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Hezekiah and the Centralization of Worship (2 Kgs 18:4.22)

Abstract: Did Hezekiah carry out religious reforms aimed at centralizing worship in Jerusalem? It is difficult to give an unequivocal answer to this question. The description of reforms is laconic and stereotypical (2 Kgs 18:4.22). The historical circumstances, however, seem to favor its recognition as historical. Also archaeological research, although not confirming unequivocally, does not allow to deny such a possibility either, even if many researchers believe that there was no massive influx of migrants from the north and that the population growth towards the end of 8th c. BCE was a natural demographic process. Texts devoted to the monarchy (1–2 Sam; 1–2 Kgs) and to the centralization of worship (Deut 12) fit better with the situation at the end of the 7th c. BCE (time of Josiah), both when we look at them from the point of view of literary criticism and from the perspective of political and social situation. However, the figure of Hezekiah could be considered by the authors of the 7th c. BCE as a precursor of the reforms of Josiah's time due to the "historical" information about his destruction of the serpent cult of Nehushtan.

Keywords: Hezekiah, centralization of worship, historicity, Jerusalem

It is quite commonly believed that the centralization of worship in Jerusalem is mainly the idea of a Deuteronomic school implemented by Judean King Josiah in the second half of the 7th century BCE. However, researchers have long pointed out that the scope of the alleged reform of Josiah was not as broad as it might have seemed¹ (2 Kgs 23), and the program text itself on this issue (Deut 12) is not homogeneous from the literary and theological point of view. Above

¹ For a summary of the discussion on this topic, see Grabbe, *Ancient Israel*, 206–207.

all, it does not point to Jerusalem as the place chosen by God for such centralized worship. The latter location of such a cult can only be inferred from reading the Deuteronomic History (hereinafter DH). On the other hand, the same DH mentions Hezekiah (725–697 BCE) as the last of the precursors of Josiah’s “great reform.” Although the reforms attributed to this last ruler (2 Kgs 18:4.22) are described concisely and schematically, and archeology does not provide sufficient material to confirm the historicity of this mention,² many researchers believe that it was the events of Hezekiah’s time that could have been a good contribution to taking the idea of the centralization of worship in Jerusalem, and in the time of Josiah (639–609 BCE) this concept was only taken up and implemented in a more radical way.³ We want to take a closer look at the arguments invoked in support of these assumptions in the paper below.

1. Fall of the kingdom of Israel/Samaria and its consequences for Judea

The revival of Assyria’s power and the return of its aggressive imperialist policy towards its neighbors⁴ led to enormous changes in the political map of ancient Mesopotamia and later the Levant. Successive Assyrian rulers (Tiglath-Pileser III, Shalmaneser V, Sargon II)⁵ put an end to the existence of the Kingdom of Israel. It was only the fall of the stronger neighbor from the north that allowed – according to many contemporary Israeli historians – the weaker neighbor from the south – the kingdom of Judah to develop. Until then, it remained in the sphere of influence of a better developed and stronger economically, militarily and culturally “brotherly” nation. Soon enough the kingdom of Judah also fell into the sphere of the Assyrian interests. Their military operations led to the devastation of areas from Dan to Beersheba. For Jerusalem, however, a particular

² Frevel, *Geschichte*, 291.

³ On the centralization of worship and archaeological data related to the discussion on this subject, see *ibid.*, 288–293.

⁴ For more: Liverani, *Assyria*.

⁵ Roux, *Mezopotamia*, 257–265.

threat was at first the annexation of strategic areas, such as the Shepherd Heights (cf. 2 Kgs 18:13–14a), in reaction to the rebellion of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:7–8), and then the Assyrian invasion of 701 BCE.⁶ The negotiations conducted at the gates of Jerusalem ultimately ended “successfully,” but Hezekiah had to consider himself a vassal of the great empire and pay large contributions (2 Kgs 18:14b–16). Paradoxically, these events could have had a greater impact on the tendency to centralize the cult than the exhortations of prophets, priests or royal power, believes Elizabeth Bloch-Smith.⁷ The situation forced the Judean court to make efforts to accumulate resources in the capital in order to meet the financial demands of the Assyrians, and at the same time to restore the temple stripped with tributes (cf. 2 Kgs 18:16). The capital itself survived the Assyrian invasion, which allowed the creation of an aura of a city specially protected by YHWH around it and could help Hezekiah in the aforementioned centralization of worship.⁸

The fall of the neighbor from the north could have caused another effect – the influx of refugees to the vicinity of Jerusalem in the years 732–(722)–701 BCE. This resulted in significant demographic changes and, as a consequence, some changes in the social structure of these areas. The doubling of the population and its mixing, postulated on the basis of archaeological data, could in fact trigger the need to create a “community myth.” This moment, according to some scholars,⁹ was in fact the first historical occasion to create not so much a pan-Israeli state, but at least a related community “identity.” To achieve this, Hezekiah had to respond to the new demographic and social situation in two ways.¹⁰ First to strengthen the central government, then to liquidate local shrines, centralizing at the same time all worship in Jerusalem. This was primarily to distract “new citizens” of Judah from visiting a spiritual and geographically close sanctuary at Bethel, and thus the areas of their recent homeland.

⁶ Ibid., 267.

⁷ Bloch-Smith, “Assyrian,” 35.

⁸ Bloch-Smith, “Assyrian,” 41.

⁹ Silberman, “Temple and Dynasty,” 259–285.

¹⁰ Ibid., 259.

Much of the history of David may have been written during this period. It combined the traditions of the North and the South to form a single, pan-Israel narrative of a unified monarchy at the dawn of Israel and Judah.

Historians, however, have no doubts today that ethnic states such as Israel, Moab, and Ammon were not formed until the ninth century BCE at the earliest.¹¹ The question of how Judah's independence has been the subject of lively debate in recent years, especially among historians from Israel.¹² It shows that for almost the entire ninth and eighth centuries BCE, Judah was in fact operating in the shadow of its stronger neighbor to the north, and perhaps was even a vassal state by him.¹³ Even in the middle of the eighth century BCE, this kingdom of Israel was at its peak in economic, territorial and diplomatic development.¹⁴ This is evident, for instance, in the preaching of the prophets of this period (Amos, Hosea), and even in the fable of Jehoash king of Israel (cf. 2 Kgs 14:9–10).¹⁵ This time was to be ended by a series of Assyrian invasions (735–722 BCE).¹⁶

Regarding the formation of the kingdom of Judah, historians point to three fundamental phases in the development of the situation in the later territories: Iron I (mid-twelfth) and then late tenth century BCE, and Iron IIA (from about 900 BCE). According to Nadav Na'aman,¹⁷ the situation did not change significantly during this period since the late Bronze Age. Jerusalem was then still a small settlement occupying an area of about two hectares on the crest of a hill with the so-called city of David in the center. The suggestion to extend this location to

¹¹ For more see: Lemański, *Narodziny Izraela*, 28–48.

¹² Jameson-Drake, *Scribes and Schools*; Finkelstein, “The State Formation,” 35–52; *ibid.*, “The Rise of Jerusalem,” 105–115; Bunimovitz – Lederman, “The Iron Age Fortifications,” 121–147; Herzog, “Redefining the Center,” 209–244.

¹³ Frevel, *Geschichte*, 46.

¹⁴ This is evidenced by the so-called Samaria ostraca (cf. Renz – Röllig, *Handbuch*, 79–144) and archaeological research (e.g., horse breeding in Megiddo; cf. Cantrel – Finkelstein, “A Kingdom,” 643–665). Then also archaeological data from Hazor, Tel Rehov, Samaria, Ta’anah.

¹⁵ See: Lemański, “Bajka,” 244–249.

¹⁶ *The Last Days*.

¹⁷ Na’aman, “The Contribution,” 17–27.

the area of the later temple¹⁸ was not accepted, as the southern and western slopes was thoroughly researched and no significant artifacts from that period were found on them.¹⁹ The mountainous areas south of Jerusalem were also not very densely populated. Archaeologists indicate about 20 smaller or larger towns.²⁰ The late Iron IIA period, based on research carried out in Lachish (the so-called level IV) and other contemporary cities of this fortress (Bet Shemesh, Beersheba, Arad), confirm the significant development of pottery and a number of other artifacts indicating the gradual formation of state structures. This is evidenced by the visible development of fortifications in the Beersheba valley and the construction of many other public buildings. The full development of the state system is noticeable in the so-called level III in Lachish (late eighth century BCE), where there are elements of advanced bureaucracy, hierarchical settlement, monumental public buildings and the production of the so-called secondary consumer goods.

Such data and the three-phase analysis of the formation of the kingdom of Judah was focused on the most dynamic periods of development, clearly visible to archeology. However, these data must be linked to the general background and geopolitical situation in the entire region of the Levant at the end of the eighth century BCE and, above all, with the demographic changes that took place at that time. Taking all this into account, the period between the second and the third phase becomes important in the discussion.²¹ By then, Jerusalem already encompassed the entire City of David, including the eastern slope.²² The excavations, however, are not older than the second half of the eighth century BCE, and the city itself may not even be fortified at that time.²³ The stepped walls on the eastern slope (now in the center of the Jewish quarter in the old town), formerly

¹⁸ Knauf, "Jerusalem," 75–90.

¹⁹ Silberman, "Temple," 260.

²⁰ Ofer, "All the Hill Country," 92–121; Finkelstein, "The Rise."

²¹ Silberman, "Temple," 261.

²² Shiloh, *Excavation*, 3.

²³ Ussishkin, "Salomon's Jerusalem," 103–115.

considered part of the fortifications from the times of Solomon,²⁴ are now classified more often as remains from the eighth century BCE. The ceramics from this place, at any rate, date from the turn of the ninth and the eighth century BCE.²⁵

The entire territory of Judea south of Jerusalem in the eighth century BCE was marked by a lack of urban centers and sparsely populated. In the border area, mention should be made of Beersheba, Arad and probably Tel Malhat.²⁶ And in Shephelah, also of Lachish and Beth Shemesh. This does not change the fact that the demographic revolution in these areas took place only in the late second half of the eighth century BCE. Over the last few decades, Jerusalem's population then increased from 1.000 to 10.000, and the buildings from 6 to 60 hectares.²⁷ A similar increase occurred at this time also in Lachish (between layers IV and III). The number of settlements south of Jerusalem also increased significantly (from 34 to 122: Iron IIA late eighth century BCE). In the late eighth century BCE, too in Shephelah, the number of settlements increased from 21 to 276.²⁸ At the end of Iron IIB, the number of seals also increased significantly, which indicates the development of the administration. Therefore, Judah's development in the final years of the eighth century was undeniable.²⁹

This sudden increase in population and settlements was the result of the peaceful demographic processes associated with, as is often believed today, the emigration of some of the inhabitants of the kingdom of Israel to the south. It is hard to imagine that these processes took place without reason, especially since the dry, semi-arid climate in the south could never compete with the fertile areas in the north.³⁰ Undoubtedly, the migratory movements must have resulted from the Assyrian invasion and the resulting fall of the

²⁴ As, among others, Mazar, "Iron Age Chronology," 164; Cahill, "Jerusalem," 13–80.

²⁵ Steiner, "The Evidence," 347–364.

²⁶ Beit-Arieh, "The Excavation," 30–39; Beit-Arieh – Freud, *Tel Malhata*.

²⁷ Silberman, "Temple," 265; C. Frevel, *Geschichte*, 280–284.

²⁸ Ofer, "All the Hill Country," 104–105; Berlejung, "Geschichte," 113–117.

²⁹ Frevel, *Geschichte*, 268.

³⁰ Silberman, "Temple," 265.

kingdom of Israel. On the one hand, the Assyrians carried out mass deportations, and on the other one, some of the inhabitants fled south for fear of them. In Judea a new reality arose that changed the demographic and political situation in that country. It was a challenge for the leadership class and created the need to bind together this now diversified Israeli-Judean community into a single nation. This challenge, in turn, required the creation of a new historical narrative that would justify such a new identity. It was not only an ideological challenge. Despite the ethnic and cultural closeness of the two communities, there were also serious religious differences and various monarchical traditions between them. Building such a new identity around the worship of YHWH in Jerusalem and the awareness of the national community around the idea of a united monarchy under the rule of the “house of David” would undoubtedly be a good contribution to the creation of such national foundations uniting diverse ethnic components. However, is such an interpretation of archaeological data correct and are the conclusions drawn from it justified? We will try to look at this in the following parts of this paper.

2. Hezekiah and his reforms

Until recently, the subject of Hezekiah’s potential religious reforms has been one of the most hotly debated issues. Some researchers, despite the laconic and stereotypical information in 2 Kgs 18:3–4.22, believed that such reforms had actually taken place.³¹ Others, in turn, argued that they were impossible and the information about them was purely ideological, related to the theological-literary concept contained in DH.³² The fact is that simply analyzing the biblical text does not provide sufficient arguments for or against such reforms. On the one hand, their laconic description is standard and reflects

³¹ Weinfeld, “Cult Centralization,” 202–212; McKay, *Religion*, 15–17; Haran, *Temple*, 132–142; Halpern, “Jerusalem,” 11–107; Rainey, “Hezekiah’s Reform,” 335–354; Albert, *A History*, 180–186; Swanson, “A Reassessment,” 460–469; Finkelstein – Silberman, “Temple and Dynasty,” 259–285; Edelman, “Hezekiah’s Alleged Cultic Centralization,” 395–434.

³² Handy, “Hezekiah’s Unlikely Reform,” 111–115; Na’aman, “The Debated Historicity,” 179–195; Fried, “The High Places,” 1–29.

Deuteronomic idioms (cf. Deut 7:5; 12:3 and 2 Kgs 18:4a), and on the other hand, the information about the destruction of Nehushtan (2 Kgs 18:4b) gives the impression of a reference to real events, which took place in Jerusalem at the time of Hezekiah.³³ Nevertheless, 2 Kgs 18–20 itself is considered a late composition today, even from the Babylonian invasion period or later, and as such describes the post-586 situation more than it does in 701 BCE.³⁴ So did Josiah only want to revive what could not be brought into Judah in Hezekiah's day, as suggested by Kristin Swanson, quoted earlier?

Important, although not necessarily conclusive, arguments in this matter can only be provided by archaeology, especially research carried out in places such as Beersheba, Arad, Lachish or, more broadly, the Shephelah hills.³⁵ Nevertheless, the interpretation of archaeological data – many researchers note – also does not allow any unambiguous answer to the question of the historicity of Hezekiah's reforms, and – as Christian Frevel³⁶ writes – “It is impossible to prove archaeologically some Hezekiah's program reform of the cult, but it is also difficult to overthrow it.” The process of destroying local sanctuaries, as the author notes,³⁷ but was not carried out in a short time. It was rather gradual, beginning before Hezekiah could initiate his reforms, and ended long after him (7th century BCE). In fact, it led to the centralization of worship, but at the same time it is difficult to unambiguously connect it with Hezekiah himself, and even more so with any program reform that this ruler carried out. Epigraphy and iconography from the turn of the eighth/seventh century BCE indicate monolatric³⁸ tendencies, but the religiosity of that time also

³³ Lemański, “Mojzesz i Nehusztan,” 18–21. For more on the serpent worship, see also Münnich, “The Cult,” 39–56 and interesting suggestions in Amzallag, “The Serpent,” 207–236.

³⁴ It is assessed in such a way by Grabbe, *Ancient Israel*, 197. See also: Dietrich, “Die Königsbücher,” 281.

³⁵ For a discussion on the interpretation of data obtained from research conducted in these places, see, among others, Silberman, “Temple,” 270–275.

³⁶ *Geschichte*, 291.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 293.

³⁸ In this context, it is worth paying attention to the so-called the patron deity. See Noll, *Canaan*.

has a family and regional dimension, so it is difficult to talk about some far-reaching nationalization of the cult and its limitation to JHWH only.

The widely discussed numerous artifacts with the figure of a woman (goddess or her worshiper),³⁹ massively present until the end of the seventh century BCE, are found mostly in the territory of Judah, and a few only in the north.⁴⁰ We are not sure if they should be associated with the cult of Asherah. However, as it can be concluded not only from the biblical texts (1 Kgs 15:13; 2 Kgs 18:4; 23:6–7; Jer 44:15–19), but also from the inscription from Kuntillet Ajrud,⁴¹ the cult of this goddess was present in the area of Judah almost until the end of the Judean monarchy. It is doubtful that there will also be a kind of “cult Assyrianization”.⁴² For we have no evidence that the Assyrians forced the cult of their gods on vassalized countries. The “solarization,” or more broadly “astralization” of the worship in Jerusalem, was at least local in nature and a large number of researchers believe that it is more about Egyptian than Assyrian influences.⁴³ Hence, Hezekiah’s alleged religious reform, if any, was not very radical and had not yet made YHWH the only God in Judah, nor did Jerusalem His only place of worship.

As the Assyrian chronicler notes, in 701 the ruler of Assyria captured 46 cities and settlements of Judah and locked Hezekiah in Jerusalem “like a bird in a cage”.⁴⁴ This “capture” could also result in the destruction of these places. For this reason, the “destruction” of the altar at Beersheba or the miniature sanctuary at Arad (similar conclusions regarding Tel Ḥalif or Lachish⁴⁵), ascribed by some scholars to the reform of Hezekiah, may have been linked to the war effort of Sennacherib in 701 BCE. The relief from Nineveh, depicting Assyrian soldiers carrying the Lachish booty and religious artifacts

³⁹ See discussion in Lemański, *Narodziny*, 272–275. Later also Kletter, *The Judean Pillar Figurines*; Nakhai, “Gender,” 508–518.

⁴⁰ Frevel, *Geschichte*, 289.

⁴¹ Lemański, *Narodziny*, 275–276.

⁴² Frevel, *Geschichte*, 273–274: “Assyrisierung des Kultes.”

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁴⁴ *ANET*, 287–288.

⁴⁵ Borowski, “Hezekiah’s Reforms,” 153.

from the destroyed home sanctuary in Tel Halif (near Beersheba),⁴⁶ is particularly telling. Together, this shows that the variety of forms and places of worship in Judah lasted until at least the end of the eighth century BCE.

Another problem is the dating of Hezekiah's alleged reforms. The Deuteronomist and chronicler agree that Hezekiah carried out a reform of worship at the beginning of his reign (cf. 2 Kgs 18:4; 2 Chr 29:3) and completed it before Sennacherib's military intervention (705–681 BCE) (2 Chr 32:1). The difficulty is that we do not know exactly when Hezekiah's reign began. According to the first biblical writer, this happened in the third year of Hosea, king of Samaria, four years before the fall of Samaria in 722 BCE (2 Kgs 18:1.9). Hence, Hezekiah began to reign in 726 BCE (this is called "high chronology"). Some researchers, however, prefer the year 715 BCE, which, together with the data on the 29 years of reign (2 Kgs 18:2) and 14 years before the invasion of Sennacherib, makes it possible to think about other than 701 BCE. In DH, this event is associated with information about the war waged against the Assyrians by the Kushite ruler of Egypt – Tirhak (2 Kgs 19:9; vel Taharka⁴⁷). However, this ruler ruled in 690–664 BCE. If this information is not a mere anachronism, as is usually believed,⁴⁸ then the so-called "lower chronology," Sennacherib's second voyage could have taken place in 688 BCE, and it was then, and not in 701 BCE, that Hezekiah's final surrender as described by the Deuteronomist took place (2 Kgs 18:13–16). This is called the theory of two expeditions from 1858 (George Rawlinson), which was undertaken by William Foxwell Albright and several other researchers.⁴⁹ Therefore, the events of 701 BCE could be seen as the miraculous saving of the city by YHWH

⁴⁶ Seger, "Halif, Tel," 553–559, esp. 558.

⁴⁷ Entry "Taharka," *Leksykon faraonów*, 324–326.

⁴⁸ E.g., Werlitz, *Die Bücher der Könige*, 290; Sweeney, *1&2 Kings*, 417. C. Frevel (*Geschichte*, 295) admits the possibility that in the context of the anti-Assyrian coalition of Egypt with the smaller states of the Levant, an expedition could have taken place by the Egyptian army led by the then young prince, the future ruler of Egypt.

⁴⁹ Albright, "New Light," 8–9. See also Bright, *Historia Izraela*, 295–296.

(cf. 2 Kgs 18:17–19:37; 2 Chr 32:1–23), which gave an additional argument for the centralization of His worship here.

3. Bible texts

As one could notice, the Bible’s account of Hezekiah’s reforms in DH is rather laconic and standard. Based on it, it is difficult to conclude whether the reforms really took place, or whether Hezekiah was included among the “precursors” of the great reformer of the cult, the “second David” – which the Deuteronomist considered King Josiah to be. Other Deuteronomist texts on the monarchy may help to better understand this doubt. It is necessary to look at them first by referring to the texts on the united monarchy (the question of the origin of the idea itself), and then to the stories of the divided monarchy. Finally, the programmatic text on the centralization of worship from Deut 12 itself also plays an important role in the discussion.

3.1. The Story of David and the United Monarchy

From the time of Leonhard Rost,⁵⁰ the passage 1 Sam 16–2 Sam 5 within the 1 Sam 16–2 Kgs 2 section was commonly called “the story of David’s accession to the throne,” and the subsequent chapters “court history” or “history of succession to the throne” (2 Sam 9–20 + 1 Kgs 1–2).⁵¹ Although the assumptions of this researcher were discussed and sometimes slightly modified (mainly as to the scope of the story, e.g., beginning in 1 Sam 15 and ending in 2 Sam 7–8), the same definition of the central part of 1–2 Sam remained valid. Critical literary studies show that both stories use more than two sources. In both, on the one hand, the tradition of the “first dynasty” of Saulids from the North (Benjaminites) is preserved, and in both there is also an image of David, which is not always positive.⁵² Visible is his initial cooperation with the Philistines, the alleged responsibility for the death of the king and people from his immediate vicinity (potential

⁵⁰ Rost, *Die Überlieferung*.

⁵¹ de Pury – Römer, *Die Sogenannte*.

⁵² Halpern, *David’s*; Dietrich, *Samuel*, 192–200.

successors!), as well as other competitors to the throne. At the same time, there is also a clear desire to soften this negative image.⁵³ It was long believed that these stories had their origins in traditions dating back to the 10th century BCE, and that was how this pro-Davidic narrative profile was translated.⁵⁴ Apologetic tendencies – as it was believed – were in the nature of a polemic with the negative image of this ruler rooted in the north. Today, the very idea of the so-called “Solomon’s enlightenment” (Leonhard Rost, Gerhard von Rad) or the tradition of a unified monarchy from the tenth century BCE have been challenged. The dominant belief is that both the story and the idea of a united monarchy arose much later. This does not mean that the 1–2 Sam description does not really contain some older memory elements dating back to the beginning of the monarchy. An example is the tradition of Gath, one of the most important Philistine political centers that lost its prestige and importance in the mid-ninth century BCE.⁵⁵ The historical realities of the ninth and not the tenth centuries also seem to reflect some passages in the story of David.⁵⁶ Some of them may even be later.⁵⁷ Writing activity in Jerusalem is first recorded in the late eighth century BCE, and its significant spread only in the seventh century BCE.⁵⁸ Thus, it was not in the tenth century, but in times much later that the conditions for writing down the traditions associated with the ruling dynasty were created. Previously, Jerusalem was also a rather small settlement, and Judea itself – as it was mentioned – a country largely dependent on the kingdom of Israel.⁵⁹

The apologetic aims of the story seem unreliable for another reason as well. What was the purpose of “defending” David’s good name in

⁵³ McKenzie, *Dawid*.

⁵⁴ McCarter, “The Apology,” 489–504; Halpern, *David’s*, 100–102.

⁵⁵ Maeir – Ehrlich, “Excavating Philistine Gath,” 22–31.

⁵⁶ Na’aman, “In Search,” 200–224; Sergi, “On Scribal Tradition,” 293.

⁵⁷ See e.g., Sergi, “The Composition,” 261–279; Adam, *Saul and David* = postmonarchic dating; Ska, “Does David,” 301–314.

⁵⁸ Schniedewind, *How the Bible*. The scale of this growth is visible in the information contained in the Book of Jeremiah, cf. Lemański, “*Niech przyjdzie*,” 123–124. Later also Sergi, “On Scribal Tradition,” 275–299.

⁵⁹ Ussishkin, “Salomon’s Jerusalem”; also the above-quoted Finkelstein, “The Rise of Jerusalem.”

later times, when we know that the geopolitical situation of the tenth century was different from what the authors of 1 Sam 16–1 Kgs 11 describe to us? In addition, it would be much easier to just eliminate negative elements from the story itself, as the author of the Book of Chronicles will do a few centuries later. The story, then, was written at a time when there was no need to practice any apology, and it was safe to accept that David was not an ideal, even though he had made great contributions to the creation of the “united” kingdom and increased the prestige of Jerusalem. The Deuteronomic school from the end of the seventh century BCE, although it made him a positive point of reference (the current ruler Josiah was presented as *David redivivus*), retained some of the negative traditions inherited from the second half of the eighth century, which in the face of the fall of the Kingdom of Israel no longer required any apologetic activity.⁶⁰

The Hebrew Bible presents Israel and Judah to us as two brotherly states and nations that grew out of the same ethnic and cultural background. This description is justified at first impression. In both countries the same principal God, YHWH,⁶¹ was worshiped, “the same memory” of the past was referenced, and both had a related language/dialect⁶² and the same type of script.⁶³ Nevertheless, it is no longer a secret today that these descriptions were not created according to the historical and chronicler regime known to us today, but had theological and propaganda purposes. Thus, they do not always coincide with the knowledge derived from archaeological data.⁶⁴ The geographic and political division of the Iron Age central mountain region of Canaan in the later history of Israel and Judah was not new. At first, it resulted naturally from different geographic and climatic conditions. As early as the Bronze Age, independent political centers can be observed in the north (Shechem) and in the south (Jerusalem,

⁶⁰ As Silberman, “Temple,” 277–278.

⁶¹ On the potential differences between the religions of Israel and Judah, see the discussion in: Uehlinger, “Distinctive or Diverse?,” 10–17.

⁶² Naveh, *The Early*, 76.78.

⁶³ Renz, *Schrift*.

⁶⁴ Finkelstein, “State Formation,” 48.

Hebron).⁶⁵ A substitute for the “united monarchy” – although not in the form described in 2 Sam 5–1 Kgs 11, could therefore actually exist, but – as Israel Finkelstein⁶⁶ puts it – it was rather an episode in the history of central *Hill country* and the division into two states better reflects the real history of this region later. On the other hand, historians also speak of a kind of domination/vassalization of the kingdom of Judah by the kingdom of Israel over a long period of time. So even assuming that this was the real historical state of affairs, building a new, shared pan-Israel identity in the post-fall period of the kingdom of Israel had a good foundation. It does not change the fact that at the starting point there were still two territorially and socio-politically separate states: Israel and Judah.⁶⁷ They developed in a slightly different environment and – at a certain stage – also in the context of a different history. Israel continued the lines of a heterogeneous population dating back to the Bronze Age, but strongly emphasized its own distinctiveness from its neighbors. The people of Judah strongly isolated themselves from their surroundings and created their own cultural features characteristic only of the Iron Age.⁶⁸ Israel undoubtedly flourished earlier (ninth century BCE) along with the states of Transjordan (Moab, Ammon) and the Aramaic Damascus. Judah did not develop with Edom until the end of the eighth century BCE.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, linking this fact with some mass influx of people from Israel is considered by some researchers⁷⁰ as a “modern myth.” They regard the growth of the population as a normal, gradual development of the Judean community, rather than a sudden and abrupt, as the followers of the aforementioned “myth”

⁶⁵ Finkelstein, “Sociopolitical Organization,” 119–131; Sergi, “The Formation,” 42–51; Lemański, *Narodziny Izraela*, 246–250.

⁶⁶ Finkelstein, “State Formation,” 48.

⁶⁷ Thompson, *Early History*, 412.

⁶⁸ Finkelstein, “State Formation,” 48. One of them was, for example, not eating pork, see: Lemański, “Zakaz,” 78–103.

⁶⁹ Finkelstein, “State Formation,” 48. Cf. also Kamlah, “Die Entstehung,” 28–33; Lemański, *Narodziny Izraela*, 28–37.

⁷⁰ Guillaume, “Jerusalem,” 195–211.

would like. Especially since the pottery from this period does not show any influences from the north.⁷¹

The problem is also that the social situation in Samaria after 722/1 BCE is not entirely clear. The information that the Assyrians deported the entire population of Samaria (2 Kgs 17:6.23–24) is rather unreliable. Documents from the time of Sargon II (722–705 BCE) put the number of 27,280 people,⁷² which would be about 10% of the total population of Samaria. These numbers are more reliable.⁷³ Other estimates suggest an even lower percentage of deportees. Thus, the demographic effects of the fall of the remnants of the kingdom of Israel were not so dramatic. In addition, Sargon, shortly after assuming the throne, had to engage for almost 10 years in the fight against the rebellious province in Babylonia (the revolt was caused by the Chaldean leader Marduk-apal-iddina of Bit-Jakin, the biblical Merodach-Baladan)⁷⁴. At that time, Karen Radner⁷⁵ writes, the Assyrian ruler had neither the capacity nor the inclination to carry out any deportations. The political situation in Judah between 722 and 701 BCE also did not inspire any vision of “great Israel.” But the situation was different in Josiah’s day, when the Assyrian empire was on the decline.

3.2. Divided monarchy

In DH, Hezekiah and Josiah deserve special mention. Both of them “did what was right in the eyes of YHWH, as their ancestor David did” (cf. 2 Kgs 18:3; 22:2; 2 Chr 29:2; 34:2). Josiah further deserved to be summarized: “There was no king like him before him who would turn to YHWH with all his heart, all his soul, and all his might according to the Law of Moses. And after him there was no more like him” (2 Kgs 23:25). However, the reforms of Hezekiah are mentioned very

⁷¹ Na’aman, “Dismissing the Myth,” 1–14; Na’aman, “The *lmlk*,” 111–125.

⁷² TUAT, I, 379; Weippert, *Historisches Textbuch*, 301–302, no. 151–152 (prism from Kalhu [Nimrud]; Prunkinschrift from Dur-Šaruken [Horsabad]).

⁷³ Frevel, *Geschichte*, 276–277.

⁷⁴ On these events, cf. Roux, *Mezopotamia*, 262–263; Joannes, *Historia Mezopotamii*, 83.

⁷⁵ Radner, “The ‘Lost Tribes,’” 101–123, esp. 108.

briefly in this story (2 Kgs 18:4.22; cf. Isa 36:7). The report on them is expanded only in 2 Chr 29–31, but we are not sure to what extent this is an invention of the chronicler⁷⁶ himself, and to what extent he reached from sources other than DH.⁷⁷ In the unanimous opinion of the Deuteronomist (2 Kgs 22–23) and the chronicler (2 Chr 34–35; the differences are only in the details), it was Josiah who definitely destroyed the open places of worship, the so-called “cultic high places” (*bāmôt*)⁷⁸ in Judah and in the north of ancient Samaria, centralizing worship. From the Deuteronomist’s narrative, however, it appears that Jerusalem was such a central place of worship for a long time before Hezekiah, in the days of David (2 Sam 6) and Solomon (1 Kgs 5–6; cf. 2 Sam 7). According to this sequence of events, Josiah merely restored the old *status quo* and formally legitimized it. However, the Deuteronomist accepts the existence of other places of worship until the temple in Jerusalem was not yet built (cf. 1 Kgs 3:2). As a consequence, he also accepts sacrifices by the rulers there until then (see 1 Kgs 3:3). Later, however, he evaluates such practices as “doing what is evil in the sight of YHWH” (cf. 1 Kgs 14:23; 15:14; 22:43; 2 Kgs 12:3; 14.4; 15.4.35; 16.4). Hezekiah in the role of a cult reformer appears, for example, right after the description of the reign of the “evil ruler” – Ahaz (cf. 2 Kgs 16), and Josiah after the equally misjudged Manasseh and Amon (2 Kgs 21). The Deuteronomist then blames the former for undermining the reforms of Hezekiah (cf. 2 Kgs 21:3). This means, however, that the “cultic high places” functioned throughout almost the entire period of the monarchy, and the idea of unity of worship in only one chosen place is quite late.⁷⁹

The emphasis on the elimination of such “unorthodox” places of worship could have been due to various reasons already mentioned, and it could also have been supported by prophetic preaching (Isaiah,

⁷⁶ For example, inspired by the reforms of Josiah, cf. Tronina, *Druga Księga Kronik*, 339.

⁷⁷ Japhet, *2 Chronik*, 364.

⁷⁸ On the concept of a “highland,” see: Gadek, “Czy wyżyny,” 185–212. For the archaeological data on such sites (mentioned in Deut 12:3), see: Zevit, *The Religions*, 247–252.

⁷⁹ Lee, “Der Umgang,” 331–338. On these issues, see also Frevel, “Wovon reden,” 249–277.

Micah; cf. Jer 26:17–19; possibly also the inheritance of Amos and Hosea).⁸⁰ However, the only non-standard information related to the alleged reforms of Hezekiah is the mention of the liquidation of the worship of the copper serpent of Nehushtan in Jerusalem, which one can get the impression that it is a memory of an actual event, attached to a stereotypical Deuteronomist formula.

3.3. Law on the worship centralization (Deut 12)

Despite attempts to challenge, the thesis of William de Wette (from 1805),⁸¹ linking Josiah's reforms (622 BCE) with the events described in 2 Kgs 22–23, remains valid. Thus – according to the biblical account – the attitude for the reforms undertaken at that time was the “rediscovered” book of God's Law, which is considered to be the so-called Deuteronomic Code in its original form (Deut 12–26*). One can infer that Josiah and the actions he undertook had some precursors. Could Hezekiah be one of them, as the Bible authors maintain? Is he to be ascribed the inspiration for the subsequent process of purification and centralization of worship in Jerusalem? The answer to these questions can be found in the analysis of the programmatic text that concerns the latter concept.

The key text in understanding the idea of worship centralization⁸² is undoubtedly Deut 12. This pericope is “homiletic,” like Deut 4⁸³ and shows a number of connections with the entire Book of Deuteronomy. After the narrative introduction (Deut 1–11), Deut 12:1 the section on law opens (12–26; the so-called Deuteronomic Code). This chapter describes something that then translates into a number of other laws in this book, formulated as a correction of the so-called Covenant

⁸⁰ Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 443.

⁸¹ On this topic, Lemański, *Tora – Pięcioksiąg*, 74–75, 618–619.

⁸² Attempts to show that there is no question of centralization here are rather unconvincing, cf. Greenspahn, “Deuteronomy and Centralization,” 227–235 and critical remarks to this thesis by Arnold, “Deuteronomy 12,” 236–241.

⁸³ Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 416. This researcher also assumes that the Deuteronomic Code is a development of the Decalogue, and consequently interprets Deut 12:1–13:1 as an extension of its first two commandments (see Deut 5:7/8–10) (*ibid.*, 416–417).

Code made due to the centralization of worship.⁸⁴ Deut 12 is also a turning point in the religion of ancient Israel.⁸⁵ However, a number of “doublets” and clear traces of the development of the very concept of centralization were noticed in this text for a long time. Contrary to the opinion of some researchers, it was not unique to the religion of ancient Israel.⁸⁶ The very idea of this kind assumed monolatry, and this was introduced at the turn of the eighth/seventh century BCE also by other rulers.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, in the strict sense of the word, the actions centralizing the cult are attributed by the Judean kings Hezekiah and Josiah. As has already been pointed out, the problem is first of all linking centralization with the first of these rulers.

The program text itself, which is Deut 12:1–28, contains the repeated four times the call to worship only in the place chosen by YHWH. It is then forbidden twice to perform this worship anywhere else; twice allowed to perform secular slaughter outside the sanctuary; twice it is ordered to pour blood on the ground; twice it is forbidden not to eat it with meat. In addition, there is a visible change of addressee from the 2nd person plural (up to v. 12) for 2nd person singular (from v. 13). Many researchers saw in this arguments in favor of accepting the thesis about at least a few Deuteronomic redactions of this text⁸⁸. The repetition alone, however, as well as the change of the style of expression (from “you” in plural to “you” in singular) are not a sufficient and objective criterion for accepting any specific literary critical divisions. The Book of Deuteronomy is written in a style in which the repetition and alteration of the addressee serve to achieve a rhetorical effect and update the message.⁸⁹ Therefore, referring to them as a literary criticism is not very convincing.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ See Deut 12:20–25 (prophane slaughter); 14:12–23 (tithes); 16:1–17 (holidays); 19:1–19 (cities of refuge); 18:1–8 (priests) etc.; cf. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 33–34.

⁸⁵ Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 362: “the link between old and new, between Israel and Judaism, is everywhere Deuteronomy.”

⁸⁶ As Rofé, “The Strata,” 97.

⁸⁷ Na’aman, “The King,” 131–168.

⁸⁸ Steuernagel, *Das Deuteronomium*, 94–99; Minnette de Tillesse, “Sections,” 29–87; Merendino, *Das Deuteronomische Gesetz*, 1–60.

⁸⁹ Christensen, “Numeruswechsel,” 61–68.

⁹⁰ Rofé, “The Strata,” 98.

It is not difficult to notice, however, that the pericope combines various provisions: (1) the above-mentioned 2–7; (2) above 8–12; (3) above 13–14.17–19; (4) above 27–28. In the third and fourth cases, the requirement of centralization is supplemented by the rules of “secular” slaughter and the order to pour blood on the ground (vv. 15–16; cf. vv. 20–26). The researchers agree that the core of the pericope should be seen in Deut 12:13–19.⁹¹ However, they differ in their assessment of later additions. Following in the footsteps of Rudolf Smend⁹² one can think of at least three Deuteronomistic editions of this text. This core would belong to the so-called *Ur-Deuteronomium*. However, the exact creation of the remaining editorial offices is already a difficult task. For instance, according to Thomas Römer, the original version was subsequently extended by the above-mentioned 8–12 (possibly together with v. 28) and in v. 2–7 (possibly together with vv. 29–31). These successive Deuteronomistic editions would be inscribed – according to this researcher – into three different historical periods (neo-Assyrian, neo-Babylonian and Persian).⁹³ It is certain that what unites all these successive extensions into a whole are repeated centralization formulas⁹⁴ (Deut 12:5.11.14.18.21.26). However, some have a short form “in the place that YHWH your God chose” (vv. 14.18.26), and the other a longer form (vv. 5.11.21), with the additional information that YHWH wants to “put his name there for an abode.” Some of these formulas are placed in a negative context (vv. 5.11.14), they imply the limitations: not to do as other peoples (as vv. 2–4); not to do as the ancestors did in the past (yes, vv. 8–10); not to offer sacrifices all over the place (yes, v. 13). Some, in turn, are

⁹¹ Preuss, *Deuteronomium*, 133; Nielsen, *Deuteronomium*, 134; Rütterswörden, *Deuteronomium*, 29–35. See also the review of many other opinions in the commentary of E. Otto. An attempt to show that the oldest in the pericope are, however, the above-mentioned 20–28 see Chavel, “The Literary Development,” 303–326.

⁹² Smend, *Die Entstehung*, 59, 96.

⁹³ Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, 56–65; Römer, “Das Buch Deuteronomium,” 156–157, 166; like Rütterswörden, *Deuteronomium*, 29. On the research on the original version of the Book of Deuteronomy, see also Achenbach, “Überlegung,” 211–254.

⁹⁴ On their application elsewhere in the book, see Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 152–153.

completed with an exhortation to rejoice before YHWH (vv. 7.12.18).⁹⁵ A careful critical-literary analysis of the development of this motif, as well as the critical review of many previous proposals by Eckart Otto,⁹⁶ lead him to different conclusions than the aforementioned Römer's proposal. Otto proves that the pericope core – in a different order than proposed by the aforementioned Römer – was supplemented during the period of exile (vv. 1–7.29–31) and after it (vv. 8–12.20–28). Regarding the oldest passage, Otto writes⁹⁷ that in Deut 12:13–19, the “Deuteronomic Deuteronomium” of the late seventh century pre-exile period comes to the fore, which is not yet related to the *Mosefiktion* of the Mosaic promulgation of the Law in Moab, introduced only by the Deuteronomist framing of the sixth century in the literary history of the Book of Deuteronomy.

The guidelines from Deut 12:13–18, in fact, assume the existence and functioning of the temple in Jerusalem. This fragment undoubtedly belongs to the first version of the Deuteronomic law and is probably a consequence of the guidelines from Deut 6:4–5 (monolatry).⁹⁸ Fifteen times the word *kōl* is used here – “whole, everyone, everything,” twice the word *'ehād* (one), and the whole idea is: one God and one sanctuary, says Thomas Römer.⁹⁹ It is developed in the context of the theology of the election of Jerusalem and Judah (the word *māqôm* applies to them), and the first addressees of these words still live in their homeland. According to the researcher, this context and this theology better fit the time of Josiah and the reforms he undertook at that time (usually dated 622 BCE). Then, the already mentioned monolatric tendencies are noticeable also in neighboring countries, and the idea of loyalty expressed in the Deuteronomistic concept of the alliance also fits this period. As Römer, quoted later, there are also external testimonials from this period, indicating that the practice did not immediately follow the idea, and the expectations

⁹⁵ Otto, *Deuteronomium 12,1–23,15*, 1147–1148; Arnold, “Israelite Worship,” 162–163.

⁹⁶ Otto, *Deuteronomium 12,1–23,15*, 1150–1167.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1182.

⁹⁸ See: Lemański, “Dlaczego Jahwe,” 59–68.

⁹⁹ Römer, “Das Buch Deuteronomium,” 156.

of Judean writers and theologians – to put it mildly – surpassed reality.¹⁰⁰

For a long time, Deut 12 has been seen as a development and adjustment to the idea of centralization of the old law on the altar (Exod 20:24–26; Lev 17:1–9), and the sources of the idea of centralization were found not so much in some new concept as in reflection on the Book of the Covenant.¹⁰¹ The authors of Deut 12, however, are now concerned first about where to worship (in the place chosen by YHWH), and only then about how and when to worship.¹⁰² This fundamentally differentiates their preferences from the interests of the later Priestly school. On the other hand, the principle emphasized in Deuteronomy 12 that distinguishes between places “chosen” and “not chosen” by YHWH (cf. v. 13) was intended to emphasize the distinction between places only devoted to YHWH and places chosen by Him. The former ones were in no way “divine.” They were arbitrarily chosen by the people themselves. It is worth paying attention to the fact that in Exod 20:24 and Deut 12:5 the entity making the choice of the place is YHWH himself. In the Syrian version of Exod 20:24 (cf. BHS footnote d), the subject is the second person singular (“you”) and this lesson is considered original. Changing the subject (shifting the choice from human to YHWH) may therefore be a Deuteronomistic invention.¹⁰³ For this reason, the revelations associated with places such as Bethel, Beersheba and Hebron¹⁰⁴ were negated. At the beginning, this distinction was not so radical, which reveals a positive attitude towards, for example, priests from these places (cf. Deut 18:6–8). The practice, however, with time went further than the program assumptions (cf. 2 Kgs 23:9).¹⁰⁵

Alexander Rofé, who, like the aforementioned Smend and Römer, suggests two later Deuteronomic editions (vv. 8–12: eighth century

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 157 with an indication of Uehlinger, “Gibt es,” 57–90.

¹⁰¹ See: Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1–21:9*, 133 with an indication of Reuter, *Kultzentralisatio* and Lohfink, “Kultzentralisation,” 117–148.

¹⁰² Arnold, “Israelite Worship,” 163.

¹⁰³ See: Johnston, “Exodus 20,24B,” 207–222; Halpern, “What Does Deuteronomy,” 97–162, esp. 98–99.

¹⁰⁴ Rofé, “The Strata,” 100.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 100, n. 9.

BCE; vv. 2–7: seventh century BCE) and believes that the very idea of centralization came from Shechem via Anathoth¹⁰⁶ with the refugees who came to this place (after the events of 722 BCE). In his opinion, in Shechem were rituals of the nature of central state ceremonies, and the memory of them influenced later Judean reforms. As this researcher notes, only Deut 12 and 27 mention places sanctified by the epiphany of God (or His messenger). In his opinion, migrants from the north came to the fore most fully in addition to Deut 12:8–12. However, this thesis is difficult to prove. The already mentioned Eckart Otto¹⁰⁷ shows quite convincingly that the first phase of extending the "reformed" version of the law concerning the altar (Exod 20:24–26 vs. Deut 12:13–18) dates from the end of the seventh century BCE at the earliest, and its first the extension – as has already been mentioned – can be found in the above-mentioned 1–7.29–31* (cf. Lev 17:1–14), and vv. 8–12.20–28 would not be added until the fifth/fourth centuries BCE.¹⁰⁸

However, the roots from which the idea of centralization arose are unclear. Perhaps the prophetic critique of the mid-eighth century BCE had a significant impact on its creation, where we find the stigmatization of deviations from YHWH practiced in local shrines (cf. Hos 4:12–15; Amos 2:8), which consequently to discredit them (Hos 8:11–14). One can imagine a situation where the intellectual elites from the north, settled perhaps in the first phase of migration somewhere in the northern border periphery of Judea, became attractive to the central government in Judea and could be involved in the creation of such a new pan-Israel identity that would suit also the aspirations of the king of Jerusalem. Until now, as mentioned, Judah was overshadowed by its neighbor in the north. After all, the influence of religious and political ideas from the north can be found in the traditions of the Pentateuch formerly referred to as JE, in the

¹⁰⁶ See: Jer 1:1; 1 Sam 2:27–28; 22:20–23; 1 Kgs 2:26–27.

¹⁰⁷ Otto, *Deuteronomium 12, 1–23, 15*, 1151–1167, esp. conclusions 1167.

¹⁰⁸ See inter alia Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 221–232: Deut 12:13–15.18–19 = basic text from the time of Hezekiah; above 20–28 pre-Deuteronomist editing; and two Deuteronomist editorial offices in the above-mentioned 8–12; above 1–7.

Deuteronomist himself or in the influences of the northern dialect present in biblical texts.¹⁰⁹

It cannot be ruled out that the centralization was originally intended to unify the image and worship of YHWH himself by celebrating it in one central sanctuary (cf. Amos 8:14). However, it could also be an idea constituting an instrument of control on the part of the authorities (cf. Amos 7:3).¹¹⁰ According to the Bible, in any case, the idea that YHWH chose one place of worship is related to David (the progenitor of the chosen dynasty; cf. Ps 132) and the transfer of the ark to Jerusalem (1 Sam 4–6; 2 Sam 6; 24; then also Jer 7:12). The verb “choose” (*bāḥar*) actually plays an important role in linking YHWH to Jerusalem (cf. Ps 78: 60.67–71; 132:13). Although it is not explicitly stated in Deut 12 that it is about Jerusalem, it is precisely the aforementioned tradition found in DH (1 Kgs 11:32; 14:21; 2 Kgs 21:7; cf. also 1 Kgs 8:16 + 2 Chr 6:5–6).

It is theoretically possible to understand the so-called “centralization formulas” in the broader sense, as more than one place chosen by YHWH, since the verb “choose” does not always entail the choice of one from many, as in the case of the election of Israel or Levi by YHWH or the king by the people (cf. Deut 7:6–7; 17:15; 18:5).¹¹¹ What you choose can also be collective or representative (e.g. mean a list of legal temples).¹¹² However, according to some researchers, the use of the article next to the word “place” (cf. vv. 5.11.14) makes it clear that it is about one place, and not many.¹¹³ It should be noted, however, that the author(s) Deut 12 does(do) not focus their attention on any specific building – a sanctuary or a city; it does not refer to some “founding myth,” although the story of the Ark in DH created such a “myth”.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Faust, “The Impact,” 53–62; Faust, *Judah*, 39–48.160–162; Halpern, “What Does,” 131–134.

¹¹⁰ Deuteronomic texts repeatedly describe various places of worship of YHWH see the list of these places in: Lee, “Der Umgang,” 334–335.

¹¹¹ Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 149.

¹¹² Lohfink, “Zur deuteronomischen,” 301–303; Halpern, “What Does,” 100, n. 13 (examples).

¹¹³ Arnold – Choi, *A Guide* § 2.6.4.

¹¹⁴ See: Lemański, “Opowiadanie,” 147–168; Römer, “Katastrophengeschichte,” 259–274.

In the curriculum, the Deuteronomist focuses solely on the “gathering of the people” in front of YHWH and not on the building or object (ark) in/through which YHWH manifests his presence. “The chosen ‘place’ is described in term of human actions rather than defined by the numinous holiness of sacred space, and sacrifice there is concerned more with bringing and eating than in transferring what is offered into the sphere of God’s ownership”.¹¹⁵ In this context, the silence about Jerusalem seems very telling (cf. Jer 7:12). The “place” contrast is, therefore, primarily between the “place chosen by YHWH” and the various and numerous places where various cults¹¹⁶ are exercised. However, it is not explicitly stated what particular place the biblical author is referring to.

Undoubtedly, the situation from the time of Hezekiah, as it was outlined at the beginning of the paper, could have been a good opportunity, even a requirement to look for ways to unite society,¹¹⁷ but – as we have noticed – archeology does not clearly confirm that it was then that some activities aimed at centralizing worship in Jerusalem, and the mere growth of the Judean population, as noted earlier, may have been the result of the natural demographic development in the region, rather than some massive influx of immigrants. Therefore, if any measures with such a goal had already taken place, it was certainly not a wide-ranging reform. In any case, the text of Deut 12 does not contain any explicit centralist tradition that could be associated with Hezekiah or his times.

Conclusions

1. The very description of the “reforms” of Hezekiah in 2 Kgs 18:4.22 is so stereotypical that it does not allow unambiguous conclusions about its historicity. Only the mention of the liquidation of the serpent worship of Nehushtan in Jerusalem has such features. The expanded version of the chronicler

¹¹⁵ Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 149.

¹¹⁶ Levinson, *Deuteronomy*, 28–34; Arnold, “Deuteronomy 12.”

¹¹⁷ Such beginnings are suggested, among others, by Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 148.

- (2 Chr 29–31/32), on the other hand, raises a reasonable suspicion that it is only a product of his own theological concept.
2. Historical circumstances (the fall of Samaria, a sudden increase in the population in Judah, especially in the vicinity and in Jerusalem itself) may suggest that the demographic and political situation of Judah after 722 BCE changed significantly and could impose and encourage the building of a new one, a pan-Israeli identity in which centralist tendencies in the worship of YHWH would play a key role. Nevertheless, the interpretation of archaeological (Lachish, Arad, Beersheba, Beth Shemesh, etc.) and historical (Assyrian annals) data does not make it possible to state unequivocally whether the destruction of places and cult objects in Judah was related to some reforms or rather to military operations. It is also doubtful that the population growth in the late eighth century BCE was the result of a massive influx of northern refugees and not a natural process of demographic growth in Judea.
 3. Both the original core of the pericope from Deut 12:13–18 and DH, devoted to the beginnings of the “united monarchy” (1 Sam 16–2 Sam 5–/2 Kgs 11), and its further fate after the collapse of the kingdom of Israel and Judah, fit better into the political and social atmosphere and situation of the time of Josiah (the second half of the seventh century BCE) than of the time of Hezekiah. In DH, then, we find the ideal (David and the transfer of the Ark from Shiloh to Jerusalem) and its hyperbolic representation in the person and centralization of Josiah (*David redivivus*). A concise description of Hezekiah’s reforms may be part of this theological hyperbola (an example of a “good king” doing what his father David did). Perhaps it had its roots in the memory of some real reform episode (the destruction of Nehushtan).
 4. So did the alleged reforms of Hezekiah actually take place, and if so, were they a centralization of worship? Archaeological data neither exclude nor confirm such reforms (question of interpretation). The Deuteronomic texts (Deut 12; DH) examined from the critical literary point of view rather show that they were rooted in the situation in Josiah’s time. Thus, if Hezekiah undertook any cult reform measures due to the new socio-political situation in

Judah at the end of the eighth century BCE, their scope and effectiveness were rather small. However, this was enough for the Deuteronomist to place him on the prestigious list of “good rulers,” the precursors of the new David that Josiah recognized in DH.

Ezechiasz a kwestia centralizacji kultu (2 Krl 18,4.22)

Abstrakt: Czy Ezechiasz przeprowadził reformy religijne, których celem była centralizacja kultu w Jerozolimie? Na to pytanie trudno dać jednoznaczną odpowiedź. Opis reform jest lakoniczny i stereotypowy (2 Krl 18,4.22). Okoliczności historyczne wydają się jednak sprzyjać uznaniu go za historyczny. Również badania archeologiczne, choć jednoznacznie nie potwierdzają, to nie pozwalają też zdecydowanie zaprzeczyć takiej możliwości, choć wielu badaczy uważa, że nie było żadnego masowego napływu migrantów z północy, a wzrost populacji pod koniec VIII w. przed Chr. był naturalnym procesem demograficznym. Teksty poświęcone monarchii (1–2 Sm; 1–2 Krl) oraz samej centralizacji kultu (Pwt 12) lepiej wpisują się w sytuację z końca VII w. (czas Jozjasza), zarówno gdy patrzymy na nie od strony analizy krytycznoliterackiej, jak i od strony analizy sytuacji polityczno-społecznej. Postać Ezechiasza mogła być jednak uznana przez autorów z VII w. przed Chr. za prekursora reform z czasów Jozjasza ze względu na „historyczną” informację o zniszczeniu przez niego kultu węża Nechusztana.

Słowa kluczowe: Ezechiasz, centralizacja kultu, historyczność, Jerozolima

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