Focal points of discussion

1. Are there aspects of siege warfare that should be further highlighted?
2. Does the examination of masculinities seem relevant? If it does, what pitfalls could this theoretical framework have for the study?
3. How does the model of conceptual blending work with these texts?

"You have not gone up into the breaches": Siege Warfare and Masculinity in the Metaphorical Condemnation of Prophets in Ezekiel 13 and 22

The Book of Ezekiel continues to be a focus of numerous studies that are concerned with various issues of gender. This is hardly surprising, as the book and especially the metaphors present in chapters 16 and 23 contain some of the most graphic depictions of gendered violence in the Hebrew Bible.[1] While certain texts of the book definitely stand out, scholars have also suggested that the gendered metaphors and language of Ezekiel are not limited to isolated sections but could for example be a way of expressing disruption in cosmic order[2] or priestly concerns of profanation[3] that are present in different parts of the book. Some studies have read the gendered language of Ezekiel in a wider ancient Near Eastern context and utilized comparatively texts such as city laments.[4] Others have adapted more contemporary terms and phenomena such as "revenge-pornography" or "slut-shaming" as interpretative tools[5] to elucidate the often problematic and troubling texts. The diversity and the number of recent studies show that the issues of gender are difficult to separate from the interpretation of the texts of Ezekiel.

Some of the recent assessments of the book and gender note that Ezekiel contains interesting constructions of masculinities. It has been suggested that the book constructs a scribal ideal where masculine qualities and power are linked with the ability to write.[6] Other studies focus primarily on the character of the titular prophet whose actions seem to run counter to the ideals of masculine performance and strength.[7] However, it should be noted that Ezekiel is by no means the only male character in the book. In chapters 13 and 22, Ezekiel faces and condemns his counterparts, the prophets of Israel. As the chapter 13 seems to divide the prophets into male and female groups, it is appropriate ask if the gender and masculinity play any role in the condemnation of male prophets of Israel.

In this paper, I focus on a feature that significantly is present in the Masoretic text of both Ezekiel 13:5 and 22:30. Both verses convey the accusation that the prophets of Israel have not come for the defense of the city. More specifically, they have not gone up or stood in the breach. In scholarship, there is a general agreement that these metaphorical verses suggest the failure of the prophets.[8]

[1] See for instance Yee 2003, 111-112; Moughtin-Mumby 2008, 159.
[2] Kamionkowski 2003, 7-9.
[3] Goldstein 2009, 57-60.
[4] Petter, 2011, 85-89; Peterson 2012, 205-26.
[5] Morse 2018, 129-130.
[6] Boer 2013, 215, 223.
[7] Graybill 2016, 97-100.
[8] See for instance Zimmerli 1979, 292-293; Greenberg 1983, 236; Block 1997, 401.

However, it has not been studied if the condemnation has any effect on their perceived masculinity. Is there a link between the language of warfare and the issue of gendered performances? If such connection exists, why could the concern with masculinity be an effective part of the characterization and condemnation of this prophetic group?

Besieged prophets in Ezekiel 13 and 22.

First, it is necessary to focus on the texts in question. The prophets of Israel are condemned twice in the book of Ezekiel, first in the chapter 13, which as a whole can be viewed as a condemnation of prophetic activity and secondly and more briefly in Ezekiel 22.[9] In a highly metaphorical passage of Ezekiel 13, the legitimacy of the prophets is thoroughly questioned. They are dehumanized with a simile that compares them to jackals in ruins and they are destroyed by the wrath of Yahweh that is manifested in weather phenomena such as rain and storm. It is notable that the section can be viewed as the first half of a larger whole where the prophesying women are afterwards condemned (verses 17-23). Therefore, it may be assumed that the first half of the text is concerned with the male prophets.[10]

The prophets of Ezekiel 13:1-16 are primarily defined by their faulty message that does not come from Yahweh but from their own hearts. During the time of impending judgement and disaster, they promised peace and were able to generate a sense of false security among the people. Additionally, the text seems to suggest that they were a well-established group in Jerusalem. The people willingly listened to them.[11] This position of authority is later reaffirmed in chapter 22 where prophets are condemned alongside officials and priests who represent the elites of the land.[12]

While the whole chapter of Ezekiel 13 is important for the construction of the negative image of prophets, the text of primary importance for this study is verse 13:5.

> 13:5 לֹֽא־עֲלִיתֶ֣ם בַּפְּרָצוֹת֮ וַתִּגְדְּרוּ֒ גָּדֵ֤ר עַל־בֵּית֙ יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל לַעֲמֹ֥ד בַּמִּלְחָמָ֖ה בְּי֣וֹם יְהוָֽה

> 13:5 You have not gone up into the breaches, or built a wall for the house of Israel, to stand in battle in the day of the Lord.

It is necessary to note that the verse contains some differences between the MT and LXX. For instance, Septuagint addresses the prophets in third person, which is similar to the preceding verse 13:4. Even more notably the Greek text lacks the reference to breach and instead states that the

[9] Duguid 1994, 92-98.
[10] See for instance Stökl 2013, 61.
[11] Duguid 1994, 93-95.
[12] Zimmerli 1979, 466.

prophets do not stand on "solid foundation"[13] However, the imagery of the Masoretic text is relatively clear. Ezekiel 13:5 accuses prophets of three things. They have not gone into the breach, they have not built a wall, and they have not stood in the battle in the day of the Lord. It is now necessary to assess this statement.

First, the accusation seems to refer to the situation of siege warfare, a form of combat that often ensued when one side had considered battlefield too risky and opted for defensive warfare inside a closed city.[14] In the case of Ezekiel 13:5, the enemies are positioned outside city walls and are trying to break through them.[15] While the verse is not lengthy, it nonetheless alludes to a situation of significant importance. As noted by Elizabeth Block-Smith, a wealth of prophetic texts in the Hebrew bible contain references to sieges. There is a certain historical reality behind these texts. From the late 8th century onwards, Assyrian and Babylonian armies conducted assaults against the cities of Israel and Judah. Integral to this type of warfare was the utilization of battle rams and siege towers which proved to be an effective combination. In this historical context, the wars of Israel and Judah were primarily wars of defense.[16]

It has been suggested that the experience of siege warfare could have been one of the significant aspects that informed later biblical texts and possibly apocalyptic traditions.[17] Siege was not a quick method of warfare but could last for a significant period of time.[18] It could be a blockade that aimed to eventually deplete the resources and disrupt the ordinary life of the city. This meant that aside from the threat of starvation, the siege affected sanitation and the status of hygiene, which could be difficult to maintain even in a peaceful situation.[19] As the duration of siege extended, morale on both sides could erode, and living conditions of the city would eventually arrive to a point where constant defense was difficult to maintain.[20] Invaders could apply psychological pressure against the physically and mentally fatigued inhabitants of the besieged city and make the surrender an appealing

[13]Cooke 1936, 139; Olley 2009, 306. Zimmerli (1979, 286) argues that the Greek text could be a result of the translation of corrupted Hebrew text.
[14] Eph'al 2009, 1-2.
[15]See for instance Brownlee 1986, 188. A Slightly different interpretation is given by Greenberg (1983, 236) and Daniel Block (1997, 401) who understand the verse as a metaphor that evokes an idea of vineyard that is threatened by marauders. However, the fact that prophets are required to go up to the breaches seems to point to city walls that are accessed with a counter-ramp during the time of breach. See Eph'al 2009, 95-96.
[16] Block-Smith 2018, 19-21, 28.
[17] Hobbs, 1989, 177-181.
[18] For instance, the siege of Babylon by Ashurbanipal lasted for 22 months. However, in comparison the Biblical account of the three-year siege of Samaria by Shalmaneser V may not be historically accurate. See Eph'al 2009, 111.
[19] Borowski 2003, 80.
[20] Hobbs, 1989, 177-181.

option. However, as the resources were a critical issue for the attacking troops, the resolve of invaders could be weakened, and the besieged city would prevail.[21]

It is evident that sieges were complex situations with multiple possible outcomes that could be achieved in various ways. However, a siege could definitely end with a successful breakthrough of invaders. Theoretically this outcome could be achieved in three ways. The attacking troops could reach the city with ladders, dig tunnels, or use a battering ram to break the walls.[22] As the text of Ezekiel 13:5 refers to a breach, it is necessary to focus on the latter method of breakthrough.

The attempt of breach can be seen as a process of three important phases. First, the invaders would need to construct a ramp that would carry the battering ram and soldiers to the walls of the city. Then the ram was transported by the soldiers to the wall. Finally, the battering ram could breach the wall and allow the attackers to reach the besieged city. This was not a process that could be achieved in secrecy during a short period of time. The defenders of the city could effectively disrupt the construction of the ramp with arrows and prevent the transportation of the battering ram. In other words, the breach could be prevented relatively early if the defenders were skilled enough.[23]

The text of Ezekiel 13:5 supposes that the invaders had been relatively successful in their mission since the breach had happened. and the only way to prevent the defeat was to go into the breach and fight off the invaders. While this action was very risky and meant chaotic combat of close quarters, the breach could be repaired. The wall (גָּדֵר) mentioned in the text could realistically refer to a barricade that was constructed after the initial attack was countered. In that situation it would be essential to utilize the most capable troops. Even their leaders could be present to increase the motivation.[24]

A single verse cannot possibly convey all the intricacies of a complex historical phenomenon such as siege warfare. Indeed, the text of Ezekiel 13:5 does not fully represent the reality of besieged city and does not mention the horrors that were caused by starvation and disease. However, text seems to be accurate in the sense that it recognizes the point of breach as a pivotal moment in combat. Ezekiel 13:5 understands that breach is the moment where the adequacy and the courage of defenders are emphasized.[25]

[21] Eph'al 2009, 67, 106-113.
[22] Eph'al 2009, 68. Eph'al notes that ladders were the most preferred method of breakthrough as they required few troops, were quick and could surprise the enemy. The battering ram was often the least preferred method.
[23] Eph'al 2009, 84.
[24] Eph'al 2009, 95-96.
[25] Eph'al 2009, 96.

Furthermore, the siege and the invasion in Ezekiel 13 is entirely commanded by Yahweh. As stated in the verse, the siege and breach happen during the day of the Lord, which signifies their nature as important aspects of divine judgement. Even though the attackers may be Babylonians, the situation is in hands of Yahweh who is able to create the outcome. If the inhabitants of Jerusalem would demonstrate certain obedience, they would be victorious. However, since they are not able to do the will of God, they are condemned to a defeat.[26] This significant feature of the text may be related to the historical reality of siege warfare where Yahweh could not be conceptualized as a deity who would lead his people into victories and conquests against the enemies and neighboring peoples.[27]

The theme of breach is present second time in the Masoretic text of Ezekiel 22:30.[28]

> וָאֲבַקֵּשׁ מֵהֶם אִישׁ גֹּדֵר־גָּדֵר וְעֹמֵד בַּפֶּרֶץ לְפָנַי בְּעַד הָאָרֶץ לְבִלְתִּי שַׁחֲתָהּ וְלֹא מָצָאתִי 22:30
>
> 22:30 And I looked for a man among them, who would build a wall, and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I might not destroy it, but I found none.

This verse conveys a situation of breakthrough during the siege, which is similar to the text of Ezekiel 13:5. The verse, however, does not explicitly mention any specific groups such as prophets. Nevertheless, the preceding context implies that prophets are one group from which Yahweh seeks a man to stand in the breach. The section of Ezekiel 22:23-31 can be understood as a passage that is concerned with the evil and corruption that pervades all authorities and institutions as the Masoretic text condemns priests, prophets, officials, and a rather vague group called "people of the land"[29]

In comparison to the content of Ezekiel 13, Ezekiel 22 contains some similar themes. For instance, the prophets are accused of daubing with plaster, which is similar to the accusation of Ezekiel 13:10-11. However, the context is significantly different as the prophets are mentioned here as a one group among other authorities.[30] In other words, Ezekiel 22 sees prophecy as one of the important institutions that have failed in their duties.

[26] Eichrodt 1986, 164
[27] Block-Smith 2018, 24-25, 28.
[28] The Septuagint interestingly does not contain imagery of siege warfare and breaches. Zimmerli 1979, 466.
[29] In the scope of this paper it is not possible to discuss the issue of verse 25. The Masoretic text of the verse compares prophets to lions. However, the Septuagint is not concerned with prophets but princes. For the arguments concerning this verse, see for instance Bowen 2010, 136. It is also worth noting that the oracle such as 22:23-31 is not unique to the Ezekiel. In fact, a notably similar section can be found in the beginning of the third chapter of the Book of Zephaniah. See Zimmerli 1979, 466-467.
[30] Zimmerli 1979, 469.

Interestingly in verse 22:30 Yahweh states that he has actively been looking for a man who could stand in breach. This may give this text certain gendered aspect. Nonetheless, the text of Ezekiel 22 later claims that all these people share similar consequences due to their actions or inactions. The wrath of Yahweh destroys both prophets and other influential groups of the land who have failed to stand in the breach. While the text does not necessarily give more information about the siege warfare and prophets, it shows that siege could be utilized as a metaphor with different groups.

Masculinity and warfare

Texts of Ezekiel 13:5 and 22:30 show that the prophets and other groups of authority can be condemned with the imagery of siege warfare. While the imagery of siege and the eventual breach may be effective in illustrating the failures of these groups in the most critical moment, it may also contain implications that rise from the presence of gendered ideas. As previously noted, the text of Ezekiel 13 as a whole creates a gendered division of prophesying groups. Likewise, Ezekiel 22 could be interpreted as a text in which God seeks specifically a man who could stand in a breach. These texts seem to contain some gendered dimensions that cannot be dismissed from the analysis.

As these texts are concerned with male groups, the issue of masculinity becomes their most central gendered aspect. However, masculinity can be a difficult subject to define. As stated by R. W. Connell, masculinity "is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experiences, personality and culture."[31] This means that masculinity has aspects that are both relational and performative.

When masculinity is understood as relational it means that it is not a quality that is shared equally by all men. A biological male can be considered to be lacking masculine traits or he can have them aplenty.[32] Instead, different men occupy different spaces on a spectrum of various relational masculinities. That which is considered the highest or most ideal state masculinity can be understood as hegemonic masculinity.[33] While this masculinity often is highly ideal, it nonetheless provides a set of expectations that many men willingly want to fulfill. Motivated by the benefits of hegemonic masculinity, males may represent complicit masculinities that effectively uphold the ideal status of hegemonic masculinity. However, some men lack traits that are important to the hegemonic ideal. These men would represent subordinate masculinities who can become victims of oppression.[34]

[31] Connell 2005, 71.
[32] For overview of the subject, see for instance Asikainen 2018, 3-17.
[33] Lipka 2016, 177.
[34] Connell 2005, 77-80.

The hegemonic masculinity is not something that is essential or cannot change over time. Instead, masculinities are always related to certain historical context. There is always a question whether it is possible to know enough about the gendered aspects of ancient world or biblical texts. However, they most definitely are products of patriarchal culture, where masculinity was emphasized. Willingness to represent the ideals of hegemonic masculinity is often encouraged in such context.[35]

But what is the central quality of the ideal masculinity in the context of Hebrew bible, if there is any? According to Hilary Lipka, it seems to be related to strength. While male strength could manifest in various settings such as domestic households, it would clearly be present in warfare, where both the physical strength and inner resolve of an individual man would be evaluated. A successful warrior could retain his masculinity and status within the community.[36] The performative aspects of masculinity are emphasized in the biblical contexts.

What could the failure in masculine performance mean? The deviance from the hegemonic masculinity can be viewed as effeminate. For instance, Jeremiah 51:30 states that the might of Yahweh is able to cause such fear that the warriors of Babylon become women. Elsewhere in the same book the panic of soldiers is compared to the travails of childbirth. These texts show that the loss of self-control due to mortal fear was considered highly negative and against hegemonic ideals. A failure to perform adequately in the battle could mean total undermining of masculinity.[37]

These texts show that language that utilizes gender and masculinity has tremendous potential as an ideological tool that can be used encourage certain behavior.[38] Masculinity was clearly at stake in the settings of combat and warfare. In battle, a man would not only risk his life but also his masculinity. While a successful performance could bring honor, a failure to represent the qualities of ideal masculinity brought shame that could be described as an overwhelming situation in biblical texts. It would mean the possible association with subordinate masculinities, which were often scorned by those who would pursue the hegemonic ideals.[39]

Introducing the Blend of Prophesying and City Defence

Now, it is possible to note some issues that are integral to the assessment of these metaphors. First, these texts are concerned with prophets. This is explicit in Ezekiel 13 and while Ezekiel 22 targets various groups, prophets are one of them. Second, the metaphor clearly involves ideas of siege warfare, and it refers to a point of breach where the battle is to be decided. Third, there is an issue of

[35] Nissinen 2016, 222.
[36] Lipka 2016, 177-178.
[37] Lipka 2016, 181-182.
[38] Chapman 2004, 8-10.
[39] Lipka 2016, 176-177.

gender. It seems clear that warfare and masculinity are linked. Warfare provided a setting where masculine performance could clearly be either a success or a failure. Furthermore, the texts of Ezekiel in question give some importance to gender.

It is now necessary to assess how this metaphor would work. How do the elements of prophesying, warfare and gender form this metaphorical expression? For this purpose, I will apply the theory of conceptual blending. Introduced by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, the theory of conceptual blending explains how the cognitive processes can create various emergent structures and meanings. These conceptual blends can be visible as metaphors that are present in images or texts. Blending can be illustrated as a conceptual integration network that can be a so called single-scope network where two mental spaces or input spaces share a generic space and form a blended space.[40] The blend is a result of selective projecting, which means that it does not contain every element of the input spaces.[41]

There are several good reasons for such networks to exist. Fauconnier and Turner note that the blending gives insight to abstract concepts that need to be understood and additionally invokes emotions in the process. This means that complex concepts such as prophecy can achieve human scale through the conceptual integration.[42] These features make the use of metaphors an effective strategy in persuasion.[43] In other words, if a text aims to discredit some group, the presence of metaphorical expressions is not surprising.

In Ezekiel 13:5, one input space of the metaphor contains prophesying. This can be viewed as action where certain agents (prophets) transmit divine messages (action) to audiences (object). Ezekiel 13 as a whole does not seem to be very specific about the intricacies of false prophecy. The actions of prophets in verses 1-16 are occasionally equated with lies, divinations, and seeing vanities but it is difficult to ascertain any definite or clearly stated process of acquiring divine knowledge. The only thing that the text clearly states is that the prophesying of the groups does not originate from Yahweh but from their own hearts.[44]

The text of Ezekiel clearly links prophesying to the survival of Jerusalem. If the prophets had been adequate, they would have been able to express Yahweh's demands to the people. This could have led to an entirely different future.[45] However, the effects of such communication are dependent on

[40] Fauconnier & Turner 2002, 126. For applications of theory in Old testament context, see for instance Hecke 2005, Descamp 2009 and Gray 2014.
[41] Descamp 2007, 26-27.
[42] Fauconnier & Turner 2002, 322-324
[43] Steuter & Wills 2008, 204.
[44] Duguid 1994, 94.
[45] Eichrodt 1986, 185.

the interaction of the prophetic groups with their audiences who have a certain role in the receiving of prophecy.[46] If prophecy has consequences, they are not directly caused by the actions of prophets.

The other input space of the blending is concerned with city defense. This conceptual space contains agents, actions, objects and consequences. However, these are fairly different when compared to prophecy. Defenders of the city have a clear and tangible goal during the breach. They need to fight off the invaders, go to the breach and repair it with a makeshift wall. If this does succeed, the immediate danger is averted, but in the case of failure the changes of survival have dramatically diminished. In other words, the survival of the city is directly related to the actions of the defenders. While this is not an accurate description of the complexities of the siege, it is a suitably compact presentation of combat where individual character and gendered performance matters.

When the conceptual blending is represented with a single-scope conceptual integration network (see figure 1), it is possible to see how these spaces. First, they share a general space of agent, action, object and consequences. However, as noted before, these domains are very different. By blending prophesying and siege warfare, the metaphor raises the stakes of prophesying to heightened levels. For instance, if the metaphor conceptualizes the relatively abstract attitudes of the audience with the very concrete wall that can be repaired[47], the metaphor implies that prophets have a direct way of affecting the people.

If prophesying is understood on the terms of warfare, it becomes a concrete struggle for the survival. Furthermore, due to the representation of siege warfare as a breach, prophets have direct responsibility over the destruction or safety of Jerusalem. While adequately performed prophecy could be important for the security of Yahweh's people, the metaphor allows the text to emphasize the consequences of its corruption in the most dramatic fashion. The catastrophe is blamed entirely on the prophets. If they had better characteristics, the destruction could have been averted.

But what could those characteristics be. Going to the breach can be understood as an act that requires strength and courage. As noted before, these qualities are related to hegemonic masculinity. Fighting invaders and risking one's life corresponds to both physical and mental constitution. As the prophets fail this performance, the metaphor would then imply the undermining of their masculinity. This allows the metaphor to highlight the shame of the prophetic group. In other words, the martial imagery helps to further emphasize the idea of compromised prophecy in Jerusalem. Not only is the legitimacy and skill of the prophets questioned, but also their gendered qualities are undermined.

[46] Nissinen 2005, 21.
[47] See Brownlee 186, 188.

The failure of masculinity is not explicitly stated in the texts of Ezekiel 13:5 and 22:30. However, metaphors often utilize implication. For instance, if a group is metaphorically compared to vermin, it is not necessary to explicitly claim for their extermination.[48] Of course, much of this is dependent on what knowledge the authors and audience of metaphor have about warfare and masculinity. However, as the Book of Ezekiel is elsewhere highly concerned with the gendered imagery, it seems possible that author would understand the potential of utilizing the ideals of hegemonic masculinity.

Conclusions

In this paper I have examined the metaphor that conceptualizes the prophets of Israel as defenders of the city during the siege. The metaphor creates an image that makes the prophets contemptible and demonstrates their centrality to the fall of Jerusalem. The text, which utilizes conceptual blending can convey a direct connection with inadequate prophecy and the destruction of the city. Metaphor seems to express an idea that prophets could directly have saved Jerusalem if they had adequately transmitted the words of Yahweh.

Warfare was a situation where masculine performance could be evaluated. Biblical and ancient Near Eastern texts show that cowardice becomes linked with the compromised masculinity, shame, and feminine traits. If the text conceptualizes prophesying with warfare, it is possible that the prophets of Israel carry heightened and highly gendered shame that is easily achieved with the metaphorical expression.

In Ezekiel 13:5 prophets are the only group that is affected by the metaphor. However, in Ezekiel 22:30 they are part of a larger issue. Not a single group or person in Israel is adequate enough to stop the eventual catastrophe. If that text is concerned with specifically male authorities, a metaphor of siege warfare could effectively undermine the masculinity of every figure of authority.

However, more issues remain to be explored. As metaphors often form networks, it is necessary to analyze the metaphor of siege in the context of other metaphors of Ezekiel 13. Moreover, in Ezekiel 13 the prophets of Israel form only a one half of a larger condemnation that also contains the peculiar description of prophesying “Daughters of your people”. Do these halves have either complementing or contrasting gendered imagery. For instance, if warfare is related to the masculinity, could references to trapping be imagery that is used to target especially female prophets in Ezekiel 13:17-23. Furthermore, it is necessary to assess how the compromised masculinity of the prophets contrasts with the masculinity of Ezekiel.

[48] Chilton 2005, 39-41.

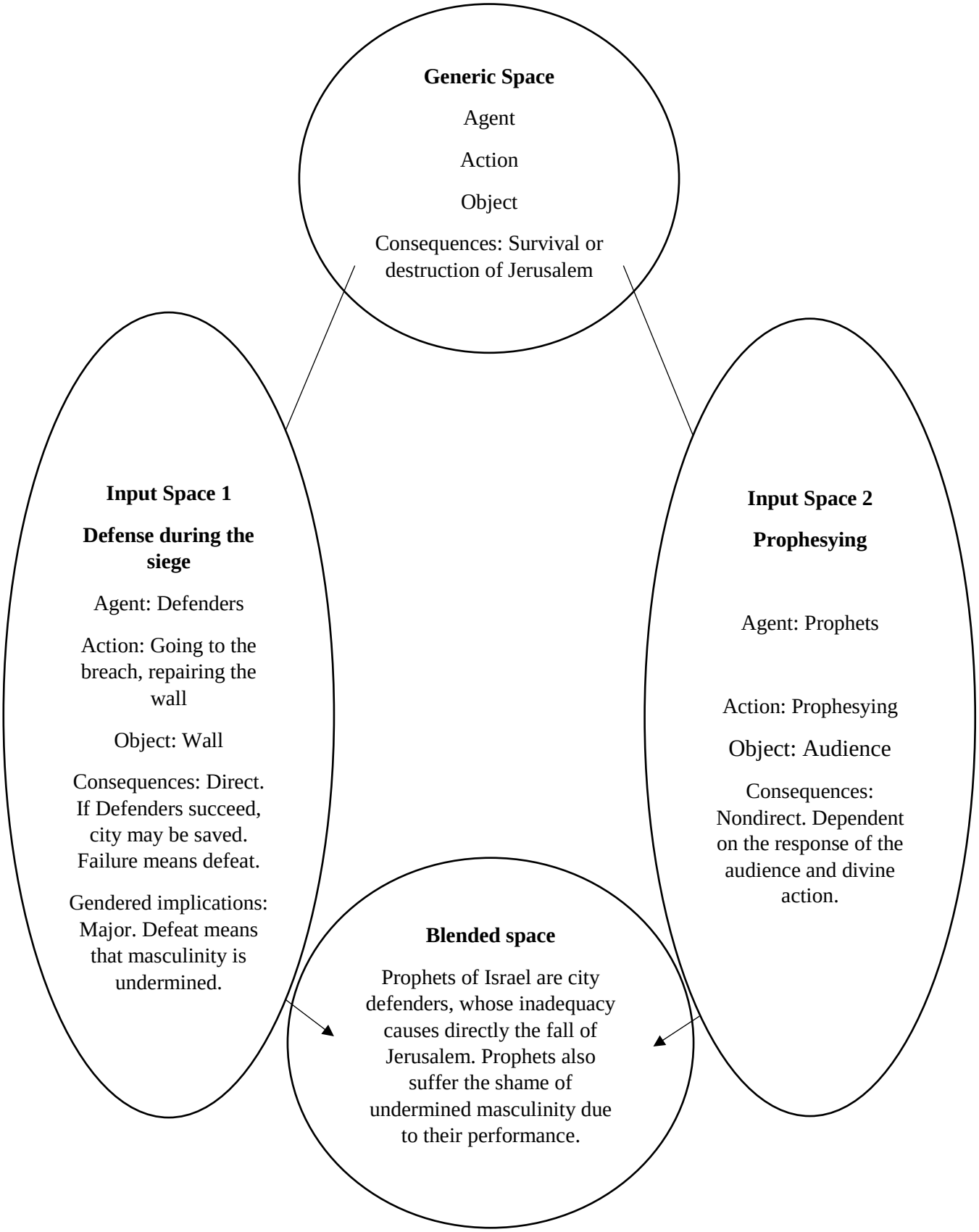


Figure 1. Single-scope network of city defense and prophesying

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