According to the Book of Kings, Israel’s gravest transgression, which eventually also caused its destruction, was Jeroboam’s sin(s), described in I Reg 12,26–33. With some exceptions the Israelite kings and the people are said to have continued in this sin throughout the existence of the kingdom. It is commonly assumed that the sin originally referred to the construction of the cultic places at Bethel and Dan but especially to the golden bulls that Jeroboam constructed in these places. Some scholars assume that only the bulls were meant in the oldest text, and that the reference to the high places, the אֱלֹהָיִם, is a later development. Although the literary history of the passage is debated, the bulls are unanimously regarded as the oldest and most integral part of 12,26–33. Other themes of the passage are variously regarded as later developments.

1 Traditionally one has referred to calves, but a more appropriate translation would be young bulls.

2 I–II Reg variably uses the plural and singular when referring to Jeroboam’s sin(s). The plural is more often used than the singular, but it is not always clear which one is meant: In I Reg 13,2; II Reg 3,3; 13,2.6.11; 17,22 the plural is used but a suffix refers to the sin(s) in the singular ( свָחַת or הַבֹּא). This may suggest that the singular is original but was later changed. It would be logical that Jeroboam’s sin was originally a single issue, but when later editors attributed more sins to him, the plural began to be used.

3 The reigns of Ela, Tibni and Shallum were very short, which may be the reason that a regular evaluation for their reigns is missing. Israel’s last king, Hoshea is also treated differently.

4 For example, J. Werlitz, Die Bücher der Könige, NSK.AT 8, 2002, 131.


Much of the debate has dealt with the question of whether the passage is Deuteronomistic or pre-Deuteronomistic. An important theme has also been its historicity. Many scholars have asked if the text preserves an early tradition, and if so, how much does it reflect historical circumstances. It has also been discussed whether the bulls are an invention by the Deuteronomistic history writer or whether their origin is older. Some scholars have argued that they were invented by the history writer, whereas most scholars, especially in earlier research, have assumed that the bulls have a historical background in the cult at Bethel or elsewhere in the Northern Kingdom. In the latter case, the bulls would derive from an early source. Nevertheless, it is generally assumed that the passage, in its current form, contains Deuteronomistic phraseology or that it "serves deuteronomistic propaganda well."

The meaning and function of the bulls have also drawn considerable scholarly attention. It has been widely discussed whether they were idols, gods or places (postaments) where the presence of a god was visualized. The question whether they were representations of a Canaanite, syncretistic, Baalistic or Yahwistic cult has also been significant. No consensus has emerged on these questions, but most scholars have assumed that the bulls violated the first and/or the second commandment of the Decalogue as well as the commandment to sacrifice only in one place, Deut 12. Other scholars assume that the bulls only violated the cult centralization and that the connection with the first

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8 Thus, e.g., H.-D. Hoffmann, Reform und Reformen. Untersuchungen zu einem grundthema der deuteronomistischen Geschichtsschreibung, 1980, 73; Kratz, Komposition, 168; Werlitz, Könige, 131.
10 Hoffmann, Reform, 59; McKenzie, Kings, 58–59; Fritz, Könige, 137–138.
12 For discussion, see Kittel, Könige, 108–109; Jones, Kings, 258; Simon DeVries, 1. Kings, WBC, 1985, 162–163; Fritz, Könige, 137–138, Cogan, Kings, 358.
13 Sweeney, Kings, 177, assumes that the bulls "depict ... the mount on which YHWH rides."
14 E.g., Werlitz, Könige, 133 and Sweeney, Kings, 178.
and second commandment was created later. The phrase "מהר לא楽しめる המות עיר משה אברל מישאם עיר משה" is especially puzzling. It is evident that the events described in Exodus are assumed as the background, but it has been debated whether it refers to Yahweh or to other gods. The amount of discussion on I Reg 12,26–33 is understandable, because of its importance for the whole I–II Reg as well as for understanding the cult practiced in Israel. The passage could provide significant information about the intentions and motifs of the history writer, but also of the other authors and editors of I–II Reg.

On the basis of disturbing repetitions, especially in vv. 32–33, it is clear that the passage was edited, and accordingly hardly any scholar has assumed that the text does not contain any editing. However, there is no consensus on the extent of the editing, although most scholars see problems in at least vv. 31–33. A great variety of literary critical solutions have been offered.

Contrary to the starting point in previous research, I will argue that the bulls are a late addition to I Reg 12,26–33. The arguments for this view rise out of the passage itself, but considerations from other texts in I–II Reg will provide support. Jeroboam seems to have been connected with bulls only at a very late stage in the development of these books. Prior to their addition, Jeroboam’s sin probably only referred to the construction of the temples on the high places. The oldest text of the passage seems to have been unaware of Bethel as well. I will concentrate on the bulls in this paper, but for a clearer understanding, the entire passage in I Reg 12–13, as well as other related passages in I–II Reg, will also be discussed.

**Literary Criticism of I Reg 12,26–33**

I Reg 12,26–33 contains several problems that imply that the text is the result of considerable editorial activity. The number of conflicting literary critical solutions is usually already an indication of heavy editing (cf. II Reg 23), and a closer look at the text corroborates the suspicion that successive hands have been working on these verses. Without any particular connection, the building account in I Reg 12,25 is followed by a description of the cultic problem that Jeroboam faced after he had declared independence from Jerusalem. The king was worried

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16 With some exceptions, such as Burney, Notes, 176–177.
that after the separation of the kingdoms, the Israelites would continue
to go to Jerusalem to sacrifice in Yahweh’s temple, and that it would
eventually lead them to abandon him and return to Rehabeam and to
the House of David.

The text in vv. 26–27 is otherwise unproblematic, but there is a
disturbing repetition inside v. 27:

The same idea is repeated, partly word-for-word, but with some dif-
fferences in nuance. The reintroduction of Rehabeam as the king of Judah
is unnecessary and unmotivated. Also, the repetition of לֶשֶׁב in the be-

ginning is suspect, as many later editors began an expansion with a word
or sentence from the older text. The repetitions suggest that the text was
not written by one author. More probably the shorter reference of a re-
turn to Rehabeam is original, because its addition would be unnecessary
as it does not provide any additional information. In contrast, the longer
reference adds details and shifts the perspective. In the shorter reference
Jeroboam states, in a rather neutral way, that the Israelites, if they go
to Jerusalem to sacrifice, would return to Rehabeam. In the longer one,
however, Jeroboam calls Rehabeam their lord, thus acknowledging that
Rehabeam is the real king of the Israelites and that he himself is a
usurper. It also contains the idea that Jeroboam was afraid that he would
be killed. In other words, an editor wanted to give the impression that
Jeroboam was also a coward, a significant insult in any Semitic culture.
Since it is unlikely that the repetition was created by one author and since
it is unlikely that the shorter reference to Rehabeam, without providing
any new information, would have been added later, the longer reference
should be regarded as a later addition. It is not surprising that the LXX
secondarily omits יִהוּדִית מֶלֶךְ יְהוָה יְהוָאָל, because this sentence be-
came unnecessary after the expansion. To assume that the LXX repre-
sents the older text and that the shorter reference is an addition would
run into difficulties in explaining why it was added at all.

17 However, Kratz, Komposition, 168, assumes that v. 26b is a later gloss, but it is diffi-
cult to find any literary critical arguments for this opinion.
18 Parallels between texts are underlined.
19 Kratz, Komposition, 168, assumes that v. 27b is also an addition, but it is difficult to
find arguments for this opinion. Taking out v. 27b would leave the בָּאָל מֶלֶךְ יְהוָה יְהוָאָל
-sentence at the beginning of v. 27a hanging in the air.
20 Most scholars acknowledge that the LXX represents a later development, e.g., Noth,
Studien, 267, but some scholars, e.g., DeVries, Kings, 160–161, assume that the read-
ing in the MT is the result of a dittography. This is improbable because also בָּאָל is re-
peated, which means that the copyist would have had to repeat this word, then skip a
section and repeat another section again and finally skip הָאָל.
Although scholarship has unanimously assumed that the bulls are part of the oldest text, there are several reasons to assume that הַיָּלָה יִשָּׁרָה יִשְׁתַּחַת וְיִשָּׁרָה in v. 28a\(β\) begins a large expansion that extends till the end of v. 30.\(α\) Jeroboam’s main problem, as described in vv. 26–27, is that, despite the political separation of Israel and Judah, the people would continue to go to Jerusalem to sacrifice in Yahweh’s temple. Jeroboam seeks to find a solution to this problem, but vv. 28–30 do not deal with sacrifices or the temple at all. Instead, in these verses Jeroboam wants to show that the gods (note the plural הַיָּלָה הַיָּלָה in v. 28) of the Israelites are in fact in Bethel and Dan and that they should go to these places instead of Jerusalem. This would solve Jeroboam’s problem, but the whole issue is now put on another level, because the Yahweh of Jerusalem is in fact replaced here. The author of vv. 28–30 seems to have a different interest than the author of v. 27a\(α\), since the original question is not really addressed. The author of v. 30, where the result of building calves is described, does not seem to be primarily interested in the sacrifices or the temple. The people go to Bethel and Dan, but a reference to sacrifices and its location is missing. Jeroboam’s original question does not correspond to the interests of the author behind vv. 28–30, and therefore it is unlikely that this author is behind Jeroboam’s original question. The bulls are of central importance for him to the extent that the original text and the sacrifices in the temple of Jerusalem, which had to be given an alternative, were forgotten. A more fitting solution to Jeroboam’s problem is found in v. 31a, as we will see later on.

Some scholars have also pointed out that the style of describing the cultic measures in vv. 28–30 differs from that of vv. 31–33. For example, Hoffmann notes that vv. 28–30 are written as a short scene where the construction of the bulls is described in many words, whereas Jeroboam’s other cultic measures are provided as a summarizing list.\(α\) Despite his observation, he fails to conclude that there is a literary critical problem between these two sections.

\(α\) to יִשָּׁרָה הַיָּלָה in v. 28a\(β\) should obviously refer to Jeroboam, but the last king mentioned in v. 27 is Rehabeam, and therefore one would expect the name of Jeroboam to be repeated here. However, concluding on that basis that v. 28a\(α\) is an addition would not solve anything because the following text does not specify the subject until v. 32. In other words, since the subject is not reintroduced after v. 27, it would – strictly speaking – be Rehabeam. Of course, the context does not leave any doubt that Jeroboam is constantly meant after v. 27.

\(α\) Kratz, Komposition, 168, has suggested that vv. 28b and 30b are later additions, but according to his chart on p. 192 v. 29 is also an addition. Neither of the suggestions is supported by arguments.

\(β\) Hoffmann, Reform, 72.
As a further argument that the bulls have been added, one should point out that v. 31a does not specify who the subject was. Of course Jeroboam was meant, but after the addition, the last singular masculine noun is the people. Therefore, the original author of v. 31a assumed that in the previous text, the last subject would unambiguously be Jeroboam. If vv. 28–30 derived from the same author, he should have reintroduced the subject. Some Greek manuscripts have added the subject, but this is evidently a later development caused by the ambiguity with the subject. A further technical indication suggesting that we are dealing with an addition is the double beginning of יִשָּׁמִּישׁ in v. 28a and 31 because an expansion was often begun with a word from the older text in order to facilitate the return to it after the expansion.

One should further note that vv. 28a–30 (without יִשָּׁמִּישׁ) form a closed unit that ends with a condemnation that what Jeroboam did was a sin: יִשָּׁמִּישׁ התכוון. One receives the impression that this was Jeroboam’s sin, although the list of Jeroboam’s sins continues in vv. 31–33. The sentence seems to be out of place in the current text. However, the same sentence is found word-for-word in 13,34,24 and, as noted by Montgomery, 12,30a is »an evident interpolation from 13,34.«25 The repetition of elements from the older text is typical of later editors who try to tie an expansion to the older text. 12,30a is followed by a description in v. 30b of what happened after Jeroboam’s measures. The author has left the presently described situation and refers to the future, to a situation after the bulls had been put in place: people started going to Bethel and Dan. Verse 30 ignores that Jeroboam’s measures to hinder people from going to Jerusalem continue in v. 31. As a whole, v. 30 was written as a conclusion to the episode as it ends with a situation where everything is already condemned and concluded. The author evidently had primarily the bulls in mind.

The conclusive nature on this verse has been noted by some scholars but they have concluded that v. 30 must be the original conclusion of the passage and that v. 31–33 were added later.26 However, this is unlikely because it would leave the whole passage without any solution to the problem with sacrifices, Jeroboam’s original concern in

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24 On the basis that it breaks the connection between v. 29 and 30b, Kittel, Könige, 110; Holscher, Könige, 183 and Noth, Studien, 284–285, have suggested that v. 30a is a later gloss. This is not impossible but it is more probable that the whole of v. 30 was made as a conclusion to a larger expansion. Verse 30a condemns Jeroboam’s actions and v. 30b describes the results.

25 Montgomery, Kings, 255. He fails to consider the possibility that the phrase functioned as a means to attach the expansion to the older text.

26 Thus for example, Jepsen, Quellen, 6; Fritz, Könige, 127–128 and Levin, Frömmigkeit, 138–139.
v. 27ac. In addition, in view of the constant criticism of the high places in Judah, it would be unlikely that Jeroboam’s sin would have nothing to do with these cultic places. This problem is emphasized by the fact that the bulls are not mentioned in the rest of I–II Reg, as we will see later. It would mean that the bulls are mentioned only once, and, despite their constantly being the main sin and eventually the reason for Israel’s destruction, they are not mentioned again. It is more probable that vv. 28aβ–30 were written by a later editor who had other interests than the original author to the extent that he provided a different solution for Jeroboam’s problem. The editor ignored the fact that the issue with sacrifices was not yet addressed at all and that Jeroboam’s building activity continued in v. 31. One should not exclude the possibility that the editor tried to marginalize the other sins listed in v. 31–33.

After the expansion in vv. 28aβ–30, the original text continued in v. 31a, which provides a natural solution for Jeroboam’s problem: יָהוּ דָּוִד יִשְׂרָאֵל, 28 he built temples on the high places, so that the Israelites would not have to go to sacrifice in Jerusalem. Throughout I–II Reg the בְּהֵמָה are regarded as places of sacrifice and as a severe challenge to the temple in Jerusalem, which Deut 12 implies is the only place where the Israelites are allowed to sacrifice. The author of I Reg 12,31a did not specify which high places were meant, but instead refers to all of them. He wanted to give the impression that Jeroboam invented and originated the cult at the high places throughout the Northern Kingdom and that before him all Israelites had been sacrificing in Jerusalem. Despite the text critical problems with the singular and the object marker, 29 the meaning of v. 31a was not ambiguous to the ancient reader because the later authors and editors were not uncertain about what was meant by the בְּהֵמָה. 30

27 For Kratz, Komposition, 168, the whole of v. 31 is an addition, but arguments are missing.
28 As noted by many scholars, the original text may have read בְּהֵמָה or בְּהֵמָה, which corresponds to the readings in the LXX (οὖν θεού υψηλήν) and Vulgate (fama in excelsis). The singular of the MT would then be a later corruption. This is also suggested by I Reg 13,32, which uses the plural בְּהֵמָה. However, II Reg 17,29.32 uses the singular בְּהֵמָה even when referring to many temples. It is possible that II Reg 17,29.32 was influenced by the corrupted version of I Reg 12,31, but some scholars, e.g., Burney, Notes, 178, have suggested that the singular should be read as a collective noun. This question does not have direct bearing on the main argument presented here.
29 Since the author was writing in a late context where the country was already full of בְּהֵמָה, he anachronistically and mistakenly used the object marker. Its use is not relevant for the arguments presented here, since the problem persists in any literary critical reconstruction of the passage.
30 For example the author behind I Reg 13,32 referred to Jeroboam’s בְּהֵמָה as those were in the cities of Samaria. Similarly also II Reg 17,29 and 23,19, which are evidently dependent on I Reg 12,26–33.
Verse 31b begins another expansion that attracted several further expansions. In fact, 12,31b-13,33a consists of successive additions. Many scholars have rightly assumed that the whole chapter 13, with the exception of some sentences at the end of the chapter, is a late expansion. However, contrary to the majority view, it is improbable that 12,31b-33 contains any vestiges of the basic text. I Reg 12,31b should be regarded as an addition that was originally placed before 13,33b.

That we are dealing with two different authors is shown in the way the same idea is expressed twice using partially identical phraseology but with fundamental differences in emphasis. According to 13,33b anyone who wanted could become a הַמִּשְׁכָּה-priest, whereas 12,31b stresses that the priests that Jeroboam appointed were not Levites. One should note that the author of 13,33b refers to the הַמִּשְׁכָּה-priests, whereas 12,31b seems to refer to priests in general. The appointment of הַמִּשְׁכָּה-priests is logical after 12,31a, where the construction of the הַמִּשְׁכָּה is described, whereas the author of 12,31b, having a wider perspective, departs from this theme, and has priests in general in mind. This suggests that 13,33b is more probably part of the original basic text than 12,31b. Many scholars have assumed that 13,33b is a resumptive repetition, but because of the expansive and digressive nature of 12,31b and the close thematic connection between 12,31a and 13,33b, it is more likely that 13,33b represents the original text.

That the reference to the הַמִּשְׁכָּה-priests is a more integral part of Jeroboam’s sin than the idea that Jeroboam appointed non-Levite priests is also corroborated by II Reg 17,32, a passage that describes the end result of Jeroboam’s sin. As in I Reg 13,33b, a later expansion in 12,33 refers to הַמִּשְׁכָּהpriests. It is difficult to see how the author of this verse could have referred to the הַמִּשְׁכָּה-priests if the older text had not referred to them. The same applies to II Reg 17,32, which also refers

31 For example, Kittel, Könige, 112–116; Jepsen, Quellen, 5; Debus, Sünde, 35–36; Dietrich, Prophetie, 114–120; Hentschel, Könige, 86–87; Kratz, Komposition, 168, 192 and Werlitz, Könige, 134.
32 According to Burney, Notes, 185, it is impossible because of the singular verb and he therefore reads כָּתְבָּה. Similarly, I. Benzinger, Die Bücher der Könige, 1899, 94.
33 Thus for example, Steuernagel, Einleitung, 361. Some scholars, e.g., Debus, Sünde, 36; Noth, Studien, 291–292; E. Würthwein, Die Bücher der Könige I. 1. Kon 1–16, ATD 11/1, 1977, 165–169, have assumed that the expansion does not begin before 12,33.
to the הכהנים but not to the fact that the appointed priests in general were non-Levitical. That II Reg 17,32, is directly dependent on I Reg 12–13 is suggested by word-for-word parallels (וְיָשָׁר לֹא הֲמַעְצָמת הֲכַהֲנַי). A comparison between I Reg 12–13 and II Reg 17,28–32 implies that the author of II Reg 17,28–32 was looking at a version of I Reg 12–13 that contained a reference to the הכהנים, whereas a reference to the priests in general being non-Levitical, as in I Reg 12,31, is missing. In other words, later authors in I Reg 12,33 and II Reg 17,28–32 seem to have referred to I Reg 13,33b and not to 12,31b when discussing the appointment of priests by Jeroboam. This is a strong argument against the conventional assumption that 12,31b is older than 13,33b. That the author II Reg 17,28–32 used a very early version of I Reg 12–13 (see below) speaks for the assumption that 13,33b belongs to the earliest literary phases of the passage.

One should further note that in the final text after all the events are described in 12,31b-33, the appointment of priests in 13,33 is badly out of context, and it is even more so after 13,1–33a. Immediately after 12,31a, however, 13,33b would make perfect sense: רֹאֶשׁ אָדָם בֹּמֻה רֹאֶשׁ מַעְצָמות הֲכַהֲנַי הֲכַהֲנַי בֹּמֻה. I Reg 13,33b does not follow naturally any other verse in the current passage. It is therefore likely that 12,31a was originally followed by 13,33b* (without the word בֹּמֻה), but was later replaced by an editor who repeated the older text almost word for word but added his own emphasis and ignored the idea of בֹּמֻה, thus developing the text into a new direction. Often an expansion is placed after the original text, but an addition before the older text is not uncommon in the Hebrew Bible. The same technique seems to have been used in v. 27 as we have seen. Such expansions often marginalize the older idea in a more efficient way than if the addition were placed after the expansion. For the editor in 12,31b the idea that the priests appointed by Jeroboam were not Levites was of such high importance that it was placed immediately after the construction of the בֹּמֻה. The original appointment of the בֹּמֻה-priests was thus placed in a secondary position. Later, with further expansions in 12,32–33, it was pushed further away from its original context so that in the final texts its position at the end of chapter 13 is perplexing. Expansions that emphasize the Levites are found throughout the Hebrew Bible, and their editors often placed the additions in very prominent locations so that the meaning of the older text was often altered.34

34 For example the Levitical editors of Ezra-Nehemiah made radical changes to the older text. In Neh 8–9 they tried to replace Ezra as the leader of the community. See J. Pakkala, Ezra the Scribe. The Development of Ezra 7–10 and Nehemiah 8, BZAW 347, 2004, 153–156, 266–274.
Verses 32–33 contain disturbing repetitions to the extent that some scholars have assumed parts of these verses to have been corrupted.\textsuperscript{35} The problems are evident, for Jeroboam ascends to the altar three times and the ascension is expressed with the same sentence $\text{\textit{h>ir}}>X\text{xb} \text{\textit{mh}=liliyv}$. It should be clear that the repetition cannot derive from the same author, for it is not motivated by the content. Jeroboam does not descend from the altar between the ascensions and the repetitions are not restricted to this phrase alone. In addition to the small phraseological repetitions (see below), with v. 32 the appointment of priests is also expressed three times in the passage (cf. 12,31b and 13,33b). Although the possibility of corruptions cannot be excluded, for most of the problems in these verses literary criticism can provide a solution.

One of the youngest additions may be found in v. 32:

\begin{verbatim}
... 32a
חרצא עשה
והַנְּפֶרֶד בֵּית־אָלָלֶה נִבְּרֵחַ לֶעֶלְּיָמִים
... 32b
חרצא עשה
וּלְּיָמִים אָסָר עָשָׂה
... 33a

Verse 32 (from $\text{\textit{h>ir}}>X\text{xb} \text{\textit{mh}=liliyv})$ introduces the idea that Jeroboam ascended to the altar to sacrifice to the bulls and to appoint\textsuperscript{37} the priests there. The word-for-word parallels with the following verse suggest that we are dealing with an addition.\textsuperscript{38} In the Masoretic text, v. 33a is incomprehensible, especially when, in addition to the ascension, the construction of the altar at Bethel is also unnecessarily repeated. The editor may have utilized the phrase $\text{\textit{h>ir}}>X\text{xb}$ as a binding element to add the two new elements. By repeating several of its elements, the editor tried to tie the expansion to the older text. Returning to the older text, he also repeated the sentence from where the expansion was begun (resumptive repetition). That v. 32b may be an even later addition to v. 32a is suggested by the disturbing repetition of $\text{\textit{h>ir}}>X\text{xb}$ and the unexpected perfect $\text{\textit{dymih}}$.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{35} Thus for example Debus, Sünde, 36.
\textsuperscript{36} The LXX reads: χορηστήρον ᾨ ἐποίησεν ἐν Βασιλ. The Hebrew may represent a later corruption or, more probably, it is an attempted correction (ךְּנֶשֶׁת) to avoid the repetition of $\text{\textit{h>ir}}>X\text{xb} \text{\textit{mh}=liliyv}$ created by the expansions. The priority of the LXX reading has been suggested by many, e.g., Kittel, Könige, 112.
\textsuperscript{37} Note that the two other references to the appointment of priests, 1 Reg 12,31b and 13,33b, use the verb $\text{\textit{dymih}}$, whereas this verse uses the verb $\text{\textit{h>ir}}>X\text{xb}$.\textsuperscript{38} Burney, Notes, 178, already notes that «there can be little doubt that this latter portion on v. 32 together with the first three words of v. 33 ... represents a very early gloss ...».\textsuperscript{39} Many scholars, e.g., Benzinger, Könige, 90, have tried to emend the perfect $\text{\textit{dymih}}$ to an infinitive or cons. imperfect to fit the preceding text.
The purpose of the addition was to emphasize Jeroboam’s sin: he sacrificed to the bulls and personally appointed the illegal priests. The editor wanted to bring the bulls to the foreground. That the bulls are an expansion in v. 32 is very significant in view of the conclusion that the bulls in vv. 28–30 are also an addition. The suspicion that the bulls are not part of the oldest text of 12,26–33 is therefore further corroborated.

Verse 33 is confusing as it again repeats the ascension to the altar. According to v. 33ab, Jeroboam ascended to the altar on the 15th of the eighth month and invented a new feast. The repetition indicates that we are dealing with a further addition. However, v. 33bβ cannot function alone, since then the text would not say where Jeroboam ascended to the altar. Moreover, the following text in 13,1ff., a later addition as assumed by most scholars, is dependent on the idea that Jeroboam was in Bethel and had ascended the altar there in order to sacrifice (v. 1). This suggests that the older text in 12,32–33 was as follows: יִתְנָה עַל הָמָמְבָּה אֵת שִׁשָּׁה בְּבֵית אֵל תַּחְפָּרִי. In this case, the latter יִתְנָה עַל הָמָמְבָּה in v. 33bβ would be the editor’s attempt to return to the older text after adding the feast and the exact date when all this happened. At least 13,1ff. seems to be unaware of any feast, but it instead continues directly from a very concrete situation where Jeroboam has just ascended to the altar at Bethel. A comment about the feast would disturb this connection.

However, one should note that Jeroboam’s sacrifice in v. 33bβ and his being in Bethel in the first place has no function without 13,1ff. This suggests that the same editor who is behind the scene at the altar in 13,1ff. also wrote יִתְנָה עַל הָמָמְבָּה אֵת שִׁשָּׁה בְּבֵית אֵל תַּחְפָּרִי in 12,32–33. A further editor then added the feast and the exact date it was celebrated. This is clearly dependent on the other reference to the feast mentioned in v. 32αα, which may have been added earlier.

References and Allusions to the Bulls in I–II Reg

Before drawing all the threads together from the literary critical observations, it is necessary to look at the rest of I–II Reg and investigate how it relates to I Reg 12,26–13,34. Outside 12,26–33 there are only two direct references and one possible allusion in the whole of I–II Reg to Jeroboam’s bulls, which is peculiar considering the frequency with which Jeroboam’s sin is referred to and the importance of the passage as describing the main sin that caused Israel’s destruction. In view of the constant criticism and explicit references to the high places, Ashera, Baal, altars etc., one would expect the authors and later editors of I–II Reg to constantly attack the sinful bulls as well. This not being the case, it is necessary to have a closer look at the two passages which do refer to
the bulls. They emerge as very late texts, even glosses, which seems to corroborate many of the literary critical conclusions reached above.

II Reg 10,29 refers to the bulls in connection with Jeroboam’s sin. However, the secondary nature of v. 29b, which specifies the sin as the making of golden bulls, is evident and often accepted in research. Verse 29b does not form a full sentence and hangs in the air without a proper grammatical connection to the previous sentence. Since the author has not made even a modest effort to integrate v. 29b into the previous sentence, we are probably dealing with a gloss or a remark originally made between the lines or in the margin that was not intended to be included in the text. The careless nature of v. 29b is also suggested by the lack of a preposition before Bethel (cf. מִבֵּית).

The masc. plural in v. 29a (חָטֵאת וְרָאשָׁן) deviates from the typical fem. plural (חָטֵאת) usually used in connection with Jeroboam’s sin, which may be an indication of later authorship for this part of the verse as well. This is also suggested by the fact that v. 31 contains a reference to Jeroboam’s sin that is partly word-for-word identical to that found in v. 29a.

In view of v. 31, v. 29a is redundant. For example, v. 31 uses the fem. instead of the untypical masculine to refer to the sin(s). It is very likely that v. 29a is part of a larger addition to the history writer’s text. The elimination of Ahab’s family is the subject in both v. 17 and v. 30, and v. 30 continues directly from v. 17 and seems to be unaware of the events in vv. 18–29. The editor who added vv. 18–28 attempted to return to the original text in v. 29a by repeating some of its themes and phraseology. Consequently, v. 29a belongs to a late editorial phase to which v. 29b was later added as a gloss in a very late stage in the development of the text.

II Reg 17 describes the final days and the destruction of Israel. It is evident that the chapter was heavily edited. Several editors wanted to give their opinion on why Israel was destroyed, and therefore the resulting text contains a series of accusations on how the Israelites had offended Yahweh or violated his commandments. As a result, various, and especially cultic, violations are listed in the chapter, and as ex-
expected, Jeroboam’s sin plays a significant role. It is explicitly mentioned in vv. 21–23, but these verses do not specify what the sin was. On the other hand, v. 16 lists the molten idols or the two bulls as one of the gravest sins that caused Israel’s destruction.

Although there is no reference to the bulls being golden, it should be evident that Jeroboam’s bulls are meant by מְכָּחַה מַלְאִילָ תּוּנִיִּים (מְכָּחַה מַלְאִילָ תּוּנִיִּים). However, the reference is regarded by many as a late gloss, the function of which was to specify the preceding word מְכָּחַה מַלְאִילָ תּוּנִיִּים. This is suggested by the contrast between the plural מְכָּחַה מַלְאִילָ תּוּנִיִּים and the singular מְכָּחַה מַלְאִילָ תּוּנִיִּים. If the original author of v. 16 had specifically meant Jeroboam’s two bulls, one would expect a plural such as מְכָּחַה מַלְאִילָ תּוּנִיִּים, or equivalent. This would suggest that the author of מְכָּחַה מַלְאִילָ תּוּנִיִּים did not have Jeroboam’s bulls in mind, and that the connection was made by a later editor. Instead of Jeroboam’s bulls, the original author of II Reg 17,16a may have had Aaron’s bull in mind and be dependent on Ex 32, or more probably, on Deut 9,12. In addition to partly identical phraseology, such as מְכָּחַה מַלְאִילָ תּוּנִיִּים, both Deut 9,12 and II Reg 17,16 regard the making of the מְכָּחַה מַלְאִילָ תּוּנִיִּים as a departure from what Yahweh had commanded. Indeed, the use of the singular מְכָּחַה מַלְאִילָ תּוּנִיִּים in II Reg 17,16a is difficult to comprehend without Aaron’s bull. The later editor, disturbed by the ambiguous reference to מְכָּחַה מַלְאִילָ תּוּנִיִּים defined it as the bulls, now referring to Jeroboam’s bulls, although the original author of II Reg 17,16a more probably had Aaron’s bull in mind. This development would explain the disagreement between the singular and plural.

In addition to the likelihood that מְכָּחַה מַלְאִילָ תּוּנִיִּים is a late gloss to II Reg 17,16a, it is probable that the whole verse already belongs to the later editorial stages of I–II Reg. The idea of making מְכָּחַה מַלְאִילָ תּוּנִיִּים may be dependent on Deut 9, but also on the general attack on idols, and Deut 9 is generally acknowledged as a very late text. Since II Reg 17,16a refers to the violation of the commandments and since Ex 34,17 and Lev 19,4 are the only laws where the making of מְכָּחַה מַלְאִילָ תּוּנִיִּים is prohibited, it is probable that

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43 E.g., Benzinger, Könige, 174; Würtwein, Könige II, 392.
44 Note that the plural מְכָּחַה מַלְאִילָ תּוּנִיִּים is used in I Reg 14,9 to refer to the two bulls.
45 The singular מְכָּחַה מַלְאִילָ תּוּנִיִּים is primarily used in reference to Aaron’s bull: Ex 32,4.8.17; Deut 9,12,16; Neh 9,18 and Ps 106,19. The singular is often used as a parallel to מְכָּחַה מַלְאִילָ תּוּנִיִּים: Deut 27,15; Jud 17,3.4; 18,14; Nah 1,4.
46 Hos 13,2 refers to a molten image with the phrase מְכָּחַה מַלְאִילָ תּוּנִיִּים as well as to the bulls in the plural. This verse is dependent on the attack on idols as well as on II Reg 17,16a. The contradiction between the singular מְכָּחַה מַלְאִילָ תּוּנִיִּים and the plural מְכָּחַה מַלְאִילָ תּוּנִיִּים in Hos 13,2 may be caused by its dependence on II Reg 17,16. Like II Reg 17,16, Hos 13,1 refers to מְכָּחַה מַלְאִילָ תּוּנִיִּים, which corroborates the connection between these passages.
II Reg 17,16 had either one of these laws in mind. This is further suggested by the similarity in phraseology: מַעֲשֶׂהָ אֶלֶךָ לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה/מַעֲשֶׂהַ אָלֹהֶים לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה (cf. מַעֲשֶׂה אֶלֶךָ). Both of these laws are dependent on the late addition of the Second Commandment to the Decalogue.48 It is therefore evident that these laws belong to the very late editorial stages of the Pentateuch. Moreover, the author of II Reg 17,16a seems to have been aware of different parts of the Pentateuch, which also implies a late origin. One receives the impression that 17,16a was written in view of the general attack on idols.49

That II Reg 17,16 belongs to a late stage in the development of I–II Reg is also shown by its dependence on the nomistic idea that Israel has to follow Yahweh’s commandments or face destruction. This idea that Israel abandoned Yahweh’s law is met in several nomistic passages, especially in the nomistic parenesis of Deuteronomy. The verse further contains the most common cultic violations that nomistic passages mention: Ashera, Host of Heaven and Baal. The author of 17,16 evidently paralleled Jeroboam’s sin with these sins. We are dealing with a late nomistic text, which is also often acknowledged in research. Many scholars assume that the whole passage from v. 7 to 20 is a large expansion, or a series of expansions, made to the history writer’s text in a late Deuteronomistic phase.50 Consequently, it seems probable that the basic text of II Reg 17,16 is a very late text that accuses the Israelites of abandoning Yahweh’s law and making idols. It is dependent on late nomistic texts, on the late parenesis of Deuteronomy, attack on other gods and the attack on idols. However, only a later editor defined the מַעֲשֶׂה as the לָחֵד מַעֲשֶׂה. Although not explicitly mentioning Jeroboam’s bulls, the broader context of I Reg 14,9 suggests that the author may have been aware of a version of 12,26–33 that contained the bulls. I Reg 14,9 does not refer to Jeroboam’s sins, but generally accuses this king of making other gods and molten images. The מַעֲשֶׂה מַעֲשֶׂה in this context after I Reg 12 is very likely a reference to the bulls. It is noteworthy that the author, with the typical phrase מַעֲשֶׂה אֲלֵיהֶם אֵלֹהִים connects the bulls with the other gods.

50 Benzinger, Könige, 174 (post-history writer); Hentschel, Könige, 79–83; M. O’Brien, The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis: A Reassessment, OBO 92, 1989, 209; already Jepsen, Quellen, 9, assumed that vv. 7–20 derive from an editor.
Jeroboam without Bulls

king has made (משה) himself other gods, which can only refer to the bulls. I Reg 12,26–33 does not inevitably suggest that the bulls are other gods. This author is clearly writing in a late context, which is dependent on the attack on other gods as well as the criticism of the idols.

That I Reg 14,9 was written by a late editor is also suggested by the curious idea that Jeroboam did more evil than any of his predecessors. He was the first ruler of the Northern Kingdom and did not have a predecessor. Since the history writer regarded Jeroboam as a usurper, it is unlikely that Saul, David and Solomon in the South would have been meant, for they are nowhere judged as having done evil, which the comment »Jeroboam did more evil« implies. The author of 14,9 is already looking at the whole spectrum of Israelite kings and forgot that he is dealing with the first one. I Reg 14,9 may have been influenced by I Reg 16,25 (וינש ... והרג ... ומלך אשר לישראל) and 30 (וירש ... ומלך אשור לישראל) where the idea makes more sense. After several Israelite kings who were regarded as sinful in the sense that they continued in Jeroboam’s sins, Omri’s dynasty, especially Omri (v. 25) and Ahab (v. 30), is regarded as the origin of many particularly grave sins. It is probable that after Jeroboam had been the initiator of the bull cult by an editor, a further editor paralleled his sins with those of Omri and also adopted the reference to the preceding kings from there.

It is often assumed that the context of I Reg 14,9 does not belong to the basic text of the chapter51 and that v. 9 is a late text.52 Many scholars have argued that 14,1–18 is an addition to the history writer’s text, and inside this addition, vv. 7–11 would be a further addition.53 Dietrich has shown that also the basic text of the chapter postdates the history writer.54 Consequently, 14,9 is part of a late addition to the history writer’s text. The author is dependent on the attack on idols.55 I Reg 14,9 corroborates the conclusions that only late texts in I–II Reg were aware of Jeroboam’s bulls.

Considering the references and the probable allusion to the bulls in I–II Reg, it is very likely that they are all late additions or part of a later addition to the history writer’s text. In II Reg 10,29 and 17,16, where Jeroboam’s bulls are explicitly mentioned, the references can even be

51 Noth, Studien, 311; Würtwein, Könige I, 177; Jones, Kings, 269; O’Brien, Deuteronomistic, 189; Fritz, Könige, 143–145.
52 Steuernagel, Einleitung, 362.
53 Benzinger, Könige, 95; Holscher, Könige, 183; Jepsen, Quellen, 6. Hentschel, Könige, 91–92, assumes that vv. 8–9 contain two different Deuteronomistic hands, both post-dating the history writer.
54 Dietrich, Prophetie, 51–54, 112–114. He ascribes v. 9b to what he calls DtrP.
characterized as loose glosses. There also seems to be a general consensus on these passages that they do not belong to the history writer’s text or to any of the earlier editorial phases of I–II Reg. The probable allusion to the bulls in I Reg 14,9 is also a late text.

**General Lack of Reference to the Bulls in I–II Reg**

The lack of reference to Jeroboam’s bulls is especially peculiar in I Reg 13,1–32, a later addition to and thoroughly dependent on 12,26–33. The chapter never refers to the bulls even in vv. 1–3 where events at the altar are described. When the man of God denounces the altar and declares that it will be destroyed, one would expect that the destruction of the bulls is prophesied or that they would be denounced. They are completely ignored, although, after 12,28–30, one would expect that the bulls are the main object in Bethel. One receives the impression that, despite its relatively late origin, the authors and subsequent editors of 13,1–32 were unaware of any bulls in 12,26–33. This suggests that even the later editors active in chapter 13 read a version of 12,26–33 that was not aware of the bulls.

One would expect II Reg 23 to mention the bulls, especially when practically all other major areas where the Israelites had violated Yahweh’s commandments are mentioned. Although the bulls were a particular sin of the north, Josiah’s activity is extended to Bethel and in vv. 15–16 its high place and the altar are specifically discussed. It is certainly peculiar that the destruction of the bull of Bethel is not mentioned in this context, because the destruction and defilement of the altar and the high place is explicitly and vividly described in these verses. Word-for-word parallels reveal that these verses are directly dependent on I Reg 12,26–33. The author clearly had an interest in showing that the sins of Bethel were completely annihilated by Josiah, and therefore, the complete silence suggests that the author was not aware of a bull at Bethel. However, he was aware of a version of I Reg 12–13 that contained a reference to a high place and altar at Bethel.

Since the destruction of the bulls is not found in II Reg 23, one would certainly expect it in II Reg 17. However, as we have seen, the chapter refers to the bulls only in connection with a list of issues that violated Yahweh’s commandments in v. 16. Their destruction is not mentioned. In comparison, the destruction of Aaron’s bull is explicitly described in Ex 32,20.

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56 Many scholars, such as Dietrich, Prophete, 95–96, have noted the problem, but have not drawn conclusions from it.
A further confirmation that Jeroboam’s bulls are a late addition comes from II Reg 17,28–32, which describes a situation where the new inhabitants of Samaria had to bring a priest to Bethel so that he could teach the people how to fear Yahweh. Although there is no explicit reference to Jeroboam, it is evident that the author(s) is (are) literally dependent on I Reg 12–13 as the following word-for-word parallels suggest:

Particularly interesting is the fact that this passage refers only to בֵּית הַבּוֹמָה and their priests, which corresponds to the above-presented reconstruction of the basic text of I Reg 12–13, where Jeroboam builds the high places and appoints their priests. It should be pointed out that in referring to the appointment of the priests the author of II Reg 17,28–32 is dependent on I Reg 13,33b (מִקְצֹת הָעֵשֶׁת בֵּית בּוֹמָה) and not on I Reg 12,31b. This further corroborates the literary critical solutions presented above.

II Reg 17,28–32 is often regarded as a difficult text and its connection to the main editorial phases of I–II Reg has likewise been difficult to establish. In any case, the connection between this passage and I Reg 12–13 suggests that the author of II Reg 17,28–32 was aware of an early literary phase of I Reg 12–13, which may imply an early origin for II Reg 17,28–32 as well.

The silence over the bulls in I–II Reg suggests that they are a latecomer in the composition. This would explain why even the later nomistic authors, who attack idols, Baal, the Ashera, altars, etc., ignore the bulls. This would place the addition of the bulls to the very youngest editorial stages I–II Reg.

**Why Are Dan and Bethel not Mentioned More Often in I–II Reg**

The lack of references to the cultic places in Dan and Bethel in I–II Reg is a further argument for assuming that I Reg 12,28–30 is a very late addition. In addition to I Reg 12,28–30, Dan is mentioned only in I Reg 5,5 (4,25); 15,20 and II Reg 10,29. The first two passages are irrelevant for our question, as they only refer to the city of Dan without any mention of a cultic place there. II Reg 10,29 is a late gloss as we have seen.

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57 For example, Würthwein, Könige II, 398–400, assumes that these verses represent a Sondertradition.
Bethel is met more often than Dan, twenty times altogether in I–II Reg, but nine of the occurrences are in I Reg 12–13. Its altar plays a significant role in I Reg 13, but seems to be unrelated to the bulls. Bethel is also the setting of the Elijah-Elisha story of II Reg 2, but this passage does not refer to an illegitimate cult place. Rather than being illegitimate, Bethel is presented as an important center for prophets, which may imply a positive view towards its possible cultic center. It seems that the author of II Reg 2 was not aware of any condemnation of the cultic center at Bethel. Nothing in this chapter connects Bethel with Jeroboam or the events described in I Reg 12–13.

The remaining references to Bethel are in II Reg 10,29; 17,28; 23,15–19. Of these passages, II Reg 10,29 has already been discussed and 17,28 and 23,15–19 are clearly dependent on I Reg 12,26–13,34, as we have already seen. II Reg 23,15–19 probably used a version of I Reg 12,26–13,34 that contained the events at the altar in Bethel, but which may not have contained the bulls.

The idea in II Reg 23,4bβ that the ashes of the burned illegitimate cultic items should be brought to Bethel is peculiar, but probably dependent on 23,15–16, which describes the defilement of the altar. Verse 4bβ may have been motivated by the idea that these items should also be ultimately defiled. The connection between verses 4bβ and 15–16 is corroborated by the shared idea of burning the illegitimate objects and making them to ashes. In fact, without vv. 15–16, the bringing of ashes to Bethel in v. 4bβ makes little sense, because the verse itself does not give any reason why they should be brought to another town. In any case, v. 4bβ is probably a later gloss, because in v. 4ba the items are brought to the Kidron valley to be burned there. The idea that the items are first brought to a valley to be burned there and that the dust would then be collected and brought to Bethel is bizarre. The connection with Bethel was therefore very likely made in view of and after v. 15–16.

Bethel is mentioned in II Reg 17,28, but as we have seen, 17,28–32 was written in view of an early version of I Reg 12–13 that only referred to the high places and their priests. The importance of the reference to Bethel in II Reg 17,28 is that the connection between this town and Jeroboam may have initially been made here. The author of II Reg 17,28–32 was aware of an early version of I Reg 12,26–13,34, according to which Jeroboam built all high places. Bethel being one of the most important cultic centers of the country and also close to Jerusalem, the author of II Reg 17,28–32 gave his view on the origins of what he regarded as an illegitimate priesthood especially in Bethel. Because according to I Reg 12–13 all high places of the North and their priesthoods were illegitimate, it was natural to connect Jeroboam with Bethel. A later editor, behind I Reg 12,33–13,3 and II Reg 23,15–16 took up
this connection and created the prophecy to defile the high place and its altar in Bethel.

The notably low number of references to Dan and Bethel affirm the conclusion that the bulls are a much later addition to I Reg 12–13. As expected, Dan, which in I Reg 12,26–33 is mentioned only in vv. 28–30 in connection with the bulls, does not play any cultic role in I–II Reg. The only reference to Dan in this respect is a late gloss in II Reg 10,29. Bethel is more important in I–II Reg, which would also be expected on the basis of the assumption that the altar episode at Bethel was an older addition to I Reg 12–13 than the addition of the bulls. However, the number of these passages is also very limited and corresponds well with the assumed literary history of I Reg 12–13. Outside I Reg 12,28–30 and II Reg 10,29, Bethel is never connected with the bulls. The connection with the altar is made only in I Reg 13 and II Reg 23,15–19. Bethel, but not the altar, is mentioned in II Reg 17,28–32, which may indicate that the connection between Bethel and Jeroboam’s sin was made in this passage and that a later author created a story where the defilement of its altar was described.

If one assumes that the bulls were part of Jeroboam’s original sin, one not only has to deal with the lack of references to the bulls in the rest of the composition, but also give an explanation for why Dan and Bethel are also ignored, although on the basis of I Reg 12,28–30 one would expect them to be one of the most central targets of Deuteronomistic criticism. The evidence is clearly against the assumption that Jeroboam’s original sin referred to the construction of golden bulls at Bethel and Dan.

Exodus 32 and I Reg 12,26–33

Ex 32 and I Reg 12,26–33 are closely related and literarily dependent. Although it is probable that these passages have influenced each other, most scholars assume Ex 32 to be generally younger than I Reg 12. The original idea of making a bull or bulls would derive from the latter passage. However, the conclusion that the bulls are late in I Reg 12 has an impact on this discussion because it has been assumed that I Reg 12, with the bulls, is a very early text in the development of the Hebrew Bible. At the same time, the late features of Ex 32 have been noted. With these basic assumptions, most scholars have regarded I Reg 12 as the older text. If the bulls are indeed a latecomer to I Reg 12, the relationship between these passages should be reevaluated.

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Another argument for the priority of I Reg 12 has been the plural reference to the bull in Ex 32, although only one bull is made. It has often been assumed that the plural derives from I Reg 12. However, the plural in Ex 32 is evidently intentional, because exactly where Ex 32 and I Reg 12,26–33 contain a parallel sentence, Ex 32,4 uses the plural instead of the singular of I Reg 12,28 (телеміа телемі): If one uses the plural as an argument for the priority of I Reg 12,28, one would have to explain the intentional change of the singular to the plural. That the plural is intentional in Ex 32 is also suggested by the people’s request for Aaron to make gods in v. 1: "тателеміа телемі арлім телемі". It is probable that we are dealing with an intentional request to make gods—a violation of the first commandment—and when Aaron makes a molten image (массех) in the form of a bull—a violation of the second commandment—the people say that these are the gods. Although the meaning of the plural is debatable—one should not exclude some humor on the part of the author—without seriously underestimating the ancient authors, it is very difficult to avoid the conclusion that the plural in Ex 32,1.4 is intentional.

One should further note that the idea of Yahweh, or in this context god(s), leading Israel out of Egypt has a natural context in Exodus but is isolated in I Reg 12 and relatively rare in the whole of I–II Reg as well. With the verb телемі the idea is met only in I Reg 12,28 in these books. With the verb ‘тателемі the idea is also rare, appearing only six times. Moreover, the function of the statement in 12,28 is puzzling. Why is it important for the author to make Jeroboam say that these are the gods that brought Israel out of Egypt? In Ex 32,4 the idea is motivated by the people’s notion in v. 1 that Moses, who led them out of Egypt, is not coming back from the mountain and therefore they need someone else to lead them. The construction of the bull is a substitute for Moses and his God, Yahweh. The narrative setting of Ex 32 is Israel’s flight from Egypt, described some chapters earlier. In contrast, in I Reg 12 the idea of Yahweh’s leading Israel out of Egypt is isolated, which is a further argument for assuming that the origin of the phrase телеміа телемі is in Ex 32, from whence it was adopted to I Reg 12.

Consequently, the original idea of making a golden bull may have been taken from Ex 32, where it is described as the ultimate fall from Yahweh. In I Reg 12,28–30 the making of the two golden bulls by Jeroboam was made the ultimate sin, a departure from the first two commandments of the Decalogue. That the initial idea may have been taken

59 In books from Joshua to 2 Kings телеміа телемі is met only in Jos 24,17, Jud 19,30 and I Sam 12,6.
60 Other than 12,28, with the verb ‘тателемі the idea is met only in I Reg 6,1; 8,9,21; 9,9 and II Reg 17,7,36.
from Ex 32 does not exclude the possibility that I Reg 12,28–30 later also influenced Ex 32 in some other details.

Conclusions – The Development of I Reg 12,26–33

The main reasons why Jeroboam’s bulls should be regarded as a late addition to I Reg 12 can be summarized as follows: Firstly, the bulls are generally ignored by the later authors in I–II Reg, even though Jeroboam’s sin is constantly referred to in these books and it is regarded as the main reason for the destruction of Israel. Secondly, the bulls are an isolated phenomenon in I–II Reg, whereas the high places are a central target of criticism. It is evident that the high places are integral to these books and one of their main themes, whereas the connection of the bulls to the rest of I–II Reg has been a puzzling question. Thirdly, the immediate context of I Reg 12 becomes clearer without the bulls. When we acknowledge that the bulls were one of the latest additions to the passage, the thematic tensions between the bulls and the rest of the passage become understandable. The older text was interested in the sacrifices and the high places where the sacrifices took place, whereas the addition of the bulls developed the text in another direction. Fourthly, passages that are directly dependent on I Reg 12–13 imply a dependence on a version where the high places still had a prominent position. After the addition of the bulls, the high places were marginalized. Fifthly, technical and other literary critical considerations in vv. 27–31 suggest that vv. 28aβ–30 were added later.

If one, in spite of these considerations, assumes that the bulls are part of the oldest text, one would have to explain the evident problems. So far scholarship has managed to ignore these problems because it has been an axiomatic assumption that the bulls form the core around which the rest of the passage was accumulated. That the bulls could be an addition has not been considered, and therefore the passage has created considerable differences of opinion starting from the meaning of the bulls.

The analysis of I Reg 12,26–33 provides the following picture of the text’s development. After a building report in v. 25, the original text portrayed Jeroboam’s problem. The king was concerned that the Israelites would continue to go to Jerusalem to sacrifice, which eventually would lead them to a return to Rehabeam, the king of Judah. As a measure to avoid this, Jeroboam founded local temples and appointed priests for them. This was Jeroboam’s sin and corresponds well with the evaluation of the Judean kings, who are constantly judged on the basis of the high places. It is also well in accordance with Deut 12, according to which there should be only one place of sacrifice. Temples in different parts of the country would manifestly challenge the centralization of the
Juha Pakkala

cult. Jeroboam’s sin was more severe than that of the Judean kings, because it was a fundamental and systematic break with Yahweh’s temple in Jerusalem. The Judean kings and people were criticized for sacrificing at the high places, but they also continued to sacrifice in Jerusalem, which evidently lessened the sin. That Jeroboam also constructed temples on the high places made the sin even more severe, because they imply an established religious institution that challenged the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem. There is an evident contrast between the and the .

The basic text of the passage can be found in I Reg 12,26–27acb (without ), 28aa, 31a; 13,33b (without ), 34a. This short account derives from the history writer because otherwise the constant condemnation of Israel on the basis of Jeroboam’s sin would be incomprehensible. There is no indication that the history writer used any sources for these verses. They contain only ideas that are perfectly in line with his composition in I–II Reg. Historically speaking the idea that all local temples in Israel were founded by Jeroboam is absurd. The author wanted to give the impression that prior to this evil king all Israelites came to Jerusalem to sacrifice and that he led them astray by constructing all the temples of the high places throughout Israel. By suggesting that Jeroboam also appointed all the priests in these temples, the author wanted to undermine their authority. The implication is that only the temple in Jerusalem is a legitimate place of sacrifice and that only its line of priests is legitimate.

The originally relatively short account of Jeroboam’s sin was later expanded in v. 31b by an editor who wanted to emphasize that the priests whom Jeroboam appointed were not even Levites. Similar Levitical additions have been found in other parts of the Hebrew Bible as well. The intention of this addition was to further undermine the status of all temples and cult sites outside Jerusalem. The changed perspective from the explicitly -priests to all priests implies that the editor had a different perspective from the author of the basic text.

A further editor added a legend about Jeroboam sacrificing at Bethel. The origin of this story, which prophesies the desecration of the high place is unclear, but it is evidently connected with the corresponding addition in II Reg 23,15–16, where the desecration is carried out by Josiah. These additions attempt to undermine the importance of Bethel. The historical background is a situation where Bethel had begun to replace Yahweh’s temple in Jerusalem as Judah’s main cultic site. It is evident that Bethel had been an important cultic center in the central hill

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61 Many scholars assume that the story has an independent history that is based on a local tradition at Bethel. Thus e.g., Jones, Kings, 261.
Jeroboam without Bulls

Jeroboam without Bulls was a significant figure in the history of ancient Israel. After the destruction of Jerusalem, Jeroboam expanded his influence in the northern kingdom, and the population of Judah shifted to Benjamin. This shift led to a new population center at Mizpah, which was close to Bethel. The technical connection between Jeroboam and Bethel might have been established in II Kings 17:28–32, as noted above.

Two short additions were made to undermine the New Year’s Feast celebrated in the North on the 15th of the eighth month. According to the first addition in v. 32a, Jeroboam imitated a feast celebrated in Judah on the same day. In another addition in v. 33a, the author claims that Jeroboam invented the feast as a New Moon festival and that the feast was made in honor of the Israelites. Although these additions may derive from two different pens, both attempted to undermine the festival celebrated in the North.

The idea that Jeroboam made golden bulls and set them in Dan and Bethel in vv. 28–30 was one of the latest additions to the passage. It was influenced by the older text according to which Jeroboam was the initiator of various evils. In the history writer’s text, the incentive to ascribe other sins to him was provided. Gradually, the short account about the origin of the high places became a list of various evils introduced by Jeroboam. A similar literary development can be seen in many other parts of the Hebrew Bible. With further additions to the text, the good kings, such as Hezekiah or Josiah, became increasingly idealized, whereas the evil kings, such as Ahab and Zedekiah, became more evil. In Jeroboam’s case, the violator of the centralization law in Deuteronomy 12 in the end became the first king to break the first two commandments. The author was dependent on the Second Commandment as well as on the younger prohibitions against making cultic images (Exodus 34:11 or possibly also Leviticus 19:4). In other words, whereas in the older text Jeroboam wanted to replace Jerusalem as the place of sacrifice, with the addition of the bulls, the king was made responsible for making idols that would replace Yahweh of Jerusalem. There is a clear shift in concern between the oldest text and the bulls. The same kind of development can be seen in many other texts, especially in those with nomistic and other late additions, such as II Kings 17 and 23. The older text criticized the kings for the people sacrificing in a wrong place, whereas the

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62 See Genesis 28:18–22; 35:1–3; Amos 7:3 (מְקוֹדֶשׁ מֶלֶךְ אֵל אֲרוֹם מֶלֶךְ מִסָכָה).

63 For example, in the Alexandrian tradition of the LXX in Jeremiah, Zedekiah is gradually made one of the most evil kings. See H.-J. Stipp, Zedekiah in the Book of Jeremiah: On the Formation of a Biblical Character, CBQ 58 (1996), 632–38.

64 For the development of the prohibition against making images, see Köckert, Entwicklung, 272–290.
later additions suggested that the main sins were the other gods and the idols. The later editors often marginalized the original ideal of the history writer. I Reg 12–13 is not an exception.

Jeroboam’s bulls have been an isolated and puzzling theme. The amount of discussion on their meaning indicates how difficult it has been for scholars to comprehend what was meant. However, there has been surprisingly little discussion on their relationship to the rest of I–II Reg. When the bulls are regarded as a late addition, dependent on Ex 32 and on the attack on other gods and idols, their relationship to the rest of I Reg 12–13 becomes more understandable and many of the problems concerning the passage melt away.

When the bulls are regarded as a late addition, the history writer’s motives in the whole of I–II Reg also become clearer. In the cultic sense, he is primarily interested in the location of sacrifice, as is suggested by his constant criticism of the high places. The bulls have only confused this picture, and it has not been possible to see clearly that the history writer is not interested in the idols or other gods. In fact, many scholars have shown that the other gods and idols are a late addition throughout I–II Reg, but Jeroboam’s bulls have remained as an isolated problem. The problem has usually been solved by assuming – against evidence to the contrary – that something other than criticism of idols was meant. The reconstruction presented here would also emphasize the connection between the history writer’s theology and the cult centralization of Deut 12. In I–II Reg as well as in Deut 12, the location of sacrifice would be a theme of central importance, disturbed by later editors.

With the conclusion that Jeroboam’s bulls are one of the latest additions to I Reg 12,26–33, there is very little reason to try to speculate about a possible bull cult at Bethel or Dan during the monarchy, or to try to find a golden bull in the archaeological excavations at Beitin or Tel Dan. The whole idea is more probably a late literary construct that aimed to increase Jeroboam’s sin and thus to ridicule his standing as a founder of a dynasty in Israel. Of course, this does not exclude the possibility that there was a bull cult in Bethel, but this remains rather speculative. At most, one could suggest that there was a bull cult in a period when the bulls were added to I Reg 12. On the other hand, it is more probable that the bulls were inspired by Aaron’s bull in Ex 32 and that the background of the addition is the general criticism of idols and other gods. This passage, once again, emphasizes the importance of understanding the history of the text before using the Hebrew Bible as a historical source.
Jeroboam without Bulls

According to the Book of Kings, Israel's gravest transgression was Jeroboam's sin (I Reg 12,26–33). Contrary to the starting point in previous research, it is probable that the bulls are a late addition to the passage. Jeroboam was connected with bulls only at a very late stage in the development of these books. Prior to their addition, Jeroboam's sin only referred to the construction of the temples on the high places. When the bulls are regarded as an addition, the history writer's motives in I–II Reg become clearer. In the cultic sense, he is primarily interested in the location of sacrifice. There is also little reason to try to speculate about a possible bull cult at Bethel or Dan. The whole idea may be a late literary construct that aimed to increase Jeroboam's sin and to ridicule his standing as a founder of a dynasty in Israel.

Selon le livre des Rois, la plus grave des transgressions d'Israël fut le péché de Jéroboam (I Reg 12,26–33). Contrairement aux présupposés de la recherche actuelle, il est cependant vraisemblable que la mention des »taureaux« soit une adjonction tardive à ce passage; ce n'est en effet que dans un stade très avancé de l’évolution du livre des Rois que Jéroboam fut mis en relation avec les représentations des »taureaux«. Avant ces adjonctions, le péché de Jéroboam ne concernait que la construction de sanctuaires des hauteurs. Si l’on considère les »taureaux« comme une adjonction, les motivations de l'historiographe de I–II Reg deviennent plus évidentes: il est d’abord intéressé à la localisation des sacrifices, au sens cultuel du terme. Il est ainsi peu productif de s’interroger sur un éventuel culte du taureau à Bethel et à Dan. Toute cette représentation consiste sans doute en une construction littéraire tardive, qui visait à accroître le péché de Jéroboam et à rendre ainsi sa position de fondateur d’une dynastie en Israel ridicule.