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# In Search of the Original Biblical Record of the Assyrian Conquest of Samaria

## 1 Introduction: Two Parallel Records

The conquest of Samaria by the Assyrian great king is recorded two times in the Book of Kings. The first account is to be found in 2Kgs 17:3–6 in the framework of the section that deals with king Hoshea of Israel. This is the place where one would expect it. The second account in 2Kgs 18:9–11 is part of the section that relates the history of king Hezekiah of Judah (Fig. 1).

9 ויהי בשנה הרביעית למלך חזקיהו היא השנה השביעית להושע בן־אלה מלך ישראל עלה שלמנאסר מלך־אשור	3 עליו עלה שלמנאסר מלך אשור ויהי־לו הושע עבד וישב לו מנחה: 4 וימצא מלך־אשור בהושע קשר אשר שלח מלאכים אל־סוּא מלך־מצרים ולא־העלה מנחה למלך אשור בשנה בשנה ויעצרהו מלך אשור ויאסרהו בית כלא: 5 ויעל מלך־אשור בכל־הארץ ויעל שמרון ויצר עליה שֶׁלֶשׁ שָׁנִים: 6 בשנת התשיעית להושע לכד מלך־אשור את־שמרון ויגל את־ישראל אשורה וישב אתם בחלח ובחבור נהר גוזן וערי מדי:
על־שמרון ויצר עליה: 10 <וילכדה> מקצה שלש שנים בשנת־שש לחזקיהו היא שנת־תשע להושע מלך ישראל גלכדה שמרון: 11 ויגל מלך־אשור את־ישראל אשורה <וינחם> בחלח ובחבור נהר גוזן וערי מדי: 12 על אשר לא־שמעו בקול יהוה אלהיהם ויעברו את־בריתו את כל־אשר צוה משה עבד יהוה ולא שמעו ולא עשו:	

Fig. 1: Synoptic table presenting the text of 2Kgs 17:3–6 (first column) and 2Kgs 18:9–12 (second column). Prepared by the author.

The second record is usually seen as secondary, and rightly so. The section disrupts the connection that originally existed between the note about Heze-

kiah's rebellion against the Assyrian king in 18:7b and the account of Sennacherib's campaign which is given from 18:13 onward: "He rebelled against the king of Assyria, and would not serve him. [...] In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them." These two phrases once followed one another immediately.<sup>1</sup>

In most parts, 18:9–11 corresponds almost verbatim with 17:3, 5–6. This is best explained by direct copying. It raises the question of why a record was repeated which every reader had already come across in the preceding section of the book. The answer might be found in those phrases that go beyond the *Vorlage* and have no equivalent in it: the synchronistic dates in 18:9, 10, and the theological comment in v. 12.

## 2 The Origin of 2Kgs 18:9–12

The first excess is the date of Shalmaneser's campaign in v. 9. It was put in front of the original beginning of the record:

וְהָיָה בְשָׁנָה הָרְבִיעִית לְמֶלֶךְ חֲזַקְיָהוּ הָיָה הַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁבִיעִית לְהוֹשֵׁעַ בֶּן־אֵלָה מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל עָלָה שַׁלְמָנְאֶסֶר מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר

*In the fourth year of king Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah, king of Israel, Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up.*

A similar synchronism is added to the date of the conquest in v. 10:

<וַיִּלְכְּדָהּ> מִקְצֵה שָׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים בְּשָׁנַת־שֵׁשׁ לְחֲזַקְיָהוּ הָיָה שְׁנַת־תְּשַׁע לְהוֹשֵׁעַ מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל נִלְכְּדָה שָׁמְרוֹן

<And he captured it><sup>2</sup> at the end of three years. In the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was captured.

<sup>1</sup> The note in 18:8 about a great victory over the Philistines "cannot be attributed to an authentic source" either, as Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1981; trans. J. Doull et al.), 132 n. 17, stated. The verse begins similarly to v. 4, compare *הוא הסייר את־הַבָּמוֹת* "he was the one who smote the Philistines" with *הוא־הִבֵּה אֶת־פְּלִשְׁתִּים* "he was the one who removed the high places." This is meaningful: Most probably the victory over the Philistines was invented because Hezekiah's piety should not go unrewarded. The combination *עֵזָה וְאֶת־גְּבוּלָהּ* "Gaza and its territory" is "objectionable, and we should expect *גְּבוּלֹם*", so Bernhard Stade and Friedrich Schwally, *The Books of Kings* (Leipzig: Hinrich, 1904), 269. It may be borrowed from Judg 1:18: *עֵזָה וְאֶת־גְּבוּלָהּ*. The expression *עַד־עִיר מִבְּצָר* "from watchtower to fortified city" (which is repeated in 2Kgs 17:9) is reminiscent of Josh 19:29: *וְעַד־עִיר מִבְּצָרֶצֶר* "to the fortified city of Tyre."

<sup>2</sup> The *Q<sup>re</sup>* *וַיִּלְכְּדָהּ* "and they captured it" is better vocalized as *וַיִּלְכְּדָהּ* "and he captured it" in accordance with the Septuagint, the Peshitta and the Vulgate. However, the Antiochian text reads

In the second case, there can again be little doubt that the synchronism is an expansion, compared to 17:5b–6:

וַיַּעַל שֹׁמְרוֹן וַיִּצַר עָלֶיהָ שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים בְּשָׁנַת הַתְּשִׁיעִית לְהוֹשֵׁעַ לְכַד מֶלֶךְ־אֲשׁוּר אֶת־שֹׁמְרוֹן

He came up to Samaria, and he besieged it for three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria captured Samaria.

In 17:5b the duration of the siege is given with “three years.” In 18:10 the duration has become the date of the conquest: “And he captured it at the end (מִקְצֵה) of three years.” In order to incorporate the synchronism, the verb וַיִּלְכְּדָה “and he captured it” had to be repeated towards the end of the verse: נִלְכְּדָה “it was captured.” The doublet shows the secondary expansion. In the same process the subject מֶלֶךְ־אֲשׁוּר was moved to v. 11; compare וַיִּגַּל מֶלֶךְ־אֲשׁוּר אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשׁוּרָה in 18:11 with וַיִּגַּל אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשׁוּרָה in 17:6: “And he /the king of Assyria/ carried Israel away to Assyria.”

There is one difficulty remaining. It relates to the form of the dating in 17:6. Instead of בְּשָׁנַת הַתְּשִׁיעִית לְהוֹשֵׁעַ “in the ninth year of Hoshea” one should expect either וַיְהִי בְּשָׁנָה הַתְּשִׁיעִית לְהוֹשֵׁעַ “and it happened in the ninth year of Hoshea” (compare 18:9), or בְּשָׁנַת־תְּשַׁע לְהוֹשֵׁעַ “in year nine of Hoshea,” as in 18:10.<sup>3</sup> I would prefer the latter for the original reading. Possibly this was the reading at the time when the text was copied to 18:10, and it was later changed into the present form.

Why was the record of the conquest of Samaria expanded in such a way? The synchronisms relate the reign of the king of Judah to that of the king of Israel. It is emphasized that the conquest of Samaria took place exactly at the time when Hezekiah was king in Judah. Compared to 2Kgs 17, the version of 2Kgs 18 depicts a sharp contrast between the two kings: the wicked Hoshea who was punished and the pious Hezekiah who was saved.

This is quite in line with v. 12 where a reason is added to explain why Israel has been carried away to Assyria:

עַל אֲשֶׁר לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וַיַּעֲבְרוּ אֶת־בְּרִיתוֹ אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מֹשֶׁה עַבְדֵּי יְהוָה וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ וְלֹא עָשׂוּ

Because they did not obey the voice of Yahweh their God but transgressed his covenant, all that Moses the servant of Yahweh commanded; they neither obeyed nor observed.

the plural καὶ καταλάβοντο; see Natalio Fernández Marcos and José Ramón Busto Saiz, *El Texto Antioqueno de la Biblia griega, 1–2 Reyes* (Madrid: Instituto de Filología del CSIC, 1992), 136. <sup>3</sup> There are more examples of the irregular style, however; see 2Kgs 25:1; Jer 28:1 *K<sup>c</sup>tib*; 32:1 *K<sup>c</sup>tib*; 46:2; 51:59; Ezra 7:8; and GKC §134p.

The addition of v. 12 was most clearly identified by Albert Šanda: “This verse certainly does not come from R [= the editor of the Book of Kings]. In this context one expects an objective report with no moralizing remarks.”<sup>4</sup> The note adds to the historical details a theological rationale: Israel has sinned, and therefore had to suffer its awful fate.

The phrases used for this comment are familiar from the latest literary layers of the Book of Deuteronomy and from those books of the Old Testament which presuppose Deuteronomy. *לֹא שָׁמַע בְּקוֹל יְהוָה* “not to obey the voice of Yahweh” marks the disobedience to the Deuteronomic law, and later to the Torah in general.<sup>5</sup> The earliest instances relating to the divine law are to be found in Deut 28:1, 15.<sup>6</sup> *עָבַר בְּרִית יְהוָה* “to transgress the covenant of Yahweh”<sup>7</sup> (instead of the regular *הִפְרָה בְרִית* “to break the covenant”<sup>8</sup>) presents the late concept in which Yahweh’s covenant and the Torah are one and the same thing.

This is made clearer still by the apposition *אֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד יְהוָה* “all that Moses the servant of Yahweh commanded.” The phrase is parallel to Josh 1:7, 13; 8:31, 33; 11:12; 22:2, 5; 1Chr 6:34. All of these instances belong to the literary sphere of the Priestly code or to the post-priestly Deuteronomism, roughly speaking. The title *עֶבֶד יְהוָה* as applied to Moses,<sup>9</sup> Joshua,<sup>10</sup> and David<sup>11</sup> is late throughout. This part of the verse may be a later clarification by another hand. It is added without a copula. The resumption of *עַל אֲשֶׁר לֹא שָׁמְעוּ* “because they did not obey” by *לֹא שָׁמְעוּ וְלֹא עָשׂוּ* “they neither obeyed nor observed” at the end of the verse also supports this possibility.

The comment wants to assure the reader that the conquest of Samaria was due to Israel’s sins. The defeat is interpreted as having been a divine punish-

<sup>4</sup> Albert Šanda, *Die Bücher der Könige*, vol. 2 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1912), 244 (my translation). Šanda continues: “R has added his judgment already in 17:21–23. The content [= of v. 12] is very reminiscent of 17:34–40.”

<sup>5</sup> Num 14:22; Deut 8:20; 9:23; 28:15, 45, 62; Josh 5:6; Judg 2:2, 20; 6:10; 1Sam 12:15; 15:19; 28:18; 1Kgs 20:36; 2Kgs 18:12; Jer 3:25; 7:28; 9:12; 22:21; 32:23; 40:3; 42:21; 43:7; 44:23; cf. Zeph 3:2; Ps 106:25; Dan 9:10, 14.

<sup>6</sup> For the origin of the phrase see Christoph Levin, *Die Verheißung des neuen Bundes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 108, n. 136.

<sup>7</sup> Deut 17:2; 29:11; Josh 7:11, 15; 23:16; 2Kgs 18:12; Jer 34:18; Hos 6:7; 8:1.

<sup>8</sup> *הִפְרָה בְרִית hi.* “to break a covenant”: profane/politically: 1Kgs 15:19/2Chr 16:3; Isa 33:8; Ezek 17:15, 16, 18, 19; related to the covenant with Yahweh, on the human side: Gen 17:14; Lev 26:15; Deut 31:16, 20; Isa 24:5; Jer 11:10; 31:32; Ezek 16:59; 44:7; on the divine side: Lev 26:44; Judg 2:1; Jer 14:21; Zech 11:10; cf. Jer 33:20 f.

<sup>9</sup> Deut 34:5; Josh 1:1, 13, 15; 8:31, 33; 11:12; 12:6; 13:8; 14:7; 18:7; 22:2, 4, 5; 24:29; 2Kgs 18:12; 2Chr 1:3; 24:6.

<sup>10</sup> Josh 24:29; Judg 2:8.

<sup>11</sup> Ps 18:1; 36:1.

ment. With this statement we have a relative dating for the section 2Kgs 18:9–12 as a whole. “Therefore, the entire group of verses 9–12 is the work of a later post-exilic redactor who, according to his way of thinking and his language, is in line with the author of 17:34–40.”<sup>12</sup> It does not go back to the edition of the Deuteronomistic History in the 6th century BCE, but was added much later, towards the era when the Book of Kings had become the *Vorlage* for Chronicles and had been submitted to the theological doctrine of divine retribution which dominates Chronicles throughout. This doctrine can occasionally be observed in the earlier historical books as well, however mostly in the form of literary additions.

### 3 The Later Additions in 2Kgs 17:3–6

There is also a large part of the *Vorlage* 17:3–6 that is missing in 18:9–12:<sup>13</sup>

3 עליו עלה שלמנאסר מלך אשור ויהי־לו הושע עבד וישב לו מנחה: 4 וימצא מלך־אשור בהושע קשר אשר שלח מל־אֵבִים אֶל־סוּא מל־מִצְרַיִם [ולא־הֶעֱלָה מִנְחָה לְמֶלֶךְ אֲשׁוּר כְּשִׁנָּה בְּשָׁנָה] ויעָרְהוּ מֶלֶךְ אֲשׁוּר ויאֶסְרֶהוּ בֵּית כְּלָא: 5 ויעַל מֶלֶךְ־אֲשׁוּר בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ ויעַל שְׁמֵרוֹן ויצַר עֲלֶיהָ שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים:

3 *Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria, and Hoshea became his vassal, and paid him tribute. 4 And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea; for he had sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, [and offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year]<sup>14</sup> and the king of Assyria restrained him, and bound him in prison. 5 And the king of Assyria came up in all the land and came up to Samaria and besieged it for three years.*

In the additional text, it is related that Shalmaneser’s campaign was in the first instance directed against king Hoshea himself. As a consequence, Hoshea was pressed into vassalage and had to pay tribute every year. After some years Hoshea rebelled against his Assyrian overlord. He tried to establish diplomatic ties with some Egyptian king. Shalmaneser put him into prison and came up against the whole country.

This outline of the events confronts us with a number of difficulties:

(1) In his inscriptions, king Tiglath-pileser III claims that Hoshea came to rule as his vassal.<sup>15</sup> The assertion of 2Kgs 17:3 that Hoshea’s vassalage had started only with Shalmaneser contradicts what is known from the Assyrian records.

<sup>12</sup> Šanda, *Die Bücher der Könige*, vol. 2, 244–45 (my translation).

<sup>13</sup> In the following translation, the minuses of 18:9–12 and the pluses of 17:3–6 are marked by *italics*.

<sup>14</sup> Verse 4aβ is a later expansion. For the source-critical arguments see below.

<sup>15</sup> Summary Inscription 4: 17–9, and Summary Inscription 9: rev. 9–10; text: Hayim Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III, King of Assyria* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences

(2) Though the verb *עלה* is repeated no less than three times (*עלה* in v. 3 and *ועל* twice in v. 5), there are no signs that the text wants to tell us of more than one campaign of Shalmaneser. This is in line with the date given by the parallel record in 2Kgs 18:9.

(3) However, it contradicts what is said in 17:4, namely that Hoshea paid his tribute “year by year” (*בְּשָׁנָה בְּשָׁנָה*). This seems to indicate that several years passed between the beginning of Hoshea’s vassalage and Shalmaneser’s campaign against Samaria.

(4) From the sequence as the text tells it, one gets the impression that king Hoshea was put into prison prior to the siege of Samaria. This raises the question of who would have reigned in the city for the three years of the siege and could have led the resistance against the Assyrian campaign. “It is [...] highly improbable that Israel remained for three years without a king, after the deposition of Hoshea, and, as a matter of fact, v. 6 states that the fall of the capital took place ‘in the ninth year of Hoshea,’ i. e. in his ninth reigning year.”<sup>16</sup>

(5) There is an awkward doublet at the beginning of v. 5: *וַיַּעַל מֶלֶךְ-אַשּׁוּר* וַיַּעַל מְלֶכְהָאֲשּׁוּר *בְּכָל-הָאָרֶץ וַיַּעַל שְׁמֶרוֹן וַיִּצֶר עָלֶיהָ* “And the king of Assyria came up in all the land, and he came up to Samaria, and he besieged it.” This is all the more striking since Shalmaneser must already have been in the land in order to bind Hoshea in prison, as is said immediately before in v. 4.

(6) The style of the passage is clumsy to some degree. In v. 5a the subject *מֶלֶךְ-אַשּׁוּר* is unnecessarily repeated though it does not change. Hebrew narratives usually try to avoid such redundancy.

(7) These observations are not due to modern criticism only, but are mirrored already in the textual tradition that in the case of the Old Greek or its *Vorlage* deviates from the Masoretic text quite remarkably, different to the surrounding verses.<sup>17</sup>

In order to solve these problems, Hugo Winckler proposed what could be called a documentary hypothesis. His idea was that two different sources had

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and Humanities, 1994), 140 and 188 = Hayim Tadmor and Shigeo Yamada, *The Royal Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 BC) and Shalmaneser V (726–722 BC), Kings of Assyria* (Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), no. 42 and no. 49; translation: James B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), 284; William W. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture, vol. 2: Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), nos. 117C and 117F; Mordechai Cogan, *The Raging Torrent: Historical Inscriptions from Assyria and Babylonia Relating to Israel* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2015; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), 73 and 68.

<sup>16</sup> Charles F. Burney, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1903), 328.

<sup>17</sup> See the chapter of Timo Tekoniemi in this volume.

been interwoven in 2Kgs 17:3–6, both of them conveying the same historical event, but from different perspectives.<sup>18</sup> “It seems easiest to suppose that the first of the two biblical sections [i.e. in 2Kgs 17:3–6] presents a combination of two records of the same event, taken from *two different sources*, in such a way that ch. 17:3–4 is a second narrative of the events recorded in 17:5b–6, the latter taken from the same source as 18:9–11 with which it agrees almost word for word. At the least, this assumption would solve all of the contradictions and difficulties.”<sup>19</sup> The one of these accounts, which according to Winckler is to be found in vv. 5–6, relates the rebellion of king Hoshea as well as his capture by Shalmaneser. The other account tells the conquest of Samaria roughly in the same form as it is also preserved in the parallel 18:9–10. Winckler maintains that both records are reliable in terms of history, Hoshea’s rebellion having been the reason for Shalmaneser’s campaign. From this follows that the capture of king Hoshea and the conquest of Samaria actually fell at the same time. So, for Winckler the two accounts are to be read as parallel versions, other than the present text wherein the editor of the Book of Kings set them in a sequence when he merged the two sources into a single record.

In accordance with the Assyrian sources – and contrary to 2Kgs 17:3 – Winckler holds that Hoshea came to the throne as a vassal of Tiglath-pileser. In order to solve the contradiction, Winckler states: “The whole difficulty would disappear if we assume that the editor read *ויהי לו עבד* instead of *ויהי לו עבד* in 17:3. The meaning of his source would have been: ‘Hoshea became king. Against him came up Shalmaneser *because* he was his vassal and had to pay him tribute. But the king of Assyria found treachery in him etc. and bound him in prison.’”<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately this reading has no basis in the textual transmission, as Winckler himself admits;<sup>21</sup> moreover, as Charles F. Burney stated, “such a construction is impossible,”<sup>22</sup> followed by Bernhard Stade and Friedrich Schwally: “Winckler’s [...]

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18 Hugo Winckler, “Beiträge zur quellscheidung der Königsbücher,” in id., *Alttestamentliche Untersuchungen* (Leipzig: Pfeiffer, 1892): 1–54, esp. 16–25. Winckler’s hypothesis was accepted by Immanuel Benzinger, *Die Bücher der Könige* (Freiburg i.B.: Mohr Siebeck, 1899): 172–73; by Burney, *Notes*, 328–29; and by John Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1970; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), 642: “Verses 3f. probably from the Annals of Israel, vv. 5f. from the Annals of Judah (cf. 18.9–11), both summarized, with vv. 3b–4a in loose parenthesis.”

19 Winckler, “Beiträge zur quellscheidung,” 20 (my translation).

20 Winckler, “Beiträge zur quellscheidung,” 22 (my translation).

21 Winckler, “Beiträge zur quellscheidung,” 22, n. 3: “It is improbable that there is a mistake in *our* textual tradition, because all recensions, MT as well as LXX, witness *ויהי לו*.”

22 Burney, *Notes*, 329, who nevertheless keeps Winckler’s source critical hypothesis.

conjecture [...] maltreats the Hebrew language; *for Hosea was his vassal* is not in Hebrew: והיה הושע לו עבד.<sup>23</sup>

However, Winckler's hypothesis is not completely obsolete. He rightly assumes that vv. 3–4 give another view of the events around the conquest of Samaria. But his solution is wrong: The other version does not go back to a different source. It constitutes a later comment on what was transmitted in one single source. It is an annotation that tells what should have happened for theological reasons but, as we know from the Assyrian sources, never happened in history. Those elements of the text that are missing in 18:9–10 did not exist at the time when the text had been copied there. They are scribal additions.

Above we have seen that the version of 2Kgs 18 is of very late origin because v. 12 shows features that are near to Chronicles. This is true also of 17:3b–5a. Whereas in 2Kgs 18 the emphasis is on the contrast between the two kings, the pious Hezekiah on the one hand, and the wicked Hoshea on the other, and the different fate of these two, it is no surprise that the editor who added 17:3b–5a also focused on Hoshea's personal guilt and his fate.

The addition follows the theological doctrine of retribution. Someone's fate had to be in line with someone's behavior. Because Hoshea was punished by the Assyrian king, he must have sinned against the Assyrian king. The scribe suggested that Hoshea rebelled against Shalmaneser. In order to demonstrate this, it is at first said that he became Shalmaneser's vassal: ויִהְיֶה־לוֹ הוֹשֵׁעַ עֶבֶד. Hoshea submitted to his overlord by paying tribute: ויִשָּׁב לוֹ מִנְחָה. The one who added these details did not care whether the sequence of events would be possible in terms of history. He simply wanted to sketch the initial situation that was later changed by Hoshea's rebellion.

The phrase מֵצֵא קִשְׁרֵי כֹּֿ "to find conspiracy in someone" occurs only once more, in Jer 11:9: "Conspiracy is found (נִמְצָא קִשְׁרֵי) among the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem." In the historical books, except for 2Kgs 17:4 the noun קִשְׁרֵי is used exclusively for a conspiracy against the king of Israel or Judah.<sup>24</sup> To indicate a rebellion against the Assyrian or Babylonian overlord the verb מָרַד is used (2Kgs 18:7; 24:1, 20). The scribe deviates from the terminology of the Book of Kings in favor of the language of prophecy. He indicates that Hoshea's rebellion against the Assyrian king was also directed against Yahweh.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Stade and Schwally, *The Books of Kings*, 260.

<sup>24</sup> 2Sam 15:12; 1Kgs 16:20; 2Kgs 11:14; 12:21; 14:19; 15:1, 30.

<sup>25</sup> The Septuagint (*kaige*-recension) translates ἀπατά = שָׁקַר "deception," thus emphasizing the theological statement that may be implied. See Alfred Rahlfs and Robert Hanhart (eds.), *Septuaginta: Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), *sub loco*.



In order to illustrate Hoshea's disloyalty, it is said that he sent messengers to the Egyptian king of that time: *וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶחָד מִלְּאֲכָיִם אֶל־סוּא מֶלֶךְ־מִצְרַיִם* "for he has sent messengers to Sō', king of Egypt." The purpose of the delegation is not indicated, but can easily be supplemented by the reader: Ahaz asked the king of Egypt for an alliance against the Assyrian king and offered him his submission. This action was seen as a severe fault by the theologians of the late Second Temple Period. We know from the Book of Chronicles that it meant sinning against the God Yahweh in a very strong way if the kings of Israel and Judah made alliances with foreign kings. As a consequence, each attempt is punished by military defeat or disaster.<sup>26</sup>

This doctrine may be labeled *Koalitionsverbot* ("prohibition of coalition with foreign powers"). It also found its way into the Book of Kings. In 2Kgs 16:7 it is said that king Ahaz of Judah called Tiglath-pileser for help when he was attacked by king Rezin of Aram and king Pekah of Israel. Here we read nearly the same expression as in 17:3:

*וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶחָד מִלְּאֲכָיִם אֶל־תִּגְלַת־פִּלְסֵר מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר לֵאמֹר עֲבֹדָה וּבְנֹדָה אֲנִי עִלָּה וְהוֹשַׁעְנִי מִכַּף מֶלֶךְ־אַרָם וּמִכַּף מֶלֶךְ־יִשְׂרָאֵל הַקּוֹמִים עָלַי*

And Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying: I am your servant and your son. Come up, and rescue me from the hand of the king of Aram and from the hand of the king of Israel who are attacking me.

This verse is a late addition to the record about Ahaz's submission to Tiglath-pileser when he was attacked by Rezin of Aram and Pekah of Israel. The original text is to be found in 2Kgs 16:5a, βα, 8, 9αβγ, b: "Then Rezin king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to wage war on Jerusalem, and they besieged Ahaz. [...] So, Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of Yahweh and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent a present to the king of Assyria. [...] And the king of Assyria marched up against Damascus, and took it, carrying its people captive [...], and he killed Rezin." The addition stresses that with Ahaz's submission to the Assyrian king he refused the promise that Yahweh had given to David: "I will be his father, and he shall be my son" (2Sam 7:14). This behavior was counted as a severe fault.

The same doctrine is also to be found in the Book of Isaiah as well as in the Book of Hoshea. "Ephraim is like a dove, silly and without sense, calling to

<sup>26</sup> Older research was already aware of this doctrine. In more recent times it was especially investigated by Tetsuo Yamaga, "König Joschafat und seine Außenpolitik in den Chronikbüchern," *AJBI* 27 (2001): 59–154.

Egypt, going to Assyria” (Hos 7:11; cf. 12:2).<sup>27</sup> “Woe to the rebellious children, says Yahweh, who carry out a plan, but not mine; and who make a league, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin; who set out to go down to Egypt, without asking for my counsel, to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh, and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!” (Isa 30:1–2; cf. 31:1). There are strong reasons to assume that statements like these do not go back to the prophets of the 8th century, but originate in the time of the Chronicler, i.e., in the Hellenistic era.

No one knows who סוֹא מֶלֶךְ־מִצְרַיִם “Sō’ king of Egypt” could have been. “No known king of Egypt at this time (ca. 725 B.C.) bore this name, a circumstance all the more remarkable in view of the transparent nature of all the other Old Testament allusions to the names of Egyptian rulers.”<sup>28</sup> The guessing game began already in the Antiochian text of the Septuagint (or its Hebrew *Vorlage*), which reads διότι ἀπέστειλεν ἀγγέλους πρὸς Ἀδραμέλεχ τὸν Αἰθίοπα τὸν κατοικοῦντα ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ “for he sent messengers to Adrammelech the Ethiopian who dwelt in Egypt.”<sup>29</sup> With high probability this reading rests on Midrashic assumptions.<sup>30</sup> Possibly it is based on 2Kgs 19:37 where it is said that Adrammelech killed king Sennacherib of Assyria, in combination with 2Kgs 19:9 where it is said that the king of Assyria heard that king Tirhaka of Ethiopia went out to fight against him. The details may still reflect the original text which tells of an Egyptian king. Therefore, the title “king” is left out and Adrammelech, though being an Ethiopian, should have dwelled in Egypt.

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**27** James A. Montgomery and Henry Snyder Gehman, *The Books of Kings* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1951), 465: “These shifting alliances of the day, now with Assyria, now with Egypt, are illustrated in the prophet Hoshea’s scornful references (5:13; 7:8, 11, 16; 8:9; 11:5; 12:2; 14:4).” It is highly questionable whether these statements go back to the prophet himself.

**28** John Day, “The Problem of ‘So, King of Egypt’ in 2 Kings xvii 4,” *VT* 42 (1992): 289–301, esp. 289. Day presents a survey of the proposals produced so far. He finally argues in favor of the place name of Sais, the capital city of Tefnakht. This possibility was, however, rejected with strong arguments by, among others, Bernd Schipper, “Wer war ‘So’, König von Ägypten’ (2 Kön 17,4)?” *BN* 92 (1998): 71–84, esp. 74–75.

**29** Fernández Marcos and Busto Saiz, *El Texto Antioqueno*, 131–2. The reading is shared by the Codex Vindobonensis; see Bonifatius Fischer, “Palimpsestus Vindobonensis: A Revised Edition of L115 for Samuel-Kings,” *BIOSCS* 16 (1983): 13–87, esp. 86.

**30** Andrés Piquer Otero, “What Text to Edit? The *Oxford Hebrew Bible* Edition of 2 Kings 17,1–23,” in *After Qumran: Old and Modern Editions of the Biblical Texts – the Historical Books*, ed. Hans Ausloos, Bénédicte Lemmelijn and Julio Treballe Barrera (Leuven: Peeters, 2012): 227–43, esp. 233–35, still looks for some historical basis – to my mind this would be misconceiving the assumptive nature of the text.

It is mostly suggested that the name Sō' refers to Pharaoh Osorkon IV.<sup>31</sup> But there is no clear indication for this suggestion, nor any linguistic support for it. Most probably the glossator did not refer to an individual king. The figure of this Pharaoh may be pure fantasy. Some scholars read his name Sō' as an abbreviated form of the Egyptian word for "king": *nj-šw.t* → *nšw.t* → *nšw* → Sō'.<sup>32</sup> This, however, cannot be proven either.<sup>33</sup> In any case we do not have to search in the 8th century BCE, because the note in 2Kgs 17:4 originates in the late Persian or early Hellenistic era.

In v. 4aβ there are some divergences in the textual transmission. Whereas the Hebrew text reads בְּשָׁנָה בְּשָׁנָה אֲשׁוּר לְמֶלֶךְ מִנְחָה לְמֶלֶךְ אֲשׁוּר וְלֹא־הֶעֱלָה מִנְחָה לְמֶלֶךְ אֲשׁוּר "and he offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year,"<sup>34</sup> the Antiochian text<sup>35</sup> presents some explication: καὶ ἦν Ὡσηε φέρων δῶρα τῷ βασιλεῖ ἀσσυρίων ἐνιαυτὸν κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν, ἐν δὲ τῷ ἐνιαυτῷ ἐκείνῳ οὐκ ἤνεγκεν αὐτῷ μανάά "And Hoshea brought gifts to the king of Assyria year by year, but that year he offered no tribute to him." This version seems to be much more natural since in v. 3 it is said only that Hoshea paid tribute to the king of Assyria (וַיִּשָׁב לוֹ מִנְחָה) which does not unequivocally imply that he was to do so every year. However, the *lectio longior atque faciliior* hardly presents the original reading. It is rather an indication that this detail of the rebellion was added only later. Again, the terminology is significant: The expression לֹא־הֶעֱלָה מִנְחָה "he did not offer tribute" is strange in this context because *hi.* is otherwise used exclusively for the grain-offering to Yahweh.<sup>36</sup> So we may conclude that this part of v. 4 is a still later addition.

Hoshea is said to have been punished for his disloyalty by Shalmaneser: וַיִּצְרְרוּ מֶלֶךְ אֲשׁוּר וַיֹּאסְרוּהוּ בַּיַּת כְּלָא "the king of Assyria restrained him and bound

31 See (among many others) Manfred Görg, "So," *Neues Bibelllexikon*, vol. 3, ed. Manfred Görg (Zürich: Benziger, 2001): 622; Schipper, "Wer war So'," 77–79.

32 This was first suggested by Herbert Donner, "The Separate States of Israel and Judah," in *Israelite and Judean History*, ed. John H. Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller (London: SCM Press, 1977): 381–434, esp. 433, followed by Rolf Krauss, "Sō, König von Ägypten – ein Deutungsvorschlag," *MDOG* 110 (1978): 49–54, who added some linguistic support, based on late evidence involving the history of language ("Rückschluß, der auf sprachgeschichtlich jungen Belegen beruht," 54). In any case the presupposition that "Sō' is attested for the time around 725 BCE" (50, my translation) is to be doubted because 2Kgs 17:4 is historically unreliable.

33 See the strong objections referred to by Schipper, "Wer war So'," 80–81.

34 The Hebrew text is supported by the *kaige* recension of the Septuagint, see Rahlfs and Hanhart, *Septuaginta, sub loco*. For בְּשָׁנָה בְּשָׁנָה the Greek text reads ἐν τῷ ἐνιαυτῷ ἐκείνῳ. It is doubtful whether this reading goes back to a different *Vorlage* (בְּשָׁנָה הַהִיא).

35 According to the edition by Fernández Marcos and Busto Saiz, *El Texto Antioqueno*, 132.

36 Exod 30:9; 40:29; Lev 14:20; Josh 22:23; Isa 57:6; 66:3; Jer 14:12. See Otto Thenius, *Die Bücher der Könige* (Leipzig: Weidmann'sche Buchhandlung, 1849), 369: "העלה" it is to be noted that this word is otherwise used exclusively for *offering*" (my translation).

him in prison.” Hoshea was bound, that means he had to share the fate that king Jehoahaz suffered from Pharaoh Necho (2Kgs 23:33), king Zedekiah from Nebuchadnezzar (2Kgs 25:7) and king Manasseh from the commanders of the Assyrian army (2Chr 33:11). Notably enough, in each of these four cases exactly the same verbal form is used: וַיִּאָסְרוּהוּ. The editor does not say what happened to Hoshea further on, but the reader of the Bible could appreciate that the other three kings were deported. This was also the case with king Jehoiachin, who is said in 2Kgs 25:27 to have finally been released from prison (בַּיַּת כְּלִיאַ).

All in all, these are clear indications that the longer record of 2Kgs 17:3–5 as we now read it is to be understood as a theological comment in narrative form, originating around the time when the Book of Chronicles was about to be written. The details given are not intended to be read as historical information.

## 4 The Original Record

Finally, in order to restore the original biblical record of the Assyrian conquest of Samaria, we have to look at those parts of the text that are shared by both of the parallel sections in 2Kgs 17 and 2Kgs 18 accordingly. The text that is common to both records is what the scribe of 2Kgs 18:9–12 found in 2Kgs 17:3–6 when he copied it and added his comments to it, and into which the glossator of 2Kgs 17:3–6 inserted the additional details in vv. 3b–5a.

In 17:3 par. 18:9, וַיָּעַל עֵלְהָ שַׁלְמַנְאֶסֶר מֶלֶךְ-אַשּׁוּר is common to both versions: “Shalmaneser the king of Assyria came up”. However, it is hard to imagine that the perfect וַיָּעַל was the original beginning – though there is also one example of it in 15:19: בָּא פּוּל מֶלֶךְ-אַשּׁוּר עַל-הָאָרֶץ “Pul (i. e., Tiglath-pileser) the king of Assyria came against the land.” Preferably, we have to look for some other reading.

One possibility is that the section began with the narrative וַיָּעַל, as is the case in 1Kgs 15:17: וַיָּעַל בַּעֲשָׂא מֶלֶךְ-יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל-יְהוּדָה “Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah” and in 2Kgs 15:14: וַיַּעַל מְנַחֵם בֶּן-גַּדִּי מִתִּירְצָה וַיָּבֵא שָׁמְרוֹן “Menahem the son of Gadi came up from Tirzah and came to Samaria”. Also, a temporal adverb can precede the verb, as in 2Kgs 12:18: אַזְּ יָעַל הַזָּאֵל מֶלֶךְ אַרָם וַיִּלָּחֶם עִלְיָת וַיִּלְבְּדָהּ “At that time Hazael king of Aram went up and fought against Gath, and took it,” and in 2Kgs 23:29: בַּיָּמָיו עָלָה פְרָעוּה נָבַח מֶלֶךְ-מִצְרַיִם עַל-מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר עַל-נְהַר-פָּרָת “In his days Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates.” Finally, an exact date could have been given, as in 1Kgs 14:25: וַיְהִי בִשְׁנָה וַיְהִי חֲמִישִׁית לְמֶלֶךְ רְחַבְעָם עָלָה שִׁשְׁק מֶלֶךְ-מִצְרַיִם עַל-יְרוּשָׁלַם “In the fifth year of king Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem.” Following the last example and taking in account the synchronism in 2Kgs 18:9 (which of course has to be shortened, as shown above) the original beginning could

have been like this: וַיְהִי בַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁבִיעִית לְמֶלֶךְ הוֹשֵׁעַ עָלָה שַׁלְמַנְאֶסֶר מֶלֶךְ-אַשּׁוּר עַל-שִׁמְרוֹן “In the seventh year of king Hoshea Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria.” There are no means that help us decide among these alternatives. However, to my mind the last possibility is the most probable because it could also have provided the basis for the synchronism in 18:9, which otherwise must have been calculated from the ninth year of Hoshea in 17:6 and the three years of the siege in 17:5.

In any case, the pronoun עָלָיו which opens 17:3 cannot be original for it refers to the data given for king Hoshea in vv. 1–2. These data go back to another source: the synchronistic excerpt of the annals of the kings of Israel and Judah.<sup>37</sup> The present form of 17:3 is focused on the person of king Hoshea: עָלָיו שַׁלְמַנְאֶסֶר עָלָה “against him came up Shalmaneser.” Because this is in line with the addition in vv. 3b–5a, the change of the original reading may go back to the same glossator. The new point he made is balanced by v. 5a: וַיַּעַל מֶלֶךְ-אַשּׁוּר וַיַּעַל בְּכָל-הָאָרֶץ “And the king of Assyria came up in all the land.” That means: after punishing king Hoshea, the Assyrian king turned towards the whole land, taking up and continuing his campaign against Samaria. This is again an addition as can be seen from the double וַיַּעַל in v. 5b. Possibly the prefix על- that is still preserved in 18:9 was lost in favor of וַיַּעַל, which resumes the original עָלָה of v. 3.

Because 17:6 par. 18:10–11 presents no major differences, as a result of our inquiry, we have the supposed original record so far:

וַיְהִי בַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁבִיעִית לְמֶלֶךְ הוֹשֵׁעַ עָלָה שַׁלְמַנְאֶסֶר מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר ... <עַל-שִׁמְרוֹן וַיַּצַּר עָלֶיהָ שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים בַּשָּׁנָה> <תִּשְׁעָה לְכַד מֶלֶךְ-אַשּׁוּר אֶת-שִׁמְרוֹן וַיִּגַּל אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁרֶה וַיָּשִׁב אֹתָם בְּחָלָה וּבַחֲבוּר נְהָר גּוֹזָן וְעָרֵי מְדֵי

In the seventh year of King Hoshea came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria, against Samaria and besieged it for three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria captured Samaria, and he carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

Like the similar records about military attacks of foreign kings that are recorded in the Book of Kings, this source is probably taken from an official document, used by the editor of the Book of Kings (i.e., the Deuteronomistic historian) when he composed his major work. It can be continued with the note in 2Kgs 17:24 about the re-settlement of Samaria:

<sup>37</sup> See Christoph Levin, “The Synchronistic Excerpt from the Annals of the Kings of Israel and Judah,” in id., *Re-Reading the Scriptures: Essays on the Literary History of the Old Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013): 183–93.

וַיָּבֵא מֶלֶךְ-אַשּׁוּר מִבָּבֶל וּמִכּוּתָהּ וּמֵעָוָא וּמִחַמַת וּסְפַרְוַיִּים [וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּעָרֵי שָׁמְרוֹן תַּחַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל] וַיִּרְשׁוּ אֶת-שָׁמְרוֹן  
וַיֵּשְׁבוּ בְּעָרֶיהָ

And the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim [and made them dwell in the cities of Samaria instead of the Israelites];<sup>38</sup> and they took possession of Samaria, and dwelt in its cities.

The expression “Samaria and its cities” witnesses that “Samaria” is not the name of the city anymore, but of the Assyrian province. So, the document tells about the events in hindsight.

I may underline that in the Bible no more than this short account was originally recorded about the Assyrian conquest: one single campaign under the Assyrian king Shalmaneser. The siege lasted for three years, from Hoshea’s seventh through his ninth year (in line with the biblical way of counting years). According to the dating, Hoshea’s rule ended when Samaria was conquered, and together with it the kingdom of Israel came to its end. The conquest was followed by the deportation of the Israelites and by the resettlement of the newly installed Assyrian province.

Nothing is said about the reason why the Assyrian king came up against Samaria. This is what we also observe with the earlier Assyrian campaigns recorded in the Book of Kings: For Tiglath-pileser’s campaign against king Menahem (2Kgs 15:19) and his campaign against king Pekah (2Kgs 15:29) no reason is given either. Whereas king Hezekiah of Judah is said to have rebelled against the Assyrian king (2Kgs 18:7), nothing similar is said of Hoshea. The personal fate of the king remains unclear as well. The end of the kingdom of Israel coincides with the conquest of Samaria. There is no period without a king. And, more important and unfortunately enough, there is nothing in the Bible that may help us decide between the two Assyrian kings, Shalmaneser and Sargon, who both claimed to have conquered Samaria, and about the question of whether the city was conquered one or two times.

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**38** Verse 24aβy is a later addition. This can be recognized from the doubling of *וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּעָרֵי שָׁמְרוֹן* “he made (them) dwell in the cities of Samaria” along with *וַיִּרְשׁוּ אֶת-שָׁמְרוֹן וַיֵּשְׁבוּ בְּעָרֶיהָ* “they took possession of Samaria, and dwelt in its cities.” The addition emphasizes that the people from Babylon replaced the Israelite inhabitants completely: *תַּחַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* “instead of the Israelites.” This assertion may be due to anti-Samaritan polemics.