that are unfavorable to David's memory. Directly preceding it are the accounts of the bloody war that the king wages against Israel, his calamitous return from exile, and an insurrection against his reign. In the immediately following account, David grows weary while fighting the Philistines and

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[26] This line in verse 7 about David sparing Mephibosheth is closely related to the interpolation in verse 2b: in contrast to Saul, David was concerned to keep an oath made "before Yhwh." The line may be intended to cast aspersions on the Gibeonites inasmuch as David has pity on a (disabled) member of Saul's family (see the Talmudic text cited in n. 31 below). The appearance of another descendant named Mephibosheth in the immediately following verse reinforces the impression that verse 7 has been interpolated. On this figure, see Jeremy Schipper, *Disability Studies and the Hebrew Bible: Figuring Mephibosheth in the David Story* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006).

[27] The explicit reference to "beginning" here in verse 9 anticipates the new scene in which Rizpah guards the corpses during the entire period of the harvest: "from the beginning of the harvest until water was pouring on them from the sky" (v. 10).

is almost killed; his men thereafter swear that he will no longer accompany them in battle. Another passage tells of a census David undertakes that provokes divine judgment on the nation; it ceases only after David builds an altar and sacrifices to Yhwh, who is said to have "heeded the land" (2 Sam. 24:25) – the same expression with which the episode in chapter 21 concludes.

In the context of these critical accounts, our story is to be interpreted not *ad maiorem David gloriam* but as a conscious attempt to cast the nation's iconic ruler in an unfavorable light. As such, it's part of the larger parable of power and statehood unfurled in the book of Samuel.[28] David originally mounts the throne because he's skilled in fending off the nation's enemies, but at this late stage he has become a menace to his own people.

RIZPAH'S HEROISM

The critique of David continues in the expansions to the account, which appear to have been undertaken in two stages. The first is one of the most poignant scenes in the Hebrew Bible, portraying a heroic act of protest. The protagonist is Rizpah, the mother of two of the seven victims. For many weeks, she camps in sackcloth on a nearby boulder, shielding the impaled bodies from birds during the day and from animals at night:

Then Rizpah daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it on the boulder for herself. She stayed there from the beginning of the harvest until water was pouring on the bodies from the sky. She did not let the birds of the sky settle on them by day or the wild beasts [approach] by night. 2 Sam. 21:10

This description of Rizpah's vigil may have been added to the story first. If so, it would have dramatically shifted the interpretation of the final line: "The deity heeded the land after this." Originally "after this" referred to the ritual slaughter on the mountain of Yhwh, yet with the new scene we are to understand that what appeased the divine ire was a very different move – namely, an act of *honoring* the victims performed by a bereaved mother who seemingly could not do otherwise.

The second part of the continuation originally had nothing to do with this story, yet it makes for a suggestive and powerful resolution to the

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[28] According to a dominant approach, this account is an apologia for the house of David, which actually had these men killed. While the account is suggestive in this regard, the approach obfuscates the fact that this account appears in a context of the book that explicitly casts David in an unfavorable light. For more on the critique of statism in the book of Samuel, see Wright, *David, King of Israel*, chaps. 6–7.

bloody drama. The text consists of a short account of how David honors the memories of Saul and Jonathan by reinterring their bones in their ancestral tomb (vv. 12–14). To connect it to the story, a scribe added two lines: one that presents David learning of Rizpah's actions (v. 11) and another (v. 13) that presents David gathering the bones of those who had been "impaled" – the same verb as used in the description of the Gibeonites "impaling" the bodies of Saul's descendants.[29]

11 *And it was told to David what Saul's concubine Rizpah daughter of Aiah had done.*
    12 David went and took the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan from the citizens of Jabesh-Gilead, who had stolen them from the public square of Beth-Shan, where the Philistines had hung them up on the day the Philistines killed Saul at Gilboa. 13 He brought up the bones of Saul and of his son Jonathan from there, *and he gathered the bones of those who had been impaled.* 14 They buried the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan in Zela, in the territory of Benjamin, in the tomb of his father Kish, and they did all that the king commanded .... 2 Sam. 21:11–14

The episode works as a continuation of the older account in two ways. First, its description of David reinterring Saul's and Jonathan's bones on their patrimony makes for a fitting response to Rizpah's protest over the exposed corpses of these men's descendants. Second, it presents the Philistines "hanging" the bodies of Saul and Jonathan at the public square in Beth-Shan, which parallels the Gibeonites "impaling" their descendants.[30]

    The new continuations thus turn the originally pro-Gibeonite account on its head. Together with the interpolation in verse 2b, which we discussed at length earlier in this chapter, these supplements make it clear that the Gibeonites do not belong to the people of Israel. They are outsiders and behave like the Philistines, Israel's most loathsome neighbors.

[29] My understanding of the text has much in common with the sensitive analysis of Simeon Chavel, "Compositry and Creativity in 2 Samuel 21:1–14," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 122 (2003), 23–52. Chavel reads all of verses 1–11, together with verse 13b and the second half of verse14a, as a separate running account. Although this is possible, the reader would be left wondering what "the king had commanded" (v. 14). It seems more likely that the second half of verse 14a is part of the originally separate account in verses 12–14a, and that verse 13b was added to it by the scribe who secondarily integrated it into the Gibeonite account.

[30] In contrast to 1 Samuel 31:11–13, which commemorates the heroism of the Transjordanian town of Jabesh-Gilead, this account maligns the city's memory by claiming that its citizens purloined the bodies of Saul and Jonathan and perhaps didn't even bury them. I treat these conflicting accounts at length in *David, King of Israel*, chap. 5.

The necessary step David takes to bring an end to the famine is not what he does to placate the Gibeonites but rather the benefaction he performs for the house of Saul. From the perspective of the account's three compositional stages, the deity heeds the land not in response to the Gibeonites' ritual slaughter or even the courageous act of Rizpah to honor the dead; what ultimately induces divine favor is rather the honor David pays to the memory of Saul and his son Jonathan. In keeping with the critique of monarchic power being formulated in the wider context, these new expanded versions of the story leave no room for doubt that had it not been for Rizpah's courageous and unrelenting protest, David wouldn't have thought to perform this praiseworthy deed.[31]

THE GIBEONITES, RAHAB, AND BIBLICAL WAR COMMEMORATION

Let us now consider how our findings relate to the Rahab story. Both the Gibeonites and Rahab are depicted in the book of Joshua as indigenous outsiders who secure a place "in the midst of Israel." The accounts of both also revolve around the formal declarations they make as they enter the national fold. The Gibeonite delegates begin their address in a manner that bears striking resemblances to Rahab's speech:

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[31] On burying or reinterring the bones of the dead as an act of piety, see Saul Olyan, "Some Neglected Aspects of Israelite Interment Ideology," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 124 (2005), 601–616; Olyan, "Jehoiakim's Dehumanizing Interment as a Ritual Act of Reclassification," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 133 (2014), 271–279.

In the Babylonian Talmud (*b. Yebam.* 79a), what seems to be an earlier maxim pertaining to Israel's defining characteristics is placed in the mouth of David: The Gibeonites voice their desire to impale seven of Saul's descendants, and David attempts to conciliate them – to no avail. Their unabashed and merciless brutality proves that they are not fit to belong to Israel: "[David] attempted to placate them, but they refused to be placated. Then he said to them: 'This nation [i.e., Israel] is distinguished by three traits: It is merciful, modest and benevolent. […] Only one who cultivates these three traits qualifies to become a member of this nation.'" The point is that David recognized that the Gibeonites did not have what it takes to belong to the nation. Even so, the king follows through with his agreement and punishes Saul's descendants in order to do justice for this alien population in Israel's midst. The retribution on behalf of marginal groups causes neighboring peoples to admire Israel and want to enter the fold: "Passers-by asked, 'What kind of men are these?' – 'These are royal princes.' 'What wrong did they do?' – 'They laid their hands upon resident aliens.' Then the passers-by declared: 'There is no nation worth joining more than this one. If royal princes are punished so harshly, how much more so common people? And if they did this for resident aliens, how much more so for Israelites?' 150,000 men immediately joined Israel – as it is said, 'Solomon had 70,000 who bore burdens, and 80,000 who were hewers in the hills.'"

Your servants have come from a very far country due to the name of Yhwh your god. We have heard a report of him, of all that he did in Egypt, and of all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, King Sihon of Heshbon, and King Og of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth . . . . Josh. 9:9–10

Rahab also tells the spies how she heard about the feats of Yhwh against these two formidable foes that inhabited the Transjordan. Yet she not only speaks; she also acts, and does so fearlessly. By risking her life, she merits the special treatment and protection she and her family receive during the Israelite invasion. Conversely, when all the kings of Canaan assemble to fight Israel (9:1–2), the lily-livered Gibeonites do not rally to Israel's side; their only move is an elaborate act of deception, through which they manage to save themselves.

Such tricksterism is admittedly in keeping with the Israelite ethos of survival depicted in many biblical texts.[32] Yet in the case of outsiders (such as Rahab and the Gibeonites), the objective is not simply to secure a place in the national community, but to do so honorably. Only then can a group expect to be embraced fully, rather than merely tolerated. In this respect, the Gibeonites fall far short of the high standard Rahab set through both her words and actions.

The authors of Joshua radically recontextualized one of the oldest accounts in the book – the story of how an indigenous military leader saved Gibeon and thereby established Israel's hegemony in the region (chap. 10). By prefacing this account with the story of the Gibeonites' subterfuge (chap. 9), they transformed the group to indigenous aliens with no primordial connection to the people of Israel. From other biblical texts and archeological evidence, we know that the Gibeonites boasted an honored position as guardians of a prominent shrine. Vilifying their cultic competitors, the Jerusalem-temple circles that composed Joshua 9 tell how Israel's leader, during the foundational wars of conquest, punished the denizens of Gibeon for their shameless chicanery and consigned them to the lowest orders of service in the congregation of Israel and at Yhwh's altar. Thus, in this case, we see how rivalries between clans and cultic professionals provided the impetus for the war commemoration that produced these central texts in the book of Joshua.

The Rahab story is directly related to this literary activity. The biblical scribes used biography and the stories of particular individuals when

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[32] Susan Niditch, *A Prelude to Biblical Folklore: Underdogs and Tricksters* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987). On the trickster elements in the stories of Rahab and the Gibeonites, see Dozeman, *Joshua 1–12*.

engaging in war commemoration on behalf of corporate groups and institutions. Yet whereas a figure like Jael, whom we study in Part IV, represents a particular ethnic group (the Kenites), Rahab serves as a foil to the Gibeonites. The authors castigate a prominent group in their society by producing a powerful tale of an outsider; in the process, the outsider becomes an insider while the Gibeonites, who had long been honored members of Israel, are declared to be aliens.

But the Rahab story is not just about Gibeonites. As the archetypal Other, this woman looms across the horizon of the entire biblical corpus, illustrating the most fundamental strategy by which disputed groups could affirm their affiliation to the people of Israel.

In addition to depicting this strategy, the biblical scribes themselves model a means of negotiating belonging. Instead of actual wartime contributions and solidarity, this method is historiographical in nature. It consists of memory-making through the activity of writing and rewriting texts. For these scribes, the account of the greatest moment in Israel's history – when the nation took possession of its Promised Land – offered itself as an ideal framework in which to commemorate the solidarity and sacrifice of some, and the duplicity and deceptions of others.

DEBORAH: MOTHER OF A VOLUNTARY NATION

I n this final part of our study, we turn our attention to the Bible's grandest war monument – the Song of Deborah. As we explore the most remarkable features of this impressive piece of poetry, we will treat its relationship to the preceding prose account, which contains another brilliant and important example of war commemoration. Both of these texts reflect the close relationship between war memories, the formation of biblical literature, and the construction of a (new) national identity in the aftermath of defeat.

We begin in Chapter 10 by considering the composition of the prose account and its function in the book of Judges. From there, we turn to the poetic version in Chapters 11 and 12, examining how the song imagines Israel as a people consisting solely of Northern tribes yet without a king ruling over them. These texts celebrate the contributions of women, and in Chapter 13 we study the central role they played in (biblical) war commemoration. Finally, in Chapter 14, we interpret our texts from the perspective of a particular population that posed a problem for the biblical scribes, and we will see how these scribes addressed the problem by supplementing narratives of the nation's past with the same politico-theological strategies on display in many of the other texts we've studied.

A Prophet and Her General

In this opening chapter, we examine the structure of the book of Judges, its place within the wider national narrative of Genesis-Kings, and compositional issues and emphases in the prose account of Deborah's war with the Canaanites. We will see that conventional approaches that distinguish between an older source and its later integration into the narrative are deficient inasmuch as the first iteration of the account appears to have been much more succinct and may have been composed as an early addendum to the exodus-conquest narrative. The account grew dramatically as scribes downplayed the role of Deborah's general by attributing the crowning feat to a woman who lived on the margins of Israelite society.

THE BOOK OF JUDGES AS A BRIDGE

The book of Judges is situated at the center of the larger narrative of the nation's history, which begins with the creation of the world in Genesis and ends with the destruction of Jerusalem in the book of Kings.[1] To appreciate the important structural function that Judges serves in this narrative, we need to compare the literary seams connecting Genesis to Exodus and Joshua to Judges.

The story in Exodus begins with the death of the Egyptian king. A new pharaoh, who does "not know Joseph," "rises up" and adopts a radically

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[1] For excellent and accessible English-language commentaries on the book, see Jack Sasson, *Judges 1–12: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); Susan Niditch *Judges: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008).

different policy toward Israel. Whereas the book of Genesis presents Joseph and his family being welcomed to Egypt, the book of Exodus describes harassment and persecution in this country, which necessitate the nation's collective flight and voyage to a new land.

The transition to the book of Judges is remarkably similar to the transition to the book of Exodus. The opening chapters of Judges also begin with a death – not of a foreign king, but of the nation's leader Joshua. Just as a new pharaoh "rises up" in Exodus, a new generation of Israelites "rises up" in Judges. And just as the new pharaoh doesn't "know Joseph," the new generation in Judges doesn't "know Yhwh" and worships other gods. The consequence of the Israelites' actions is defeat: Yhwh brings an end to their streak of victories during the days of Joshua and allows them to be assailed by their enemies round about (Judg. 2:10–15).

As many scholars now agree, Genesis originally had nothing to do with the narrative of the exodus and conquest. In fact, the two accounts of Israel's origins may have long competed with each other before they were spliced together to form a single narrative (see the discussion in Part I). As scribes conjoined these accounts, they had to deal with problems of transition. In Genesis, the pharaoh treats Israel with exceptional favor and generous patronage; in Exodus, the pharaoh is a genocidal tyrant. To explain this radical shift, the scribes who combined Genesis and Exodus prefaced a new introduction to the latter, which presents a different ruler taking the throne.

The narrative of the exodus and conquest concludes on a high note in the book of Joshua, with Israel's enemies subjugated and the land resting from war (see Josh. 11:23). However, "the history of the monarchy," which is told in the books of Samuel and Kings, presents the nation struggling with the Philistines and Ammonites; the monarchy is born as Saul and David subjugate these enemies. Eventually, scribes welded the two works together, just as they had attached Genesis to the exodus-conquest account. In this case, however, they had to bridge the gap between the triumphs recounted in Joshua and the dismal conditions faced by the nation at the beginning of the book of Samuel. Situated between these works, the book of Judges plays a pivotal role. By depicting the disintegration of the hegemony achieved by Joshua, it explains why the nation is plagued by foreign aggression in Samuel.[2]

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[2] On Judges as a bridge in the national narrative, see Uwe Becker, "The Place of Judges in the So-Called Deuteronomistic History: Some Remarks on Recent Research" in Christoph Berner and Harald Samuel (eds.), *Book-Seams in the Hexateuch I: The*

AN OLDER SOURCE?

While the book of Judges functions as a literary bridge in the narrative that extends from the book of Genesis to Kings, the Song of Deborah joins the Song of the Sea (Exod. 15) in demarcating an epoch within this narrative. What defines the epoch is Yhwh's direct, royal sovereignty over the nation. (The Song of the Sea culminates with the proclamation of this Yhwh's reign; likewise, the Song of Deborah pits this deity against the kings of Canaan.) What comes thereafter belongs to a different age and has a different historical status from the great salvation wrought by the nation's god through the agency of Moses, Joshua, and Deborah – the three archetypal leaders in Israel's premonarchic history.[3]

In the new age portrayed in Judges, Yhwh repeatedly raises up leaders who "rescue/save" them from their foes. The cycle of sin and salvation progresses steadily, so that each new generation is worse than the one before (Judg. 2:19). What's remarkable is that the book presents Israel's golden age as a period in which a woman, Deborah, governs the nation. By concluding Deborah's account with a lengthy hymn (the focus of our attention in Chapters 11 and 12), the book highlights her peerless performance. She is the ideal leader, and the account of her leadership conveys two of the book's central themes: 1) the limits of (macho) monarchic power that undergirded ancient states and 2) the central role of volunteerism in the life of the nation.

According to the brief paragraph that prefaces Deborah's story, the Israelites returned to their evil ways after the death of Ehud; consequently,

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Literary Transitions Between the Books of Genesis/Exodus and Joshua/Judges (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 339–351.

[3] The accounts of Deborah's immediate successors – Gideon, his son Abimelech, and Jephthah – all treat the issue of monarchic rule, and the concluding chapters of the book repeatedly assert that "at that time, there was no king in Israel." The Song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2 likewise marks the beginning of a new monarchic era, and it reflects on this change in relation to Yhwh's royal power, which he "grants to the king" (v. 10).

The account of Deborah has more in common with what comes before than what comes after: with the exception of David's capture of Jerusalem from the Jebusites, Deborah's battle is the final one fought against a member of the "seven nations." Moreover, Yhwh fights for Israel by throwing its enemies into a "panic" (*wayyāhām*, 4:15). The first time the deity brings victory to Israel in this manner is during the exodus (Exod. 14:24). He does so again during a pivotal battle at Gibeon during the days of Joshua (Josh. 10:10), and then one final time right before the establishment of the monarchy (1 Sam. 7:10), which the prophet Samuel commemorates with a monument that he calls "Ebenezer" (1 Sam. 7:12). Inasmuch as this monument commemorates the end of an epoch ("thus far Yhwh has helped us"), it functions in both the topography of the nation's territory and the narrative of the nation's history as a *lieu de mémoire*, à la Pierre Nora.

Yhwh sold them into the hand of a Canaanite king, who oppressed them for twenty years. The Hebrew syntax suggests that the nation stubbornly endured the two decades of oppression before turning to Yhwh for help.

After this preface, the narrative introduces Deborah and begins the account of her activities with Barak. Most scholars deem this account to represent an older written source, while they attribute the preface (Judg. 4:1–3) to an "editor" who compiled inherited materials and shaped the narrative of the book.[4] By prefixing this secondary paragraph to the description of Deborah in the older account, the editor identified Deborah as the divine response to the nation's belated lament:

1 The Israelites again did evil in the eyes of Yhwh – Ehud now being dead. 2 So Yhwh sold them to King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. His army commander was Sisera, whose base was Harosheth-Hagoyim. 3 The Israelites cried out to Yhwh for help, for he had nine hundred iron chariots and had oppressed the Israelites ruthlessly for twenty years.

4 Deborah, woman of Lappidoth, was a prophetess, and she was judging Israel at the time. 5 She used to sit under the Palm of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites would come to her for judgment. 6 She summoned Barak son of Abinoam, of Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "Yhwh, the god of Israel, has commanded: Go, march up to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun. 7 I will draw Sisera, Jabin's army commander, with his chariots and his troops, toward you up to the Wadi Kishon; and I will deliver him into your hands." Judg. 4:1–7

Despite the attractiveness of this neat reconstruction, it poses problems. Various clues suggest that a scribe added lines to bring the account into conformity with the narrative in Judges. For example, two clauses in verses 4–5 ("she was judging Israel at the time" and "the Israelites went up to her for judgment") recast this prophetess in the role of leader who *judges* Israel.[5] The phenomenon can be observed throughout the book: stories of disparate local heroes – Ehud, Gideon, Jephthah, Abimelech, Samson, etc. – have been reworked and aligned into a succession of "judges" (or "saviors") who rescue the nation from its enemies. While the evidence of the editorial expansions supports the view that the Deborah-Barak account is an older written source that the putative editor/compiler of Judges integrated into his narrative, there's a persisting problem: the reader would have no clue who Jabin is in verse 7 were it not

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[4] See, e.g., Kratz, *Composition*, 203.
[5] Without these clauses, verses 4–6 read more smoothly: "Deborah, woman of Lappidoth, was a prophetess, who used to sit under the Palm of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim. She summoned . . . ."

for the preface in verses 1–3, which is supposed to be part of the later editorial framework. To save the thesis, scholars must argue that the editor did not preserve the older source intact.

It's certainly possible that portions of the original Deborah-Barak account have been omitted or reformulated, yet it's more probable that the (originally brief) account was drafted for its present context. If so, the two supplementary clauses in verses 4–5 ("she was judging Israel at the time" and "the Israelites went up to her for judgment"), which recast Deborah as a judge of Israel, would indicate not that the putative editor of the book was drawing on an older written source but that later scribes were expanding earlier iterations of a larger narrative. That this was a work in progress can be seen from the fact that a death announcement, which concludes the other accounts, is still missing for Deborah and appears to have been added secondarily for Ehud (4:1b; cf. 3:11).

Whereas the book of Judges now functions as a literary bridge between the exodus-conquest narrative and the history of the monarchy in Samuel-Kings, it may not have been originally conceived as such. Otherwise, it's difficult to explain why the core accounts in Judges do not do a better job of making a case for the monarchy. Thus, the story of Deborah depicts the nation flourishing under her leadership, without a king standing in the way, and the following accounts of Gideon, Abimelech, and Jephthah are even more explicit in their repudiation of the monarchy, casting serious shade on the institution. As we will see, the Song of Deborah imagines and celebrates a nation ruled directly by Yhwh and "a mother in Israel"; in the absence of a king, it depends on the volunteerism of its diverse members.

A full elaboration and defense of my thesis will have to await a separate treatment, yet I would suggest that the earliest accounts in Judges were composed as appendices to the exodus-conquest narrative. The climax of the Joshua story reports that "the land had rest from its wars" (Josh. 11:23), and by concluding these appendices with similar statements (e.g., "the land had rest for forty years" in Judg. 5:31), their authors sought to demonstrate that the nonmonarchic rulers whom Yhwh "raises up" were repeatedly successful in restoring the peace and sovereignty that Joshua had first established.[6]

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[6] According to my thesis, the additions in verse 4 are not evidence of an older, independent account that has been repurposed for the narrative of Judges; instead, they witness to the gradual separation of what were originally appendices to the Joshua story and the emergence of a new epoch/book of "judges" that follows the death of Joshua.

    The Abimelech account in Judges 9 may represent an early bookend to the first appendices. Its depiction of a professional, mercenary army in the service of a (would-be) king

DEBORAH AND GIDEON

Deborah performs her prophetic activities as a sibyl under "the Palm of Deborah." Like the Oracle of Delphi in Greece, her isolated location (Judg. 4:5) corresponds to her political independence, so that her prophecies are not corrupted by the interest of any one city, such as Ramah or Bethel. It is from this remote residence that she summons Barak ben Abinoam. All we are told about this figure is his place of origin: the northern town of Kedesh. Deborah communicates to him the word of Yhwh, whom she calls "the god of Israel."

The oracle charges Barak to go up to Mount Tabor and summon an army to himself in order to take the offensive against Sisera. The warrior executes his battle orders, rallying 10,000 warriors atop this isolated horst or inselberg. In response, Sisera, the enemy commander, musters his 900 iron chariots and his infantry in the valley near the Kishon River – a level playing field that has witnessed massive chariot and tank battles over the past five millennia.[7] The enemy's professional forces and sophisticated armaments prove to be no match for Barak's thousands. The latter descend in a "blitz" (both this German term and the name Barak mean lightning) and wipe out the Canaanite forces.

The point of the story is a common one in biblical literature. By mobilizing large numbers of volunteers who fight under the banner of their national deity, Israel can withstand the superior weapons and professional forces of the surrounding kingdoms. For a people who lack formidable military technology, strength is in the numbers: a large force of citizen-soldiers often can withstand a smaller, elite, well-equipped army. Yet this brief tale is less about military strategy than about the ideals of volunteerism and what we today call civic duty. As such, it serves as a fitting backdrop to the following, and much more elaborate, account of Gideon.

Like the Deborah-Barak story, the Gideon account treats questions of national belonging in terms of the voluntary contributions of Israel's tribes to a war effort. Remnants of what appears to be an older account

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stands in stark contrast to the collective, national nature of military contributions in the preceding accounts. The immediately following accounts develop this aspect, with Jephthah commanding a band of desperadoes and Samson acting in isolation. In the final chapters, the nation finally comes together to wage war, but the enemy is now one of their own.

[7] For a survey of these battles, see Eric H. Cline, *The Battles of Armageddon: Megiddo and the Jezreel Valley from the Bronze Age to the Nuclear Age* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

present Gideon as a warlord with a private army of 300 professional fighters. The scribes who drew excerpts from this older account transformed the hero into a timorous farmer; likewise, they made his elite force into a small and unskilled portion of a much larger volunteer army.

The new version of the Gideon account tells how a huge multitude answers his call to arms. Since "Israel might claim for themselves the glory," Yhwh commands Gideon to discharge "all who fear and tremble." When 10,000 troops remain, precisely the size of Barak's force, Yhwh is still not satisfied, and he commands the hero to reduce his army again (Judg. 6:34–35, 7:2–8). In the end, Gideon is left with a force of 300 – the original size of his private army in what appears to be an older source (7:16, 8:4).

In this way, scribes transformed the identity of Gideon's 300: they are no longer professional warriors and seasoned soldiers but farmers who volunteer for military service in an ad hoc war effort. As such, they rout the enemy not with martial savoir faire but with clever ruses and divine assistance. The heavily reworked Gideon account shares with the Deborah-Barak story an emphasis on volunteerism and the participation of Israel's tribes, yet whereas Barak triumphs because of the size of his army, Gideon succeeds thanks to divine support and subterfuge.[8]

THE JAEL EPISODE

The earliest iteration of the Deborah-Barak account likely didn't include the episode with Jael. On the basis of parallels with other biblical battle stories, we would expect the account to conclude in Judges 4:16 – "The whole camp of Sisera fell by the sword; none remained" – which resembles the conclusion of many other battle stories.[9] When we're told that the whole army of Sisera fell in battle and that no one survived, we should assume that this really means no one – neither the soldiers nor their commander. Yet, surprisingly, in the next paragraph (vv. 17–22), which is formulated in a different style and with much greater detail, Sisera is still alive and fleeing to the tent of Jael, the wife of one of his allies.

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[8] See Wright, "Gideon Narrative."

[9] Thus, the battle story in 1 Samuel 11 concludes in verse 11b: "The survivors scattered; no two remained together." (Verses 12–13 appear to be a late insertion connected to 10:27; the conclusion goes from verse 11b to verse 15.) The verb *šāʾar* (remain) is employed frequently in this manner (see, e.g., Exod. 14:28; Josh 8:22, 10:28–40, 11:10, 22). See my article, "Deborah's War Memorial."

As scribes added the Jael episode, they made changes to other parts of the Deborah-Barak account, and the perceptive reader can easily retrace their moves. Thus, the statement about Jael's husband Heber in verse 11 stands isolated in its context; a scribe apparently found this transitional point to be a suitable place to insert an explanation of why Sisera later trusts Jael.[10] Similarly, Deborah's surprising prophecy to Barak in verse 9b is easy to identify as an interpolation: originally, Deborah prophesies that Yhwh would deliver Sisera into *Barak's hand* (v. 7), while here she declares that Yhwh would deliver the enemy general into *the hand of a woman*. Another place is the description of Sisera descending from his chariot and fleeing on foot to the tent of Jael (vv. 15b–16a). While the older portion presents Barak pursuing all the chariots back to the place whence they came, the reader now knows that Sisera is elsewhere and on foot. Similarly, while the older portion reports that "the entire camp of Sisera fell by the sword," the reader must now conclude that this means only Sisera's camp, not Sisera himself.

The Composition of Judges 4

Preface
1 The Israelites again did evil in the sight of Yhwh – Ehud now being dead. **2 So Yhwh sold them to King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. His army commander was Sisera, whose base was in Harosheth-Hagoyim. 3 The Israelites cried out to Yhwh for help, for he had nine hundred iron chariots and had oppressed the Israelites ruthlessly for twenty years.**

Deborah Commissions Barak
4 Deborah, woman of Lappidoth, was a prophetess, and she was judging Israel at the time. **5 She used to sit under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim,** and the Israelites would come to her for judgment. **6 She summoned Barak son of Abinoam, of Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "Yhwh, the god of Israel, has commanded: Go, march up to Mount Tabor,** and take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun. **7 I will draw Sisera, Jabin's army commander, with his chariots and his troops, toward you up** [to the Wadi Kishon]**; and I will deliver him into your hands."**

8 Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go." 9 And she said, "I will surely go with you; *nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your own glory, for Yhwh will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.*" Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh.

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[10] The Jael episode presupposes that Sisera's army consisted of a coalition that included other peoples, such as the Kenites, but the initial description of Sisera's forces refers only to "his chariots" and "the troops who were with him" in Harosheth-Hagoyim (v. 13).

The Campaign

10 **Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh, and ten thousand foot soldiers went up – and also Deborah went up with him.**

11 Now Heber the Kenite had separated from the other Kenites, *that is, the descendants of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses*, and had encamped as far away as Elon-Bezaanannim, which is near Kedesh.

12 **Sisera was told that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor.**
13 **Sisera called out all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the troops who were with him, from Harosheth-Hagoyim to the Kishon River. 14 Then Deborah said to Barak, "Up! For this is the day on which Yhwh has given Sisera into your hand. Yhwh is indeed going out before you." So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand warriors following him. 15 And Yhwh threw Sisera, all his chariots, and indeed his entire camp into panic before the sword of Barak.**

Sisera got down from his chariot and fled away on foot, 16 while Barak pursued the chariotry and the camp to Harosheth-Hagoyim.

The entire camp of Sisera fell by the sword; none remained.

Jael Episode

17 Now Sisera had fled away on foot to the tent of Jael wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was peace between King Jabin of Hazor and the clan of Heber the Kenite. 18 Jael came out to meet Sisera, and said to him, "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; have no fear!" So he turned aside to her into the tent, and she covered him with a rug. 19 *Then he said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink; for I am thirsty." So she opened a skin of milk and gave him a drink and covered him.* 20 He said to her, "Stand at the entrance of the tent, and if anybody comes and asks you, 'Is anyone here?' say, 'No.'" 21 But Jael, wife of Heber, took a tent peg, and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, until it went down into the ground – *he was lying fast asleep from weariness* – and he died. 22 Then, as Barak came in pursuit of Sisera, Jael went out to meet him, and said to him, "Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking." So he went into her tent; and there was Sisera lying dead, with the tent peg in his temple.

Conclusion

23 So on that day God subdued King Jabin of Canaan before the Israelites. 24 **Then the hand of the Israelites bore harder and harder on King Jabin of Canaan, until they destroyed King Jabin of Canaan.**

[The "Song of Deborah" in Judges 5]

5:31b: **And thereafter the land had rest for forty years.**

DECONSTRUCTING MALE POWER

The Jael episode is part of a larger compositional effort in Judges to malign the male martial power that both symbolized and undergirded the

authority of ancient states. Thus, two heroic warriors in the book, Jephthah and Samson, are "brought low" by women (11:35, 16:1–21).[11] Likewise, when Abimelech besieges the town of Thebez in his quest for monarchic power, a woman drops a millstone from atop the wall on his head. Since weapons of war are reserved for men, she wields an object that symbolizes her domestic place in society. In the same way, when Jael slays Sisera, she brandishes a tent peg, the symbol of her identity as a nomadic Kenite woman who waits in her tent while men fight on the battlefield.[12]

The authors of Judges reshaped the Gideon account so that this mighty warrior becomes an apprehensive and unlikely leader. He summons the courage to fight only after many divine assurances of success, and his triumph is ascribed to the fact that Yhwh "goes with" him into battle (6:15–16). Similarly, a supplement to our account subordinates the warrior Barak to the authority of Yhwh's prophet Deborah: Barak will not accept this mission unless Deborah "goes with" him (4:8, 9b).

Barak's demand that Deborah accompany him reflects the anxiety of rulers and their need for oracles assuring them that the deity would be with them in their undertakings. For example, the goddess Ishtar assures the Assyrian ruler Esarhaddon through the mouth of prophet:

Esarhaddon, king of the lands, fear not! What is the wind that has attacked you, whose wings I have not broken? Like ripe apples your enemies will continually roll before your feet. I am the great Lady, I am Ištar of Arbela who throws your enemies before your feet. Have I spoken to you any words that you could not

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[11] The late character of the daughter of Jephthah episode is widely accepted; see the discussion of past research by Thomas Römer, "Why Would the Deuteronomist Tell About the Sacrifice of Jephthah's Daughter?," *Journal of the Study of the Old Testament*, 77 (1998), 27–38, and David Janzen's response "Why Would the Deuteronomist Tell About the Sacrifice of Jephthah's Daughter?," *Journal of the Study of the Old Testament*, 29 (2005), 339–357. With respect to the Samson account, many agree that a later author appended chapter 16 (notice the conclusion in 15:20); see the discussion in Walter Gross, *Richter* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2009).

[12] In Chapter 13, we explore other ways the account engages in a critique of masculine martial authority. On the subversive quality of Judges, see, most recently, Kelly J. Murphy, *Rewriting Masculinity: Gideon, Men, and Might* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019). The depictions of both Deborah and Jael have had a substantial political impact throughout the ages, and that impact is the focus of Joy A. Schroeder's *Deborah's Daughters: Gender Politics and Biblical Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), as well as Colleen M. Conway's *Sex and Slaughter in the Tent of Jael: A Cultural History of a Biblical Story* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

rely upon? I am Ištar of Arbela, I will flay your enemies and deliver them up to you. I am Ištar of Arbela, I go before you and behind you . . . .[13]

In the biblical corpus, the injunction to "fear not" is also addressed to the king in response to military threats (e.g., Isa. 7:4, 37:6), while other texts portray Israel's monarchs being eager, like Barak, to harness the divine prophetic power for their military campaigns (e.g., 1 Kings 22; 2 Kings 3). The scribe who added 4:9a allows Deborah to accompany the warrior while using her prophetic power to foretell (and simultaneously interpret) the outcome: "You will receive no glory on the way you are going, for Yhwh will deliver Sisera into the hand of a woman" (cf. Judg. 7:2).

Here and elsewhere, scribes have retouched a tale of triumph, subordinating the role of the male hero to the power of the nation's deity that works through women. As an alternative to the egoism and thirst for glory that motivates male rulers, they imagine the ideal ruler for Israel as a mother (see 5:7). They beckon their (male) readers to embrace her capacity to both protect her people and inspire volunteerism among its members. To be a great leader like Deborah, one must curb the quest for personal honor and social advancement that motivates Barak and many of the other male figures in the book.

The Jael episode dovetails with the gender-bending subversion of macho-monarchic masculinity on display throughout the narrative of the nation's formation. In Part III, we saw how Rahab, as a woman without husband or children, acts maternally by protecting the Israelite spies, hiding them under stalks of flax on her roof and lying at length to the king's men. As one of the next women to appear in the wider narrative, Jael acts in defense of the nation by first seducing its enemy into her tent ("Turn aside to me, my lord, turn aside to me; have no fear!") and then feigning maternal protection – covering him, feeding him milk, and agreeing to stand by the door and lie to those who sought his life. While Rahab lets down the spies from her window, orchestrating their escape as Michal does for David (see 1 Sam. 19), Sisera's mother is depicted in the following chapter waiting at the

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[13] Translation of SAA 9.1.1, lines I 4'–29', by Martti Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 102–103. For the so-called *Mitsein* formula, with which the deity promises "I will go with you," see the Zakkur Inscription (KAI 202 13–14), as well as late Neo-Assyrian materials collected by Manfred Weippert, "Assyrische Prophetien der Zeit Assarhaddons und Assurbanipals" in F. M. Fales (ed.), *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: New Horizons* (Roma: Istituto per l'Oriente, 1981), 71–115.

window for her son to return and finds consolation in the thought that he is busy taking maidens captive for his pleasure.[14] The reader is invited to compare this Canaanite mother with "a mother in Israel" who mobilizes a nation and leads it to victory (see 5:7). Like Rahab and Deborah, Jael has no children, but whereas Rahab and Deborah also do not have husbands who would stand in their way, Jael is married to a man who sides with the enemy and whom she, in turn, brazenly sidelines in her solidarity with Israel.

MARTIAL VALOR AND MONARCHIC RULE

To what extent the author of the Jael episode knew of, and consciously played on, similar stories throughout the biblical narrative is difficult to say. What seems more certain is that this author was inspired by the depiction of Deborah's authority in the originally brief account of her commissioning Barak to fight Sisera. That account juxtaposes Deborah and Barak, on one side, with the Canaanite king Jabin and his general Sisera, on the other. Israel's leader is neither a king nor a man, and by issuing instructions to Barak, she thwarts any intention he may have had to leverage his triumph in a bid for monarchic rule (as in the cases of Gideon and Jephthah, or Saul and David, for example).

One of the most striking lines in the account presents Deborah summoning Barak (4:4). Due to Deborah's gender, the line has aroused the consternation of many later male commentators, both Jewish and Christian. But its implications for political theory and political theology are even more radical: Authority here is not predicated on the basis of martial valor, and the role of military leadership is sharply divided from the right to govern. Barak has a purpose to serve, but he, and the male readers of this account, must learn to "stay in their lane." In keeping with the laws of Deuteronomy, in which generals are to be chosen right before battle and a king is nowhere to be found, success on the battlefield does

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[14] The motif of the aristocratic woman at the window is a popular one in both ancient texts and images; for example, it's represented in an ivory found at Samaria, as well as on the furniture of the royal couple in the Ashurbanipal relief discussed above. (For a biblical instance of a woman waiting in a window while men go out to battle, see 2 Kings 9:14–37, esp. v. 30.) See Claudia Suter, *Die Frau am Fenster in der orientalischen Elfenbeinschnitzkunst des frühen 1. Jahrtausends v. Chr.* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1992), 7–28.

not entitle one to wider political prerogatives, let alone offer a legitimate basis for exercising monarchic rule.[15]

[15] I develop these points in my essays, "Human, All Too Human: Royal Name-Making in Wartime" in Yigal Levin and Amnon Shapira (eds.), *War and Peace in the Jewish Tradition: From the Biblical World to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 62–77; "Military Valor and Kingship: A Book-Oriented Approach to the Study of a Major War Theme" in Brad E. Kelle and Frank Ritchel Ames (eds.), *Writing and Reading War: Rhetoric, Gender, and Ethics in Biblical and Modern Contexts* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 33–56.

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A Poetic War Monument

If the Jael episode is indeed a later addition, then much of the account represents the work of later scribes who built on the work of their predecessors. These findings are of particular significance, since they reveal how an important biblical text grew exponentially as part of the war commemoration conducted by biblical scribes. We witnessed the same for the Rahab story in Part III. What's different about the case of Jael is that she represents an actual ethnic group (the Kenites). In the coming chapters, we examine various aspects of this woman's identity, but first we must consider what the Song of Deborah contributes to the account.

One of the earliest and most influential studies of biblical poetry is *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry: An Instruction for Lovers of the Same and the Oldest History of the Human Spirit*, published in 1782–1783.[1] Its author – the German philosopher, poet, theologian, and literary critic Johann Gottfried von Herder – was among the first European figures to think in terms of a *national* identity that transcends political borders, and Deborah's song was of special significance to him not only because he considered it to be older than most other biblical texts but also because he regarded it as proof that a people – like the tribes of ancient Israel and the divided German principalities of his own day – didn't need a common ruler to be united in spirit.

Thanks to Herder, most scholars today deem the Song of Deborah to be a very ancient, if not the most ancient, exemplar of Israelite poetry.

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[1] Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie*, ed. Karl Wilhelm Justi, 3rd ed. (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1825).

According to this view, the prose version that precedes the song was composed centuries later in order to provide a more straightforward narration of the battle. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Julius Wellhausen revealed the merits of this approach, and it has since reigned as the academic consensus.[2] More recently, a few scholars have drawn attention to late features of the song and argued that the reverse is the case – that it is a late lyrical retelling of the earlier prose account.[3]

My own approach abolishes this simple alternative.[4] I consider the song to have originally consisted of a generic hymn to the divine warrior, similar to many other biblical exemplars. Before being incorporated in the narrative and augmented with new lines, it had nothing to do with Deborah, Barak, or Jael. In what follows, I will illustrate this approach, considering not only *how* scribes transformed an older hymn into this impressive war monument but also *why* they did so.

BETWEEN PROSE AND POETRY

If the prose version of the Deborah-Barak account (Judg. 4) represents an attempt to "tell the story" contained in the song (Judg. 5), as widely assumed, one must explain why it doesn't mention Megiddo, Taanach, or "the kings of Canaan" (5:19), and why it describes a very different constellation of the participating tribes (5:14–15). There are other discrepancies to be explained, such as the song's allusion to a dearth of weapons among the Israelites (5:8), which has no counterpart in the prose version.

On the other hand, if the song is a late poetic midrash on the prose version, as a handful of scholars now claim, one must account for numerous features that bear no connection whatsoever to the prose version, such as the pivotal place of Mount Tabor, Barak's 10,000 troops, or Sisera's

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[2] For a brilliant defense of this approach, see Baruch Halpern "The Resourceful Israelite Historian: The Song of Deborah and Israelite Historiography," *Harvard Theological Review*, 76 (1983), 379–401.

[3] This approach is more common in German scholarship; see, e.g., Christoph Levin, *Fortschreibungen: Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 124–141.

[4] I discuss research on the song in "Deborah's War Memorial" and "War Commemoration and the Interpretation of Judges 5:15b-17." Among the more recent treatments, two stand out for the central place they occupy in the framework of important larger theses: Daniel Fleming, *The Legacy of Israel in Judah's Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Mark Smith, *Poetic Heroes: The Literary Commemorations of Warriors and Warrior Culture in the Early Biblical World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014).

900 chariots. Moreover, we would expect the authors of the prose version to have seized upon the opportunity to portray as many tribes as possible participating in the battle, given that volunteerism is a major theme of Judges. Yet instead of depicting six tribes contributing to this war effort and four tribes shirking their duties, as the song does, the prose version names only two tribes.

References to Kishon are integral to the song, while in the prose version they appear to be supplementary. Deborah prophesies that Yhwh "will draw out Sisera to you [Barak]" (4:7). The following detail, "to the Kishon River," not only makes an unnecessarily detailed impression; it also conflicts with the emphasis on Mount Tabor as the place where Barak would descend and conquer the enemy (see 4:6, 12). In the description of that descent (4:14), the river is not mentioned. Likewise, in the miraculous routing of Sisera's force (4:15), Yhwh does not use water as a weapon; instead, he throws the enemy horses and the army into a panic – a conventional "holy war" motif in the Bible. It's also difficult to explain why the prose version has nothing to say about the "kings of Canaan" or places such as Megiddo and Taanach (5:19–21).

The song is in many ways internally incongruous. For example, one strophe describes how the stars fight from heaven and the waters of Kishon miraculously sweep away Sisera and the Canaanite kings; the reader assumes that these enemies had been fully vanquished (5:19–23). Yet the following strophes present Sisera as still alive and well, resting in the tent of Jael. How he ended up in her abode is not explained. In fact, we do not even know the identity of this figure until four lines later.[5]

Here, as elsewhere, the song makes little sense by itself. If we assume the story was widely known through oral tradition, the gaps in the song's narrative would not have posed a problem. Such an appeal to oral tradition is speculative, however, and must be the ultima ratio in any analysis. A more plausible scenario is that scribes amplified the song with strophes that presuppose knowledge of the prose version. This scenario is even more likely if the Jael episode was added to the prose version, as argued in Chapter 10.

REPURPOSING AN OLDER HYMN

Within the song, it's relatively easy to distinguish two strands: one that is symbolic and mythical, and another that is concrete and realistic. The first

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[5] See vv. 24–27. The one line that does refer to him by name does not easily fit into the parallelism, so it's possible that 5:24–27 did not include his name.

includes 5:2–5, 8–11, 13, 19, 21–23, and 31. It resembles the style of not only Exodus 15 but also Psalm 68. Thus, it begins with an exordium (see Exod. 15:1). Yhwh is described as coming out of Seir and Sinai as the earth trembles (see Ps. 68:8, 18). The people of Yhwh march down to fight a plurality of anonymous kings (see Ps. 68:13) in the Jezreel Valley, which, as noted, has long been one of the most popular battle sites in the southern Levant. These kings desire plunder but are swept away by primordial, chaotic waters (see Ps. 68:9–10; Exod. 15:8–10) in the form of the Kishon River.

The other strand comprises 5:6–7, 12, 14–18, 20, and 24–30, and is much more concrete. Deborah rouses the troops to fight, and Barak leads them into battle. Sisera represents the anonymous enemy kings, and the description of his death at the hands of Jael, with his mother awaiting his triumphal return, is exceptionally graphic. This strand also dates events by reference to the historical chronology employed by the book of Judges ("the days of Shamgar/Jael").

The differences between the two strands in the song are perhaps most obvious when we compare verses 24–30 to the peroration in verse 31. The former is realistic or even "naturalistic" in the technical sense, while the latter employs highly rarefied, mythical symbols.

Scholars who distinguish between these two strands often conclude that the concrete, realistic one ("the heroic epic") is older and that a later hand added more mythical, theological elements, which shift attention from human actors to the deity.[6] However, this interpretation of the evidence fails to recognize that the "mythical" thread is intact, with a beginning and an end and that its form and themes have much in common with other biblical songs. Conversely, the historically concrete material of the heroic epic is hardly self-sustaining and lacks biblical parallels. It can easily be removed without inflicting structural damage to the song, and when one does so, the coherency and natural flow of an older hymn come to light:

Shamgar, Jael, and Deborah in verses 6–7. While it's difficult to understand exactly what is meant in 5:6–7, these lines draw undeniably on the figures, language, ideology, and historiographical principles from the surrounding narrative. Moreover, the theme of verses 4–5 is closely connected to verses 8–9. Both sections refer to the deity and the absence of

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[6] What likely informs this view is the noticeable tendency in the book of Judges to introduce a pan-Israelite and Yahwistic overlay in older "profane" heroic material. While that tendency may be observed elsewhere, it should not prejudice the analysis of the song.

arms in Israel's armies. The latter is a common topos in biblical prose and poetry and is consistently linked to the deity's direct intervention, as in verses 4–5.

Deborah and Barak in verses 12 and 15. Verse 13 refers to those who march down to the battlefield. This theme begins already in verse 11b: "Then down to the gates marched the people of Yhwh." In the transmitted form of the song, the line sticks out; it's also the only case where a colon stands isolated instead of in *parallelismus membrorum*.[7] Yet after removing the appeal to Deborah and Barak in verse 12, which suddenly alternates from narrative-style to second-person address, we can see how the line is strikingly similar to, and anticipates, verse 13.[8] Both the action ("marched down") and the subject ("people of Yhwh") are consistent in these lines. That the mention of Deborah and Barak in verse 15 is secondary explains why the "catalogue of tribes" in verses 14–18 can be easily removed, revealing a tight connection between verses 13 and 19: Israel marches down to engage the Canaanite kings in battle.

Sisera in verses 19–21. In verse 21, the river Kishon sweeps "them" away, yet the immediately preceding verse speaks of the stars fighting from heaven against *one* person, Sisera. To figure out who is meant by "them," we have to go back to verse 19, where the subject is "the kings of Canaan." They fight by "the waters of Megiddo" (i.e., the Kishon), yet they are unsuccessful in taking "ill-gotten gain." Why? Because "the river Kishon swept them away" (v. 21; see vv. 3–5; cf. Exod. 15:9–10). By removing verse 20, these lines make much more sense. Alternatively, it is possible that only "with Sisera" was added to verse 20. Whatever the case may be, most would agree that these lines read better without a reference to Sisera. If he were not a compositional afterthought, he could have easily been included in the formulation of verse 19.

Jael and Sisera's mother in verses 24–30. The final line (v. 31) expresses one of the fundamental themes of the song: the contrast between the perishing of Yhwh's enemies and the favor for those who "love" him

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[7] Not surprisingly, verse 11b is subjected to the most radical of alterations by commentators, ancient and modern. Rashi, for example, reads it as describing the people returning to their dwellings from walled cities (or wishing to do so; see Ralbag).

[8] It is the same speaker, probably representing individual/collective Israel, as in verse 3 (see Exod. 15:1). Alternatively, as in the Codex Vaticanus, one could read it as "him." Rashi resolves the repetition between verses 11 and 13 by interpreting the verb *y-r-d* in verse 13 differently (viz., as "rule").

(cf. Ps. 68:2–3). Such love is the loyalty of vassals/allies who come to the help of their overlord/partner and offer him or her military assistance (one of the central components in international treaties). The theme of coming to Yhwh's help in wartime appears earlier in verses 11b and 13, but most explicitly in verse 23. Accordingly, the wish that "all Yhwh's enemies perish" in the final line continues the curse of Meroz, which is reminiscent of the imprecations in international treaties against a party for failing to contribute to a war effort.

The intervening strophes (vv. 24–30) dilate on the theme of the surrounding lines with a diptych that features the action of a loyal ally (vv. 24–27) and the reaction of the enemy's mother (vv. 28–30). The first passage portrays Sisera perishing at the hands of one of Yhwh's "friends" (see v. 31) in an individual and concrete manner, and the anguish of Sisera's mother at the loss of her son segues into the final summation: "Indeed, may all your enemies perish . . . ." Similarly, "most blessed of women is Jael" (v. 24) stands opposite "cursed be Meroz" (v. 23).

The fact that these lines are well-suited to their context does not suffice as a reason to deny that they were likely introduced at a later point. Verse 31 is formulated in a style that differs sharply from the naturalism and realism in verses 24–30, yet it resembles very closely the style of verses 19–23.

> **Supplements to the Song of Deborah**
> 1 *On that day Deborah [and Barak son of Abinoam] sang*:[9]
>
> **2 When locks go untrimmed in Israel,**
> **When a people/army offers itself willingly –**
> **Bless Yhwh!**
>
> **3 Hear, O kings!**
> **Give ear, O potentates!**
> **I am for [belong to] Yhwh, and I will sing,**
> **I will make music for Yhwh,**
> **For Yhwh God of Israel.**
>
> **4 O Yhwh, when you came forth from Seir,**
> **Advanced from the country of Edom,**
> **The earth trembled,**
> **The heavens dripped,**
> **Yea, the clouds dripped water,**
> **5 The mountains quaked,**

---

[9] The earliest stratum is in bold, with verse 1 perhaps as the introduction to the postulated hymn that was reworked into the song and thus being older than the other additions. (The translation provided here is based on that of the Jewish Publication Society.)

Before Yhwh, the One of Sinai,
Before Yhwh, God of Israel.

6 In the days of Shamgar son of Anath,
In the days of Jael,
Caravans ceased,
And wayfarers went
By roundabout paths.
7 Deliverance ceased,
In Israel it ceased,
Till I/you arose, Deborah,
I/you arose, a mother in Israel!

8 **When they chose new gods,**
The war was in the gates.
Was shield or spear to be seen
Among forty thousand in Israel?

9 **My heart is with Israel's marshals,**
With those who offered themselves freely among the people. –
Bless Yhwh!

10 **You riders on tawny she-asses,**
You who sit on saddle rugs,
You wayfarers, declare it!
11 **To the sound of musicians among the watering places,**
There let them chant the mighty deeds of Yhwh,
The mighty deeds of his peasantry in Israel.

Then did the people of Yhwh march down to the gates!

12 Awake, awake, O Deborah!
Awake, awake, strike up the chant!
Arise, O Barak;
Take your captives, O son of Abinoam!

13 **Then down marched the remnant of/to the nobles,**
Yhwh's people marched down for him/me with/against the mighty.

14 From Ephraim came they whose roots are in Amalek;
After you, your kin Benjamin;
From Machir came down leaders,
From Zebulun such as hold the marshal's staff.
15 And Issachar's chiefs were with Deborah;
As Barak, so was Issachar,
Rushing after him into the valley.
Among the clans of Reuben
Were great searchings of heart.

16 Why did you stay among the sheepfolds
And listen as they pipe for the flocks?
Among the clans of Reuben
Were great searchings of heart!
17 Gilead tarried beyond the Jordan;
And Dan – why did he linger by the ships?
Asher remained at the seacoast
And tarried at his landings.

[*18 Zebulun is a people that spurned its soul to die,
Naphtali, on the open heights.*]

19 **Then the kings came, they fought:**
The kings of Canaan fought
At Taanach, by Megiddo's waters
They got no spoil of silver.
20 The stars fought from heaven,
From their courses they fought against Sisera.
21 **The torrent Kishon swept them away,**
The raging torrent, the torrent Kishon. –
March on, my soul, with courage!
22 **Then the horses' hoofs pounded**
As headlong galloped the steeds.

23 **"Cursed be Meroz!" says the angel of Yhwh.**
"Bitterly curse its inhabitants,
Because they came not to the aid of Yhwh,
To the aid of Yhwh with/against the warriors."

24 Most blessed of women be Jael,
Wife of Heber the Kenite,
Most blessed of women in tents.
25 He asked for water, she offered milk;
In a princely bowl she brought him curds.
26 Her [left] hand reached for the tent pin,
Her right for the workmen's hammer. –
She struck Sisera.
She crushed his head,
Smashed and pierced his temple.
27 At her feet he sank, lay outstretched,
At her feet he sank, lay still;
Where he sank, there he lay, destroyed.[10]

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[10] Perhaps the interpolated Jael material consisted originally of this first section of the diptych (vv. 24–27) and was formulated with verse 31a in view ("So may all your enemies . . . .").

28 Through the window peered Sisera's mother,
Behind the lattice she whined:
"Why is his chariot so long in coming?
Why so late the clatter of his wheels?"
29 The wisest of her ladies give answer;
She, too, replies to herself:
30 "They must be dividing the spoil they have found:
A damsel or two for each man,
Spoil of dyed cloths for Sisera,
Spoil of embroidered cloths,
A couple of embroidered cloths
Round every neck as spoil."

**31 Indeed, may all your enemies perish, Yhwh! But may his friends
be as the sun rising in its might!**

Our analysis thus far has called into question two widely held views: 1)
that the song predates the prose version, and 2) that the prose version was
written long afterward in order to fill in the gaps in the song. Why these
views ever had purchase in biblical scholarship is due to the influence of
nineteenth-century Romanticism, which regarded poetry as a more
ancient mode of human expression than prose. Laying the groundwork
for this view, Herder compared the song's imitative reenactment of the
battle to victory rituals celebrated by other "uncivilized nations."[11]

If the Song of Deborah was originally not about Deborah and had
nothing to do with the prose tale that precedes it, then why would the
authors of Judges have selected it for their history? We noted that the song
refers to a battle in the Jezreel Valley and so was well suited to the battle
story in Judges 4. But why include a victory hymn in the first place? In
Chapter 10, we observed how this hymn, together with the Song of the Sea
in Exodus, demarcates an epoch of Yhwh's direct royal sovereignty in the
narrative of Genesis-Kings. In the present chapter and those that follow,
we pursue this line of inquiry and explore the ways in which scribes
reworked this hymn to create a "national anthem" for Israel.

A NATIONAL GOD AND ISRAEL'S UNITY

War is one of the most powerful catalysts of political unification, and
hence it is not surprising that the authors of Judges, like those of many
other biblical books, treat the issue of national belonging in terms of

[11] *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie*, 248

wartime service and sacrifice. This issue is not central to the prose version of our story, though it does makes itself felt in the way a local narrative has been adopted and adapted to tell the story of the people of Israel as a whole. In the song, however, national belonging is argued directly through appeal to memories of military service and sacrifice performed on behalf of the nation's deity, not its ruling house.

The emphasis on Israel's unity under its national deity at a time of war is likely one of the primary reasons why scribes adopted the older hymn for their narrative.[12] The poet praises the people and the commanders of Israel who "offer themselves willingly" (vv. 2 and 9); each of these stanzas is punctuated with the refrain "Bless Yhwh!"[13] Yhwh's victories and those of "his peasantry" are one and the same (v. 11a). Similarly, the army of Israel is designated "the people of Yhwh" (vv. 11b, 13) or "those who love him" (v. 31). The implication is that if one loves Yhwh, one will readily participate in the wars he fights on behalf of his people. This participation is described as "coming to the help of Yhwh," and those who fail to do so, such as the inhabitants of Meroz, are decisively cursed (v. 23).

Because it integrates disparate literary traditions, the song is characterized by a dizzying diversity of voices and actors. The heterogeneity is impressive, if not also occasionally confusing. What unites all these social classes, military ranks, regions, communities, and individual men and women is their collective identity, defined variously as "Israel," the children of "a mother in Israel," "the people/army of Yhwh," and "those who love him" (i.e., his vassals and allies).

Ancient military coalitions usually did not fight under the banner of a single deity; each member had its own leaders, god, and emblems. Hence, Sisera would not have expected the Kenites to embrace his god as their own. Yet a nation like Israel is more than an ad hoc military coalition; it is unified by deeper, enduring commitments. For the biblical authors, the deity was an ideal focal point in their project of consolidating

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[12] As we saw in Part II, the older pre-Priestly and Deuteronomistic portions of Numbers 32 and related texts present the Transjordanian tribes swearing to fight for their kindred. However, in the later Priestly versions, they fight first and foremost for Yhwh, in accordance with the divine command communicated through Moses (=the Torah). Compare the way David's strategic raids are transformed to the wars of Yhwh (1 Sam. 25:28).

[13] The expression "offer freely" appears frequently elsewhere in cultic contexts (see esp. Exod. 35). Throughout Ezra-Nehemiah, the expression constitutes a leitmotif that serves to highlight the various kinds of voluntary contributions as the defeated nation builds a communal life without a king of its own.

rival communities. Although often divided by warring factions, these communities could appeal to Yhwh as the one who transcends political divisions and binds them all together as one people.

The expansion of the hymn with elements of the prose version in chapter 4 develops this theme of solidarity. Thanks to the inspiration of "a mother in Israel" (v. 7; contrast "the mother of Sisera" in v. 28), the nation's members volunteer for this war effort. Whole tribes and regions send down their officers and warriors, while others are rebuked for failing to participate. They come to the help of Deborah and the deity (vv. 13 and 23) instead of solely to relieve a beleaguered population. The prose version had already made Yhwh responsible for the triumph, and the addition of Deborah's prophecy and the Jael episode to the story likewise diminishes the role of the male hero (Barak) by making a woman responsible for the most valorous deed in the battle. In the song, Barak now joins Deborah in directing attention away from himself by lauding Yhwh and the myriad members of the nation "who offered themselves freely." With the addition of his name to the introduction in verse 1 (the verb is a singular feminine form), we are to understand that he came to fully embrace and internalize Deborah's perspective, relinquishing his quest for personal glory and paying tribute to Jael's culminating feat.

RELIGIOUS UNITY AND AMERICAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

According to a once popular interpretation, the song reflects the cultic celebration of a putative league of tribes in the pre-state period of Israel's history, and the register of tribes in 5:14–18 constitutes an attendance list.[14] While such views have, with good reason, been abandoned in current scholarship, their proponents drew attention to an important feature of the song: the uniting of (rival) groups under the aegis of a single deity (see also 7:18, 20).

The depiction of a wide array of groups and individuals rallying around the deity in wartime is reminiscent of Karl Shapiro's poem "Sunday: New Guinea," which describes soldiers of all stripes and colors coming together to worship a single deity during the Second World War:

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[14] See Volkmar Fritz, "The Complex of Traditions in Judges 4 and 5 and the Religion of Pre-state Israel" in Aren Maeir and Pierre de Miroschedji (eds.), *I Will Speak the Riddles of Ancient Times: Archeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday*, vol. 2 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 689–698.

> The bugle sounds the measured call to prayers,
> The band starts bravely with a clarion hymn,
> From every side, singly, in groups, in pairs,
> Each to his kind of service comes to worship Him.

Citing this poem in her book *GI Jews*, Deborah Dash Moore discusses how the US armed forces during the early 1940s made a concerted effort to foster solidarity and cohesion among Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, as well as all the denominations that constitute these three groups.[15] In order to achieve this unity, the armed forces appealed to "the Judeo-Christian tradition," a notion that has a prehistory but that was not widely embraced until the Second World War and thereafter. The navy hoped that an ecumenical doctrine, according to which all three religions worshiped the same deity, would provide common ground on which disparate religious and social factions could come together. Hence, lifeboats carried waterproof packages of pocket-sized Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish Bibles. According to the army's standard operating procedure, chaplains of one faith were required to minister to the soldiers of other faiths, and they were often expected to collaborate with chaplains of other faiths for common memorial services.

The impact on internal divisions within Judaism was profound. The Committee on Army and Navy Religious Activities (CANRA) formulated a tripartite Jewish denominationalism (Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform), and one of the most remarkable achievements was the agreement of the three denominations on a common Siddur (Jewish prayer book).

The Song of Deborah is in many ways an ancient precursor to the efforts of the US armed forces inasmuch as its formation was propelled and sustained by concerns to bring together rival communities as one people. Yet there are basic differences to be noted: CANRA sought to create a cultural and national unity by *redefining* Jews in terms of one of several legitimate religions ("faiths") that its members thought should define America's national identity. Moreover, instead of mobilizing an already existing nation for war, the biblical scribes were inventing what it means to be a nation, and they were doing so in the aftermath of defeat.

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[15] Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

A National Anthem for the North

By means of war commemoration, the consolidation of a political community, which is set in motion during a military conflict, can persist long thereafter. After the kingdom of Israel had been defeated by imperial powers and no longer possessed a native army with which to engage its enemies on the battlefield, the Song of Deborah could continue to unite the nation as a "mnemonic community."[1] In what follows, we focus on this basic purpose of the song. Comparing it to parallels from the Bible as well as the ancient Aegean world and colonial America, I will endeavor to show how the song served as a "national anthem" for Northern communities after the fall of the kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE.

MOBILIZING THE NATION'S MEMBERS

The song's depiction of the nation's plurality and unity culminates in the composition of the central section, the "Catalogue of Tribes" (Judg. 5:14–18), which identifies the combatants by tribe or region. This section is easy to isolate, and when it's removed, one notices a tight connection between the surrounding statements: Yhwh's people march down against/with the mighty (v. 13), and the kings of Canaan come and fight (v. 19). Read together, these lines portray Israel as a people confronting Canaanite polities that are represented solely by monarchs. The Catalogue of Tribes in turn celebrates those who contributed to this war effort, while chiding others for failing to take part.

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[1] See Eviatar Zerubavel, "Social Memories: Steps to a Sociology of the Past," *Qualitative Sociology*, 19 (1996), 283–299.

Throughout the song, those who take part – who "march down to the gates" – are called variously "the people of Yhwh," those "who love him," "those who offer themselves freely," etc. Positioned right before the descriptions of the actual engagement, the Catalogue of Tribes uses proper names to identify the groups that participate:

> From Ephraim came they whose roots are in Amalek;
>> And after you Benjamin with your kin;
> From Machir came down leaders,
>> From Zebulun such as hold the marshal's staff.
> And Issachar's chiefs were with Deborah;
>> As Barak, so was Issachar,
>>> Rushing after him into the valley.
>
> Judg. 5:14–15a

The five names listed here – Ephraim, Benjamin, Machir, Zebulun, and Issachar – correspond to tribes or regions. By naming them, the song commemorates their contributions and thereby declares that they deserve an honored place in the history of the nation. The two last-named participants, Zebulun and Naphtali, are the same tribes that join Barak in the prose version of chapter 4. Given the special place they occupy in that chapter, it's not surprising that their contribution is singled out here:

> Zebulun is a people that spurned its soul to die,
>> Naphtali, on the open heights.
>
> Judg. 5:18

The expression "spurned its soul (to die)" appears frequently in later Hebrew literature (e.g., in the official "Prayer of Remembrance for War Casualties" of the Israeli Defense Forces) to describe courageous self-sacrifice in battle.[2] Throughout the Hebrew scriptures, death in battle is, with very few exceptions, a consequence of sin; likewise, victories are astonishingly devoid of any casualties in Israel's ranks. One of the principal reasons for this curious fact is, as I argue elsewhere, a traumatic experience with radical politics: Many were willing to resist the encroachment of imperial armies at great expense, rejecting Jeremiah's ethos of "put your necks under Babylon's yoke ... and live!" (Jer. 27:12). By risking all for the sake of territorial sovereignty, their politics brought only more pain and suffering on their communities. In opposition to these

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[2] The word *ḥērēp* (spurned) is often synonymous with *yôreh*, (to shoot/throw/cast off), so a more precise translation might be "cast off its soul to die." The expression may be intentionally ambiguous, especially given the repetition of Zebulun and its position after the chiding of the tribes who shirked their wartime duties.

insurgent factions and their cult of martyrdom, the biblical scribes went to great lengths to avoid one of the basic rituals of statehood: the heroizing, memorializing, and sanctifying of the war dead.[3]

In between these lines, the catalogue identifies four tribes that failed to heed the call to arms:

> Among the clans of Reuben
>   Were prolonged contemplations of the heart.
> Why did you stay among the sheepfolds
>   And listen as they piped for the flocks?
> Among the clans of Reuben
>   Were prolonged contemplations of the heart!
>
> Gilead tarried beyond the Jordan;
>   And Dan – why did he linger by the ships?
> Asher remained at the seacoast
>   And tarried at his landings.
>
> <div align="right">Judg. 5:15b–17</div>

The tribes that are clearly included among the belligerents are described with verbs of action. Most often, they are said to have "descended" (*y-r-d*). In this way, the song identifies those who fight as highland dwellers who go down to battle in the Jezreel Valley. In contrast, the nonparticipants are portrayed in states of nonmovement, inactivity, passivity, and even tranquility. The transition to these verbs of inaction, and their variety, is pronounced; the specific verbs are "stay" (*y-š-b*), "dwell" (*š-k-n*), and "reside" (*g-w-r*).[4]

In Numbers 32, which we studied in Part II, the verb *y-š-b* is the operative term in Moses's censure of the Transjordanian tribes of Reuben and Gad for not contributing to the Cisjordanian war effort: "Shall your brothers/comrades go to war while you stay (*y-š-b*) here?" (v. 6). Reuben and Gad desire to "stay" in the Transjordan, rather than cross over and fight in the Cisjordan, since the rich pasturelands of the Gilead were well suited to their large herds (vv. 1–5). The Song of Deborah indicts the tribe of Reuben (in interrogatory form, like Num. 32:6) for staying in the safety of their sheepfolds and lazily listening to their herds rather than rising up to heed the call to arms.

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[3] I show how the Hebrew Bible, in contrast to the New Testament, rejects heroic (substitutionary) death and martyrdom in my article "Making a Name."

[4] Against proposals that this section describes the tribes contributing to the war effort, rather than shirking their duties, see Jacob L. Wright, "War Commemoration and the Interpretation of Judges 5:15b-17," *Vetus Testamentum*, 61 (2011), 505–521.

That this use of *y-š-b* is formal or technical is suggested by the strange "law and ordinance" instituted by David: "For the share (of booty) of the one who goes down (*y-r-d*) to war shall be the same as the one who stays (*y-š-b*) with the baggage; they shall share (the spoils) together" (1 Sam. 30:24). Here, *y-š-b* is employed in a similar sense to Numbers 32:6 and the song; these texts refer, however, to those who shirk their military obligations rather than performing a logistical-support function.[5]

The Catalogue of Tribes has much in common with Jacob's deathbed blessings for his sons in Genesis 49. For example, its descriptions of Asher and Dan are similar to the patriarch's statement about Zebulun (Gen. 49:13).[6] Immediately thereafter, Jacob speaks of Issachar lying "among the flocks/baggage," a rare expression found only in Psalm 68, which is closely related to the song (see the discussion in Chapter 11), and in the song itself, where it is applied to Reuben. In Genesis 49, Reuben is the first to be mentioned: Jacob condemns his actions and prophesies his end. Likewise, in the song, Reuben leads the list of the reproached tribes.

These and other observations bespeak the likelihood that the scribes who expanded the song drew on several lines from Jacob's blessings and applied them to the nonparticipants with a new twist. Whereas Genesis promotes pacifistic ideals, the book of Judges, in keeping with the very different ethos set forth in the exodus-conquest account, demonstrates the need for bellicose interactions with Israel's neighbors.[7] Thus, Genesis 49 reproaches Simeon, Levi, and Benjamin for their unbridled violence and bellicosity; in contrast, the song uses the acclamations of quietude and idyllic passivity in Genesis 49 to upbraid several tribes for failing to rise up and mobilize for Israel's war effort.[8]

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[5] The law is part of a supplement to the account (1 Sam. 31:9b-10, 21–25; see also 1 Sam. 25:13). It differs from the Priestly practice of dividing up the spoils unequally between those who go out to battle and the rest of the congregation (Num. 31:25–30). All these texts reflect larger concerns over the issues posed by service and reward: If fighting is the basis for belonging, what about those who cannot fight but contribute in other ways? The issue is thus about more than the particular scenario portrayed in these texts.

[6] The song presents Issachar and Zebulun in the same sequence. Notice also how "scepter" and "ruler" are paralleled in Judges 5:14 and Genesis 49:10.

[7] On these differences between Genesis and the exodus-conquest account, see Chapters 2 and 10. On the issues posed by, and the biblical polemics directed at, the Transjordanian tribes, see Part II.

[8] Ephraim's "root is in Amalek" (cf. Judg. 12:15). This statement associates Ephraim with a militant people. In contrast, Reuben is listening to the whistles of/to the herds (rather than the call to battle), Dan is resting in his ships (or "at ease"), etc.

CENSURE OF TRANSJORDANIAN COMMUNITIES

One of the most basic themes of Judges is Israel's unity and disunity as a people. While the book of Joshua depicts a high point in the nation's past by portraying its members joining together to conquer Canaan, the book of Judges tells how, after the death of Joshua, this unity dissolves, never to be reestablished. The only time the tribes assemble and unite for action is when they wage war against their own members, and even then some do not take part (see Judg. 21:5–14).

In keeping with Judges' concern with Israel's unity, several passages in the book depict Israel's tribes providing, failing to provide, or being jealous that they were not asked to provide, military assistance. Many of these texts relate to Ephraim and Benjamin, tribes that occupied Israel's core territory. Thus, a Benjaminite named Ehud petitions Ephraim to assist him against Moab (3:27), and in the same way, Gideon calls on Ephraim for help (7:24–25). As the narrative progresses, the depiction of Benjamin and Ephraim becomes gradually less favorable: The Ephraimites are angered that Gideon did not call on them earlier (8:1–3). Later, they mobilize for war against Jephthah the Gileadite because, once again, they were not invited to participate (12:1–3). In the final chapters of the book, a couple of Ephraimite individuals commit (shocking) crimes, and war is declared on Benjamin (chaps. 20–21). Notably, in the Song of Deborah, Ephraim and Benjamin are praised for being the first tribes to "come down" for battle (5:14). This is just what we would expect given the gradual transition of the book's narrative from a positive to a negative tenor in the depiction of these tribes.

The members most excoriated in the song are the Transjordanian tribes of Reuben and Gilead; no fewer than six cola – with the indicting question surrounded by an *inclusio* – are devoted to Reuben. The censure of communities from the eastern side of Jordan is once again consistent with the larger narrative of Judges. In the immediately following chapters of the book, Gideon and his 300 famished men cross the Jordan in pursuit of the Midianite armies. He begs the inhabitants of Succoth for a few loaves of bread, yet his request is sharply rejected, with a telling rhetorical question: "Are [the enemy leaders] already in your hands that we should give bread to your troops?" (8:6). Gideon then petitions the city of Penuel and receives the same response. These two Transjordanian communities would be willing to supply victuals for Gideon and his men, but only

after they prove themselves to be the victors; because they were unwilling to contribute to the Cisjordanian war effort until victory had been achieved, they are subjected to harsh sanctions.⁹ The book's censure of Succoth and Penuel is remarkable given that these cities figure prominently, and favorably, in the narrative of Jacob's wanderings constructed in Genesis (see Gen. 32:17, 24–32, 33:17).

Several other texts in Judges cast aspersions on the Transjordanians. The account of Jephthah (chaps. 10–12) depicts the inhabitants of Gilead and its leadership as self-absorbed and foolish. As the son of a harlot, Jephthah is disinherited and becomes a leader of a marauding band out in the backcountry of Tob. Later, the elders of Gilead bring him back, but only because they need someone who can fight their wars with the neighboring Ammonites. Jephthah acquiesces on the condition that they make him their leader, and later he must sacrifice his daughter to Yhwh as compensation for his triumph. The account concludes with him gathering all his men to do battle against members of Israel, slaying 42,000 inhabitants of Ephraim. This censure of Jephthah and Gilead is echoed in the last chapter of the book, where the city of Jabesh-Gilead ducks its wartime duties and is punished with the extermination of all its citizens (21:5–14).

The same failure to support a pan-Israelite war effort is the grievance brought against the Transjordanian communities in the Song of Deborah. Moreover, the way the song associates Gilead with those who cowardly dodge their military duties may be compared to the words Gideon utters when he musters out all the lily-livered troops: "Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home, flying like a bird from Mount Gilead" (7:3).¹⁰

The book of Judges is not alone in this respect. As we saw in Part II, a wide range of biblical texts address a question posed by the Transjordanian communities. If the Jordan marks the border of the Promised Land, what is the status of the territories on the east bank of the river? Many of the texts we looked at address this question in relation

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⁹ Their refusal to provide alimentary succor for the troops – a common type of wartime contribution (see discussion in Part I) – is comparable to a failure to send one's own troops as reinforcements. Rashi reads the reference to Reuben in the song in light of this text: its members dwelt/stayed on the sidelines, waiting to hear the bleating of the flocks as an indication of who had won and who had lost. In keeping with an established exegetical tradition, Rashi treats the problem posed by the larger number of tribes who fight in the song by interpreting it as referring to past history (e.g., Ephraim=Joshua, or Machir relates to Deut. 3:4, 14) as well as to Deborah's prophecy of future events (e.g., Benjamin=Saul).

¹⁰ Birds are frequently portrayed as timid, fluttering creatures eager to flee to the mountains (see, e.g., Hosea 11:11; Ps. 11:1).

to wartime contributions. Some texts censure the Transjordanian communities for attempting to shirk their military duties, while others respond to these accusations, claiming that the Transjordanians spearheaded the offensive when Israel crossed the Jordan and took possession of the Promised Land.

Against the backdrop of these numerous texts, it's all the more significant that the Song of Deborah contains several strophes that accuse the Transjordanian tribes of forsaking their wartime obligations to the nation. Yet there is a difference between the song and the texts reviewed above: rather than attempting to impugn the memory of the Transjordanian communities, the indictment more likely *affirms* their membership by implying that they have the same obligation as the Cisjordanian tribes. It's noteworthy that Dan and Asher are the other two tribes that the song censures for dodging their duties. The land allocated to these tribes does not belong to the core territory of Israel and was rarely under its hegemony. Israelites were a hill-country people, and this fact accounts for the scarcity of references to ships and seacoast life in the Bible. In the song, all the territories/tribes that "go down" to battle are located in the central hill country and the Jezreel Valley, regions that constitute the central realm of the kingdom.[11] Thus, while the prose version of the Deborah-Barak account (Judg. 4) focuses on the contributions of Zebulun and Naphtali, the song commemorates Ephraim and Benjamin as the first tribes to follow Deborah. By chiding communities on the periphery (on the coasts, in the North, and across the Jordan) for failing to demonstrate their belonging, it invites these outlying communities to join the core and demonstrate that they belong to the people who eagerly volunteer themselves for the cause of Yhwh and Deborah.[12]

judah's absence

One of the most remarkable features of the song is that it commemorates the contributions of only ten tribes, not twelve as we would expect.[13]

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[11] For a discussion of early highland polities and the expansion of their borders, see Finkelstein, *Forgotten Kingdom.*

[12] Some scholars view the polemics against nonparticipation as the song's original and primary purpose (see, e.g., G. T. K. Wong, "Song of Deborah as Polemic," *Biblica*, 88 (2007), 1–22). The evidence for the secondary quality of the Catalogue of Tribes gainsays this view.

[13] The notion of twelve Israelite tribes is a late one. Most scholars assign it to the Priestly source, which originated in the late monarchic or the exilic period. If so, the

What's more, two of the ten names, Gilead and Machir, do not appear in the canonical tribal registers. With respect to Machir, many texts locate this tribe in the Transjordan, identifying it with either the name of Gilead's father or the clan that conquers Gilead.[14] The rich region of Gilead is ascribed by many biblical texts to Gad. While Gilead is censured in the song, Machir is praised – namely, for sending troops *down* to the battle. This movement is easiest to understand if Machir represents not an eastern territory but rather the large region in the central hill country known as Manasseh. Not only does the song fail to mention Manasseh; it also refers to Machir right after Ephraim and Benjamin in the south and right before Zebulun and Issachar in the north – precisely the Cisjordanian region identified elsewhere as Manasseh. Not surprisingly, a number of biblical texts identify Manasseh as the father of Machir.

But what about the absence of Judah? All the tribes/regions that do not participate in the battle are on the outermost margins of Israel's core territory, located either across the Jordan or on the northern periphery. Written from the perspective of Ephraim and Benjamin, the song should either report that Judah took part in the battle or rebuke it for failing to do so. The indictment for shirking duties is, as noted, an implicit affirmation of membership in the nation, but the song issues no such indictment against Judah.

The significance of Judah's absence would be difficult to overstate. Much of the biblical corpus originated in the North, in the context of the kingdom of Israel (Samaria) as well as during the centuries after its destruction in 722 BCE. But the biblical corpus wouldn't exist – or at least it would look very different – were it not for Southern scribes who expanded and shaped it during the final century of the kingdom of Judah and then after foreign empires conquered this kingdom in 587 BCE.

The activity of these Southern scribes is the reason why the tribe of Judah figures so prominently in biblical literature. In the book of Judges, Judah is the first tribe chosen by Yhwh to "go up" to conquer the land (chap. 1), and it's the first tribe to produce a "savior" who delivers Israel from its enemies (3:7–11). These passages were likely added in the book's final compositional stages. If their authors had been involved in the composition of the song, we would expect Judah to have been portrayed as marching at the front of the tribes who mobilize for war, yet the song

unconventional constellation of the tribes in the catalogue indicates that it likely predates the postexilic period.

[14] See, e.g., Num. 26:29, 27:1, 32:39–40.

has nothing whatsoever to say about Judah, assigning the leading role to Ephraim and Benjamin.

What possibly motivated the omission was, I suggest, the move by Judah, and above all the Davidic dynasty that ruled Judah, to lay claim to Israel's cultural heritage after the conquest of Samaria in 722 BCE. In reaction to this move, scribes from the erstwhile kingdom of Israel appear to have collected and composed a number of texts that envision Israel as a people without a king at its center. Their most important literary production was the exodus-conquest account, and if the earliest iteration of the Judges narrative was composed as a continuation of that account, it makes sense that the Song of Deborah articulates a national identity for Israel that includes neither Judah or a monarchy.[15]

A testimony to the kind of statist ideology that developed in Judah is found in Psalm 78.[16] This psalm represents the antithesis of the song. Thus, it assigns an indispensable role to a monarch: "[Yhwh] chose David, his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds. He brought him from the nursing ewes to tend his people Jacob, Israel, his very own … " (vv. 70–72). Likewise, the perspective in the psalm is explicitly anti-Northern: "[Yhwh] rejected the clan of Joseph; he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim. He chose instead the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loved" (v. 67). Like the Song of Deborah, the psalm uses war commemoration to formulate its polemics: "The Ephraimites, armed with the bow, turned back on the day of battle …" (v. 9). The psalm continues: "They did not keep God's covenant, and refused to walk according to his law. They forgot what he had done …" (vv. 10–11). This late Judean broadside against the North conjoins memories of military service with fidelity to the Torah, which is similar to what we observed in Part II with respect to the Narrative of the Transjordanian Tribes.

THE CURSE OF MEROZ

The Catalogue of Tribes evinces parallels not only with other biblical texts, but also with war commemoration in the Aegean world. Thus, the so-called Catalogue of Ships transmitted in Homer's *Iliad* negotiates belonging by naming the contingents and their leaders who contributed

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[15] For alternative theories on Judah's absence, see Fleming, *Legacy of Israel*, 58–71.

[16] On the dating and purpose of the psalm, see Markus Witte, "History and Historiography in Psalm 78" in Núria Calduch-Benages and Jan Liesen (eds.), *Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature: Yearbook 2006* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 21–42.

to a momentous collective war effort situated in the shadows of time.[17] It also includes descriptive epithets of the territories and clans, similar to what we witness in Genesis 49, Deuteronomy 32, and the Song of Deborah. Most experts agree that this Homeric text has been supplemented variously with the names of new contributors and that some participants may have been deleted as a way of criticizing these communities. By stating exactly how many ships each land sent, the catalogue ranks the level of each participant's contribution. For example:

> Men from Tricca, rocky Ithome, Oechalia,
> city of Eurytus, the Oechalian,
> were commanded by two sons of Asclepius,
> skilled healers, Machaon and Podaleirus.
> They brought thirty hollow ships with them
> > *Iliad* 2.729–809

Other strophes name the land that sent the best horses (2.761–765) or the best warriors (2.767–768). The catalogue also notes nonparticipation: "But their minds weren't set / on the grim clash of war. They had no one to lead them" (2.761–762). Later, we read that these same troops "stayed behind by their ships" and "amused themselves" in various ways (2.771–779; cf. Judg. 5:16–17).[18]

By imagining the nation's territories as discrete and circumscribed tribal units, the Catalogue of Tribes from the Song of Deborah could treat the problem of "the one and the many" in Israel's political history: *e pluribus unum*. The counterpart to this unification is exclusion, as we witness in the case of Meroz. This is the only time in the Bible where the name Meroz appears. Whatever group this name represents, the song clearly does not extend membership to its members:

> Curse Meroz, says the angel of Yhwh,
> > Curse bitterly its inhabitants,
> Because they did not come to the help of Yhwh,
> > To the help of Yhwh with/against mighty warriors.
> > > Judg. 5:23

Similar maledictions and sanctions are known from the Aegean world. For example, the city Thebes was reluctant to join the Hellenic alliance and later fought on the Persian side (even though 400 Theban hoplites were

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[17] 2.494–759; see also the Trojan "Battle Order" in 2.816–877. On this text, see Edzard Visser, *Homers Katalog der Schiffe* (Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner, 1997).

[18] See also the Trojan "Battle Order" in 2.816–877 and the description of warriors in 3.160–244, as well as Niditch, *Judges: A Commentary*, 79.

supposed to have fought bravely against the Persians at Thermopylae). As a result, the city was severely penalized and almost eliminated from the Delphic amphictyony.[19]

I've argued that the song doesn't exclude from the national fold several tribes on Israel's periphery when it scolds them for failing to contribute to Deborah's war effort; to the contrary, it affirms their belonging among the people of Israel and exhorts them to demonstrate this belonging through their actions in the present. Had the authors of our song wished to sever ties with other tribes, we would expect them to have pronounced a curse upon them as they did on Meroz. That the song does not do so is likely because the scribes who repurposed the older hymn wanted to encourage marginal communities to think of themselves as part of Israel and to conduct themselves accordingly.

Why then is Meroz execrated? Scholars have offered a range of explanations: Israel expected Meroz to cut off the enemy when the latter retreated, but Meroz did not do so and was therefore harshly cursed. Or Meroz was in alliance with Israel but joined "the Canaanites" during this battle. According to another suggestion, economic reasons militated against the participation of the other tribes that did not participate, whereas Meroz lacked a legitimate excuse.[20]

These suggestions are, however, based on little more than speculation. As we saw in our reconstruction, the insertion of the Jael material juxtaposes "most blessed of women is Jael" with "Curse Meroz . . . for they did not come to the help of Yhwh," and before the Jael material was inserted into the older hymn, the imprecation would have stood right before "So may all your enemies perish, O Yhwh!" in the final strophe. The authors of the hymn may have chosen an obscure name, or even invented one, in order to illustrate the point of the curse: those who conduct themselves as Meroz did, failing to "come to the help of Yhwh," however such "help" is understood, will be punished with total oblivion.

MEROZ AND THE AMERICAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

In 1777, a year after the American colonies declared their independence from Great Britain, a Presbyterian minister named Nathaniel Whitaker,

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[19] In the Conclusions, we treat other examples of Aegean war commemoration that emerged in the wake of the Persian Wars.

[20] On the identification of Meroz, see Erasmus Gaß, *Die Ortsnamen des Richterbuches in historischer und redaktioneller Perspektive* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005).

pastor of the Third Church of Salem, Massachusetts (the "Tabernacle"), delivered a sermon on the curse of Meroz entitled "Antidote Against Toryism." The transcript was widely circulated both during and after the Revolutionary War and was republished a year before the American Civil War.[21] The sermon offers a graphic illustration from recent reception history of the song's political potential. What makes the sermon especially worthy of our attention is the way it, like the song, combines antimonarchic sentiment with an emphasis on volunteerism.

According to Whitaker, the Song of Deborah provides biblical justification for limiting membership and privileges in the American colonies to those individuals and communities who readily contributed to the war effort against King George of England. Applying the curse of Meroz to those who remain loyal to the British throne, the Presbyterian preacher begins by observing that:

our struggle with Great Britain is very similar to that of Israel and Jabin. As they had, so have we been long oppressed by a power that never had any equitable right to our land, or to rule over us, but by our own consent, and agreeably to a solemn compact. . . . Therefore, if it was their duty to fight for the recovery of freedom, it must likewise be ours. And to neglect this, when called to it by the public voice, will expose us to the curse of Meroz.

Asserting that America's war is as equally legitimate and divinely authorized as the war that Israel initiated against the Canaanite king, Whitaker goes on to declare that:

those who are indolent, and backward to take up arms and exert themselves in the service of their country, in order to recover and secure their freedom, when called thereto by the public voice, are highly criminal in the sight of God and man.

Contributions to the war effort consist of more than just bearing arms; all kinds of exertion for the public good are demanded. Men and women, young and old, are called upon to give liberally of their time and substance. Pastors should preach to encourage the public, while parents should exhort their children to do their part. Everyone can participate in various kinds of manufacturing activities and services essential to the success of the American forces.

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[21] Quotations are drawn from Frank Moore (ed.), *The Patriot Preachers of the American Revolution: With Biographical Sketches* (New York: Charles T. Evans, 1862). The sermon was reprinted in 1811 by Poole & Palfray in Salem. See now James Byrd's *Sacred Scripture, Sacred War: The Bible and the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), chap. 3.

Whitaker's sermon contains some of the most eloquent early American rhetoric in defense of "republican civic virtue" – the willingness to forego personal pursuits and private concerns for the sake of the common good. Here's a representative excerpt:

This was the crisis when their all lay at stake. They well knew that their brethren . . . were groaning under cruel bondage. But as selfishness renders people callous and unfeeling to the distresses of others, so they were easy and satisfied to see their brethren tortured by the unrelenting hand of oppression, if so be they might sleep in a whole skin. They were contented that others should go forth and endure the hardships of war, but refused to engage in the work, or bear any part of the burden with them . . . .

Whitaker is describing here both the inhabitants of Meroz and the Tories of his own day. In contrast to outright betrayals benefiting the enemy or active efforts to discourage the nation's wartime resolves, the sin of Meroz is that they simply failed to do their part:

The crime they are charged with, is not their aiding, assisting, or furnishing the enemy, or holding a secret correspondence with, or taking up arms to help them; they are not charged as laying plots to circumvent the rest, or striving to discourage their neighbors from going to war, or as terrifying others with descriptions of their irresistible power of Jabin's nine hundred chariots of iron and the like. No, the inhabitants of Meroz were innocent people compared to these; they were only negatively wicked, they only failed in their duty; they did not arm to recover their liberties when wrested from them by the hand of tyranny. This is all the fault charged on them, yet for this they incurred the fearful curse in my text.

According to Whitaker's exposition, God requires a nation, like ancient Israel and its successor America, to treat those who will not join them in their cause for liberty as "open enemies" and to "reject them as unworthy of the privileges of society." The song articulates a basic criterion of affiliation to the political community, one that restricts privileges of membership to those who make sacrifices on behalf of the nation in arms.

A curse is something more than wishing ill to a person. It implies a separating him to some evil, or punishment. The command in my text therefore required Israel to separate the inhabitants of Meroz from some temporal good the rest of Israel enjoyed, and inflict on them some severe punishment . . . .

Those who dodged their duty must not be allowed to enjoy a place of honor in the government; instead, they should be deprived of "that delightful freedom and liberty Israel had regained from the tyranny of Jabin." At one point, Whitaker calls for the enslavement of these dodgers:

As these wretches discovered their servile temper in refusing to exert themselves for the recovery of their liberty, why should they not be condemned to the slavery they chose?

Later, he refers to more mild punishments, such as taxation without representation. In conclusion, the Massachusetts minister makes it clear that the punishment of Meroz is an enduring, if not timeless, moral duty, not confined to a period of military conflict. Indeed, it must be a fundamental feature of the ongoing program of reform that paves the way to the nation's happiness:

[W]e shall then see our councils filled with men inspired with wisdom to know what Israel ought to do; our arms victorious and triumphant; the inhabitants of Meroz justly punished; peace, liberty and safety restored; the rod of tyranny broken; pure and undefiled religion prevailing, and the voice of joy and gladness echoing round our land. May God hasten the happy, happy day!

Whitaker's sermon demonstrates the song's potential to mobilize a political community around (republican) ideals of communal volunteerism, without looking to a monarch to define its identity. But there are important differences to be noted between the song itself and Whitaker's appropriation of it for the American colonial context.

In Chapter 11, we observed how during World War II, the US armed forces appealed to a "Judeo-Christian tradition" in an effort to unite the nation and its troops, and we noted that the formation of the song – and by extension, much of the biblical corpus – was likewise propelled and sustained by concerns to bring together rival communities as one people. The difference is that the biblical project is not about mobilizing a nation for war, but creating a nation in the aftermath of defeat.

Similarly, Whitaker applied the song to a war of liberation and emergent statehood; however, we've seen that the song seeks to consolidate a nation in the wake of defeat and the demise of statehood. In focusing on one strophe of the song (the curse of Meroz), Whitaker's exegetical sermon misses the overarching message of his biblical text: the song does not celebrate the victory of a nation-state; rather, it affirms that a nation (Israel) can exist *without* a state.

What is perhaps even more jarring than the way Whitaker adapts the song to the politics of statehood is the manner in which he masculinizes its contents: men are to do the fighting, while women are to support them from their family homes. His audience never learns that the song abolishes this gender binary, celebrating a "mother in Israel" alongside a woman

who defies her husband's politics and deftly dispatches the enemy leader from her domestic confines. Indeed, the macho tenor of Whitaker's sermon helps us appreciate the song's revolutionary gender-bending agenda. In Chapter 13, we explore this important dimension of the song.

A NATION WITHOUT A KING

In interpreting the song as a "national anthem," I do not mean to suggest that it was performed in ancient Israel in the manner that, for instance, Americans sing "The Star-Spangled Banner." My point is rather that the intention driving the composition of this work anticipates the creation of modern anthems that began in the nineteen century.[22]

National anthems promote and celebrate symbols unifying the members of their political communities. Frequently, these anthems mimic military marches or relive a battle, summoning the nation's citizens to demonstrate their belonging through devotion and deed. While most contemporary anthems extol the country and the core values that bind its diverse populations (e.g., "La Marseillaise"), some have their origins in praise and supplications for monarchs (e.g., "God Save the Queen"). In intoning the hymn, the subjects pray collectively for their king's or queen's military success and long life, as the prosperity and security of the monarch presumably redound to their subjects' benefit.

While the Song of Deborah has many features in common with these anthems, the nation it imagines is not governed by a human king; he's been dethroned and his place assigned to a deity named Yhwh and to "a mother in Israel" named Deborah. Indomitable volunteerism, selfless sacrifice on the behalf of Yhwh and his people, and the courage to face fearsome opposition – these are the national virtues held high in this poetic monument.

The song imagines a nation consisting solely of Northern communities, and it likely emerged among scribes from these communities who were writing shortly before and especially after the downfall of their kingdom

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[22] See Christopher Kelen, *Anthem Quality: National Songs: A Theoretical Survey* (Bristol: Intellect, 2014). One of these anthems is "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Written by Julia Ward Howe, an abolitionist and supporter of the Union cause during the American Civil War, and performed as a war march and in protests against antebellum slavery, the song draws deeply on biblical sources, as Scott C. Ryan demonstrates; see "God in Conflict: Images of the Divine Warrior in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Texts," The Bible and Interpretation website, https://bibleinterp.arizona.edu/articles/god-conflict-images-divine-warrior-ancient-jewish-and-early-christian-texts [2019].

in 722 BCE. For more than a century, the Southern kingdom managed to maintain its existence, and, during this time, the Davidic kings enthroned in Jerusalem urged Northern communities to recognize them as their divinely appointed rulers.[23] As a memorial to the battle fought against the kings of Canaan during the birth of the nation, the song responds to, and repudiates, these political overtures, conveying a momentous message to its vanquished audience: Long before the reigns of their kings, Northern communities had come together from far and wide and collectively surmounted formidable challenges, and they could do so again now that their kings had been exiled.

Voluntary service and sacrifice are the basic expressions of national belonging. After all, a nation exists only to the extent that a group continues to will it through collective action. Such is what the Breton philosopher and Semiticist Ernest Renan meant by "daily plebiscite" when, in 1882 at the Sorbonne, he delivered his influential response to the question "What is a Nation?"

A nation is therefore a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling [*le sentiment*] of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future. It presupposes a past; it is summarized, however, in the present by a tangible fact, namely, consent, the clearly expressed desire to continue a common life. A nation's existence is, if you will pardon the metaphor, a daily referendum, just as an individual's existence is a perpetual affirmation of life.[24]

Renan here underscores the voluntary nature of the nation. While the nation presupposes a past and therefore a narrative (see Part II), what is most important is the fact that and the manner in which its members translate past sacrifices into a shared desire to continue a common life.

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[23] These claims are most pronounced in the David stories in which Saul represents the Northern monarchy. Thus, in 2 Samuel 5:1–3, all the Northern tribes come to David at Hebron and recognize his royal authority: "Long before now, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led Israel in war; and Yhwh said to you: 'You shall shepherd my people Israel; you shall be ruler of Israel.'" In their words, we can hear the Davidic kings beckoning Northern communities to accept their rule now that Saul is dead (i.e., now that the Northern kingdom has fallen). See Wright, *David, King of Israel*, chap. 3.

[24] An English translation and the original French version are available online at www.nationalismproject.org/what/renan.htm. The language of "feeling" and "sacrifices" has its origins in European Romanticism.

13

Women and War Commemoration

Building on our examination in Chapter 12 of the ways in which the Song of Deborah uses war commemoration to negotiate belonging for communities, we turn now to the gender of wartime contributions. A common cultural construction draws a sharp distinction between men, who leave their families to go fight, and women, who wait for their men to return. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, the Song of Deborah and the prose account that precedes it do not partake in the gender polarity that informs the cultural productions of so many societies, modern and ancient. By subverting the status quo and repudiating the conventions of male heroism, they do much the opposite. Moreover, our investigation will reveal that women, although rarely having opportunities to take up arms in defense of their communities, played a central role in war commemoration as "memory makers."

MOTHERS OF SOLDIERS

At first glance, women appear in ancient discourses on war primarily as objects: victims, trophies, and *causa belli*. In stereotypical laments, they give voice to suffering, and their bodies, along with those of the children in their care, give graphic expression to the costs of war. A closer examination of the sources, however, discloses the much more complex nature of women's roles and destinies in wartime. Far from being passive objects, they were active agents who consciously and directly shaped how their societies interpreted events on the battlefield.

Women in ancient Mediterranean societies usually did not partake in fighting on the front lines, and societies often went to great lengths to

evacuate them from the scene of conflict.[1] Even so, women contributed to war efforts in a variety of ways – from outfitting and provisioning soldiers to pelting aggressors from atop city walls and even engaging directly in (alternative forms of) combat.[2] In accounts of the past penned by male writers, their varied contributions have been consigned to oblivion, since memories of women saving the day had the potential to undermine what many considered to be the essential and primary contribution of women to war efforts: bearing male babies and rearing them to be soldiers.

In the book of Genesis, the family of Rebekah sends her off to marry Isaac with the following blessing: "May you, our sister, become thousands of ten thousands, and may your offspring take possession of the gates of their enemies" (Gen. 24:60).[3] Since states have conventionally fostered procreation, scholars often evaluate the Bible's "natalism" in relation to (pre-state and state) realities during the Iron Age.[4] To be sure, state-sponsored fertility and reproductive politics deserve consideration, yet the biblical corpus was decisively shaped by the experience of defeat and the demise of statehood. The most pressing concern for the scribes who produced this corpus was not to raise a new army, but to survive in a new age, and hence procreation had a new role to play. (Closely tied to procreation is the enculturation/education of future generations in the nation's collective memories and traditions.)

The ways in which progeny and procreation replace a native army and combat is illustrated in a variety of biblical texts. The book of Genesis expresses the point symbolically in the scene of Jacob's and Esau's

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[1] See, e.g., Hdt. 8.36.2, 8.41.1; Thuc. 2.6.4, 4.123.4, 5.32.1; Diod. Sic. 13.91.

[2] See Judg. 9:53–54; Plut. *Pyrrh*. 34; Paus. 1.13.8; Polyaen. 8.68–69; Thuc. 2.4.2–4, 3.74.1, 5.82.6; Plut. *Mor*. 245B–C, 246D–247A, 248E–249B; Diod. Sic. 15.83.3. See also 2 Sam. 20 for the role a wise woman plays in saving her city during a siege. That women – usually *hetairai* rather than wives – were present in the war camps of Greek mercenary armies is clear from Xenephon's *Anabasis*.

[3] This wish that the bride would become mother to a powerful fighting force may represent a variation of a traditional blessing. In relation to the Aegean world, see, e.g., Hdt. 1.136 on the honors Persian kings conferred on families with many sons. The information matches evidence from the Persepolis Fortification Tablets showing that mothers who had given birth to sons receive double portions of rations. In Sparta, only those men who had died in combat were commemorated with epitaphs on their tombstones, along with women who had died in childbirth (Plut. *Lyc*. 27.2 – Latte's emendation).

[4] See, e.g., Carol Meyers, "Procreation, Production and Protection: Male-Female Balance in Early Israel," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 51 (1983), 569–593; Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "The Atrahasis Epic and Its Significance for Our Understanding of Genesis 1–9," *Biblical Archaeologist*, 40 (1977), 147–155; Ryan Byrne, "Lie Back and Think of Judah: The Reproductive Politics of Pillar Figurines," *Near Eastern Archaeology*, 68 (2004), 137–151.

reunion: the patriarch of Israel is accompanied by his wives and numerous children, while Esau is accompanied by his 400 warriors (Gen. 32–33, discussed in Chapter 2). The book of Ruth imagines "the days of the judges" as an idyllic period, when war was completely absent and the nation was sustained by acts of *ḥesed* (loyalty, hospitality, generosity) that result in offspring. The male protagonist Boaz is called a *gibbôr ḥayil*; the designation is usually translated as mighty warrior, but here it refers to a man of noble virtue who assumes his social duty, marries a widow, and produces a child with her. The story explicitly plays on the title. When the community blesses Boaz on his marriage with Ruth, it encourages him to act heroically: "May you do a mighty deed of valor (*ḥayil*) in Ephrathah, and make a name in Bethlehem" (Ruth 4:11). The expressions "do a mighty deed of valor" and "make a name" here refer not to martial courage or noble death, as they do elsewhere, but to acts of marriage and procreation.[5]

Throughout the biblical corpus, the home competes with the battlefield as the principal stage of national life, and in rethinking the nature of peoplehood, the biblical scribes de-gendered procreation so that it's no longer solely a woman's duty. Infertility becomes an agonistic struggle for men rather than simply the fault of women. The choice to place household stories at the center of Israel's history is a bold statement that power resides in the inner workings of the family and that the project of creating a nation is a collaborative effort.

POLITICAL PERFORMANCES

Teddy Roosevelt famously compared a woman who "shirks her duty to bear children" to a man who "fears to do his duty in battle when his country calls him."[6] This gender polarity is not unique to modernity. As the French historian Nicole Loraux demonstrated in an important essay, classical Greek sources juxtapose the birthing bed of women with the battlefield of men.[7] A common motif in classical Greek art is the departure scene, which features a hoplite warrior taking leave of his wife, his son, and often the family dog. To perform aristocratic manhood, the hoplite

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[5] On the way biblical texts consistently make procreation, not heroic death, the principal means of making a name, see Wright, "Making a Name."

[6] In my article "Making a Name," I juxtapose this quote with a number of biblical and ancient Near Eastern texts that liken the painful birthing process to battle.

[7] Nicole Loraux, "Le lit, la guerre," *L'Homme: Revue française d'anthropologie*, 21 (1981), 37–67.

leaves hearth and home – the domain of women – and fights fearlessly alongside other men of the same class. Greco-Roman literature reports many cases of men returning too early from the front lines, only to confront the public scorn of their women.[8] By appealing to their manhood, the women made sure that their men fulfilled their societal role.[9]

Just as women were expected to send off their men and boys and encourage them to carry out their duties with valor, they performed rituals that involved going out to meet their homecoming heroes. Such performances are well attested in many places and times – from nineteenth-century German society in which girls robed in white gowns greeted returning soldiers, to the Wankas in sixteenth-century Peru, whose women, according to Francisco's de Toledo's account, "came forth with pitchers of *chichi* and other things" to confer honor on their triumphant men.[10] In other cases – from Sparta to Achaemenid Persia and pre-Islamic Arabia – women and girls (were) paraded before soldiers on the eve of battle. Their appearance served to stimulate the men to fight and reminded them what they were fighting for. Thus, as the Banū Bakr prepared for war against the Banū Taglib in the early sixth century, two women chanted lyric verses that roused the men to undertake great deeds of valor:

On the day of at-Tahaloq [a war between two tribes], al-Fand az-Zamani, an old man more than a hundred years old, arrived with his two daughters. The first one took off her clothes and started singing to the tribes of Shaiban and Bakr [to encourage them to victory]:

> War, war, war, war!
> The fire of war is glowing.
> How lovely, how lovely, to be with the victorious at dawn!

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[8] Plut. *Mor.* 241, 244F–245B; Justin 1.6.13–15; Hdt. 1.37.3, 1.82.7, 3.134.2; Polyb. 5.83, 15.30; see the discussion in David Schaps, "The Women of Greece in Wartime," *Classical Philology*, 77 (1982), 193–213.

[9] In "Women as Creators of Biblical Genres," *Prooftexts*, 8 (1988) 1–33, at 3, S. D. Goiten calls attention to songs of mockery and goading in Arab culture: "When a poet came to lament over her brother or some other fallen hero of the tribe, she reproached her fellow tribesmen in the harshest terms for not preventing his death or for not hurrying to seek vengeance for him. Mockery of the conquered enemy and joy at his misfortune are also found, but perhaps less than goading of her own tribe to go out to war. The poetess' clever mockery was a weapon which the ancient Arabs feared more than the edge of the sword."

[10] The color symbolized the purity of the women that the victorious troops had protected; see Ute Frevert, *Die kasernierte Nation: Militärdienst und Zivilgesellschaft in Deutschland* (Munich: Beck, 2001). On the Wankas culture and de Toledo's account, see Timothy Earle, *How Chiefs Come to Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 115.

The second one also took off her clothes and sang:

> We are the daughters of Tariq.
> We walk on carpets.
> If you fight, we'll embrace you.
> And prepare beds for you
> But if you desert, we'll abandon you.[11]

Arabian women played drums in battle to encourage the warriors to victory, as well as when performing laments (*marthiya* or *nawh*) for heroes. Thus, Mohammad's enemy, a woman named Hind bin Utba, used drums when commemorating the war dead with songs and lamentation.[12]

Closer to the biblical period, archeologists uncovered at Achziv (15 km north of Acco) what became known as the Tomb of the Horsemen. Deposited in the grave were figurines of women drummers alongside various other objects, such as figurines of horsemen. As Sarit Paz notes in *Drums, Women, and Goddesses*, it's conceivable that "the juxtaposition of the women drummers and horsemen denotes the 'victory song' tradition of women who go forth singing, drumming, and dancing to greet the warriors returning from battle."[13]

This "victory song" tradition to which Paz refers is well attested in biblical literature. Thus, the daughter of the triumphant Jephthah comes out to welcome him, at his homecoming, with dance and *tuppîm* (Judg. 11:34). The latter are likely frame drums, similar to the Greek *tympanum* or the Arabic *duff*.[14] Women do the same for Saul and David when they return from their battles with the Philistines (1 Sam. 18:6–7), playing *tuppîm* and other instruments. Likewise, Miriam leads the women of Israel with *tuppîm* and dancing after the victory at the Red Sea (Exod. 15:20).

Such performances had extraordinary political potential. For example, in the story of Saul and David, the praise chanted by the women has

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[11] From Ibn al-Kalbi (d. 819), as quoted in Veronica Doubleday, "The Frame Drum in the Middle East: Women, Musical Instruments and Power," *Ethnomusicology*, 43 (1999), 101–134, at 129.

[12] Doubleday, "Frame Drum," 109.

[13] Sarit Paz, *Drums, Women, and Goddesses: Drumming and Gender in Iron Age II Israel* (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2007), 121.

[14] See Carol Meyers, "The Drum-Dance-Song Ensemble: Women's Performance in Biblical Israel" in Kimberley Marshall (ed.), *Rediscovering the Muses: Women's Musical Traditions* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 49–67, 234–238; Miriam Tadmor, "Realism and Convention in the Depiction of Ancient Drummers" in Yairah Amit et al. (eds.), *Essays on Ancient Israel in Its Near Eastern Context* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 321–338.

a subversive ring to it: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his myriads." The lyrics seem harmless enough, since they extol the deeds of the reigning king. However, by paying tribute to an upstart and ambitious warrior and singing his name in tandem with the king's, the celebration paves the way for that upstart to seize the throne. When Saul hears the words of their song, he furiously concedes that: "the only thing he has yet to gain is the kingdom itself!" (1 Sam. 18:8–9). The performance by these women has an impact far beyond Israel's borders, and the Philistines cite their song twice as evidence of David's political ambitions (1 Sam. 21:12, 29:5).

In the case of Jephthah, his rule over Gilead depends on his success in battle. Hence, he utters a vow to sacrifice whoever comes out first to meet him if he returns triumphantly. Since he has only one daughter, it was likely that either she or his wife would be the sacrificial victim. When he returns from vanquishing the enemy, it's his daughter who comes out to greet him, and the text suggests that she does so knowingly:

On seeing her, Jephthah rent his clothes and said, "Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low. You have become my troubler! For I have opened my mouth [i.e., made a vow] to Yhwh and I cannot retract." "Father," she said, "you have opened your mouth to Yhwh. Therefore, do to me as you have spoken now that Yhwh has brought victory for you against your enemies, the Ammonites." Judg. 11:35–36

The song that Miriam sings at the exodus is equally political inasmuch as it pays homage to Yhwh alone without mentioning Moses or any human warrior in the nation's ranks:

Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a drum in her hand, and all the women went out after her with drums and with dancing. And Miriam chanted to them: "Sing to Yhwh, for he is truly exalted. Horse and chariot he has hurled into the sea." Exod. 15:20–21

It is their song that determines how that battle is commemorated, and it may have directly influenced the composition of the longer Song of the Sea (compare Exod. 15:21 with Exod. 15:1).

In these and other texts, we witness how the messages encoded in women's songs and celebrations had the potential to sway public opinion far and wide. Victory is first and foremost a performance, and the song and dance of women determined to a considerable extent how triumphs and defeats were remembered. They might deflect honor from the reigning king by praising him alongside a figure who has his eye on the throne, or

they might deflect honor from men altogether by focusing attention on the nation's deity.[15]

BETWEEN BED AND BATTLEFIELD

Our accounts of Deborah and Jael presuppose these conventional wartime roles. Like Arabian prebattle rituals, the poetic version exhorts Deborah to break out in song at the same time as it enjoins Barak to take captives (Judg. 5:12). The preceding prose story depicts Jael going out to meet Sisera, the enemy general. Her behavior follows the pattern of women's postbattle performances – but with a dramatic twist: Sisera is not a returning hero but the leader of Israel's enemy fleeing to save his life. Jael entices him into her tent under the pretense of hospitality; once he enters her domain, she slays him with cunning and stealth.[16] Having made a battlefield out of her domestic confinement, she then goes out again to meet Israel's returning warrior, Barak. Yet instead of hailing him as the champion, she invites him to come into her tent and see the man whom he was seeking and whom she has slain.[17]

In many photos and artistic renderings of Middle Eastern aristocracy, women often lie reposed on divans. In contrast, men stand proudly or sit mounted on their steeds, parading their weapons prominently. To advertise confidence, a man might depart from these expectations by posing in a recumbent posture, especially if it's in the company of women. Such is how the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal is portrayed in an impressive palace

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[15] Psalm 68 similarly refers to the women who bear tidings of Yhwh's victory as a great "army" or "host." In keeping with its anti-monarchic thrust, the book of Joshua, which depicts a military hero slaying kings left and right, does not depict women honoring him with hymns or rituals of triumph. Nowhere do we read that the women went out with their drums to greet Joshua and his warriors when they returned from battle.

[16] On the role of hospitality in this account, see Victor Matthews, "Hospitality and Hostility in Judges 4," *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 21 (1991), 13–21; as well as, most recently, Anne Katrine de Hemmer Gudme, "Death at the Hand of a Woman: Hospitality and Gender in the Hebrew Bible" in Stephanie Lynn Budin (ed.), *Gender and Methodology in the Ancient Near East* (Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona Edicions, 2019), 23–33; Gudme, "Invitation to Murder: Hospitality and Violence in the Hebrew Bible," *Studia Theologica – Nordic Journal of Theology*, 73 (2019), 89–108. Gudme offers a new interpretation of Jael, Rahab, and others that considers hospitality in the Hebrew Bible as a distinctively male prerogative.

[17] If the song is secondarily ascribed to Barak, as many scholars claim (the line begins "And *she* sang"), it may have been to show that he finally realizes and celebrates how Yhwh brings victory through the hands of women (Judg. 4:9). See Steven Weitzman, *Song and Story: The History of a Literary Convention in Ancient Israel* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 35–36.

relief (ca. 645 BCE), which depicts the king reclining on a couch in his garden and drinking with his wife. His weapons rest behind him, and the head of the enemy king dangles from a tree. The passivity of the scene has a theological quality: if the king can rest at home with the queen, it's because his deity, the goddess Ishtar, leads his army against the enemy for him – "You stay here in your place, eat bread, drink wine, play music, and praise my godhead, while I go there to complete the job, and to fulfill your heart's desire."[18]

Adventuresome valor is extolled in the Erra Epic, one of the most widely circulated texts in Mesopotamia during the first millennium. A portion of the epic, called "The Warrior's Manifesto," beckons the hero to arise and partake in the "feast" of the battlefield, instead of "sitting" (*wašābum*) like an old man in the city, like a little infant in the house, or like the timorous who "eat the bread of women" (I:46–49; cf. the use of *y-š-b* in Judg. 5 and Num. 32).

To cite an example from personal correspondence, Shamshi-Adad, a king from the Old Assyrian Empire, wrote to his son in ca. 1776 BCE admonishing him to withdraw from the company of women in order to go out and conquer:

> Here your brother won a victory, but there you lie among women! Now, when you march with your army to Qatna, be a man. As your brother has established a great name, you also in your region establish a great name. (ARM 1:69)

The expression "establish a great name" refers here not only to feats on the battlefield but also to the act of setting up a victory monument bearing the name of the ruler.

Biblical texts, too, present the battlefield and the bed as antithetically gendered spaces. Thus, the David-Bathsheba story from the book of Samuel has the king staying back in Jerusalem and sleeping with the wife of one of his soldiers while the nation is away engaged in a military campaign.

Defying this spatial polarity, Jael transforms her bed into a -battleground.[19] In the prose version of the account, Jael goes out of her tent to meet Sisera and lures him into her tent: "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; have no fear." Later, displaying maternal

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[18] See the discussion in Jacob L. Wright, "Commensal Politics in Ancient Western Asia: The Background to Nehemiah's Feasting (Part I)," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 122 (2010): 212–233, at 230–31.

[19] In this respect, she resembles Delilah, as underscored by Milton; see the following section of this chapter.

hospitality, she covers him with a blanket. When he asks for water, she serves him milk.[20] He orders her to stand at the entrance lest a *man* come looking for him. When he falls fast asleep, confident that he has found a secure place to rest, she drives a peg into his temple, pinning him to the ground. The song makes Jael's deed even more daring and Tarantinoesque. Instead of waiting for him to sleep, she straightaway crushes his skull with a hammer so that he topples over and then falls dead between her legs. Meanwhile, Sisera's mother waits passively and patiently at her home for her son to return triumphantly as a warrior from battle. In one of the finest literary flourishes in the biblical corpus, we overhear this woman reassuring herself in front of her ladies-in-waiting, as she gazes from her window, that her son is delayed in his return because he was busy collecting and dividing up the spoils, which include "a damsel [lit. a womb] or two for each man."[21] Little can she imagine, as the reader knows, that one of those damsels had assassinated her warrior-son.

For many contemporary readers, Jael's tent peg is a phallic symbol. When she plunges the object into Sisera, she murders the male warrior with a kind of violent sexual penetration.[22] Yet while the account is undeniably suggestive in this direction, and highlights Jael's seductive ploy, one should not lose sight of the more basic manner in which it depicts Jael seizing quotidian objects to achieve something that the male warrior Barak could not. Her creativity reminds us of the women in the Aegean world who hurled house tiles upon invading armies, or the unnamed figure in Judges 9 who launches a millstone – simultaneously the implement and symbol of her role as a woman – from atop a tower, crushing the skull of Abimelech, Israel's first king. Moreover, the tent peg, hammer, and milk symbolize Jael's identities not only as a woman but also as a tent-dwelling nomad and a member of an ethnic group known for animal herding and metalworking. (In Chapter 14, we consider aspects of her ethnic identity.)

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[20] The milk may signify Jael's attempt to make her guest drowsy, as suggested by the sixteenth-century commentator Ibn Zimra (Radbaz). Rashi argued that it was her way of testing Sisera to see if he was fully conscious. The song adds that she served the milk in the finest vessel, underscoring thereby her attempt to win his confidence through her hospitality (but cf. *mayim ʾaddîrîm* in Exod. 15:10).

[21] On the term, see the Mesha Stele, lines 16–17.

[22] This interpretation is found, or at least intimated, already in rabbinic writings. The Ehud story in Judges 3:12–30 may have served as the template for the Jael episode; their common features are frequently noted in studies and commentaries.

The book of Judith from the Hellenistic period draws directly on our story and drives its gender reversal even further. It portrays a woman achieving a name and honor for herself (16:21–23) by performing a feat of martial valor. Instead of enticing the victim into her tent, she abandons her frightful countrymen in order to penetrate the enemy camp. Once she decapitates the enemy general, she marches with his head, as David did with that of his Philistine competitor. Just as the dancing women had gone out to meet returning male heroes, so now they go out to welcome this triumphant woman. Traditional roles are transformed as "all the men of Israel in their armor, bearing garlands and with songs on their lips," join the women's procession (15:12–13).

MEMORY AS A MORAL IMPERATIVE

Societies rarely recognize the critical role women have played in war commemoration, just as they rarely commemorate women's direct contributions to war efforts.[23] The problem persists to the present. Thus, more than a thousand female aviators flew some sixty million miles in the Army's aircraft during World War II, yet because these members of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) were not considered real military pilots, no flags were draped over the coffins of the thirty-eight members who died in the line of duty. After the war ended, the surviving members of the unit paid their own bus fare home, and for decades thereafter they fought an arduous battle for recognition. In 1977, they were finally granted official veteran status. More than thirty years later, in 2009, the remaining members received a prestigious award; it was, however, the Congressional Gold Medal – a civilian honor.

A moral failure to commemorate women's contributions cannot be charged against the book of Judges. As we've seen, the scribes who composed the account diminished the heroic contributions of men by assigning credit for the greatest martial feats to "a mother in Israel" and to a woman who represents a marginal group in their society. Nothing is said about the direct progeny of these two women; their attention is directed elsewhere. As the book's ideal leader, Deborah exerts authority over all others in her society. She beckons the warrior Barak, issues his

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[23] Ben Sira includes a lengthy encomium on the great deeds of men (44:1). For the late Second Temple period, this text witnesses to a possible formal, ritual setting in which the names of national heroes and warriors were commemorated with the help of transmitted eulogies.

battle orders, and thereby severs his military role from the right to govern. Instead of staying behind the front lines, she accompanies him into battle while warning him that another woman, Jael, would secure the glory he sought.[24]

Addressing the issue of collective amnesia most directly, the story of Jephthah, several chapters later, portrays "the daughters of Israel" coming together every year for four days to "recount" (*letannôt*) the deeds of his brave daughter, who had not produced a child and who, without their efforts, would be consigned to oblivion (Judg. 11:40). It is this imagined festival that preserves this nameless woman's memory; meanwhile, what preserves Jephthah's memory is an account that excoriates his hypermasculine obsession with his own name-making.

Delilah is yet another woman from the book of Judges, and Milton's *Samson Agonistes* (1671) has this figure expressing a desire to be named among the famed for eschewing "wedlock-bands" and saving her country from an enemy predator:

> But in my countrey where I most desire,
> In Ecron, Gaza, Asdod, and in Gath
> I shall be nam'd among the famousest
> Of Women, sung at solemn festivals,
> Living and dead recorded, who to save
> Her countrey from a fierce destroyer, chose
> Above the faith of wedlock-bands, my tomb
> With odours visited and annual flowers.
> Not less renown'd then in Mount Ephraim,
> Jael, who with inhospitable guile
> Smote Sisera sleeping through the Temples nail'd.[25]

In wishing to be "sung at solemn festivals" and to have her grave visited in annual celebrations, Delilah not only reminds us of Jephthah and his nameless daughter; she also covets the fame that Jael enjoyed in Mount Ephraim for demonstrating "inhospitable guile" to a sleeping enemy. Exercising midrashic license, Milton joins here the architects of biblical memory in an effort to restrain the male ego by celebrating, with the help of graphic and shocking images, the

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[24] As noted in Chapter 10, the account features both the king Jabin (who hardly plays a role in the account) and Sisera, his general, in order to place Deborah on a par with this ruler and demote Barak to the corresponding rank of her general. On the other ways in which the book of Judges severs the conventional connection between martial heroism and political authority, see my article "Military Valor and Kingship."

[25] Lines 980–995.

(martial) feats women are capable of performing to make a name for themselves.[26]

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[26] On this theme in biblical literature, see my essay "Making a Name." Milton's view of women in *Paradise Lost* stands in stark contrast to this work; see Barbara K. Lewalski, "Milton on Women – Yet Once More," *Milton Studies*, 6 (1975), 3–20; John B. Mason, "Multiple Perspectives in *Samson Agonistes*: Critical Attitudes Toward Dalila," *Milton Studies*, 10 (1997), 23–34.

14

Jael's Identities

Having now examined Jael from the perspective of gender, we turn in this final chapter of Part IV to her representative role as a member of the Kenites. While a number of biblical texts identify this group as the nation's enemies, others depict a special relationship between them and Israel. As we work through these texts, our guiding question will be: What does the case of the Kenites reveal paradigmatically about Israel's ethnogenesis and the formation of biblical literature?

THE KENITES' SOLIDARITY WITH ISRAEL

At the beginning of our investigation, we saw that the episode in which Jael assassinates the Canaanite commander appears to have been appended to the prose account in Judges 4. Connected to this episode is a statement that appears earlier in the narration:

Now Heber the Kenite had separated from the Kenites [lit. *qayin* or "Cain"] – from the descendants of Hobab, Moses's father-in-law – and had pitched his tent at Elon-Bezaanannim, which is near Kedesh. Judg. 4:11

This statement interrupts the flow of the story and was likely not part of its original iteration. To understand why a scribe would have added it, we need to consider the introduction to the Jael episode:

But Sisera fled by foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because there was an alliance [lit. peace] between King Jabin of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. Judg. 4:17

This introduction begs a basic question for the readers: In making an alliance with Israel's enemy, was the house of Heber representative of, or an exception among, the Kenites? The insertion of 4:11 responds by declaring that Heber had "separated from the Kenites" and pitched his tent apart from them. Accordingly, Sisera's flight to Heber's camp doesn't mean that the Kenites as a whole were on the side of Sisera and Jabin.[1]

Heber's political associations were not representative of the Kenite population corporately, and in fact they had caused a division within Heber's own household. The name Heber means "friend" or "ally" in most Semitic languages; in Akkadian, the verb *ḫabarum* refers to the act of leaving one's house (i.e., moving to a new political domain).[2] Yet contrary to Heber's intentions, the alliance he makes with the Canaanites ultimately works in Israel's favor. As Israel routs the enemy forces, Sisera seeks refuge in Heber's camp, and it is there that this Canaanite general meets his violent death at the hands of Heber's own wife.[3] In executing the general with remarkable finesse and guile, Jael openly opposes her deviant husband and tangibly reaffirms the Kenites' collective and enduring loyalty to Israel.

Jael's bravery illustrates, according to these scribes, the solidarity that had long defined the relationship between the Kenites and Israel. In 4:11, an interjected clause describes the Kenites as the "descendants of Hobab, Moses's father-in-law." The first chapter of the book contains a verse with similar information:

The Kenite descendants [lit. the descendants of Keni],[4] Moses's father-in-law, went up from the City of Palms with the people of Judah into the wilderness of Judah that is in the Negeb of Arad. They went and settled among the people.[5] Judg. 1:16

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[1] If the second half of 4:17 ("because there was an alliance between King Jabin of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite") is supplementary, it may represent a simultaneous or earlier attempt to make Heber's clan an exception among the Kenites.

[2] Abraham Malamat, "Mari and the Bible," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 83 (1962), 143–150, compared the word to the Mari *ḫibrum*, a political association or "nomadic community." On the Mari evidence, see Daniel E. Fleming, *Democracy's Ancient Ancestors* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 97–102, 231.

[3] A rabbinic source (*Ex. Rab.* 4.2) links Moses's flight to the tent of Jethro, on the one hand, and the flight of Sisera to the tent of Jael, on the other.

[4] Most of the Greek versions supply the name Hobab, whereas the rabbis concluded that Keni is one of the many names for Moses's father-in-law and the eponymous ancestor of the Kenites (see, e.g., *Mek. Rab. Ish.* 1:1).

[5] Some versions have "among the Amalekites" in place of "among the people," anticipating Saul's engagement with both populations in 1 Samuel 15.

Within the context of Judges, the line anticipates the material about Jael that was added to the Deborah story; as we shall see, it also represents a piece of an extended narrative that earlier scribes had produced through piecemeal insertions at key points in the exodus-conquest account. Although this narrative originally had nothing to do with the Kenites, it now serves a new purpose: Readers of the nation's story should understand that the Kenites had long been close allies. During the days of the exodus and wilderness wanderings, Moses had forged a personal bond with their eponymous ancestor, who was none other than his father-in-law. During the conquest and settlement, the Kenites had inherited a portion of the Promised Land with the tribe of Judah. Therefore, by flouting her husband's political alliance, Jael reaffirmed the Kenites' long-standing loyalty to the nation.

In the Deborah-Barak story, we can retrace the steps scribes took as they responded to polemical attacks on the Kenites. The prose version of the story has been expanded with a new culminating scene that ingeniously admits a case of Kenite betrayal while simultaneously making it exceptional. Likewise, the song has been augmented with lengthy strophes that go even further: Jael is praised as the "wife of Heber the Kenite," without anything being said about this man's ties to the enemy. Jael's deed is offered here as both illustration and evidence of the special relationship with the Kenites. They are exemplary "friends" of Yhwh (lit. those who love him).[6]

THE KENITES ON THE BIBLICAL LANDSCAPE

In the book of Judges, the Kenites are descendants of Hobab, Moses's father-in-law. Describing Israel's departure from Sinai (or "the Mountain of Yhwh"), the book of Numbers presents Moses approaching Hobab with a petition that he join them as their guide through the wilderness. Yet in this account, Hobab is designated as the son of Moses's father-in-law, who here is called "Reuel the Midianite" (Num. 10:29–32). In addition to being the name of one of Esau's sons and thus a prominent figure in the Edomite genealogy (Gen. 36),[7] Reuel appears in the tale of Moses's flight

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[6] Notice how the Jael material in 5:24–30 has been directly placed before the final line about Yhwh's friends in verse 31.

[7] The genealogy includes also Jitran (Gen. 36:26), a name that is related to Jethro. Whatever the case may be, the amplified form of this chapter likely represents an attempt to incorporate all southern populations in the lineage of Edom. The amplification likely reflects the period leading up to and after 587 BCE, when the Edomites came to control

from Egypt, where he bears the title "the Midianite priest" (Exod. 2:11–22). The sequel to that episode is the story of the burning bush, and there he is called by yet another name: Jethro.

Over the centuries, interpreters have offered various solutions to the confusion of these three names, an issue that does not merit our attention here. What's more important for our purposes is how our texts conceive of the Kenites as descendants from the family of Moses's wife and thus related to the Midianites. Strangely, other biblical texts provide little in the way of support for a historical relationship between the Kenites and the Midianites. The reason for this fact is that the identification of the Kenites as descendants of Moses's Midianite in-laws has really little, if anything, to do with the Midianites; rather, it represents a clever scribal attempt to connect the Kenites' story to the nation's narrative by linking them to none other than the founder's own family.

The origins of the Kenites are treated in a genealogy that later scribes connected to the story of Cain and Abel (Gen. 4). The name "Cain" (*qayin*) and the ethnonym "Kenite" (*qêynî*) are closely related.[8] The Semitic root is related to "forge" and "metalworker" in Arabic, Syriac, and Palmyrene. In the description of Cain's progeny, one of his descendants, named Tubal-cain, is honored as the father of metallurgy, "a smith of all kinds of bronze and iron tools" (Gen. 4:22). The genealogy also ascribes to the Kenites' ancestors a number of technological and cultural achievements. In addition to being a pioneer in agriculture, Cain builds the first city (Gen. 4:17; agricultural innovations indeed paved the way for urbanism), and his offspring are identified as the first nomadic herders, musicians, and smiths (Gen. 4:20–22).

In the context of Genesis, the Kenite genealogy paints these Promethean achievements in dark tones. The metallurgical innovations served, not least, the needs of warfare. (The word *qayin* can also mean spear.) Cain murders his brother and, as consequence, is doomed to a vagabond existence.[9] Like their eponymous ancestor, the Kenites are depicted as nomads in biblical

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much of the Negev, eventually even beyond Hebron (Kenizzite territory). Attempts by scholars (see n. 27 below) to use this text as a source for the reconstruction of Judah's origins are hence problematic.

[8] For an excellent survey of the issue, see Baruch Halpern, "Kenites" in David Noel Friedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 17–22.

[9] The "mark of Cain," which serves somehow to protect the despised fugitive, may be compared to the grotesque appearance of many mythic smiths, like the Greek god of metallurgy Hephaestus.

texts. The authors of Genesis may not have intended that their readers attribute these characteristics to the Kenites of their own time, since the flood destroys the antediluvian population; the flood story may have been added subsequently, however.[10] Whatever the case may be, the genealogy serves the needs of the narrative, which portrays the gradual emergence of human civilization characterized by the tragic dichotomy between technological progress and a propensity for violence.

The Kenites make an appearance in the "Story of David's Rise" in the book of Samuel, which tells how the Judean king spends his early days as a warlord providing protection and robbing marauders of the wealth they had seized. Three of the regions in which he and his men roam are the Negeb of Judah, the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites, and the Negeb of the Kenites (1 Sam. 27:10). In order to win the favor of those who could make him king, David behaves like a mafioso and shares "the spoils of the enemies of Yhwh" with his people. These enemies include "the towns of the Jerahmeelites and the towns of the Kenites" (1 Sam. 30:29). The next episode in this older narrative portrays David and his men moving to the Hebron, where he is made king over the federation he had created, designated "the House of Judah" (2 Sam. 2:1–4). This narrative implies that the Kenites were the enemies of the Judean population that appointed David to be their king.

I discuss these texts and the process of Judah's consolidation elsewhere.[11] Many of the populations that formed the kingdom of Judah continued to play a key role in the centuries that followed, and the narrative of David's rise and reign reflects not the actual origins so much as (early) dynamics and political concerns in the kingdom after David's reign. The Kenites may, accordingly, have been a population that the historical David plundered on his way to kingship. However, the reference to them may indicate only that they were a political issue in Judah at the time when scribes were composing the account. In the latter scenario, it's noteworthy that the scribes, presumably working for the palace in Jerusalem, used a form of war commemoration when polemicizing against them. Instead of the allies of Israel and friends of Yhwh, they are remembered here as outsiders opposing the nation's hero as he used his private army to carve out a kingdom in the Judean desert.[12]

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[10] See Idan Dershowitz, "Man of the Land: Unearthing the Original Noah," *Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 128 (2016), 357–373.

[11] Wright, *David, King of Israel*, 39–45, 172–174.

[12] Since the story of David's rise to power presents the protagonist in a rather unflattering light, as a Machiavellian ruler who stops at nothing in his quest for the throne, the

The Bible refers frequently to many little-known population groups; as a rough-and-ready rule, one can posit that the frequency with which these populations are mentioned is indirectly related to the degree to which they were integrated and assimilated into the larger political communities of Israel and Judah. In the case of Judah, some peoples, such as the Jerahmeelites, are mentioned very rarely, and the likely reason for their low profile is that they were fully absorbed into Judah, gradually relinquishing their identity as a distinctive clan. If we hear about the Kenites more than the Jerahmeelites, it's because the Kenites either struggled longer to maintain a distinct identity, were more important as a population, and/or presented more obstacles to their integration.[13]

The image of the Kenites as indigenous outsiders who must be subjugated is found not only in the story of David's rise to power. In the Abraham account in the book of Genesis, Yhwh makes a covenant with the patriarch, promising his offspring a vast stretch of land from Egypt to the Euphrates. This land is occupied by ten peoples whom Abraham's descendants would have to dispossess, and the Kenites are the first group in this list (Gen. 15:18–21).[14]

A more vociferous attack on the Kenites is found in the Balaam account from the book of Numbers. Balaam is hired by King Balak of Moab, together with the elders of Midian, to pronounce a curse on Israel (see the discussion in Chapter 1). At the end of the account, the seer finally delivers the long-awaited imprecation, but it is directed solely at Israel's enemies, which include the Amalekites and the Kenites:

> He saw Amalek and, uttering his oracle, he said:
> "First among the nations is Amalek.
> But its end is to perish forever."
>
> He saw the Kenites and, uttering his oracle, he said:
> "Though your abode be secure,
> And your nest be set among cliffs,
> Yet shall [you] Cain be purged/burned,
> When Assyria takes you captive."
>
> Num. 24:20–22

mention of the Kenites as one of three populations in the Negev whom David ruthlessly plunders may be intended to cast them in a sympathetic light.

[13] For an exemplary study of populations in the Negev from a material-cultural perspective, see Juan Manuel Tebes, "Cerámicas 'Edomita,' 'Madianita,' y 'Negevita': ¿Indicadoras de grupos tribales en el Negev?," *Antiguo Oriente*, 2 (2004), 27–49.

[14] For the putative Davidic dating of this text and the problems it presents, see Wright, *David, King of Israel*, 168–172.

The language plays on the consonance of Cain or Kenite (*qāyin/qênî*) and "your nest" (*qinnekā*); as noted, the name Cain/Kenite can also mean smith, which matches the fate of this population being purged/burned. It's remarkable that the curse of the Kenites is twice as long as that of the Amalekites, even though the latter are the most despised of Israel's enemies in the Bible.[15]

<center>FROM SAUL TO MOSES</center>

The association of the Kenites with the Amalekites is reflected also in 1 Samuel 15, which presents Saul going to war with the latter. What motivates his bellicosity is a war memory from the earliest days of the nation, when Israelite refugees were making their way from Egypt to the Promised Land. The Amalekites attacked them when they were most vulnerable, and now that Israel has finally, after many centuries, become strong, Saul intends to exact revenge on the Amalekites.

As the troops of Israel approach "the city of Amalek" and are about to wreak carnage on its inhabitants, Saul sends a message to the Kenites, who were living in their midst:

Leave! Withdraw at once from among the Amalekites, so that I may not destroy you along with them! For you showed kindness to all the Israelites when they went up from Egypt. 1 Sam. 15:6[16]

The Kenites deserve special protection because, in contrast to the Amalekites, they demonstrated *ḥesed* (loyalty, hospitality, generosity) to the Israelites when they were making their way from Egypt to Canaan.

The Pentateuch records the belligerent actions of the Amalekites after the exodus from Egypt, yet what about the Kenites and their act of *ḥesed*?

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[15] Another case of biblical polemics against the Kenites might be found in the Nehemiah Memoir. A silver bowl that was found in Egypt and dates to ca. 410 BCE bears an Aramaic votive inscription that reads: "Qainu (or Cain) son of Geshem brought an offering to Han-Ilat." This name may reflect a Kenite affiliation. The Nehemiah Memoir claims that a leader of the Arabs named Geshem took part in military coalitions that planned to attack Jerusalem and disrupt the reconstruction of Jerusalem. On this inscription, as well as the Septuagint's translation of "in the land of Goshen" in Genesis 45:10 and 46:34 as "in the land of Geshem of Arabia," see Israel Eph'al, *The Ancient Arabs: Nomads on the Borders of the Fertile Crescent, 9th–5th Centuries BC* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1982), 212–214.

[16] On the basis of this passage, many modern translations emend the notice in Judges 1:16b so that the Kenites settle "with the Amalekites" instead of "with the people" (*ʾet-hāʿām*). According to that reading, the notice represents a polemical gloss that departs from the pro-Kenite depiction in Judges 1:16a.

Where is that "memory" recorded? In Part I, we saw that a number of texts negotiate relations with Israel's neighbors (the Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, and others) by reporting their responses to Israel's conventional petitions for permission to pass through their lands. Thus, in the books of Deuteronomy and Nehemiah, the Ammonites and Moabites are barred from the "congregation of Yhwh" because they failed to meet Israel with bread and water in the wilderness (Deut. 23:4–5; Neh. 13:1–3). While a number of texts relate to the hospitality/belligerence displayed by the various peoples whom Israel encountered in the wilderness, we search in vain for one that describes interactions with the Kenites.

It's entirely conceivable that the authors of 1 Samuel 15 used allusion to concoct an ad hoc memory that affirms the Kenites' historic loyalty to Israel. After all, the cases of Deuteronomy and Nehemiah cited above fabricate wartime memories for two other peoples – the Ammonites and the Moabites – in an effort to disqualify them from cultic rights and societal privileges, while other texts flatly contradict this memory in an effort to present these neighbors in a more favorable light.

However, in light of the connections between the Kenites and the Midianites that we observed in the figure of Moses's father-in-law, it seems more likely that the authors of the Saul account intended that their readers (re-)interpret several "Midianite" accounts as illustrations of the *ḥesed* the Kenites manifested to Israel. When Moses flees from the Egyptian court into the wilderness, the figure of Reuel, "the priest of Midian," performs exemplary hospitality by feeding him, convincing him to stay with him, and extending to him the hand of one of his seven daughters (Exod. 2:16–22). Later, after Israel had escaped from the Egyptians and was encamped at "the Mountain of God," this same figure, now called Jethro, travels to meet his son-in-law (Exod. 18). The account of their warm reunion comes directly on the heels of the story of the Amalekites attacking Israel. Along with Aaron and the elders of Israel, Jethro and Moses enjoy a covenantal meal, with Jethro bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices to God. In what appears to be a supplementary section (vv. 13–26), Jethro advises Moses to establish a system of judges to alleviate the burden of adjudicating Israel's disputes.[17]

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[17] The placement of the Jethro account in Exodus 18 is a problem: Israel doesn't arrive at "the mountain" until the next chapter. Martin Buber argued that the redactor wished to embellish the Kenites' hospitality by positioning the episode immediately after the description of the Amalekites' military assault on the Israelite refugees in Exodus 17;

It's important to distinguish here between what the authors of 1 Samuel 15 intended their readers to understand and the interpretation of these Pentateuchal texts on their own terms. The latter do not refer to Moses's in-laws as "Kenites," and the Kenites likely had little, if any, historical relationship to the Midianites. When critical scholars today use these texts to reconstruct the history of Israelite-Kenite relations, they are simply following the suggestion of the biblical scribes and harmonizing competing texts. To study Israel's ethnogenesis in a careful manner, we must appreciate the political dimensions of the scribal discourse in our sources. The participants in this discourse were less concerned to provide an accurate account of the past; instead, they were answering such basic questions as: Who belongs to the people of Israel? Who are our friends? Who are our foes? They routinely addressed these questions by creating new texts and reworking older ones as a way of creating memories of a given group's loyalty (or betrayal) in times of conflict. In this case, they honored the Kenites by linking their story to that of Moses's illustrious father-in-law, a Midianite who plays a pivotal role in Israel's emergence as a nation as it made its way from Egypt to the Promised Land.

FELLOW TRAVELERS

The book of Exodus presents Moses ultimately sending his father-in-law away to "his own country" (Exod. 18:27).[18] The only ones who remain with Israel are Jethro's daughter and the two sons she bore to Moses. Yet as the narrative progresses, we get a different view: In the book of Numbers, this man – now called "Hobab, son of Reuel the Midianite" (see Judg. 4:11) – is still with Israel as they are camped at Sinai. Moses now implores him to accompany Israel as they voyage to their new homeland: "Come with us, and we will be sure to show you favor, for Yhwh has declared favor toward Israel" (Num. 10:29). The offer is initially declined: "I will not go [with you], but will go instead to my own country and native land" (cf. Exod. 18:27). Moses doesn't allow this to be the final word: "Please do not abandon us, for you know where we should camp in the wilderness and can be our guide (lit. eyes). If you come with us, we will be

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see Martin Buber, *Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1988), 94. Cf. *Ex. Rab.* 27.6; *Midr. Ag. Ex.* 18.6. A rabbinic tradition has Jethro dodging conscription from the Amalekite military courts and then becoming a foe of the Amalekite nation (*Midr. Samuel* 11.2).

[18] The line in Exodus 18:27 was perhaps originally connected to the first words of 18:13.

sure to extend the same favor that Yhwh grants us!" (Num. 10:30–32). The petition implies that Hobab's clan will inherit a portion of the Promised Land.

The following lines (Num. 10:33–36) describe the departure, with the cloud of Yhwh and the ark of Yhwh's covenant guiding Israel to its encampments. Since Hobab's response is not provided, many scholars assume that something has been deleted; however, the account likely presupposes the statements in Judges, which affirm that the descendants of Moses's father-in-law, now identified explicitly as "Kenites," did indeed become fellow travelers with Israel. This is the only instance in which an outside group joins the nation after it leaves Egypt.[19] During the conquest of Canaan, the Kenites fought alongside the tribe of Judah and inherited a portion of the land with them. Accordingly, the account in Numbers implies that Hobab acquiesced, taking his place near the cloud and ark at the front of the camp.[20]

The promise Moses makes to Hobab sounds like an invitation to join the Israelite fold. As Jacob Milgrom pointed out, the language is covenantal and as such may be compared to the description of the treaty sacrifices and commensality between Jethro, Aaron, and the elders of Israel in Exodus 18.[21] As with Rahab, the favor Hobab shows Israel is eventually repaid to his descendants in the form of rights to settle in the Negeb of Arad "among the people." The directly preceding lines (Judg. 1:10–15) tell how the Calebite clan came to possess a prized portion of the Promised Land, also in the Negeb, as a reward for the martial valor of its eponymous ancestor.[22]

By creating memories of early encounters with outsiders, the biblical scribes made a case for a political posture toward the group in question. As we saw in Part I, many of these memories relate to the nation's future

[19] The Rahab clan and the Gibeonites become members of the nation after it enters Canaan. There are hints dropped throughout the narrative that the nation was a "mixed multitude" (see, e.g., Exod. 12:38; Num. 11:4), but we probably should assume that this refers to the nation's population as it left Egypt.

[20] The placement of the episode at this point in the narrative is undoubtedly related to the description of the guidance provided by the ark and the cloud. On the compositional issues of the passage, see Germany, *Exodus-Conquest Narrative*, 194–197.

[21] Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers: The JPS Torah Commentary* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 79. Notably, the very next chapter contains a reference to a contingency of newcomers ($w^e h \bar{a}$ʾ$sapsup$, lit. those who were added) that "were in [Israel's] midst" (Num. 11:4). On $w^e h \bar{a}$ʾ$sapsup$, compare the possible $qtltl$ noun form ʿ$\bar{e}rebrab$ in Exodus 12:38.

[22] I treat this passage in *David, King of Israel*, 186–189.

neighbors; in this case, the memory relates to a group that became fellow travelers with the nation. All these texts are not easily assigned to the conventional documentary sources, especially if they are assumed to have originated independently of each other.[23] The memories betray not only knowledge of each other; they also directly engage and challenge each other, exemplifying the combative character of war commemoration in which rival groups negotiate belonging and status in their communities by constructing competing memories of wartime loyalty and betrayal.

Thus, we see how a group of biblical scribes, by means of an extended history of supplementation, affirmed a special relationship with the Kenites by linking them to Moses's own in-laws.[24] Writing in the late Persian and Hellenistic periods, the authors of Chronicles grafted the Kenites onto Israel's family tree. Instead of joining Israel along the way, the Kenites are, according to this work, descendants of the illustrious Calebites, related to the devout Rechabites, and include scribal families who lived in the town of Jabez (1 Chron. 2:55).[25] Rejecting this positive posture, other scribes cast hostile aspersions on this people, as we observed in both the promise to Abraham and the curse of Balaam. Here again, we see how biblical war commemoration is not only a decentralized discourse but also a relentlessly disputatious one.

DEVOTION TO A DEITY

According to a line of rabbinic interpretation, scripture refers to Jethro as "Hobab" after his visit to Moses because he "embraced" Israel's God. Since the place where he appeared is called the "Mountain of God," Jethro must have undergone a change of heart upon learning about Israel's experience in Egypt. The biblical text states that "Jethro rejoiced for all the good that Yhwh had done for Israel in delivering them from the Egyptians" (Exod. 18:9). Concluding his blessing, he makes a broad declaration: "Now I know that Yhwh is greater than all gods" (Exod. 18:10–11). Thereafter, he performs sacrifices and breaks bread with Moses, Aaron, and the elders of Israel "in the presence of God." These biblical statements prompted the rabbis to search for other clues showing

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[23] See the discussion in Parts I and II.

[24] These texts correspond to the three fundamental stages of Israel's history in the exodus-conquest narrative: Moses's flight followed by the exodus, the nation's wanderings in the wilderness, and the conquest of the land.

[25] Shemaryahu Talmon, "These Are the Kenites Who Come from the Father of the House of Rechab," *Eretz Israel*, 5 (1959), 111–113 [in Hebrew].

that he underwent the formal rites of conversion. They discovered a deeper meaning in the root of the Hebrew word describing Jethro's reaction ("and he rejoiced," *wayyiḥad*), taking it to mean either that he circumcised himself with a "sharp" knife or that he proclaimed the "one-ness" of Israel's deity.[26]

Many modern scholars have adopted the opposite approach: instead of Jethro embracing Israel's God, Israel embraced Jethro's God. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century and persisting to the present, scholars have invoked these texts in support of the so-called Midianite-Kenite Hypothesis. Jethro's affirmation, "Now I know that Yhwh is greater than all gods," is taken to mean that this Midianite-Kenite priest is asserting that the deity he had long venerated and served (i.e., Yhwh) was indeed the greatest of all gods. This interpretation of the biblical text is highly problematic, yet some inscriptional evidence from Egypt does suggest that the veneration of Yhwh originated among proto-Arabian tribes east and west of the Arabah and the Gulf of Aqaba.[27] The matter is beyond the scope of our study; it suffices for the present to recognize that the assumption of connection between the Kenites and Midianites rests on late supplements to the book of Judges and has little to do with a historical relationship between these groups.

This double-sided history of interpretation – with the rabbis, on the one side, reading the account as a description of Jethro's conversion, and modern scholars, on the other side, constructing theories like the Midianite-Kenite Hypothesis – is a result of the manner in which these texts negotiate matters of national belonging.

In the case of Rahab, we saw in Part III how scribes supplemented her deeds with words acclaiming the superiority of Israel's national deity. With respect to Jethro, notice the supplementary character of the passage (Exod. 18:8–11) in which this figure rejoices over the favor that

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[26] See, respectively, *b. San.* 94a and *Yal. Shim.* 268.

[27] Originally proposed by Friedrich Wilhelm Ghillany in 1862, the hypothesis has won the support of a long list of important scholars: Eduard Meyer, Bernhard Stade, Karl Budde, Thomas Kelly Cheyne, Henry Preserved Smith, and later Gerhard von Rad, Martin Noth, Harold Rowley, Manfred Weippert, and Moshe Weinfeld. See, most recently, Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Midianite-Kenite Hypothesis Revisited and the Origins of Judah," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 33 (2008), 131–153; Nadav Na'aman, "The Kenite Hypotheses in Light of the Excavations at Horvat Uzza" in Gilda Bartolini and Maria G. Briga (eds.), *Not Only History: Proceedings of the Conference in Honor of Mario Liverani* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 171–182; Juan Manuel Tebes, "The Southern Home of YHWH and Pre-Priestly Patriarchal/ Exodus Traditions from a Southern Perspective," *Biblica*, 99 (2018), 166–188.

Yhwh showed the nation and then declares this deity to be greater than all others.[28] The rest of the account uses the generic term for god (ʾelōhîm), while only this passage refers to Yhwh.[29] This passage has much in common with Numbers 10:29–32, where Moses petitions his father-in-law to accompany them to the Promised Land. (For example, both texts highlight the "good" Yhwh does for Israel.) The addition of Exodus 18:8–11 serves a much wider narrative arc, yet its author apparently deemed this to be the best place to present Jethro acknowledging Yhwh's supremacy. Another large supplement to the chapter goes a step further, presenting Jethro as one who not only acknowledges that Yhwh is greater than all gods but also recognizes the importance of divine laws and statutes.[30]

Thus, we again see how biblical scribes added theological words to political deeds, pointing to a particular deity as both the emblem and the source of the nation's unity. Israel may consist of rival communities and regions, each with their own history and tradition; nevertheless, they can be one people if they remain devoted to one god and his one law.

JAEL AS A KENITE AND A JEW

The various strands of our study coalesce in the character of Jael. Like Rahab, Jael is an archetype of the marginalized outsider. As a woman, she is left back in her tent while the men take part in a military campaign. As a tent-dwelling nomad, she pursues an existence on the periphery of society. And as a member of the Kenites, her allegiance is in doubt. She

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[28] The rabbis connected Jethro's acclamation to that of Rahab by claiming that Jethro, as a pagan priest, knew that Yhwh was the greatest, because he had "fornicated" (a term often used to describe illicit worship) with all deities on earth, just as Rahab had slept with all the men of the land and witnessed how Yhwh's power had made them impotent (*Mek. Rab. Ish.*, Amalek 3).

[29] Notice the abrupt switch in verse 12; verse 1b reflects the influence of verses 8–11.

[30] The supplement is found in Exodus 18:13–26, where Jethro advises Moses to establish a juridical system. Moses originally sends him away "the next day" following the commensality (v. 27), just as Laban leaves on the morning after a covenantal feast (Gen. 31:54, 32:1–2). Moreover, Jethro doesn't seem to enter the camp, as seen already in *Midr. Ag. Ex.* 18.6. The supplement likely takes its cue from Moses's complaint in Deuteronomy 1:9–18, which would explain the passage's Deuteronomistic language. By attributing a juridical system to Jethro, the author emphasizes his special solicitude for Moses's personal welfare, a prominent feature of these texts. In Part II, we saw how biblical scribes augmented an earlier emphasis on kinship by shifting attention to Yhwh and his law as the focal point of the nation's unity.

surmounts the obstacles presented by her identity not by circumventing them, but rather by wielding them to her advantage.

The depiction of the murder plays on markers of her identity as a Kenite woman: just as she transforms her personal domestic confines into a battlefield, the milk she feeds Sisera and the tent peg and hammer she brandishes as weapons fuse the characteristic features of her nomadic people who dwell in tents, herd flocks, and forge metal objects.[31] We noted the Kenites' violent associations in a number of biblical texts, beginning with Cain's murder of his brother, and these associations may make themselves felt in the characterization of Jael. If so, the author would be introducing a twist on the Kenites' putative capacity for violence: Jael directs this aggression not against Israel, but against the nation's enemies.

Because Jael courageously and creatively exploits her distinctive qualities, she is honored in the Song of Deborah with the remarkable approbation: "Most blessed of women is Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. Of tent-dwelling women she is most blessed" (Judg. 5:24).[32] For early readers, this glowing praise provoked questions that are taken up in rabbinic sources: Does Jael deserve more praise than Deborah? Is she more blessed than the nation's greatest matriarchs such as Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah, who were also tent dwellers (Gen. 18:9, 24:67, 31:33)? Although one should perhaps not make too much of the song's hyperbole, the text contains clues as to what makes her case so special: she is not an Israelite, yet she risks her life on the behalf of the nation and thereby violates the political allegiances of her husband (Judg. 4:17). Responding to these questions, Rabbi Eliezer points out that the matriarchs of Genesis deserve praise since they gave birth to Israel, yet the nation (their children) would have ceased to exist had it not been for Jael's valorous deeds.[33]

A strophe from the Song of Deborah begins "in the days of Shamgar ben Anat, in the days of Jael." Throughout the book of Judges, the expression "in the days of" consistently denotes the discrete era in

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[31] The hammer is the traditional symbol of the smith in many cultures. Various biblical texts locate the Kenites deep in the southern Negev, which would place them in a region rich in metals and home to much mining and minting activity in antiquity. On the marginal identity of metalworkers in ancient Mediterranean, see Sandra Blakely, *Myth, Ritual and Metallurgy in Ancient Greece and Recent Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Note, likewise, the place-name Harosheth-Hagoyim (lit. smith of the nations) (Judg. 4:2, 13, 16).

[32] Heber here seems to be denigrated by being remembered only as her husband.

[33] *Gen. Rab.* 48. On this tension in Jewish identity between *yichus* (birth, descent, genealogy) and *zechut* (merit, conduct), see Wright, *David, King of Israel*, 83–84.

which a particular Israelite deliverer/judge governs. Likewise, the story of Ruth begins "in the days when the judges governed." On the basis of this text, Ruth Rabbah and other rabbinic sources identify Jael as not only an Israelite but also as a full-fledged "judge" like Deborah and Gideon.

When the rabbis defend Jael's identity as an Israelite, they do so by arguing that she complied closely with Jewish law: if she "went out" of her tent to greet Sisera, it's because the war was a *milḥemet mitzvah* (an obligatory war), when "all go out to war, even the groom leaves his chamber and the bride her chuppah"). An Aramaic translation (the Targum Yerushalmi) inserts right before Judges 5:26 that Jael "fulfilled that which is written in the Teaching of Moses: 'Weaponry of a man shall not be on a woman neither shall a man wear a woman's garment.' Therefore she reached for the tent peg." Here the translator refers to Deuteronomy 22:5 and the prohibition of "Lo Yilbash," which forbids women to bear the "weapons of men" (*kelî-gever*). If Jael used milk, a peg, and a hammer, instead of conventional weaponry, it must have been, according to this line of reasoning, because she strives to comport herself in keeping with the Torah.[34]

In these ways, Jewish interpreters added a new dimension to the societal expectations of women in wartime that we surveyed in Chapter 13. Their creative interpretations illustrate what we have repeatedly observed about biblical war commemoration – namely, that it gradually assumed a more pronounced theological disposition. In Part II, we witnessed how scribes expanded a narrative about kinship by affirming the deity and a body of divine, written law as the foundation of national unity and belonging. In the stories of Jael and the Kenites, the principles of kinship and divine law coalesce, and while this coalescence reaches a zenith in the postbiblical imagination, it's on display already in the work of the anonymous scribes who connected Jael and her people to the remarkable stories of Moses's father-in-law.

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[34] The heroine of the (nonrabbinic) book of Judith severs Holofernes's head with a sword (Jth. 13:6–8). The rabbinic identification of Jael as a Jew is predicated on adherence to Jewish laws that adopt a binary gender classification (also known as gender binarism). Jael is accordingly a Jew inasmuch as she knows that she must not behave like a Jewish man.

Conclusions

A Movable Monument and a Portable Homeland

The nineteenth-century German poet and literary critic Heinrich Heine famously claimed that the Jews have a "written" and "portable home-land" (*portative Heimat*) in the form of the books of Moses, which they have carried with them during their wanderings. In this chapter conclud-ing our study, we begin by comparing ancient Near Eastern war memor-ials preserved in the archeological record with biblical war commemoration that has been transmitted for millennia. While one was carved in stone and displayed in competing palaces, the other was con-ducted in the framework of a single, yet composite, narrative – what we may call a "movable monument."

In contrast to what we encounter in ancient Egypt and Western Asia, the societies of the East Aegean produced forms of war commemoration that more closely resemble what we have witnessed in biblical writings. After presenting a selection of this evidence from ancient Greece, we examine some of factors that help explain the commonalities between Athens and Jerusalem. In the final pages, we turn back to Wellhausen and reflect on the larger implications of our inquiry for political theology.

FIGHTING FOR THE KING: WAR COMMEMORATION IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

The biblical narrative presents the nation of Israel naturally evolving from a family into an extended clan and eventually into a full-fledged nation. What makes the nation is first and foremost procreation, not political negotiation. However, when we examine the seams in this narrative, we can see how its authors used war commemoration to construct Israel's

national identity from originally separate groups and regions long before they were grafted onto the nation's family tree. In the framework of this narrative, scribes affirmed that a given group belongs to the people of Israel, or denied their membership, by reporting how its members discharged, or dodged, their duties in major war efforts and battles. War commemoration thus served as a means of both demarcating the contours of the nation and defining the status of its members. The biblical narrative grew gradually through a process of successive supplementation over centuries, and our study has situated the genesis of this narrative in relation to the commemorative activities through which political communities have long negotiated their identities.

When we take a step back and consider the larger picture, we can't help but wonder about similar projects of war commemoration and nation-making in the ancient Near East. What do we know about parallel moves in neighboring societies of the Levant, Egypt, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia? As we will see, many ancient Near Eastern monuments affirm allegiance through wartime service and sacrifice, yet they do so in the name of rulers and dynastic houses, not on behalf of populations and political communities. As strategies of statecraft, they differ substantially from the national commemoration that we find in the Hebrew Bible and in the memorial cultures of modern nation-states.[1]

The typical Near Eastern war monument focuses on the king. The armed forces that partake in the fighting are conceived of as an extension of the right arm of both the ruler and the deity under whose aegis he fights. The point is often expressed in Neo-Assyrian art by depicting the king, larger than life, attacking a city with outstretched bow and a symbol of the state deity portrayed in the same pose hovering above him. A similar expression of monarchic singularity is found in Egyptian art: the pharaoh rides alone in his chariot, with the reigns tied around his waist and an outstretched bow in his arms; he is completely self-sufficient, requiring neither charioteer nor weapon bearer.[2] We know that this riding

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[1] To avoid any confusion, the distinction I am drawing here is between the biblical project, on the one hand, and states, on the other. It's likely that monuments similar to what we find in neighboring states (such as the Mesha Stele from Moab) were produced in the Northern and Southern kingdoms as well. Ancient Israel and biblical Israel are not the same, however, and the difference between the two is crucial to the appreciation of the biblical project; see Reinhard G. Kratz, *Historical and Biblical Israel: The History, Tradition, and Archives of Israel and Judah*, trans. Paul Michael Kurtz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[2] For an example of this royal isolation, see the cover image of this book depicting Ramses II at the battle of Kadesh, 1274 BCE.

technique was never actually practiced; the representation serves rather to communicate the matchless sovereignty of the king and the state he embodies.[3]

Naturally, vassals and allies who had offered their military service to the throne would have been keen to draw attention in various ways to their sacrifice and contributions – not only in the hope of receiving a larger share of the war spoils but also with the aim of affirming their loyalty to the palace and laying claim to privileges and honors. Neo-Assyrian reliefs from the reigns of Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal show soldiers standing next to piles of decapitated enemy heads on the battlefield and receiving commemorative jewelry (manacles, bracelets) and other rewards. While these monuments memorialize wartime contributions, they rarely do so on behalf of a particular population or community. The message they send relates rather to the honors and material compensation that the state awards to soldiers (and the armed forces they represent) in recognition of their valorous service to the king.[4]

For Assyrian as well as Achaemenid armies, various sources reveal that royal officials kept records of soldierly prowess and exceptional contributions on military campaigns. These records were not public inscriptions for purposes of political-collective commemoration; rather, they are documents that the crown, in keeping with the principle of *Wissensmonopol*, deemed worthy of preservation and to which only a select few were allowed access.[5]

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[3] See Jacob L. Wright, "Chariots: Technological Developments from the Third Millennium to the Hellenistic Age" in Angelika Berlejung et al. (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Material Culture* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming); the manuscript can be accessed on my Academia.edu web page.

[4] Mesopotamian palace reliefs, like their Egyptian counterparts, often portray warriors with distinctive ethnic features, and some of the soldiers in Assyrian reliefs may in fact be from Samaria or Judah. While we may be able to detect in these representations an element of political commemoration on behalf of a particular population, the more immediate objective is to display, in a manner typical of royal houses throughout history, the strength of the state's military forces, which recruits soldiers from populations known for their military prowess.

[5] On the *Wissensmonopol* (lit. monopoly on knowledge) as a strategy of statecraft in relation to the formation of the Bible, see my article "Prolegomena to the Study of Biblical Prophetic Literature" in Jean-Marie Durand, Thomas Römer and Micaël Bürki (eds.), *Comment devient-on prophète?* (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2014), 61–86 (available on my Academia.edu and Scribd web pages). See also Marie Theres Fögen's study of imperial Rome, *Die Enteignung der Wahrsager* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993); as well as Beate Pongratz-Leisten's study of ancient scholarship in the service of Mesopotamian kings, *Herrschaftswissen in Mesopotamien: Formen der Kommunikation zwischen Gott*

What can we say then about public commemoration? We know that Ashur-etel-ilani, one of the final Assyrian kings, issued decrees conferring honors, property, and tax privileges, along with gifts of colorful robes and golden bracelets, to a number of military commanders who had demonstrated their loyalty to him and had assisted him in laying claim to the throne during a vicious war of succession. One may compare these decrees to the Behistun Inscription of the Achaemenid king Darius, which at several points pays tribute to the names of a commander who rendered exceptional service on a military campaign or to six of the king's "followers" who assisted him in his rise to power. In the case of the latter, Darius calls on his successors to protect the families of these men. Artaxerxes III is said to have bestowed gifts, honors, and titles upon Mentor, a Rhodian soldier, for contributing to the king's reconquest of Egypt. According to legend, the Persian kings granted gold regularly to Persian women of Pasargadae for their role in Cyrus's victory over the Medes. The Egyptian records are especially rich in this regard: inscriptions and deposits in private tombs allow us to retrace the careers of military officers as they rise in the ranks and receive military decorations along with public honors.[6]

Closer to the land of Israel, an Anatolian king from the late eighth century set up a funerary monument that commemorates the great deeds of his father Panamuwa II. From his account, we learn that his father had served as a loyal vassal to the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III, and that when he was killed on the battlefield, the Assyrian king formally mourned his death and set up a memorial in his honor. A similar expression of service and reward is found in a mid-fifth-century funerary inscription from Sidon on the Lebanese coast; in it Eshmun-azar, king of Sidon, reports that "the lord of kings (*ʾdn mlkm*) gave us Dor and Joppa, and the rich grainlands in the Sharon Plain, as a reward for the mighty deeds I had done."

One could point to other examples. However, what we don't find in the societies of ancient Western Asia and Egypt is a culture of war commemoration through which communities collectively negotiated belonging and status in relation to a people. The biblical materials we've

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    und König im 2. und 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr. (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1999).

[6] For more on the images and materials discussed throughout this section, with special attention to the Egyptian evidence, see Wright, "Social Mobility and the Military in the Ancient Near East" (paper presented at the College de France, Paris, December 17, 2010, available on my Academia.edu web page).

studied in this book commemorate the contributions and sacrifices of communities in relation to a national body (Israel); in contrast, the materials discovered in Mesopotamia and Egypt are fixated on rulers and their dynastic successors.[7]

SAVING HOLY HELLAS: WAR COMMEMORATION IN THE EAST AEGEAN WORLD

While we search in vain for ancient Near Eastern analogies to our biblical texts, we discover more decentralized, demotic forms of war commemoration in the ancient Aegean world. Greek city-states, and the classes within their societies, jockeyed with each other for power and privilege by constructing memories of extraordinary wartime service. The media for these memories range from paintings and physical monuments to works of drama and narrative histories.

Greek war commemoration has a long history; in Chapter 12, we noted the parallels between the Song of Deborah and the Catalogue of Ships in Homer's *Iliad*. Yet some of the most important materials for study originated after the Persian Wars (499–449 BCE), when Greek city-states sought in various ways to draw attention to the pivotal roles they claim to have played in key battles, such as Thermopylae or Salamis. Thus, an epitaph ascribed to the lyric poet Simonides is said to have read:

O stranger (traveler), once we dwelt in the well-watered city of Corinth, but now Salamis the isle of Ajax holds us. Here, by defeating the Phoenician ships and Persians and Medes, we saved holy Greece.

This full two-couplet version is known only from later literary sources; fragments of the first couplet were found on a marble tablet discovered in 1895 in Salamis, which likely stood on the grave of the Corinthians who died in the sea battle (480 BCE). Despite its archaicizing script, the stela was likely erected long after the battle. The second couplet may represent an instance of inscriptions being expanded in the literary tradition; if so, the pan-Hellenic perspective ("saved holy Greece") was not found in the original.

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[7] Biblical counterparts to this state-oriented commemoration can be found in the memories of towns, groups, guilds, and representative individuals demonstrating loyalty to King David (or failing to do so) in the wars that established the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. In my books on David, I study these memories and situate them in relation to the demotic perspective that shapes the national narrative in Genesis-Kings, as well as the revisionist history of Chronicles.

Herodotus reports that Corinth, already at an early point in the battle, panicked and retreated, returning only after victory was certain. This version of the story was still being circulated a century after the events. As most agree, Herodotus is here informed by an Athenian source that reflects a bias resulting from growing tensions with Corinth. A more reliable tradition claims that the Athenians allowed Corinth to set up the stela for its war dead on the island.[8]

Other forms of commemoration of Corinthian contributions are known. At the temple of Aphrodite in Corinth, there was supposedly a painting that portrayed women praying that their men may be roused to demonstrate exceptional valor; it was accompanied by a dedicatory epigram:

These women stood praying their inspired prayer to the Cyprian on behalf of the Greeks and their close-fighting fellow-citizens; for divine Aphrodite did not wish to hand over the citadel of the Greeks to the bow-carrying Medes.[9]

Many of these sources are cited by Plutarch in his essay "On the Malignity of Herodotus" as alleged proof of the subject's prejudice. Not only is their authenticity problematic, but some may have nothing to do with the battle of Salamis. Even so, subsequent tradition, beginning long before Plutarch, collected these epigrams as evidence of Corinthian wartime sacrifice and contributions.

One of the monuments at Thermopylae commemorated the bravery of the Locrians, a population that later joined the Persian side. In response to doubts about their loyalty to Greece, the inscription proclaimed, "Opus, the mother-city of the Locrians with their just laws, laments these men who died fighting the Medes on behalf of holy Hellas."

An example of a monument that salutes the contributions of multiple allied communities is the famous Serpent Column. Originally erected in Delphi and later moved to Constantinople, it lists the names of thirty-one (city-)states that contributed to the Persian War. The name of the Tenians was inscribed later, while five communities, including the Locrians, are conspicuously absent.

Other monuments, as well as works of historiography and drama, illustrate how population groups and social classes within the city-states used war commemoration in a manner strikingly similar to that of the

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[8] See John H. Molyneux, *Simonides: A Historical Study* (Wauconda: Bolchazy-Carducci, 1992); Deborah Boedeker and David Sider (eds.), *The New Simonides: Contexts of Praise and Desire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[9] As quoted in Molyneux, *Simonides*, 193.

biblical authors (and modern nation-states) – namely, to negotiate belonging and status in a larger political community.

Aeschylus's *Persians* (472 BCE) furnishes an important testimony. Although the navy was responsible for the momentous victory at Salamis, the play asserts that the real strength of Athens is its hoplite infantry, representing the propertied class of "citizen-soldiers." That the land battle was actually comparatively insignificant is suggested by the short shrift it receives later from Herodotus. It's possible, however, that Herodotus may already have been influenced by a more democratic naval perspective, which had a vested interest in identifying Salamis as the pivotal battle in the Persian Wars. Since the Greek tragedian was writing so early after Salamis, the poorer citizen rowers may not yet have succeeded in making their voices heard in Athens.

After the battle of Salamis came to be recognized as the decisive moment in the Persian Wars, other classes claimed a share of the responsibility. As explained in *The Athenian Constitution* (attributed to Aristotle), the Areopagus Council, representing the highest classes, deserved the credit for the victory. Against this elitist claim, the *thetes* (serfs with only a small amount of property) seized on the memory of Salamis for their own interests. To bolster their newfound self-confidence, and to justify their claims to a larger piece of the political pie, they reminded others of the part they had played in the emergence of Athens as a hegemonic power.[10]

The Athenian democracy was sired in a vigorous tug-of-war-commemoration, with various factions claiming rights and honors by appealing to a record of exceptional wartime contributions. As today, conservatives were wary of the "identity politics" that were reshaping their society.

Thus, in Aristophanes's play *The Knights*, an old man named Demos represents "the people" who won the great victories at Salamis and Marathon (lines 781–785). Whereas the *parabasis* of this play (lines 576–580) allows the equestrians (or knights, *hippeis*) to claim for themselves "the defense of the city, gratis, nobly, and for the national gods as well," his other works designate the men of the top rowing bench, where the citizens were stationed, "saviors of the city" (see *Acharnians*, lines 162–163; *Wasps*, lines 908–909).

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[10] Although the navy was undeniably a critical component of Athenian hegemony, it was more immediately the growth of the Athenian empire that brought wealth and, in turn, political empowerment to the lower classes.

The Knights pokes fun at a situation in which every social group sought to improve its political and social status by claiming an indispensable role in defending the community. Portraying the absurdity of this political contest, the play has the equestrian chorus lauding the wartime contributions of their horses, who seize the role of the democratic rowers:

We will sing likewise the exploits of our steeds! They are worthy of our praises; in what invasions, what fights have I not seen them helping us! But especially admirable were they, when they bravely leapt upon the galleys, taking nothing with them but a coarse wine, some cloves of garlic and onions; despite this, they nevertheless seized the oars just like men, curved their backs over the thwarts and shouted, "Hippapai! [a play on *hippois* (horses) and *rhuppapai* (the rhythmic chant of the lowly rowers)].[11]

War commemoration from the Aegean world has much in common with the incessant wrangling that characterizes political life in modern democracies. From the cited examples, one can see how it was conducted to negotiate status for social classes *within* Greek city-states as well as *between* city-states that considered themselves to be part of a larger (yet poorly defined) political community (e.g., "holy Hellas"). In contrast, biblical war commemoration is central to a project of peoplehood, whose architects were designing a *national* identity. Nevertheless, the parallels between Greek and biblical war commemoration are much closer than what we find in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt.

FROM ATHENS TO JERUSALEM

We've seen that ancient Near Eastern war commemoration is decidedly king-focused. How then are we to explain the presence of demotic, decentralized war commemoration in the Bible and classical Greek sources? The question is complex, but two factors merit attention here: 1) the different character of statehood in the rocky terrain of the Aegean region and in the highlands of the southern Levant; 2) the appeal to a collective political entity ("Israel" or "Greece") that was not coterminous with a single state or political power.

According to the Weberian notion of *Gewaltmonopol*, the state is a political community with a demarcated geographical territory and a monopoly of legitimate force (*Gewalt*). Yet as Mogens Hansen has observed, even major European states in the seventeenth and eighteenth

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[11] Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill, Jr., *The Complete Greek Drama*, vol. 2 (New York: Random House, 1938).

centuries would fail to meet the criterion of *Gewaltmonopol*.[12] The same applies even more to the ancient world. In the southern Levant throughout the Late Bronze Age and much of the Iron Age, states continued to compete with private armies (what Nadav Na'aman calls "Ḥabiru-like bands"), which correspond to sea pirates in the East Aegean.[13] The exceptional cases in the ancient world are the imperial forces that emerged in Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and Egypt, where strong centralized states witnessed more success in monopolizing force and curbing dissent.

Vincent Gabrielsen argues that in order to maintain Charles Tilly's maxim that "states make war and war makes states," one would have to expand the definition of state to include polities in which legitimate force exists within a more pluralistic (or oligopolistic) rather than one that is monopolistic.[14] That the monopolistic system was not the norm in the Aegean world had a lot to do with geography. The hilly terrain and countless islands impeded the efforts of any state to achieve a level of centralization comparable to that of the territorial states in the large flat basins of the Nile delta and Mesopotamia. A modern analogy is the difference between France and Switzerland: the first is highly centralized, with Paris as the focus of national life, while the latter is extraordinarily decentralized, with its twenty-six cantons, each having its own constitution, legislature, government, and courts.[15]

The states of Israel and Judah never achieved the level of centralization witnessed in Mesopotamia and Egypt. The highlands had always been home to recalcitrant elements (the "Ḥabiru-like bands") that lowland

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[12] Mogens Herman Hansen, "Was the *Polis* a State or Stateless Society?" in Thomas Heine Nielsen (ed.), *Even More Studies in the Ancient Greek* Polis (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2002), 17–47.

[13] Na'aman's research over the years has paid a lot of attention to private armies; see, e.g., his "Ḥabiru-Like Bands in the Assyrian Empire and Bands in Biblical Historiography," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 120 (2000), 621–624. When a Greek community went to war, it coerced those who owned warships or commandeered private armies to fight for common interests and to join together in collective war efforts.

[14] Vincent Gabrielsen, "Warfare and the State" in Philip Sabin, Hans van Wees and Michael Whitby (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 248–272, at 248. Ancient states may have achieved a monopoly of force during times of crisis, but they were short-lived: "because all-out military enterprises invariably demanded that communal forces be placed under a single command structure, all early states tended to behave in a monopolistic fashion during short spells of 'national' hostilities, only to revert to their original status as soon as fighting or campaigning was over" (ibid., 251).

[15] It is notable in this respect that Switzerland has a long history of great soldiers and military bands that fought as mercenary units in the Middle Ages, and it was not until 1815 that the cantonal army was converted into the *Bundesheer*.

states and imperial governments struggled to bridle and integrate into their military forces. The same goes for prophetic groups that stood on the periphery and that often eluded the efforts of the king to lure these groups to the courts, where an eye could be kept on them.[16]

The states that emerged in the Iron Age faced many hurdles in maintaining control of the periphery as they expanded from the hill country into the Jezreel Valley, Galilee, the Transjordan, and the Shephelah, as well as into the Judean hills and the Negev. The number of putsches, dynasties, and shifting capitals reveals that the central highland states encountered great difficulties in achieving a *Gewaltmonopol* over other territories. This situation likely led to greater autonomy, diversity of political actors, dissent, and competition, which are expressed in the range of rival war memories (and prophetic antagonism) that characterize biblical literature.

But what was perhaps more decisive was the second factor: the appeal to a collective political entity ("Israel" or "sacred Greece") that was not coterminous with a single state or political power. In the Aegean world, there had long existed central institutions and cultic sites serving a plurality of communities, yet it was the Persian Wars that were to catalyze a more robust sense of Greek identity. The assault by the Achaemenid armies forced Greek political communities to unite, even if recent scholarship is correct in insisting that this unification was ad hoc and, in most instances, failed to run very deeply. During the later Peloponnesian Wars, Athens and its competitors would vie for hegemony by claiming to have played the most significant role in the resistance against Persian imperial encroachment.

For biblical Israel, the situation is similar but also different. Many scholars begin with the (often unspoken) assumption that a primordial sense of kinship had long united the populations that later inhabited the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. While this assumption may not be completely unfounded, it is difficult to prove. What originally was more important than a primordial sense of kinship were the appeals by Israel's and Judah's kings to a collective identity as they sought to consolidate the diverse populations of their states. We can observe similar political dynamics in the neighboring kingdom of Moab during the reign of Mesha.[17] Like the Aegean heroes who claimed to have "saved holy

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[16] In my essay "Prolegomena," I delineate four stages in the growth of a pan-Israelite identity, rejecting alternative appeals to "Northwest Semitic kinship notions."

[17] See Routledge, *Moab in the Iron Age*; Gaß, *Die Moabiter*.

Hellas," these Levantine kings claimed to have "saved" their peoples in wars with their common foes, and a common designation for rulers in Israel and Judah was "savior" (*môšîaʿ*), corresponding to a popular epithet for Hellenistic rulers (*sōtēr*).

Yet even these appeals by the royal courts of Israel and Judah are of minimal significance compared to the efforts of the biblical scribes who were working after the downfall of their kingdoms. The war commemoration that we find in the Bible is more national in character than what we witness in Greek sources, and the reason for this difference is "the long seventh century," stretching from the fall of the Northern kingdom of Israel in 722 to the fall of the Southern kingdom of Judah in 587 BCE. Israel's defeat paved the way for Judah, which had long felt Israel's direct political and cultural influence, to seize upon, and strengthen, a national discourse that appears to have emerged first in Israel.

After the defeat of their kingdom, scribes from Israel appear to have drafted the earliest iterations of the patriarchal stories and the exodus-conquest narrative. These literary productions are not only focused on the North; they also diminish the role played by the monarchy in the formative moments of Israel's history. Meanwhile, scribes working at the Judean court in the South drafted narratives that asserted the divine right of David and his dynasty to rule Israel. The nation transcends its (existing) territorial borders in these narratives, and on this point the statist agenda of the Southern scribes agreed with the stories of peoplehood that their Northern counterparts were composing in the years after Israel's defeat.[18]

The contest between these two perspectives – between the people-focused productions from the North and the palace-focused productions from the South – marks the point of departure for the biblical project. The resistance of Northern scribes to the monarchic program of the Davidic throne precipitated deeper reflection on the nature of peoplehood, and when the Davidic throne finally met its demise, the power of the Northern perspective proved itself to the vanquished of Judah. Southern scribes would later combine the accounts to create the extensive narrative of the nation, extending from the creation of the world to the destruction of Jerusalem. This new narrative includes the history of the monarchy, but in

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[18] On the relationship between Israel and Judah in the formation of the biblical corpus, see also Fleming, *Legacy of Israel*. In my books on King David, I lay out my own thesis in greater detail.

a heavily reworked form that demonstrates both its potential and its problems.

The prophets promised the reestablishment of "the fallen booth of David" (Amos 9:11), but no one really knew when that would happen. In the meantime, the nation might survive if its members joined in solidarity, both in their homeland and abroad in the diaspora. And one of the ways in which this solidarity expressed itself was by commemorating the contributions of rival communities in the major wars that shaped the nation's history.

What's most significant about biblical war commemoration is that it was done in the framework of a single, yet highly composite, national narrative. In Greece, communities made discrete monuments for themselves on the land they occupied; the biblical scribes, in contrast, engaged in commemorative activities by making supplements to a collaborative, literary monument, which was simultaneously a "portable homeland." More than this, their commemorative activities honored the contributions of others, including both ethnicity and gender (Jael, Rahab, Esau, Jethro, etc.). Inspired by a vision of unity between North and South, the purview of their narrative reaches from the Gibeonites in the west to the Transjordanians in the east.

BACK TO WELLHAUSEN AND THE NATION

In the Introduction, I situated our study of war commemoration and national identity in relation to the work of Julius Wellhausen, who was a torchbearer of modern biblical research and whose incisive studies from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries continue to shape the way in which we, as scholars, view both the origins and objectives of biblical literature. According to Wellhausen, the armies of the world's first empires not only conquered the kingdoms of ancient Israel; they also destroyed Israel's national identity. What emerged from the ashes of defeat was not a new form of peoplehood, but "an unpolitical and artificial construct" called Judaism.

Wellhausen was convinced that "God works more powerfully in the history of nations than in church history."[19] Deeply discontent with the Christianity of his day, he took aim at the church by identifying it as the "heritage of Judaism." Christianity represents, in his historical

[19] Julius Wellhausen, *Sketch of the History of Israel and Judah*, 3rd ed. (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1891), 228.

scheme, the culmination of a protracted process by which the once thriving nation of Israel devolved into "a mere religious community" that relinquished all political affairs to foreign governments. The separation of church and state, of sacred and secular, may have some value, he claims, but it's inherently artificial and inferior to the ideal symbiosis of religious and national life.

In good Protestant fashion, Wellhausen argued his points exegetically, even if the critical quality of his exegesis led to a break with the theological faculty over the course of his career.[20] His aim was to repristinate older sources and layers, and he did so by isolating later sources and accretions whose putative fixation on cultic matters now obscure the text's original elegance. What is old in the text, according to Wellhausen, is natural and national, while what is late is abstract and unpolitical.

The findings of our study seriously undermine this polarity. We've seen how even the latest layers of biblical literature engage in war commemoration as they negotiate various aspects of Israel's national identity. The authors of our texts were working not only before but also, and especially, after the downfall of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Their aim was to establish a form of peoplehood that could unite and mobilize their communities at a time when colonial powers were beginning to constrict, or already had constricted, the conditions for the nation's political sovereignty. The biblical corpus grew to its present proportions as scribes composed and collected a wide assortment of texts – from prophecies and proverbs to laments and love-poetry – for the instruction and edification of the nation.

Christian interpreters over the millennia have frequently stripped the biblical texts of their political character, either dismissing its war stories as reflections of a bellicose, "tribal," pre-Christian people or reading them in terms of a disembodied theology. Our study has shown that a metamorphosis from nation to religion was not the objective of the scribes who composed and reworked these texts. To be sure, matters related to the nation's deity and its cult figure prominently in advanced stages of the biblical corpus, when the palace no longer stood at the center of public life. But hopes for the reestablishment of the monarchy permeate this corpus. Moreover, after its demise, a body of written laws came to

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[20] Wellhausen focused on texts also because, like others in the nineteenth century, he conceived of the historian's task as the study of historical writings; see Aly Elrefaei, *Wellhausen and Kaufmann: Ancient Israel and Its Religious History in the Works of Julius Wellhausen and Yehezkel Kaufmann* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), chap. 1.

serve as the constitution for this national community, and these laws combine political and religious matters in an inseparable union. The biblical "project of peoplehood" must, accordingly, be appreciated as a political-theological discourse.

<div align="center">LAW, NARRATIVE, AND KINSHIP</div>

In the evolution of Israel's national narrative, we discerned a diachronic shift of emphasis: from kinship to law, with the latter being understood as the will and words of the nation's deity. This shift should not be confused with a quest for an alternative to national identity. The biblical scribes were not en route to the religious sphere with their backsides bared to their political past, as Wellhausen would have it. If later scribes found kinship limited and inadequate, it's because families often quarrel. There need to be ideals and a code to which one can appeal when adjudicating disputes, especially when the family comprises many clans and tribes, towns and cities. Hence the law. As a divinely inscribed document to which all members of the nation formally subscribe, it represents a rallying point that simultaneously articulates the rules by which all are to play.

Now we might deem biblical law to be a far cry from an equitable, egalitarian social-political order. If the nation is required to worship a single deity at a single place and in a precise manner, where is there room for the most basic religious freedoms? To be sure, the biblical writers were after something different from the concerns of modern secular democracies. Yet their intellectual efforts deserve our attention, especially since they were engaged in one of the oldest and most elaborate projects of peoplehood.

By appealing to a history of wartime service and sacrifice, kinship, shared laws, and a single deity, the scribes who produced our texts were not seeking, first and foremost, to eliminate communities from the national fold. While they did use war commemoration for the purpose of ostracism, as we saw with the Gibeonites and Meroz, their primary intention was to transcend divisions and to set forth a broader national identity. The developments we've studied here are therefore more about inclusion than exclusion. Similarly, the process of canonization was more about the collection and incorporation of texts representing competing traditions and communities, even if it also meant the omission of that which was deemed to be deleterious to a sustainable national identity.

We explored the various ways in which the biblical texts construct bonds of filiation that hold together communities from North and South

and from both sides of the Jordan, and we have much to learn from the authors of these texts. They realized that law without a story was ineffective. Thus, the command to "love your neighbor as yourself" is followed throughout the narrative by stories that answer the question, "Who is my neighbor?" Likewise, the command to "love the stranger" is embedded in a larger narrative that portrays Israel's origins as a group of refugees who make their way to a new land after escaping bondage; this story of liberation lays the foundation for the law.

The promulgation of law can provoke deep resentment if it does not draw on shared experiences. This is the job of storytelling. Nations need narratives, and perhaps the biggest challenge faced by political communities is finding a way for our members to tell their stories – a way that, by being both honest and inclusive, has the capacity to engender a real sense of kinship and solicitude for our neighbor's welfare. If there's anything that the history of ancient Israel and its neighbors can teach us, it's that without such a narrative, we are doomed to perish.

The Hebrew Bible models a robust and persistent engagement around issues of belonging. Though often wielded in contemporary political debates as if it were a static authority, this corpus of scripture is characterized by lively exchanges from competing perspectives and across generations. Our study of biblical war commemoration has laid bare the textured fabric of these exchanges, with scribes skillfully weaving new materials into the narrative tapestry they inherited from earlier generations.[21]

We also witnessed how their war stories frequently feature not only marginalized communities but also women. Although, historically, women may have had a limited hand in actual fighting, their perceptions and interpretations of all aspects of the battle – why it was waged, what its implications are, who deserves responsibility for its outcome, etc. – were often determinative. The political potential of women's performances, and their roles in memory-making, must be borne in mind when studying not only war commemoration but the formation of biblical literature more broadly.[22]

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[21] As we take our cue from the biblical scribes and look for new and more effective ways of telling each other our stories, the method of their work and the physical medium (expandable scrolls) they adopted deserves our attention.

[22] A weighty body of evidence showing that women were actively involved in ancient West Asian text production has been tendered in Charles Halton and Saana Svärd, *Women's Writing of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Anthology of the Earliest Female Authors* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Is the biblical model of peoplehood adaptable to the exigencies of modern secular democracies? Perhaps not. But the task at hand is to find new ways of bolstering a sense of kinship, as the biblical authors did in their time. Both then and now, the most powerful means of creating community is to tell stories. At this moment of populistic upheaval – fomented by cynical, corrupt leaders who deem themselves to be above the law – we need narratives that reflect the diversity of our communities, temper the hostility that often characterizes national discourses, and offer tangible reasons why we should cultivate affection for our laws. As we create these narratives, perhaps we will discover a unifying force under whose aegis we will be able to face an otherwise frightening future.

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