SOME NOTES ON יָרֵעַ AND ITS DERIVATIVES

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Introduction

In the Book of Proverbs the verb יָרֵעַ and its derivatives occur seventeen times. A perusal of the various translations and commentaries quickly indicates considerable lack of unanimity among scholars as to the sense of this word. Lexicons are not of much help either since they tend also towards diversity. The problem is intensified when one examines the passages outside of the Book of Proverbs in which this root and its various derived forms appear.

BROWN, DRIVER, and BRIGGS (= BDB) 1) give the meaning of "scorn" to the verb יָרֵעַ in spite of the fact that the closest forms which they can find do not have this sense at all. M. A. CANNEY 2) points out the difficulty which one faces in translating יָרֵעַ in the Qal as "scorn" and in the Hiphil as "interpret". He goes on to say, "I suggest that in Qal it means 'to talk freely' and in the Hiphil 'to talk freely' or 'to make (others) to talk freely'; and further that the noun יָרֵעַ, used so often in the Book of Proverbs, means, not 'a scorners', but a 'babblers'. 'Scornere' seems to be a pure guess." 3). P. A. H. DE BOER in 1943 offered the meaning "to repeat, in a different way" as the basic sense of יָרֵעַ. He suggested that מֶלֶטָ is one who repeats the words of another sometimes, as in Job xvi 20, in a mocking fashion. In Jok xxxii 23 he concluded that מֶלֶטָ must be translated "intercessor" 4).

KOehler seems not to have been able to come to a final decision in this matter. For the verb he gives both "talk big" (= grosspreche-

1) BROWN, DRIVER, BRIGGS, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament.
2) American Journal of Semitic Languages, vol. 40, Jan. 1924, p. 135 ff. (KOehler in Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros, p. 481, refers to this article incorrectly, attributing it to ALBRIGHT, and cites the page as 35).
3) Ibid., p. 136.
4) Oudtestamentische Studiën, III, p. 165f.
risch sein) in the Qal and "be the spokesman" or "interpreter" in the Hiph'il. For ḥṣ he gives "prattler" (= Schwätzer — (big) talker, prattler, babbler) and "scornor" (= Spötter)! To ṣān is attached the meaning "boasting prattle" (= grosstüerisches Geschwätz); but for $mèsāb$ he gives the meaning "alluding saying". Thus one might say that Köhler has been influenced to some degree by Canney's observation; the question remains, however, whether one might go further in unifying the translations of ḥṣ and its derivatives in the direction which Canney and Köhler have already taken. In view of the fact that there are no cognates which throw light on the meaning of this root, we must rely upon an examination of the passages in which the word appears.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the occurrences of ḥṣ and its derivatives in an effort to show that as a matter of fact ḥṣ and the substantives derived from it have the meaning of "talk freely" and other related senses.

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and (if) you engage in loose talk you alone will bear (the consequences).

Oesterley 1), Toy 2), Gordon 3), BDB, and the Holy Scriptures according to the Massoretic Text (= HS) all give the sense of "scorn" to the verb here. The Revised Standard Version (= RSV) renders it "scoff". Köhler gives the meaning "talk big". Frankenberg 4) and Wildeboer 5) both prefer Spötter. LXX translated the verb with $\chi\chi\chi\lambda\varsigma\; \acute{a}\nu\phi\beta\nu\varsigma$.

There is nothing in the verse itself or in the context which demands one rendering or another. However, "talk big, freely" or even "loosely" would fit as well as "scorn". However, LXX may throw some additional light upon the subject. In LXX there is a fairly long addition to this verse in the form of an explanation of the second line, both of the nature of $\chi\chi\chi\lambda\varsigma$ and of the consequences. Here one

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4) Frankenberg, W., Die Sprüche.
5) Wildeboer, G., Die Sprüche.