

Jeroboam's Sin and Bethel in 1Kgs 12:25-33

Juha Pakkala – University of Helsinki

Jeroboam's sin is described in 1Kgs 12:25-33. Several other texts in the books of 1-2Kgs also refer to the sin, but are evidently dependent on this passage.¹ It is also probable that the golden calves in Exod 32:1-35 and Deut 9:7-21 are dependent on Jeroboam's calf of 1Kgs 12:25-33.²

It is commonly accepted that the main idea of 1Kgs 12:25-33 derives from the history writer (DtrH).³ Otherwise, the integral and central role of Jeroboam's sin in the whole composition is difficult to understand. Almost all kings of the Northern Kingdom are condemned because of continuing in Jeroboam's sin.⁴ Although the passage has been edited by later writers, its main idea was not disturbed by them. Later editing is often found in v. 32-33,⁵ but there may be some glosses or words added by later editors throughout the passage. For the purposes of this article, it is not necessary to identify the additions in detail. Nevertheless, verses 32-33, will not be treated as their secondary origin is often assumed.⁶

¹ 1Kgs 15:26, 34; 16:19, 26, 31; 22:53; 2Kgs 3:3; 10:29, 31; 13:2, 6, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28. All these passages refer to 1Kgs 12:25-33 directly.

² This view has recently been argued by *Schmitt* (2000, 237-240), *Kratz* (2000, 139-141, 150) and *Gertz* (2001, 91-95). According to them, Exod 32-34 is dependent on the priestly additions to the Pentateuch. *Särkiö* (1998, 156-158) assumes an earlier version of the tradition that lies behind 1Kgs 12:25-32 influenced Exod 32:1-35 and Deut 9:7-21. I will not go into the details in this context, but already the fact that the calves in Exod and Deut are restricted to one chapter implies that they are not integral to the composition, but were brought in later. In addition, Exod uses the plural verb even when referring to one calf only. One may assume that the plural form of Exod 32:8 was taken from 1Kgs 12. Exod 32 also gives details on how the calf was constructed, which is reminiscent of the late attack on idols especially in Deutero-Isaiah (Is 40:19-20). Further on, many expressions in Exod 32 (as well as in Deut 9) are more developed and are otherwise known from late texts only, e.g. in Exod 32:9. Even the expression used for the calf is עגל מסכה instead of a shorter עגל. The longer form עגל מסכה appears only in Exod 32, Deut 9 and Neh 9:18. The whole chapter Exod 32 seems to be heavily influenced by late – nomistic and priestly – phraseology and theology. Although one could try to find an earlier core in Exod 32, its central texts on which the additions depend on are later than 1Kgs 12:25-33. Thus also *Gertz* 2001, 91-95. The same can be said of Deut 9, although it is possible that this passage is generally even later than Exod 32.

³ Among many others, *Würthwein* 1977, 162-163 and *Campbell – O'Brien* 2000, 374-376.

⁴ With the exception of Elah (1Kgs 16:8-10), Shallum (2Kgs 15:13-15) and Hoshea (2Kgs 17:2). The reason why the sin is not mentioned in connection with Elah and Shallum may be the short period that they reigned. Hoshea was the last king of Israel and his evaluation is slightly more positive than that of any other Israelite king.

⁵ *Debus* (1967, 35-37) ascribes v. 25-32 to the history writer. According to *Hentschel* (1984, 84-85) v. 26-29, 30b derive from the history writer. *Würthwein* (1977, 162) finds the earliest layer of the deuteronomists in v. 25-30, whereas v. 31-33 would be later additions. Also according to *Provan* (1988, 78-81), v. 31-32 are a later addition.

⁶ Verse 30 may be a later addition, because it breaks the description of Jeroboam's measures. V. 31 assumes the subject to be Jeroboam as in v. 29, but v. 30 has changed the subject (twice). For the purposes of this paper it is not imperative to determine whether v. 30, or parts of it as is often assumed, is a later addition or not. On the other hand, it is possible that v. 29 derives from a source and v. 30 from the history writer, which would explain the problematic grammar. Further on, there is nothing to argue that v. 31 is a later addition. The verse is well in line with the main idea on v. 25-30 as well as with the main theological idea of the history writer we know from

It is probable that the history writer had access to sources about Jeroboam. Traces of these sources are found throughout 1Kgs 11-14. Unfortunately, they were used selectively and were shaped to serve the editor's purposes. For example, in 1Kgs 11:27 we are told that the story of Jeroboam's rebellion will follow, but it does not. Instead, we have a prophetic legend that gives the divine legitimization to Jeroboam's future kingdom. As many scholars have pointed out, only parts of the original story have been used.⁷ The source has mainly served the history writer's compositional plan. In 1Kgs 12:25-31 traces of sources are often found in v. 25 and v. 29, but they also have been used to serve the history writer's central idea. There has been considerable amount of speculation on the historicity, sources and historical background of this passage, but in my view, the sources are too fragmentary and too scarce to make any far-reaching conclusions. The main historical contribution of many Biblical texts may be what they tell about the time of writing. Stories about Jeroboam were put into the present composition not earlier than 300 years after the actual events. Centuries of transmission, as well as selecting and final editing by the history writer have blurred the original information taken from the sources. It is possible to use 1Kgs 11-14 as a source for 10th century Israel, but we may remain on a speculative level. There may be something historical but we do not know exactly which part, and it is difficult to separate from later influences. In any case, we should identify and understand the main editor of the composition and his historical background before we could even consider using as historical evidence the sources that he has used. The importance and centrality of 1Kgs 12:25-31 in the history writer's composition implies that the passage had an important function in the history writer's own time and for the history writer.

In order to understand 1Kgs 12:25-31, it is first necessary to understand what he did *not* mean. Now, also the later editors of the DH, the post history writer editors, referred to Jeroboam's sin, but they interpreted it differently than the history writer. For them Jeroboam's sin was an act of apostasy from Yahweh: Jeroboam made false gods, worshipped them and thus broke the first commandment. This interpretation is found in 1Kgs 14:9 and 16:26.⁸ In general, however, in the later additions – e.g., nomistic (DtrN) additions – of the DH Jeroboam receives very little attention. For example, when the destruction of the Northern Kingdom is described in 2Kgs 17, the nomists and other late editors active in v. 7-20 have not even commented on Jeroboam.⁹ References to Jeroboam's sin appear only in the history writer's text, in 2Kgs 17:21-23. For the history writer, Jeroboam's sin is the main reason for the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, whereas the later editors ignored the idea. For the later editors the main reason for the destruction was apostasy, the worship of other gods. Jeroboam's sin is a history writer's theme.

In another context, I have argued that one may see a clear division and development inside the DH or inside the so called deuteronomistic tradition between the history writer and the second major phase of editing, the nomistic phase (DtrN). The attitude towards the other gods is one of the clearest areas where this difference can be seen.¹⁰ Whereas the nomists and

other texts. Also v. 32 is not necessary a later addition. It is not in contradiction with the preceding text, but continues it in a logical manner, showing a further measure or change originated by Jeroboam. Also grammatically, it is not problematic. V. 33 seems to show some repetition in relation to the preceding text, and may be a later addition. Overall, for the purposes of this paper it is not imperative to determine whether v. 32-33 belong to the history writer or not.

⁷ Campbell – O'Brien 2000, 371.

⁸ Both passages are commonly accepted as late. See Pakkala 1999, 157, 159.

⁹ It is often acknowledged that v. 7-20 derive from later editors. See Würthwein 1985, 396-398 and Henschel 1985, 79-83.

¹⁰ The change in attitude towards the monarchy has been shown by Veijola 1977, 115-122.

some other later editors are preoccupied with the other gods and their criticism, the theme is unimportant in the history writer's text. References to other gods and their criticism in the DH derive from the later editors of the work.¹¹ Some scholars interpret Jeroboam's sin through the nomistic spectacles of the final form of the DH and understand the criticism in the passage to be aimed at idolatry or at apostasy from Yahweh's exclusive worship.¹² Such an interpretation may be rendered by Exod 32:1-35 and Dt 9:7-21, but cannot be found in 1Kgs 12.¹³ The Deuteronomistic history writer did not accuse Jeroboam of apostasy from Yahweh. The history writer's motives and interests in the event are elsewhere.

The first detail in 1Kgs 12:25-31 one should pay attention to is the formula in v. 28. Jeroboam is told to have said to the Israelites: הנה אלהיך ישראל אשר העלוך מארץ מצרים "look, here are your gods/is your god that brought you out of Egypt." This formula can only refer to Yahweh.¹⁴ It is one of the main theological ideas in the DH and the Pentateuch that Yahweh is the God that brought Israel out of Egypt. And now, according to the history writer, Jeroboam was dependent on the same idea and even implied a similar confessional formula. If the history writer had just wanted to criticize and ridicule Jeroboam's cult policy more than three centuries earlier, he should have been quite free to characterize the cult as blatantly foreign. Consequently, the history writer regarded the cult initiated by Jeroboam's as that of Yahweh. The use of a formulation that binds Jeroboam with the same religious tradition as he himself represents, implies that the history writer is actually criticizing a form of Yahweh-cult that was contemporary and theologically close to his own theology. Both shared the idea that Yahweh had brought the Israelites out of Egypt.¹⁵

The main offence of the passage is revealed by the strongly Jerusalemite perspective: Jeroboam poses a serious challenge to Jerusalem and its temple. This is well illustrated in v. 27-28. According to the history writer, Jeroboam made the calves because he wanted to provide the Israelites with an alternative for Salomon's temple in Jerusalem. The history writer wanted to show the reader that this challenge was illegitimate, for it was based on political interests and selfish motives: By making the calves, Jeroboam only wanted to protect his own life and his new kingdom. The writer implies that Yahweh's cult at competing locations at Dan and Bethel did not have any divine basis or blessing. Invented by man, they could not compete with Yahweh's legitimate cult in Jerusalem. In contrast, it is an important motif for the history writer to show that Jerusalem's cult has a legitimate basis.¹⁶ Interest in the temple of Jerusalem and cult centralization are leading ideas of his theology. In evaluating the Kings, relationship to the temple plays an important role.¹⁷ In the final form of the DH this idea has partly been hidden by the nomistic criticism of the other gods. The nomists show clearly less interest in the temple than the history writer.¹⁸ Because of the nomistic additions, many readers are misguided about the history writer's original idea.

¹¹ See *Pakkala* (1999) for details and argumentation.

¹² For example, *Noth* 1968, 283-284; *Grey* 1970, 315-316; *Jones* 1984, 258; *Campbell – O'Brien* 2000, 375.

¹³ Exod 32:1-35 and Deut 9:7-21 should be seen against the background of the second commandment. As noted above, both passage are probably later than 1Kgs 12.

¹⁴ E.g., Deut 5:6; 6:21; 1Sam 12:6; 2Kgs 17:7.

¹⁵ That the history writer uses the plural verb העלוך in v. 28 may have had the purpose of showing that if there are many cult places, it will also imply the existence of many Yahwehs. It is difficult to know if such an idea had been offensive in the preexilic religion (there is of course a wide discussion about this issue), but it quite probably was in the later religion from the beginning of the exile onwards.

¹⁶ For example, 2Sam 7:13; 1Kgs 5-7.

¹⁷ E.g., 2Kgs 12:1-16 and 2Kgs 22:3-7. The reparation of the temple may actually be a central reason for the very positive evaluation of Josiah.

¹⁸ See *Pakkala* 1999, 214-217.

Verse 31 further demonstrates that the main problem in 1Kgs 12:25-31 was the challenge Jeroboam's measures posed to the temple. Jeroboam is the initiator of the sinful cult at the *במורת*. The problem is not the worship of the other gods, but the existence of the *במורת*. They are in conflict with the cult centralization (Dt 12) and compete with the temple. Contrary to some nomistic additions (e.g., 1Kgs 11:7-8), there is nothing in the history writer's texts to imply that the cult at the *במורת* would have been other than that of Yahweh. This is also the case in 1Kgs 12:31.

It is significant that the destruction of the calves is not told in the DH. In fact, the history writer and the whole DH is silent as to what happened to the calves after Jeroboam made them. We only have one remark in 2Kgs 10:29 that during Jehu's time they still existed, but even there, no further comment is given.¹⁹ Description of their destruction or defamation would have been an excellent place to ridicule Jeroboam's cult and remind about the consequences of sin. Since none of this happens, it seems fair to assume that the history writer did not have major interest in the calves as such.²⁰ His interest was the location of the cult.

It is probable that the history writer did not invent the calves, but adopted them from one of his sources. If they had been his invention, he would have used them frequently in his composition and certainly describe their destruction. In other words, they would have been better integrated into the composition. The problem of integrating the calves into the composition may be the best proof that one of the history writer's sources connected Jeroboam with golden calves.²¹ His sources probably did not tell what happened to the calves and for that reason we also do not know their fate.²² Obviously, the history writer is not very interested in the fate either. In any case, the amount of information on the calves is too limited to allow further speculation on their historicity.

It seems that the reference to Dan in the passage has a similar background. Dan does not have any religious relevance in the DH after 1Kgs 12. Like the calves, Dan disappears. Outside the DH, the calves and Dan in the religious sense are mentioned only in passages that are dependent on 1Kgs 12:25-31. It is possible that an older source in some way connected Dan with Jeroboam, but without additional sources, further speculation may be futile.²³

¹⁹ This verse may be a later addition, as almost the same idea is repeated in v. 31. It is probable that v. 17 was originally continued by v. 30 so that v. 18-29 would derive from a later editor.

²⁰ It also shows that the history writer was not attacking idols. This was not his theme, but a later interpretation of the nomists and other later editors.

²¹ Since the history writer really does not need the calves in his compositions, without assuming a source that connected Jeroboam with calves that had cultic importance, it would be difficult to comprehend why would he connect the calves with Jeroboam. One could of course suggest that the source would have been Exod 32, but the same problem appears also there. The calves do not play a role in the Pentateuch outside Exod 32 and Deut 9.

²² Hos 8:6 predicts that the calf of Samaria will be destroyed (*שבר*), but Hos 8:4-6 as a whole already implies familiarity with Exod 32, 1Kgs 12 and the late attack on idols. Moreover, according to Hos 10:5-6 the calf will be deported to Assyria. *Nissinen* (1991, 339-340) suggests that the surrounding passage may derive from the 8th century. At the same time he acknowledges that the references to the calf and later additions and dates them to time immediately following the destruction of the Northern kingdom. However, the fact that the editor (the same editor according to *Nissinen's* reconstruction) in v. 5 and 8 has combined high places (v. 8) with the calves (v. 5) implies familiarity with 1Kgs 12 and the history writer's attack on the high places.

²³ It is also difficult to see how Dan could have played an important role in the 7th and 6th century discussion. Whereas the distance from Jerusalem to Bethel is about 20 km, the distance from Jerusalem to Dan is about 200 km. By the 7th and 6th centuries, Dan was very isolated from Judah and its religious discussion. This could also explain why Dan is not so well integrated to the composition. Unfortunately, the excavations at Dan have not yet been able to establish a clear picture of the Iron Age strata. The excavator *Biran* (1993, 327-328) is convinced that Jeroboam built the cult place that was discovered at the site. The origin of the cult place was also dated to the end of the 10th century. In principle, it would fit with the here presented theory that there was and Israelite

In contrast, Bethel's religious importance in the DH and the OT is evident. First of all, in 2Kgs 23:15a, which may derive from the history writer, there is a comment on Bethel that corresponds well to 1Kgs 12:25-31. King Josiah is claimed to have destroyed the *במה* and the altar at Bethel. In 1Kgs 12:25-31 the sin is introduced and in 2Kgs 23:15a it is canceled. If this verse would derive from the history writer, it would betray that the history writer's main interest in 1Kgs 12:25-31 was Bethel. Unfortunately, this verse like the whole chapter 2Kgs 23 is very disputed. Many scholars ascribe v. 15 to later editors, but all literary and redaction criticism of this chapter is hazardous.²⁴

However, even without 2Kgs 23:15a there is reason to suspect that the main criticism of the history writer in 1Kgs 12:25-31 was actually directed at the Yahwistic cult of Bethel, which competed with Jerusalem as a cult center. This suspicion is raised by Bethel's religious importance in many Biblical texts. Especially patriarchal tradition behind Bethel is strong. In Gen 12:28 Abraham builds an altar at Bethel. In Gen 31:13 Jacob erects a *massebah* at Bethel. In Gen 35 he further builds an altar there. In the same chapter, Deborah is buried under a holy tree at Bethel. The original background of these passages was probably to legitimize and explain the origin of the cult at Bethel. The religious importance of Bethel is also demonstrated by references to prophets who come from Bethel: 1Kgs 13:11 and 2Kgs 2:3. Bethel is often mentioned in the books of Hosea and Amos.²⁵ Although these texts are difficult to interpret and date, they seem to acknowledge the importance of Bethel as a cult site. And contrary to the history writer, many Biblical authors seem to have had a positive view of Bethel. Already in view of Biblical evidence, it would be quite understandable if the history writer, who believed that Jerusalem is the only legitimate place of worship, had been worried about Yahweh's cult at Bethel.

The Biblical evidence should be supplemented by archaeology.²⁶ Unfortunately, there are serious problems with the excavation reports of Beitin/Bethel. They are lacking in detail and the data that has been provided has to be used with caution.²⁷ According to the excavator

cult at Dan, but we may have to wait for the final publications of Dan and their critical evaluation by scholarly discussion before making further conclusions.

²⁴ For example, Bethel is mentioned in 2Kgs 17:28. The verse implies that the cult of Bethel is Yahwistic, run or initiated by a Samaritan priest of Yahweh, but already the context in v. 27 and 29 shows that the later editor implies the cult in Bethel to be syncretistic. Another reference to Bethel is met in 1Kgs 13:1-32, but this passage is usually ascribed to a later editor.

²⁵ Hos 4:15 (Beth 'Aven); 5:8 (Beth 'Aven); 8:4-6; 10:5, 8 (Beth 'Aven); 12:4; Amos 3:14; 4:4; 5:5-6; 7:10, 13; 8:14. Beth 'Aven may be identified with Bethel, although according to *Na'aman* (1987, 13-19), Beth 'Aven was the cultic site of Bethel located outside and east of the city. The attack on the Bethel/Beth 'Aven in Hosea is dependent on the picture of Bethel provided by a late version of the DH. This is implied by the fact that the attack on Bethel in Hosea connects the *במות* with the attack on the other gods. It is also aware of the criticism of the idols. The references to Bethel in the book of Amos are also probably dependent on the DH. According to *Vermeylen* (1978, 568-569), all passages in the book of Amos that mention Bethel derive from a dtl editor active after the events of 586: Amos 3:14 (p. 548); 4:4; 5:5-6 (p. 548-552); 7:10, 13 (p. 565-567); 8:14 (p. 567-568). Even if dating of these passages is difficult to determine, most scholars regard all these passages as later additions to the original prophecies of Amos. According to *Nissinen* (1991, 221-222), Hos 4:15 is post late dtl and belongs to the latest layers of the chapter. Hos 5:8 mentions Beth Aven without any specific comment or reference to the cult site. Hos 8:4-6 is dependent on the late idol criticism and implies familiarity with Exod 32 and 1Kgs 12. As already noted above, the fact that the editor (the same editor according to *Nissinen's* reconstruction) in v. 5 and 8, has combined high places (v. 8) with the calves (v. 5) implies familiarity with 1Kgs 12 and the history writer's attack on the high places. Hos 12:4 is dependent on a quite late form of Gen as it is familiar with many passages in Gen 25-35.

²⁶ Identification of Bethel with Tell Beitin has been commonly accepted. See *Dever* (1992, 651) for example.

²⁷ The excavation data has not been presented in a way that would make reevaluation of the conclusions possible. For example, many important details are not presented at all and the maps and plans are inadequate. Some of the

Kelso,²⁸ Bethel was a cult place already from the chalcolithic period onwards. There were several settlements throughout the ages, but the site was important during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages (2000-1200 BCE) when it was a major city and had a temple.²⁹ However, the city was destroyed in the 13th century and in the Iron I period (1200-1000 BCE) it became quite poor and unimportant.³⁰ The city then recovered slowly during Iron II period.³¹ According to *Kelso*, there is clear evidence that the Bronze Age temple went out of use from the Iron I period onwards. This is quite peculiar in light of the Biblical account that Bethel had been a major cultic site during the Israelite monarchy.³² *Kelso* is also surprised that there are so few items of cultic nature in the first half of the Iron II period, the period of Israelite monarchy. In fact, the excavators did not find any evidence of Jeroboam's cultic center.³³ This state of affairs is notable because it was one of the main aims of the excavations to find Jeroboam's cult site. Then there is clear evidence of destruction by the Assyrians in the late 8th century. After the Assyrians, the town was in ruins for some time until it and its shrine were revived, possibly completely rebuilt at the end of the Assyrian period.³⁴ This would be very strange in light of 2Kgs 23:15a, according to which, Josiah – contemporary with the fall of the Assyrian empire – destroyed the shrine. There also was no destruction of the city itself during Josiah's reign. The Biblical account is therefore not compatible with the archaeological evidence.³⁵

Further on, the excavators have argued that the site continued to prosper and was not destroyed by the Babylonians when most of Judah was. Bethel remained an important site during the whole of 6th century BCE until it was destroyed for an unknown reason in the late 6th or early 5th century, and did not recover before the Hellenistic period.³⁶ Even if the excavation reports are not without problems on the 6th century evidence, the abundant existence of 6th century intermediary pottery on the site implies that the town was habited most of the century.³⁷ The picture we receive from archaeology is that after the Bronze Age Bethel was an important site from the end of the 7th century till the end of the 6th century. The

information has been made unusable because the excavators have evaluated the evidence through Biblical spectacles. Furthermore, there are contradictions between the preliminary reports and the final report. Some information provided by the preliminary reports have been omitted in the final report (without comment) and vice versa. See *Dever* (1992, 651) for more detailed criticism of the excavation reports.

²⁸ The excavations at the site were begun by *Albright* and later taken over by *Kelso*.

²⁹ *Kelso* 1968, 45-47 and 1993, 193. There is archaeological evidence for a temple from the chalcolithic till MB II periods. According to *Kelso*, the MB II temple is one of the finest stone buildings in Palestine.

³⁰ *Kelso* 1968, 32-35, 47-48.

³¹ *Kelso* 1968, 34-37, 49-52. Here the archaeological evidence is scarce and problematic, and the excavators present it largely based on Biblical data. Due to the existence of IA II pottery, it can be established that there was some occupation during the 9th to 7th centuries.

³² According to *Na'aman* (1987, 13-19), the cultic center was outside the town, but this view has not been corroborated by archaeology. Appealing to Gen 12:8 and 13:3 where Abraham erects an altar east of Bethel, *Blenkinsopp* (1998, 34) also regards it possible that the cultic center may have been outside town.

³³ *Kelso* 1961, 5-6; 1968, 50-51; 1993, 192.

³⁴ *Kelso* 1968, 37, 51; 1993, 194 and *Stern* 2001, 321. As pointed out by *Stern* (2001, 347), the sanctuary is an interpretation of one structure. Unfortunately, the structure has not been properly documented for later evaluation. According to *Kelso* (1968, 37), the town was probably revived by the foreigners brought there by the Assyrians as reported in 2Kgs 17:24ff., but this account is probably a late addition that rises out of a postexilic understanding of Israel.

³⁵ Taking 2Kgs 23:15a at face value, *Kelso* (1968, 37) assumes that Josiah destroyed only the shrine and that the excavators did not find it.

³⁶ *Kelso* 1968, 52.

³⁷ *Sinclair* 1968, 75-75 and *Lipschits* 1999, 171-172.

6th century was the heyday of Bethel, which corresponds well to the traditional dating of the history writer (DtrH).

Recent archaeological surveys have established that Jerusalem and its surroundings lost most of their populations in the 6th century. After the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE, the center of population seems to have shifted from Judah to Benjamin (as well as to the region around Bethlehem).³⁸ Bethel was one of the main towns of Benjamin.³⁹ After the temple of Jerusalem had been destroyed, there also was a natural need for an alternative cult center or centers. Bethel with a functioning cult, probably not disturbed by the Babylonian conquest of Judah⁴⁰ and a strong preexilic tradition backed up with the patriarchs may have taken much of Jerusalem's function and position. On the other hand, it is possible that the patriarchal stories in Gen that try to legitimize the cult at Bethel derive from this period.

There is evidence in the DH that Bethel was an important cult site during the exile. *Veijola* has shown that religious assemblies and lamentation services took place at Bethel during this time.⁴¹ This is especially reflected in the later (nomistic) additions of the DH, which tend to ascribe cultic assemblies of the pre-monarchic time to Bethel.⁴² It is fair to assume that these additions reflect exilic conditions.⁴³ Interestingly, the history writer avoids Bethel in this context and sets the assemblies to Mizpah. It is possible that both Mizpah and Bethel served as cultic centers during the exile, but Mizpah may have been more neutral than Bethel for the history writer.⁴⁴ In addition to the religious assemblies referred to by the history writer, there is no indication that Mizpah had been an important cultic site. Mizpah evidently did not have such a strong tradition as a cultic center that it could have challenged Jerusalem.⁴⁵ For the nomists, the question whether there is cultic activity at Bethel or Mizpah may have been less important, as they show less interest in the cult centralization.⁴⁶ Therefore, the nomistic texts may better reflect exilic conditions on where the most important contemporary cult place was.

³⁸ *Lipschits* 1999, 179-185 and *Stern* 2001, 350.

³⁹ Mizpah (Tell en-Nasbeh) and Gibeon (Tell el-Jib) seem to have been the main administrative and economic centers respectively. See, *Lipschits* 1999, 165-176. On account of Biblical evidence, *Veijola* (1982, 197-198) has shown that Bethel and Mizpah became the centers of Judean population during the Exile.

⁴⁰ See *Lipschits* 1999, 159-165.

⁴¹ *Zech* 7:2-3; 8:18-19 imply that Bethel was an important cult site for lamentation services during the Exile. See *Veijola* 1982, 194-195.

⁴² *Veijola* 1982, 197-198, 210. According to him, these assemblies actually reflect contemporary events of the exilic authors. Texts that reflect a cult at Bethel: e.g., *Jdg* 20:18, 26-27; 21:2-4, 19. The fact that Bethel was destroyed at the end of the 6th or the beginning of the 5th century (*Kelso* 1968, 37) suggests that the nomists behind passages that locate the cult at Bethel should not be dated much after the early 5th century.

⁴³ The nomistic additions are usually dated to the late-exilic or postexilic times, but in view of the archaeological evidence that Bethel was important during the exile, an exilic dating of these nomists would seem more appropriate.

⁴⁴ According to *Veijola* (1982, 197-198), behind this shift may be a change in the location of the assemblies during the exile so that after Gedajah was killed (2Kgs 25:23-26) Mizpah was abandoned as the cultic center. Similarly, *Blenkinsopp* (1998, 33-34) who suggests that it would have improbable that there had been two cult places.

⁴⁵ The nomists may not have been so interested in the centralization (or the temple for that matter) that they would have been offended by the challenge that Bethel posed to Jerusalem.

⁴⁶ That the nomists are not particularly interested in the cult centralization is visible in Dt, where their additions mainly deal with the other gods and obedience to the law. Of course, cult centralization may be implied as part of the law but it is not the main issue for them.

Conclusions

As a strong supporter of the temple in Jerusalem and probably a proponent of its reestablishment, the history writer attempted to undermine Bethel's rising religious importance in the exile. He used Israel's history and 1Kgs 12 to show that the cult was illegitimate. Jeroboam's cult policy was used to remind that all challenge to Jerusalem would in the end lead to a catastrophe. If we accept that 2Kgs 23:15a derives from the history writer, he further implied that if there is something cultic going on at Bethel, it is certainly not old, for Josiah had recently destroyed the altar and the *במה*. He evidently cannot reject the cult at Bethel as non-Yahwistic – such a claim would have been ridiculous for his contemporaries – and he cannot even deny that the cult rises from a theological tradition close to his own, but he wants to say that its existence in the wrong place is against Yahweh's will. The history writer implies that Yahweh wants the temple to be rebuilt in Jerusalem.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ The conflict between the centralizers and the others continued during the second temple period as is also reflected in the Samaritan conflict. According to *Schwartz* (1985, 74-81), Jubilees 31-32 implies that Bethel challenged Jerusalem as late as the 2nd century. There may even have been discussion about building a temple at Bethel during this period.

Bibliography:

Biran, Avraham

1993 Dan. – The New Encyclopedia of the Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land. Vol. 1. Ed. Ephraim Stern. 1993. Simon & Schuster. Jerusalem. 323- 332.

Blenkinsopp, Joseph

1998 The Judean Priesthood during the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Periods: A Hypothetical Reconstruction. – CBQ 60. 25-43.

Campbell, Antony F. – O'Brien, Mark A.

2000 Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History. Fortress Press. Minneapolis.

Debus, Jörg

1967 Die Sünde Jerobeams. Studien zur Darstellung Jerobeams und der Geschichte des Nordreichs in der deuteronomistischen Geschichtsschreibung. – FRLANT 93. Göttingen.

Dever, William G.

1992 Beitin, Tell. – ABD vol. I. 651-652.

Gertz, Jan Christian

2001 Beobachtungen zu Komposition und Redaktion in Exodus 32-34. – Gottes Volk am Sinai. Untersuchungen zu Ex 32-34 und Dtn 9-10. Ed. Köckert, Matthias – Blum, Erhard. Chr. Kaiser. Gütersloher Verlaghaus. 88-106.

Gray, John

1986 1 & 2 Kings – OTL. London.

Hentschel, Georg

1985 2.Könige. – NEB 11. Würzburg.

Jones, Gwilym

1984 1 and 2 Kgs. Vol. I. 1 Kgs 1-16:34. — NCBC 5. Grand Rapids - London.

Kelso, James Leon

- 1961 The Fourth Campaign at Bethel. – BASOR 164. 5-19.
1968 Excavations at Bethel (1934-1960). – AASOR 39. Cambridge.
1993 Bethel. – The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land. Vol. 1. Ed. Ephraim Stern. 1993. Simon & Schuster. Jerusalem. 192-194.

Kratz, Reinhard G.

- 2000 Die Kompositionen der erzählenden Bücher des Alten Testaments. – UTB 2157. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. Göttingen – Zürich.

Lipschits, Oded

- 1999 The History of Benjamin Region under Babylonian Rule. – Tel Aviv 26/2. 155-190.

Na'aman, Nadav

- 1987 Beth 'Aven, Bethel and Early Israelite Sanctuaries. – ZDPV 103. 13-21.

Nissinen, Martti

- 1991 Prophetie, Redaktion und Fortschreibung im Hoseabuch. Studien zum Werdegang eines Prophetesbuches im Lichte von Hos 4 und 11. – AOAT 231. Neukirchner Verlag. Neukirchen – Vluyn.

Noth, Martin

- 1968 Könige. – BK IX/1. Neukirchen – Vluyn.

Pakkala, Juha

- 1999 Intolerant Monolatry in the Deuteronomistic History. – SESJ 76. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. Helsinki - Göttingen.

Provan, Iain W.

- 1988 Hezekiah and the Books of Kings. A Contribution to the Debate about the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History. – BZAW 172. Berlin – New York.

Särkiö, Pekka

- 1998 Exodus und Salomo. Erwägungen zur verdeckten Salomokritik anhand von Ex 1-2; 5; 14 und 32. – SESJ 71. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. Helsinki – Göttingen.

Schmitt, Hans-Christoph

- 2000 Die Erzählung vom Goldenen Kalb Exod. 32* und das Deuteronomistische Geschichtswerk. – Rethinking the Foundations. Historiography in the Ancient World and in the Bible. – BZAW. Essays in Honour of John Van Seters. Ed. by Steven L. McKenzie and Thomas Römer. Walter de Gruyter. Berlin – New York. 235-250.

Schwartz, Joshua

- 1985 Jubilees, Bethel and the Temple of Jacob. – HUCA 56. 1986. 63-85.

Sinclair, L. A.

- 1968 Bethel pottery of the Sixth Century, B.C. – Excavations at Bethel (1934-1960). – AASOR 39. Cambridge. 70-76.

Stern, Ephraim

- 2001 Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, vol. 2. The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Period (732-332 BCE). – ABRL. Doubleday. New York – London – Toronto – Sydney – Auckland.

Veijola, Timo

- 1982 Verheissung in der Krise. Studien zur Literatur und Theologie der Exilszeit anhand des 89. Psalms. – AASF B 220. Helsinki.

Vermeylen, Jacques

- 1978 Du Prophetie Isaïe a l'apocalyptique, Tome II. Librairie Lecoffre. Paris.

Würthwein, Ernst

- 1985 Die Bücher der Könige 1 Kön. 1-16. — ATD 11,1. 2. edition. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. Göttingen.