The Meaning of וַיַַעַַל בְְּכָָל־הָָאָָרֶֶץ in 2 Kgs 17:5a.
The Semantic and Syntactic Study of the Phrase with Particular Interest in the Verb על and the Preposition ב

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ABSTRACT: The expression וַיַַעַַל בְְּכָָל־הָָאָָרֶֶץ in 2 Kgs 17:5a is apparently simple and devoid of semantic or syntactic difficulty. This Hebrew phrase is, however, interpreted variously by the scholars who generate a considerable plurality of its translations. The problem appears to lie in the diversity with which the meaning of the verb על and of the preposition ב, and further, their semantic and syntactic relation in 2 Kgs 17:5a, are interpreted. The examination of these lexemes’ semantics and their interrelated syntax in the Hebrew text leads to the following conclusions: (1) the verb על has there a technical-military meaning “to invade, attack, march against;” (2) it is used stereotypically and from the sociolinguistic perspective it denotes the nuance of an upward movement; (3) the meaning of ב is spatial in 2 Kgs 17:5a and marks an area moved through; (4) the syntactic relation √הְָּבְְּ + על is not equivalent to √הְָּעַל + על and consequently, the technical-military meaning of the verb does not remove the spatial meaning of the preposition. It is proposed to translate 2 Kgs 17:5a in a following way: “And then (the king of Assyria) marched up throughout the whole country.” Such a rendering expresses both the Assyrian military actions, a physical movement upwards, and the area moved through. From the historical point of view, it describes the first stage of the Assyrian attack, the invasion going throughout the whole country of king Hosea (v. 5a), followed by an attack directed against its capital, Samaria (v. 5bc). Other interpretations (translations), either ignoring or highlighting one of the discussed features only, may be considered incomplete, questionable or unacceptable from the semantic and syntactic point of view.

KEYWORDS: semantics of על, semantics of ב, Hebrew syntax, translation technique, fall of Samaria, Hosea (king), Shalmaneser (king), Books of Kings

The chapter 17 of the Second Book of Kings contains a kind of climax in the narrative of 2 Kings by presenting the history of the last years of the Northern Kingdom and a purposefully constructed commentary on its fate. There are many interesting questions heatedly disputed among scholars concerning the last days of Samaria and the fate of its inhabitants. Attempts to reconstruct the chronology of events, in consequence of which Samaria became an Assyrian province, produced a lot of theories about the number of

The Assyrian campaigns between 722–720 BCE, the identity of the Assyrian king(s) who invaded and captured Samaria, the sequence of events that led to that tragic end, and so forth. In fact, the biblical accounts on the fall of Samaria in 2 Kgs 17:3–6 and 18:9–10 and pieces of information drawn out from the extrabiblical sources (such as eponyms, inscriptions, reliefs, Babylonian Chronicles) do not harmonise with each other. Therefore, hypotheses put forward are often speculative and debatable.

In this paper I do not want to deal with the reconstruction of the historical events mentioned in 2 Kgs 17:3–6. Neither do I intend to take position in the scholarly debate about harmonising biblical and extrabiblical sources. I would like to focus on the Hebrew text itself and examine the semantic and syntactic aspects of the phrase בְְּכָָל־הָָאָָרֶֶץ וַַיַַּעַַל in 2 Kgs 17:5, which appears to be problematic, in spite of an apparent simplicity of the Hebrew language.

1. Stating a Problem

It is noteworthy that, on the one hand, there is no research studying the Hebrew text of 2 Kgs 17:5 in detail. The commentators dealing with the above-mentioned questions usually pay little attention to the Hebrew text itself. On the other hand, the vast number of its renderings reveals that there is no consensus on its interpretation among scholars. The clause בְְּכָָל־הָָאָָרֶֶץ מֶֶלֶךְ־אַָָשּׁוּרֶ וַַיַַּעַַל is composed of a simple predicate (וַַיַַּעַַל √הָ על “to go up”), a subject (רֶוּשּׁ מֶֶלֶךְ־אַָָשּׁוּר “the king of Assyria”) and a prepositional phrase being an adverbial modifier of place (בְְּכָָל־הָָאָָרֶֶץ; literary: “in the whole land”). Nonetheless one deals here with a basic Hebrew vocabulary, the syntactic relation between וַַיַַּעַַל and בְְּכָָל־הָָאָָרֶֶץ leaves much space for varied interpretations. The consulted renderings of 2 Kgs 17:5a may be categorised into five groups according to the meaning that is understood. The diagram on the next page shows an increasing degree with which the military aggression of the Assyrian king is perceived by the scholars: from the most neutral one, describing the king’s coming up through the whole country, to the most expressive one, depicting his invasion of the entire land.

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2 We should bear in mind that the literary composition of 2 Kgs 17:3–6 is not interested in the first place in the exact reconstruction of historical events. The disproportion between the brief reports of historical events and the theological comments on them is striking, and so we may conclude that the whole chapter 17 is interested mostly in the theology of history. Cf. R. Dilday, 1, 2 Kings (CCS.OT 9; Dallas, TX et al.: Word Books 1987) 419; cf. I.W. Provan, 1 & 2 Kings (OTG; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1997) 53–54; cf. Viviano, “2 Kings 17,” 548–550.

3 In another paper that is about to be published, I examine various renderings of 2 Kgs 17:5 in ancient and modern translations as well as commentaries on the Books of Kings, among which I singled out at least ten different ways in which the verse in question is rendered. Such a translation plurality indicates the semantic and syntactic difficulty underlying the Hebrew text of 2 Kgs 17:5, variously interpreted by the scholars and/or Bible translators.
The first set of renderings of 2 Kgs 17:5a [1] is “the king of Assyria went up/came up through(out) the whole country/land.” It denotes a simple action of traversing (up) the land. It combines the literal meaning of the verb √ הָעַל “to go up” with the spatial sense of the preposition בְָּד which marks an area moved through. Such an interpretation does not allude to the military attack and may be called the neutral one. In the second set


of renderings of 2 Kgs 17:5a [2]: “the king of Assyria marched through(out) the whole country/land,” the meaning of the verb √הָעל is perceived as a military action. The English verb “to march” implies in this co-text a kind of war manoeuvres. Such a translation retains, however, the spatial sense of the preposition ב. The other one, [3]: “the king of Assyria went up/came up against the whole country/land,” expresses the literal meaning of the verb √הָעל and the adversative sense of the preposition ב. Some other renderings denote more explicitly a military action of the Assyrians [4]: “the king of Assyria marched against the whole country/land.” The preposition ב is interpreted there as denoting an adversative meaning. The renderings of the last group are even more explicit [5]: “the king of Assyria invaded/attacked/campaigned/made an expedition against the whole country/land.” The king’s coming in the country is interpreted there as an invasion just from the beginning of the verse.

By singling out these sets of renderings of 2 Kgs 17:5a one gains an important pointer to identify the difficulty of this text. The diagram above illustrates how different comprehension and interpretation of the verb √הָעל and of the preposition ב may lead to varied translations. On the one hand, the matter dealt with is the polysemy of the verb √הָעל, and thus, the question arises, which meaning of this lexeme is denoted in 2 Kgs 17:5a within its co-text and context. On the other hand, the problem to solve regards the syntactic relation between the verb √הָעל and its adverbial modifier בְּכָָל־הָָאָָרֶֶץ, or more specifically, the function of the preposition ב, whether it expresses spatial or adversative meaning. In order to respond to the above mentioned questions, a careful study of the semantic and syntactic aspects of the clause בְְּכָָל־הָָאָָרֶֶץ is necessary.

To find satisfactory solution to the above expressed questions, it is necessary to establish the exact meaning and syntactic function of בְְּכָָל־הָָאָָרֶֶץ in 2 Kgs 17:5. The detailed analysis of this phrase shall proceed in two stages: (1) at the level of its component words, the semantics of individual lexemes shall be examined, and (2) at the second level, the syntax of the sentence and its contribution to the meaning of the whole verse shall be analysed. All these levels express linguistic meaning of the phrase under examination and, being interrelated, cannot be isolated one from another. Therefore, only such a two-fold approach shall enable us to draw conclusions about the interpretation of בְְּכָָל־הָָאָָרֶֶץ in 2 Kgs 17:5, so that the difficulty in its comprehension may be removed.

2. Level of Individual Words: Semantics of the Lexemes

As the first approach in the study of בְְּכָָל־הָָאָָרֶֶץ the self-contained meaning of its component words shall be examined, namely [A] that of the verb √הָעל, [B] the preposition ב, [C] the noun כֹֹּל, and [D] the noun אֶָרֶֶץ.
The verb √הָעַָל is one of the most frequent verbs in the Hebrew Bible occurring altogether 890 times, not less than 675 times in the conjugation Qal. Concerning its meaning, the verb √הָעַָל represents a wide range of semantic aspects in highly differentiated co-texts and contexts. The multiplicity of its related senses proves the polysemous character of the verb √הָעַָל (in opposition to unrelated senses that are characteristic of homonymy). It may be, however, remarked that its basic meaning relates to a movement toward an elevated goal.

By analysing the semantic spectrum of the verb √הָעַָל, three semantic domains may be singled out. They reflect its usage in the Hebrew Bible: [I] when it describes a physical movement, [II] when it is used figuratively, [III] when it is employed in idiomatic expressions and technical terminology. Sometimes it acquires a theological significance, but since the Hebrew lexicography and not theology is discussed in this paper, the theological connotations will not be dealt here with for methodological reasons.

[I] The verb √הָעַָל Qal is predominantly used with its most basic meaning “to move upwards,” namely, “from a lower location to a higher,” being an antonym of the verb √ירֶד that...

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10 By the “co-text” I mean sentences, paragraphs or chapters surrounding the text under examination and related to it, which is sometimes defined as a literary context. By the “context” I mean the sociological and historical setting of the text. Cf. P. Cotterell – M. Turner, *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity 1989) 16.

11 For general observations about polysemy and homonymy, and about the question regarding a “core” meaning of words see Cotterell – Turner, *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation*, 135–139.

12 Cf. Fuhs, ”יהו,” 77. By stating this, it cannot be claimed that the verb √יהו has a kind of “core” sense. It should only be noticed that a movement from below upwards is an element shared in common that may produce a plurality of senses by means of semantic changes. They are due to both linguistic innovation and conservatism.

13 It should be remarked that the meaning of a word and its usages are distinct. The lexical meaning is “the range of senses of a word that may be counted on as being established in the public domain” (Cotterell – Turner, *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation*, 140). The usages of a word may not be a part of its lexical meaning, if they are not conventional. However, “if particular usage became widespread, such that it became a standard public idiom, and so conventional, we would say it was becoming, or even had become, part of the lexical meaning of the word” (Cotterell – Turner, *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation*, 140). In case of biblical Hebrew, which is a linguistically closed set, the usages of a word may be treated as a part of its lexical meaning.


15 The verb √יהו expresses [1] the ascent of Elohim/YHWH to His dwelling place in heaven (Gen 17:22; 35:13; Ps 47:6; 68:19) and Elijah’s ascension/rapture to heaven (2 Kgs 2:11; cf. 2 Kgs 2:1 in Hiphil). [2] It describes frequently migrations of persons from low place to high. The verb in question is used stereotypically to denote the route from Egypt to Canaan (Gen 45:25; Exod 12:37; Judg 11:13, 16; 1 Sam 15:2, 6; 1 Kgs 9:16; Isa 11:16), from Babylon to Canaan (with an allusion to the return of the exiles; Ezra 2:1, 59; 7:6, 7, 28;
describes the opposite direction, “to move towards a lower location.” The verb \(\text{לַעֲשָׂה} \) refers to a physical movement from below upwards in other Hebrew verb conjugations, too. From the geographical point of view such a movement is a stereotypical feature connected with the sociolinguistic aspects of the biblical narratives, in which one can observe a mutual relation between the symbol/sign (a concrete word), its sense (the mental concept called up by the symbol/sign) and its referent (significatum) in the extralinguistic realities of the physical world. In specialised co-texts the verb \(\text{לַעֲשָׂה} \) expresses an impressive wealth of nuances involving somehow a physical movement upwards, too.

See an interesting discussion on cases when verbs \(\text{לַעֲשָׂה} \) and \(\text{יָרֵד} \) are used in the opposite sense (\(\text{לַעֲשָׂה} \) denotes movement downwards, \(\text{יָרֵד} \) – upwards) in G.R. Driver, “On \(\text{לַעֲשָׂה} ‘Went up Country’ and \text{יָרֵד} ‘Went down Country,’” *ZAW* 69 (1957) 74–77. The author evokes a theory that \(\text{יָרֵד} \) might originally have meant ‘journeyed in hilly country,’ so \(\text{לַעֲשָׂה} \) might occasionally have meant ‘travelled on high land,’ when the context would have shown whether such movement was upwards or downwards” (*ibidem*, 75–76). He argues, however, that \(\text{לַעֲשָׂה} \) “went up” may be used of going northwards, i.e. ‘up country,’ and \(\text{יָרֵד} \) “went down” may be used of going southwards, i.e. ‘down country,’ without reference to heights involved” (*ibidem*, 76). An Ethiopian parallel showing the same phenomenon was discussed by W. Leslau, “An Ethiopian Parallel to Hebrew \(\text{לַעֲשָׂה} \) ‘Went up country’ and \(\text{יָרֵד} \) ‘Went down country,’” *ZAW* 74 (1962) 322–323.

It occurs in Niphal with a passive meaning “to be lifted up, be led up” (Exod 40:36; Num 9:17; 21; 10:11; Ezra 1:11); in Hiphil with a causative active meaning “to cause to ascend, bring up” someone/something from one place to another (Gen 50:25; Exod 8:1; Judg 16:8; 31; 1 Sam 2:19; 2 Kgs 17:4; 2 Chr 8:11; Ps 40:5; it is regularly used, about 42 times, with reference to the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt); in Hophal with a causative passive meaning “to be brought up, be taken up” (Nah 2:8) and in Hithpael with a reflexive meaning “to raise oneself up” (Jer 51:3).

For the sociolinguistic reason, entering a city, for example, is frequently described as a “going up” to it (Gen 38:13; 1 Sam 15:34; Ezra 7:7; Zech 14:17), since cities were usually located on elevations. Such stereotypical usage of \(\text{לַעֲשָׂה} \) is a standard feature of biblical Hebrew so that topographical data are sometimes omitted entirely (Gen 24:16; Exod 19:20; 2 Sam 24:19).


It describes a breaking a dawn (in Qal: Gen 19:15; Judg 19:25; 1 Sm 9:26; Neh 4:15; Jonah 4:7), a leaping (mating) of flocks (in Qal: Gen 31:10, 12), a mounting a horse and a chariot (in Qal: Jer 46:4; Nah 3:3; Sol 7:9), a climbing up a palm (in Qal: Sol 7:9) and rocks (in Qal: Jer 4:29), a setting up lamp(s) (in Hiphil: Exod 25:37; 30:8; Lev 24:2; Num 8:2, 3). Furthermore, the verb \(\text{לַעֲשָׂה} \) is used with reference to a lot that falls on someone (in Qal: Lev 16:9, 10; Josh 19:10), to a garment that is put on (in Qal: Lev 19:19; Ezek 44:17), to a yoke that is put on an animal (in Qal: Num 19:2; 1 Sam 6:7), to a razor that touches the skin (Judg 13:5; 16:17; 1 Sam 1:11), to someone that goes to a bed/couch, sometimes with an allusion to sexual intercourse (in Qal: Gen 49:4; 2 Kgs 1:4, 6, 16; Ps 132:3; Isa 57:8), to animals chewing the cud (in Hiphil: Lev 11:3, 4; Deut 4:6, 7), to a fork taking meat up (in Hiphil: 1 Sam 2:14), to buildings being raised on the wall (in Hiphil:
Concerning the variety of semantic aspects of the verb הָעל, evidenced so far, a brief comment on the linguistic mechanisms that underlie the semantic alterations of this verb can be made. They are frequently due to the phenomenon called “linguistic innovation.” New nuances or new meanings of the verb can be produced as a result of a semantic shift (involving relatively small changes) such as restriction (as, for example, in the case of “dawn breaking”) or generalisation (namely, that any kind of movement from below upward, performed by persons, animals, plants, and so forth, may be expressed by the verb הָעל). Changes in the meaning of the verb are sometimes a result of metonymic transfer, based on the contiguity of related senses (for example, “going to a bed with someone” may mean by metonymy in some co-texts “to have a sexual intercourse with someone”). In the following paragraphs other types of semantic changes within the semantic spectrum of the verb in question will be observed.

It is necessary to comment now on the semantic domain to which the verb הָעל belongs, namely, on verbs that describe a movement in general (verbs of locomotion). It is noteworthy that the verb הָעל is quite frequently accompanied by other verbs belonging to this semantic realm, such as הָאָוַ ב Qal “to come” (Gen 45:25; Exod 7:28; Deut 1:24), הָוַ נ Qal “to go” (Exod 33:1; Judg 11:16; 2 Sam 17:21; Isa 8:7; Mic 4:2), הָנַ וב Qal “to turn around” (Deut 1:24; 3:1), הָהָ נ Qal “to go out” (1 Kgs 10:29), הָנַ וב Qal “to approach” (Josh 8:11). The following verbs should also be mentioned: הָהָ נ Qal “to traverse,” הָשׁוַ כ Qal “to return,” and הָהָ נ Qal “to go down” (which is, as noted before, the antonym of our verb). In attempting to proceed with a componential analysis of the lexeme הָעל, these verbs of locomotion should be collated in order to single out “atomic” concepts that compose the sense of each of them. In the present case, the “atomic” concepts concern the plane of movement (horizontal, vertical and rotary) and stages of a distance that is to be covered (namely, the notion of the departure point, of transition, and of the arrival point). The table on the next page presents the component concepts (“atomic” senses) of the most frequent Hebrew verbs of locomotion.

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2 Chr 32:5), to clouds being raised up (in Hiphil: Ps 135:7; Jer 10:13), to dust being thrown on one’s head (in Hiphil: Lam 2:10; Ezek 27:30), to bones being covered with flesh (in Hiphil: Ezek 37:6), to words to be included in the book (in Hophal: 2 Chr 20:34).


23 It is necessary to highlight that only the self-contained meaning of these terms is considered here, leaving apart for a moment the syntax with prepositions.
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It can be noticed that the verbs of locomotion mentioned above are semantically related to each other but only contiguously (excluding, of course the verb הָעַל, which is the antonym of יָרַד). Their sense relations indicate their improper synonymy. All of those verbs denote at least one plane of movement, but not all of them include in themselves concepts regarding stages of such a movement. The sense of the verb הָעַל is built out of the concept of a vertical movement (motion upwards), which is always present when הָעַל expresses a physical movement. Sometimes a concept of a horizontal movement (motion ahead) is also denoted. This verb, however, does not have specified in itself any notion either of the departure/arrival point or of transition. It will be discussed in the next part of this paper that such notions may be expressed by the syntactic relation of הָעַל to prepositions. It may be concluded that the “atomic” sense of הָעַל “motion upwards” is distinctive in relation to other verbs of locomotion.

[II] Besides the sense of a physical movement, the figurative meaning of the verb הָעַל can also be singled out. The concept of an upward motion is sometimes transferred by metaphor to a new realm in order to produce new meaning of הָעַל that no longer denotes a physical movement. This is another linguistic device (metaphorical transfer) that on the basis of similarity of meanings generates figurative (metaphorical) meanings of a word. When the association between meanings is established, the result of the semantic shift
is that a word may be used in the new meaning with no implication of the primary one. A similar mechanism have already been noticed with reference to the metonymic transfer (that one, however, bases on the contiguity of meanings, not on their similarity). The verb הָעַל is used figuratively with a variety of meanings.24

[III] The verb הָעַל occurs also with an idiomatic and technical meaning. Both idioms and technical terminology, being alterations in the meaning of a word, are due to the mechanism of specification (or restriction) of the meaning, which is typical of the so-called "linguistic conservatism." They are both characterised by a highly conventional usage serving as cultural tokens (in other words, they evoke a certain sociolinguistic context). There is, however, an important difference between them. Idiomatic expressions "are complex lexemes acting as a simple constituent,"25 so that the lack of any element of the expression (by ellipsis) results in the loss of its idiomatic meaning. Technical terminology, on the other hand, being characterised by a high degree of specialisation, is less dependent on the co-text and the definite referent may be associated automatically with a word itself even if a phrase lacks some constituent (ellipsis usually does not result in a change of meaning).26

There are a few idiomatic expressions that employ the verb הָעַל. Some expressions using the verb הָעַל become technical terms in the Hebrew Bible.28 The most pertinent to

24 It means [1] "to go to a significant personality" ( הָעַל Qal), namely, to a high-rank person (for example, when Joseph goes to Pharaoh in Gen 46:31; see other examples: Num 16:12, 14, Hos 8:9). [2] The verb הָעַל Qal is used also when someone goes for judgment (to Deborah in Judg 4:5; to elders in the city gate in Deut 17:8; 25:7; Ruth 4:1). In other specialised co-texts it means [3] "to prosper, become great and powerful" (Gen 49:9; Deut 28:43), and [4] "to surpass [others]" (Prov 31:29). [5] Furthermore, הָעַל Qal is used figuratively in relation to varied concepts, very often abstracts: to describe anger/wrath raising up (1 Sam 11:20; 2 Chr 36:16; Ps 78:21, 31; Prov 15:1; Ezek 38:18; in Hiphil: Ezek 24:8), a raging of a battle (1 Kgs 22:35; 2 Chr 18:34), an outcry going up to heaven (1 Sam 5:12), a tumult reaching one's ears (2 Kgs 19:28; Isa 7:19), an uproar raising up (Ps 74:23; Jer 14:2), death rising up (Ps 74:23; Jer 14:2), a mountain rising up (Ps 47:6; Jer 9:20), a city going up in smoke (Judg 20:40). [6] In a metaphorical sense the verb הָעַל Hiphil expresses God's exaltation (rehabilitation) of the weak and oppressed (1 Sam 2:6) and [7] deliverance from the danger (Ps 50:4; 40:3; 71:20; Jonah 2:7).


26 Silva, *Biblical Words*, 77.

27 For example, [1] הָעַל Qal + שעיר "to come to mind, be minded, remember" (2 Kgs 12:5; Isa 65:17; Jer 3:16; 19:5; 32:35; 51:50; Ezek 38:10); [2] הָעַל Hiphil + שעיר (or שעיל) "to take to heart," namely, "to turn one’s thoughts towards something" (Ezek 14:3, 4, 7); [3] הָעַל Qal + שעון "to mount up to heaven" (Deut 30:12; Ps 107:26; Isa 14:13, 14; Jer 51:53; Amos 9:2), which becomes in biblical Hebrew a proverbial expression; [4] הָעַל Niphal + שעון לשל "to become an object of gossip" (Ezek 36:3).

28 For instance, [1] הָעַל Qal + ל (1 Kgs 10:29; 2 Chr 1:17) is a commercial term for an imported product reaching a certain price. Conventional usage of this expression involves the sociolinguistic context of trade between Egypt and Israel. [2] הָעַל Hiphil + למס (1 Kgs 5:27; 9:15, 21; 2 Chr 8:8) is a technical term for raising a troop of forced labourers; Cf. הָעַל, HALOT II, 830a, 2b. [3] הָעַל Qal (Ps 47:6) and הָעַל Hiphil (1 Sam 6:21; 7:1; 2 Sam 6:2, 12, 15; 1 Kgs 8:1; 4; 1 Chr 15:3, 12, 14, 25, 28; 2 Chr 5:2, 5) is a technical term for the procession of the Ark of YHWH with the cultic (liturgical) context involved. Similarly, הָעַל Qal is
the present study is the analysis of the syntagma √הָ על Qal + על which is a very frequent warfare term to describe an attack/invasion

By correspondence with the Qal meaning, √הָ על Qal/Hiphil + על means “to bring against, lead into battle” (Jer 50:9; Ezek 16:40; 26:3; 2 Chr 36:17). It is noteworthy that the technical term √הָ על Qal/Hiphil + על is synonymous with other expressions, such as: √הָ על Qal + לְהָׅלָָּחֵַם "to go up to fight" (2 Kgs 3:21; 2 Chr 35:20), √הָ על Qal + לָּאַם (or להָׅאָמָם) "to go into battle" (1 Sam 29:9; 1 Kgs 20:26; 2 Kgs 16:5; Isa 7:1), √הָ על Qal + על and √הָ על Hiphil + על which mean respectively “to come against, attack” (2 Kgs 15:19; Ezek 33:3) and “to bring against” (Jer 25:9, 13; Ezek 14:17; 38:16). The antonym of our technical term is the expression √הָ על + מַלָּׅׅ with a meaning “to withdraw from, cease an attack” (1 Kgs 15:19; 2 Kgs 12:19; 2 Chr 16:3; Jer 34:21).

It should be noted that the usage of √הָ על Qal + על in the technical meaning is conventional in the Hebrew Bible, involving its sociological context, namely, that a conquest of regions and an attack against cities, constructed regularly on hills, required frequently an ascent up the hillside. The technical usage of the verb √הָ על in specialised co-texts is thus stereotypical in biblical Hebrew that the preposition על is sometimes either omitted by an ellipsis (2 Kgs 12:18; 24:1, 10; 2 Chr 16:1), or replaced by the preposition אל (Num 13:31; 2 Sam 5:19; 2 Kgs 16:9; 2 Chr 18:28; Jer 35:11; 50:21). It happens also that phrases lack an object (person or thing) of an attack at all (Judg 1:4; 1 Sam 27:8; 2 Sam 5:23; 1 Kgs 22:6; 2 Kgs 18:17) with no loss in the military meaning of the term.

In addition, it should be remarked that the specialised co-texts mentioned above are identifiable by the presence of verbs that belong to the realm of warfare, that accompany

used technically with a meaning “to go on pilgrimage” (Exod 34:24; 1 Sam 1:3; 10:3; Isa 2:3; Jer 31:6; Ps 122:4) entailing a convention based on the sociolinguistic context (geographically, sanctuaries were usually build on high places). The cultic (liturgical) context seems also to be evident. [4] √הָ על Hiph is a very common technical term for an offering of a sacrifice. Its usage is conventional, entailing the cultic context, since its meaning may derive from either the placing of the sacrifice upon the altar or its rising in smoke. New technical meaning is then generated by means of a semantic shift of restriction (specialization); see Fuhs, "הָ על", 90. √הָ על Hiph is used frequently in this technical meaning in conjunction with the noun "הָעֹלָה" "a burning offering" (61 times out of 77 occurrences of this technical term), but it describes also other types of sacrifice (Exod 30:9; Lev 14:20; Josh 22:23; Judg 20:26; 2 Sam 6:17; 1 Kgs 9:25; Jer 14:12; Amos 5:22). Gerhard Wähmeier ("הָ על", 887) argues that sometimes √הָ על Hiph, occurring with no further modification, acquires the general meaning "to sacrifice." Hans F. Fuhs, ("הָ על", 90) opposes to his opinion by claiming that the immediate co-text of the passages cited by Wähmeier speaks clearly of burnt offerings.


Cf. also Montgomery, Books of Kings, 477.

30 For example, Josh 22:12, 33; Judg 6:3; 1 Kgs 14:25; 2 Kgs 17:3; 18:9; 2 Chr 36:6; Jer 50:3, 21; Ezek 38:11; Joel 1:6; Nah 2:2.

31 Note that the standard antonym of √הָ על is the verb ירֶד, however, the expression ירֶד + על means “to descend against," emphasising that the enemy is located in a lower position (2 Chr 20:16; cf. Judg 1:9; 1 Sam 26:10; 29:4; 30:24). Cf. Wähmeier, ("הָ על", 887).
frequently the technical term in question. They are, as follows, √לחַם Niphal “to wage war, fight” (Deut 1:41, 42; Josh 19:47; 1 Kgs 12:24; 2 Chr 11:4), √לכָד Qal “to capture” (Josh 19:47; 1 Kgs 9:16), √שְׂטֶפ Qal “to capture” (2 Kgs 16:9; 18:13; Isa 36:1), √רֶוַצ Qal “besiege” (1 Kgs 20:1; 2 Kgs 6:24; 17:5; 18:9; Isa 21:2), √הָכָנ Hiphil “to strike” (Josh 7:3; Judg 8:11), √שְׂרֶפ Qal “to burn” (Judg 15:6; 1 Kgs 9:16), √שׁרֶי Qal “to take in possession” (Num 13:30; Deut 1:21; 9:23; Josh 19:47), √חַרֶב Qal “to murder” (Jer 50:21), √חַרֶם Hiphil “to execute the ban” (Jer 50:21), √שׁדֶד Qal “to annihilate” (Jer 49:28).

Having established semantic spectrum of the verb √על and singled out its meanings in the Hebrew Bible, the lexical meaning of the verb in question can be now determined in 2 Kgs 17:5a. It is noteworthy that there the vocabulary characteristic of the warfare realm occurs in its co-text. It is as follows: √רֶאָס Qal “to arrest” (v. 4), √רֶאָס Qal “to imprison” (v. 4), √רֶוַצ Qal “to besiege” (v. 5), √לכָד Qal “to capture” (v. 6), √הָגָל Hiphil “to lead into exile” (v. 6). These lexemes indicate that √על should be interpreted as a technical-military term meaning “to attack, invade” regarding both of its occurrences in v. 5. The ellipsis of the preposition עַַל in v. 5b (cf. the plain form עַַל־שֹׁמְֶרֶוַֹן in 2 Kgs 18:9) should not give rise to any difficulty since this does not affect the meaning of the technical term. In case of √בְְּכָָל־הָָאָָרֶֶץוַַיַַּעַַל (v. 5a), however, there is still a question open to discussion whether the preposition √בְְּ is simply synonymous to the preposition עַַל as its stylistic variation (as it happens in case of the preposition עַַל־שֹׁמְֶרֶוַֹן) or the preposition √בְְּ adds a new aspect to the meaning of the verb. This matter will be confronted in the next part of this paper.

[B] Semantics of √בְְּ

Concerning the lexical meaning of the preposition √בְְּ, some general remarks about the semantics of prepositions in biblical Hebrew should be taken into account. It is commonly stated that prepositions are derived, historically speaking, from nouns in the adverbial (accusative) case in the construct relation to a word they modify.32 Bearing this in mind,
it is indeed possible to speak about the semantics of prepositions in general and so of בְּ in our case as well. In fact, every single word in any language has some sense that is somehow self-contained, even if it is minimal.33

It is noteworthy that prepositions are, by their grammatical nature, relational terms in the first place and they denote their meaning through the syntactic relations to words they modify or by which they are headed. In 2 Kgs 17:5a the preposition בְְּ is related syntactically to the verb √ָ הָעַל (heading the verb phrase) and to the noun אֶָרֶֶץ (headed by the preposition). The syntactic function of the preposition בְְּ and, in consequence, its meaning in 2 Kgs 17:5a will be examined in the next part of this paper. Let this study be limited now to pointing out possible senses that the preposition בְְּ denotes in biblical Hebrew.

The remarkable variety of senses that the preposition בְְּ has in the Hebrew Bible can be noticed on the diagram on the next page.34 They may be categorised in four groups by types of relation they signify: [1] spatial senses (in relations of place), [2] temporal senses (in relations of time), [3] circumstantial senses (in relations of circumstances, such as origin, instrument, agent, interest, cause, and goal), [4] and senses that are more strictly connected with grammatical relations between בְְּ and noun/verb phrases. Despite the self-contained meaning of the preposition בְְּ (“in”) is minimal, it signifies, by linguistic economy, a remarkable diversity of senses. It may be argued, however, that the spatial senses of בְְּ are basic.35

Having singled out the chief senses of the preposition בְְּ in the Hebrew Bible, an attempt to define its meaning in 2 Kgs 17:5a can be made. Theoretically, three possible meanings of בְְּ may be singled out in this verse. The preposition בְְּ, being there a modifier of the verb of locomotion (√ָ הָעַל), may have a spatial sense, marking either a goal of such movement: “to go up to the whole country,” or an area moved through: “to go up through the whole country.” In the third possible sense it would express the relation of circumstance, specifically, of adversative agent with a meaning “to go up against the whole country.” In order to establish the exact sense of בְְּ the syntax of the entire clause will have to be examined in the second part of this paper.

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33 Even the definite article, which is highly functional, contains “some” meaning, namely, the concept of definiteness.
in relations of place (movement not involved)
in / at a point
בָּאָר (Judg 16:4, in Nahal Soreq)
on a surface
בָּאָר (Gen 31:54, on the mountain)
within an area
בַּשָּׁדֶה (Deut 12:15, within all your gates)
amid a domain
בְּעָמִּים, בְּהָרָיִם (Ps 57:10, among the nations)
in relations of place (movement involved)
goals of movement
בָּי (Exod 14:28, [go] into the sea)
areas moved through
בָּאָר (Gen 24:65, [go] through the field)

Spatial senses

in relations of physical circumstances (beth comitantiae)
בָּאָר קָרָה (Ezek 3:12, [weeping] aloud)
ment of mental circumstances
בְּשָׁנָה (Isa 12:3, [draw water] joyfully)
of instruments (non-animates)
בָּשָׁנָה (Mic 4:14, [smite] with the rod)
of agents (animates)
בַּאֲרִים (Gen 9:6, [shall be shed] by a human)
of disadvantage
בְּכָל־עֵת (Gen 16:12, [his hand] against all)
of material
בָּשְׁלָמֵי רַשּׁיָּם (1 Kgs 6:15, with planks of cypress)
of price paid (beth pretii)
בָּשְׁלֹחְיוֹ (1 Kgs 10:29, for six hundred [sheqels])
of price exchanged
בַּשָּׁפֶה (2 Sam 23:17, at the risk of their lives)
of specification
בָּשָׁפֶה (Lev 5:22, with regard to these)
of manner
בָּשָׁפֶה (Isa 16:9, [weep] like Jazer weeps)
of estimation
בָּשָׁפֶה (Sol 1:8, the most beautiful among women)
of identity (beth entia)
בָּשָׁפֶה (Exod 6:3, as El Shaddai)
of reason or originating force (casual beth)
בָּשָׁפֶה (Gen 18:28, because of [on account of] five)

Temporal senses

in relations of time within noun phrases
בָּאָר (2 Kgs 17:1, in the twelfth year)
בָּשָׁדֶה (Prov 17:17, at all times)
בָּשָׁדֶה (Ps 109:13, in [the time of] a future generation)
 것이다 (Ps 46:2, in [the time of] trouble)
in relations of time within verb phrases
בָּאָר (1 Sam 30:1, when [David] came)

Circumstantial senses

with relation to noun phrases
relation of distribution
בַּשָּׁדֶה (2 Chr 30:21, day by day)
relation of partition
בַּשָּׁדֶה (Ps 141:4, some of their dainties)
with relation to verb phrases (marking objects)
verbs of extending, touching, fastening
בַּשָּׁדֶה (Gen 37:22, you shall not lay a hand on him)
verbs of striking at, reaching to, filling
בַּשָּׁדֶה (1 Sam 19:8, he struck them)
verbs of sense perception
בַּשָּׁדֶה (1 Sam 9:5, when they came to the land of Zaph)
verbs of emotion
בַּשָּׁדֶה (Exod 19:9, they will trust in you)
verbs of speaking
בַּשָּׁדֶה (Deut 6:7, talk about them)
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[C] Semantics of כֹֹּּל

The third lexeme in the phrase under examination is the noun כֹֹּּּּ (in the construct form כָֹּּל־). It is a very frequent term occurring about 5408 times in the Hebrew Bible, stemming from the root √כָּל to be complete, make complete, and originating historically in the form *kull(u) which denotes the concept of totality. The examination of the usage of כֹֹּּּ in the Hebrew Bible demonstrates that it occurs both [I] in the absolute meaning and [II] in the construct relation to noun/verb phrases.

[I] In absolute usage the noun כֹֹּּּ expresses the aspect of entirety and means “the whole, everything, everybody, all.” In some co-texts the noun כֹֹּּּ acquires the technical-cosmological meaning “universe” describing the entire creation in relation to God, the creator of all (Jer 10:16; 51:19; cf. Ps 103:19; Isa 44:24; Job 42:2).

[II] Very frequently the noun כֹֹּּּ occurs in the construct relation to noun phrases. In different co-texts it denotes a variety of semantic aspects of totality. In some cases the aspect of totality is expressed not by the construct relation but by other syntactical features, such as the apposition, the casus pendens and the adverbial accusative.

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37 Cf. Even-Shoshan, New Concordance of the Bible, 534c–542c.
40 In biblical Hebrew the third radical of this term is evident only in suffixed forms such as, for example, כֹּּּּ “all of them,” כֹּּּּ נ “all of us.”
41 It occurs both in the definitive form (for example, Exod 29:24 “you shall place everything,” Gen 16:12 “his hand [is] against everybody,” Ps 14:3 “they all have gone astray,” Eccl 3:19 “they all have the same life breath”) and in the indeterminate one (for instance, Job 13:1 “my eyes have seen everything,” Jer 44:12 “they all will meet their end”).
43 Cf. 2 Sam 2:9 וְכָֹּּּ אִָּּּ לָָּּּ יִָּּּּ יָּּּ אֵּּּּ׃ “all Israel,” Isa 29:11 וְכָֹּּּ הָּּּ הָּּּ שִׁיָּּּ׃ “entire vision.”
44 Cf. 1 Sam 2:13 וְכָֹּּּ וּכָֹּּּ וּכָֹּּּ “each time someone offered sacrifice,” Ps 74:3 וְכָֹּּּ וּכָֹּּּ וּכָֹּּּ “[the] enemy has destroyed everything.”
45 Cf. 2 Sam 1:9 וְכָֹּּּ וּכָֹּּּ וּכָֹּּּ “because my life still [lingers] in me.”
With reference to 2 Kgs 17:5a it shall be noticed that it is the noun כֹּל that heads the construct relation in the noun phrase כֹּל-הָָאָָרֶֶץ. This syntactic feature will be examined later in this paper. For the moment it can be said that כֹּל expresses in this verse the quantitative aspect of the noun אֶָרֶֶץ, and the phrase means literally “the whole of the land,” and so the realm denoted by the noun אֶָרֶֶץ in 2 Kgs 17:5a is meant in its entirety. In the further analysis the referent of this noun will be examined.

[D] Semantics of אֶָרֶֶץ

The term אֶָרֶֶץ is one of the most frequent nouns in the Hebrew Bible occurring 2504 times. Its basic meaning may be defined as referring to the whole space “in which man thinks of himself as living.” The vast range of semantic nuances denoted by this lexeme in biblical Hebrew proves its polysemous character. Its new meanings are generated in varied co-texts and contexts by means of semantic shifts (generalisation and specialisation), and so the following senses of אֶָרֶֶץ can be singled out: [I] the cosmological meaning, [II] the physical meaning, [III] the geographical and [IV] political meaning. It is noteworthy that this term acquires a theological significance in some co-texts. Theological implications, however, do not generate new lexical meanings of the term. They ascribe to אֶָרֶֶץ a pragmatic aspect (theological significance), which is, for methodological reasons, beyond our interest.

[I] In the cosmic sense the noun אֶָרֶֶץ means “(the) earth” as a part of creation established by God. In connection with such cosmological meaning of אֶָרֶֶץ several important concepts are subsequently developed. Concerning the lexical meaning of אֶָרֶֶץ its cosmic sense, strictly speaking, is expressed in the Hebrew Bible with varied nuances. The meaning “earth”

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46 Cf. Even-Shoshan, New Concordance of the Bible, 112a–119b. This common Semitic root is well attested in Acadian (erṣetu), in Ugaritic (ዓይ), in Arabic (ارد) and in Aramaic (אַרְעַא and אָרֶע); cf. H.H. Schmid, “ארץ,” TLOT I, 172–173.


48 In this presentation the following studies are adopted: M. Ottooson, “ארץ,” TDOT I, 388–405; Schmid, “אֶָרֶֶץ,” 172-179; the entry אֶָרֶֶץ, BDB, 75b–76b; אֶָרֶֶץ, HALOT I, 90b–91a. One should observe that the singular form of אֶָרֶֶץ is generally preferred in all senses. The plural form אֲָרֶָצוַֹת, occurring only in rather late texts, denotes the meaning marked with [III] and [IV] only, when particular territories are intended.


50 For instance, God, the creator, is presented as the one who possesses the earth (cf. Isa 14:25; Ezek 36:5), who exercises his sovereignty over it as its Lord (Josh 3:11, 13; Mic 4:13; Zech 6:5; Ps 97:5), king (Ps 47:3), God (Isa 54:5) and the Most High (Ps 83:19; 97:9; 98:4; 100:1), and the one who manifests his dominion and power over the earth so that it trembles and quakes (Isa 13:3; Joel 2:10), it staggers and sways (Isa 24:19), and mourns (Isa 24:4; Hos 4:3). In such co-texts the term אֶָרֶֶץ acquires a theological significance for statements defining YHWH’s sovereignty over the whole earth, and for the theology of the promised land (cf. Deut 1:8, 36).
occurs to stand in an antithesis to heaven, which corresponds to a belief about the bipar-
tite division of the universe.51 Sometimes, a tripartite worldview is intended in the Hebrew
Bible, namely, that the whole world consists of heaven, earth, and sea (cf. Exod 20:4, 11).52
The term under examination occurs also in the meaning “underworld” which evokes just
another type of worldview, namely, that the universe consists of heaven (as the dwelling
place of God), earth (as the dwelling place of living creatures), sea, and underworld (as
the abode of the dead) (cf. Ps 135:6).53 There is also a vast range of semantic nuances ex-
pressed by the term in question in specialized co-texts.54

[II] The term under examination occurs in the physical sense “ground,” as well. At times
different aspects of such a sense are accentuated. Sometimes, אֶָרֶֶץ means “surface of
the ground,”55 or “soil, ground” when it refers to its products.56 Occasionally the term אֶָרֶֶץ
is used metaphorically, too.57 One can also notices an idiomatic expression כִֹּּבְרֶַת־אֶָרֶֶץ (or

51 Heaven and earth describe the whole reality (world) created by God (cf. Gen 1:1; 14:19; Ps 89:12). The earth is
dressed place of men (Gen 1:28; Ps 115:16; Ezek 41:16; 43:14), called sometimes "habitants of the earth" (Jer 25:19; Zeph 1:18; Ps 33:14), or "nations of the earth" (Gen 18:18; Jer 26:6; Zech 12:3), or "peoples of the
earth" (Deut 28:10; 1 Kgs 8:43; Ezek 31:12). It is also the place where wild beasts live (Isa 18:6; Jer 15:3;
Psalms 79:2; Prov 30:24) and varied kinds of plants grow (Gen 1:11, 29; 7:3; Amos 7:12). From various texts,
referring to אֶָרֶֶץ, further information about the form of the earth may also be read. These pieces of information
correspond with the worldview beliefs held through the Ancient Near East. It is said that the earth has four
corners (Isa 11:12; Ezek 7:2; Job 38:13), an edge or hem (Isa 24:16), an end (Deut 28:49; Isa 5:26; Ps 61:3;
Prov 17:24) or ends (Isa 40:24; Job 28:24), sides or remote parts (Jer 6:22; 50:41) and a centre or 'navel'
(Ezek 38:12).

52 In such a view “earth” stands in an antithesis to sea as a “dry land,” arisen out of primal waters (Gen 1:10;
Prov 8:27, 28), resting still upon columns (cf. Gen 7:3; Ps 24:2; 136:6) and having the vault of
heaven anchored in itself (Amos 9:6).

53 The term אֶָרֶֶץ implies this sense in few expressions, such as “the nether world” (Exod 31:14; 32:18), “depths of
the earth” (Isa 44:23; Ezek 26:20; Ps 63:10; 139:15). Sporadically, אֶָרֶֶץ alone involves the concept of the under-
world (Exod 15:12; Ps 22:30; Isa 26:19; Jer 17:13).

54 Occasionally, the term אֶָרֶֶץ, being a part of God’s creation, denotes by metonymy an aspect of durability
(Ps 78:69; Eccl 1:4). Sometimes it occurs metaphorically in the meaning of earthly existence (Ecc 5:1; 7:20;
8:14, 16; 11:2). By means of metonymy it means occasionally “the inhabitants of the earth” (Gen 11:1; 41:57;
1 Sam 17:46; 1 Kgs 10:24). The term occurs also in the idiomatic phrase כִֹּּבְרֶַת־אֶָרֶֶץ (Josh 23:14;
1 Kgs 2:2) “going the way of all the earth,” which expresses the inevitability of death.

55 On such a surface people, animals and things stand (Gen 1:26; 8:19; Exod 8:12), rain and dew fall (Gen 7:4;
Exod 9:33; Job 5:10), and so forth (cf. Ps 147:6; Isa 47:1; Ezek 26:16; Amos 3:5; 9:9). When the term under dis-
cussion is modified by the locative morpheme אַָרְֶצָה, it refers to the physical movement towards the ground.
In this meaning it occurs commonly with verbs, such as "fell" in the Qal "to fall" (Gen 44:14), מִפְּרָת Hishtaphal "to
prostrate" (Gen 24:52; 2 Sam 14:33), מִפְּרֶָא Qal "to bow down" (Exod 34:4).

56 It is said that it gives, for example, fatness (Gen 27:28), increase (Lev 26:4; Deut 32:22; Judg 6:4; Ezek 34:27;
Psalms 67:7), fruit (Num 13:20; Deut 1:25; Jer 2:7), shoots (Isa 61:11), produce (Lev 23:39; Josh 5:12), bread
(Ps 104:14; Job 28:5), and so forth.

57 In some co-texts the form אֶָרֶֶץ has no direct relation to the physical movement “to the ground.” For example,
the expression "no word of YHWH will fall to the ground” in 2 Kgs 10:10 means by metaphor that none of
his words will remain unfulfilled. The expression "to pour out one’s liver on the ground” in Lam 2:11 means
metaphorically "to be wholly in despair." The term אֶָרֶֶץ is also used in expressions such as "to be cut down to
the ground” (Isa 14:12, אֲוֹלֶָא Niphal + מַנְחָּל), and "to crush to the ground” (Ps 143:3, מַלְכֵל Piel + מַנְחָּל) which
which refers to measurements of distance and means “some long distance” (Gen 35:16; 48:7; 2 Kgs 5:19).

[III] The term אֶָרֶֶץ occurs in the geographical sense “land, region” with reference to a circumscribed territory. It occurs in the geographical meaning in expressions that define individual regions. They are, in fact, perceived as a kind of “microcosm” if one considers that the earth is conceived in the Hebrew Bible as “extended continuously through the continents.” Rarely, אֶָרֶֶץ means a “parcel of land” (Gen 23:15; Exod 23:10). By metonymy this term alone may refer to “the inhabitants of the land” (Lev 19:29; Ezek 14:13; 1 Sam 14:25; 2 Sam 15:23). It can also be noticed that an idiomatic use of the term is employed in the expression עַַם־הָָאָָרֶֶץ (“people of the land”) which signifies “common people” in contrast to officials and princes. This idiom refers either to non-Israelites (Gen 23:7, 12, 13; Num 14:9) or to Israelites (Lev 20:4; Ezek 7:27). In some co-texts the idiom refers to the “land aristocracy” (2 Kgs 15:5; 16:15).

[IV] The term אֶָרֶֶץ acquires in some co-texts the political meaning “country” in the sense of a governed area. It is noteworthy that the meaning of אֶָרֶֶץ in relation to the territory of individual tribes (for example, “the land of Ephraim/Gad/Benjamin” and so forth, cf. Deut 34:2; Judg 21:21; 1 Sam 13:7) stands on the border between the geographical and political meaning.

means respectively “to be defeated” and “to defeat” (cf. similar expressions entailing other verbs in Ps 147:6; Isa 26:5; Ezek 28:17; Obad 3). 58 The lexeme אֶָרֶֶץ means frequently a “tract of land, region” that may be further specified as, for example, a wilderness (Deut 32:10; Prov 21:19), a dry and weary land (Ps 63:2; cf. 143:6; Isa 32:2), a parched land (Isa 53:2; Hos 2:5; Joel 2:20; Ps 107:35), a dry and thirsty land (Ezek 19:13), a land of drought and darkness (Jer 2:6), a land not sown (Deut 29:22; cf. Jer 2:2), a salt land (Jer 17:6), a terrible land (Isa 21:1), and a land of darkness (Isa 45:19; Jer 2:31).

59 Usually, אֶָרֶֶץ occurring in geographical sense, is defined either [a] by an indication of direction (“the land of the north” Jer 3:18; Zech 6:6; “the land of the south” Gen 24:62; Judg 1:15; Zech 6:6; “the land of the sunset = the west” Zech 8:7; “the land of the sunrise = the east” Zech 8:7; “the land of the east” Gen 25:6); or [b] by a topographical indication (“the land of the circle = the plain of Jordan” Gen 19:28; “the valley region” Josh 17:16; “the land of the plain” Jer 48:21; “the garden land” Jer 2:7); or [c] by a name of a city or a mountain (“the land of Mizpa” Josh 11:3; “the land of Tappuah” Josh 17:8; “the land of Ararat” 2 Kgs 19:37; Isa 37:19; “the land of Moriah” Gen 22:2); or [d] by the relation to either a person or a group (“native land” Gen 11:28; Jer 22:10; “the land of the fathers” Gen 31:3; cf. 48:21; “the land of your sojournings” Exod 6:4; Ezek 20:38; “the land of their possession” Lev 14:34; Josh 22:4; “the land of his possession” Deut 2:12; “the land of his dominion” 1 Kgs 9:19; Jer 51:28; “the land of their captivity” 1 Kgs 8:47; cf. Neh 3:36; “the land of their enemies” Lev 26:41, 44).

60 Stadelmann, Hebrew Conception of the World, 127.

61 In such a meaning the term can be subsequently defined either [1] by a proper name of the land (for example, “the land of Israel” 1 Sam 13:19; Ezek 47:18; “the land of Egypt” Gen 41:19; Exod 5:12; Jer 44:26; “the land of Canaan” Gen 17:8; Josh 24:3; “the land of Edom” Num 20:23; Judg 5:4), or [2] by a gentilic name (for instance, “the land of the Canaanites” Exod 13:5; Josh 13:4; “the land of the Philistines” Exod 13:17; 1 Sam 27:1; “the land of the Ammonites” Deut 2:19), or [3] by a name of pertinent ruler (“the land of Sihon” Deut 4:46; “the land of Og” Deut 4:47; “the land of Ramses” Gen 47:11), or by a personal suffix referring to a ruler (Gen 20:15; Deut 4:47).
The relations of meanings expressed by אֶָרֶֶץ and by its synonyms shall be examined, too.62 There are a few lexemes that occur in the synonymous meaning to אֶָרֶֶץ. Some of them correspond to certain cosmic aspects of the lexeme under discussion: כֹּּל-הָָאָָרֶֶץ "habitable part of the world" (Isa 14:21; 24:4; Jer 10:12; Ps 19:5), דָּבָּר "space of the world" (besides its temporal meaning "lifetime, age" Isa 38:11; Ps 17:14; 49:2), יָּבָּשָׁ "dry land, ground" (Gen 1:9; Exod 4:9; 14:29; Isa 44:3) and מָּעָּז "underworld" (1 Sam 2:6; Ps 30:4; Isa 5:14); some others – only to the geographical ones: מָּדְבְָּ "wilderness" (Gen 4:20; Num 10:12; 2 Sam 17:49; Isa 41:18), מָּדָּר "wilderness" (Isa 35:1; Jer 2:6; 50:12). The term מָּדָּר demonstrates more complex synonymy to the term אֶָרֶֶץ and means in varied co-texts "the entire inhabited earth" (Gen 12:3; Deut 7:6; Isa 24:21), "ground yielding sustenance" (Gen 2:5; Exod 34:26; 2 Sam 9:10), "soil, humus" (Isa 45:9; 1 Sam 4:12; 2 Sam 1:2), "a piece of ground" (Gen 47:18; Deut 5:16; Isa 14:2), "land, territory, country" (Gen 47:19; Lev 20:24; Isa 19:17). By comparing these terms with our lexeme it can be noticed that מָּדָּר, being highly polysemous, covers a much wider semantic spectrum than other terms. Their sense relations may be defined as hyponymy (inclusion), in other words, that the specific senses expressed by the terms listed above (which should be called cohyponyms) are somehow included in much wider semantic spectrum of מָּדָּר. Additionally, these cohyponyms themselves present sense relations either of overlapping (for example, between מָּדְבְָּ and מָּדָּר, between כֹּּל-הָָאָָרֶֶץ and מָּעָּז, and between מָּדְבְָּ and מָּדָּר), or of contiguity (for example, between מָּדְבְָּ and מָּדָּר).

Considering the meaning of מָּדָּר in 2 Kgs 17:5a, it occurs there in the political sense “country,” even if the term is not specified explicitly. From the narrative point of view, in the co-text of 2 Kgs 17:1–6, the expression כֹּּל-הָָאָָרֶֶץ is connected with the figure of king Hosea. Therefore, “the whole country” in v. 5a refers to the whole territory governed by this king.

3. Level of Sentence: Syntax and Semantics of the Clause

Having established the self-contained meaning of individual words of the clause under examination, the syntactic analysis of 2 Kgs 17:5a, כֹּּל-הָָאָָרֶֶץ מֶֶלֶךְ-אַָּשּׁוּרֶ וַַּעַַּל may be proceeded with. Three successively occurring phrases can be singled out in this clause: the verb phrase (VP) וַַּעַַּל, literally “and he went up,” the predicate of the clause, morphologically composed of the verb itself (יַעַַל) and a conjunction וַַ integrated with it (the conjunction וַַ “and” with a “sequence morpheme”); next, the noun phrase (NP) מֶֶלֶךְ-אַָּשּׁוּרֶ, literally "the king of Assyria," being the subject of the clause, and the preposition phrase (PP) כֹּּל-הָָאָָרֶֶץ, literally...
“in the whole country,” being the adverbial modifier of place, syntactically consisting of the preposition מִן and the NP כָֹל־הֶָאֶרֶץ. The schema below presents the String Constituent Analysis of this clause.

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  NP PP NP VP
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The study of semantics at the sentence level consists of the examination of the meaning expressed by syntactic relations in the clause. In this regard, the syntactic analysis of the verb עָלָה Qal modified by various prepositions, with particular interest in its syntax with the preposition מִן, is a key-tool for the interpretation of the phrase in question. The diagram on the next page presents a general overview of the syntax of עָלָה Qal when it heads various prepositions (the preposition מִן will be discussed separately).

This diagram presents concisely the meaning of VPs in which the verb עָלָה Qal heads various prepositions (or more specifically, PPs being headed by various prepositions). When עָלָה Qal is used with the physical meaning (an upward movement) prepositions modifying the verb function as syntactic devices denoting the point of departure (מִן “from,” עָלָה “up to”), the point of arrival (the goal of movement: בַּר “to,” אֶל “to,” עִַם “on, upon,” עָלָה “up to”), or add other nuances to the movement described by עָלָה Qal such as, for example, the aspect of companionship (אֶל “with,” בַּר “with,” עִַם “after”) or its antonym, separateness (מִן “from, without”).

With respect to the technical-military meaning of עָלָה Qal, it usually governs the preposition מִן, and occasionally, the preposition בְְּ as its stylistic variation (see an obvious example in Kgs 17:5a). However, as already observed, the ellipsis of these prepositions does not result in the loss of the technical meaning, and thus, the verb עָלָה alone may express such a meaning as well. It means that the technical-military meaning of this verb does not depend on the syntactic relation to the prepositions, since it itself is capable enough of expressing such a sense. However, other prepositions add further nuances to such a technical meaning of עָלָה Qal, for example, they may denote the point of departure: “to march up from...” (when the verb is modified by מִן), or the position in attack: “to attack from behind...” (when it is modified by קָרָא), or to point out an accomplice of an attack: “to attack in company with” (when it is modified by the preposition מִן or בְְּ).
“to go up in company with sb” Gen 50:7, 14; Exod 12:38; 1 Sam 2:19; 2 Sam 19:35 with the tech. meaning of the verb:
“to attack in company with sb” Josh 1:3

“to go up to [a place]” שׁ = שׁ marks the goal of movement
1 Sam 25:35; Ezra 1:3; Job 20:6; Isa 22:1 with the tech. meaning of the verb:
“to go on battle (וַלָּיָן)” 1 Kgs 20:26; 2 Kgs 16:5; Isa 7:1

“to go up to sth/sb” שׁ = שׁ marks the goal of movement
Gen 44:34; Exod 19:23; 24; Deut 25:7; 1 Sam 15:34; 2 Kgs 22:4; Ezra 7:7 with the tech. meaning of the verb:
“to attack sb/sth” Num 13:31; 1 Sam 7:7; 2 Kgs 16:9; 2 Chr 18:2, 28; Isa 36:10; Jer 35:11; 49:28; 50:21

“to go up on sth/sb” שׁ = שׁ marks the point of departure
Gen 38:12; Exod 10:12, 14; Josh 2:8; 1 Sam 1:11; 14:10; 1 Kgs 12:32 with the tech. meaning of the verb:
“to attack sb/sth” Jos 22:12, 33; Jdg 6:3; 15:10; 18:9; 1 Kgs 14:25; 15:17; 20:22; 2 Kgs 12:18; 17:3; 18:9; 13, 25; 23:29; 1 Chr 14:10; 2 Chr 12:2, 9; 16:1; 24:23; 36:6, 17; Isa 7:1; 8:7; 36:1, 11; Jer 50:3, 21; Ezek 38:11, 16; Joel 1:6; Nah 2:2; Zech 14:16

In a nutshell, it is always שׁ Qal that syntactically heads the VPs. It should be highlighted, however, that the relation between the verb and its preposition modifiers varies in intensity from a very strict semantic linkage (when שׁ Qal occurring in the technical-military meaning governs the prepositions ל or את, and as their antonym) to a rather loose one (when the meaning of prepositions does not depend directly on the meaning of the verb). The question to be answered is, whether the preposition ל in general, and in 2 Kgs 17:5a in particular, belongs to the first or to the second “category,” in other words, whether שׁ Qal governs objects modified by ל in the technical-military meaning. In order
to answer this question the syntactic and semantic relation between \(\text{לָעַל} + \text{Qal}\) and \(\text{בְּ}\) needs to be examined. The diagram below presents a concise summary of semantic nuances expressed by the preposition \(\text{בְּ}\) when headed by \(\text{לָעַל} + \text{Qal}\).

The preposition \(\text{בְּ}\) when governed by \(\text{לָעַל} + \text{Qal}\) occurs predominantly in the spatial meaning (besides a few occurrences with the circumstantial meaning) by marking either the goal of movement, or the area moved through, or the area within which such a movement is performed.\(^{63}\) It is true especially in relation to geographical places and topographical areas. In almost all cases it is unmistakably evident from their co-text that the preposition \(\text{בְּ}\) expresses spatial meaning. There are, however, three passages (marked with an asterisk on the diagram) where the adversative meaning of the preposition is sometimes argued, as if \(\text{לָעַל} + \text{Qal}\) in the technical-military meaning governed \(\text{בְּ}\), in other words, as if \(\text{לָעַל} + \text{Qal} \text{ “to attack” + בְּ}\) were a synonym of the formulation \(\text{לָעַל} + \text{Qal}\).\(^{64}\) These passages needs to be discussed in detail.


\(^{64}\) Hans F. Fuhs (םָאִּיר, 84) classifies \(\text{לָעַל} + \text{בְּ}\) in Isa 7:6 as the technical term in addition to the classical construction \(\text{לָעַל} + \text{בְּ}\).
The first passage is Jer 48:18,ךְבָעַלָה מֶוַֹאָכִי שֹׁדֵד בְַּת־דִִּיבוַֹן יֹשֶׁבֶת בַצָָּמֶָא יַּשְׁבִי מִֶכָֹּּבָֹד רְֶדִי מִֶבְצָרֶָיִךְ שִׁחֵַת. Some translations (NRSV, NASV) render the Hebrew text in the following way: “Descend from glory, and sit on the parched ground, o daughter dwelling in Dibon! For the ravager of Moab has come up against you; he has destroyed your fortresses.” In such a rendering the expressionךבָעַלָה is understood as a technical-military expression, being an equivalent ofךעַלַיךְ. However, by considering the inner parallelism within the verse, the PPךבָּ corresponds withךמִֶבְצָרֶָיךְ “your fortresses,” not withךבת־דִִּיבוַֹן “the daughter of Dibon,” and thus,ךבָּ should be understood as referring to “your city.” In such a case the phraseךבָּ expresses “entering the city” with the spatial meaning ofבְְּwhich marks the goal of movement. Therefore, it is possible to interpret this passage in the following way: “Descend from glory, and sit on the parched ground, o daughter dwelling in Dibon! For the ravager of Moab has entered your town; he has destroyed your fortresses” (cf. the translation of JPS T anak).

Another passage to be discussed is Isa 7:6,ךְמֶֶלֶוְַנַמְֶלִיךְ אֵָלֵינוּ וְַנַבְקִעֶַנָָּהָ וּנְקִיצֶנָָּהָ בִיהָוּדָהָ נַעֲַלֶהָ בְֶּן־טָ֣בְאַָל אֵָתָּ הָָָָבָה וַַאֵָלֵינָּ. The first clause,הָבִיהָוּדָהָ נַעֲַלֶהָ, is usually rendered as “let's march against Judah” (cf. the translations of NASV, NRSV, JPS Tanak) which reveals the technical-military meaning of√הָעל Qal +בְְּperceived there. It is unequivocal that √הָעל Qal occurs there in such a sense. It is noteworthy that the clauses which follow, namely, בַּאֵָלֵינָּוְַנַבְקִעֶַנָָּהָ וּנְקִיצֶנָָּהָ מֶֶלֶוְַנַמְֶלִיךְ, unfold a series of actions to be performed in consequence of the military aggression: “let us tear it apart” (√קוַץ Hiphil), “let us conquer it for ourselves” (√בקע Hiphil), “let us set up [the son of Tabeel] as king in the midst of it” (√מֶלך Hiphil). All these actions are connected with each other and fit perfectly the narrative logic if one retains the spatial meaning of the prepositionבְְּ, not depriving the verb √עלה, at the same time, of its technical-military meaning. It thus appears that the passage in question may be understood better, as follows, “let us march up through Judah and tear it apart and conquer it....”

The same narrative logic may be identified in 2 Chr 21:17 where one readsהָבִיהָוּדָוַַיַַּעֲַלוּ לְבֵית־הַָמֶּׅלֶךְ הַָנִָּמְֶצָאָ כָֹּּל־הָָרְֶכָוּ אֵָת וַַיַַּשְׁבְּוּ וַַיֵַַּבְקָעוּהָ. It is possible to render this text in a following way: “they marched up through Judah and conquered it and carried off all the property found, that belonged to the king’s palace.” The unfolding actions of this verse are linked with each other and form a logical chain of events, which, as can be argued, fits the narrative better if both the technical-military sense of√עלה Qal and the spatial meaning ofבְְּare understood there. It is possible, then, to state that both lexemes, linked syntactically, are connected more loosely from the semantic point of view, in other words, thatבְְּis not a constituent of the technical-military term involving√עלה Qal.

Before drawing conclusions for this part of our analysis, it is necessary to study the meaning of the PPךבְּכָָּּל־הָָאָָרֶֶץ, in particular, the semantic relation between the prepositionבְְּand the nounאֶָרֶֶץ. It is noteworthy that PPs consisting ofבְְּandאֶָרֶֶץ, when headed by verbs of locomotion, occur in the meaning of either goals of movement or areas moved

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The Masoretic vocalization suggests to read the consonantal writing //---------------- as instead of an expected reading---------------- (the so-called Qere-Ketiv).
through. Such PPs are frequently headed by verbs, such as \(\text{רֶעָב}\) Qal: “to pass through, traverse” an area from one point to another (Gen 12:6; Exod 12:12; Deut 2:27; Judg 12:15; Josh 18:8; Jer 2:6); \(\text{רֶעָב}\) Qal “to go [through the land]” (1 Kgs 18:5; Ps 73:9), in Hiphil “to bring sb/sth [through the land]” (Josh 24:3), in Hithpael “to walk [through the land] back and forth” (Josh 18:4-8; Job 1:7; 2:2; Ps 116:9; Zech 6:7); \(\text{שׁוַט}\) Qal “to traverse, to roam [through the land]” (2 Sam 24:8; Job 1:7; 2:2); \(\text{דָּבָר}\) Qal “to enter, come [into the land]” (1 Sam 9:5; Ezek 11:16; it occurs sometimes in the technical meaning “to attack, invade” (Josh 2:18; Judg 6:5; 2 Kgs 6:23; 13:20; Mic 5:4, 5); in such cases \(\text{כְּ}\) is the constituent of the technical term \(\text{דָּבָר} + \text{כְּ}\). It does not occur, in my opinion, in the case of \(\text{דָּבָר} + \text{כְּ}\).

With respect to the verb \(\text{דָּבָר}\), 2 Kgs 17:5a is the only passage where the PP, built out of \(\text{כְּ}\) and \(\text{כְּ} + \text{כְּ}\), is headed by this verb. H.A. Brongers claims that \(\text{דָּבָר} + \text{כְּ}\) means generally “to traverse [the land]” (das Land durchziehen), both flat and hilly regions, being a synonym of \(\text{רֶעָב}\). Although one may concur with him about the spatial meaning of the preposition \(\text{כְּ}\) in such an expression, it should be argued that the technical-military meaning of the verb \(\text{דָּבָר}\) cannot be ignored when it is evident. In conclusion, it should be highlighted that irrespective of the meaning of the verb \(\text{דָּבָר}\), the preposition \(\text{כְּ}\) occurs regularly with the spatial meaning when it refers to geographical places, areas and lands.

In order to draw some final conclusions, all the arguments already expressed should be collected. It has been demonstrated that \(\text{דָּבָר} + \text{כְּ}\) with the technical-military meaning “to attack, invade” governs normally the prepositions \(\text{לָע} + \text{כְּ}\), or expresses such a meaning by itself (with an elision of the preposition). With respect to other prepositions, it has been observed that they amplify in various ways the meaning expressed by the verb \(\text{דָּבָר}\). On the other hand, the preposition \(\text{כְּ}\) occurs predominantly with the spatial meaning both in relation to the verb \(\text{דָּבָר}\) and to the noun \(\text{כְּ}\). The biblical passages, where the adversative meaning of \(\text{כְּ}\) headed by \(\text{דָּבָר}\) is argued, are debatable, and in my opinion, the spatial meaning of the preposition fits better the narrative logic of the respective contexts and should be retained. To sum up, there is no incontrovertible evidence for the statement that \(\text{דָּבָר}\) governs the preposition \(\text{כְּ}\) in the technical-military meaning (as a synonym of \(\text{דָּבָר} + \text{כְּ}\)). There are, however, solid grounds, both semantic and syntactic, for claiming the spatial meaning of \(\text{כְּ}\) in the clause under examination.

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66 Cf. GKC, §119h.
69 Confront the verb \(\text{דָּבָר}\) with other verbs of the realm of warfare that govern objects modified by the preposition \(\text{כְּ}\), such as, for example, \(\text{הָאָב}\) Qal “to come against, attack” (Josh 2:18; Judg 6:5; 2 Kgs 6:23; 13:20; Mich 5:4, 5), \(\text{לָע} + \text{כְּ}\) Niphal “to wage war against” (Exod 17:9; Josh 10:31; 1 Sam 12:9; 19:8; 2 Kgs 3:21), \(\text{לָע} + \text{כְּ}\) “to encamp against” (Judg 9:50).
In keeping with conclusions of the semantic study and of the present analysis, the phrase וַיַַעַַל מֶֶלֶךְ־אַָשּׁוּרֶ בְְּכָָאל־הָָארֶֶץ in 2 Kgs 17:5a expresses three aspects: 1) the technical-military meaning of the verb √ הָּعلى; 2) the nuance of its physical meaning, namely, an upward movement; 3) the spatial meaning of בְְּ marking an area moved through. It is thus proposed to render the Hebrew text in the following way: “And then the king of Assyria marched up throughout the whole country.” The meaning of the English term “to march up” implies both military operations (it expresses the technical meaning of our verb) and a motion upwards at the same time (it expresses the physical movement as well). Moreover, the rendering “throughout the whole country” respects the spatial meaning of the preposition בְְּ.

In such a translation of 2 Kgs 17:5a all three postulated aspects of the Hebrew text are expressed.

Conclusions

The expression וַיַַעַַל מֶֶלֶךְ־אַָשּׁוּרֶ בְְּכָָאל־הָָארֶֶץ in 2 Kgs 17:5a presents an interpretative difficulty concerning the meaning of the verb √ הָּعلى and of the preposition בְְּ, and further, their semantic and syntactic relation in the clause under examination. It is remarkable that these Hebrew lexemes and their syntax are interpreted variously, generating a considerable plurality of different translations, in other words, interpretations of 2 Kgs 17:5a. Five various sets of renderings of 2 Kgs 17:5a may be identified from among translations consulted in this paper, oscillating from the most neutral statements of the Assyrian king’s coming up through the whole country to those that clearly expresses his invasion of the entire land. It appears that the semantic and syntactic difficulty of the clause, besides its apparent simplicity, underlies various interpretations and translations.

In order to solve this problem, it has been necessary to study the semantics and syntax of the clause in question, consisting of the self-contained meaning analysis of all the constituent words of the clause (the level of individual lexemes), and of the study of semantics and syntax at the sentence level. As a result of such a study, it has been established that verb √ הָּعلى occurs in 2 Kgs 17:5a in the technical-military meaning “to invade, attack, march against,” belonging to the vocabulary of warfare. This sense of the verb is unequivocally recognisable in the co-text of the clause by the occurrence of other verbs pertaining to warfare. In fact, the motif of invasion is present in vv. 3–6 right from the beginning of the narrative (וַיַַעַַל עַָלָהָ "he attacked him” in v. 3a). There is no doubt that the actions of the Assyrian king are military operations, and thus, the technical-military meaning of √ הָּعلى is unquestionable with respect to its both occurrences in v. 5.

The technical sense of √ הָּعلى is stereotypical in biblical Hebrew, involving the sociological context of the Hebrew language. This verb acquires a notion of attacking by a semantic shift of specialisation of its general sense “to go up.” An invasion, in fact, entails usually an ascent up the hillside in order to attack inhabited areas located on elevations. From
historical point of view, the Assyrian troops must have invaded the Levant from the north, having to attack the hill country of Ephraim from the valleys. Both sociolinguistic setting of the military usage of וַיִּעַל and the historical setting of the narrative under examination incline to retain in the rendering of 2 Kgs 17:5a the nuance of an upward movement of the verb, besides its technical meaning. The English term “to march up” combines both aspects very well, since it implies military operations and involves at the same time a movement from below upwards.

The difficulty with the meaning and function of the preposition בְּ concerns its semantic and syntactic relation to the verb וַיִּעַל (in 2 Kgs 17:5a the verb phrase וַיִּעַל heads the preposition phrase בְּכָָל־הָָאָָרֶֶץ). The problem to solve consists in a question of whether the verb governs the preposition בְּ in the technical-military meaning, or not. In this regard the following remarks should be considered altogether:

1. the verb וַיִּעַל governs the preposition עַ (or its stylistic variation אל) in the technical sense,
2. this verb, used stereotypically, may denote such meaning when standing alone as well,
3. other prepositions, when governed by the verb וַיִּעַל in such a sense, may express their “own” meaning, adding further semantic nuances to the phrase in which they occur,
4. the preposition בְּ occurs in the spatial meaning (“to, into, through”) when governed by verbs of locomotion (to which the verb וַיִּעַל belongs),
5. when denoting the physical meaning, the expression וַיִּעַל + בְּ is synonymous to the verb רֶעֶב “to pass through, traverse,”
6. the preposition בְּ modifying the noun ארץ occurs predominantly in the spatial meaning,
7. the retaining of the spatial sense of בְּ in passages where וַיִּעַל occurs in the technical meaning fits their narrative logic better,
8. in the co-text of 2 Kgs 17:5a the prime importance is given to the attack against Samaria (v. 5bc) and not against the surrounding territory, and thus, the spatial meaning of בְּ in v. 5a corresponds perfectly with the narrative dynamics of the passage.

In summary, it appears that the verb וַיִּעַל does not govern the preposition בְּ in the technical-military meaning, and consequently, the preposition בְּ expresses in 2 Kgs 17:5a the spatial nuance of the Assyrian invasion moving through the whole country. Therefore, it is proposed to translate וַיִּעַל + בְּ in 2 Kgs 17:5a, as follows: “he marched up through.” In my opinion, the renderings singled out while stating a problem in the first section of this paper, which appear to ignore either the technical meaning of the verb וַיִּעַל (the renderings marked with [1] on the given diagram), or the spatial meaning of the preposition בְּ (the renderings marked with [3] through [5] on the diagram), impoverish the semantic richness of the sentence under examination and express the meaning of the Hebrew phrase in an insufficient manner. The renderings marked with [2] on the given diagram seem to be the best translational choice, since they reflect both the semantics of the constituent

70 Cf. GKC, §119h.
words of the phrase בְְּכָָל־הָָאָָרֶֶץ and their syntactic interrelations in 2 Kgs 17:5a. They also fit better the logic of the narrative, focused on the attack against Samaria (v. 5bc), but preceded by the mention of the military expedition going throughout the whole country (v. 5a).

Considering the meaning of בְְּכָָל־הָָאָָרֶֶץ, it has been established that the noun אֶָרֶֶץ occurs in this phrase in the political meaning “country,” referring in the co-text to the area governed by king Hosea. The noun כֹֹּל functions there as a quantifier specifying the entirety of the country enduring the Assyrian military operations, in other words, that none of its parts was excluded from the invasion of the Assyrians. Therefore, the noun שֹׁמְֶרֶוַֹן in 2 Kgs 17:5b refers to the city of Samaria and not to the territory of Samaria. With respect to רֶוּשּׁ מֶֶלֶךְ־אַָ, it can be stated that, apart from possible speculations about its referent in the physical world, this phrase does not present any semantic difficulty and means “the king of Assyria,” and that from the narrative point of view it refers to king Shalmaneser mentioned in v. 3a.

Taking into account all above mentioned remarks it is proposed to translate 2 Kgs 17:5a in the following way: “And then the king of Assyria marched up throughout the whole country.” Such a rendering puts together the technical-military meaning of √הָּעָל and the spatial sense of בְְּ, and seems to be the rendering closest to the sense intended in the Hebrew text. Other interpretations (translations), either ignoring or highlighting one of these features only, may be considered incomplete, questionable or unacceptable from the semantic and syntactic point of view.

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