

A COLLOQUIALISM IN JER. 5:13 FROM THE ANCESTOR OF MISHNAIC HEBREW *

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In Jer. 5:13, the people accuse Jeremiah and his doomsaying colleagues of being false prophets: והנביאים יהיו לרוח והדִבָּר 'The prophets will prove to be wind (full of hot air), the דִבָּר not in them; may such and such befall them.'¹ Two recent commentators on the Book of Jeremiah have viewed the vocalization of הַדִּבָּר with suspicion. Thompson writes 'LXX and some MSS read *The word* in place of MT "Has he spoken?" The consonants are the same.'² Carroll comments, 'MT *w^hbaddibēr* [sic, for *w^hbaddibbēr*], "and who

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¹ Our rendering of this verse follows the great majority of modern scholars in taking it to be a continuation of the popular diatribe against pessimistic prophets quoted by Jeremiah in the previous verse. W.L. Holladay (*Jeremiah* I [Philadelphia c. 1986], 187) points to the word order as evidence against this interpretation: "the prophets" precedes the verb, so that a contrast is implied with what has come before.' This argument is unconvincing for two reasons: (1) The majority interpretation does imply a contrast between verse 12 (roughly: 'we will be fine') and verse 13 (roughly: '... but the prophets will not'). (2) SVO word order is used in narrative passages to signal a contrast with the preceding clause only when the latter has the normal narrative word order, viz., VSO (cf. 5:30-31 where there is a series of SVO clauses with no contrast); but verse 13 is not narrative according to any opinion, and the clause preceding it does not have VSO word order.

² J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids, 1980), 241, fn. 1.

says": G "the word of the Lord"; EVV treat *hdb̄r* as a noun 'the word'.³

Both of these scholars analyze the Tiberian form *h̄d̄b̄r* as a verb, thereby turning the verse into nonsense. However, as noted already in the earliest comprehensive dictionary of Biblical Hebrew (tenth century CE),⁴ it is only in pause that the *ב* of the verb in question is vocalized with *šere* (דְּבַר); elsewhere it takes a *segol* (דְּבָר). Thompson compounds the error by analyzing the prefixed *ה* as interrogative, despite the fact, noted already in the earliest Hebrew grammar (also tenth century CE),⁵ that the letter following interrogative *ה* may take *dageš hazak* only when vocalized with *šewa*. Nevertheless, the question remains: is the form *דְּבַר* attested as a noun in any other source?⁶ What does it mean? Why do we not find 'דְּבַר' here as in 27:18 'ואם נביאים הם ואם יש דְּבַר י' אתם 'and if they are prophets and the word of the Lord is with them...?'

Modern commentators generally refrain from citing Hos. 1:2 'תחלת דְּבַר-י' בהושע 'the beginning of the Lord's speaking to Hosea' as evidence for a nominal *דְּבַר*, and wisely so, since *דְּבַר* in that verse is more likely to be a verb than a noun.⁸ On

³ R. P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (London 1986), 182.

⁴ *Kitāb Jāmi' al-Alfāz of David ben Abraham al-Fāsi* (ed. S. L. Skoss) (New Haven 1936-1945), I, 364, ll. 100-103; cf. also Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley, 142, § 521.

⁵ S. L. Skoss, *Saadia Gaon, The Earliest Hebrew Grammarian* (Philadelphia 1955), 20; cf. also Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley, 296, § 296*k-l*. The relevant passage from Saadia's *Kutub al-Luḡab* has not yet been published, but a Hebrew paraphrase of it appears in *Tešuvot Dumaš hallevi ben Labraṭ 'al Rabbi Sa'adyah Ga'on* (ed. R. Schröter), § 120 (cf. also § 180d).

⁶ The pattern *ciCCēC* for verbal nouns of the *pi'el* stem is attested elsewhere in the Bible (see Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley, 142 § 521) as has been noted since the Middle Ages (see *Jāmi' al-Alfāz*, I, 365, ll. 104-105 and many later lexicographers and exegetes). It has not been noted, however, that that pattern is related to the *heCCēC* pattern used commonly for verbal nouns of the *bif'il* stem in Mishnaic Hebrew.

⁷ Note that the tetragrammaton is abbreviated as 'י' in this article.

⁸ Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley, 143, § 520. My agreement with their judgment is not based on the vocalization with *segol*, since closed-syllabic *šere* is often replaced by *segol* when it loses its stress due to proclisis; cf. אָתָּה, אָתָּם, etc. It is based, rather, on the fact that a genitive phrase 'דְּבַר-י' would be redundant and that not one of the 136 attestations of MH *דְּבַר* in the *Historical Dictionary of the Hebrew Language (Materials for the Dictionary, Series I* [Jerusalem 1988], 6497-6499) occurs in such a phrase. It is true that there are a few examples of 'דְּבַר-י' in the Palestinian targum (see M. L. Klein, *Geniza Manuscripts of Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*, II, 106), but most

the other hand, some commentators allude to a post-biblical Hebrew noun דְּבַר with the meaning 'Gotteswort'⁹ or 'revelation.'¹⁰

There is, in fact, incontrovertible evidence that not only Mishnaic Hebrew¹¹ but also Jewish Palestinian Aramaic¹² had a noun דְּבַר referring to divine speech (mass noun) or a divine utterance¹³ (count noun).¹⁴ In Mishnaic Hebrew, this noun

of these are simply variants of מִמְרָא דִי (e.g., Ex 19:20 'וּקְרָא דְבִרְיָה דִי' 'the word of the Lord called') and have no relevance to the biblical form.

⁹ W. Rudolph, *Jeremia* (Tübingen 1968), 39.

¹⁰ Holladay, 187.

¹¹ See W. Bacher, *Die Bibelexegetische Terminologie der Tannaiten* (Leipzig 1899), 19-20 (reprinted as part I of *Die Exegetische Terminologie der Jüdischen Traditionsliteratur* [Hildesheim 1965]); H. Yalon, "Ašeret haddibberot", *inyene Lašon* (1941-42), 46-48 (reprinted in *Bulletin of Hebrew Language Studies* [ed. H. Yalon] [Jerusalem 1963]); id., *Pirke Lašon* [Jerusalem 1971], 460-462; N. Berggrün, "Ašeret haddibberot", *Hašofeh* (Av 3, 1941-42); id., 'Lešon haddibbur hayehudit baggolah kemaqor leḥeḳer ha'ivrit', *Lešonenu* 34 (1969-70), 165-166; E. Y. Kutscher, 'Mittelhebräisch und jüdisch Aramäisch im neuen Köhler-Baumgartner', *Hebräische Wortforschung* (Baumgartner Festschrift), *VTSup* 16 (1967), 164-165; M. Greenberg, 'Masoret 'ašeret haddibberot bir'i habbiḳqoret', in *The Ten Commandments as Reflected in Tradition and Literature Throughout the Ages* (ed. B.-Z. Segal) (Jerusalem 1985), 67-68, fn. 2; and the many works cited by I. Eldar (Adler), *Masoret haḳḳeri'ah haḳkedam-ʾaškenazit*, 2 (Jerusalem 1979), 235-236. The connection between the MH form and our verse was explicitly noted already by Hillel ben Eliakim (c. 12th century) in his commentary to the Sifra (*Nedava* 2, 1 = Lev 1:1; *Šerašim* 11, 1 = Lev 12:2); see *Torat kohanim 'im peruš Hillel ben Eliakim* (ed. Sh. Koleditzky) (Jerusalem 1960-61), I, 1 & 179. Greenberg goes a step further, contending that דְּבַר is the verbal noun of the MH verb וַדְּבַר/וַדְּבַר, which is also restricted to divine speech; cf. also the discussion of the form מְדְבַר (Nu 7:89, Ez 2:2, 43:6) in his *Ezekiel, 1-20*, (*The Anchor Bible*, vol. 22; Garden City, 1983), 62. His contention is strengthened by the collocation of the verbal noun with the verb in the Mekhilta to Ex 12:2 וַדְּבַר מִשָּׁה 'all the Words which He spoke with Moses.'

¹² The earliest occurrence seems to be דְּבִינָא in Targum Jonathan to Ez 1:25; for the later occurrences, see M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (Ramat-Gan, 1990), 138 and the works cited there. The form exhibits a phonological anomaly – an unreduced, etymologically short vowel in an open unstressed syllable – which shows it to be a loanword, undoubtedly from Hebrew.

¹³ More specifically, a divine utterance in the Torah introduced by the verb וַדְּבַר, in contrast, at least in the Sifra, with a divine utterance introduced by the verb וַיֹּאמֶר, referred to as an אַמְרָה.

¹⁴ The plural in Mishnaic Hebrew is דְּבָרוֹת, which, as noted by Yalon ("Ašeret haddibberot", 47), is on the pattern of כְּסָאוֹת (< כְּסָאוֹת*, with degemination of the sibilant as in יִסְעוּ < יִסְעוּ* and יִשְׂאוּ < יִשְׂאוּ*). The

(also spelled **דְּבִיר** and **דִּיבֵר**) contrasted with the noun **דְּבוּר**. The precise nature of the contrast is best seen in the 9th-10th century Vatican manuscript of the Sifra with Babylonian vocalization (Codex Assemani LXVI).¹⁵ Almost all of the relevant material is found in the section of the manuscript labelled 10 by G. Haneman.¹⁶ Alongside 63 examples¹⁷ of singular **דְּבִיר/דִּיבֵר/דְּבִיר**¹⁸ and 24 examples of plural **דִּיבְרוֹת/דְּבָרוֹת**, all referring to divine speech/utterances, that section of the manuscript contains two examples of **דִּיבוּר**, both referring to human speech/utterances.¹⁹

Thus, Mishnaic Hebrew had a sharp distinction between **דְּבִיר** and **דְּבוּר**, the former belonging exclusively to the divine realm and the latter (in the usage of the Sifra, at least), exclusively to the human realm. The fact that the two terms are complementary²⁰ has not been noted by modern scholars, because it has been obscured by scribal tampering. In most manuscripts and printed editions of Rabbinic texts, many

plural in Galilean Aramaic is **דְּבִינְיָה** (see Klein, *Genizah*, vol. 1, 257, lines 14, 16) with unreduced *šere* (see fn. 12, above).

¹⁵ All references are to the facsimile edition by Louis Finkelstein, *Sifra or Torat Kobanim according to Codex Assemani LXVI* (New York 1956).

¹⁶ 'Lemasoret hakketiv šel ketav-yad hassifra' hamenukḳad (ketav-yad romi 66)', in *Henoch Yalon Memorial Volume* (eds. E. Y. Kutscher, S. Lieberman, and M. Z. Kaddari) (Jerusalem 1974), 84-98 (reprinted in *Koveš ma'amarim bilḥon haḳzal*, II [ed. M. Bar-Asher] [Jerusalem 1979-80], 15-29).

¹⁷ All of the statistics given here are based on the data in *Materials*, 6497-6499, collated with the facsimile of the manuscript.

¹⁸ Note that the *verb* is vocalized **דְּבִיר**, as expected in the Babylonian tradition.

¹⁹ The first occurrence (202, last two lines) refers to Moses' command to Aaron and his sons in Lev 10:12 and to the people's complaint to God and Moses in Nu 21:5. The second occurrence (204, first two lines) refers to Lev 11:2 (not 11:1!), according to which Moses and Aaron are to speak to the Israelites about the dietary laws. The section labeled 20 by Haneman, and which apparently has a different Vorlage, has a third occurrence of **דִּיבוּר** (p. 337, line 3), referring to the divine utterance recorded in Lev 10:8 ff. This occurrence cannot be original since the same divine utterance is referred to three lines earlier as one of two **דְּבָרוֹת**. It is perhaps not a coincidence that this confusion occurs at the precise place where the Sifra is attempting to prove that Lev 10:8 is not to be taken to mean that God spoke to Aaron directly.

²⁰ I.e., that the semantic relationship between them is one of *incompatibility*.

instances of דִּבָּר have been 'corrected' to דִּבּוּר.²¹ Perhaps the most egregious example of this tampering comes in the well known Talmudic dictum (PT Megilla 71b) about the virtues of specific languages: Greek is good for singing, Latin for warfare, Aramaic for lamentation, and Hebrew for דִּבּוּר – generally taken to mean 'speaking' but almost certainly דִּבָּר 'divine speech, revelation' in the original.²²

Armed with the knowledge that דִּבָּר refers exclusively to *divine* speech, we may now turn to the LXX's rendering λόγος κυρίου 'word of the Lord'. It is tempting to account for this rendering on the assumption (1) that the Greek translators had the form דִּבָּר in their reading tradition of 5:13 and that they knew its meaning;²³ but it is also possible (2) that they read הַדִּבָּר and added the modifier κυρίου based solely on the context²⁴ or (3) that their Vorlage had 'דִּבָּר'.²⁵

Most of the evidence bearing on this problem from else-

²¹ Cf. already Bacher, 19, fn. 4: 'Es scheint, dass wo in unseren tannaitischen Texten דִּבּוּר steht, ursprünglich דִּבָּר gemeint war...' This widespread 'correction' has misled many Hebraists. In *Sefer hattišbi*, s.v. דִּבּוּר, E. Levita writes: 'The Sages of blessed memory called the word of the Holy One Blessed be He just plain דִּבּוּר... It is with the definite article that we find this, e.g., על פי הַדִּבּוּר 'at the behest of the word' and היה הַדִּבּוּר סֵרוּשׁ הַיָּמִנָּה 'the Word was separated from him' and many others. And דִּבּוּר in the plural is דִּבּוּרִים, but the ten commandments on the tablets they called הַדִּבְרוֹת.' Similarly, Rabin claims that '(dibbur) may mean divine pronouncements' in PT Megilla 71b; see 'Hebrew and Aramaic in the First Century', in S. Safrai and M. Stern, eds., *The Jewish People in the First Century*, II, Philadelphia, 1976, 1019, fn. 3. And in a recent article ('Šinnuy haššem šel "עֲשֵׂרֵת הַדְּבָרִים"', *Beth Mikra*, 27 [1981-82], 20), M. Gruber writes, 'In place of דִּבָּר, we frequently find in Rabbinic literature a synonym, namely דִּבּוּר.' One scholar, writing at about the same time as Yalon and Berggrün, even denied the validity of the well-attested MH vocalization דִּבְרוֹת, on the grounds that the singular form דִּבָּר presupposed by plural דִּבְרוֹת is rare in BH and (allegedly) non-existent in MH; see M. N. Zobel, "Al niḵḵud "עֲשֵׂרֵת הַדְּבָרִים"', *Sinai* 9 (1940-42), 378. (I am indebted to E. Halivni for this reference).

²² This interpretation is a slight modification of a suggestion by Rabin; see the preceding footnote.

²³ The connection between the post-biblical meaning of דִּבָּר and the Greek rendering of it was also noted by Greenberg, 'Masoret', 67, fn. 2 and apparently by Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1, 187, as well.

²⁴ This is apparently the position of Thompson in the comment cited above p. 11.

²⁵ This is one of the possibilities mentioned by R. Althann, *A Philological Analysis of Jeremiah 4-6 in the Light of Northwest Semitic* (Rome 1983), 151.

where in Jeremiah is inconclusive. No support for hypothesis 2 is provided by the correspondence between MT **הַדְבָר (הוּא)** and LXX $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma \kappa\upsilon\rho\iota\omicron\upsilon$ in Jer. 28(35):7 and 38(45):27,²⁶ since it is universally agreed that the LXX of Jer. 29-52 is quite different from the LXX of Jer. 1-28.²⁷ More promising evidence for that hypothesis can be adduced from Jer. 1:1, where the potentially misleading **דְבָרֵי יִרְמְיָהוּ** 'the words of Jeremiah' is corrected in the LXX to $\tau\acute{o} \rho\acute{\eta}\mu\alpha \tau\omicron\upsilon \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon \delta\ \acute{\epsilon}\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\tau\omicron \acute{\epsilon}\pi\iota$ 'Ieremían' 'the word of God which came to Jeremiah'.²⁸ But it is not impossible that this correction of the verse was made already in the translator's Vorlage, and in any case Jer. 1:1 is not completely comparable to 5:13. The closest parallels to 5:13 provide evidence against hypothesis 2. In 18:18 (**לֹא־תֵאבֹד תוֹרָה מִכֶּהֱן וְעֵצָה מִחֲכָם וְדָבָר מִנְבִיאֵי הַדְבָר**) and 25:1 (**הַדְבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר הָיָה עַל יִרְמְיָהוּ**), the LXX has (δ) $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ for MT **הַדְבָר**, with no added $\kappa\upsilon\rho\iota\omicron\upsilon$.²⁹ Thus, the evidence bearing on hypothesis 2 is quite mixed.

Hypothesis 3 is supported by the absence of the definite article with $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma \kappa\upsilon\rho\iota\omicron\upsilon$ in 5:13, contrary to the Masoretic text and Greek usage. There are, of course, dozens of occurrences of $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma \kappa\upsilon\rho\iota\omicron\upsilon$ without the article in the LXX of Jeremiah, but most of them correspond to MT **דְבָר י'**, which likewise has no article.³⁰ In those cases, the omission of the required Greek article is simply a matter of fidelity to a Hebrew Vorlage identical to MT;³¹ in 5:13, the 'fidelity' explanation works only if the Vorlage was *different* from MT. Nevertheless, this argument is not conclusive. Despite the unanimity of the manuscript tradition, it is not entirely certain that the omission

²⁶ Of the 48 instances of $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma \kappa\upsilon\rho\iota\omicron\upsilon$ in the Greek version of Jeremiah, 42 correspond to MT **דְבָר י'**. The six exceptions are in 5:13, 10:1, 23:17, 28(35):7, 36(43):1, and 38(45):27. In 36(43):1, $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma \kappa\upsilon\rho\iota\omicron\upsilon$ corresponds to MT **דְבָר הוּא...מֵאֵת י'**; in 10:1, $\tau\omicron\nu \lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\nu \kappa\upsilon\rho\iota\omicron\upsilon \delta\nu \acute{\epsilon}\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}\lambda\eta\sigma\epsilon\nu$ corresponds to MT **דְבָר אֲשֶׁר דְבָר י'**. These and 28(35):1 are too different from 5:13 to have any relevance.

²⁷ See E. Tov, *The Septuagint Translation of Jeremiah and Baruch* (Missoula, 1976).

²⁸ Cf. Is 1:1, where **וְחִי אֱלֹהֵי אֱלִי יְשַׁעִיו** is rendered *וְחִי אֱלֹהֵי אֱלִי יְשַׁעִיהוּ* 'the revelation of God to Isaiah', in Saadia Gaon's Arabic translation.

²⁹ A third parallel, in 44(51):1 (**הַדְבָר אֲשֶׁר הָיָה אֵל יִרְמְיָהוּ**), has no value since it comes from a different section of the translation (Jer b').

³⁰ Indeed, it appears that in the original text virtually all examples of $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma \kappa\upsilon\rho\iota\omicron\upsilon$ lacked the article; see J. Ziegler, *Beiträge zur Ieremias-Septuaginta* (Göttingen 1958), 135.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 167-169.

of the article in 5:13 is to be attributed to the translators.³² It is possible that the translators did use the article with *λόγος κυρίου* in 5:13 but that an early copyist deleted it in order to harmonize that occurrence of the phrase with all of the others in the book.³³

The evidence from Jerome is less problematic; it seems to suggest that he had the vocalization *דִּבְרֵי* in 5:13.³⁴ In the Vulgate to that verse, he renders *דִּבְרֵי*³⁵ with Latin *responsum* 'oracular reply'³⁶ instead of the usual *uerbum* or *sermo*.³⁷ This rendering is unique, and may well reflect a unique vocalization.³⁸

What are we to make of this vocalization? Why does it appear in our verse and only in our verse? These questions, I submit, cannot be answered without a clear understanding of the nature of Mishnaic Hebrew, in which, as we have seen, *דִּבְרֵי* is frequently attested.

It is generally accepted today that Mishnaic Hebrew was the literary form of a natural, indeed colloquial, idiom still spoken in the first two centuries CE.³⁹ It is also generally accepted that the ancestor of Mishnaic Hebrew, an older vernacular which we may call pre-Mishnaic Hebrew, has left its imprint on

³² The article is absent in all MSS, including the Chester Beatty Papyrus (third century CE); see *Septuaginta*, XV (ed. J. Ziegler) (Göttingen 1957), 173.

³³ See fn. 30, above.

³⁴ So P. Volz, *Studien zum Text des Jeremia* (Leipzig 1920), 37.

³⁵ According to Prof. D. McCarthy (personal communication), the Vulgate is not based directly on any Hebrew Vorlage but rather on a Greek translation thereof. If so, the conclusions drawn here about the vocalization of *דִּבְרֵי* in Jerome's time actually pertain to an earlier period.

³⁶ Cf. his commentary: *responsum, hoc est oraculum; Corpus Christianorum*, LXXIV (*S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Opera*, I, 3), 56. I am indebted to Prof. D. Berger for his help in translating the rest of Jerome's comment to this verse.

³⁷ In his commentary (loc. cit.), he gives *sermo* as an alternative rendering. This alternative does not provide evidence for any special vocalization of *דִּבְרֵי* in 5:13, since the Vulgate has a number of examples of this rendering in Jeremiah (e.g., 13:3, 20:8, 22:29, 39:15, 43:8, and, most significant, 18:18).

³⁸ According to B. Fischer, *Novae Concordantiae Bibliorum Sacrorum Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem Critice Editam* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1977), 4445, the word *responsum* occurs only two times in Jerome's translation of the Hebrew Bible. The other occurrence is in Mi 3:7, where it renders *תַּעֲנֵה* 'answer (from God).'

³⁹ See Appendix, below.

the Bible, but there is no agreement on the extent of that influence.⁴⁰ At one end of the spectrum are those scholars who find pre-Mishnaic Hebrew lexical items and/or grammatical features in virtually all books of the Bible (Bendavid,⁴¹ Rendsburg⁴²); at the other end are those scholars who find no clear traces of such influence outside of Esther and Ecclesiastes (Rabin⁴³). The regnant view today falls somewhere between these two extremes.

The pre-Mishnaic vernacular has left unmistakable traces in Jeremiah. A list of such traces has been compiled by Bar-Asher.⁴⁴ It includes the form ירושלים (spelled with *yod*) in 26:18, the *nomen agentis pā'ól* pattern (בְּנוֹדָה, עֲשׂוּק) and theophoric names ending in *-yb* rather than *-ybw* (חַנְיָה, יְרַאִיָּה), נְדַלְיָה, נְרִיָּה, מַלְכִיָּה, מַעֲשִׂיָּה, צְדָקְיָה, שְׁפַטִּיָּה, הַשְּׁעִיָּה, יֶאֱזִיָּה, נְתַנְיָה, צַפְנִיָּה.⁴⁵ The most significant item on the list, discussed already

⁴⁰ D. Talshir ('Ma'amadah šel ha'ivrit hammiḳra'it hamme'uḥeret ben lešon hammiḳra' liššon ḥaxamim', *Mehqarim beššon* 2-3 [1987], 161-172) has compiled a list of Late Biblical Hebrew grammatical morphemes and phrases which distinguish it from both Standard Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew. He adduces this list as evidence against the view that LBH is nothing more than an amalgam of SBH (the old literary language) and MH (the spoken language), but it has always been obvious that the colloquial Hebrew of the Persian period was not *identical* to MH, and careful scholars have made that clear. Segal refers to 'the colloquial Hebrew of Biblical times, which was the ancestor of MH' (*A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* [Oxford 1927], 11). He describes MH as 'a purely colloquial, one might say, a vulgar idiom, directly descended from an older colloquial or vulgar idiom' (loc. cit.). Similarly, Rabin refers to 'an older form of Mishnaic Hebrew' ('Historical Background', 152). The real importance of Talshir's list, if we omit some of the dubious items, is as a starting point for research into the difference between the vernacular of Biblical times (pre-Mishnaic Hebrew) and MH.

⁴¹ *Lešon miḳra' ulšon ḥaxamin*, (Tel-Aviv 1967), 14-15.

⁴² 'Evidence for Spoken Hebrew in Biblical Times', Ph. D. thesis (NYU, 1980), 21, 285 ff.

⁴³ 'The Historical Background of Qumran Hebrew', in *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, IV (*Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls*) (Ch. Rabin and Y. Yadin, eds.) (Jerusalem 1958), 151-153.

⁴⁴ 'Aḥdutah hahistorit šel hallašon ha'ivrit umehqar lešon ḥaxamim', *Mehqarim beššon* I (1985), 93-94.

⁴⁵ In a careful study ('A chapter in the History of Israelite Personal Names', *BAJOR* 250 [1983], 1-16), Z. Zevit has shown that the abbreviated theophoric ending *-yb* occurs frequently not only in Jeremiah but also in Samuel, Kings and other pre-exilic Biblical sources, as well as in pre-exilic inscriptions. J. Tigay, however, notes (following Y. Shiloh) that 'the spelling *-yb* occurs almost exclusively in seal inscriptions' and, with one

by Segal,⁴⁶ is the pronominal form אנו 'we',⁴⁷ which appears as a *ketiv*⁴⁸ in 42:6. There is no doubt that דבר belongs on this list, as well.

We can now return to the questions posed earlier. How are we to view the occurrence of the form דבר in Jer 5:13? Is it original or secondary? Is it fortuitous or intentional?

Many scholars will no doubt be tempted to dismiss דבר as an anachronism, a post-biblical form which entered the oral tradition at a late date: some will view it as having crept into the oral tradition by accident; others will view it as having been deliberately grafted on to the consonantal text in order to mark דבר as divine in a context where the Lord is not mentioned. Both of these views are problematic, inasmuch as they fail to account for the absence of the form elsewhere in the

exception, 'always ... at the ends of lines, where space is minimal', and he argues that 'if the pronunciation *yâ* existed in the pre-exilic period, one would expect it to appear with greater frequency in texts where space was not restricted, and not almost exclusively on seals' (*You Shall Have No Other Gods* [Atlanta 1986], 47, fn. 1). In my view, Tigay's observation does not prove that *-yb* was not read *yâ* but only that scribes considered the form vulgar and were reluctant to use it unless forced to do so by lack of space. An instructive parallel is provided by a long (27-line) and relatively early Syriac mosaic inscription written entirely in the old Estrangela script except for a few narrow cursive letter-forms at the end (R. C. Steiner, 'A Syriac Church Inscription from 504 CE', *JSS* 35 [1990], 100-104). The restriction of these highly developed letter-forms to the end of the inscription, where the crowding shows that the scribe had run out of room, proves nothing more than that the scribe considered them vulgar and would not have used them had he not been forced to conserve space.

⁴⁶ 'Mišnaic Hebrew', 655-656.

⁴⁷ This form is vocalized אנו by most modern scholars on the assumption that it is derived from אנתו. However, a recently discovered Geniza fragment of Jeremiah and reliable rabbinic manuscripts with Babylonian vocalization (esp. Codex Assemani 66) coupled with the more attractive etymology supplied by Segal (*loc. cit.*) show that the traditional Ashkenazic vocalization אנו is correct; cf. E. Porath, *Mishnaic Hebrew* (Jerusalem 1938), 143; I. Yeivin, *Masoret hallašon ha'ivrit hammištaškefet bannikkud habbavli* (Jerusalem 1985), 1104; id., 'Zuṭot lešoniyot bekiṭ'e haggenizah', *Te'uda I (Cairo Geniza Studies)* (ed. M. A. Freidman) (Tel-Aviv 1980), 179-180. (I am indebted to J. Blau for the last reference).

It should be noted that the vocalizations אנו and אנו in MS de Rossi 138 and other reliable rabbinic manuscripts with Palestinian-Tiberian vocalization are irrelevant here, since such manuscripts do not distinguish אנו and אנו; G. Haneman, *Torat haššurot šel lešon hammišnah* (Tel-Aviv 1980), 460.

⁴⁸ In the 'eastern' (*madinba'e*) reading tradition, according to a Masoretic list, the word is read as written; Yeivin, 'Zuṭot', 179-80.

Bible. The latter view is incapable of explaining the Masoretes' failure to employ the same device in Jer. 18:18, 25:1, 44:1, and other contexts where there is no explicit mention of the Lord. The former view has to contend with a much larger number of potential occurrences of דָּבָר, since an accidental change would have been at least as likely to occur in, say, הדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר הִיָּה אֵל יִרְמִיָּהוּ מֵאֵת י' (Jer. 7:1, 11:1, 18:1, 21:1, 30:1, 32:1, 34:1,8, 35:1, 40:1) as in הדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר הִיָּה אֵל יִרְמִיָּהוּ (Jer. 44:1).

In my view, the question of why a word denoting one of the central concepts of biblical theology – the word of the Lord – is a *hapax* in biblical literature can be convincingly answered only on the assumption that it is a colloquialism used intentionally for stylistic effect,⁴⁹ comparable to the deliberate Aramaisms which have been noted in biblical stories about Arameans and in dialogue involving them.⁵⁰ The crude accusation of 5:13, ending apparently in an imprecation, is a context which clearly demands colloquial usage. In the very next verse, however, the response to the accusation uses the form דָּבָר to

⁴⁹ The same goes for אָנֹכִי used by the people in Jer. 42:6. Cf. Segal's claim that 'the colloquial and popular character of MH grammar is so strongly pronounced that it helps us in many cases to distinguish in BH colloquial or dialectal forms and phrases from the literary and polite ones, a fact which, if elaborated with proper care and discrimination, may have an important bearing upon many problems in Biblical criticism' (Segal, 'Mishnaic Hebrew', 734). Several recent attempts to isolate colloquial usage in the Bible have paid no attention to Mishnaic Hebrew: two articles entitled 'Colloquialisms in the Old Testament' – one by G. R. Driver in *Mélanges Marcel Cohen* (ed. David Cohen) (The Hague 1970), 232-239 and the other by G. Abramson in *Semitics*, 2 (1971-72), 1-16 – and J. MacDonald, 'Some Distinctive Aspects of Israelite Spoken Hebrew', *BiOr* 32 (1975), 162-175. The only exceptions that I know of are B. A. Levine, 'Perašim betoledot ha'ivrit hamedubberet', *Eretz Israel* 14 (1978), 155-160, Rendsburg, 'Spoken Hebrew', and a hesitant proposal by A. Bendavid in *Lešon mišra' ulšon hašamim*, 14-15. Cf. also S. Gevartz, 'Phoenician *wšbrt mlšm* and Job 33:23', *Maarav* 5-6 (1990), 157.

⁵⁰ S. A. Kaufman, 'The Classification of the North West Semitic Dialects of the Biblical Period and Some Implications Thereof', in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies; Panel Sessions: Hebrew and Aramaic* (ed. M. Bar-Asher) (Jerusalem 1988), 55 (I am indebted to G. Rendsburg for this reference); J. C. Greenfield, 'Aramaic Studies and the Bible', in *Congress Volume, Vienna 1980* (Leiden 1981), 129-131; A. Hurvitz, 'The Chronological Significance of "Aramaisms" in Biblical Hebrew', *IEJ* 18 (1968), 236-237 and the works by Baumgartner and Kutscher cited there in fn. 14.

refer to the word of the Lord. Thus, we have a shift from **הַדְבָר** 'the Word (... in them)' in 5:13 to standard biblical Hebrew **דְבַרִי** 'My word (which is in your mouth)'⁵¹ in 5:14. This lexical shift seems to correspond to a shift in style, the form **דְבַר** being too colloquial for use by the Lord.

If that is the case, the rarity of **דְבַר** in the Bible is hardly surprising. The word of God is usually discussed in elevated prose or poetry; there are very few places in the Bible where it is discussed in a colloquial context.

There is, therefore, every reason to view the occurrence of **דְבַר** in Jer. 5:13 as original and intentional. To insist that it is anachronistic and/or fortuitous is to ignore its distribution and to deny the artistry of the text. It is to assert either that Biblical authors did not employ the kind of stylistic cues which are the mark of effective speaking and writing today or that modern readers cannot aspire to be sensitive to them.

Appendix

The view that Mishnaic Hebrew was the literary form of a colloquial idiom still spoken in the first two centuries CE was for many years a minority view. Since the widespread acceptance which it now enjoys was won very gradually, many scholars are not fully aware of the change.⁵² It is, therefore,

⁵¹ This phrase is clearly an allusion to Jer. 1:9. The latter, in turn, together with 1:7 alludes to Deut. 18. This allusion, noted already by Sifre, Midrash Tannaim, Rashi, Kara, etc., is also recognized by modern scholars, but the extent of the allusion has not been seen, and, hence, its point has not been fully understood. Jer. 5:13-14 shows that the allusion is not limited to Deut. 18:18 but extends to vss. 20-22, as well. These allusions relate to one of the important themes of the book as a whole: who is a true prophet and who is a false prophet. It has been noted that Jeremiah himself needed divine reassurance on this point; cf. H.H. Rowley, 'The Early Prophecies of Jeremiah in Their Setting', in *A Prophet to the Nations* (L.G. Perdue and B.W. Kovacs, eds.) (Winona Lake 1984), 53; A. Hakham, 'Hamma'avak ben nevi'e 'emet linvi'e šeker', in *Iyyunim besefer yirmiyahu*, part II (B.-Z. Luria, ed.), 212-213. That is, no doubt, the reason that, in Jeremiah's case, the faded metaphor of the messenger formula was concretized and revived, turning into an elaborate ceremony of physically placing the words in his mouth. That is also the reason that the memory of that ceremony was a source of consolation and strength to Jeremiah when he was attacked later in his career (15:16). The allusion to Deut. 18, made larger than life by the commissioning ritual, is meant to underscore both the legitimacy of Jeremiah and the illegitimacy of his rivals.

⁵² A notable recent exception is G. Garbini (*Il semitico nordoccidentale*

worth listing the scholars who have adopted it (with only occasional reservations) during the past century and a half: H. Graetz,⁵³ S. D. Luzzatto,⁵⁴ I. H. Weiss,⁵⁵ A. Neubauer,⁵⁶ M. Grünbaum,⁵⁷ I. Lévi,⁵⁸ C. Levias,⁵⁹ J. D. Wijnkoop,⁶⁰ M. H. Segal,⁶¹ G. Bergsträsser,⁶² E. Ben Yehudah,⁶³ J. Klausner,⁶⁴ H. Birkeland,⁶⁵ A. Bendavid,⁶⁶ W. Chomsky,⁶⁷ J. Blau,⁶⁸ J. Canti-

[Rome 1988], 94), who refers to 'una communis opinio accettata senza discussione'.

⁵³ Review of A. Geiger, *Lehrbuch zur Sprache der Mischna*, *Literaturblatt des Orients* (1844), 825.

⁵⁴ 'Ueber die Sprache der Mischna', *Literaturblatt des Orients* (1846), 829-832, (1847), 3-4.

⁵⁵ *Mišpaṭ lešon hammišnah* (Vienna 1867), 2.

⁵⁶ 'On the Dialects Spoken in Palestine in the Time of Christ', in *Studia Biblica: Essays in Biblical Archaeology and Criticism and Kindred Subjects* (Oxford 1885), 39, 45-48.

⁵⁷ 'Ueber Schem hammephorasch', *ZDMG* 39 (1885), 592; 'Renan über die späteren Formen der hebräischen Sprache', in *Semitic Studies in Memory of Rev. Dr. Alexander Kohut* (ed. G. A. Kohut) (Berlin 1897), 232-233.

⁵⁸ *L'ecclésiastique* (Paris 1898), XXII-XXIII.

⁵⁹ 'Hebrew Language', in *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (1901-1906), 308.

⁶⁰ 'The Neo-Hebraic Language and Its Literature', *JQR* 15 (1903), 41-49.

⁶¹ 'Mišnaic Hebrew and Its Relation to Biblical Hebrew and to Aramaic', *JQR* 20 (1908), 647-737; 'Hebrew in the Period of the Second Temple', *The International Journal of Apocrypha* 23 (1910), 79-82; 'Lešon hammišnah, moša'ah, wetoledoteha', *Madda'e Hayyahadut* 1 (1925-26), 30-44.

⁶² *Hebräische Grammatik* (Leipzig 1918), 13.

⁶³ *Ad 'ematay dibberu 'ivrit* (New York 1919).

⁶⁴ 'Moša'ah šel lešon-hammišnah', in *Scripta Universitatis Atque Bibliothecae Hierosolymitanarum: Orientalia et Judaica*, 1 (Jerusalem 1923), 1-8. Klausner distinguishes between Rabbinic Hebrew and the genuine vernacular. The former is the precise, abstract vehicle for legal discussions carved out of the vernacular by the legislators and jurists of the Hasmonean period; the latter is the language of the folk-songs preserved in the Talmud.

⁶⁵ *Språk og religion hos jøder og arabere* (Oslo 1949), 24, 26-27; *The Language of Jesus* (Oslo 1954), 12-16, 18-24. Although Birkeland holds that 'already in its preliterary oral stage [Mishnaic Hebrew] was a "literary" language and, as a consequence, more or less artificial' (ibid., 20), he also believes that this literary language was created out of 'living dialects of Hebrew' (loc. cit.), much as 'Norwegian normalized "nynorsk" or "landsmål," ... is built up on the foundation of the dialects ...' (ibid., 22).

⁶⁶ *Lešon mikra' 'o lešon hašamim* (Tel-Aviv 1950-1951), 74-78, 98-125; *Lešon mikra' ulšon hašamim* (Tel-Aviv 1967), 74-80, 95-165.

⁶⁷ 'What Was the Jewish Vernacular During the Second Commonwealth?' *JQR* 42 (1951-52), 193-212.

⁶⁸ Review of A. Bendavid, *Lešon mikra' 'o lešon hašamim* in *Kiryat Sefer*

neau,⁶⁹ Sh. Morag,⁷⁰ Ch. Rabin,⁷¹ J. C. Greenfield,⁷² E. Margalio,⁷³ W. Baumgartner,⁷⁴ E. Y. Kutscher,⁷⁵ J. M. Grintz,⁷⁶ J. T. Milik,⁷⁷ H. L. Ginsberg,⁷⁸ A. Díez-Macho,⁷⁹ K. Hruby,⁸⁰ G.

29 (1952-54), 26-27; 'The Historical Periods of the Hebrew Language', in *Jewish Languages: Theme and Variations* (Proceedings of Regional Conferences of the Association for Jewish Studies Held at The University of Michigan and New York University in March-April 1975) (H. H. Paper, ed.), 4-5.

⁶⁹ 'Quelle langue parlait le peuple en Palestine au I^{er} siècle de notre ère?' *Semítica* 5 (1955), 99-101.

⁷⁰ 'Lašon begalutah uvithiyatah', *Lešonenu La'am* 67-68 (1955-56), 3-8.

⁷¹ *Qumran Studies* (Oxford 1957), 67-69; 'The Historical Background of Qumran Hebrew', in *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, IV (*Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls*) (ed. Ch. Rabin and Y. Yadin) (Jerusalem 1958), 144-161; 'Hebrew', *Current Trends in Linguistics*, 6 (*Linguistics in South West Asia and North Africa*) (The Hague 1970), 317-318, *Ikkele toledot ballašon ba'ivrit* (Jerusalem, 1971), 24-29; 'Hebrew and Aramaic in the First Century', in *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum*, Section I (*The Jewish People in the First Century*), 2 (Assen 1976), 1015, 1022-25, 1035-36; *Die Entwicklung der hebräischen Sprache* (Wiesbaden 1988), 15, 20-21.

⁷² 'Lexicographical Notes I', *HUCA* 29 (1958), 204; 'The Languages of Palestine, 200 BCE - 200 CE', in *Jewish Languages*, 143, 148-149, 153-54; (with J. Naveh) 'Hebrew and Aramaic in the Persian Period', in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, 1 (Introduction; The Persian Period) (Jerusalem 1984), 119-120.

⁷³ 'Liš'elat šefat haddibbur bizman bayit šeni uvitkufat hammišnah wehattalmud', *Lešonenu* 23 (1958-59), 49-54.

⁷⁴ *Zum Alten Testament und seiner Umwelt* (Leiden 1959), 233.

⁷⁵ *Hallašon wehareka' hallešoni šel megillat yeša'yahu baššelemah mimmegillot yam hammelaš* (Jerusalem 1959), 8, 10-11; 'Mittelhebräisch und Jüdisch-Aramäisch im neuen Köhler-Baumgartner', in *Hebräische Wortforschung* (Baumgartner Festschrift), *VTSup* 16 (1967), 158; 'Hebrew Language, Mishnaic', in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 16, 1590-1593.

⁷⁶ 'Hebrew as the Spoken and Written Language in the Last Days of the Second Temple', *JBL* 79 (1960), 32, 46-47.

⁷⁷ *Discoveries in the Judean Desert II; Les grottes de Murabba'at* (Oxford 1961), 70.

⁷⁸ 'New Light on Tannaitic Jewry and on the State of Israel of the Years 132-135 CE', *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America* 25 (1961), 138-139 (reprinted in *The Jewish Expression* [J. Goldin, ed.] [New Haven 1976], 115-116); 'The Northwest Semitic Languages', in *The World History of the Jewish People*, 1, 2 (*Patriarchs*) (Tel-Aviv 1970), 111, 116.

⁷⁹ 'La Lengua hablada por Jesucristo', *Oriens Antiquus* 2 (1963), 123-125.

⁸⁰ 'La survivance de la langue hébraïque pendant la période post-exilienne', in *Mémorial du Cinquantenaire, École des langues orientales de l'Institut catholique de Paris* (Paris 1964), 112-113.

Schramm,⁸¹ M. H. Goshen-Gottstein,⁸² J. Barr,⁸³ J. Fitzmyer,⁸⁴ E. Ullendorff,⁸⁵ A. Hurvitz,⁸⁶ J. A. Emerton,⁸⁷ C. H. Gordon,⁸⁸ B. A. Levine,⁸⁹ S. J. Lieberman,⁹⁰ M. McNamara,⁹¹ Z. Ben-Hayyim,⁹² M. Bar-Asher,⁹³ E. Qimron,⁹⁴ G. Rendsburg,⁹⁵ R. C. Steiner.⁹⁶ There is no need to rehearse here the many arguments presented by these scholars – first and foremost among them, Segal. Suffice it to say that the evidence, both internal and external, adds up to a strong case, and that the burden of proof long ago shifted to the sceptics.

Contrary to the impression given by the above-cited literature, nineteenth century scholars were not the first to suggest

⁸¹ *The Graphemes of Tiberian Hebrew* (Berkeley 1964), 65.

⁸² 'Lešon hammikra,' in *Leksikon mikra'i* (Tel-Aviv 1965), 444 (left column) and reprinted in *Hallašon ha'ivrit weballešonot haššemiyot* (Tel-Aviv 1965), 11 (left column).

⁸³ *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (Oxford 1968), 38-43; 'Which Language Did Jesus Speak? – Some Remarks of a Semitist', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 53 (1970-71), 18-21, 28; 'Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek in the Hellenistic Age', in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, 2 (*The Hellenistic Age*) (Cambridge 1989), 82-85.

⁸⁴ 'The Languages of Palestine in the First Century AD', *CBQ* 32 (1970), 530 (reprinted in *A Wandering Aramean* [Missoula, 1979], 45).

⁸⁵ 'Is Biblical Hebrew a Language?' *BSOAS* 34 (1971), 247-252, 255 (reprinted in *Is Biblical Hebrew a Language?* [Wiesbaden 1977], 9-14, 17).

⁸⁶ *Ben lašon lelašon* (Jerusalem 1972), 40-46.

⁸⁷ 'The Problem of Vernacular Hebrew in the First Century AD and the Language of Jesus', *JThS* 24 (1973), 1-17.

⁸⁸ 'Hebrew Language', in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Supplementary Volume (Nashville 1976), 392.

⁸⁹ 'Perašim betoledot ha'ivrit hamedubberet', *Eretz Israel* 14 (1978), 155-160.

⁹⁰ 'Response', in *Jewish Languages: Theme and Variations* (Cambridge, Mass. 1978), 25-26.

⁹¹ 'The Spoken Aramaic of First Century Palestine', *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* 5 (1981), 96-98.

⁹² 'Ha'aḥdut hahistorit šel hallašon ha'ivrit waḥaluḳatah litḳufot – kešad?' *Mehkarim belāšon* 1 (1985), 22.

⁹³ 'Aḥdutah hahistorit šel hallašon ha'ivrit umeḥkar lešon ḥaxamim', *Mehkarim belāšon* 1 (1985), 93-99; 'La langue de la mishna d'après les traditions des communautés juifs d'Italie', *REJ* 145 (1986), 268.

⁹⁴ *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta 1986), 117.

⁹⁵ 'Evidence for Spoken Hebrew in Biblical Times', New York University dissertation (1980): *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew*, Ann Arbor, Mich., in press (I have not seen the latter).

⁹⁶ 'Hebrew, Ancient', in *International Encyclopaedia of Linguistics*, (New York 1992), 2, 111.

that Mishnaic Hebrew was a colloquial idiom with roots in the biblical period. Already in the tenth century, Saadia Gaon⁹⁷ referred to MH as 'the idiom which the [Jewish] people received... and which they spoke with simple naturalness' (אלכלאם אלדי תלקנתה אלאמה תלקינא... וכאן קולהא לה)⁹⁸ and as 'the prosaic idiom found in the Mishnah, as widespread among its folk as the/a popular idiom' (אלכלאם אלמנת'ור אלמוג'וד פי אלמשנה אלמשהור פי מא בן אהלהא) (כאשהאר אלכלאם אלעאם)⁹⁹. He also asserted that 'the transmitters of the Mishnah and the Talmud were most proficient in the [Hebrew] language, especially since they were extremely close to the prophets' (אלנאקלן ללמשנה ואלתלמוד אבצר באללגה).

⁹⁷ Chomsky ('Jewish Vernacular', 193) erred in associating Saadia with the view that 'Hebrew ceased being a living language after the destruction of the first Temple', that 'during the Babylonian Exile... the Hebrew language had been gradually forgotten... and was displaced by Aramaic.' The passage which Chomsky cites from the Hebrew introduction to Saadia's dictionary (Saadia Gaon, *Ha'egron: Kitāb uṣūl al-ṣi'r al-ibrānī* [ed. N. Allony] [Jerusalem 1969], 158) says only that in the time of Nehemiah, the Jews began to abandon the Holy Tongue and to speak languages of the alien peoples of the Land [of Israel] (החילונו לטוש לשון הקודש ולספר בלשונות) (עמי נכרהארץ 31:16, that what he has in mind is not Aramaic but local Palestinian languages like Ashdodite, which he mentions in his next sentence. Thus, Saadia's statement is nothing more than a paraphrase of Neh. 13:24. It deals with the beginning of a long process which culminated *when the Jews were dispersed among the nations* (לא היה גי' שלא באו בו נדחינו... לשונותם למדנו). (ותלט עלנתם על-שטר אמרינו...).

The view that Chomsky ascribes to Saadia is more likely to have been that of his Karaite opponents, some of whom rejected all non-Biblical forms of Hebrew (ג'חדן בעצהם מא סמעו מן כלאם אלאמה ולם ג'דוה ס') אלכתאב; N. Allony, *Studies in Medieval Philology and Literature*, 1 (*Sa'adia's Works*) (Jerusalem 1986), 83, ll. 10-11; *ibid.*, 109). Similarly, Ibn Janah, in the introduction to the *Kitāb al-Luma'* (*Le livre des parterres fleuries* [ed. J. Derenbourg] [Paris 1886], 8, l. 27 f), discusses the rejection of the use of Mishnaic lexical items in biblical exegesis by the 'community of interpreters of God's revealed Scriptures' (אנכארהם עלינא מעשר אהל אלתססיר לכתב) – probably a reference to the Karaites, as suggested by M. Wilensky (*Sefer harikmah lerabbi Yonah ibn Janah* [Jerusalem 1964], י"ט-כ, fn. 8). According to Ibn Janah, this group attempted to discredit the linguistic competence of the Rabbis by pointing to grammatical anomalies in Mishnaic Hebrew. Ibn Janah replies that these anomalies are not mistakes but natural developments with parallels in Biblical Hebrew and Arabic.

⁹⁸ Allony, *Studies*, 41, ll. 12-13, 14-15.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, ll. 21-22.

אוסימא אד' המא אקרב אלי אלאנביא).¹⁰⁰ Accordingly, Saadia argued, it is legitimate to use Mishnaic Hebrew to shed light on Biblical Hebrew; indeed, for biblical *hapax legomena*, like the one discussed in this article, it is indispensable.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 41-42, ll. 4-6. I am indebted to J. Blau for informing me that Allony's emendation of אוסימא to ולא סימא is unnecessary in Judeo-Arabic and for answering my questions about the meaning of these passages.

¹⁰¹ Expanding the corpus of ancient Hebrew to include the Mishnah and other rabbinic sources provides new contexts from which the meaning of rare biblical words may be deduced. For the use of this method in the Middle Ages, see F. E. Greenspan, *Hapax Legomena in Biblical Hebrew* (Chico, 1984), 6, 9 and E. Z. Melamed, *Mefarṣe hammikra* (Jerusalem 1975), 420, 480, 618-619. For its use in contemporary lexicography, see Kutscher, 'Mittelhebräisch'. Cf. also J. Barr, 'Hebrew Lexicography', *Studies on Semitic Lexicography* (ed. P. Fronzaroli) (Florence 1973), 111-112. Fine examples of what can still be achieved in this area are S. Lieberman, 'Laḥpor perot wela'atalefim', *Leṣonenu* 29 (1964-65), 132-135 and Greenfield, 'Lexicographical Notes', 203-212.