

**Structure, setting and translation of Jeremiah 23:9-40 :  
A comparison and synthesis of the views of  
W L Holladay (1986), W McKane (1986) and R P Carroll (1986)**

**by**

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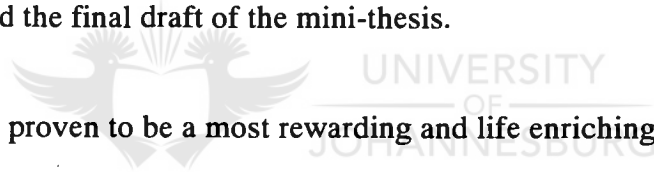
To God who gave me life and the ability and opportunity to complete this study, I give honour and thanks.

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## SUMMARY

Jeremiah 23:9-40 is characterized in the Hebrew Bible as “concerning the prophets” and can be divided into seven (or six) relatively independent oracles.

In the mini-dissertation the said oracles are studied with regard to translation, form and structure as well as setting. For this purpose three commentaries on the book of Jeremiah which appeared in 1986 are compared. The respective authors are WL Holladay, W McKane and RP Carroll. Holladay’s endeavour is used as basic work. His translation of Jeremiah 23:9-40 is provided and alternative renderings of Carroll and McKane are selected. A comparable procedure is followed with regard to structure and form, and setting.

Holladay and McKane offer individual translations while Carroll utilizes the Revised Standard Version (*RSV*), adding variant readings (for example from *NEB* and *JPSB*). The three English renderings of the Hebrew text represent three points of departure with regard to translation techniques. Carroll (*RSV*) gives a rather literal version and McKane a more dynamic one. Holladay tries to keep close to the Hebrew text and syntax (attempting to translate identical words and phrases in a consistent way), but nevertheless attempts to render the contextual function of the Hebrew passages in an ingenious way. The evidence provided by 23:9-40 also suggests that he occasionally tends to resort to more drastic textual emendations than Carroll or McKane.

Seen from a general perspective, the three translations reflect subtle aspects regarding translation techniques. Renderings differ, for example, depending upon whether the translator focuses on the speaker or the addressee[s]. They also show the impact of grammatical interpretation, for example choosing to read a conjunction as consecutive (ie conversive) rather than copulative.

When analysing the form and structure of the individual oracles and their settings, the view of Holladay is annotated with those of Carroll and McKane. Subsequently the premise of each of the authors regarding the composition of the book of Jeremiah is summarized and compared with their respective statements regarding the various extracts. In the concluding discussion remarks regarding form and structure, and setting are integrated.

Regarding form and structure as separate items, it is clear that Holladay in particular presents a systematic scrutinizing of syntax. He often labels clauses with characterizations of the intention of

the speaker such as “paranetic appeal” (verse 16) or “complaint statement” (verse 25). As far as setting is concerned Holladay dates all the oracles (except 23:33-40) round about 601/600 BC, during a time of conflict of the prophet Jeremiah with the false prophets.

McKane and Carroll both focus on the editorial process. Carroll finds “interests” of consecutive generations reflected in text. McKane is hesitant to pinpoint specific circumstances which influenced the editing of the text. He does suggest a formal procedure by means of which ancient material became enlarged, but nevertheless refers to the “desultory” nature of the process. Both he and Carroll regard the fifth century as the approximate time of final composition of the book of Jeremiah.

Compared with the study of Rodd (1986/7) the mini-dissertation substantiates more clearly and elaborately the contributions of the individual authors in general and specifically as regards 23:9-40. Focusing on the aspects of translation and alternative renderings, form and structure, and setting also provides perspectives from different angles. It also shows how different points of departure determine (to a greater or lesser extent) the direction of a commentary.





# CHAPTER 1

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years several South African scholars have published their research on the book of Jeremiah. The *Index to South African Periodicals* does not, however, mention any article specifically focusing upon Jeremiah 23: 9-40.

This mini-thesis therefore fills a certain gap in this regard. It is done in a specific way, namely by scrutinizing the 1986-endeavour of Holladay in the light of the attempts of R P Carroll and W McKane which were published in the same year. Their analyses are also updated by the addition of insights gained from more current literature.

For the sake of contextualizing the present research, some general comments are made (chapter 2). In the first place relevant biographical detail regarding the life of Jeremiah is provided (chapter 2.1). Attention is also given to the compilation of the book of Jeremiah in order to determine the literary setting of 23:9-40 (2.2). A discussion of the contents of the selected portion of Jeremiah is subsequently given (2.2). A general review of the three commentaries as well as the perspective and aim of the mini-thesis comes next (2.3). An analysis of the content of Jeremiah 23:9-40 (2.4) pays particular attention to statements regarding the prophets. The third chapter contains detailed examinations of the various subdivisions of 23:9-40 (cf 3.1.-3.7).

Translations by Holladay are used as basis and alternative renderings are listed. They are followed by observations regarding the structure and form, as well as setting and summarizing remarks.

Chapter 4 provides a comparison and synthesis of the foregoing investigations.

# CHAPTER 2



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## 2. CONTEXT

### 2.1 Biographical detail

According to Curt Kuhl (1960:105) Jeremiah was born in the reign of Manasseh (c. 650 BC). When still a young man (ca 626 BC) he had a visionary experience. He became convinced of an enemy from the North (1 14-15). The first phase of his activity was in the reign of Josiah, during whose kingship the finding of the scroll in the temple took place. Jeremiah warned against a popular spirit of ease and false security. When Josiah died in 609 BC a new dispensation began for Judah and Jeremiah. During this second phase he soon came into opposition with Jehoiakim. He confronted the King (22:13-17) and also came into open conflict with civil authorities. His life was in constant danger. The third phase of Jeremiah's activity commenced with the year 598 BC when Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem and made Mattaniah (renamed Zedekiah), the son of Josiah, king. Contrary to the other prophets, Jeremiah advised the people to console themselves with the reign of the Babylonians. Once again he was opposed and detained by the anti-Babylonian party. This lasted till the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC. He was not exiled but stayed in his native land and joined the newly appointed governor Gedaliah at Mizpah. He was forced, however, to flee to Egypt by the latter's murderer, Ishmael. Jeremiah's career in Egypt is shrouded in obscurity. Nothing more than legends remain. Jeremiah therefore resembles Moses in certain aspects (Holladay 1966, Seite 1989).

Thus ended his career where his predecessor started his own.

### 2.2 Compilation of the book

Georg Fohrer (*Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1968, based upon Ernst Sellin's *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 1910 ff), identified an original scroll, as augmented with lamentation and confessions, and enlarged with a series of sayings 'concerning the royal house of Judah' as well as a collection with the title 'concerning the prophets' (23:9-40). To this is also added a minor collection of optimistic utterances, and oracles against foreign nations.

The compilation of the book Jeremiah was very likely influenced by the Deuteronomistic school which, according to Dutcher-Walls (1991), comprised a coalition of elite professional groups. Form and

content were borrowed from the preaching of earlier prophets. It is often difficult to discern what is original, and perhaps redacted by the author himself (cf Paterson 1985) and that which was the work of later hands. In chapter 23 verses 9-12, 13-15, 16-17, 21-22 and 25-32 may possibly derive from Jeremiah. The present composition of the book renders the material according to the following themes:

- 1 - 25: Threats against Judah and Jerusalem
- 26- 35: Promises for Israel and Judah
- 36-45: Major portion of the Baruch document
- 46-51: Threats against foreign nations
- 52: Appendix.

Scholars are of course, not unanimous regarding the structure of the book. Rafe (1989:395), for example, argues in favour of the following structure : 1-24, 25-36, 37-45, 46-51 and 52. Keil (1968:21-25) suggests the arrangement: 1, 2-20, 21-33, 34-45, 46-51, 52.

With regard to the corpus 1-25 (to which 23:9-40 belongs) Arthur Weiser (1961) expresses the opinion that these prophetic oracles were apparently set out according to the three historical periods of Jeremiah's ministry:

- 1-6: time of Josiah
- 7-20: mainly out of the time of Jehoiakim
- 21-25: mostly out of the time of Zedekiah.

Compared with the Masoretic text (MT) of the Hebrew version of Jeremiah the Septuagint (LXX) has a shorter text. The latter is usually regarded as the earlier version. This supposition, however, is challenged by scholars like Van der Kooij (1994) with regard to certain parts of Jeremiah (eg 27:5-10).

### 2.3 A general review of the three commentaries

In *The Expository Times* 98 (1986-1987) 171-175 a comparative review is given by C. S. Rodd of the following Jeremiah commentaries:

Carroll, R P                      1986: London: SCM,

Holladay, W L            1986: Philadelphia: Fortress, and  
 McKane, W                1986: Edinburgh: T T Clark.

Carroll (as quoted by Rodd) points out that the portrait of Jeremiah was created in the editorial process and that the historical man can no longer be discerned. The main focus, according to him, must be on the developing traditions and their different interests. [This approach has been criticized by Le Roux (1994), but endorsed as “eine instruktive Einfuhrung” by Wanke (1990).]

McKane (as interpreted by Rodd) also agrees that the key to the interpretation of the book lies in an analysis of the redactional history. Firm evidence regarding the context of prophecies is slight, and some passages are best explained as later reflections on Jeremiah’s career rather than as words of Jeremiah himself. [His perspective upon the book of Jeremiah is typified by McK himself as a “rolling corpus” (Overholt 1988).] By contrast Holladay (in the footsteps of J Bright and J Thompson, cf Carroll 1996) believes that most of the material in the book can be set within the life of the historical prophet.

Rodd illustrates the different methods and interpretations of the three commentators by the way they deal with three key passages, namely 7:1-15, the confessions (11:8-12:6, 15:10-21, 17:12-18, and 20:7-18), and the prophecies ‘concerning the prophets’ in 23:9-40. The last passage, according to him, deals with the problem of inspiration. A careful examination of their respective endeavours, however, leads the reviewer (Rodd) to comment:

Sadly, none of the commentaries succeeds in bringing this issue to life.

- \* McKane’s concentration on individual words and phrases and the rendering of versions obscures the general issues, and his final paragraphs in each section hardly redeem this.
- \* Carroll subjects the logic of the arguments presented by the writers (traditionalists in the post-exilic period, not Jeremiah himself) to a sharp scrutiny and concludes that it does not stand up. He finds in the attitude to prophesy as a whole ideas from the post-exilic period.
- \* Holladay regards vv 9-32 as by Jeremiah and dates them to 600 BC. According to him only verses 34-40 belong to the middle of the fifth century.

The mini-dissertation carefully compares and re-evaluates the contributions of the three authors with regard to Jeremiah 23:9-40, focusing on the words and phrases **where they differ**. Using the translation of Holladay as point of departure, a study is first of all made of the variants offered by the commentaries. Attention is subsequently paid to form and structure, setting and lastly a general discussion is given at the end of each pericope. In this way a variety of insights come to the fore, but simultaneously a ‘fourth commentary’ is added through a synthesis of the individual attempts of the three scholars. In the mini-dissertation no deliberate attempt (as had been advocated by Fohrer as early as 1962) has been made to analyse or merge the research methodologies of the present three (1986) interpretative studies.

## 2.4 Content analysis of Jeremiah 23:9-40

Jeremiah 23:9-40 represents a compilation which probably circulated in a semi-independent form among the oracles (Caselles 1981:35).

A foregrounded phrase “to [ie ‘concerning’] the prophets” introduces the compilation 9-40, which may be subdivided (according to Holladay 1986) into six or seven units, namely 9-12, 13-15, 16-20, 21-22 (or 16-22), 23-24, 25-32 and 33-40.

Naturally other segmentations are also possible, Honeycutt (1989) who analyses 23:9-40 under the theme of prophetic ethics, focuses on four larger units, namely 9-15, 16-22, 23-32 and 33-40.

The subject matter of 23:9-40 explicitly refers to prophets in verses 1, 15, 16, 21, 25, 26, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34 and 37.

In the short summaries below no distinction is made between pericopes which may contain prophecies “in ursprünglicher Gestalt” (eg 9-12, 13-15 and perhaps 16-32, cf Kraus 1964:24) and those which may be ascribed to a later date. All the subdivisions deal directly or indirectly with the question of true versus false prophecy. Jeremiah’s charge is directed against the specific content of his opponents’ message, rather than their office (Overholt 1967). Even though Jeremiah claims that their prophecies are untrue, he does not deny their calling themselves prophets (Oosterhoff 1994:270). Their “Heilsverkündigung” at an inopportune moment in history is attacked (Kraus 1964:110ff). From an objective point of view, however, it is difficult to apply infallible criteria to judge the trustworthiness of prophetic claims (Renner 1966). Carrol (1979: 185, 1981: 180) himself seems to be sceptical about Jeremiah’s own statement in this regard, but nevertheless lists several theological guidelines.

Using the theme of prophecy as leitmotif the contents of 23:9-40 may briefly be analysed as follows:

9-12:

In verse 11 the accusation is made that the prophets have committed sacrilege. The evil, however, which they have done will be brought upon them (12). "Their way" itself will prove to be slippery. They are not the only sinners. "Adulterers" (10) are found on national scale, and their behaviour has resulted in a curse of drought.

13-15:

The reproach of verse 11 (above) is repeated and elaborated in 15: "For from the prophets of Jerusalem sacrilege has gone out to the whole land". "Adultery" (14) is also ascribed to them. They are compared to the prophets of Samaria (13) causing the people to go astray. Their punishment will be consumed with poisonous herbs and water.

16-20:

In this pericope people are warned not to "listen to the words of the prophets". The vision(s) they intend communicating originate from their own heart (16). Rather than preaching the disastrous consequences of sin, they promise prosperity to those who scorn the word of Yahweh (17). The impression is thus wrongly created that they have stood in Yahweh's council (18). Divine response would be comparable to a whirling gale (19).

21-22:

Verses 21-22 repeat the theme of the council of Yahweh found in the preceding portion. Prophets have acted on their own authority (21) and have not (judged from the outcome) persuaded the people to abandon their evil ways (22).

23-24:

Divine speech is quoted without any direct link to the activities of the prophets. The statements, structured as rhetorical questions, use spatial terminology (eg: “Am I a God [of] near”), but may also have a temporal connotation.

25-32:

Direct speech, with Yahweh as subject, is continued. A critical approach to unidentified [false] prophets is described. Pretending or believing that they are speaking in the name of Yahweh they prophesy a lie (25), based (26) on their own deluded thinking (Bright 1965: 149). The result is that people are not reminded of God, but tend to forget his name (27). Yahweh declares himself as the opponent of these prophets (31) who base their preaching, characterized as lies and loose talk, on their own insight (32). Their lack of authority is to the detriment of the people.

The dream as medium of revelation is not directly criticized (25), although the proclaimed contents is frowned upon. Of the utmost importance is the fact that prophets should speak the truthful word of Yahweh (28), a word which has the likeness of fire and is like a sledgehammer smashing rock (29).

33-40:

In the final subdivision judgement is pronounced on the prophet, priest or layman who pronounces an oracle (*massa'*) of Yahweh (34). It is declared a taboo subject, the mentioning of which would bring about visitation and exile (30). The impression is created of an established corpus of prophetic speech which should be accepted unaltered in order not to pervert the word of the living God (36).



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### 3. DETAILED ANALYSIS

In the following investigation (3.1-3.7) the *translation* of Holladay (1986) is given. Underlined words and phrases are annotated by means of explanations and *alternative renderings* (predominantly from Carroll and McKane). *Structure and form* (analysed separately by Holladay) is also given attention, followed by an examination/evaluation of the three commentators' view of the *setting* (eg time, place and literary context) of the various prophecies. A final paragraph is allocated to a *discussion* of focal aspects.

The main contribution of the mini-dissertation is to identify variation among the chosen commentaries within the selected fields (alternative renderings, structure and form, and setting).

Subdivisions (23:9-12 etc) printed below are in accordance with Holladay 1986.

#### 3.1 Jeremiah 23 :9-12

*Translation (H)*



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- 9     [Concerning the prophets.]  
My heart is broken within me,  
all my bones are weak;  
I have become like a man drunk  
and like a fellow overcome by wine,  
because of Yahweh  
And because of his holy words :
- 10    [...]  
Indeed because of the curse  
the land has dried up,  
the pastures of the wilderness have  
withered;  
((for of adulterers and evildoers  
the land is full,))



their course has become evil,

and their might is not right.

11 Indeed both prophet and priest commit

sacrilege;

even in my house I have found their

evil,

oracle of Yahweh.

12 Therefore their way shall be to them like

Perdition,

into Darkness they shall be driven,

and shall fall into it;

for I shall bring upon them disaster,

the year of their visitation

oracle of Yahweh.

*Alternative renderings*

9

*[Concerning the prophets]*



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Cf C and McK. C typifies *la=nebi'im* as an 'editorial phrase', while McK refers to it as a 'general heading' which pertains to 23:9f, particularly 13-40. According to H the superscription is to be regarded as secondary.

Compared with C and McK, H is more explicit with regard to the scope and origin of the above phrase.

*my heart* is broken

Cf C. McK's rendering is more ad sensum: "My nerve is broken". H (referring to Bright) explains that Jeremiah is 'extremely disturbed in mind, upset, shocked'. McK mentions the speaker's 'pathological lassitude' and 'great confusion'.

The literal translation of *leb* (cf *libbi*) by H and C gives the idiom the meaning of “sadness”, while McK’s interpretation may be paraphrased as: “I have lost my courage”. In their subsequent explanations, however, it seems as if H and McK have identical circumstances (regarding Jeremiah) in mind.

All my bones *are weak*

Cf McK: “(... are) jelly”. C: “shake”. H refers to the Arabic *rahafa*, and quotes as parallel Ps 22:5: ‘my heart is like wax, it is melted within my breast’. The rendering of *rhp* (qal) by C is comparable with the meaning (ie describing movement) sometimes suggested for *rhp* (pi’el) in Gen 1:2, Deut 32:11 and in Ugaritic (cf H).

The various meanings ascribed to the clause are more or less identical. Differences are on syntactic level and pertain to the respective functions (stative: H and McK; repetitive movement: C) ascribed to the verb. Consulting of different parallels may be the main reason for the divergent renderings.

like a man drunk



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Cf C: “a drunken man”. McK: “a man dead drunk”. H has a more extreme condition in mind, a ‘physical paralysis’ (cf the previous clause), caused by ‘intoxication’ (cf the following clause).

H and McK keep to the word sequence of the Hebrew text. By doing so *shikkor* is emphasized in English, and virtually becomes an elliptic relative clause.

because of Yahweh and because of his *holy words*.

Cf C. McK: “It is Yahweh's dread words (that have done it)”. A literal rendering of the Hebrew expression would be: “the words of his holiness”. The “words” may be those ‘against evildoers’ (C), found in 10-12 (McK). “[H]is holiness” may imply (H) “his sanctuary”, place of evil (cf 11) or true revelation. Alternatively the two *mipeney* (“because”) phrases may focus on the ‘awful majesty’ (C) of the Divine (Yahweh’s) presence.

The nomen rectum, *qodsho* is translated as “holy” by H (cf C) and as “dread” by McK. The latter focuses on the effect of the utterance and H (and C) on the Divine origin. In the respective commentaries the potential scope of the phrase is discussed, eg the addressees (“evildoers”) and the place of announcement (“sanctuary”).

10 For of *adulterers* [*and evildoers*] the land is full

For the sequence of clauses by H, cf *structure and form*.

C: “For the land is full adulterers!” McK: “The land is full of adulterers”. The addition, “and evildoers” (*mere'im*) suggested by H is in assonance with *mena'apim* (“adulterers”), and parallels the combination *na'op* (“commit adultery”) and *mere'im* in 14. He believes that the said phrase (“and evildoers”) is absent from the MT due to haplography.

Indeed because of *the curse* the land *has dried up*

C: “because of the curse the land mourns”. McK: “and so the soil is parched”. “Curse” (*'alah*, cf H, C) may have been a revocalization of *'eleh* [“these things”] (McK) in the present verse (H). The verb *'abelah* may be translated as “dried up” (H, cf McK: “is parched”), or as “mourns” (C, cf 12:4).

H and McK agree while C chooses the alternative option in translating the homonym *'abelah* (“dried up” :: “mourns”). Depending upon the rendering which is preferred, a specific prehistory of the text (differing from MT) may be reconstructed (McK, cf H).

*their course* has become evil.

Cf C: “Their course is evil”. McK: “They lead evil lives”. According to H, “course” may also mean “running” and implies “behaviour”. C suggests “the illegitimate rulers of society” as the people concerned. McK paraphrases: “the race (ie “way” and “tendency”) of life which they run is evil”.

The statement in the Hebrew text equating (ie comparing) *meruṣatam* and *ra'ah* is translated by means of a verbal clause by McK, preferring idiomatic English rather than a literal rendering of

of the Hebrew nominal clause.

and their might is *not right*:

Cf C. McK: “and their power is corrupt”. H regards *geburah* (“might”) as an ironic parallel of *geber* (“fellow”) in 9. “Not right” means “not honest” or not “true” (C, cf 8:6, 48:30). McK explains *lo ken* as “lacking in rectitude”, and the context as a “breakdown of sexual morality”. Prophets and priests are exposed as “morally bankrupt”.

The predicate, “[is] corrupt” (McK), is more explicit than “not right” (H), but the subtle positive-negative parallelism (Berlin 1985:56-7) in the Hebrew text (*ra’ah // lo ken*) is not imitated.

11           Indeed both prophet and priest *commit sacrilege*

C: “are ungodly”. McK: “are no less tainted”. H argues that ‘the verb [*hnp*] refers to the realm of that which resists what is sacred’, and that it should go beyond the usual “are godless”. The connotation of bad quality, decay or infection in the expression used by McK, is in harmony with his interpretation of *lo ken* (as “is corrupt”) in the previous parallel line.

C and McK translate the intransitively used word *hanepu* by means of nominal clauses, thus stressing the existence of an undesirable quality. H keeps to the verbal phrase of the Hebrew text, adding an object and thus highlighting the despicable acts which prophet and priest commit.

12           Therefore *their way* shall be to them like *Perdition*

C: “slippery paths”. McK: “Therefore they will lose their footing on the road which they take”. H is persuaded by Dahood (cf Ps 35:6a) to interpret *halaqlaqot* as a term for Sheol. The verb *hlq* (“perish”), is also attested in Ugaritic. C (cf McK) chooses the translation “slippery” (cf Ps 73: 18) emphasizing the fact that ‘they will inevitably’ fall.

H is inspired by Hebrew and Ugaritic parallels, and keeps close to the grammar of MT. The

imagery, however, suggested by the Hebrew text seems that of path and pit rather than the Sheol (ie ultimate perdition).

*into darkness they shall be driven and shall fall into it*

C adds the reference to “darkness” to the previous line [cf Cloete 1989:194]: “Therefore their way shall be to them like slippery paths in the darkness”. H’s translation, “they shall be driven” (cf C) is rendered by McK as “they will stumble”. Both (H and McK) refer to the verb *dḥḥ* or *dḥh*. H prefers a passive interpretation of *dḥḥ* (*yiddaḥu*) or *dḥh* (*yiddâḥu*) and McK an intransitive one (cf the Targum: *yqlwn*).

McK paraphrases, “and shall fall into it” as “come to grief”.

For I will bring *disaster* on them

“[D]isaster” (cf McK) describes the consequences of *ra’ah*. C keeps to the traditional rendering, “evil”, and therefore makes it clear in the English version (as in the Hebrew text) that the “evil” (*ra’ah*) of the people’s course and the retribution (*ra’ah*) will be of the same nature.

the year of *their visitation*

C: “punishment”, McK: “reckoning”. The phrase refers to time without indicating ‘the correct dating of this passage’ (McK).

H focuses on the event, and C and McK on the consequences of requital.

## Form and Structure

H in particular provides important insights regarding the form and structure of Jeremiah 23:9-12. According to him the collection (9-40) was perhaps originally appended to the end of the confessions. “My heart” and “my bones” referred to in v 9, for example also appear in 20:9. Verses 9-12 can be regarded as a separate unit dealing with prophet and priest, while vv 13-15 focus on the prophets of Jerusalem, who are compared with the prophets of Samaria. The words of Jeremiah are given in verse

9, while verses 10-12 contain a Yahweh oracle. Verses 10-11 can be typified as an accusation and verse 12 as an announcement of judgement.

Looking from a diachronic point of view, C proffers the opinion that verses 10 and 12 may represent the original sense of the passage. They state the condition of the land due to evildoers. Causal relations abound in 9-12, eg *mipeney*, *ki* and *laken*. H argues that the sequence of verse 10 (BHS text) should be : 10b, 10a, 10c. “*Their course*” in 10c refers to the “adulterers [and evildoers]”.

Although the three verses may be analysed in terms of contents, speaker and tenor (H), there is only a loose (and not always clear) relationship between the various statements. It may also be that 23:9-12 reflects a growth in prophetic tradition (C), with verse 12 possibly a later addition.

### Setting

Against the backdrop of the book Jeremiah the passage offers diction (H) with close parallels with material elsewhere, eg. the confessions, drought and battle (14:1-15:9) and the topic of adulterers (9:1, 14:18). References, however, are very general so that neither the exact situation (C) or date (McK, H) can be exactly ascertained.



The circumstances alluded to are probably of a crisis of vocation which Jeremiah underwent when he was challenged by the “optimistic prophets” (H). [The future events which are referred to remind of the “cup of wrath” and the ancient custom of a “trial by ordeal” (McK 1980; cf Num 5:11-31)].

### Discussion

In addition to the *setting* above, H, C and McK have different views with regard to several words and phrases, especially the figurative language in the three verses, as well as the sequence of clauses in 10 and the segmentation of verse 12. The passage, 9-12, has clearly a semi-independent and introductory function.

## 3.2 Jeremiah 23: 13 - 15

*Translation (H)*

- 13 Indeed in the prophets of Samaria  
 I have seen something fatuous :  
 they have prophesied by Baal  
 and led astray my people Israel.
- 14 But in the prophets of Jerusalem  
 I have seen something horrible :  
imagine committing adultery and  
walking in the Lie !-  
 and then they strengthen the hands of evildoers,  
 so that no one (turns) from his evil;  
 they have all become to me like Sodom  
 and her inhabitants like Gomorrah.
- 15 Therefore thus Yahweh of hosts has said  
 concerning the prophets :  
 I am going to feed them with wormwood,  
 and give them poisoned water to drink  
 for from the prophets of Jerusalem  
sacrilege has gone out to the whole land.

*Alternative renderings*

13 *Indeed*

Absent in C and McK. H stresses the function of the introductory *u* at the beginning of 13 (“indeed”) and 14 (“but”) to indicate correspondence between the two verses.

*something fatuous*

C: “an unsavoury thing”, McK: “what is senseless”. H and McK give a contextual rendering of *tiplah* and C an etymological one. The prophets “lack reality” (H) or “intellectual discrimination” (McK). Carroll’s translation (“an unsavoury thing”) is inspired by Job 6:6 where *tapel* refers to “tasteless” food.

14 *imagine committing adultery*

A free rendering of the two absolute infinitives *na’of* and *halok* are not to be found in C and McK, who both use a finite verb: “they commit adultery”. H argues in favour of his translation, “imagine”, by referring to the function of the infinitive absolutes in 3:1, 4:18 and particularly 7:9. He regards the statements (“committing adultery”, and “walking in lies”) in the present verse as examples of irony, stating: “How ironical that those charged with religious leadership should be the ones to break the covenant norms!”.

Behaviour contradictory to their presumed position is a prominent theme throughout the chapter and (seen from an objective point of view) infinitive absolutes, *per se*, do not necessary convey the idea of irony (H). They are either stylistic features which do not have to receive any prominence in the translation (C and McK), or simply denote repetitive action.

*walking in the Lie*

C: “walk in lies”, McK: “practise falsehood”. According to H the phrase *we=halok ba=sheqer* refers to the worship of Baal, which “engulfed” the people. To C “lies” is the equivalent of “falseness”, an opinion shared by McK (“practise falsehood”) who draws attention to the fact that the prophets may have been aware (being “hypocrites”) or unaware (being “self-deceived”) of the fact that their prophesies were “not authorized by Yahweh”.

*they strengthen the hands*

McK: “encourage [evil-doers]”, gives a more interpretative rendering.

So that no one (*turns*)

C: “turns back”. *Shabu* after *bilti* in MT, is regarded as grammatically unlikely by the three



commentators. H reads *shub* (infinitive) while C and McK offer *yashubu* (imperfect). There is, however, no substantial difference in their respective translations.

*her inhabitants*

The =*ha* pronominal suffix refers to Jerusalem, cf McK: “those who live in Jerusalem”. According to C (“its inhabitants”), however, there is “no antecedent” for the pronoun (“its”) in the poem.

15 *wormwood*

McK, “*poisonous herb*”, opts for clarity rather than an exact botanical identification.

*sacrilege ... to the whole land*

C: “ungodliness” (ie “irreligion”). McK prefers “pollution”, which he describes as “a pestilence of turpitude [ie wickedness] - rather than godlessness or apostasy”. The latter (McK) probably has the widespread effect (see below) of *hanufah* in mind.

*has gone out to the whole land*

C: “has gone forth (into all the land)”, McK: “has spread (throughout the land)”. According to H the phrase should be understood as the words that have “gone out from (the mouth of) the prophets of Jerusalem to the whole land” and should be compared with the previously mentioned punishments which are portrayed as poisonous food and drink entering the mouth.

The respective translations of *yaše’ah* differ according to the way the metaphor is understood. H and C focus on the acts (of speaking) of the prophets, while McK adapts his translation to fit the (quantitative) distribution suggested by the prepositional phrase.

## Form and Structure

13-14 may be typified as “accusation speech” and as an “announcement of judgement” (H). In 13 and 14 Yahweh is the speaker. This is also the case in 15, introduced by a “messenger formula”. Samaria and Jerusalem are compared (13-14). According to H (cf C) the implication is drawn that “Jerusalem is worse than Samaria”. McK, however states that *tiplah* (13) and *sha'arurah* (14), by means of which the sins of the prophets of the respective cities are typified, “are not to be related in terms of differing degrees of severity”.

H and C agree regarding the subdivision of poetical lines while McK occasionally has longer lines, eg at the beginning of 13 and 14 where he combined the two respective hemistichoi (as identified by H and C)

## Setting

The setting of the passage is the same as that for 9-12 (H). No setting and explanation of the metaphor, “they strengthen the hands of evildoers” (14) are given in the text. A conspiracy between the prophets and other unspecified people may have been in mind.

Seen from a tradition history perspective the reference to the divine punishment by means of the images of poisonous herbs and water (15) may be considered “as a secondary level of application” and can be attributed to the “Deuteronomistic redaction” (C). A parallel to the tradition that is reflected in 13-15, is found in 9 :12-16 where, “the people” (*ha= 'am*) are addressed. The latter passage probably bears testimony to “a stage in the development of the tradition when the independent cycle of tradition against the prophets was being incorporated into the larger work” (C).

## Discussion

Both 13 and 14 commence with identical syntactic structures, namely (1) prepositional phrase, (2) verb, and (3) object. The respective objects, *tiplah* (13) and *sha'arurah*, are defined by subsequent statements. Prophets in Samaria are accused (13) of prophesying *ba=ba'al* (“by Baal”) and leading the people astray. Those in Jerusalem (14) commit adultery, strengthen the hands of evildoers and thus prevent repentance. The elaborated statements in 14 may indicate that the sins of the prophets in Jerusalem were regarded in an even more serious light. This does not mean that *tiplah* and *sha'arurah*

more than mere synonyms (McK::H). Prophesying by Baal (13) and committing adultery and walking in lie[s] (14) may both point to indulgence in local (anti-Yahweh) cults.

In verse 15 punishment precedes motivation (cf *ki*). The latter refers to a third *terminus technicus*, namely *hanupah*, a transgression which the prophets in Jerusalem seemingly instigated. It may be that the three sins (*tiflah*, *sha'arurah* and *hanupah*) which are mentioned in 13-15 served as a mnemonic device linking the respective verses. The redaction history and greater (eg Deuteronomistic) textual relationships remain open to speculation.

On grammatical level attention may be drawn to the unusual *le=bilti* plus *shabu* (perfect) in verse 14, which is emendated in different ways by the commentators. The infinitive absolutes in the same verse (14) also pose translation problems. Solutions are determined by the interpretation of context (and tone, cf H), here and with regard to the *hanupah* phrase in 15.

### 3.3 23:16-20

#### Translation (H)



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- 16 [Thus Yahweh of hosts has said:]  
Do not listen to the words of the prophets  
[who prophesy to you,]  
filling you as they do with nothingness;  
a vision of their own heart they speak,  
not from the mouth of Yahweh;
- 17 they keep saying to (those despising the  
word of) Yahweh.  
"It shall go well for you!"  
and to everyone walking in the stub-  
bornness of his heart they say,  
"Disaster shall not come upon you!"
- 18 For who has stood in the council of  
Yahweh (and seen) [and (heard,)]  
to his word who has paid attention [(to)

his word] and heard?

- 19 Look! - the gale of Yahweh,  
 (his) wrath has gone forth;  
 [and] a gale is whirling,  
 On the head of the wicked it shall  
 swirl
- 20 The anger of the Yahweh shall not return  
until he performs and carries out the  
 decisions of his heart,  
In time to come  
you will give it attention [with under-  
standing.]

*Alternative renderings*

- 16 *Do not listen*

McK as well as H present vv 16-20 as poetry. C regards verses 16-17 as prose.

Distinguishing between these two genres is difficult. In addition the contents of 16-17 abounds with expressions referring to saying and prophesying which sounds more like prose. Repetition of ideas as well as similar grammatical constructions (eg *mahbilim*, 'omerim), perhaps tips the scale in favour of poetry.

*[who prophesy to you]*

Cf C. McK deletes the relative clause as it disturbs the metre. H regards the phrase as gloss (retaining it in brackets []).

*filling you as they do with nothingness*

H bases his translation on the “word order” (pronoun after participle). C: “filling you with vain hopes” (a translation considered, but regarded as “too specific” by H). McK: who “address you

with empty words”. All three render the participle (hiph. of *hbl*) with a verbal expression and add an additional prepositional phrase (besides the direct object, *etkem*).

*a vision of their own heart*

C: “visions of their own minds”; McK: “the visions are from within themselves”. MT (literally): “a vision of their heart”.

Both C and McK prefer “visions” (plur) and render *libbam* freely.

17

*those despising the word of Yahweh*

MT: “to those who despise me (cf McK) spoke Yahweh”. H (cf C) changes the vocalization of the final syllable of the participle (reading: *li-mena'aše* = “the despisers of”), and the vocalization of *dbr* (reading: *debar* = “the word of [Yahweh]”). H argues that “me” (cf MT) clashes with Yahweh, the third person speaker in v 16. McK assumes that 16-22 is a direct address. He omits the words “spoke Yahweh”, regarding them as a secondary insertion to make explicit that the subsequent clause, *shalom yihyeh lakem* (see below), was spoken [unjustly] in the name of the Lord.

*It shall go well with you.*

H (cf C) thus opts for an impersonal construction to translate MT: “peace will be to you”. McK, “You will be safe and prosperous”, renders *shalom* by means of a hendiadys.

The translation of McK echoes the subsequent diction in the same verse: “Disaster shall not come upon you”. Quotations of statements made by opponents (cf *shalom yihyeh lakem*) is a device frequently found in Jeremiah (eg chapter 2, cf Overholt 1979).

*and to everyone walking in the stubbornness of his heart*

C. “to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart”. McK: “and to everyone who follows his own wilful inclinations”.

All three commentaries interpret *we=kol* (“and all”) as *u=le=kol* (“and to all”). McK (cf C) explicitly suggest textual emendation. According to H *le* in the first colon of the verse (cf *le=mena’ase*) does double duty. The phrase, *holek bi=sherirut libbo* is translated in a stereotyped way by H, keeping to the Hebrew grammar. The other two commentators have a freer rendering. Within context the phrase is parallel to (the preceding) *l=mn’sy dbr yhw* and probably refers to people who are disobedient to the laws of the Lord (and do as they like).

*For who*

C: “for who among them ...”. He justifies the addition with reference to the subject of 22 (false prophets). H regards 21-22 as a separate unit. Reconciliation between the singular (18 and 19) and the plural (21 and 22) is therefore not deemed necessary.

*has stood in the council of Yahweh*

Cf C. McK: “had access to Yahweh’s secrets. C draws attention to prophetic “call” narratives (Isa 6:1-11, Ezek 1-3) and suggests that the motif of the divine council may provide a mythological background to the text, or may simply function in a metaphorical way (as literary device). H seems to be in favour of the former interpretation (cf Ps 89:8, I Kings 22:19-22), while McK opts for a derived meaning for *sod* (ie “... access to ... secrets”) and believes that a “one-to-one” closeness of the prophet to Yahweh is more appropriate here (than membership of a divine council).

*(and seen) [and (heard)]*

C: “to perceive and to hear his word”. McK: “that he might see his word”. Both C and McK ascribe a final function to the clause (cf *we* plus jussive[s]: MT). H seemingly prefers a consecutive rendering emending MT to *wa* plus narrative. The Greek text translates: “and saw”, omitting (cf McK) “and heard”. According to H the “simplicity and symmetry” of the Greek text commends itself. The MT is described as dittographic (cf “his word, and he heard”) or a conflation. H subsequently links *et-debaro* (as object) to *mi-hiqshib*.

It is evident that the Hebrew text of verse 18 has become corrupt (and/or amended) during the course of time. The translation of C closely reflects the interpretation of the ancient scribes of

MT. As a whole it would seem theologically more sound than the rendering of H (“for who has stood in the council of Yahweh and seen and heard”). Without any reference to the object of seeing or hearing (*debaro* is moved to the next clause by H), a theophany would then be suggested.

18 *to his word who has paid attention [(to) his word] and heard?*

C and McK regard *et-debaro* (“to his word”) as a part of the previous clause. The rest of the above line *mi-hiqshib debaro* (ie *qere*) *wa=yishma*‘ (C) is paraphrased by McK as: “who has listened carefully to his word and heard it?”

The suggestions of C and McK make more sense of MT. It may, however, be that the *ketib* version (*debari*: “my word”) of the second *debaro* (“his word”) represent a pre-Masoretic attempt to vary the repetition of *debaro*.

19 *Look! - the gale of Yahweh, [his] wrath has gone forth*

Cf C. McK: “A storm has issued from Yahweh”, omitting *hemah* (“wrath”) and interpreting *sa‘arat Yahweh* (“the storm of Yahweh”) as *sa‘arah min Yahweh*. He (McK) does not translate *hinneh*.

H, “... the gale of Yahweh ... *his* wrath”, refers to the double-duty of “Yahweh” (pertaining both to “gale” and “wrath”). According to C ‘wrath’ may be an addition here. It turns one statement into two (cf McK). McK has little doubt that *hemah* is a gloss. He remarks that the terror of the wind in v 19 is its tempestuous fury rather than a manifestation of heat (*hammah*). Neither *hemah* (“wrath”) nor the alternative vocalization *hammah* (according to McK) suits the context. H, however, links 23:19 to the ‘wrath goes forth statements’ in 4:4=21:12.

The seemingly superfluous word *hemah* (“wrath”) is a necessary insertion in order to understand the extended metaphor. It also paves the way for the identification of *sa‘arat yahweh* with *ap yahweh* in verse 20.

*[and] a gale is whirling*

H suggests that the copula (“and”) should be omitted (cf C and McK). He (H) refers to the doublet text (Jrm 30:23). “[I]s whirling” (*mitholel*: H) is rendered by C as “burst upon” and by McK as “it circles” [over the heads of the wicked]”. McK compares the fate of the *resha'im* (“wicked”) as similar to being in the eye of a hurricane, while H is not convinced that one must necessarily assume a whirlwind (that is a cyclone) is intended. It may be that only “dust devils” (cf Isa 17:13) are indicated.

Descriptions of a weather pattern are used as images to portray the vehement response of *Yahweh* to the behaviour of the “wicked”. It is certain that a tempest is referred to, but it is not clear whether it is painted as imminent (cf “circles over”: McK) or in the process of happening (“burst” upon: C).

20                    *shall not return*

C: will not turn back; McK: “will not subside”. H (“shall ...”) renders *yashub* as a threat, while C (“will”) and McK (“will”) translate it as a statement.

The question of divergent modal auxiliary verbs comes to the fore in the present clause. It is not an item of great difference between the commentators, but its extensive application can make every translation of especially a Hebrew imperfect verb problematic.

*until he performs and carries out*

C: “until he has executed and accomplished; McK: “until he has finally carried out”. H remarks that the two infinitives “perform” and “carry out” are really synonymous. Their emphasising function is clearly stated in the diction of McK (“finally carried out”).

*In time to come*

C: “In the latter days”, McK: “when the time comes”.

All three sources interpret *be=aḥarit ha=yamim* as referring to the foreseeable future (cf Willis 1997).



*you will give it attention [with understanding]*

C: “You will understand it clearly”, McK: “You will be fully enlightened”. H omits (ie brackets) the cognate accusative *binah* (in harmony with the Greek and Syriac texts). The meaning of the verb here (stressing the hitp of *byn*) is: You will know for yourselves that my word is genuine. McK (cf C) retains the accusative, *binah*, rendering it with an adverb (“fully [enlightened]”. Cf C [“understand it] clearly”.

From an interpretative point of view the grammatically explicit emphasizing (verb plus cognate accusative) of “insight through experience” seems to be a logical conclusion of the threat expressed in the relevant verses.

### **Form and Structure**

According to H this unit begins with a messenger formula, [“Thus Yahweh of hosts has said”], which is regarded as secondary. Jeremiah is in fact the speaker. He counsels the people by means of prohibitions: “Do not listen to the words of the [false] prophets”. V 15 (cf 13-15) consists of an announcement of judgement. This contrasts with the paranetic appeal in verse 16.

Verses 21-22, regarded as a separate unit, contain the utterances of Yahweh, phrased in the first person. From a thematic point of view verses 16-17 describe the conduct of the false prophets and verse 18 comprises rhetorical questions. A vision report is found in it (cp 16).

Formally (cf H) the passage (16-20) offers an inclusio of second person verbs (16a, 16b, 20). C represents 16-17 as prose. Both he and McK regard 16-22 (rather than 16-20) as one unit, with the messenger formula pertaining to all the verses. The motif of the divine council is for example both in vv 18 and 22. (Not all commentators, however, agree as to the authenticity of verse 18). Charges are also made against the prophets in vv 16-17 and 21. McK bases the possibility that the unit consists of vv 16-22, on the assumption that these verses are addressed to the people of Judah. He furthermore retains the first person suffix (“to those who despise *me*”) in verse 17, which brings it into harmony with verses 21 and 22. McK, on the other hand draws attention to the fact that verses 21 and 22 are stylistically at variance with 16 and 20 (where the 2nd person plural is evident).

Differences with regard to the identification of smaller units (as explained above) bears testimony of various structuring principles which serve as guidelines, eg introductory formulas, motifs, intention (“charges”), addressees and grammar.

### Setting

H opines that the setting of this passage must be placed at the time of the crisis of vocation which Jeremiah underwent in 600, when he was in confrontation with the optimistic prophets. C refers to the polarization of the people into righteous (pious) and wicked, which is reflected in 16-17. According to him these verses are Deuteronomistically shaped. They do not render a material statement about the prophetic clashes before 587. Prophets are rather associated with different groups of people. McK mentions the soothing of the people by prophets (verse 17) as a confusion of patriotism or nationalism with Yahwism. These so-called false prophets rely upon the dogma of the invincibility of Jerusalem as seat of the Yahweh cult, and thus put the people at ease that all will go well for them. McK admits to Deuteronomistic influence, but is convinced of the historicity of the passage. H draws attention to phrases identical or parallel to verses 14-16 (cf H). They are particularly found in chapters 4 (vv 4, 11-12, 20), 14 (vv 10, 13, 14), and 15 (v 19).

The motif of the divine council is also embedded (cf H, C, McK) in various Biblical passages.

### Discussion

The commentaries differ with regard to the inclusion (C and McK) or exclusion (H) of 21-22 as part of the passage. They also disagree about the extent to which the passage mirrors a Deuteronomistic rather than pre-exilic situation. *Sod* (divine council or secret[s]) is also given a prominent position by the three authorities.

The phrase, *mi 'amad be=sod* (referring to divine council or secret[s]) is furthermore interpreted differently by the authorities. Other detail aspects with regard to which they have alternative views are textual emendation and segmentation of lines. There is often a subtle difference between translations, depending upon the interpretation of context.

## 3.4 23:21-22

*Translation (H)*

- 21 I did not send the prophets  
but they ran anyway;  
 I did not speak to them,  
 but they prophesy anyway.
- 22 If they had stood in my council  
then they would have announced my  
 words to my people,  
and brought them back from their evil  
 way,  
 and from the evil of their doings.

*Alternative renderings*

- 21 *but they ran away*



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Cf C. McK “but they were swift to do my tasks”. *Raṣû* need not refer to hurried or ecstatic behaviour, but may be a technical term to characterize the “stylized” behaviour of the prophets (H).

The words “to do my tasks”, by McK is an addition which is debatable. Its acceptance depends upon the interpretation of “my tasks” as “prophetic assignments not authorized by me” [ie Yahweh].

- 22 *then they would have announced*

H and McK (cf C) prefer to vocalize the introductory conjunction as consecutive *wa* [plus narrative], rather than copulative *we* [plus imperfect] suggested by MT. The condition is interpreted as unreal (“then they would have ...”) instead of real (“then let them ...”). It is not a test (McK) being to the prophets, but a verdict is given about their preaching. The Greek reads the verb as Qal (“and if they had listened”) rather than hiph.

*and brought them back...*

The MT has a *waw* copulative and imperfect/jussive (*hiph*). Translations are vague with regard to the exact interpretation. McK : “turning them ...”, probably chooses for a final sense (“so that they may turn [them] back”) or a simultaneous (continuous) meaning (“and [at the same time] turning [them] back”). H and C implicitly interpret the verb as a *waw* consecutive plus narrative form of *sh-w-b* (and they would have turned them ... : C, cf H). As such it refers to an unfulfilled condition or consequence. C remarks that Jeremiah himself did not manage to “turn the people or persuade them to turn (25:1-7)”. McK, however, emphasises the ingressive aspect of the verb : If they had been true prophets they would have taken trouble “exerting themselves” to turn the people back.

### **Form and Structure**

The passage (21-22) is analysed (H) separately from the previous unit, verses 16-20 (contrary to C and McK who render vv 16-22 as one unit). The unit's present position (cf H) is perhaps due to the fact that v 22, “stand in my council”, may be linked with the similar idea in v 18. Verses 21-22 deal with the illegitimacy of the so-called false prophets. Therefore, it must be separated from vv 23-24 which are concerned with the nature of Yahweh himself. The two verses consist of a statement (21) and a conditional sentence (22). There is some ambiguity, however, in the tradition (cf the Greek text) regarding the place where the protasis should end.

There is also some speculation as to whether *sh-m-‘* and *sh-w-b* respectively should be interpreted as commands (“then make known and let them turn back”) or as reports (“then they would have made known and brought them back”). In the first instance the apodosis is regarded as real and in the second both the condition and consequence are regarded as unreal.

### **Setting**

H refers to v 16-20 as well as 21-22 being identical. They share the motif of standing in the council of Yahweh. Similarly in 14:14 there is a reference to Yahweh not having sent the prophets, and the motif of the prophets’ “running” is found in 12:5. The last two sentences of this verse are found not in judgement speeches but in warnings in the earlier, more hopeful period (18:11; 4:4). C, who regards 16-22 as a unit, evaluates 21-22 within a logical framework. He denies the validity of the claims expressed in vv 21 (cf 16) and 22. C draws attention to the fact that the “ideology of the editors

presents the speaker as being in the right and his opponents as being in the wrong”.

## Discussion

H refers to the sayings found in the NT (Matt 7:16). The false prophets brought no change in the ways of the people - so they could not have been sent from Yahweh (H). C turns the light (or mirror) towards the speaker using the measure (effective results equal true divine commissioning) to weigh Jeremiah. McK responds more positively, viewing the verses (21-22) from a hermeneutical angle: “Response to the word(s) of Yahweh is a strenuous exercise and is profoundly disturbing ...”. He thus focuses on the contents of the prophet's message (which lies at the core of the whole argument). The primary accusation is that the (false) prophets did not insist on obeisance to the law.

### 3.5 23:23-24

#### Translation (H)

23 Am I (a God nearby,)

oracle of Yahweh,

and not (a God far off?)

24 Can anyone hide in some hole

without being seen by me?

[oracle of Yahweh.]

Are not heaven and earth filled by

me ?

oracle of Yahweh.

#### Alternative renderings

23 *Am I (a God nearby) ... and not (a God far off)*

H redefines word boundaries (and changes the vocalization). Thus

*h = 'lhy m=qrb 'ny ... w=l' 'lhy m=rhq, becomes*

*h = 'lhy-m qrb 'ny ... 'w=l' 'lhy-m rhq.*

The emendation is inspired by grammar, the preposition *m=*, following [the construct] *'lhy*, is linked to it (*'lhym*) Furthermore the nouns *qrb* and *rḥq* without prefix (*m=*) are in harmony with Jer 12:2b. The alternative rendering, however, does not essentially change the translation (cf C, McK). No interrogative particle is reflected by the Greek: “I am a God nearby and not a God far off”

According to Lemke (1981) the masoretic text (MT) reflecting “the rarer and more paradoxical statement” and which is “close to the prophet’s own thought and message” should be preferred. Choosing, on a theoretical level, between the alternatives, Lemke versus H, is difficult. A literal rendering of MT would be:

“Am God-of-from-near I  
and/or  
not God-of-from-far I”.

The subject is “I” and the complement (or argument) is “God-of-from-near/far”. In its amended form the relevant clause(s) may be translated as:

“Am God(s) near/far I”.

The result is a loosely knit clause which might have been regarded (if there had been a debate) as too ambiguous by the ancient editor(s). There is even a hypothesis (Rudolp, quoted by McK) that the interrogative particle (*ha=*) is an addition by “later orthodoxy”.

23, 24      *oracle of Yahweh*

The Greek text omits *n'm yhwh* after *(m)qrb 'ny* (23). H, C and McK retain it. H regards the second *ne'um Yahweh* (24a) as dittography.

24            *hide in some hole*

C: “in secret places”, McK: “and hide from me”.

The version of H is a free translation of “hiding places” (*mistar-im*, cf C). McK paraphrases

the expression bringing it in harmony with the following clause.

## Form and Structure

Three sets of rhetorical questions can be identified (H, cf C and McK), introduced by *ha=* (23), *im* (24a) and *ha=lo'* (24b). The syntax and contents thus differ from verses 22 and 25. C refers to the threefold formulaic phrase *ne'um yhwah*, which has the function to present the independent disputation (23,24) as divine speech.

## Setting

Jeremiah 23:23 is reminiscent of 12:2b (“Near are You in their mouth, but far from their kidneys”), which has bearing upon the false prophets (H). The dichotomy “near ... far” is also found in Ps 139:2 and Amos 9:2-3. Furthermore (H) Deut 30:11-14 is dependent on the present passage (23-24). “A God nearby” (*[m]qrb*) can be regarded as a statement with a negative connotation and can be compared (McK, cf Duhm) with the “new/false gods” (*hadashim*) coming from nearby (*m=qrb*), ie neighbouring countries (Deut 32:17). The relation between 23:23 and 24 can, however, best be upheld if God is regarded as both *m=qrb* and *m=rhb* (McK). The hiding motif is also found in passages like Gen 3:8, 4:14, Job 34:22, Amos 9:2-4 and Ps 139:7-12 (C). “Do not I fill the heaven and the earth” is a unique expression (H) in the Old Testament. The closest parallel is Isa 6:3.

## Discussion

Verse 23 is problematic. God being nearby and far can be interpreted in a temporal and spatial sense. According to McK there are three ways in which a temporal interpretation has been understood by exegetes :

1. Yahweh has the knowledge of the present as well as the future
2. Yahweh created the world at the beginning
3. Yahweh possesses ancient wisdom.

A spatial connotation [preferred by Hermann 1983] can also be understood in various ways (McK).

1. Yahweh is not a local near God, but keeps his distance
2. Yahweh has a distant and thus an enhanced view of affairs
3. Yahweh is (according to the Greek version) effectively near and not distant and inaccessible.

Suggestions 1 and 2 of the spatial connotation do not fit the context (23,34) while 3 implies textual emendation. The intention of verses 23 and 24 is to state that God was not deceived by the activities of the false prophets.

Any connotation of transcendence and immanence in a strict sense is denied by McK. C, however, states that the theological perspectives behind the texts are immanent (G) and transcendent (MT). According to the Greek the deity is close and knows what is going on. C suggests that the deity's immanence is limited by his transcendence. A parallel idea is expressed by 12:2b where it is said of the wicked that God is near (*qarob*) in their mouth, but far (*rahoq*) from their feelings. "Near" may also refer to saving activity (Isa 55.6), and "far" to destruction. [Cf Lapointe 1970 who makes similar observations in his study of divine monologues, eg Jer 12:7-11]. There is nevertheless, some paradox between the God who speaks (23:29) and the One who is distant. A shadow is shed on even the true prophet's claim of speaking the word of Yahweh (C).

[The New Testament with its theology of Incarnation (John 1:14, cf Spieckermann 1990) suggests a unique solution to the "near-far" dichotomy.]

### 3.6 23:25-32

#### *Translation*

- 25 I have heard what the prophets have said  
 who prophesy in my name a lie, saying "I  
 have dreamed, I have dreamed!" 26/  
 How long? (Can the heart)" of the prophets  
 (return) who prophesy a lie (and who prophesy)  
the deceit of their own heart, 27/ who  
 intend to make my people forget my name  
 by the dreams which they tell each other, just as their  
 fathers forgot my name for Baal?



- 28 The prophet who has a dream;  
 let him tell a dream;  
 but the one who has my word,  
 let him speak my truthful word!  
 What has straw to do with wheat?  
 oracle of Yahweh,
- 29 ((with) my word, a dream?  
Scorching)) is my word like fire,  
 oracle of Yahweh,  
 and like a sledgehammer which  
 smashes a rock!
- 30 Therefore, I declare myself against the  
 prophets, oracle of Yahweh, who steal  
 "my words" from each other; 31 I  
declare myself against the prophets,  
 oracle of Yahweh, who use their own  
 tongue to oracle an oracle; 32/ I declare  
myself against the prophets of lying  
 dreams, oracle of Yahweh, who tell them  
 and lead my people astray by their lies  
and by their loose talk : I for my part did  
 not send them or command them, and they  
 certainly do not profit this people!-  
 oracle of Yahweh.

*Alternative renderings*

- 25 *I have heard...*

Cf C. McK has a free rendering, foregrounding *sheqer*: "I have heard the falsehoods ...". [According to Thiel 1973 : 250 the *sheqer* -statement is one of the few examples in 23:9-40 where typical Deuteronomic terminology is used].

...*Can the heart of the prophets return*

H changes the grouping of the consonants, from *h=ysh̄ b = lb* (“Is there in the heart”), to *h=ysh̄b lb ...* (“Can the heart of the prophets return [*ysh̄b*]”), cf Jer 8:5. McK doubts whether this emendated text suits the intended meaning, namely: “How long will it be till they change their tune, these prophets ...”. Both McK (in a paraphrased way) and C keep to the MT in their respective translations.

The suggestion of H reflects a tendency (cf verse 23) to challenge the segmentation of words in MT. C and McK seem to be hesitant to follow suit.

*and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart*

H (cf C) revocalizes *u=nebi'e tarmit libbam* (“and [the] prophets of the deceit of their heart”) to *we=nibbe'e tarmit libbam* (“and who prophesy the deceit of their heart”).

McK (in his commentary) paraphrases *tarmit libbam* as the “intent to deceive others rather than a condition of self-deceit”. In his translation he regards the relevant Hebrew text as an extension of the interrogative clause (26a). McK thus translates: “and [how much longer will prophets be minded (26a)] to make out that their own illusions are prophecy”. It is not clear whether his rendering, “to make out”, is based upon MT (*nebi'e*) or an emended version.

*to make my people forget ...*

Cf C. McK: “to make my people defect [from me]”. The Hebrew, *le=hashkiah̄*, is therefore visualized (by McK) as a deed of encouraging apostasy.

*let him speak my truthful word*

H regards *debari emet* as a construct chain with an intervening suffix. C: “speak my word faithfully” (adverb), McK: “declare it [=my word] as the truth (object)”.

McK regards *yedabber* (“let him speak”) as governing a double accusative (*debari* and *emet*). In order to reflect his interpretation in his translation, however, he has to give the jussive, *yedabber*

(“let him speak”), a more assertive sense. Rendering *emet* as adverb, enables C to interpret *yedabber* in a more neutral sense (“speak [my word faithfully]”).

28-29            *with my word a dream*

*ha=lo'* is emended to *ḥalom* (“dream”) and *debari* (“my word”) added. This results in *debari* appearing both sides of *kh* in the reconstructed text. The absence of repetition of *debarim* in the Masoretic text is ascribed to haplography.

29                *Scorching* is my word like fire

The consonants *kh*, following the surmised *ḥalom debari*, are interpreted as *koweh* (“scorching”) rather than *koh* (“so”, retained by Van Selms 1972). H admits, however, that the *qal* (common in postbiblical Hebrew) does not appear elsewhere in the OT. The other two authorities either ignore *kh* (cf C) or delete it (McK). Both C and McK translate: “Is not my word like fire ...?”

30-32            *I declare myself against ... I declare my self against ... I declare myself against*

C and McK: “I am against”. H characterizes the thrice-repeated phrase *hinneni 'al-[ha=nebi'im]* as a “challenge formula”.

Providing a specific intention of a speaker (Jeremiah in the name of Yahweh) in an ancient text is a problematic issue. Three clauses with a similar introduction, however, do emphasize opposition against the behaviour of the addressees.

31                *... to oracle an oracle*

C: “and say: “Says the Lord”. McK: “and claim to speak as my prophets”. H proposes as possibility that Jeremiah uses an ironic turn of the phrase *wa=yin'amu ne'um*. He admits, however, that the *hapax legomenon* (*[wa=] yin'amu*) may already have existed in Hebrew.

Verb and object having the same derivation, repeats the same statement (or at least the sound pattern) by varying the grammar. The effect is to lay stress on the announcement.

H refers to Zeph 3:4 where a related form of *paḥazut[am]* is found, namely *poḥazim* (qal participle), with the connotation “reckless, undisciplined”. C accordingly renders *u=be=paḥazut-am* as “and their recklessness”. McK translates the relevant prepositional phrases as: “[with their falsehoods] and wild words”.

The versions of the three commentaries are more or less the same. The said term, “loose talk” (H), “recklessness” (C) or “wild words” (McK), is not merely an addition to *be=shiqrehem* (“by their lies”), but an explanation or amplification.

### Form and Structure

In an earlier study (1966) H typifies 23:25-32 as “poetic”, but in his commentary (1986) he regards 28-29 (cf 23-24) as a climactic short poem in the middle of a long prose passage. There is a thematic correspondence between the prose sections 25-27 and 30-32. C agrees that 28b-29 is the poetic kernel of the portion, but he renders all the verses (25-32) in a prose format (cf McK). He also refers to the patchwork-quilt (ie decorative) phraseology of the unit.

H categorizes the respective clauses of 25 to 32 as follows:

Syntactically 25 is a complaint statement. Verse 26 (emended) begins with a rhetorical expression and the rest of 26 as well as 27 consists of rhetorical questions. 28a describes a challenge by Yahweh and 28b and 29a are rhetorical questions. 30-32 resembles an implied judgement speech.

The abundance of rhetorical questions is striking. It is the typical style in which arguments or statements of polemical nature are phrased; an important feature of the excerpt.

### Setting

According to McK it could be argued that 23:25-32 arouse out of reflections among exiles during the final period of the pre-exilic Judaen state. The prophesy is, however, just as appropriate to the life and times of Jeremiah himself. Neither does McK find special relationship between 23:25-32 and the

passages in Jeremiah which deal with the criteria of true and false prophecy. C is convinced that the cycle, focusing primarily on the false prophets, belongs to the late period when prophets were banned as false *per se* (Zech 13:2-6). H finds no reason to suggest any other setting for the passage than that proposed for other passages in the present sequence, namely in 600. 23:25-32 contains unique expressions, but there are several which parallel diction elsewhere in Jeremiah (compare 25-26 with 8:4-7). H regards the passage as a whole authentic to the biblical prophet.

Differences in suggested settings by the three commentators are a testimony to the difficulty which interpreters have to ascribe a setting to verses where there are no clear indications of time, place or circumstances.

### Discussion

Compared to C and McK, H more often resorts to textual emendations in his translation and commentary. Although his suggestions may be disputed (eg verse 23), the editing endeavours give an idea of some of the problematic issues found in the section. They are incomplete syntax (26), unacceptable vocalisation of words (26) and defective parallelism (28-29). H, C and McK also differ with regard to the translation of words (27,30,31,32) and the genre (prose or poetry) of individual verses.

C draws attention to the fact that the poetic images in 28b and 29 reflect an ideological position which approves of the word, but not of dreams. A false dichotomy is thus created between these two media of divine revelation. Dreams are, however, regarded as an inherent part of the future age by the Biblical Joel (2:28). Another technique which is also the target of attack is the stealing of oracles (30). A close scrutiny of the text, however, shows that the opposition is between word and word and the basis of the opposition is the acquisition of the divine word by false means.

[Miller (1990) suggests, with regard to dreams and prophetic visions, that passages such as Jer 23:25-28 (cf Num 12:6-8, Deut 13:1,3,5) reflect a “distinction in terminology” and not a “distinction in phenomenology”].

### 3.7 Jeremiah 23:33-40

*Translation* (H)

33 And when this people (or the prophet or priest) asks you, “What is the ‘burden’ of Yahweh?” then you shall say to them, (“You are the burden!) - and I shall throw you off!” - oracle of Yahweh.

[34 / But as for the prophet or the priest or the layman who shall say, "The 'burden' of the LORD", I shall attend to that man and his household. 35 / This is what you are to say to each other, among yourselves: “What has the Lord answered?” or “What has the LORD spoken ?” 36 / but “the ‘burden’ of the LORD” (you are to mention) no more; for “the burden” shall pertain to a person’s own word, and (using it) you would pervert the words of the living God, the LORD of hosts, our God. 37 / This is what (you shall say) to the prophet: “What has the LORD answered you?” or “What has the LORD spoken?” 38 / but if you do say, “The ‘burden’ of the LORD,” therefore thus the LORD has said, Because you say this word “the ‘burden’ of the LORD,” when I sent (word) to you as follows, “You are never to say ‘the “burden” of the LORD’,” 39 / therefore look, I shall (surely) lift (you) up and throw off you and the city which I gave to you and to your fathers from my presence, 40 / and I shall put upon you everlasting reproach and everlasting shame, which shall not be forgotten.]

*Alternative renderings*



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33 *And*

Absent in C as well as McK.

By translating the conjunction, “*we=*”, H shows the link (cf MT) between the present and the previous passage (notwithstanding their divergent contents).

*(or the prophet or priest)*

H states that this is a gloss from v 34. For this reason H brackets the words. H also refers to the fact that while “prophet” has the article (*h=*), “priest” appears without an article, simply as “*kohen*”. C translates “a prophet” or “a priest”. McK deletes the clause “or the prophet or priest” and simply refers to “this people”.

H and McK both ascribe a secondary status to the phrases added to the preceding subject (*ha='am ha=zeh*). They may be correct, or it may be that the threefold subject (especially *ha=nabi*) was the reason for annexing 33 to 40 to the preceding corpus.

*You are the burden*

MT: 't / mh / ms[s]' (the what burden", cf C) is read as

't[t]m / hms[s]' ('tm h=mss': "you are the burden", cf C and McK), or

't[t]mh / ms[s]' ('tmh mss': "you are a burden"). Rendering the relevant pronoun as

't[t]mh (= 't[t]m) is common in QIS<sup>a</sup>, but H points out that there is no other evidence for this spelling of the pronoun in Jeremiah. Therefore the definite article (preceding *ms[s]*') is appropriate here.

H, C and McK therefore agree about the emendation (cf H). All three the commentators also refer to the connotation of "oracle" and "burden" attached to *ms[s]*'. H draws attention to the words "and throw you off" (*we=natashti*) in verse 39 which "plays on the double meaning of the noun". McK regards *mh ms[s]'*[yhwh] as "a satirical reference to the gloomy prophet Jeremiah whose utterances are always 'heavy' with doom".

34 But as for the prophet, or the priest *or the layman*

C: "or one of the people", McK: "and people". The text refers to common people (21:7, 22:4, cf H), in addition to the (preceding) religious authorities.

*I shall attend to that man and his household*

"I shall attend to" (H) refers to punishment (cf C, McK).

36 *You are to mention no more*

Cf C and McK. The Qal, *tizkeru*, of MT ("You are to remember [no more]") is vocalized as hiph'il (*tazkiru*), cf C and McK.

*for "the burden" shall pertain to a person's own word*

Cf C. McK: “for ‘that burden’ is what he entrusts to the man who bears his word”.

According to H “his word” refers to a human word, while McK (cf the Vulgate) believes that “the word of Yahweh” is alluded at.

The expression “for [the] man [of] his word” (*le=ish debaro*) is ambiguous. In the interpretation of H (cf C) *debaro* functions as opposition to *le=ish* (“for a man [namely] his [own] word”). McK emphasizes the construct relation (“for a man-of-the-word of him [ie Yahweh]”).

37            *you shall say*

MT *to‘mar* (singular) is emended to *to‘maru* (plural; cf 35,36,38) by H. C and McK accept MT.

39            *Therefore look, I shall (surely) lift (you) up and throw off you ...”*

H prefers *we=nasa’ti* (“and I shall lift up”) to MT *we=nashiti* (“and I shall forget”), and omits *etkem* (“you”) and *nasho’* (inf abs). He points out that the position of the infinitive is dubious, and that the preceding ‘*etkem* does not match the compound object (“you and the city”) of *we=natashti* (“and I shall throw you off”)

The metaphor “I shall lift you up” (emended text) seems attractive in the light of the subsequent “I shall shrow off you”. It is, however, clear that the text in its present form (reflected by MT) is problematic.

## Form and Structure

H draws attention to the fact that most commentators separate verse 33 and 34-40. Verse 33 contains an ironic turn on the ambiguous word *massa’*. *Massa’* is the technical term for a prophetic oracle, but also (contrary to McK [1980]) has the connotation “burden” (cf *ns’*: “lift (up)”).

Verse 34 to 40 may be regarded (H) as a midrashic extension of 33. Within the pericope 34-40, verse 34 (judgement speech) may be separated from verses 35-40, (instruction). From a syntactic point of view (cf H: “Form”) verse 33 is “of the question and answer scheme” [in its simplest form, cf Long



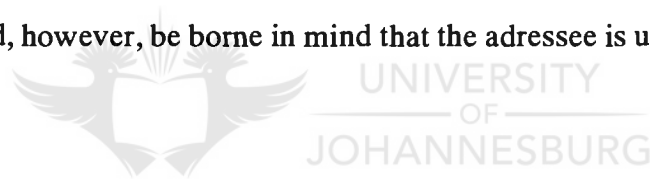
1971] while the diction of 34 and 35-40 may be characterized as a prophetic torah. [In 23:34-39 the typical prophetic diction (Dietrich 1972:60<sup>10</sup>) of “Begründung” and “Ankündigung mit zugehörigen Partikeln” (cf *hinne* in 23:30-32) is no longer used].

The phrase *massa' Yahweh* appears five times in 34-38, “[b]ut whereas in v 33, it is used in a punning way, in vv 34-38 the phrase becomes the thing itself” (C). Both H and C also list other stylistic variations peculiar to 34-40, compared with 33 and the rest of Jeremiah, eg the function of *ha= 'am* in 34.

[In its present form this final passage (cf 23:9-40) is apparently prose, but probably “has an underlying poetic basis because of the number of parallelism which occur” (Thompson 1980:503)].

### Setting

H, C and McK agree that 34-40 should be dated much later than 33. H suggests the middle of the fifth century as *terminus ad quem* (ie the latest date). Verse 33 is a kernel which may be attributed to Jeremiah (McK). It should, however, be borne in mind that the addressee is undefined in all the verses (C).



McK states that it is likely that vv 34ff represent the endeavours of later generations, living in historical circumstances greatly different from those in the late pre-exilic period. There is an attempt to recapture the significance of the conflict between the *shalom* and doom prophecy in the time of Jeremiah. The post-exilic (?) Jewish community must confess that Jeremiah, prophet of doom, spoke the word of Yahweh, over and against the prophets whose assurances were proved false by destruction, defeat and the shameful exile.

C affirms that the vindication of Jeremiah, “starkly absent throughout the cycle”, is implicit in the verses being discussed. To him (C) the passage 33-40, however, reflects (as Zech 13:2-6) a negative Deutero-prophetic assessment of prophecy. He emphasises the aspect of irony. Yahweh is free to send any human construct, no matter how sincerely intended for the glory of God, into the ashheap of ridicule or contempt; so with the term “burden”!

## Discussion

The meaning of 33-40 is not easy to grasp. Careful scrutiny is necessary. One of the problems is that the person spoken to, is not identified (C). The style and coherence between (and within) verses are sometimes problematic. Neither can the sincerity of the speaker be discerned so easily. McK is in favour of the contention that the question of 33 is a genuine request, but refers to the alternative view namely that intention was to poke fun at Jeremiah's unfulfilled prophecies of doom. This possibility is ruled out, however, if Yahweh is the "I" carrying on a conversation with the "you" of 33 (cf 34: "I will punish").

To understand the pericope, the function of *massa' Yahweh* must be determined. It is probably derived from the verb *ns'* and may refer to the lifting up of voice (H). The phrase became the term to designate an "oracle". In addition the meaning "burden" was also associated to it. The addressees are warned, quite strangely, to discontinue even the mentioning of the term. By simply saying '*mss' Yahweh*', permanent shame would be the result. According to C v 33 affords an opportunity for the author to rule out any claim to the possession of new oracles from Yahweh, in order to control contemporary "false" prophecy. The prophecy of doom uttered by Jeremiah had to remain untwisted (McK). [Adding new material to the Jeremiah *corpus* did seemingly not contravene the prohibition expressed in the pericope. As a matter of fact scribalism was a core activity in the post exilic society (Cook 1995:218)].

To regard 33-40 as an example of the growth of Biblical tradition, influences conceptions regarding the state of the text, and translation. The three scholars rearrange consonants (33) and change the vocalisation of words (36). H and McK also suggest the deletion of several glosses during the course of their translations. They sometimes differ about the referent of the pronoun in a nominal (36) or verbal (37) expression.

Statistics may be added. The masora in margin can for example also be utilized and various comparisons drawn (cf Yeivin 1982). In the following chapter a comprehensive summary will be given of the results of the above analysis of alternative renderings, form and structure, and setting.

# CHAPTER 4

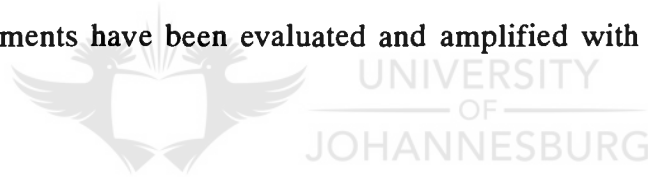


## 4 CONCLUSION

In the foregoing pages the Hebrew text of Jeremiah 23:9 to 40 has been scrutinized in a particular way. The focal aspects have been the rendering of MT in English, the form and structure of subdivisions within verses 9 to 40, and their setting. During the course of the research three works in particular have been consulted. They are the 1986-commentaries of H[olladay], C[arroll] and McK[ane]. H has served as basis, and his views have only been discussed where C and McK supply noteworthy divergent or additional material.

On translation level the result is a reference work, offering the reader a selection of alternative renderings of C and McK with regard to specific words, phrases and clauses in the English version (Jeremiah 23:9-40) of H. Apart from identifying differences, an attempt has been made to supply reasons which motivated them. At the same time particular issues are pinpointed which have bearing upon the theory of translation.

In the discussions of form and structure ample use has been made of the information provided by H. Where necessary his statements have been evaluated and amplified with additional or alternative observations.



The setting of the various pericopes has also been considered from an H[olladay] perspective, adding the views of C and McK. In practice this subdivision has often been used to show the relationship of identified themes (in the verses being discussed) with the rest of Jeremiah or other Bible books. It has also been the case where historical-critical aspects with regard to the text have been considered. In addition to the literary setting questions pertaining to the time and occasion of a specific prophecy have also received attention.

Giving prominence to the endeavours of H[olladay] does not mean that the works of the other two scholars (C and McK) are degraded or regarded as being of inferior quality. The explanation is simply that the work of H is easier to consult and the division between translation, form and structure, and setting are drawn more clearly.

Formally therefore the commentary of H can be allocated a preferential position.

C, for example, provides a translation (see 4.1.1) and a discussion, often leaving it to the reader to

decide which of the alternative renderings he has favoured (and why). Discussion of the text is intermingled with a discussion of the context and theological questions. Categorizing his findings (within a ‘Holladay scheme’) is therefore a plus point of the mini-dissertation.

McK, whose work is titled *A critical and exegetical commentary on Jeremiah* (as part of the series: The International Critical Commentary), provides elaborate reference to ancient translations, old Jewish sources and modern scholars. He indicates by way of footnotes when an emendation of MT is considered necessary. As is the case with C, however, an integrated procedure is followed, making it sometimes difficult to find information relevant to aspects focused upon in the mini-dissertation. Deducing McK’s own point of view also requires for a careful scrutiny of data, usually aimed at giving the reader a representative overview of sources to which he had access. Even so his documentation of the various earlier interpretations has seldom been used in the mini-dissertation.

The goal of the present study has thus been a functional one, ascertaining ‘real’ variants on the level of translation, and complementary and (or) divergent opinions (ie C and McK compared to H) with regard to structure and context. Apart from focusing on the individual authors, the conclusions below, will, however, also highlight general trends pertaining to the aspects discussed.

#### 4.1 Translation and alternative renderings

##### 4.1.1 The individual authors

The English versions provided by the three commentators each have their own unique features.

C states (1986:82) that he uses the text of the Revised Standard Version (*RSV*). In his own notes he employs “the *NEB* [New English Bible] and *JPSB* [Jewish Publication Society Bible] as alternative renderings”.

H (1986:xii) characterizes his “translation style” as “sometimes excessively wooden”. He explains:

“One reason for this is an effort at concision in English that will match the concision of the Hebrew. But the most substantial reason is the impulse to translate identical words and identical phrases consistently throughout the book, in order to further a comparison of the parallel passages which are such a prominent feature of the book [of Jeremiah]”.

Both C (=RSV) and H thus attempt to translate the Hebrew text in a consistent way. Their renderings therefore have a tendency towards a more literal representation of the original. They do differ, however, in some aspects. C [=RSV] keeps as close as possible to MT, reproducing it in English in a standardised way. As a matter of fact the translation he uses has become a kind of *textus receptus* in the English language. H, on the other hand, tries to reflect the contextual function of Hebrew passages in a rather ingenious way. The statement in 23:14 (referring to the conduct of Jerusalem prophets)

*na'op we=halok ba=sheqer*

is translated as

“imagine committing adultery and walking in the Lie!”

The two infinitive absolute forms are interpreted in terms of the presumed tenor of the excerpt, namely that of irony (cf 23:31). Elsewhere (23:30-32) the thrice repeated phrase

*hinneni 'al ha=nebi'im*



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is regarded as challenge formula and translated accordingly, namely:

“I declare myself against the prophets”.

McK's efforts in the domain of translation are more directed towards an *ad sensum* portrayal of the Hebrew original. Metaphors in particular are rendered in an interpretative way, eg 23:11 where the Hebrew clause (according to *BHS* delineation)

*laken yihyeh darkam ka=ħalaqlaqot*

(“Therefore their way shall be to them like slippery paths ...”, cf C)

is paraphrased as:

“Therefore they will lose their footing on the road which they take”.

Occasionally McK does give a more literal rendering of a metaphor, subtly substituting a Hebrew figure of speech with an English one. It seems, however, as if immediate syntactic environment rather than overall tone of a passage determines his choice of words. In 23:15 for example the technical term *ḥanupah* (“ungodliness”:C, “sacrilege”:H) is translated as “pollution” and explained as “a pestilence of turpitude - rather than godlessness or apostasy”. The decision of McK was probably influenced by the preceding verb (*yaṣe’ah*: “it went went”) and subsequent prepositional phrase (*le=kol ha=areṣ*: “to the whole earth”). His rendering of the accusation against the prophets of Jerusalem is thus:

“[for from the prophets of Jerusalem] pollution has spread throughout the land”.

The result of the unsatisfactory behaviour of the prophets is illustrated in an impressive way. It also shows his tendency to make the readers aware of the effect or outcome (cf 23:27) of an event.

All three the commentators sometimes find it necessary to amend the Masoretic text (MT). Their respective suggestions often differ, but is not always reflected on the level of translation, eg 23:14 where MT

*le=bilti shabu*

“so that they did not return” (perfect of *sh-w-b*)



is changed to

*le=bilti shub* (inf)

by H, while the recommended reading of C and McK is

*le=bilti yashubu* (imperfect).

The translation, “so that no one turns” is, however, accepted by all three the commentators.

In their rendering of an amended text H usually brackets a dubious phrase, while McK omits it where necessary (eg 23:16).

Reading through the relevant portions of the three commentaries, one gets the impression that H more often resorts to drastic textual emendation compared with the other two scholars. He changes word boundaries, eg 23:23 (cf 24)

*h'lhymqrb'any*

is read as

*h'lhym/qrb/'any* (“Am God far I”)

rather than (cf MT)

*h'lhym/qrb/'ny* (“Am God-from-far I”).

The same procedure is also reflected in 23:26 where the traditional rendering (cf C and McK)

“How long will there be in the heart (*ha=yesh be=leb*) of the prophets”

is amended to

“How long! Can the heart of the prophets return (*ha=yashub leb*)”.

In addition to the changing of consonants and vowels in MT, words (deemed to have fallen out through haplography) are sometimes added by H (: C and McK), eg 23:29 (cf 23:10) where the Hebrew (MT)

*ha=lo'* (“Is there not”)

becomes

*halom debari* (“... my word a dream”).

There is also occasional differences among the authors with regard to categorizing lines as poetry or prose (eg 23:16-17), and the length of lines (possibly 23:13-14). Their individual choices, of course, have a slight effect on the translation of the respective parts. These aspects, however, have not received



systematic attention in the mini-dissertation.

Different thematic or contextual interpretations of specific excerpts have a more profound influence on the rendering of the Hebrew. Diverging interpretations have, for example, been identified with regard to the conception of the “divine council” (23:18) and the experiencing of the “gale” (*sa‘ar*) by the *resha‘im* (23:19).

In addition to associating tendencies with the individual authors, a profitable approach is also to indicate specific features pertaining to the aspect of translation and alternative renderings which have come to the fore in the study of individual verses.

#### 4.1.2 General aspects

Translations and interpretations may be regarded as endeavours which clearly bear the stamp of the individual scholar (as shown in 4.1.1). General trends may, however, also be indicated without necessarily relating them to a certain person each time. A few remarks will accordingly be made about lexical and grammatical aspects, as well as textual criticism.

When translating, **equivalents** may be sought to match words or phrases on a one to one basis. A dynamic rendering, on the other hand, will strive to render the sense of a certain linguistic segment by means of an expression which is more familiar in the target language. Some features and consequences of this procedure have been illustrated in the discussion of Jeremiah 23:9 to 40. It has, for example, been found that (during the process of translation) the number of words may increase or decrease with regard to the original. In verse 10

*u=geburatam* (“and their might/power”) *lo ken*

the predicate has been translated as “not right” or “corrupt”. The second suggestion (decrease of words) is clearer but the first (“not right”) has been shown to be poetically more striking as variation to the synonym *ra‘ah* (“evil”) in the preceding clause.

Alternatively the English version of a statement may be done in an amplified way, eg 23:17

*shalom yihyeh lakem*

(“May peace be upon you”)

which is rendered by McK as: “You will be safe and prosperous”. An attempt is thus made to make the impact (within context) of a fossilized expression more explicative.

A prominent feature of a dynamic versus a conventional translation is the changing of nouns to verbs, eg 23:10

*wa=tehi meruṣ-am ra‘ah*

of which the stereotyped rendering would be:

“Their course has become evil”

and the more interpretative version:

“They lead evil lives”.



It also happens that verbs without an object are translated in a nominal way, eg 23:11

*ki gam nabi' gam kohen ḥanepu*

where the sin of prophet (*nabi'*) and priest (*kohen*) may be interpreted as being “ungodly”. An alternative verbal rendering is “committed sacrilege”.

In the discussion of the above example in chapter 3 attention has been drawn to the question of intensity. In the view of H a finite verb plus object (“committed sacrilege”) is more informative than a nominal predicate (“are ungodly”).

The contextual rendering of nouns has also brought to the fore other categories by means of which differences between variant translations may be portrayed. In verse 9, for example, attention has been drawn to the phrase

*dibre qodsh-o*

and its rendering as “his (ie Yahweh’s) holy words”, or “dread words”. “Holy” focuses on the Divine Speaker from whom the words originate, while “dread” indicates the effect the words have (or should have) upon the addressees. A similar example may be found in verse 12:

*ki abi’ alehem ra’ah*

(“I [Yahweh] will bring *ra’ah* on them”).

Within context *ra’ah* refers to an event. A more or less neutral translation would be “evil” (cf *wa=tehi meruṣam ra’ah* above). Alternatively the consequences of the said event may be spelt out by rendering it as “disaster”.

References to the state of mind of the “false” prophets leads to speculation among the three commentators. In 23:26 reference is made to

*tarmit libbam* (“the deceit of their heart”)

and in 23:13 the statement is made:

*u=bi=nebi’e shomeron ra’iti tiplah*

(“And in the prophets of Samaria I have seen *tiplah*”).

The first example (23:26) gives rise to the question whether “self-deceit” or the “intent to deceive” is alluded at. Jeremiah 23:13, in turn, may refer to the prophets’ “lack of reality” or “intellectual discrimination”. (*Tapel* refers to tasteless food in Job 6:6). Within the domain of translation (as in everyday communication) hypothesized mental states (Verschueren 1999:88) therefore remains a problem.

**Grammatical** categories such as singular and plural lead to differences among the three scholars. In 23:16 the phrase

*ḥazon libbam*

is interpreted both as a “vision” and “visions of their heart”. The choice, singular or plural, sometimes leads to textual emendation, eg 23:37 where H reads *to'maru* rather than *to'mar*. The English translation of both of the options, however, remains the same, namely “you shall/will say”. When nouns are concerned, a plural may be interpreted in an individualizing way, eg 23:24

*'im yissater ish ba=mistar-im*  
 (“If a man hides in *mistarim*”)

where *mistarim* is interpreted as “some hole” and “hiding/secret places”.

The antecedent of the pronominal suffix in the phrase *yoshebe=ha* (“her [ie Jerusalem’s] inhabitants”) can only be ascertained from the bigger context. In 23:19 again a pronominal suffix must be presumed (cf “[his] wrath”) to facilitate the reading of a phrase.

Translating of verbal categories pose some questions. In a clause like 23:20

*lo yashub 'ap yahweh*



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opinions differ whether the predicate of “wrath of Yahweh” should be “will” or “shall return”.

Occasionally the problem of deciding between intransitive active, or passive mood arise (eg *ydhw* in 23:12).

On syntactical level the interpretation of a conjunction as copulative or passive may pose a problem. In 23:22 the protasis

“and if they stood in my council”

is followed by the apodosis which can be rendered as

“then (copulative) let them make known my word”, or

“then (consecutive) they would have made known my word”.

All three the commentators seem to follow the second option which leads to extensive theological discussion. In these and in other examples it proves to be difficult “to reproduce the meaning ... as understood by the writer” (Nida and Taber 1974:8).

In the discussion thus far **textual emendation** has already been referred to. The Masoretic text, as interpreted by the three scholars provides examples of textual corruption such as haplography, eg 23:10

*ki mena'apim u=mere'im male'ah ha=ares*

where the underlined clause (“and evildoers”) is regarded by H as having fallen out during the process of transmission.

The phrase, *ne'um yahweh*, where it appears the second time in 23:24 is regarded as dittography by H.

H and C change the vocalization of *l=mn'sy dbr* in 23:17, interpreting it as “the despisers of the word [of Yahweh]” (*li=debar [yahweh]*) rather than “to those who despise me, spoke Yahweh” (*li=mena'aşe dibber [yahweh]*). Word boundaries are altered by all three scholars in 23:34, reading ‘*t[t]m/hmş[s]*’ rather than ‘*t/mh/mş[s]*’.

Sequence of clauses is changed by H in verse 10, while a word (*ba='apelah*) is allocated a different position by C compared to H and McK in verse 12.

## 4.2 Form, structure and setting

In the discussion thus far *form and structure* have been kept apart from *setting*, following the procedure of H. In the following overview (4.2.1), however, this distinction will be abandoned in the examination of the individual authors.

### 4.2.1 The individual authors

In the introduction of McKane he has an elaborate discussion of the relationship between MT and LXX, as well as between MT and the Peshita and Targums respectively. He also refers to views with regard to the identification of prose sections in the book of Jeremiah, particularly the endeavours of

Thiel and Weippert (whose point of view he considered for example in 23:25-32).

McK expresses the opinion (1986:xlix) “that there is no comprehensive framework of literary arrangement or theological system within which the parts of 1-25 are fitted together ...”. He states that the “pre-existing nucleus of Jeremianic material” was enlarged through processes which are only partly understood at present. For this purpose he coins the technical term, “rolling corpus” (cf chapter 1 of the mini-dissertation).

The “trigger” which led to expansion (according to McK 1986:1) could have been a single verse. Within the pericope 23:9-40 he refers to verses 17 and 19. In verse 17 the phrase *li=mena’asay* (accepting the vocalization of MT), for example, led to the insertion of *dibber yahweh* (MT) which in turn had the function to make explicit that the subsequent clause, *shalom yihyeh lakem*, was spoken [unjustly] in the name of the Lord. Furthermore in verse 19 *hemah* (“wrath”) is regarded as gloss.

McK also uses the term “kernel” or “core” (1986:liii) during the course of his endeavours to reconstruct the history of the Hebrew text. He emphasizes, however, that the core does not necessarily refer to the *ipsissima verba* of the prophet Jeremiah. In 23:33-40 verse 33, for instance, constitutes the kernel. Verses 34-40 are described as “the elaboration of a satirical use of *ms[s]*”.

Another characterization utilized by McK is the so-called “reservoir” idea (1986:lvi). This refers to the theory that the vocabulary of the poetry was re-used in prose sections (ie functioned as “reservoir”). He contends, for example, that 23:12c (“for I will bring disaster on them when the day of reckoning comes. This is Yahweh’s word”) was the source of Jeremiah 11:23. McK also argues that *[bi=]sherirut libb[=o]* in 23:17 is a reservoir for the occurrences of the phrase in prose passages such as 3:17 and 13:10. Likewise 23:21 is regarded as source for 23:32 (which most probably does not derive from the prophet Jeremiah).

Under the heading “generation” or “triggering” (1986:lxi ff) McK comments that 23:25-32 is “explicable as a prose commentary on vv 16-22, and, in particular they are generated by descriptions of *shalom* prophets in v 16”.

Pertaining the book as a whole McK states (1986:xlix) that there is a tendency to “underestimate the untidy and desultory nature of the aggregation of material which comprises the book of Jeremiah”.

Regarding the historical setting, he typifies 23:34-40 as an exilic or post-exilic passage using internal evidence as criteria. He hesitates, however, to assign any other portion of chapters 1-25 to specific historical periods. With reference to 23:25-32 he agrees (1986:595) that the passage could have arose out of “reflections among exiles about the meaning of disintegration and dispersion and how these experiences were theologically explicable in relation to the different kinds of prophetic activity which characterized the final period of the pre-exilic Judaeian state”. There is however “no decisive indications” that the contents fits the exilic period better than the life and times of the prophet Jeremiah.

McK is also careful with regard to the relationship between Jeremiah and the Deuteronomic-Deuteronomistic prose. He merely concludes that the book of Jeremiah “increases and enriches” the latter (1986:xlvi).

Carroll is not concerned with the reconstruction of the ‘historical Jeremiah’ from a reading of the text, but rather approaches the book as the “editorial assemblage of many discrete levels of tradition” (1986:34). He is therefore sceptical of the attempts of H to construct a coherent chronology of Jeremiah's preaching (1985:43). C is more inclined to agree with McK and states that the latter's views should be taken into account when analysing the text of Jeremiah.

With reference to the works of Janzen (1973) and Tov (1979), C agrees that the Greek and MT represent two editions of the book of Jeremiah. According to C the *persona* of Jeremiah is considerably enlarged in the second edition (MT). He himself is more interested in the “redactional organization of the many units and blocks of material constituting the book” (1986:57). The hypothesis is, for instance, presented that a factor playing a part in the construction of Jeremiah was the “theological propaganda designed to make sense of the collapse of the Judaeian society and the fall of Jerusalem” (1986:60).

The function, setting and date of the Deuteronomistic level of the editing of Jeremiah cannot be determined with any certitude (1986:67). C suggests that the complex issues of date and setting can only be settled “in an approximate way” (1986:69) by reference to the different interests presented by the various traditions in the text. He accordingly identifies several social circles active after the fall of Jerusalem and during the Persian period. Bearing in mind these interests provide penetrating insights into the various features incorporated into the text.

One of the “ironies” in the book is, for example, the fact that the prophets of Judah and Jerusalem are denounced in the name of the prophet Jeremiah. C contends (1986:76) that the “other prophets in the

tradition provide a foil for Jeremiah and by their falseness endorse him as the one speaking the word of Yahweh". Passages like 23:9-40 stress the active participation of the prophets in the performance of the prophetic role. However they are criticised for not having the divine word and lacking the divine commission. The editors of the tradition seemingly wished to present Jeremiah's words as the divine words for their time. C draws attention to the fact that in the first edition [Greek] Jeremiah is rarely called a prophet while his role as prophet is greatly developed in the second edition. A fifth century dating is suggested (1986:79).

**Holladay** states at the beginning of his 1986 commentary: "I have become convinced that the data for a reconstruction of the chronology of Jeremiah's career, and for the establishment of fairly secure settings for his words and actions are attainable, and this commentary is based upon such a construction".

In the second volume of his commentary (1989:1) he still emphasizes that "one has the impression from the book of a distinctive personality, and of specific details of the words and actions of that personality ...". He admits, however, that the reconstruction of a historical Jeremiah is a difficult endeavour due to aspects like the process of oral tradition and the various kinds of literary material.

Regarding the fact that MT offers expansions over the Greek text, he stresses that it is "a characteristic of the prose sections, not the poetic ones" (1989:3). A date towards the end of the fifth century BC is suggested for the expanded edition.

The setting of 23:9-33 is, according to H, evidently the conflict with the false prophets in 601/600 (1989:21). Within this collection he does not find any discernible ordering process of units, suggesting that the present order may be simply chronological. Jeremiah 23:9-40 is preceded by material centering on Jerusalem and the royal house (21:11-23:8). These two small collections were attached to chapter 20 "at Jeremiah's behest" (1989:21). "My bones" in 23:9 reminds of a similar expression in 20:9. H dates its incorporation into the bigger text as the year 594, or "soon thereafter".

H phrases the relationship between Jeremiah and Deuteronomy in the following way (1989:53):

"Jeremiah drew on Proto-Deuteronomy, and exilic redactors of Deuteronomy sometimes drew on Jeremiah's words".



According to the investigation of H Jeremiah knew Deuteronomy 5-26. H even provides a bigger literary setting for Jeremiah by indicating relations of the book with Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Joshua and Judges. Jeremiah was acquainted with events during the reign of earlier kings. The book Jeremiah is also dependent on Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and the minor prophets (Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk), the Psalms and Proverbs. Jeremiah, in turn, had impact upon later books like Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah (1989:84 ff).

H provides some impressions regarding Jeremiah's use of language (1989:75 ff). He himself (ie H) found 135 references in the book of Jeremiah to irony and sarcasm. There are also many examples of word play and assonance.

#### 4.2.2 General aspects

When comparing the **general views** of McK, C and H as summarized in the previous subsection (4.2.1) it becomes clear that the approaches of McK and C regarding the composition and setting of the book of Jeremiah are quite similar, while H seemingly has a different outlook.

McK and C both focus on the editorial process. The former (McK) suggests a formal procedure by means of which ancient material, referred to as the "kernel" or "core", became enlarged. Certain initial statements, for example, "triggered" expansion, and the vocabulary of poetry served as "reservoir" for prose sections. Except for 23:34-40, he is hesitant to provide a historical setting. He refers to the "desultory nature of the aggregation of material" and he refrains from placing the contents in a literary or theological framework.

C has the same point of departure as McK (he actually complements him while criticizing H). Contrary to McK, however, C believes that the "redactional organization" does reflect (in a retrievable way) the theology of its later editors. Attention is drawn to the different "interests" presented by various traditions in the text. C also admits that the dating of the sources is a complex issue, but nevertheless suggest a fifth century historical setting for 23:9-40.

H also regards the end of the fifth century BC as terminus ad quem for the compilation of the book as a whole. He does, however, insist that the contents of the various passages can be related to the lifetime of the historical Jeremiah. The conflict with the false prophets, described in 23:9-40, fits (according to H) the period 601/600 BC.

The hypotheses of the three scholars, as set out above, influence their respective discussions of the aspects of form and structure, and setting as expounded in chapter 3.

Regarding **form and structure** H pays much more attention to a systematic discussion of syntax than C or McK. Clauses are labelled (by H) according to the surmised intention of prophet Jeremiah or the Divine Being. Verses 10-12 are, for example, typified as an accusation and 12 as an announcement of judgement. The two categories are merged in the discussion of 13-14. Verse 16 is referred to as a paranetic appeal and verse 25 as a complaint statement, while verse 28a is categorized as a “challenge by Yahweh”.

Characteristic of H is also his attempts to carefully distinguish between the words of Jeremiah (eg 23:9, 16) and those ascribed to Yahweh (eg 23:10-12, 21:22). Presumed speaker and addressees are also used as a way of establishing the boundaries between subsequent passages. It is, however, not such a straightforward procedure. Verses 16 to 22, for example, are regarded as one pericope by C and McK, while H separates 16-20 from 21-22. One of the reasons for the difference in opinion is the scope ascribed to the messenger formula, *koh amar yahweh šeba’ot* (“thus said Yahweh Šeba’ot”).

There is usually a general agreement regarding the main genres, namely prose and poetry, among the three commentators. In the pericope 25-32, however, H (cf C) classifies the first and last three verses (25-27, 30-32) as prose, and McK all the verses (25-32). To H verses 28-29 appear to be a climatic short poem in the middle of a long prose section. It is interesting that these divergent opinions coincide with alternative settings ascribed to the passage by H (600 BC) and McK (possibly final period of the pre-exilic Judaen state). What can be said with some certainty is that H continuously seeks to identify kernel material pertaining to the earliest stages of the written Jeremiah tradition.

H does, however, not rule out the possibility of later additions to core material. He typifies, for example, verses 34-40 as a midrashic extension of 33 (cf McK and subsection 4.2.1). To substantiate his point of view in this instance, H (cf C) lists stylistic variations peculiar to 34-40 compared with 33 and the rest of Jeremiah.

The suggested **setting** of the 33-40 (particularly 34-40) is the only instance where the three commentators are in accord with each other about date and circumstances of a passage. They agree that the contents can be best applied to the post-exilic Jewish community.

No exact date is suggested by H, C or McK regarding 9-12. H, however, shows that the topics (like drought) have parallels elsewhere in the book of Jeremiah. He also refers to the crisis of vocation of the prophet reflected in the passage.

Verses 13-15 mention the prophets of Samaria as well as Jerusalem. H suggests the same setting as that which applies to 23:9-12. References to the divine punishment by means of the images of poisonous herbs and water prompts C to consider a “secondary level of application” attributed to the “Deuteronomistic redaction”.

The next passage (16-20:H; 16-22:C, McK) is historically related to the previous two by H. He draws parallels with verses in chapters 4, 16 and 15. C, however, prefers a later period. According to him (C) verses 16-17 reflect a polarization of people into righteous (pious) and wicked, circumstances which fit 587 and later. Once again he discovers the hand of a Deuteronomistic editor. McK prefers a middle course, admitting Deuteronomistic influence without denying the historicity of the passage. A religio-political setting is proposed, a confusion of patriotism and nationalism and reliance upon the dogma of the invincibility of Jerusalem as seat of the Yahweh cult.

Verses 21-22 share the motif of standing in the council of Yahweh, present in 16-20 (cf 18). C finds traits of a specific editorial policy in 21-22, namely presenting the speaker as being in the right and his opponents as being in the wrong.

The two verses, 23 and 24, contain information about God being far and/or near, phrased as a statement in the Greek and a question in MT. Although the present Hebrew version (rhetorical questions) may be the work of later orthodoxy (McK), the contents echo similar expressions elsewhere in the Bible. Furthermore, according to H, Deut 30:11-14 is dependent on the present passage (23-24).

When suggesting a setting for 25-32 the three scholars do it in accordance with their proclaimed points of departure (cf 4.2.1). H regards the passage authentic to the biblical prophet (600 BC). C ascribes it to a later period when prophets were banned as false *per se* (Zech 13:2-6). McK finds both an early and a late (pre-exilic) dating applicable.

### 4.3 Final discussion

The “discussion” in chapter 3 summarizes the results of the exegetical study (“translation” and “alternative renderings”), the remarks pertaining to form and structure, and theories about the setting of the relevant verses. Attention is drawn to differences among the scholars, problematic issues (eg 23-24) and general trends. The final discussion will be of similar nature, focusing on the mini-dissertation as a whole but particularly on 4.1-4.2.2. In conclusion a comparison will be drawn with the study of Rodd (1986/7).

Jeremiah 23:9-40 is characterized in the Hebrew Bible as “concerning the prophets” and can be divided into seven (or six) relatively independent oracles.

In the mini-dissertation the said oracles are studied with regard to translation, form and structure as well as setting. For this purpose three commentaries on the book of Jeremiah which appeared in 1986 are compared. The respective authors are WL Holladay, W McKane and RP Carroll. Holladay’s endeavour is used as basic work. His translation of Jeremiah 23:9-40 is provided and alternative renderings of Carroll and McKane are selected. A comparable procedure is followed with regard to structure and form, and setting.



Holladay and McKane offer individual translations while Carroll utilizes the Revised Standard Version (RSV), adding variant readings (for example from *NEB* and *JPSB*). The three English renderings of the Hebrew text represent three points of departure with regard to translation techniques. Carroll (RSV) gives a rather literal version and McKane a more dynamic one. Holladay tries to keep close to the Hebrew text and syntax (attempting to translate identical words and phrases in a consistent way), but nevertheless attempts to render the contextual function of the Hebrew passages in an ingenious way. The evidence provided by 23:9-40 also suggests that he occasionally tends to resort to more drastic textual emendations than Carroll or McKane.

Seen from a general perspective, the three translations reflect subtle aspects regarding translation techniques. Renderings differ, for example, depending upon whether the translator focuses on the speaker or the addressee[s]. They also show the impact of grammatical interpretation, for example choosing to read a conjunction as consecutive (ie conversive) rather than copulative.

When analysing the form and structure of the individual oracles and their settings, the view of Holladay

is annotated with those of Carroll and McKane. Subsequently the premise of each of the authors regarding the composition of the book of Jeremiah is summarized and compared with their respective statements regarding the various extracts. In the concluding discussion remarks regarding form and structure, and setting are integrated.

Regarding form and structure as separate items, it is clear that Holladay in particular presents a systematic scrutinizing of the syntax. He often labels clauses with characterizations of the intention of the speaker such as “paranetic appeal” (verse 16) or “complaint statement” (verse 25). As far as setting is concerned Holladay dates all the oracles (except 23:33-40) round about 601/600 BC, during a time of conflict of the prophet Jeremiah with the false prophets.

McKane and Carroll both focus on the editorial process. Carroll finds “interests” of consecutive generations reflected in text. McKane is hesitant to pinpoint specific circumstances which influenced the editing of the text. He does suggest a formal procedure by means of which ancient material became enlarged, but nevertheless refers to the “desultory” nature of the process. Both he and Carroll regard the fifth century as the approximate time of final composition of the book of Jeremiah.

Compared with the study of Rodd (1986/7) the mini-dissertation substantiates more clearly and elaborately the contributions of the individual authors in general and specifically as regards 23:9-40. Focusing on the aspects of translation and alternative renderings, form and structure, and setting also provides perspectives from different angles. It also shows how different points of departure determine (to a greater or lesser extent) the direction of a commentary.



**CHAPTER 5**  
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