

**THE CONCEPT OF FALSE PROPHECY IN THE OLD
TESTAMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
EZEKIEL 13**

**A thesis submitted to the School of Mission and Theology
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Keturah Ahereza and Elizabeth Akoragye

הַנְּחָלָה יְהוָה בְּנֵי שָׂרָה פְּרֵי הַבֶּטֶן: **Psalm 127:3**

ἰδοὺ ἡ κληρονομία κυρίου υἱοῖ ὁ μισθὸς τοῦ καρποῦ τῆς
γαστροῦς

ecce hereditas Domini filii mercis fructus ventris

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Most of the abbreviations used in this thesis are those listed in *The SBL Handbook of Style* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 68-152. For those abbreviations that are not in the above book but have been used in this thesis, are listed below:

<i>BE</i>	The Biblical Expositor
<i>CCHS</i>	A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture
<i>CMS</i>	Church Missionary Society
<i>IBC</i>	The International Bible Commentary
<i>IBD</i>	The Illustrated Bible Dictionary
<i>NBC</i>	The New Bible Commentary
<i>NBD</i>	The New Bible Dictionary
<i>NIDB</i>	The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible
<i>PCB</i>	Peake's Commentary on the Bible
<i>RSB</i>	The Reformation Study Bible
Webster's Dictionary	Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General background on Old Testament prophecy

The concept of prophecy is very central in the religious life of Israel. There are differing views as to when prophecy started in Israel. According to Gen 20:7, Abraham is the first person to be associated with the title נביא “prophet” in the entire Hebrew Bible. Because of this verse (Gen 20:7), Abraham is considered the first prophet in Israel. It is important to note that “although Abraham is identified as a prophet by the source usually called E, Abraham does not function as the other prophets do. He does not address people in the name of God.”¹ Others have argued that true prophecy started with Moses at the onset of the Exodus. During the Exodus, Moses exhibited qualities that were later seen in other prophets. He approached Pharaoh of Egypt without fear and this can be well compared to the way Elijah confronted King Ahab (1 Kgs 21:17-29). Moses further gave guidelines that Israel was to follow to distinguish true from false prophets (Deut 13:1-5; 18:22). Other than Moses, Aaron is also called by the title נביא “prophet” (Exodus 7:1). According to Exodus 15:20, Miriam the sister of Aaron is called הנביאה “the prophetess”, “but she performs actions that exhibit a character that is more cultic than prophetic (Exod 15:20; Num 12:1-15).”²

After the Exodus then came the time of Judges and during this time, the concept of prophecy still existed. According to Judg 4:4, Deborah was הנביאה “prophetess” who judged Israel “under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim.” After the time of Deborah, prophecy became less common. There was drought for God’s word of prophecy. According to 1 Sam 3:1, “the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision.”

The call of Samuel (1 Sam 3:1-21) marked a new beginning in the religious life of Israel. He became a prophet who even influenced the politics of the nation. This is because through him, God chose and rejected kings. During this time prophecy entered a new phase. God seemed to come closer to His people than before. Samuel became

¹ J. J. Schmitt, “Preexilic Hebrew Prophecy,” ABD 5:482.

² Ibid.

the greatest figure to emerge in Israel since Moses. Through him, God warned Eli of the calamity that was to befall him and his family (1 Sam 3:11-18), chose Saul to be a king (1 Sam 9:17), later rejected him (1 Sam 15:23) and chose David to be king (1 Sam 16:12-13). God during this time still spoke through the prophets. For example Nathan rebuked David when the latter killed Uriah and took his wife (2 Sam 12:1-15).

During this time of the monarchy, prophecy and kingship existed side by side. Prophecy acted as a sort of a check to the monarchy.

Long after Saul and David had left the scene, two prominent figures emerged in Israel: Elijah and Elisha. In fact according to G. v. Rad, "It was in the ninth century, with Elijah and Elisha, that prophecy, ... first began to make its voice heard."³ During this time, prophecy became more like a profession. As a prophet, Elijah is "unapproachable, unpredictable, feared and even hated but always someone to be reckoned with.....Such a figure cannot simply have been invented, and can only be explained by saying that the stories reflect a historical figure of well-nigh superhuman stature."⁴ This superhuman stature is reflected in the many miracles that he performed, one of which is the Mount Carmel victory against the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18:20-40). After Elijah had ascended to heaven, Elisha took over his role and he as well did many miracles. Characteristic of prophecy during this time, is the phrase, בני הנביאים "sons of the prophets" (1 Kgs 20:35; 2 Kgs 2:7). Another characteristic of prophecy during this time is the concept of ecstasy when people prophesied with special power and seemed to be out of their minds (cf. 1 Sam 10:6; 1 Kgs 11:29-30).

The period above of Samuel, Nathan, Elijah and Elisha is usually called "preclassical" period. "Since they did not write down their prophecies in separate books, these prophets are often better remembered for what they did than for what they said."⁵ During this time, "prophecy was always intimately associated with the monarchy beginning with Saul, for whose downfall, according to the tradition, one of the principal reasons was loss of prophetic support."⁶

³ G. v. Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol II, *The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions* (New York: Harper, 1965), 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵ "Introduction to the Prophets," RSB 1018.

⁶ J. Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (London: SPCK, 1984), 60.

In the 8th and 7th centuries B. C., we have what is usually called classical period of Israelite prophecy. A chief characteristic of prophets during this time is that they put their oracles in writing which later became part of Hebrew Scriptures. First, there was Amos who was followed by Hosea in the northern kingdom and later Micah and Isaiah in the southern kingdom and this was at a time when Israel was under attack from the Assyrians. Then later in the 7th century, there came Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Nahum and Habakkuk. During the Babylonian Exile, we have Ezekiel and Obadiah.⁷ After the exile, there appeared Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Joel.

1.2 Origin of Israelite prophecy

The origin of prophecy in Israel remains a big academic debate. G. v. Rad comments thus on the origin of prophecy: “The origins of prophecy are themselves a difficult problem: there is not enough source material, and what there is is not sufficiently homogeneous, to allow us to draw up anything like a history of the movement, or even a rough sketch of its first beginnings.”⁸ It is believed that the concept of prophecy in Canaan (Palestine) originated from the mantic activity in Thrace and Asia Minor. Therefore when the Israelites arrived in Canaan, they found the concept there. “Canaanite religion must, then, have been the medium by which the movement came to Israel.”⁹ Two views have come up to try to explain the origin of prophecy. One says that Israelites found the concept of prophecy among Canaanites “after the settlement on Canaanite soil and took it over from them, adapting it in the process to her own conception of God.”¹⁰

Another view is that prophecy just developed naturally in Israel without being copied from other societies. Others say that the relationship between prophecy in Israel and the neighbouring cultures (especially the Mari texts) can be explained “under the assumption that prophecy was mediated to Israel by ancestors who had come from a similar cultural environment.”¹¹

⁷ There are different views concerning the historical setting of Obadiah. J. J. Collins is one of those that suggest that the book was written during the exile in his book: *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 374-375.

⁸ G. v. Rad, *Old Testament Theology, Vol II, The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions* (New York: Harper, 1965), 6.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁰ H. Mowvley, *Guide to Old Testament Prophecy* (Guildford: Lutterworth, 1979), 9.

¹¹ J. Bright, *A History of Israel* (London: SCM Press, 1986), 89.

On the basis of some biblical verses, some scholars maintain that prophecy in Israel originated from Yahweh. A good example is Jer 7:25 which says that: “From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day.” A related verse is 2 Chr 36:15. Whatever the origin, what is clear is that prophecy was a very established institution which played a big role in shaping the religious and political life of Israel.

1.3 The meaning of the word נביא “prophet”

The English word ‘prophet’ comes from the Greek word *προφეტης*. This is the word used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew word נביא. According to Webster’s Dictionary, a prophet is “a person who speaks for God or a god, or as though under divine guidance.”¹² According to J. J. Collins, this *προφეტης* “refers to one who speaks on behalf of a god or goddess.”¹³ This person can either be a man or woman (called prophetess). A prophet is a proclaimer. “This seems to be the primary meaning of the Hebrew word *nabi*, as applied to the vast majority of biblical prophets.”¹⁴ A prophet is known as someone with ability to foretell the future or who is able to know something without being told by anyone. “The prophets were men of remarkable psychic powers.”¹⁵

There are three Hebrew words all of which have sometimes been rendered “prophet” in English. These are: נביא, ראה and חזה. The word נביא is in all cases translated as prophet, while ראה “which is, in form, an active participle of the verb “to see”, is translated ‘seer’.”¹⁶ On the other hand, חזה does not have an English exact equivalent “and is translated either “prophet” (e.g. Is 30:10) or ‘seer’ (e.g. 1 Ch 29:29).”¹⁷ According to most scholars, ראה and נביא are the same. It is agreed that a prophet in ancient times was called ראה as is explained in 1 Sam 9:9.¹⁸ The word נביא seems to have come to Hebrew from the Akkadian word *nabitu*. Interestingly now, the word *nabu* (diviner?) is found among the Mari documents. “This probable loanword in Hebrew suggests that prophecy in Israel was not a phenomenon unrelated to ideas and practices outside

¹² “Prophet,” Webster’s Dictionary 1443.

¹³ J. J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 283.

¹⁴ J. F. A. Sawyer, *Prophecy and the Biblical Prophets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 1.

¹⁵ J. P. Baker, “Prophecy, Prophets,” IBD 3:1279.

¹⁶ J. A. Motyer, “Prophecy, Prophets,” NBD 1037.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Israel. Israelite prophecy can rather be understood as a concept and an activity that Israel shared with other cultures and peoples.”¹⁹ On the other hand however, some other scholars say that the word נביא means “one who is called” (from the verb בוא, “to come”).²⁰

The title איש האלהים “man of God” was also used in reference to “prophet”. “This title was first used of Moses (Dt. 33:1) and continued in use till the end of the monarchy (e.g 1 Sa 2:27; 9:6; 1 Ki. 13:1, etc).”²¹

The word ‘prophecy’ refers to “prediction of the future under the influence of divine guidance; act or practice of a prophet.”²² It can also mean “something prophesied or predicted; specifically, the utterance or utterances of a prophet.”²³

1.4 True and False Prophets

There were two kinds of prophets in the Old Testament; the true and false ones. The true prophets were speaking the message of Yahweh while the false ones were uttering messages from their own minds. These two groups of prophets were always confronting each other. For example according to 1Kgs 22: “Micaiah the son of Imlah and Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah confronted each other before king Ahab, the one warning of defeat and other promising victory, and both appealing to the authority of the Lord.”²⁴ The confrontation reaches a climax with Zedekiah striking Micaiah on the cheek (1 Kgs 22:24). In this text, Micaiah is a true prophet of Yahweh who prophesies defeat and God’s judgment upon Ahab (1 Kgs 22:28) while Zedekiah promises victory for Ahab (1 Kgs 22:11). It was hard to tell a true prophet from a false one since both groups claimed to be speaking for Yahweh. False prophets have been said to be ecstatic but we know that according to 1 Sam 9; 10, “group-ecstasy was the common mark of the *nabi* in the time of Samuel.”²⁵ This ecstasy is also seen among the prophets of Baal at the Mount Carmel contest (1 Kgs 18:20-40).

¹⁸ BDB s.v. נביא, 611; s.v. ראה, 909.

¹⁹ J. J. Schmitt, “Preexilic Hebrew Prophecy” ABD 5:482.

²⁰ J. J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 283.

²¹ J. P. Baker, “Prophecy, Prophets,” IBD 3:1278.

²² “Prophecy,” Webster’s Dictionary, 1443.

²³ Ibid., 1443

²⁴ J. A. Motyer, “Prophecy, Prophets,” NBD 1041.

²⁵ Ibid.

False prophets were always corrupted to prophesy what the kings wanted; to prophesy good news. A good example is when Ahab says that he hates Micaiah because the latter does not prophesy good. This is what he says: שְׂנֵאתוֹ כִּי לֹא־יִתְנַבֵּא עָלַי טוֹב כִּי אִם־רָע וְאֲנִי, “but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil” (1 Kgs 22:8). Even the messenger who went to call Micaiah tried to convince him to prophesy what pleased the king (1 Kgs 22:13) but Micaiah vowed saying, “As the Lord lives, what the LORD says to me, that I will speak” (1 Kgs 22:14). Such was the determination of a true prophet of Yahweh. Prophets of Yahweh “were straight-from-the-shoulder men, those stout and devout hearts who in their times stood up and stood out in solitary grandeur. Chins up, faith up, they minced no words. If the dancing, drinking society women of Bethel were like ‘fat cows,’ that is what they were called (Amos 4:1).”²⁶ Whatever the true prophets prophesied, came to pass. For example when Jeremiah says that Hananiah will die, indeed he dies that same year as the former had prophesied (Jer 28-15-17).

Moses gave criteria that were to guide Israel in differentiating true from false prophets. Deut 13:1-5 says that if someone rises up and prophesies and what he says comes to pass, but preaches other gods, he should not be believed. Deut 18:22 gives fulfilment as a sign that the prophecy originated from God. But “sometimes the word of the false is fulfilled also, as a test for God’s people.”²⁷ Although there were those criteria laid down by Moses, it was not easy to know who was true and who was false. A good example is the conflicting messages given by Jeremiah and Hananiah (Jer 28). “Jeremiah knew firmly who was true and who was false, but how could he prove his case or convince his audience with a message that was considerably less palatable than the comforting words of his rival?”²⁸

According to Jer 23:10-14, false prophets are always characterized by immorality. Jeremiah further says in 23: 30-32, that “false prophets are men of borrowed testimony, feigned authority, and self appointed ministry... whereas the true prophet has stood in the counsel of Yahweh, and heard His voice, and has been sent by Him (verses 18, 21,

²⁶ J. K. Grider, “The Prophetic Books,” BE 2:115.

²⁷ J. K. Grider, “The Prophetic Books,” BE 2:1042.

²⁸ Y. Gitay, *Prophecy and prophets* (Atlanta: SBL, 1997), 66.

22, 28, 32).²⁹ False prophets always prophesied peace to their audience (Ezek 13:10, 16; Micah 3:5). According to Ezek 13:2, Yahweh condemns false prophets who speak from their own mind and then say, “Says the Lord.”³⁰ Prophet Micah condemns false prophets in the strongest possible terms when he says to them in 3:6 that: “Therefore it shall be night to you without vision, and darkness to you, without divination. The sun shall go down upon the prophets, and the day shall be black over them.”

False prophets always tell lies, as G. Cooke testifies: “False prophecy is deceptive, it deliberately leads people away from the Lord. Often it is a word dreamt up from their own imagination (Jer 23:16-18) and thoughts. People speak out of the deception of their own hearts (Jer 23:16).”³¹

One scholar argues that: “The false prophets were still active during the beginning of the reconstruction of the Second Temple, and their major programme in this time was to hinder the temple erection, Neh 6:10-14.”³² Misgana further argues that during the postexilic period, false prophecy did not flourish as before because “the wellbeing messages of the false prophets were proved a lie by the actuality of Judah’s exile.”³³

True prophets of Yahweh continued to appear until the time of Malachi (around 450 BC). But it would be right to argue that prophecy did not end with Malachi as seen from the Qumran documents and the work of John the Baptist (Luke 3:1-6).

1.5 Prophecy in Ancient Near East

It has been proved beyond any doubt that prophecy existed in the nations neighbouring Israel. The existence of prophecy or prophetic practices in these lands is attested in the Hebrew Bible by Jeremiah (Jer 27:1-15) who “referred to prophets and other religious specialists in the neighbouring lands of Edom, Moab, Ammon and the Phoenician cities...”³⁴ It even seems that in most of these nations, prophecy existed much before it even did in Israel. There has been evidence in the ancient nations of Mesopotamia,

²⁹ J. A. Motyer, “Prophecy, Prophets,” NBD 1042.

³⁰ Ezekiel 13:6 (RSV)

³¹ G. Cooke, *Developing Your Prophetic Gifting* (Tonbridge: Sovereign World, 1994), 310.

³² M. Misgana, *The True and False Prophecy in the Old Testament*, (Master of Philosophy in Theology diss., MHS, 1996), 130.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ J. Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (London: SPCK, 1984), 54.

Syria, Egypt, Syria and Anatolia that proves the existence of prophecy in these lands. The existence of prophecy in nations surrounding Israel has been used to answer the question about the origin of Israelite prophecy.

Prophetic activity is reported to have taken place in Hamath, a city state in Northern Syria. An inscription from there dating from the 8th century B. C. has been secured. This inscription “tells how, during a siege of a dependent city, Zakir prayed to the local Baal and received assurance of divine assistance through seers and other inspired individuals.”³⁵ From Ammon, a text from around 700 B. C. was discovered in 1967 which makes a reference to Balaam son of Beor, “who saw a vision during the night and obtained a somewhat enigmatic revelation from a group of numinous beings.”³⁶ Interestingly, the Hebrew Bible makes mention of one Balaam “who sees the vision of the Almighty” (Num 24:4).

The most famous prophetic texts to come from Ancient Near East outside Israel are the Mari documents that were discovered at Tell Hariri, “just inside the Syrian border with Iraq.”³⁷ These letters date to the first half of the 18th century B. C. Most of these documents are letters containing messages from the gods to king Zimrilim. Some of the messages were got through dreams. “Others came in visions, others again in a state of trance, no doubt induced by appropriate techniques by temple ecstasies.”³⁸

The Mari letters describe different types of prophets; some with titles and others without them. The most common title at Mari is *muhhu/ muhhutu* (ecstatic) whose “behaviour may involve self wounding.”³⁹ This practice can well be compared to the prophets of Baal that were competing with Elijah at Mount Carmel (1 Kgs 18:28). Commenting on the nature of *muhhu/ muhhutu*, this is what one had to say: “Thus this type of prophet, because of his peculiar behaviour, was perceived of as a madman, similar to the biblical *mēšuggā*’.”⁴⁰ At Mari, there were two main ways through which the gods sent their word to the people: “The professional prophets enjoyed direct revelations while awake; the lay persons, on the other hand, were usually dreamers of dreams. Divine revelations through dreams were a widespread phenomenon throughout

³⁵ Ibid., 54-55.

³⁶ H. B. Huffmon, “Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy,” ABD 5:477.

³⁷ J. Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (London: SPCK, 1984), 56.

³⁸ Ibid., 57.

³⁹ H. B. Huffmon, “Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy,” ABD 5:478.

the ancient Near East, including Israel.”⁴¹ In the Old Testament we also see dreams listed as one of the media through which Yahweh talked to His people (1 Sam 28:6).

Before the famous Mari texts were discovered, there were the Neo-Assyrian prophetic texts published in the second quarter of the 19th century. These texts contain terms like “*raggimu/ raggintu*, “proclaimer,” with some prophecies ascribed to a *selutu*, “votaress.”⁴²

From Middle Euphrates, texts dating to 1300 B. C. have been discovered. Two important Akkadian words appear in these texts: *anabbi atu* and *munabbi atu*. These words are proof to the existence of the phenomenon of prophecy in this area.

It has also been proved that prophecy and prophetic practices existed in ancient Egypt. “A twentieth dynasty copy also attests that Ipuwer, an Egyptian sage, denounced the kings for permitting lawlessness and injustice in the society”⁴³ This is found in the document, “The Admonitions of Ipu-wer.” Another text, “The Prophecy of Neferti” is “foretelling a future deliverance for a country in a time of trouble.”⁴⁴ In Egypt still, there are reports “that Pamyle— foster parent of Osiris— heard a voice from the temple of Zeus (Amun) instructing Pamyle to announce that Osiris had been born...”⁴⁵ There is also the text called “King Cheops and the Magicians” where a king’s son tells his father about an old man called Dedi. “The king visits Dedi, who demonstrates his powers and then predicts the birth of three kings who will find a new dynasty and bring to an end Cheops’ royal line. A brief appendix to the tale describes the gods fulfilling the sage’s prophecy.”⁴⁶

There is also a story where, “one of the Phoenician prince’s young attendants became ecstatic and delivered an oracle authenticating Wen-Amun’s mission from the god Amun.”⁴⁷

⁴⁰ P. D. Miller, et al, *Ancient Israelite Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 40.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁴² M. Nissinen, ed., *Prophecy in its Ancient Near Eastern Context*, (Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 57.

⁴³ M. Misgana, *The True and False Prophecy in the Old Testament*, (Master of Philosophy in Theology diss., MHS, 1996), 6.

⁴⁴ H. B. Huffmon, “Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy,” ABD 5:481.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ R. R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 125.

⁴⁷ H. B. Huffmon, “Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy,” ABD 5:477.

The above discussion shows that the concept of prophecy was not unique to Israel. Her neighbours also had knowledge of this phenomenon and there is proof that Israelite prophecy is much younger compared to that in her neighbours. Although the question whether Israel adopted prophecy from her neighbours remains a hot academic debate, what is clear is that there are similarities between prophecy in Israel and that in the neighbouring nations.

1.6 The role of נביא “prophet” in Israel

A prophet נביא was influential in Israel. His role is well seen during the preclassical, well up to the postexilic period. During the preclassical period, prophets like Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, and Nathan played a great role in society. Samuel delivered a message of Yahweh’s judgment upon priest Eli and his sons (1 Sam 3:1-21), judged Israel (1 Sam 7:15-17). As a man of God, he foresaw the disadvantages of a human king and thus warned Israel against having one (1 Sam 8:1-22). He anointed Saul king (1 Sam 9:15 – 10:1) and also David (1 Sam 16:1-13).

A prophet was to guide people to remain loyal to Yahweh. This is seen in the words of Samuel when he says: “If you are returning to the LORD with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you, and direct your heart to the Lord, and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.”⁴⁸ Even during the time of Elijah and Elisha, the role of a prophet was to protect Israel against other gods. This reaches a climax at the Mount Carmel contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18:20-40) where Elijah emerged triumphant. This is what one scholar has written about the role of prophets:

Whereas the last *shophet*, Samuel, was still both messenger and political-military leader, the prophet Nathan was simply the messenger of Yahweh, while the anointed king David assumed the military and political leadership. When the institution of the monarchy became firmly established, it appeared that the prophet would surely be confined to the role of a spokesperson ... the prophet was simply a messenger pronouncing the word of Yahweh.⁴⁹

Prophets were supposed to warn people to come back to God in all that they were doing. They were therefore carriers of God’s warnings as seen in the following text:

“Yet the Lord warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, ‘Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with

⁴⁸ 1 Samuel 7:3 (RSV).

⁴⁹ R. A. Horsley and J. S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets & Messiahs* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), 138.

all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets'. But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the LORD their God."⁵⁰

The above text shows that "it was the function of the prophets.... to warn both Israel and Judah to repent and to keep the law (*torah*), which had itself been given to the people by prophets. Thus the prophets are presented as preachers of repentance whose message was a call to return to the law."⁵¹

During this time prophets gave advice to kings whenever they went astray from God's covenant. Prophets had a great influence on the monarchy. For example "we find the prophets Nathan and Gad guiding David in cultic matters (2 Sam. 7.1-7; 24.18-19) and Gad instructing the king as to military enterprises (1 Sam. 22.5)."⁵² J. K. Grider adds: "Whether the king was a saint like Hezekiah or a sinner like Ahab, the prophets were God's spokesmen in palaces."⁵³ Prophets were always consulted before going to or during war. For example king "Zedekiah called on Jeremiah on the eve of the fall of Jerusalem (Jer. 21.1-7; 37.3-10, 17; 38.14-23)."⁵⁴ Another familiar example is the one in 1 Kgs 22:15 where Ahab consults prophet Micaiah before going to war.

In the classical period also, the role of a prophet was to guide Israel to follow God's laws and commandments. Prophets in this time were also concerned with social injustices that were taking place in Israelite society. A good example is this text in Amos 2:6:

Thus says the LORD: 'For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment; because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes.

The true prophets of God also had a role to make sure that the nation of Israel sticks to the true worship of Yahweh. They thus preached against idolatry as seen in Isa 2:8-9 which says:

Their land is filled with idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their fingers have made. So man is humbled, and men are brought low- forgive them not!

During this time, the prophet had a role to play in the Temple worship in Israel. Prophets conducted people's prayers and interceded for them. For example Jeremiah, to emphasize the intercessory aspect of the prophet had this to say in 27:18: "If they

⁵⁰ 2 Kings 17:13-14 (RSV).

⁵¹ R. E. Clements, *Prophecy and Tradition* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), 50.

⁵² A. Rofe, *Introduction to the Prophetic Literature* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 75.

⁵³ J. K. Grider, "The Prophetic Books," BE 2:116.

⁵⁴ A. Rofe, *Introduction to the Prophetic Literature* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 75.

are prophets, and if the word of the LORD is with them, then let them intercede with the LORD of hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of the LORD, in the house of the king of Judah, and in Jerusalem may not go to Babylon.”

Even during the exilic period in Babylon, prophets condemned idolatry (Ezek 6:4, 5). During this time of exile, prophet Ezekiel travelled to Jerusalem by vision and witnessed the great abominations that were being committed in God’s house and was concerned (Ezek 8:1-18).

In the period after the Babylonian exile, true prophets of God had a role to play. When the exiles returned, they found everything in a mess. They found that the temple (the heart of Jewish religion) had been destroyed. “At the urging of the prophets, the rebuilding of the temple was begun.”⁵⁵ Haggai was one of the prophets during this time and is credited for having “succeeded in his mission to have the temple rebuilt ... he contributed enormously to the stability of the Judean community in the Persian period.”⁵⁶

⁵⁵ J. J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 403.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER TWO

2. EZEKIEL

2.1 Biographical information about Ezekiel and Historical background.

Little is known about prophet Ezekiel beyond what is written in the book named after him. The name Ezekiel לְעִזְקִיֵּל means “God strengthens” or “God makes strong” and in the LXX, it is written as Ιεζεκιηλ . This name לְעִזְקִיֵּל appears only twice in the entire Book of Ezekiel; 1:3; 24:24. This same name is found elsewhere once in the Hebrew Bible in 1 Chronicles 24:16. Prophet Ezekiel “was the son of a Zadokite priest, Buzi, and in all probability was himself being trained for the priesthood or possibly had already taken the robes of office.”⁵⁷ According to Ezek 1:3, he was himself a priest. Ezekiel is said to have grown up around the Temple precincts in Jerusalem. Without doubt, he knew much about the religion of Israel and her God Yahweh; after all, he was a son of a priest.

In 597 B. C., Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and King Jehoiachin was taken prisoner. (2 Kgs 24:14). “Ezekiel was among this first group of deportees.”⁵⁸ Ezekiel in exile was living by the River Chebar at a place called Tel-Abib which literally means “hill of the storm god”. He was a contemporary of Jeremiah and thus must have been influenced by the latter’s zealous preaching. This is what one scholar has said about this influence on Ezekiel: “It is quite likely that as a young man he had heard the thunder of Jeremiah in the streets of Jerusalem and had been moved by it.”⁵⁹ Ezekiel delivered his stinging message in ecstasy or near ecstasy and used symbolic actions which we find no where among his contemporaries. This is supported by Bright when he says thus of Ezekiel:

Drawing a diagram of Jerusalem on a clay brick, he ate rationed food, as he laid mimic siege to the city (ch.4:1-15). Shaving his hair and beard, he burned some of the hair in the fire, hacked at some with a sword, scattered some to the winds, and tied only a few wisps in the skirt of his robe (ch.5:1-4), symbolizing the fate of his people. On one occasion (ch.12:3-7), making a hole in the wall of his house, he issued forth from it by night and, carrying his baggage on his back, acted the part of one going into exile.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ C. G. Howie, “Ezekiel,” IDB 2:203.

⁵⁸ “The Book of Ezekiel,” RSB 1256.

⁵⁹ J. Bright, *A History of Israel* (London: SCM, 1986), 336.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 337.

Because of such actions, one scholar has “concluded that Ezekiel was a true psychotic, capable of great religious insight but exhibiting a series of diagnostic characteristics: catatonia, narcissistic-masochistic conflict, schizophrenic withdrawal, delusions of grandeur and of persecution. In short, he suffered from a paranoid condition common in many great spiritual leaders.”⁶¹ But most commentators and psychiatrists have rejected this assertion that Ezekiel had a mental problem.

Ezekiel was a married man but his wife died in exile (Ezek 24:15-18). Ezekiel is said to have been called to prophesy at about age thirty (that is, after five years in exile) and this is around 593 when “during a thunderstorm, Ezekiel saw his wondrous vision of God and received the call to be a prophet to Israel”⁶² (Ezek 1:2). He reports thus in his vision: “As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud, with brightness round about it, and fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming bronze.”⁶³ After this, Ezekiel is given the task to take God’s message to His people. In his own report, the One who was speaking to him said: “Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels, who have rebelled against me; they and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day.”⁶⁴

Ezekiel is addressed by the title בֶּן־אָדָם “son of man” by God. This phrase בֶּן־אָדָם “emphasizes human frailty and insignificance as compared with the transcendence of God.”⁶⁵ After his call, it is not clear to whom his prophetic ministry was to be addressed. “Some scholars maintain that the prophet returned to Jerusalem after his call and actually lived in that doomed city during the time of his prophesying to the inhabitants of it.”⁶⁶ But G. v. Rad opposes this view when he says that: “To divest his message of its exilic dress and assume that he worked exclusively in Jerusalem before 587 entails a radical criticism which makes deep inroads into the very nature of the prophecy itself.”⁶⁷ A big number scholars maintain that Ezekiel was in Babylon the

⁶¹ E. C. Broome, “Ezekiel’s Abnormal Personality,” *JBL* 65 (1946) 277-92, *apud*, D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 10.

⁶² C. G. Howie, “Ezekiel,” *IDB* 2:203.

⁶³ Ezekiel 1:4 (RSV).

⁶⁴ Ezekiel 2:3 (RSV).

⁶⁵ “The Book of Ezekiel,” *RSB* 1256.

⁶⁶ C. G. Howie, “Ezekiel,” *IDB* 2:204.

⁶⁷ G. v. Rad, *Old Testament Theology Vol II, The Theology of Israel’s Prophetic Traditions* (New York: Harper, 1965), 220.

whole time of his prophesying and never went back to Jerusalem except when he visited the city in a vision (Ezek 8:1-4). “Legend says that he is buried in a tomb at al-Kifl, near the modern town of Hilla in Iraq, not far from the site of ancient Babylon.”⁶⁸

Although there is disagreement among scholars concerning his area of ministry, what they agree on is that “his prophecies were largely directed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem until the fall of that city in 587.”⁶⁹ According to the book of Ezekiel, “there was but one Israel, to whom he spoke whether present or far away, and it was a matter of no importance that some of the chosen people were living in Palestine and some in Babylonia. In fact, the exiles were no less a rebellious house than were those who still lived at home, for both groups had refused to obey God.”⁷⁰ It is estimated that Ezekiel was active as a prophet between 594 and 571 B. C.

After being called to prophesy, Ezekiel became an influential man among the Jews. “We find him, on occasion, sitting in his house וזקני יהודה יושבים לפני “and the elders of Judah sitting before me” 8:1; cf. 14:1; 20:1... and seems to have been viewed with respect by the exilic community.”⁷¹

It is agreed that the youth of Ezekiel “fell in the period of the reformer king Josiah (639-609), and was greatly influenced by the great political and cultic reformation undertaken by that king in the year 621.”⁷² King Josiah was killed by Pharaoh Necho II at Megiddo in battle in 609 B. C. (2 Kgs 23:29) and was succeeded by his son Jehoahaz who was later put in prison at Riblah by Pharaoh Necho II and replaced him with Eliakim, another son of Josiah in the same year (609 B. C.) but his name was changed to Jehoiakim (2 Kgs 23:34) as a mark of vassalage to king Necho II of Egypt. Because his stay in power depended on the Egyptians, Jehoiakim imposed heavy taxes on his subjects which he paid to Pharaoh Necho II. He even used forced labour. He also committed the sin of murder (Jer 26:23, 2 Kgs 24:4). There was religious decay in the nation. All the religious reforms instituted by Josiah were completely forgotten and

⁶⁸ L. Boadt, “Ezekiel, Book of,” ABD 2:711.

⁶⁹ C. G. Howie, “Ezekiel,” IDB 2:204.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 205.

⁷¹ J. J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 353.

⁷² W. Eichrodt, *Ezekiel. A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 1.

idolatry and Egyptian gods were introduced (Ezek 8:5-17). “He was unjust and malignant, neither holy towards God, nor forbearing towards man.”⁷³

Jehoiakim was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin in whose reign Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon attacked and captured Jerusalem in 597 B. C., took into captivity the king and the entire royal house and “all the princes, and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths; none remained, except the poorest people of the land.”⁷⁴ In Judah, Zedekiah, Jehoiachin’s uncle was put on the throne as ruler of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar. But “Jehoiachin was considered the last legitimate ruler from the Davidic line.”⁷⁵ Among those carried into exile was a young priest named Ezekiel, son of Buzi who later became an influential figure in the exile.

It is accepted by many scholars that Ezekiel was highly influenced by the religious reforms of Josiah. As a son of a priest and a priest himself, he hated the idolatry that Israel fell into during the reign of Jehoiakim and even his son Jehoiachin did not do any better. He was thus waiting for an opportunity when Yahweh would come out and deal a blow the evil practices that were going on among His people. This opportunity came upon Ezekiel himself when God chose him to declare His word “to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels, who have rebelled against me.”⁷⁶

Those who were taken into exile and those who remained in Jerusalem thought that the exile was going to take a short time and very soon it would end. “There were false prophets who wrongly encouraged this belief. Since the Lord had chosen Jerusalem as His dwelling and had Himself defended the city in the past, people believed Jerusalem was inviolable. Ezekiel had to warn the exiles that a worse fate was yet in store for Jerusalem.”⁷⁷ Ezekiel’s condemnation of these false prophets is in Ezek 13:1-23 and this text will be fully analyzed and exegeted in the next pages.

Having given biographical information about Ezekiel the prophet and the historical background leading to his ministry, what follows is a brief discussion of the Book of Ezekiel.

⁷³ D. J. Wiseman, “Jehoiakim,” NBD 603.

⁷⁴ 2 Kings 24:14 (RSV).

⁷⁵ “The Book of Ezekiel,” RSB 1256.

⁷⁶ Ezekiel 2:3 (RSV).

⁷⁷ “The Book of Ezekiel,” RSB 1256.

2.2 The Book of Ezekiel and its authorship

The Book of Ezekiel comes after Lamentations and before Daniel in the English Bible just like in the LXX in the section of the prophets. In the Hebrew Bible, it comes after Jeremiah and before Hosea. It is written in both prose and poetry. For example chapters 7, first half of 17, 19, last part of 27 and first part of 31 are written in poetry. “The Book of Ezekiel is the third large collection of Israel’s prophecies, alongside the other ‘major’ (in size) prophetic books of Isaiah and Jeremiah.”⁷⁸ But the Babylonian Talmud (Baba Batra 14 b) “records that the original order was Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah. Isaiah had been put last so that the message of the major prophets would end with a book full of hope.”⁷⁹ This is what is written about this issue in the said Talmud: “Since the book of Kings ends with doom and the book of Jeremiah is all doom, and the book of Ezekiel begins with doom but ends with consolation, while Isaiah is all consolation, you see that we place doom next to doom and consolation next to consolation.”⁸⁰

Although there may be some hard issues to explain in the book, it is agreed that the work is a product of one hand or many hands of one tradition. This is supported by J. W. Wevers who writes that: “The book of Ezekiel more than any other book in the canon of the Latter prophets yields evidence of intentional arrangement and a single editorial mind.”⁸¹ According to Greenberg,

The tannaitic bipartition of the book into dooms and consolations has served to explain an otherwise enigmatic statement in Josephus (Antiq. 10.5.1 [79]) that Ezekiel ‘left behind him in writing two books.’ Since, in fact, the first half of the book (chs 1-24) consists largely of prophecies of doom, while the last half (chs 25-48) largely of consolations, it has been suggested that this underlies Josephus’ remark.⁸²

According to some other scholars, the book of Ezekiel is a composite work. One scholar argues “that the book is a pseudepigraphon based on 2 Kgs 21:2-16, written in 230 B. C. with a Palestinian setting... the entire work is nonhistorical, as is its chief character, Ezekiel himself.”⁸³ Some other scholars have taken a middle view,

⁷⁸ M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 3.

⁷⁹ L. Boadt, “Ezekiel, Book of,” ABD 2:711.

⁸⁰ Talmud Baba Batra 14b, *apud*, M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 3.

⁸¹ J. W. Wevers, *Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 1.

⁸² M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20* (New York: Doubleday, 1986), 3.

⁸³ C. G. Howie, “Ezekiel,” IDB 2:206.

suggesting that “Ezekiel the book is the product directly or indirectly of Ezekiel the man.”⁸⁴ Some scholars even doubt Ezekielian authorship of chapters 38, 39; and 40-48.

About the text of Ezekiel, J. B. Taylor says that: “The Hebrew text of Ezekiel has suffered more than most books of the Old Testament in the process of transmission, and the RSV footnotes bear witness to the many occasions on which the translators had to resort to the Versions or to conjecture in order to make sense of a particularly obscure sentence.”⁸⁵ Instead of using the Hebrew text independently, Taylor suggests that “The LXX remains, of course, an invaluable aid to all who would attempt to find out the best Hebrew text.”⁸⁶ About the LXX text of Ezekiel, this is what Taylor further observes:

It seems likely that the translation was done by two or even three hands, though with an over-all editor who produced a unifying effect upon the whole book.... They paraphrased instead of translating; they omitted what they considered repetitious phrases or inserted explanatory comments on no authority but their own; and there are instances where they altered the translation to make it accord with their own view point.⁸⁷

Although scholars agree that the LXX version of Ezekiel is more original than the Masoretic Text, Emanuel Tov says that: “The Greek translation of Ezekiel is relatively literal, so that it is reasonable to assume that its minuses ... reflect a shorter Hebrew Parent text.”⁸⁸ The point being made here is that the LXX is also not free from limitations. The book of Ezekiel is estimated to have been written within a scope of 22 years, that is from 593- 571.

The book of Ezekiel was first divided into two sections by early Jewish interpreters. The first section is chapters 1-24 which contains oracles of doom and destruction. “Chapter 24 does dwell at length on the destruction of Jerusalem and thus gives the impression of a definitive end to the period of judgment; whether this event signals a turning point in the book is another question.”⁸⁹ The second part is chapters 25-48 which contains a message of hope and consolation.

However according to some other scholars, Ezekiel can be divided into three sections. The first section is chapters 1-24 which contains prophecies against Israel; chapters 25-

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ J. B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1976), 47.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 48.

⁸⁸ E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 333.

32 contain prophecies against foreign nations. The last section is chapters 33-48 which contain a message about the salvation of Israel. This is what L. Boadt says concerning the arrangement of the different sections of the book:

While there may be individual units within each of these sections that more naturally belong to one of the other sections, the pattern has been organized for a definite purpose: to show that the prophet preached warning and judgment to the Judeans up until the final catastrophe of 586 B. C. E. when the city fell completely to the Babylonians; and that he preached hope and promise of restoration after that date.⁹⁰

The book of Ezekiel is full of visions. On some instance, it is hard to draw a line between a vision and actual reality. For example, “When he is said to go to Jerusalem (*e.g.*, 8:3) does he actually visit there, or is he experiencing a spiritual transport?”⁹¹

There are special words and phrases used in the book of Ezekiel and the following are some of the examples (in English) as presented by J. B. Taylor.

“The hand of the LORD was upon me...1.3; the word of the LORD came to me, 3.23 rebellious house, 2.5; scatter to (all) the winds, 5.10; detestable things, 5.11; abominations, 5.11; my eye will not spare, 5.11; I, the LORD, have spoken, 5.13; spend... fury, 5.13; vent... fury, 5.13; set your face toward, 6.2; mountains of Israel, 6.3; Behold, I ... am against, 5.8; shall know that I am the LORD, 6.7; idols, 6.4; nations ... countries, 5.5; scattered through the countries, 6.8; I will stretch out my hand against, 6.14; I will ... pour out my wrath, 7.8; prince, 7.27; stumbling block of ... iniquity, 7.19; what is this proverb that you have, 12.22; Because ... therefore, 13.8; prophesy and say to those who, 13.2.”⁹²

Having discussed about the book of Ezekiel and its authorship, what follows is a summary of the message of the prophet Ezekiel.

2.3 The Message of Prophet Ezekiel

Like any other prophet, Ezekiel had a special message which he emphasized in his prophetic oracles as shown below:

⁸⁹ M. S. Odell, “Ezekiel, Book of,” NIDB 2:387.

⁹⁰ L. Boadt, “Ezekiel, Book of,” ABD 2:711.

⁹¹ C. G. Howie, “Ezekiel,” IDB 2:205.

2.4 God's judgment of sin

Ezekiel attacks and condemns Israel and Judah because of their sins. During Ezekiel's time, idolatry was being practiced in the nation (Ezek 6:4; 8:10) and Ezekiel sets out to condemn this evil practice. In Ezek 23:1-4, Ezekiel compares idolatry to prostitution. "Child sacrifice is expressly condemned (16:20; 20:31) and this practice is repulsive to the prophet not only because it is inhumane but also because it is a distortion of true worship of God."⁹³ He condemns the sin of murder, disrespect for parents, dishonour for the Sabbaths, adultery, (Ezek 22:6-12) and many others. Because of such sins יהרהר כבוד, "Yahweh's Glory" withdrew from the city (11:22-23).

Because of their sins, Ezekiel predicts Babylonians' attack against Israel which he describes thus: "the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans ... shall come against you from the north with chariots and wagons and a host of peoples; they shall set themselves against you on every side with buckler, shield, and helmet, and I will commit the judgment to them and they shall judge you according to their judgments (22:23-24; cf. 5:11-12; 8:18; 20:38)."⁹⁴

2.4.1 Individual Responsibility

Although the exile had come about as a result of cumulative generational sin among the Israelites, Ezekiel emphasizes individual responsibility for sin. The prophet informs the reader that Yahweh will no longer apply the proverb in 18:2 which says that:

The fathers have eaten sour grapes,
And the children's teeth are set on edge.

Instead, "The soul that sins shall die" (Ezek 18:4). But if a person abstains from all sin, "He shall surely live" (Ezek 18:9). He further repeats this position in 33:20 when he says: "O house of Israel, I will judge each of you according to his ways." Here, "the prophet makes it plain that there is no such condition or possession as inherited righteousness. It is God's will that every individual should now fulfil in himself the covenant requirements and avoid the destruction of judgment."⁹⁵

⁹²J. W. Wevers, *The New Century Bible Commentary: Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 1.

Wevers' comment about these words and phrases of Ezekiel is: Whether such recurring phrases signal a single author or simply the thorough work of an editor cannot be answered easily.

⁹³J. D. Newsome, *The Hebrew Prophets* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984), 134.

⁹⁴This exact quotation is taken from J. D. Newsome, *The Hebrew Prophets* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984), 134.

⁹⁵C. G. Howie, "Ezekiel," IDB 2:211.

2.4.2 God as Giver and Protector of life

Ezek 37:1-14 records one of the great visions of Ezekiel. This vision is about “the dry bones” which he found in a valley. They were very dry and by all human standards, they could not live again. But Ezekiel prophesies to them in 37:5-6 that: “Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live.” This vision brings to mind how God created man out of the dust of the ground and breathed in his nostrils and he became a living being (Gen 2:7). The message that Ezekiel is putting across is that God is the originator and protector of all human life. This vision of Ezekiel means that God is all powerful and can do the impossible when man has already resigned.

Another passage is Ezek 47:1-12 which talks about the healing waters coming from under the temple. Ezekiel, in his description of the great waters says in 47:9 that: “And wherever the river goes every living creature which swarms will live, and there will be very many fish; for this water goes there, that the waters of the sea may become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes.” As the river sustains the life of the fish and the plants, so does God sustain the lives of men.

2.4.3 The Forgiveness and Grace of God

Although Ezekiel condemns sin and pronounces doom and judgment upon Israel in the first part of his book (chapters 1-24), he changes tone later. Like most of the other prophets, the theme of “the forgiveness and grace of God” is very pronounced in Ezekiel. This is mainly found in the second part (Chapters 25-48). At first, God was angry with the Jews for their sin(s), but later, Ezekiel promises forgiveness and restoration. This brings to mind Ps 103:8, 9, which says that:

The Lord is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always chide,
Nor will he keep his anger forever.

In Ezek 36: 8, 9, the prophet says: “But you, O mountains of Israel, shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people Israel; for they will soon come home. For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown.” He proceeds to give the vision of the dry bones which also shows God’s life-giving act as already said above. “Ezekiel sees the glory of the Lord returning so that ‘the name of

the city from that day shall be ‘The Lord is there’⁹⁶ He foresees a new temple and city constructed in place of the old ones which were destroyed by the Babylonians.

2.4.4 The Messianic Hope

Although the theme of the Messiah is not as pronounced in Ezekiel as in Isaiah, a close look will reveal that this prophet had it mind. For example in the oracle against irresponsible shepherds in chapter 34, some scholars have identified “My servant David” (v 23) with Jesus Christ the Messiah. The prophet writes that: “And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd.”⁹⁷ Again in chapter 37, Ezekiel brings out the same theme. He says that: “My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall follow my ordinances and be careful to observe my statutes.”⁹⁸ Many scholars like Newsome D. James⁹⁹ agree that a king from the line of David (Jesus Christ) must have been in mind since David the son of Jesse had already died. Many commentators agree that: “The prophecy is Messianic, spiritually fulfilled in the one true Church.”¹⁰⁰

2.5 True and false prophecy in Ezekiel 12:21 – 14:11

The most obvious theme in this section is Ezekiel’s condemnation of false prophets (13:1-16) and prophetesses (13:17-23). But this talk about issues of prophecy starts from 12:21. God is determined to put to an end the saying that יארבו הימים ואבד כל-הזון “The days grow long, and every vision comes to naught”(Ezek 12:22). According to some scholars, “The element of delay would have been aggravated by Jeremiah’s ministry. For the past thirty years he had announced the coming judgment of Jerusalem; events had apparently discredited him.”¹⁰¹ Ezekiel tells his audience that: “The days are at hand, and the fulfilment of every vision” (Ezek 12:23 cf. 28). From 13:1-16, Ezekiel condemns false prophets who speak from their own mind. This compares well with Jer 23:16-17. The nation is in time of crisis but instead of preparing the people by calling upon them to repent, the false prophets say that all is

⁹⁶ W. R. Roehrs, “Ezekiel,” BE 2:226.

⁹⁷ Ezekiel 34:23 (RSV).

⁹⁸ Ezekiel 37:24 (RSV).

⁹⁹ Newsome gives out his view on this point in his book, *The Hebrew Prophets* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984), 136.

¹⁰⁰ E. Power, “Ezechiel,” CCHS 617.

well. This is actually one of the things that make them “false”. “The false prophet ... does but utter his own thoughts, while the true prophet has a mandate from God. The false prophet sees a vision, yet not one that God has given; it is but the projection of his own mind.”¹⁰² Another one adds: “The true prophet knew he had authoritative inspiration, but the false prophet could not know that he lacked it; this is the quandary of all religious belief where objective test is often lacking.”¹⁰³ In the same way, these prophets thought they were speaking for Yahweh.

The prophet compares false prophets to jackals (some versions render שעלים “foxes”). “We watch a jackal leaping from stone to stone, seeking out a snug burrow amid the rubble of a house, now pouncing on a corpse which lies unburied still.”¹⁰⁴ So does Ezekiel consider a false prophet. These false prophets prophesy שלום ואין שלום “peace when there is no peace” (13:10). This verse can well be compared to Jeremiah 6:14 which says:

They have healed the wound of my people slightly
Saying, ‘Peace, peace,’
When there is no peace.

A similar verse to the above also appears in Jer 8:11, the only difference being that here there is אה־שבר בתעמי “hurt of the daughter of my people” and not אה־שבר עמי “hurt of my people” as in Jer 6:14.

From Ezek13:11, the prophet says that: “The state of Judah and Jerusalem is like that of a tottering wall; the false prophets, instead of taking remedial action, conceal its precarious condition by covering it with a coat of whitewash and thus render its collapse more certain.”¹⁰⁵ This whitewash refers to the false prophets’ insistence that there is peace when there is no peace. “The rain in torrents, hailstones and violent winds which bring down the wall (11-14) denote the divine judgment which is to come upon Judah and Jerusalem”¹⁰⁶ and when this happens, וידעתם כי־אני יהוה “and you shall know that I am the Lord” (Ezek13:14).

¹⁰¹ G. R. Beasley-Murray, “Ezekiel,” NBC 652.

¹⁰² E. L. Allen, “Oracle Against False Prophets (13:1-16),” IB 6:129.

¹⁰³ H. G. May, “Oracles Against Prophets and Prophetesses (13:1-23),” IB 6:130.

¹⁰⁴ E. L. Allen, “Oracle Against False Prophets (13:1-16),” IB 6:130.

¹⁰⁵ F. F. Bruce, “Ezekiel,” IBC 821.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

In the last section of this chapter, Ezekiel in equal measure condemns the false prophetesses who also prophesy out of their own heart (13:17). He further condemns “the women who sew magic bands upon all wrists, and make veils for the heads of persons of every stature, in the hunt for souls” (Ezek 13:18). The Lord pronounces judgment upon these prophetesses by declaring: “Behold, I am against your magic bands with which you hunt the souls, and I will tear them from your arms; and I will let the souls that you hunt go free like birds” (Ezek 13:20). These magic charms “belong to the paraphernalia of witchcraft; their appropriate use was thought to preserve or take away people’s lives, and they may have done so where their efficacy was believed in.”¹⁰⁷

Ezekiel 14:1-11 is a condemnation of idolatry. But there is a mention about prophecy as well. The Lord warns that whoever believes in idols and then goes to inquire from the prophet about God, “I the Lord will answer him Myself and I will set my face against that man. I will make him a sign and a byword and cut him off from the midst of my people” (Ezek 14:7-8). In verse 10, the Lord promises to punish those who consult false prophets although God Himself may have induced such to prophesy. This may seem unjust but that is what He says.

¹⁰⁷ F. F. Bruce, “Ezekiel,” IBC 821.

CHAPTER THREE

3. EZEKIEL 13

Ezekiel 13 is written in prose and it is a prophecy of judgment against the false prophets and prophetesses. It is composed of two oracles; one against false prophets and the other against the false prophetesses. “It is likely that accretions have been made in the course of the history of the tradition.”¹⁰⁸ Muilenburg argues that the fact that there is “reference to the ‘register of the house of Israel’ (9) is by no means necessarily late.”¹⁰⁹ This chapter is thought to have been written approximately about 587 B. C. In themes and language, Ezekiel 13 is close to Jeremiah 23 as shown in this text below:

“They speak the vision of their own hearts, not from the mouth of Yahweh. I did not send the prophets, but they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied ... I am coming at the prophets, declares Yahweh, who make their tongues declare oracles; I am coming at those who prophesy lying dreams ... and relate them, and mislead my people by their lies and their wantonness, whereas I never sent them ... and they will do this people no good”¹¹⁰ (Jer 23:16-32).

It is agreed among scholars that Jeremiah had a lot of influence on Ezekiel. This influence extends even to chapter 13 where the false prophets and prophetesses are condemned just like Jeremiah 23. But there is a difference in how prophets of Yahweh addressed false prophets. Prophet Elijah speaks of נביאי הבעל “prophets of Baal” (1 Kgs 18:19, 22) and נביאי האשרה “prophets of Asherah” (1 Kgs 18:19), Jeremiah talks of שמרין נביאי “prophets of Samaria” (Jer 23:13) and נבאי ירושלים “prophets of Jerusalem” (Jer 23:14). Ezekiel uses a unique phrase; נביאי ישראל “prophets of Israel” (Ezek 13:16). This phrasing “underscores again that Ezekiel is concerned with the state of affairs inside Israel, the people of God.”¹¹¹

3.1 Textual criticism and Translation of Ezekiel 13

In this section, I will give an interpretation of Ezekiel 13 verse by verse. I will combine this with textual critical study of the most important words and / or phrases. In this, I will analyze the most important words and their original meanings. For convenience, I will divide the text into three parts as follows: 3.2, will be ‘The foolish prophets’ (Ezek

¹⁰⁸ J. Muilenburg, “Ezekiel,” PCB 576.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ This quotation is written as it appears in M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 243.

¹¹¹ W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 292.

13:1-9)', 3.3 'The whitewashed wall' (13:10-16), while 3.4 will be 'False prophetesses and their charms' (13:17-23).

3.2 The Foolish Prophets (13:1-9)

V. 1. וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר "And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying" is a common phrase in the book of Ezekiel whenever he is introducing a new oracle (cf. 12:1; 11:14; 15:1; 17:1; 18:1). This means that unlike the false prophets who were prophesying from their own minds (cf. 13:2), Ezekiel's prophecies were from Yahweh.

V. 2. This verse opens with the phrase בֶּן-אָדָם "Son of man". This phrase is used many times in the book of Ezekiel (7:2; 12:2; 8:12,17) to show human weakness and helplessness without God and Yahweh's awesomeness. The word הַנְּבִיאִים "those who prophesy" in the Masoretic Text "is unusual. It is hardly original."¹¹² The LXX reads καὶ προφητευσείς which "suggests an emendation to הַנְּבִיאִים"¹¹³ In this verse, the LXX has πρὸς αὐτούς which when translated directly into Hebrew would be אֵלֵיהֶם but it is lacking in the Masoretic Text.

The phrase נְבִיאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל "prophets of Israel" is unique to Ezekiel. It is also found in verse 16 and in 37:18. "This designation not only distinguishes Ezekiel's addressees from their professional Babylonian counterparts but also opens the door for broad application to his fellow exiles and to Israelite prophets everywhere."¹¹⁴ In this verse, we see the influence of Jeremiah upon Ezekiel. This is in the phrase לְנְבִיאֵי מַלְבָּם "unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts." This is in a way similar to Jeremiah 23:16 which says חֲזוֹן לִבָּם יִדְבְּרוּ "They speak a vision of their own heart." In his condemnation of these prophets, "Ezekiel's point is that their inspiration ranked no higher than that of normal human wisdom. Their utterances were nothing more than their own concoctions, based on their own evaluation of the situation and their own judgment."¹¹⁵

¹¹² Ibid.,

¹¹³ Ibid., 285.

¹¹⁴ D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 398-399.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 399.

V. 3. The Masoretic text of this verse reads רוחם הוי על הנביאים הנבלים אשר הלכים אחר “Woe unto the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit.” (The interjection הוי which is translated as “Woe” in many versions can also be translated as “Alas” or “Ah”) This sharply contrasts with the LXX which reads οὐα τοις προφητεουσιν ἀπο καρδιας. When this is translated directly into Hebrew, it would be הוי לנבאי מלבם “which is probably more original.”¹¹⁶ Because of this, many scholars argue that the LXX version of Ezekiel is more dependable than the Masoretic Text.

The word הנבלים “the foolish” comes from the adjective נבל which means “foolish”, “senseless”, “nonsense”. According to BDB, it means “man who has no perception of ethical and religious claims.”¹¹⁷ According to Wiseman, “The fool was spiritually and morally insensitive; he was inclined to blasphemy (Ps. 74:18) and to atheism (Ps. 14:1); he was churlish and arrogant, like his namesake Nabal of Carmel (1 Sa. 25).”¹¹⁸ According to Prov 30:32, a fool exalts himself; Prov 17:7 a fool is one who uses crude speech. In Job 2:9-10 when Job’s wife tells him to curse God and die, Job answers her that: “You speak as one of the foolish women speaks.” The word used here for “fool” is the same used for the false prophets. This means that false prophets despise God. Fools deny God (Ps 14:1) and blaspheme Him (Ps 74:22). Therefore the word נבל is strong and when it is used to the false prophets, it means that their activities were very detestable to Yahweh.

V. 4. In this verse, Ezekiel compares false prophets to foxes (כשעלים). This word comes from שיעל which can also be rendered “jackal”. As a jackal is “leaping from stone to stone, seeking out a snug burrow amid the rubble of a house, now pouncing on a corpse which lies unburied still”,¹¹⁹ so does a false prophet in this simile. Just like a jackal, he is selfish; he is only “content if he can snatch from it the necessities and pleasures of the passing day.”¹²⁰ Such are the prophets Ezekiel was contending with. According to Song 2:15, a fox spoils the vine. So false prophets were compared to foxes because they were leading people astray. The simile used by Ezekiel is a perfect

¹¹⁶ W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 285.

¹¹⁷ F. Brown *et al*, BDB, 614.

¹¹⁸ J. B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary*, (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1976), 120.

¹¹⁹ E. L. Allen, “Oracle Against False Prophets (13:1-16),” IB 6:130.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

one because during this time, Israel is pictured as a society in ruins. “Instead of helping to rebuild the nation, the false prophets capitalize on the devastation.”¹²¹

V. 5. In ancient times gardens were protected by fences (Num 22:24, Isa 5:5). In this case, the wall of Israel was supposed to be righteousness but this vital element was lacking and thus they were to experience the wrath of Yahweh (cf. Isaiah 5:5). Ezekiel’s role was to “warn the people of their iniquity (build a fence), and, ... to intercede with God on their behalf (stand in the breach).”¹²² Whether made of stone or whatever material, if a wall is neglected, it obviously develops cracks which can increase to become a breach or gap. Whenever this occurred, “one of two responses was required of those responsible for the security of the estate: either go up and physically stand in the breach, turning aside any would-be intruder, or repair the wall.”¹²³ In the case of the false prophets, they failed to do any of the two. “Instead of standing in the breach by denouncing evil and reconstructing the wall by calling for the renewal of the covenant relationship in which true security was to be found, they have been rummaging around in the ruins, intent on salvaging as much as possible for themselves.”¹²⁴ Because of this, Yahweh their maker has become their archenemy.

In v. 5b, “Israel is no longer a vine protected by a stone fence; she is a city under siege ... the enemy is not merely the army of some earthly ruler, but Yahweh himself.”¹²⁵ The phrase *במלחמה ביום יהוה* “refers to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in the coming day of the Lord as predicted by Ezekiel and the earlier prophets.”¹²⁶ This day of destruction was coming upon Jerusalem because of the sins of the people. This theology of *יום יהוה* “Day of the Lord” is very pronounced in other prophetic literature (e.g Amos 5:16; Joel 1:15; 2:1, Zeph1:7) In Ezekiel, “The Day of the Lord”, “is to be identified with the sack of Jerusalem in 587 BC, a day in which the storm of judgment eventually broke.”¹²⁷ Wherever this phrase “Day of the Lord” appears, it signifies God’s judgment upon His people.

¹²¹ D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 401.

¹²² M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20* (New York: Doubleday, 1986), 236.

¹²³ D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 401.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 402.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ H. G. May, “Oracle Against False Prophets (13:1-16),” *IB* 6:129.

¹²⁷ J. B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Intervarsity, 1976), 121.

V. 6. ‘They have seen vanity and lying divination’ חזו שוא וקסם כזב. The Vulgate has *vident vana et divinant mendacium*. According to some scholars, the Vulgate and LXX renderings are the most correct. Literary, the Masoretic Text reads “divination of a lie.” To make a better sense, this should be read as an infinitive absolute. False prophets practiced divination which was not allowed by Yahweh according to Deut 18:14. ויהוה לא שלחם “and Yahweh has not sent them” shows how false these prophets were. They cooked up messages in their own minds and brought them to the people and said “Thus says the Lord.” The last part of the verse is the one that is not clear about what it refers to. ויחלו לקים דבר can mean “yet they hope that the word may be confirmed” (NKJV), or “and they have made *others* to hope that they would confirm the word” (KJV). In the KJV, the word “others” is written in italics to mean that it was not part of the original text but was inserted in to make a better sense.

The word לקים comes from the word קים which in qal means “to rise” or “stand” but in piel it means “to confirm”. But it is not clear who is to “confirm” the word. The word דבר “word” in this verse is very clear. It refers to the word of prophecy from the false prophets. In this verse, the prophets have seen nothing but go ahead to crown their lies with God’s stamp of נאם-יהוה “the Lord says”. “By concluding their utterances with the signatory formula *The declaration of Yahweh* ... they laid public claim to divine authorization on the one hand, while seeking to obligate God to fulfil their proclamations on the other.”¹²⁸

V. 7. This verse is similar to v. 6. According to J. W. Wevers, “7b is a late doublet on verse 6b.”¹²⁹ Verse 7b ואני לא דברתי נאם-יהוה is not found in the LXX. It was possibly omitted by the editors “as a gloss on vs 6.”¹³⁰ The LXX only has οὐχ ὄρασαν ψευδη ἑωρακατε και μαυτειας ματαιιας ειρηκατε, thereby omitting the whole phrase: ואמרים נאם-יהוה ואני לא דברתי. There is no explanation given for this omission.

According to W.Eichrodt, there was “a collapse of the abortive attempt at a revolt against Babylonian supremacy ... which according to Jer. 27, had been supported by

¹²⁸ D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 402.

¹²⁹ J. W. Wevers, *Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 86.

¹³⁰ H. G. May, “Oracle Against False Prophets (13:1-16),” IB 6:130.

predictions of success by the prophets.”¹³¹ It seems probable that Ezekiel had this in mind when he uttered this prophecy. Ezekiel abandons the third person and uses the second person, thereby forcing “his hearers to interact with his charges.”¹³²

Although these false prophets use a counterfeit stamp claiming to be of Yahweh, it does not give them divine favour and authority. Their prophecies remain concoctions. According to Block, the problem with these false prophets is that “they preached the wrong message at the wrong time.”¹³³

V. 8. This verse begins with לכן “therefore” thereby “signalling transition from accusation to announcement of judgment.”¹³⁴ In this verse, the Lord says that He is against false prophets because they have spoken שוא. The NKJV translates this word as “nonsense” while BDB translates it as “emptiness” or “vanity”. The KJV prefers to use “vanity”. This means that the message of the false prophets is hollow without any substance in it.

Behold I am against you” shows that Yahweh was fed up with their deeds and was determined to punish them and thus deal their evil ministry a serious blow. Surprisingly, the word אדני is not in the LXX text. Yahweh accuses false prophets of envisioning כזב “lies” or “falsehood”. This is almost similar to 13:3 where they are accused of seeing “nothing”. It is further repeated in v.9 as will be seen below.

V. 9. “And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity” means that Yahweh is determined to crash these false charlatans. In many places, Ezekiel talks of Yahweh stretching his hand as a punitive measure. This can be seen in Ezek 6:14; 14:9; 25:7; 35:3. In this verse He is against them and their practices. The same idea of שוא which has been tackled in v. 8 resurfaces. Yahweh says that these prophets will not be בסוד “in the assembly” or “counsel” of his people. It seems probable by this time, that Ezekiel had already foreseen that the exile would end at some time, though not in a near future. Therefore סוד here may be referring to those

¹³¹ W. Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 165.

¹³² D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 403.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

who will survive the wrath of exile; the remnant who “will inherit His promises afresh and enjoy restoration to their land,”¹³⁵ when the name of the city shall be יהוה שמה ‘the Lord is there’ (Ezek 48:35). However, W. Eichrodt sees it differently. He argues that the word *sod* “indicates the intimate way in which persons meet and talk together when linked by something they have in common. It may be the local community at the gate in their leisure-time, discussing all the local concerns, or it may be a merry group of young people (Jer. 6.11; 15:17).”¹³⁶ But if we put this verse in context, Eichrodt’s position seems not to hold. In Ps 89:8, the word סוד is used in reference to saints or holy ones בסוד־קדשים . In the Hebrew of the Mishna, the word סוד means “secret”. According to Block, Ezekiel’s use of the word סוד, could have been influenced by Jer 23:18, 22 “in which the guild of genuine prophets is identified as sôd yhwah, ‘the confidants of Yahweh.’ Here Ezekiel goes beyond denying the false prophets membership in the divine council; he dismisses their claim to membership in the earthly community of faith—the people of Yahweh.”¹³⁷

For the phrase לא יהיו ובכתב בית־ישראל “neither shall they be written in the record of the house of Israel,” I agree with H. G. May, who suggests that the word כתב “writing”, “record”, or “register” refers to the “list of returning exiles in Ezra 2.”¹³⁸ According to Ezekiel, the false prophets were not going to be included in the census list of the Israelites. This exclusion echoes the judgment that Jeremiah had passed against Shemaiah the Nehelamite (Jer 29:31-32). This “register” has a parallel in the New Testament’s βιβλω της ζωης “Book of Life” (Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12; 21:27; 22:19; Phil 4:3) where names of believers in Jesus Christ will be written. As in the previous verse, the word אדני “God” does not exist in the LXX. Where we would expect και γνωσονται διοτι ἐγω κυριος θεος , there is only και γνωσονται διοτι ἐγω κυριος .

3.3 The Whitewashed Wall (13:10-16)

V. 10. This verse starts with a doubling of יען וביען . יען means “because” or “on account of”. But where two are combined, they are translated as “because, even because”. This is the translation adopted by KJV. This same phrase is further found in Ezek 36:3 and

¹³⁵ “The Book of Ezekiel,” RSB 1257.

¹³⁶ W. Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 166.

¹³⁷ D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 404.

¹³⁸ H. G. May, “Oracle Against False Prophets (13:1-16),” IB 6:130.

Lev 26:43. The prophet criticizes the false prophets for promising peace while in actual sense there was no peace. The word שלום translated as “peace” has a wide range of meanings. It can also mean “welfare”, “soundness”, “completeness”, or “safety” according to BDB,¹³⁹ but the rendering “peace” seems to fit the situation. But I think “safety” can also work.

The word והנהם should literally be “and behold them” but KJV translates it as “and, lo, others” while NKJV follows the translation of the LXX which is “and they”. The expression שלום ואין שלום “peace when there is no peace” seems to have been borrowed from Jeremiah, “and gives proof of Ezekiel’s acquaintance with the preaching of his great contemporary.”¹⁴⁰ In the Hebrew text, we have והנהם “and behold them” while “the LXX, Syriac, and Vulg. read ‘they’, i.e., the prophets.”¹⁴¹

The word הטעו “they have misled” is thought to have come to Hebrew from the Aramaic word טעה ; it is therefore an Aramaism. This can be compared with the Hebrew word תעה which means “cause to go astray”. This word טעה “evokes images of a shepherd who, instead of leading his sheep to pasture and security, causes them to get lost.”¹⁴² In this verse, Ezekiel condemns the false prophets who have misled God’s people. “Instead of leading them to authentic pasture and rest, they have fed them with empty platitudes of peace. They have intentionally deluded them into a false sense of security with their pronouncements”¹⁴³ of שלום “peace” when there is no peace on the ground to talk about.

The word חייץ “party wall” but here merely rendered “wall” is used to depict the situation of the people of Yahweh at that time. This word חייץ is only used here in the entire Old Testament. Its meaning is attested by lexical studies in Jewish-Aramaic and Neo-Hebrew. “It stands for the empty hopes which they are erecting for themselves and which the false prophets are blandly endorsing.”¹⁴⁴ According to Ehrlich, חייץ is a

¹³⁹ BDB s.v. שלום, 1022.

¹⁴⁰ W. Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 167.

¹⁴¹ H. G. May, “Oracle Against False Prophets (13:1-16),” IB 6:131.

¹⁴² D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 406.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ J. B. Taylor, *Ezekiel, An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1976), 122.

hapax legomenon and “it denotes a wall constructed of loose stones.”¹⁴⁵ According to Coffman, this חֵרֵץ “is not a reference to any literal wall, but to the rotten, worthless, and unbelieving ‘prophecies’ these sinful men were preaching in place of the true word of God”¹⁴⁶

The word חָפַל in Hebrew is an adjective which means “tasteless” or “unseasoned”. But here it is used figuratively to mean “to plaster over”. This word חָפַל is “related to טָפַל ‘to smear, to smear over’.”¹⁴⁷ This related word טָפַל is used in Job 13:4; and Ps 119:69 “of smearing a person with lies. So the people’s futile hopes are encouraged by the prophets’ lying lullabies of peace.”¹⁴⁸ This smearing of the wall “with white wash in no way adds to its strength.”¹⁴⁹ It must be added that this daubing with whitewash is “a figurative description of deceitful flattery and hypocrisy, the covering up of inward corruption with outward appearances, as in Matt 23:27, and Acts 23:3.”¹⁵⁰ It is right to observe that this concept of ‘a whitewashed (wall)’ was well known in Israel’s religious circles. Jesus talks of κεκοιναμεινους “being whitewashed” while Paul talks of τοιχε κεκοιναμεινε “white washed wall”. It is not surprising to hear Paul talking of “a whitewashed wall” because he was well schooled in Israelite religion (Acts 22:3) and therefore he knew the religious jargon used.

V. 11. The ειπον προς τους αλειφοντας πεσειται in LXX comes as a result of misreading *tapel* as *tapol*. This word חָפַל (*tapel*) is missing in the LXX and the Syriac versions. The word ויפל “that it shall fall”, is thought to be a dittography of another word חָפַל; thus, “Most scholars on the authority of G. delete ‘that it shall fall’.”¹⁵¹ The word ואתנה “and you” is also found in the LXX as και δωσω and in the Vulgate as *et dabo*. The whole phrase היה גשם שוטף ואתני אלגביש חפלנה ורוח סערות חבקק “there will be flooding rain and you O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall tear it down” refers to the judgment of Yahweh that was going to come over the false prophets. This heavy rain (God’s wrath) was to have a serious effect on the white washed wall. “A mud-brick wall suffers much from winter rains and hailstones; it has

¹⁴⁵ Ehrlich, *Randglossen*, apud., Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 287.

¹⁴⁶ J. B. Coffman, *Commentary on Ezekiel* (Abilene: Abilene Christian University Press, 1991), 132.

¹⁴⁷ W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 287.

¹⁴⁸ J. B. Taylor, *Ezekiel, An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1976), 122.

¹⁴⁹ J. W. Wevers, *Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 87.

¹⁵⁰ J. B. Coffman, *Commentary on Ezekiel* (Abilene: Abilene Christian University Press, 1991), 132-133.

to be kept in continuous state of repair. The false prophets only put a veneer on the wall and did not contribute to its ability to withstand the storms.”¹⁵²

Most scholars look at the phrase *וְאַתְּנָה אֲבָנֵי אֲלֻגְבִּישׁ* “you O great hailstones” as “unnatural, and prefer to point to give the sense ‘and I will cause great hail stones to fall’. This is preferable to RSV which solves the problem by omitting altogether the word ‘and you’”¹⁵³ To Block, the insertion of *וְאַתְּנָה* after *גִּשְׁמֵי שׁוֹטֵף* is very hard to explain. The vocalization used on *וְאַתְּנָה* seems odd and out of place.¹⁵⁴ Block further comments that *וַיִּפֹּל הָיָה* is awkward. He proposes that *יִפֹּל* should be deleted as a dittograph of the preceding word *הַפֹּל* thus yielding *וְהָיָה* which fits the context better.¹⁵⁵ The phrase *אֲבָנֵי אֲלֻגְבִּישׁ* “hailstones” is only found in Ezekiel. In Ezek 38:22, this phrase is associated with *אֵשׁ* “fire”, *גִּפְרִית* “brimstone” and *מָטָר* “rain”. In Josh 10:11, the phrase *אֲבָנֵי הַבְּרָד* is used for hailstones. It seems the word *אֲלֻגְבִּישׁ* was not originally Hebrew. According to BDB, it comes from an Arabic word whose meaning is “gypsum”. According to Block however, it is a loanword which is cognate to Egyptian *irqbs* or is related to Akkadian *algamisu* or Ugaritic *algbt*. It is not clear why Ezekiel decides to use *אֲלֻגְבִּישׁ* instead of the Hebrew word *הַבְּרָד*. Whatever the origin, it is agreed among scholars that it came from another language. The word *הַבִּקֵּעַ* here is a Piel yet we would expect a Niphal in this position. Elsewhere in Isa 59:5 the Piel of *בִּקֵּעַ* is used of hatching eggs.

V. 12. The question *אֵיזָה הַטִּיחַ אֲשֶׁר טָחָהּ* “where is the daubing with which you daubed it?” is only a prelude “for soon the wall will fall (14) and the false prophets of peace will perish with it (15, 16). At this stage the figure of the wall, which began by representing popular optimism, comes to be identified with the city of Jerusalem, on whose impregnability their empty hopes had centred.”¹⁵⁶ The external appearance of the wall was completely opposite to what was inside; it was about to fall. The false prophets had created false optimism of all-is-well.

¹⁵¹ J. B. Wevers, *The New Century Bible Commentary: Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 87.

¹⁵² H. G. May, “Oracle Against False Prophets (13:1-16),” IB 6:131.

¹⁵³ J. B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1976), 123.

¹⁵⁴ Footnote 27 in D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 397.

¹⁵⁵ Footnote 28 in D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 397.

¹⁵⁶ J. B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1976), 123.

V.13. In part one of the verse, the word אֱדֹנָי “God” is not found in the LXX. The rest of the verse is almost similar to 11. As in v.11, in v. 13 Ezekiel talks about רוח־סערה ‘stormy wind’, and how it shall rend or break בקע it (the wall); וּגְשָׁם שֶׁטֶף “and the flooding rain”; וַאֲבָנֵי אֲלֻגֵי־שׁוֹ “and hailstones”. The word בחמה “in fury” or “in rage” is used in many places to mean God’s wrath. It can be seen in Jer 4:4; 2 Kgs 22:13, 17. The last phrase of this verse וַאֲבָנֵי אֲלֻגֵי־שׁוֹ בַחֲמָה לְכַלָּה literally means “and hailstones in wrath to destruction.” Some scholars argue that since there is no verse in this phrase, it is grammatically unacceptable; they suggest that לְכַלָּה “to destruction” “is a copyist error for ‘will fall’; cf. verse 11 which is based on this verse.”¹⁵⁷ The storm that was to rend the wall was no ordinary meteorological issue. “The hurricane winds, the driving rain, and the pounding hail are impelled by the exploding fury of Yahweh, who is determined to destroy (*kala*) the house.”¹⁵⁸

V. 14. In this verse, there is talk of a wall that Yahweh vows to break down. But there is change of vocabulary used. Before in verse 10, Ezekiel uses the word חֵיץ to refer to “wall”, but here in v. 14, the word קִיר is used and its meaning is “a house wall”. What causes this sudden change of vocabulary is not clear. This same word קִיר is used in Ezek 12:5, 7.

The phrase וְהִגַּעְתִּיהוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ “and bring it down to the ground”, when translated literally, it would be “I will make it touch the earth”. To make a better sense, the translations avoid the literal translation. According to Zimmerli, “בְּחֻכָּה is difficult to understand in connection with a picture of a wall collapsing (we would expect תַּחְתִּיו or תַּחְתִּיה),...”¹⁵⁹ Commentators have suggested that the clause וְהִגַּעְתִּיהוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ “and bring it down to the ground” was an allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem as one scholar notes; “The language of this clause is thus more appropriate to massive demolition than the fall of a mere wall; it facilitates the intrusion, ... of the reference to Jerusalem.”¹⁶⁰ Proof for this assertion is that וּנְפֹלָה “when it falls” or “when it shall fall” is feminine. Also בְּחֻכָּה “in the midst of it” is feminine. Therefore the reference cannot be to קִיר “wall” which

¹⁵⁷ J. W. Wevers, *Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 87.

¹⁵⁸ D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 408.

¹⁵⁹ W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 288.

¹⁶⁰ M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 238.

is masculine. This therefore confirms the view that Ezekiel had the fall of Jerusalem in mind.

The phrase ונגלה יסדו “and its foundation be uncovered” echoes the language used in Mic 1:6 where it says that:

Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in the open country,
A place for planting vineyards;
And I will pour down her stones into the valley,
And uncover her foundations.

Therefore, it is most likely that when Ezekiel uttered this verse, he had the fall of Jerusalem in mind. “The demise of the nation will expose the counterfeits and force them finally to acknowledge Yahweh in truth.”¹⁶¹

The last phrase in the verse, וידעתם כי-אני והוה “and you shall know that I am the Lord” is used many times in Ezekiel’s prophecies, probably to show the power of Yahweh. It can be found elsewhere in these verses: Ezek 13:9, 21, 23; 14:8.

V. 15. In this verse, Yahweh vows to accomplish His wrath up on the wall and all (false prophets) that have daubed it with whitewash. It has been suggested that the LXX of this verse may be more original than the Masoretic Text. In ואמר “and I will say”; “here it is God who speaks, making an authoritative assertion ...”¹⁶² The opening phrase כליתי את-חמתי “I will accomplish my wrath” appears many times in the book of Ezekiel (5:13; 6:12; 7:8; 20:8, 21). The Syriac version of this verse reads איה ... איה ‘where ... where’ and some scholars have proposed that perhaps, it was influenced by verse 12.

V. 16. This verse talks about the false prophets who promise peace and yet there is no peace. This has already been tackled above in verse 10. According to one scholar, this verse “could almost serve as a title for verses 10-15.”¹⁶³

3.4 False Prophetesses and their charms (13:17-23)

The fact that Ezekiel condemns these women prophetesses does not mean that the issue of women prophesying was new to him. In Exod 15:20, Miriam is called נביאה

¹⁶¹ D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 408.

¹⁶² M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 239.

¹⁶³ J. W. Wevers, *Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 87.

“prophetess”. Deborah (Judg 4:4) Huldah (2 Chr 34:22) and Noadiah (Neh 6:14) are referred to as prophetesses. Like their male counterparts, these prophetesses “dealt with matters concerning the people as a whole.”¹⁶⁴

The section 13:17-23 is similar to verses 2-8, “except that it lacks the ‘because’ element. Verse 17 is parallel to verse 2; verse 18, to verse 3; and verse 20, to verse 8.”¹⁶⁵ In its attack on women, this section is reminiscent of Isa 3:16- 4:1; 32:9-13, Amos 4:1-3. Commenting on these condemned women, J. B. Taylor argues that “Ezekiel’s language suggests that these were more like witches or sorceresses who practiced strange magic arts.”¹⁶⁶ Eichrodt adds that “all we are concerned with is a few women who deal in magic on the sly for the benefit of individual clients who pay in cash for their services.”¹⁶⁷

These women can be compared to the one sought by Saul in 1 Sam 28:7 when he says; *בְּקִשְׁוֹלֵי אִשָּׁת בַּעֲלֵת־אֹזֶב וְאֹלֶכָה אֵלֶיהָ וְאִרְרָשְׁהָ* “Find me a woman who is a medium, so that I may go and inquire of her.” Commenting on the rise of such women, Taylor further says that: “In times of national decay or crisis such quacks are often thrown up and they prey upon credulous and anxious minds.”¹⁶⁸

V. 17. Ezekiel opens this verse with a very familiar phrase *בְּן־אָדָם* “son of man” which has already been explained above in verse 2. Ezekiel is commanded to prophesy against these women that prophesy out of their own hearts *הַמְחַנְבְּאוֹת מִלְּבָבָן*. The same expression has already been used in verse 2. It is important to note that Ezekiel does not associate these women with the word *נְבִיאָה* “prophetess”. The reason is possibly that “they act like pagan prophets ..., attempting to manipulate Yahweh as they exploit other divinities, but their methods and aims are sinister. By means of incantations, curses, spells, the mutilation of the images of their victims, and alliances with evil spirits, they stalk the exilic community for prey and coerce the gods into serving their agenda.”¹⁶⁹ By all standards, as a man who had served as a priest and witnessed the religious reforms of Josiah, Ezekiel could not at any time associate these women with the word *נְבִיאָה*. About the true identity of these women, Coffman says: “Prophetesses

¹⁶⁴ W. Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 169.

¹⁶⁵ J. W. Wevers, *Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 87.

¹⁶⁶ J. B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1976), 123.

¹⁶⁷ W. Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 169.

¹⁶⁸ J. B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1976), 123.

¹⁶⁹ D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 417.

is too good a word for them; witches or sorceresses would suit the description better. These people were the ancient forerunners of the palmists, madams, fortune-tellers, card readers, and crystal ball watchers that ply their nefarious trade today in every large city on earth.”¹⁷⁰

V. 18. In this verse, Ezekiel condemns women “who sew magic charms on all their wrists and make veils of various lengths for their heads in order to ensnare people.” This practice by these women has parallels in other lands outside Israel as Eichrodt testifies: “The bindings round the wrist recall the magical knots and bands which have some prominence in the rich Babylonian library of incantations.”¹⁷¹ It is thus thought that these women could have adopted their practice from the Babylonian people, more so because we have some key technical words borrowed from Akkadian. The practice of these women has remained unclear to scholars.

The phrase לַמַּתְפָּרוֹת כְּסָתוֹת כָּל-אַצְבָּלַי יָדַי is translated in the KJV as “that sew pillows to all armholes” but loosely translated, it would be “who sew amulets upon all joints of the hands.” This phrase אַצְבָּלַי יָדַי is interpreted as “wrists” by RSV, while others prefer “elbows”. The word אַרְבֵּי does not appear in the Septuagint. It is also agreed upon by scholars that the word יָדַי “my hands” is a textual error. According to Zimmerli, we should read יָד “hand” as it is in the LXX: ἐπι παντα ἀγκωνα χειρος where י (y) is may be a dittography of the word וַעֲשֵׂה “and make” which follows. The other alternative proposed is that originally, the word was יָדַיִם but the final ם fell from the Masoretic Text by error.¹⁷² These two views could not be accommodated in translation.

The word כְּסָתוֹת translated as “pillows” or “magic bands” in the RSV comes from כָּסַת and it is only used here and in verse 20. In modern Hebrew, it means “cushions” or “pillows”, “and this is how the LXX translated it, but some ancient writers thought in terms of amulets or even phylacteries.”¹⁷³ He further adds that “this may have been a magical binding of the wrists of the inquirer to symbolize the binding power of the

¹⁷⁰ J. B. Coffman, *Commentary on Ezekiel* (Abilene: Abilene Christian University Press, 1991), 133.

¹⁷¹ W. Eichrodt, *Ezekiel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 169.

¹⁷² The treatment of this יָדַי problem is in W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 288.

¹⁷³ J. B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1976), 124.

spell or incantation that accompanied it.”¹⁷⁴ This word תַּחֲסֵב may be related to the Akkadian verb *kasu* which means “to bind” and the noun *kasitu* which means “binding magic”. The LXX translates it as προσκεφαλαια “cushion for the head” but Origen preferred to translate it as φυλαχτηρια. This word תַּחֲסֵב appears only here and in verse 20 in the whole Hebrew Bible. Some think that it is associated with the verb חָסַב which means “to cover”. Therefore its actual meaning remains obscure. According to some other scholars, “these bands were also put on the wrists of their victims so these women could maintain control over them by means of sympathetic magic.”¹⁷⁵

The word תַּחֲסֵב translated as “kerchiefs” comes from תַּחֲסֵב which means “long veil... covering whole person” according to BDB.¹⁷⁶ Block suggests that the word comes from the Hebrew root חָסַב which means “to join”, “attach”. Of the suitability of this suggestion, he argues that this root is “easily associated with magical appurtenances, specifically amulets tied to a string and worn like a phylactery on the forehead, or, more likely, brought over the head and worn around the neck.”¹⁷⁷ These kerchiefs were probably worn from the head downward. It is probable that this kind of dress was part of their weaponry which they used to “hunt souls”. To support this, Block adds: “Whatever the nature of the *kesatot* and the *mispahot*, they appear to have been instruments of black magic and their wielders may justifiably be designated sorceresses, evil magicians, witches.”¹⁷⁸ The LXX translates תַּחֲסֵב as ἐπιβολαια which is related to the Akkadian word *sapahu* which means “to scatter”, “to spread out”. These women were witches who held power over their clients; controlling and driving them to wherever they (women) wanted. They thus had power of life and death. They can be compared to voodoo cultists of the West Indies. “Hunting lives is here contrasted with preserving lives. The term probably was some technical term for harming by magical means”¹⁷⁹ Zimmerli, wonders how an article could appear on תַּחֲסֵב of the Masoretic Text yet in כְּסוּתָהּ it (the article) is lacking.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ H. W. F. Saggs, “External Souls in the Old Testament,” JSS 19 (1974) 5, apud., D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 413.

¹⁷⁶ F. Brown, et al., BDB (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 705.

¹⁷⁷ D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 414.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

In this verse, Yahweh refers to הנפשות as עמי and I may say, this shows Yahweh's mercy and sympathy towards His people. The fact that He still calls them His people, means that He still loves them. Always, "When Yahweh sees his people threatened by deceptive charlatans ... and human vultures, he stands up as their patron and comes to their defence."¹⁸⁰

V. 19. In this verse, God condemns the false prophetesses for polluting Him among His people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, killing people who should not die and sparing those who should die. Many scholars agree that what is described here is not clear. Some think that "barley and bread refer to the materials for magical practice..."¹⁸¹ Reference to Num 5:15 is given where it is written that "Then the man shall bring his wife to the priest, and bring the offering required of her, a tenth of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil upon it, and put no frankincense on it, for it is a cereal offering of jealousy, a cereal offering of remembrance, bringing iniquity to remembrance." Bread is referred to in Lev 2:5ff. Barley and bread are presented as elements of sacrifice and in Greek they are ἀλφιτομαντεια and χριθομαντεια.

In my own opinion, these prophetesses were probably given barley and bread by those that came to seek a word of prophecy from them. "They dispensed life and death according to the size of the payments which were given to them (Mic 3:5), thereby dishonouring the name of Yahweh among his people."¹⁸² However according to M. Greenberg, "the barley and bread are to be taken, not as the paltry price of their services..., but rather as means of divination."¹⁸³ Greenberg suggests two possibilities, that either divination was done by means of these elements like in Mesopotamia, by throwing flour on water and this has a parallel with Greek aleuromancy and alphitomancy which is divination by wheat and barley meal.¹⁸⁴ The other alternative is that "these grain items may have been offered to God in connection with divination (cf. the barley offering in Num 5:15);"¹⁸⁵ The phrase בשעלי שערים is the one that determines

¹⁷⁹ J. W. Wevers, *Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 88.

¹⁸⁰ D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 415.

¹⁸¹ W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 297.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20* (New York: Doubleday, 1986), 240.

¹⁸⁴ G. Contenau, *La Divination chez les Assyriens et les Babyloniens*, (1940), p. 296, apud., M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 240.

¹⁸⁵ M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 240.

the meaning. If it is translated as ‘for hands of barley’ as is the case in the KJV and RSV then it would imply that these prophetesses were working for a pay. But if it is translated as ‘with handfuls of barley’ it would mean that it is “an allusion to divination technique”¹⁸⁶ According to scholars, “בכזבכם לעמי שמעי כזב” “by your lying to my people that hear your lies” was added by a later hand. “It was added to make explicit the false character of their words.”¹⁸⁷

V. 20. In this verse, there is a striking anthropomorphism where God Himself vows to invade the witches. Ezekiel tells how

God will himself destroy the magic snares and set his people free from them, a stronger power will cancel the operations of magical power, and show the people how to free themselves from such slavery to the demonic. Ezekiel tells how the power of truth comes on to the stage to uncover all the hidden winding ways followed by sinful selfishness, and thus rob them of their seductive power.¹⁸⁸

While the Masoretic Text has *אשר... שם*, the versions have *אשר... בם*. The word *לפרחות* “to make them fly” literally means “for flying things” and is always rendered “like birds” basing on the fact that *פרחת* in Aramaic means “bird”. It is therefore an Aramaism “and is taken by some as a gloss, the first of its two occurrences being omitted by the LXX and Syriac. It would suggest an allusion to necromancy and the idea of the souls of the dead in the form of birds...”¹⁸⁹ However, other scholars think that the first *לפרחות* was omitted in the LXX and Syriac because of its existence at the end of the verse. The Targum interprets it as a flight into perdition, viz., Gehena.¹⁹⁰ The word *אדני* “God” is not found in the LXX. Instead there is *κυριος κυριος* which when translated becomes ‘Lord Lord’. The phrase *את נפשים* is grammatically not correct. “*נפש* is usually formed with a feminine plural; it also lacks the article here, and further the whole expression is quite inappropriate after the preceding *את הנפשות*”¹⁹¹ One scholar Cornill suggests that it should be read as *אתן חפשים* which would give a better sense to the text. Following Cornill’s emendation, the text then reads “I will let

¹⁸⁶ H. G. May, “Oracle Against Prophetesses (13:17-23),” IB 6:133.

¹⁸⁷ J. W. Wevers, *Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 88.

¹⁸⁸ W. Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 172.

¹⁸⁹ H. G. May, “Oracle Against Prophetesses (13:17-23),” IB 6:133.

¹⁹⁰ Footnote 11, in D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 411.

¹⁹¹ W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 289.

the souls that you hunt go free like birds.” The text here becomes clearer and more sensible. The RSV follows Cornill’s emendation.

The word לִפְרוּחַ “to fly” in the LXX is εἰς διασκοπισμον. The meaning of this word is not very clear. Probably, it has reference to “a picture of a bird escaping from a snare (Ps 124:7; Prv 6:5).”¹⁹² For comparison, Ps 124:7 is written here down:

We have escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowlers;

The snare is broken, and we have escaped!

For the discussion of the word translated as “pillows”, an explanation has already been given on verse 18.

V. 21. This verse is a warning of how Yahweh will deliver His people by tearing the kerchiefs of the false prophetesses (אִתֵּי־מַסְפַּח־יָדָיִם). Verses 20 and 21 are arranged in a balanced ABCA'B'C' pattern as seen below.¹⁹³

- | | | |
|----|----------------|---|
| A | Divine action | I will tear them (the bands) from your arms. |
| B | Divine aim | I will set free the persons. |
| C | Purpose/result | That they may fly away. |
| A' | Divine action | I will tear off your amulets. |
| B' | Divine aim | I will rescue my people from your hands. |
| C' | Purpose/result | That they may cease to be prey in your hands. |

These verses (20 and 21) should always be treated together.

Vv 22-23. In these verses, through the prophet Ezekiel, Yahweh further condemns the false prophetesses for their lies with which they have made sad the hearts of the righteous. They are further condemned for strengthening the hands of the wicked. The actions of the false prophetesses are in such a way that they take people further away from Yahweh instead of bringing them closer to Him. The last part of verse 22 has resemblance to Jeremiah 23:14 where it is written that:

They strengthen the hands of evildoers,

So that no one turns from his wickedness.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ This arrangement can be seen in D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 147.

In v. 23, Yahweh vows to deliver His people from the hand of the false prophetesses. The crime of these prophetesses is that they have “disheartened the righteous” לִב־צַדִּיקַת and “encouraged the wicked”. These prophetesses have “... caused damage to the people’s morale and abused the influence which the uncertain times thrust into their hands. They have been moral bloodsuckers at a time when the people needed as never before to lean upon the one holy God who treats them all as individuals with the strictest fairness and impartiality”¹⁹⁴

In verse 22, there is a very important word in the study of false prophecy. This is שֶׁקֶר. This word is used elsewhere to refer to lies of the false prophets (Jer 23:25, 32; 27:10). Brownlee treats שֶׁקֶר as a misplaced marginal gloss on *qesem* in v. 23.¹⁹⁵ It is in fact surprising to find that this word שֶׁקֶר appears only once in the whole book of Ezekiel. Ezekiel prefers to use כִּיב in vv. 6, 7, 8, 9, and 19 to refer to “lies”. Surprisingly, the word שֶׁקֶר is missing in the Septuagint. It can as well mean falsehood. What prompts the prophet to change terminology is not clear. But according to BDB, the two words are almost synonymous. His ability to use both of them interchangeably shows how versed Ezekiel was in the Hebrew language.

In verse 23, Ezekiel brings to mind what he has already written in verses 6, 7, 9 and 19. As Zimmerli argues, we would expect to meet the word כִּיב “lie” and not קִסָּם “divination” as is the case. This section is concluded with a vow by Yahweh to deliver His people as he says in the preceding verses. The following opinion by Zimmerli fits the occasion as I conclude this section; “In the עֲמֵי מוֹדֵקֵן אֶת הַצִּלְחָתִי there echoes Israel’s old language of deliverance (Ex 18:9f; Ju 8:34). Yahweh’s deliverance, which once came to his people, is here promised fully to individuals”¹⁹⁶

3.5 Translation of Ezekiel 13

In this section I will give a literal translation of Ezekiel chapter 13.

1. And the word of the Lord came to me, saying,

¹⁹⁴ J. B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1976), 125.

¹⁹⁵ Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p. 194, apud., D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 411.

¹⁹⁶ W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 298.

2. Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who are prophesying and say to them that prophesy from their hearts, 'Hear the word of the Lord'.
3. Thus says the Lord God, Woe to the foolish prophets who walk after their own spirits and have not seen anything.
4. O Israel, your prophets are like jackals in the ruins.
5. You have not gone up in the breaches nor repaired the wall on the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord.
6. They have seen vanity and lying divination saying, the Lord declares and the Lord has not sent them and they wait for the word to be confirmed.
7. Have you not seen a vain vision, and a lying divination and you say, the Lord declares, and I have not spoken?
8. Therefore thus says the Lord God, because you have spoken vanity and seen a lie, therefore, behold, I am against you, declares the Lord God.
9. And my hand shall be against the prophets who see vanity and divine lies, they shall not be in the council of my people neither shall they be written in the record of the house of Israel and nor shall they enter into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord God.
10. Because, even because, you have led my people astray saying peace, and there is no peace and he builds a wall and behold others coated it with whitewash.
11. Say to them that coat it with whitewash, that it shall fall; there shall be overflowing rain and you O great hailstones will fall and a stormy wind shall break.
12. And behold when the wall has fallen, will it not be said to you, where is the coating with which you have coated it?
13. Therefore thus says the Lord God, and I will break it in my fury with a stormy wind and there shall be overflowing rain in my anger and hailstones in my rage to consume it.
14. And I will throw down the wall which you have coated with whitewash and cause it to touch the ground and I will uncover its foundation and it shall fall and you will be consumed in its midst; and you shall know that I am the Lord.
15. And I will accomplish my rage in the wall and in they that coated it with whitewash. And I will say to you, the wall is no more and those that coated it.
16. The prophets of Israel who prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and who see visions of peace for her and there is no peace; declares the Lord God.

17. And you, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy from their heart and prophesy against them.

18. And say, thus says the Lord God, woe to those sewing bands to all joints of the hand and make long veils on the head of every height to hunt souls of my people. Will you spare alive the souls for yourselves?

19. And will you pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread to kill the souls that should not die and to save alive the souls that should not live by your lying to my people that listen to lies?

20. Therefore, thus says the Lord God, behold, I am against your bands with which you hunt the souls there to make them fly and I will tear them from your arms and will send away the souls, the souls which you hunt, to make them fly.

21. And I will tear your long veils and let my people be delivered out of your hand and they shall no longer be in your hand to be hunted. And you shall know that I am the Lord.

22. Because you have made sad the heart of the righteous with lies and I have not made him sad and strengthened the hands of the wicked so that he may not return from his evil way, to let him live.

23. Therefore, you will not see vanity nor divine divination, and again I will deliver my people from your hand and you shall know that I am the Lord.

3.6 Form and structure of Ezekiel 13

As already said at the beginning of this chapter, Ezekiel 13 is a prophetic oracle of judgment. It is made up of two sections; one addressing the false prophets (vv 1-16) and the other addressing false prophetesses (17-23). Both sections open with הוי cry in verse 3 which is very popular in Isaiah (5:8; 5:11; 10:1; 10:5; 18:1; 28:1) and Jeremiah (23:1; 30:7; 47:6; 48:1, 50:27). It also appears in Ezek 13:18 and later in Ezek 34:2. The appearance of הוי “Alas”, “Ah”, “Woe” marks a beginning of an independent section. It is therefore probably true to say that these two sections were uttered at different times but later put together by the editor(s) of this book. According to Block, “These two oracles have obviously been brought together because of their common concern with professional competition to Ezekiel’s own ministry.”¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 393.

At the beginning of both sections, there is commission to prophesy. For part one, it starts with the popular phrase בן־אדם 'son of man' followed by הנבא אל־נביאי ישראל "prophesy against the prophets of Israel ..." in verse 2. Part two starts with אל־בנות עמך "Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people...". If this theory of fusion of two prophetic oracles is to have any credence, it is good to argue that the opening word of verse 17, ואתה "And you" or "likewise" may have been added by the editor(s) of the Book of Ezekiel as a link between the two sections. In the two sections, we find the recognition formula וידעתן כי־אני יהוה "you shall know that I am the Lord" evenly distributed. In section one, it appears in verses 9 and 14; then in section two it is in verses 21 and 23. Ezek 13:22-23 is a proof oracle "which is already evident as a three part formula in 1 Kgs 20:13; 28. After a) a motivation introduced by יען there follows b) the declaration of the divine intervention introduced in a vigorous style with לבן and c) the declaration of purpose in the recognition formula."¹⁹⁸ According to Block, "The presence of these elements highlights the oracles' main aim: that the addressees might recognize the identity and sovereignty of Yahweh."¹⁹⁹

The first section can further be divided into two parts. Verse 1 is the introduction. Then verses 2-9 seem to flow together in their condemnatory language against the false prophets. The crime of the false prophets is that they envision lies and proclaim futility as can be seen in verse 9. "My hand will be against the prophets who envision futility and who divine lies; they shall not be in the assembly of My people, nor be written in the record of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord." After this verse, another element comes in and this is the tottering wall. The metaphor of the wall continues up to verse 16 after which comes the oracle against the false prophetesses who may rightly be called fortune tellers.

Ezek 13:18-21 is the proof saying part where, instead of יען as in verse 22, here we have the הוי cry. As said before, this is a very popular word with Isaiah and some of the other prophets. It also appears in Amos 5:18; 6:1 and also in Mic 2:1 among other

¹⁹⁸ W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 290.

¹⁹⁹ D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 394.

places. Wherever it occurs, it is “intended as a motivation for the following divine word.”²⁰⁰ It can thus be called a motivation for judgment.

Although quite different, the two sections that make up Ezekiel 13 (1-16 and 17-23) have some similarities and this is more pronounced in the vocabulary used. Verse 2 “Son of man prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, ‘Hear the word of the Lord’.” This verse can be compared to verse 17 which says “Likewise, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own heart; prophesy against them.” The uniting factor is the phrase “who prophesy out of their own heart(s).” Although in Hebrew the wording is different (in verse 2 it is לנביאי מלבם and in verse 17 it is המתנבאות מלבן), still the meaning is the same. The slight difference is that in verse 2, hearts is in plural. But still in verse 17, many prophetesses cannot have one heart. Therefore the interpretation ‘hearts’ seems to be right.

Verse 3 opens with כה אמר יהוה “Thus says the Lord God.” This opening is very similar to that of verse 18 which starts that ואמרת כה אמר יהוה “And say, thus says the Lord God.”

Verses 4-6 can be compared to 18-19. In both cases, there is description of the evil that these false prophets and prophetesses were committing. In 4-6, false prophets are likened to foxes and are condemned for envisioning futility and false divination. In 18-19, the prophetesses are condemned for sewing magic charms on their sleeves and for hunting souls. Though the sins may be different, all the same, it is evil and detestable before Yahweh.

Verses 8 and 20 also have something in common. They both open with כה אמר יהוה “Therefore thus says the Lord God.” In the two verses, the prophet uses the word לבן which can be rightly translated as “against”. In verse 8 Yahweh is אליכם “against you” for seeing vanity שוא and lies כזב while in verse 20 He is against כסתותיכנה “your pillows.”

²⁰⁰ W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 290.

There is also some similarity between verse 9 and verses 20-21. In both cases, there is a description of the punishment that was to be meted on these false prophets and prophetesses. In verse 9, the punishment is that the hand of Yahweh would be against these prophets and they would not be in the assembly of His people and they will not be written in the record of the house of Israel and also, they shall not enter the land of Israel. In verses 20-21, among other things, Yahweh promises to tear off the veils of the false prophetesses. In both cases, these punishments are followed by **כִּי אֲנִי אֲדַנֶּה יְהוָה** “and you shall know that I am the Lord God”, a phrase which is very popular in the book of Ezekiel.

Verses 10 and 22 can also be compared. Both verses begin with **יֵעַן** “because”, although on verse 10 it is repeated and written as **יֵעַן וַיֵּעַן** which is translated as “because, indeed because.” In verse 10, the false prophets preach to the people saying **שְׁלוֹמִים וְאֵין שְׁלוֹמִים** “peace when there is no peace.” This is a lie because at this time, God’s wrath was soon being poured on the people, contrary to the promises of the prophets. In the same way, false prophetesses are accused of telling **שִׁקְרָה** “lies” to the people. The underlying point is that in both cases, there is an element of falsehood. Verse 13 is linked to verse 23, in that both open with **לְכֵן** “therefore”.

By comparing the two sections of Ezekiel 13 (1-16 and 17-23), the point being made is that they are closely related. As some scholars suggest, it is probable to say that there were originally two oracles which were fused into one by the editor(s) of the book of Ezekiel. In the process of editing, he or they tried to fill any gaps by borrowing from each of the documents. But it is quite impossible to know which oracle was composed before the other. But much as there is some similarity, it is important to recognize that the first section is longer and probably more complex than the second one.

The section from verses 10- 14 opens with **יֵעַן** in verse 10. In this section, “we find the classic form of the proof oracle in a series of three parts: a) motivation with **יֵעַן** v 10, b) declaration of judgment introduced with **לְכֵן** and the messenger formula, vv 13-14b α , c) formula of recognition v 14b β .”²⁰¹ The following verses starting with verse 15 are believed by scholars to be a late addition since they seem to interfere with the smooth

²⁰¹ W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 290.

flow of the preceding verses. According to Zimmerli, verses 11-12a seem to be a doublet of 13 and the following verses. A comparison of the said verses may serve us better. “Say to those who daub it with whitewash that it shall fall! There will be a deluge of rain, great hailstones will fall, and a stormy wind will break out; and when the wall falls, will it not be said to you, ‘Where is the daubing with which you daubed it?’” (Ezek 13:11-12). This verse is similar to verse 13 which says “Therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘I will make a stormy wind break out in my wrath; and there shall be a deluge of rain in my anger, and great hailstones in wrath to destroy it.’” The key words in verse 11-12 appear in verse 13. For example the falling of *ואבני אלגביש* “hailstones”, *רוח־הסערה* “stormy wind” and *גשם שוטף* “overflowing shower”. One wonders how one person could have repeated himself in such a startling way. This brings in the theory of fusion of more than one piece of work.

Scholars have identified two hands in the composition of verses 1-9. This is because there is “the change of address from second to third person”²⁰² Some scholars have attempted to identify two units that were fused together to come up with what we have today. They do this by separating verses that are in the second person (1, 5, 7) from those which are in the third person (3, 6, 9). The conclusion reached is that originally, there were two documents, one written in the second person and the other written in third person. These two documents were then combined by late editor(s) who worked on the book of Ezekiel. However, this theory cannot be proved beyond reasonable doubt because it is possible for one author to write changing address between two or more persons depending on what he or she is writing about. Among the scholars that do not agree with this fusion theory is Moshe Greenberg. He argues against it as shown here: “But this theory cannot avoid manipulating the text even further in order to obtain consistency The theory is condemned by its necessitating the separation of “I am coming at you” (vs 8, second person) from “my hand will come upon the prophets” (vs 9, third person), in defiance of the rule that “I am coming at ...” is followed by a sentence of punishment.”²⁰³ According to Greenberg, the literary design of the chapter militates against the theory that Ezekiel 13 is a composition of more than one document.

²⁰² W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 291.

²⁰³ M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 243.

3.7 The setting of Ezekiel 13

To get a clear glimpse of the setting of Ezekiel 13 requires one to be aware of the setting of the whole book of Ezekiel and this is not easy as C. G. Howie testifies. “The problem of setting for the Ezekiel prophetic ministry is not an easy one to solve; this fact is evidenced by an increasingly wide diversity of opinion.”²⁰⁴ Traditionally, the book of Ezekiel is known to have been written in Babylon where the prophet was a member of the exile community living at Tel-Abib. It was here that Ezekiel got his visions and gave his prophetic oracles. “Yet the major part of his message in chs 1-24 is admittedly directed to the people in Jerusalem, which he calls a ‘bloody city.’... His prophecies seem to have little relevance to the Tel-Abib community.”²⁰⁵ Chapter 12 which comes immediately before 13 seems to have been written in Jerusalem and it is as if the exile had not started as it is testified in Ezek 12:11: “Say, ‘I am a sign for you: as I have done, so shall it be done to them; they shall go into exile, into captivity.’” Ezek 12:13 makes it very clear. “And I will spread my net over him, and he shall be taken in my snare; and I will bring him to Babylon, to the land of the Chaldeans.” These verses make the setting of Ezekiel 13 harder to explain. However, one may argue that the way these verses and chapters are written does not follow the chronology of events as they unfolded.

Accordingly, Ezekiel 13 is directed to the false prophets who were in Jerusalem. In verse 9, the prophet “shows ... the future perspective of a return to the land”²⁰⁶ especially the part which says that “they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel;...” Some scholars think that Ezekiel 13 was written in Jerusalem. To make this theory work, they argue that verse 9 is “a very late insertion by an exilic hand.”²⁰⁷ But taking away this verse from Ezekiel 13, would be disturbing the symmetrical structure of this whole chapter. Zimmerli in support of Babylonian setting, argues that: “The strong appearance of mantic actions by the women who prophesy is perfectly credible in the exile,”²⁰⁸ and this would mean that at least Ezek

²⁰⁴ C. G. Howie, “Ezekiel,” IDB 2:205.

²⁰⁵ C. G. Howie, “Ezekiel,” IDB 2:205.

²⁰⁶ W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 298.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

13:17-23 was composed in Babylon. These women may have adopted their witchcraft from their Babylonian counterparts. Verses 1-16 could have been written in Jerusalem and then a later editor combined the two sections.

Ezekiel 13 could have been uttered slightly after 587 BC but we are not sure whether Jerusalem was still standing at this time. “However, it is also possible that verse 5, as well as the picture of the coming assault on the wall (vv 13-15) and the imminent threat of the ‘battle on the day of Yahweh,’ could point to a time before the fall of Jerusalem.”²⁰⁹

All said, the issue of the setting of Ezekiel 13 is as complex as that of the entire book. In the words of Zimmerli, “the question must therefore remain open.”²¹⁰

3.8 Theological Implications of Ezekiel 13

The theological implications of this chapter can well be seen if one first looks at the first section of the false prophets (verses 1-16) and then after look at the second one about the false prophetesses (verses 17-23).

3.8.1 False Prophets (Ezekiel 13:1-16)

This section carries a lot of theological implications for any Bible reader or God fearing person. Yahweh had given out His word to be a light to His people. However, this word is always counterfeited in many ways. “Counterfeits characteristically claim divine authority, even when they speak only from their own inspiration. The frauds of Ezekiel’s day claimed to have had visions, but had seen nothing.”²¹¹ Instead of being light to people, they became a snare for them. Just like the irresponsible shepherds who instead of feeding the sheep fed themselves (Ezek 34:2); these prophets were only concerned with their own welfare. As Block argues, oratory power and charismatic personality “do not authorize one to stand behind the pulpit. The message of those who claim to speak for God must have his signature. This will be true of our proclamation only to the extent that we declare the message of God revealed in the Scriptures: sola Scriptura!”²¹²

²⁰⁹ W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 298.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans, 1997), 409.

²¹² Ibid.

Even in the Church of today, there are people who call themselves prophets but in actual sense they are false. A good example is Wilson Bushara of Uganda that will be dealt with in the appendix. Therefore Ezekiel 13 is a good example to all Christians not to believe any one that comes calling himself a prophet. The exile community was living in a time of despair, far away from home, separated from their people and their holy Temple. The false prophets used this chance to declare their message of “all is well” when in the actual sense nothing was. Instead of telling the people to repent and walk according to the covenant faith, they were just exploiting the situation and making them more lost (they were driving the people away from the Lord). In the same way today, there are preachers who instead of speaking out on the evil that is in the society, all they declare is peace, miracles and God’s blessings so that their grand scheme of enriching themselves with economic benefits may be realized. To such preachers and pastors Ezekiel 13 loudly speaks. Such leaders are more concerned about themselves than the people they lead. Ezekiel actually compares them to jackals “scavenging among the ruins for personal advantage, capitalizing on the calamity of others.”²¹³ Such fraudulent leaders evade their responsibility to take care of the people they lead and instead mind about their own affairs, just like a jackal.

It is good to emphasize that this chapter is not only relevant to religious leaders but also political ones as well. It speaks much against corruption in all circles of society. All leaders in society have God-given power to execute their duties in righteousness and with responsibility. But “Ezek 13 shows how God’s power given to men could be despised and misused by them.”²¹⁴ To emphasize the weakness of these prophets, this is what Zimmerli adds: “The men who should have watched over the protection of the community..., to make clear the work of Yahweh (Is 5:12), and who should have been ready to help speedily, had been asleep. They had neglected to turn to God in ceaseless intercessions.”²¹⁵ Such people still exist even today. Instead of causing a positive change in the people they lead, they instead keep quiet as long as they can get what they want. By the activities of these false prophets, “God’s word had been brought into disrepute in ‘beautiful-worship’ and sentimental ‘assurances’ (שְׁלוֹמִים). It had lost its

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 298.

condemning sharpness (Heb 4:12f; cf. Mt 5:13) and instead of leading, it had misled.”²¹⁶

3.8.2 False Prophetesses (Ezek 13:17-23)

Although this text is very hard to interpret, its theological message remains very clear. In time of crisis, people are vulnerable to occult powers. This section is proving to the readers about the presence of evil powers and how people can manipulate them to harm others for their own benefit. “The demonic spiritual world operates in direct opposition to the kingdom of God, seeking to gain control over the weak and to destroy the righteous.”²¹⁷ The Old Testament in general speaks less about the demonic powers compared to the New Testament. But still in the Old Testament, we find verses which are against the activities which these prophetesses were doing. For example Deut 18:10 condemns witchcraft, soothsaying, use of omens and sorcery.

In the New Testament, Peter warns that νηψατε, γρηγορησατε, ὅτι ὁ ἀντιδικὸς ὑμῶν διαβόλος ὡς λέων ὠρυόμενος, περιπατεῖ ζητῶν τινα καταπιεῖ “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.” This verse shows the reality of the devil’s power and the need to always guard against it.

Like these women were doing, today there are countless people who practice magic and witchcraft. From this text, we learn that no one is safe. All people have to be on the lookout against people who are aiming at harming them. Bad enough, some people use witchcraft claiming to be the power of God. There are actually some churches in many parts of the world which have been accused of using witchcraft in a bid to attract more members. Just like these prophetesses who were operating “for handfuls of barley and pieces of bread”, today there are leaders in the church whose aim is to get money from their unsuspecting followers. Other leaders in society have been accused of bribery and all sorts of corrupt tendencies. These verses therefore condemn such. Therefore “the people of God must resist the temptation to exploit spiritual connections for personal

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 299.

²¹⁷ D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 418.

advantage. Such exploitation is obvious when a person resorts to spells, charms, and wizardry, all of which have been condemned by God (Deut. 18:10-14).²¹⁸

The fact that these evil women are condemned in the strongest terms possible should be a reminder that “those who occupy positions of power will answer to God for the manner in which they have exercised their authority.”²¹⁹ These women’s “motives were parasitic, and their methods were sinister. On the one hand, they were interested only in their own status; on the other, they marshalled the forces of darkness in support of that power.”²²⁰ This situation is seen in the church today, where the leaders’ behaviours are similar to those people outside the church who have never known Christ.

These women had misused their God-given power and authority. In the words of Zimmerli, they “had misused the authority to offer life and death through words and signs which God had entrusted among his people to human mouths and human hands. They had used conveniently for their own gain and for payment the life and death which God had bound to his own summons to righteousness and man’s obedience.”²²¹ In their evil activities, these women had to be judged. Yahweh was fed up with what they were doing. He thus had to act. In the same way, people who do such things today in the church should know that at one time they will be brought to God’s harsh judgment as these women were.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 419.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 299.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. AN OVERVIEW OF FALSE PROPHETS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the Old Testament, the issue of false prophecy is not peculiar to Ezekiel 13. There are many other places where this issue is addressed in the Old Testament. In this chapter therefore, I will discuss false prophecy and prophets in light of these other places other than Ezekiel 13. I will look at false prophecy in Jeremiah 23:9-40; 28; Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:9-22; Micah, 1 Kings 18:20-40; 22:1-28.

4.1 False prophets in Jeremiah

4.1.1 Jeremiah 23:9-40

Before commenting on these verses, it is important to first give brief information about Jeremiah and the historical setting in which he operated. He was born in Anathoth which is the current Ras el-Kharubbeh near Jerusalem. He was a son of Hilkiyah the priest. “While we are not informed concerning his early years, it is apparent that he was reared in the traditions of his fathers.”²²² He was called to be a prophet in the 13th year of King Josiah (626 B. C.). His prophetic ministry covered 40 years up to 587 B. C., thus witnessing the reigns of the last five kings of Judah: Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiachin, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. Jeremiah was thus a contemporary of Ezekiel, though the former was older than the latter.

It must be pointed out at this stage that the book of Jeremiah makes reference to false prophets several times, more than any other. This can be seen in 5:31; 6:13-14; 8:10-11; 14:13-15; 27:1-28:16. During Jeremiah’s day, many false prophets were in Jerusalem “since the Deuteronomic reform of 621 B. C. involved the removal of many cultic prophets and priests from the local sanctuaries to the capital.”²²³

In what follows, I will try to explain the phenomenon of false prophecy as given in Jeremiah 23:9-40.

²²² J. Muilenburg, “Jeremiah the prophet,” IBD 2:825.

²²³ J. P. Hyatt, “Oracles Concerning the Prophets (23:9-40),” IB 5:990.

This section is made up of a collection of messages attributed to Jeremiah concerning false prophets. It is agreed among scholars that the final collection and editing was not done by Jeremiah himself. “The collection was made very early, possibly by Baruch, and shows no evidence of Deuteronomic editing.”²²⁴

These verses are thought to have been produced during Jeremiah’s life time with exception of verses 34-40 which are attributed to a later hand.

In the first section (verses 9-12), the prophet’s heart is broken שָׁבַר because of the false prophets and their evil activities. “This section describes the prophet’s great sorrow over the general wickedness in which both prophets and priests share.”²²⁵ The language used here is similar to the one in Ps 69:21 “Reproach has broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness...” The evil practices of these prophets and priests had also extended to God’s house גַּם-בְּבֵיתֵי (23:11).

Verses 13-15 form another section. In this section, prophets of Samaria are accused of prophesying by Baal (23:13), while those of Jerusalem are accused of נֶאֱדָר “adultery” and שָׁקֵר “lies” yet they prophesy by Yahweh, thereby profaning His name. Compared to those in Ezekiel 13, the prophets of Jerusalem seem to be worse. As in Ezekiel 13, Yahweh promises to punish these prophets (23:15).

Verses 16-22 also make a section of their own. These verses “provide a rationale for Yahweh’s judgment against the prophets, who have been largely responsible for what the people as a whole have done.”²²⁶ In this section, Yahweh commands His people not to listen to the words of the prophets because “They speak a vision of their own heart” (23:16). This is similar to Ezekiel 13:2. Just like the Prophets in Ezekiel 13, these prophets promise peace (23:17).

In verse 18, we are introduced to a new idea of סוּדַּיְהוָה “counsel of the Lord” “where the true prophet receives the word of Yahweh.”²²⁷ The Jews believed in a kind of council headed by Yahweh before which true prophets always stood to get His word to

²²⁴ Ibid., 989-990.

²²⁵ Ibid., 990

²²⁶ T. W. Overholt, *The Threat of Falsehood: A Study in the Theology of the Book of Jeremiah* (London: SCM Press, 1970), 57.

²²⁷ J. P. Hyatt, “Nature of the False Prophets’ Message,” IB 5:992.

His people. This same word סִדָּר further appears in verse 22. The reason why false prophets prophesy lies is because they have not stood in the סִדָּר יְהוָה “counsel of Yahweh.” Had they done this, “They would have seen that peace is an illusion, that Yahweh’s decision to send judgment upon his people was firm.”²²⁸

Verses 19-20 talk of God’s wrath that will come like a whirl wind on these false prophets. These verses are very similar to 30:23, 24 and many scholars consider them to have been borrowed from here. In verse 21, Yahweh disowns these prophets by saying “I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied.”

Verses 23-32 form another distinct section. This section opens with Yahweh talking about His omnipresence and transcendence. In the rest of the section, He condemns the dreamers who claim to have a message from Yahweh. In this oracle, “Jeremiah is not necessarily condemning the belief that dreams may be a medium of God’s revelation ..., but he sees that the false prophets proclaim as God’s word what is only the product of their own dreams, a medium easily abused.”²²⁹ We know that dreams had been used by God before to speak to man (Gen 40; 41). In fact, “Dreams are connected with prophecy and as part of the prophet’s endowment, and men may turn to dreams expecting to hear from Yahweh.”²³⁰ What we learn from this section is that no one can elect himself to the office of prophecy nor can one ably reject God’s ministry when he is called. In verse 30, the false prophets are accused of stealing the words of Yahweh. In this, they make pronouncements and claim them to be Yahweh’s and this is what makes them false.

The last part of this section is verses 33-40. Many commentators “regard this passage as an appendix to the preceding collection of oracles against the prophets.”²³¹ They say that verse 33 is the only one uttered by Jeremiah in the whole of this passage. The rest 34-40 is thought to have been added by the editors who seem to have misinterpreted the word מִשָּׂא “burden”. In this passage, the key word is מִשָּׂא. This word has been interpreted differently. It can mean “load” or “burden” carried by an animal as in Exod

²²⁸ T. W. Overholt, *The Threat of Falsehood* (London: SCM Press, 1970), 61.

²²⁹ J. P. Hyatt, “The False Prophets’ Lying Dreams (23:23-32),” IB 5:993.

²³⁰ T. W. Overholt, *The Threat of Falsehood* (London: SCM Press, 1970), 65.

²³¹ Ibid., 69.

23:5 or carried by man as in Num 4:15. But it can also refer to an oracle of the Lord as we find in Nah 1:1; Hab 1:1. In this passage, the NKJV translates אָמַר as “oracle” as opposed to RSV and KJV which translate it as “burden”. I will therefore follow the NKJV which seems to fit the occasion. In verse 33, Yahweh instructs Jeremiah that when people ask him about the oracle of Yahweh, he says that the Lord is soon forsaking them. In the rest of the passage, Yahweh is angry that people “have perverted the words of the living God, the Lord of hosts, our God” (23:36). Yahweh makes it clear that there is not to be any other new word from Him other than the message of doom and judgment that he had sent to them before (23:40).

4.1.2 Jeremiah 28

The setting of this chapter is in Jeremiah 27. In chapter 27:2, the word had come to Jeremiah that nations should make yokes and put them around their necks as a sign of captivity. The Lord promises to punish any nation that does not serve the Babylonians (27:8). Yahweh warns the people not to listen to their prophets, diviners, dreamers, soothsayers and sorcerers who say “You shall not serve the king of Babylon” (27:9). In Jer 27:10, Yahweh says that such prophets prophesy a lie. This is repeated in verses 14-15. Yahweh again in 27:16-18 warns the people not to listen to the prophets who prophesy that the vessels of the Lord’s house will be brought from Babylon very shortly. He actually challenges them that if they are prophets, let them intercede that the vessels left in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem do not go to Babylon. Jeremiah prophesies that all these vessels shall be taken to Babylon until the appointed time.

Having given such a background to Jeremiah 28, what follows is a summary of the concept of false prophecy as seen in this chapter.

Jeremiah 28 is a contention between two personalities, Jeremiah the true prophet of Yahweh on one hand prophesying captivity, and Hananiah the false prophet prophesying the end of captivity on the other. Hananiah is called ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης “the false prophet” in the LXX while the Masoretic Text simply calls him הנביא “the prophet”. “The encounter must have taken place very shortly after the events of ch. 27, for the symbol of the yoke is used in both chapters.”²³² Hananiah spoke to Jeremiah that Yahweh had broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. He promises that Yahweh

²³² J. P. Hyatt, “Conflict with Hananiah (28:1-17),” IB 5:1014.

would bring back the vessels of the Lord's house and all the captives who had been taken to Babylon within two years. It is unfortunate that he crowned all his lies with Yahweh's stamp of נאם־יהוה "says the Lord". Hananiah went ahead to break the yoke that was on Jeremiah's neck to symbolize the end of the Babylonian captivity. But Jeremiah on the other hand, got a word from Yahweh that was contrary to the lies of Hananiah. Yahweh says "You have broken the yokes of wood, but you have made in their place yokes of iron" (28:13). This was to mean that the exile was far from over and it was to be more severe. Jeremiah then openly told Hananiah in 28:15 that: "the LORD has not sent you, and you have made this people trust in a lie." Jeremiah then declares that Hananiah would die that year as a punishment for teaching rebellion against Yahweh. This prophecy later came to pass and Hananiah died that same year, there by confirming Jeremiah as a prophet of Yahweh according to the criterion given by Moses in Deut 18:22. In what follows in chapter 29, Jeremiah writes a letter to the exiles and still urges them not to listen to the lies of the false prophets (29:8, 9).

4.2 False prophecy in Deuteronomy

4.2.1 Deuteronomy 13:1-5

The book of Deuteronomy has been traditionally attributed to Moses as has been the rest of the Pentateuch. According to Wellhausen, the nucleus of this book is chapters 12-26 which were written by a certain prophet in 622 B. C. But according to S. R. Driver, the book was written in 640, while according H. H. Rowley, the book was written in 680 B. C. "and suggests that the author may have been a follower of Isaiah."²³³ The dating of Deuteronomy is very important in Old Testament prophecy studies. It is not surprising that this book talks about true and false prophecy in chapters 13 and 18. This is because it was almost during the same time that that prophet Jeremiah was prophesying. It was therefore addressing an issue that Jeremiah addressed; false prophecy.

In the section 13:1-5, Moses warns Israel against false prophets. Verse one talks of two individuals (prophet and dreamer) who seem similar in terms of functions. G. v. Rad is indeed right when he says that: "We do not know how these two men are to be distinguished from each other as regards their professional functions ... these are

²³³ G. T. Manley, "The Book of Deuteronomy," NBD 308.

persons whose words have an authoritative influence by virtue of a special commission.”²³⁴

In verses 1-2, we come to know that the fulfilment of אות “a sign” or מופת “wonder” is not an indication that the person is from Yahweh. This ties well with 2 Thess 2:9 and Rev 16:14 where we are told that demons can also perform signs and wonders. In Deut 13:2-3, Moses tells the Israelites that there may be prophets who may do wonders and signs but following other gods. These verses echo the message of Exod 20:3 where it is said that לא יהיה לך אלהים אחרים על-פני “You shall not have other gods before me.” We see that at times, a false prophet may prophesy something and it comes to pass when God is just testing His people to see whether they love Him with all their hearts and souls. The point here is that Moses is warning the Israelites against idolatry. But this is not to say that dreams and visions can not originate from Yahweh as these scriptures attest (Gen 20:3; 31:11; Num 12:6; Joel 2:28).

Because of the action of the dreamer or prophet that would try to drive people from Yahweh, the punishment was severe; he was to be put to death “because he had encouraged rebellion against Yahweh who had delivered Israel from Egypt.”²³⁵ It has to be pointed out here that there is only one recorded incident in the Old Testament when false prophets were killed for leading people astray and these were the prophets of Baal killed by Elijah (1 Kings 18:40). It is not clear why this law was not always followed as many false prophets existed in Israel at different times.

4.2.2 Deuteronomy 18:9-22

This section has been identified by scholars as the law concerning prophets. According to G. v. Rad, these laws “are to be dated at the earliest in the period of the monarchy.”²³⁶ The reason is that several pagan practices hitherto unknown in Israel’s early days are dealt with. In this section, Moses warns Israelites against some pagan practices like making their children pass through fire (18:10), witchcraft, soothsaying, interpreting omens or sorcery. The practice of consulting other powers was blasphemous, abominable and idolatrous. Of all the pagan practices prohibited, the one

²³⁴ G. v. Rad, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 96.

²³⁵ J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary* (London: Intervarsity Press, 1974), 174.

²³⁶ G. v. Rad, *Deuteronomy* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 122-123.

of passing through the fire has remained unclear to scholars. This practice is associated with the worship of the god Molech in other parts of the Old Testament (2 Kgs 23:10; Jer 32:35). Yahweh urges the Israelites to be blameless תמים as far as those practices are concerned. Yahweh was dispossessing the Canaanites because of such practices and the implication is that if they (Israelites) did the same, they would be dispossessed in the same way. It is probable to say that since part of verse 14 says that: “For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners...” these practices were foreign to Israel. They only found them among the Canaanite people.

In 18:15, the verb in the phrase “will raise up” has been interpreted by scholars to be in “a distributive sense (i.e. will raise up from time to time), and does not refer to a single future act.”²³⁷ It will have to be noted that “The terms throughout the section are collectives and represent types of individuals. The sense of the passage is that a succession of prophets would arise to continue the work of Moses.”²³⁸ However in the Christian era, this verse was later interpreted to be referring to the Messiah. Verse 16 reminds us of the events of Deut 5:23-31 where people demanded to have a mediator between them and Yahweh. This can be said to be the point where the real institution of prophecy started from. On that day, people said, “Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.”

In verse 18, Yahweh applies the phrase ונתתי דבריי בפי “and I will put my word in his mouth” to the prophet already promised in verse 15. This phrase is also used by Yahweh in Jer 1:9. It means that “It is Yahweh who commissions and sends forth the prophet... For that reason the prophet could say, ‘Thus saith the Lord.’”²³⁹ Verse 20 warns that anyone who falsely claims to be speaking on the behalf of Yahweh will die. This was true on Hananiah in Jer 28:17. Verses 21-22 give a criterion of how a true prophet was to be differentiated from the false one. As opposed to 13:1-5, here the fulfilment of the prophecy is enough stamp to know that the prophet is from Yahweh as in 1 Kgs 22:26-28; Jer 28:16:17. But the biggest problem is that at times, the false prophet’s prophecies could come to pass. The criterion one would resort to was to

²³⁷ A. D. H. Mayes, *Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 282.

²³⁸ J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary* (London: Intervarsity Press, 1974), 212.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 213.

check whether he is speaking presumptuously זָדוֹן .The root of this word is זָדַד which means “to boil up”.

4.3 False Prophecy in Micah

Little is known about Micah beyond what is contained in the book named after him. Micah was from Moresheth (1:1; 1:14) and he prophesied from 740 and 690 B. C. He was thus a contemporary of Isaiah. His ministry covered the reigns of Jotham (750-735 B. C.), Ahaz (735-715 B. C.), and Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.). During this time, there was syncretism in Israel. King Ahaz of Judah cooperated with Assyria and worship in Jerusalem was conducted following the Assyrian system of worship (2 Kgs 16:7-18). During this time, the rich oppressed the poor and the situation was made worse by the corrupt political and religious leaders. As Waltke says, “prophets and priests in Micah’s time were in cahoots with the corrupt bureaucrats in the royal court (Mic 2:6-11; 3:6-7).”²⁴⁰ Mic 3:2-3 summarize the evil that was prevailing during the days of Micah:

You hate the good and love the evil;
Who tear the skin from my people,
And their flesh from off their bones;
Who eat the flesh of my people,
And flay their skin from off them,
And break their bones in pieces,
And chop them up like meat in a kettle,
Like flesh in a caldron.

In Mic 2:11, the prophet speaks of those who prophesy for a pay. These are under the bondage of a false spirit. Indeed false prophets operate under the influence of a false spirit as opposed to true prophets who are led by the Spirit of God. Just like the false prophetesses in Ezek 13:19 who operated for handfuls of barley and pieces of silver, here false prophets prophesy for wine and strong drink. This is made clear in 3:11 where it is said that the prophets of Jerusalem divine for money. This is what is said of the false prophet in Micah’s day, “If people would supply him with the liquor he desired, he in turn would preach what they wanted to hear.”²⁴¹ Micah’s message in this verse was that the people of his day were so evil that they “would ordain as their

²⁴⁰ B. K. Waltke, *A Commentary on Micah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 2.

²⁴¹ R. E. Wolfe, “Love for False Prophets (2:11),” IB 6:915.

prophet any liar who was willing to tailor his message to their greed.”²⁴² It is unfortunate that the masses loathed Micah the man of integrity and embraced “A prophet who would declare himself in favour of intoxicants.”²⁴³

False prophets are further condemned in Mic 3:5-7. In 3:5, false prophets are accused of leading people astray. Just like the false prophets in Ezek 13:10, these prophets in Micah’s time also chant peace. These prophets were perpetrators of corruption. Whoever gave them what to eat, they would declare a good oracle to him or her. “Because of the disreputable behaviour of mercenary prophets, interested only in their personal gain, religion was being degraded.”²⁴⁴ The religion being degraded is the religion of Yahweh who had delivered the Israelites from their Egyptian oppressors. The people had forgotten to serve Yahweh who had been so kind to them in the past and bent so low to listen to people who were giving messages cooked up from their own minds. Whenever these prophets were not well paid, they would fight their victims. Because of the evil actions of these false prophets, God would not accept this trend to continue; their punishment was to be severe as shown in 3:6:

Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision,
And darkness to you, without divination.
The sun shall go down upon the prophets,
And the day shall be black over them.

In verse 7, החזים “the seers” are to be ashamed. Seers were playing the role of prophet and sometimes these two words could be used interchangeably as in Isaiah 30:10.

4.4 False prophecy in 1 Kings

4.4.1 1 Kings 18:20-40

In this section, we find the contention between Prophet Elijah on one hand and the prophets of Baal on the other. Elijah is the true prophet of Yahweh while the prophets of Baal are false since they were of a different god. Moses in Deut 13:1-5 had said that if a prophet arises but preaches other gods, he is not to be listened to. In this section,

²⁴² B. K.. Waltke, *A Commentary on Micah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 122.

²⁴³ P. J. King, “Micah,” JBC 286.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

the false prophets were prophesying by Baal and therefore they were false from the start. In Jer 23:13, it is written that:

In the prophets of Samaria I saw an unsavory thing:
They prophesied by Baal
And led my people Israel astray.

Prophet Elijah, acting on the behalf of Yahweh opposes the false prophets. Elijah was persecuted by Ahab and his wife Jezebel (who had brought the worship of Baal to Israel). In verse 17, Ahab accuses Elijah of troubling Israel but the latter answered him in verse 18: “I have not troubled Israel; but you have, and your father’s house, because you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and followed the Baals.”

In verse 19, Elijah proposes to Ahab to gather all Israel on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah.

Ahab then gathers all the people and the prophets on Mount Carmel. In verse 21, Elijah challenges the people not to falter between two opinions. “If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” From verse 23, Elijah gives the prophets of Baal a test. He asks for two bulls; one for him and the other for the prophets of Baal. Then the prophets of Baal chose one bull according to the instructions of Elijah and cut it into pieces and put the meat on the wood and put no fire under it and then called on the name of their god from morning till noon. Elijah had said that the God who answers by fire, He is God. These prophets even cut themselves and blood gushed out but still their god did not answer any thing.

Then Elijah repaired the altar with twelve stones in the name of the Lord, put the wood in order, cut his bull in pieces and put it on the wood. And he instructed the people to pour water at the meat and the wood three times which they did. Then in 18:36-37, he called upon God saying: “O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and I am thy servant... Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that thou, O Lord, art God, and that thou hast turned their hearts back.” After this, fire came down and consumed all the offering, the wood, stones and dust. When the people saw this, they shouted: “The Lord, He is God; The Lord, He is God.” (1 Kgs 18:39). Then the people seized the prophets and Elijah executed them. In this account, we see the power of Yahweh and the authority of His true prophet and the weakness of the false prophets who prophecy in the name of another god.

4.4.2 1 Kings 22:1-28

In this text, King Ahab decided to attack the king of Syria to take Ramoth Gilead. Jehoshaphat implored him to first seek the word of the Lord through the prophets. When Ahab asked the prophets he had gathered whether he should attack Ramoth Gilead, they all said that the Lord would give him victory. But it seems that Jehoshaphat doubted these prophets because he later asked in verse 7: “Is there not here another prophet of the LORD of whom we may inquire?” Then Ahab mentions Micaiah the son of Imlah. But Ahab complains that Micaiah does not prophesy good concerning him. This is because Micaiah was a true prophet who did not want to please anybody but to say that which Yahweh had told him to say. There was also another prophet called Zedekiah who had made horns of iron for himself. He then said in verse 11: “With these you shall push the Syrians until they are destroyed.”

The servant of Ahab who had gone to call Micaiah tried to convince him to prophesy what the king wanted to hear but as it was the nature of the true prophets of Yahweh, he said in verse 14: “As the LORD lives, what the Lord says to me, that I will speak.” When the king asked him whether he will be victorious in the war, Micaiah sarcastically says that victory is his. But later, he said how he had seen in a vision the defeat of Ahab. In verse 23, Micaiah openly speaks to Ahab thus: “The Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the Lord has spoken evil concerning you.” Zedekiah the false prophet did not agree with Micaiah and he justified this by striking Micaiah on the cheek. Then Ahab ordered that Micaiah be put in prison and be fed with bread and water of affliction (1 Kgs 22:27). Then Micaiah said that Ahab would not return in peace (22:28). Ahab continued to fight the Syrians but as Micaiah had said, he never came back alive; he was killed in battle (22:37). This confirmed Micaiah as a true prophet of Yahweh because he had said to Ahab in 1 Kgs 22:28: “If you ever return in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me.”

4.5 Concluding remarks

From all that we have seen, the concept of false prophecy is hard to define because it took different shapes at different times. False prophecy is well scattered in Israel’s history but mainly during the time preceding and during the Babylonian exile. This topic is so diverse that it cannot be fully exhausted in this thesis. In this thesis, a lot has been said about false prophets in Ezekiel 13 and comment has also been made about

Jeremiah 23; 28, Deuteronomy 13; 18, Micah and 1 Kings 18:20-40 and 22:1-28. But to be more clear, false prophecy is dealt with in very many parts of the Old Testament.

The issue of true and false prophecy can be well seen at the Mount Carmel contest, where prophets of Baal (false prophets) are contending with Elijah the prophet of Yahweh (1Kgs 18:20-40). The prophets of Baal failed the test that Elijah gave them and as such, it was clear that they belonged to another god, not Yahweh of Israel. Deut 13:1-5 had warned that in case somebody comes up calling himself a prophet and what he prophesies comes to pass but preaches other gods, that person will be an impostor. The punishment for such a person is death. Following this law, Elijah put to death all the evil prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18:40). Apart from this incident, it is not recorded anywhere that false prophets were put to death because of their activities.

But the issue of differentiating between true and false prophets is not an easy one. Deut 13:1-5 seems to contradict 18:22. Deut 18:22 gives fulfilment of the prophecy as the only criterion for knowing that the person is from God while 13:1-5 says that fulfilment is not a sign that the prophecy is from God.

According to Ezekiel 13, false prophets were declaring peace at a time when God's harsh judgment was at hand. False prophets in Ezekiel's day were characterized by pretence as if all was well as long as they got what they wanted; just like a jackal or fox שׂיטל that moves in the ruins (Ezek 13:4) looking for what it may eat. These prophets were full of כִּזְבוֹ "lies". While Ezekiel prefers כִּזְבוֹ while referring to "lies" (Ezek 13:8, 9, 19), Jeremiah uses שֶׁקֶר to refer to the same thing (Jer 23:25, 26, 32).

According to Jeremiah, true prophets stood in the council סֵדֶר of Yahweh (Jer 23:22) where they got their oracles from, while false prophets "speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the Lord" (Jer 23:16). True prophets spoke by the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:19-21, Isa 61:1, Mic 3:8, Acts 28:25-27). These prophets of Yahweh were foretellers of God's word to the people. They also acted as a bridge between men and Yahweh. These men were intercessors for men to Yahweh (Exod 32:30-32; 1 Sam 7:5-9, 2 Kgs 19:4). On the other hand, false prophets "said what

people wanted to hear and spoke their own dreams and opinions rather than words of God (1 Kin. 22:1-28; Jer. 23:9-40; Ezek 13).”²⁴⁵

The origin of prophecy in Israel has remained a puzzle to scholars. While evangelical scholars hold that Yahweh was the source of all true prophecy in Israel, others think that this concept might have been adopted from the neighbours of Israel. This is because of the similarity between Israelite prophecy and the prophecy in Ancient Near East, particularly the Mari prophets. The Old Testament itself gives some explanation to this enigma. This is in 1 Sam 9:9 where it is written that “Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he said, ‘Come let us go to the seer’, for he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer.” From this text, we come to learn that in the ancient time of Israelite history, seer and prophet were different “but that with the passage of time the functions of the seer were taken over by the prophet so that the seer ultimately disappeared.”²⁴⁶ In ancient Mesopotamia, the seer was a very important personality in daily life. “Such things as the success or failure of the harvest, the results of warfare, the consequence of infection or disease were all of concern to the seer.”²⁴⁷ But from the time of Samuel, the role of the seer seemed to have been incorporated into that of the prophet. My position on this is that prophecy in Israel was originated from Yahweh and any similarity between this prophecy and that in Israel’s neighbours might have been coincidental. Prophecy outside Israel was not from Yahweh but from other deities which were opposed to Yahweh, the God of Israel. It is perhaps right to say that in the Ancient Near East, people believed in different deities which communicated to the people through special individuals (called נביאים “prophets” in Israel).

True prophets of the Old Testament have been interpreted to have been forward looking to the time of the Messiah. The Immanuel prophecy of Isaiah 7; Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, all are interpreted to be referring to Jesus Christ the Messiah. Prophecies of the Messiah have further been cited in Ezekiel 34 (My servant David), and Mic 5:2-5. All the prophets were pointing to another bigger prophet who was to

²⁴⁵ “Prophets,” RSB 266.

²⁴⁶ J. D. Newsome, *The Hebrew Prophets* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984), 2.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

come. Moses had said that a prophet like him would be appointed in the future and this prophet is interpreted to be Jesus Christ (Deut 18:15-22).

APPENDIX - “PROPHET” WILSON BUSHARA OF UGANDA

1 Brief introduction about Uganda

1.1 Geo-political background

Uganda is a land locked country found in East Africa. Before the British came during the colonial era, there was nothing like Uganda. There were many independent tribes some with kings while others were governed by councils of elders. Buganda was one of the powerful kingdoms in the land. The British then united all the regions and a new country called Uganda (a name adopted from Buganda) was born. In 1962 Uganda gained her independence from Britain and a new era of coups and wars started. Uganda borders with Kenya on the East, Sudan on the North, Democratic Republic of Congo on the West, Rwanda on the South West and Tanzania on the South. The population of Uganda is estimated to be at around 31 million. Uganda’s total area is 236,040 sq km where land accounts for 199,710 sq km and water covers 36, 330 sq km. Uganda is made up of around 52 tribes with Baganda as the largest group making 16.9 % of the total population.

1.2 Religion in Uganda

Before the introduction of Islam and Christianity in Uganda, different tribes had their traditional religions. They believed in a Supreme Being who was thought to be the creator of everything. This Supreme Being had differing names from tribe to tribe. However, this Supreme Being was not always approached directly. Below Him was a number of smaller gods each being responsible for a specific duty. For example among the Baganda, there was god of agriculture, god of rain fall, god of Lake Victoria and many others. Below these gods there were other mediums like demons and spirits of the ancestors through which people always approached their God.

In 1844, Islam reached Uganda through Arab traders from the East African Coast. Many people became Muslims (though most of them retained their traditional religious beliefs). In 1877, the CMS Anglican missionaries arrived in the country and they were followed by the Catholic Missionaries in 1879. The new Missionaries started preaching the Gospel and many people became Christians. As fate would have it, the new

religion (Christianity) started clashing with the king and the entire royal hierarchy of Buganda. The African Christian converts started disobeying the king. When the king could no longer tolerate this kind of behaviour, many Christians were killed in the Namugongo infamous fires in 1886 and those that died have been called Uganda Martyrs. After all this, three religions emerged; the Catholics, Anglican Protestants and Muslims. On the other hand, there were those that stuck to their traditional religions. Later in the 20th Century, other Christian groups started to emerge ranging from Seventh Day Adventists to different brands of Pentecostals. According to the 2002 Housing and Population Census, Roman Catholics are 41.9%, Anglicans are 35.9, Pentecostals 4.6%, Seventh Day Adventists 1.5%, Muslims 12.1% and other religious groups account for 3.1%. 0.9% of the total population have no religious beliefs. But it must be pointed out that there is one problem with these statistics. Irrespective of their official religions, most of the people still subscribe to their traditional African religions. This is usually witnessed when someone is sick and has tried all possible scientific solutions and failed. In such cases, most people would consult African Traditional Religion specialists for solutions. Some have testified that they have been healed through such means. In Uganda, cases of human sacrifice are still prevalent though the people doing such are baptized Christians or Muslims. People still believe in the existence of ancestral spirits that need to be sacrificed to from time to time. This is always seen when people are building a new house. Most people will kill an animal and its blood sprinkled in the foundation of the building.

Between 1971-1979, Uganda was ruled by a dictator called Idi Amin who interfered with people's right to worship. He only allowed three main stream religions: Catholics, Anglicans and Muslims. After he was overthrown in 1979, all religions were allowed to operate freely. With the coming of Yoweri Museveni to power in 1986, all Human Rights were restored. People were thus free to worship the way they wanted. Due to this unrestrained freedom, there has been mushrooming of all sorts of religious groups. The first on the stage was the Holy Spirit Movement of Alice Auma Lakwena who claimed to have been inspired to by the gods to fight the evil government in her day by divine means. She took the country by storm. She claimed to be speaking directly to the gods and promised military victory against the government. But her forces were utterly defeated and she fled to Kenya where she later died in 2007.

One of the commanders of the Lakwena group called Joseph Kony later emerged as another rebel leader, also claiming to be working for God. He formed what he called Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and claims to be having a blessing of the Lord in his war. With his weird religious beliefs, he became a problem to the local population by unleashing untold suffering on the people. Several people have been killed, while others have been misplaced from their homes. He is now in the DRC where he has caused a lot of suffering to the local population there.

Apart from Lakwena and Kony's religious movements that have been military and violent in nature, there has been the emergence of many religious movements that claim healing and special powers. One of such is Bishaka "Owobushoborozi Bwona" who claims to have all the authority on earth. He claims to be equal to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He says he is number four in the hierarchy. He too, claims healing powers.

In the 1990s, another movement called Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments (MRTC) was started at Kanungu in South Western Uganda by one Kibwetere. On March 17th 2000 over 300 members of this movement were burnt to death in their church after failing to go to heaven as they had been promised by their leaders. "Mass graves were later discovered of people who had died violent deaths. Some suicides have also been reported. The final count was close to 800."²⁴⁸

As of today, there are several groups, many of them claiming charismatic powers operating in the country especially in the urban areas. Many seem to be Pentecostal in practice. One of such is Universal Church of the Kingdom of God which has been controversial in Kenya, South Africa and Zambia. There are very many people in Uganda called 'Prophets' and 'Apostles' but whose practices are questionable.

²⁴⁸ P. C. Lucas, T. Robbins, *New Religious Movements in the 21st Century* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 163.

2 “Prophet” Wilson Bushara

The information provided below was got from my research about this religious movement. However, I was not able to interview many people because many of them feared that they would be arrested. Most of the people suspected me to be a government spy and thus decided to hide any information they knew for fear of being suspected to have been part of “prophet” Bushara’s group. This hampered my research project. But I managed to interview 20 people who gave me the information below. Also I myself had heard about this prophet when he was still active at the close of the last century.

Little is known about Wilson Bushara’s past history. He emerged in 1995 with another man called James Wazemba claiming to have a special message from God. The two claimed that they were the last witnesses mentioned in the book of Revelation chapter 11. They claimed to have been sent by God to declare His last message to the world. They thus started their church which they called World Message Last Warning Church. Of the two, Bushara was the senior and he called himself a prophet. Then the other was to act like an apostle to him. Bushara was formerly a Pentecostal pastor but with no formal training in theology. He had stopped in Primary 3. He claimed he was sent by God to preach His last message in three and a half years and then the end was to come.

Bushara started his formal preaching in January 1996 and was to finish in June 1999, when the end was to appear. He operated in the districts of Nakaseke, Luwero, Nakasongola, Kiboga, Mubende, Rakai, Kabarole and Mpigi. His followers went to as far as Northern Tanzania and Western Uganda. In all these places, they enlisted support from the unsuspecting believers who were told very frightening ‘sermons’ and they were told to sell their property because the end was near. Because of such messages, many people sold off their cattle and land and brought some of the money to the prophet. Many wives ran away from their husbands and when they reached in the prophet’s camp they were married off to other “believers”. Many children left school for hope of a better life in heaven. This “church” had its Head Quarters at Bukoto near Luwero town about 50 miles North of Kampala where they built a camp of around 1000 people. The people were living in huts thatched with dry banana leaves with horrible sanitary conditions. Many children died out of cholera and other preventable

diseases. Whenever a person died, the believers would say “the will of God has been done”, instead of putting measures to prevent further deaths.

2.1 Some of the beliefs and claims of “prophet” Bushara

Bushara and Wazemba claimed to be the two witnesses written in the book of Revelation chapter 11. As the story goes in Rev 11, these two men claimed that they would minister for three years and a half, after which they would be persecuted and killed. They were then supposed to resurrect and ascend to heaven. Bushara further claimed to be the man talked about in Isa 46:11 where it is written that:

Calling a bird of prey from the east,
The man of my counsel from a far country.
I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass.
I have purposed, and I will do it..

Bushara and Wazemba further claimed to be the two olive trees that stand beside the lamp stand in the vision of Zechariah in Zech. 4:1-14. These two men claimed to be the “two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth” (Zech 4:14). They claimed to be the last messengers of God to the world; after this the end was to come. They further taught that there would be severe persecution of the Church of Christ done by the beast talked about in Revelation. They said that the two beasts talked about in Rev. 13:1-18 were going to be the USA president and the Pope (Head of the Roman Catholic Church). That these two leaders were going to rule the world and administer the number 666 on all people and that this is a sign of the devil (Rev. 13:18). They however claimed that the Church of the selected few would be raptured and taken to heaven and then after 1000 years, they would descend on the land of Israel which would be their eternal home (cf. Rev. 21:1). According to Bushara, the church that was to be taken to heaven was the one he was leading. That then there would be suffering on the people that will miss the rapture. That salvation would no longer be possible for them.

In order to prepare for this heavenly rule, the prophet divided all his followers into twelve tribes of Israel, each led by a man named after one of the 12 sons of Jacob. That these 12 leaders were to lead their respective members to heaven as is shown in Rev 7:1-8. In order to belong to the specific tribe, a sheep was slaughtered and its blood would be smeared on the forehead of the individuals. That this was to act as the blood

of the Passover in the Old Testament. They claimed that their ministry would spread to all the nations of the world within such a short time. That at the end, God would send 12 planes each bearing the name of the specific tribe and the members of that tribe would board and leave for heaven.

Because of the above promises, people knew that the end was near. Many uneducated people thus joined Bushara as they awaited their departure to heaven. In all this, men were allowed to marry as many women as they wanted. They did not mind about the fate of the children they would produce since Christ would have taken them to heaven already. There was even no measure put in place to guard against HIV/AIDS because the people believed that God had healed whoever was sick. But this later turned out to be untrue as many later died of the epidemic.

2.2 Effects of “Prophet” Bushara’s activities

The effect of the Bushara cult was indeed very great. Very many marriages were broken. Many wives ran away from their husbands and whenever they reached Bushara’s camp, they were given to his followers as wives. This meant that a person would marry as many wives as he could manage because women were more than men. To justify their practice, they were quoting Isa 4:1 where it is written:

“And seven women shall take hold of one man in that day, saying, ‘We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes, only let us be called by your name; take away our reproach.’” I was told by one of the former followers of Bushara that at one time the prophet had 38 wives.²⁴⁹ Also some men abandoned their wives who refused to join the prophet and went and married other women. In this way, many children were neglected and left to be looked after by their relatives.

There was also the increase of AIDS because there was no blood testing before “marriage”. They claimed that God had cleansed all the sick and healed them. In my research, I met one Barbra Kayesu who testified that she was a member of that cult and she was given to a man who had AIDS. She was thus infected and is now being taken care of by Kiwoko Hospital. There was even no immunization of children against diseases like Polio, T.B, measles and Tetanus. Many children were thus affected. I was

²⁴⁹ Interview with Barbra Kayesu, 8th July 2008.

even told that at one time there was an outbreak of cholera in their camp and many children lost their lives because of their parents' faith.

Many parents withdrew their children from school since they believed that the end was about to come. Even other grown up students escaped from High schools and colleges and came and joined this movement. In the camp, there was no formal education at all. People would spend the whole day singing and praying while waiting for whatever food God would bring since they neither worked nor encouraged it.

The worst effect of this cultic movement is that people sold off their property and gave most of the money to the leaders. Most of the members were cattle keepers. They sold off their cattle and land and brought everything to the camp to wait for their journey to heaven. After spending all they had, they became poor and started suffering. Actually many started resorting to crime like stealing to satisfy the needs of their huge families. It happened that in the process of selling off their property, many sold off what did not belong to them and thus conflicts started. Many were arrested and charged with theft.

Because of such effects, the government of Uganda had to act. A police force attacked his camp in September 1999 and all the people were dispersed. Some were arrested and charged with different offences. But Bushara was able to escape and lived in hiding until he was arrested on July 18 2000 and taken to court. He was able to secure release and briefly lived at his official residence in Bukoto near Luwero town. I was told that he now lives in Kenya with his family while most of his many followers live destitute lives in different parts of the country. Many feared to go back to their former villages for fear of being laughed at and thus decided to resort to jobs like milk vending, charcoal burning and other odd jobs. In my research, I was not able to find out whether the followers are still hoping to go to heaven in the same style as before because the cult members I was able to meet refused to divulge any information. So what they believe now is a secret within them.

2.3 Leadership structure of Bushara's religious organisation

At the top was Wilson Bushara who was the prophet from God. His word was final and was always thought to speak with God. Next to him was James Wazemba who acted as

an apostle. Below these two were archbishops, bishops, reverends and deacons. All deacons were females and they also played sexual roles as most of them later produced. There was also a coordinator for all the members of the cult.

Later in 1999, all members of the group were divided into twelve groups. And twelve men were chosen to lead these groups. They were given names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

I was even told that there were those called angels. Seven men were chosen and each was assigned responsibility of a specific day. In other words each day had its own angel that made sure that all was well.

Then there was a man who acted as a pastor of the entire group. This one was concerned with ecclesiastical duties.

3 A comparison between “Prophet” Wilson Bushara and the biblical false prophets

“Prophet” Bushara compares very well with the biblical false prophets. Many evil acts done by the biblical prophets were also done by Bushara and his followers.

In the first instance, the biblical false prophets prophesied messages from their own hearts. In the same way, Bushara seems to have got his messages from his own heart because whatever he prophesied never came to pass just like prophet Hananiah who prophesied that within two years, the vessels of the Lord’s house would be brought back from Babylon. He further said that that the exile would end in the same time. (Jer 28:3-4). These two prophecies never happened as Bushara’s end of the world never came as he predicted. On this account therefore, he qualifies to be called a false prophet. This is in line with Deut 13:22.

From my interviews, it was found out that Bushara and his followers drank wine in large quantities and became drunk. After the burning of the camp, hundreds of wine bottles were found. This compares with the false prophets condemned by Micah who prophesied for wine (Mic 2:11).

In Ezek 13:19, false prophetesses were prophesying for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread. In the same way, Bushara was prophesying for money and wealth. Very many people gave him their cattle hoping in return to go to heaven. It was like he was selling heaven. This is supported by P. C. Lucas and T. Robbins who say that Bushara “had offered space in heaven after death in return for cash; men were

supposed to surrender their wives, and the wives then declared themselves unmarried.”²⁵⁰

In many places in the Old Testament, false prophets are accused of prophesying lies (Jer 23:14, 25; Ezek 13:8, 22) and in the same way, Bushara prophesied lies. Just as the false prophets said “Thus says the Lord”, Bushara also did it. But in actual sense, the Lord had not spoken to him; he only uttered out his own thoughts and imaginations.

According to Jer 23:14, prophets of prophets of Jerusalem are accused of adultery. This is the area where they compare well with Bushara. He was accused in court of defiling young girls. I was even told that whenever one of his followers came with a beautiful wife, he (Bushara) would take her as his, claiming that the Lord has said so. I was even told that on some occasions wives were shared. All this was evil and whoever does such and claims to be a prophet, is a false one.

There were other evil acts among the followers of Bushara that really qualify him to be a false prophet. For example many members were accused of stealing. And I was told by one of the former members that stealing was allowed in some situations. There was also incest. The teaching by Bushara was that people had been set free by God. This freedom meant that some of the things that had hitherto been seen as sinful were now allowed to be done. Because of this teaching, some people found it okay to marry close cousins in the name of God’s freedom. I was told of one of the archbishops in Bushara’s church who got married to his cousin sister and abandoned his legal wife. Because of such, Bushara is thought to be a false prophet.

The Bible teaches that children should obey their parents (Exod 20:12; Lev 19:3) but “prophet” Bushara taught the contrary. He encouraged children to run away from their parents and join him. Against the wish of their parents, many children left school and Bushara supported this.

²⁵⁰ P. C. Lucas, T. Robbins, *New Religious Movements in the 21st Century* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 161.

4 Concluding Remarks

Apart from the Kibwetere cult that killed people in Kanungu in South Western Uganda, the Bushara cult is the worst thing to have ever happened on the religious scene of Uganda. Bushara destroyed people's futures by discouraging education, and breaking families. Men were allowed to marry more than one wife and this led to production of very many children that they could not afford to look after since they did not believe in Family Planning methods. All the people I interviewed said that Bushara was a false prophet who was after snatching people's wives and wealth. But most of the local people in Bukoto where the Head Quarters of the cult are located seemed to sympathize with the Bushara movement. The reason for this is because they benefited from it. They set up small businesses in food items, and hotels out of which they earned a lot of money. Therefore when the camp was destroyed, the local population was at a loss.

This thesis cannot fully explain the beliefs of this strange religious movement. A thorough study needs to be done to be able to find out what was going on in the camp to be able to help people avoid joining cults thinking that they are genuine churches. The government of Uganda in conjunction with the established churches should set up a commission that will fully investigate the beliefs and the activities of this strange religious movement. The government should further help to resettle the people that were cheated by the prophet. Churches should also sensitize their members against false teachers that mislead the flock.

Christians need to be taught that false prophets are also mentioned in the Bible. For example Jesus said that as a sign of the end times, many false prophets will emerge (Matt 24:11). Therefore Bushara should have been seen as a false prophet and avoided by all means. For those that could not avoid him, they must have learnt a very bitter lesson because all that he said never came to pass. Efforts should be put in place to guard against the rise of other false prophets in future.

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ATTACHMENT 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

Master of Theology Thesis Project, 2008-2009

School of Mission and Theology, Misjonsveien 34, 4024 Stavanger, Norway.

Student name: Ivan Muramuzi.

Thesis Topic: “The concept of false prophecy in the Old Testament with special reference to Ezekiel 13.”

Dear respondent,

I am a Master of Theology student at the School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger, Norway. I am carrying out research on the above topic in relation to prophet Wilson Bushara in the districts of Luwero, Kiboga, Nakaseke and Nakasongola. I therefore request you to fill in this questionnaire as part of your contribution to my thesis. I assure you that any information given will be treated with high confidentiality. I guarantee you that any information you will provide will only be used for the intended academic purpose.

Thank you in advance.

Information about yourself.

- a. Name.....
- b. Sex.....
- c. Age.....
- d. Religious affiliation.....
- e. Occupation.....
- f. Address.....
- g. Date.....

Questions

1. In your view, what is the meaning of the term “prophet”?
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.....
.....
.....
2. From your understanding, are there true prophets today?
.....
3. Do you think Bushara was/ is a true prophet of God?
.....
4. Give some reasons for your answer above.
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
5. Do you think Bushara is a false prophet?
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.....

6. Give some reasons for your answer above.
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7. True prophets of the Old Testament were persecuted and Bushara and his followers were harassed, beaten and imprisoned. Does this mean that he could be a true prophet of God?
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8. Give some of the characteristics of Bushara as a prophet.
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9. Do you think one of Bushara's aim is to collect money from his followers?
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.....
10. Some Old Testament prophets like Elijah and Elisha performed miracles. What are some of the miracles performed by Bushara?
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.....
11. Give reasons why the government of Uganda was opposed to the activities of Bushara?
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12. Why do you think he managed to get a big number of followers in Uganda?
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13. Did Bushara use the Bible as we know it or did he have some other additional literature?

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.....

14. Do you think Bushara should be described as “a prophet of doom”?

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15. What are some of the prophecies of Bushara?

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16. Of the above prophecies, what came to pass?

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.....
.....

If some or all of his prophecies did not come to pass, what conclusion do we draw from that?

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.....
.....

ATTACHMENT 3: LIST OF RESPONDENTS.

1. Masembe Ivan, 22, male, 8. 7. 2008
2. Kayesu Barbra, 29, female, 8. 7. 2008
3. Kyaterekera Richard, 40, male, 8. 7. 2008
4. Byiringiro Byakatonda John, 28, male, 8. 7. 2008
5. Mulindwa Stephen, 30, male, 9. 7. 2008
6. Mperese William, 43, male, 9. 7. 2008
7. Kagwa John, 50, male, 9. 7. 2008
8. Salongo Ahmada, 38, male, 10. 7. 2008
9. Joroba William, 36, male, 10. 7. 2008
10. Nantongo Annet, 35, female, 10. 7. 2008
11. Muhumuza Solomon, 32, male, 10. 7. 2008
12. Karuhanga Benon, 38, male, 10. 7. 2008
13. Ahimbisibwe Emmanuel, 30, male, 11. 7. 2008
14. Muramuzi David, 66, male, 12. 7. 2008
15. Mwandha Michael, 46, male, 12. 7. 2008
16. Katende George William, male, 57, 12. 7. 2008
17. Nakate Miria, 40, female, 16. 7. 2008
18. Namutebi Jenipher, 38, female, 16. 7. 2008
19. Asasira Aisa, 34, female, 16. 7. 2008
20. Nanyondo Jesca, 30, female, 17. 7. 2008