

The Jeroboam Story in the (Re)Formulation of Israelite Identity: Evaluating the Literary-Ideological Purposes of 1 Kings 11–14

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1. INTRODUCTION

Told amidst stock motifs of oppression and liberation, the circumstances from which a new “Israel” emerges in 1 Kgs 11–14 bear many similarities to those found in Exodus, that “grand narrative” integral to Israelite identity. This similarity in literary-ideological terms certainly poses a challenge to the historicity of both, but it also highlights that memories of interaction with Egypt were central to the (developing) identity of “Biblical Israel.” In this article, the story of Jeroboam’s foundation of the kingdom of Israel is assessed, highlighting its complexity and seeing it as an accretion of accounts of Israel’s formative years which has ultimately been subsumed by much later historiographical (ideological) concerns. The methodologies and conclusions of this article arose from my research into the growing interest in “Memory Studies” as a vehicle for appreciating biblical historiography, particularly in terms of how collective memories specific to the preservation of perceptions and expressions of group identity—a loose and by no means expansive definition of “cultural” memory—contribute towards the “historicisation” of the past (generally speaking, the positioning of past events along a literary chain of “cause-effect” sequences).¹

When I speak of (collective) memories, I mainly refer to perceptions of a shared past surviving in oral tradition, although the relationship between history and memory is con-

¹ A cultural memory is a codified or “sacralised” account of a past event through which a group defines and distinguishes itself. Cultural memory is that which makes the past present, and its most tangible manifestations can be seen in ritual, ceremony and (religious) festivals. For a practicable approach to cultural memory, see especially Assmann 2006; while “Memory Studies” in general is the subject of an important collection of essays and extracts compiled in Olick et al. 2011.

siderably more complicated.² Cultural memories are those which have survived the “limited temporal horizon” of collective memories (which generally survive three or four generations of transmission), essentially transcending the significance of the latter in terms of protecting group (for our purposes, ethno-religious) identity.³ I will come to use the term “memory context” further below, and I use this term to refer to a time (and event) surviving in memory—specifically because of its recognised significance—prior to its later “historicisation” within a constructed narrative framework. This distinguishes it from the term “historical context,” whereby the significance of an event has been retrospectively constructed. Following a brief summary of the story of the foundation of the “northern kingdom” Israel, I will evaluate the details within it upon which scholars usually focus in the debate concerning both its historicity and the purpose(s) it serves in its wider literary context.

Specifically, I will focus on four main aspects of this debate:

(1) The presence in the story of Pharaoh Shishak, with whom Jeroboam was said to have sought refuge; and who is said to have come up against Jerusalem. I do this to determine whether there is evidence in the received story of memories of interaction with Egypt relevant to identifying a terminus post quem for the formulation of a homogeneous Israelite identity; memories which have been subordinated to the aforementioned concerns of the biblical writers.

(2) The matter of whether a royal residence might have been established at Shechem at the time implied by the text. I deal with this to determine whether the stories of the foundation of an Israelite kingdom accord with the archaeological evidence for the infrastructure necessary for overseeing such a territorial entity in the tenth century BCE. This relates also to:

(3) The cult status in the tenth century BCE of Dan and Bethel, the border towns demonised by the writers as having hosted the infamous bull icons synonymous with Jeroboam’s “heresy” and the secession of the northern tribes from the fabled Solomonic “empire.” Here I ask whether there is any truth to this basis for the generic cursing of the northern kings as apostate rulers, and whether we should disassociate the story from its alluded context to appreciate it in mythological terms as the justification for the post-monarchic disassociation from the legacy of “the north.” Finally, I will consider:

(4) The building projects of Solomon, upon which the whole account rests. Once again, this relates to the reimagining

² Assmann has championed the term “mnemohistory” (most notably in his *Moses the Egyptian*; Assmann 1998), in which perceptions of the past are understood in terms of accretions of memory(ies) which may potentially be investigated (apart from history proper) to appreciate how said perceptions evolve over time.

³ Assmann 2011: 213; Mayes 2010: 140.

of memories or perceptions of ancient interaction with Egypt, as well as to the supplanting of the historical Omride dynasty by the reinvention of a Davidic heritage for “Biblical Israel.”

2. FOUNDATION

Jeroboam was assigned by Solomon the position of taskmaster over the corvée labour force of the “house of Joseph” (1 Kgs 11:28), but when a prophet (Ahijah of Shiloh) predicted that he would become king of Israel following the division of Solomon’s territory, Solomon feared a coup and wanted Jeroboam killed (1 Kgs 11:40; Solomon somehow heard of the prophecy, which had been delivered privately to Jeroboam).⁴ Jeroboam fled to Egypt, was granted asylum there by a king named Shishak, and he returned to Israel only when (he heard that) Solomon had died.⁵ Approaching Solomon’s son and heir, Rehoboam, Jeroboam requested that the heavy labour forced upon the northern tribes be reduced. Rehoboam refused, instead decreeing that the work should be even more demanding (1 Kgs 12:14), a fateful judgement resulting in Jeroboam leading the secession of the northern tribes and the establishment of an autonomous state (administered from Shechem, see 1 Kgs 12:25) on Rehoboam’s doorstep.

The kingdom of Israel, then, was founded as the result of an uprising against tyranny and oppression; so far, a positive account. Yet it does not end there, for despite the prophet Ahijah promising (conditionally) that Jeroboam would be like a David in the north (1 Kgs 11:38), the new king of Israel proceeded to make a considerable mess of things by not only seeking to decentralise the cult of YHWH—which the biblical account tells us was focused on Jerusalem at the time—but also by erecting idols of golden calves at two separate sanctuaries, Dan and Bethel, and by appointing priests “from among all the people, who were not Levites” (1 Kgs 12:31).⁶ In a verse pre-

⁴ On the prophecy of Ahijah, see, for example, Leuchter 2006: 53–59; Galvin 2011: 97–100. See also Linville 1998: 158–65 on the “torn robe” and whether it constitutes the “tearing” apart of the Davidic kingdom or just the “tearing” of the kingdom from David’s heir. Leuchter (*idem*: 53) argues that the tearing of the cloak into twelve pieces “is more likely [to] correspond to Solomon’s twelve administrative districts,” (cf. 1 Kgs 4:7) a conclusion which appears to contradict his immediately preceding recognition of the “Josianic-era” ideology behind the metaphor of the twelve tribes. In other words, the latter is likely the “reality” behind the former.

⁵ The MT at this point (1 Kgs 12:1–2) is unspecific as to what Jeroboam heard of, but hearing of the intent to crown Rehoboam over “all Israel” at least implies that Jeroboam understood Solomon to be dead. While not explicit in its connection to Moses learning of Pharaoh’s death while in Midian (Exod 4:19), one would be forgiven for seeing a literary pattern. For more on the motif of flight to Egypt, see especially, Galvin 2011.

⁶ Leuchter (2006: 52) observes the connection between this promise to Jeroboam and that of Nathan to David in 2 Sam 7 (cf. also Linville 1998: 158), remarking also that the traits of Jeroboam—rising

supposing the “Exodus,” the ideological connection between this story and Exodus is articulated through Jeroboam’s words when he calls the people to worship (1 Kgs 12:28):

You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

There is a clear connection here to the “Golden Calf” pericope of Exod 32, and needless to say, it was not long before another prophecy was brought before the hapless king, this one foretelling the destruction of the altar at Bethel (1 Kgs 13:2–3).⁷ Another one followed in the wake of Jeroboam’s continued “heresy.” This final prophecy, delivered by the same prophet who had foretold Jeroboam’s rise to power, warns of the impending destruction of Jeroboam’s “house” as well as the entire kingdom of Israel and the dispersal of its people.⁸

The rapid rise and fall of Jeroboam constitutes something of a portentous microcosm of the rise and fall of Israel, whereby the prophecy of the Assyrian destruction sets the mood for the entire history of the kingdom to follow. Although two centuries have yet to pass, destruction is inevitable and Jeroboam is to blame.⁹ This tells us, of course, that the received

to prominence under the king—are “clearly reminiscent of the early depiction of David as he distinguished himself under Saul’s regime.” See also Galvin 2011: 94–95. As with the matter of the golden calves and Exod 32, we cannot be certain of the direction of dependence of these literary and ideological connections. On the comparisons with David which determine the character of Israelite and Judean kings—especially “inverted” comparisons in the case of Jeroboam—see Frisch 2011.

⁷ Leuchter (2006: 68) sees the “Golden Calf” pericope of Exod 32 as “a Shilonite composition that was conceived to polemicize against Jeroboam’s cult as a perversion of Mosaic tradition.” If this is correct, then the result of this polemic is to project a presupposition into the “time of Jeroboam” of such thing as a “Mosaic tradition.” For Cross (1997: 73), it is the Shilonite inheritance which informs the Deuteronomistic polemic against Jeroboam. On the “military overtones” of the calf idol, insofar as it recalled the ark as a “war standard,” see Russell 2009: 50–54.

⁸ Jeroboam’s spectacular fall from grace is the primary focus of Cohn’s 1985 article, “Literary Technique in the Jeroboam Narrative,” in which he assesses the composite nature of the work in the context of the author’s (or redactor’s) theological apologetic. The narrative, then, is considerably multi-layered, as it deals not only with the retrospective assessment of the Assyrian annexation of the northern kingdom, but also with how YHWH could make a “covenant” with Jeroboam which appeared so doomed from the outset. For a recent treatment of the literary aspects of the story (focusing on issues of characterisation and political power-play), see, for example, Bodner 2012.

⁹ Cf. Leuchter 2006: 51: “The northern realm [Jeroboam] created is irreparably corrupted by his religious policies, and every subsequent northern king is judged (. . .) to be wholly illegitimate regardless of individual virtues or accomplishments explicitly because of Jeroboam’s example.” See also Mullen 1993: 266–68.

story post-dates the events of 722 BCE, but the reference to Josiah in the Bethel prophecy tells us further that the story cannot be earlier than Josiah's late seventh century reign.¹⁰ Certainly, the specific reference to a much later king in Judah moves the date of composition forward in time and disconnects it from its alluded context, but every (retrospective) account of prophecy does the same. As we will see, the history of Israel and Judah within which the Jeroboam story was situated was composed much later than its alluded context, and it is to the chain of historical events between those two "way-points" that we owe the received version.

3. SHISHAK AND JEROBOAM—A FATEFUL ENCOUNTER WITH EGYPT?

Shishak has long been recognised as Pharaoh Shoshenq, founder of the Twenty-Second Dynasty.¹¹ This passing reference alone would be insufficient to help us date the story with great confidence, considering that it might constitute nothing more than a vague memory of a Pharaoh whose name in Hebrew sounds similar to the Egyptian. It is not long, however, before Shishak appears again, this time attacking Jerusalem in "the fifth year of King Rehoboam" (1 Kgs 14:25). It is upon this event that historians mainly focus, dating the foundation of Israel by working backwards from Shishak's (Shoshenq's) campaign into Palestine, evidence of which comes from i) the inscription on the "Bubastite Portal" at the Amun temple at Karnak; and ii) a fragment of a "victory" stele erected at Megiddo.¹² As with the majority of proposed correlations between biblical accounts and extra-biblical evidence, however, debate abounds. It can be asked whether Shishak would have been in the least concerned to attack the relatively insignificant Jerusalem of the time, but both the veracity of the Karnak inscription and the dating of the Megiddo stele have been

¹⁰ Finkelstein and Silberman 2002: 166–67. Wilson (1984: 187–88) suggests that the Deuteronomist has edited and updated an earlier tradition regarding a prophetic confrontation at Bethel.

¹¹ Kitchen 1966: 29; Mayes 2010; Levin 2012 (esp. p. 45); Grabbe 2007: 81–83; Assmann 2003: 299; Miller & Hayes 2006: 199; Finkelstein and Silberman 2002: 18; Dever 2004: 74. For a background to the debate on this correlation see especially, Bimson 2015. For recent arguments to the contrary, see Morkot and James 2015; Thijs 2015; and James and Van der Veen 2015, all of whom put Shoshenq in the ninth century BCE.

¹² For full colour images of the Bubastite Portal and the Megiddo fragment, see especially Levin 2012. Mayes 2010: 130, and Finkelstein 2007: 148 both suggest that the attachment of the Egyptian invasion to the time of Rehoboam—as opposed to Solomon—amounts to a theological shifting of culpability to the former: he is the "foolish" and "sinful" king punished by external forces. Finkelstein, however, emphasises the likelihood that northern traditions preserving memories of the Egyptian invasion were brought down to Judah. On the difficulties in correlating the reign of Rehoboam with the campaign of Shishak, see, for example, Ash 1999: 27–34.

challenged; the former because it causes so much difficulty for the accuracy of the biblical account, and the latter because of arguments surrounding the stratigraphic association of the fragment (see below).

Mayes argues that despite the “conventional” form of the Karnak inscription (in that a new Pharaoh is seeking to glorify himself through his military activity), the list of conquered sites includes some which do not feature on the lists of earlier Pharaohs, and thus is likely to reflect a visit to the region postdating its predecessors.¹³ Of course, Egyptian knowledge of sites in Syria-Palestine would not come solely from military campaigns, and so this in itself is insufficient to assert the historicity of the campaign. Still, I am inclined to agree with Mayes—and others—that some sort of campaign into Palestine was undertaken by Shishak, in the long-standing tradition of using the region north of Egypt as a kind of “proving ground” for incumbent kings.¹⁴ The repeated attempts of scholars to trace the movements of Shishak throughout the region based upon the topographical list—those which Clancy calls “geographically and historically myopic”—serve only to move us away from the questions we wish to ask about the impact such a campaign might have had in Palestine in general, and on the development of Israel in particular (the focus of Mayes’ essay).¹⁵ Granted, the matter of whether Jerusalem was attacked is one of great significance—for it deals with the political significance of the city in the late tenth century BCE—but that is of less importance for speculating as to the geopolitical consequences of the Egyptian attack; or raid; or invasion.¹⁶ From an archaeological point of view, Shishak’s campaign may not have left a “permanent mark

¹³ Mayes 2010: 133; Mazar 2007a: 124; cf. also Kitchen 1966: 29–30 (rejecting Wellhausen’s “hypercriticism”): “In actual fact, Shishak’s list uses an orthography different from all earlier lists, because of linguistic changes in Egyptian before his time and since the known earlier lists. It also contains many names never yet [of course, read 1966] found in earlier lists.”

¹⁴ Pritchard 2011: 228; Na’aman 2011: 44. For the suggestion that there may have been an unrecorded campaign other than the Libyan one (that is, “without extant monumental commemoration”) within which context we might locate the “Jerusalem” one, see Dodson 2015 (quote from p. 10).

¹⁵ Clancy 1999: 18.

¹⁶ In an interesting article, Uziel and Shai (2007) navigate the evidence which for most relegates Jerusalem to an insignificant town, arguing instead that it should be seen as analogous to a “temple-town” to which a palace was later attached (169–70). For the authors, the biblical account is reliable, especially since “none of [the biblical] references present Jerusalem as a large residential capital city” (164); and the “city” before the eighth century BCE should be seen as a “royal-cultic center, purposely separated from a large population of residents, with the specific intention of strengthening the status of the monarchy” (162). The later development of Jerusalem occurred in the wake of “[t]he ruin of the competitor kingdom” (170). For a comparison of the developmental trajectories of Israel and Judah, see for example, Na’aman 2010: 14–17.

on the conquered cities,” but the mark it left on the indigenous population may have borne consequences for identity formulation.¹⁷ Accepting that Shishak came up from Egypt into Palestine and either attacked or threatened to attack significant elements of people who were or later became “Israel” is our focus here, because the implications are that in the aftermath, the withdrawal of Egyptian forces informed the “liberation” aspects of the “first narrativisation” of the story which became Exodus.¹⁸

The Bible suggests that Jeroboam fled to Egypt and sought political asylum there. That is not so difficult to believe, but it would be difficult to argue that this was a wholesale invention of later writers with no basis in historical accuracy, especially considering that the next reference to the Egyptian king in question points us not only to an historical figure who actually existed at the time implied by biblical chronology, but also to that king’s own record of a military venture into the region.¹⁹ Yet does this correlation automatically mean that Jeroboam must also have been a real figure? As the correlation is with the second appearance in the text of Shishak, the flight to Egypt implied by the first might be an interpolation legitimated by the reality of Shishak’s invasion; an event long remembered and retaining its significance in Israelite history as a political turning point.²⁰ If, on the other hand, Shishak had no knowledge of Jeroboam prior to his incursion into Palestine—and thus no reason to leave him to his own devices in his newly established kingdom (Israel)—would the Pharaoh not have asserted his dominance over that particular upstart state (pre-

¹⁷ Clancy 1999: 18–19.

¹⁸ If Frisch (2000: 18–19) is correct to see the “coming up” of Shishak against Jerusalem as a theological inversion of the “Exodus” (in which “Israel” “came up” from Egypt [the verb עלה connecting both events]), then the position of Shishak’s attack in the text constitutes an historical statement of causation in the wake of Jeroboam’s sinful acts (or possibly Rehoboam’s fateful decision at Shechem); one informed by an already extant “Exodus” tradition of some kind. While this may weaken the claim to historicity of the former, it would not explain why the attack was placed specifically in the *fifth year* of Rehoboam.

¹⁹ I agree, then, with Mazar (2007: 124) that “the mention of Sheshonq’s [sic] campaign (. . .) cannot be explained away as an invention of an author of the seventh-century B.C.E. or later,” but I would not necessarily follow that “the writer must have had records of some sort,” considering how vague and troublesome the reference to Jerusalem clearly is.

²⁰ In this, I disagree with Clancy (1999: 20) that the interpolation of Shishak into the story belongs at the earliest to a post-sixth century BCE context arising from Judeans living in Egypt having seen the Karnak inscription. I simply find this solution too simplistic in light of the overlapping connections between i) the biblical account of Jeroboam; ii) the restructured memories of the Solomonic “empire” (see further below); and iii) the Egyptian evidence which places Shishak in close proximity to centres of emerging Israelite identity.

sumably what would be implied by the “pay-off” made by Rehoboam)?²¹

The biblical picture of the extent and strength of either Judah or Israel flies in the face of the archaeological evidence for Shishak’s activity in the region in particular and Egypt’s in general, particularly as it would be unlikely that an “empire” the size of that claimed for Solomon would have remained outside the political remit of the Egyptians during its lifespan.²² Furthermore, the instability caused by the secession of the northern tribes from such an “empire” would surely have piqued the interest of whatever Pharaoh was sitting on the throne at the time.²³ The fact that neither Israel nor Judah feature on Shishak’s list of conquered or “pacified” people or places suggests either that none of this was the case or that neither state existed at the time the Bible would have us believe.²⁴

²¹ With no accompanying evidence by which he might posit such a thing, Bakon (2012: 9–10) casts Shishak (“Jeroboam’s patron”) as “a contributing factor” to the division of “David’s United Kingdom.” Cf. also Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 178.

²² Perhaps the biblical writers, hoping to keep their story watertight, invented the marriage of Pharaoh’s daughter to Solomon so that they could explain why he had been left alone by Egypt. Of course, Jeroboam was also given an Egyptian royal bride (is this why Shishak did not attack the north? Is she the wife of 1 Kgs 14?) and, just as Moses is rescued by Pharaoh’s daughter, there is a repeating theme of Egyptian women “saving” the “saviours” in Israelite history. Whether it is a theme independent of the historical possibility of Ahab taking a Phoenician (read “Canaanite”) wife to seal a political alliance (see Grabbe 2007: 136, 142); or whether it serves to both allude to and contrast with this “fact” opens up another route of inquiry. I am tempted to agree with Sweeney (2001: 101–2) that Solomon’s marriage to Pharaoh’s daughter relates to a “Josianic redaction” of the story, in which Solomon’s resulting apostasy—that which leads to the division of his kingdom—is contrasted with Josiah’s religious fidelity, particularly in light of Egypt’s antagonism in the late seventh century; but it should be borne in mind that i) the presence of prominent women associated with hero figures serves to connect these stories ideologically; and ii) Josiah’s religious fidelity is more likely to be part of the later idealisation of this king. Thus, the motif of the political marriage becomes detached from any real historical relevance.

²³ Mazar (2007: 124) suggests that Solomon’s death might have precipitated an attack on “the emerging Israelite state,” but then the historicity of any sort of relationship between Egypt and Jeroboam dissolves with this view. Grabbe (2007: 82) deals with the suggestion that Shishak would have been interested in the copper trade centred on Judah, observing that the picture as to whether it was controlled from Jerusalem or any of the Philistine cities on the plain is not clear. The omission of those cities from the campaign list poses further problems for understanding the relationship between Egypt and the Philistines at this time. Clancy (1999: 4–5) argues that they were allies.

²⁴ The fact that Jerusalem is not found on the list suggests that it was of no concern to an invading Pharaoh. Cf. Gelinas 1995: 230 (who goes on [233] to suggest that Judah did not coalesce as a “centralised political entity” until after the Assyrian annexation of Israel); also Joffe 2002: 445. Levin (2012: 47–48) suggests that Egyptian

Israel Finkelstein emphasises the “exceptional” nature of Shishak’s movement up into the “sparsely settled, wooded, rugged and hostile hill country of Canaan,” and goes on to argue that the likely target of this unusual military action was Gibeon (listed as one of Shishak’s conquests), “the hub of an emerging territorial-political entity” associated with the Saulide state of 1 Samuel.²⁵ Although he refers to this entity as the “[f]irst Israelite territorial entity” in the northern highlands, the fact that the name “Israel” is not mentioned alongside Gibeon on the campaign list or cities suggests that i) Shishak did not know that these people called themselves “Israel”; or ii) they did not consider themselves to be a homogeneous entity called “Israel”; or iii) Gibeon was not known as the political centre of a people called “Israel.” Apart from the 13th century BCE Merneptah, no Pharaoh ever referred to an attack on any entity called “Israel,” but the Merneptah stele applied the term for an ethnic group.²⁶ From an Egyptian point of view, where has that group gone by the time of Shishak, especially if either Gibeon (according to Finkelstein; of course, cf. 1 Kgs 3:4) or Shechem (according to the Bible) are supposed to be centres of Israelite identity at this time? If there really was an exclusive “Israelite” enclave in either of these sites (or anywhere in the region, for that matter), why would an Egyptian record of a campaign into the area not record its presence as in the time of Merneptah? Of course, the matter here is one of naming sites, not people, and the Merneptah stele refers to “Israel” as a people (albeit a group of significant size and strength to warrant a reference), while Shishak’s list refers to sites. The problem is not really about identifying anyone called “Israel” in the list, however; instead, it is about identifying the likelihood that an early “Israelite” enclave was attacked by Shishak.

It appears that instead of attacking Shechem—as we would presume from the biblical picture of the kingdom so recently established at that site—Shishak continued northwards into the Jezreel Valley and attacked Megiddo, a significant site at the time.²⁷ Were “Israel” to be found here? Is this the source

arrogance could lead to the negation of the legitimacy of other sovereign states in official records; a scenario which would see “Judah” and “Israel” omitted (if they existed at the time). Jerusalem’s absence from the list is of no concern to Schniedewind, who states that 1 Kgs 14:25–28 “accurately recalls a campaign of Pharaoh Shishak from at least two centuries earlier” (2004: 20). Certainly, we may have “chronological synchronism” (*ibid.*), but “recollection” of the campaign has sacrificed details in favour of later ideologies.

²⁵ Finkelstein 2007: 148; although cf. Mazar 2007a: 124. Clancy (1999: 8) expands the reference to Gibeon to include Jerusalem as one of “the four Gibeonite cities,” using its omission from the list to argue that “Shoshenq did not go into the hills of Judah at all” and that he was instead “punishing the Gibeonite confederacy.”

²⁶ For a background on the Merneptah Stele, see Hjelm and Thompson 2002; Hasel 1994; Ahlström and Edelman 1985; and Stager 1985.

²⁷ Mayes 2010: 135; Clancy 1999: 16–17; Ussishkin 2007: 306;

of the memory of Shishak eventually attached to Jerusalem (so that Jerusalem assumes the status of this significant site)? There would surely have been refugees from Megiddo and other ruined towns, and stories of Shishak's attack could have been brought into any "Israelite" hub later embraced by that fully defined ethnic identity. If Megiddo was a primary focus (we need not presume to find the focus) of the campaign, and if it was at this time part of the northern kingdom, then poor Jeroboam did not benefit much from his "sojourn" in Egypt. Of course, it is only in retrospect that we presume that Megiddo was part of the kingdom, and if it was not incorporated into an "Israelite" kingdom until the ascension of the Omrides in the mid ninth century (see further below), then memories of Shishak's "visit" to Megiddo entered the Israelite collective memory from non-Israelites.²⁸ The conclusion that Shishak took Megiddo accords with interpretations of his victory stele, although as per Ussishkin, it is unlikely that the Pharaoh set it up in a ruined city where no one would see it; and Grabbe argues that "the erection of a royal stela at Megiddo shows that Shoshenq aimed to hold the city, not destroy it."²⁹ In this

Grabbe 2007: 67–68. On Shishak's victory stele and the excavations at Megiddo (initially summarising the circular argumentation which supported the traditional view of Solomon as a great builder king), see, for example, Wightman 1990; also Finkelstein and Silberman 2002: 135–42. Chapman (2009: 16), dismissing the necessity of correlations with the campaign list, argues for associating the (unstratified; see Miller & Hayes 2006: 199 n. 17) fragment of the Shishak stele to the Omride (late 9th century) stratum; which in turn moves the Egyptian campaign into this historical context. Similar to my argument above regarding the absence of the eponym "Israel" on the list, any proposed "interest (. . .) in the kingdom founded by Omri in the north" on the part of an Egyptian Pharaoh completely ignores any question of recording the name of that kingdom; not to mention the anachronistic picture of the Egyptians marching up into a region increasingly troubled by the ascendancy of the Arameans. On the background of the political relations between (Omride) Israel and the Arameans, see, for example, Kottsieper 2007 (based on an analysis of the Tel Dan inscription); also Grabbe 2007: 146–49.

²⁸ On the "Low Chronology" proposed by Israel Finkelstein, which would see the dating of major "Solomonic" sites lowered from the tenth to ninth century BCE, see, for example, Miller & Hayes 2006: 202–3; Hendel 2005: 76–80 (for a "thought experiment" on the implications of accepting this view); Levin 2012: 52; Grabbe 2007: 12–16, 65–77. For an argument specifically against the "Low Chronology," see Dever 2004. Ash (1999: 64–67) addresses the issues, with his study assuming "that there were a David and a Solomon, who ruled over some 'kingdom' during the late eleventh and tenth centuries BCE." On the basis of the seals of *Asaph* and *Shema* associated with the gatehouse of the southern palace at Megiddo, Ussishkin (2007: 304–5; cf. Ussishkin 1994) suggests a tenth century BCE connection to Jeroboam. If this is correct, and Shishak could have encountered our enigmatic "Israelite" king at Megiddo, it has been pointedly "forgotten" by the guardians of Israelite collective memory.

²⁹ Ussishkin 2007: 304 (reconstructing the history of Megiddo to account for its military centralisation after the Aramean destruction of

regard, perhaps Wightman is correct in suggesting that a “ceremonial” destruction occurred in a section of the town (later fortified under the Omrides), which would envisage the submission of the inhabitants rather than total destruction.³⁰ One could even go so far as to say that the “pay-off” occurred here, but that seeks only to afford some ring of truth to the Jerusalemite version of events, glorifying that city by exaggerating its wealth.

The point here is how the memory of Shishak’s attack was preserved in the collective memory of the people of developing “Israel” to become an integral aspect of the foundation myth of the northern kingdom (see below). Working on the assumption that Shishak came up against Gibeon and Megiddo, in one form or another—the former confirmed by the correlation between the references on the campaign list to this “niche to the north of Jerusalem” and the biblical account of Saul’s territory;³¹ and the latter by the victory stele—can it still be said that he came up against an entity called “Israel”? The account of David’s handing over of seven men to be executed by the Gibeonites makes it very clear that the latter were not part of Israel (2 Sam 21:2), but this may constitute a retrospective distancing from people seen as “the remnant of the Amorites” at a later context in which the text is composed. In the greater milieu of developing Israel and Judah, there is no reason to exclude the inhabitants of this area in terms of their possible absorption into an “Israelite” identity, the crystallisation of which, from a geopolitical point of view, likely belongs to the mid to late ninth century BCE at the earliest. The problem for the historicity of the Jeroboam story, however, is that if his newly established territory at the time of Shishak’s campaign stretched from Bethel to Dan, and this territory constituted the fledgling northern kingdom Israel, Shishak would not have been attacking “Israelites” in Gibeon unless Jeroboam’s kingdom did not incorporate all “Israelites” at this time.

With so much uncertainty surrounding Shishak’s campaign, I will move on under the assumption that he attacked a site of some significance to the people of developing “Israel,” so that this pivotal event entered their collective memory. As with much of the confusion arising from the attachment by scholars of extra-biblical correlations to an “Israel” imagined to be homogeneous from the thirteenth century BCE (and, for some, even earlier), the problem with locating in time the foundation of Israel under Jeroboam by associating it with Pharaoh Shishak presumes i) that the story is faithful to the

Jezreel in the late ninth century; 306); Grabbe 2007: 75.

³⁰ Wightman 1990: 19. Mazar (2007: 124) notes that “[v]iolent destructions (. . .) were *tentatively* [italics mine] identified at (. . .) Megiddo,” as well as other sites. Cf. Clancy (1999: 17), who suggests that the stele might have “celebrated” a treaty between Egypt and the (presumably Philistine) inhabitants of Megiddo. Finkelstein and Silberman (2002: 341) identify Canaanite material culture in the city “well into the tenth century BCE.”

³¹ Finkelstein 2007: 147–48.

historical context in which it is set; ii) that there was a “United Monarchy” of Israelite people (or just a united people called “Israel”) ruled from Jerusalem prior to the establishment of the kingdom of Israel; and iii) that the people of Judah called themselves “Israel” from at least as far back as the tenth century BCE.³² The latter is a complex matter with which I intend to deal elsewhere, but the introduction into this argument of at least two significant sites associated with the developing Israelite identity—Gibeon and Megiddo—which appear to be separate political entities at this time introduces also the possibility that this identity was not exclusive to any particular territory, and that the dissolution of the Gibeon-centred “Israel” left the way open for the exclusive adoption of the eponym for the “northern” kingdom.³³ It is here that we can posit the signs of a crisis of identity, one of the earliest instances of an argument over who is the “real” Israel; for if the David of legend appropriated the Saulide “Israel,” then it is possible to propose that Jeroboam was not rebelling against a tangible territorial entity ruled from Jerusalem and thus “dividing” an extant kingdom; he was establishing himself as a “king” or chief—the semantics are irrelevant—with exclusive rights to the name “Israel.”³⁴ Linville argues that what is occurring amidst the confusion of the Shechem sequence is not the division of an “Israel” previously incorporating Judah, but the establishment of an “Israel” rejecting David (with Judah making “an independent choice” to side with the Davidic line; 1 Kgs 12:20).³⁵ This is why the language of Jeroboam’s rebellion so echoes David’s rise to power: as David usurped Saul, so Jeroboam usurped Solomon (or rather, his son).³⁶ In this light, the prophet of Ahijah envisages

³² On this last matter, see especially, Fleming 2012.

³³ It is interesting to note Joffe’s observation (2002: 442) that Megiddo, Gezer and Hazor in the tenth century were sites constructed on territorial borders (Phoenicia, Philistia and Aram-Damascus, respectively) and, as such, they may have been “part of a larger entity whose borders remain difficult to define.” As he points out, however, the presence of multiple “palaces” at these sites “may (. . .) reflect [the presence of] competing elites” therein. It is difficult in this regard to posit a structured hierarchical system subservient to a king resident at Shechem, Penuel or Tirzah (see further below).

³⁴ Cf. Thompson 1999: 203.

³⁵ Linville 1998: 165–71, on the confusing matter of “Israel,” “all Israel,” and the “sons of Israel living in the cities of Judah” in the Shechem sequence. Carr and Conway (2010: 87–91), accepting not only the historicity of the “United Monarchy” but apparently also the existence in the tenth century of “Davidic and Zion texts,” refer to Jeroboam’s rejection of Rehoboam and his establishment of variant cultic practices as the initiation of a “counter curriculum” (89).

³⁶ This connection introduces the possibility of a literary parallel constructed at a later juncture within the context of the composition (or compilation) of the “Primary History,” whereby the request of the people in 1 Sam 8 which leads to the coronation of Saul foreshadows the eventual obsolescence of monarchy for the identity of “Biblical Israel.” To expand further on the possible relationship between these two foundation narratives would, I feel, complicate the current inves-

Jeroboam “tearing” Israel away from Solomon; or, in the words of Mark Leuchter, “the original text [that is, prior to the later ideology of a homogenous twelve-tribe Israel] focuses attention on the king rather than the kingdom.”³⁷

This view, however, presupposes that Solomon did indeed oppress the people of the territories which would become the inhabitants of the northern kingdom, but such a conclusion hardly requires a Solomonic “empire” ruled from Jerusalem as the Bible has it:

Forced labour would naturally have been used in the construction of the Temple, the royal palace, and other projects in Jerusalem, and this, in conjunction with royal appropriation of other goods and labour, may have contributed to the alienation of the northern tribes from their political union with the House of David.³⁸

Such a “political union” could have arisen from any number of circumstances, and I see no reason to overlook the possibility that agreements made within the constraints of kinship or other kinds of (perceived?) ethnic fealty precipitated the oppression of the northern tribes as a result of a Jerusalemite “king” getting too big for his boots.³⁹ As will be argued below, the biblical presentation of Solomon as an Egyptianised monarch only served to bolster the negative image of that particular king, as well as facilitating the connection between Rehoboam and the Pharaoh of the “Exodus,” but it is in turn dependent upon the memories of Egypt’s impact on the establishment of the northern kingdom.⁴⁰ Identities crystallise out of compromise and accommodation binding people together through narrativised allusions to shared antiquity, but they are more potently brought to fruition through a sense of shared suffering or simply through the recognition that a single entity is the enemy which this new identity group have in common.⁴¹ In the Bible, Solomon and subsequently Rehoboam are seen as that enemy, the “other” in Jerusalem upon which and through which a new “Israelite” identity can be founded and expressed. The rejection

tigation.

³⁷ Leuchter 2006: 54. Cf. also Wilson 1984: 185. In this regard, Bodner (2012: 51–52) highlights the clever wordplay in Ahijah’s prophecy in which the root שלמה is used to connect the robe (שִׁלְמָה) to the king (שְׁלֹמֹה).

³⁸ Hendel 2005: 79–80.

³⁹ Cf. Gelinias 1995: 235: “Perhaps there never was an inherently unified national structure but rather a personal union between Israel and ‘Judah’ that has been torn apart by the course of world events.” In this, Gelinias attributes the socio-political realities of the late eighth century to the retrospective account of the “division” of the “United Monarchy.”

⁴⁰ On the retreat of Israel from Rehoboam’s “Egypt,” see Linville 1998: 172–73. Cf. also Mullen 1997: 171.

⁴¹ See especially Smith 1991; but also more focused studies in Jonker 2011; and—in the context of exile and suffering—Smith-Christopher 2002.

of Jerusalemite religion is explored further below, and all of this is relevant for appreciating not only the crystallisation of this northern Israelite identity but also that of the tradition which became Exodus; for if the invasion of Shishak was the catalyst for the resurfacing of older concepts of negative interaction with Egypt (and his withdrawal from the region was “remembered” as a liberation from Egypt), then it is to the presentation of Solomon and his relationship with the northern tribes that we must look for the “first narrativisation” of “Exodus.” This is the argument behind Mayes’ statement that “[i]f there is a Pharaoh of the exodus (. . .) that Pharaoh was Shishak”;⁴² for if Shishak is the key to understanding the context within which a story of “coming up” from Egypt resurfaced in response to a crisis of Israelite identity, then it is in the period in which and shortly after Shishak came up to Palestine that we should locate the initial articulation of the Israelite identity championed by the Hebrew Bible. That is all well and good, but it still leaves us with a considerable shortfall with regards to illuminating the socio-political context within which said articulation occurred. For that, we need to delve deeper into the toponyms and motifs conveyed in the portrayal of Solomon’s oppression of “Israel” and the subsequent “liberation” of his work force.

4. FROM SHECHEM TO SAMARIA—GETTING TO THE POINT

Following Ahijah’s prophecy of judgement upon Jeroboam’s “house,” Jeroboam’s wife returns with her son to Tirzah (1 Kgs 14:17), where the boy dies. This is the first reference to this city (“after” Josh 12:24), but it is not identified as a royal site in Kings until Baasha ascends to the throne in 1 Kgs 15:33. Of course, the audience may have been expected to know that Jeroboam had moved to Tirzah from Shechem (via Penuel), but the account seems rather confused.⁴³ It would be unlikely that a foundation myth for the Omride dynasty later established in Samaria would preserve memories of an Israel locating its foundation in Shechem; in fact, it would be quite uncomfortable, unless the Omrides continued to hold Shechem in great esteem. This may be the case, considering how significant that site had been since at least the early second millennium BCE.⁴⁴

⁴² Mayes 2010: 144.

⁴³ Using the verb *בנה* “to build,” 1 Kgs 12:25 envisages Jeroboam living first in Shechem, but it is not clear whether the reference to him building (more likely fortifying, on both counts) Penuel infers his subsequent residing there. For Finkelstein and Silberman (2002: 151), Jeroboam’s royal residence is in Tirzah, “the first capital of the northern kingdom,” a conclusion apparently based upon this story. Miller & Hayes (2006: 278) make the same suggestion.

⁴⁴ On the (19th–18th century) Egyptian “Execration Texts” which mention Shechem and (possibly) Jerusalem, see Finkelstein and Silberman 2002: 154–55; Grabbe 2007: 42. Also on the cultic installations at Shechem, see Fried 2002. For an understanding of such installations at Shechem in the context of “Tribal League Shrines”—based on the now outdated analogy of Israel’s early history in terms

The disrupted coronation of Rehoboam at Shechem would have borne great religious significance for Israel “at the time” (cf., for example, Josh 24; Gen 33:18–20); thus Jeroboam might have chosen to establish himself there to legitimise his position.⁴⁵ In saying that, the biblical account of the tenth-ninth century transition rushes through the successive “dynasties” of Jeroboam, Baasha and Zimri, with royal capitals changing from Shechem to (possibly) Penuel and then to Tirzah before coming to Omri setting himself up in Samaria. It is almost as if the writers cannot wait to get to the point; that is, the demonisation of the Omride dynasty. It is not, then, to any continuities between the Omride dynasty and that of Jeroboam that we should look, but to the discontinuities, especially in light of the prophesied and fulfilled destruction of first Jeroboam’s line; then that of Baasha and Zimri. My point is this: if it is to be argued that the Jeroboam story amounts to the distorted demonisation of the Omride dynasty, why the rapid succession and destruction of dynastic lines preceding Omri which serve to significantly disconnect him from the legacy of Israel’s legendary founder? It has already been observed that the second prophecy of Ahijah and the prophecy of the “Man of God” from Judah belong at the earliest to the seventh and sixth centuries BCE, respectively. In this regard, the story of Jeroboam’s wife returning to Tirzah could reflect an evolution of the Jeroboam tradition told in the courts of Baasha or Zimri (although the latter is unlikely, considering he only ruled in Tirzah for seven days; 1 Kgs 16:15); thus the seat of the legendary founder was shifted to Tirzah by way of the story of Ahijah’s second prophecy, which by its nature is retrospective.

What we might be seeing, then, in this rapid succession of kings and their changing seats of power, is an attempt to articulate in a coherent narrative a story of the foundation of Israel which from very early on was detached from both its chronological and geographical context. If this is the case, then any truth regarding Jeroboam we might hope to glean from the

of the Greek tribal amphictyony (cf. Mayes 1973; Hauser 1979; and Sparks 1998: 7–8)—see Wright 1971 (cf. also Anderson 1957). On the convergence at Shechem of an important network of roads, see Dorsey 1987.

⁴⁵ Linville 1998: 166–67. At this point, I will avoid intimating a direction of dependence which would require that Josh 24 was the earlier text. This is not to say that what it relays is not an earlier tradition than that of Jeroboam. For an argument in favour of a late (exilic) date for the composition of Josh 24, see Van Seters 1984. On the matter of fealty to YHWH and the threat of deviant worship in Josh 24, see Mitchell 1993: 115–19, who notes that the message of Josh 23–24 is that “illicit worship will result in the reversal of the conquest, and Israel will share the fate of the nations” (119). What better ideology upon which to establish the kingship of Israel (at precisely the same location)? Does it not also imply a presupposition of the Assyrian destruction retrospectively blamed on religious infidelity (or perhaps it is addressed to post-exilic “Israel” in the wake of the Babylonian destruction)?

present account may have been irreparably obscured by each ideological and politically-motivated restructuring. There may be some vague memory of a coronation or a coup d'état at Shechem, but the ensuing coups by Baasha and Zimri and their subsequent annihilation of the families of their respective predecessors suggests a literary pattern designed to intimate that Israel was consumed by conspiracy and murder from the very beginning. As Jeroboam's fate was prophesied, so too was the destruction of Baasha's line, by Jehu (1 Kgs 16:1–13); and both Baasha and Zimri are said to have been punished because of Jeroboam's sin, a strange statement in light of their familial disconnection from him that can only be seen as maintaining a "curse" on the northern kingdom no matter who sat on the throne.⁴⁶

It seems to me, then, that a primary thrust of the account of these "Israelite" kings is to assert the familial and dynastic discontinuity characteristic of the evolving northern monarchy in contrast to the continuity of that of the south (Judah).⁴⁷ A promise may have been made to Jeroboam that he would be like another David in the north, in light of Solomon and Rehoboam being punished for their sins, but the repeated dissolution of the northern bloodlines ensures that no such promise pertains to anyone claiming descent from a northern king. Thus the supremacy of Jerusalem is asserted through its appeal to a (Davidic) dynasty which necessarily *precedes the foundation* of the northern kingdom, thus maintaining pre-eminence over any claim to the name "Israel." The northern monarchs are held responsible for their own downfall, despite the faith YHWH had shown in granting them a chance at greatness (even the Judahite prophet Shemaiah relays YHWH's approval of Jeroboam; 1 Kgs 12:21–25, while the "Man of God" from Judah is tricked by a prophet of Bethel).⁴⁸ In short, the fate of Israel was its own fault, and certainly nothing to do with the Davidic descendants.

Where does this leave us, then, for the historicity of Jeroboam at Shechem? The short answer is "back where we started," because without specific evidence of any such person at that site or any administrative centre there in the tenth century BCE, there is nothing to support a claim to *exclusively Israelite occupation* at the time, let alone the origins of the Israelite monarchy.⁴⁹ The Jeroboam story as a whole is, in my opinion,

⁴⁶ Cf. Leuchter (2006: 69 n. 66): "Jeroboam's 'house' is to be seen in terms of Bethel more than in terms of biological lineage by extending the prototype of Jeroboam's sin throughout the duration of the northern kingdom's history long after other northern dynasties had taken power." It is possible, then, that the "Josian" retrospective which legitimates his destruction of Bethel necessitates the projection of this prophecy into the distant past.

⁴⁷ Miller & Hayes 2006: 267–70; Mullen 1993: 268.

⁴⁸ See further Walsh 1989: 360–62; and Wilson 1984: 187–91.

⁴⁹ Contra the optimistic suggestion in Campbell and Ross (1963: 10–11; emphasis mine)—based on a literal acceptance of Josh 24; and an understanding that "the Israelites *represented by the tribe of Manasseh*"

less concerned with historical integrity as it is with ideological and theological retrospective. It should come as no surprise, then, that the succession of kings leading to the Omride dynasty is both framed and pervaded by prophetic narratives—Ahijah and the “Man of God” from Judah (as well as Jehu) on one side, and the Elijah-Elisha sequence on the other. This “frame” is about answering questions prevalent at the time of its composition (or compilation), and as such we move further away from the alluded historical context. As Walsh observes:

The Deuteronomistic History often uses prophecy-fulfillment [sic] passages to bridge large sections of time and text. The underlying vision, of course, is the Deuteronomistic theology of the prophetic word as it reveals Yahweh’s reliable guidance of history.⁵⁰

The problem expands further, however, than just dismissing the historicity of a particular man at a particular place and time; instead, the “domino effect” of such a dismissal is that Israel the kingdom did not incorporate Shechem in the tenth century BCE (did Israel the kingdom exist in the tenth century BCE?) and, by extension, neither did the Solomonic “empire” possess that territory so that it could be relieved of it in the first place! The implications of these conclusions are explored further below, but the matter of continuity and discontinuity suggested above is a significant one, for it reveals one of the major concerns of the biblical writers. If historical and ideological continuity is required, it is necessary to bridge the gap from both a genealogical and a causative point of view; conversely, creating a sense of discontinuity requires constructing a disassociation in the narrative from facts which would otherwise reveal connections resulting in a “derailment” of the entire program. Consider, for example, the “carrying off” of the treasures of Jerusalem by Shishak, an interpolation which seems to me to be an apologetic for the disassociation evident in later Jerusalem from the grandeur of the Solomonic “empire” (Rehoboam’s bronze shields [1 Kgs 14:27] are surely no match for what came before!). Regardless of the strength of Josiah “Israel” (if this is indeed the time to which the presentation of Solomon belongs⁵¹), the former could be only an aspiration, an ideal

assumed control of the relevant territory—that Shechem “may very well have been the first real *Israelite* city”! It is much more likely, however, that the covenant ceremony of Josh 24 is part of the late construction of continuity between Joshua, Jeroboam, and Josiah; and no conclusions should be drawn as to the ethnicity of pre-Israelite elements based upon the literary-ideological legitimation of the continuity of “Biblical Israel.” In fact, insofar as exclusivity is concerned, Campbell and Ross make it clear from the beginning of their article (1963: 3; emphasis mine) that “Shechem was occupied by either Canaanites or Israelites, *or both together*, throughout the Biblical period.”

⁵⁰ Walsh 1989: 367.

⁵¹ For an argument against the outright dismissal of the historicity of Solomon’s wealth (albeit recognising that the received text dates

through which a “reforming” king might legitimate attempts at expansion.⁵² It is feasible, then, to suggest that the awareness of the writers of the tentative nature of some of their claims led them to anticipate challenges which survive in the text as anachronisms and contradictions brought to light by modern archaeological inquiry. As a result, the truth behind the place of Shechem in the story of the foundation of the northern kingdom may forever be obscured by the “perfect storm” of time and cultural “forgetting.”

5. “THESE ARE YOUR GODS”—DAN AND BETHEL IN THE LATE TENTH CENTURY BCE

So, what of Dan and Bethel? Is the biblical picture of Jeroboam setting up cult statues in his border towns to divert worship from Jerusalem credible?⁵³ Fundamental questions obstruct any “eureka” moment in this regard: firstly, were Dan and Bethel really the border towns of an Israelite kingdom in the late tenth century BCE;⁵⁴ and secondly, can we be sure which deities were worshipped at these sites at this time? More specifically, can we be sure that Israelite deities of any kind were worshipped there? As with Shechem, only archaeology can answer that question; and as with Shechem, the picture is hazy at best.

In the Jeroboam story, Bethel is the primary focus, with Dan quickly fading into the background. It is significant that in the MT the verse referring to the sin of erecting the golden calves (1 Kgs 12:30) attaches that sin specifically to the people going up to Dan, with the “sin” of Bethel implied by the pericope that follows.⁵⁵ There is no way of knowing if this passing reference to whatever the situation may have been at Dan indicates either i) a lack of preserved memory of anything that occurred there; or ii) a lack of interest in the same, considering the focus on Bethel.⁵⁶ A combination of the two would explain

from the sixth century BCE at the earliest), see Millard 1994.

⁵² A similar concept may be behind the payment made to Ben-Hadad by the Judean king Asa to “break his pact” with Baasha of Israel so that Asa could defeat his northern enemy with Aramean assistance (1 Kgs 15:16–21). Following this pay-off, the coffers of Jerusalem must have been empty once again! We may add to this the contradictory account of Nebuchadnezzar taking away all the treasures of the temple and his “cutting in pieces [of] all the vessels of gold (. . .) which King Solomon of Israel had made” (2 Kgs 24:13). This is clearly a motif of defeat to legitimise prophecies against kings, for if “all this [was] as YHWH had foretold” (24:13), then someone somewhere was rather confused about to which event YHWH was referring!

⁵³ On the literary aspects of Jeroboam’s “mutinous soliloquy,” see Bodner 2012: 84–89.

⁵⁴ Biran (1994: 7) certainly thinks so.

⁵⁵ Chung (2010: 22) observes how the other “sins” (the appointment of non-Levite priests and the changing of the dates of festivals) are subordinate to that of the erection of the calves.

⁵⁶ Leuchter (2006: 69) suggests that “[t]he Deuteronomist may have even geared his rhetoric to appeal to the sacral concerns of

much, and Finkelstein and Singer's observation that greater knowledge of Bethel should be understood with respect to its proximity to Jerusalem as much as anything else adds greater credence to Noll's words regarding Dan:⁵⁷

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Dan as presented in the Hebrew Bible is how little is actually said about it. Biblical writers seem to have known next to nothing about that city. Even if one assumes a basic historical reliability in all references to a city of Dan (as opposed to a legendary individual or "tribe" by that name) one will conclude that, according to the Bible, Dan was only marginally related to Israel at all.⁵⁸

Noll goes on to say that "the biblical writers were less interested in Dan as a city than in the city of Dan as a symbol—a symbol of all that is not right in Israel."⁵⁹ If this is true, then Dan is reduced to little more than an ideological device. As for identifying what deity might have been worshipped at Dan, Noll also argues that Hadad was the primary god there "during much of the pre-Assyrian Iron Age"; a conclusion refuted by Greer.⁶⁰ Through an analysis of faunal and ceramic finds from Tel Dan and the correlations he makes with biblical accounts of cultic feasting and sacrifice (specifically from Exodus and Leviticus), Greer argues that Israelite cultic activity occurred there during the Iron II period. Because his study relates to ninth and eighth century strata, he concedes that such activity occurred "at least at some stage" during Iron II.⁶¹ Despite the correlations Greer identifies, his conclusion from ninth and eighth century evidence that tenth century cultic practice at Dan was distinctly Israelite because "cult is by nature conservative" assumes that the biblical texts he uses are reliable records of practices which were uniquely Israelite at a time either contemporary with or predating the faunal and ceramic deposits.⁶² This is where things get very complicated, especially as Greer adds that "later texts often preserve earlier practices"

figures who were at one point associated with these non-Bethel northern cult sites." Of course, attributing significant elements of the story to the Deuteronomist(s) distances it considerably from the tenth century, positioning its concerns in a much later socio-religious context. Cf. Chalmers 2008: 45 n. 154: "The calf at Dan seems almost secondary in all of these traditions; it is virtually absent in the rest of the Deuteronomistic History and is not associated with a calf by Hosea." Keel and Uehlinger (1998: 191 n. 9) note the suggestions of some that "the idea of a bull calf image at Dan was a Deuteronomistic fiction." Fried (2002: 442) appears to presume the historicity of the golden calf at Dan.

⁵⁷ Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz 2009: 43 n. 121.

⁵⁸ Noll 1998: 13.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*: 14.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: 4; cf. Greer 2014: 7–8.

⁶¹ Greer 2014: 2, 8.

⁶² *Ibid.*: 7.

(a statement not inherently problematic).⁶³ In conjunction with the assertion in his earlier work on Dan (upon which his 2014 article depends) that the cult of the northern kingdom was “essentially Yahwistic and traditional in its inception and perpetuation,” Greer seems to be of the opinion that the biblical accounts of Levitical practices pre-date Jeroboam I.⁶⁴ This is problematic (and not only because it assumes the historicity of Jeroboam), for while cult may be conservative, historiography is decidedly less so. With each respective retelling of the past, the latter gradually loses its grip on certain details;⁶⁵ and as such, we cannot really be sure that these biblical accounts (the implied *sitz im leben* of which is the thirteenth century BCE) are reflections of monolithic cult practices reaching back through centuries of faithfully preserved Israelite cultic history.⁶⁶ If the biblical accounts appear to correspond with evidence of cult practices in ninth and eighth century strata, then I would propose taking that correspondence solely as a *terminus post quem* for those accounts, particularly if one is going to make assertions regarding the ethnic identity to which the practices belong. Projecting the biblical accounts further back through time than the archaeological correlates demand based on an understanding of the conservative nature of cult is speculative at best; while it assumes that “Israelite” cultic activity was manifestly autonomous in relation to its general socio-cultural environment by the time implied by the Hebrew Bible. The biblical text is a complex artefact itself, comprised of its own strata indicative of its composition history, but then so is any archaeological record of human behaviour.⁶⁷ “Conservative” does not necessarily imply “unchanging,” and Greer’s

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Greer 2013: 43; Nakhai 2001: 166: “[t]he Levitical priesthood (. . .) had dominated religious practice at Dan since the Settlement period”; Cross 1997: 74 (accepting both the historicity of the Jeroboam story and the “fact” that Yahweh was the god “who brought Israel up from Egypt”). Also cf. Laughlin 2009, who—despite acknowledging that we cannot be certain which gods which were worshipped at Dan—suggests that Jeroboam “may have been reviving an old Yahwistic cult that was known to have existed [t]here centuries before” (354). Cf. also Miller & Hayes 2006: 314. On Judg 17–18 (which likely presupposes the Dan element of the Jeroboam story and thus informs the foregoing preconceptions) and how it serves to connect Dan and Bethel, see Amit 1990.

⁶⁵ Here I am reminded of Nietzsche’s imagery of “islands” of “embellished facts” surviving the purposeful “forgetting” of information deemed irrelevant to the historical narrative with each respective reshaping of the past. Nietzsche 1980: 17.

⁶⁶ Accepting them as such is the problem inherent in “biblical archaeology,” and it leads to an inverted understanding of the burden of proof implicit in such statements as the following: “The Bible’s complex, obscure and fascinating description of the *bāmôt* system challenges archaeologists to search widely for relevant material remains” (Nakhai 2001: 168, emphasis mine).

⁶⁷ Cf. Dever 1987: 221.

argument requires a symbiosis of stasis on the part of both the cultic practices and the texts in question.⁶⁸

In his 2010 article, “An Israelite Mizraq at Tel Dan?,” Greer argues for the association of Israelite cultic practices as described in the Bible with the “blood-bowl” (mizraq) found in the eighth century Stratum II. While allowing for the possibility that the relevant cultic paraphernalia or “altar kit” could be “a common feature indicative of the greater Levantine cultic milieu,” he nonetheless maintains that the “blood manipulation rites” were *distinctly Israelite*.⁶⁹ Greer’s conclusions appear to be comprised of an argument from silence and a ready application of the biblical description of such rites so that they can be attributed to an ideological retrospective on the antiquity of Israel and its cultic practices. In this regard, Greer’s view of the biblical account of northern religious practices should be approached with caution:

Finally, returning to the Deuteronomistic account of the northern cult, it would be surprising indeed to think that a cult of foreign god in Israel would have escaped mention—let alone vehement condemnation—by the historians who considered such practices to be the cause of the fall of the north.⁷⁰

Greer appears to have fallen into the trap set by the biblical “leap-frogging” into the past of the Davidic-Yahwistic legacy, which asserts the great antiquity of the exclusive relationship between YHWH and the (homogeneous) people “Israel.”⁷¹ The biblical history of Israel and Judah is clearly characterised by the demonisation of the northern kingdom on the basis of heretical behaviour and religious infidelity. While the Omride dynasty is blatantly accused of worshipping stereotypically “Canaanite” deities (without which the Elijah-Elisha sequence would have no potency), the negotiation of constructing a shared antiquity necessitates the attaching of Yahwistic centrality to the earliest stages of “Israel.”⁷² This leads us in the direction of questioning the identity of the “original” god of the “Exodus” as preserved in the subtext of the Jeroboam story,

⁶⁸ Edelman 2012: 161: “While there tends to be a conservative bias in rites, they do change in their form, symbolic meaning and social effects according to the needs of the people using them to link the past to the present and the present to the future.”

⁶⁹ Greer 2010: 38–39; 2014: 7.

⁷⁰ Greer 2014: 8.

⁷¹ It is also worth bearing in mind that a single deity worshipped at a single site (even if it was a state-sponsored temple) did not necessarily mean that that deity was perceived as god of the entire territory (cf. Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 134). What is important is the significance and meaning attached to a specific deity; the issue here is one of binding identity (see below).

⁷² In this regard, Elijah’s contentious words on Mount Carmel (“How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If YHWH is *the* god, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” [1 Kgs 18:21]) are written from a Yahwist perspective of (perceived) triumph.

something to which I will return below, but it will suffice here to say that if any such cultic “reform” as that implied by the text actually occurred, it may have been altered so that it appears to be *pseudo*-Yahwistic insofar as the identity of the god who brought Israel up out of Egypt appears to be presupposed by the context.⁷³ This is done to maintain the antiquity and continuity of the connection between the idealised “Israel” and YHWH, while also justifying the retrospective “cursing” of the northern kingdom. When it comes to sites such as Dan, about which the biblical writers clearly knew so little and arguably did not care to know, we should be careful as to how we interpret the Yahwistic, Judean perspective:

[I]t seems clear that the “view from the south” (. . .) needs to be carefully re-assessed in light of both critical literary studies and now the abundant archaeological evidence. It is hoped that the renewed excavations will continue to make important discoveries from the time of biblical Dan and help even more to bring this important city back to life and rescue it from its very hostile and negative portrayal seen in the “view from the south.”⁷⁴

This “view” also applies to sites not nearly as far to the north; in fact, right on Jerusalem’s doorstep. The literary retrospective on Bethel, the primary focus of the religious polemic in the Jeroboam story, belongs to a much later time than that implied.⁷⁵ Even the repetition in 1 Kgs 12:32–33, which tells us twice that Jeroboam ascended the altar at Bethel, suggests an emphatic interpolation to set the scene for the confrontation with the Judahite “Man of God.” The repeated reference to the establishment of a festival emphasises the conflict with Jerusalem regarding the cultic calendar, and while this does not necessarily mean that either calendrical system was in place in the tenth century BCE, it is worth noting that a conflict concerning cultic practices informs the polemic of the prophets Amos and Hosea in the eighth century (cf. Hos 8:4–6, 11; Amos 3:14 and 4:4–5).⁷⁶ We can be reasonably confident, then, that the picture of prophetic condemnation of Jeroboam’s Bethel constitutes a memory of some form of deity worship and its associated cult seen as the antithesis of the cult at Jerusalem prior to the eighth century BCE. The assumption, however, that there was actual continuity between the religious practices under Jeroboam the legendary founder of the northern kingdom and those of *his namesake* in the time of Hosea and Amos takes the text at face value. Whatever memory may lie behind the authentication of the Bethel pericope at the time of its composition could just as

⁷³ Cf. Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 194: “Jeroboam’s cultic activities started nothing new (. . .) but simply attached new significance to a traditional cultic image that was at Bethel, probably a leftover from the Late Bronze Age or from Iron Age I (. . .) which was probably connected originally with El (. . .).”

⁷⁴ Laughlin 2009: 355.

⁷⁵ See especially Amit 2003; Blenkinsopp 2003.

⁷⁶ Leuchter 2006: 68 n. 62.

easily have originated with a ninth century initiation of Israelite practices preserved through the prophetic traditions of the eighth century (traditions bolstering much later claims to the antithetical nature of Bethel). I believe it is feasible to see this element of the Jeroboam story as belonging to a Judean retrospective on the time and activities of Jeroboam II (the apparent *sitz im leben* for Amos and Hosea; 1:1 in each book), especially in light of the conflict between institutional and peripheral prophets evident in both narratives.⁷⁷

To return focus to the sanctuaries themselves, then, I would ask this: can we be confident that the towns in which they were located marked the boundaries of a kingdom called “Israel” towards the end of the tenth century? The simple answer is “No.” While the construction of “monumental cultic structures” at Dan, and possibly a “base or podium for a temple,” might belong to a late tenth century context (if not an early ninth), I have found nothing conclusive to identify the builders.⁷⁸ Finkelstein and Singer have posited an occupation gap in late tenth century Bethel, and reconstructions of the biblical account of Jeroboam’s erection of calf or bull idols are often based on aligning that account with generalised correlations drawn from an international context of cultic iconography (not to mention accepting the biblical chronology requiring seeing in Exod 32 the precursor to the Jeroboam story!).⁷⁹

Take, for example, the image of a bull engraved on a bronze plaque discovered in a ninth-eighth century context at Dan, something which would at least give us some grounds for positing the worship of an idol similar to that said to have been set up by Jeroboam roughly a century earlier. If there was a memory of such iconography involved in the cultic practices at Dan, it could easily have been attributed to the demonised founder of the kingdom of Israel within the context of rejecting Jerusalemite Yahwism. If Laughlin is correct to suggest Syrian influence behind this iconography; and if we were to allow for the possibility of a legendary founder of Israel setting up bull (or calf) idols, then the biblical picture has warped the reasons for his actions considerably.⁸⁰ The picture, in fact, opens up the possibility—as inferred above—that the original identity of the “Exodus” deity was not the “Israelite” YHWH we would expect.⁸¹ In fact, Mayes suggested in 2006 that the “heresy” of

⁷⁷ In fact, it is entirely possible that the elements of the foundation narrative featuring a legendary founder of Israel *by the name of Jeroboam* belong either to an eighth century context in which Jeroboam II constructed his pedigree through a revision of the same; or a slightly later context in which he found his pedigree attacked through the demonisation of the first “king” of Israel by the same name!

⁷⁸ Laughlin 2009: 344. Dever (1987: 233, based on Biran’s 1974 findings) sees this “high place” as constructed in a “Canaanite style,” but states that it is “certainly Israelite.”

⁷⁹ Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz 2009. On said context, see especially Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 177–90.

⁸⁰ Laughlin 2009: 343.

⁸¹ Chalmers 2008: 43.

Jeroboam was a distortion of a “religious reminiscence” in which Ba’al was the god of the “Exodus”: hence the golden calf idols erected in Dan and Bethel, idols which he argues were most likely to have been associated with representations of “Canaanite” deities such as El or Ba’al.⁸² Is this what is happening here? Are we in fact seeing a much more complex rewriting of “Israelite” tradition, in that a Ba’al-focused migration tradition was appropriated by followers of YHWH? It is an interesting theory, one which would require a reassessment of Greer’s conclusions regarding the ethnic distinctiveness of the cultic practices at Dan.⁸³ In fact, it might require an understanding of the early religious practices of the kingdom of Israel solely in terms of continuity with Canaanite practices:

[It] is difficult to insist, from a strictly archaeological perspective, that the kingdom of Israel as a whole was ever particularly Israelite in either the ethnic, cultural, or religious connotations of that name as we understand it from the perspective of the later biblical writers. The Israeliteness [sic] of the northern kingdom was in many ways a late monarchic Judahite idea.⁸⁴

This is the lens through which we should analyse the Jeroboam story. The “sin” of Jeroboam as we have it in the Primary History is not “simply” that he “declared [the] god of Israel to be the calf” or bull, or any other animal specifically.⁸⁵ Instead, *by the time of the composition of the received text*, it is about setting up idols of any kind, the anthropomorphising of the deity in direct contravention of the second “commandment” of Exod 20:4–5;

⁸² Mayes 2006: 56–59. Although Chalmers (2008: 46) argues that “bull imagery fits comfortably in the cult of El, Baal, *and* Yahweh.” See further Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 118–19, 191–95; Mazar 2007b: 91: “The symbol of the bull in the religion of the northern tribes of Israel (. . .) was inherited from Canaanite religion.” Contra Cross 1997: 73: “In spite of its polemical distortion, the slogan ‘Behold your god(s) who brought you up out of the land of Egypt’ is a characteristic Yahwistic confession”; and further (75): “There can be no question of Jeroboam introducing a Ba’l-Haddu [sic] cult: if he had, tradition should have preserved the fact.” I would ask why Cross would expect this preservation of “fact,” in light of a thoroughly ideological and polemical text; although Chalmers (2008: 51) agrees with Cross in that he sees YHWH “as an El figure.”

⁸³ In an interesting excursus on the “archaeology of borders,” Bunimovitz et al. (2009: 119) emphasise the need to address issues of cultural diversity which might be characteristic of sites which are by nature situated on the fringes of more than one territory. They go on to assert that it is, in fact, at border sites that identity formation most evidently takes place within a context of liminality and contrast with external identities (120). I would complicate the issue further by adding that in a context of socio-religious fluidity arising from constant interaction with “others,” identity might never be confidently described as “formed” or “codified.”

⁸⁴ Finkelstein and Silberman 2002: 194. See also Miller & Hayes 2006: 102–6; and Galvin 2011: 114–16.

⁸⁵ Loewenstamm 1992: 53.

and if Yahwism was not aniconic in its early stages, then it is highly unlikely that this “commandment” or Jeroboam’s sin (which presupposes it) belongs to a tenth century context.⁸⁶ Of course, the rejection of Jerusalemite centrality is also the issue, and most scholars would locate the *terminus post quem* for the crystallisation of this ideology in the seventh century BCE context of Josiah’s “reformation.”⁸⁷ Now we are a “distance” of three hundred years from the “time of Jeroboam” and the picture has become very hazy indeed, but who better for Josiah to contrast himself with as the founder of a *new* “Israel” than the man who must have been long cast in Jerusalemite circles as the architect of a rebellion against “their king”? Jeroboam proved himself unworthy of the faith YHWH had shown in him, but through the destruction of Bethel (amongst other “heretical” sanctuaries), Josiah would not only prove himself more than worthy; he would redeem “Israel” from the condemnation echoing down through the centuries:

From the perspective of the Josianic court, the northern realm had been a complete failure as part of YHWH’s covenantal plan for national existence, doomed by Jeroboam almost immediately after its inception.⁸⁸

I believe these connections identify interdependence between these two foundation myths of “Israel”; and in this regard, the story about Bethel—and by association, that of Dan—is a projection into the past of the historical “character” of these sanctuaries preserved in the collective memory so that they can be used as symbols of “all that is not right in Israel.”⁸⁹ Used in *the stories of Josiah’s “reform,”* they function to bring “closure” to that state of affairs, so that a new foundation is (retrospectively) laid for the future “Israel.” The negative image of these

⁸⁶ On the aniconic nature of “Israelite” religion, see Laughlin 2009: 353; Chung 2010: 7–14. See further, Grabbe 2007: 161–62. On the general decline in anthropomorphic representations of the divine, see Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 135–40. On the likelihood of a late date for the composition of the “decalogue” (“a point of arrival rather than departure” harmonising earlier ethical traditions), see Mayes 1991.

⁸⁷ It could be argued that cultic centralisation as a whole informs the polemic against the twin sites of Dan and Bethel. The confusion arising from variant references throughout the Bible as to whether there was one or two calves (cf. Chalmers 2008: 30–36) would be somewhat redundant in this light. Even if Jeroboam wished for a single god to be worshipped, there would be two idols if there was one in each sanctuary (cf. 2 Kgs 10:29). Chalmers might be correct to see the accusations of polytheism as later distortions of whatever “truth” we might be dealing with (41, 50–51), but I think the priority for the biblical commentators on the “memory” of Jeroboam was to present the practices he introduced as *non-Yahwistic and de-centralised*.

⁸⁸ Leuchter 2006: 72.

⁸⁹ Davies (2005: 3–4) attributes “the production of much of the material in Judean literature” to the rivalry between Jerusalem and Bethel, but adds that “it must have achieved its literary expression in the period when Jerusalem reasserted its supremacy over Bethel.”

sites disassociates them from the court history of the kingdom of Israel, as it is quite beyond belief that any kingdom would perpetuate the demonisation of its own founder. Just like the Elijah-Elisha narratives which seek to continue this polemic against Israel into the ninth century; and the prophetic condemnations of eighth century prophets which presuppose the doom of the kingdom, the stories of Jeroboam's idols at sanctuaries marking either end of his territory should be read in the context of religiously-charged political propaganda perpetuated by Jerusalemite court scribes and storytellers.

6. SOLOMON THE BUILDER KING—OMRIDE GRANDEUR AND “EXODUS” IDEOLOGY

The story of Jeroboam, then, is a complex foundation myth (in that it addresses retrospectively the concerns of more than one historical context), dislocated both temporally and ideologically from whatever original context to which it *might* have belonged, but in the biblical text, this foundation myth has its own foundation—the reign of Solomon; more specifically, the building projects upon which the “House of Joseph” were forced to work.⁹⁰ A critical reading of the Genesis–2 Kings presentation of Solomon reveals the Jerusalem-centred theology and the grandiose claims to a “golden age” under the Judean king which stands not only in conflict with the international context within which such an “empire” might have existed, but also with the accumulating evidence from the field of archaeology that the biblical picture of this empire has intentionally reversed the reality of the northern kingdom Israel dominating the highlands from the ninth century on.⁹¹ The biblical writers, whose concern it was to harmonise the religious and political centralisation of Jerusalem with a reimagining of the history of the people “Israel,” worked hard to avoid anyone in the future drawing conclusions such as this:

If we were to accept only the archaeological record and the extrabiblical [sic] literary evidence from the ancient Near East, we would have to conclude that Omri of Samaria, who is referred to in the ninth-century BCE inscriptions of Shalmaneser III, is the first known king of Israel.⁹²

The reign of the Omrides, this uncomfortable truth from a Jerusalemite perspective, was the true “golden age” of Israel, and the biblical account amounts to the Judean appropriation and suppression of the Omride legacy.⁹³ A relatively late date for this literary-ideological appropriation would provide a context for the audience accepting the biblical chronology which

⁹⁰ See Miller & Hayes 2006: 213–16.

⁹¹ Against seeing the biblical picture of David-Solomon as a “golden age,” see Linville 1998: 89–91. Cf. also Miller & Hayes 2006: 186–87.

⁹² Gelinas 1995: 230.

⁹³ See especially Finkelstein and Silberman 2002: 180–95.

places Solomon (and Rehoboam) neatly before the formation of the Israelite kingdom.⁹⁴ In other words, the distance in time between the Assyrian annexation of Israel and the composition of the stories designed to glorify Solomon as the great builder king facilitated the “forgetting” of the Omride dynasty the very real power and grandeur of which had dominated the region.⁹⁵ Omri, the king who built armies which would (under his son, Ahab) go on to stand against Shalmaneser III in the powerful anti-Assyrian coalition of 853 BCE which asserted the strength of Israel, is afforded a handful of lines in the biblical text: he did “what was evil in the sight of YHWH (. . .) more evil than all who were before him” (1 Kgs 16:25).⁹⁶ All the man did, apparently, was acquire the hill of Samaria, build his palace there, and die. He may have “shown power” (16:27), but not the kind of which Jerusalemite Yahwists, overseeing the composition of the history, approved. Similarly, the triumph of Ahab over Ben-Hadad of Aram (Syria) is attributed to YHWH (20:26–29) while his “ivory house” and all the cities he built (or perhaps fortified; 22:39) appear in a somewhat incidental “postscript.” The account of Ahab’s reign is so dominated by the theological polemic of the Elijah-Elisha sequence that attention is diverted from any historical concerns, so the reality of the building projects of that king could easily have faded from memory to be pushed back in time and readily appropriated within the context of the Solomon story.⁹⁷ Whatever the

⁹⁴ The schematic length of the reign of Solomon (forty years; the same as David) is overlooked by Green (1978) in his consideration of a connection between Pharaoh Siamun and Solomon, when he makes the surprising statement that “the dates for the 21st and the 22nd Dynasties must be moved backward or forward in accordance with the accepted end of Solomon’s reign (. . .) by which they are fixed” (356)! For a more enlightened approach to the potential for correlations, see Ash 1999: 22–26. For Davies (2009: 67), the existence of Rehoboam himself is doubtful.

⁹⁵ On the shifting conclusions from archaeology on the “stables” and palaces at Megiddo, which in the 1960s reassigned the former to Ahab and the latter to Solomon (the palaces were uncovered beneath the stables); and more recently placed the palaces in a ninth century context, see Finkelstein and Silberman 2002: 137–40.

⁹⁶ Dever (2004: 69) applies the relevant Assyrian text to argue that Ahab’s kingdom could not have simply sprung “into full-blown existence overnight” and that the “ascendancy of Omri and Ahab (. . .) requires us to postulate predecessors who had founded a kingdom somewhat earlier.” Does it really require us to postulate a *kingdom* as the Bible presents that of Solomon, or would a tribal affiliation suffice, one which led to the coalescence over roughly seven decades into a territorial state? It is an interesting argument, but I would draw attention initially to Dever’s ready acceptance of the Assyrian text claiming that Shalmaneser was faced by two-thousand Israelite chariots (not to mention ten-thousand foot soldiers; ANET 277–81)! Why deconstruct one source and not another? For a more recent analysis of the archaeology of Samaria and Megiddo, see Chapman 2015.

⁹⁷ On the likelihood that the Elijah-Elisha sequence is retrospectively given a ninth-century context, see Miller & Hayes 2006: 313–15.

case, the temporal dislocation from the age of the Omrides permitted their demonisation in terms favourable to the later theological concerns of Jerusalemite Yahwists, with the accounts of their reigns reduced to nothing more than a literary stage for the propagandistic manifestation of same. It is within the context of the Solomon story, however, that we find the basis for the “first narrativisation” of the tradition of coming up from Egypt, for the image of Solomon as the great builder king facilitates his casting as the tyrant who oppresses the northern tribes. Whether such oppression really occurred is difficult to say, but Solomon might only have built or restored within and around Jerusalem itself.⁹⁸ If this is the case, then the image of a great workforce comprised of ten tribes outside his immediate sphere of influence belongs to the realm of fantasy; it is an image concerned with aligning him ideologically with rulers in the Ancient Near East with whom the biblical writers could only hope to compare him.⁹⁹ Similarly, the biblical claim that one of Solomon’s wives was the daughter of Pharaoh (1 Kgs 3:1; once again, an anonymous Pharaoh—why remember or record Shishak but not this one?) appears on the surface to amount to Solomon’s diplomatic relations with Egypt, but it tells us something else—that Solomon’s kingship was recast as an Egyptian-style monarchy.¹⁰⁰ This is the perception of Solomon’s reign (and subsequently, that of Rehoboam) which piques my interest, for it is within this context that the story of Jeroboam makes much more sense:

If one pays careful attention to the message that was proclaimed at the sanctuaries in Bethel and Dan at the same time that the images of the bulls were set up (. . .), then one can see that such activities were part of a program that was to give expression to an emancipation intended to free

Also Blenkinsopp 1996: 57–58. Young (1998: 252) observes that it has likely “been heavily redacted by someone sympathetic with Jehu’s revolution.”

⁹⁸ Hendel 2005: 80.

⁹⁹ Thompson 1999: 202: “[T]he narratives describe a Croesus-like Solomon in a manner reminiscent of the way the kings of great states like Egypt, Assyria and Babylon liked to describe themselves.”

¹⁰⁰ Green 1978, argues for Siamun as Solomon’s “Father-in-law”; but cf. n. 94, above, on his ready acceptance of the biblical chronology informing his conclusions. Miller & Hayes (2006: 208) take a decisive stance in the opposite direction: “We decline to speculate on which Pharaoh gave his daughter to Solomon in marriage (. . .), since we regard the whole ‘pharaoh’s daughter’ theme as suspect.” See further Keel and Uehlinger (1998: 178) for Egyptian cultural influence in Israel (although they appear to take the biblical account of the “United Monarchy” at face value; cf. idem: 133). A concise summary of opinions and bibliography relevant to the question of Egyptian cultural influence in the time of David and Solomon can be found in Ash 1999: 13–20. On the “Canaanite” influence on the nature of “the Israelite Monarchy,” see Day 1998 (who notably plays down any Egyptian connections).

them concurrently from subjection both to Egypt and Jerusalem.¹⁰¹

This comes close to the matter, but to what subjection(s) are Keel and Uehlinger referring? According to the story, Jeroboam set up these idols immediately following his return from Egypt; that is, before Shishak came up to Palestine. Considering that the biblical text has the Pharaoh attacking Jerusalem five years later, Jeroboam's Israel has no experience of subjection by Egypt.¹⁰² Attacks on Megiddo or any other site later brought into the sphere of Israel's territorial influence may be retrospectively attached to the developing account of Jeroboam, but none of this concerns the biblical writers. Instead, the answer to the above question is that any perception of subjection should be seen within the context of the Egyptianised image of Solomon's kingdom, in that from a literary-ideological point of view, Jerusalem and Egypt are one and the same. Dealing with a vague (possibly false) memory of the experience of the "House of Joseph" as it "slaved" for a king in the south, Jerusalem was cast as "Egypt" through the attachment of a combination of popular literary motifs related to Ancient Near Eastern monarchic propaganda and memories of ancient interaction with and "liberation" from Egypt. This is where the "first narrativisation" of the "Exodus" tradition really comes into its own, for it is here that the negative connotations of Egypt lying dormant in the collective memory are appropriated amidst an array of related concepts and half-truths so that it aligns perfectly with an assertion of identity on the part of "Israel." There is a sense that a significant event occurred which led to the rejection of the Jerusalemite monarchy or chieftainship, because the polemic against Solomon was designed to explain the dissolution of a pre-existing relationship amongst the people of the highlands, north and south. I believe that a memory survived of a fundamental schism which set the developing states of Israel and Judah upon different cultural trajectories. What better way to present Solomon in this story, especially in light of the memories of interaction with Egypt presupposed by Exodus, than that of an "Egyptian" king oppressing his own people? It facilitates both sides of the cultural divide, sufficiently glorifying the king of Jerusalem so that he has the ability to do such a thing, while incorporating and harmonising an Israelite assertion of ethnic distinctiveness.¹⁰³ In

¹⁰¹ Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 191.

¹⁰² See Ben-Dor Evian 2015, for a short article (or "extended abstract") relating to the archaeological evidence for Egyptian presence and influence in early Iron Age IIA Israel.

¹⁰³ Chung's suggestion (2010: 16) that "the tradition of Israel's exodus from Egypt was marginalised in the kingdom of Judah from the time of the reign of David and Solomon" makes too much of the biblical concept of an ethnically unified people sharing a single foundation myth prior to the inception of the kingdom of Israel. I believe that the people occupying the southern highlands did not utilise the memories of an Egyptian migration until "Israel" became part of their

this sense, Shishak need not be seen as the “Pharaoh of the Exodus,” the conveniently positioned Egyptian king arriving amidst a crisis of Israelite identity, because both Solomon and Rehoboam fit the bill; and Exodus has two Pharaohs oppressing the Hebrews (with the second increasing the workload as Rehoboam does). Shishak may not be the “Pharaoh of the Exodus” in any real way, but he certainly facilitates the projection into the past of the foundation of *the kingdom of Israel*.

7. SHISHAK IN A STORMY SEA—SUMMARY

In a sense (and before drawing conclusions as to the ideological purposes of 1 Kgs 11–14) we are trying to determine whether the biblical account of the inception of the kingdom of Israel accords with the emergence in the region *at the time implied by the text* of an “ethnic state” to such a degree that said account can be relied upon to reconstruct the history of that kingdom.¹⁰⁴ Joffe’s definition of an “ethnic state” relates to the conclusions of Mayes that the withdrawal of Shishak from Palestine and the subsequent power-vacuum in the region precipitated the emergence of Israel in the context of smaller states—centred upon long-established sites significant to ethnic identities—coalescing within a single territorial centralised entity.¹⁰⁵ Yet the

shared identity. While this might have occurred from the late eighth century at the very earliest, I think that the late seventh century is the most suitable context; although cf. Davies, Graham 2004: 26–27.

¹⁰⁴ Joffe 2002: 426: “[T]hey [that is, ethnic states] are novel and historically contingent political systems which appear in the Levant during the first millennium BCE thanks to the confluence of several factors, not the least of which is the collapse of imperial domination and the longstanding city-state system. New forms of local identity and organization developed during the centuries of relative dislocation, which were later utilised in part by reemergent [sic] elites.” The concept of an “ethnic state” is useful, considering the overuse of terms such as “city-state” or “nation-state.” Gelinas (1995: 236) remarks: “Scholars attempting to write a history of Palestine from the tenth through the sixth century BCE must address the issues relating not only to the geographical, archaeological and epigraphic studies of this period in Palestine, but also to questions arising out of anthropological research on states, both their formation and collapse.” Dever (2004: 76–86) deals with the problematic definition of “statehood” within the context of the debate surrounding the “United Monarchy.”

¹⁰⁵ It is within this context that I am reluctant to accept Dever’s (2004) attack on the “revisionist” refutation of the nature and extent of both the “United Monarchy” and a tenth century inception of a kingdom of Israel based upon an acceptance of the former. Dever points to urbanisation, centralised administration, monumental architecture and population increase (and relocation) as indicative of the formation of an “Israelite” state in the tenth century; but even if Finkelstein’s Low Chronology is proved wrong and the relevant sites remain dated to the tenth century, there is still no evidence that i) these sites are connected politically or ethnically; or ii) that the sites *implied by the biblical text as central to the kingdom of Israel* asserted any power over those which have provided evidence for Dever’s criteria

Bible, apart from possibly inferring the importance of Shechem for the *reinvigoration* of an identity group called “Israel” (the emphasis should be read in relation to the existence centuries earlier of “Merneptah’s Israel”), does not convey this connection at all, despite its reference to the Egyptian king.¹⁰⁶ Instead, the Jeroboam story is concerned solely with how Israel broke away from both Davidic rule centred upon Jerusalem and the cultic manifestations of royal theology promoted by that monarchy. As such, the story is overtly biased in favour of both Jerusalem and Yahwism, which should immediately weaken any claims that this story reflects the actual concerns of a people called “Israel” in a kingdom of the same name conceived in the tenth century BCE.¹⁰⁷ In fact, I think there is very little in the Jeroboam story that belongs to a tenth century context. Instead, it is, in my opinion, a conflation of evolving traditions concerning i) the foundation of the kingdom of Israel; ii) the demonisation of the Omride dynasty;¹⁰⁸ related to iii) Judean

of statehood. In a similar vein (and because Dever refers to excavations at Beth-Shemesh; 82–84), I would argue that a picture of a centralised Judean state based upon the archaeology of Beth-Shemesh—a “frontier site” to the west of Jerusalem—requires evidence of subordination to Jerusalem before convincing correlation with the biblical account. Beth-Shemesh may show evidence of “the involvement of a central government in the town’s daily life” (Bunimovitz et al. 2009: 133), but if its description as a “frontier” or “border” site is based upon the biblical picture of a Jerusalem-centred state, any possibility of seeing it as subordinate to any other site, or indeed recognising its potential autonomy in the tenth century, goes out the window.

¹⁰⁶ The concept of “reviving” Israel is behind Miller & Hayes’ assertion that “the rebel kingdom took the *old name* ‘Israel’ ” (2006: 265, emphasis mine).

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Grabbe 2007: 121. Chung (2010: 24) agrees that “the Deuteronomist’s condemnation of Jeroboam’s religious policies is characterised by unjustness and bias, since his point of view is essentially Judean, that is, it originates in the southern kingdom.” Chung, however, would see this point of view as contemporary with the alluded historical context, as he accepts the biblical picture of a “United Monarchy.”

¹⁰⁸ One would imagine that if Shoshenq I invaded the territories around northern Israel in the *ninth* century BCE—as per Morkot and James 2015; Thijs 2015; and James and Van der Veen 2015—he would have encountered a significantly strong “Omride” army, an account of which would have contributed greatly not only to the theological agenda of the “southern” writers of Kings (had he lost), but also to the “Exodus” ideology of negative interaction with Egypt. I think James and Van der Veen (2015) go too far by suggesting that Shoshenq encountered Aramean forces and subsequently helped to “liberate” Israel, a scenario casting Shoshenq I as the mysterious “saviour” of 2 Kgs 13:5! I will admit, however, that the confusion surrounding the “whitewashing” of Omride grandeur in favour of the Jerusalemite Solomon might add to the difficulties of maintaining the Shishak-Shoshenq I correlation, but one thing I would advise those intent on severing said link is to stop accepting the biblical picture of Jeroboam’s flight to and return from Egypt; and presuming that this intimates an alliance of any kind. This literary motif is part of a pro-

polemic against northern cultic practices (possibly later redacted to project the prophetic condemnation of Jeroboam II back to the origins of Israel);¹⁰⁹ iv) Jerusalemite political propaganda regarding the Davidic legacy; and v) interaction with Egypt. As such—and I would emphasise that I refer here to *the current form of the story*—it does not have a definitive historical setting which I would call a “memory context”; at least not one which envisages a real Jeroboam establishing any kingdom in the north. Whatever memory context we might posit for an “original” version of this story is drawn only from the preservation in the text of the correlation between Shishak’s military campaign and a vague memory on the part of a pre-monarchic “Israelite” entity of his activity in Palestine.

As noted above, Israel Finkelstein argues that the likely target of Shishak’s unusual incursion into the highlands was prompted by the growing power of the “Saulide State” centred on Gibeon, and that the memory of that event was later adopted into Judean-Israelite tradition so that Jerusalem is elevated by proxy to a status worthy of attack by an Egyptian Pharaoh. I have said something similar, of course, of Megiddo, but according to the Bible, Megiddo was part of the kingdom of Israel by the time of Shishak’s campaign. The confusion arising from archaeology considering whether some or all of the site was razed by the Egyptians cautions against drawing conclusions either way, but the fact that there is no memory preserved in the Bible of the Megiddo attack is problematic with regard to the historicity of the Jeroboam story. We could on the one hand choose to accept that Megiddo was in Israelite hands at the time, and that it is from here that the memory of an Egyptian attack arises, only to be later attached to Jerusalem. In observing that Jerusalem is not mentioned in the campaign list where one would expect to find it, Clancy argues that “[t]he most likely explanation is that Shoshenq omitted Jerusalem because it was neither rich nor important.”¹¹⁰ It is to this understanding of Jerusalem that we should apply the inverse portrayal of the city in the Bible. After all, why would a marauding Egyptian army ignore the mighty Jerusalem of the Solomonic empire?

The other option is that Megiddo was not in Israelite hands; that no one fled the city with tales of an attack which

ject of continuity incorporating the “telescoping” of Exodus imagery.

¹⁰⁹ This does not necessarily mean that Jeroboam I did not exist, just that his legacy was reassessed in light of prophetic condemnations of Jeroboam II. In this light, it might serve us well to reduce Jeroboam I to the “arch evil figure” (Russell 2009: 47) in the biblical history of Israel, a character in the literary presentation of Israel’s past who facilitates later theological reflections on the fateful events closing the eighth century. Russell argues that the connection of Bethel with the “celebration of an Israelite exodus from Egypt” pre-dates these events, but he is careful not to suggest an early date for the attachment of Jeroboam I (again, if he ever existed) to the initiation of such a celebration in the northern kingdom.

¹¹⁰ Clancy 1999: 5–6.

came to form part of Israelite collective memory, and as such Megiddo has nothing to do with the memory of Shishak; an option which leaves us with an “Israelite” enclave at Gibeon. Again, however, this is not remembered in the Bible; Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, we read, until it feels like we are marching around in similar circles to those devised by scholars trying to find out where Shishak actually went! Someone remembered Shishak, however; someone who either identified themselves as “Israelite” at the time or later came to do so. Whatever became of the stories of an Egyptian incursion into the region by elements outside “Israel,” the appropriation of those stories by developing “Israel” became the foundation for a tale preserving a context of a crisis of identity. The apparent confusion in the text as to “who is Israel?” may just as well be indicative of a real memory of an ethnic schism as opposed to a political one, into which has been interpolated the interests imagined of Judah at the (much later) time of composition. It is Shishak, however, who is the *mnemohistorical* “anchor” for the tenth century context of the Jeroboam story;¹¹¹ and I cannot see any conceivable reason for his presence specifically in the story (as opposed to just another anonymous Pharaoh) other than a real memory of some kind of interaction with Egypt corresponding with his reign.¹¹² Through Shishak, ninth century memories of Omride power have been dislocated and “forgotten” to glorify a comparatively weak kingdom in the “south” which did not concern Shishak in his campaign. To this weak kingdom is afforded the capability of oppressing its northern neighbours, aspects of which are a combination of the inversion of the reality under the Omrides as well as the appropriation of vague memories of some sort of liberation from Egyptian power. The withdrawal of Shishak following his Palestinian campaign is interpreted as a victory over Egypt and the crisis of identity regarding the ethnic label “Israel” is associated in memory with this event because it facilitated the ascension of the Omrides, the first truly Israelite “empire.” In the wake of the dissolution of the Saulide state, whose chiefdom may have been comprised of early Israelites and thus entertained pretensions of being the earliest territorial “Israel,” the focus of the foundation myth of the kingdom of Israel was intentionally shifted from Gibeon and Saul to Shechem and Jeroboam. At any rate, the demonisation of the Omride dynasty attacked the legitimacy of an “Israel” centred upon Samaria, so that a foundation myth pre-

¹¹¹ By the term “mnemohistorical anchor,” I mean a person, place or event in an historical narrative (the existence of whom or which is not in dispute) through which are “anchored” chronologically the memories informing a tradition or story, the details of which are presented as entirely factual.

¹¹² Although related to the “historicisation” of prophetic activity in the prophetic books, the words of Ben Zvi (2006: 49–50) are particularly relevant here: “Narratives about the communal past, that is, ‘historical’ narratives—whether accurate from our perspective or not—most often tend to contain temporal anchors and refer to particular circumstances in the social memory of the group.”

ceding the Samarian-based kingdom (and with pretensions of Solomonic splendour) was absolutely necessary. This also facilitated an attack on the legendary (fictional?) figure of Jeroboam so dislocated from historical accuracy that it could not be contested. For modern historians, it is virtually impossible to penetrate:

The historical discussion today about the role and nature of the tenth century in the history of Palestine is a close variant on the old question that teachers of philosophy put to their students, about whether there is a sound of trees falling in the woods when there is no one to hear it.¹¹³

From an historiographical point of view, then, the story of the tenth century “foundation” of Israel inhabits a “no-man’s land” of memory between historical contexts of interaction with Egypt (for which we can argue based primarily upon the Merneptah Stele) and the ascendancy of the Omride dynasty, which Jerusalemite scribes diluted in order to facilitate their inversion of Omride domination. The stories of Israelite kings in a ninth century context are even more fantastical in their polemic, an approach which completely dominates the accounts;¹¹⁴ and so, as modern historians, we find ourselves moving swiftly into the eighth century, where the action really appears to be. Not surprisingly, with the retrospective on the Assyrian annexation of Israel, this is where Jerusalemite polemic really comes into its own.

As a result, the excellent analysis of the ethnicity and identity of ancient Israel by Sparks moves from the Merneptah Stele at the close of the thirteenth century BCE to the beginning of Assyrian domination in the eighth century BCE; and any study on ethnicity and identity in ancient Israel driven solely by extra-biblical evidence would likely overlook the Jeroboam story. Despite this, we can ask: what is being remembered in the Jeroboam story? Is it really the foundation of a kingdom? I do not believe so. In fact, I think this is less about the inception of a territorial kingdom and more about the earliest crystallisation of “Israel” as an entity bound by a single ideology, one which distinguishes it from its southern neighbours so that it later coalesces as a territorial entity with the development of states resulting from external pressures and international influence. Insofar as its connection to the “Exodus” story is concerned, Jeroboam’s statement that “These are your gods” calls the people to worship amidst the assertion of “Israel” as a homogeneous entity rejecting Jerusalemite religion, whatever that may have been at the time (and amidst the confusion of literary retrospective, we should be cautious to presume religious uniformity of any kind). The vague memories of coming up from Egypt that contribute to the connections with LBA and Early Iron Age realia—those which keep the debate going

¹¹³ Thompson 1999: 200.

¹¹⁴ On the Elijah-Elisha narratives, see for example, Blenkinsopp 1996: 58–64; and Wilson 1984: 194–206.

as to the historicity of Exodus—are brought into the spotlight but narrativised as a distinctive appropriation of the tradition within the constraints of this new “Israelite” identity, separating it from Judean-Yahwistic concerns. If this is a “Charter Myth” (and on this I assume a subtle distinction from the conclusions of Van der Toorn), it is one of ethnic amalgamation, albeit one facilitating the state formation of *the ninth century*.¹¹⁵ Part of the debate surrounding Exodus sees certain elements of those who crossed the Jordan and entered the highlands bringing Yahwism with them (the *Shasu Ybm*), and so it is simplistic to conclude that Jeroboam’s “reformation” was to Ba’al religion. It might still have been Yahwism (and by this I mean simply a structure of worship of the deity YHWH), but its articulation occurred within a framework of “Canaanite” religious expression; and this is what is retrospectively condemned.¹¹⁶ It is also worth bearing in mind what has been suggested above regarding the connections between the Jeroboams of both the tenth and eighth century contexts, particularly when analysing the retrospectives on the eighth century prophetic condemnations of Israel. Some may find such a connection simplistic and historically dismissive, but in my defence I say this: does the prophecy against Bethel and the subsequent interaction with the “old prophet” not anticipate (and presuppose) Amos and his conflict with Amaziah? I am certainly tempted to see in the figure of the “man of God” from Judah that very prophet from Tekoa, thus laying the foundation for ideological continuity with the eighth century context. Of course this may read too much into the text, and I am certainly not suggesting that Amos met with the same fate as his literary doppelgänger, but the presence in both stories of this conflict between institutional and peripheral prophets and a king named Jeroboam should at the very least furrow some brows!¹¹⁷ For me, it is clear that the received Jeroboam story is incredibly complex and wonderfully constructed, preserving as it does numerous allusions to the periods through which it was transmitted along the way.

¹¹⁵ For more on Exodus as the “Charter Myth” of Israel (“a powerful instrument to weld the Israelite clans and families together into one nation”), see especially Van der Toorn 1996 (291–302; quote from p. 302), and 2001; also Albertz 2001 (a response to Van der Toorn in the same volume).

¹¹⁶ Cf. Dever 1987: 233: “[T]he material basis of the early Israelite cult can hardly be distinguished from that of the Canaanite cult of the Late Bronze Age (. . . and . . .) there is nothing in the archaeological record per se that reflects ‘Yahwism.’”

¹¹⁷ Cf. Davies 2006: 122–23; 2009: 62–63. The motif of disobeying the word of YHWH and the subsequent death by lion attack is used in a similar vein in 1 Kgs 20:35–36.

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