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Geographical and Historical Observations on the old North Israelite Gideon tale in Judges

It is widely accepted that the Book of Judges includes substantial North Israelite traditions.[1] Fifty years ago Wolfgang Richter[2] described their first appearance in writing as »The Book of Saviors« (*Retterbuch*), which contained, in his opinion, the early layer of Judges 3–9, and included early traditions, which were originally separate oral units. According to Richter, the author/editor of the Book of Saviors collected these separate literary units,[3] and added some links and editorial passages as part of his editorial frame. Richter dated this »Book of Saviors« to the second half of the 9th century BCE.[4] In addition to the early composition, he identified two later layers: Deuteronomistic frame and additions, and post-Deuteronomistic supplements.

Though not all scholars accepted this theory,[5] and even if some of the passages that Richter assigned to the original stories and to the editor of the Book

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1 Thomas Römer and Albert de Pury, »Deuteronomistic Historiography (DH): History of Research and Debated Issues,« in *Israel Constructs Its History*, ed. idem, JSOTSup 306 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000): 24–141, 118 f.

2 Wolfgang Richter, *Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Richterbuch*, Bonner Biblischer Beiträge 18 (Bonn: Hanstein, 1966).

3 To this pre-editorial stage of the »Book of Saviors« Richter assigned Judg 3:15b–26; 4:17a, 18–21; 6:11a, 18–19, 21–24, 27–31a–b; 7:11b, 13–21; 8:5–9, 14–21, 24–27a, 30, 32; 9:8–15, 26–40, 46–54.

4 Richter, *Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, 319–343; and cf. to Ludwig Schmidt, *Menschlicher Erfolg und Jahwes Initiative: Studien zu Tradition, Interpretation und Historie in Überlieferungen von Gideon, Saul und David*, WMANT 38 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1970), 16 f., 52.

5 Uwe Becker, *Richterzeit und Königtum. Redaktionsgeschichtliche Studien zum Richterbuch*, BZAW 192 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990), 207 rejected the existence of the Book of Saviors and proposed that it was the Deuteronomist who put together different early (separated) traditions. Yaira Amit, *Judges – Introduction and Commentary* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1999), 14 f., in some aspects after Charles F. Burney, *The Book of Judges, with Introduction and Notes* (London: Rivingtons, 1903), XLI–L, and Robert G. Boling, *Judges: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 6A Garden City (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 29–38, argued that a nearly final editing was conducted in Judah at the end of the 8th century BCE, after the destruction of the Kingdom

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of Saviors should in fact be assigned to Deuteronomistic and post-Deuteronomistic hands, with the necessary amendments it is still the best explanation for the development of the Book of Judges. Accepting the general division into four main layers (the original oral tradition, the Book of Saviors, Deuteronomistic and post-Deuteronomistic) in this article we deal with the Gideon narrative – the longest and one of the most intricate in Judges. Our main goal is to isolate the old, oral tale and reconstruct its geographical and possibly historical settings.

Our basic premises are as follows: We accept the existence of pre-Deuteronomistic Northern traditions in Judges. The old tales belong to the genre of heroic stories,[6] that is, they must have had a hero, an enemy (preferably also leaders of this enemy), a geographical setting, and a specific confrontation at their core; at times heroic stories also depict a fairytale anecdotal/atmosphere. These old stories were local in nature, representing a clan (Abiezer here), a town (Gilead in the case of Jephthah) or (perhaps) a tribe (e.g., Naphtali in the case of Deborah and Barak). They were transmitted orally until collected and committed to writing, in our opinion, in the first half of the 8th century BCE. This date is based on what we know today regarding the proliferation of literacy and scribal activity in Israel in general and the Northern Kingdom in particular;[7] on literary consideration – the old stories must be pre-Deuteronomistic; and on historical considerations – they represent the territory of Israel and there is no logic in dating them after the demise of the Northern Kingdom. We are well aware of the fact that the long period of oral transmission before the stories were submitted to writing means that even the »original«, pre Book of Saviors oral tales could have been layered.

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of Israel. For a similar date see Ernst A. Knauf, »Does ›Deuteronomistic History‹ Exist?« in *Israel Constructs Its History,* ed. Thomas Römer and Albert de Pury, JSOTSup 306 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000): 388–398, 396; idem, »History in Judges,« in *Israel in Transition 2: From Late Bronze II to Iron IIA (c. 1250–850 BCE), the Texts,* ed. Lester L. Grabbe (New York: Bloomsbury, 2010): 140–149; Philippe Guillaume, *Waiting for Josiah – The Judges*, JSOTSup 385 (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 14–16; Konrad Schmid, *The Old Testament: A Literary History* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 79.

6 Stanley Isser, *The Sword of Goliath: David in Heroic Literature* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003); Charles L. Echols, »*Tell Me, O Muse*«*: The Song of Deborah (Judges 5) in the Light of Heroic Poetry* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2008).

7 Israel Finkelstein and Benjamin Sass, »The West Semitic Alphabetic Inscriptions, Late Bronze II to Iron IIA: Archeological Context, Distribution and Chronology,« *HeBAI* 2 (2013): 149–220.

1 Literary Layers in the Gideon Story

In order to study the geography of the old Gideon tale, it needs to be separated from the later Deuteronomistic and post-Deuteronomistic additions. The peeling-away of layers of the story is done below, based on inner biblical clues, linguistic and toponymic considerations, the flow of the story and its logic, the role of the deity, etc.[8] Attempting this, one needs to acknowledge the many redactions, and consider that while materials were added, others could have been deleted. Hence it is difficult, if not impossible, to extract the early tale as a coherent text (more below).

The Deuteronomistic and post-Deuteronomistic hands are relatively simple to trace here, though it is not always easy or even possible to distinguish between them. There is a general agreement among scholars about the attribution of the opening and closing formulae (6:1, 6b and 8:28aβ-b, 32–34) to the Deuteronomistic editing phase.[9] Verse 6:2a seems to include the original opening of the old story (... וַתָּעָז יַד-מִדְיָן עַל),[10] closed in 8:28aα (וַיִּכָּנַע מִדְיָן) as the end of the old story. Verses 6:2b, 6a seem like expansions by the hand of the author/editor of the Book of Saviors, as part of his introduction to the story. Verses 6:3–5 elaborate on 6:1–2, and should be assigned to a post-Deuteronomistic hand. The author expands the conflict from Midian to »the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the east«, probably based on the Deuteronomistic formula in v. 33, and enters camel raids and Gaza to the narrative.[11] The same holds true for 7:12 and 8:10aβ–b. The background – especially the importance of Gaza – should probably be sought in the Persian period.

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8 For a similar attempt, with somewhat different criteria, see Guillaume, *Waiting*, 41–55.

9 Becker, *Richterzeit*, 141–144, proposed that vv. 1–5 were all written by the Deuteronomist, as against Richter's idea that vv. 1–2a are Deuteronomistic and vv. 2b–5 were written by the editor of the Book of Saviors. Walter Groß, *Richter – übersetzt und ausgelegt* (Freiburg: Herder, 2009), 368 f., assigned large parts of this section to the pre-Deuteronomistic story (vv. 2b, 3aβ without »and the Amalekites, and the children of the east«).

10 Note the unique form of the root עזז; beside a late use in Judg 3:10, it does not exist in the Deuteronomistic literature; this form does not appear in other parts of the Old Testament.

11 This designation is different from that of Richter, who suggested that vv. 2b–5 are the work of the editor of the Book of Saviors, or that of Becker, who asserted that vv. 1–5 are all part of the Deuteronomistic introduction, with no early source used here. Groß, *Richter*, 368 f., assigned larger parts of this section to the pre-Deuteronomistic story (vv. 2b, 3aβ [without »and the Amalekites, and the children of the east«], 4–6a).

The section in 6:7–10 has »no connection to the context«,[12] its message not to fear the gods of the Amorites is irrelevant in this circumstance;[13] it is also missing in the 4QJudgᵃ, frg. 1.[14] The explanation of sin and punishment given by a prophet is an exception in the Book of Judges and is probably part of a very late addition to the text.[15]

Scholars saw vv. 11a (or 11aα), together with 19–24 (or 19, 21, 24 or 24a – more below) as part of the old story.[16] We view v. 11 differently. It is here that the hero and his family, hometown and clan are introduced. The original story may have had the elders of Abiezer coming to the terebinth at Ophrah to ask Gideon to lead the people against the Midianites. We cannot accept the »angel of the LORD« as part of the old heroic tale, and see v. 11aα as a Deuteronomistic insertion.[17]

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12 Alberto Soggin, *Judges: A Commentary,* OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 112; Graeme Auld, »Gideon: Hacking at the Heart of the Old Testament,« *VT* 39 (1989): 257–267, 263.

13 John Gray, *Joshua, Judges and Ruth*, Century Bible (London: T. Nelson & Sons Ltd., 1977), 229.

14 Eugene Ulrich, ed., *The Biblical Qumran Scrolls, Transcriptions and Textual Variants. Volume 1: Genesis –Kings* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 255; Lee Roy Martin, »The Intrusive Prophet: The Narrative Function of the Nameless Prophet in Judges 6,« *Journal for Semitics* 16/1 (2007): 113–140, 113 f., with further literature. Richter ignored these verses in his work on Judges 6–9; see also Walter Beyerlin, »Geschichte und heilsgeschichtliche Traditionsbildung im Alten Testament: Ein Beitrag zur Traditionsgeschichte von Richter VI–VIII,« *VT* 13 (1963): 1–25, 13 f.

15 Groß, *Richter*, 369 f. On the connection between Judg 2, 6:7–10, and 10:6–16, see Barry G. Webb, *The Book of Judges. An Integrated Reading* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 102–105, 119; Benoît Standaert, »Adonai Shalom (Judges 6–9): The Persuasive Means of a Narrative and the Strategies of Inculturation of Yahwism in a New Context,« in *Rhetoric, Scripture, and Theology: Essays from the 1994 Pretoria Conference*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht, JSOTSup 131 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996): 195–202; and cf. already to Martin Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien I* (Halle: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1943), 93 f.; Timo Veijola, *Das Königtum in der Beurteilung der Deuteronomistische Historiographie* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1977), 43 f., assigned these verses to Smend's DtrN, and cf. to Rudolf Smend, *Die Entstehung des Alten Testamentes* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1978), 116. See, however, the comment of Jack M. Sasson, *Judges 1–12: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 329 f.

16 Ernst von Kutsch, »Gideons Berufung und Altarbau Jdc 6, 11–24,« *TLZ* 81 (1956): 75–84, for example, suggested that the early layer of the etiological story included vv. 11a, 19–24; Becker, *Richterzeit*, 148–151, reconstructed the original story in vv. 11aα, 18–19aα–b, 21–24a. Reinhard G. Kratz, *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament*, trans. John Bowden (London: T & T Clark International, 2005), 203, minimized the early story to vv. 11a, 19, 21, 24.

17 According to Kutsch, »Gideon« the Deuteronomistic utilization of the story for explaining Gideon's mission included the addition of vv. 11b–18. According to Becker, *Richterzeit*, the Deuteronomistic editing used this story to expand on Gideon's mission, adding vv. 11–12, 14aβ–19aα–b, 21–24; he reconstructed a post–Deuteronomistic editing in vv. 13–14aα, and argued that vv. 19–20aβ make a still later addition.

The block in 6:12–24 tells the story of the angel and the appointment of Gideon, also aiming to explain the erection of an altar of YHWH at Ophrah (v. 24), known by the name יְהוָה שָׁלוֹם. Its Deuteronomistic nature is intimated by the genre and especially the etiological ending, »until this day«; its main use in the Deuteronomistic story was to emphasize the mission of Gideon.[18] Historically, this block may be understood as legitimizing a village altar, which may sound awkward for a Deuteronomistic text. But the idea could be similar to the references to patriarchal altars in Genesis and the clues for such countryside altars in the stories of the judges (also הַפְּסִילִים, »which were at Gilgal« [3:19] and the palm tree of Deborah »between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim« [4:5]). The existence of these altars was accepted by the Deuteronomist »before« the rule of the Davidic Dynasty and the building of the Temple in Jerusalem. In any event, this part of the story means that the memory of a Yahwistic cult place at Ophrah was an old one, still acknowledged long after the fall of the Northern Kingdom. If this is the case, it would be logical to assume that the following section (6:25–32), relating how Gideon destroyed the altar of the Baʿal, is post-Deuteronomistic,[19] with a paradigmatic intention to describe cultic purification before war.[20]

The second divine sign to Gideon, proving that God stands by him (6:36–40), is a clear insertion into the flow of the story. It is alien to both the preceding section, dealing with the recruitment of the army (vv. 34–35), and to the following section, describing the diminution of Gideon's fighting force (7:1–8).[21] Some scholars suggested that 6:36–40 is a parallel to 6:11–24, and following to the Documentary Hypothesis assumed that the two represent the J and E layers. This assumption cannot be accepted nowadays. As described above, the two sections

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18 Becker, *Richterzeit*, 145, literature in n. 20.

19 Groß, *Richter*, 373 f.

20 Becker, *Richterzeit*, 148–150; Kratz, *Composition*, 203. Albert de Pury, »Le raid de Gédéon (Judg 6, 25–32) et l'histoire de l'exclusivisme yahawiste,« in *Lectio Difficilior Probabilior? Festschrift F. Smyth-Florentin*, ed. Thomas Römer, Dielheimer Blätter zum Alten Testament und seiner Rezeption in der Alten Kirche, Beihefte 12 (Heidelberg: Springer Verlag, 1991): 173–205 saw this section as reflecting an old story from the 9th–8th century BCE trend toward exclusive Yahwism. Note that this is the first point of connection between Gideon and Jerubbaʿal, where it seems that Gideon is the secondary name, as it is in 7:1 and 8:35; see Auld, »Gideon«: 264 and cf. to Sara J. Milstein, *Reworking Ancient Texts: Revision through Introduction in Biblical and Mesopotamian Literature* (Ann Arbor: PhD dissertation, New York University, 2010), 195 f.; 219–221; see more below. Some scholars suggested that the act of cutting the asherah (from the root גדע) is an etymological legend on the name Gideon (Shemariyah Gershoni, »Etymological Legends in the Book of Judges,« *Aloney Mamreh* 121 (1988), 102, with further literature; Auld, »Gideon«: 264; Amit, *Judges*, 123. Against this idea, note that the story uses the root כרת, not גדע.

21 Kratz, *Composition*, 203.

are not parallel; most of vv. 11–24 (in our opinion — 6:11–12, 14aβ–bα – 19aα, 19b, 20a–bα, 21–24) belong to a section connected to the foundation of the altar known by the name יְהוָה שָׁלוֹם, probably Deuteronomistic in its core with later expansion. If so, vv. 36–40 should be considered as a post-Deuteronomistic addition.

In the literary units discussed thus far we could recognize only a few remains from the original tale: the enemy (6:2aα), the clan of the hero, his father and hometown and his whereabouts during the Midianite pressure (11aβ–b). We assume that the continuation of the old story – the beginning of Gideon's actual action – can be found in 6:34aβ–b and possibly also in 6:35a. The remaining part of 6:34–35 makes the Deuteronomistic frame of this presumable original beginning of the battle story.[22]

The next section of the old story, describing the location of the battle, is found in v. 7:1 (without identifying Jerubbaʿal as Gideon): Gideon camped »beside the Spring of Harod«[23] and the camp of Midian was »by the hill of Moreh in the valley«.[24] Scholars assumed that the original diminutive story focused on the victory of Gideon and the 300 warriors from the Abiezer clan (and the tribe of Manasseh?) over a Midianite group (8:4), and hence, the section in 7:2–8a represents the Deuteronomistic editor's need to add a tale on the reduction of the number of warriors.[25] We wish to suggest a more complicated literary process, in which the reduction of Gideon's force was part of the original story – told in a fairytale-like ambiance typical of the heroic stories in Judges. After the opening line in 7:1 we reconstruct the continuation of the story in 7:5a, 6, that is, without the Deuteronomistic instruction of YHWH to Gideon in v. 5b. In the old story Gideon himself selects the 300 warriors and excludes all those who bowed down on their knees to drink water (v. 6): »So

22 The expression וְרוּחַ יְהוָה לָבְשָׁה in v. 34a can be found only twice more in the Old Testament: 1Chr 12:19 and 2Chr 24:20; Soggin, *Judges*, 129; Auld »Gideon«: 265; it is hard to accept Groß's opinion that vv. 33–35 are unified and part of the original story, Groß, *Richter*, 374–377.

23 On the meaning of the name of this spring, »the spring [source] of anxiety«, see Erasmus Gass, *Die Ortsnamen des Richterbuchs in historischer und redaktioneller Perspektive*, Abhandlung des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins 35 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 279, with further literature. On the identification of this place see further below.

24 On the geography of the old tale see the discussion below. Note that the term »camp« (מַחֲנֶה) appears in Chapters 7–8 22 times, 21 of them in relation to the Midianites; only once – in the later addition of 7:15bα – it describes the camp of the Israelites.

25 Based on the suggestion that v. 8b is a *Wiederaufnahme* (linking repetition) of v. 1, Becker, *Richterzeit*, 162–164, proposed that the entire story in 7:2–8 is post-Deuteronomistic. Kratz, *Composition*, 203, considered it as Deuteronomistic. Becker, *Richterzeit*, 161, also argued that in the literary unit of 6:33–35, describing the recruitment of the army, the clan of Abiezer was expanded by the Deuteronomist, similar to what he did with the army of the Midianites (in 6:33); the reduction of the army episode aims to match the Deuteronomistic intention to ascribe the war to »all Israel«.

he (=Gideon) brought the people down to the water ... the number of those that lapped ... was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people knelt down to drink water.« The end of this short episode is in v. 8aβ–b, in a clear literary continuation from v. 6 (without the insertion of Israel, probably instead of Abiezer or Manasseh): »and he sent all the rest of <Abiezer?> every man unto his tent, but retained the three hundred men; and the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.« All the other verses in this unit (7:2–4, 5b, 7–8aα) seem to be part of the Deuteronomistic attempt to turn this selection into a divine test, as well as a divine promise to Gideon to prevail over the Midianites with his small army.

The heart of the Gideon story is the battle with the Midianites. In addition to the location of the two camps, it includes the seed of the story of the Midianite's dream (7:11b, 13–14a, without »the man of Israel«); Gideon's preparation for battle with the unique trick of the trumpets and empty jars (7:15aα, 16a–bα, 17–18bα); and the battle itself, which ends with the eastward escape of the Midianites (7:19, 21a, 22aα, 22b).[26] The reference to the torches in v. 16bβ is part of the Deuteronomistic addition of v. 20; torches do not appear in the original description of the battle (vv. 17–19).[27] We assume that vv. 14b and 15aβ are part of the editing of the book of Saviors and v. 15b, 18b, 21b, and 22aβ are part of the Deuteronomistic edition of the story.

Kratz assumed that within the section of 7:16–22, the description of the escape of the Midianite army is also late, added in order to combine this story with the description of the chasing of Gideon after the remaining army of the Midianites, while according to v. 22a »the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow and against all the army.«[28] In our opinion, v. 22a is a later addition, aimed at emphasizing God's role in the events; this verse disrupts the continuity between vv. 21 and 22b, which seems to us a proper ending to this section, with the many topographical details it contains.[29]

The two sections that describe the gathering of the other tribes to capture the Jordan fords (7:23–25) and the conflict with the men of Ephraim (8:1–3)[30] are both

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26 Our reconstruction is close to that of Becker, *Richterzeit*, 164–172, and Kratz, *Composition*, 203. Becker assigned vv. 11b, 13, 14a, 15a, 16a–bα, 17–19, 21a, 22a to the pre-Deuteronomistic story, and vv. 9–11a, 14b, 15b, 16bβ, 20, 21b, 22b to the Deuteronomistic layer. Kratz expanded the original story to vv. 8b, 13–14, 15a, 16–21, 22b.

27 Becker, *Richterzeit*, 167–172.

28 Kratz, *Composition*, 203.

29 And cf. to Groß, *Richter*, 383.

30 Note the similarity between the call to the Ephraimites to capture the Jordan fords (7:24–25) and the same call of Ehud (3:27). In both cases, the outcome is similar (3:28; 7:24). To this we can add the description of the Gileadites in the story of Jephtah (12:5; here from east to west). The origin of this theme is probably in the Ehud story.

part of a later story that is not related to Gideon's conflict with the Midianites. Rösel suggested that these units were probably added by a post-Deuteronomistic editor in order to give a proper ending to the description of the raid in Chapter 7.[31] They were combined with the description of the continued chase of Gideon after the remaining army of the Midianites (8:4–12), as well as his revenge on the people of Succoth and Penuel (8:13–21).

Following Kratz,[32] we reconstruct the original story in Chapter 8 in vv. 4, 5bβ, 10aα, 11a–bα, 12aα, 12bα, 18a (without the location – Tabor), 19–20, 21bα (but note that Kratz assigned to it all of 10–12, and 18–21bα). Some post-Deuteronomistic sections were added in order to expand the power of the Midianite army and »smooth out« the story with the Deuteronomistic editing (8:10aβ–b, 11b, 12aβ, 12bβ).

Verses 8:18a, 19–20 (without »as the LORD leaves«) constitute an important part of the story, disclosing the reason for the war: the killing of the brothers of Gideon by Zebah and Zalmunna. There is no information about this event in other parts of the story, but it can explain the Midianite presence in the territory of Abiezer. Placing this event at Tabor is not connected to the territory of Abiezer or to the location of the battle, and seems like a late (Deuteronomistic?) attempt to connect the story to Chapter 4. It is also part of the misunderstanding of the meaning of »valley« in v. 7:1 (see more below).

We omit the polemic against Succoth and Penuel in vv. 8:5–9, 13–17 from the original story.[33] Kratz assigned these units to a Deuteronomistic layer.[34] Indeed, this may be a Deuteronomistic polemic against North Israelite cult places in Transjordan; or, this section may have originated from a post-Book of Saviors, still Israelite hand, related to a Northern controversy regarding Pekah's ostensible rule in the Gilead in rivalry to Samaria.[35] This hostility to Transjordan may possibly be compared to Hosea's attitude to the Jacob narrative.[36]

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31 Hartmut Rösel, »Studien zur Topographie der Kriege in den Büchern Josua und Richter,« *ZDPV* 92 (1976): 10–46, 19 f.

32 Kratz, *Composition*, 203.

33 We accept Becker's omission of vv. 10aβ–b, 11b, 12a–bβ from the original story and see these verses as a later expansion of the story of the war.

34 Kratz, *Composition*, 203. Unlike Kratz, Becker assigned the reference to Succoth in vv. 13–16 to the original story, but saw the Penuel story as a later insertion (especially vv. 8–9, 17).

35 E.g., Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 123–126; Bob Becking, *The Fall of Samaria: An Historical and Archaeological Survey* (Leiden: Brill, 1992); Stuart A. Irvine, *Isaiah, Ahaz, and the Syro-Ephraimitic Crisis* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 105 f.

36 Omer Sergi, »The Gilead between Aram and Israel: Political Borders, Cultural Interaction and

Verses 8:18b, 21a, 21bβ, 22–27 seem to belong to a post-Deuteronomistic hand. Note the mention of Ishmaelites in v. 24[37] and the polemic against the altar at Ophrah in v. 27 – an altar which was »legitimized« by the Deuteronomistic author (above). Also note that vv. 8:22–23 seem to be inserted between 21bβ and 24–27 and hence we may have here an indication of the existence of two different post-Deuteronomistic hands.[38] The post-Deuteronomistic editor is also responsible for the association of Jerubba'al and Gideon.[39] An important aim of this layer is to connect Jerubba'al to the Abimelech story in Chapter 9.[40] As indicated above, 6:25–32 is a post-Deuteronomistic addition, describing how Gideon destroyed the Ba'al altar at Ophrah, with a paradigmatic idea of cultic purification before war. This story was used to explain the name Jerubba'al, supposedly given to Gideon; it appears as an etymological legend.[41] The author did not understand the original geography of the story, made the wrong correlation with the Jezreel Valley (6:33, because of Judg 4–5? similar to the insertion of Tabor in 8:18), and misled modern scholars regarding the location of the conflict (see more below). The geography of 7:1 was also misunderstood and a late insertion there is part of the intention to

the Question of Jacob and the Israelite Identity,« in *In Search of Aram and Israel: Politics, Culture and the Question of Identity* (ORA), ed. Omer Sergi, Manfred Oeming and Izaak de-Hulster (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, in press).

37 Ernst A. Knauf, »Midianites and Ishmaelites,« in *Midian Moab and Edom*, ed. John F. A. Sawyer and David J. A. Clines (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1983): 147–162.

38 As against Becker, *Richterzeit*, 180–183, who connected it to the following unit of vv. 24–27a. Note that YHWH rather than a flesh and blood figure, is the king over Israel.

39 On this subject see Herbert Haag, »Gideon – Jerubba'al – Abimelek,« *ZAW* 79 (1967): 305–314, and see also Milstein, *Reworking*, 192–225, with further literature. Against this view see John A. Emerton »Gideon and Jerubba'al,« *Journal of Theological Studies* N.S. 27 (1976): 289–312.

40 In the old story in Chapter 9, Abimelech is the son of Jerubba'al, but there is no connection between Jerubba'al and Gideon. Richter, *Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, 322, argued that the Abimelech story was not part of the original »Richterbuch«. According to him, the Jotham parable, as well as 9:25–41; 46–54 were added in the secondary editing level, and the Deuteronomist added vv. 1–7, 16a, 19b–21, 23–24, 41–45, 56–57. Becker, *Richterzeit*, 206, had the same idea regarding the original text, but Frank Crüsemann, *Der Widerstand gegen das Königtum. Die Antiköniglichen Texte des Alten Testaments und der Kampf um den Frühen Israelitischen Staat*, WMANT 49 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 32–36, assigns verses 23, 25, 42, 43–54 to the original story. On this subject see also Guillaume, *Waiting*, 53 f., and from a different aspect Milstein, *Reworking*, 192–225.

41 See Auld, »Gideon«: 264. For a different interpretation and an early date of this section in the time of the Northern Kingdom see de Pury, »Gédéon«: 190–198. Guillaume, *Waiting*, 44 f. identified vv. 6:7–32 as a Deuteronomistic block.

identify Jerubba'al with Gideon.[42] Verses 8:29–31, 35 clearly make the connection with the Abimelech story in Chapter 9.[43]

We can summarize this section as follows:

The old story: 6:2aα (only וַתָּעָז יַד־מִדְיָן without »Israel«), 11aβ–b (basic details in the Deuteronomistic verse); 34aβ–b – 35a; 7:1 (without יְרֻבַּעַל הוּא), 5a, 6, 8aβ–b, 11b, 13–14a (without »the man of Israel«), 15aα (with the verb וַיִּשְׁב from v. 15bα) 16a–bα, 17–18bα (without the references to the torches), 19, 21a, 22aα, 22b; 8:4, 5bβ, 10aα, 11a–bα, 12, 12bα, 18a (without Tabor), 19–20 (without »as the LORD lives«), 21bα, 28aα.

The author of the Book of Saviors: 6:2b, 6a; 7:14b, 15aβ, 28a; 8:5–9, 13–17 (these verses might also be part of the Deuteronomistic level, and this is why we mention some of them also below.

The Deuteronomistic layer: 6:1, 6b, 11aα, 12, 14aβ–bα, 15–19aα, 19b, 20a–bα, 21–24, 33, 34aα, 35b; 7:2–4, 5b, 7–8aα, 9–11a, 14aβ–b, 15b (without the verb (וַיִּשְׁב, 61bβ, 18b, 20, 21b, 22aβ; 8:5–9, 13–17, 28aβ-b, 32–34.

Post-Deuteronomistic additions: 6:3–5, 7–10, 13–14aα, 14bβ, 19aβ, 20bβ, 25–32, 36–40; 7:2–8a, 12, 23–25; 8:1–3, 10aβ–b, 11bβ, 12aβ, 12bβ, 18b, 21a, 21bβ, 22–27, 29–31, 35.

2 The Old Tale: Its Geography and Historical Settings

2.1 The Old Tale

The discussion above makes it possible to configure the old tale, without the geographical expansions introduced by the North Israelite author and the Deuteronomistic and post-Deuteronomistic additions. Evidently, with centuries of redactions, supplements and deletions, it is difficult, probably impossible, to fully reconstruct the original tradition. Hence the narrative below should be conceived as no more than a demonstration (in brackets, bold additions that we entered in

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42 The original seems to have read וַיֵּשֶׁב גִּדְעוֹן וְכָל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ.

43 On this subject see already Richter, *Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, 157–162, and cf. to Haag, »Gideon«: 305–314; Guillaume, *Waiting*, 53–55. Against this view see Emerton, »Gideon«: 289–298, who argued that 8:29–32; 9:17–18 are part of the original story and 6:32 is part of the story on the altar. He also argued (»Gideon«: 299–309) that the names Gideon and Jerubbaʿal belonged to the same person, that Gideon indeed became king, and that one of the two became a regnal name. However, as Emerton himself argued (»Gideon«: 301 f.), the connection between Gideon and Jerubba'al depends on 6:25–32, which is not part of the original story; and see Auldʿ »Gideon«: 264).

order to make the story coherent; they are inspired by the Gideon text and the Jephthah tale).

וַתָּעָז יַד-מִדְיָן עַל [**אֲבִיעֶזֶר**] [**וַיֵּלְכוּ זִקְנֵי אֲבִיעֶזֶר אֶל מָקוֹם**] הָאֵלָה אֲשֶׁר בְּעָפְרָה אֲשֶׁר לְיוֹאָשׁ אֲבִי הָעֶזְרִי וְגִדְעוֹן בְּנוֹ חֹבֵט חִטִּים בַּגַּת לְהָנִיס מִפְּנֵי מִדְיָן. [**וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְגִדְעוֹן לְכָה וְהָיִיתָה לָּנוּ לְקָצִין וְנִלָּחֲמָה בְּמִדְיָן**] וַיִּתְקַע [...גִדְעוֹן] בַּשּׁוֹפָר וַיִּזָּעֵק אֲבִיעֶזֶר אַחֲרָיו. וּמַלְאָכִים שָׁלַח בְּכָל-מְנַשֶּׁה וַיִּזָּעֵק גַּם-הוּא אַחֲרָיו. וַיַּשְׁכֵּם גִּדְעוֹן וְכָל-הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ וַיַּחֲנוּ עַל-עֵין חֲרֹד וּמַחֲנֵה מִדְיָן הָיָה-לוֹ מִצָּפוֹן מִגִּבְעַת הַמּוֹרֶה בָּעֵמֶק. וַיּוֹרֶד אֶת-הָעָם אֶל-הַמָּיִם. וַיְהִי מִסְפַּר הַמְלַקְקִים בְּיָדָם אֶל-פִּיהֶם שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת אִישׁ וְכֹל יֶתֶר הָעָם כָּרְעוּ עַל-בִּרְכֵיהֶם לִשְׁתּוֹת מָיִם. וּבִשְׁלֹשׁ-מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ הֶחֱזִיק וּמַחֲנֵה מִדְיָן הָיָה לוֹ מִתַּחַת בָּעֵמֶק. וַיֵּרֶד הוּא וּפֻרָה נַעֲרוֹ אֶל-קְצֵה הַחֲמֻשִׁים אֲשֶׁר בַּמַּחֲנֶה. וַיָּבֹא גִדְעוֹן וְהִנֵּה-אִישׁ מְסַפֵּר לְרֵעֵהוּ חֲלוֹם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה חֲלוֹם חָלַמְתִּי וְהִנֵּה צְלִיל לֶחֶם שְׂעֹרִים מִתְהַפֵּךְ בְּמַחֲנֵה מִדְיָן וַיָּבֹא עַד-הָאֹהֶל וַיַּכֵּהוּ וַיִּפֹּל וַיַּהַפְכֵהוּ לְמַעְלָה וְנָפַל הָאֹהֶל. וַיַּעַן רֵעֵהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵין זֹאת בִּלְתִּי אִם-חֶרֶב גִּדְעוֹן בֶּן-יוֹאָשׁ. וַיְהִי כִשְׁמֹעַ גִּדְעוֹן אֶת-מִסְפַּר הַחֲלוֹם וְאֶת-שִׁבְרוֹ וַיִּשְׁתָּחוּ וַיָּשָׁב וַיַּחַץ אֶת-שְׁלֹשׁ-מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ שְׁלֹשָׁה רָאשִׁים וַיִּתֵּן שׁוֹפָרוֹת בְּיַד-כֻּלָּם וְכַדִּים רֵקִים. וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם מִמֶּנִּי תִרְאוּ וְכֵן תַּעֲשׂוּ וְהִנֵּה אָנֹכִי בָא בִּקְצֵה הַמַּחֲנֶה וְהָיָה כַאֲשֶׁר-אֶעֱשֶׂה כֵּן תַּעֲשׂוּן. וְתָקַעְתִּי בַּשּׁוֹפָר אָנֹכִי וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר אִתִּי וּתְקַעְתֶּם בַּשּׁוֹפָרוֹת גַּם-אַתֶּם סְבִיבוֹת כָּל-הַמַּחֲנֶה. וַיָּבֹא גִדְעוֹן וּמֵאָה-אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-אִתּוֹ בִּקְצֵה הַמַּחֲנֶה רֹאשׁ הָאַשְׁמֹרֶת הַתִּיכוֹנָה אַךְ הָקֵם הֵקִימוּ אֶת-הַשֹּׁמְרִים וַיִּתְקְעוּ בַּשּׁוֹפָרוֹת וְנָפוֹץ הַכַּדִּים אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדָם. וַיַּעַמְדוּ אִישׁ תַּחְתָּיו סָבִיב לַמַּחֲנֶה. וַיִּתְקְעוּ שְׁלֹשׁ-מֵאוֹת הַשּׁוֹפָרוֹת וַיָּנָס הַמַּחֲנֶה עַד-בֵּית הַשִּׁטָּה צְרֵרָתָה עַד שְׂפַת-אָבֵל מְחוֹלָה עַל-טַבָּת. וַיָּבֹא גִדְעוֹן הַיַּרְדֵּנָה עֹבֵר הוּא וּשְׁלֹשׁ-מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ עֲיֵפִים וְרֹדְפִים אַחֲרֵי זֶבַח וְצַלְמֻנָּע מַלְכֵי מִדְיָן. וְזֶבַח וְצַלְמֻנָּע בַּקַּרְקֹר וּמַחֲנֵיהֶם עִמָּם. וַיַּעַל גִּדְעוֹן דֶּרֶךְ הַשְּׁכוּנֵי בָאֳהָלִים מִקֶּדֶם לְנֹבַח וְיָגְבְּהָה וַיַּךְ אֶת-הַמַּחֲנֶה. וַיָּנֻסוּ זֶבַח וְצַלְמֻנָּע וַיִּלְכֹּד אֶת-שְׁנֵי מַלְכֵי מִדְיָן. וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-זֶבַח וְאֶל-צַלְמֻנָּע אֵיפֹה הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר הֲרַגְתֶּם, אַחַי בְּנֵי-אִמִּי הֵם לוּ הַחֲיִתֶם אוֹתָם לֹא הָרַגְתִּי אֶתְכֶם. וַיֹּאמֶר לְיֶתֶר בְּכוֹרוֹ קוּם הֲרֹג אוֹתָם וְלֹא-שָׁלַף הַנַּעַר חַרְבּוֹ כִּי יָרֵא כִּי עוֹדֶנּוּ נָעַר. וַיָּקָם גִּדְעוֹן וַיַּהֲרֹג אֶת-זֶבַח וְאֶת-צַלְמֻנָּע. וַיִּכְנַע מִדְיָן.

And the hand of Midian prevailed over **[Abiezer] [and the elders of Abiezer went to]** the oak at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press (or: at Gath), to hide it from the Midianites. **[And they said to Gideon, come and be our leader, that we may fight with the Midianites.]** And **[Gideon]** sounded the trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; and they too were called out to follow him. Then Gideon and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the spring of Harod; and the camp of Midian was north of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. So he brought the people down to the water. And the number of those that lapped, putting their hands to their mouths, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people knelt down to drink water. He retained the three hundred men, and the camp of Midian was below him in the valley. Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outposts of the armed men that were in the camp. When Gideon came, behold, a man was telling a dream to his comrade; and he said, »Behold, I dreamed a dream; and lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian, and came to the tent, and struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down, so that the tent lay flat.« And his comrade answered, »This is no other than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash«. When Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he returned **[and]** divided the three hundred men into

three companies, and put trumpets into the hands of all of them and empty jars. And he said to them, »Look at me, and do likewise; when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then blow the trumpets also on every side of all the camp.« So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just set the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the jars that were in their hands. There stood every man in his place round about the camp. When they blew the three hundred trumpets, the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath. And Gideon came to the Jordan and passed over, he and the three hundred men who were with him, faint yet pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian. Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with their army. And Gideon went up by the caravan route east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and attacked the camp. And Zebah and Zalmunna fled; and took the two kings of Midian. Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, »Where are the men whom you slew? They were my brothers, the sons of my mother, if you had saved them alive, I would not slay you.« And he said to Jether his first-born, »Rise, and slay them.« But the youth did not draw his sword; for he was afraid, because he was still a youth. And Gideon arose and slew Zebah and Zalmunna. So Midian was subdued.

2.2 The Geographical Setting

Midian (and Midianites) of the biblical sources[44] is a broad terms, associated with the steppe areas that stretch from the Hijaz in the south (e.g., Gen 25:1–4), via Moab (Gen 36:35; Num 22:4, 7; Josh 13:21–22), to the Gilead (Gen 37:25–28, notably connected with Dothan in northern Samaria – v. 17) and further to the north.[45]

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44 A tribe/group called Midian is unattested in ancient Near Eastern sources (Sasson, »Judges«: 327 f.), to differ from Roman to Medieval Arab sources, which refer to a place named Madian/Madiain/Madiana in Arabia.

45 See: Ernst A. Knauf, *Midian. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Palästinas und Nordarabiens im 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988), 35; Becker, *Richterzeit*, 141. We see no reason to associate this group with raids of camel herders after the Babylonian destruction; or with groups that were settled in Samaria by Sargon II after 716 BCE – Guillaume, *Waiting*, 42, and cf. Knauf, *Midian*, 85 f. On the geography of Midian and the Midianites see Jacob Liver, »Midian, Midianite,« *Encyclopedia Biblica* 4 (1962): 686–691 (in Hebrew); Knauf, »Midianites«; *Midian*. On the early history of the Midianites' traditions, see Knauf, »Midianites«; Kenton L. Sparks, »Israel and the Nomads of Ancient Palestine,« in *Community Identity in Judean Historiography, Biblical and Comparative Perspectives,* ed. Gary N. Knoppers and Kenneth A. Ristau (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009): 12–17.

Hence, confrontation with marauding Midianites in the hill country around Shechem and pursuit of the attackers down to the Jordan Valley and possibly into the Gilead (below) is reasonable.

The Abiezer clan appears in 6:11aβ and v. 34b. The location of Abiezer in the territory of Manasseh is documented in the Samaria Ostraca, which refer to two villages in its territory: Elmattan (Ostracon 28), identified in the village of Immatin (G.R. 165 177);[46] and Tawil (Ostraca 13; see also 21), probably the mound of Rijal el-Arbaʿin (G.R. 168 178) with the name preserved in the village of Tell 1.5 km to the east of the ancient site.[47] Ostraca 13 and 21 refer to an official named Shamaryau, who is also mentioned in Ostracon 1 with a place named Beerayim (possibly Beera [בְּאֵרָה] of Judg 9:21, geographically associated with the area of Mount Gerizim). This name is possibly preserved in the village of Burin on the southern slopes of Mount Gerizim, so the site should be located in its vicinity.[48] The same official is also mentioned in Ostracon 14 with a place called Gath-pi-ran. Assuming that this is the name of a village, it can be identified in Jit, near Immatin, ca. 2.5 km to the north of the Farʿate – the most logical location of Ophrah (below).

With this place in mind, we may suggest an alternative interpretation for חֹבֵט חִטִּים בַּגַּת (v. 6:11bα), not as the usual »beating out wheat in the wine press«, which has no logic in the daily, traditional agricultural work, but as a corruption of »beating out wheat *at* Gath«, that is, in a place called Gath – Gath-piran of Samaria Ostracon 14 = the village of Jit.[49] The meaning then, would be that Gideon was beating out wheat at a place called Gath near his hometown of Ophrah (v. 11), to hide it from the Midianites. We agree with Naʼaman,[50] who locates

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46 Zecharia Kallai, »The Land of Benjamin and Mt. Ephraim,« in *Judaea, Samaria and the Golan: Archaeological Survey 1967–1968*, ed. Moshe Kochavi (Jerusalem: Carta, 1972): 153–196, 167 (in Hebrew).

47 Kallai, »Land«: 166.

48 Aryeh Bornstein, »The Economy of the Mannassite Territory in Light of the Samaria Ostraca,« in *Judea and Samaria Research Studies, Proceedings of the 1ˢᵗ Annual Meeting – 1991*, ed. Zeev H. Erlich and Yitshak Eshel (Jerusalem: Reuven Mas, 1992): 61–121 (Hebrew with english summary in pp. xi–xiv).

49 For what seems to be a water-system at Jit, similar to that of Gibeon, see Avraham Shevut, »The Large Pool at Kefr Jitt,« in *Shomron Studies*, ed. Shimon Dar and Zeev Safrai (Tel Aviv: Kibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1986): 219–288 (in Hebrew). On the identification of Gath-piran of the Samaria ostraca at Jit see Dvir Raviv and Nahshon Zenaton, »The Identification of Ophrah of the Abiezrites,« in *Studies on Mount Ephraim and Benjamin*, vol. II, ed. Aharon Tabgar, Zohar Amar and Miriam Bilig (Ariel-Talmon: the Old City Publications, 2012): 27.

50 Nadav Naʼaman, »Pirathon and Ophrah,« *BN* 50 (1989): 11–16.

Ophrah in the village of Farʿate,[51] 1 km southeast of Immatin and 2.5 km south of Jit.[52]

The discussion above puts the territory of Abiezer west and southwest of Shechem.[53] This is where the conflict described in Judges 6–8 commenced. Verse 6:35a refers to messengers sent »throughout all Manasseh«. Manasseh here can be part of the North Israelite author's conversion of the story from a local conflict to a larger Israelite confrontation (above). But it can also be part of the original story – note that the conflict continues in the territory of Manasseh to the east of Abiezer (below).[54] The distinction between Manasseh (v. 35a) and Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali (v. 35b) may support this option.

The story of the battle starts with the location of the two camps: Gideon »and all the people that were with him« were »beside the spring of Harod« and the Midianites were »on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley« (v. 7:1). Readers who considered the text of the Gideon narrative as one block identified these places in accordance with the mention of the Jezreel Valley in v. 6:33. Yet, the latter is part of the post-Deuteronomistic layer, by an author who no longer understood the geography of the old story and interpreted בעמק = (»in the valley«, v. 7:1) as referring to the Jezreel Valley (v. 6:33, maybe after 5:15 – כֵּן בָּרָק בָּעֵמֶק שֻׁלַּח בְּרַגְלָיו). Accordingly this same post-Deuteronomistic author/redactor also added Tabor as the place where the Midianites killed Gideon's brothers (probably after 4:6, 12, 14).

Thus, there is no reason to identify the Spring of Harod in Ein Jalud.[55] »Harod«, a place, is mentioned only two other times in the Old Testament, as the

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51 The only obstacle for this identification is the possibility to place here the hometown of Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite (Jud 12:13–15). Yet, Abdon's Pirathon may be identified in the village of Farkha further to the south (Naʾaman, Pirathon).

52 For an early survey see Kallai, *Land*, 167. For the debated location of Ophrah see also Hanan Eshel, »The Possible Location of Ophrah, Town of Gideon,« *Cathedra* 22 (1982): 3–8 (in Hebrew); Zeev H. Erlich, »Further Evidence for the Possible Location of Ophrah, Town of Gideon, at Khirbet ʿAufar,« *Cathedra* 28 (1983): 151–154 (in Hebrew), both placing it slightly to the east, at Khirbet ʿAufar, G.R. 171, 178; Ernst A. Knauf, »Eglon and Ophra: Two Toponymic Notes on the Book of Judges,« *JSOT* 51 (1991): 25–44, puts it in Jinsafut, southwest of Farʿata; Raviv and Zenaton, Ophrah identify it in Khirbet Sur near Burin. For a summary of other views and for further literature, see: Gass, *Ortsnamen*, 270–278.

53 André Lemaire, *Inscriptions hebraiques I: Les ostraca* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1977), 56–65.

54 This depends on the question of the clan affiliation of Arumah (=Khirbet el-ʿUrmeh south east of Shechem) – the seat of Abimelech in chapter 9. Nadav Naʾaman, »A Hidden Anti-Samaritan Polemic in the Story of Abimelech and Shechem (Judges 9),« *Biblische Zeitschrift* 55/1 (2011): 1–20, 13, locates it on the eastern fringe of the Abiezer territory; this question is beyond of the scope of this discussion.

55 See in Gass, *Ortsnamen*, 279–281, the detailed bibliography and further suggestions for the identification of this place.

hometown of two of David's heroes – »Shammah the Harodite, Elika the Har-odite« (2Sam 23:25), but it is clear that there is no connection between this town and the spring in the Gideon story.[56] It is possible that the biblical narrator used this toponym as a literary allusion to the fear and anxiety of the warriors.[57] Judg-ing from the direction of the events – from the territory of Abiezer to the Jordan Valley (below), placing the Spring of Harod in the area of Shechem seems rea-sonable. This was also the way that Josephus understood the story, in describing these events near the Jordan River (Ant. V 6, 3 [216–217]).

The Hill of Moreh גִּבְעַת הַמּוֹרֶה does not appear in anywhere else in the Old Testament. Similar to the case of the Spring of Harod, influenced by late inser-tions into the story, the Hill of Moreh too has been identified in the Jezreel Val-ley – in Jebel ed-Dahi, as indicated on modern Israeli maps.[58] The resemblance to the place name, »the Oak of Moreh« אֵלוֹן מוֹרֶה (Gen 12:6; Deut 11:30) near Shechem hints at the location of this place close to the territory of Abiezer. Identifying this place near Shechem, the »valley« mentioned in the story might be Sahl ʿAskar.[59]

The Midianite fled »as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the edge of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath« (v. 22b).[60] Beth-shittah and Tabbath appear here only, and so does Zererah, unless it is understood as a corruption of Zarethan (Josh 3:16; 1Kgs 4:12, 7:46). Abel-Meholah is mentioned in the Bible two other times (1Kgs 4:12, 19:16). The area described here is to be located somewhere in the strip of the Jordan Valley between the southern tip of the Beth-shean Valley and Succoth at the outlet of the Jabbok.[61] The name Tabbath may have been preserved in Ras Abu Tabat on the lower Wadi Kufrinje.[62] Zarethan (if indeed to be equated

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56 Gass, *Ortsnamen*, 279, and n. 2056, identified the hometown of these two of David heroes in Ḥirbet Ḥarēḏān, about 5 km southwest of Jerusalem. It is clear, however, that this is not the place described in Gideon's story. Note that in the parallel list in 1Chr 11:27, Elika is missing and Sham-mah (here called Shammoth) is called »the Harorite«.

57 Gass, *Ortsnamen*, 281.

58 Rösel, »Studien«: 22f.; Gass, *Ortsnamen*, 279–281, with further literature. Note that Ernst Sellin, *Wie wurde Sichem eine Israelitische Stadt?* (Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhand-lung, 1922), 43 suggested to identify Tabor of the Gideon story with Mount Gerizim, based on the southern location of the Gideon-Abimelech stories (and cf. Gass, *Ortsnamen*, 252, n. 1854).

59 Some scholars suggested differentiating between the Hill of Moreh and the Oak of Moreh, and identifying the former in the Jezreel Valley and the latter near Shechem (Gass, *Ortsnamen*, 281–283 with further literature); we see no reason for this separation, which is based on the later additions to the Gideon story.

60 Summary of identifications in Gass, *Ortsnamen*, 283–289.

61 On the many different suggestion for the identification Abel-meholah see Gass, *Ortsnamen*, 287–293, with further literature.

62 Summary in Henry O. Thompson, »Tabbath,« *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 6 (1992): 291f.; Gass, *Ortsnamen*, 293–295, with other suggestions and further literature.

with Zererah) should perhaps be identified at Tell es-Saʿidiyeh, at the outlet of Wadi Kufrinje.[63] The exact location of Abel-meholah within this area is disputed.[64]

Gideon's pursuit after the Midianite kings east of the Jordan River is in direct continuation of the area referred to in v. 7:22b: Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor (v. 10aα), so Gideon »went up by the way of those who lived in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah« (v. 11a) and captured them (v. 12bα). Here too the reference to places which are not of primary importance is typical of the heroic stories in Judges. Different sites in the eastern steppe and deserts have been suggested for Karkor.[65] Perhaps the best solution is to see Karkor as a corruption of Aroer, overlooking Rabbah (עֲרוֹעֵר אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי רַבָּה, Josh 13:25), which, according to Judges 11:33, needs to be located on the western border of the Ammonites. Of the other four places, only one can be identified – Jogbehah (also Num 32:3), generally placed at Rujm el-Gubehah (G.R. 231 159, or nearby Tell Safut),[66] that is, not far from Aroer (=Karkor?).

To sum up the geography, the confrontation starts in the territory of the Abiezer clan west of Shechem. The two camps were pitched somewhere near Shechem and the battle was fought there. The Midianites were chased to the Jordan Valley north of Succoth, and their leaders were further pursued in a south-easterly direction in Transjordan, as far as the area of Rabbah.

2.3 The Historical Setting behind the Old Tale

Knauf[67] made a useful distinction regarding the Book of Judges, between the date of composition of a given story and the date of the event/s echoed in it. Assuming that the Gideon tale is not a sheer invention of the North Israelite author and that the story was composed in the first half of the 8th century BCE, when can we place the »events«, that is, the historical stage-setting behind it?

Clearly, the story must come from a period before the strong rule of the Omrides: in fact, the ambiance – characterized by lawlessness and insecurity – is pre-monarchic, that is, before the rise of the North Kingdom. Note that even

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63 Summary in Henry O. Thompson, »Zarethan,« *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 6 (1992): 1041–1043; Gass, *Ortsnamen*, 286.

64 Summary in Diana V. Edelman, »Abel-meholah,« *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 1 (1992): 11; Gass, *Ortsnamen*, 287–293, with further literature.

65 Henry O. Thompson, »Karkor,« *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 6 (1992): 6.

66 Zecharia Kallai, *Historical Geography of the Bible: The Tribal Territories of Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 296 f.

67 Knauf, »Deuteronomistic«.

though the confrontation reaches Transjordan and the area of Rabbah, the Kingdom of Ammon is not referred to. Indeed the background of other North Israelite tales in Judges may also depict the situation before or, possibly, in the early days of the Northern Kingdom. We refer, for instance, to the traditions in Judges 4–5, which may portray the stormy events of destruction of late Iron I Canaanite city-states in and around the Jezreel Valley during the 10th century BCE. It seems to us, then, that the old Gideon tale preserves memories of this period, ca. two centuries before it was put in writing. One can say no more.

Zusammenfassung: In diesem Artikel beschäftigen wir uns mit der Gideongeschichte des Richterbuches. Zuerst schlagen wir eine Identifikation der unterschiedlichen Schichten im Text vor: die alte, nordisraelitische Heldenerzählung; die Arbeit des nordisraelitischen Autors (des Retterbuches), der die Geschichte in der 1. Hälfte des 8.Jh. verschriftete.; und die deuteronomistische sowie nachdeuteronomistische Schicht. Dann rekonstruieren wir die alte Geschichte und beschäftigen uns mit ihrem geographischen und historischen Setting. Geographisch beschreibt die alte Erzählung Ereignisse im Gebiet der Sippe von Abiezer, west-südwestlich von Sichem. Die eigentliche Konfrontation findet nahe bei Sichem statt und die Midianiter werden im Jordantal, irgendwo nördlich von Sukkoth gejagt (die Verbindung der Geschichte mit dem Jezreel-Tal ist Ergebnis eines Missverständnisses durch einen nachdeuteronomistischen Autor). Die Anführer der Feinde werden dann im Gebiet von Gilead verfolgt, in der Gegend von Rabbah. Historisch kann die Geschichte Erinnerungen an Ereignisse aufbewahren, die vor dem Aufstieg des Nordreiches, evtl. im 10.Jh. v. Chr. geschahen.

Abstract: In this paper we deal with the Gideon story in the Book of Judges. We first propose identification of the different layers in the text: the old, heroic North Israelite tale; the work of the North Israelite author (of the »Book of Saviors«) who put the story in writing in the first half of the 8th century; and Deuteronomistic and post-Deuteronmistic layers. We then reconstruct the old tale and deal with its geographical and historical stage-settings. Geographically, the old tale describes events which commence in the territory of the clan of Abiezer, west-southwest of Shechem. The actual confrontation takes place near Shechem and the Midianites are chased to the Jordan Valley somewhere north of Succoth (the association of the story with the Jezreel Valley is a result of a misunderstanding by a post-Deuteronomistic author). The leaders of the enemy are then pursued in the Gilead, to the area of Rabbah. Historically, the story may preserve memories of incidents that took place before the rise of the Northern Kingdom, perhaps in the 10th century BCE.

Résumé: Cet article traite de l'histoire de Gédéon dans le livre des Juges. Il commence par l'identification des différentes couches littéraires du texte : l'ancien récit héroïque en provenance du royaume du Nord d'Israël, le travail d'un auteur nord-israélite (du »livre des sauveurs«) qui mit l'histoire par écrit durant la première moitié du huitième siècle ; des couches deutéronomistes et post-deutéronomistes. Ensuite l'ancien récit est reconstruit et situé dans son cadre historique et géographique. D'un point de vue géographique, l'ancien récit décrit des événements qui débutent dans le territoire du clan d'Abiezer, à l'ouest, sud-ouest de Sichem. Le combat a lieu près de Sichem et les Madianites sont chassés vers la vallée du Jourdain, quelque part au nord de Succoth (l'association du récit avec la vallée du Jourdain est le résultat d'une mécompréhension d'un auteur post-deutéronomiste). Les chefs ennemis sont ensuite poursuivis en Galilée, jusqu'à la région de Rabbah. D'un point de vue historique, le récit pourrait préserver la mémoire d'événements ayant eu lieu avant l'apparition du royaume du Nord, peut-être au 10e siècle av. n. ère.