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Shadows on the Sundial of Ahaz and New Light on the Troubled History of Isaiah 38:8 and 2 Kings 20:11

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Abstract

The textual history of biblical pericopes preserved in more than one version is very complex. Although the stories in Isa 38 and 2 Kgs 20 appear to have originated with some distinctive accents, one can observe a later tendency to harmonise these parallel accounts. Against the background of ancient scribal practices, the current investigation places the wide range of available empirical data regarding Isa 38:8 and 2 Kgs 20:9–11 in a complex network of evidences. This data network is evaluated both along the individual, distinctive tradition lines of the two books, as well as in their interaction with each other. The textual history reconstructed here based on this empirical data grid witnesses the existence of two different traditions regarding Isaiah's astronomical sign. In the version preserved by the book of Isaiah, YHWH returned the sun, while in the version of the book of Kings, he returned the shadow. The proposed text-historical reconstruction resolves the often-noted grammatical and other types of incongruences within both narrative variants of the current Masoretic text.

Keywords

Isa 38:8 – 2 Kgs 20:11 – textual history – harmonisation of parallel texts – glosses – astronomical sign

Differences between parallel texts of the Hebrew Bible, such as Isa 36–39 and 2 Kgs 18–20 analysed below, bewildered readers of all ages (cf. already Sof. 8.1–2). As the earliest mutual witnesses, parallel compositions provide empirical evidence to trace back textual history. Nonetheless, the data harvested under

these circumstances confronts the researcher with a very complex situation. With parallel textual traditions, the quantity of data to be evaluated increases significantly. The text-historical characteristics of the individual books (in this case Isaiah and 2 Kings) in which the pericopes are located are very different, but these individual features need to be considered while dealing with smaller segments belonging to these larger contexts. More significantly, it is well-known that parallel traditions influenced ancient authors *and* scribes in the process of both content creation and content transmission. Scribes were well-aware of working with versions and variants, and attempts to harmonise them are clearly traceable, even though attitudes toward this phenomenon were not uniform.¹ This harmonising tendency is observable not only at the level of the Hebrew text (primary and subsequent)² but also at the level of the secondary versions, the ancient translations, as well as later transmissions.³

While the intricacies involved in the investigation of such complex processes of textual transmission might be intimidating, a deep level examination of the network of empirical evidence can lead to reasonable conclusions.

In the following I aim at shedding light on the complex transmission history of Isa 36–39 and 2 Kgs 18–20, the report(s) about the famous encounter between Isaiah and Hezekiah, concentrating on a small segment, Isa 38:7–8 and 2 Kgs 20:9–11.⁴

1 Isaiah 38:7–22 and 2 Kgs 20:7–11: A Case for Diversity within the Unity

It is important to emphasise at the outset that, from a text-historical point of view, Isa 36–39 and 2 Kgs 18–20 are very similar regarding their textual bases. The most significant differences appear in Isa 38:7–22 and 2 Kgs 20:7–11, the story of Hezekiah's healing from a deadly disease. First, the book of Isaiah contains substantial *distinctive material*, namely a psalm of Hezekiah (38:9–20), missing in 2 Kings. A second important difference occurs in the *narrative*

1 On the mutual influence of parallel passages, see, e.g., Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 12–17; Rezetko and Young, *Historical Linguistics*, 145–155, 162–165.

2 Inclinations in 1QIsa^a towards 2 Kgs 18–20 were noted by Kutscher, *Language*, 546; Panov, *Hiskijas Geschick*, 92; Iwry, “Qumrân Isaiah,” 28 n. 2.

3 See the influence of parallel texts in the Lucianic revision of 1–4 Kingdoms in Rahlfs, *Lucians Rezension*, 239–259. Concrete examples of scribal harmonisations appear within the pericope Isa 36–39 itself at Isa 36:7 (cf. codices Q marginalia and V); 37:8–9 (cf. codex B); 37:14 (cf. codices S* and B); 37:34 (cf. codex B).

4 The amount of literature on these chapters is significant. Beyond the commentaries, see especially Catastini, *Isaia ed Ezechia*; Konkel, “Sources”; Williamson, “Hezekiah”; Person, *Recensions*; Young, *Hezekiah*; Panov, *Hiskijas Geschick*, dealing with text-historical issues.

sequence. The cure-by-fig-compression incident is located differently in the two narratives and the accounts are worded differently. In Isa 38:21, this episode is placed after the astronomical sign (and the psalm of the king), whereas in 2 Kgs 20:7 it appears before the sign. This episode raises several additional problems.⁵ In its current context, the location of 2 Kgs 20:7 is rather illogical: the imperative concerning the application of the fig compression and the statement on its accomplishment (cf. קָחֵהוּ ... וְיִקְרָחֵהוּ) precede the question of the king in v. 8 regarding the divine promise of his healing. Nonetheless, the parallel Isa 38:21 also poses problems. Although the formulation (וְיִקְרָחֵהוּ ... וְיִשְׂאֵהוּ) is logically more coherent, it is nonetheless strange that the prophetic command to apply a fig treatment comes after a statement in v. 9 regarding the recovery of the king. If the psalm, including v. 9, is disregarded as an eventual later addition to Isaiah,⁶ some of the problems with Isa 38:21 may be considered solved. However, the issue surrounding the position of Isa 38:22 remains. While I will not deal with these verses in the current study, they illustrate well the troubles tied specifically to the chapters Isa 38 and 2 Kgs 20.

With respect to the smaller segments under scrutiny here, Isa 38:7–8 and 2 Kgs 20:9–11, there are striking differences between the two accounts.

Isa 38:7–8 (MT)		2 Kgs 20:9–11 (MT)	
7	And this is the sign for you from YHWH that YHWH will do this thing that he has promised:	9	And Isaiah said: This is the sign for you from YHWH that YHWH will do the thing that he has promised: Should the shadow walk (forwards) ten steps, or return ten steps?
		10	And Hezekiah said: It is easy for the shadow to stretch ten steps! But let the shadow rather return backwards ten steps!
8	Look, I will return the shadow ^{masc} of the steps on which she had descended on the steps of Ahaz, in [?] the sun ^{fem} backwards ten steps.	11	And Isaiah, the prophet, called to YHWH,

5 Cf. Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 310–311; Williamson, “Hezekiah,” 50; Kustár, *Wunden*, 123–126; Panov, *Hiskijas Geschick*, 246.

6 Cf. Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 1373–1374; Williamson, “Hezekiah,” 48; Person, *Recensions*, 72; Kustár, *Wunden*, 126–129.

(cont.)

Isa 38:7–8 (MT)	2 Kgs 20:9–11 (MT)
And the sun ^{fem} returned ten steps on the steps on which she had descended.	and he returned the shadow ^{masc} on the steps on which she had descended, on the steps of Ahaz, backwards ten steps.
<p>8 הַנְּיִי מָשִׁיב אֶת־צֶל הַמַּעֲלוֹת אֲשֶׁר יָרְדָה 11 בְּמַעֲלוֹת אַחַז בְּשֶׁמֶשׁ אַחֲרֵי עֵשֶׂר מַעֲלוֹת וַתָּשָׁב הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ עֵשֶׂר מַעֲלוֹת בְּמַעֲלוֹת אֲשֶׁר יָרְדָה:</p>	<p>וַיִּקְרָא יִשְׁעִיהוּ הַנְּבִיא אֶל־יְהוָה וַיֹּשֶׁב אֶת־הַצֶּל בְּמַעֲלוֹת אֲשֶׁר יָרְדָה בְּמַעֲלוֹת אַחַז אַחֲרֵי עֵשֶׂר מַעֲלוֹת: פ</p>

The following observations highlight the cardinal problems of the pericope:

- Compared to the rest of the account, the wording of these verses is very different. In Isa 38:7, unlike in 2 Kgs 20:8–9, the astronomical sign of turning (the sun and) the shadow backwards is provided without any solicitation from the king. In 2 Kgs 20, the sign is explicitly asked for by Hezekiah.
- The version in 2 Kgs 20:9–11 is more elaborate than the version in Isa 38:7–8, containing a longer dialogue between Isaiah and the king whether the shadow should go forwards or backwards.⁷
- In 2 Kgs 20:9–11, a single sign covers the promises of both the healing of Hezekiah and his ascent to the temple on the third day. In Isaiah, the narrative records a second sign in Isa 38:32 which is distinct from the astrological sign performed earlier. This second sign is explicitly requested by Hezekiah in relation to his going up to the temple. However, as noted earlier, unlike in 2 Kgs 20:5, the idea of “going up to the temple” has no antecedents in the Isaianic narrative.⁸ Any explicit statement in Isaiah regarding the fulfilment of this second sign is missing.
- In Isa 38:8 both the shadow and the sun are involved, but 2 Kgs 20:9–11 mentions only the shadow (three times), while the sun is not referenced at all. Furthermore, whereas forecasting the sign in Isa 38:8 also involves

7 This elaborative style is usually viewed as sign of later origin compared to Isaiah (cf. Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 1452).

8 Williamson, “Hezekiah,” 52, argued that the antecedent of this motif appears in the final words of the king’s psalm (v. 20). Therefore, the relocation of Isa 38:21–22 and the inclusion of the psalm could have been part of the same redactional process.

the shadow, its accomplishment is confirmed as “and the sun returned,” without any reference to the shadow.

- e. In the Isaianic version the sun is the subject of the verb “to return,” while in the MT of 2 Kings it is YHWH who turns the shadow backwards.

2 Grammatical and Semantic Problems within Isa 38:7–8 and 2 Kgs 20:9–11

Beyond the differences mentioned above, substantial grammatical and semantic problems occur within both Isa 38:8 and 2 Kgs 20:11.

- a. In rendering the phrase *צֶל ... אֲשֶׁר יֵרְדֶה*, modern translations cloud the significant grammatical incongruence between the masc. noun *צֶל* “shadow” and the fem. verbal form *יֵרְדֶה* “to descend.”⁹ Note that beyond v. 11, 2 Kgs 20:9–10 consistently uses masc. verbs in relation to the noun *צֶל*.
- b. The only possible subject correlation for the fem. verb *יֵרְדֶה* could be *שָׁמֶשׁ* (cf. the fem. verbal form in Isa 38:8: *וְהָשֶׁמֶשׁ*). This, however, raises further problems: (1) *שָׁמֶשׁ* appears only in the Isaianic account, and not in 2 Kings. One would still have to explain 2 Kgs 20:11, where *יֵרְדֶה* has no antecedent.¹⁰ (2) Within Isa 38:8 the current Masoretic reading *בְּשָׁמֶשׁ* can hardly fulfil the syntactic role of being the subject of the verb *יֵרְדֶה*.
- c. In both versions, the adverb *אֲחֵרִית* “backwards” is unusually removed from the verb *שׁוּב*, which it obviously modifies.
- d. In 2 Kgs 20:9–10, the term *מַעְלוֹת* “steps” is used four times as a unit of measurement and is always accompanied by a number: the shadow should move forwards or backwards a *measure* of ten *ma’alôt*, whatever that measure would refer to. While it is possible to interpret the word *מַעְלוֹת* within the phrase *בְּמַעְלוֹת אֲתִּי-הֵצֵל וַיֵּשֶׁב* of 2 Kgs 20:11 in a similar sense (“and he returned the shadow¹¹ in / according to the steps ...”), this is not possible in the construction *צֶל הַמַּעְלוֹת* “the shadow of the *ma’alôt*,” in Isa 38:8. In this second case, one would have to assume that the plural form *מַעְלוֹת* refers to some shadow casting *object(s)*. The sundial theory that subsequently developed around this verse intended to make sense

9 Cf. Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 1441–1442; Trebelle, “Old Latin,” 92.

10 Moreover, 2 Kgs 20:9–10 uses the verbs *הֵלֵךְ / נָטָה* (rather than *יֵרְדֶה*) for moving forwards and *שׁוּב* for moving backwards.

11 For a possibly earlier tradition having the shadow as subject rather than object, see §4.6 below.

of the status constructus. However, it is hard to bring this suggestion, first proposed by Symmachus, into conformity with the Hebrew text.¹²

Ancient transmitters of Isa 38:8 and 2 Kgs 20:11 were aware of the problems mentioned and occasionally they presented their own (harmonising) solutions. For reasons outlined above, one must always carefully weigh the possibility of having found evidence of an earlier *Vorlage* against the likelihood of stumbling onto early exegetical attempts, ultimately with little relevance for the textual histories of Isa 38:8 and 2 Kgs 20:11.

Below, I will first provide the relevant alternative textual traditions, along the two distinctive lines of base traditions, Isaiah and 2 Kings respectively. This will allow me to highlight what I consider the most important data with respect to the problems posed in this study. In a second step, I will analyse these data synthetically with the aim of reconstructing the supposed earliest form of *both* tradition lines.¹³ In view of the problems involved, I will concentrate mainly on Isa 38:8a and 2 Kgs 20:11b.

3 An Analytical Overview of the Relevant Ancient Testimonies¹⁴

3.1 *Isaiah 38:8 Beyond the Masoretic Tradition*

1QIsa^a

MT הנני משיב את-צל המעלות אשר ירדה במעלות אחז בשמש אחרנית עשר מעלות

1QIsa^a הנני משיב את צל המעלות אשר ירדה במעלות עלית אחז את השמש אחרנית עשר מעלות

12 Symmachus' ὡρολόγιον τοῦ Ἰαχάζ (cf. Gryson, *Esaias*, 764) was taken over by the Vulgate (*horologio Ahaz*). On this basis, several scholars ventured to reconstruct the “sundial” of Ahaz. Cf. Yadin, *מעלות אחז*; van Dorp, “Sundial”; Miano, *Shadow*, 14–19, 205 (with reservations). The hypothesis that *מעלות* would by itself (i.e., without any additional qualification) refer to a measuring instrument, is problematic (cf. Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 1453). The *מעלות* = “sundial” interpretation was unknown to the LXX, Josephus, Aquila, Theodotion, and the Peshitta. The expression אבן שע׳א “sundial” appears in the Targum of Isa 38:8, however, without connecting this instrument to Ahaz: “Behold, I am going to return the shadow of the sundial—for the sun had descended on the ramp of Ahaz (במסקנא דאחז)—backwards ten degrees. And the sun returned ten degrees on the form of the sundial where she descended.”

13 The question of chronological primacy regarding these two extent traditions is beyond the scope of the current study.

14 Due to space constraints, I present here only the most important textual witnesses, mentioning others in passing where considered appropriate.

Behold, I am going to return the shadow of the steps—which had descended on the steps the upper room of Ahaz—the sun^{acc15} backwards ten steps.

1QIsa^a has *אֵת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ* instead of *בַּשֶּׁמֶשׁ*. Nonetheless, despite their distinctive forms, from a semantic point of view, MT and 1QIsa^a could be argued to point in similar directions insofar as both *אֵת* and *ב* can be used as direct object markers. Since the semantic value of these prepositional forms is closely connected to syntagmatic constructions, I postpone the discussion of this aspect of v. 8 until its textual history is appropriately dealt with (§4.2).

In the chain *אֵת אֲחֻזַּת עֲלִית* “upper room”¹⁶ is a plus compared to MT. Strikingly, the same construction, *עֲלִית אֲחֻזַּת*, emerges again in 2 Kgs 23:12, designating an elevated construction (cf. §4.2).

Septuagint

MT הגני משיב את־צל המעלות אשר ירדה במעלות אחז בשמש אחרנית
עשר מעלות
ותשב השמש עשר מעלות במעלות אשר ירדה:

LXX^{Ra=Zie}
eclectic text¹⁷ τὴν σκιάν τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν οὓς κατέβη ὁ ἥλιος τοὺς δέκα ἀναβαθ-
μοὺς τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ πατρὸς σου ἀποστρέψω τὸν ἥλιον τοὺς δέκα
ἀναβαθμούς
καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ ἥλιος τοὺς δέκα ἀναβαθμούς οὓς κατέβη ἡ σκιά

The shadow^{acc} of the steps, (on) which^{acc pl} the sun had descended, (on) the ten steps^{acc} of the house of your father, I will turn back the sun^{acc} (on) the ten steps^{acc}. And the sun went up (on) the ten steps^{acc} (on) which^{acc} the shadow^l had descended.

The Greek text represented above, conventionally followed in studies focusing on Isa 38:8, appears in the critical editions of both Rahlfs (Ra) and Ziegler (Zie). At a first sight, compared to the known Hebrew readings, this edition presents an overloaded text with a heavily restructured phraseology, due especially to the lack of any Greek term corresponding to *הגני משיב* at the beginning of the sentence. Furthermore, the double accusatives, *τὴν σκιάν* and *τὸν ἥλιον*, so far

15 Or eventually: “with the sun” (cf. §4.2).

16 Cf. Judg 3:20, 23, 25; 2 Sam 19:1; 1 Kgs 17:19, 23; 2 Kgs 1:2; 1 Chr 28:11; 2 Chr 3:9; Neh 3:31–32; Ps 104:3–13; Jer 22:13–14.

17 See Rahlfs, *Septuaginta*, 2:617; Ziegler, *Isaias*, 261–262.

removed from each other, hardly make sense in the current verse with just a single verb left. Since in modern critical research the Rahlfs-Ziegler-reading is often treated as the Old Greek text of Isa 38:8, it is important to emphasise that both represent eclectic editions. In view of the available textual resources, at this particular location, the proposed scholarly reconstruction is problematic. Authoritative codices of the Septuagint actually point to another Greek version of Isa 38:8:

LXX^{A=Q} ἰδοὺ στρέφω τὴν σκιάν τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν οὓς κατέβη ὁ ἥλιος τοὺς δέκα ἀναβαθμοὺς τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ πατρὸς σου ἀποστρέψω τὸν ἥλιον τοὺς δέκα ἀναβαθμοὺς
καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ ἥλιος τοὺς δέκα ἀναβαθμοὺς οὓς κατέβη ἡ σκιά

Regarding the OG of Isaiah, Codex Alexandrinus (LXX^A) is ranked among its reliable later witnesses. Together with Codex Marchalianus (LXX^Q), Codex Alexandrinus was grouped by Ziegler among the authoritative, “non-revised text group.”¹⁸ Within this authoritative Greek manuscript tradition we lack any substantial reason to consider the initial ἰδοὺ στρέφω a later insertion.¹⁹ The rationale behind dropping ἰδοὺ στρέφω by Rahlfs (and Ziegler) remains unclear to me. Seeligmann suggested that occasionally the Masoretic text might have influenced the choice of the Greek base text in Ziegler’s critical edition.²⁰ Whether this also pertains to the current case is uncertain.²¹ At any

18 See Ziegler, *Isaias*; Seeligmann, *Isaiah*, 11. Ziegler distinguishes the first group of non-revised texts (such as A and Q) from a second group of texts showing signs of Hexaplaric revision (which includes S [= Sinaiticus], B [= Vaticanus], the marginal notes of Q, but also Eusebius, Basilus, and Hieronymus), as well as a third, so-called Lucianic revisions group (Theodoretus, Chrysostomus). Codex Alexandrinus also served as the base text for the critical study of Ottley, *Book of Isaiah*.

19 At this point, the Sinaitic and Vatican codices show only minor variations compared to A and Q. Both S and B have ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ στρέφω instead of ἰδοὺ στρέφω. The word ἐγὼ is probably the result of Hexaplaric revision. For rendering וַיָּנֶה + PART in Isaiah with ἰδοὺ + VERB, see Isa 13:17; 38:5; 43:19. For ἰδοὺ + ἐγὼ + VERB, see Isa 28:16; 29:14; 37:7; 66:12.

20 Cf. Seeligmann, *Isaiah*, 11 n. 8, highlighting this problem behind Ziegler’s critical edition: “Even Ziegler, it strikes me, is not always immune against the dangerous suggestion of the Massorah.”

21 ἀποστρέψω appearing midway in the Greek text might have been thought to cover the initial Hebrew מַשִּׁיב מַשְׁיב, so that ἰδοὺ στρέφω was considered an error.

One may also note here the alternative scholarly suggestion that ἀποστρέψω would not translate מַשִּׁיב but rather זָחַל, interpreted by the translators as a verbal form. See on this especially Catastini, “Osservazioni,” 172, 177; Catastini, “Le varianti greche,” 226–227; Trebelle, “Old Latin,” 92–93; Catastini, *Isaia*, 252–253, 257; Trebelle, “Qumran Fragments,” 27. The evidence and argumentation of these scholars is different, however. Catastini

rate, the critical apparatus in Ziegler merely justifies the absence of ἐγώ based on codices A and Q (even though the apparatus of his critical edition is often erroneously interpreted as if the entire phrase ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ στρέφω was shown to be missing²²).

Holding on to the Greek version preserved in LXX^{A=Q} leads to several important observations. In Isa 38:8a the MT uses תִּלְעָד עָשָׂר “ten steps” only twice, while in the LXX the corresponding δέκα ἀναβαθμούς appears three times. The MT uses the word שָׁמַשׁ only twice, while in the LXX ὁ ἥλιος appears three times. In v. 8a the MT uses the verb בָּשָׁ only once, while in the Greek text we find two corresponding renderings, στρέφω and ἀποστρέψω. Quantitative analysis suggests that the Greek text preserved a *double variant* of Isa 38:8a.²³ Based on the evidence above, the Old Greek text and its retroversion (R)²⁴ can be outlined as follows:

LXX^{A=Q} [1] ἰδοὺ στρέφω τὴν σκιὰν τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν [2] οὓς κατέβη ὁ ἥλιος τοὺς δέκα ἀναβαθμούς [3] τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ πατρός σου [4] ἀποστρέψω τὸν ἥλιον τοὺς δέκα ἀναβαθμούς [5] καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ ἥλιος τοὺς δέκα ἀναβαθμούς οὓς κατέβη ἢ σκιά²⁵

argues that ἀποστρέψω renders the combination תִּתְּנֶנִּי וְחָזַק “I will hold back” (*qal yiqtol* sg. 1). He also presupposes that the Greek text underwent later modifications whereby a shorter Greek version was subsequently updated to bring it in line with the Hebrew. Trebelle, on the other hand, follows the lead of the Vetus Latina (see below), where the phrase *et detenta est* also presupposes a verbal interpretation of וְחָזַק.

However, the suggestion that ἀποστρέψω in the LXX-Isa would render a verbal form of וְחָזַק is problematic. The verb וְחָזַק is never translated by ἀποστρέφω, while at the same time this verb often renders בָּשָׁ, including within the larger context of the current narrative (cf. Isa 36:9; 37:7, 8, 9, 29, 34, 37). In addition, assuming that וְחָזַק was read as a verb and not a personal name, would also leave the Greek πατρός σου unexplained.

22 See, e.g., Iwry, “Qumrân Isaiah,” 31; Miano, *Shadow*, 17.

23 For the phenomenon of doublets in the LXX of Isaiah, see Seeligmann, *Isaiah*, 31–38; van der Kooij, *Textzeugen*, 180–181, 216; van der Vorm-Croughs, *Old Greek*, 141–185. In more general terms, see Talmon, “Double Readings”; Talshir, “Double Translations”; Tov, *Septuagint*, 140–141.

24 For reconstructing retroversions, see especially Tov, *Septuagint*, 62–99, 224–235.

25 In v. 8b the LXX has κατέβη ἢ σκιά instead of the Hebrew יָרַד שָׁרָשׁ, implicitly alluding to the sun as subject. It is unlikely, however, that the LXX variant would presuppose another base text. This must be an exegetical interpretation which saw the need to relate the cumbersome constellation of sun and shadow in the text. For the contextualisation of this hermeneutics, see van der Vorm-Croughs, *Old Greek*, 47–48.

Behold, I am going to turn back the shadow of the steps, (on) which the sun had descended, (on) the ten steps of the house of your father.

I will turn the sun backwards the ten steps.

And the sun went up (on) the ten steps (on) which the shadow had descended.

R-LXX-Isa [1] הנני משיב את-צל המעלות [2] אשר ירדה [3] במ[עלות] [2] עלית? אהז[2]
 השמש אחרנית עשר מעלות
 [4] הנני משיב בשמש אחרנית עשר מעלות
 [5] ותשב השמש עשר מעלות במעלות אשר ירדה

With respect to LXX doublets, scholars usually differentiate between the following possibilities: (a) the translator faithfully rendered double variants appearing in his *Vorlage*; (b) the LXX was expanded by a second variant in the course of its transmission (or revision); (c) the LXX contains alternative renderings of one parent text by the same translator (“double translation”).²⁶ While option (c) can be excluded here, both (a) and (b) can account for the current Greek text. As for option (a), 1QIsa^a preserves a contemporary illustration of the scribal phenomenon of two variants surviving within the same Hebrew manuscript at Isa 38:19–20 (col. xxxii). Both variants appear within the main text, being written by the same scribe, one variant being placed immediately after the other.²⁷ As for option (b), this phenomenon is largely represented within the different branches of LXX revisions.

The Greek version of Isa 38:8a renders two distinctive Hebrew textual variants of the predicted astronomical sign: namely LXX-Isa¹, containing the phrase sequences [1]–[3], and LXX-Isa², containing phrase sequence [4]. The surplus of Greek terms compared to the MT noted above perfectly aligns with this suggestion. The terms appearing twice in the Greek version correspond to the two distinctive Hebrew phrasings of the astronomical sign.²⁸ This interpretation of the text of the LXX-Isa has important consequences for the textual history of Isa 38:8 and will be detailed below (cf. §4.5).

Apart from a double version of the sign preserved in the OG, LXX-Isa¹ (I postpone the discussion on LXX-Isa² until §4.5) covers in most respects the

26 Cf. van der Vorm-Croughs, *Old Greek*, 141–143.

27 The two variations preserved in 1QIsa^a for Isa 38:19–20 are:

Var. 1. חִי חֵי הוּא יִזְכֶּכָּה כְּמוֹנֵי הַיּוֹם אֲב לְבָנִים יִדְעֵ אֵל אִמְתַּכָּה יְהוּה לְהוֹשִׁיעֵנִי

Var 2. חִי חֵי יוֹדֵד כְּמוֹנֵי הַיּוֹם אֲב לְבָנִים וְהוֹדִיעַ אֱלֹהֵי אִמְתַּךְ יְהוּה לְהוֹשִׁיעֵנִי

28 The fact that ἀποστέφω is regarded as the headword of a sentence is strong in the ancient reading tradition. Cf. the sentence delimiting dots in LXX^Q (folio 266) and LXX^S.

Isaianic prediction as known from the MT and 1QIsa^a versions.²⁹ Several important remarks need to be added here though regarding sequences [2] and [3]. First, the sequential order of the rendered Greek phrases differs from the order of these phrases in the known Hebrew texts. It is unlikely that this difference should be traced back to an eventual Hebrew base text. The translator must have observed the problem already noted above: the distance between the verb *ירדה* and its alleged subject *שמש* was too big. At the same time, the translator recognised correctly that the genitival attribution of the “steps,” ([במ]עלות?) *עלית*?³⁰ *אחז* breaks the logical flow of the text. He sought to normalise this flow by relocating the constructive (ἀναβαθμούς) τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ πατρός σου to the end his first sentence. LXX-Isa¹ does not therefore necessitate any differently sequenced Hebrew base text.

Second, scholars argued that the phrase (ἀναβαθμούς) τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ πατρός σου could reflect a tradition also preserved in 1QIsa^a, *עלית* [במעלות] “of the *lyyyat* of Ahaz.”³¹ The evidence is not straightforward, however, as the Greek “of the house of your father” is different from “of the *lyyyat* of Ahaz” when considering an eventual base text.³² A Greek phrase similar to τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ πατρός σου appears several times in LXX-Isa, regularly translating Hebrew *בית אביך* (cf. Isa 7:17; 22:23–24). At the same time, the LXX of Isaiah is not entirely consistent, insofar as οἶκος can stand for a wide variety of Hebrew lexemes beyond the

29 Hurwitz, “Septuagint of Isaiah 36–39,” calls attention to the different character, the relative literalness of the translation of these chapters in comparison with the rest of Isaiah. Cf. also Person, *Recensions*, 39; Tov, *Septuagint*, 19. While in general the LXX of Isaiah may contain interpretive renditions, on various points it clearly presupposes Hebrew *Vorlagen* different from MT, so that each case must be evaluated individually (cf. Troxel, *LXX-Isaiah*, 74; van der Vorm-Croughs, *Old Greek*, 477–513; Panov, *Hiskijas Geschick*, 83–84, 93, 243–244).

30 At this point it is somewhat problematic to decide whether the Greek text presupposes *עלית* במעלות? *ירדה* במעלות? *עלית*, *ירדה* במ? *עלית*, or *ירדה* במעלות, i.e., whether we should reckon with two paleographically similar terms as in 1QIsa^a, or just one term as in the MT. Given the genitival construction of the Greek phrase “x of the house of your father,” *ירדה במעלות* seems to be the more likely Hebrew base text.

31 Catastini, “Osservazioni,” 170; Barthélemy, *Isaïe*, 262; van der Vorm-Croughs, *Old Greek*, 490. In case of Isa 38–39 par., Person, *Recensions*, 46, considers LXX and 1QIsa forming together a distinctive text family (beside MT-2K + LXX-2K and MT-Isa). For the phenomenon of common readings in 1QIsa^a and the LXX-Isa, see Ziegler, “Die Vorlage”; Parry, “LXX Isaiah,” 159–161.

32 The Peshitta contains the phrase *bdr̄g' d'hz' b'wk*, apparently rendering the MT, but also harmonising with the LXX: “Behold, I am going to return the shadow of the step^s—because the sun had descended on the step^s of Ahaz, *your father*—backwards ten steps^{pl}.” For the harmonising tendency of the Peshitta of Isaiah, see van der Kooij, “Textual History,” 460. For further references to “the house” and “the house of Hezekiah” by Josephus, Eusebius of Caesarea, and Hilarius of Poitiers, see n. 75 below.

usual בית, such as היכל (Isa 39:7), ארמון (Isa 32:14), or עפל (Isa 32:14).³³ Therefore the עליה = οἶκος rendition could be yet another *ad sensu* variation along this LXX-Isa tradition line.³⁴ As Iwry remarked, even Hebrew treats בית and עליה as synonyms (cf. Jer 22:13–14).³⁵

Nevertheless, the absence of the personal name “Ahaz” inside the genitival construction and the appearance of a variant “your father” is striking. The LXX might have stylistically adapted its translation, as “your father” was considered to be more appropriate in a sentence addressing the son, Hezekiah. It cannot be excluded though that “of the house of your father” in the LXX and “of the *‘liyyat* of Ahaz” in 1QIsa^a actually represent two *different interpretive traditions* regarding the identification of the “steps” where the sign is supposed to take place. The possible existence of two distinct traditions relating to the interpretation of the “steps” has interesting ramifications for the origin of this expression and the compositional history of Isa 38:8. I will return to this aspect later (cf. §4.3).

Vetus Latina

MT הגני משיב את־צל המעלות אשר ירדה במעלות אחז בשמש ...

VL *ecce ego auerto umbram graduum ascensionis quae descendit in gradus et detenta est in sole ...*

Behold, I am going to return the shadow^{fem} of the steps^{pl} of ascent^{sg fem}, which^{fem} has descended in the steps^{pl} and is detained^{fem} in the sun.

R-VL^G-Isa ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ στρέψω τὴν σκιάν τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν ἀναβάσεως οὗς κατέβη ἐν τοῖς ἀναβαθμοῖς καὶ κατεχόμενη² ἐν τῷ ἡλίῳ

R-VL^H-Isa הגני משיב את־צל המעלות עליה אשר ירדה במעלות אחז בשמש

33 In Isa 22:9 οἶκος has no direct reference within the Hebrew text. Van der Vorm-Croughs, *Old Greek*, 36–37, suggests that in Isa 38:8 as well τοῦ οἴκου was a pleonastic addition (a stylistic feature not necessarily grounded in a parent text). However, τοῦ πατρὸς σου makes this unlikely.

34 Beyond Isaiah, עליה is occasionally translated as ἀνάβασις (cf. Neh 3:31–32). Cf. Aquila at Isa 38:8: ταῖς ἀναβάσεσιν Αχάζ (Ziegler, *Isaias*, 262).

35 Iwry, “Qumrân Isaiah,” 33.

This highly interesting Old Latin text appears as a marginal note in Codex Legionensis³⁶ in the margins of the *parallel* passage 2 Kgs 20:11. The fact that the marginal note was added to 2 Kings is interpreted by some to mean that it represented some variant rendering of 2 Kgs 20:11.³⁷ That, however, is rather unlikely.

In general, the Vetus Latina of 2 Kings is assumed to be corelated with the Lucianic / Antiochean Greek recension,³⁸ being characterised by extreme literalness.³⁹ However, Moreno Hernández calls attention to the important differences between this particular marginal note and the actual Antiochean text of 2 Kgs 20:11 (cf. §3.2). He notes that there is no overlap in the references of the relative pronouns, no awareness of the name Ahaz in the Latin text, and no reference to the sun in the Antiochean text. Together with Barthélemy and Treballe, he concludes that ultimately, this Latin marginal note at 2 Kgs 20:11 was derived from Isa 38:8.⁴⁰ The analysis below follows this assumption: the surviving marginal note renders some ancient version of Isa 38:8, and not 2 Kgs 20:11.

The character of Vetus Latina as a highly literal translation, also showing signs of Hebraism (including in Isa 38:8),⁴¹ makes it an important (indirect) witness for textual history.⁴² At Isa 38:8, this Latin text preserved a striking expression, *graduum ascensionis*. Treballe believes that this expression hides a construction comparable to 1QIsa^a, במעלות עליה (ἀναβαθμῶν ἀναβάσσεως). He concludes that מעלות should not be translated any more either as “degrees” or as “sundial” but rather “steps” “of a staircase leading to an upper room” (עליה).⁴³

36 A Vulgate codex from 960. See Vercellone, *Variae lectiones*, 629; Moreno Hernández, *Las glosas marginales*, 141; Kauhanen, *1–2 Kings*, 14–17; Schenker, “Randlesarten.” Indirect evidence in Kauhanen, *1–2 Kings*, 315, questions that these marginalia would go back to a single Old Latin translation.

37 See, e.g., Brooke et al., *I and II Kings*, 370; Fernández Marcos, *Scribes*, 81.

38 Rahlfs, *Lucians Rezension*, 157–161, esp. 158; Fernández Marcos, *Scribes*, 41.

39 Kopfstein, “Latin Translations,” 302–308.

40 Moreno Hernández, *Las glosas marginales*, 213–214; Barthélemy, *Rois*, 415; Treballe, “Old Latin,” 92. Unfortunately, no other Old Latin version of Isa 38:7–8 has been discovered yet. Cf. Gryson, *Esaias*, 763–766.

41 Considering the complex history of the Old Latin version(s), the origin of Hebraisms is not easy to explain. It is most often assumed that Hebraisms do not presuppose a Hebrew parent text, but a Hebraising Greek *Vorlage* (see especially Kraus, “Hebraisms,” 487–513; Treballe Barrera, “Old Latin,” 320). However, Benjamin Kopfstein argued that while the influence of a Hebrew text-tradition is evident in VL, this may come from “later corrections and insertions” (“Latin Translations,” 310–311).

42 See the guidelines of Tov, *Septuagint*, 93, with respect to Hebraised renderings: “whenever a syntactical Hebraism occurs in the LXX that is not supported by any corresponding element in the MT, it may be retranslated into a Hebrew reading differing from the MT.”

43 Treballe, “Old Latin,” 92–93.

Although the Old Latin version does not completely overlap with 1QIsa^a (its retroversion can be reconstructed as either *המעלות עליה*, or *המעלות עליה*, the reason of which will be addressed below), the variant *graduum* (pl.) *ascensionis* (sg.) is another clear, independent, albeit indirect confirmation for the existence of a lexeme *עליה* (cf. also eventually LXX-Isa¹ noted above).

Another important distinction compared to 1QIsa^a is also crucial in view of the textual history of the passage examined below. As rightly recognised by Treballe and others, the phrase *detenta est* probably reflects a verbal rendering of *אחז*.⁴⁴ Some uncertainties should be noted though. The Latin *et detenta est* presupposes a *waw* + a passive verbal form, possibly a *niphal wayyiqtol*.⁴⁵ This can be achieved if *אחז* is delimited as *במעל ותאחז*, yet (*descendit*) in *gradus* also presupposes a pl. form of *במעלות*. The question is, of course, how far literalness in Vetus Latina is assumed to accurately portray a previous textual stage. Nonetheless, the equivalence of *אחז* and *detenta est* should be considered as relatively solid.

A further very important aspect also deserves attention in the Vetus Latina. Unlike 1QIsa^a, the Latin text does not connect **עליה* and **אחז*, suggesting that the two words were separated in the *Vorlage* (see the reconstructed retroversion). Through the disassociation of these lexemes, this Latin version indirectly testifies to a parent text with a phraseological structure different from 1QIsa^a, the significance of which will be addressed in detail below (cf. §4.1).

3.2 2 Kings 20:11 Beyond the Masoretic Tradition

The Greek textual tradition of 2 Kings is very complex.⁴⁶ It is generally assumed that the original Old Greek of 1–4 Kingdoms was a literal translation of a Hebrew parent text. Consequently, deviations from the MT are indications of a different Hebrew *Vorlage*.⁴⁷ The available manuscript tradition regarding the Old Greek of 1–4 Kingdoms is not unanimous, however. Depending on the sections of 1–4 Kingdoms that we are dealing with, LXX^B (Codex Vaticanus) and LXX^L (the so-called Lucianic recension or Antiochean text) are assumed to have preserved a textual form closest to the OG that, in turn, testifies to an earlier text compared to what we now find in the MT. Regarding specifically the Greek versions of 2 Kings (also referred to as the $\gamma\delta$ section in technical

44 Treballe, “Old Latin,” 93.

45 One may wonder how the idea of the shadow being detained in the sun was supposed to be understood. But this curiosity will probably not be satisfied by a translation in which ambitions regarding literalness are always supposed to triumph over readability.

46 For the details, see Barthélemy, *Les Devanciers*, 36–41; Schenker, *Älteste Textgeschichte*, 179–180; Joosten, “Value,” 230; Kauhanen, *1–2 Kings*, 1–2; Treballe Barrera, *Textual and Literary Criticism*.

47 Schenker, *Älteste Textgeschichte*, 171–175; McLean, “Kaige Text,” 275.

literature), it is generally assumed that LXX^L (Antiochean text) represents a version that is closest to the Old Greek.⁴⁸ In 2 Kings, the text preserved in LXX^B (Codex Vaticanus) is considered an ultra-literal Palestinian *kaige*-revision of the Old Greek from the first half of the 1st century, based on a pre-Masoretic Hebrew *Vorlage*.⁴⁹ In our case, LXX^A (Codex Alexandrinus) essentially follows MT, and was probably based on Origen's revision, being of little text-critical value.⁵⁰

While these general characteristics frame our use of available material for text-historical purposes, the evaluation of evidence is more complex. Scholars note that the "contamination" of manuscripts should not be excluded,⁵¹ and, especially with regard to the Antiochean tradition, indirect evidence from Old Latin occasionally points to an Old Greek deviating from its purportedly closest Lucianic evidence.⁵² Even more vigilance is required in case of parallel traditions, such as the pericope under scrutiny here. Rahlfs already noted a tendency in the Lucianic version to perform revisions based on parallel texts, i.e., texts from inside 1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles, or—most importantly for our case—from Isaiah.⁵³ For 2 Kgs 18–20, Rahlfs lists no fewer than 26 possible cases where LXX^L may have been influenced by Isa 36–39.⁵⁴ While these intricacies endorse a humble approach, a careful look at the textual tradition of 2 Kgs 20:11, placed in the context of this complex grid of evidences, can yield very interesting results. I will focus on 2 Kgs 20:11b only:

MT	:ישב את־הצל במעלות אשר ירדה במעלות אחז אחרנית עשר מעלות:
LXX ^L	καὶ ἐπέστρεψεν ἡ σαυὰ ἐν τοῖς ἀναβαθμοῖς Ἀχαζ οἷς κατέβη τοῦς
= boc ₂ e ₂	δέξα ἀναβαθμοῦς εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω ⁵⁵

48 For the base text of LXX^L, see Fernández Marcos and Busto Saiz, *El texto antioqueno*, 144. For an in-depth study on the Lucianic tradition of 2 Kings, see especially Rahlfs, *Lucians Rezension*, as well as corrective re-evaluations in modern literature by, e.g., Torijano, "Antiochean Greek Text"; Treballe Barrera, *Textual and Literary Criticism*, 163–190.

49 Barthélemy, *Les Devanciers*, 31–68, 91–143; Schenker, *Älteste Textgeschichte*, 6–7, 171–172; Joosten, "Value," 227–229; Torijano, "Antiochean Greek Text," 341; Kauhanen, *1–2 Kings*, 1–2; Treballe Barrera, *Textual and Literary Criticism*, 2; Kreuzer, "Septuagint," 362–363.

50 At 2 Kgs 20:11, the single difference compared to MT is the adherence of LXX^A to the LXX-2K tradition in rendering καὶ ἐπέστρεψεν ἡ σαυὰ = הצל = הַצֵּל, rather than אֶת־הַצֵּל = יֵשֶׁב that we find in MT.

51 Joosten, "Value," 229–230; Kreuzer, "Septuagint," 362; Dickie, "Post-Hexaplaric," 390.

52 Schenker, *Älteste Textgeschichte*, 6–7, 172; Treballe Barrera, *Textual and Literary Criticism*, 142–143.

53 See especially Rahlfs, *Lucians Rezension*, 250–259. Cf. also Konkel, "Sources," 461.

54 Rahlfs, *Lucians Rezension*, 255–257.

55 The new Göttinger edition of 2 Kings (under preparation) uses Rahlfs' manuscript identifiers 19+108/82/127/93 instead of b/o/c₂/e₂ of the Cambridge Edition.

[1] and the shadow^{fem} returned [2] on the steps of Ahaz, [3] (on) which^{dat pl} it descended [4] ten steps, [5] backwards.

R-LXX^L-2K : וישב את־הצל במעלות אשר ירדה במעלות אחז אחרנית עשר מעלות:

LXX^B και ἐπέστρεψεν ἡ σὰν ἐν τοῖς ἀναβαθμοῖς εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω δέκα βαθμούς

and the shadow returned on the steps backwards ten degrees.

R-LXX^B-2K : וישב את־הצל במעלות אשר ירדה במעלות אחז אחרנית עשר מעלות:

The differences between the two Greek traditions, LXX^L and LXX^B, on the one hand, and the MT on the other, are clear: In both Greek versions (cf. also LXX^A), the rendering of the direct object marker in v. 10b is missing, concomitantly presupposing an active וישב (*qal*) rather than causative וישב (*hiphil*) verbal form. The fact that in the accomplishment report the subject of the verb שוב is the shadow rather than YHWH is in line with the preceding vv. 9–10 and (more remotely with Isa 38:8b).⁵⁶

Beyond that, however, LXX^L and LXX^B diverge significantly, the Lucianic version being much closer to the MT (and Isaiah). Given the character of LXX^L, based on this Greek version, I would not venture to suggest a different word order for its underlying Hebrew text (R-LXX^L-2K).⁵⁷ It also remains uncertain whether the Greek οἷς κατέβη rendered merely אשר ירדה, or במעלות אשר ירדה, or even במעלות אשר ירדה.⁵⁸ It is clear, however, that the sg. relative pronoun אשר is rendered by a Greek masculine plural, the reference being the “steps,” on which the shadow had descended previously (cf. LXX-Isa¹). Moreover, the feminine verb ירדה, presupposing the sun as subject (absent from 2 Kgs 20!), is connected in LXX^L to the shadow. We have reasons to believe that the Lucianic version was a *corrective* recension, based on a Hebrew *Vorlage* already harmonised with Isa 38:8.

56 The Peshitta is also unaware of the direct object marker after וישב: “Isaiah, the prophet, cried to the Lord, and the shadow returned (*hpk* G) on the step—for the sun had descended on the step of Ahaz—backwards ten steps.”

57 Note that in the Greek translation אחז במעלות and אשר ירדה במעלות are interchanged, as are also עשר מעלות and אחרנית. While in general OG is considered a literal translation, the word order in the Lucianic text may have been influenced by various factors. Cf. Rahlfs, *Lucians Rezension*, 251 (1 Kgs 10:17), 279 (2 Kgs 23:18).

58 Note that in LXX-Isa¹ οἷς κατέβη appears to translate אשר ירדה במעלות, rather than merely אשר ירדה (see above).

LXX^B, on the other hand, is different. In general, the version of 2 Kings preserved in Codex Vaticanus is considered an ultra-literal revision (the so-called *kaige*-revision) of OG based on a Hebrew parent text. In this case the difference between this assumed *Vorlage* and the MT is significant: the phrase אֲשֶׁר יִרְדָּה אִחֻז בַּמַּעְלוֹת must have been missing from the Hebrew manuscript that the revisor used.⁵⁹ It is important to note that this is the exact phrase causing serious problems in both contexts, leading to an overloaded syntax and to grammatical incongruences (cf. §2). Except being unaware of this phrase, the lexical base and word order of LXX^B faithfully mirrors the MT.

4 A Synthesis of the Evidence

In his study on the versions of 2 Kgs 20:11, Fernández Marcos describes the evolution of the text of the parallel accounts Isa 38:8 and 2 Kgs 20:11 as follows:⁶⁰

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------|--|
| (1) | 1QIsa ^a | עלית אחוז את השמש > |
| (2) | LXX-Isa | του οικου του πατρος σου αποστρεψω τον ηλιον ⁶¹ > |
| (3) | MT-Isa | במעלות אחוז בשמש > |
| (4) | VL-Isa | <i>in gradus et detenta est in sole</i> > |
| (5) | LXX ^B -2K | και επεστρεψεν η σκια > |
| (6) | MT-2K | במעלות אחוז. |

However, such a linear development, a single line of tradition, hardly accounts for the complexities exposed by the analytical data presented above. The conclusions ask for a qualified synthesis of the relevant empirical data.

4.1 1QIsa^a and R-VL-Isa

From a text-historical viewpoint, the most valuable information can be derived from sources in which the interpretive element in the process of textual production is arguably at the lowest level. Therefore, below I will not follow the chronological sequence of the sources, but I will consider the witnesses as interconnected nodes of a complex network. In line with this basic methodological consideration, I start my synthesis with Isa 38:8, comparing first the *Hebrew* text in 1QIsa^a with a *literal* translation of Isa 38:8 in *Vetus Latina*, or

59 In view of the general character of LXX^B for 2 Kings, it is unlikely that this would have been intentionally dropped (contra Iwry, "Qumrân Isaiah," 32).

60 Fernández Marcos, *Scribes*, 81. See further Trebelle, "Qumran Fragments," 27; Catastini, *Isaia ed Ezechia*, 254.

61 Here αποστρεψω is assumed to be a rendering of זָהַא. See n. 21 above.

more precisely, the VL retroversion.⁶² Beyond their similar character as witnessing sources (a Hebrew text and a literal translation respectively—the qualitative perspective), this comparison is also warranted by the fact that these two versions stand close to each other in representing their respective base texts (the quantitative perspective; cf. §3.1, especially the discussion of עלית and אחז). I will search for clues concerning prior textual forms and postpone for the moment the issue of chronology, to which I will return later. While I am well-aware of the hypothetical nature of my investigation,⁶³ I believe to be able to highlight significant connections within the available complex empirical data network that will help to trace back the textual history of Isa 38:8 and 2 Kgs 10:11.

את השמש	אחז	עלית	במעלות	אשר	ירדה	במעלות	את	צל	המעלות	הנני	משיב	את	1QIsa ^a
בשמש	אחז	עלית	במעלות	אשר	ירדה	במעלות	את	צל	את	הנני	משיב	את	R-VL ^H -Isa

ecce ego auerto umbram graduum ascensionis quae descendit in gradus VL
et detenta est in sole ...

Comparing these two genetically unrelated text traditions reveals the conspicuous position of the relative clause אשר ירדה במעלות vis-à-vis the expression עלית אחז. In case of 1QIsa^a, the relative clause precedes אחז עלית, whereas in VL, the phrase is inserted in-between the same expression. In accordance with our knowledge of text production, this very unusual phenomenon is most likely to be explained by the fact that in the Hebrew manuscript from which R-VL^H-Isa was copied, the phrase אשר ירדה במעלות was probably still located above the line, only later being inserted into the main text, and in the wrong location.⁶⁴ Supralinear additions are known as scribal correction methods applied to existing manuscripts.⁶⁵ When manuscripts with such annotations

62 Naturally, I implicitly assume that the *Vorlage* of VL is older—and in this sense temporally much closer to 1QIsa^a—than the actual VL.

63 Cf. Kauhanen, 1–2 *Kings*, 1–5; Trebelle Barrera, *Textual and Literary Criticism*, 211–220.

64 Examples of misplaced expressions or phrases in the textual transmission of the Hebrew Bible were noted on several occasions (cf. Gen 7:6; 10:14; 23:1; Josh 18:13; see further Delitzsch, *Schreibfehler*, 133–139).

65 See y. Meg. 1.71c; b. Menah. 30b; Sop. 5.4, 10. For a detailed investigation of supralinear corrections, see Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 222–229; Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 204. For 1QIsa^a, cf. Kutscher, *Isaiah*, 522–536. Such additions may involve small corrections of merely one letter, or longer texts (eventually continuing horizontally into the margins, or vertically; cf. 1QIsa^a cols. xxx, xxxii, xxxiii).

were copied, the annotations were implemented directly into the main text of the copy.⁶⁶ Therefore, a comparison of data between 1QIsa^a and R-VL^H-Isa indirectly testifies to a textual tradition of Isa 38:8 from which *אשר ירדה במעלות* was missing, or—to be more precise—was not part of the main text. This phrase came to be inserted into the main text at a later date, and relative to *אחז עלית* in two different positions. From a chronological perspective this also means that within Isa 38:8 *אחז עלית* is earlier than the phrase *במעלות אשר ירדה*.

In a first attempt, based on the evidence above, I suggest the following reconstruction of an earlier stage of Isa 38:8 (tentatively called R-Isa²) from which both 1QIsa^a and R-VL^H-Isa derive, albeit along different genetic lines:

R-Isa² הנני משיב את־צל המעלות עלית אחז בשמש אחרנית עשר מעלות

Behold, I am going to return the shadow of the steps—of the *‘aliyyat* of Ahaz—with / in the sun⁶⁷ backwards ten steps .

This conclusion regarding the later origin of *אשר ירדה במעלות* is in line with our suspicions of grammatical-syntactical nature raised in the introduction (the incongruence between the fem. *ירדה* and masc. *צל*), as well as the problems of the overloaded syntax (cf. §§1–2). Nonetheless, the text temporarily designated as R-Isa² is still problematic, not least because of the great distance of the adverb *אחרנית* in relation to its referee. This leads me to conclude that R-Isa² is unlikely to have been the earliest form of Isa 38:8.

4.2 *R-Isa² and R-LXX^B-2K*

As mentioned in the introduction, parallel biblical texts developed together, exerting mutual influence upon each other. This also means that in case of parallel textual traditions one needs to correlate both versions in order to unveil their textual formation.

	R-Isa ² הנני משיב את־צל המעלות עלית אחז בשמש אחרנית עשר מעלות	
	R-LXX ^B -2K וישב הצל במעלות	
	אחרנית עשר מעלות	

66 See on this Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 134–235; Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 202. From a temporal perspective, the insertion of the supralinear *אשר ירדה במעלות* must have taken place at a stage earlier than the production of the base text R-VL^H-Isa, as it is less conceivable that the translator would have reproduced a supralinear gloss, or phrase in such an abnormal form.

67 At this intermediary stage of textual history, this interpretation of *בשמש* appears to give sense in the current context. See §4.2 for a detailed discussion on *בשמש* though.

It was noted above in §3.2 that the *Vorlage* of the *kaige*-version of 2 Kings (R-LXX^B-2K) also lacks the relative phrase *אשר ירדה במעלות*. Beside the arguments mentioned in §4.1, this may independently confirm the secondary origin of this relative clause in the narrative. But what about *עלית אחז*? The reference to *אחז* (*עלית*) is also missing from R-LXX^B-2K. This absence was regarded long ago as an empirical confirmation that *עלית אחז* was an explanatory gloss.⁶⁸ Moreover, as I mentioned at §3.1, the variations *אחז* (*עלית*) in 1QIsa^a (etc.) and (τὸ ὄψω) τὸ πατρὸς σου in LXX-Isa may presuppose alternative interpretive traditions regarding the attribution of the “steps” in question, which is a phenomenon characteristic for interpretive glosses.⁶⁹

What was the reason behind this gloss? At this point a comparison of the reconstructed R-Isa² can help us further. As I argued above (§2d), within the context of 2 Kgs 20:9–10, *מעלות* is a unit of measurement, and that is also true of the accomplishment report in v. 11. However, in the Isaianic version, the strange expression *צל המעלות* “the shadow of the steps” (instead of *הצל במעלות* in 2 Kings)—a reading nonetheless supported by all ancient witnesses—is strange, and does not conform to the semantic nuance of *מעלות* in 2 Kings: *צל המעלות* “the shadow of the steps” becomes a vague expression.⁷⁰ Furthermore, as I noted above (§1e), while in 2 Kings the shadow plays an exclusive role, in the Isaianic confirmation of the sign accomplishment (38:8b) the shadow is not mentioned at all, only the returning of the sun. These two observations, the differing sense of *מעלות* in the expression *צל המעלות* at Isa 38:8 and the lack of any reference to the shadow in the Isaianic confirmation report, coalesce into the conclusion that *צל המעלות* in Isa 38:8 must be the result of *harmonisation* with 2 Kgs 20:11. *צל המעלות* was inserted into the Isaianic context secondarily from 2 Kings. The aim of the editor was to harmonise the two different versions of the stories involving the “sun” and “shadow.”

Nevertheless, as it also happened in other harmonisation attempts,⁷¹ this import of material deprived *מעלות* of its primary meaning in its original context of 2 Kings. This phenomenon explains the need for a gloss to *מעלות* in its secondary Isaianic context. It is at this stage that *עלית אחז* must have first been appended as a qualifier of and as a gloss to *המעלות*, with the intention to explain what kind of *המעלות*—which have in the meantime become “the

68 Cf. Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 1439; Kustár, *Wunden*, 125.

69 See van der Vorm-Croughs, *Old Greek*, 490. Such an explanatory gloss also appears in 1QIsa^a at Isa 7:25 (col. vii line 16), where the word *ברזל* is written above *שמיר* clarifying its meaning.

70 This was recognised by the Targum which interprets “the shadow of the *sundial*.”

71 Cf. a similar effort in 2 Kgs 19:17 and Isa 37:18, also resulting in an unintelligible phrase. See Konkel, “Sources,” 473–474.

stairways”!—were intended.⁷² המעלות was identified as *the* stairways leading to the *‘lyyat* of Ahaz.

It is striking that in 2 Kgs 23:12, the other biblical context where the same expression, עלית אחז appears, the reference of King Josiah tearing down “the altars on the roof of the upper room of Ahaz⁷³ made by the kings of Judah” immediately follows a statement in v. 11 regarding the eradication of the cult of the sun (horses and chariots of the sun). The proximity between sun-worshipping and the cultic construction of Ahaz in 2 Kgs 23:11–12 may have served as a guideline for the scribe when identifying the המעלות on which the sun was turned back.⁷⁴ This observation concerning the combination of the sun motif with Ahaz’ building in 2 Kgs 23:11–12 would add further probability to the suggestion above that the Isaianic version (the one in which the sun appears) was the original location of the עלית אחז gloss.

One should probably reckon here with a two-step edition of the original Isaianic prophecy. First (= R-Isa¹) the two stories were synchronised by means of the expression את-צל המעלות from R-LXX^B-2K. Afterwards, in a second step (= R-Isa²), the meaning of המעלות was glossed within the Isaianic manuscript by עלית אחז. The fact that LXX-Isa¹ might have been familiar with a different gloss at this point may suggest some fluctuation in the qualifier of המעלות, which is more likely if “*‘lyyat* of Ahaz” or “house of your father” functioned as scribal notes added to the main text later than the qualified המעלות צל.⁷⁵

If צל המעלות, derived from 2 Kings, and its later gloss within Isaiah, עלית אחז, are disregarded, we arrive at the following version of Isa 38:8 (identified here as R-Isa⁰):

72 Note that in R-Isa² עלית אחז follows המעלות צל.

73 Barthélemy, *Rois*, 419, assumes that עלית אחז is a gloss at 2 Kgs 23:12. In the phrase על-הגג אחז, the Masorettes vocalised על-הגג as a *status absolutus*. The LXX, however, translates here a chain of genitival constructions (reading על-הגג?). Since the definite article is not usually prefixed to nouns determined by a following determinate genitive, the idea that על-הגג עלית אחז would form a series of genitival constructions is considered suspicious. Gesenius et al., *Grammar*, §127f, suggest that in such cases one should probably presuppose an elliptical construction which, if adapted to 2 Kgs 23:12, would yield “on the roof, namely the roof of the *‘alyyat* of Ahaz,” similar to constructions such as המזבח בית-אל (2 Kgs 23:17) “the altar, namely that of Bethel,” or המזבח הנחשת “the altar, namely that of bronze” (2 Kgs 16:14). Cf. also Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar*, §140b.

74 Contra Barthélemy, *Isaïe*, 262.

75 Josephus Flavius, *Ant.* x 29 refers to “the house” of the king as the location of the miracle of Isa 38. Eusebius of Caesarea also records that in his days, people could still identify a “house of Hezekiah” in the Jerusalem temple area. Hilarius of Poitiers argued that it was the “steps” in Hezekiah’s house on which the sun reascended again after having descended during its regular course (cf. Gryson, *Esaias*, 764). Note lack of any reference to a “sundial” and even “Ahaz” in these sources.

הנני משיב בשמש אחורנית עשר מעלות R-Isa⁰
ותשב השמש עשר מעלות במעלות אשר ירדה

Behold, I am going to return the sun backwards ten steps.
And the sun returned ten steps on (or: in accordance with)
the steps on which it descended.

A further note should be added regarding my interpretation of **בשמש** as a prep. + direct object of the verb **שוב** *hiphil*. The form **בשמש** has clear support in the distinctive traditions of the Vulgate and the Vetus Latina (*in sole*), while from a semantic point of view 1QIsa^a, with its variant **את השמש**, and LXX-Isa² (τὸν ἥλιον)⁷⁶ presuppose that **שמש** is a direct object of the verb **שוב**. I consider that the accusative interpretation can be harmonised with the current Masoretic **בשמש**.

Classical grammars confirm that, in certain contexts, both **ב** and **את** can preface a direct object of a verb.⁷⁷ Bekins' recent study shows that the choice of **ב** or **את** as direct object marker may involve subtle differences of nuance in relation to the same verb.⁷⁸ But occasionally, the differences are indistinguishable,⁷⁹ or may even be ascribed to dialectal variation.⁸⁰ In our concrete situation, the construction **שוב** *hiphil* + **ב** might eventually be argued to have a partitive (imperfective) nuance, insofar as the sun was returned "ten steps" (i.e., not completely). However, the two constructions attested in the MT and 1QIsa^a may overlap beyond any reasonable distinction.⁸¹ At any rate, this uncertainty concerning the ultimate semantic nuance behind the chosen phraseology hardly invalidates the possibility of viewing **בשמש** as a case of accusative construction.

76 See also Symmachus (*apud* Ziegler, *Isaias*, 261–262): ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ παλινδρομῶ τὴν σκίαν τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν ὧν κατέβη ἐν τῷ ωρολογίῳ Ἀρχαζ τον ἥλιον ὀπισθίως δεκά ἀναβάσεις.

77 Gesenius et al., *Grammar*, §119q; Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar*, §125bc, m.

78 For instance, in case of "canonical transitive verbs," **נכה את** ("to smite one") presupposes complete destruction (2 Sam 23:12; perfective), while **נכה ב** "produces a partitive reading" (1 Sam 11:1; 2 Sam 23:10; imperfective) (Bekins, *Object Marking*, 165–166).

79 With verbs of type "surface contact" (such as **אחז** "to grasp," or **תפש** "to size") the difference is less obvious (Bekins, *Object Marking*, 167, 241; cf. also Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar*, §125m).

80 Bekins, *Object Marking*, 169–170.

81 Cf. 2 Sam 4:10 (**ב** **אחז**) and Judg 12:6 (**את** **אחז**), or Exod 7:20 (**ב** **רום**) and Exod 14:16 (**רום את**).

4.3 *R-Isa⁰ and LXX-Isa²*

At this point, the conclusion derived from various sources regarding the earliest probable form of Isa 38:8 (R-Isa⁰) astonishingly overlaps with the data found in our independent analysis of the Old Greek of Isaiah (§3.1), more precisely with the translation sequence [4] ἀποστρέψω τὸν ἥλιον τοὺς δέκα ἀναβαθμούς, that is LXX-Isa². I argued above that this Greek sentence must have represented the rendering of a second Hebrew variant of the astronomical sign, different from LXX-Isa¹, which on its turn follows 1QIsa^a and MT. It is striking to observe that LXX-Isa² corresponds literally to R-Isa⁰, הַגִּנִּי מְשִׁיב בְּשֶׁמֶשׁ אַחֲרֵינִית עֶשֶׂר מַעֲלוֹת, the purportedly earliest version of the Isaianic sign prediction (R-Isa⁰).

LXX-Isa preserved both a later (LXX-Isa¹) and an early version (LXX-Isa²) of the Isaianic text side by side. This phenomenon, especially the existence of a variant reading in LXX-Isa shorter than the MT-Isa, can be further contextualised within the OG tradition of Isa 36–39. Van der Vorm-Croughs calls attention to a suspicious concentration of *large-scale* minuses of LXX-Isa exactly within Isa 36–39, for instance at Isa 36:7, 10; 37:8–9, 14, 34.⁸² The shorter Greek versions (preserved in Codex Alexandrinus) were expanded in subsequent LXX manuscript traditions to conform with the longer MT.⁸³ While each case should be carefully evaluated, the conspicuous aggregation of a significant number of shorter forms within Isa 36–39 point to deliberate harmonisation attempts with 2 Kings within the longer versions of the MT (and 1QIsa^a). The (*Vorlage* of) LXX-Isa might have yet been unaware of phrases or sentences which came to be included into the later Hebrew Isaiah-tradition, as a result of this harmonisation.

The fact that at Isa 38:8 the available Greek manuscript traditions preserved both translation variants (a long and a short one) side by side, from a *temporal* perspective, makes this case distinctive from the above-mentioned instances: the double translation in v. 8 appears to be earlier than the other expansions appearing in Isa 36–39. Nonetheless, *technically* speaking, the Septuagint version of Isa 38:8 can essentially be categorised under a similar scribal phenomenon: v. 8 presents a very early attempt of harmonising diverging traditions.

The textual history outlined above also implies that we need to distinguish between two different traditions of Isaiah's astronomical sign account: There was one account in which YHWH returned the *sun* (according to the book

82 Van der Vorm-Croughs, *Old Greek*, 481–483. Person, who argues that for the most part LXX-Isa (including the shorter variants) is closer to the original text, considers LXX-Isa 36:7 a later redactional abbreviation (cf. Person, *Recensions*, 44, 59).

83 Cf. n. 3 above.

of Isaiah) and another account in which he returned the *shadow* (according to 2 Kings).⁸⁴ This suggestion deduced with the help of empirical evidence coheres with observations derived from the context (the unexpected fem. ירדה in 2 Kings focusing exclusively on the shadow, and the lack of reference to the shadow in the accomplishment report in Isa 38:8). The different core motifs of these two distinct versions of the narrative were combined only secondarily, mainly in a process of harmonising the two stories.

4.4 *A Further Note on the Possible Source and Origin of אשר ירדה במעלות*

It was argued that 1QIsa^a and VL-Isa (as well as LXX^B-2K) testify to the later origin of the phrase אשר ירדה במעלות that came to be inserted only after a previous harmonisation of R-Isa⁰ with R-LXX^B-2K. It remains an intriguing question though from where this phrase could derive. If the argumentation that this phrase was added initially as a supralinear note is accepted (cf. §4.1), then we may safely exclude the possibility of a scribal error (e.g., dittography) within the current line of Isaianic textual tradition. Some other explanation must be found for its occurrence. Due to the fem. form of ירדה, I assume this phrase to derive from a source text in which the subject of the verb was still a fem. noun, i.e., שמש and not צל. This could have only been the case with a different Isaiah manuscript, in which the sun rather than the shadow played the central role. This means that, in the process of Isaiah's textual history, besides the influence from 2 Kings, one has to reckon with an interaction with a different line of Isaianic manuscript tradition, which was still immune to harmonisations with 2 Kings. Following the harmonisation of the original Isaianic version (R-Isa⁰) with R-LXX^B-2K, this concatenated R-Isa² version (i.e., the one which included the entire phrase את־צל המעלות עליה אחז) was collated by a scribe of Isaiah against a *different Isaianic manuscript* (R-Isa^x), which contained the phrase אשר ירדה במעלות, either in its base text, or as a scribal note above the lines. The scribal process reconstructed here may then be sketched as follows:

84 A similar suggestion regarding the existence of two distinctive stories was formulated earlier by Fullerton, "Original Text," 49–51; Treballe, "Old Latin," 93–94; Konkel, "Sources," 481–482. However, these scholars work with assumptions not shared in the present study: Fullerton and Konkel argue that הַנְּנִי מְשִׁיב אֶת־צֶל should be *emended to* הַנְּנִי מְשִׁיב אֶת־שֶׁמֶשׁ. The deduction of these two core variants in the study of Treballe is less clear to me.

Isaiah manuscript tradition R-Isa ^x (not harmonised with 2 Kings)	Isaiah manuscript tradition	Phases
הנני משיב בשמש אחורנית עשר מעלות	הנני משיב בשמש אחורנית עשר מעלות	R-Isa ⁰
	הנני משיב את-צל המעלות בשמש אחרנית עשר מעלות	R-Isa ¹
	(harmonised with 2 Kings)	
	הנני משיב את-צל המעלות עליה אחז בשמש אחרנית עשר מעלות	R-Isa ²
	(gloss added within Isaiah)	
הנני משיב בשמש אשר ירדה במעלות אחורנית עשר מעלות	הנני משיב את-צל המעלות אשר ירדה במעלות עליה אחז בשמש אחרנית עשר מעלות	R-Isa ³
Behold, I am going to return the sun which descended in steps ⁸⁵ backwards ten steps.	(manuscript is collated against R-Isa ^x , a different Isaianic textual tradition)	

The scribal practice of collating one manuscript against another version of the same book is well-known and is amply illustrated by the scroll 1QIsa^a.⁸⁶ One should note here that collating a manuscript against another manuscript of the same book is a different type of scribal activity than the process of harmonisation between different versions. While this type of collation is frequent in scribal practice in all ages, harmonisation between different books is a creative type of editorial work which would probably include higher authorities than just simple scribes.

85 It remains a question what the reason could have been for the addition of the phrase אשר ירדה במעלות at v. 8a within the Isa^x manuscript tradition. One might ponder the view that the phrase was taken over from the accomplishment report deliberately in order to give some additional emphasis: the very sun that had already descended would be returned on the same path (as in v. 8b). But it is equally possible that אשר ירדה במעלות within R-Isa^x is another case of erroneous dittography evoked by v. 8b.

86 Longacre, "Developmental Stage," 48, argued that 1QIsa^a was copied from at least two exemplars.

From this point onwards, the textual tradition of R-Isa³ developed in two directions, which accounts for the strange difference concerning the position of במעלות אשר ירדה עלִית אחוּ vis-à-vis: one line is represented by 1QIsa^a and another one by R-VL^H-Isa.

4.5 R-VL-Isa and MT-Isa

הגני משיב את־צל המעלות עלִית אשר ירדה במעלות אחוּ בשמש	R-VL ^H -Isa
הגני משיב את־צל המעלות עלִית אשר ירדה במעלות אחוּ בשמש	MT -Isa

The MT of Isaiah, with its reading בשמש, is closer to the textual tradition represented by VL-Isa (*in sole*) and may be its less remote ancestor (cf. the diverging השמש את in 1QIsa^a). From the earlier text form המעלות עלִית, the second element was dropped, eventually by a scribal error (haplography).⁸⁷

4.6 MT-Isa and MT-2K

From the viewpoint of the textual history of 2 Kings, at a relatively late stage, an early version of 2 Kings (cf. R-LXX^B) came to be harmonised with MT-Isa (which also implies that MT-Isa is earlier than MT-2K).⁸⁸ This harmonisation explains the presence of אשר ירדה במעלות אחוּ in the context of 2 Kgs 20:11, which is out of place in its secondary context. The fact that this harmonisation took place via MT-Isa is confirmed by the fact that it was the “defective” variant (i.e., a manuscript tradition lacking the word עלִית) that MT-2K took over.

This harmonisation of 2 Kings with MT-Isa may also answer the appearance of the direct object marker את before צל in 2 Kgs 20:11. The preposition את was probably unknown to all earlier versions of 2 Kings (cf. all versions of LXX-2K, as well as the Peshitta). The lack of בשמש from MT-2K, which appears in MT-Isa, can be explained through the different focus of the story in 2 Kings, lacking any role assigned to the sun altogether (cf. vv. 9–10).⁸⁹

87 This became the base text for Aquila, Symmachus and the Vulgate.

88 Scholars generally consider MT-2K the latest witness to 2 Kgs 18–20 (cf. Catastini, *Isaia*, 265–266; Person, *Recensions*, 43).

89 As Isa 38:21–22 and 2 Kgs 20:7–8 also illustrate, harmonisations are not intended to create exact replicas, they involve the retention of characteristic elements within the parallel texts.

MT of Isaiah

Development of 2 Kings

	וישב הצל במעלות אחרנית עשר מעלות	R-LXX ^B -2K
הגני משיב את־צל המעלות אשר ירדה במעלות אחז בשמש אחרנית עשר מעלות	וישב את־הצל במעלות אשר ירדה במעלות אחז אחרנית עשר מעלות	MT-2K

5 Conclusion

The textual history of biblical pericopes preserved in more than one version within the Bible is very complex. Although the two versions of the stories in Isa 38 and 2 Kgs 20 appear to have been created originally with distinctive accents, one can observe an obvious later tendency to harmonise these parallel accounts. This predisposition transcends the early transmission of the Hebrew texts, the ancient translations, and even the transmission and revision of these translations. The current study evaluated the available complex data against the background of ancient scribal practices, both along the distinctive tradition lines of the two books, as well as in their interaction with each other. As a result of this investigation, the development of Isa 38:8 // 2 Kgs 20:11 could be represented in a simplified form by the following chronologically structured flowchart. Each of the reconstructed phases derives from concrete, often independently confirmed evidence.

Phase	Isa ^x	Isa	2 Kgs
0 R-Isa ⁰	הגני משיב בשמש אחרנית עשר מעלות	הגני משיב בשמש אחרנית עשר מעלות The original form of Isa (cf. LXX-Isa ²).	וישב הצל במעלות אחרנית עשר מעלות The original form of 2 Kings (cf. LXX ^B -2K).
1 R-Isa ¹		הגני משיב את־צל המעלות בשמש אחרנית עשר מעלות	

(cont.)

Phase	Isa ^x	Isa	2 Kgs
		Isaiah is harmonised with 2 Kings.	
2 R-Isa ²		הגני משיב את־צל המעלות עלית אחז בשמש אחרנית עשר מעלות	
		עלית is added to clarify המעלות	
3 R-Isa ³	הגני משיב בשמש אשר ירדה במעלות אחרנית עשר מעלות	הגני משיב את־צל המעלות עלית אשר ירדה במעלות אחז בשמש אחרנית עשר מעלות	
		Isaiah is collated against another Isaiah manuscript, with a supralinear phrase added. From this manuscript R-VL ^H -Isa was copied (cf. 1QIsa ^a).	
4 MT-Is		הגני משיב את־צל המעלות עלית אשר ירדה במעלות אחז בשמש אחרנית עשר מעלות	
		MT-Isa is created, עלית is dropped (haplography?).	
5 MT-2K			וישב את־הצל במעלות אשר ירדה במעלות אחז אחרנית עשר מעלות MT-2K is harmonised with MT-Isa.

The textual history outlined above witnesses the existence of two originally different traditions regarding Isaiah's astronomical sign. In the version preserved by the book of Isaiah, YHWH returned the *sun*, while in the version of the book of Kings, he returned the *shadow*. This text-historical reconstruction resolves

the often-noted grammatical issues, as well as other types of contradictions and difficulties appearing within both versions of the current Masoretic text form (§§1–2).

This study has further ramifications for the archaeological question of Ahaz's sundial that penetrated the exegetical history since the third century CE. Did King Ahaz have a sundial as Symmachus (and Jerome) thought? Perhaps. But if the results of the current research are accepted (§4), the historical confirmation for such contention must be found beyond Isa 38:8 or 2 Kgs 20:11. For these texts have hardly anything to say regarding this particular topic.

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