CHAPTER FIVE

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The passage 2:21-27 in the book of Joel is concerned with the blessings and the מִדְבַּרְדְבַּרְדָּה that Yahweh will give to his people according to the covenant. The blessings mentioned in the text all belong to the agricultural-pastoral sphere: green pastures, good fruit, and rains which will give good harvests, filling the threshing floors with grain and the winepresses with wine. What the locusts had destroyed will be fully restored again. The people will eat and drink and be satisfied. Never again will they be put to shame. Because of this they will praise Yahweh, v. 26. Thus, the blessing and well-being of the people is intimately connected with the needs of an agricultural society. All this will be dependent upon, or made possible through, מִדְבַּרְדְבַּרְדָּה, v. 23, that Yahweh will give the people. What this phrase means has long been a matter of dispute. However, this is not the place for describing that history, but it should be mentioned that the versions differ in translating this phrase. The Vulgate renders it *doctorem (or pastorem) justitiae*; the Targum has מַלְפָּטִךְ בּוֹשֶׁךָ; Symmachus has τὸν ὑποδεικνύοντα. Thus, these versions have based their interpretations of מִדְבַּרְדְבַּרְדָּה upon the hiph. of what has been considered as הַר III, “to teach, point one’s finger at, instruct”. The LXX on the other hand has τὸ βρῶματα, “food”, which means that one has read מִדְבַּרְדְבַּרְדָּה instead of מַדְבָּר, 1 which also seems to be the reading behind Vetus Latina’s *escas justitiae*, 2 as well as the Peshitta’s מַדַּבָּר. מַדְבַּר can also be seen as a hiph. ptc. of מָדַבֶּה I, “to throw, shoot, cast”, 3 cf. Ugar. *yry/w*, or of מִדְבַּר II, for which Köhler-Baumgartner’s dictionary gives no translation. It has been doubted whether one really should have

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3 Thus J. Weingreen, “The Title Môreh Şeğék”, *JSJ* 6/61, pp. 169 f.
these three stems הָרִיך; thus, for instance, Brown-Driver-Briggs' dictionary, which only lists one stem הָרִיך.1

In connection with this problem, one should note 2 Chr. 15:3, where הָרִיך is found referring to a priest. The phrase חַכֹּם מַהֲרֵי in this verse can be translated "oracular priest".2 J. Morgenstern has maintained that the occurrence of תֹּרָב in this verse gives a sense of "oracular decision" or "revelation" to the phrase.3 In this passage, הָרִיך and מַהֲרֵי are so intimately connected that they are to be considered as belonging to the same stem, cf. Mic. 4:2. Thus, one may be somewhat skeptical towards the idea of תֹּרָב as being a pure loan word, the Akkadian tertu (from (w)āru). Rather, the Akkadian (w)āru and the Hebrew הָרִיך should be seen as etymologically the same, both having as a derivate a t-preformative. Be this as it may, the question here is whether there is any possibility of finding out what מַהֲרֵי in Joel 2:23 means.

From the discussion concerning the stems, three meanings of מַהֲרֵי have been deduced. First, it has been understood as an "archer" in 1 Sam. 31:3 and 1 Chr. 10:3. In both places, the form is plural, מַהֲרֵי. In the latter passage occurs also the form מַהֲרֵיה. The word is connected with תֹּרָב, "bow"; thus, מַהֲרֵי mean the one who shoots the bow.4 Second, מַהֲרֵי is rendered with "rain" in the sense of early rain. This is to be found in Joel 2:23, מַהֲרֵי הָמָלָךְ, and also in Ps. 84:7.5 (It is doubtful that מַהֲרֵי would occur in Joel 2:23

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1 This is the same problem as with מְרוֹן, which has been derived from הָרִיך I, "to cast, throw"; in the hiph., "to shoot". That this verb in the hiph. may have developed the meaning "to instruct" is not impossible to believe. An oracle is thought of as giving the will of the deity. Therefore, all oracles show "the way of the god"; they are his law. It should also be mentioned that some have seen the term תֹּרָב as a loan-word, namely the Akkadian tertu, "oracle-message", from *tawirum > ta'irtum, יָרָע, "to send (a message)", cf. Codex Ham. III:51.

For a discussion about תֹּרָב, see G. Östborn, Törab in the Old Testament, 1945, pp. 5 ff. Östborn denies a connection between הָרִיך, "to shoot, cast", and מַהֲרֵי, "to shoot (a bow)". I. Engnell (Israel and the Law, Symbolae Biblicae Upsaliensis 7/54, 2nd ed., p. 1 ff.) and A. Deissler (Psalm 119 (118), 1955, pp. 75 f.) both affirm (correcting Östborn) that תֹּרָב is to be connected with the Akkad. tertu.

2 R. Meyer renders it "weisenden Priester" and says that in this particular passage it means the high priest. According to Meyer, מְרוֹן can be a teacher, a priest or a prophet, "Melkisedek von Jerusalem und Moresedek von Qumran", SVT XV 1966, pp. 234 f.

3 J. Morgenstern, "The Oldest Document of the Hexateuch", HUCA 4/27, p. 108. Cf. Jsa. 2:3 (and Mic. 6:2), "for from Zion goes forth מְרוֹן and from Jerusalem מְרוֹן. תֹּרָב and Yahweh's word are here identical phenomena; the word of Yahweh comes as an oracle.
