

Stones, Tablets, and Scrolls

Periods of the Formation of the Bible

edited by

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Jeroboam II and the Invention of Northern Sanctuaries and Foundation Stories*

Thomas Römer

Dedicated to the memory of Philip Davies

A. The Case of Jeroboam “II”

As is well known, the presentation of the reigns of Israelite and Judahite rulers in the book of Kings does not accurately reflect their historical political influence and achievements. The Judean “Deuteronomistic” redactors considered all northern kings as “sinners” perpetuating the “sin” of the first northern king, namely the construction of competing Yahwistic sanctuaries outside Jerusalem and the representation of the deity YHWH as a bull.

Therefore, all northern kings are depicted in a negative way – even Jehu, son of Nimshi, who should have been praised because of his anti-Ba‘al and anti-Omride revolt.¹ For some northern but also southern kings, the Deuteronomists also adopted a strategy of silencing. Kings who reigned for a long time or were politically successful were silenced, and their careers were summed up in just a few lines.

In the south this silencing affects especially king Manasseh. Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, enjoyed a very long reign of fifty-five years, but we have remarkably few details about it. For the editors of the book of Kings, he is the very model of a bad king who did everything that displeased YHWH. Historically speaking, his acceptance of Assyrian dominance guaranteed a period of calm and stability for the kingdom of Judah. He probably rebuilt Lachish and established a series of fortresses dependent on Jerusalem, and it is possible that Ashurbanipal restored

* I would like, with this article, to honor the memory of my colleague and close friend Philip Davies, who passed away unexpectedly in May 2018. Before his death he was working on an article about Jeroboam II and he asked me to send him a paper I had recently published in *HeBAI*. We had an exchange about his ideas on Jeroboam II, which are in some aspects close to mine, and which will be published soon in a *Festschrift* in his honor. Philip Davies was one of the most creative and groundbreaking biblical scholars, and he will be missed very much.

¹ For details, see Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: T&T Clark; New York: Continuum, 2005), 155–57.

to him some annexed Judean territory, notably the Shephelah, as a reward for his loyalty.² It is even possible that some of the most remarkable achievements that the Bible attributes to Hezekiah are actually his doing. Ernst A. Knauf argues that the construction of the famous tunnel that, according to the biblical account, was built by Hezekiah would have taken a very long time, so long in fact that it could not have been initiated and completed during the reign of Hezekiah. The tunnel was probably constructed during the rule of Manasseh, who wanted to use it in order to irrigate a royal garden built on an Assyrian model.³ Since the editors of the book of Kings utterly detested Manasseh, it makes perfect sense that they would have attributed these achievements to his predecessor. This thesis gains even more plausibility if Hezekiah did in fact begin his reign only around 715 BCE.⁴

A similar phenomenon can be observed in Israel in regard to Omri and Jeroboam II. Like Manasseh, Omri, who was considered by the Assyrians to be the founder of the Northern Kingdom,⁵ and who built Samaria as the capital of Israel, receives little attention in the book of Kings. Although Omri ruled for twelve years, 1 Kgs 16:15–28 reports only his putsch against Zimri and his fortification of Samaria. For the redactors of the book of Kings, “Omri did what was evil in the sight of YHWH; he did more evil than all who were before him” (v. 25), perhaps because he built a temple in Samaria.⁶

Let us turn now to the description of the reign of Jeroboam II (2 Kgs 14:23–29), which again is astonishingly short, despite the fact that he ruled for about forty years.

²³ In the fifteenth year of King Amaziah son of Joash of Judah, king Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel began to reign in Samaria; he reigned forty-one years. ²⁴ He did what was evil in the sight of YHWH; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, by which he had caused Israel to sin. ²⁵ He restored the borders of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of YHWH, the God of Israel, which he had spoken through his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet, who was from Gath-hepher. ²⁶ For he had seen that the distress of Israel was very bitter; there was no one left,

² Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na’aman, “The Judahite Shephelah in the Late 8th and Early 7th centuries B. C. E.,” *TA* 31 (2004): 60–79; Alexander Fantalkin, “The Final Destruction of Beth Shemesh and the *Pax Assyriaca* in the Judahite Shephelah: An Alternative View,” *TA* 31 (2004): 245–61.

³ Ernst Axel Knauf, “The Glorious Days of Manasseh,” in *Good Kings and Bad Kings: The Kingdom of Judah in the Seventh Century B. C. E.*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 164–88.

⁴ For discussions of the dates of the reign of Hezekiah, see Ernst Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige: 1. Kön. 17–2. Kön. 25*, ATD 11.2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 412–13; Gösta W. Ahlström, *The History of Ancient Palestine from the Palaeolithic Period to Alexander’s Conquest*, JSOTSup 146 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 689–91.

⁵ As shown by the expression “house of Omri,” which the Assyrians used to refer to the Northern Kingdom, even after the Omrides.

⁶ Translations of biblical texts follow the NRSV, sometimes with minor modifications.

bond or free, and no one to help Israel.²⁷ But YHWH had not said that he would wipe out the name⁷ of Israel from under heaven, so he saved them by Jeroboam son of Joash.²⁸ Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, and all that he did, and his might, how he fought, and how he recovered for Israel Damascus and Hamath, which had belonged to Judah,⁸ are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel?²⁹ Jeroboam slept with his ancestors, the kings of Israel; his son Zechariah succeeded him.

Outside of this very short note, Jeroboam II is mentioned in the book of Kings only in 2 Kgs 13:13 and 14:16 (two parallel accession notices that mention the death of his father Joash), 15:1 (the accession of Azariah of Judah in the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam), and 15:8 (the accession of Jeroboam's son Zechariah in the thirty-eighth year of Azariah).

The forty-one years of Jeroboam's reign are summarized in a couple of verses.⁹ The notice starts with a traditional Deuteronomistic topic, accusing the northern kings of continuing the sins of the "first" Jeroboam. In the following verses, however, nothing negative is said about this king. On the contrary, 2 Kgs 14:25 states that "he restored the borders of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah." This territorial extension recalls the borders of the "united monarchy" under Solomon. If there is some truth behind this verse, one might suppose that the geographical reality that gave rise to the (Judahite) idea of a united monarchy corresponded to the geopolitical situation under Jeroboam II.¹⁰ However, the idea that Lebo-hamath is the northern boundary of Israel appears mostly in late texts from the Persian period (e. g., Num 13:21; 34:8; Josh 13:5; Ezek 47:20, 48:1; 1 Chr 13:5; 2 Chr 7:8). For this reason, Volkmar Fritz has identified v. 25 as a later addition,¹¹ since it anticipates the note in v. 28, which seems to reflect an older tradition according to which Jeroboam successfully extended the northern border of Israel and controlled Aramean territories. But even so, one could imagine that this note reflects a historical memory from the days of Jeroboam that was linked by the redactor to a divine oracle attributed to a prophet Jonah from Gath-hepher, a place also mentioned in the list of Galilean towns in

⁷ LXX: "the seed." It is difficult to decide which variant is original. MT has the same wording here as in Deut 9:14 and 29:19 (see below).

⁸ The claim that Judah controlled Damascus and Hamath is strange. It has often been argued that this note refers to laudi/Sam'al (Zinjirli), e. g., Würthwein, *Könige*, 375. But the Akkadian references to laudi denote the kingdom of Judah. Therefore, one may speculate whether the text originally read "Israel," which was later altered to "Judah" by a Judean glossator e. g., Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 11 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1988), 162.

⁹ For the following, see Thomas Römer, "How Jeroboam II became Jeroboam I," *HeBAI* 6 (2017): 372–82, on which the present contribution draws.

¹⁰ Israel Finkelstein, "A Corpus of North Israelite Texts in the Days of Jeroboam II," *HeBAI* 6 (2017): 281, 288–89.

¹¹ Volkmar Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 324; on the other hand, Würthwein (with many others) considers v. 25a to be a "geschichtliche Notiz." *Könige*, 374–75.

Josh 19:10–39. This list may reflect a situation from the time of Jeroboam II.¹² It is therefore possible that the redactor preserved a memory of this prophet from the eighth century BCE.

In any case, vv. 26–27, which are often considered to be the work of a later (post-Deuteronomistic) redactor,¹³ seem to presuppose v. 25.¹⁴ In vv. 26–27 the long reign of Jeroboam is justified by the idea that he was a tool used by YHWH to save Israel from its enemies. This is indeed an astonishing idea in the context of the Deuteronomistic edition of the book of Kings.

Verse 27 contradicts prophetic announcements that YHWH would destroy the Northern Kingdom.¹⁵ The expression *mhh šm* used in this verse occurs elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible only in Deut 9:14, in the Deuteronomistic account of the golden calf (which is related to the Jeroboam of 1 Kgs 12), and in Deut 29:19. The latter passage appears in the context of curses,¹⁶ so that 2 Kgs 14:17 may also be alluding to these texts and claiming that these curses were not (yet) executed during the time of Jeroboam.¹⁷ Another possibility would be to take v. 27 in an absolute sense, and to understand it as the note of a post-Deuteronomistic redactor who wanted to acknowledge the fact that even after the destruction of Samaria in 722, the “name” or “seed” of Israel had not been blotted out but continued through the inhabitants of the former kingdom of Israel.

Verse 28 seems to be an older tradition according to which Jeroboam did gain territories in the north.¹⁸ Amos 6:13 presupposes that Karnaim became Israelite in the first half of the eighth century, and Israel’s domination of the upper Jordan Valley is shown by 2 Kgs 15:29, which describes the campaign of Tiglath-pileser III in this region (732 BCE). Archaeology has shown that in the first half of the eighth century BCE, Israel, probably under Jeroboam II, took over Dan and retook Hazor from Aram,¹⁹ so that under this king Israel reached its maximal territorial extension.

¹² Volkmar Fritz, *Das Buch Josua*, HAT 1.7 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1994), 189.

¹³ Würthwein, *Könige*, 375–76; Fritz, *Kings*, 325.

¹⁴ Which may be an earlier text, or a text written by the same redactor. See Ernst Axel Knauf, “Jeroboam ben Nimshi: The Biblical Evidence,” *HeBAI* 6 (2017): 294.

¹⁵ It could also be a critical allusion to the prophecies of Amos, who announced the end of Jeroboam and his dynasty. See Frank Crüsemann, “Kritik an Amos im deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk. Erwägungen zu 2. Könige 14,27,” *Probleme biblischer Theologie: Gerhard von Rad zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Hans W. Wolff (Munich: Kaiser, 1971), 57–63. But v. 27 does not contain straightforward quotations from Amos. See also Shuichi Hasegawa, “Relations between Amos 6:13–14 and 2 Kgs 14:25–28,” *AJBI* 33 (2007): 92–102.

¹⁶ Deut 29:20: “All the curses written in this book will descend on them, and YHWH will wipe out their names from under heaven.”

¹⁷ Würthwein, *Könige*, 376.

¹⁸ Israel Finkelstein, “Stages in the Territorial Expansion of the Northern Kingdom,” *VT* 61 (2011): 227–42.

¹⁹ Finkelstein, “Stages,” 241.

Summing up, we see that Jeroboam II was treated by the redactors of king: similarly to Manasseh, whose deeds were attributed to Hezekiah. Apparently, several achievements of Jeroboam II were attributed to other kings, especially to Solomon and Jeroboam I. According to 1Kgs 9:15, Solomon built Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer, but archaeological evidence indicates that this construction activity occurred later, during the period of Jeroboam II.²⁰

A similar case can be made for the “first” Jeroboam, who is credited with the construction of the shrines of Dan and Bethel and the introduction of bovine statues representing YHWH:

So the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold. He said to the people, “You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Here are your gods,²¹ O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. (1Kgs 12:28–29).

This passage cannot reflect the situation in the tenth century BCE, since, as shown by Eran Arie and Israel Finkelstein, Dan did not become Israelite before the eighth century.²² Following their reconstruction, Dan was destroyed at the end of the late Iron I period. Apparently unoccupied during most of Iron IIA, it was rebuilt by Hazael and later conquered by Israel for the first time around 800 BCE or somewhat later. Hence, 1Kgs 12, in its present form, cannot be a record of the reign of Jeroboam I. It is a polemical fiction that transfers an event from the time of Jeroboam II to the early days of the Northern Kingdom. As Angelika Berlejung puts it, 1Kgs 12 does not contain “reliable historical information about the time of Jeroboam I, but reflects historical facts ... of the time of Jeroboam II.”²³ For these reasons, the story of 1Kgs 12 should be considered as a reassignment of events that happened during the time of Jeroboam II to the first years of the Northern Kingdom. If this transfer from Jeroboam II to Jeroboam I (whether he was a historical figure or not²⁴) reflects in fact a back-dating of eighth-century BCE historical realities, one could argue that it was Jeroboam II who transformed the shrines of Dan and Bethel into Yahwistic sanctuaries,

²⁰ Israel Finkelstein, “Gezer Revisited and Revised,” *TA* 29 (2002): 262–96; Knauf, “Jeroboam,” 301.

²¹ For an explanation of the plural form here, see Römer, “Jeroboam,” 375–76.

²² Eran Arie, “Reconsidering the Iron Age II Strata at Tel Dan: Archaeological and Historical Implications,” *TA* 35 (2008): 6–64; Finkelstein, “Stages,” 230.

²³ Angelika Berlejung, “Twisting Traditions: Programmatic Absence-Theology for the Northern Kingdom in 1Kgs 12:26–33* (the ‘Sin of Jeroboam’),” *JNSL* 35 (2009): 24. For a similar argument, grounded more on literary considerations, see Christoph Levin, “Amos und Jerobeam I.,” *VT* 45 (1995): 307–17, repr. in idem, *Fortschreibungen: Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, BZAW 316 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 256–64; Juha Pakkala, “Jeroboam without Bulls,” *ZAW* 120 (2008): 501–25.

²⁴ I argued for the latter possibility in Thomas Römer, *The Invention of God*, trans. Raymond Geuss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 108 (see also Christian Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, Studienbücher Theologie 2 [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2016], 151–57, 192–93), but I admit that this makes it necessary to identify another historical context in order to explain some strange positive traditions about Jeroboam I.

and who promoted the exodus tradition (perhaps without Moses²⁵) as a national tradition.

1 Kgs 12 clearly indicates that the exodus tradition originated in the north. It is indeed difficult to imagine that the Deuteronomists would have invented the fact that Jeroboam, in 1 Kgs 12, characterizes YHWH as the god who brought the Israelites out of Egypt. If 1 Kgs 12 reflects the time of Jeroboam II, one may conclude that this king tried to officialize the exodus tradition and perhaps to link it in one way or another to the tradition of Jacob, whom he wanted to transform into the ancestor of “Israel.” Apparently the sanctuary of Bethel played a major role in this religious reorganization.

B. Sanctuaries and Foundation Stories: Bethel (and Penuel) and the Jacob Tradition

In the book of Amos, whose activity is dated by the redactors of the book to the days of King Jeroboam (1:1), Bethel is mentioned in the story about the conflict between Amos and Amaziah, the priest of Bethel (7:10–17). This passage interrupts the cycle of prophetic visions and it has been suggested that it is in the wrong place or a late addition to the book.²⁶ There are indeed some indications that this passage in its present form presupposes the Deuteronomistic “exilic” edition of the book of Kings, since the oracle *יִשְׂרָאֵל גָּלוּהָ מֵעַל אֲדָמָתוֹ* (“Israel shall surely go into exile away from its land,” Amos 7:11, 17) sounds like a quotation from 2 Kgs 17:23 and 25:21 (//Jer 52:27). The mention of the “house of Isaac” in Amos 7:16, which is taken up in v. 9 (the “high places of Isaac”) is intriguing. Does “Isaac” here refer to the Southern Kingdom in parallel with Israel (which would indicate a late date), or does the name designate a southern territory that was under the influence of Jeroboam II?²⁷ Amos 7:10–17 conserves some memories from the time of Jeroboam II, as shown by the following observations.

²⁵ According to 2 Kgs 18:3 Hezekiah destroyed in Jerusalem a bronze serpent said to have been made by Moses. This notice, which can hardly be an invention, places Moses in a Jerusalemite setting. Hezekiah’s elimination of this (Egyptian-inspired) cult object is best explained by the fact that he had become an Assyrian vassal; cf. Kristin A. Swanson, “A Reassessment of Hezekiah’s Reform in Light of Jar Handles and Iconographic Evidence,” *CBQ* 64 (2002): 460–69.

²⁶ Jürgen Werlitz, “Amos und sein Biograph. Zur Entstehung und Intention der Propheten-erzählung Am 7,10–17,” *BZ* 44 (2000): 233–50; Jakob Wöhrle, *Die frühen Sammlungen des Zwölfprophetenbuches: Entstehung und Komposition*, BZAW 360 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 110–13; Knauf, “Jeroboam,” 297–300. Melanie Köhlmoos imagines a redactor who was working between 720 and 587 BCE. *Bet-El – Erinnerungen an eine Stadt: Perspektiven der alttestamentlichen Bet-El-Überlieferung*, FAT 49 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 109–10. According to Köhlmoos, this narrative explains why the royal cult in Bethel came to an end after 720 BCE.

²⁷ Northern influence on the south is also attested by the findings in Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, which date to the time of Jeroboam II; see below.

First, a prophetic oracle in v. 11 announces Jeroboam's death by the sword, but this does not correspond to the historical reality of his death; therefore this unfulfilled announcement may reflect a saying of the "historical Amos."

Second, the priest Amaziah designates the sanctuary of Bethel in v. 13 as a *מִקְדָּשׁ-מֶלֶךְ* (royal sanctuary) and a *בַּיִת מִמְלָכָה* (royal house/temple),²⁸ which seems to indicate that Bethel has recently gained importance and become a key royal sanctuary. This comports with the archaeological evidence for Bethel in the time of Jeroboam II. Israel Finkelstein and Lily Singer-Avitz have argued that in the first millennium BCE, Bethel was the site of a substantial settlement only during the eighth and early seventh centuries and that it declined during the Babylonian and Persian periods.²⁹

Amos 7:13 indicates that Bethel had been promoted under Jeroboam II as an important royal sanctuary to which the king or his theologians wanted to link the Jacob traditions.³⁰ Therefore, the patriarch had to change his name to "Israel" in order to become the official ancestor of the north. According to the Jacob cycle itself, the patriarch was the founder of the sanctuary of Bethel.

Genesis 28:10–22 relates Jacob's foundation and naming of the sanctuary of Bethel. The original story can be found either in 28:11–13a₁, 16–19³¹ or in

²⁸ Note that both expressions are undetermined, which indicates the existence of other royal sanctuaries.

²⁹ Israel Finkelstein and Lily Singer-Avitz, "Reevaluating Bethel," *ZDPV* 125 (2009): 33–48. This view has recently been challenged by Nadav Na'aman and by Oded Lipschits, who argue that the biblical account cannot be explained by such a hypothesis. Na'aman, "Does Archaeology Really Deserve the Status of a 'High Court' in Biblical Historical Research?," in *Between Evidence and Ideology: Essays on the History of Ancient Israel Read at the Joint Meeting of the Society for Old Testament Study and the Oud Testamentisch Werkgezelschap, Lincoln, July 2009*, ed. Bob Becking and Lester L. Grabbe, OTS 59 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 178; Lipschits, "Bethel Revisited," in *Rethinking Israel: Studies in the History and Archaeology of Ancient Israel in Honor of Israel Finkelstein*, ed. Oded Lipschits, Yuval Gadot, and Matthew J. Adams (Winona Lake, IN; Eisenbrauns, 2017), 233–46. In any case it is clear that according to 2 Kgs 17:25–41, cultic activity continued in Bethel after 722 BCE, and this statement is hardly an invention of the author of 2 Kgs 17. Although the story is quite preposterous, it indicates that Bethel continued to be a Yahwistic sanctuary after the fall of Samaria. According to 2 Kgs 23:15 Josiah destroyed the sanctuary of Bethel. This may be a theological claim, or a bit of wishful thinking triggered by the idea that Josiah brought the sin of Jeroboam to an end (interestingly, nothing is said about the shrine of Dan, where cultic activities continued apparently until the Roman period). Whether Bethel still played an important role in the Persian period must remain an open question. It is mentioned in only a few biblical texts: Ezra 2:28 // Neh 7:32 and Neh 11:31.

³⁰ For the following, see Israel Finkelstein and Thomas Römer, "Comments on the Historical Background of the Jacob Narrative in Genesis," *ZAW* 126 (2014): 317–38.

³¹ So, among others, Erhard Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte*, WMANT 57 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984), 8–34. Adepts of the Documentary Hypothesis distinguished between the Yahwistic speech in vv. 13–16 and an Elohistic narrative in vv. 10–12* and 19a; see Christoph Levin, *Der Jahwist*, FRLANT 157 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 216–17; Klaus Koenen, *Bethel: Geschichte, Kult und Theologie*, OBO 192 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 152–59.

28:11–13aα, 15*, 16–19.³² If the narrative is taken to describe YHWH as standing next to Jacob, there must be another deity in heaven, namely El. This concept is also reflected in the original version of Deut 32:8, according to which YHWH is understood as a son of El.³³ It is therefore possible that Gen 28:10–22* was written down in the time of Jeroboam II in order to establish Jacob as the founder of an El sanctuary that the king had transformed into a royal sanctuary, and to set a precedent for the worship of YHWH in this sanctuary. Although YHWH was probably already worshiped as the dynastic deity of the Omrides,³⁴ it is likely that Jeroboam II wanted to strengthen this cult throughout his kingdom.³⁵

The story of how Jacob became Israel in Gen 32:23–32,³⁶ which reflects an attempt to transform the figure of Jacob into the ancestor of “Israel,” is set at the sanctuary of Penuel, which, like Bethel in Gen 28, is also named by Jacob. The site of Penuel is probably older than Bethel, but the monumental podium of Tell edh-Dhahab esh-Sharqi in the valley of the Jabbok does not seem to belong to the early Iron IIA period but to a later moment, perhaps during the reign of Jeroboam II.³⁷ The Gileadite hero Jacob was probably first commemorated in Penuel,³⁸ before Jeroboam (or his clergy) made him the founder of Bethel.

³² Erhard Blum, “Noch einmal: Jakobs Traum in Bethel – Genesis 28,10–22,” in *Rethinking the Foundations: Historiography in the Ancient World and in the Bible. Essays in Honour of John Van Seters*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and Thomas Römer, BZAW 294 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 47–49. Blum’s argument is based on the observation that Hos 12:4b alludes to the fact that God spoke to Jacob at Bethel. The fact that Hos 12:4 uses the root *dbr* and not *’mr* has been interpreted by Jacob Wöhrle as an indication that Hos 12 presupposes the Priestly text of Gen 35:14–15. Wöhrle, “Jacob, Moses, Levi. Pentateuchal Figures in the Book of the Twelve,” in *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel and North America*, ed. Jan C. Gertz et al., FAT III (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 997–1014, at 1003–1004; see already Henrik Pfeiffer, *Das Heiligtum von Bethel im Spiegel des Hoseabuches*, FRLANT 183 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 178. But can this theory stand on such a common root as *dbr*? In any case, the association of a divine vision with a promise of divine assistance is very common in Neo-Assyrian oracles, in which Ishtar (or another deity) presents herself to the king and promises him assistance. It is therefore not necessary to rely on Hos 12:4b for the above reconstruction.

³³ Nicolas Wyatt, “The Seventy Sons of Athirat, the Nations of the World, Deuteronomy 32.6b, 8–9 and the Myth of the Divine Election,” in *Reflection and Refraction: Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld*, ed. Robert Rezetko, Timothy H. Lim, and W. Brian Aucker, VTSup 113 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 547–56.

³⁴ As indicated by the Mesha Stela. See also Matthias Köckert, “YHWH in the Northern and Southern Kingdom,” in *One God – One Cult – One Nation: Archaeological and Biblical Perspectives*, ed. Reinhard G. Kratz and Hermann Spieckermann, BZAW 405 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 364–66.

³⁵ Finkelstein, “Corpus,” 271.

³⁶ The original story can be reconstructed roughly in vv. 23, 25b, 26a, and 27–32a. Römer, “Jeroboam,” 379–80.

³⁷ Finkelstein, “Corpus,” 271n39.

³⁸ Gen 32:23–32 focuses indeed on this new name, and the etiology of Penuel is not as important as Jacob’s new name. It is possible that the etiology was added because of a memory of an old link between the *bēnē Ya‘āqōb* and Penuel.

Genesis 28:10–22* and 32:23–32* share stylistic and theological similarities that suggest they were both created by the scribes of Jeroboam II.³⁹

Although the account of the separation between Jacob and Laban in Gen 29–31* contains older material,⁴⁰ it was also revised under Jeroboam II. In the context of the eighth century BCE, when Israel was at war with Aram and under Jeroboam II managed to annex some Aramean territories,⁴¹ a tale of conflict between the Aramaean Laban and the Israelite Jacob makes good sense. Even the conflict between Jacob (Israel) and Esau (Edom) and their reconciliation can be understood in terms of the time of Jeroboam II. The graffiti from Kuntillet 'Ajrud, which date to the first half of the eighth century,⁴² provide evidence that at this site YHWH was addressed as the "YHWH of Samaria" and the "YHWH of Teman" (with and without the definite article). On the one hand, these epithets recall the "YHWH of Dan" and the "YHWH of Bethel" in 1 Kgs 12. On the other hand, they indicate that a relationship between Jacob (Israel) and Esau/Edom (Teman, which is often located in the territory of Edom) is plausible in the context of the eighth century.

Jeroboam II's attempt to officialize the Jacob tradition and relate it to the sanctuary of Bethel was heavily criticized by the prophet Hosea or his editors. Hosea, like Amos, is also dated to the reign of Jeroboam II (Hos 1:1).

As often noted, Hos 12 depicts the Jacob tradition, which was well known to the author of this text, in a very pejorative way and juxtaposes this negative view of the patriarch with the exodus tradition (YHWH is a god related to Egypt and the exodus).⁴³

It is difficult to imagine that the Jacob narrative in Genesis would have been constructed on the basis of Hos 12.⁴⁴ Rather, this text presupposes the audience's knowledge of a Jacob story, and the numerous literary parallels between Hos 12

³⁹ Both encounters take place at night; in both stories sanctuaries with the theophoric element El are mentioned. Both narratives are short and sober.

⁴⁰ The earliest Jacob traditions were local to the Israelite territory in Gilead, possibly to the early core area of the territory named Gilead. For the Israelite territories in Gilead, see Israel Finkelstein, Ido Koch, and Oded Lipschits, "The Biblical Gilead: Observations on Identifications, Geographic Divisions, and Territorial History," *UF* 43 (2012): 131–59.

⁴¹ Israel Finkelstein, "Stages," 227–42.

⁴² Israel Finkelstein and Eli Piasezky, "The Date of Kuntillet 'Ajrud: The 14C Perspective," *TA* 35 (2008): 135–85.

⁴³ Albert de Pury, "Osée 12 et ses implications pour le débat actuel sur le Pentateuque," in *Le Pentateuque: Débats et recherches*, ed. Pierre Haudebert, LD 151 (Paris: Cerf, 1992), 175–207; Erhard Blum, "Hosea 12 und die Pentateuchüberlieferungen," *Die Erzväter in der biblischen Tradition: Festschrift für Matthias Köckert*, ed. Anselm C. Hagedorn and Henrik Pfeiffer, BZAW 400 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 291–321; Martin Schott, "Die Jakobspassagen in Hos 12," *ZTK* 112 (2015): 1–26.

⁴⁴ As argued by William D. Whitt, "The Jacob Traditions in Hosea and Their Relation to Genesis," *ZAW* (1991): 18–43.

and Gen 25–33*⁴⁵ may indicate that this story was close to the pre-Priestly Jacob narrative.⁴⁶

The negative view of Jacob in Hos 12 reflects (prophetic) opposition to Jeroboam II's politics. Amos and Hosea or their early editors were hostile to the sanctuary of Bethel, maybe because Jeroboam II wanted to transform it from an El shrine into a YHWH shrine. Hosea 10:15 announces the death of the king of Israel (Jeroboam II?) because of the “wickedness” of Bethel (10:15), which is called Bet-aven in 10:5 (and in 4:15, 5:8).⁴⁷ Given the very positive presentation of the exodus tradition in Hos 12 and the harsh critique of Bethel (see also Amos 3:14 and 4:14), it seems unlikely that the exodus tradition was kept and transmitted in Bethel.

C. Samaria and the Exodus Tradition

As already indicated by the title “YHWH of Samaria” in the inscriptions of Kuntillet 'Ajrud, there was almost certainly a temple of YHWH in the capital of Israel, which is quite logical. Curiously, the book of Kings is silent about such a temple. There is, however, one verse that hints at a YHWH sanctuary in Samaria. According to 1Kgs 16:32, King Ahab built an altar to Ba'al in the temple of Ba'al. The double mention of Ba'al here is awkward. LXX avoids the repetition and reads “in the house of his abominations.” As Pakkala has argued, both readings are attempts to avoid the original version, which spoke of a temple of YHWH, and this is indeed historically plausible. The original offense of 1Kgs 16:23 would then have been the building of an altar for Ba'al in the temple of YHWH.⁴⁸ The alteration of the original text in 1Kgs 16:23 can be explained in the context of the Persian period: the Judean redactors of the book of Kings wanted to avoid any allusion to a temple of YHWH in Samaria.

The worship of a bull in Samaria is also attested in the book of Hosea, which contains a critique of this bovine statue and announces its destruction (8:5–6).⁴⁹ The existence of a temple in Samaria is also confirmed by the Nimrud prism, in

⁴⁵ For these parallels, see Blum, “Hosea 12”; Finkelstein and Römer, “Comments,” 321–22.

⁴⁶ For an attempt to consider Hos 12 as a post-Priestly composition, see above.

⁴⁷ For Beth-aven, which in other texts designates another place, see Nadav Na'aman, “Beth-aven, Bethel and Early Israelite Sanctuaries,” *ZDPV* 103 (1987): 13–21.

⁴⁸ Juha Pakkala, *God's Word Omitted: Omissions in the Transmission of the Hebrew Bible*, FRLANT 251 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 231–33. See also Köckert, “YHWH,” 365.

⁴⁹ Philological and diachronic analysis of this oracle shows that it is composite. In its present form the passage dates from the Persian period because its ideology is very similar to that of Second Isaiah. The oldest form of the oracle, however, may reflect the situation just before or after 722 BCE.

which the Assyrian king praises himself for the destruction of Samaria and the deportation of “the gods in whom they trusted.”⁵⁰

Archaeologists have not discovered any clear evidence of the existence of a sanctuary in Samaria, but excavations have not been undertaken throughout the entire territory of the city. It is possible that current excavations of an area about 650 meters to the east of the acropolis, which was occupied during the Iron Age, will find evidence that indicates the existence of a sanctuary there.⁵¹ Whatever the results of these excavations, though, the capital of the kingdom must have had an important sanctuary.

YHWH was probably worshipped as the god of the exodus in Samaria.⁵² The fact that the exodus tradition is related in 1Kgs 12 to Bethel and Dan does not speak against this hypothesis, especially if 1Kgs 12 is a retrojection from the time of Jeroboam II. Under “Jeroboam I,” Samaria was not yet the capital of Israel, and the Deuteronomists locate its founding in the reign of Omri. For this reason they had no other choice than to link the exodus with Bethel and Dan.

D. Dan

The biblical text does not give much information about the sanctuary of Dan. As already mentioned, the site was unoccupied during most of Iron IIA, then rebuilt by Hazael, and later conquered by Israel for the first time around 800 BCE or somewhat later.⁵³ According to 1Kgs 12, Dan was a border sanctuary for the north, as Bethel was for the south. The golden calves of Bethel and Dan are mentioned again by the Deuteronomists in 2Kgs 10:29, but there is no Israelite foundation tradition related to the sanctuary of Dan.

The Masoretic text of Amos 8:14 states: “They swear by the sin of Samaria and they say: ‘Long live your god, Dan! Long live the path (*derek*) of Beer-sheba!’”⁵⁴ The link between Dan and Beer-sheba recalls the mention of Isaac in Amos 7:9 and 16 and may indicate that Jeroboam II exercised some control over this area. One might speculate that the Isaac tradition was known through Beer-sheba in the Northern Kingdom, which could explain how Isaac became the father

⁵⁰ See, for instance, Bob Becking, *The Fall of Samaria: An Historical and Archaeological Study*, SHCANE 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 29–30.

⁵¹ Detlef Jericke, *Regionaler Kult und lokaler Kult: Studien zur Kult- und Religionsgeschichte Israels und Judas im 9. und 8. Jahrhundert v. Chr.*, ADPV 39 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 90–91.

⁵² Finkelstein, “Corpus,” 269–71.

⁵³ Arie, “Reconsidering.”

⁵⁴ The word *derek* (path, trail) makes no sense in this context. LXX reads “god” (*theós*) instead of “path,” and so we can deduce that the original text had *ddk* (*dôdēkā*), meaning “your Dôd” or “Your well-beloved” (as in the Mesha Stela), in place of *drk*: “Long live your god, Dan! Long live your Well-Beloved (*dwd*), Beer-Sheba!”

of Jacob. The “god of Samaria” is probably YHWH, as shown by the parallelism with the “sin of Samaria.” The worship of the “god of Dan” (*ʿēlohē Dān*) is still attested in the second century BCE in a bilingual inscription in Greek and Aramaic which reads in Greek, ΘΕΩΙ ΤΩΙ ΕΝ ΔΑΝΟΙΣ (“to the god who is in Dan”).⁵⁵ It remains difficult to ascertain whether this reflects an ongoing YHWH cult in Dan and to which tradition(s) this cult was related.

E. Kiriath-jearim and the Ark of YHWH

The site of Kiriath-jearim (Deir el-ʿAzar), named several times in the Bible,⁵⁶ is never mentioned in direct connection with the reign of Jeroboam II. There are, however, some indications that the original ark narrative, which ended in 1 Sam 7:1⁵⁷ and told how the ark found a “new home” in Kiriath-jearim, was composed during the reign of Jeroboam II. Interestingly, the narrative does not relate that the ark was returned by the Philistines to the sanctuary of Shiloh, its original emplacement. The transfer of the ark from Shiloh to Kiriath-jearim may reflect the abandonment of the shrine of Shiloh. According to Israel Finkelstein’s excavations, the site was abandoned or destroyed in the middle of the eleventh century BCE and then sparsely repopulated during the eighth and seventh centuries BCE.⁵⁸ Preliminary results from the current excavation of the site seem to emphasize activity during the eighth century BCE, but there are no publications so far.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Avraham Biran, “‘To the God Who is in Dan,’” in *Temples and High Places in Biblical Times: Proceedings of the Colloquium in Honor of the Centennial of Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion*, ed. Avraham Biran (Jerusalem: Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology of Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, 1981), 142–53.

⁵⁶ See the enumeration in Israel Finkelstein, Thomas Römer, et al., “Excavations at Kiriath-jearim Near Jerusalem, 2017: Preliminary Report,” *Sem* 60 (2018): 33–38.

⁵⁷ The transfer of the ark to Jerusalem in 2 Sam 6 is a later addition. Cf. Patrick D. Miller and J. J. M. Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord: A Reassessment of the “Ark Narrative” of 1 Samuel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); Franz Schickelberger, *Die Ladeerzählungen des ersten Samuel-Buches: Eine literaturwissenschaftliche und theologiegeschichtliche Untersuchung*, FZ 7 (Würzburg: Echter, 1973); Christa Schäfer-Lichtenberger, “Beobachtungen zur Ladegeschichte und zur Komposition der Samuelbücher,” in *Freiheit und Recht (FS F. Crüsemann)*, ed. Christoph Hardmeier, Rainer Kessler, and Andreas Ruwe (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1995), 323–38; Peter Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes im Alten Testament und in den Texten vom Toten Meer*, BZAW 397 (Berlin: Gruyter, 2009), 134–56.

⁵⁸ Israel Finkelstein, “Seilun, Khirbet,” *ABD* 5:1069–1072; Israel Finkelstein and Baruch Brandl, *Shiloh: The Archaeology of a Biblical Site*, SMNIA 10 (Tel Aviv: Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University, 1993).

⁵⁹ Don McNeeley, “A Brief Overview of Discoveries from the Shiloh Excavations, 2017,” Associates for Biblical Research, August 1, 2017, <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2017/08/01/A-Brief-Overview-of-Discoveries-from-the-Shiloh-Excavations-2017.aspx#Article> (accessed July 22, 2018).

In any case, at the end of the story about the lost ark that finally returned, Shiloh vanishes from the scene, and there is no explanation why the ark was not brought back to its original place. Therefore, it is plausible that the original ark narrative ended with the installation of the ark in Kiriath-jearim. According to the biblical record the ark remained about twenty years in this place (1 Sam 7:2). This may indicate that Kiriath-jearim contained a sanctuary housing the palladium of the warrior god YHWH.

The assumption that there was a sanctuary in Kiriath-jearim is supported by 1 Sam 7:1, according to which Abinadab's son, who hosted the ark, was consecrated as a priest: "And the people of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the ark of YHWH, and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill. They consecrated his son, Eleazar, to have charge of the ark of YHWH." In this case, one of the aims of the ark narrative would have been to explain how the shrine of Kiriath-jearim replaced the sanctuary of Shiloh. The 2017 and 2019 excavations at Kiriath-jearim has revealed the existence of an important wall around a man-made podium that may have supported a shrine (of the ark); a Byzantine church was built near this site in the first centuries of the Christian era, and at the beginning of the twentieth century the basilica of Notre Dame de l'Arche de l'Alliance was erected there. The wall can be dated to the first half of the eighth century BCE, and thus Jeroboam II was most likely responsible for the wall and the sanctuary.⁶⁰ In this case the first edition of the so-called ark narrative could have been written by the scribes of Jeroboam II in order to legitimate the shrine of Kiriath-jearim.

F. Conclusion

This investigation has shown that the reign of Jeroboam II was the setting for the formation of northern foundation traditions that made their way into the kingdom of Judah after 722 BCE. The exodus tradition was originally transmitted in the north when Jeroboam II ruled, perhaps in the temple of Samaria. Jeroboam II also tried to officialize the Jacob traditions at the El shrine of Bethel, which he transformed into a Yahwistic sanctuary. He probably also built a shrine in Kiriath-jearim that hosted the ark traditions.

Indeed, the Hebrew Bible contains many other northern traditions,⁶¹ especially in the book of Judges, which certainly has a northern origin, and in the traditions about the rise of Saul. Interestingly, the book of Numbers contains in its second part conquest traditions that are related to Transjordan and the North. Some of them seem to reflect conquests by the Omrides, but the stories could well have

⁶⁰ For more details, see Finkelstein and Römer, et al., "Excavations," 52–60.

⁶¹ See Finkelstein, "Corpus."

been written down during the reign of Jeroboam II in order to legitimate his ideas of territorial expansion.⁶² Despite the efforts of Judean redactors to eliminate or transform northern traditions during the compilation of biblical texts, and despite the Deuteronomistic attempt to downplay the reign of Jeroboam II, these traditions persisted and can be uncovered in the Hebrew Bible.

⁶² Israel Finkelstein and Thomas Römer, “Early North Israelite ‘Memories’ of Moab,” in Gertz et al., *Formation of the Pentateuch*, 718–19.