

CHAPTER X

HAB/PIRU AND HEBREWS

by M. Greenberg

A. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

MODERN STUDENTS of Israelite history have shown an interest in the hapiru¹ ever since the first letters from Tell el-Amarna were published in 1888-9. Among these letters, which were eagerly scanned for new light on biblical Canaan, were a half-dozen from the governor of Jerusalem imploring the aid of the Egyptian court against the attacks of the hapiru. The assonance of hab/piru and *'ivri* and the apparent concurrence in time, place, and activity between the hapiru and the Hebrew invaders of Palestine seemed sufficient in the eyes of many scholars to justify identifying the two. Thus, it was claimed, there was available at long last "monumental notice of Hebrew victories."² When later it was established that the ideogram SA. GAZ, occurring frequently in the Amarna letters to denote hapiru-like groups throughout Syria and Palestine, was, in fact, interchangeable with hapiru, the identification appeared to be confirmed.³ In spite of many demurrers that have since been put in against it, it has had advocates to the present time. The study of ancient Israel must, accordingly, give consideration to the hapiru and to the possibility of their connection with Hebrew origins.

While our present materials do not tell us all we should like to know about the hapiru they are sufficient to form a general hypothesis which may reasonably be expected to survive the test of new evidence. The material comes from, and is restricted to, cuneiform and Egyptian sources of the 2nd millennium B.C.E.⁴ We shall begin by surveying this evidence and drawing what conclusions it allows concerning the nature of the hapiru. We shall then be in a position to compare these conclusions with the biblical data on the Hebrews.

B. THE HAB/PIRU IN THE 2ND MILLENNIUM B.C.E.

1. Occurrences of SA. GAZ as a verbal or nominal element are available from the Ur III period (2050-1930). The texts in question are primarily

court records. In each case SA.GAZ appears in a context suggesting illegality; a reference to SA.GAZ activity in a passage of the Lipit-Ishtar code (1860) seems also to involve unauthorized action.

2. The earliest passage in which hapiru occurs, phonetically spelled, is in a letter from the Old Assyrian merchant colony of Alishar in Asia Minor (first half of the 18th century). Reference is made to the "ḥabiru of the palace of Shalahshuwe" — an unidentified neighbor of Alishar — who are to be ransomed from custody. At the beginning of the 2nd millennium, then, the hapiru appear in the dependent status in which we find them throughout their history.

3. From contemporary Larsa, under the reign of Warad-Sin, seven texts record the receipt by the state treasurers of small cattle "as rations for the SA.GAZ." A text of the first year of Rim-Sin records the allocation of clothing to "ḥapiru sergeants" from a temple treasury. Evidently these SA.GAZ/hapiru were organized military contingents of the Larsa kings.

4. Texts of the Old Babylonian period show the hapiru in a dual role. As we know from the Mari letters, this was a time of considerable turbulence in Mesopotamia, brought about by intense interdynastic rivalries, individual adventurers, and nomadic incursions. In these letters the hapiru appear as military auxiliaries of the rival king and chiefs: 2,000 are with the Yapah-Adad; Izinabu, a Yamutbalite, has 30 Yamutbalite hapiru under his charge; another contingent are in the service of Ashkur-Adad. At the same time we learn from a letter to Hammurabi that, like his predecessor Rim-Sin, he, too, maintained a SA.GAZ contingent in Larsa, which had its own overseer. A list of the names of eight members of one such military group from the end of this period shows most of the names to be Akkadian, a few West Semitic. An Elamite list of sheep allocated to cantonments of "Amorite (i.e. West Semitic) soldiers" names one such location *Ha-BI-riki*, possibly after the "Amorite" hapiru who were there quartered.⁵

But alongside these dependent groups of military auxiliaries appear independent bands of hapiru freebooters. Their activity is usually directed against the towns: they "seize," "raid" (*išhitū*), or "constantly raid" (*ištanaḥhitū*) them. One text has them participating in a raid by the men of one town against a neighboring town, a good instance of the anarchic conditions in which the independent hapiru bands thrived.

Thus our sources depict the SA.GAZ/hapiru of the Old Babylonian period as fighting men, either in the service of kings or as independent raiders. Their origins are diverse: some are "Amorite," some "Yamutbal-

Greenberg

n interest
l-Amarna
y scanned
governor
re attacks
rent con-
e Hebrew
cholars to
ailable at
ter it was
e Amarna
tine, was,
red to be
in against
ent Israel
possibility

to know
esis which
ence. The
an sources
evidence
re of the
sions with

available
primarily

ite"; some are foreigners ("Amorites" in Elam), some are "of the land" or have names which connect them with the area in which they are found. Yet, although they may be settled in cantonments they do not seem to have roots in any given locality.

5. Among the Alalakh texts are one of the 18th century and a dozen of the 15th in which the SA. GAZ/hapiru are mentioned. The date formula of an 18th century sale document reads: "The year Irkabtum the king, Shemuba, and the hapiru soldiers made peace." While nothing is known concerning this event it may reflect hostility between the Alalakhian king and an independent group of hapiru which was finally ended by a treaty. It was an important event, as shown by its mention in a date formula.

The 15th century texts are, for the most part, military registers of SA. GAZ soldiers belonging to various localities under the control of Alalakh. Following the heading "SA. GAZ soldiers, bearing arms, of the town X" are the name, place of origin, and occasionally the calling, of the individuals of the contingent. Two summary tablets give the total of SA. GAZ as 1,436. They seem to have had their own holdings, called *bītlū* SA. GAZ, where they were quartered.

Most of the names are non-Semitic, some are recognizable as Hurrian; scarcely a half-dozen out of the more than a hundred names are Semitic. This distribution accords with the ethnic make-up of the area, and is in agreement with the fact that the towns mentioned as the SA. GAZ's places of origin are presumably scattered in the vicinity of Alalakh. Occasionally a more distant location is mentioned, such as Emar or Canaan. Here again, then, the evidence indicates diversity in ethnic composition and in places of origin, a mixture of local and foreign elements.

It is significant that in nearly every case the SA. GAZ's place of origin is other than the town in which he is found.⁶ One feature common to members of the SA. GAZ group was thus the status of strangers. An episode in the life of Idrimi, a king of Alalakh, provides an excellent illustration of why men left home to join the SA. GAZ. Fleeing from a rebellion, the king lodged a night among the Shutu nomads; continuing southward he reached the coastal town of Ammiya, where he was recognized by former subjects of his father. It was with the SA. GAZ that he finally found refuge for seven years, during which time he prepared to regain control of his throne. Such hospitality to fugitives on the part of the SA. GAZ suggests that they were composed, at least in part, of similar elements. The alien and refugee character of the SA. GAZ was doubtless a determining factor in their generally dependent status. It is of importance to emphasize the Alalakh evidence for the urban origins of the SA. GAZ. They do not come from

the desert but from the towns; they are not nomadic encroachers upon the settled, but outcasts from civilized society.⁷

6. Material from the 15th century Hurrian principality of Nuzi throws light on a different aspect of the social-legal status of the hapiru. For here we have, in addition to state documents, material from the private archives of prominent citizens who contracted for the service of individual hapiru.

The public documents are similar to the Larsa texts: they relate to the allocation of food and clothing to individuals and groups of hapiru and, in some cases, for the horses of hapiru.⁸

The significant contribution to our information on the hapiru is made by the private documents. These record the voluntary agreement of men and women called hapiru to enter as servants into the households of prominent Nuzians. The terms of the agreement usually bind the hapiru to serve his master as long as the latter lives; occasionally he is permitted to break the agreement upon furnishing a replacement. In return the hapiru receives food and clothing; the relationship may be compared to that of client and patron in Roman law.

Most of the hapiru at Nuzi appear to be foreigners. This is clear, in the first place, from the unusually high percentage of Akkadian names they bear amidst the predominantly Hurrian population. Several are explicitly said to come from Ashur, from Akkad, and from Zarimena. Their client status is evidently an outcome of their foreignness and lack of means: indigent migrants, having come to Nuzi individually and in families, they were constrained to exchange their person for sustenance and protection.

Roughly a third of the hapiru names are non-Semitic, primarily Hurrian. Their presence is sufficient to show that in Nuzi, as elsewhere, the hapiru were ethnically heterogeneous. They had in common neither ethnic nor geographic origins; it was a common social status which identified them and set them apart from the rest of society.

7. The largest single group of texts relating to the SA.GAZ/hapiru is found among the Tell el-Amarna letters. These letters date from the reigns of Amen-hotep III and Amen-hotep IV (Akh-en-Aton), and reflect vividly the disturbances which wracked the Syrian and Palestinian provinces of Egypt during this period. In the ensuing anarchy the SA.GAZ/hapiru, available to all as mercenary troops, played a decisive role.

The prime mover of sedition in the north was 'Abd-Ashirti, prince of Amurru, who organized and directed the war against the royal governors. We can follow the success of 'Abd-Ashirti and his sons in the correspondence of Rib-Addi, the loyalist governor of Byblos. Rib-Addi complains constantly of the attacks of 'Abd-Ashirti, his allies, and the SA.GAZ.

The SA.GAZ are not an independent group, but are under the command of 'Abd-Ashirti: he assembles them and stations them where he wishes; they are "his auxiliaries." However, it is impossible to identify the SA.GAZ as a separate element among the anti-Egyptian forces from the letters of Rib-Addi, for it is his custom indiscriminately to lump all his enemies under this rubric.⁹

That the SA.GAZ were a group apart from the rebelling natives is evident from a passage in a letter of a royal deputy in Syria. Among the forces under his command he counts a contingent of SA.GAZ alongside one of the nomadic Shutu. It is thus clear that the SA.GAZ were a separate element; they could ally themselves either with the natives or with the Egyptians. As a rule they were to be found on the side of the natives because these, rather than the Egyptians, were in dire need of auxiliaries. Moreover, from the fact that the term SA.GAZ could cover all those in revolt, it is evident that the group comprised a considerable number of persons who had defected from the Egyptian cause.

The SA.GAZ of the Syrian letters are characteristically affiliated with towns; from them they receive food, equipment, and quarters in return for their military services. A typical relationship is well illustrated in the following letter concerning Amanḥatbi, Prince of Tushulti, and his private army of the SA.GAZ. It is interesting not only for its picture of the part the SA.GAZ played in the petty warfare of the towns, but also for the light it throws on the way in which accretions were made to their ranks. The writer is Mayarzana of Hazi, an injured and outraged neighbor of Amanḥatbi.

May the king, my lord, my god, my sun, take note of the deed that Amanḥatbi, Prince of Tushulti, has done against the cities of the king, my lord, when the SA.GAZ army made a war on me and seized the cities of the king, my lord . . .

The SA.GAZ seized Maḥzibti, a city of the king, my lord, and looted and set it afire. Then to Amanḥatbi the SA.GAZ came back.

And the SA.GAZ seized Gilûni, a city of the king, my lord, and looted and set it afire, so that scarcely a single house escaped destruction in Gilûni. Then to Amanḥatbi the SA.GAZ came back.

[The letter goes on to describe how two more cities were similarly dealt with.]

Now see: the SA.GAZ raided Hazi, a city of the king, my lord. But we did battle with the SA.GAZ, and we killed them . . .

And when we heard that the SA.GAZ were with Amanḥatbi, my brothers and my sons, your servants, [*mounted* (?)] their chariots to

come before Amanḥatbi. And my brothers said to Amanḥatbi, "Surrender the SA.GAZ, the enemies of the king, our lord! We would ask them what they spoke of with you, [*these (?)*] SA.GAZ, wherefore did they seize the cities of the king, my lord, and set them afire?"

And he agreed to surrender the SA.GAZ; but he took them *to free (?) [them (?)]*. Then he fled to the SA.GAZ! . . .¹⁰

The letters from Palestine depict a wholly analogous situation. Here the foe of Egyptian authority is Lab'ayu, a prince of the central hill country, but there are also other individual adventurers who exploit the weakness of the central government to pillage and harass their neighbors. Here too the correspondents to the court are in the custom of calling all their enemies SA.GAZ — 'Abdū-Heba of Jerusalem uses the term hapiru. But there is abundant evidence here as well that the SA.GAZ/hapiru proper were a distinct element whose ranks were, to be sure, constantly swelled by rebels against Egypt. The SA.GAZ are in the service of Lab'ayu: he gives them Shechem, and his sons hire them to fight against the prince of Megiddo. The townsmen of Lachish, after having slain the local representative of Egypt, are said to have become hapiru.¹¹

As before, we find the SA.GAZ/hapiru supported in the main by the towns: Gezer, Ashkelon and Lachish are — it would seem — accused of provisioning them; a deserter to them enters the town of Muḥḥazu to join the SA.GAZ there; all the cities of the king, in fact, are said to be falling away to them. Alongside mercenary bands, however, we hear — particularly in letters from southern Palestine — of what appear to be independent bands of raiders, ravaging the countryside on their own initiative. One text mentions the SA.GAZ alongside the Shutu nomads as plunderers. The cave-filled terrain of the south was apparently found as congenial a refuge by the freebooters of el-Amarna times, as it was by the guerrillas and outlaws of later ages.

In sum, then, the SA.GAZ/hapiru in Syria-Palestine emerge as one of several elements in the population that thrive on the disordered circumstances of the Amarna period. While occasionally they are found as independent raiders, their preferred role appears to have been as dependents of the local authorities. They serve as auxiliaries in the forces of both native and Egyptian governors. As at Alalakh and Nuzi they seem to be a mobile group, composed of persons raked together from various places. They welcome fugitive and renegade elements. There is no indication of a tribal consciousness uniting the SA.GAZ bands, nor does their activity, associated as they were with any and all who could hire them, reveal signs of an invasion for conquest of the land. They appear rather as outcasts,

banded together from diverse origins, often subsisting on the razzia, but preferably in alliance with towns. Excellent parallels in the society of pre-monarchic Israel are available.¹²

8. After the Alishar text (B, 2, above), the presence of SA. GAZ/hapiru in Asia Minor is attested by a few Hittite Old Kingdom texts (16th–15th centuries), in which they appear as sizable military contingents subject to the king. One text refers to certain obligations that the king pledged himself to fulfill toward them.¹³

The bulk of the Hittite references to the SA. GAZ/hapiru date from the period of the Empire (14th–13th centuries). The largest number occurs in the formula “gods of the Lulahu, gods of the hapiru” which appears in the lists of divine witnesses at the close of thirteen state treaties. This alone is sufficient to attest that the hapiru were a recognized class of Hittite society; that they were an entity apart, having gods other than those of the official pantheon; and that they were probably foreigners, like the Lulahu with whom they are paired. Further evidence of their status is offered by an exorcism text countering quarrels among the classes of Hittite society. Ranked between the free-born citizens and the slaves are the Lulahu and the hapiru.

Among the other references in Hittite texts are two which deserve mention: the one speaks of a hapiru settlement — that is, probably a cantonment, the other applies the epithet SA. GAZ to one Tette, a Syrian prince. Tette appears to be unique among the SA. GAZ in having attained such an exalted station.¹⁴

9. Extraordinary light is shed on the hapiru in general and on those of the Hittite empire in particular from the Ra's Shamra texts. The most significant text is a Hittite-Ugaritic state treaty — bearing the seals of Hattusilis III (1275–1250) and Pudu-hepas — concerning the extradition of fugitives. It reads:

Seal of Tabarna Hattusilis, the great king.

If a servant of a king of Ugarit, or a man of Ugarit, or the servant of a servant of the king of Ugarit should rise up and come into the territory of the SA. GAZ of the Sun [= the Hittite king], I, the great king, shall not receive him; I shall return him to the king of Ugarit.

If the people of Ugarit shall purchase someone of another land with their money, who from the land of Ugarit flees and enters among the SA. GAZ, I, the great king, shall not receive him; I shall return him to the king of Ugarit.¹⁵

This is the only one of the several Hittite treaties which deal with the extradition of fugitives that specifies the "territory of the SA. GAZ" (*eglitu* SA. GAZ) as the goal of flight. It offers official recognition, so to speak, of the SA. GAZ groups as fugitive havens, attests to the importance of the refugee element in their composition, and shows how men of all conditions were apt to join their ranks. Moreover, the proprietary phrase "SA. GAZ of the Sun" suggests that the Hittite SA. GAZ were directly dependent on the throne, that is, were state dependents. Finally, the fact that these SA. GAZ have a definable "territory" is additional evidence of their recognized status in Hittite society. They are uprooted aliens who live together as clients of the king.

Other Ugaritic texts add further details to the picture. Tax lists in Akkadian and Ugaritic mention a "(quarter of the city) Ḥalab of the hapiru," furnishing the equation Akkadian SAG. GAZ (*sic*) = Ugaritic 'pru.¹⁶ A clause in a royal grant of property exempts the grantee from having to quarter SA. GAZ or an *ubru* (a foreign dignitary¹⁷) in his house: both classes could be put up at the state's bidding.¹⁸ There are, finally, two references to the predatory nature of the group: one is a school vocabulary in which the series "robber", SA. GAZ, "criminal" is found; the other concerns an altercation between two cities in which a SA. GAZ attack is involved.¹⁹

This brings to an end the significant cuneiform material on the hapiru. There are a few omen texts — in which the SA. GAZ play a menacing role, occupation lists — in which they appear among hired and agricultural laborers, and lexical lists — which gloss SA. GAZ with *habbātu*.²⁰ But there is little additional information that can be gleaned from them.²¹

10. The Egyptian references to the 'pr. w remain to be considered. The 'pr. w are first evidenced in Egypt at the beginning of the 15th century, when they appear as workers in a winepress in the eastern Delta. They continue to appear in a consistently menial status — as quarry workers and stone haulers — up to the time of Ramses IV (1164–1157). That they are foreigners is at times indicated by a foreigner-determinative written with 'pr. w. How they came to Egypt is seen in a list of captives of Amen-hotep II's second Asiatic campaign (ca. 1430): "127 princes of Reṭenu [Syria-Palestine]; 179 brothers of princes; 3,600 'pr. w; 15,200 living Shasu [nomads]; 36,300 Kharu [settled population of Syria-Palestine]; 15,070 living Neges [north Syrians]." The 'pr. w were thus properly a Syro-Palestinian element; their small number and their position — immediately following the nobility and preceding the natives — recalls their similar status in the Hittite class listing. Can one see here an indication of their

direct dependence on the nobility? At any rate, the 'pr. w are captives in Egypt; hence their position there tells nothing concerning their original status.

Egyptian records mention two encounters with the 'pr. w in Palestine, in the 15th and 14th centuries: in both cases they appear as a disturbing element, in full accord with the picture derived from the Amarna letters.

The SA.GAZ/hapiru, then, are a recognized part of the society of the Near East throughout the 2nd millennium. They usually appear as dependents, serving states and towns in a military capacity, and individuals as household servants. Independent bands appear in 18th century Mesopotamia and 15th-14th century Syria-Palestine. In both instances local conditions are in disorder, so that the outlawry of the SA.GAZ/hapiru seems to be a correlative of local instability. It must be noted however, that, as the omen texts testify, this aspect of the group was prominent in the contemporary conception of them.

The individuals who make up this class are generally foreigners to the localities in which they are found. When their places of origin are specified they are, nearly without exception, towns; to become a hapiru, then, meant to break one's ties, to leave — at times to flee — one's native land, and to exchange a settled for an unsettled, migrant existence.

The composition of the class was diversified: members of military groups, such as are found in Alalakh, derived from many different localities; among them were men of different callings; and — what is particularly significant for us — their names betray a similar ethnic mixture. It was not in their origins that the hapiru were united, but in their foreignness, and their peculiar manner of subsistence. That the hapiru were ethnically or tribally structured seems to be excluded by our present evidence.

How and when the class first came into being cannot as yet be ascertained. Some indications point to the West Semitic infiltration of Mesopotamia at the start of the 2nd millennium as the occasion of its coming into being. Moreover, it would appear that both *hab/piru*, the cuneiform representation of an original 'ab/piru, and SA.GAZ, best taken as a pseudo-ideogram for *šaggāšu*,²² are West Semitic derivatives. The etymology of 'ab/piru is uncertain; the Egyptian and Ugaritic spelling favor *'p r as the base, without excluding absolutely *'b r.²³ For *šaggāšu* the meaning "disturber, restive one," from West Semitic *š g š, may be suggested.²⁴ However this may be, the hapiru absorbed vagrant elements of all stocks, so that in the earliest times the terms SA.GAZ and hapiru had already become international coin.

C. THE RELATION OF THE HAPIRU TO THE HEBREWS

We are now in a position to consider what relation, if any, the hapiru bear to the biblical Hebrews.

Philologically *'ab/piru* and *'ivri* though not transparently related are not irreconcilable, even if the former should derive from **'p r* — as present evidence suggests. For it is possible to muster a few instances in which Hebrew *b* appears as *p* in Egyptian and Ugaritic. In form, *'ab/pir* is a *qatil* stative, *'ivri* a gentilic of the base *'ever*; but the latter, in turn, may go back to *'avir*, so that it is theoretically possible to derive both from a common base.²⁵

The usage of *'ab/piru* and *'ivri*, however, is more difficult to harmonize, for while the former is a social classification, with no ethnic implications whatsoever, the latter is a gentilic, designating the Israelites and their ancestors as descendants of Eber — though this interpretation is implied rather than stated explicitly in the Bible.²⁶ Since the gentilic meaning of *'ivri* in biblical Hebrew has been questioned — usually by the advocates of combining it with hapiru²⁷ — a review of its occurrences will not be out of order.

Occurrences of *'ivri* cluster in two situations: the Israelite-Egyptian episodes in the Pentateuch (the Joseph story [Gen. 39:14 – 43:32] and the Exodus story [Ex. 1:15 – 9:1]) and the Israelite-Philistine episodes in I Sam. The normative sense of the term in biblical Hebrew must be determined from these contexts. From the contrast of *'ivri-mizri* in Gen. 43:32; Ex. 1:19; 2:11, it follows that, like *mizri* “Egyptian,” *'ivri* is an ethnicon denoting Jacobites/Israelites. The same is indicated by the alternation of “YHWH God of the *'ivrim*” (Ex. 5:3) and “YHWH God of Israel” (Ex. 5:1). One notes that *'ivri* is employed a) by foreigners (Gen. 39:14, 17; 41:12; Ex. 1:16; 2:6; and all save one of the I Sam. passages: 4:6, 9; 13:3,²⁸ 19; 14:11; 29:3); b) by Israelites when speaking of themselves to foreigners (Gen. 40:15²⁹; Ex. 1:19; 2:7); c) or by the narrator, when he wants a gentilic to set off Israelites in a foreign environment from their surroundings (Gen. 43:32; Ex. 1:15; 2:11, 13; I Sam. 14:21³⁰). In sum: *'ivri* serves the only available ethnicon for the proto-Israelites in the patriarchal narratives, and thereafter, when used as an ethnicon — bereft of the honorific associations of “Israel” — to set off Israelites from foreigners.

Three occurrences remain. Jonah 1:9 — the prophet’s “I am an *'ivri*,” responding to the sailors’ query, “And of what people art thou?” — falls clearly in b. Gen. 14:13, “Abram the *'ivri*,” belongs to c, its use due

evidently to the interest of this author in identifying everyone (and every place) by some qualification (in this verse "Abram the Hebrew" is contrasted with "Mamre the Amorite").

How is it with the law of the "Hebrew slave" ('*eved ivri*)? While the earliest occurrence (Ex. 21:2) is not self-explanatory, the deuteronomic restatement of the law (Deut. 15:12) with the addition of *ahika* "thy brother" all but precludes any interpretation of '*ivri* other than "Israelite." That this is how Jeremiah understood the law is proved by his citation of it (Jer. 34:9) with the gloss *y'hudi ahihu* "his Judean brother." Whether the '*ivri* of the Exodus law ever meant anything else has indeed been argued,³¹ but usually on the prior assumption that '*ivri* = '*ab/piru*.

No scriptural passage gives explicit ground for extending the scope of '*ivri* beyond Israelites.³² On the plausible assumption that it is intended to mean, literally, "Eberide," '*ivri* ought logically to apply to many Arab and Aramean peoples as well (Gen. 10:21-25; 11:14-26; I Chron. 1:17-27).³³ But the fact is that none but the line of Abraham-Isaac-Jacob is ever called '*ivrim*. That biblical writers knew a sense of '*ivri* that could include non-Semites, or that, like '*ab/piru*, denoted a social class, embracing elements of diverse ethnic origins, goes well beyond the evidence.

→ From the fact that no extra-biblical source ever refers to the people of Israel or Judah as '*ivrim*, it may be inferred that the term is peculiar to biblical Hebrew. Presumably it was an archaic term, utilized in the first place in traditions of the earliest ancestors of Israel, when the gentilics "Israelite" or "Judahite" were not yet available, and later as an outsider's term, in contexts where a bare gentilic was wanted, without any of the proud associations of "Israelite."

The traditional etymologies of the term are not quite satisfying.³⁴ The derivation from Eber leaves unexplained the peculiar restriction to Israelites: the alternative, from '*ever (ha-nahar)* "beyond (the River [Euphrates])" — (cf. Josh. 24:2) — seems artificial. It is this difficulty of accounting for the origin of '*ivri* with Hebrew resources alone that makes recourse to a combination with '*ab/piru* perennially attractive, though a simple identification of the two would do violence to the distinctive sense of each term. "Abram the Hebrew" offers a point of departure for such a combination, as will be suggested in the sequel.

The attractiveness of the hapiru-Hebrew combination has always been its historical dividend. If the hapiru disturbances of Amarna Palestine could be equated with the Hebrew invasion, a fixed chronological point in early Israelite history would become available, as well as an extra-biblical control to check the biblical record of this event. To be sure, the scope of

Israelite activity is too limited to permit its outright combination with the far-flung SA.GAZ/hapiru. At the most, the Israelite tribes could have been only one element of this widespread group. One must further assume a 15th century stage of Israelite invasion, war, and settlement, prior to the archeologically established 13th century wave of war and settlement. With this assumed earlier wave it has been proposed to identify the activity of (at least part of) the Amarna hapiru.³⁵

Our present purpose does not require us to examine the chronology and the stages of the Israelite settlement. For however long and gradual one assumes the process to have been, its distinctive features remain unaltered: it was an ethnic movement, a purposeful invasion of land-hungry tribes intent upon seizing territory for settlement. The tribes first occupied the highlands, where the density of the native population was least; their weakness and ignorance of chariot warfare made the conquest of the plains impossible. Their official policy toward the natives was uncompromisingly hostile. While some instances of assimilation may have occurred, the fundamental antagonism of Israel toward, and its isolation from, the Canaanite population is evidenced in the development of its political and religious institutions: both are in striking opposition to those of the natives.

Beyond the fact that the hapiru and the Israelites were both militant groups, the two differ in every way. The hapiru are not ethnically homogeneous, nor is there any indication that they were tribally structured. Their activity is not informed with a discernable common purpose, but is sporadic and dissociated. There is no more a purpose uniting the many hapiru groups than there is uniting the various petty rulers whom they serve. As a rule the hapiru are subordinates; it is upon the initiative of others that they act, only occasionally — and then merely as raiders — on their own.

There are no grounds for seeing in the hapiru an invading, desert element. Almost all of those whose provenance is known originate among the settled population of the towns; they migrate as individuals or as families. They are, to be sure, foreigners, but the members of a given hapiru group hardly ever have a common place of origin.

The hapiru have their own cantonments and occupy areas that are assigned to them. But that, on their own, they ever seize a town, depopulate it and then settle it permanently, is never indicated. Their tactics are to hit and run; a city "looted and burned so that scarcely a house was left standing" is their mark.

The activity of the hapiru is not restricted to the highlands. Megiddo and Ajjalon, for example, are no less accessible to them than Shechem. Moreover, they are adepts in chariot warfare.

The close association of the hapiru with the native townsmen, their frequent support of the native rebellion against Egypt, the supply of provisions and equipment which they receive from the cities, above all the wholesale desertions of the natives to the hapiru — all these are irreconcilable with the biblical picture of Israel's long drawn out warfare against the Canaanite cities. The total involvement of the hapiru in the political upheavals of the Amarna age is equally at variance with Israel's isolationist policy. Finally, it is to be noted that the background of Egyptian hegemony is absent from the biblical narratives. The great discrepancy between the Amarna hapiru and the invading Israelite tribes leaves little room for combining the two.

The possibility — and it is no more than that — remains that the Patriarchs — as individuals and families — may have been hapiru. Uprooted from their native place, migrant, having the status of protected clients (*ger w'-toshav*) in the land of their sojourn, they bear the earmarks of the class. Perhaps a reminiscence of their hapiru status is to be seen in the peculiar restriction of 'ivri (if 'ivri is a Hebrew adaptation of 'ab/piru) to the migrant Patriarchs — for example, so as to apply to Abraham,³⁶ but not to his settled kinsman Lot. If that is indeed the case, the biblical writers recast the term as a gentile — unless we assume that it had already lost its original meaning before reaching them.³⁷

With this speculation we have reached what would seem to be the limits of the justifiable combination of hapiru and Hebrews. To go further is to run the risk of obscuring the proper features of each group. The two may have met in the "wandering Aramean" who was Israel's ancestor. But in all else each pursued its independent historical way.

CHAPTER X

HAB/PIRU AND HEBREWS

1 The labial is ambiguously represented by cuneiform signs which may be read as *bi* or *pl*. On the Egyptian and Ugaritic writing with *p*, see note 23, below.

2 The title of C. R. Conder's article in *PEFQS*, 1890, 326 ff.

3 See the summary of F. M. Th. Böhl, in *Kanaanäer und Hebräer*, Leipzig, 1911, pp. 85 ff.

4 For comprehensive collections and analyses of the available material on the hapiru, see J. Bottéro, *Le problème des Habiru*, Paris, 1954; and M. Greenberg, *The Hab/piru*, New Haven, 1955.

5 On the Babylonian evidence, see the excellent survey of J.-R. Kupper, *Les nomades en Mésopotamie au temps des rois de Mari*, Paris, 1957, pp. 249-59.

6 The one exception in the published texts is Wiseman, *Alalakh*, no. 182:10 (Greenberg, *op. cit.*, no. 26:10) where Erata of Anzaqar appears among the SA. GAZ o Anzaqar.

7 This is not to say that no persons of nomad extraction were among the hapiru (cf. the evidence relating some Mari-text hapiru to nomadic tribes collected by J.-R. Kupper, "Sutéens et Hapiru," *RA*, 55 [1961], 197-200); only that the group as a whole cannot be characterized as "desert invaders"; see Greenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-7.

8 Bottéro, *op. cit.*, nos. 67-9; Greenberg, *op. cit.*, nos. 52-7; E. Cassin, "Nouveaux documents sur les Habiru," *Journal asiatique*, 246 (1958), 225-36.

9 For Rib-Addi's letters, see Bottéro, *op. cit.*, nos. 94-124; Greenberg, *op. cit.*, nos. 66-90. On the usage of (SA.) GAZ in these letters, see Greenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 71 f.

10 Bottéro, *op. cit.*, no. 129; Greenberg, *op. cit.*, no. 95.

11 For the Palestinian letters, see Bottéro, *op. cit.*, nos. 136-53; Greenberg, *op. cit.*, nos. 101-18. On the usage of SA. GAZ and hapiru in these letters, see Greenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

12 For example, the bands of "vain fellows" (*anashim reqim*) that collect around Abi-

melech (Jud. 9:4) and Jephthah (Jud. 11:3); the roving *condottiere* Gaal the son of Ebed (Jud. 9:26 ff.); and David's roaming band, composed of "every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented" (I Sam. 22:2). The case of David is most illuminating: note the refugee nature of the group, all of whom are outcasts from civilized society; note their attempts to gain the favor and protection of the cities (I Sam. 23), and their final association with a local Philistine dynast who "gives" them a town as their quarters (I Sam. 27:5-6) precisely, for example, as Lab'ayu "gives" Shechem to the hapiru (Bottéro, *op. cit.*, no. 145; Greenberg, *op. cit.*, no. 112). For this meaning of the oft-repeated accusation that the towns of the king are being "given" to the SA. GAZ/hapiru, see Greenberg, *op. cit.*, note to no. 110:31. On these parallels in the society of Amarna Palestine and premonarchic Israel, see also Alt, "Erwägungen über die Landnahme der Israeliten," *Kleine Schriften*, I, p. 170.

13 Bottéro, *op. cit.*, no. 72; Greenberg, *op. cit.*, no. 120; H. Otten, "Zwei althethetische Belege zu den Hapiru (SA. GAZ)," *ZA* (N. F.), 18 (1957), 216-23.

14 Other indications that hapiru attained respectable status: at Nuzi one can infer that some were "decurions" (*emantuhlu*): see Cassin, *loc. cit.*, 229 ff., who quotes SMN 3242 (*Harvard Semitic Series* xv, 62) and comments thereon; again, at Alalakh a sizable number are charioteers — i.e. highly trained soldiery (Bottéro, *op. cit.*, nos. 43, 46; Greenberg, *op. cit.*, nos. 29-30). Where the hapiru contingents were organized by the state their members could rise to positions of respect and responsibility.

15 Bottéro, *op. cit.*, no. 161; J. Nougayrol, *PRU*, IV/1, 1956, pp. 107 f.

16 Bottéro, *op. cit.*, nos. 154-6; Greenberg, *op. cit.*, nos. 140-2.

17 E. A. Speiser, *AASOR*, 16 (1935-6), 124; *idem*, *JAOS*, 74 (1954), 162; J. Lewy, *Orientalia* (n.s.), 11 (1942), 32 note 1.

18 Bottéro, *op. cit.*, no. 159; Nougayrol, *PRU*, III/1, 1955, pp. 102 f.

19 Bottéro, *op. cit.*, nos. 157, 162; Nougayrol, *op. cit.*, III/1, pp. 213 f.; IV/1, pp. 161 ff.

20 The meaning of *habbātu* is probably "wanderer, vagrant" (from *habātu šā alāki* = "habātu of movement"); see the discussion in Greenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 89, and the comment by J. Lewy *apud* Bottéro, *op. cit.*, p. 203 note to p. 143 (for a dissenting view, favoring "robber," cf. that of B. Landsberger, *apud* in *ibid.*, pp. 203-4).

21 Or from the *hab/pir*-element in names (collected in Greenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 57 ff.), or from the god *Hab/piru* (Bottéro, *op. cit.*, nos. 167, 89-90; Greenberg, *op. cit.*, nos. 155-6) — whose connection with the *hapiru* is at best questionable — if, indeed, the reading is not rather *Hawiru* (*ha'iru*) "spouse" (W. von Soden *apud* Bottéro, *op. cit.*, p. 135). Whether the Middle Babylonian gentilic *habirāyu* (Bottéro, *op. cit.*, nos. 165-6; Greenberg, *op. cit.*, nos. 143-4) has anything to do with our problem is doubtful; see, for example, R. Borger, *ZDPV*, 74 (1958), 126.

22 The phonetically consistent variants SA. GA. AZ and SAG. GAZ. seem to point to this.

23 West Semitic is regularly represented by cuneiform h. The ambiguity of the cuneiform representation of the middle radical (see note 1, above) compels us to lean on the Egyptian and Ugaritic writings, which are not altogether sure supports themselves; for Egyptian *p*, while regularly corresponding to Semitic *p*, may represent the Semitic *b* when preceded or followed by *r/l* (B. Gunn *apud* E. A. Speiser, *AASOR*, 13 [1931-2], 38 note 93); and Ugaritic can be shown sporadically to have gone its own way in voicing labials (Greenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 90, note 24). Nonetheless the reluctance of Borger, *loc. cit.*, 127-8, to rely on such abnormalities is justified. One may doubt whether any question as to the middle radical would have survived the Egyptian and Ugaritic evidence for *p*, had not a connection with *'ivri* "Hebrew" been at stake.

24 The appeal to a West Semitic root is based a) on the need of Akkadian lexicographers to gloss SA. GAZ/šaggāšu by *habbātu* — unnecessary, had *šaggāšu* carried its normal Akkadian value "murderer"; b) the inappropriateness of the Akkadian value as an appellation for the class as a whole.

25 Speiser, *loc. cit.*, 40 note 96.

26 See the ancient discussion in Genesis Rabba 42, 8 (Greenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 5 note 24, where it is also shown that the I.XX *Ἰὼ περάτη* [Gen. 14:13] follows the opinion that derives *'ivri* from *'ever* [hanahar], and has nothing to do with the verb *'avar*).

27 See, for example, Alt, "Ursprünge des israelitischen Rechts", *Kleine Schriften*, I, pp. 292 ff., who sees in *'ivri* a generally derogatory social classification.

28 Read: *wa-yishm' u p'lishtim le'mor pash'e'u ha-'ivrim*; S. R. Driver, *Notes on Samuel* (2nd ed.), Oxford, 1913, *ad loc.*

29 To call the land of the patriarchs' sojourning *erez ha-'ivrim* is perhaps no more than an anticipation of the later *erez yisra'el* (which would have been an anachronism here). In itself however the naming of the territory, in which they roam, after nomadic herdsmen is not unparalleled: a Mari text mentions three kings "of town X and the country (*māt*) of Y" — where in each case Y is a nomad tribe (G. Dossin, "L'inscription de fondation de Iaḥdun-Lim, roi de Mari," *Syria*, 32 [1955], 14, col. III, lines 4-9; cf. Kupper, *Les nomades en Mésopotamie*, p. 31). For another view, see Y. M. Grintz in *'Oz le-David (Ben-Gurion Volume)* (Hebrew), Jerusalem, 1964, pp. 92-102.

30 This passage is often cited to show that *'ivrim* may refer to non-Israelites. But the very necessity of further qualifying "Israel" in the second part of the verse by the clause "that were with Saul and Jonathan" indicates that the preceding *'ivrim* were their countrymen: if the two were not congruous, what need was there further to qualify the latter? See the apt argumentation of J. Wellhausen, *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis*, Göttingen, 1871, *ad loc.*

31 See Ibn Ezra's dispute (comment to Ex. 21:2) with those who broadened *'ivri* to include peoples kindred to Israel. The

attempt of J. Lewy, *HUCA*, 14 (1939), 608 ff., to interpret Ex. 21:2 ff. in the light of Nuzi habiru contracts is criticized in Greenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 67 note 28; A. Alt's equation of 'ivri and hapiru here led him to strike out the then superfluous 'eved (*Kleine Schriften* I, p. 291 note 2) — which bodes ill for that equation.

³² On I Sam. 14:21, see note 29, above.

³³ See Ibn Ezra to Ex. 21:2; and A. Guillaume, *PEQ*, 1946, 64 ff.

³⁴ See note 25, above.

³⁵ See H. H. Rowley, *From Joseph to Joshua*, London, 1950, for a comprehensive review of the entire problem. Rowley's position — including his treatment of the habiru — is criticized pertinently by M. Noth, *VT*, 1 (1951), 74 ff.

³⁶ Gen. 14:13. If this datum is late (see the judicious treatment by H. Gunkel, *Genesis* (3rd ed.), Göttingen, 1910, pp.

288–90) it may be no more than a retrojection of the gentilic 'ivrim found in the Israel–Egypt stories, in a passage where an ethnic designation for Abraham was needed to set him off from Mamre the Amorite. In that event we should be left with no compelling etymology for 'ivri. On the other hand, this may be among the authentic data of this singular chapter (see Gunkel, *ibid.*, *loc. cit.*), in which case it may be, on the contrary, the source of the subsequent usage of 'ivri as an ethnicon. The possibility that "Abram the Hebrew" is a genuinely ancient tradition opens the way to a combination with hapiru.

³⁷ The biblical genealogists will then have combined the fact that the Patriarchs were 'ivrim with the fact of their kinship with other Aramean and Arabic tribes to create the eponymous ancestor Eber, from whom all descended.