

The Minor Judges according to Josephus in comparison with the Bible, Pseudo-Philo and the "Samaritan Chronicle No. II"

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1. Introduction

Among the less memorable figures presented in the Book of Judges surely rank the five so-called "Minor Judges," Tola (Judg 10:1-2), Jair (10:3-5), Ibzan (12:8-10), Elon (12:11-12), and Abdon (12:13-15).¹ In this essay I focus on Josephus' portrayal of these figures in his *Ant.* 5.254,271-274.² My projected study involves a two-part comparison of the Josephan material. Firstly, I shall compare this with the Judges material itself as represented by the following major witnesses MT (BHS),³ Codices Alexandrinus (A) and Vaticanus (B) of the LXX,⁴ the *Vetus Latina* (hereafter *VL*),⁵ the Vulgate (hereafter *Vg.*),⁶ and Targum Jonathan (hereafter *Tg.*).⁷ Secondly, I shall compare Josephus' handling of the minor judges with their treatment in two other post-biblical writings, i.e. Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (hereaf-

¹ Jephthah enjoys dual status in the book: he is both a major judge to whose military exploits the long segment Judg 10:6-12:6 is devoted and a minor judge whose tenure, death and burial are summarily reported in 12:7. Given that peculiar status of his, I leave him out of consideration in this essay.

² For the text and translation of *Ant.* 5.254,271-274 I use Marcus, Josephus V, 114-117.122-125. I have likewise consulted the Greek text and French translation of and notes on the above passages in Nodet, Flavius Josephus II, 175-175*.179-180* and the annotated translation of Begg, Flavius Josephus, 62.67-68.

³ Judg 10:1-5 and 12:8-15 are not extant in the (fragmentary) Qumran Judges manuscripts.

⁴ For the A and B texts of Judg 10:1-5 and 12:8-15, I use Rahlfs, Septuaginta I, 450.459-460. I have likewise consulted the annotated French translation of these two Greek witnesses in Harlé, Juges, 176-179.196-197. Harlé also provides references to the "Lucianic" (hereafter L) readings of the Judges texts (which generally go together with those of A). On the A B and L texts of Judges, see briefly Harlé, Juges, 25-28.

⁵ For the.132.137. *VL* text of Judg 10:1-5; 12:8-15, I use Robert, Heptateuchi ... versio Latina.

⁶ For the *Vg.* text of Judg 10:1-5 and 12:8-15, I use Gryson, Biblia sacra, 339.343.

⁷ For the targumic text of Judg 10:1-5 and 12:8-15, I use Sperber, Bible in Aramaic, II, 69.74. I have also consulted the translation of the targumic texts in Harrington / Saldarini, Targum Jonathan, 80.84.

ter *L.A.B.*), chaps. 38 and 41⁸ and the “Samaritan Chronicle No. II” (hereafter SC).⁹ Via this double comparison, I hope to bring into sharper focus what is distinctive about the historian’s depiction of these obscure figures.

2. Tola

As the immediate successor of the infamous Abimelech (Judges 9), Judg 10:1 (MT) introduces a certain “Tola,” son of Puah, son of Dodo,¹⁰ quailfying him as a man of Issachar resident at “Shanir”¹¹ in the Ephraimite hill country. Judg 10:2 rounds off the Bible’s very brief account of this figure with mention of the twenty-three (*VL*: 73) years he judged Israel, followed by his death and burial in Shanir.

In Josephus’ presentation, Tola disappears without a trace, with the death of Abimelech (*Ant.* 5.253// Judg 9:57) being followed immediately by the accession of Jair (5.254// Judg 10:3). The reason for Tola’s absence in Josephus remains elusive since he is not a source of embarrassment as are such other biblical personages / events as the golden calf of Exodus 32 or Micah’s idol in Judges 17-18 that Josephus likewise leave aside.¹² In any case, it is noteworthy that Pseudo-Philo too makes no mention of Tola.¹³ By

⁸ For the Latin text of *L.A.B.* 38 and 41 I use Jacobson, Commentary, 1.57.61 and for the English translation 1.157./62.

⁹ For the relevant passages of SC, I use Macdonald, Samaritan Chronicle No. II, 36-39 (Hebrew text) and 104-110 (English translation). In this essay my focus is on Josephus’ own presentation of the minor judges. Accordingly, I shall not go into detail concerning Pseudo-Philo and SC’s treatments of them (for which I refer the reader to the introductions and relevant notes of Jacobson and Macdonald, respectively), but concentrate rather on highlighting similarities and differences between these and Josephus’ account.

¹⁰ LXX, *VL* and Vg. all take MT’s form “Dodo” as a common noun, i.e. “his (paternal) uncle,” the pronoun “his” in turn referring back to the Abimelech mentioned at the start of 10:1. On this understanding, Tola would be the grandson of the (unnamed) uncle of Abimelech.

¹¹ LXX AL and *VL* have “Samaria.”

¹² Nodet (Flavius Josèphe II, 175, n. 1) suggests a variety of possible motivations for Tola’s absence from Josephus’ account: the historian’s animosity against Abimelech whom Tola immediately follows or the incompatibility with Tola’s 23-year biblical rule with Josephus’ overall chronology. Alternatively, Nodet points out that the lacuna might be due to homoioarcton with the eye of the historian (or subsequent copyist) passing from the opening words אהריי ויקם of 10:1 (Tola) to the similar expression אהריי ויקם at the start of 10:3 (Jair).

¹³ This is a case of a “negative agreement” between the two authors. They further share a variety of positive agreements against the Bible itself; see the listing in Feldman, Prologomenon, lviii-lxi. As Jacobson (Commentary, 2.939) and other commentators point out, there is an obvious lacuna at this juncture in the extant

contrast, SC does selectively reproduce the data of (MT) Judg 10:1-2 concerning Tola (his father Puah, 23-year rule, death), while having him buried, not at “Shanir,” but rather “in the land of Shechem.”

3. Jair

Standing next in the biblical series of minor judges is “Jair” featured in Judg 10:3-5. The MT supplies the following data concerning him: a “Gileadite,” he judged Israel twenty-two years. His 30 sons rode on 30 asses and had 30 cities¹⁴ (these called “Havoth-jair to this day” and situated in the land of Gilead). Jair dies and is buried in “Kamon.”¹⁵

Josephus gives a presentation of Jair involving a variety of minor omissions and amplifications of the Bible’s account in *Ant.* 5.254. It reads:

The leadership (τὴν ἡγεμονίαν) of the Israelites was taken over¹⁶ by Jair (Ἰαίρη; compare LXX Ἰαείρ) the Gileadite (ὁ Γαλαδηνός),¹⁷ of the tribe of Manasseh,¹⁸ a man in all ways blessed (εὐδαίμων),¹⁹ and chiefly in his progeny of valiant (ἀγαθούς)²⁰ sons, thirty²¹ in

manuscripts of *L.A.B.* where the account of Abimelech ends up (37.5) with him dying due to a woman’s casting a millstone on his head (compare Judg 9:53-54) and there immediately follows (38.1) mention of the building of a sanctuary to Baal by an unspecified subject (whom the context indicates is to be identified with “Jair”).

- ¹⁴ The LXX witnesses have 32 in place of MT’s 30 in all three of the above instances. *VL*, *Vg.* and *Tg.* agree with MT’s figures.
- ¹⁵ Compare LXX AL Ραμμω; LXX B Ραμμων; *VL* Gamon; *Vg.* Camon.
- ¹⁶ In Judg 10:3 Jair “arises” and “judges” (LXX ἐκρῖνεν) Israel. Whereas the Bible uses the latter term in reference to the activity of each of the minor judges, Josephus invariably substitutes some alternative formulation when speaking of their leadership roles.
- ¹⁷ Compare LXX AL ὁ Γαδααδίτης; LXX B ὁ Γαλααδ.
- ¹⁸ This indication concerning Jair’s tribal status lacks a basis in Judg 10:3 itself (I italicize such elements of Josephus’ presentation in this essay.). Josephus apparently derived the item from Num 32:41 where a “Jair son of Manasseh” of the time of Moses takes possession of Amorite villages and calls these “Havvoth-jair” (see 10:4).
- ¹⁹ This overall, positive characterization of Jair’s life and tenure lacks a counterpart in Judg 10:3-5. On Josephus’ use of the key term εὐδαιμονία of Greek moral philosophy – though nowhere used in the LXX – and its cognates, see Weiss, *Pharisäismus* 427-428.
- ²⁰ This qualification of Jair’s sons lacks an equivalent in 10:4’s mention of them. The insertion reinforces the preceding reference to Jair’s “blessed” state: he not only had many sons; these were also “good” ones.
- ²¹ Josephus’ figure agrees with that of MT 10:4 against LXX’s 32; see n. 14.

number, *excellent* (ἀρίστους) horsemen (ἵππεύειν^{22,23}) to whom was committed the government of the several cities of Gilead.²⁴ Their father, after bearing rule (τὴν ἀρχήν) for twenty-two years,²⁵ died in *old age* (γηραιός)²⁶ and received *honoured* burial (ταφῆς ... ἀξιοῦται)²⁷ at Kamon (Καμών),²⁸ a city of Gilead.²⁹

Both Judg 10:3-5 and Josephus offer a positive – albeit quite summary – account of Jair’s tenure. Pseudo-Philo (*L.A.B.* 38), by contrast, gives a more extended portrayal of this figure and one that is highly negative. In this presentation Jair erects an altar to Baal (see n. 13) and proclaims that any one who refuses to worship Baal will die (38.1a). Seven men do refuse and are condemned to be burned by Jair (38.1b-3a). At this juncture the angel Nathaniel intervenes, extinguishing the fire, burning Jair’s servants, and enabling the faithful seven to escape by inflicting blindness on the people (38.3bc). Thereafter, the angel confronts Jair himself who having been “raised from the dust and made leader over the people” has led the people astray (38.4ad). Nathaniel’s punitive activity then climaxes with his burning of Jair, demolition of the pillar of Baal, and burning of both Baal and the 1,000 who are standing by this (38.4e).³⁰

²² Josephus’ only other use of the verb ἵππεύω is in *Ant.* 17.29.

²³ Compare 10:4 (MT) where Jair’s 30 sons ride on 30 “asses.” Josephus substitutes a qualification of the sons’ horsemanship that echoes his previous characterization of them as “valiant.”

²⁴ Josephus abbreviates the closing formulation of 10:4: “(the sons) had thirty cities, called Havvoth-jair to this day, which are in the land of Gilead.” The historian regularly omits biblical etiological notices like the above which speak of phenomena existing “to this day” that by his own time may well have ceased to do so.

²⁵ Josephus’ figure for Jair’s tenure corresponds to that found in all witnesses for Judg 10:3b.

²⁶ Judg 10:3-5 gives no indication regarding Jair’s age at death. Josephus’ insertion on the matter serves to reinforce his opening mention of the leader’s “blessed” existence.

²⁷ In Judg 10:5 Jair is simply “buried.” The “honorableness” of that burial in Josephus’ wording is a final confirmation of the “blessedness” of his entire career.

²⁸ Josephus’ name for the site of Jair’s burial agrees with that of MT against those of LXX (see n. 15).

²⁹ Judg 10:5 does not supply such a localization of “Kamon.” Josephus derives the indication from the context where Jair himself is called a “Gileadite” (10:3) and his sons have their cities “in the land of Gilead” (10:4).

³⁰ For more details on the various possible sources – both biblical and extrabiblical – Pseudo-Philo may have utilized in developing his negative portrayal of Jair, see Jacobson, *Commentary*, 2,939-945. Here I simply note that according to Jacob-

Finally, SC takes over virtually the entire content of the MT report on Jair. At the same time it embellishes this with a few further particulars reflecting the work's Samaritan and priestly interests. Specifically, it has the entire people install Jair as their ruler on "Mount Gerizim Bethel" in the presence of the high priest Shishai. Jair himself is called "a prince of the tribe of Manasseh" – a datum paralleled in Josephus (see n. 15). His death and burial in "Kamon" (MT 10:5) occurs in the 27th year of Shishai's high priesthood.

4. Ibzan

Following the long interlude devoted to Jephthah, the major/minor judge (see n. 1), the Bible commences a second segment (Judg 12:8-15) concerning the minor judges with the figure of Jephthah's immediate successor, i.e. "Ibzan" (MT)³¹ in v.8-10. Of him, it records the following details: his hometown of Bethlehem,³² his 30 sons and daughters for all of whom he provides spouses from "outside" (his clan; see n. 37), his seven-year tenure, death and burial at Bethlehem.

Josephus' version (5.271) elaborates the biblical data with additional items in a way reminiscent of his handling of Jair in 5.254:

Upon the death of *Jephthah* [on this see 5.270// 12:7], the rulership (τῆν ἀρχήν) passed³³ to Apsanes (Ἀψάνης) of the tribe of Judah³⁴

son (2.940), following Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6.202, the starting point for Pseudo-Philo's whole construction concerning Jair was the mention of his being buried in "Kamon" (קמון) in MT Judg 10:5. Pseudo-Philo would have taken this proper place name as the Aramaic Greek loanword קמון or קמון (Greek καμίνιον) meaning "furnace" and so came to the idea that Jair ended up being consumed by "fire" (see 38.4). Further developing this suggestion, Jacobson proposes that Pseudo-Philo elaborated his story about Jair's idolatry in order to account for the figure's disastrous end (sentencing others to be burned, Jair himself undergoes this fate). I further note, that via his omission of Tola and rewriting of the biblical story of Jair himself, Pseudo-Philo generates a sequence (*L.A.B.* 37-38) featuring two egregiously reprobate Israelite leaders, i.e. Abimelech and Jair – both of whom come to spectacularly bad ends.

³¹ The figure bears a variety of names in the other witnesses of 12:8: Εσεβων (*LXX AL*), Ἀβαισαν (*LXX B*), Esselom (*VL*), Abessan (*Vg.*).

³² Scholars debate which biblical "Bethlehem" this is: the well-known Judean town or rather the site in Zebulun mentioned in Josh 19:15. See Boling, *Judges*, 215-216.

³³ Compare 12:8: "Ibzan judged Israel."

³⁴ With this inserted indication Josephus spells from which Bethlehem Ibzan hailed; see n. 32.

and the city of Bethlehem. He had sixty children,³⁵ thirty sons and as many daughters, all of whom he left alive at his death,³⁶ after bestowing wives and husbands upon all.³⁷ Having achieved in his seven years of office [see 12:9b] nothing worthy of record and remembrance (λόγου καὶ μνήμης ἄξιον³⁸),³⁹ he died in old age (γηραιός)⁴⁰ and was buried in his native place [12:10: at Bethlehem].

As noted above, Pseudo-Philo, like Josephus, makes no mention of the minor judge Tola of Judg 10:1-2. Diverging from both the Bible and Josephus, he likewise passes over judge Ibzan of 12:8-10, proceeding directly from the death of Jephthah (*L.A.B.* 40.9// Judg 12:7) to the emergence of “Abdon” (38.1) who in Judg 12:13-15 appears as the third and last in the series of post-Jephthah minor judges; see below. SC, on the contrary, offers an account of “Abhoda,” the successor of Jephthah, that in several particulars

³⁵ Josephus supplies this total for Ibzan’s progeny on the basis of the separate figures for his sons and daughters given in 12:9.

³⁶ This detail is without biblical basis; it accentuates the familial good fortune of Ibzan: none of his many children predeceased him. The datum contradicts the tradition cited in *b. B. Bat.* 91a according to which Ibzan (who is here identified with his fellow Bethlehemite, Boaz, as he is in *Ruth Rab.* 3.6 and Tg. Ruth 1:6; 4:21) gave a double wedding feast for each of his sixty children, but did not invite the childless Manoah (the future father of Samson) to any of these, thinking that Manoah would never be in a position to reciprocate. By a kind of “measure for measure” punishment, the thus calculating Ibzan / Boaz was, the talmudic passage avers, deprived of all his children during his lifetime.

³⁷ Josephus leaves out the detail of 12:9 that Ibzan married both his sons and daughters to those “outside” (RSV adds the specification “his clan”). That detail could suggest that Ibzan was a promoter of intermarriage, a ticklish problem for Josephus in his rewriting of biblical history, as Feldman, *Interpretation*, 138-139 notes, and one that he here, as also elsewhere, deals with by simply passing over the Bible’s indication on the matter. See also Nodet, *Flavius Josèphe*, II, 176.179 for further considerations on the omission.

³⁸ Josephus’ one remaining use of this genitival construction is in *BJ* 3.229 where it appears in a positive affirmation concerning Eleazar, the Jewish defender of Jotapata, whose memorable deed was his disabling of the Roman battering ram at the cost of his own life.

³⁹ With this insertion Josephus implicitly responds to a question readers might have about Ibzan, i.e. why does Josephus not report some memorable (military) exploit of him the way he does of his predecessor Jephthah? As we shall see, Josephus employs similar formulations with regard to the two following minor judges.

⁴⁰ Josephus inserts this same indication concerning Jair’s age at death in 5.254. The common insertion serves to reinforce the parallelism between the two figures, both of whom enjoyed long lives.

goes beyond (and differs from) the biblical presentation of “Ibzan.” As in Josephus (see n. 34), e.g., he is explicitly assigned to “the tribe of Judah.”⁴¹ Like Jair before him (see above), this Abhoda is designated as “king” by the whole body of the people “on Mount Gerizim Bethel” in the presence of the high priest Shishai. His rule extends for ten rather than the biblical (and Josephan) seven years. In the seventh of those years, the priest Shishai dies, is buried, and succeeded by his son Bahqi under whom, three years later, “King Abhoda” himself dies.

5. Elon

Of the five biblical minor judges, “Elon”⁴² (Judg 12:11-12) gets even less attention than his four colleagues. All we told of him is that he was a Zebulunite who judged Israel ten years, died and was buried “at Aijalon”⁴³ in the land of Zebulun.”

Josephus (5.272) has nothing particular to add to this minimalistic presentation – other than to highlight just how little there is to say about “Elon”: “Apsanes, *having thus died*, his successor Elon (Ἐλων) *of the tribe of Zabulon*, held the leadership (τὴν ἡγεμονίαν; see 5.254 [Jair]) for ten years⁴⁴ *and likewise did nothing of note* (σπουδῆς ἄξιον).”⁴⁵

Pseudo-Philo (L.A.B. 41.2) does give a somewhat more expansive account of “Elon” than do either the Bible or Josephus, likewise reversing their shared sequence Elon-Abdon (see above). This runs: “At that time the people chose Elon and appointed him as judge for them.⁴⁶ He judged Israel twenty years.⁴⁷ In those days they fought against the Philistines (Latin: *Allo-*

⁴¹ Unlike both Judg 12:8 and *Ant.* 5.271, SC does not, however, mention Bethlehem as his hometown.

⁴² This is the MT form of his name. Compare Αἰλων (LXX A), Αἰλωμ (LXX B), Aelom (*VL*), Ahialom (*Vg.*).

⁴³ So MT; compare Αἰλιμ (LXX A), Αἰλομ (LXX B, where the name of the judge and his burial place are identical), Aelim (*VL*). *Vg.* does not have an equivalent to these proper place names.

⁴⁴ Compare Judg 12:11 “Elon ... judged Israel ten years.”

⁴⁵ This appended remark echoes that made concerning Ibzan in 5.271, i.e. he achieved “nothing worthy (ἄξιον) of record and remembrance.” It takes the place of the death and burial notice for Elon of 12:12.

⁴⁶ Neither the Bible nor Josephus alludes to such a popular choice of Elon. In further contrast to both witnesses, Pseudo-Philo does not mention Elon’s tribal affiliation.

⁴⁷ In both Judg 12:11 and *Ant.* 5.272 Elon’s leadership lasts ten years.

philos) and took from them twelve cities.⁴⁸ Elon died and was buried in his city.”⁴⁹

The Pseudo-Philonian portrayal of Elon, in turn, has certain points of contact with SC’s account (Macdonald, 1969:108-109) of the figure it calls “Ebhen-Lel.” Of this member of the tribe of Zebulun (see 12:11 and 5.272) the Chronicle records that the Israelites made him “king”⁵⁰ on “Mount Gerizim Bethel” in the presence of the high priest Bahqi. Thereafter, Ebhen-Lel holds office for twenty-eight years,⁵¹ and is buried “in the land of Zebulun.”⁵²

6. Abdon

The last in the series of biblical minor judges is “Abdon”⁵³ of Judg 12:13-15. The Bible’s account of him opens in 12:13 with mention of his father Hillel⁵⁴ and gentile (“the Pirathonite”). Next, 12:14 cites the judge’s 40 sons, 30 grandsons and the 70 asses on which they rode, together with Abdon’s own eight-year tenure. Rounding matters off, 12:15 reports his death and burial “at Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.”⁵⁵

Josephus’ expanded rendering of 12:13-15 comes in 5.273-274:

⁴⁸ Such a military success by the Israelites in Elon’s time has no counterpart in either the Bible or Josephus (who, on the contrary, avers that “nothing of moment” occurred under Elon’s tenure). In making the Philistines the people against whom the Israelites fight at this point, Pseudo-Philo is perhaps inspired by the near context of Judg 12:11-12; see 13:1 where the Lord gives the apostate Israelites into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.

⁴⁹ Pseudo-Philo’s non-mention of the proper name of Elon’s burial place has a counterpart in Vg. 12:12 where the judge is simply buried “in Zabulon”; see n. 43. In his explicit reference to Elon’s death and burial Pseudo-Philo agrees with 12:12 against Josephus (who leaves these points unmentioned). In contrast to both the Bible and Josephus, Pseudo-Philo nowhere cites Elon’s tribal status; see n. 46.

⁵⁰ Compare Pseudo-Philo’s reference to the people’s initiative in appointing Elon as judge.

⁵¹ Compare Pseudo-Philo’s assigning Elon a longer tenure than do either the Bible or Josephus (20 versus 10 years).

⁵² Like Pseudo-Philo (and Vg. 12:12), SC does not name the more specific site of Elon’s burial; see n. 49.

⁵³ Thus MT; compare Λαβδων (LXX AL), Αβδων (LXX B), Labdon (VL), Abdon (Vg.).

⁵⁴ Thus MT; compare Σελλημ (LXX AL), Ελληλ (LXX B), Ellen (VL), Hellel (Vg.).

⁵⁵ With MT’s above indication concerning Abdon’s burial place, compare: “in the hill country of Lanak” (LXX A), “in the hill country of Amalek” (LXX B), “in Sellem” (LXX L), “in terra Aellen Amalecitrae” (VL), “in monte Amalech” (Vg.).

(5.273) Abdon (Ἀβδών), son of Elon (Ἐλωνος),⁵⁶ of the tribe of Ephraim⁵⁷ and the city of Pharathon (Φαραθωνιτών)⁵⁸ who was appointed sovereign leader (αὐτοκράτωρ ἡγεμῶν)⁵⁹ after Elon,⁶⁰ calls for no mention save for happy paternity (εὐπαιδίας)^{61, 62} since thanks to the prevailing peace and security (εἰρήνην καὶ... ἄδειαν)⁶³ of the state, he too did no brilliant deed (λαμπρόν).⁶⁴

(5.274) But he had forty sons, and born of these, thirty grandsons, and was wont to ride with this family of seventy,⁶⁵ all excellent horsemen (ἱππάζειν⁶⁶ ἀρίστοις)⁶⁷; he left them all in the land of the

- ⁵⁶ This is the reading of the codices according to which Abdon's father has the same name as his predecessor, i.e. "Elon." Nodet (Flavius Josèphe, II, *ad loc.*) conjectures Ἡλωιος, which would itself be a corruption of the name of Abdon's father as read by MT ("Hillel") and LXX B (Ελληλ).
- ⁵⁷ Josephus anticipates this indication concerning Abdon's tribal affiliation from 12:15 where the judge is buried "in the land of Ephraim."
- ⁵⁸ Literally: "of the Pirathonites." In 12:13 the gentilic "the Pirathonite" is used of Abdon. Josephus substitutes mention of the inhabitants of the city of "Pirathon" (see 12:15).
- ⁵⁹ This expression occurs only here in Josephus. He often uses the term αὐτοκράτωρ as an equivalent for the Latin "imperator."
- ⁶⁰ Compare 12:13 "After him [Elon, 12:11-12] Abdon... judged Israel." Josephus' formulation leaves indeterminate who (God? the people?) appointed Abdon to his position.
- ⁶¹ Josephus' only other use of the noun εὐπαιδία is in *Ant.* 12.268.
- ⁶² This inserted reference to Abdon's paternal felicity recalls Josephus' – likewise inserted – remark about Jair in 5.254: "a man in all ways blessed (εὐδαίμων), and chiefly in his progeny of valiant sons...."
- ⁶³ This hendiadys is *hapax* in Josephus.
- ⁶⁴ Josephus' above insertion into the biblical data for Abdon recalls his similar remarks about Ibzan and Elon. To those remarks he here adds an indication about why these figures failed to do anything memorable, i.e. Israel's situation was such that they had no chance to prove themselves militarily. That explanation, in turn, conveys the idea that the personal felicity that marked the tenure of these figures extended to the people as a whole, this constituting a multi-sided contrast between them and Jephthah who did achieve military success against the Ammonites, but who also experienced familial disaster (the sacrifice of his only child) and who brought affliction on Israel itself (via his slaughter of the recalcitrant Ephraimites; see Judg 12:1-6).
- ⁶⁵ Compare 12:14a where Abdon's sons and grandsons "ride on seventy asses." Josephus' wording makes Abdon himself part of the riding party. As in the case of Ibzan (5.271) he supplies an explicit total for Abdon's progeny.
- ⁶⁶ Josephus' two remaining uses of the verb ἱππάζω are in *BJ* 4.451 and 5.54.
- ⁶⁷ The above characterization of the riding abilities of Abdon's progeny recalls Josephus' – likewise inserted – qualification of Jair's thirty sons as "excellent horsemen" (ἱππεύειν... ἀρίστοις) in 5.254. (In both instances, Josephus recasts

living⁶⁸ when he died *in old age* (γηραιός)⁶⁹ and was buried in state (ταφῆς λαμπρᾶς)⁷⁰ at Pharathon.⁷¹

As noted above, Pseudo-Philo reverses the biblical (and Josephan) order of Elon and Abdon in *L.A.B.* 41.1-2. His presentation of both these figures is likewise quite distinctive. Thus, in the case of Abdon (41.1) he cites a military achievement by him during his eight-year tenure (see 12:14b)⁷² that is unmentioned by either the Bible or Josephus.⁷³ That achievement consists in Abdon's leading an Israelite army to victory over the recalcitrant Moabites, 45,000 of whom he slays, after which he returns safely and sacrifices to the Lord.⁷⁴ In a final divergence from the Book of Judges and Josephus, Pseudo-Philo has him buried, not at "Pirathon," but rather at "his city Effrata."⁷⁵

biblical references to the progeny's riding "on asses" [see 10:3; 12:14] an allusion to their horsemanship – this perhaps reflecting Greco-Roman conceptions about what would have been an appropriately dignified mount for a leader.)

⁶⁸ This insertion concerning Abdon's being survived by all his sons and grandsons has a counterpart in Josephus' presentation of Ibzan in 5.271 (where it too is biblically unparalleled).

⁶⁹ Josephus previously supplied this same indication for Jair (5.254) and Ibzan (5.271). The Josephan Abdon, like Ibzan before him, is doubly blessed: he dies an old man without having experienced the prior death of any of his many children. Conversely, Josephus leaves aside the reference of 12:14b to Abdon's eight-year tenure.

⁷⁰ Compare Josephus' mention of Jair's "receiving honoured burial" (ταφῆς... ἄξιοῦται) in 5.254. The use of the term λαμπρᾶς ("brilliant") here in connection with Abdon's burial ironically recalls the historian's earlier statement (5.273) about Abdon's having done no "brilliant (λαμπρόν) deed." Abdon's personal felicity is such that, notwithstanding this deficiency, he is still awarded a "splendid" burial.

⁷¹ From the formulation of 12:15 about Abdon's place of burial Josephus leaves aside its additional indications, i.e. "in the land of Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites" (MT). He anticipated the first of these indications in his designation of Abdon as being "of the tribe of Ephraim" at the start of 5.273.

⁷² Conversely, Pseudo-Philo says nothing about Abdon's progeny and their mounts that are featured in both Judg 12:14a and Josephus.

⁷³ The contrast between the Pseudo-Philo's and Josephus' Abdon is all the sharper in that the latter explicitly denies to the figure the kind of "brilliant deed" the former credits him with. Compare the two authors' markedly divergent portrayals of Jair in 5.254 and *L.A.B.* 38, respectively. In both cases, Josephus stands closer to the Bible's account of the given figure than does Pseudo-Philo.

⁷⁴ For more details on this presentation, see Jacobson (Commentary, 2.977-978) who points out that it is both clearly inspired by, but also intended to contrast with, the preceding story of Jephthah. Like Jephthah, the Pseudo-Philonian Abdon engages in ultimately unavailing negotiations with a Transjordanian people (the

SC goes its own way as well in its account of the last of the minor judges (whom it calls "Anitel"). In particular, it assigns this figure to the tribe of Judah (in 12:15 and Josephus Abdon's associations are rather with Ephraim). The people make him their "king" on "Mount Gerizim Bethel" and he rules for forty years (compare 12:14b's and Pseudo-Philo's eight years). In the fourteenth year of his reign the high priest Bahqi dies and is ceremoniously buried at Kiriath-mahanah.⁷⁶ Bahqi's son, Uzzi, is still young at this point and so it is only nine years after Anitel's death that he accedes to the high priesthood, the older Eli, of the priestly line of Ithamar, aspiring to assume the office in the meantime.

7. Conclusion

By way of conclusion to this essay I shall now attempt to summarize my findings on Josephus' presentation of the minor judges in comparison with those of both the Bible and of Pseudo-Philo and the SC.

In our comparison of the relevant passages of Josephus and the Bible, we noted first of all two instances where the historian seems to reflect the MT as against the LXX text-form; see nn. 21 (30 v.32 as the figure for Jair's sons, etc.) and 28 ("Kamon" as Jair's burial-site). Of the five biblical minor Judges, Josephus omits the first of these, i.e. Tola (Judg 10:1-3) completely. Conversely, he does reproduce most of the (meager) biblical data concerning the four remaining figures.⁷⁷ At the same time, he repeatedly embel-

Ammonites and Moabites, respectively), eventually routs that people, and then returns home. Unlike Jephthah, however, Abdon makes no rash vow prior to battle and there is nothing objectionable about the sacrifices he offers to the Lord once back home.

⁷⁵ Pseudo-Philo thus (apparently) diverges from 12:15 on the name of Abdon's burial site, even though at the start of 38.1 he does follow 12:13 in calling the judge "a Pirathonite." See, however, Jacobson (Commentary, 2.978) who avers that "Effrata" is to be identified with the biblical "Pharathon."

⁷⁶ This development provides the Chronicle with the occasion for an extended parenthetical discussion concerning the work and dignity of the legitimate high priesthood vested in the line of Phineas.

⁷⁷ Among his omissions here are the following: the collective name "Havvoth-jair" for the Gileadite cities possessed by Jair's thirty sons (10:4), the "outside" marriages of Ibzan's progeny (12:9), Elon's burial place (12:11), and Abdon's eight-year tenure (12:14b) and burial "in the hill country of Amalekites (12:15 MT *in fine*). Josephus likewise, on occasion, modifies biblical data that he does utilize, e.g., the mention of the "asses" on which the progeny of both Jair (10:4) and Abdon (12:13) ride are replaced by references to the "horsemanship" of their descendants in 5.254 and 5.275 respectively; see n. 67. Again, Abdon's association with Ephraim is cited by Josephus at an earlier point (see 5.273) than in the biblical presentation of him (see 12:15b). Finally, Josephus avoids the biblical

lishes those data with inserted remarks that serve to highlight two particular features of the careers of the minor judges (as well to accentuate the similarities among them). On the one hand, these figures, in Josephus' portrayal, enjoy a heightened personal felicity: they live to be old men (Jair, Ibzan, Abdon); their progeny are outstanding horsemen (Jair and Abdon); they die with all their children still alive, and receive a worthy burial (Jair and Abdon). On the other hand, Josephus thrice goes beyond the Bible in calling explicit attention to the fact that this set of figures achieved nothing of public, enduring significance during their tenures; see 5.271 (Ibzan), 272 (Elon) and 273 (Abdon), while also supplying (5.273) in the case of the last of them an explanation of their "failure," i.e. the tranquil conditions of the time did not confront these leaders with the kind of military-political crises in which they might have distinguished themselves, as, e.g., Gideon and Jephthah did.

With Pseudo-Philo's treatment of the minor judges, Josephus' version does share one "negative agreement," i.e. the non-mention of "Tola" (Judg 10:1-2). Otherwise, however, their respective presentations differ strikingly, with Josephus clearly hewing much more closely to the biblical account than does Pseudo-Philo. Thus, Josephus (5.272) does follow Judg 12:8-10 in telling of a minor judge "Ibzan" of whom Pseudo-Philo says nothing. The historian likewise preserves the biblical sequence Elon-Abdon (see 12:11-15// 5.272-274) which Pseudo-Philo reverses in *L.A.B.* 41.1-2. Pseudo-Philo's negative depiction of Jair (*L.A.B.* 38) stands in marked contrast to the positive portrait of him jointly offered by Judg 10:3-5 and *Ant.* 5.254. Similarly, Pseudo-Philo relates military achievements that occur under the tenures of Elon (*L.A.B.* 41.2) and Abdon (*L.A.B.* 41.1) to which neither the Bible nor Josephus has any counterpart (and which the latter explicitly precludes in the case of both these figures (see 5.272 [Elon] and 5.273 [Abdon])). At least as far as the minor judges are concerned then Pseudo-Philo felt free to take far greater liberties with the Bible's presentation than did his fellow historian (and approximate contemporary).⁷⁸

As for Josephus and SC, their presentations have in common two points that lack an equivalent in the Judges material itself: Jair's pertaining to the tribe of Manasseh (see n. 18) and Ibzan's to that of Judah (see n. 34). These two communalities excepted, their accounts diverge in numerous respects. In particular, Josephus' version lacks, e.g., the designation of the figures in

key word "(to) judge" in reference to the activity of these figures, replacing it with a variety of alternative formulations (see n. 16).

⁷⁸ On the controverted question of the dating of *L.A.B.* – before or after the destruction of the Second Temple – see the discussion in Jacobson (Commentary, 1.199-210) who opts for the latter possibility.

question as “kings,” their installation by the entire people on Mount Gerizim, and the all-pervading interest in the priestly contemporaries of these figures that characterizes the Chronicle’s account (and at the same time distinguishes that account from the Bible’s treatment of them).

Josephus’ portrayal of the minor judges stands in a complex relationship of similarity and difference with those of the Bible, Pseudo-Philo and the “Samaritan Chronicle No. II.” As I hope has emerged over the course of this essay, a comparative study of all four versions as offered here can indeed help bring into clearer focus the distinctiveness of the Josephan perspective on these largely – but not quite – forgotten figures.

Summary

This article offers a detailed study of Josephus’ account (*Ant.* 5.254,271-274) of the so-called “minor judges” in relation both to the biblical presentation of them (Judg 10:1-5; 12:8-15) and to that of Pseudo-Philo (*L.A.B.* 38,41) and the “Samaritan Chronicle No. II.” Josephus does, it emerges, incorporate most of the biblical data concerning the minor judges (although he omits the figure of Tola [Judg 10:1-2] completely). At the same time, he goes beyond the Bible in accentuating their personal felicity on the one hand and their failure to perform any deed of public and lasting significance on the other. In comparison with Pseudo-Philo (who, e.g., turns Jair [Judg 10:3-5] into a promoter of Baal-worship and attributes military achievements to Elon [12:11-12] and Abdon [12:13-15] of which the Bible and Josephus say nothing), Josephus hews much closer to the biblical story-line on these figures. Vis-à-vis the Samaritan Chronicle he lacks the focus on Mount Gerizim and the high-priestly succession which characterizes that document’s portrayal of the minor judges.

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Artikel bietet eine detaillierte Studie zu Josephus Flavius über die sogenannten “Kleinen Richter” im Verhältnis (*Ant.* 5.254,271-274) sowohl zu der biblischen (Ri 10:1-5; 12:8-15) wie auch zur pseudo-philonischen (*L.A.B.* 38,41) Beschreibung und zur samaritanischen Chronik II. Josephus bezieht die meisten biblischen Angaben zu den „Kleinen Richtern“ ein (obwohl er Tola vollständig weglässt). Zugleich geht er über die Bibel hinaus einerseits in der Akzentuierung deren persönlichen Glücks und andererseits in deren Versagen, wenn es darum geht, öffentliche Aktionen zu setzen und ungebrochene Wirkung zu erreichen.

Im Vergleich zu Pseudo-Philo verbleibt Josephus viel näher an der biblischen Erzählungstradition über diese Gestalten, (der z.B. Jair [Ri 10,3-5] zum Förderer der Baals-Verehrung verändert und bei Elon [12,11-12] und Abdon [12,13-15] militärische Unternehmungen hinzufügt, von denen die Bibel und Josephus nichts berichten). Gegenüber der samaritanischen Chronik fehlt bei ihm die Konzentration auf den Berg Gerizim und die hohepriesterliche Nachfolge, welche charakteristisch ist für die Darstellung in diesem Werk der „Kleinen Richter“.

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