The Origin and Narrative Function of the Conquest of the Land (2 Kgs 17:5a) in the Account of the Fall of Samaria (2 Kgs 17:3–6)

Krzysztof Kinowski
The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin
krzysztof.kinowski@kul.pl
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9740-5500

Abstract: The conquest of the land in 2 Kgs 17:5 is the key element in the account of the fall of Samaria (2 Kgs 17:3–6). The source analysis of this verse leads to the conclusion that its shorter version, witnessed by the Old Latin *Palimpsestus Vindobonensis* (La[115]) where the conquest of the land is not mentioned, may be the oldest recoverable form of this text, allowing for the reconstruction of the true Old Greek text and its Hebrew *Vorlage*, in this regard alternative to the longer version attested to by the Masoretic text. The survey on the possible reasons underlying the postulated textual expansion in 2 Kgs 17:5[MT] indicates that the mention of the attack on the entire country adds drama to the events narrated, emphasises the totality of the Assyrian invasion, and makes the capture of Samaria more significant. In contrast, the *lectio brevior* of the OL appears to be less dramatic and somehow 'flat' from the narrative point of view. In this way the narrative of the *lectio longior* takes on an increasingly anti-Samarian tone disclosing possible pragmatic motives underlying postulated textual expansions. Historical contextualisation of the events narrated in 2 Kgs 17:5[MT] completes the picture, which seems to be much more complex than the straightforward biblical narrative would suggest. The final literary context in which these events are narrated indicates that the biblical editor is mostly interested in theodicy to depict the total defeat of Samaria and the definitive end of the Kingdom of Israel in theological terms. In this regard, the remark about the conquest of the land in the MT, in later Greek versions, and the Targum, intensifies the anti-Samarian rhetoric of the biblical text in comparison with those textual versions which do not mention it (OL and several Greek testimonies).

Keywords: Books of Kings, fall of Samaria, Assyria, Shalmaneser V (King), Sargon II (King), Assyrian invasions, *Critica Textus*

The tragic end of the Northern Kingdom is undoubtedly one of the most important events in the history of ancient Israel. The biblical author devotes much space to its theological interpretation (cf. 2 Kgs 17:7–23),[1] presenting the fall of Samaria as God's punishment for religious apostasy in Israel and idolatrous worship at Bethel and Dan sanctuaries, which were introduced by Jeroboam (1 Kgs 12:28–32) and which never ceased thereafter (the so-called 'sins of Jeroboam', cf. e.g. 1 Kgs 15:30, 34; 16:31; 2 Kgs 3:3; 10:31; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 17:21–22).[2] However, the events themselves, i.e. the Assyrian conquest of Israel's

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1   On an alternative explanation of the fall of the Northern Kingdom based on the narrative dynamics in 2 Kgs 15, see P. Dubovský, "Why Did the Northern Kingdom Fall According to 2 Kings 15?," *Bib* 95/3 (2014) 321–346.

2   N. Lovell argues that the narrative unit of 2 Kgs 17:7–23 summarises the history of idolatrous worship in Israel and Judah to provide the text with the theological reason for the series of Assyrian invasions in

lands and its capital Samaria, are reported very briefly with only one verse (2 Kgs 17:5).[3] All the more so, this single verse seems crucial for understanding the dynamics of the events it refers to, and their historical contextualisation. In this regard, the fact that some Greek and Latin sources preserved a shorter version of this verse, omitting the information about the Assyrian invasion of the land of Israel – present in the Masoretic text (MT) in 2 Kgs 17:5a – but mentioning the attack on Samaria only and its three-year siege (2 Kgs 17:5bc), inspired and at the same time intrigued the author of this paper to explore the matter further. In fact, this textual peculiarity led the author to raise questions about the originality of this biblical remark; namely, whether it may be considered as primary or secondary.

The first part of this paper is devoted to finding an answer to this question. It focuses on a detailed textual criticism through an analysis of all available ancient sources and a literary analysis of 2 Kgs 17:5 in its co-text (2 Kgs 17:1–6). Although many studies, including historical-critical ones,[4] have been conducted on the text in question, there are no accounts in the literature discussing this matter in depth and in a comprehensive way in an attempt to trace all possible stages of the history of this text transmission. In this respect, this paper fills a gap in historical-critical studies on 2 Kgs 17:5.

The query about the source and origin of the biblical remark concerning the invasion of the entire country in 2 Kgs 17:5a^{MT} prompts further questions. If it is true that it is secondary in nature, and therefore was not part of the oldest recoverable form of this text, one can consider the purpose of adding it to the story of the fall of Samaria. Thus, it seems crucial to discover the pragmatic narrative function it plays in the unfolding plot of 2 Kgs 17:1–6. This in turn allows us to propose a hypothesis about possible motives for including this narrative thread in the story. In this respect, the juxtaposition of the results of the text-critical and narrative analyses is enlightening, as it provides insights into possible reasons that may have prompted the editor to re-elaborate this text. Therefore, the narrative analysis of the pericope provides us with a new perspective in interpreting the mention of the Assyrian conquest of the land of Samaria.

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the late 8th c. BCE, and the different fates of both kingdoms; see N. Lovell, "A Text-Linguistic Approach to the Literary Structure and Coherence of 2 Kings 17:7–23," *VT* 68/2 (2018) 220–231. On this passage, see also S.-C. Chang, "Understanding the Fall of Israel," *Korean Journal of Christian Studies* 60 (2008) 5–23.

3   The whole chapter 2 Kgs 17 is interested mostly in the theology of history and not in the exact reconstruction of historical events. It is evident when the striking disproportion between the reports of historical events and the theological comments on them is considered. Cf. T.R. Hobbs, *2 Kings* (WBC 13; Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher 1985) 224–225; R.H. Dilday, *1, 2 Kings* (CCS.OT 9; Dallas, TX – London – Vancouver – Melbourne: Word Publishing 1987) 419; P.A. Viviano, "2 Kings 17: A Rhetorical and Form-Critical Analysis," *CBQ* 49 (1987) 548–550; I.W. Provan, *1 & 2 Kings* (OTG 11; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1997) 53–54.

4   See, e.g., P. Torijano Morales, "Textual Criticism and the Text-Critical Edition of IV Regnorum: The Case of 17,2–6," *After Qumran. Old and Modern Editions of the Biblical Texts – The Historical Books* (eds. H. Ausloos – B. Lemmelijn – J. Trebolle Barrera) (BETL 246; Leuven – Paris – Walpole, MA: Peeters 2012) 195–211; J.M. Robker, "Samaria's Downfall in the Versions: The Masoretic Text, Vaticanus, and the So-Called Lucianic Recension," *XVI Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies: Stellenbosch, 2016* (eds. G.R. Kotzé – W. Kraus – M.N. van der Meer) (SCS 71; Atlanta, GA: SBL 2019) 133–144; T.T. Tekoniemi, *The Textual History of 2 Kings 17* (BZAW 536; Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2021).

The historical contextualisation and the attempt to reconstruct the narrated events complement the research on 2 Kgs 17:5. Although there are more questions than answers regarding this matter, and the multitude of hypotheses put forward ignites scholarly discussions on the topic, the analyses conducted allow possible solutions to be proposed. Referring to the extra-biblical sources and the historical realities of the era in which the narrated events should be placed allow us to look at the campaign against the land of Israel from the perspective of the Assyrians' art of war, by adding and explaining what escapes narrative analysis alone.

Such a threefold approach to the problem – through the text-critical, narrative, and historical analyses – sheds new light on the understanding of the episode in question and on the complex history of its textual transmission.

1. *Critica Textus*: In Search for the Most Original Recoverable Reading of 2 Kgs 17:5

The transmission history of each biblical text may be traced back by a careful analysis of sources (external criticism), allowing for a reconstruction of individual stages of its composition. In the case under examination, a critical study of all available textual versions of 2 Kgs 17:5 (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Latin, and other ancient testimonies) and their mutual comparison is the key to formulating a hypothesis on the oldest recoverable form of the text, postulated as the closest to the original. In this respect, the criteria of literary analysis of the text (internal criticism) ought to be taken into account as well, especially when it comes to explaining the differences between individual text versions and the chronology of their formation.

1.1. Hebrew and Aramaic Readings

The starting point for the analyses is the examination of the Hebrew text itself. The first observation to be made is that none of only few fragments of the Book of Kings found at Qumran contains 2 Kgs 17:5.[5] Therefore, the only Hebrew textual tradition transmitting the studied pericope that we have full access to is the Masoretic tradition. In this regard, the Masoretic text of 2 Kgs 17:5 (MT) as witnessed by the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (*BHS*)[6]

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5   There were found only remains of three manuscripts of the Book of Kings at Qumran: 4Q54 consisting of five small pieces comprising the text of 1 Kgs 7:20–21 (fragm. no. 1), 7:25–27 (fragm. no. 2), 7:29–31 (fragm. no. 3–4), 7:29–42 (fragm. no. 5); 5Q2 comprising the text of 1 Kgs 1:1.16–17.27–37 and 6Q4 consisting of the 17 defined pieces (besides the 77 other undefined pieces) comprising the text of 1 Kgs 3:12–14 (fragm. no. 1); 12:28–31 (fragm. no. 2–4); 22:28–31 (fragm. no. 5); 2 Kgs 5:26 (fragm. no. 6–7); 6:32 (fragm. no. 8–9); 7:8–10 (fragm. no. 10–14); 7:20–8:5 (fragm. no. 15); 9:1–2 (fragm. no 16); 10:19–21 (fragm. no. 17). Cf. J.T. Milik – M. Baillet – R. de Vaux (eds.), *The Discoveries in the Judean Desert III*. *Qumran Cave 5 and 6* (Oxford: Clarendon 1962); E. Ulrich – F. Moore Cross (eds.), *The Discoveries in the Judean Desert XIV*. *Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon 1995).

6   K. Elliger – W. Rudolph (eds.), *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 5 ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft 1997).

is uniform in all known Hebrew manuscripts which present the same reading, as follows: וַיַּעַל מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ וַיַּעַל שֹׁמְרוֹן וַיָּצַר עָלֶיהָ שָׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים 'the king of Assyria marched up throughout the whole country, attacked Samaria and besieged it (for) three years.' Consequently, little can be said about the origins and the history of the text transmission, if one relies on the MT only. Nonetheless, a certain literary peculiarity may be observed in 2 Kgs 17:5^MT, namely, a double occurrence of the verbal form וַיַּעַל '(he) marched up/attacked', used once in reference to בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ 'throughout the whole country', and again to שֹׁמְרוֹן 'Samaria'. As it will be shown later, this repetition is an interesting hint to be taken into account while reconstructing the transmission history of the text under examination within the Greek tradition in search of the Hebrew *Vorlage* underlying the Old Greek (OG) form of this text.

The textual situation with regard to 2 Kgs 17:5 in the Aramaic (Targumic) tradition is similarly simple and devoid of major interpretative difficulties. The Aramaic rendering of this verse in the *Targum of Jonathan* (*Tg. J.*) is very close to the MT and does not diverge from it except for one detail (see below): וסליק מלכא דאתור בכל ארעא וסליק לשומרון וצר עלה תלת שנין 'the king of Assyria marched up throughout the whole country, reached Samaria and besieged it (for) three years.'[7] This Aramaic rendering is concurrent to the Hebrew text, and with regard to the translation technique, it may be considered as a verbatim word-for-word translation of the MT, with (almost) every single morphosyntactic feature rendered by set translation equivalents. The only deviation from this pattern is the occurrence of the preposition ל modifying שומרון (in the MT there is no preposition). The rendering לשומרון 'to Samaria' is attested by the majority (nine of ten) Aramaic testimonies consulted in the critical edition of this Targum by A. Sperber.[8] Only one source, referred to by Sperber as 'f', attests the non-preposition phrase שומרון as it occurs in the MT. In this regard, the difference between the sources may reflect some interpretative peculiarity, namely, that the Hebrew expression וַיַּעַל שֹׁמְרוֹן, devoid of any preposition, may have been somehow ambiguous for the Aramaic translator, so the phrase וסליק לשומרון was his translatory choice offering a particular interpretation of the Hebrew source text. In such a rendering, the phrase לשומרון is the adverbial modifier of place of the verb סלק 'to go up' indicating the position reached by the Assyrian king ('he came up to Samaria', that is, 'he reached Samaria'). Thus, the proposed logic of the events referred to in the Aramaic text specifies that after the king's marching up through the land, he reached its capital, the city of Samaria, and besieged it. From the grammatical point of view, the preposition ל may occasionally

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7   Cf. the translation of D.J. Harrington and A.J. Saldarini 'and a King of Assyria went up in all the land, and he went up to Samaria, and he besieged it for three years'; D.J. Harrington – A.J. Saldarini, *Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets. Introduction, Translation and Notes* (ArBib 10; Edinburgh – Wilmington, DE: Clark – Glazier 1987) 296.

8   Cf. A. Sperber (ed.), *The Bible in Aramaic. Based on Old Manuscripts and Printed Texts*. II. *The Former Prophets according to Targum Jonathan* (Leiden: Brill 1959) 308. The basic manuscript of the *Targum of Jonathan* is British Library Oriental manuscript 2210, a 15th/16th-century Yemenite manuscript of the Former Prophets with the 4th/5th-century Babylonian vocalisation. This manuscript was employed by A. Sperber in his critical edition of the Aramaic Bible.

denote the adversative meaning 'against' to involve the hostile direction of the action in question, in the present case, that 'he came up against Samaria.' However, the use of the preposition ל as a marker of the position reached, indicating the local aspect of direction,[9] is stereotypical in Aramaic when it modifies verbs of motion, as it is in the present case. Therefore, it may be assumed that the rendering וסליק לשומרון expresses the locative meaning, indicating the point of the king's arrival.[10] With regard to its textual variant attesting the non-prepositional syntagma וסליק שומרון, it appears to be a harmonisation with the MT to render it as literally as possible. In conclusion, the general observation is that the Aramaic tradition, with a small translatory adjustment only, reflects the same text form of 2 Kgs 17:5 as it occurs in the MT.

1.2. Greek Readings

A different textual situation is found in the Greek tradition, which demonstrates a vast plurality of textual variants in the Septuagint (LXX) manuscripts. In our case, one can distinguish 22 different versions of 4 Kgdms 17:5 (= 2 Kgs 17:5[MT]) among altogether fifty-six Greek uncials and manuscripts containing this text. With regard to these sources, the most complete critical edition of the Book of Kingdoms (= Samuel–Kings in the MT) that one can consult today is the so-called Cambridge edition of the LXX from the 1930s.[11] Unfortunately, the project of the Göttingen critical edition of the LXX has not yet been completed, and a new critical edition of the Book of Kingdoms has not been published yet. For this reason, in the present research, we have to rely on the old Cambridge edition, however, referring also to a preliminary draft of the new text-critical edition of 4 Kgdms, published by one of its editors,[12] as well as to the text-critical notes in the studies dedicated to the pericope being analysed.[13] The individual versions of 4 Kgdms 17:5 listed below show all its textual variants in the Greek tradition: differences in wording between them are marked with bold characters, differences in word order with italics, and omissions with a horizontal line indicating a missing text.[14]

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9   Cf. F. Rosenthal, *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic*, 7 ed. (PLO.NS 5; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2006) §79. It is also possible that the preposition ל indicates here the direct object of the verb סלק, namely, that 'he reached Samaria,' cf. *ibidem*.

10   One must remember the general truth that prepositions are a 'closed set' in every language, and their use in Aramaic (or in Greek, as will be shown later) cannot be decisive for the interpretation of the Hebrew text. In the author's view, the MT intends in 2 Kgs 17:5 the technical-military meaning of the verb עָלָה modified by שֹׁמְרוֹן as its direct object, namely, that the king of Assyria 'attacked Samaria'. See K. Kinowski, "The Meaning of וַיַּעַל בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ in 2 Kgs 17:5a. The Semantic and Syntactic Study of the Phrase with Particular Interest in the Verb עלה and the Preposition בְּ," *BA* 13/4 (2023) 563–590, especially 571–573.

11   A.E. Brooke – N. McLean – H.S.J. Thackeray (eds.), *The Old Testament in Greek* (London: Cambridge University Press 1927–1930) II/I–II.

12   Cf. Torijano Morales, "Textual Criticism," 195–211. I would like to express my appreciation to Prof. Pablo A. Torijano Morales for his suggestions sent by email.

13   See especially Tekoniemi, *Textual History*, 66.

14   See Brooke – McLean – Thackeray, *Old Testament in Greek* II/II, 355–356. As for designations of the reported sources, due to the generally accepted rule, the capital letters refer to the codices (uncials), whereas

1. καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ καὶ ἀνέβη εἰς Σαμάρειαν καὶ ἐπολιόρκησεν ἐπ᾽ αὐτὴν τρία ἔτη B, V, 56(i) [→*f*], 488 [→*s*], 244–342 [→*mixti*]; ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ cf. Aeth Arm Cop Geor SyrH; > ἐπ᾽ αὐτὴν cf. Aeth

2. καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ βασιλεὺς **Ασυρίων** ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ καὶ ἀνέβη εἰς Σαμάρειαν καὶ ἐπολιόρκησεν ἐπ᾽ αὐτὴν τρία ἔτη 527, 158(g) [→*mixti*]

3. καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἐν —— τῇ γῇ καὶ ἀνέβη εἰς Σαμάρειαν καὶ ἐπολιόρκησεν ἐπ᾽ αὐτὴν τρία ἔτη N, 44–610 [→*d*]; 92(m) [→*s*]

4. καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ καὶ ἀνέβη εἰς **Σαμάριαν** καὶ ἐπολιόρκησεν ἐπ᾽ αὐτὴν τρία ἔτη 318 [→*mixti*]

5. καὶ ἀνέβη —————————————— εἰς Σαμάρειαν καὶ ἐπολιόρκησεν ἐπ᾽ αὐτὴν τρία ἔτη 98–243(j)–379–731 [→*CI*]; cf. Lat (*et rex assyriorū ascendit in samariam et obsedit eam trienio* La[115]) and the quotation by Cyril of Alexandria (see later in this paper)

6. καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ καὶ ἀνέβη εἰς Σαμάρειαν καὶ ἐπολιόρκησεν — αὐτὴν *ἔτη τρία* 246 [→*f*], cf. Arm

7. καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ καὶ ἀνέβη εἰς **Σαμάριαν** καὶ ἐπολιόρκησεν — αὐτὴν τρία ἔτη 159–245(v)–372(u) [→*mixti*]

8. καὶ ἀνέβη –βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ καὶ ἀνέβη εἰς Σαμάρειαν καὶ ἐπολιόρκησεν — αὐτὴν τρία ἔτη 328 [→*CII*], 381 [→*o*]

9. καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἐν —— τῇ γῇ καὶ ἀνέβη εἰς Σαμάρειαν καὶ ἐπολιόρκησεν — αὐτὴν τρία ἔτη 707ˢ [→*mixti*]

10. καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἐν —— τῇ γῇ ———— εἰς Σαμάρειαν καὶ ἐπολιόρκησεν —— ———— 125 [→*d*]

11. καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ καὶ ἀνέβη εἰς Σαμάρειαν καὶ ἐπολιόρκησεν ἐπ᾽ **αὐτῇ** τρία ἔτη 509

12. καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ καὶ ἀνέβη εἰς Σαμάρειαν καὶ ἐπολιόρκησεν — **αὐτῇ** τρία ἔτη 247(x), 64 [→*o*]

13. καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἐν —— τῇ γῇ καὶ ἀνέβη εἰς Σαμάρειαν καὶ ἐπολιόρκησεν ἐπ᾽ **αὐτῇ** τρία ἔτη 46–52(e)–236–313–530 [→*CII*], 106(p)–107(d) [→*d*], 130(s)–314(w)–489(f)–762 [→*s*], 74–120–134(t) [→*t*], 68–122 [→*z*], 129(q)

14. καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἐν —— τῇ γῇ καὶ **ἦλθεν** εἰς Σαμάρειαν καὶ ἐπολιόρκησεν — **αὐτῇ** τρία ἔτη 242 [→*CII*]

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the minuscules – to the manuscripts according to the typology given in the Cambridge edition (see Brooke – McLean – Thackeray, *Old Testament in Greek* II/I, v–ix; II/II, v–vi). Numbers attached to the minuscules refer to the manuscripts' typology in Rahlfs' edition of the LXX (*Septuaginta. Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft 2006); occasionally such references are followed by brackets with an arrow [→] and a letter or phrase in italics which indicates the manuscripts' group (or family) to which the reported source(s) belong(s) (see a discussion on the manuscripts group typology in S.P. Brock, *The Recensions of the Septuagint Version of I Samuel* (Quaderni di Henoch; Torino: Zamorani 1987) which is relevant to all four Books of Kingdoms); sometimes other ancient versions are mentioned too. When it was possible, some other manuscripts and sources, referred to in the available draft of an upcoming Göttingen new critical edition of the LXX, were also added; cf. Torijano Morales, "Textual Criticism," 196 n. 3, 200.

15. καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ καὶ ἀνέβη εἰς Σαμάρειαν καὶ ἐπολιόρκησεν ἐν αὐτῇ τρία ἔτη 121(y), 488 [→*s*], 71 [→*mixti*]

16. καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασυρίων ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ καὶ ἀνέβη εἰς Σαμάρειαν καὶ ἐπολιόρκησεν **ἐν αὐτῇ** τρία ἔτη 554(z) [→*mixti*]

17. καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ βασιλεὺς **Ἀσσυρίων** ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ καὶ ἀνέβη εἰς Σαμάριαν καὶ ἐπολιόρκησεν **ἐν αὐτῇ** τρία ἔτη Α, 55(h) [→*mixti*]

18. καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἐν πάσῃ —γῇ καὶ ἀνέβη εἰς Σαμάρειαν καὶ ἐπολιόρκησεν **ἐν αὐτῇ** τρία ἔτη 119(n)

19. καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἀνέβη **ἐπὶ πάσαν τὴν γῆν** καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς Σαμάρειαν **καὶ εἰς πάσαν τὴν γὴν αὐτῆς** καὶ **περιεκάθισεν** — **αὐτὴν** τρία ἔτη 108(*b*)–127(c₂) [→*L*], 460–700(r) [→*mixti*]; ἦλθεν cf. Geor

20. καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς **Ασυρίων** ἀνέβη **ἐπὶ πάσαν τὴν γῆν** καὶ **ἦλθεν** εἰς Σαμάρειαν **καὶ εἰς πάσαν τὴν γὴν αὐτῆς** καὶ **περιεκάθισεν** — **αὐτὴν** τρία ἔτη 82(o) [→*L*]

21. καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἀνέβη **ἐπὶ πάσαν τὴν γῆν** καὶ **ἦλθεν** εἰς Σαμάριαν **καὶ εἰς πάσαν τὴν γὴν αὐτῆς** καὶ **περιεκάθισεν** — **αὐτὴν** τρία ἔτη 93(e₂) [→*L*]

22. καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἀνέβη **ἐπὶ πάσαν τὴν γῆν αὐτῆς** ——————————— καὶ **περιεκάθισεν** — **αὐτὸν** τρία ἔτη 19(b') [→*L*]

In order not to get lost in this maze of varied textual versions of 4 Kgdms 17:5, we should first note that it is possible to trace two lines of tradition preserved in the Greek readings listed above.

1.2.1. *Kaige* Text

One line is found in text versions marked with nos. from 1 to 18 and may be labelled as representing the so-called *kaige* revision of the LXX (see discussion later in this article).[15] In these sources, it exhibits such characteristic features as:

1. the VSO (verb-subject-object) word order typical of Hebrew syntax[16] (the word order of καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων is identical with that of וַיַּעַל מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר),

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2. presence of the same morphosyntactic structures as in the MT (with occasional deviations from this principle[17]) with a word-to-word relation to it (notice, for instance, ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ and בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ, or ἐπολιόρκησεν ἐπ᾽ αὐτήν and וַיָּצַר עָלֶיהָ).

Besides these similarities, the versions above present a number of differences. These include:

1. different spelling of proper nouns: Ασσυρίων *versus* Ασυρίων in text versions nos. 2 and 16, Σαμάρειαν *versus* Σαμάριαν in text versions nos. 4, 7, 17;

2. presence of different prepositional phrases modifying the verb ἐπολιόρκησεν 'he besieged': ἐπ᾽ αὐτήν lit. 'on/against her (= city of Samaria)' *versus* ἐπ᾽ αὐτῇ lit. 'on/against her' in text versions nos. 11 and 13, or ἐν αὐτῇ lit. 'in/against her' in text versions nos. 15–18;

3. greater or lesser omissions: of a definite article ὁ in text version no. 8, or τῇ in text version no. 18; of a preposition ἐπ᾽ in text versions nos. 6–9, 12, and 14; of singular terms such as πάσῃ in text versions nos. 3, 9, 10, 13, 14; of larger text portions such as ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ καὶ ἀνέβη in text version no. 5, or καὶ ἀνέβη and ἐπ᾽ αὐτὴν τρία ἔτη in text version no. 10;

4. different wording, that is, the occurrence of the verb ἦλθεν 'he came' in text version no. 14 *versus* the second ἀνέβη 'he ascended' in all other text versions (nos. 1–13, 15–18);

5. different renderings of the Hebrew syntagma צוּר עַל 'to besiege': the Greek verb πολιορκέω '(I) besiege' is either modified by prepositional phrases – ἐπ᾽ αὐτήν (text versions nos. 1–5), ἐπ᾽ αὐτῇ (text versions nos. 11 and 13), ἐν αὐτῇ (text versions nos. 15–18) – or by a direct object αὐτήν (text versions 6–9), or by an indirect object αὐτῇ (text versions 12, 14); it may be noted that from a grammatical point of view, the syntagma πολιορκέω + αὐτῇ raises some questions, because this verb usually builds word compounds with a direct object (in Accusative), or a prepositional phrase with ἐπί (+ Accusative)[18]; it cannot be ruled out that some of the forms present in the sources are the result of a copyist's error consisting in miswriting, omitting the preposition or the final -ν in the Accusative forms.

The textual similarities and divergences pointed out above indicate a complicated transmission history of our text, and at the same time allow us to formulate hypotheses about the course of this process. It is reasonable to identify the most complete version of the *kaige* text of 4 Kgdms 17:5 with the textual variant no. 1, represented, among others,

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17 For example, all Greek variants consistently render the Hebrew phrase מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר 'the king of *Assyria*' as ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων 'the king of *Assyrians*'. Some other translatory adaptations regard the use of prepositions (see discussion later in this paper).

18 See the entry πολιορκέω in T. Muraoka, *A Green-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Louvain – Paris – Walpole, MA: Peeters 2009) 572b–573a; cf. J. Lust – E. Eynikel – K. Hauspie (eds.), "πολιορκέω," *A Green-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft 1992–1996) II, 385b.

by the *Codex Vaticanus* (B). In fact, already H.S.J. Thackeray[19] considered it a revision work of a later translator, containing the so-called *kaige* text portions in 3 Kgdms 1:1–2:11 and 3 Kgdms 22 – 4 Kgdms 25 (corresponding to 1 Kgs 1:1–2:11 and 1 Kgs 22 – 2 Kgs 25 in the MT), which is a commonly acknowledged opinion among the scholars today.[20] The fact that the *kaige* text is considered a revision of the LXX has obvious consequences, namely, it hardly attests to the oldest recoverable text version of the LXX, and in our particular case, of 4 Kgdms 17:5. This assumption will be elaborated in later parts of this survey.

The comparison between the Greek variants in question leads to the conclusion that the text version no. 1, represented by e.g. the *Codex Vaticanus* (B), gave origin to all other *kaige* text forms. Furthermore, these variants, when juxtaposed, can be grouped according to increasing dissimilarities. The affiliations and postulated mutual relations between all *kaige* versions of 4 Kgdms 17:5 are shown graphically on the diagram below (text versions nos. 5, 10, and 14 deserve separate comments, and they will be discussed later).
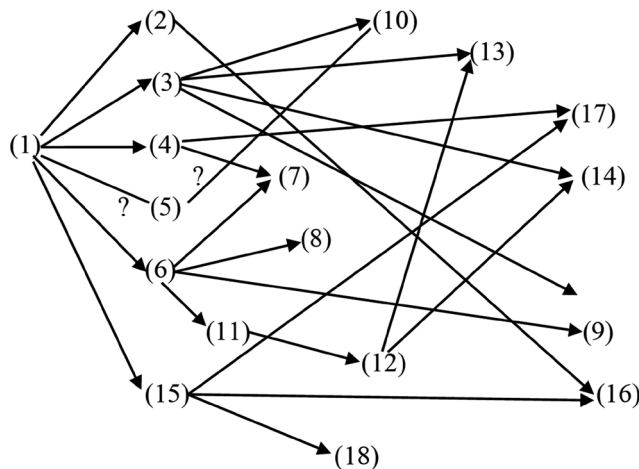
The particularised *kaige* text is juxtaposed with the MT below:

2 Kgs 17:5[MT]

וַיַּעַל מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ וַיַּעַל שֹׁמְרוֹן וַיָּצַר עָלֶיהָ שָׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים

4 Kgdms 17:5[kaige]
καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ καὶ ἀνέβη εἰς Σαμάρειαν καὶ ἐπολιόρκησεν ἐπ᾽ αὐτὴν τρία ἔτη

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19   Cf. H.S.J. Thackeray, "The Greek Translators of the Four Books of Kings," *JTS* 8/30 (1907) 262–278. See also comments in M.A. Sweeney, *I & II Kings. A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville, KY – London: Westminster John Knox 2007) 36, who refers himself to D. Barthélemy, *Les devanciers d'Aquila* (VTSup 10; Leiden: Brill 1963).

20   Cf. Law, "3–4 Kingdoms," 148–149; Tekoniemi, *Textual History*, 14–15.

Both forms of the biblical text correspond to each other word-for-word in terms of semantics, and maintain an identical style and word order, the same syntactic structures, and mutually corresponding morphological forms. In this respect, the *kaige* recension (with one exception, see below) presents a text characterised by a high degree of convergence with the MT, in other words, a very literal, so-called 'source oriented' translation of the Hebrew source text preserved in the MT (in contrast to a so-called 'target oriented' type of translation).[21] However, one deviation from this principle can be seen in the analysed text, namely, the presence of the prepositional phrase εἰς Σαμάρειαν 'to Samaria' where the MT provides a non-prepositional verbal complement. This is a situation analogous to that observed in the *Targum of Jonathan*. Both traditions, therefore, the Aramaic and the Greek *kaige*, interpret the Hebrew text in such a way that the Assyrian king literally 'ascended to', 'arrived at (the city of) Samaria'. Such a description shifts the point of narrative tension in the logic of the events reported to the information about the siege of the city, which is mentioned in the next and final part of the verse (4 Kgdms 17:5c = 2 Kgs 17:5c). In this respect, the logic of the events in the *kaige* text seems to differ slightly from the one implied by the MT. In other words, from the narrative point of view, the Greek (and Aramaic) rendering that the king 'reached Samaria' – which is a general and neutral statement – reduces the drama of the scene, whereas the Hebrew text appears to denote the direct assault on the city ('he attacked Samaria'),[22] which naturally increases the narrative tension.

1.2.2. Antiochian Text (*L*)

The second line of Greek tradition is preserved in readings listed under nos. 19 through 22. These are the so-called Lucianic manuscripts (*L*) representing the Antiochian textual tradition of the LXX. As remarked, one of their readings is also present in Mss 460 and 700 that belong to the heterogeneous manuscript group labelled *mixti*. With regard to 4 Kgdms 17:5, it can be observed that the sources in question (text variants nos. 19–22) exhibit the following characteristics:

1. the SVO (subject-verb-object) word order typical of Greek syntax in contrast to the VSO word order of the *kaige* recension (καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἀνέβη *versus* καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων in the *kaige* text),
2. occurrence of terms or expressions that render the Hebrew source text more dynamically (in juxtaposition to the *kaige* text) and can be considered as 'target oriented' renderings adjusting Hebrew phrases to fit the Greek language: ἐπὶ πάσαν τὴν γήν *versus* ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ 'in/into the whole land' (the *kaige* text) which is a verbatim rendering of בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ; or περιεκάθισεν αὐτήν '(he) hemmed it in under siege' *versus* ἐπολιόρκησεν

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21   The terminology employed here is taken from A. Pietersma, "Septuagintal Exegesis and the Superscriptions of the Greek Psalter," *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception* (eds. P.W. Flint – P.D. Miller) (VTSup 99 – FIOTL 4; Leiden: Brill 2005) 443–475.

22   Notice the technical-military meaning of the verb עָלָה as a warfare term for expressing an attack on something or someone. For a detailed study on this matter, see Kinowski, "Meaning of וַיַּעַל בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ in 2 Kgs 17:5a," 571–573.

ἐπ᾽ αὐτήν '(he) besieged it' (the *kaige* text) which gives translation of the prepositional phrase עָלֶיהָ of the MT,

3. different wording in comparison with the text of *kaige* recension: the occurrence of the verb ἦλθεν '(he) came'[23] (except from text version no. 22) *versus* the second occurrence of ἀνέβη '(he) ascended' in the *kaige* text; or the use of the verb περικαθίζω '(I) hem in under siege' instead of πολιορκέω '(I) besiege' in the *kaige* text,[24]

4. presence of textual expansion (except from text version no. 22): the addition of καὶ εἰς πάσαν τὴν γῆν αὐτῆς, lacking in the *kaige* text, which makes an explicit remark that the king arrived at Samaria 'and at all its territory'.

Besides these similarities, there are several differences between the Lucianic manuscripts. These are as follows:

1. different spelling of proper nouns: Ασσυρίων *versus* Ασυρίων in text version no. 20, Σαμάρειαν *versus* Σαμάριαν in text version no. 21,

2. different morphological (that is, masculine) form of the personal pronoun in the phrase περιεκάθισεν αὐτόν '(he) hemmed him (= King Hoshea) in under siege' in text version no. 22 *versus* the feminine one (referring to the city of Samaria) in all other text versions,

3. addition of a personal pronoun in the phrase ἐπὶ πάσαν τὴν γῆν αὐτῆς 'on/against all *its* (= of Samaria) territory' in text version no. 22,

4. omission of the phrase καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς Σαμάριαν καὶ εἰς πάσαν τὴν γῆν αὐτῆς in text version no. 22, but present in all other Antiochian text versions.

From the above observations, several interesting conclusions of a narrative and historical-critical nature can be drawn. Regarding the first category, it may be observed that the logic of events presented in the Antiochian text shifts the emphasis in the narrative in comparison with the *kaige* text account, namely, the Antiochian version seems to suggest that the attack of the Assyrian king on the entire land took place from the very beginning: ἀνέβη

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23   The fact that this textual variant is also supported by the Georgian version is not without significance. It has increasingly been pointed out that where the Georgian tradition supports the Antiochian text against the *Codex Vaticanus*, one can see variants close to the OG text. Cf. Hugo, "1–2 Kingdoms," 134–135. It has even been argued that occasionally the Georgian (and Armenian) versions may be the sole conservators of the OG; cf. A. Piquer – P. Torijano Morales – J. Trebolle Barrera, "Septuagint Versions, Greek Recensions and Hebrew Editions: The Text-Critical Evaluation of the Old Latin, Armenian and Georgian Versions in III–IV Regnorum," *Translating a Translation: The LXX and Its Modern Translations in the Context of Early Judaism* (eds. H. Ausloos *et al.*) (BETL 213; Leuven – Paris – Dudley, MA: Peeters 2008) 251–281; P. Torijano Morales – J. Trebolle Barrera, "The Edition of III–IV Kingdoms. The Critical Reconstruction of the Old Greek Text and the Construction of the Critical Apparatus," *Editing the Septuagint: The Unfinished Task. Papers Presented at the 50th Anniversary of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies* (eds. F. Albrecht – F. Feder) (De Septuaginta Investigationes 16; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2022) 67–71.

24   P. Torijano Morales observes that there is a tendency to translate the Hebrew verb צור with the verb πολιορκέω in the *kaige* sections of 1–4 Kgdms (although there are several instances when the verb περικαθίζω is employed too), whereas in non-*kaige* section the only translatory equivalent found of the term צור is περικαθίζω; see Torijano Morales, "Textual Criticism," 208–209.

ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γήν; lit. 'ascended on/against the whole land' (v. 5a). In such a rendering, the Greek syntagma ἀναβαίνω + ἐπί would express the technical-military meaning of the Hebrew phrase עָלָה עַל 'to attack, invade'. From a narrative point of view, this would indicate a high level of dramatic tension present in the account from the very beginning of the verse. The tension would then subside slightly with the mention of his arrival at the city of Samaria (ἦλθεν εἰς Σαμάρειαν 'came to Samaria', v. 5b). The addition of the phrase καὶ εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν γήν αὐτῆς 'and to all its territory' in this part of the verse would create a kind of suspense, maintaining and prolonging the dramatic tension at the same level, which would also emphasise the scale of the ongoing warfare. The tension would rise again with the news about the siege of the city (περιεκάθισεν αὐτήν '(he) hemmed it in under siege') in the last part of the verse (v. 5c). In relation to this last piece of information, it can be noted that the Greek verb περικαθίζω '(I) hem in under siege, besiege' used in the Antiochian text in place of the verb πολιορκέω '(I) besiege' in the *kaige* text expresses the sociolinguistic aspect of the art of war, namely, the surrounding of a city during the siege and enclosing it by enemy troops, which semantically corresponds perfectly to the Hebrew syntagma צוּר עַל 'to confine, shut in, besiege' occurring in the MT.

Conclusions of a historical-critical nature should be added to the above remarks. They regard the possibility of identifying the original form of 4 Kgdms 17:5 in the Lucianic manuscripts and its relation to both the *kaige* text and the MT. In this respect, the hypothesis commonly accepted today is that in the so-called *kaige* sections of the *Codex Vaticanus* (and this is our case) an older reading and therefore a version of the Greek text that is closer to the original can be found in the Antiochian tradition.[25] It often appears to preserve the ancient Greek text (OG) or a text close to it, which sometimes differs significantly from the *kaige* text type, and which seems to present a translation of the Hebrew source text, alternative to the one preserved in and transmitted by the Masoretic tradition.[26] In the case in question, such features of the Antiochian text as, for example, the SVO word order and the so-called 'target orientedness' of its translation, which does not show traces of textual harmonisation with the MT, characteristic of later LXX revisions, make it reasonable to conclude that it is the Lucianic manuscripts that would preserve a more original form of the Greek text in relation to the *kaige* text.

On the other hand, however, textual extensions present in all sources from this group (see earlier observations); textual omission in one of them (text version no. 22) that is most probably due to the scribal error of *parablepis* from one occurrence of πᾶσαν τὴν γήν to the other; convergence of one of the variants (text version no. 19) with sources classified as *mixti* group – they all are confusing. These observations indicate the presence of later

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25 For a general overview on this matter, see, e.g., P. Torijano Morales, "The Contribution of the Antiochian Text to Text Criticism in Kings: Rahlf's Study of the Lucianic Recension Revisited (1 Kgs 1:3, 36, 40, 41, 45)," *Textual Criticism and Dead Sea Studies in Honour of Julio Trebolle Barrera. Florilegium Complutense* (eds. A. Piquer Otero – P. Torijano Morales) (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 157; Leiden –Boston, MA: Brill 2012) 325–342.

26 See Law, "3–4 Kingdoms," 148; Tekoniemi, *Textual History*, 14–15.

amendments introduced to the Antiochian text, which should by no means be identified with the OG text. Indeed, many scholars point to the specific nature of the Lucianic manuscripts, which indeed seem to preserve the OG many times, especially in the *kaige* sections of the *Codex Vaticanus*; nevertheless, they also preserve traces of later textual modifications, sometimes called post-hexaplaric.[27] It seems that this is no different in the case in question. The Antiochian form of 4 Kgdms 17:5 presents an alternative Greek text to the *kaige* form, however, it is clouded by later additions and scribal errors. In this way, the Antiochian text has a mixed character.[28] Therefore, the only hypothesis based on a comparative analysis of the Lucianic variants that may be proposed here is to indicate the proto-Lucianic (or pre-Lucianic) text form without providing a final answer whether it is an OG text or not. The reconstruction of both text types is given below (differences in word order with the *kaige* text are marked with italics; differences in wording are marked with bold characters; a horizontal line indicates a missing text):

4 Kgdms 17:5^L

καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἀνέβη **ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν** καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς Σαμάρειαν **καὶ εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν αὐτῆς** καὶ **περιεκάθισεν αὐτὴν** τρία ἔτη

4 Kgdms 17:5$^{proto-L}$

καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἀνέβη **ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν** καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς Σαμάρειαν ———— ———— καὶ **περιεκάθισεν αὐτὴν** τρία ἔτη

The identification of Greek readings alternative to the *kaige* text raises questions about their Hebrew source text; namely, one may wonder if the proto-Lucianic text would be a translation of the Hebrew source consistent with the MT, or not. By attempting a reverse translation, hypothetically, one could not rule out that the expression ἀνέβη ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν would indicate וַיַּעַל עַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ in the Hebrew source instead of וַיַּעַל בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ in the MT. Similarly, it is tempting to see in the Hebrew source text וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל־שֹׁמְרֹון or even וַיֵּלֶךְ שֹׁמְרֹון instead of וַיַּעַל שֹׁמְרֹון occurring in the MT. All these proposals would be, however, purely speculative, and not supported by any evidence. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the phrase ἀνέβη ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν would be a Greek interpretation of the Hebrew expression וַיַּעַל בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ, tending to emphasise the idea of the attack launched by the king on the entire country. Similarly, the Greek translation ἦλθεν εἰς Σαμάρειαν could be successfully considered as a dynamic rendering of the Hebrew וַיַּעַל שֹׁמְרֹון, emphasising the information that the king of Assyria reached Samaria. For these

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[27]   P. Hugo characterises the *L* text as an important witness to the OG but stresses that it is not free from editorial corrections of grammatical and lexicographical nature, amendments removing semitisms, additions of words or smaller explanatory phrases to harmonise or clarify biblical stories. Cf. Hugo, "1–2 Kingdoms," 131, 134.

[28]   T. Tekoniemi comments that the longest text form of 2 Kgs 17:5^L is a product of conflation of different kinds of readings from both the OG and the *kaige* texts; see Tekoniemi, *Textual History*, 67–68 with notes. Cf. Torijano Morales, "Textual Criticism," 201–210.

reasons, in the view of the author of the paper, it is not necessary to propose a Hebrew text alternative to that found in the MT as a source for the translation found in the Antiochian tradition.

1.3. Old Latin (OL) and Other Ancient Versions

In search for the most original available version of 2 Kgs (4 Kgdms) 17:5, one cannot ignore other ancient versions, which have not been discussed yet. First of all, it should be noted that the Old Latin (OL) text witnessed by the *Palimpsestus Vindobonensis* (La[115])[29] gives a *lectio brevior* of the analysed verse: *et rex assyriorū ascendit in samariam et obsedit eam triennio* lit. 'and the king of Assyrians came up to Samaria and besieged it for three years.' It does not contain the part of the verse mentioning the Assyrian king's invasion of the entire country, similarly to one of the textual versions represented by manuscripts from the *CI* group (see text version no. 5). Other ancient translations (Aethiopian, Armenian, Coptic, Georgian, and Syro-Hexapla, see text version no. 1) support the *lectio longior*, containing such a piece of information.

Comparing both versions, one can speculate about the origin of the *lectio brevior*. B. Fischer[30] proposes to explain this with a scribal error called *parablepsis*, namely, an omission of a certain part of a text during copying of a manuscript as a result of a scribe's gaze jumping from one word to another identical one in the text. In the present case, it would mean skipping the text between the first and the second occurrence of the verb ἀνέβη. Such a proposal could successfully explain the origin of one of the variants of *kaige*, namely, text version no. 5,[31] but it could not explain the shorter reading of the OL. While the sequence of two identical verbs ἀνέβη … ἀνέβη … in the *kaige* text could hypothetically lead to a scribal error of *parablepsis*, the sequence of verbs ἀνέβη … ἦλθεν … in the Antiochian tradition (see *L*, Mss 460–700)[32] – considered original due to being closer to the OG text – no longer creates the possibility of such an error and simply rules this out.[33] In the same way, the *lectio brevior* of OL could not be a result of the *parablepsis* error if one considers, by analogy, the hypothetically original sequence of verbs *ascendit* and *venit* in La[115].

As shown above, neither the form of the *L* text nor the reconstructed proto-*L* one allows for a *parablepsis*-type error as the origin and reason for the *lectio brevior* text of

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29   Cf. J. Bellsheim (ed.), *Palimpsestus Vindobonensis* (Christianiae: Mallingi – Parmann 1885); cf. C. Vercellone (ed.), *Variae Lectiones Vulgatae Latinae* (Romae: Spithöver 1860) II. See an overview of the characteristics of this document in Tekoniemi, *Textual History*, 13–14, 16–23. One of the most interesting peculiarities of this source is the fact that 2 Kgs 17 immediately follows 2 Kgs 15:38, thus omitting the entire chapter of 2 Kgs 16. T. Tekoniemi argues that it is highly probable that this entire chapter originally would have followed 2 Kgs 17. In his view, the fact that La[115] places 2 Kgs 17 immediately after 2 Kgs 15 would indicate an original order of chapters in the OG as well. See discussion in Tekoniemi, *Textual History*, 39–52.

30   See B. Fischer, "Palimpsestus Vindobonensis: A Revised Edition of L115 for Samuel–Kings," *BIOSCS* 16 (1983) 86.

31   It would be more difficult to explain the origin of text version no. 10 on this basis.

32   A trace of the original verb sequence ἀνέβη … ἦλθεν … within the *kaige* text forms can also be found in Ms 242 (text version no. 14).

33   See T. Tekoniemi reaches the same conclusion in Tekoniemi, *Textual History*, 66, n. 262.

2 Kgs 17:5 attested by the *Palimpsestus Vindobonensis* (La[115]). It is thus worth considering if this OL text could in fact represent a more primary, rather than secondary, form of the text, the composition of which would precede the formation of the proto-*L* text. In this regard, it is generally acknowledged that the *Palimpsestus Vindobonensis* is a highly valuable testimony in historical-critical research on the text of the Book of Kings (3–4 Kgdms), allowing for identification of the OG text, especially when the OL renderings coincide with the Antiochian readings versus the *kaige* text and/or the MT.[34] This is not exactly what happens in our case, since 2 Kgs 17:5[OL] differs from the (proto-)*L* readings contaminated by later additions and modifications, thus clouding the original OG text. In this regard, it should also be noted that in a formal sense, the La[115] manuscript (5th c. CE) postdates the Lucianic recension (4th c. CE) and cannot be uncritically treated as a source for identifying the true OG. It seems likely, however, that the OL text may indeed preserve original readings close to the OG, lost or shadowed by later amendments in the course of textual transmission. Moreover, it may happen in some cases that the OL text would be the only witness of the OG reading, and thus, of the Old Hebrew (OH) original.[35] The author of this paper believes that there is no better explanation for the shorter version of 2 Kgs 17:5[OL] than that it is a translation of a shorter Greek source text (the true OG) referring to the shorter Hebrew source text (OH).

There is yet another specificity of the OL text that should be taken into account. Generally speaking, when textual variants of *CI* manuscripts conform with those of the OL, they may preserve old readings, which have not been amended in the process of textual transmission.[36] This is what occurs here. Both the *CI* manuscripts and the OL rendering attest to the

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34 N. Fernández Marcos argues that 'the *Papyrus Vindobonensis* of the *Vetus Latina* also contains a series of changes which are doubtlessly related to an earlier stage of the transmission in the Greek model,' see N. Fernández Marcos, "The Antiochene Edition in the Text History of the Bible," *CCHS-ILC: Informes y documentos de trabajo* (2011) 10. Also, W. Schütte argues that La[115] represents the oldest form of 1–2 Kgs, see W. Schütte, "Israels Exil in Juda nach der Urfassung von 1–2 Könige," *Bib* 98/3 (2017) 363–381. See discussion on the textual affiliations of La[115] with various strands of Greek tradition in 1–2 Kgs in Tekoniemi, *Textual History*, 19 (in general) and 68 (with regard to 2 Kgs 17:3–6).

35 J. Trebolle Barrera argues in his publications that *Vetus Latina* alone may retain the oldest reading for 3–4 Kgdms (= 1–2 Kgs in the MT). See, for example, J. Trebolle Barrera, "From the *Old Latin*, through the *Old Greek* to the *Old Hebrew* (2 Kings 10:23–25)," *Text* 11 (1984) 17–36; J. Trebolle Barrera, "Old Latin, Old Greek and Old Hebrew in the Books of Kings (1 Ki. 18:27 and 2 Ki. 20:11)," *Text* 13/1 (1986) 85–94; J. Trebolle Barrera, "From Secondary Versions through Greek Recensions to Hebrew Editions. The Contribution of the Old Latin Version," *The Text of the Hebrew Bible and Its Editions. Studies in Celebration of the Fifth Centennial of the Complutensian Polyglot* (eds. A. Piquer Otero – P. Torijano Morales) (Supplements to the Textual History of the Bible 1; Leiden – Boston, MA: Brill 2016) 180–216; J. Trebolle Barrera, "The Contribution of the Old Latin to the Reconstruction of the Old Greek of Judges and Kings: 'Doublets' and 'Additions' of the Antiochene Text Missing in the Old Latin," *Textual and Literary Criticism of the Books of Kings. Collected Essays* (eds. A. Piquer Otero – P. Torijano Morales) (VTSup 185; Leiden – Boston, MA: Brill 2020) 317–348. Cf. Torijano Morales – Trebolle Barrera, "Edition of III–IV Kingdoms," 67–71.

36 I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Pablo A. Torijano Morales for sharing this observation with me in private communication.

shorter form of the verse. Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that the version closest to the true OG text could indeed be found in La[115].

1.4. Reconstruction of the OG Text and Its Hebrew *Vorlage* ('Old Hebrew')

If the above supposition is true, the OG text of 4 Kgdms 17:5, reconstructed on the basis of La[115], would have contained the shorter report on the invasion of Samaria by the Assyrians. Its later revisions with additions could be reconstructed as the proto-Antiochian text (proto-*L*) and the *kaige* recension. Yet another textual form of 4 Kgdms 17:5 can be found in Lucianic manuscripts (*L*) exhibiting subsequent expansions on the text. Moreover, the above proposal may lead to the conclusion that the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the OG (= OH) text reconstructed on the basis of La[115] would also present a shorter version of the verse, passing in silence over the conquest of the land. Such a shorter form of the OH text would be alternative to the Masoretic *lectio longior* and supposedly precede it in terms of the time of composition.[37] In summary, the postulated chronology of individual text forms of 2 Kgs (4 Kgdms) 17:5 can be presented as follows (in order to distinguish between the attested and the reconstructed text forms, the latter ones are in boxes; subsequent expansions on the hypothetical original text are marked with bold characters):

2 Kgs 17:5[OH]

וַיַּעַל מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר שֹׁמְרוֹן וַיָּצַר עָלֶיהָ שָׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים

4 Kgdms 17:5[OG]
καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἀνέβη εἰς Σαμάρειαν καὶ περιεκάθισεν αὐτὴν τρία ἔτη

2 Kgs 17:5[OL]
et rex assyriorum ascendit in samariam et obsedit eam triennio

2 Kgs 17:5[MT]

וַיַּעַל מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר **בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ וַיַּעַל** שֹׁמְרוֹן וַיָּצַר עָלֶיהָ שָׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים

4 Kgdms 17:5[proto-*L*]
καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἀνέβη **ἐπὶ πάσαν τὴν γῆν καὶ ἦλθεν** εἰς Σαμάρειαν καὶ περιεκάθισεν αὐτὴν τρία ἔτη

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37   It is not a novelty to treat the MT as an edition or recension of the Hebrew *Vorlage* of Kingdoms (= Samuel–Kings), and as such, it would be posterior, when it comes to its composition, in relation to the OG text (dated recently to the 3rd c. BCE). The author of this article shares the opinion of J. Trebolle Barrera, A. Shenker and P. Hugo that the Hebrew *Vorlage* of Kingdoms precedes the final redaction of the proto-MT. Therefore, the OG and *Vetus Latina* readings take us back to the OH text, whereas the later *kaige* and Hexaplaric forms – to its 'recension', that is, to the MT. See discussion and a presentation of scholarly views on this matter in Law, "3–4 Kingdoms," 153–158. On the list of (proto)-Masoretic revisional characteristics in 1–2 Kgs, see Tekoniemi, *Textual History*, 265–271.

4 Kgdms 17:5[kaige]

καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων **ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ καὶ ἀνέβη** εἰς Σαμάρειαν καὶ ἐπολιόρκησεν ἐπ᾽ αὐτὴν τρία ἔτη

4 Kgdms 17:5[L]

καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἀνέβη **ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν καὶ ἦλθεν** εἰς Σαμάρειαν **καὶ εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν αὐτῆς** καὶ περιεκάθισεν αὐτὴν τρία ἔτη

Although the above hypothesis about the reconstruction of the OG text and its Hebrew *Vorlage* (OH) is speculative, it is not entirely unfounded. The textual evidence points towards a reasonable conclusion that the OL text of La[115] would be in fact the only source available today that witnesses the true OG text, and thus, the shorter form of the Hebrew source text.[38] This makes us raise questions about the possible reasons (an anti-Samarian polemic?) underlying the postulated textual expansion in 2 Kgs 17:5, and so about the narrative function of that addition to the account about the invasion of Samaria in 2 Kgs 17:3–6 (see discussion later in this paper).[39]

1.5. Other Biblical and Extrabiblical Evidence

There are supplementary arguments supporting the *lectio brevior* of 2 Kgs (4 Kgdms) 17:5. First of all, it is intriguing that the quotation of 2 Kgs 17:5 found in the writings of Cyril of Alexandria (*ca.* 378–444 CE) attests to the *lectio brevior*.[40] This patristic reference may not be a coincidence. It may, in fact, reflect the original shorter form of the biblical text.

Another argument supporting our hypothesis is provided by a parallel narrative of Shalmaneser V's invasion in 2 Kgs 18:9–10. This narrative contains – besides some additional pieces of information, mostly of chronological character, synchronising the reigns of the Israelite and Judahite monarchs – an almost verbatim quotation of 2 Kgs 17:5. It is

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38   T. Tekoniemi comments that the MT 'evidences the very *latest*, revised version of the passage' (= 2 Kgs 17:3–6); *Textual History*, 70 (see also his conclusions on pp. 81–82).

39   If the MT represents a development of the 'Old Hebrew' text, the question arises about the ideological and theological purposes of that textual development. On this matter, see Law, "3–4 Kingdoms," 158–160. T. Tekoniemi provides a list of proto-Masoretic revisional characteristics in 1–2 Kgs, among which he mentions anti-Samarian tendencies in the MT; see Tekoniemi, *Textual History*, 269–270.

40   Although the critical apparatus of the Cambridge edition of the Septuagint does not provide any bibliographic data in this regard (cf. Brooke – McLean – Thackeray, *Old Testament in Greek* II/II, 355), the full quotation of 4 Kgdms 17:3–5 can be found in Cyril of Alexandria's *Commentarius in Isaiam prophetam: Liber I, Oratio VI* to Isa 10:24–25; see J. Aubert (ed.), *Sancti Patris Nostri Cyrilli Alexandriae Archiepiscopi opera quae reperiri potuerunt omnia: Tomus III* (Patrologiae Graeca Migne 70; Paris: Bibliothecae Cleri Universae 1864) 297, C l. 13 – D l. 7. The full quotation reported there is, as follows: ἐπ᾽ αὐτὸν ἀνέβη Σαλμανασὰρ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων καὶ ἐγενήθη αὐτῷ Ωσὴε δοῦλος καὶ ἐπέστρεψεν αὐτῷ Μαναῆ καὶ εὗρε βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων ἐν τῷ Ωσὴε ἀδικίαν ὅτι ἀπέστειλεν ἀγγέλους πρὸς Σηγὼρ βασιλέα Αἰγύπτου καὶ οὐκ ἤνεγκε Μαναὰ τῷ βασιλεῖ Ασσυρίων ἐν τῷ ἐνιαυτῷ ἐκείνῳ καὶ ἐπολιόρκησεν αὐτὸν ὁ βασιλεὺς Ασσυρίων καὶ ἔδησεν αὐτὸν ἐν οἴκῳ φυλακῆς καὶ ἀνέβη εἰς Σαμάρειαν καὶ ἐπολιόρκησεν αὐτὴν τρία ἔτη. The text of vv. 3–4 is almost perfectly concurrent to the reading of the *Codex Vaticanus*, but v. 5 (marked with a frame) presents a clearly identifiable *lectio brevior* (cf. text version no. 5 on the list of Greek readings earlier in this paper).

striking that it mentions the attack against the city of Samaria, its siege and subsequent capture, but does not report on the invasion of the surrounding territory (compare the text in boxes below).

2 Kgs 17:5[MT]

וַיַּעַל מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ וַיַּעַל שֹׁמְרוֹן וַיָּצַר עָלֶיהָ שָׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים

2 Kgs 18:9–10[MT]

וַיְהִי בַּשָּׁנָה הָרְבִיעִית לַמֶּלֶךְ הִזְקִיָּהוּ הִיא הַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁבִיעִית לְהוֹשֵׁעַ בֶּן־אֵלָה מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל עָלָה שַׁלְמַנְאֶסֶר מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר עַל־שֹׁמְרוֹן וַיָּצַר עָלֶיהָ וַיִּלְכְּדֻהָ מִקְצֵה שָׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים בִּשְׁנַת־שֵׁשׁ לְהִזְקִיָּה הִיא שְׁנַת־תֵּשַׁע לְהוֹשֵׁעַ מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל נִלְכְּדָה שֹׁמְרוֹן

As shown, the only piece of information occurring in 2 Kgs 17:5 but left unmentioned in the parallel account of 2 Kgs 18:9–10 is that about the king's marching throughout the whole country. When juxtaposed with other evidence, it may induce us to think that the phrase בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ וַיַּעַל would not occur in the original (primary) draft of 2 Kgs 17:5[OH], and therefore, this particular information was not mentioned in 2 Kgs 18:9–10.[41]

Yet another argument supporting the originality of the shorter text form of 2 Kgs 17:5 comes from Josephus Flavius' reference to the events in his *Jewish Antiquities* (*Antiquitates judaicae*).[42] As shown below, he limits himself to recounting Shalmaneser's expedition against the sole city of Samaria in consequence of Hoshea's plot with the king of Egypt, leaving unmentioned the invasion that swept across the whole country according to 2 Kgs 17:5 (see the text in boxes).

Josephus, *Ant.* 9.277–278:[43]

Σαλμανάσσης δὲ ὁ τῶν Ασσυρίων βασιλεύς ἐπεὶ ἠγγέλη αὐτῷ ὁ τῶν Ισραηλιτῶν βασιλεὺς Ωσείης πέμψας κρύφα πρὸς Σώαν τὸν τῶν Αἰγυπτίων βασιλέα παρακαλῶν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ συμμαχίαν τὴν κατ᾽ αὐτοῦ παροξυνθεὶς ἐστράτευσεν ἐπὶ τὴν Σαμάρειαν ἔτει ἑβδόμῳ τῆς Ωσήου βασιλείας οὐ δεξαμένου δ᾽ αὐτὸν τοῦ βασιλέως ἔτεσι πολιορκήσας τρισὶν εἷλε κατὰ κράτος τὴν Σαμάρειαν ἔνατον μὲν ἔτος Ωσήου βασιλεύοντος ἕβδομον δὲ Εζεκίου τοῦ τῶν Ιεροσολυμιτῶν βασιλέως καὶ τὴν τῶν Ισραηλιτῶν ἡγεμονίαν ἄρδην ἠφάνισε καὶ πάντα τὸν λαὸν μετῴκισεν εἰς τὴν Μηδίαν καὶ Περσίδα ἐν οἷς καὶ τὸν βασιλέα Ωσῆν ζῶντα ἔλαβε

When it was reported to Shalmaneser, the king of the Assyrians, [that] *Hoshea, the king of the Israelites, had sent secretly to So, the king of the Egyptians, calling him on for alliance against him* [= Shalmaneser], [he became] *irritated* [and] waged war against Samaria *in the seventh*

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41   On the historical-critical relations between 2 Kgs 17:3–6 and 18:9–11, see Tekoniemi, *Textual History*, 83–86.

42   For a concise presentation of King Hoshea and his dealings by Josephus Flavius', see C.T. Begg, "The Last Six Kings of Israel according to Josephus *Ant.* 9,228–278," *ETL* 72/4 (1996) 379–383.

43   Cf. S. Mason (ed.), *Flavius Josephus. Translation and Commentary* (Leiden – Boston, MA – Köln: Brill 2005) V. See also comments in M. Nobile, *1–2 Re. Nuova versione, introduzione e commento* (I Libri Biblici 9; Milano: Paoline 2010) 407 with notes. English translation by the author.

year of the reign of Hoshea. When he [= Shalmaneser] *was not received by the king* – [after] having besieged [it] *for three years* – he took Samaria *by force in the ninth year of Hoshea's reigning, so in the seventh year of Hezekiah, the king of the Jerusalemites, and highly destroyed the leadership of the Israelites, and deported all the people into Media and Persia among whom he took also King Hoshea alive.*

As evidenced, Josephus Flavius refers to the pieces of information coming from 2 Kgs 17:5 and 18:9–10, and their literary contexts. Is it significant, however, that he does not refer to the Assyrian king's attack on the entire country? Or is it rather an insignificant detail left unmentioned as unnecessary? Any definite answer to these questions is speculative since we lack further evidence. It cannot be ruled out, though, that Josephus Flavius' reference might reflect the shorter form of 2 Kgs 17:5.[44] One could expect him to mention such information, if he had had access to it, especially as it would render his account about the fate of Samaria more dramatic.

It must be admitted that the above evidence is only of an auxiliary character and can only indirectly support the thesis about the originality of the shorter version of 2 Kgs 17:5. However, the accumulation of this evidence and the fact that it comes from different types of sources encourage us to support it. It is difficult to consider it a pure coincidence that the source testimonies, the quote from one of the Church Fathers, the parallel narrative in the Book of Kings, and the account of these events in the work of Josephus Flavius – all testify in favour of the *lectio brevior* of 2 Kgs 17:5. Therefore, the thesis that precisely this text form presents the original version of 2 Kgs 17:5 may be considered highly probable.

If such a thesis is accepted, it consequently implies that, at least in some cases, the MT itself may already represent a revision[45] of the Hebrew text now lost in the process of textual transmission, but recoverable in the form of the OG text, to be reconstructed on the basis of available sources of the LXX, including the OL text. The thesis about the originality of the *lectio brevior* of 2 Kgs 17:5 would also imply that for some reason the biblical editor considered it right and useful to insert a mention of Shalmaneser's attack on the entire country to the former draft of the account so that it played some, presumably important role in the unfolding plot of the events. He achieved this by making use of the so-called *Wiederaufnahme* technique,[46] namely, a resumptive repetition of the same term or phrase; in our case, of the verbal form וַיַּעַל, that frames a new text portion put into the account. As a result, the editor would create a kind of intratextual relation within the same v. 5 and its literary context (see v. 3 and discussion later in this paper). Therefore, the narrative analysis of this pericope (2 Kgs 17:3–6), with particular attention paid to the narrative function of

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44   P. Hugo reports the scholar's opinion that in the 1st c. CE Josephus Flavius would use a biblical text form close to the proto-Lucianic one; cf. Hugo, "1–2 Kingdoms," 134. For more, see V. Spottorno, "Josephus' Text for 1–2 Kings (3–4 Kingdoms)," *VIII Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Paris 1992* (eds. L. Greenspoon – O. Munnich) (SCS 41; Atlanta, GA: Scholars 1995) 145–152.

45   For a list of proto-Masoretic revisional characteristics in 1–2 Kgs, see Tekoniemi, *Textual History*, 265–271.

46   On the methodological implication of this technique, see, e.g., Tekoniemi, *Textual History*, 7–8.

וַיַּעַל בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ, is the key to disclosing possible reasons for this insertion into the biblical account, as postulated above. This is the subject of the second part of this paper.

2. The Narrative Function of וַיַּעַל בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ in the Unfolding Plot of 2 Kgs 17:1–6

It is necessary to examine the narrative function of וַיַּעַל בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ in the entirety of the narrated story of 2 Kgs 17:1–6. In order to avoid circular reasoning, it should be stated from the outset that the narrative analyses undertaken in this chapter are not intended to justify any preferred or alternative reading of 2 Kgs 17:5. From a methodological point of view, they concern the text as such, without delving into the history of its composition. However, understanding the narrative functions played by individual elements of the narrative can provide information on the postulated textual changes. Since it can be ruled out that they occurred as a result of scribal error or by pure coincidence, it is necessary to consider how the narrative message changes depending on whether the *lectio brevior* or *longior* is taken into account. Therefore, understanding the narrative function of the expression וַיַּעַל בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ in 2 Kgs 17:5 and its literary context will allow us to formulate hypotheses on the possible reasons why the analysed text would have been expanded to include a mention of the conquest of the entire land, or conversely, what reasons may have been behind the removal of this mention from the narrative. In none of these cases do they appear to be merely meaningless or completely random textual amendments.

The schema below presents a general view of how the plot of 2 Kgs 17:1–6 unfolds on different narrative levels of foreground and background (the mention of the conquest of the land in v. 5 is marked with bold characters).[47]

It can be noted that v. 3 begins with a general statement about the Assyrian invasion: 'Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, marched up against him.' The pronominal suffix in עָלָיו refers clearly to 'Hoshea, son of Elah, king over Israel in Samaria' (v. 1), to whom the Deuteronomistic editor dedicates a moderate critic by claiming that 'he did what was displeasing to YHWH, though not as much as the kings of Israel who preceded him' (v. 2).[48] The position of עָלָיו at the beginning of v. 3 is undoubtedly both emphatic[49] and ironic, since it is 'he',

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47   On the structure of 2 Kgs 17:1–6, see, e.g., J. MacDonald, "The Structure of II Kings xvii," *TGUOS* 23 (1969–70) 29–41; B.O. Long, *2 Kings* (FOTL 10; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1991) 180–190; Sweeney, *I & II Kings*, 390.

48   By means of such authoritative and evaluative remark, the writer/editor of the passage reveals himself as being more than a neutral narrator and breaks his habitual silence, thus giving pragmatic importance to the whole passage; J.-L. Ska, *"Our Father Told Us." Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives* (SubBi 13; Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico 2000) 80–81. On the evaluative point of view in narration, see D. Marguerat – Y. Bourquin, *Per leggere i racconti biblici. La Bibbia si racconta. Iniziazione all'analisi narrativa* (Roma: Borla 2001) 74–75, 77; J.-P. Sonnet, "L'analisi narrativa dei racconti biblici," *Manuale di esegesi dell'Antico Testamento* (eds. M. Bauks – C. Nihan) (Testi e commenti; Bologna: EDB 2010) 73–76.

49   Cf. J. Gray, *I & II Kings. A Commentary*, 2 ed. (OTL; London – Philadelphia, PA: Westminster 1970) 642.

Hoshea, against whom the Assyrian aggression is directed in vv. 3–4 in the first place. It is significant that עָלָיו עָלָה, being, in terms of Hebrew syntax, a formulation of *(wə-)x-qatal* type, stands out against the narrative sequence of vv. 1–2, and so it begins a new one, forming a kind of introduction to the actions narrated subsequently.[50] It can also be noted that עָלָיו עָלָה is a plain formulation of the technical-military expression meaning 'to attack, invade, march up against' (see remarks expressed previously in this paper). It makes the motif of invasion explicit in the narrative right from its beginning.

Background of the Narrative	Foreground of the Narrative		2 Kgs 17
	Continuation of the Narrative Sequence	Beginning of the Narrative Sequence	
	בִּשְׁנַת שְׁתֵּים עֶשְׂרֵה לְאָחָז מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה מָלַךְ הוֹשֵׁעַ בֶּן־אֵלָה בְשֹׁמְרוֹן עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל תֵּשַׁע שָׁנִים		v. 1
	וַיַּעַשׂ הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יהוה		v. 2a
רַק לֹא כְּמַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ לְפָנָיו			v. 2b
		עָלָיו עָלָה שַׁלְמַנְאֶסֶר מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר	v. 3a
	וַיְהִי־לוֹ הוֹשֵׁעַ עֶבֶד		v. 3b
	וַיָּשֶׁב לוֹ מִנְחָה		v. 3c
	וַיִּמְצָא מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר בְּהוֹשֵׁעַ קֶשֶׁר		v. 4a
אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַח מַלְאָכִים אֶל־סוֹא מֶלֶךְ־מִצְרַיִם			v. 4b
וְלֹא־הֶעֱלָה מִנְחָה לְמֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר כְּשָׁנָה בְשָׁנָה			v. 4c
	וַיַּעַצְרֵהוּ מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר		v. 4d
	וַיַּאַסְרֵהוּ בֵּית כֶּלֶא		v. 4e
	וַיַּעַל מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר **בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ**		v. 5a
	וַיַּעַל שֹׁמְרוֹן		v. 5b
	וַיָּצַר עָלֶיהָ שָׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים		v. 5c
		בִּשְׁנַת הַתְּשִׁיעִית לְהוֹשֵׁעַ לָכַד מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר אֶת־שֹׁמְרוֹן	v. 6a
	וַיֶּגֶל אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל אַשּׁוּרָה		v. 6b
	וַיֹּשֶׁב אֹתָם בַּחְלַח וּבְחָבוֹר נְהַר גּוֹזָן וְעָרֵי מָדָי		v. 6c

Furthermore, there is a sequence of seven *wayyiqtol* forms in vv. 3b–5, which point out the foreground of the narrative plot by heading individual clauses.[51] And so, there is a chain of seven subsequent actions in vv. 3b–5: Hoshea's becoming a vassal of Assyria (v. 3b), his tribute being paid to the Assyrian emperor (v. 3c), the unravelling of Hoshea's conspiracy by the king of Assyria (v. 4a), the arrest of Hoshea (v. 4d) and his imprisonment (v. 4e),

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50   On the initial *(wə-)x-qatal*, see A. Niccacci, *Sintassi del verbo ebraico nella prosa biblica classica* (SBFA 88; Milano: Terra Santa 2020) §§16–20 and §27. Cf. Joüon – Muraoka, *Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, §118d. On the reversed word order in Hebrew syntax, see Muraoka, *Biblical Hebrew Reader*, §48.

51   See Niccacci, *Sintassi del verbo ebraico*, §26. Cf. Joüon – Muraoka, *Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, §118ac; Muraoka, *Biblical Hebrew Reader*, §21b.1.

the Assyrian king's marching up through the whole country (v. 5a), the attack on Samaria (v. 5b) and its three-year siege (v. 5c). All these actions unfold the foreground of the plot. As seen on the diagram, this narrative sequence is broken in v. 4bc by the *(wə-)x-qatal* formulation (אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַח ... בְּשָׁנָה), which introduces the background information[52] on the reasons for the Assyrian aggression: Hoshea's conspiracy with So'[53] king of Egypt (v. 4b) and the withholding of tribute due (v. 4c).

The narrative sequence is broken again in v. 6a by another *(wə-)x-qatal* formulation (בִּשְׁנַת הַתְּשִׁיעִית לְהוֹשֵׁעַ לָכַד מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר אֶת־שֹׁמְרוֹן). This time, however, it does not introduce background information but initiates a new narrative sequence, which continues with two *wayyiqtol* clauses in v. 6bc, and so, after a gap of three years (in terms of the time of narration) between v. 5 and v. 6 the story reports the capture of Samaria (v. 6a), the deportation of the Israelites to Assyria (v. 6b) and their settlement there (v. 6c). This temporal gap reflects the narrative paralipsis (the lateral omission with the 'zero' time of narration), while the narrated time comes to three years.[54] In this way, the narrative concentrates and puts a strong emphasis on the attack against Samaria. It mentions its further capture but leaves other events that are irrelevant to the plot unsaid. From the narrative point of view, it creates effects of surprise, expectation, and suspense, and raises the dramatic tension.[55]

Considering the storyline of the passage in a wider co-text it represents a classic plot of stories about historical events,[56] characterised by a change of situation (the status of King Hoshea and his kingdom changes drastically by losing their independence to the Assyrians). It is possible to single out the classic moments of the plot in this passage:

1. the exposition (vv. 1–3), which presents the setting of the narrative: the main characters (King Hoshea and King Shalmaneser) and relations between them (Hoshea's becoming an Assyrian vassal and the annual tribute) – these pieces of information are key to understanding the entire narrative;

2. the inciting moment (v. 4abc) which presents the conflict between Hoshea and Shalmaneser as a result of Hoshea's conspiracy with So' and of the withholding of tribute due – the intention of this is to arouse the interest of the reader;

3. the complication (v. 4de), which recounts the different attempts to solve the conflict: the Assyrian king's punishment of Hoshea for his disloyalty through imprisonment;

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52   Cf. Niccacci, *Sintassi del verbo ebraico*, §40. On relative clauses, see Muraoka, *Biblical Hebrew Reader*, §49.

53   On the identification of this figure with Osorkon IV, see S.I. Kang, "A Philological Approach to the Problem of King So (2 Kgs 17:4)," *VT* 60/2 (2010) 241–248.

54   The narrative figure of paralipsis which is a simple temporal omission in the plot should not be confused with an ellipsis which is an omission of a more nuanced kind and less evident to the reader. On this, see Marguerat – Bourquin, *Per leggere i racconti biblici*, 95, 133.

55   Cf. Ska, *"Our Father Told Us"*, 8–9.

56   Cf. Sonnet, "Analisi narrativa," 56–58. For remarks regarding the plot in the narratives, its types, and detailed discussion about the individual moments of the plot, see Ska, *"Our Father Told Us"*, 17–38.

4. the climax (v. 5), which presents the moment of the highest tension by narrating the Assyrian attack launched first against the entire country and then against its capital Samaria taken after a three-year siege;
5. the resolution (v. 6) which reports the solution (the *peripeteia* in Aristotle's terms) of the initial problem, that leads to the exact opposite state of affairs compared to the initial situation: Samaria is captured, and Hoshea's kingdom, initially a relatively independent state, becomes an Assyrian province, and the inhabitants are taken into captivity;
6. the conclusion of the narrative (vv. 7–23), which presents a kind of epilogue to the story and a narrator's evaluation of the fate of the Northern Kingdom in theological terms, which points out the pragmatic reading of the whole section.

With respect to the verse under examination, it may be concluded that it marks the climax of the whole narrative.[57] The Assyrian invasion that swept through the entire country and the conquest of Samaria (v. 5) are the most important moments in the plot, representing a transforming action in narrative terms and the moment of the highest dramatic tension, leading to the tragic fall of the kingdom.

To this general overview of the unfolding plot of the passage, several further considerations should be added. Concerning the statement about Shalmaneser's invasion in v. 3a, it is noteworthy that it does not belong, from the narrative point of view, to the same storyline as the sequence of *wayyiqtol* forms in vv. 3b–5.[58] In fact, they do not describe subsequent actions in relation to what is said in v. 3a (Shalmaneser's marching up against Hoshea). It should rather be said that the series of events in vv. 3b–5 unfolds the 'content' of עָלָיו עָלָה שַׁלְמַנְאֶסֶר מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר in v. 3a, in other words, that vv. 3b–5 describe in detail what is mentioned only generally at the beginning.[59] Therefore, speaking in narrative terms, the statement in v. 3a is a proleptic (anticipatory) summary (the so-called *Sammelbericht*) that presents in advance the general motif of the whole narrative: the Assyrian invasion. By such prolepsis, the attention of the reader 'can focus more on the "how" of the specific narration than on the "what" of the "story"'.[60]

The particular episodes underlying this invasion are narrated in vv. 3b–5. The problem is, however, that vv. 3a–4c recount events that happened before Shalmaneser's

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57 On the narrative climax, see Marguerat – Bourquin, *Per leggere i racconti biblici*, 48, 55.
58 From a historical-critical point of view, many scholars assume that vv. 3–6 consist of two different accounts of the same historical event, deriving from two different ancient sources; proposed already by H. Winckler, "Beiträge zur Quellenscheidung der Königsbücher," *Alttestamentliche Untersuchungen* (ed. H. Winckler) (Leipzig: Pfeiffer 1892) 16–25; cf., e.g., Gray, *I & II Kings*, 639. See also discussion in Tekoniemi, *Textual History*, 63. In opposition to that opinion, J. Trebolle Barrera argues that tensions and inconsistencies in the text may be due not to its composite character, but to its multiple successive revisions, see J. Trebolle Barrera, "La Caida de Samaria: Critica Textual, Literaria e Historica de 2 Re 17, 3–6," *Salm* 28/1–2 (1981) 139–146.
59 P. Merlo suggests to read vv. 3–4 and 5–6 parallelly, not one after another; see P. Merlo, *Re. Introduzione, traduzione e commento* (Nuova versione della Bibbia dai testi antichi 9; Milano: San Paolo 2020) 372.
60 Ska, *"Our Father Told Us"*, 8. On the use of summaries in biblical narratives, see Marguerat – Bourquin, *Per leggere i racconti biblici*, 93–94.

attack[61] – Hoshea's becoming an Assyrian vassal, the tribute, the conspiracy with So', and the withholding of tribute that in effect provoked the military response of the Assyrians – being a kind of analepsis of the mixed type.[62] And so, in order to respect the time sequence in the translation into English we should normally render these verses using the pluperfect tense.[63] The question is, however, complex, since it is difficult to establish with certainty to which concrete action עָלָיו עָלָה in v. 3a refers, and so, at which point of the narrative we should shift in the translation from the pluperfect to the simple past tense. On the one hand, עָלָיו עָלָה in v. 3a may refer to וַיַּעַצְרֵהוּ מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר in v. 4d, since the text tells there about the operations directed against Hoshea: 'Shalmaneser marched up against him' – 'the king of Assyria arrested him.' On the other hand, עָלָיו עָלָה in v. 3a corresponds to וַיַּעַל מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ in v. 5a by involving in both cases the verb עלה with the technical-military meaning: 'Shalmaneser marched up against him' – 'the king of Assyria marched up throughout the whole country.'[64] However, it may be argued that עָלָיו עָלָה in v. 3a does not refer to any single action narrated in vv. 3b–5, but expresses the entirety of the Assyrian invasion, being a kind of title, or as already claimed, the *Sammelbericht* of the events that are next recounted with details. It is then reasonable to propose placing a colon after the rendering of v. 3a, so that it might mark that the events narrated in vv. 3b–5 are not successive, in terms of the narrated time, in relation to what is said in v. 3a.

Concerning the structure of vv. 3–6 another peculiarity of this text can be noticed, namely, that both v. 3a and v. 6a begin without the conjunction *waw*, being a formulation of *x-qatal* type marking the beginning of a new narrative sequence.[65] Even though some thematic correspondence may be observed between them, namely, that the first one tells about the attack of Shalmaneser against Hoshea, and the latter one – about the capture of Samaria, Hoshea's residence, they do not correspond to each other structurally. In terms of syntax, v. 6a corresponds rather to v. 1, being a stereotypical introduction to the account about the monarch's dealings with a standard temporal synchronisation between the northern and southern rulers, and with a general evaluation of the given king. Bearing this

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61 J.H. Kuan and J.K. Hayes solve this difficulty by suggesting that vv. 3a and 5a speak, in fact, about two different invasions of Samaria by Shalmaneser V; see J.H. Hayes – J.K. Kuan, "The Final Years of Samaria (730–720 BC)," *Bib* 72/2 (1991) 179–180. On the contrary, N. Na'aman explains the events in vv. 3–5 in a chronological and linear way by linking v. 3a with Shalmaneser V's invasion of 727 BCE, in consequence of which King Hoshea became his vassal (v. 3bc) but then rebelled again (v. 4), and v. 5a with Sargon II's campaign of 720 BCE; see N. Na'aman, "The Historical Background to the Conquest of Samaria (720 BC)," *Bib* 71/2 (1990) 214, 219, 224–225.

62 For a definition, see J.-N. Aletti *et al.*, *Lessico ragionato dell'esegesi biblica. Le parole, gli approcci, gli autori* (Brescia: Queriniana 2006) 73.

63 R.D. Nelson observes that vv. 3b–4 go back to start the narration about the events from the beginning ('tornano indietro per cominciare a raccontare le cose dall'inizio'); R.D. Nelson, *I e II Re* (Strumenti. Commentari 51; Torino: Claudiana 2010) 252. T.R. Hobbs translates vv. 3b–5 with the pluperfect tense, by stressing the consecutive meaning of וַיְהִי in v. 3b 'because he had become…'; Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 220, 226.

64 K.L. Younger Jr. suggests that עָלָיו עָלָה in v. 3a and וַיַּעַל in v. 5a refer to the same event; see K.L. Younger, "The Fall of Samaria in Light of Recent Research," *CBQ* 61/3 (1999) 478.

65 Cf. Niccacci, *Sintassi del verbo ebraico*, §18, §27.

in mind, v. 6 would be a conclusion of Hoshea's account. It is peculiar, however, that v. 6 speaks about the fate of Samaria and its inhabitants, and only indirectly refers to Hoshea, whose fate was already reported in v. 4de. In this regard, there is a noticeable shift of fo-calisation in the narrative,[66] concentrating first on King Hoshea and his dealings only (vv. 1–4), but afterwards reporting on the conquest of the country and the capital of Samaria, and its consequences (vv. 5–6). It has already been commented that the position of עָלָיו in v. 3a is emphatic, and so, it is King Hoshea against whom the military operations of King Shalmaneser are directed in the first place. In fact, vv. 3–4 recount the personal fate of Hoshea only, by mentioning his arrest and imprisonment. With the beginning of v. 5, the perspective changes and the focus shifts from what concerns the king to what concerns the fate of the country.[67] In addition, yet another shift of focus can be noticed there: the Assyrian aggression is directed, first, against the whole country (v. 5a) and then, against its capital city, Samaria (v. 5b). The narrative does not seem particularly interested in the fate of the country as a whole, but in the fate of its capital. And so, a contrast concerning the time of narration, namely, the 'space' that the narrative dedicates to recount the fate of the whole country (v. 5a) and of the city of Samaria (vv. 5bc–6a) is striking. In effect, the brief mention concerning the whole country stands between the story concerning Hoshea and that concerning Samaria. It marks, then, a kind of transition, a narrative bridge connect-ing one point of view with another. The final outcome of such a narrative construction is twofold. On the one hand, the Assyrian invasion is envisioned as a total conquest, both of the country and of the city of Samaria, leaving the reader with an impression that none of its parts were left unvanquished. Thus, the mention of the king's marching through the country adds drama to the narrated events. On the other hand, as it is a kind of transition creating a narrative suspense, it means that the narrative in its entirety does not pay much attention to the invasion of the country (v. 5a) but concentrates on the operations directed against Samaria (v. 5bc) and their consequences (v. 6). From this perspective, the mention of the attack on the entire country is a background to the story about the conquest of Sa-maria, and as such, it emphasises the special role that the capture of the city plays within this narrative. Paradoxically, it makes its capture more significant. The whole narrative thus takes on an anti-Samarian tone.

Yet another peculiarity of the passage in question concerns a double *Wiederaufnahme*[68] (resumption) visible in the text: the first one between vv. 3a (עָלָיו עָלָה) and 5a (וַיַּעַל), and the other one – within the internal structure of v. 5ab (וַיַּעַל ... וַיַּעַל).[69] This redaction tech-

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66 For general remarks about focalisation in the Bible, see Ska, *"Our Father Told Us"*, 67–76.

67 Cf. R.L. Cohn, *2 Kings* (Berit Olam. Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 2000) 117; Merlo, *Re*, 372.

68 On the function of this narrative figure, see, e.g., B.O. Long, "Framing Repetitions in Biblical Historiography," *JBL* 106/3 (1987) 385–399; Sonnet, "Analisi narrativa," 64.

69 S. Talmon comments that '[…] (v. 5) is a resumptive repetition of […] (v. 3) which proves that the reference to Hoshea's conspiracy with Egypt and his refusal to pay tribute and his ensuing arrest by the king of Assyria (v. 4) is a secondary insert into the originally shorter text'; S. Talmon, *Literary Studies in the Hebrew Bible: Form and Content. Collected Studies* (Leiden: Brill 1993) 155–156.

nique is known as a literary device to insert some text into an already existing passage, making use of a short resumption of the leading motif, so that the text in between might be considered a redactional addition. With respect to the passage in question, this and all abovementioned pieces of information point towards a conclusion that it can hardly be considered a uniform literary unit. On the contrary, it betrays various traces of redactional reworking and editorial adjustments. This remark would corroborate our thesis that the mention of the campaign launched against the whole country in v. 5a may be secondary, namely, it would be inserted into the primary draft of this narrative to give much importance to the attack against Samaria within the narrative plot of 2 Kgs 17:3–6. The *lectio brevior* of the OL and, according to the reconstruction proposed, presumably also of the OG and of its Hebrew *Vorlage* (Old Hebrew), lacking v. 5a, immediately moves on from the military operations against Hoshea to those against Samaria. Such a text form is less dramatic and somehow 'flat' from the narrative point of view. On the contrary, the longer reading of the MT and later Greek text forms (in relation to the postulated OG reading), by providing brief information about the Assyrians' traversing the whole country, depicts their campaign as a total invasion and attaches much greater importance to the conquest of Hoshea's residence, the city of Samaria, than the shorter reading. Such an intensified anti-Samarian tone may have been the reason for inserting v. 5a into the already existing narrative from the pragmatic point of view.[70] If one accepts the shorter reading of the verse as reflecting an alternative (and presumably more original) text in comparison with the MT and other Greek readings, the longer one would reflect a subsequent development of the text aimed at giving much significance to the capture of Samaria and emphasis to the totality of destruction and exile of the Israelites. From a narrative point of view, it is difficult to find a convincing reason why the text of 2 Kgs 17:5 would be shortened and the mention of the conquest of the land omitted.

3. Events Narrated in 2 Kgs 17:3–6 in the Historical Context

The reconstruction of the transmission history of the text under examination and the analysis of the narrative function played by the mention of the land's conquest within the account of 2 Kgs 17:3–6 should be complemented by the historical contextualisation of the narrated events. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss all the particularities concerning the Assyrian invasion of Samaria, therefore, the author limits himself to the aspects related directly to the interpretation of 2 Kgs 17:5 in its co-text.

The first element that requires explanation is the identity of the Assyrian king who besieged Samaria. On the one hand, the biblical text clearly indicates that it was Shalmaneser V, whose name is mentioned explicitly in 2 Kgs 17:3a in the context of the measures taken against King Hoshea (vv. 3b–4). On the other hand, the very general and rather enigmatic

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70   Cf. Tekoniemi, *Textual History*, 67 n. 266.

expression מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר 'the king of Assyria' occurring five times in vv. 4acd, 5a, 6a provides grounds for speculations about the identity of the actual conqueror of the city of Samaria.[71] The biblical narrative (2 Kgs 17:3–6) and a fragmentary note in the Babylonian Chronicle 1 speak of Shalmaneser V's conquest of Samaria,[72] whereas it is Sargon II, the successor of Shalmaneser V, who claims in the Ashur Charter, the Nimrud Prisms, and the Great Summary Inscription from his palace in Khorsabad (ancient Dūr-Šarrukīn) to have captured Samaria and deported its inhabitants to Assyria.[73] The discussion on this topic has been going on among scholars for years, as none of the ancient sources is decisive on that matter.[74] Although it is not the subject of this paper to take a decisive stance on this matter, let it suffice to recall the most frequently cited scenario of the events – in the opinion of the author of this paper, the most probable one – namely, a double or a two stage conquest of Samaria, as has been argued by many scholars.[75]

In a nutshell, King Hoshea would be installed on the throne of Samaria by Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 BCE) in the aftermath of his invasion of the southern Levant with a series of campaigns in the years 734–732 BCE, and of the *coup d'état* against King Pekah (cf. 2 Kgs 15:29–30). It appears that Hoshea was a faithful Assyrian vassal during the first part of his reign, as it may be incurred from the biblical account (cf. 2 Kgs 17:1), but then he rebelled, perhaps in the attempt to free himself from the Assyrian burden and, very possibly, with the intention of making an alliance with Egypt (cf. v. 4bc). The response to

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[71] For an overview of opinions concerning the identity of the Assyrian king and other debated issues related to our passage, see Younger, "Fall of Samaria," 461–482; T.-H. Kim, "Shalmaneser V, Sargon II, and the Final Years of Samaria in Recent Study," *Korean Journal of Christian Studies* 51 (2007) 6–19.

[72] Cf. J.-J. Glassner (ed.), *Mesopotamian Chronicles* (WAW 19; Atlanta, GA: SBL 2004) 16, col. i: 28. See discussion on the sources for Shalmaneser V in Younger, "Fall of Samaria," 463–468. On a controversy about the writing of ^{URU}*šá–ma–ra–'i–in* in this chronicle, see P. Dubovský, "Did Shalmaneser V Conquer the City of Samaria? An Investigation into the *ma/ba*-sign in Chronicle 1," *Or* 80/4 (2011) 423–438.

[73] See G. Frame, *The Royal Inscriptions of Sargon II, King of Assyria (721–705 BC)* (RINAP 2; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 2021) no. 1: 12–17; no. 74: col. iv: 25–41. See discussion about these sources in Younger, "Fall of Samaria," 468–473.

[74] The data in favour of Shalmaneser V's conquest of Samaria is only fragmentary, as none of his significant royal inscriptions has survived to our times. On the other hand, the difficulty in evaluating Sargon II's royal inscriptions lies in the fact that they were written towards the end of his reign and are strongly marked by propaganda purposes and a ceremonial tone, reflecting a completely different historical situation when – at the end of his rule – Sargon II was indeed 'the King of the ancient World'. The beginnings of his reign were, however, marked by a series of rebellions and general chaos in the empire which burst out when he usurped the throne after the death of Shalmaneser V. Therefore, his allegedly triumphant military operations at the beginning of his rule were, for sure, not so successful and glorious as they are described in the royal inscriptions. For possible historical reconstructions, see P. Merlo, *Storia di Israele e Giuda nell'antichità* (Guida alla Bibbia 71; Milano: San Paolo 2022) 89–90, 92–93; C. Frevel, *History of Ancient Israel* (ABS 32; Atlanta, GA: SBL 2023) 361.

[75] See, for instance, M. Cogan – H. Tadmor, *II Kings. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 2 ed. (AB 11; New Haven, CT – London: Yale University 2008) 197; G. Galil, "The Last Years of the Kingdom of Israel and the Fall of Samaria," *CBQ* 57/1 (1995) 60; Merlo, *Re*, 373; cf. P.R. House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC 8; Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman 1995) 340; G. Hens-Piazza, *1–2 Kings* (AOTC; Nashville, TN: Abingdon 2006) 351. On the opposite opinion, see conclusive statements in Na'aman, "Historical Background," 222–225; see also M.C. Tetley, "The Date of Samaria's Fall as a Reason for Rejecting the Hypothesis of Two Conquests," *CBQ* 64/1 (2002) 59–77.

Hoshea's disloyalty came with the new Assyrian ruler, Shalmaneser V (727–722 BCE), who intervened in the region in 724 BCE and conquered (but not necessarily destroyed)[76] the city of Samaria after a siege at the turn of 722 and 721 BCE. This did not mean, however, a triumphant Assyrian victory over the region and the end of military operations in the southern Levant. In the face of further local uprisings,[77] Shalmaneser V's successor, Sargon II (721–705 BCE), was forced to intervene there once again. Only then, not earlier than in 720/719 BCE, did he manage to retake the Syro-Palestine region, including the land of Samaria, and to incorporate it into the provincial system of the empire.[78]

The picture resulting from the historical reconstruction seems to be much more complex and multi-dimensional than the straightforward biblical narrative would suggest. Nevertheless, on the narrative level, there is no doubt that for the biblical writer מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר 'the king of Assyria' in vv. 4acd, 5a, 6a is identifiable with שַׁלְמַנְאֶסֶר מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר 'Shalmaneser, King of Assyria' as explicitly indicated in v. 3a. In the view of B. Becking, it is possible that the editor of Kings who was no longer aware of a double conquest of Samaria, conflated all the events spanning from 724 to 720/719 BCE into one campaign and attributed them to one king.[79]

Since the capture of the city by Shalmaneser V and its reconquest and subjugation of the region by Sargon II could be a possible scenario of the events, we should consider the relationship between the phrases כָּל־הָאָרֶץ 'the whole land' and שֹׁמְרוֹן 'Samaria' occurring in the biblical text. In this regard, for example, G. Galil argues that שֹׁמְרוֹן functions in 2 Kgs 17:5 as a general term representing the kingdom as a whole.[80] In fact, this term is occasionally ambivalent and may refer either to the land of Samaria or to its capital city of the same name. It is significant, however, that the meaning of most of the 48 occurrences of שֹׁמְרוֹן in 1–2 Kgs is restricted to the city only. If the term שֹׁמְרוֹן in 2 Kgs 17:5 refers to the land

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76 L.L. Grabbe comments that the biblical data must be nuanced on the archaeological basis, since there is no significant burn layer or other direct evidence of destruction of Samaria; see L.L. Grabbe, "The Kingdom of Israel from Omri to the Fall of Samaria: If We Had Only the Bible …," *Ahab Agonistes: The Rise and Fall of the Omri Dynasty* (ed. L.L. Grabbe) (LHBOTS 428; Edinburgh: Clark 2007) 64; cf. Na'aman, "Historical Background," 209; Younger, "Fall of Samaria," 473–475. See also the latest comprehensive study on the conquest of Samaria in S. Hasegawa – C. Levin – K. Radner (eds.), *The Last Days of the Kingdom of Israel* (BZAW 511; Berlin: De Gruyter 2018).

77 M. Cogan comments on the situation in 721 BCE and calls it unprecedented, since Sargon II was an usurper (although of royal blood from a side branch from Tiglath-pileser III, as it is argued) who seized the throne after the sudden death of Shalmaneser V, and thus all previous oaths of loyalty were cancelled and many regions, including Israel and Judah, went back on their vassal obligations and rebelled. Therefore, it was impossible, contrary to what is claimed in Sargon II's inscriptions, to campaign against the West in his accession year (721 BCE). It only became possible in his second full year, that was 720/719 BCE, but even if then he may have retaken the West, 'it was far from being subdued.' See M. Cogan, "Restoring the Empire: Sargon's Campaign to the West in 720/19 BCE," *IEJ* 67/2 (2017) 154, 163.

78 Cf. Merlo, *Storia di Israele e Giuda*, 90; Frevel, *History of Ancient Israel*, 362–364.

79 See B. Becking, *Fall of Samaria. An Historical and Archaeological Study* (SHANE 2; Leiden – New York – Köln: Brill 1992) 56. R.L. Cohn comments that the biblical writer does not name or distinguish the Assyrian kings, because for him what matters is not the process but the result; see Cohn, *2 Kings*, 117.

80 Cf. Galil, "Last Years," 60.

of Samaria and not to the city, both expressions (שֹׁמְרוֹן and כָּל־הָאָרֶץ) would have the same referent in the physical world, and thus they would create a superfluous and unnecessary repetition in the text. Moreover, the expression וַיָּצַר עָלֶיהָ 'he besieged it' in v. 5c reports the siege of Samaria. It would be highly unusual for it to refer to the 'siege' of a region and not of a city. It is clear, therefore, that כָּל־הָאָרֶץ and שֹׁמְרוֹן in 2 Kgs 17:5 are not equivalent terms and have two different referents: the first one – the whole country of Samaria, identifiable in our passage with the country ruled by King Hoshea, and the latter one – its capital, the city of Samaria. In this context, the quantifier כֹּל 'the whole of, entirety' used with reference to the land accentuates the fact that no part of Hoshea's kingdom was passed over in the Assyrian invasion. As A. Šanda rightly observes, כָּל־הָאָרֶץ in 2 Kgs 17:5 would not refer to the entire land of Israel but rather to Hoshea's country, which was the rest of the land of Israel – from the northern Jizre'el plain to the southern boundary with Judah – that had not been conquered by Tiglath-pileser III in 734–732 BCE.[81]

Another interesting element regarding 2 Kgs 17:5 is its 'sociological setting.'[82] It is noteworthy that the expression עָלָה עַל employed several times in 2 Kgs 17:3–6 and used stereotypically to denote an invasion, indicates some sociolinguistic background. In fact, it implies the geographic topography of the Levant, which entails a natural movement from below upwards in attacking inhabited areas located usually on elevated places. This fits the historical context of the narrative in question, namely, the Assyrian invasion of the southern Levant. It is almost certain that the troops set out from the north, either from Tyre[83] in Philistia or from Damascus in Syria (where they were presumably stationed), and so they must have invaded the land from the valleys (either from Shephelah or from the Valley Jizre'el), marching up through the hill country of Ephraim in order to attack the stronghold of Samaria. In such a sociolinguistic context, the verb עָלָה expresses in 2 Kgs 17:5 both a notion of an upward movement and the technical-military sense of invading the highlands.

Coming back to the question of a two-stage invasion of Samaria, some further elements present in the biblical text should be commented on. The presence of two consecutive clauses וַיַּעַל בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ 'he marched up throughout the whole country' and וַיַּעַל שֹׁמְרוֹן 'he attacked Samaria' in 2 Kgs 17:5 corroborates the already expressed assumptions. On a narrative level, the biblical text describes the Assyrian invasion as consisting of two stages: (1) the conquest of the open hill country of Ephraim by subduing all significant Israelite towns in the region and (2) the attack directed against its capital city of Samaria.[84] On a historical level, not only is such a military tactic plausible, but it is well documented by

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81   Cf. A. Šanda, *Die Bücher der Könige. Zweiter Halbband. Das zweite Buch der Könige übersetzt und erklärt* (Münster: Aschendorff 1912) 217.

82   For general remarks regarding sociolinguistics, see W.B. McGregor, *Linguistics. An Introduction* (London – New York: Continuum 2010) 155–178.

83   On Shalmaneser V's campaign against Tyre, see Cogan – Tadmor, *II Kings*, 198–199. Cf. Hayes – Kuan, "Final Years," 159–161.

84   T.R. Hobbs comments that the Assyrian strategy consisted of paralysing the country and then of surrounding the capital city after its military and economic support had been taken away; cf. Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 230.

Neo-Assyrian sources as an almost standard procedure in conquering other lands. In fact, the Assyrians would not attack the capital of the rebel region immediately, at the beginning of their military campaigns. Instead, they would cut it off from any possible external support and supplies, for instance, by attacking smaller centres of the rebellion around and negotiating with the allies of the rebels to make them shift their allegiance to the Assyrians, or by setting blockades on the routes to stop the flow of food and trade – all this aimed at total isolation of the 'headquarter' and exposing it to a siege calculated to be short and dramatic. This tactic proved to be very effective a decade earlier in dealings with Aram-Damascus by Tiglath-pileser III in 734–732 BCE.[85]

The Assyrian military strategy described above, consisting of a two-stage conquest of the land of Samaria and its capital, is concurrent with the plot of the MT and most of the Greek testimonies, but not with the shorter OL version preserved in La[115]. One could argue that this undermines the thesis about the original (primary) nature of this text version. The author of this paper believes that it is exactly the opposite. It is difficult to assume that the postulated textual changes occurred inconsiderately or were not carefully thought out. The well-known war practice of the Assyrians would be an excellent argument for the biblical editors to give credibility to the textual expansion they introduced. In this way, the postulated addition of the mention of the land's conquest before the attack on its capital would not only be justified by the war realities of the era, but would be, in fact, possible thanks to them. In this regard, it would be more difficult to explain the opposite process, i.e., the appearance of a shortened text version of the events, omitting the mention of the conquest of the land.

When it comes to the conquest of Samaria itself, archaeological data demonstrate many traces of devastation found throughout the coastal strip and the hill country of Ephraim in the late 8th century BCE.[86] Some of these may be linked with the aforementioned invasion of Tiglath-pileser III in the 730's BCE, even though his operations were focused mainly on the northern and eastern parts of Israel (Galilee and Gilead), and not on the hill country of Ephraim. It seems, however, that his campaigns affected, directly or indirectly, the whole country and left it ruined and devastated, and therefore weak and almost defenceless. It would mean that perhaps there was no necessity for Shalmaneser V's troops to fight in the open field, and the Assyrians could easily subjugate the whole country, already plundered a few times, that had put up little resistance. In fact, the Babylonian Chronicle speaking about the invasion of Shalmaneser V records that the Assyrians had plundered vast areas or groups of towns in Israel before the attack was directed against the city of Samaria itself. By stating this, the Assyrian writer employs an Akkadian verb *ḫepû* 'to plunder, ravage', indicating the conquest by raiding, looting, or sacking rather than defeat by regular clash

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85   Cf. P. Dubovský, "Tiglath-Pileser III's Campaigns in 734–732 B.C.: Historical Background of Isa 7; 2 Kgs 15–16 and 2 Chr 27–28," *Bib* 87/2 (2006) 158–161.
86   Cf. Becking, *Fall of Samaria*, 56–60.

of troops.[87] Therefore, Shalmaneser V would first plunder the entire region of Ephraim and the neighbourhoods of Samaria. In consequence, its capital would be the only city left that defied his power by defending itself during a three-year siege. In this regard, A. Šanda comments that such a long siege may have been due to the defensible position of the city and to the necessity of the Assyrian army to withdraw to the winter-camp somewhere in the province of Damascus.[88] P. Merlo argues, however, that the three-year siege appears simply improbable, just because of the warfare practice evoked by A. Šanda, namely, that the Assyrian army used to go back to the heartland every year. P. Merlo comments further that Samaria was not as important and inexpungable as to resist the power of Assyria for three years.[89] According to a possible scenario, the Assyrian conquest may have been somehow inconclusive and the siege of the city interrupted, for instance, because of the notice about the death of Shalmaneser V, which forced the army to withdraw from the southern Levant to the Assyrian heartland. Only two years later would Sargon II resume the conquest and bring it to the (more or less) satisfactory end.[90]

In summary, the historical reconstruction of the events recounted in 2 Kgs 17:3–6 leads to the conclusion that the Assyrian king who invaded Samaria was Shalmaneser V, but it was his successor, Sargon II, who managed to complete the conquest and control the region by turning it into the Assyrian province of *Samērīna*, and to exile its inhabitants to Assyria. The question of the actual conqueror of the city of Samaria is still open to debate since many scenarios may still be envisioned. The author of this paper believes that it is reasonable to assume that Shalmaneser V launched the campaign against Samaria, and after a relatively rapid conquest of the open hill country, he encountered some resistance in the capital, which led to its siege. It is very likely that the Assyrian forces succeeded in breaking the resistance of the Samarians and taking the city, but they did not destroy it. The eventual

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87   See the entry *ḫepû* 3 in *CAD* VI = I.J. Gelb *et al.* (eds.), *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (Chicago, IL – Glückstadt: Oriental Institute – Augustin 1956) VI, 173. Cf. Naʾaman, "Historical Background," 211.

88   Cf. Šanda, *Bücher der Könige*, 217.

89   Cf. Merlo, *Re*, 372. Contrary to this view, M.A. Sweeney argues that Samaria had well-constructed fortifications, 'which would have been nearly impossible to breach by frontal assault'; see Sweeney, *I & II Kings*, 393; cf. Gray, *I & II Kings*, 644; N. Avigad, "Samaria," *The New Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavation in the Holy Land* (ed. E. Stern) (New York – Jerusalem: Simon & Schuster – Israel Exploration Society & Carta 1993–2008) IV, 1300–1310 (especially 1302–1303). N. Naʾaman argues that the length of siege in the biblical text comes from erroneous deduction of the writer 'who in his sources had found a datum that Samaria was besieged and conquered by the Assyrians three years *after* its rebellion and the imprisonment of its king' and so he assumed that the conquest of Samaria must have lasted three years; see Naʾaman, "Historical Background," 221.

90   H. Tadmor put forward an interesting hypothesis that Sargon II may have been present, or even have overseen, the siege of Samaria as Shalmaneser V's general; see H. Tadmor, "The Campaigns of Sargon II of Assur: A Chronological-Historical Study," *JCS* 12/1 (1958) 31, 36; cf. L.M. Wray Beal, *1&2 Kings* (ApOTC 9; Nottingham – Downers Grove, IL: Apollos – InterVarsity 2014) 449. This proposal was elaborated by S.J. Park who argues that it was Sargon who defeated the military alliance in the West and conquered Samaria under Shalmaneser V in 722 BCE, and then, after having heard of the death of the king, he returned to the heartland and usurped the Assyrian throne; see S.J. Park, "A New Historical Reconstruction of the Fall of Samaria," *Bib* 93/1 (2012) 104–106. Cf. Kim, "Shalmaneser V," 5–27.

retreat of the armies to the heartland of Assyria, perhaps prompted by news of internal unrest caused by the death of Shalmaneser V, gave rise to a series of rebellions in the southern Levant, as local political entities, including the region of Samaria, took advantage of Assyria's internal weakness to regain relative independence from the empire. The new Assyrian ruler Sargon II could face these difficulties neither in his accession year, nor in the first regnal year, as he was too occupied with internal difficulties and struggles with Babylonia and Elam. Only in the late 720 BCE could he launch a campaign against the West to reconquer it. Perhaps, another siege and capture of Samaria was necessary, but the biblical text is silent about this, while the Neo-Assyrian sources are not decisive on this matter.

The biblical author presents these events in a form of a single victorious campaign of Shalmaneser V, showing the total defeat of Samaria and the definitive end of the Kingdom of Israel in theological terms (notice a long 'homily' on the fall of Israel in 2 Kgs 17:7–23).[91] The mention by the biblical writer that Samaria regained relative independence after Shalmaneser's withdrawal and that Sargon II had to set out with a new campaign to reconquer it would disturb that one-sidedly negative theological image of the fall of the Northern Kingdom as God's harsh punishment for its apostasies. In this respect, the mention about the conquest of the land in the MT, in later Greek versions, and the Targum intensifies the anti-Samarian rhetoric of the biblical text in comparison with those textual versions that speak only of an attack on the city and its siege (OL and reconstructed OH and OG texts).

Conclusions

The text-critical analyses of all available textual sources of 2 Kgs (4 Kgdms) 17:5 indicate a complex transmission history of the text in question. It points towards the recognition of its two basic textual strands:

1. one preserving the full account of the events (*lectio longior*), that is, the conquest of the land (v. 5a), of the city of Samaria (v. 5b) and its three-year siege (v. 5c), attested to by the MT, Aramaic *Tg. J.*, Greek *kaige* text as well as by the Antiochian (*L*) text with a further expansion,
2. the other one preserving the shorter version of the narrated events (*lectio brevior*), lacking the mention about the conquest of the land, witnessed by the OL *Palimpsestus Vindobonensis* (La[115]) and several Greek testimonies (*CI* group).

This diversity prompts us to raise questions about the character of the biblical remark on the conquest of the land, whether it may be considered primary or secondary. The scholarly discussion about the textual witnesses involved here, especially about the great value of the OL in reconstructing the text close to the OG, leads to the conclusion that the shorter

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91   M.A. Sweeney comments that the narrative in 2 Kgs 17 'is formulated largely as a theological treatise that explains the exile of the northern Israel as a consequence of the people's apostasy against YHWH […]. Such an account must be recognised as an expression of theodicy'; Sweeney, *I & II Kings*, 389.

version of La[115] may be in fact the only source available today that witnesses the true OG text and at the same time the oldest recoverable form of 2 Kgs (4 Kgdms) 17:5. This assumption is supported by auxiliary evidence such as the quotation of 2 Kgs 17:5 found in the writings of Cyril of Alexandria, the parallel account about the conquest of Samaria in 2 Kgs 18:9–10 and Josephus Flavius' reference to the events in his *Jewish Antiquities* – all of them testifying in favour of the *lectio brevior* of 2 Kgs 17:5. The accumulation of this evidence and the fact that it comes from different types of sources can hardly be a pure coincidence. It encourages the author of this paper to hypothesise about the originality of the *lectio brevior* of 2 Kgs 17:5 and to propose the reconstruction of all stages of its textual transmission, including the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the OG, the OG itself, and the proto-*L* text, in consequence of which the Masoretic *lectio longior* would appear as a recension of an older Hebrew text, and thus, as an alternative version of the events referred to.

The *lectio longior* of the MT could hardly be accidental. This makes us raise questions about the possible reasons underlying the postulated textual expansion in 2 Kgs 17:5[MT]. In this regard, the narrative analysis of 2 Kgs 17:5 within its co-text shows that the notice of the Assyrian attack on the entire land and its capital of Samaria is the climax of the unfolding plot of the narrated events. Through a noticeable shift of focalisation, the invasion that swept throughout the entire country and the conquest of Samaria are given much emphasis and become a transforming action in the narrative terms and the moment of the highest dramatic tension, leading the narrative to the tragic end of the kingdom. In this context, the brief mention concerning the whole country stands between the story concerning King Hoshea (vv. 3–4) and that concerning Samaria (vv. 5–6). It marks a kind of transition, a narrative bridge connecting one point of view with another. The final outcome of such a narrative construction is twofold. On the one hand, the Assyrian invasion is envisioned as a total conquest, leaving the reader with an impression that none of Israel's lands was left unvanquished. The mention of the king's marching up the country (v. 5a) thus adds drama to the narrated events. On the other hand, as it is a kind of transition creating a narrative suspense, it emphasises the operations directed against the city of Samaria (v. 5bc) and their consequences (v. 6). From this perspective, the mention of the attack on the entire country makes the capture of the capital more significant. In contrast to this, the *lectio brevior* of the OL and presumably also of the OG and of its Hebrew *Vorlage* (Old Hebrew), which passes immediately from the military operations against Hoshea to those against the city of Samaria, appears to be less dramatic and somehow 'flat' from the narrative point of view.

If one accepts that the shorter reading of the verse reflects an alternative and presumably more original text in comparison with the MT and other Greek readings, the longer one would reflect a subsequent development of the text aimed at giving much significance to the capture of Samaria and emphasising the totality of the Assyrian invasion. This is even more evident in a further expansion on 2 Kgs 17:5 preserved by the Antiochian text. In such a way, the narrative of the *lectio longior* takes on a more anti-Samarian tone, disclosing possible pragmatic motives underlying postulated text expansions. In fact, this

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kind of polemic may have been the reason why the biblical editor would have inserted the mention of the campaign against the whole country into the primary draft of this narrative. This assumption would corroborate an increasingly popular thesis that one of the characteristics of the MT, viewed as a revision of an older Hebrew text, would be its anti-Samarian tendency.

Historical contextualisation of the events narrated in 2 Kgs 17:5 and its co-text completes the picture which seems to be much more complex and multi-dimensional than the straightforward biblical narrative would suggest. The biblical text leaves little space for an identification of the king of Assyria who invaded Samaria different than with Shalmaneser V, as he is the only ruler mentioned explicitly by name in the co-text (v. 3). However, many scholars argue in favour of a double or a two-stage conquest of Samaria and interpret the biblical narrative as a conflation of events spanning from 724 to 720/719 BCE. They are identified as one campaign attributed to one king, behind whose actions are hidden military operations of both Shalmaneser V and his successor Sargon II. Various details of those conquests, including their course and exact dating of the events, are still open to debate. However, the result of the Assyrian campaigns remains clear: the land of Israel that had not been conquered by Tiglath-pileser III in 734–732 BCE, that is, Hoshea's country from the northern Jizre'el plain to the southern border with Judah, was conquered and incorporated into the provincial system of the empire, and the city of Samaria, besieged but most probably not destroyed, became a new Assyrian centre in the southern Levant. This marked the end of the Northern Kingdom as an independent political entity.

In the historical context depicted above, the phraseology employed in 2 Kgs 17:5 is noteworthy. Hebrew syntagms making use of the verb עָלָה express both an idea of an upward movement and the military operation of invading the highlands. This fits perfectly the historical realities of Assyrian invasions of the southern Levant, as it is almost certain that their troops set out from the north and invaded the land of Israel from the valleys, marching up through the hill country of Ephraim to attack the stronghold of Samaria. Moreover, the biblical text itself (MT, *Tg. J.*, and almost all Greek Testimonies) implies that the Assyrian invasion consisted of two stages: the conquest of the open hill country of Ephraim and the attack directed against its capital city of Samaria. Such military tactics are well documented by Neo-Assyrian sources as an almost standard procedure in conquering the lands. As discussed, the Assyrians would not attack the capital of the rebel region immediately, but instead, they would cut it off from any possible external support and supplies. This tactic proved to be very effective a decade earlier in dealings with Aram-Damascus by Tiglath-pileser III in 734–732 BCE, and it may have been effective in the case of the conquest of Samaria as well. Such a military strategy is not implied in the shorter OL text of La[115]. If our hypothesis that this text preserves the oldest recoverable form of 2 Kgs 17:5 is true, it can also be admitted that the well-known Assyrian war practice of attacking first the open country and only then its fortified capital would be an excellent justification for the biblical editor for the postulated textual expansion, thus giving credibility to the events recounted.

The final literary context in which these events are narrated indicates that the biblical writer/editor was not interested in presenting a merely historical report on them. He was much more interested in theodicy, depicting the total defeat of Samaria and the definitive end of the Kingdom of Israel in theological terms. The anti-Samarian tone resonates strongly in the long 'homily' on the fall of Israel in 2 Kgs 17:7–23 as God's harsh punishment for its apostasies. It may have been the reason why those elements coming from the historical contextualisation of the events which could weaken that one-sidedly negative theological image – such as the remark that Shalmaneser campaign may have been inconclusive, or that Samaria was not destroyed, or that it had to be conquered twice – were somehow simplified by the biblical editor to a single victorious Assyrian invasion. In this regard, the remark about the conquest of the land in the MT, in later Greek versions, and the Targum intensifies too the anti-Samarian rhetoric of the biblical text in comparison with those textual versions which do not mention it (OL and reconstructed OH and OG texts).

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