THE PROPHESYING WOMEN IN EZEKIEL 13 RECONSIDERED

Ezekiel 13$_{17-23}$ Read in its Contexts

1 Introduction

Ezekiel 13$_{17-23}$ is part of the polemics of Ezekiel against 'false prophets'. Unlike most other words against 'false prophets' in the Hebrew Bible, these verses are addressed to the women who מִתְנַבְּאוֹת (normally 'to prophesy'). In the past most interpreters have taken these women to be either sorceresses or female soothsayers, following the Bible's negative value judgement against such activities in contrast to positively received 'proper' prophecy.[1] There has been a sea-change in the recent debate, and the majority of scholars now understands 'the daughters of your people who הִתְנַבֵּא' as prophetesses.[2] This more recent view is often related to an open attack on the paradigms and value judgements of the earlier interpreters: earlier scholarship shared the Hebrew Bible's basic concept that 'prophecy' is good while 'magic' and 'divination' are bad. It has become clear that this view is deeply apologetic and untenable in the scholarly community.[3] The difference between 'good' (or white) magic and 'bad' (or black) magic and between magic and religion are emic judgements (emic is the technical term for a perspective from within a culture); they are valid for the culture which makes them, but they are not based on 'objectively' observable data.

In this paper I will present and review the two main interpretations of the pericope: 1) the women are not really 'good' prophetesses but 'evil' witches; and 2) the women are prophetesses and magicians. Adducing evidence from Emar, I will then suggest a third reading, which combines elements of the first two: the 'daughters of your people' are involved in necromancy of some sort, but this should not be taken to mean that they are of lower status than either the male prophets of *Ezekiel* 13$_{1-16}$ or Ezekiel himself. It is clear that this solution is closer to the more traditional reading, but does not carry the moralistic

[1] See e.g. EICHRODT (1959), POHLMANN (1996), ZIMMERLI (1969, ET 1979) and BLOCK (1997). See also BROWNLEE (1950) and SAGGS (1974).

[2] See e.g. JOST (1994), BOWEN (1999), FISCHER (2002:221-234), JOYCE (2007:120-122) and GAFNEY (2008:107-109). Somewhat surprisingly, BUTTING (2001:182-183) only comments in passing on this pericope.

[3] E.g. GAGER (1992).

baggage imposed on the text by earlier exegetes. A corollary of this argument is that *Ezekiel* 13_{1-16} and *Ezekiel* 13_{17-23} were probably not composed as a coherent whole in the first instance, but carefully put together at a later point.

2 The Text

Before approaching the content of the text it is necessary to make some preliminary comments on the structure and text of the pericope. I will first define the pericope, and then make some comments regarding individual particularities of the text. There is a plethora of obscure terms in this text, and in spite of a number of scholars attempting to come closer to a precise understanding of these terms, we are still not much closer to their meaning.[4]
We could spend the entire afternoon, indeed the entire symposium discussing the lexical difficulties of this text without coming to a satisfactory conclusion. Having said that, there are few significant variants in the versions – apart from where the Hebrew text is either corrupt or difficult to understand.

2.1 Delimitation of the Pericope

Already in 1840 Heinrich Ewald remarked that *Ezekiel* 12_{21}-14_{11} formed a larger group of literary oracles about true and false prophecy.[5] It is well known that this group is divided into five subsections, in which the first two (12_{21-25} and 12_{26-28}) and the third and fourth (13_{1-16} and $13_{(17)18-23}$) form pairs.[6] Additionally, there are two themes which hold this larger text together, that of false visions in 12_{21}-13_{16} and that of consulting the deity in 13_{17}-14_{11}. It is impossible to say whether this arrangement is orginal or was established by later redactors. Due to the fact that it is so competently arranged, I tend toward the latter option.[7]

The pericope itself seems to be composite. This is supported by the changes in grammatical gender in the middle of verse 19 and again in 20 from feminine plural to

[4] E.g. SAGGS (1974), DAVIES (1994) and KORPEL (1996).
[5] EWALD (1840:254-257). Recently see ALLEN (1994:193) and BLOCK (1997:384-386).
[6] This pentapartite structure is reminiscent of several such structures in Amos and elsewhere.
[7] I share DAVIES's (1994:110) cautionary reading that verses 17-23 were modelled to correspond verses 1-16, and that verses 22-23 are written for that purpose.

masculine plural without any apparent reason for such a change. This is an issue known from elsewhere in the book of Ezekiel (e.g. ch. 1), and in my view is the result of the redactional process of the prophetic book.[8] If this reading is correct, the change would support the interpretation of the entire structure as a composed whole – albeit it with further intrusions – which could not have been completed until well into the exilic period.

2.2 Text-Critical and Lexical Remarks

The text of our pericope does not present us with any major difficulties; most of the evidence for different textual traditions exhausts itself in the adding or leaving out of אֲדֹנָי before the tetragrammaton (e.g. vss 18 and 20). More interesting is the relative density of possible Akkadian loanwords. The most convincing case is כְּסָתוֹת, plural of כֶּסֶת ('band'), which in all likelihood is a loanword of *kasîtu* ('bondage'; derived from the verb *kasû*, 'to bind').[9] This word is one of the cases in which the Septuagint has a variant depending on the post-biblical meaning of כֶּסֶת ('cushion'), namely προσκεφάλαιον.[10]

The other candidate is הַמִּסְפָּחוֹת, plural of מִסְפָּחָה. It is probably to be connected to Arabic *safīḥ* ('robe of coarse material'), which is etymologically related to Akkadian *sapāḫu* ('to loosen, scatter').[11] The relatively strong connection to Mesopotamia in words which appear only in this pericope and nowhere else in the entire Hebrew Bible gives more credence to Nancy Bowen's recent reappraisal of the link of the pericope to the incantation list *Maqlû*.[12] In her reading of the pericope, Ezekiel is using a structure reminiscent of anti-witchcraft incantations using magic while arguing against the women whom he accuses of using magic.

[8] *Contra* OREL (1997) who thinks that the women put the bands on the arms of men only. While it is true that in modern Judaism Tefillin are only worn by men, there is no reason to assume that the bands here are truly the predecessor of Tefillin; and even if they were, it is by no means sure that they would have been worn (only) by men at this stage.

[9] This solution is considerably easier than KORPEL's (1996:103) suggestion to link כסתות with Akkadian *katāmu* which does mean 'to cover' as Korpel states, but is etymologically entirely unrelated to the root כסה.

[10] Thus noted e.g. by SAGGS (1974:2).

[11] I do not follow SAGGS's (1974:6-7) suggestion which ultimately relies on BROCKELMANN (1908:§60 e δ), followed by KORPEL (1996:103) to relate מספחות to Akkadian *musaḫḫiptu* ('net') with a metathesis of /ḫ/ and /p/. Labials and laryngeals are at times metathesized, and Saggs' suggestion would make good sense of the passage. The vocalisation, however, seems to make such a derivation less likely. Further, as DAVIES (1994:121) points out 'binding' and 'loosening' form a logical pair thus also found in magical texts. Some interpreters return to a suggestion which, as far as I can see was first suggested by G.R. DRIVER (1938:63-64) to read the מספחות as some early form of Tefillin/Phylakteria, without noting Driver's suggestion; see. e.g. OREL (1997:411-413) and JOST (1994:60).

[12] But see already COOKE (1936:144-149) and BERTHOLET (1936:49).

Finally, the expression את נפשים לפרחות at the end of verse 20 remains mysterious. Contrary to Zimmerli, I do not think that the infinitive לפרחות earlier in the verse is a later addition on the basis of the end.[13] Instead, I suggest interpreting the last three words as the result of an *aberratio oculi* of a scribe when coming to מְצֹדְדוֹת ('hunting').[14]

3 Scholarship up to now

After these preliminary remarks, we may approach the central topic of this paper: what are the role and function of the בְּנוֹת עַמֶּךָ הַמִּתְנַבְּאוֹת? Are they good prophetesses or are they evil witches? How do we distinguish between these functions?

3.1 The Traditional View

Traditionally, exegetes argued that the women in *Ezekiel* 13 performed magic, playing with the souls of the Israelites. The rhetoric used by these scholars often implies that these women perform some lower and despicable form of magic, and that they do not really deserve the title prophetesses.[15] According to them that is why the hitpaʿel is employed here: it allegedly implies that the women are just pretending to be prophetesses. But Wilda Gafney has shown that the neat distinction between the nifʿal and hitpaʿel of נבא cannot be upheld.[16] Indeed, Renate Jost has pointed out that if להתנבא carried such negative connotations, the use of the hitpaʿel by Ezekiel to describe his own actions in *Ezekiel* 37_{10} would become problematic.[17] Additionally, the usage of the participle – indeed, the feminine participle occurs only here[18] -

[13] ZIMMERLI (1969:284-285).

[14] In spite of the evidence from the Septuagint and Peshitta who do not have the expression the first time, but do note it the second time.

[15] See for example DUMERMUTH (1963) who speaks of the women's 'niedere Mantik'.

[16] GAFNEY (2008:36-47).

[17] JOST (1994:59). The form וְהִנָּבֵּאתִי with assimilated ת is slightly unusual, and some manuscripts have the uncontracted form. BHS suggests reading nifʿal וְנִבֵּאתִי, as in verse 7. I see no reason for the change other than to avoid a difficult form. The form found in the MT is rare. To my knowledge the להתנבא only assimilates the ת here and in *Jer* 23_{13}. For the assimilation of ת in the hitpaʿel to both נ and שׁ, see GK §54c and JM §53e.

[18] The masculine participle occurs 5 times in the plural (*Num* 11_{27}, *1 Sam* 10_5, *1 Ki* 22_{10}, *2 Chr* 18_9, *Jer* 14_{14}) and 4 times in the singular (*2 Chr* 18_7, *Jer* 26_{20}, 29_{26}; one with article (*Jer* 29_{27}).

instead of the common noun נְבִיאָה ('prophetess') is often interpreted negatively and attributed to their being not real prophetesses.[19]

In an interesting article on the pericope, Marjo Korpel has recently compared the language and imagery of bird catching and the depiction of the dead with a view to this pericope. Her result is, that throughout the ancient Near East the dead can be depicted with bird-like features such as feathers. In her view, this makes it likely that the language of bird-catching is intended here to express the catching of dead souls.[20] As my own interpretation comes to a similar result, Korpel's arguments and mine strengthen each other.

3.2 Recent Scholarship

Many recent studies of magic and religion have come to the conclusion that it is impossible to develop objective criteria by which to distinguish between the two.[21] The term 'magic' has often been used to describe unofficial rites, often slightly hidden and regarded as negative, while 'religion' is open, and regarded as positive. But one person's magic can be the another's religion. This means that the terminology of magic and religion does not help to distinguish different social function. In a similar development, the distinction between prophecy and 'divination', or more accurately, 'technical divination' has become blurred as well. The biblical opposition to divination and magic has influenced scholars for a long time, but one of the most important results of the recent research into ancient Near Eastern prophecy is that this distinction is based on a misunderstandig of the data. Indeed, rather than being in conflict with divination, prophecy is an integral part of divination. As will become clear shortly, I do not entirely agree with this assessment. Before presenting my views, however, I will portray the scholarship which relies on this understanding.

On the basis of these realisations, a new wave of interpreters has firmly established a new consensus that the women in *Ezekiel* 13 are indeed prophetesses and that their behaviour as soul-catchers is part of their intermediary prophetic role between humans and the divine. One opinion of this new wave of scholarship which is gaining support at least in North

[19] E.g. DAVIES (1994:110).

[20] KORPEL (1996). She relies on SPRONK (1986:161-196). It is important to note here that this does not mean that I accept the concept of an 'external soul' already existed, *contra* SAGGS (1974). However, we know that the entire ancient Near East believed that there was a 'land' where the dead existed – and whence they could return to haunt the living. This means that there was a concept of some form of a continued existence, but it was corporeal and shadowy, rather than spiritual and rewarding.

[21] E.g. GAGER (1992), FRANTZ-SZABÓ (1995), DE TARRAGON (1995), and FARBER (1995).

American circles is that the women in *Ezekiel* 13 are involved in magic connected to child-bearing and childbirth. As far as I can see, the suggestion goes back to Bowen who argues in favour of this view because *Ezekiel* 13 uses the language of 'binding' and because the women work for barley. Because barley and the language of 'binding' play a role in Mesopotamian magic related to pregnancy and childbirth, Bowen follows that they must do so here too. However, the language of 'binding' is common to describe spells in general, and barley is used for any larger ritual and many smaller ones as well.[22]

Further, Bowen and others argue that the women in *Ezekiel* 13 must be prophetesses because magic, divination and religion are indistinguishable. Bowen calls these women prophetesses, it seems, because she wants to interpret them in a positive light, and because calling them sorceresses would put them in a negative light. This, however, relies precisely the argument of previous scholarship which she and others rightfully criticised – only in reverse. In simplified terms the old argument says that these women are sorceresses, therefore they are bad. In equally simplified terms the new argument is: they are good, therefore they cannot be sorceresses. Thus, while strongly arguing the point that magic, divination and religion cannot be formally distinguished, Bowen and others fall into the very same trap.

3.3 Magic and Religion, Divination and Prophecy

The fact that a distinction between religion and magic is valid only from an emic point of view is relatively self-evident. However, within the religio-magic continuum, some differences can be noted, even though priests use magic, and magicians use rituals. The case is slightly more complicated with prophecy and divination. Martti Nissinen summarises the debate on the relation between ancient Near Eastern prophecy and (technical) divination by saying that

> [t]here is a growing tendency in the study of biblical and ancient Near Eastern prophecy to consider prophecy, rather than being in contrast with divination (i.e., consulting the divine world by various means), an integral part of it.[23]

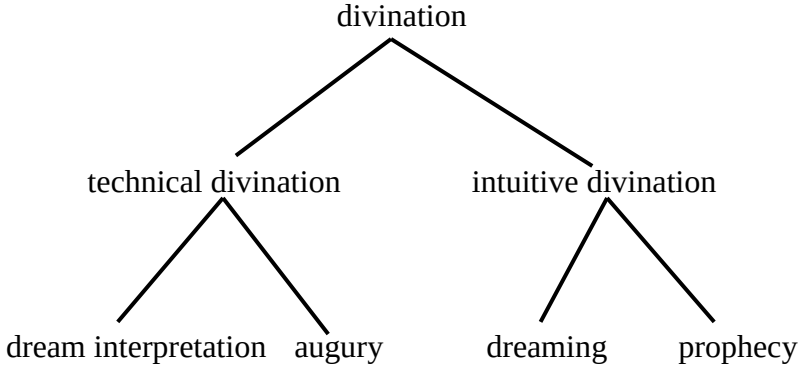
[22] BOWEN (1999:423-427). Her theory has since been adopted by ZEVIT (2001:561-562) and GAFNEY (2008:12).

[23] NISSINEN (1998:6). See also GRABBE (1995:150-151) and PONGRATZ-LEISTEN (1999). See also VAN DER TOORN (1987:67-68), DEJONG ELLIS (1989:144-146), OVERHOLT (1989:140-147), BARSTAD (1993:47-48), VANDERKAM (1995:2083), and CANCIK-KIRSCHBAUM (2003).

Far be it from me to disagree with Prof. Nissinen. But the presentation of his argument has led to the rather bizarre situation where some scholars identify biblical characters as prophets and prophetesses precisely because they perform technical divination. In a recent article, Nissinen has clarified his position arguing that there is a difference between prophecy and technical divination, but that prophecy and technical divination are but two facets of divination.[24]

I agree with Nissinen, but prefer the terms 'technical divination' and 'intuitive divination' instead of divination and prophecy, as I find that this terminology helps to clarify the issue. The distinction between technical divination and intuitive or natural divination is often attributed to Cicero but goes back to at least Plato.[25] Initially, neither is of an inherently better value as such: the terms simply describe different modes of acquiring information from the divine sphere.

If we accept this basic distinction but not the value judgements which are still often attached to it, we get the 'supercategory' of 'divination' with the two categories 'technical divination' and 'intuitive divination'. Each of these categories can then be divided into the various forms in which they manifest. Thus haruspices, augurs and dream-interpreters are technical diviners, while prophets and dreamers are intuitive diviners:[26]



[24] NISSINEN (2004).

[25] See Plato's *Phaedrus* 244 b-e, ROWE (1988:56-57). In an etymological essay which in its fancifulness could have been written by Josephus, Plato writes that at his time μαντική ('of/for a soothsayer') had replaced the older term μανική ('of/referring to madness'). Similarly, the older term οἰοϊστική (according to Plato it refers to insight and history) has been replaced by οἰωνιστική ('of or referring to an omen'). In fact, the term μανηική originally referred only to intuitive divination. Later, its meaning included inductive divination (οἰωνιστική, τεχνική), FLACELIÈRE (1965:4-5). On the etymology of μάνηις see FLOWER (2008:22-24) and the literature cited there.

[26] I would like to thank Anna Zernecke whose through a question encouraged me to find a better understanding of the issue.

4 A New-Old Suggestion

One point which has yet not yet been brought to bear on this question is the strikingly close etymological parallel between *Ezekiel* 13_{17} and the occurrences of *munabbiātu* in four texts from twelfth century BCE Emar. Indeed, while most scholars take the Emar occurrences of nominal forms of the root נבא as referring to prophecy, and female prophecy in particular, I am aware of only one scholar, Mayer I. Gruber, who explicitly links Emar *munabbiātu* to Hebrew מִתְנַבְּאוֹת.[27] But he does not develop the similarity, perhaps because he regards it as too self-evident.[28] Prophets in Ezekiel, Prophets in Emar. But things are not that straight forward: *Ezekiel* has a feminine plural participle of the root נבא in the hitpaʿel. The Emar texs have *munabbiātu*, which is a D-participle (the equivalent of the Hebrew piʿel) in the feminine plural. Despite the fact that they are slightly variant forms of the same stem, the D-stem of the root נבא at Emar fulfils a similar denominative role as the hitpaʿel does in Hebrew.

The four texts in question are 1) *Emar* 406:5', 2) *Emar* 373:97', 3) *Emar* 383:10' and 4) *Emar* 379:11-12. The first text mentions meat rations for **munabbiātu* while the other three texts (2-4) are virtually identical and say that the **munabbiātu* are related to Išḫara:

1) Emar 406:5'	[…]*bu-uq-qú-ra-tu*$_4$ *ša* $^{\text{f.meš}}$*mu-na-bi-ia-ti* […](a kind of) meat of/for the **munabbiātu*[29]
2) Emar 373:97'	$^{\text{d}}$*iš-ḫa-ra ša* $^{\text{f.meš}}$*mu*$_{\text{x}}$*-nab-bi-ia-*[*ti*][30] Išḫara of the **munabbiātu*
3) Emar 383:10'	$^{\text{d}}$*iš-ḫa-ra ša* $^{\text{f.meš}}$*mu*$_{\text{x}}$*-nab-b*[*i-ia-ti*][31] Išḫara of the **munabbiātu*
4) Emar 379:11-12	^{11} $^{\text{d}}$*iš-ḫa-ra ša* ^{12}*mu*$_{\text{x}}$*-na-bi-ia-ti*[32] Išḫara of the **munabbiātu*

The link between the two terms is based solely on morphology. Until James Barr's critique of the confusion of etymological with functional equivalence, etymology alone would have been

[27] The texts were introduced by FLEMING (1993a-c). A first critique appeared in HUEHNERGARD (1999) to which FLEMING (2004) wrote a response. For a thorough evaluation see STÖKL (2008:177-184).

[28] GRUBER (1999:129) writes: 'In the published texts from Emar, the feminine plural munabbiātu appears to be a clear cognate of the Hebrew *mitnabbe'ôt* ("women who prophesy"; e.g., Ezekiel 13:17). It is mentioned four times, three of them in the phrase "Ishkhara, the divine patroness of the prophetesses." The fourth reference in an Emar text to a *munabbiātu* occurs in what appears to be a list of portions of meat distributed among various officials including a male diviner and a male scribe.'

[29] ARNAUD (1987:402-403).

[30] ARNAUD (1987:353.360) and FLEMING (2000:244-245 (line 107)). The reading *mu*$_{\text{x}}$ for the A sign was suggested by VON SODEN (1987).

[31] ARNAUD (1987:377).

[32] ARNAUD (1987:375).

enough proof that the Emarite and the Judean women were fulfilling the same function.[33] And even knowing Barr's work, many scholars have assumed that the Emarite terms refer to prophetesses.[34] Instead of reading a biblical understanding of prophecy into the texts from Emar, I suggest interpreting the texts in their own context, before then comparing them to each other.

To that aim I suggest looking at the root נבא in Akkadian in general and in Emar in particular. In Standard Akkadian, the verb *nabû* normally means 'to call' in the G-stem and 'to wail' in the D-stem (*nubbû*).[35] However, Emar was at the edge of the Akkadian speaking and writing world and thus words often had a slightly different meaning, particularly in case of D-stems. To the best of my knowledge, the verbal root *n.b.*ʾ occurs only eight times at Emar, exclusively in the D-stem, and exclusively in the context of adoption deeds:[36]

1) RA 77 1:8	DINGIR.MEŠ-*ia ù me-te-ia* ˹*lu*ʾ-*ú tu-na-bi* She shall invoke/mourn (?) my gods and my dead[37]
2) RA 77 2 :11-12	[11]DINGIR.MEŠ-*ia ù me-te-ia* [12]*lu-ú tu-na-ab-bi* She shall invoke/mourn (?) my gods and my dead[38]
3) Emar 185:2-3	[2]DINGIR.MEŠ-*ia ù me-te-ia* [3]*lu-ú <tu>-na-ab-bi* She shall invoke/mourn (?) my gods and my dead[39]
4) AuOr 5 13:6-7	[6]DINGIR.MEŠ-*ia* [d]IŠT[AR.MEŠ-*ia*] [7]*lu-ú tu*[!]*-nab-bi-mi* She shall invoke my gods and my goddesses[40]

[33] BARR (1968).

[34] Among other see TSUKIMOTO (1989:4-5), MILLER (2000:177-178), PRECHEL (1996:80.186), FELIU (2003:55), GRUBER (1999:129 and 2007:10 nt.3), HESS (2007:89), and of course FLEMING (1993a-c). GORDON (1993:65) is careful to point out the weakness of the argument.

[35] CAD.

[36] The number of attestations is according to *Progetto Sinleqiunni. The Emar Cuneiform Archive* (accessed 16/05/08 at http://www.pankus.com/) [website currently offline for update]. There is one possible exception to the rule that *n.b.*ʾ always occurs in the D-stem, AuOr 5 13:6-7 (text no. 4 below), if the text is not emended following DURAND (1989). For studies on this terminology see also VAN DER TOORN (1994), PITARD (1996), and SCHMIDT (1996). TSUKIMOTO (1999) points out that in the text RE 94:25-27 our expression occurs with the verb *kunnu* instead of *nubbû*.

[37] HUEHNERGARD (1983:13).

[38] HUEHNERGARD (1983:16-17). Both of the texts published by Huehnergard here were also published as ASJ 13 25-26, cf. TSUKIMOTO (1991).

[39] ARNAUD (1986:197-198). I follow the suggestion by DURAND (1989) and emend the first sg. cs. D-precative *lunabbi* to a third person D-durative+ *lu*, *lu tunabbi*. As an alternative Durand suggests correcting the text to read *lu-u tu*[!]*-nab*[!]*-bi*, in either case the resulting form is a third sg. f.

5) CM 13 3 :23-24	^{23}DINGIR.MEŠ *u me-te-ia la-<aḫ>-te-ia* ^{24}*a-bi-šu-nu lu-na-ab-bu* May they invoke the gods and the dead of Laḫteya, their father[41]
6) Sem 46 2:20-21	^{20}…DINGIR.MEŠ-*ia* ^{21}*u mi-ti-ia ú-na-bu* They will invoke my gods and my dead[42]
7) RE 23:16-17	^{16}DINGIR.MEŠ-*ia ù* ˹*me*˺*-te-*˹*ia*˺ $^{lo.e.17}$*lu-*˹*ú tu*$_4$˺*-na-ab-b*[*i*] May she invoke my gods and my dead[43]
8) RE 30:5-7	^{5}DINGIR.MEŠ$^{!}$-*ia ù mé-e-te* ^{6}*ša* ^{m}*tu-ba-a a-b*[*i-šu*] ^{7}*ú-na-ab-bi* He will/shall invoke my gods and the dead of [his] father Tubâ[44]

Thus, at Emar *n.b.*ʾ only occurs in the D-stem (*nubbû*) and in the idiom 'to *nubbû* my gods and my dead' (e.g. *ilāni u mītiya nubbû*). The context makes it likely that the verb refers to some form of interaction with the dead, be it invoking them, caring for them or talking to them.

I have to stress that the amount of evidence is not particularly impressive and that all conclusions from this presentation of data have to remain necessarily preliminary. However, as it stands now, the evidence from Emar points to some form of interaction with the dead, rather than prophecy. This is further supported by the connection to the deity Išḫara. As Emar was under strong Hurrian influences it is likely that we are not talking about one of the many forms of Ištar, but of the Hurrian goddess of the underworld, who is responsible for the shadowy existence of humans after death.

At this point we can return to the women of *Ezekiel* 13 and the question of how their behaviour and social role should be understood. The fact that *Ezekiel* 13 uses the feminine participle instead of the feminine noun has often been remarked upon, and it may be an important difference. The other five prophetesses mentioned by the biblical text are in canonical order: Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, the prophetess of *Isaiah* 8 and Noadiah. We cannot glean much of the behaviour of these women – or that of male prophets – but it does not seem to include the catching of souls either for beneficial or for malevolent actions. It is

[40] ARNAUD (1987:233). DURAND (1989) suggests correcting the verb-form from *ta-nab-bi-mi* to *tu-nab-bi-mi*, changing it from a G-durative to a D-durative. This suggestion is supported by the fact that, if true, *nabû* would only occur in the D-stem at Emar, always in the same idiomatic expression.

[41] WESTENHOLZ (2000:9-12).

[42] ARNAUD (1996:10-14).

[43] BECKMAN (1996:39-40).

[44] BECKMAN (1996:49-51).

true that black magic is one of the more common accusations levelled against women throughout history, often without any indication that such magic was used. It may be the case that the women in *Ezekiel* 13 are therefore unjustly accused of magic. But if the description of their behaviour is accurate, and for reasons which will become clear later I think the description is relatively accurate, then these women behave in ways which are different from those of the other prophetesses (and prophets) in the Hebrew Bible and other ancient Near Eastern sources.

Thus, taking *Ezekiel's* description of these women's behaviour seriously, Korpel's approach to the text is successful: by pointing out the parallels between the usage of bird imagery of the souls in this text and bird imagery of the spirits of the dead she provides good reasons to understand the מִתְנַבֵּאוֹת in *Ezekiel* 13 as involved in some way in the interaction with the dead, in short 'necromancy'. It seems likely, therefore, that the Emarite term **munabbiātu* and Hebrew מִתְנַבֵּאוֹת should both be understood as referring not to prophetesses but to necromancers.[45]

If we accept this interpretation of the מִתְנַבֵּאוֹת and the **munabbiātu* as necromancers, what does this imply about the meaning of the Hebrew root נבא in general or at least about the development of its meaning? I am not aware of a single old text describing what a נָבִיא *does* when they are performing their duty, we have no access to direct information which could decide this question. The situation is made even more complicated by the fact that in their literary forms the reports of technical and intuitive oracles are virtually indistinguishable. It could well be that some of the great 'prophets of old'- such as Nathan - may have been the great technical diviners 'of old'.[46]

Clearly, we end up with a situation in which נָבִיא means 'prophet'. Has it developed from a generic term of diviner to this rather more specific meaning? As we do not have access to native speakers of ancient Israelite or Judean we cannot determine what the meaning of the term was when it was borrowed into Hebrew. It is, of course, also possible

[45] I would like to point out that in most ancient Near Eastern societies technical diviners would have been of a higher social standing than prophetesses. Thus, by recognising the function which these women performed, we attribute a higher social standing to them.

[46] That the faces of technical and intuitive divination changed over time has recently been re-affirmed by JASSEN (2007), albeit not explicitly. In his monograph on prophecy at Qumran he worked out beautifully how scriptural interpretation became the new 'prophecy'. This would form a true bridge between technical and intuitive divination, as both sets of abilities, charismata and skills are required to perform this form of divination: training in scribal and interpretative skills and inspiration by the spirit. It is this form of prophecy which is intuitively familiar to many of us, and which creates all the problems for distinguishing various kinds of divination at an earlier period. But before the advent of the scribal prophet-scholar-diviner, technical and intuitive divination were distinct, albeit very similar in appearance and identical in function.

that the noun נָבִיא always had the meaning 'prophet', while the hitpaʿel participle retained the meaning 'diviner' – or indeed even more specific, that the feminine participle retained the meaning 'necromancer' which is otherwise only attested in Emar, 600 kilometres further north and 600 years earlier.[47]

5 Conclusions

In this paper I have presented the two standard interpretations of the role of the 'daughters of your people' in *Ezekiel* 13. I argued that both are deficient ultimately relying on the biblical model that prophecy is good and what is good must be prophecy. Particularly Marjo Korpel's reading of the pericope is vital for my interpretation of the meaning of מִתְנַבְּאוֹת in *Ezekiel* 13, but in her rhetoric, at least, she follows the traditional prejudice against diviners.

My reading strategy of this pericope is therefore twofold. On the one hand it is necessary to accept the result of recent studies on magic and religion that the two are not opposed to each other. As I have shown, by slightly adapting Nissinen's understanding of the relationship between prophecy and (technical) divination, I can explain their relation to each other as part of a wider enterprise, whilst they still remain distinct forms of divine-human communication.

On the other hand I have adduced the attestations of texts from Emar in which the term **munabbiātu* occurs. According to my preliminary interpretation, these do not refer to prophetesses, but to female necromancers. The connection between the Emar occurrences and *Ezekiel* 13 are based both on the feminine plural D-stem/hitpaʿel participles and on the their social functions which appear to be linked to necromancy or care for the dead in some way. This suggests that while the more traditional exegetes are correct in stating that the women in *Ezekiel* 13 are not prophetesses, they are false in their negative evaluation of these women.

[47] But what does this say about the current position of the pericope in the context of *Ezekiel* $13_{1\text{-}16}$ and clearly linked to these verses? I would suggest that both oracles originally existed independently and were linked together based on the catch-word principle. The argument that this requires that the מִתְנַבְּאוֹת were already understood as prophetesses by the editor does not convince as the catch-word principle was applied not only on the basis of semantic relation, but also on the basis of etymological or by phonological relation.

To the contrary, in the societies of the ancient Near East, their status as technical diviners would have been higher than if they had been prophetesses.[48]

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[48] As a by-effect of this reading we can now refute Spieckermann's idea that Neo-Assyrian influence caused there to be more women among the prophets, SPIECKERMANN (1982:296-303). For the apparent lack of prophetesses see my suggestion in STÖKL (2009).

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