

## DECEITFUL ABOVE ALL THINGS - 1 KINGS 12:25-33

### I. Text

<sup>25</sup> וַיִּבְנוּ יִרְבֵּעַם אֶת־שִׁכְמָה בְּהַר אֶפְרַיִם וַיָּשֶׁב בָּהּ וַיֵּצֵא מִשָּׁם וַיִּבֶן אֶת־פְּנוּאֵל:  
<sup>26</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יִרְבֵּעַם בְּלִבּוֹ עַתָּה תָּשׁוּב הַמַּמְלָכָה לְבֵית דָּוִד:  
<sup>27</sup> אִם־יֵעָלֶה הָעָם הַזֶּה לַעֲשׂוֹת זִבְחִים בְּבֵית־יְהוָה בִּירוּשָׁלַם וְשָׁב לֵב הָעָם הַזֶּה<sup>a</sup> אֶל־אֲדֹנֵיהֶם אֶל־רִחְבֵּעַם מֶלֶךְ־יְהוּדָה וְהִרְגִּנִי<sup>b</sup> וְשָׁבוּ אֶל־רִחְבֵּעַם מֶלֶךְ־יְהוּדָה<sup>c</sup>:  
<sup>28</sup> וַיֹּעֲצֵן<sup>a</sup> הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיַּעַשׂ שְׁנֵי עֲגֻלֵי זָהָב וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם<sup>b</sup> רַב־לָכֶם מַעֲלֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם הִנֵּה אֱלֹהֵיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱלִוּךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:  
<sup>29</sup> וַיֵּשֶׁם אֶת־הָאֶחָד בְּבֵית־אֵל וְאֶת־הָאֶחָד נָתַן בְּדָן:  
<sup>30</sup> וַיְהִי הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה לְחִטְאָתָא<sup>a</sup> וַיֵּלְכוּ הָעָם לִפְנֵי הָאֶחָד<sup>b</sup> עַד־דָּן:  
<sup>31</sup> וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת־בֵּית־אֵל בְּמֹזֶה וַיַּעַשׂ כְּהַנִּיחַם מִקְצֹצֹת הָעָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־הָיוּ מִבְּנֵי לֹוִי:  
<sup>32</sup> וַיַּעַשׂ יִרְבֵּעַם חָג בַּחֲדָשׁ הַשְּׁמִינִי בַחֲמִשָּׁה־עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֲדָשׁ כִּחְג אֲשֶׁר בִּיהוּדָה וַיַּעַל עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ כֶּן עָשָׂה בְּבֵית־אֵל<sup>a</sup> לְזִבְחַת לְעֹגְלִים אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה וְהֶעֱמִיד בְּבֵית־אֵל אֶת־כֹּהֲנֵי הַבְּמֹזֶה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה:  
<sup>33</sup> וַיַּעַל עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה<sup>a</sup> בְּבֵית־אֵל<sup>b</sup> בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם בַּחֲדָשׁ<sup>c</sup> הַשְּׁמִינִי בַחֲדָשׁ אֲשֶׁר־בְּדָא (מִלְבָּד)  
 [מִלְבָּו]<sup>d</sup> וַיַּעַשׂ חָג לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּעַל עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְהַקְטִיר: פ

### II. Translation

(v.25) Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and dwelt in it. And he went out from there and built Penuel.

(v.26) And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom may turn back to the house of David.

(v.27) If this people go up to make sacrifices in the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, to Rehoboam, king of Judah, and they will kill me and turn back to Rehoboam, king of Judah."

(v.28) So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold and he said to them, "It is too much for you to go up [to] Jerusalem. Behold your gods, O Israel, who raised you up from the land of Egypt."

(v.29) And he set the one in Bethel, and the one he set in Dan.

(v.30) Then this matter became a sin, and the people went before the one as far as Dan.

(v.31) And he made temples of high places and he appointed priests from the ends of the people, who were not from the sons of Levi.

(v.32) Then Jeroboam appointed a festival on the eighth month, on the fifteen[th] day of the month, like [the] festival which [was] in Judah, and he went up unto the altar, thus he did in Bethel, to sacrifice to the calves that he made. And he stood in Bethel the priests of the high places which he appointed.

(v.33) And he went up unto the altar that he made in Bethel and on the fifteen[th] day in the eighth month, in the month that he devised from his heart [Qere] and he made a festival for the sons of Israel, and he went up unto the altar to burn incense.

### **III. Apparatus**

#### **Verse 27**

(a.) “Is absent in the Septuagint.” [Comment: This would change the translation from “then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord” to “then the heart of the people will turn back to their lord.” Given that the verse opens with “this people,” the Septuagint’s lack of the second “this” does not seem to be a substantial difference from the Masoretic Text. By using the demonstrative twice in the verse, the Masoretic Text emphasizes the particular group of people to a slightly higher degree than the Septuagint. However, in both cases, it is clear that the people group referred to is the kingdom of Israel. Thus, this textual variant will not be accepted in this study].<sup>1</sup>

(b.) “Is absent in a few medieval manuscripts of the Hebrew OT, the Lucianic Recension of the Septuagint.” [Comment: Given that it is only a few medieval manuscripts with this omission, and that the revisions of Lucian are primarily stylistic in nature,<sup>2</sup> most commentaries accept the inclusion of “and they will kill me,” as part of the text. It seems fitting, given the picture being formed of Jeroboam’s political motives in setting up the calves. A vav-conversive itself, it seems to fit with the vav-conversives “they will turn back” either side of it, moving the story along,

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<sup>1</sup> According to Stuart, the Septuagint is, on average, as reliable and accurate a witness to the original wording of the Old Testament as the Masoretic Text. Stuart states that in many sections of the Old Testament, it is *more* reliable than the Masoretic Text and thus, where they differ, no automatic decision can be made. See Douglas K. Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 88. However, general scholarly consensus places the Masoretic Text above the Septuagint in terms of significance for textual criticism, see the order of significance in E. Würthwein and E. F Rhodes, *Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica* (London: SCM Press, 1979), 114. The 1947 discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has allowed for the best evaluation of the reliability of Old Testament texts. In weighing the evidence, scholars agree, in general, that the Hebrew sources take precedence over other versions, though other versions often contain what appears to be plausible original readings. Paul D. Wegner, “The Reliability of the Old Testament Manuscripts,” in *Understanding Scripture* (eds. Wayne Grudem, C. John Collins, and Thomas Schreiner; Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2012), 110-109. In this study, the Masoretic Text will be favored. Regardless, this particular variance does not seem to have particular significance in translation.

<sup>2</sup> Karen H Jobses and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle, Cumbria, U.K.: Baker Academic, Paternoster, 2000), 53.

building tension. The narrator describes a fear stemming from lack of faith that seems accurate. Thus, this textual variant will not be accepted in this study].

**(c-c.)** “Is absent in a few medieval manuscripts of the Hebrew OT, Septuagint, added?” [Comment: It is possible that the last clause of the verse was added to the Masoretic Text. At the least, it is omitted from some manuscripts of the Hebrew OT and the Septuagint. The clause is a repetition from earlier in the verse, and thus emphasizes Jeroboam’s state of mind. While some commentaries prefer to exclude it from study, noting it as dittography,<sup>3</sup> the majority include it as part of the narrative. Given that it seems a fitting inclusion, and that, though it adds emphasis, the addition does not affect the narrative significantly, this clause is included in this study].

### Verse 28

**(a.)** “Septuagint (Codex Alexandrinus) και επορευθη compare Septuagint remaining, to be read וַיֵּלֶךְ” [Comment: Some versions of the Septuagint<sup>4</sup> add this verb phrase, which translates into English as “and he went/journeyed.” De Vries notes that this would indicate that the fabrication of the calves would have to occur elsewhere than in Shechem.<sup>5</sup> There may be logic to this, but, as an aside, it seems that the addition could be included without necessarily indicating that the making of the calves occurred in a different place, given the breadth of meaning of the verb הלך. Said of a man, it can mean “do service.” Regardless, the addition will be rejected in this study on the basis of the fact that there are not a large amount of texts in which the addition is found].

**(b.)** “To be read אֶל-הֵעָם compare Septuagint.” [Comment: In English, the Masoretic Text would read “to them,” while the Septuagint reads “to the people.” While this reading is smoother, some commentators suggest that אֶל-הֵעָם is a corruption of אֶל־הֶם. Thus, in this study, the Masoretic Text will be kept].

### Verse 30

**(a.)** “The Lucianic Recension of the Septuagint adds τῷ Ἰσραηλ [“for Israel”], perhaps correctly.” [Comment: To add these two words would not significantly alter the meaning of the text. It is already clear that Jeroboam is addressing the Israelites. He has referred to them as “this people” in v.27 (in his inner musings), and thus it is obvious that “the people” here refers to Israel. Given that the meaning is not significantly altered or clarified, and that it is only one manuscript that includes the additional two words, this variant is not accepted for this study].

**(b.)** “Insert perhaps וּלְפָנַי הָאֵל compare the Lucianic Recension of the Septuagint (homoeoteleuton).” [Comment: The Lucianic Recension here corrects what it considers to be a scribal error (homoeoteleuton) due to similarities in endings with the phrase “and before the other unto Bethel.” This sentence, in the Masoretic Text, is quite awkward. It translates into English as “and the people went before the one as far as Dan.” With the proposed addition, (used by some English translations, for example, NEB and NAB), the text would read “and the people

<sup>3</sup> Simon John De Vries, *1 Kings* (WBC 12; Nashville, Tenn.: T. Nelson, 2003), 160.

<sup>4</sup> De Vries notes specifically the Codex Vaticanus (and its recension) and the Lucianic recension, though the BHS apparatus notes the Codex Alexandrinus, see De Vries, *1 Kings*, 161.

<sup>5</sup> De Vries, *1 Kings*, 161.

went before the one, Bethel, and before the other as far as Dan.” The Hebrew construction here of “before the one... before the other” does seem to add clarity to the awkward sentence. However, this study will read with the more difficult Masoretic Text, given that it is only one recension of the Septuagint that has this variant, and that, logically, it seems that the citing of only the furthest shrine emphasizes Jeroboam’s determination to prevent Jerusalemite worship].<sup>6</sup>

### Verse 31

**(a.)** “Septuagint, Latin Vulgate, plural as 13:32.” [Comment: The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate read the apparent Hebrew singular in the Masoretic Text as plural in function within the construct chain with  $\text{בְּמִוֹת}$ . De Vries suggests that it is likely that the construct plural has been corrupted to the construct singular. This amendment will be accepted in this study given that (a.) the Septuagint is a main manuscript helpful in text critical issues, (b.) it is fitting with the context of Jeroboam’s activity (as well as grammatically, with the “of high places” to follow), (c.) it is accepted by most mainline translations, and (d.) it is not a major alteration to the Masoretic Text to accept this variant].

### Verse 32

**(a-a.)** “= 33aα [Aquila], to be deleted?” [Comment: The revision of the Septuagint produced by Aquila notes the similarity of the phrases “and he went up unto the altar, thus he did in Bethel” (v.32) and “and he went up unto the altar that he made in Bethel.” Although the words here are almost identical, it is only that the “thus” ( $\text{כֵּן}$ ) in v.32 is replaced with “that” ( $\text{כִּי}$ ) in v.33, the difference is significant. Indeed, the Masoretic markings indicate that a break should be present in v.32 that is not present in v.33. Although Aquila’s revision is correct in noting the similarity, and thus repetition, there are no indications that the phrase should be deleted, and so this variant is not accepted in this study].

**(b.)** “Medieval manuscripts of the Hebrew OT, Septuagint, as 33 אֲשֶׁר.” [Comment: Given that it is the Septuagint that has exchanged the “thus” ( $\text{כֵּן}$ ) in v.32 with “that” ( $\text{כִּי}$ ) in v.33, it may be that this is the correct reading. If this was the case, then the above decision of Aquila to delete the repetition is more understandable (yet, still the deletion seems unfounded in necessity). Although this alteration to the text is feasible, the reading of the Masoretic Text does make sense contextually, and it is emphasized by the pause markings that the Masoretes included. Thus, this variant will be rejected in this study].

### Verse 33

**(a-a.)** “Is absent in the Syriac (2<sup>nd</sup>), variant reading to bβ, to be deleted?” [Comment: This is not accepted in this study because of the reasons outlined in v.32. I.e. although the same phrase is found in both verses, this is not necessarily grounds for deletion. In context, the inclusion seems fitting].

**(b-b.)** “Is absent in the Septuagint.” [Comment: This study will read with the Masoretic Text that includes the explicative “in Bethel,” seeming to fit well with the context].

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<sup>6</sup> Lissa M. Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings* (AOTC 9; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 178.

(c.) “Septuagint εὐ τῆ εορτῆ = בַּחַג.” [Comment: The Septuagint suggests that the word for month be replaced with a word for feast or festival. De Vries notes that this is likely to be a copy of the idea of feast/festival in the second half of the verse.<sup>7</sup> It may be an intentional change to the text, but it is not accepted in this study as it seems unwarranted given the context of the verse].

(d.) “Some/several medieval manuscripts of the Hebrew OT as Qere מַלְבוֹ (compare all versions or most), thus to be read.” [Comment: This study will read with the Qere, noting that it particularly fits the theme of the passage, in which the motives of the heart are revealed in the actions of Jeroboam and the people].

## **IV. Paper**

### **1. Introduction<sup>8</sup>**

The story of 1 Kgs 12:25-33 is part of the greater narrative of Jeroboam. In fact, arguably, the story falls at the center of the narrative. The narrative forms the following chiasm:

- A1 *Ahijah of Shiloh announces Jeroboam’s kingship (11:26-40)*
- A2 *Closing Formula for Solomon’s reign (11:41-43)*
- B *Political disunity: Rejection of Rehoboam (12:1-20)*
- C *A Judahite prophet’s confirmation (12:21-24)*
- X *The sin of Jeroboam: Cultic innovations (12:25-33)*
- C’ *A Judahite (Shemaiah) prophet’s condemnation (13:1-10)*
- B’ *Prophetic disunity: Rejection of Judahite prophet (13:11-32)*
- A1’ *Ahijah of Shiloh announces Jeroboam’s downfall (14:1-18)*
- A2’ *Closing formula for Jeroboam’s reign (14:19-20)<sup>9</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> De Vries, *1 Kings*, 164.

<sup>8</sup> All biblical quotations are taken from the ESV.

<sup>9</sup> This chiasm is taken from Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2007), 712. I altered X to include v.25 (initially it began at v.26). In A/A’ Ahijah announces the beginning and the termination of Jeroboam’s kingship. In B/B’ the two units present God’s judgment for disobedience (on a king and a priest). In C/C’ a Judahite prophet confirms Jeroboam’s right to divide the kingdom because of the sin of Rehoboam, but another condemns the false liturgy and predicts its destruction. In X the sin of Jeroboam brings about the reversal of the Lord’s prophecies.

Within X, the word sin (חַטָּאת) is at the center point.<sup>10</sup> Thus both the structure of the Jeroboam narrative, and the story of Jeroboam’s golden calves itself, is visually representative of sin’s devastating effects. Sin changes the course of Jeroboam’s life.

Bracketing the episode, as an *inclusio*, are two references to Jeroboam’s heart (vv.26, 33). Deceitful above all things, and desperately sick, man’s heart is on display in this narrative. The climactic, central statement “then this thing became a sin” is understood only through the lens of man’s idol-making heart. This study considers the gravity of Jeroboam’s sin, and yet the sovereignty of God, through exegesis of the narrative. It proceeds in three parts: Context, Content, and Theological Summary and Conclusions.

## **2. Context**

1 Kings 12:25-33 records the first acts of Jeroboam I as king over Israel, and thus also records the first acts of the divided kingdom. The division of the kingdom was made complete with the anointing of Jeroboam I (vv.18-20).<sup>11</sup> In order to understand 1 Kgs 12, it is important to consider the events leading up to this anointing of Jeroboam, (and thus the division of the kingdom).

### **2.1 The Division of the Kingdom**

#### **2.1.1 Three Cracks in the Solomonic Empire**

Upon Solomon’s death (c. 930 B.C.), the kingdom was on the brink of collapse.<sup>12</sup> The reason for the collapse can be found in 1 Kgs 11:9, “And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his

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<sup>10</sup> In fact, the word is almost precisely at the center of the narrative, with 77 words coming before, and 74 after.

<sup>11</sup> John D. Currid and David P. Barrett, *Crossway ESV Bible Atlas* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2010), 142.

<sup>12</sup> Currid, *Crossway ESV Bible Atlas*, 141.

heart had turned away from the LORD.” At the least, this included the toleration of idolatrous worship, and, for his wives, the building of high places for gods of other nations (see 1 Kgs 11:1-8). Three cracks in the Solomonic Empire are identified by Merrill and serve as a helpful summary of its fall.<sup>13</sup>

The first crack appeared in the province of Edom, “the LORD raised up an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite. He was of the royal house in Edom” (1 Kgs 11:14). Although Edom had been subjected to David’s dominion, and a genocide on the male population had taken place by Joab, Hadad had escaped and sought protection in Egypt.<sup>14</sup> Hadad returned to Edom at the news of David and Joab’s death and it appears that Edom regained its sovereignty (though to what extent, it is unclear), and became a continual thorn in Solomon’s side.<sup>15</sup>

The second source of difficulty for Solomon was Rezon of Damascus. Rezon had fled from his master, Hadadezer king of Zobah, and after David’s defeat of Hadadezer, took control of Damascus. Rezon “was an adversary of Israel all the days of Solomon... he loathed Israel and reigned over Syria” (1 Kgs 11:25).<sup>16</sup>

The third crack, or instrument of the Lord’s hand in the demise of the Solomonic Empire, was Jeroboam, son of Nebat. Jeroboam was a trusted official of the king. Having been discovered for his industriousness in the building of the Millo, and closing up the breach of the city of David, Solomon set him in charge of all the forced labor of the house of Joseph (1 Kgs

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<sup>13</sup> See Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1987), 315-17.

<sup>14</sup> Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 316.

<sup>15</sup> John Noel Schofield, *The Historical Background of the Bible* (London, New York: T. Nelson, 1938), 134.

<sup>16</sup> Note that “Although Damascus was at least theoretically a province of Israel under Solomon until the end of his life, it is clear that Rezon was a constant irritation through all those years. At last either he or his successor Tabrimmon removed Damascus from Israelite domination. This probably happened shortly after Solomon’s death and the division of the kingdom.” Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 317.

11:26-28). Because Solomon's heart had turned away from the Lord, it was declared (by Ahijah, prophet of Shiloh), that ten tribes of Israel would be given to Jeroboam (1 Kgs 11:37).

### **2.1.2 Biblical Background for the Division**

Although the division of the kingdom occurred after the death of Solomon, upon the installation of Jeroboam, king of Israel, it is important to note that warning signs of division may be traced back far earlier. In fact, the roots of separation may be seen as early as Gen 49, in which both Judah and the sons of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) were given privileged positions among the tribes of Israel. In Joshua, it is recorded that Judah received the first allotment of the land (Josh 15:1), and Ephraim the second (16:5). Perhaps an early rivalry between the two tribes is to be discerned from Joshua's warning that they stay clear of one another (Josh 18:5).<sup>17</sup>

The development of the division is recorded in the book of Judges, in which is found two accounts of Ephraim's attempt to establish a monarchy in Israel (Judg 8:22ff.; 9:7-16, 22). The position of the tabernacle in the tribal allotment of Ephraim, and then later, the position of the temple within the bounds of Judah, was an issue that furthered the fracture. The separation deepened when the kingship in Israel was not established under an Ephraimite king (Ps 78:67-71). Under Saul, the separation was clear (1 Sam 11:8; 18:16), and also under David, who ruled over Judah for seven and a half years, and then over all of Israel (including Judah) for 33 years (2 Sam 2:4; 5:5). Solomon himself added to the tension by making the taxation burden less on Judah than on the other tribes.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Currid, *Crossway ESV Bible Atlas*, 138.

<sup>18</sup> Currid, *Crossway ESV Bible Atlas*, 138. The story of Sheba's rebellion against David, in which the tribes of Israel followed a traitor and yet the tribe of Judah remained loyal to David, reflects the separation (2 Sam 20:1-22).



### **2.1.3 Revolt of the Northern Tribes**

The revolt of the northern tribes, then, is to be understood in light of the historical animosity between Israel and Judah. Given such animosity, it is not surprising that, when external cracks began to appear in the Solomonic Empire (as a result of internal apostasy), the revolt of the northern tribes was successful. While Rehoboam's stubborn refusal to listen to the plea for a lightening of the "heavy yoke" of his father (see 1 Kgs 12:1-24) can be identified as the specific event leading to the division, it should be recognized not in isolation, but as the outworking of Israelite history, traced as far back as Gen 49.

### **2.2 The Lord's Appointment of Jeroboam**

At this point, it is perhaps worth highlighting the marks of God's sovereignty in Jeroboam's appointment as king. The Lord acts decisively to inform Jeroboam that he will have his own kingdom. In the prophecy, it is clear that it is the Lord's will that Jeroboam should rule the northern tribes, "And I [the Lord] will take you [Jeroboam], and you shall reign over all that your soul desires, and you shall be king over Israel" (1 Kgs 11:37). Later, in 1 Kgs 12:12-15, as the story unfolds and the division of the kingdom seems immanent, the writer of 1 Kings includes the phrase, "it was a turn of affairs brought about by the LORD that he might fulfill his word" (1 Kgs 12:15). 1 Kgs 12:24, the verse preceding the passage of study, records the Lord's words to Rehoboam and the house of Judah and Benjamin, "Every man return to his home, for this thing is *from me*" [emphasis added]. The Lord's sovereign hand is thus underscored.

Added to this, the Lord gives Jeroboam a command that is reminiscent of the command that He once gave to Solomon, "And if you listen to all that I command you, and will walk in my ways, and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and commandments, as David my

servant did, I will be with you and will build you a sure house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you” (1 Kgs 11:38; cf. 3:14; 6:12-13; 9:4-7).

That the Lord sovereignly appoints Jeroboam, and charges him with obedience, promising blessing, is somewhat surprising. Jeroboam is not the legitimate heir to Israel’s throne: he does not belong to the house and line of David. Yet God sets him in his place, calls him to obedience, and graciously offers him the blessings of David nonetheless. He promised to be with Jeroboam and to establish his kingdom.<sup>19</sup>

Contingency is to be particularly noted in God’s words to Jeroboam. 1 Kgs 11:38 is a conditional (if/then) clause. Jeroboam is to be a king who rules in accordance with God’s law, as outlined in Deut 17:14-20, one who fears the Lord “by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes.” If Jeroboam will walk in the ways of the Lord, then the Lord’s promise of his presence with him will surely be kept. It is in light of this that we should consider 1 Kgs 12:25-33, the response of Jeroboam to his charge.

### 3. Content

#### 3.1 Verse 25

וַיִּבֶן יִרְבֵּעַם אֶת־שִׁכְמָה בְּהַר אֶפְרַיִם וַיֵּשֶׁב בָּהּ וַיֵּצֵא מִשָּׁם וַיֵּבֶן אֶת־פְּנוּאֵל:

*Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and dwelt in it.<sup>20</sup> And he went out from there and built Penuel.*

<sup>19</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *1 Kings*, (REC; Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Pub., 2011), 323.

<sup>20</sup> Joüon notes that this is a common grammatical structure. With nouns pertaining to place, the preposition with a retrospective pronoun (in it, towards it, etc.) is often replaced by the adverb שָׁם or שָׁמָּה *there*, or מִשָּׁם *from there*. In this verse, the contrast between 1 Kgs 12:25a בָּהּ וַיֵּשֶׁב and 25b מִשָּׁם וַיֵּצֵא can be observed. See Joüon §158jN.

### 3.1.1 General Notes

The vav-conjunction joins this verse to the preceding verse, causing the reader to consider this passage in light of the previous episode. The previous episode is the anointing of Jeroboam as king over Israel, underscoring in it God's design (v.24). Thus, it is fitting that "then" be chosen in translation (as opposed to "and"), as the reader will now discover the first act of Jeroboam as king of Israel in the divided monarchy.

### 3.1.2 Shechem

The repeated verb בנה,<sup>21</sup> indicates the main focus of this verse: Jeroboam's building of Shechem and Peniel. The building occurring here is likely a rebuilding, and thus the picture seems to be one of rebuilding or outfitting Shechem and Peniel for defensive purposes.<sup>22</sup>

Shechem played a particularly interesting and important role in the life of ancient Palestine.<sup>23</sup> Identified with the site Tel Balatah,<sup>24</sup> its major period of settlement was in the Middle Bronze II era (MB II; ca. 2000-1550 B.C.), at which time it was a Canaanite city, part of a wave of MB II settlements discovered along the northern coastal plain and the northern valleys of Israel.<sup>25</sup> At this time (MB II), Shechem was an important center, confirmed by its mention in

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<sup>21</sup> Predominantly meaning "to build" in a literal sense in the OT. See Bruce K. Waltke, "בָּנָה," *TWOT* 1:116-18.

<sup>22</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, *I Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2002), 137.

<sup>23</sup> G. Ernest Wright, *Shechem: The Biography of a Biblical City* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 1.

<sup>24</sup> Professor Hermann Thiersch, through the fortuitous discovery of a piece of "cyclopean" wall upon a rest stop of their journey, made a conclusive case for the location of Shechem at Tel Balatah. Through his findings, the earlier supposition of Nablus was refuted. See Wright, *Shechem*, 5-6.

<sup>25</sup> While the MB IIA levels are somewhat poor and no fortifications from this period have been found, a large structure, possibly a palace, was discovered at the site, evidence of the development of Canaanite culture. From the MB IIC period, there is evidence of a huge retaining wall behind which was a massive artificial fill, a variation of the earthen ramparts common in this period. See Amihay Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible. Vol. I* (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2007), 178-201.

the Egyptian Execration Texts and in the Khu-Sebek Inscription (both from the nineteenth century B.C.).<sup>26</sup>

Wright posits that if one were to search for a natural capital in the hills of the country, the one place in which all requirements are met can only be ancient Shechem. Jerusalem's merits are historical, but it is Shechem that meets the requirements of a natural capital. Shechem is almost in the exact center of western Palestine; it is surrounded and protected by mountains, and is located in the most important mountain pass in the country.<sup>27</sup> Shechem has a sizable plain around it, forming the food basket of the ancient city. It also has rich soil, and a water supply through Jacob's Well.<sup>28</sup> The site has been named "the uncrowned queen of Palestine."<sup>29</sup>

Shechem plays an important role in biblical history. A place hallowed by association with the patriarchs, its significance increased in the time of Joshua, when the people were led in a ceremony of covenant reaffirmation in accordance with Moses' commands (Josh 8:30-35; Deut 27:2-8). On the eve of Joshua's death, a second gathering of the tribes of Israel is recorded, recounting a second pledge of fidelity to the Lord from the next generation (Josh 23:1-24:28).<sup>30</sup> The importance of the city in Israelite history must not be underplayed. Rehoboam, upon his

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<sup>26</sup> Currid, *Crossway ESV Bible Atlas*, 79.

<sup>27</sup> Wright, *Shechem*, 20.

<sup>28</sup> Wright, *Shechem*, 22.

<sup>29</sup> Wright, *Shechem*, 20.

<sup>30</sup> Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 130. There is no record of the fall of Shechem to the Israelites. It seems that either Shechem was abandoned at the time of Joshua's conquest or that it surrendered without a struggle. The latter seems the most likely, given the evidence from the Amarna texts that the Canaanites at Shechem cooperated well with the 'Apiru. The 'Apiru were not Israelite, yet it is likely that the Canaanites viewed both races as one and the same. Thus, it seems likely that the cordiality of the Shechemites toward the 'Apiru/Israelites was a long standing policy. (See also pp. 122-23).

accession to the throne when division seemed immanent, used Shechem as the site of coronation, going to the old center of covenant renewal in order to win over the northern tribes.<sup>31</sup>

It is at this point that the question must be asked: what is Jeroboam's purpose in building at Shechem? The picture ascertained of Shechem, from archaeological and biblical evidence, is one of great natural power and religious meaning. On its own, this would make it a desirable site. However, it is the qualifier, "in the hill country<sup>32</sup> of Ephraim," that reveals more of Jeroboam's motive. Jeroboam is an Ephraimite (1 Kgs 11:26), and given the history of animosity particularly between the tribes of Ephraim and Judah (see 2.1.2), it is not hard to imagine that Jeroboam would seek to establish his capital firmly in Ephraim.<sup>33</sup> The establishment of his residence in this powerful, religious city appears, then, to be a political move on Jeroboam's part.<sup>34</sup>

### 3.1.3 Penuel

Penuel (or Peniel), is most commonly associated with Jacob, given that it is the place where he wrestled with an angel. This is where the place got its name, Penuel, meaning "the face of God."<sup>35</sup> It is also found in Judg 8:8-9 as the route of Gideon's pursuit of the Midianites back to the desert. Penuel is a town in the Transjordan in Wadi Jabbok, in the neighborhood of

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<sup>31</sup> Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 337.

<sup>32</sup> Although it is more common to translate *בְּהַר אֶפְרַיִם* as "at the *mountain* of Ephraim," *hill country* is an acceptable translation and is most common among translators. See Bruce K. Waltke, "הַר," *TWOT* 1:224-25.

<sup>33</sup> The juxtaposition of Jeroboam's building activities to Jerusalem in the following verse (v.26) has suggested that these two cities, Shechem and Penuel, served in succession as capitals. See Mordechai Cogan, *I Kings* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 361.

<sup>34</sup> It is possible that we are given here a picture of the powerful administrative abilities of Jeroboam, as he may be taking advantage of his close relationship with Egypt's Pharaoh Shishak (that he had developed while in exile). See Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 339.

<sup>35</sup> Currid, *Crossway ESV Bible Atlas*, 74.

Mahanaim and Succoth. Several sites have been identified as the ancient Penuel, though ultimately the location is unknown.<sup>36</sup>

The reasons for the move to Penuel are unclear.<sup>37</sup> It is possible that the move was a result of the attacks of Pharaoh Shishak on fortified cities of Israel and Judah in the fifth year of the divided kingdom. Aharoni suggests that the action hints at a time of emergency that fits with the time of Shishak's invasion.<sup>38</sup> However, this is not conclusive, particularly in light of the fact that Penuel is found 53<sup>rd</sup> on Shishak's list.<sup>39</sup> Thus, if the move preceded Shishak's campaign, it provided little refuge.<sup>40</sup>

Perhaps a more helpful understanding of this second part of the verse is to exclude the assumption that Jeroboam had a shift of residence. Although this is a common interpretation,<sup>41</sup> it appears that there is nothing to suggest that that Penuel, far removed from the Israelite heartland, became his capital.<sup>42</sup> It is more likely that Jeroboam went about rebuilding (or fortifying) Penuel because of its crucial position in defense, a little east of the junction of the Jabbok and Jordan rivers, thus guarding Jeroboam's kingdom from incursions from the east, from the King's Highway, perhaps.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Cogan, *I Kings*, 358. See also John D. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1997), 194.

<sup>37</sup> Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 339.

<sup>38</sup> Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), 283.

<sup>39</sup> The reading is partially destroyed, yet both Müller and Kitchen propose that the "p-restoration" is likely, thus concluding that the word reads "Penuel." See Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 194.

<sup>40</sup> Cogan, *I Kings*, 358.

<sup>41</sup> Perhaps based on Bible translations that translate פָּנֹּעַל as "then he left it" (e.g. NAB).

<sup>42</sup> Cogan, *I Kings*, 358. In fact, later in the text it can be noted that the royal residence was moved to Tirzah, just north of Shechem (1 Kgs 14:17).

<sup>43</sup> Davis, *I Kings*, 137.

### 3.1.4 Summation

This verse, then, a portrayal of the first acts of Jeroboam as king of Israel, provides a helpful setting for the rest of the passage. While it is true that fortification of cities would have been a necessary act of the king in defending his nation, there is perhaps more to be seen here. His choosing of Shechem, with its particular advantages, as his capital, together with the rebuilding of Penuel, suggests that Jeroboam is securing his best political and military position. It may in fact be that Jeroboam has his heart set on earthly power and is, as such, acting as a “king like all the nations” (1 Sam 8:5).

### 3.2 Verse 26

וַיֹּאמֶר יִרְבֵּעַם בְּלִבּוֹ עַתָּה תָּשׁוּב הַמְּמַלְכָה לְבַיִת דָּוִד:

*And Jeroboam said in his heart, “Now the kingdom may turn back to the house of David.*

#### 3.2.1 General Notes

While not accepting that there is a change in sources between v.25 and v.26,<sup>44</sup> there is a notable break between the two verses. In the flow of the narrative, v.26 interjects in two ways. Firstly, it provides a literary shift, as the text now provides an insight into Jeroboam’s own thoughts. Secondly, in the events of the narrative, it is almost as if v.26 halts the busy activity of Jeroboam. Amidst his building projects, and the accompanying consolidation of power, there is a hitch in his plans! The temple of the Lord in Jerusalem threatens his political dreams.

This shift arrests the attention of the reader, and directs it to consider the actions of v.25 in light of the heart motives revealed in v.26 (and following). De Vries, Cogan, and many commentators claim that v.25 is the only “factual” item free of polemic in this passage. They

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<sup>44</sup> De Vries, *I Kings*, 161. De Vries suggests that v.25 is the first of a number of extracts from a new archive known as the Book of the Chronicles of the Israelite Kings (14:19, 15:31, etc.), and that the report that follows (vv.26-30a) contrasts with this in being markedly subjectivistic, presuming first to know Jeroboam’s thoughts and in the conclusion rendering judgment on that king’s religious innovations.

consider the author (of vv.26-30a) to be from Judah, reflecting a strong Jerusalemite bias in his writings. While agreeing with the polemical nature of the writing, this should be qualified in two ways. Firstly, while it may be the case that the writer is from Judah, reflecting the Jerusalemite bias, it is perhaps more important to note that the writer is a true follower of the Lord. The author, as De Vries and Cogan detect, is not writing from a “neutral” position, but he is writing to convey a point. There is a mocking here of the king’s cult even as he describes it (yet, this does not render the account ahistorical).<sup>45</sup> Secondly, to split v.25 and 26 to such a degree that they are viewed as the result of different sources seems to miss something of the writer’s purpose. The writer appears to be deliberately explaining the actions of v.25 in v.26ff. In this, the progression and the depths of Jeroboam’s sin are portrayed. Thus, the view that v.25 is the only verse containing historical fact, and that the polemical nature of the verses to follow almost exclude their historical reliability, seems an incorrect reading of the shift occurring.

### 3.2.2 The Heart

In this verse we are taken into the inner chamber of Jeroboam’s troubled being: we see his heart. The Hebrew word for heart, לֵב or לִבָּ, though it can mean the literal bodily organ, in its abstract meanings is the richest biblical term for the totality of man’s inner or immaterial nature.<sup>46</sup> The term is often used to describe one of the three traditional personality functions of man: emotion, thought, or will. In v.26, Jeroboam’s thought functions are attributed to the heart, the sense of which is found, for example, in the NIV and NAB translations, “Jeroboam thought to himself.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> See comments under v. 33.

<sup>46</sup> Andrew Bowling, “לִבָּ,” *TWOT* 1:466-67.

<sup>47</sup> The heart being used to express the idea of thought can be found similarly throughout Scripture. As an example, Exod 7:23, which the ESV translates as “Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he did not take even this to heart,” is translated by the NAB as “Pharaoh turned away and went into his house, with no concern even for this.”



There seems a connection here between this phrase and the verb of the root יעץ (to counsel) in v.28, in which the reflexive verb emphasizes Jeroboam's responsibility for his decisions.

In this passage, the word heart is used three times, twice in reference to Jeroboam's thoughts, almost bookending the episode as an *inclusio* (vv.26 and 33). It seems that there is an emphasis being placed on the connection between Jeroboam's thoughts (arising from his heart) and the great sin taking place (fitting neatly in between these two references, at v.30). Jeroboam was granted no divine revelation nor was he entrusted with a commission to undertake such reforms. His actions sprang from his own heart (לב), according to his decision made after taking counsel (יעץ).<sup>48</sup>

The third use of the word (v.27) is as a collective, in reference to the Israelites. In this case the word expresses totality of a man's nature and character. Interestingly, it is used in this way just a few chapters earlier in 1 Kgs 8:23, in which Solomon says, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart." The presence of לב in this verse heightens the emphasis on the place of the heart in this passage. While it is Jeroboam's heart that is the focus of attention, the use of the word in reference to the Israelites is demonstrative of the meaning of לב. The reader is reminded of the centrality of the heart to one's being.

Specifically, in his heart, Jeroboam fears that the kingdom<sup>49</sup> will return to the house of David. In English, the strength of the phrase עתה תשוב הממלכה לביית דוד is hard to capture. This is

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<sup>48</sup> Gene Rice, *Nations under God: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Kings* (ITC; Grand Rapids : Edinburgh: Wm. B. Eerdmans, Handsel Press, 1990), 106.

<sup>49</sup> Davies notes that in this verse, Jeroboam is echoing the sentiment that "the kingdom" (not one of two kingdoms) is for the moment his. The issue, then, is how to shore up his hold on the realm for the long term. John A. Davies, *1 Kings* (EP Study Commentary; Darlington, Eng.: EP Books, 2012), 249.

because Hebrew expresses less often than English the notions of ‘can’, ‘must’, and ‘want’. The *yiqtol* is often used to express these nuances, and thus the translation reads, “Now the kingdom may turn back to the house of David,” yet it should be understood to carry more urgency than the English conveys.<sup>50</sup>

### 3.2.3 Summation

Thus, in v.26, we are introduced to a panicked heart, and the results cannot be good. As Davis puts it, “Now Jeroboam speaks ‘in his heart’ and within two verses religion has gone bovine.”<sup>51</sup>

The Bible teaches that “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jer 17:9). It thus also contains warnings to guard the heart above all else (e.g. Prov 4:23). The connection between the heart and the sin of idolatry outlined in the coming verses brings to mind John Calvin’s description of the human heart as “a perpetual factory of idols.”<sup>52</sup>

### 3.3 Verse 27

אִם-יַעֲלֶה | הָעָם הַזֶּה לַעֲשׂוֹת זִבְחִים בְּבַיַת-יְהוָה בִּירוּשָׁלַם וְשָׁב לֵב הָעָם הַזֶּה<sup>a</sup> אֶל-אֲדֹנָיָהם אֶל-רְחָבֶעַם מֶלֶךְ  
יְהוּדָה וְהָרְגֵנִי<sup>b</sup> וְשָׁבוּ אֶל-רְחָבֶעַם מֶלֶךְ-יְהוּדָה<sup>c</sup>:

*If this people go up to make sacrifices in the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, to Rehoboam, king of Judah, and they will kill me and turn back to Rehoboam, king of Judah.”*

#### 3.3.1 Jeroboam’s Inner Musings

In this verse, the contents of Jeroboam’s thoughts are further revealed. It is clear that he did not wish to establish his kingdom outwardly only, but also inwardly, attaching the people

<sup>50</sup> Joüon §1131

<sup>51</sup> Davis, *1 Kings*, 137.

<sup>52</sup> Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, The Library of Christian classics v. 20-21 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1.11.8.

permanently to himself. While the political union with Judah was broken, the religious union still remained.<sup>53</sup>

The fear in Jeroboam's heart is striking, emphasized by the use of repetition. The verb שׁוּב is used three times in vv.26-27: he three times fears the people's return to the house of David. The repetition, not only of the verb שׁוּב, but of Rehoboam's name and position as king of Judah further serves to portray Jeroboam's sense of fear. The quick succession of the verbs, "they will kill me" and "turn back" also heightens tension. Some manuscripts exclude the וְהָרַגְנִי, and a case has been made for the last clause as dittography (see Apparatus note c-c). While this may be feasible, the full text (as included in this study), fits well with the context. Without them, the picture of Jeroboam's fear would be reduced.

Jeroboam's fear is unfounded. The Lord has made it clear that there will be no reunification (vv.21-24). And, although Rehoboam did seek to "restore" (שׁוּב; v.21) the kingdom, Judah does "return" (שׁוּב; v.24) home.<sup>54</sup> Yet, the greatest comfort of all to Jeroboam should have been the Lord's words to him through the prophet Ahijah, "And I [the Lord] will take you [Jeroboam], and you shall reign over all that your soul desires, and you shall be king over Israel" (1 Kgs 11:37). Jeroboam does not trust the prophetic word that transferred the northern tribes to him.

### 3.3.2 Jerusalem

It is important to consider this verse in light of God's instructions to the Israelites concerning the place in which they are to worship the Lord. In Deut 12:5-6, the Lord speaks through Moses, saying "... you shall seek the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes to

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<sup>53</sup> Johann Peter Lange and Phillip Schaff, eds., *Kings* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1950), 153.

<sup>54</sup> Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 183.

put his name and make his habitation there.” The idea of the place of worship as being (a.) of the Lord’s choosing, and (b.) where his name will dwell can be traced through Israelite history (e.g. Deut 12:11; 16:2; 26:2). Fulfilled temporarily in the tabernacle (Josh 18:1), the temple was built by Solomon in Jerusalem, according to the will of the Lord (1 Kgs 8:29; 2 Chr 7:12). The temple at Jerusalem, glorious though it was, was only a shadow of what was to come. The symbol of the tabernacle/Jerusalem temple is also a prominent theme of the NT. The NT draws close connections between Jesus and the tabernacle/temple. There are three to be highlighted. Firstly, in Christ’s death, He removed the barrier which existed between God and humankind (Heb 9:1-8). Secondly, Jesus entered the heavenly sanctuary, not man-made, but heaven itself (Heb 9:24). And thirdly, just as God previously inhabited the tabernacle/temple, now he inhabits human flesh (Jn 1:14). According to Paul, every believer is a temple, due to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19).<sup>55</sup>

The presence of the Lord amongst the Israelites is a glorious gift for this set apart nation, steeped in biblical significance. It is with this understanding, then, that we must measure Jeroboam’s response. Something is awry in Jeroboam’s heart. His response to the richest blessing of the Lord’s presence with His people is one of panic, fear, and rejection. Further, there may be an irony here. Jeroboam’s greatest fear for the demise of his kingship is the temple of the Lord, the symbol of God’s presence. Yet, in His charge to Jeroboam, anointing him as king of Israel, the Lord promises His very presence with him, “I will be with you” (1 Kgs 11:38).

### **3.3.3 Summation**

Verses 26 and 27 set an ominous tone for the rest of the passage. In them, the reader encounters a heart that is desperately sick, one that rejects the rich blessings of the Lord. The Lord gave the

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<sup>55</sup> See T. D. Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2002), 202-3.

Israelites laws, through Moses, according to which they were to worship Him. The liturgical laws were designed to spare the Israelites from idolatry, to teach them to fear and love the Lord.<sup>56</sup>

It is from this reference point that the remainder of the passage is to be considered. In Jeroboam's panic, he fortifies two cities: political and military consolidation. Yet his heart tells him that this is not enough, and that he must address religion. The descent into grave sin has begun.

### 3.4 Verse 28

וַיִּעַץ<sup>a</sup> הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיַּעַשׂ שְׁנֵי עֲגֹלֵי זָהָב וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם<sup>b</sup> רַב־לָכֶם מֵעֲלֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם הִנֵּה אֱלֹהֵיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הָעֵלִוְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם:

*So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold and he said to them, "It is too much for you to go up [to] Jerusalem. Behold your gods, O Israel, who raised you up from the land of Egypt."*

#### 3.3.1 General Notes

As noted earlier, the verb of the root יעץ adds to the sense that it is Jeroboam acting on his own thoughts. The basic meaning of the word is to advise, counsel, purpose, plan, with the notion of arriving at a decision. To help understand its sense, it should be noted that the word is first used in the Bible in Exod 18:19, where Jethro, seeing Moses' burden, gives him "counsel," advising him how to carry out his administrative responsibilities. In the same chapter as our passage of study, the word is used in reference to Rehoboam, in his rejection of the counsel of the old men (vv.8, 13). Thus, the word is commonly used in describing the counsel of men and nations.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 488-50.

<sup>57</sup> Paul R. Gilchrist, "יעץ," *TWOT* 1:390-91. Other places in which the Bible records kings as taking counsel are 2 Kgs 6:8; 1 Chr 13:1; 2 Chr 25:17; 30:2; 32:3. Beal Wray, *1 & 2 Kings*, 184.

The theological significance of the word is unpacked with a consideration of OT references to the “counsel of the Lord.” A contrast between the two is particularly apparent in Ps 33:10ff., “The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples.” The counsel of the Lord is eternal, and thus His counsel is to be desired above all else. In 1 Kgs 12:28, the *niphal* stem provides a sense of reflexivity. Thus, though it is likely that Jeroboam took counsel from his advisors, the activity of coming to a decision is Jeroboam’s act. Whatever counsel is given, Jeroboam is alone the subject of the chapter’s remaining verbs and thus he is responsible for the events that transpire.<sup>58</sup> The results of this decision “became a sin” for Israel.

This turn of phrase רב-לְכֶם מְעַלּוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם is difficult to express in English. Gesenius notes that there is a unique use of מִן after adjectives or intransitive verbs possessing an attributive sense, when the thought to be expressed is that the quality is too little or too much in force for the attainment of a particular aim. Thus, in this case, רב לְכֶם מִן, followed by the infinitive, “it is enough for you to” might be translated as “it is too much for you to.” However, both Gesenius and Joüon note that 1 Kgs 12:28 is something of a special case. The sense may be that the repeated action has been completed long enough.<sup>59</sup> Davis notes that the Hebrew idiom borders on the English “that’s enough of that,” and so the argument is not one of convenience, but is the stronger, “you have chosen a new king, choose also new places of worship.”<sup>60</sup> David’s dynasty

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<sup>58</sup> Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 184.

<sup>59</sup> *GKC* §133c. Joüon notes it as an elliptical comparison, concluding with the same translation: “too much for.” He writes that, “instead of bearing on two objects, the comparison can be established between an object and what another object can do, e.g. it is heavier than that... Likewise an infinitive expressing the action which the subject cannot perform... for their possession were too numerous for them to be able to live. However, רב לְכֶם מִן, it is too much for you (with inf. 1Kg 12.28) does not seem to be logically formed.” See Joüon §141i.

<sup>60</sup> Davis, *1 Kings*, 139.

was focused on a royal person (Rehoboam, at that time) and an atoning place (Jerusalem).<sup>61</sup> In his fear, Jeroboam provides an alternative to orthodoxy.

### 3.3.2 The Two Golden Calves

After Jeroboam “took counsel,” he made two calves of gold and presented them to the people as their gods. The passage is likely a genuine witness to northern cultic traditions.<sup>62</sup> In Canaanite mythology, the bull is associated with the chief deities, El and Baal.<sup>63</sup> In the ancient Near East, bovines were commonly used as representative deities. They particularly flourished in Ancient Egypt. For example, Apis was the most important of the Egyptian sacred bulls; Isis, who was queen of the gods, bore cow’s horns on her head, and Hathor had a bovine head.<sup>64</sup> Bull figurines have been recovered in cultic contexts.<sup>65</sup>

The exclamation of Jeroboam echoes the curious phrase of the Israelites in Exod 32, “Behold your gods, O Israel, who raised you up from the land of Egypt” (in Exod 32 the phrase is “*these* are your gods, Israel, who raised you up from the land of Egypt.”<sup>66</sup>) While it is possible that in this passage, and in Exod 32, the plural is used as a plural of majesty,<sup>67</sup> it seems preferable to use the translation “gods” in both cases. In Exod 32, where there is only one calf, the word

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<sup>61</sup> Davis, *1 Kings*, 138.

<sup>62</sup> Andrew R. Davis, *Tel Dan in Its Northern Cultic Context* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 111. Even critics of the text, who claim that it is likely a polemical text written from the Jerusalemite viewpoint of the Deuteronomist, admit this to be the case.

<sup>63</sup> Cogan, *1 Kings*, 359.

<sup>64</sup> John D. Currid, *Exodus* (EP Study Commentary; Darlington Darlington, England ; Auburn, MA: Evangelical Press, 2000), 271.

<sup>65</sup> Cogan, *1 Kings*, 359. An example of this is a molten calf uncovered at the site of Ashkelon on the Mediterranean coast. See Currid, *Exodus*, 271.

<sup>66</sup> This one word difference is the only difference between the Exod 32 and 1 Kgs 12 statements.

<sup>67</sup> Joüon writes that with a plural of excellence or of majesty the verb is usually in the singular (always so in the later stage of the language). Thus they posit that the translation here should be “your God who brought you up” (rather than “your gods”). See Joüon §150f.

“gods” might reflect syncretism, in which the calf was seen as being in partnership with the Lord. This idea fits with Aaron’s proclamation that the next day would be a feast day to the Lord.<sup>68</sup> In this passage, although the plural might be said to reflect the fact that two calves are present, given the obvious parallelism between 1 Kgs 12 and Exod 32, it seems best to interpret the plural as a combination of the calves and the Lord. This understanding appears to be supported in the verses to follow in which a picture of syncretistic worship is presented, with recognizable elements of both Yahwistic and Baal worship. Commentators are divided over the number of commandments Jeroboam is breaking. If the calves only represent Yahweh, then the second commandment is broken (Exod 20:4-6; Deut 5:8-10). Yet, if the calves are to be worshiped as well as Yahweh (syncretism), then both the first (Exod 20:3; Deut 5:7) and second commandments are broken. It seems that both the first and the second are broken: not only are there reconstructions of the One who led the Israelites out of Egypt (violation of second commandment), but those reconstructions are called gods (violation of first commandment).<sup>69</sup>

Jeroboam’s use of the expression “who brought you up out of the land of Egypt” indicates that so deeply ingrained in the northern Israelites was the belief that the Lord had brought the Hebrews of Egypt that this new cult (be it Yahwistic or otherwise) was associated with the exodus event in order to gain legitimacy.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Currid, *Exodus*, 271.

<sup>69</sup> See G. Coats, “The Golden Calf in Psalm 22,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 9 (1987): 1. On this issue, Provan comments that Hosea did not seem to treat calves as liturgical aids; otherwise, what was the point of his insistence that “a craftsman made it – it’s not God” (Hos 8:6; cf. 10:5-6; 13:2). See Iain Provan, *1 and 2 Kings* (NIBC; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995), 111-12. See also John N. Oswalt, “The Golden Calves and the Egyptian Concept of Deity,” *The Evangelical Quarterly* 45/1 (1973): 13-20.

<sup>70</sup> James Karl Hoffmeier and Dennis Robert Magary, *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith?: A Critical Appraisal of Modern and Postmodern Approaches to Scripture* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2012), 120. It may be that there are more parallels that can be drawn between Exod 32 and 1 Kgs 12, especially in considering the priestly role of Aaron, and that which Jeroboam ultimately assumes. See M. Aberbach and M. Smolar, “Aaron, Jeroboam, and the Golden Calves,” *JBL* 86:126-140.



### 3.3.3 Summation

While the confession of 1 Kgs 12:28 has been compared to Exod 32:4, it is also fitting to compare both to the confession elsewhere in Scripture. Although 1 Kgs 12:28 and Exod 32:4 employ the plural verb “who brought you up,” all other scriptural references employ the singular verb “he brought up” (see Judg 6:13; 1 Sam 12:6; 2 Kgs 17:36; Jer 16:14; 23:7) or “he brought out” (see Exod 16:6; Deut 1:27; 6:12, 23; 7:8, 19; 1 Kgs 19:9; 2 Chr 7:22). The exceptional nature of the 1 Kings and Exodus passages, then, highlight the perversion in both cases: Jeroboam’s perversion being greater than Aaron’s.<sup>71</sup> This further reveals the polemical nature of the writing.

### 3.5 Verse 29

וַיִּשֶׂם אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים בְּבֵית־אֵל וְאֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים נָתַן בְּדָן:

*And he set the one in Bethel, and the one he set in Dan.*

#### 3.5.1 General Notes

This brief verse brings attention to two items: the location of the calves and the actions of Jeroboam. The verbs וַיִּשֶׂם and נָתַן draw attention to Jeroboam’s actions, which is further emphasized with the repetition of עָשָׂה throughout this passage (once in v.28, eight times in vv.31-33). While it is true that עָשָׂה is a common verb, and so its importance must not be overstated, the focus on Jeroboam’s actions seems fitting, given the text’s theme, that Jeroboam is acting in response to the ideas of his heart. Called to do “as David my servant did,” (1 Kgs 11:38), Jeroboam will “do” according to his own desires. Davis takes this a step further and suggests that the writer of 1 Kings, a devout follower of the Lord, is not merely reporting the events, but that he is ridiculing, the style is polemical. He writes, “The writer has dipped his pen in acid.

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<sup>71</sup> Beal Wray, *1 & 2 Kings*, 184.

Jeroboam's religion, he says, is Jeroboam's concoction. Concoctions should not be taken seriously."<sup>72</sup>

### 3.5.2 Dan

In the Bible, Dan is presented as having a rich cultic history. Not only is it the site of Jeroboam's idolatry, but it is also the site in which a Levite priest is drafted into the service of the Danites on his way to Laish (Judg 17-18).<sup>73</sup> The fact that he sets one of the calves in Dan should be considered in light of its cultic history as recorded in Judges.

The ritual center at Tel Dan, uncovered at the northern edge of the mound, is the only structure that is mentioned in the Bible that has been positively identified in archaeological excavations. The center lay upon earlier cultic ruins from the tenth and eleventh centuries B.C. that may well be the remains of the shrine erected by the Danites after their migration (Judg 18).<sup>74</sup> At the site, three parts can be identified: a podium for a temple structure, a square open area where the main sacrificial altar was located, and side chamber for ritual, minor sacrifice, and administration.<sup>75</sup> While only a corner of the altar remains, it is clear that it had four horns, and was made of hewn stones. This is significant, as it is contrary to biblical law (Exod 20:25-26; Deut 27:5-6).

The ritual center is unique as it is the only actual example of an Israelite royal ritual center. However, it is not the only evidence of the cultish ways of the Israelite people. The temple at Arad, (with its Holy of Holies mimicking the Solomonic temple), the four-horned altar of hewn stones at Beersheba, and evidence from other sites prove that idolatry was a part of

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<sup>72</sup> Davis, *1 Kings*, 143.

<sup>73</sup> Davis, *Tel Dan*, 109.

<sup>74</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology*, 492.

<sup>75</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology*, 492.

Israelite life from the time of David. While biblical law was the ideal, it was by no means the uniform practice of Israel.

### 3.5.3 Bethel

Bethel, meaning “house of God,” a town on the border territory of Ephraim (Josh 16:1-4), is a site rich in biblical history, particularly known for Jacob’s dream (Gen 28:10-22). In the times of the Judges, there was a place of worship there (Judg 20:26) that was probably connected with the worship center at the time of the Patriarchs. The building of Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem greatly reduced the importance of Bethel.<sup>76</sup> Bethel, unlike Dan, is referenced in later biblical literature, (for example, as a state of sanctuary in Amos 7:13 and Hos 10:5).

### 3.5.4 Summation

In considering Jeroboam’s motives for choosing Bethel as one of the sites for the high places, its connections with the Jacob story, as well as its importance as a cult center for the tribe of Ephraim (Gen 35:1-15), and its location just north of Jerusalem surely come into play. His motives for his choice of Dan surely have some connection to the Judg 17-18 narrative. Yet, it seems that Jeroboam’s greatest motive is their location as border towns. Dan and Bethel are at the northernmost and southernmost extremes of the land.<sup>77</sup> Jeroboam has his heart set on earthly power and is, as such, acting as a “king like all the nations” (1 Sam 8:5). Shechem and Peniel provide political and military surety, and now he even provides places of worship so that the people do not have to go to Jerusalem. Attempting to unify the people through idolatry, Jeroboam leads his kingdom astray.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Avraham Negev, ed., *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land*, Rev. ed. (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1986) 49.

<sup>77</sup> Baruch Halpern, “Levitic Participation in the Reform Cult of Jeroboam I,” *JBL* 95, no. 1 (1976): 31–42.

<sup>78</sup> Peter J. Leithart, *1/2 Kings* (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible; Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 97.

### 3.6 Verse 30

וַיְהִי הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה לְחַטָּאת<sup>a</sup> וַיֵּלְכוּ הָעָם לִפְנֵי הָאֱחָדִים<sup>b</sup> עַד־דָּן:

*Then this matter became a sin, and the people went before the one as far as Dan.*<sup>79</sup>

#### 3.6.1 General Notes

This verse is a reminder of the greater flow of the narrative. In the midst of the busy activity of Jeroboam, we are reminded of the gravity of the situation, “then this matter became a sin” for Israel. It reminds us of Jeroboam’s sinful heart, bracketing the passage (v.26, 33), on display in the sin of v.30. Jeroboam is the subject of every verb of vv.28-33, and thus the responsibility for this grave sin lies undoubtedly with him.

#### 3.6.2 חַטָּאת

In consideration of this phrase “it became a great sin,” the Exodus story, the prototype for the events at Dan and Bethel is again crucial to understand. It is the classic story of apostasy, which is called a “great sin” (Exod 32:21, 30, 31). As the motifs of calves, priests, and feasts are found in both stories, tragically, so too is this word, sin.

חַטָּאת has a basic meaning of “missing the mark” (Judg 20:16), or “missing the way” (Prov 19:2). There is also the similar idea implicit in the word of not “finding a goal” (Prov 8:36) and thus the concept of failure is implied. The word is different to other words for sin. פָּשַׁע means “revolt against the standard,” and עָוָה means either “to deviate from the standard” or “to twist the standard.” חָטָא, on the other hand, meaning to “miss/fall short,” and its Greek equivalent, *ανομία* means “without law,” and therefore judgment is the implication.<sup>80</sup> In the *hiphil* stem it means “to lead someone else into sin.” Interestingly, this sense can be applied to the story of

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<sup>80</sup> G. Herbert Livingston, “חַטָּאת,” *TWOT* 1:277-79.

Jeroboam, as the sin of Jeroboam was a standard by which the evil kings of northern Israel were judged (1 Kgs 14:16).

Perhaps most significant is that, in a number of instances, it has the sense of compromised allegiance to God, direct disobedience to him. The human analogy is found in this text, 1 Kgs 1:21. The term in the OT is most often used in reference to idolatry. However, it is also used of adultery (Gen 20:9; 39:9). In fact, it is used as a legal term for adultery in the ancient Near East. Thus, these two are closely related, “they are two sides of the same coin.”<sup>81</sup>

### 3.7 Verse 31

וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת־בַּיִת<sup>a</sup> בְּמֹזֹת וַיַּעַשׂ כְּהֹנִים מִקְצֹת הָעָם אֲשֶׁר לְאַהֲוֵי מִבְּנֵי לְוִי:

*And he made temples of high places and he appointed priests from the ends of the people, who were not from the sons of Levi.*

#### 3.7.1 Temples of High Places

In these verses, the Israelite departure from the law of God is clearly outlined. The word for “high places” qualifies the type of temple identified as idolatrous.<sup>82</sup> These “high places” could consist of simple outdoor altars, or more elaborate sanctuaries. Many were pre-Israelite places of pagan fertility religion that Israel was instructed to destroy upon entrance to the land (Num 33:52; Deut 33:29).<sup>83</sup> While it is not the case that every Israelite “high place” was of Canaanite origin, it does seem that many were, and thus is the connotation here.

The phrase “temples of high places” is literally found as “house of high places” in the Masoretic Text. The textual variant has been accepted (see note in the apparatus).<sup>84</sup> The phrase

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<sup>81</sup> Currid, *Exodus*, 283.

<sup>82</sup> Davies, *1 Kings*, 251.

<sup>83</sup> Davies, *1 Kings*, 77.

<sup>84</sup> See Joüon §136n for a consideration of this construction. As another grammatical note, Gesenius notes that **בַּיִת** occurs very seldom in prose before a noun actually or apparently undetermined. Thus, he suggests that it should be excluded from the text. *GKC* §117d.

connects this passage with pre-temple worship locations (1 Sam 9:12; 10:5; 1 Kgs 3:2), yet they are now negatively appraised (1 Kgs 14:23; 15:14; 22:44). The high places of Jeroboam are judged (1 Kgs 13:2; 32-33), as are all the high places of the northern kingdom (2 Kgs 17:9).<sup>85</sup>

### 3.7.2 The Priests

That the priests were selected from “the ends of the people” is an expression best captured by “absolutely anybody,” and expression in Hebrew that refers to the “extremities.”<sup>86</sup> It is helpful to consider that the noun denoting extremity may refer to the tip of a rod (1 Sam 14:27) or wings (1 Kgs 6:24), the edge of a curtain (Exod 26:4-5), or the end or outskirts of a land (Num 20:16).<sup>87</sup> Thus, here in 1 Kgs 12:30, it is clear that Jeroboam’s actions stand in opposition to the law of God, which outlines that the Israelite priesthood was to be exclusively from the tribe of Levi (Deut 18:1-8; 21:5) and that it was a high privilege granted to the Levites only by covenant (Mal 2:4).<sup>88</sup> Josh 21:1-42 tells of the strategic placement of the Levites throughout the kingdom of Israel. It is likely that Jeroboam selected non-Levites so that they would not undermine his cause. No doubt there would have been many willing to take the position, as many Israelites wanted to be priests (e.g. Num 16).

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<sup>85</sup> Wray Beal, *1 Kings*, 185.

<sup>86</sup> Davies, *1 Kings*, 251-52. Some translations prefer to portray the idea of lowliness (e.g. GNV). This conveys a similar idea, yet the concept of “extremity” seems to be most central, and thus “the ends of the people” or “absolutely anybody” tend to describe the concept with more clarity, indicating that this appointment was not in line with the law of God.

<sup>87</sup> Leonard J. Coppes, “קָצֵה,” *TWOT* 2: 806-7.

<sup>88</sup> Davies, *1 Kings*, 251-52.

### 3.8 Verse 32

וַיַּעַשׂ יִרְבֵּעָם | חֹג בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁמִינִי בַחֲמִשָּׁה-עָשָׂר | לְחֹדֶשׁ כִּכְּזָר | אֲשֶׁר בִּיהוּדָה<sup>a</sup> | וַיַּעַל<sup>a</sup> עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ כֹּן<sup>b</sup> עֲשָׂה  
בְּבֵית-אֵל<sup>a</sup> | לְזִבְחַ לְעֹגְלִים אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה וְהָעִמִּיד בְּבַיִת אֵל אֶת-כֹּהֲנֵי הַבָּמֹת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה:

*Then Jeroboam appointed a festival on the eighth month, on the fifteen[th] day of the month, like [the] festival which [was] in Judah, and he went up unto the altar, thus he did in Bethel, to sacrifice to the calves that he made. And he stood in Bethel the priests of the high places that he made.*

#### 3.8.1 General Notes

Verses 32-33 relate a particular event at the Bethel altar. It is important to consider these verses in conjunction with 1 Kgs 13, in which the altar at Bethel is denounced.<sup>89</sup> We can assume that similar acts of idolatry occur at Dan, yet Bethel is particularly noted here. Bethel, with its Patriarchal significance, becomes the location of grave apostasy and the subsequent concern of the prophets (Hos 10:15; Amos 3:14; 4:4). Thus, these two verses, relating a specific (yet perhaps representative) episode of idolatry, in conjunction with 1 Kgs 13, leave the reader with no doubt that Jeroboam acts in sin and that his actions are to be denounced.

#### 3.8.2 The Festival

The verse marks another innovation of Jeroboam: a festival. The word חֹג usually refers to the three main pilgrimage-feasts of Israel. Most often it is used specifically for the celebration of one of the three main pilgrim-feasts (Exod 23:14): the Passover together with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks or Harvest of Firstfruits, and the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles) or Feast of Ingathering.<sup>90</sup> The festival is mentioned three times (twice in vv. 32-33), and is clearly connected with the plans of Jeroboam's heart (v. 33).

<sup>89</sup> Note in 1 Kgs 13:32-34 the similar elements to 1 Kgs 12:30-33: “became a sin,” “temples of high places,” priests from “the ends of the people,” and the altar.

<sup>90</sup> Carl Philip Weber, “חֹג,” *TWOT* 1:261-62.

Jeroboam transferred to the eighth month the festival which ought to have been kept in the seventh month (i.e. the “Feast of Booths” see 1 Kgs 8:2; Lev 23:34, 39, 41).<sup>91</sup> It seems undeniable that this variance is an outworking of Jeroboam’s desire to make his separation from Jerusalem worship as clear as possible. Yet the keeping of the date (the fifteenth) may have encouraged the “weak” who took offence at his innovations.<sup>92</sup> It is here in which great danger is found: Jeroboam’s incomplete move away from Yahwistic worship, resulting in a sort of syncretism, easily and subtly leads the people astray.

### 3.8.3 Summation

Three times in vv.32-33, there is found the phrase “he went up to the altar.” The presence of this, combined with the *hiphil* “and he stood”<sup>93</sup> (in reference to the appointment of priests), again emphasizes that it is Jeroboam doing all the scheming and acting in this text. As will be pointed out in v.33, Jeroboam’s final negative action is in his assumption of the role reserved for the high priest alone.

### 3.9 Verse 33

וַיַּעַל עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ | אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה<sup>a</sup> בְּבֵית-אֵל<sup>b</sup> בְּחֶמְשָׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם בַּחֹדֶשׁ<sup>c</sup> הַשְּׁמִינִי בַחֹדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר-בָּרָא (מִלְבָּד) [מִלְבוֹ]<sup>d</sup>  
וַיַּעַשׂ חֹג לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּעַל עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְהַקְטִיר: פ

*And he went up unto the altar that he made in Bethel and on the fifteen[th] day in the eighth month, in the month that he devised from his heart [Qere] and he made a festival for the sons of Israel, and he went up unto the altar to burn incense.*

<sup>91</sup> See Julian Morgenstern, “Festival of Jeroboam I,” *JBL* 83, no. 2 (1964): 109–18 for an interesting discussion of this alteration, based on the use of different calendars.

<sup>92</sup> Carl Friedrich Keil, Franz Delitzsch, and James Martin, *The Books of the Kings* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 201.

<sup>93</sup> Gesenius notes that this is an unusual form. He goes on to state that there are a number of passages which are hard to classify, some due to the influence of Aramaic modes of expression, while others due to corruption of the text. In these instances there is nothing more that can be done than to merely call attention to the incorrectness of the expression. In this case, 1 Kgs 12:32 וַיִּקְמַד, the influence of the Aramaic construction of the perfect with וַי as the narrative tense, instead of the Hebrew imperfect consecutive is to be noted. *GKC* §112pp.



### 3.9.1 להקטיר

The root of this verb, קטר, means “to cause to rise up in smoke” (generally used cultically). The common rendering of the *hiphil* is to “burn incense,”<sup>94</sup> yet to “make offerings”<sup>95</sup> also seems to fit, as the word has similarity in meaning to other words used for sacrificing and burning in the Old Testament. In considering words for sacrificing particular, this word has similarities to the verb of the root זבח (mainly used of killing animals for sacrifices), עלה (in the *hiphil* expressing the idea of offering up to a deity), and קרב (to approach, engage in offering).<sup>96</sup>

One point of particular interest is that the verb קטר in the *hiphil* stem is generally used in the Bible to convey the idea of true sacrifices. God specified the particulars of sacrifices, for true love requires obedience (Deut 6:4-6). However, in the *piel* stem, the verb can also represent the total act of ritual in worship, its occurrences tracing a downhill history through the kings of Israel and Judah. The acts described using this stem were acknowledged as contrary to true worship.<sup>97</sup> It is interesting, then, that the *hiphil* stem is chosen in the telling of this story. Perhaps it emphasizes the issue at hand: the presentation of false worship as true.

### 3.9.2 Summation

The emphatic repetition of events through verbs of which Jeroboam is the subject paints a picture of Jeroboam’s priestly role. Regardless of Solomon’s dedicatory offerings before the altar (1 Kgs 8:22; 62), the action is reserved from the high priest alone (Exod. 30:1-10; cf. Num 16; Lev 10:1-3; 2 Chr 26:16-21). This, combined with the fact that he ascends an altar in Bethel, in the wrong

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<sup>94</sup> Wray Beal, *1 Kings*, 185.

<sup>95</sup> As rendered by the ESV.

<sup>96</sup> Leonard J. Coppes, “קטר,” *TWOT* 2:795-97.

<sup>97</sup> Coppes, *TWOT* 2:795-97.

month, and makes sacrifices to calves, renders the judgment of 1 Kgs 13 not surprising to the reader.

The writer stresses that Jeroboam devised this from his own heart,<sup>98</sup> and thus the themes of Jeroboam's responsibility and the wickedness of the heart return to conclude the narrative. Jeroboam has inaugurated his new religious cult, and the writer has concluded that it is sheer invention.

#### **4. Theological Summary and Conclusions**

1 Kgs 12:25-33 shows the progression of the sin of idolatry. By the end of the passage, Jeroboam's heart, an idol-making factory, has reduced Yahwistic worship to an almost unrecognizable form. There was hardly any biblical regulation that he did not violate. Pleased to do things his own way, this became a great sin.

The sin of polytheism and idolatry depicted in this passage is a grave warning to Christians. The Westminster Shorter Catechism notes that the first commandment does not simply detail what should not be done, but implicitly outlines what should be done, that is, "to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God... and to worship and glorify him accordingly."<sup>99</sup> This leads logically to the second commandment, in which, positively, it requires "observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in his word."<sup>100</sup> Jeroboam violated the "regulative principle" for worship. God has the right to determine how He is to be brought glory. Moreover, Jeroboam's sin warns the Christian

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<sup>98</sup> See note in apparatus: the Qere reading is followed in this study, though the Kethib reading still carries the idea that the idea of religious syncretism came from Jeroboam himself.

<sup>99</sup> WSC Q. 46.

<sup>100</sup> WSC Q. 50.

to trust in Christ alone for salvation. In rejecting Jerusalem, Jeroboam rejected the only place that God had appointed for the forgiveness of sins.<sup>101</sup> Man-made religion can never save.

Jeroboam's actions are clearly denounced (1 Kgs 13) and his demise foretold (1 Kgs 14). The legacy of Jeroboam is found in 1 Kgs 22:52, where he is said to have "made Israel to sin." In the northern kingdom, Jeroboam becomes the standard for wickedness. In the accounts of the northern kings recorded in the book of Kings, the comparison to the sin of Jeroboam becomes part of the formula (e.g. 1 Kgs 22:52). Although Jeroboam was promised the very presence of God in his kingship, (contingent upon obedience), he exchanged it for a lie. Truly, the heart is deceitful above all things, desperately sick.

Yet, although this passage has much to say about the fallen state of man's heart, and the sin of apostasy, the Christian should not despair upon reading this text. God's sovereignty is inescapable in this passage, seen in this idea of kingship. In 1 Sam 8-12, kingship is established in Israel. However, the idea of kingship can be traced even further back than this.<sup>102</sup> In Deut 17, the kingship is prophesied, and laws pertaining to its institution are laid out. Thus, it was in God's sovereign will that Israel have a human king to rule under Him.

The Davidic kingship was established in accordance with this idea. Israel was to be a theocracy, the Lord sovereignly appointing kings to rule under Him. Human kings however, like Jeroboam, fail. In the book of Kings, we read account after account of kings who became kings "like the nations" (1 Sam 8). Man does not wish to serve under any ruler.

Yet although the picture of the Davidic kingship looks dire, and the evil oppressive, God is at work in this, "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he

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<sup>101</sup> Ryken, *1 Kings*, 351.

<sup>102</sup> For example, see Gen 17:16.

will” (Prov 21:1). God is in sovereign control of all of history: none of Jeroboam’s actions were outside of His reach, and Jeroboam’s folly did not ultimately triumph. Further, the picture of fallen man in these kings points forward to a better King. The covenant that the Lord made with David (2 Sam 7:12) is made even more certain and complete in Jesus Christ. Jesus rightly sits on David’s throne in heavenly Jerusalem, of which the earthly throne was always only a type (cf. Acts 2:33-34; Heb 12:22-24). From His heavenly throne, by the Spirit, He rules the hearts of elect saints, and one day the covenant will be consummated and the heavenly Jerusalem will come down out of heaven from God to the renewed heaven and earth (Rev 21).<sup>103</sup> In considering this covenant then, there are two glorious truths. Firstly, the deceitful hearts of the elect are ruled by Christ. Thus, though, alone, our hearts are as black as Jeroboam’s, in Christ we have new hearts within us (Ezek 36:26). Secondly, earthly kings and their faults should point us to Christ, our King, who reigns forever, perfectly, and in justice. Thus, our gaze should be heavenward, and our works fuelled by sure hope of the consummation of Rev 21.

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<sup>103</sup> Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 701.

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