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Philistines as Heirs of Egyptian-Canaanite Dominion

The Philistine settlement on the southwest coastal plain of Canaan, from Gaza in the south to Joppa in the north and inland to the foothills of the central mountain range, began shortly after 1200 B.C. and culminated in 1050–1000 B.C. in a direct contest of arms with Israel for the control of Canaan. Thanks to extrabiblical texts and archaeological finds, the Philistines are now better understood culturally and militarily than they were as recently as twenty-five years ago.[328] However, the Philistine social and political organization, and particularly the transitional stages from their initial settlement to their assertion of sovereignty over all Palestine, are still very imperfectly known. Enough is reconstructable to establish with assurance that the Philistines emerged in Canaan as the heirs of Egyptian imperialism and of Canaanite city-state feudalism. What remains uncertain, for want of detailed information, is the precise manner in which preceding Egyptian/Canaanite elements of sociopolitical organization were juxtaposed with newly introduced Philistine elements of sociopolitical organization to produce a fresh and formidable historic force in Palestine.

37.1 Philistine Dominion in Canaan

There is a growing consensus that the appearance of the Philistines on the southwest coastal plain of Canaan can best be explained on the theory that they were installed there as protégés and vassals by the Egyptians in order to buttress declining Egyptian imperial control over that region. The Philistines were one of the "Sea Peoples" who had been displaced from the Aegean-Anatolian regions (the Philistines having migrated perhaps from Crete or, even more probably, from Lycia in Asia Minor, and perhaps before that from Illyria or Etruria). With their allies, they attempted to invade the Nile Delta during the reign of Rameses III (some time in the first three decades of the twelfth century). They were blocked in this attempt, but not long afterwards archaeological data show these very Philistines to have been serving as mercenaries for the Egyptians in the Nile Delta, in Nubia, and in southwest Canaan as well.

During the twelfth century Egyptian imperial control over Canaan declined to zero; simultaneously the Philistine grip upon Canaan increased steadily to fill the power vacuum. It was precisely the old Egyptian administrative district in southwest Canaan, where Ashkelon and Gaza were located, that was both the last

toehold of the Egyptian Asiatic Empire and the strategic base of the flourishing Philistines. This synchronization of Egyptian withdrawal and Philistine expansion seems best explained not on the theory that the Philistines forcefully ejected the Egyptians from the start, or that the Philistines entered a region evacuated by the Egyptians, but rather on the theory that the Philistine establishment in Canaan "took place under acknowledgement of Egyptian sovereignty and with Egyptian sanction, or at least with Egyptian toleration."[329] As Egyptian sovereignty over Canaan crumbled away in the following decades, the Philistines became the successors to defaulted Egyptian claims of sovereignty. This would have been a particularly logical historical development if we grant, as seems most plausible, that these same Philistines had been originally permitted to enter the region as military, and probably also as administrative, overseers of the Egyptian imperial apparatus by vassal or mercenary arrangement.

On the other side, it appears that the city-state structure of the southwest coastal plain of Canaan was not fundamentally disturbed by the entrance of the Philistines. The sociopolitical subdivision of the land into city-states, which had persisted throughout the Egyptian imperium in Canaan over centuries of time, continued in what was to become Philistia. Ashkelon, Ashdod and Gaza, on or near the coast, were ancient cities whose independence as units within the empire remained intact. Further inland, Ekron and Gath were apparently built after the Philistine settlement to insure military and commercial control of the approaches to the hill country of Judah. Greater certainty about the early history of Ekron and Gath continues to be frustrated by a lack of consensus in identifying the actual sites of these cities.[330] The Philistines, with Egyptian concurrence, not only made no attempt to disrupt the old city-state pattern but even contributed to its extension inland on the coastal plain. It is commonly assumed, on the basis of biblical data such as I Samuel 6:17–18a, that the frequently mentioned "lords of the Philistines" were the direct rulers of the five major city-states of Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gaza, Ekron, and Gath, although this longstanding interpretation is now properly questioned. In any event, the initial accommodation of the Philistines to the older city-state divisions was perpetuated even after the Egyptian withdrawal from Asia. Accordingly, not only did the Philistines fall heir to the succession of Egyptian empire but they also fell heir to the old internal Canaanite subdivisions by city-states and incorporated those city-state entities as a mode of their hegemony, just as the Egyptians before them had done.

The leaders of the Philistines are referred to characteristically in the Bible by the term *s^{e}rānīm,* "lords" or "military aristocrats," always in the plural as a collective body acting in concert. The term is plausibly related to the Greek *tyrannos;* but, since it is suspected that *tyrannos* is a loan from Lydian or Phrygian (and is sometimes compared with the Etruscan *turan,* "lady"), the Philistine *seren* may derive finally from Anatolia (or Etruria?).[331] The fact that this is one of a small

number of technical words known to have survived the wholesale Philistine adoption of Canaanite speech strongly suggests that a collective aristocratic military leadership characterized the Philistines before they settled in Canaan. We are completely in the dark as to whether such coordinated leadership was operative in their original homeland or was an adaptive device developed during their migrations to insure survival. Further support for the hypothesis of the presettlement origin of the Philistine military aristocracy is the fact that we know of no such sustained collective leadership among the older Canaanite city-states which, even when faced with extreme external threats, had been capable only of episodic alliances markedly unstable in their membership and longevity.

It has been customary to conceive of the Philistine lords as installed in the five major city-states as feudal lords who replaced the former Canaanite rulers. Our source of information on this matter is the Israelite historical writings, which sometimes speak of the Philistine lords as five in number, although in several instances their number is unspecified. Only in I Samuel 6:18a is the five-member body of *s^erānīm* expressly equated with the five major cities of the Philistines, and then only by a rather clumsy circumlocution with an appositional expression which leaves the matter in some doubt. After it is said that the five golden tumors, fashioned as a guilt offering to Yahweh, correspond to the five cities ("one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron," vs. 17), it is further stated that the golden mice were "according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to (or connected with) the five lords, ranging from fortified cities to unwalled villages" (vs. 18a). The position of this note in the narrative, the stylistic opening ("these are the golden tumors" without immediate antecedent [vs. 17]), the obvious attempt to elaborate on 6:4, and the ambiguous appositional construction of the final phrase all attest to vss. 17–18a as a learned secondary expansion. Granted that a secondary notation may contain reliable historical information, there is sufficient ambiguity in this case to construe the relation of the lords to the cities in either of two ways: (1) it may be construed that there were as many golden mice as there were cities owned by the five lords, including a considerable number of walled cities and unwalled villages, which would obviously be many more than five in number; or (2) it may be construed that the five familiar cities of the Philistines are identified respectively with the five lords, the phrase "ranging from fortified cities to unwalled villages" referring to the entirety of the region controlled from each of the five major cities. Given the larger context of the notation, it is probable that the latter sense is the one intended, but even such a determination does not settle the matter because the exact sense of the prepositional connection between cities and lords is indeterminate. In what sense do the cities "belong to" the lords?

On close analysis, the assumption that the five lords of the Philistines ruled directly over the five city-states is by no means conclusive, resting as it does on

rather slim foundations in the biblical materials. On the basis of the distinction between the Philistine *s^erānīm* and Achish, king of Gath, in I Samuel 29, H. Kassis has contended that Gath was ruled dually by a native Canaanite king, Achish, who was in turn subject to the Philistine *s^erānīm*.[332] Although Kassis does not extend the proposal of dual rule to the other Philistine cities, he does note that in I Samuel 29:2 it is reported that "the Philistine *s^erānīm* were passing on by hundreds and thousands." This enumeration of the *s^erānīm* in the magnitude of hundreds and thousands, coupled with passages which give no indication of number, may imply that they were "a class of charioteers who manipulated and controlled the land that came to bear their name."[333] It would in my view be more accurate to speak of a class of military professionals, since as a whole the Philistine warriors were not restricted to chariots. Also, it is noteworthy that certain of the *s^erānīm* are singled out as "commanders" or "princes" (I Sam. 29:3–4).

It seems to me worth exploring the hypothesis that the dual rule posited for Gath was also typical of the other Philistine cities. On such an hypothesis each city will have possessed its own local petty ruler who was subordinate to the collective authority of the military aristocracy. Certain of these *s^erānīm* will have formed the military high command, and either they or another group of *s^erānīm* will have been assigned to administrative oversight of the vassal kings in the five major cities. Such an organization, essentially that of a military ruling elite with particular members assigned specific military and administrative leadership roles, helps to explain why *s^erānīm* are described as a collectivity in close cooperation, whereas their number is only sporadically indicated. When no number is stated, or when hundreds and thousands are reported in one instance, the reference is to the collectivity of military aristocrats encompassing all the professional warriors conceived as self-governing and unitedly dominant over the respective city-states in the total realm. When "five *s^erānīm*" are specified, the reference is to the "commanders" or "princes" with special military and/or administrative functions which were articulated according to the five major city-state subdivisions of the Philistine state.

Moreover, the hypothesis of dual rule in which a Philistine military aristocracy was superimposed on Canaanite vassal kings in the major cities corresponds closely to the situation of Egyptian rule over Canaan. The pharaoh never ruled directly over the city-states. Instead, Egyptian commissioners supervised regions of the empire, but internal affairs were the jurisdiction of the native vassal-kings. Proceeding on the assumption that the Philistines had been admitted to Canaan as the agents of Egyptian imperial rule and were, therefore, predisposed to follow previous Egyptian imperial policies, we should not be surprised to find the Philistines exercising their sovereignty through indirect oversight rather than through direct rule over the city-states. At the same time, we cannot underestimate the major new element supplied by the Philistines, namely, a remarkably well

disciplined and cohesive ruling military aristocracy in comparison with which the bureaucratically organized foreign service of the Egyptian empire was diffuse, poorly coordinated with the army, deficient in morale, and relatively ineffectual.

37.2 The Philistine Challenge to Early Israel

We begin to see the contours of the great organizational strength of the Philistines, even though we lack much detail. Internally, as a body of mercenaries and administrators serving the Egyptian empire in Canaan, they had a ready-made organization seasoned by years of testing in warfare and self-rule during their long migrations. This hardy organization, increasingly rooted in a Canaanite habitat in contrast to the ill-adapted colonial intrusion of Egyptian rule, provided continuity and stability which made them surer masters of those parts of Canaan they controlled than the Egyptians had ever been, except for brief periods under the most energetic pharaohs. Obviously Egypt was the stronger power in terms of total human, economic, and military resources, but Egypt had the great disadvantage of having to operate from a base separated from Canaan by the Sinai desert. Egypt had learned to depend upon periodic military campaigns into Asia to terrorize the opposition into compliance, but for the sustenance of the empire the lines of communication and resupply from the Nile to Canaan were long and precarious. Moreover, the line of pharaonic succession had not always been smoothly maintained. Internecine court fights in Egypt, as well as periodic tendencies toward absorption with domestic affairs, had contributed to an erratic imperial policy which aborted efforts at systematic exploitation of the Canaanite provinces. Also, the garrisons of Egyptian troops stationed at points in Canaan were thinly spread and manned by troops who did not regard Canaan as their home. The Philistines, by contrast, were concentrated in a well-provisioned and strategically defensible area, and they soon came to regard Canaan as their home. They ardently adopted Canaanite culture in most regards, remaining distinguished chiefly by their extraordinary military-political guild structure. The Philistines could thus feel themselves to be far more "Canaanite" and could represent themselves to their subjects as far more "Canaanite" than could the Egyptians. It is evident that on geographic strategic grounds and on military-political organizational grounds the Philistines posed a challenge to Israel far more serious than single or allied Canaanite city-states and even more serious than the Egyptian empire itself in the attenuated form in which pharaonic rule affected the Canaanite highlands.

Another major factor in Philistine strength was its superb military technology. Much has been written on this subject in recent years, [334] and I shall only draw summary conclusions relevant for our examination of the adaptive advantages enjoyed by the Philistines. We know that the Philistines had chariots. Unlike the *maryannu* charioteer aristocracy which in previous centuries had come to hold

great military and political power in the various Canaanite city-states, the Philistines fielded a more diversified array of forces, including heavily armed infantry, some of whom were of great physical stature. Probably through their contact with the Hittites in Anatolia and northern Syria, the Philistines had acquired skill in iron-working and were able to deploy iron weapons with devastating effect. The Bible reports that the Philistines asserted their hegemony over the Israelites by denying them knowledge and practice of iron smithing, thereby preventing their access to iron weapons (I Sam. 13:19–22). In fact, the Israelites had to take their iron agricultural implements to the Philistines for sharpening. The technological leap from bronze-working to iron-working is a measurable one. Compared to bronze, iron demands more complicated sets of favorable conditions and precise techniques in working the metal into tools and weapons.[335] Israel had acquired iron tools and implements for clearing and cultivating the highlands, but not many iron weapons had come into its hands as a result of the iron monopoly of the Philistines. Nor did Israel have diplomatic relations with Syrian states by means of which it could gain access to Hittite iron technology or come into possession of iron weapons through foreign trade. Apparently the bronze-working Kenites, allied to Israel, either had not begun to experiment with iron-working techniques or had not enjoyed any success in such endeavors. In any case, the Philistines cut short all advance toward iron technology and weaponry in Israel.

By confronting Israel's bronze military technology with an iron military technology in the hands of disciplined professional warriors, the Philistines strove to cancel out the Israelite advantage of mountainous terrain and to deny Israel its hitherto marked success in the tactics of guerrilla warfare. Previously, the Canaanite city-states had been heavily dependent on chariots and composite bows,[336] which were not well adapted to warfare in the thicketed ravines of the hill country where Israel normally chose to fight.[337] By contrast, the Philistines had better trained and equipped heavy infantry, who could challenge an enemy to single combat with sword and spear (I Sam. 17; II Sam. 21: 15–22), or who could form "strike forces" capable of hard-hitting raids into Israelite territory (I Sam. 13:17–18; 14:15).[338] By challenging Israelite guerrilla tactics on their own level, the Philistines managed to penetrate into the highlands north and south of Jerusalem and to establish outposts or garrisons (I Sam. 10:5; 13:3–4,23; 14:1,4, 6,11,15; I Chron. 11:16). One of their large fortified structures may be attested from excavations at Gibeah.[339] Owing, therefore, to a remarkable convergence of mutually reinforcing factors—unified military and political organization, flexible repertory of tactics and weaponry, a secure home base within easy striking distance of the hill country, and a monopoly on iron—the Philistines were able to gain the upper hand over Israel in a seesaw struggle which precipitated the rapid emergence of the institution of monarchy in Israel as the only recourse if this unprecedented threat was to be met.

Yet the reality of Philistine power does not at once explain why they were so intent on dominating the highlands occupied by Israel. The Philistine moves against Israel were hardly in direct self-defense, for the Israelites were not engaged in open attacks upon their cities. Nor were the Philistines in need of new territory to settle a rapidly expanding population. Relative to the total population of the coastal plain in which they settled, the Philistines were a decided minority. This facilitated their speedy adoption of Canaanite language and culture, but there is no evidence for notable population growth which would have pressured the Philistines to advance into the hill country. Why, then, were the Philistines so ardently committed to the domination of Israel?

One commanding reason was the need for the Philistines to protect their trading empire. They controlled several strong positions in the coastal plain north of Philistia, in the lateral Valley of Esdraelon and in the northern Jordan Valley, but these strong points were insufficient to extend adequate protection to the caravans of their clients in Transjordan.[340] As long as Israel was in control of the highlands on either side of the Jordan, the Philistine trade hegemony was precarious. Although I am unaware of any direct evidence, it is probable in my view that Israel raided the trade routes in Transjordan and in the Jordan Valley over which Philistine-controlled commerce regularly moved—just as Israel had formerly raided the Canaanite caravans. Moreover, being predominantly warriors and traders, the Philistines depended upon their subjects for agricultural support. The plain of Philistia was a fertile grain-growing region, but as the Philistine commercial empire expanded, the coastal agricultural base was probably insufficient to produce large surpluses of grain and oil, so necessary as trading commodities to offer in return for the more exotic products not indigenous to Canaan. Consequently, the Philistines set out to conquer Israel

> with the intention of establishing their overlordship along the lines of the former dynasty of the Pharaohs, and with the practical aim of exploiting the husbandry and agriculture of the mountain regions by exacting tribute. They would be a ruling military class; the Israelites and Canaanites would be their subjects and produce the food—this is how the Philistines would have liked to see the distribution of functions throughout Palestine.[341]

When the aims of Philistine hegemony over Israel are seen in the context of political economy, it is evident that in resisting such hegemony Israel was fighting for its survival as an egalitarian, self-determining, socioeconomic system. The handing over of her agricultural and pastoral surpluses to Philistia would have meant not only the end of formal independence for the tribes but also impoverishment for the predominantly peasant-herdsmen populace of Israel. Philistine hegemony would also have opened the way for conscription of Israelite troops as auxiliary forces under Philistine command and for drafting of Israelite manpower for state labor, either on building projects or in servitude on feudally

organized agricultural estates. This would have signalled Israel's integration into the imperial-feudal grid system of social relations, with the rapid eclipse or attenuation of her own autonomous institutions.

The fate of subjection to Philistia would have been for Israel a virtual return to bondage in Egypt. In resisting the Philistines, all the rich, highly charged symbolism of the centralized cultic traditions about deliverance from Egypt and possession of the land was available to mobilize the fighting spirit of the people (cf. III.11). And it was precisely this grave threat from the Philistines that gave the final stimulus to the development of the centralized traditions, cementing them ever more firmly into the superstructure of Israelite society and imbedding them ever more deeply in the public consciousness of Israel. However, far more than rich symbolism and a will to resist were called for. Somehow the superior organization and technology of the enemy had to be neutralized, and it was of course this fundamental desideratum that elicited the forced experiments in more centralized leadership under Saul and David, experiments which proved to be highly successful in blunting the Philistine hegemonic drive and in confining the Philistines to their former coastal homeland.

37.3 Philistine–Israelite–Canaanite Triangular Relations

It would be a deficiency in our method of study, however, to restrict our view of the struggle in Canaan during the eleventh century to the Philistine and Israelite antagonists. We must also take into account the Canaanite populations which had not been absorbed into Israel and which, to greater or lesser degrees, were still beyond the control of the Philistines. In the southwest coastal plain the Canaanites had come under Philistine hegemony when these Sea People were installed there by the Egyptians; the Canaanites continued as Philistine subjects when Egyptian suzerainty passed into Philistine hands. As Philistine control reached up the coastal plain, across the Valley of Esdraelon and into the northern Jordan Valley, more and more Canaanite city-states felt its effect. Although our information is meager, by extrapolation from known Philistine policy we can conclude that wherever possible they subjected the Canaanites and exacted tribute from them. And even apart from the extent of political control exercised by the Philistines over these Canaanite entities, which probably varied from region to region, we must recognize that the lucrative trade that had prospered the major Canaanite cities in the great valleys now passed more and more into the hands of the Philistines. Unquestionably this meant a decline in the prosperity of the Canaanite cities; or, in circumstances where the level of prosperity was maintained, the Canaanite city-states were at any rate compelled to give up larger shares of commercial wealth to the Philistine masters, so that the Philistine overlords prospered at a faster rate than did their Canaanite vassals.

It has been argued, chiefly on linguistic grounds, that the cryptic Shamgar ben

Anath, credited with slaying six hundred Philistines with an ox-goad, was in fact a Canaanite (Judg. 3:31; 5:6).[342] Of course, what is not clear from the scraps of information in Judges is whether Shamgar was operating as the representative of one of the Canaanite cities that opposed the Philistines or whether he was merely an individual adventurer who joined the Israelite cause. In either case, he illustrates vividly that not only Israelites but Canaanites as well were threatened by the encroachment of the Philistines. This perception of political forces in eleventh-century Canaan is further reinforced by a brief comment in I Samuel 7 in connection with the much disputed account of Samuel's victory over the Philistines: "There was peace also between Israel and the Amorites" (vs. 14b). This occurs in an E-type traditional context where "Amorite" refers in a general way to the indigenous populace of Canaan. Now this is so general a remark as to cover a wide spectrum of possible relations between the two peoples, ranging all the way from mere cessation of conflict to the actual contracting of alliances of varying scope. There is no independent evidence of such alliances, and we do not read of the forces of Canaanite city-states joining with Israelite forces against the Philistines. Yet even if we put a minimal construction on the circumstances summarized in I Samuel 7:14b, it is patent that a cessation of Canaanite hostilities against Israel would have been a great boon, releasing Israelite forces to concentrate exclusively on the Philistine invaders. Moreover, a truce between Canaanite city-states not dominated by Philistia and the Israelites signalled an important shift in political sympathies, for it meant that the still independent Canaanites recognized the Philistines as a far greater threat to themselves than the traditional Israelite enemies. This was certainly a realistic assessment on the part of the Canaanites, not only because of the superior Philistine organization and technology but also because of the overt expansionist policy of the Philistines in contrast with the long-prevailing defensive stance of Israel.

We need not exaggerate the Canaanite change of mind. It could be construed as little more than a forced diversion of their attention from trying to dislodge the Israelites from the hill country because they were compelled to cope with the Philistine political, military, and economic encroachment upon their spheres of dominion and influence. Nevertheless, those who have a common enemy have common interests even if they maintain other very different and opposed interests as well. In such circumstances, Canaanite city-states would have been indirect beneficiaries of Israelite successes in resisting or driving back the Philistines, and vice versa. Accordingly, we can see a convergence of anti-Philistine interests which brought Canaanites and Israelites closer together after two centuries of diverging and clashing interests. David's success in incorporating the surviving old Canaanite city-states into his kingdom after the defeat of the Philistines must be seen in this context. The records are blank on the details of that incorporation, but it is consistent with the conditions we have just described that

these Canaanite entities would have been greatly relieved to be delivered of the Philistine threat, and that at least in many instances, they would have tended to look upon Davidic rule as a means to safeguard their vital interests once they were incorporated into one or another of the tribal subdivisions of David's kingdom. It need scarcely be said that in the early reign of David these Canaanites had no inkling of the despotism which was to become Solomon's hallmark in dealing with his subjects.

The Canaanite-Israelite-Philistine triangular relations were further complicated by the presence of *'apiru* who continued to operate symbiotically with organized city-states in Canaan. While considerable numbers of *'apiru* became a part of Israel, the tribes of Israel did not spread over the entirety of Canaan. For that reason it is to be expected that wherever the imperial-feudal pattern held firm in Canaan, *'apiru* continued to function as mercenary bands in the city-states. This reading of developments is borne out by some cursory details about "Hebrews" in I Samuel 13—14. These details have troubled interpreters to the extent that they have resorted to unnecessary textual and exegetical contortions to avoid the evident meanings of what is said. I shall quote these allusions to "Hebrews" and, in brackets, indicate the sense in which each of them is to be understood. Afterward the asserted equations for Hebrews will be defended against contrary interpretations.

> *I Samuel 13:3–7a:* Jonathan defeated the garrison of the Philistines which was at Geba (Gibeah?); and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews [*'ivrīm* = *'apiru*] hear!" And all Israel heard it said that Saul had defeated the garrison of the Philistines, and also that Israel had become odious to the Philistines. And the people were called out to join Saul at Gilgal. And the Philistines mustered to fight with Israel; . . . they came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east of Beth-aven. When the men of Israel saw that they were in a critical situation (for the people were hard pressed), the people hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns, and [whereas?] the Hebrews [*'ivrīm*=*'apiru*] crossed over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead.

> *I Samuel 13:19–20:* Now there was no smith to be found throughout all the land of Israel; for the Philistines said, "Lest the Hebrews [*'ivrīm* = Israelites] make themselves swords and spears"; but every one of the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe, or his sickle.

> *I Samuel 14:11–12:* So both of them [Jonathan and his armor bearer] showed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines; and the Philistines said, "Look, Hebrews [*'ivrīm* = Israelites] are coming out of the holes where they have hid themselves." And the men of the garrison hailed Jonathan and his armor-bearer, and said, "Come up to us, and we will show you a thing." And Jonathan said to his armor-bearer, "Come up after me; for Yahweh has given them into the hand of Israel."

> *I Samuel 14:21–23a:* Now the Hebrews [*'ivrīm* = *'apiru*] who had been with the Philistines before that time and who had gone up with them into the camp, even they also turned to be with the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan. Likewise, when

all the men of Israel who had hid themselves in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines were fleeing they too followed hard after them in battle. So Yahweh delivered Israel that day.

In these excerpts, "Hebrews" is used in two senses by two sets of speakers: in one sense it is the term used by the Philistines for the Israelites, whereas in the other sense it is a term used by the Israelites (either by a speaker in the narrative or by the narrator) for a group not equatable with Israel which fought with the Philistines but was won over to the Israelites after Jonathan's rout of the Philistines. All interpreters agree as to the presence of the first sense in I Samuel 13—14, but a majority deny a second sense, or, if granting it of necessity in 14:21, they do not know what to make of it and fail to see the same meaning of "Hebrews" in 13:3 and 13:7, nor are they able to establish an adequate sociopolitical link between the two senses of "Hebrew."

This blindness toward the double meanings of Hebrew in I Samuel 13—14 follows from the inability of interpreters to believe that any groups other than Israelites could have been called Hebrews. Accordingly, all occurrences of *'ivrīm* are made into Philistine statements about the Israelites—or, in one instance, into a narrator's accommodation to Philistine usage. This sleight of hand is adroitly performed. Beginning with the undisputed Hebrew-Israelite equation in 13:19 and 14:11, the same equation is found in 13:3 by emending the text, along the line of LXX, and transposing phrases with the resultant reading:

Jonathan defeated the garrison of the Philistines which was at Geba, and the Philistines heard of it and proclaimed, "The Hebrews have revolted!" And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, and all Israel heard it and said, "Saul has defeated the garrison of the Philistines."[343]

In 13:7, "Hebrews" is stricken from the text, usually on the assumption that the original reading was a verb form describing how the men of Israel "passed over" the Jordan,[344] but sometimes on the conjecture that the original was *'am rav*, "a great crowd,"[345] which would similarly refer to some of the Israelites. The final reference to *'ivrīm* in 14:21 is taken to refer to a group of Israelites who had defected to the Philistines but who were won back by Saul's and Jonathan's striking victory. If the matter is discussed at all, the defecting and returning Israelites are said to be called "Hebrews" in keeping with Philistine convention.

The weakness of this univocal understanding of Hebrew as Israelite is that it does not consider a sociopolitical meaning for Hebrew as a viable alternative to the traditionally accepted ethnic meaning. As a result it forces all occurrences of "Hebrews" into the same ethnic mold and, even though it gets rid of two of the troublesome references by textual emendation, its treatment of the recalcitrant "Hebrews" in 14:21 is highly strained. On the other hand, if we take into account the sociopolitical *'apiru* type previously discussed, it is possible to establish a

sociopolitical meaning for "Hebrews" which encompasses both of the senses identified in I Samuel 13—14.

It is noteworthy that those called Hebrews by the Philistines are consistently called Israel or Israelites by the Israelite speakers and narrator. This can hardly be attributed to the late Deuteronomist traditionist who edited the narrative, for to him "Hebrew" was simply an ethnicon for Israelite. There is every reason to believe that the original narrator was close enough to the events to remember accurately that the Philistines did indeed regularly refer to his people as "Hebrews." Only one explanation of this linguistic practice is plausible. The Philistines employed this opprobrious term in order to express their claims of hegemony over the Israelites. They refused to recognize the people of the highlands as a separate autonomous sociopolitical entity; they saw in them only rebellious subordinates whose proper place was within the imperial-feudal system as subjects of the Philistine overlords.

A certain degree of haughtiness can be discerned in the application of this term by the Philistines—from their point of view quite understandable, as the Israelites were their subordinates for some time by then, and was [sic] even disarmed (I Sam. 4:9; 13:19). The same preventive measure was applied by the Egyptian Pharaoh to the *'ibrīm* then subordinate to him (Ex. 1:15f.) . . . For the Philistines then, the Israelites are *'ibrīm* because they regard them as their servants and subordinates.[346]

In so labelling the Israelites, the Philistines did not have to coin a term. They simply adopted a common Canaanite term. Since *'apiru*, as political dependents and mercenary auxiliaries, still served Canaanite city-states and Philistine *s^erānīm* alike, it was a label at hand for the Philistines to attach to a people they were intent on keeping subordinate to their rule. The continuing existence of non-Israelite *'apiru* was, however, not in itself a sufficient reason for calling Israelites "Hebrews." After all, the Israelites composed a large congeries of tribes including tens if not hundreds of thousands of people, and extending over a large contiguous area of the highlands. Furthermore, the Philistine intent was to requisition the agricultural surpluses of the Israelites and to impress Israelite manpower as needed into Philistine state projects. The Philistines confronted the Israelites in a manner more analogous to their confrontation of a Canaanite city-state or group of city-states than in a manner analogous to one city-state among others vying for the services of outlaws who might become their mercenaries. So there must have been additional factors which led the Philistines to select the rather restricted, and in some ways anomalous, term *'apiru* /Hebrews to designate the Israelites.

One of these additional factors was probably the respect that the Philistines had for the Israelite soldiery. Of course, they did not regard the Israelites as a match for their superior weapons and organization, but they did perceive them as very tough fighters whose service as lightly armed infantry auxiliaries and as raiders would be very useful. The Philistines already employed hired bodies of aux-

iliaries, including *'apiru* from Canaanite city-states, and it was therefore appropriate to extend the same term to the Israelites.

Still, we have not fully accounted for the contemptuous overtones of the Philistine epithet "Hebrews" as directed at Israelites. This is best explained by a continuous living tradition of contempt toward *'apiru,* passed along from the Amarna imperial-feudal establishment to the Philistines when they inherited that establishment from the Egyptians. The term *'apiru* still carried wider pejorative auras of meaning which aptly branded the Israelites as arch-rebels against the imperial-feudal order. Israel recognized neither imperial nor feudal masters. It must have come early to the attention of Philistines that Israelites alone in Canaan refused on principle to be ruled by others or to rule themselves according to the long-canonized system of political hierarchy. They saw at once the sizable agricultural and manpower resources that would be theirs if they could subject the Israelite "outlaw" society. They would not concede the pretension of autonomy contained in the name "Israel" by deigning to use it. Thus the contempt conveyed in the epithet *'apiru*/Hebrew expressed Philistine frustration and apprehension that the *'apiru* project of becoming relatively independent of the imperial-feudal establishment had been carried through to successful revolution by the Hebrews/Israelites. It was the Philistine intention to wipe out that revolution and to return the mass of Israelites to the status of *'apiru* captives of war, analogous to the *'apiru* in Egypt. Having done so, they might then select the best Israelite warriors for more privileged status as mercenary auxiliaries.

So it seems that there was a mixture of meanings, a mélange of nuances, in the Philistine epithet "Hebrews." Israelites were "Hebrews" in that, like the *'apiru* at large, they were viewed by the Philistines as subordinates in the overall imperial-feudal system. Israelites were "Hebrews" in that they gave promise of being good auxiliary troops in the best *'apiru* tradition. Israelites were "Hebrews" in that they had become the supremely successful rebels against the imperial-feudal system. Israelites were "Hebrews" in that, with sufficient force, they could be reduced to state slavery as the Egyptians had done to their *'apiru* captives.

When the sociopolitical basis of the Philistine use of *'apiru*/Hebrews for the Israelites is grasped, we can more readily make sense of the other occurrences of *'ivrīm* in I Samuel 13—14 which allude to an armed body (or bodies) independent of the Israelites.

The touchstone for this understanding is 14:21 where an armed group called "Hebrews," who had been in the Philistine camp, is said to have switched its loyalty to the Israelites under Saul and Jonathan. There is no way of seeing "Hebrews" and "Israelites" in this context as simply interchangeable terms for the same group. "Hebrews" is here used as a differentiating term, either for non-Israelites or for some Israelites viewed in a particular way. In either case, the differentiation entailed is a sociopolitical one. In other words, we must apply our previous

determination that *'apiru* is a sociopolitical "outlaw" category with military subspecialization in the Canaanite setting. If the "Hebrews" of 14:21 are non-Israelites, they are to be seen as a professional military band offering their services first to the Philistines and later, when the balance of power shifted to the Israelites, switching their support to the latter. If the "Hebrews" of 14:21 are Israelites, the only reason for differentiating them with this term would be that they were an armed band of Israelites who had given their services as *'apiru* to the Philistines but returned to the Israelite side when the battle went decisively against the Philistines. In that case, the Israelite *'apiru* engaged in a fight with their own people would have been in the situation that David and his band narrowly avoided when, contrary to the wish of Achish of Gath, the Philistine *s^{e}rānīm* disqualified David and his troops from fighting against Saul at Gilboa (I Samuel 29).

A similar sociopolitical understanding of "Hebrews" in 13:3 is evident. In spite of the awkwardness of the Hebrew text, perhaps stemming from confusion among the later traditionists once the original sociological context for *'apiru*/Hebrews was lost to their view, there is no real satisfaction to be gained by the frequent emendation of the text we referred to above. The LXX of 13:3 is not less clumsy than MT, and the transposition of phrases in order to iron out difficulties by shifting the speaker of the exclamation, "The Hebrews have revolted!" from Saul to the Philistines is wholly conjectural. In fact, the impulse to emend the text starts from the inability of scholars to accept "the name *Hebrews* in Saul's mouth, which cannot be correct."[347] To those interpreters it "cannot be correct," of course, because elsewhere in context the Israelites call themselves only Israelites, and most scholars do not consider that "Hebrews" may be sociopolitical nomenclature referring variously to Israelites and non-Israelites who fill the appropriate *'apiru*/Hebrew role.

Actually, what is said of the "Hebrews" in 13:3 fits well with what is said of them in 14:21. The sound of the trumpet is a military signal. "Let the Hebrews hear!" is more properly to be translated, "Let the Hebrews listen / pay attention / obey!" This is Saul's appeal to the "third force" of *'apiru* warriors, who have served the Philistines but should now be warned or inspired by the Israelite victory to withdraw their support from the Philistines and come over to Israel—precisely as they eventually did, according to 14:21. The two verses fit comfortably together, and they do so whether "Hebrews" are non-Israelite mercenary *'apiru* or whether they are a band of Israelites who gave *'apiru* service to the Philistines.

The "Hebrews" in 13:7 present a difficulty not easily overcome on any view of the identity of the Hebrews in I Samuel 13—14. The consonantal change in the Hebrew text required to get the LXX's "and they passed over Jordan" (subject, "the people," or, by implication, "some of the people"), which eliminates "Hebrews" altogether, corrects a kind of textural error that is common enough and, at the same time, eliminates the problem of relating the "Hebrews" of 13:7 to those

of 13:3 and 14:21. In the end this may be the proper course, but there is one feature held in common by 13:7 and 14:21 which gives me pause and which suggests that "Hebrews" in 13:7 may indeed be original. I refer to the fact that 14:21 distinguishes a group of Hebrews from the Israelites who hid themselves in West Jordan and that precisely the same pairing appears in 13:6–7 where Hebrews who fled over the Jordan are set off from Israelites who hid themselves in West Jordan.

There can hardly be any doubt that the Israelites who hide themselves in 13:7 are the same Israelites who come out of hiding in 14:21. Should it not at least be seriously considered that the Hebrews who come over to the support of Israel in 14:21 are the Hebrews who fled over the Jordan in 13:7, or, at least, that they are an armed band analogous to those in 13:7? If, however, the *'apiru*/Hebrews of 13:3,7 and 14:21 are conceived as Israelites or non-Israelites fighting with the Philistines, but who later align with the Israelites, it is virtually impossible to make sense of their flight across the Jordan in 13:7. I say this because the hiding of many Israelites and the flight of the Hebrews in 13:6–7 is occasioned by the large muster of Philistine troops who strike panic among the forces of Saul. If these Hebrews were at the time still a part of the Philistine force, there would be no explanation of their flight except desertion. According to 14:21 the desertion to Israel came only after the Philistines were faring badly in the fight. Thus, the Hebrews of 13:7 can only be seen as former fighters with the Philistines on the assumption that this early in the action some of them deserted the Philistines—i.e., before the larger desertion of 14:21—and on the further assumption that, once they had deserted, instead of standing firm with Saul, they fled in panic. This is not a plausible reconstruction of events. If "Hebrews" is to be retained in 13:7, they would have to be understood as a group of Israelites who, though they customarily gave *'apiru* service, were not supporting the Philistines in the present campaign but were within Saul's army. They would be like the Hebrews of 13:3 and 14:21 in that they regularly offered themselves in *'apiru* service, but they would be unlike the Hebrews of 13:3 and 14:21 in that they had not given their services to the Philistines in this campaign but had remained loyal to Saul. All in all, this is so precious an argument that I am not prepared to urge it decisively against the rather simpler recourse of deleting "Hebrews" in 13:7. For the moment, I would only argue that there is at least one way in which Hebrews can be retained in 13:7 in a manner that is sociopolitically plausible and conceivably resolvable within the framework of the narrative events.

While a sociopolitical understanding of *'apiru*/Hebrews does not quite resolve all difficulties in the terse reports of I Samuel 13—14, it brings far more illumination to the events there described than does the ethnic understanding of the terms. It not only renders plausible the different senses of "Hebrews" when used, on the one hand, by the Philistines for all Israelites as their subjects and, on the other hand, by the Israelite speaker or narrator to designate Israelite or non-Israelite elements giving *'apiru* service. It also shows that not all combatants were firmly locked into the Philistine or Israelite camps; some wavered between the two opposing forces. A factor in the eventual victory of Philistines or Israelites was to be their relative success in enlisting the support of these uncommitted groups. From I Samuel 13—14 I have been unable to determine whether the "Hebrews" in 13:3 and 14:21 (and 13:7 if that reference to Hebrews is tentatively retained) were Israelites or non-Israelites. If "Hebrews" is retained in 13:7, the balance of evidence points toward Israelite *'apiru*/Hebrews, but we have seen that any firm conclusion about 13:7 is dubious. If it is objected that Israelites could not be conceived as giving *'apiru* service, especially to the Philistines, we must remember that David and his band offered just such service to Achish of Gath only a little later than the events of I Samuel 13—14. If the Hebrews of 13:7, and perhaps also of 13:3 and 14:21, were Israelites, then we should have to imagine that Saul had alienated some Israelites at an early point in his career as leader of united Israel. While I know of no independent evidence on this point, his later falling-out with David, which prompted David and his band to give *'apiru* service to Philistines, makes the hypothesis of earlier analogues to the Saul-David rift altogether plausible.