Possible focal points for the discussion

1. Is the argumentation and the application of various theoretical frameworks (enemy images, theories of metaphor, similes) sound?
2. What should be taken into an account when discussing the different texts of the MT and the LXX, while using theoretical frameworks mentioned above?

4.4 Conspiracy, Lions, and Plaster: The Different Enemy Images of the Prophets in the MT and LXX of Ezekiel 22:23–31

This paper focuses on descriptions of prophets in Ezekiel 22:23-31. As a tool of interpretation, the analysis utilizes the concept of enemy image, which provides a framework for understanding the various imagery that is being related to the group in the text(s). Enemy image can be defined as a description of a threatening group or entity that is often linked to stereotypes and presented with various rhetorical devices, metaphors, or other textual effects. Hence, the paper focuses especially on the figurative language and expressions, metaphors and similes, which are used to construct a sense of threat.[1]

The formation of enemies has an important function. From a social perspective, they represent a threat that could enhance the internal cohesion of a community that faces a crisis or major anxiety about the future. In other words, enemies are a valuable tool for the formation of identity.[2] In the context of biblical texts, however, it is not always clear how enemy images are related to historical situations.[3] The situation is further complicated with the complex textual history of the Hebrew bible. For example, if there are different readings of the description that could be classified as an enemy image, what could that potentially tell about their formation? Was there perhaps a change in context that required a change in the imagery, or could the different imagery be attributed to the complex process of textual transmission, which could include scribal errors?

This paper presents both the Masoretic text and the Septuagint of Ezekiel 22:23-31 to illustrate the issues that may emerge in the study of biblical enemy images. As noted earlier, the characterization of the prophets in these verses is the focal point of the analysis. This means that I seek to explain how various metaphors or similes could function and how they would contribute to the formation of threatening imagery. Taking into an account the both texts, however, helps to elucidate the difficulties one faces if contextualization or finding a possible historical situation of biblical enemies is to be attempted.

[1] For discussion and definitions of biblical enemy images see Eidevall 2005, 55-65; 2009, 1-6, 19-22. The analysis of various metaphors and rhetorical devices used in the text is similar to what Eidevall calls characterization in his methodology.
[2] Fiebig-Von Hase 1997, 15-16; Vuorinen 2012, 1-3.
[3] Eidevall 2009, 195.

MT (BHS)	Translation	LXX (Ziegler)	Translation
וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר׃	And the word of Yahweh came to me, saying	καὶ ἐγένετο λόγος κυρίου πρός με λέγων	And a word of the Lord came to me, saying
בֶּן־אָדָם אֱמָר־לָהּ אַתְּ אֶרֶץ לֹא מְטֹהָרָה הִיא לֹא גֶשְׁמָה בְּיוֹם זָעַם׃	Son of man, say to her: You are a land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation	Υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου, εἰπὸν αὐτῇ Σὺ εἶ γῆ ἡ οὐ βρεχομένη, οὐδὲ ὑετὸς ἐγένετο ἐπὶ σὲ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς·	Son of man, say to her: You are a land that is not rained upon, nor did rain come upon you in a day of wrath
קֶשֶׁר נְבִיאֶיהָ בְּתוֹכָהּ כַּאֲרִי שֹׁאֵג טֹרֵף טֶרֶף נֶפֶשׁ אָכָלוּ חֹסֶן וִיקָר יִקָּחוּ אַלְמְנוֹתֶיהָ הִרְבּוּ בְתוֹכָהּ׃	A conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey. They have devoured lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst.	ἧς οἱ ἀφηγούμενοι ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῆς ὡς λέοντες ὠρυόμενοι ἁρπάζοντες ἁρπάγματα, ψυχὰς κατεσθίοντες ἐν δυναστείᾳ, τιμὰς λαμβάνοντες, καὶ αἱ χῆραί σου ἐπληθύνθησαν ἐν μέσῳ σου.	whose leaders in her midst are like roaring lions seizing prey, devouring souls with dominance, taking worthy things, and your widows have been multiplied in your midst.
כֹּהֲנֶיהָ חָמְסוּ תוֹרָתִי וַיְחַלְּלוּ קָדָשַׁי בֵּין־קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל לֹא הִבְדִּילוּ וּבֵין־הַטָּמֵא לְטָהוֹר לֹא הוֹדִיעוּ וּמִשַּׁבְּתוֹתַי הֶעְלִימוּ עֵינֵיהֶם וָאֵחַל בְּתוֹכָם׃	Her priests have violated my law and have profaned my holy things; they have made no distinction between the holy and the profane, and they have not made known the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they have hidden their eyes from my	καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς αὐτῆς ἠθέτησαν νόμον μου καὶ ἐβεβήλουν τὰ ἅγιά μου· ἀνὰ μέσον ἁγίου καὶ βεβήλου οὐ διέστελλον καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον ἀκαθάρτου καὶ τοῦ καθαροῦ οὐ διέστελλον καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν σαββάτων μου παρεκάλυπτον τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν, καὶ	And her priests nullified my law and were profaning my holy things; they were making no distinction between holy and profane, and they were making no distinction between unclean and clean, and they were hiding their eyes from my sabbaths, and I was

	sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.	ἐβεβηλούμην ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν.	being profaned in their midst.
שָׂרֶיהָ בְקִרְבָּהּ כִּזְאֵבִים טֹרְפֵי טֶרֶף לִשְׁפָּךְ־דָּם לְאַבֵּד נְפָשׁוֹת לְמַעַן בִּצַּע בָּצַע:	Her officials within her are like wolves tearing the prey, by shedding blood and destroying lives in order to get dishonest gain	οἱ ἄρχοντες αὐτῆς ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῆς ὡς λύκοι ἁρπάζοντες ἁρπάγματα τοῦ ἐκχέαι αἷμα, ὅπως πλεονεξίᾳ πλεονεκτῶσιν.	Her rulers in her midst were like wolves seizing prey to shed blood so that they gain through greed.
וּנְבִיאֶיהָ טָחֲוּ לָהֶם תָּפֵל חֹזִים שָׁוְא וְקֹסְמִים לָהֶם כָּזָב אֹמְרִים כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה וַיהוָה לֹא דִבֶּר:	Her prophets have spread plaster for them, seeing vanity and divining lies for them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord Yahweh,' when the Yahweh has not spoken.	καὶ οἱ προφῆται αὐτῆς ἀλείφοντες αὐτοὺς πεσοῦνται, ὁρῶντες μάταια, μαντευόμενοι ψευδῆ, λέγοντες Τάδε λέγει κύριος, καὶ κύριος οὐ λελάληκεν·	And her prophets, smearing them, shall fall, while they behold vanity, divine lies, saying, “This is what the Lord says,” and the Lord has not spoken
עַם הָאָרֶץ עָשְׁקוּ עֹשֶׁק וְגָזְלוּ גֵּזֶל וְעָנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן הוֹנּוּ וְאֶת־הַגֵּר עָשְׁקוּ בְּלֹא מִשְׁפָּט:	The people of the land have practiced oppression and committed robbery, and they have mistreated the poor and needy and have oppressed the stranger without justice.	λαὸν τῆς γῆς ἐκπιεζοῦντες ἀδικίᾳ καὶ διαρπάζοντες ἁρπάγματα, πτωχὸν καὶ πένητα καταδυναστεύοντες καὶ πρὸς τὸν προσήλυτον οὐκ ἀναστρεφόμενοι μετὰ κρίματος.	oppressing the people of the land in injustice and committing robberies, oppressing poor and needy, and did not deal toward the stranger with justice.
וָאֲבַקֵּשׁ מֵהֶם אִישׁ גֹּדֵר־גָּדֵר וְעֹמֵד בַּפֶּרֶץ לְפָנַי בְּעַד הָאָרֶץ לְבִלְתִּי שַׁחֵתָהּ וְלֹא מָצָאתִי:	And I looked for a man among them, who would build a wall, and stand in the breach before me for the land,	καὶ ἐζήτουν ἐξ αὐτῶν ἄνδρα ἀναστρεφόμενον ὀρθῶς καὶ ἑστῶτα πρὸ προσώπου μου ὁλοσχερῶς ἐν καιρῷ τῆς	And I was seeking from them a man who behaved rightly and stood in front of me entirely in the time of

	that I might not destroy it, but I found none.	γῆς τοῦ μὴ εἰς τέλος ἐξαλεῖψαι αὐτήν, καὶ οὐχ εὗρον.	the land so as not to wipe it out completely, and I did not find.
וָאֶשְׁפֹּךְ עֲלֵיהֶם זַעְמִי בְּאֵשׁ עֶבְרָתִי כִּלִּיתִים דַּרְכָּם בְּרֹאשָׁם נָתַתִּי נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה: פ	"Thus, I have poured out my indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath; their way I have brought upon their heads," declares the Lord Yahweh.	καὶ ἐξέχεα ἐπ᾽ αὐτὴν θυμόν μου ἐν πυρὶ ὀργῆς μου τοῦ συντελέσαι· τὰς ὁδοὺς αὐτῶν εἰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν δέδωκα, λέγει κύριος.	And I poured out my anger upon it with the fire of my wrath to finish it completely; I have given their ways upon their heads, says the Lord.

Ezekiel 22:23-31 is the second section of the book, which contains verses that are explicitly concerned with prophets. Differences to Ezekiel 13, which contains the major judgement of prophetic groups, are apparent from the outset. Prophets are not the only focus of the section as the text is concerned with the misdeeds and transgressions of the authorities within the land. Furthermore, the text contains differences between the Masoretic text and Septuagint, which affect the characterization of prophets. These range from relatively minor differences to significant discrepancies seen especially in the content of verse 25, which subsequently is one of the focal points of the paper.

Before the individual verses of the Masoretic text and the LXX are assessed, it is necessary to briefly note the wider literary context of the section. It has been argued that Ezekiel 22 could be viewed as a chapter consisting of three distinct oracles that may be connected with a shared focus on social injustices.[4] While the formation and arrangement of chapter 22 does not seem arbitrary due to recurring words and themes, and the development of the recipient from Jerusalem (1-16), to house of Israel (17-22), and finally to the land (23-31), the structure of the chapter allows viewing the text of Ezekiel 22:23-31 in relative isolation.[5]

Commentators often see this section bearing a strong similarity to an oracle in Zephaniah 3:3-4., which condemns princes, judges, prophets, and priests with partially similar expressions. Thus,

[4] See Mein 2006, 95.

[5]Bowen 2010, 133-134. Greenberg (1983, 464-465) who strongly argues for the complementary nature of the oracles, notes that they have some significant differences. For example, the punishments that are mentioned in the oracles are not the same, and first and second section place the fulfillment of the oracles into the future. Pohlmann (2001, 329), argues that Ezekiel 22:23-31 forms the core text (*der Kerntext*) of the chapter.

historically this text could be seen as a development of the said oracle.[6] While the purpose of this paper is not to re-examine the connection between these texts, it is important to note that it is not extraordinary or unique to Ezekiel that prophets could be condemned alongside other groups.

It is, however, necessary that the analysis does not only focus on those verses in 22:23-31 that are directly concerned with prophets i.e. 25 in LXX and 25/28 in MT. While the other authorities are not the primary focus of the paper, it is important to understand how they possibly define or affect the imagery of prophets. In other words, it is relevant to know if there is significant overlap between the characteristics of these groups in the texts. The analysis of the imagery will begin with the Masoretic text. Afterwards, the reading of Septuagint will be assessed.

4.4.1 The Conflicting Imagery of the Masoretic Text

Verse 23 describes the arrival of the message with the prophetic word formula, which introduced the previous oracles in verses 1 and 16 of the chapter.[7] Afterwards, verse 24 sets the tone for the section with an order to issue judgement against the land. This provides a context for a series of condemnations for the groups who bear responsibility. The land seems to be a rather general recipient, but it nonetheless makes certain metaphorical expressions possible. If the verse states that the land will not be cleansed or rained upon, it can be concluded that it is in a state of impurity and drought. Thus, the metaphor conceptualizes the situation as something that needs to be cleansed but also revitalized.[8] However, while land in a text is a feminine word, it does not seem to hold similar so explicit gendered connotations as the city in verses 1-16.[9]

In Masoretic text, the prophets are the first group that is condemned. Verse 25 opens with statement קֶשֶׁר נְבִיאֶיהָ בְּתוֹכָהּ. which can be translated as *a conspiracy of prophets in her midst*. In the verse, בְּתוֹכָהּ clearly refers to land and that was introduced in the previous verse, which establishes the conspiracy here as a decidedly internal affair. The exact nature of the conspiracy is nonetheless not elaborated. The word occurs only here in the book of Ezekiel, and the book does not return to the subject in the other verses or chapters.

What can be said about such conspiracy? A major issue here concerns the semantic range of word קֶשֶׁר. It is not an unusual term in the Hebrew bible, occurring several times in various contexts, and it

[6] Zimmerli 1979, 467. See also Duguid 1994, 72-74. Dietrich (2016,) notes that a major difference between the oracles concerns their endings, as Zephaniah directs the punishment towards the nations. Additionally, the condemnation of prophets in Zephaniah 3:4 is very different from Ezekiel 22:28. (Ben Zvi 1991, 204)
[7] Zimmerli, 1979, 467; Hals 1989, 84.
[8]See Greenberg (1983, 460) who notes the metaphors of both rain/drought and purification in the verse. The implied metaphor of drought has been noted by Ndoga, (2014, 250)
[9] Goldstein 2015, 100.

usually denotes a plot that has been devised against a monarch or a ruler.[10] In prophetic literature, Jeremiah 11:9-10 states that a conspiracy against Yahweh has been found in the people as they have broken the covenant. This implicates that the word could mean a harmful plot in a more figurative sense. Such use of קֶשֶׁר could potentially lend offenses additional seriousness since it would clearly imply that Yahweh occupies a status of a king.[11]

While the exact nature and aims of the conspiracy may be difficult to determine in this verse, it seems clear that קֶשֶׁר is a voluntary act that has premeditated goals. When a group is accused of conspiracy, they are not primarily blamed for incompetence. Therefore, the accusation represents a departure from the condemnation of Ezekiel 13 wherein the prophets of Israel were unable to transmit the messages of Yahweh. Whereas the prophets in that chapter could not tell the difference between real oracles and oracles that originated in their own heart, their characterization is here more malevolent. The actions of the prophets are intentionally harmful.

Moreover, as far as enemy images are considered, the presence of conspiracy in this verse could be highly important. A mention of conspiracies may suggest a belief that misfortunes and hardships are caused deliberately by some organized group of people that has sufficient ability to work toward their aims.[12] When the text has such concept, it issues an accusation against the prophets, which could resonate with the audience especially in the times of uncertainty and anxiety.[13]

But could prophets be involved in conspiracies? Interestingly, Amos 7:10 states that the titular prophet was accused of conspiring against the king.[14] The Masoretic text also contains other examples where prophets are involved activity that may fit the category of conspiracy, even though word קֶשֶׁר is not being used. For example, Hananiah in the book of Jeremiah could be viewed as a prophet who takes part in a plot against the Babylonian rule.[15] Another point of comparison regarding a prophetic alliance could be found in the book of Nehemiah where Noadiah and other prophets seek to frighten

[10] For other occurrences of the word see 2. Sam 15:12, 1 Kings 16:20, 2 Kings 11:14, 12:20, 14:19, 15:15, 15:30, 17:4, 2 Chronicles 23:13, 25:27, Isaiah 8:12, Jeremiah 11:9. The related verb that can mean *to conspire* is even more common and occurs in 1 Sam. 22:8, 22:13, 2 Sam. 15:31, 1 Kings 15:27, 16:9, 16:16, 16:20, 2 Kings 9:14, 10:9, 12:20, 14:19,15:10, 15:15, 15:25, 15:30, 21:23, 21:24. 2 Chronicles 24:21, 24:25, 24:26, 25:27, 33:24, 33:25. Nehemiah 4:6, 4:8. Amos 7:10.
[11] Williamson 2018, 291.
[12] Vuorinen 2012, 4.
[13] As noted by Victoria Pagán (1994, 6) in her study of conspiracy narratives of the antique Rome "Conspiracy is dangerous and threatening, morally, politically, economically, and socially. It arouses fear, both in those in power, who risk being overthrown, and in those who conspire, who risk being discovered and punished. A historical account of a conspiracy controls these fears by solidifying them in written word and disengaging other possible narrative outcomes. Conspiracy narratives operate as palliatives; well constructed accounts of the worrisome events assure the reader that the conspiracy was a rare exception and will not happen again, if everyone remains vigilant. In this sense, conspiracy narratives both contain fear and deter future attempts at revolution."
[14] As noted also by Bowen 2010, 136.
[15] Mills 2017, 20.

Nehemiah.[16] The idea that prophetic figures and groups could be involved in deliberate and harmful plots may not be entirely extraordinary.

After the accusation of conspiracy, the verse introduces a figurative expression, which seems to further conceptualize and elaborate its effects and potential threat. *A conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey* is easily identified as a simile due to presence of word *like,* which makes the comparative nature of the phrase explicit.[17] In other words, such expression invites the reader to seek some point of comparison between a conspiracy of prophets and a lion, which naturally are very distinct from each other. The simile here, however could be viewed as a *broad-scope simile*, which invites a comparison between two domains but does not yet fully elaborate what the exact focus of the comparison is.[18] Indeed, the further elaboration seems to be given later in the verse as the misdeeds of the conspiring prophets are explicitly condemned.

While the simile is initially relatively open, the mention of dangerous animal could have very immediate effects. The basis for this simile seems to be in fairly conventional conceptual metaphors where humans/human behavior are conceptualized with animals/animal behavior.[19] In other words, the simile achieves a notable compression of relations. A potentially complex plot of individual prophets becomes a single predator, which behaves in aggressive manner.

It should be noted that it is highly important that the predator in these verses is not just any animal, but a lion. This particular animal is a rather complex source for a metaphorical mapping, as it has ambiguous nature in biblical texts. While the animal could be related to royalty and high status, it was also understood as a dangerous and even vicious creature.[20] Here the lion is described as roaring and tearing the prey. As noted by Strawn, roaring and predation are the two most important aspects of the animal in the Hebrew bible. In biblical context the prey of lions could very well be human victims, which lends this image additional threatening qualities.[21]

There is a tendency to utilize the imagery of lion to conceptualize human enemies in the Hebrew bible. Aside from this particular text of Ezekiel, psalms notably use the lion as a metaphor for personal

[16] Knoppers 2007, 314.
[17] As Romano (2017, 40) states: *Like announces dissimilarity, the need to find a pattern linking source and target domain, and therefore acts as a staller, facilitating the speaker/writer's process of creation and the hearer/reader's comprehension of the intended mapping by means of elaboration*. See also Israel, Harding & Tobin 2004, 123-128 for discussion and definition of similes. However, it should be noted that the distinction between similes and metaphors and their recognition is not always uniform in biblical scholarship. For example, de Joode & van Loon 2014, 43-44 seem to understand word *like* as an indication of deliberately expressed metaphor.
[18] Dancygier & Sweetser 2014, 145-146.
[19] Basson 2008, 12-14.
[20] Duguid 1994, 36.
[21] Strawn 2005, 34-36, Basson 2008, 13.

enemies. In other words, the image is such that it can be linked to different situations where negative and threatening behavior needs to be conceptualized and emphasized. Strawn notes that when lion is used as and metaphor for an enemy, it lends the image some important features. First, it dehumanizes or demonizes the subject of the metaphor while lending them at the same time incredible power. Furthermore, their victims are rendered more helpless, as they are threatened by a vicious lion.[22] Thus the presence of a lion in the verse could characterize the prophets and their conspiracy as a very severe threat.

However, while the imagery of lion is potentially highly evocative, the simile initially could be seen in certain respects unclear. How is a conspiracy or any initially clandestine plot of select people comparable to an imposing predator? When the simile has established the dangerous point of comparison for the prophets and their conspiracy, the verse more explicitly turns into their misdeeds, which could be seen as an elaboration that is typical to broad-scope similes. It is notable, however, that the focus of the elaboration seems to have shifted from the conspiracy to the conspirators. First, they have devoured human lives. Secondly, they have taken treasure and precious things, and thirdly, they have made many widows.

These accusations correspond well with the simile of lion. As lions are dangerous predators, it makes sense that the simile creates a deliberate connection between the human and animal violence. In this context it also seems to suggest that conspirators are guilty of violent abuses of power. The second accusation conjures an image of a distinctly human endeavor that could well be related to some figure of authority acting in unjustified manner. Finally, the making of widows can be attributed to both lions and violent humans.[23] Thus, the verse presents a fairly typical enemy image where metaphorical expressions are used to convey violent threat and dehumanization.

However, while the connection of lion and violent injustice is understandable in the context of somewhat generic enemy, it remains peculiar in the context of prophets. In fact, nothing in verse 25 is concerned with the transmission of divine knowledge. Furthermore, the imagery is considerably different from the animal simile that was utilized in Ezekiel 13:4. Jackals of that verse are usually understood as scavengers and eaters of carrions. Additionally, they bear no connections to the frames of power or royalty. On the contrary, they seem to represent decay and the lack of ordered society, as they are explicitly situated in ruins in the text of Ezekiel 13.[24] This means that the simile of verse 25

[22] Strawn 2005, 275-276.
[23] Duguid 1994, 39.
[24] Greenberg 1983, 235-236.

is very different from the one that is utilized in Ezekiel 13:4. If prophets are understood as transmitters of divine knowledge, the lion seems highly incongruous animal for this purpose.

The simile could, nevertheless, viewed as somewhat understandable if the goal of the text is to conceptualize prophets as powerful, dangerous and threatening enemies who may have partaken in other activity besides of receiving and transmitting messages. However, this kind of characterization would be in stark contrast with the text of Ezekiel 13:1-16, where the accusations are clearly concerned with prophesying. Additionally, the imagery of lions may also be problematic for the conceptualization of conspiracy. While conspiracies can eventually lead to violence, they also involve plotting and/or secrecy. Lions can be cunning predators, but the metaphor here evokes the image of a roaring animal that has made its presence clear. Moreover, the elaboration that suggests killing and taking of property is not necessarily linked to plotting, but to more general and direct abuse of power. In other words, there seems to be a certain disconnect between the comparison and the subsequent elaboration.

It can be concluded that the Masoretic text of verse 25 is peculiar for various reasons. Syntactically and lexically it presents an understandable enemy image, and formally it can be viewed as a complete broad-scope simile. However, this imagery differs strongly from the very specific accusations of chapter 13, and instead forms an image of conspiring internal enemies, whose offenses have little to do with prophecy. Furthermore, the imagery of lion is in clear contrast with characterization that emphasized the ineffectiveness of prophets in Ezekiel 13. One may indeed ask whether the characterization that is present in the Masoretic text was intentional[25] or represents an incorrect reading.[26] In any case, the verse significantly complicates the otherwise relatively consistent enemy image of prophets in the Masoretic text.

After the highly unusual verse 25, the text turns to the actions of priests. In contrast to the accusations of the previous verse, 22:26 is rather specific and clearly targets priestly offenses, which highlight the importance between the separation between holy/clean and profane/unclean. The verse contains a clear correspondence between the transgressions and the duty of the group.[27] The priests are doing exactly the things that they should not be doing.

[25] Bowen (2010, 136) states that the reading could be considered intentional but also acknowledges its obvious difficulty.
[26] As the apparatus of BHS notes, קשר נביאיה should be read as אשר נשׂיאיה . Zimmerli (1979, 465) strongly advocates that the text should be emendated with the help of Septuagint, which has preserved the correct reading. This position has been taken by most commentators, see also Greenberg 1996, 462.
[27] Wong 2001, 235.

What is interesting here, however, is that the priests here are partially accused of the same thing as prophesying women in Ezekiel 13:19. They have profaned Yahweh himself.[28] Other than that there is not much overlap with either Ezekiel 13 or other groups that are being accused here. The priests are not conceptualized with clear metaphors or similes and there are no dehumanizing elements present in the language.

The officials[29] are judged afterwards with imagery that contains clear dehumanizing elements. The content of the verse is remarkably similar to verse 25. The major difference is that the simile utilizes a different animal as the officials are not lions but wolves, which nonetheless are predatory carnivores. The visible connection between these descriptions makes the content of verse 25 and the description of prophets even more interesting. Since the metaphorical mappings that are present in both similes are comparable, is there a resulting implication that officials are similar to prophets but perhaps lower in a hierarchy?[30] It definitely seems peculiar to create so direct correspondence between these groups that should not have too much in common.

Prophets are once again mentioned in verse 28, but this accusation is different from verse 25. Prophets are said to spread plaster that is analogous to the divining lies and seeing vanity. The spreading of plaster in this case can clearly viewed as a metaphor that seems to be linked to the building of the wall in Ezekiel 13. In that chapter, the prophets of Israel are conceptualized as a group that coats a loosely constructed wall with plaster that initially hides the structural faults but is not able to provide protection against the catastrophic weather phenomena caused by Yahweh. In both chapters the basis for the metaphor lies in a novel conceptualization of prophetic messages as plaster.[31]

Why could plaster be a fitting conceptualization of lies or any message that is revealed to be inadequate in the future? The metaphor where physical buildings are being plastered and eventually revealed seems to be highly dependent on image schematic structures. Image schemas are dynamic and recurring patterns that structure human experiences and form basis for various conceptual metaphors.[32] In the activity of plastering, a schema that seems to be utilized is the one of containment. Containment schema is one of the most basic image schemas as it draws from common human experiences where various objects and actions are conceptualized in the terms of exteriors, interiors and boundaries. For example, clothes form a boundary that separates the exterior from interior, food

[28] Wong 2001, 153.
[29] The group seems to have consisted of people that were not of royal lineage yet held significant power. Depending on the position of king, they could have acted independently. They could also be more specifically military commanders. Duguid 1994, 110.
[30] Interestingly Bowen (2010, 137) does not discuss the hierarchical implications of the verses and similes.
[31] See for instance, Joyce 2009, 121.
[32] Johnson 1987, xiv.

is placed into containers and people traverse between indoors and outdoors.[33] Similarly, the plaster could be understood as a boundary that separates the foundation of some significant structure from the exterior.

The question is, however, why something that could in certain situations be viewed as a harmless surface material be also understood as a negative thing? In certain contexts, the image schema of containment can provide sub-schemas of concealing and revealing. In other words, the boundary affects how much of the interior is being perceived from outside. The manipulation of outward appearance can reveal or conceal various internal states.[34] Since the boundary is separate from the interior, it does not always represent it.[35] Appearances can be deceiving.

The plaster forms a boundary that separates and contains the interior structure, but at the same time it represents the less substantial periphery to the interior. In other words, there seems to be a fair amount of ambiguity to how plaster could be experienced or perceived. It could be a necessary coating to the various buildings, but it also could be peripheral and conceal the more integral internal state of the things that need attention or change. In this metaphor, the latter property of the plaster makes the metaphor an effective way of understanding the nature of prophecies.

It is evident that while verse 28 repeats accusations and metaphors that were introduced in Ezekiel 13:6-15, it expresses them in a far more condensed form. Spreading of plaster is common to both sections, but the syntax and surrounding context here may create additional meanings for the action. Moreover, if לָהֶם is not understood as an ethical dative, the plastering would be done for some other group. The possible implication is that there could have been some interaction between officials of the previous verse and prophets.[36] If that is the case, the relatively short verse would add something to the image of prophets that was not already present in Ezekiel 13.[37] However, the interpretation of לָהֶם as an ethical dative could be more appropriate in this context, as it would highlight that prophets were acting for their own gain, similar to prophets and officials condemned before.

All things considered, verse 28 is remarkably dependent on the content of Ezekiel 13, which contained a more elaborate metaphor of plastering. For example, the entire notion of the wall and its destruction is missing. Additionally, Ezekiel 13 connected the ultimate fate of prophets to the collapse of the

[33] Dewell 2008, 371-372.
[34] See Hoffman 2014, 272. Hoffman argues that the containment and its various sub-schemas commonly used in various religious discourses. For instance, something substantial is often *revealed* due to divine action, or mystery is something that is *concealed.*
[35] See Lakoff & Turner 1989, 148. Here one may potentially see conceptual metaphors ESSENCE IS CENTRAL and LESS IMPORTANT IS PERIPHERAL being utilized.
[36] Greenberg 1996, 463.
[37] Contrary to Duguid (1994, 98).

plastered wall, which does not happen here. Prophets are not yet punished for their actions in this verse. Hence, the use of metaphor here is in some respects different from the larger text of Ezekiel 13.

So far, the Masoretic text of Ezekiel 22:23-31 has presented two very different accusations against the prophets. It seems likely that the metaphors and similes that are used of prophets in Ezekiel 22 are highly mixed and the verses in general do not seem to have a lot in common. In the framework of enemy images this is not necessarily a problem. Enemy images can be inconsistent in terms of strict logical coherence.[38] Furthermore, Ezekiel 13 also utilizes both dehumanizing similes (jackals in ruins) and metaphors that deliberately conceptualize transmission of messages.

Here, however, it is very curious that the metaphor of devouring prey is similarly used of both prophets and princes and that the prophets mentioned twice. The text, in fact, contains two highly different images. One that highlights violence and abuse of power, and another that emphasizes deception. While the dehumanization and the metaphor of plastering were indeed distinct from each other in Ezekiel 13 they nonetheless could be connected with common themes of ruin, lack of order and falling physical structures. Here such connection does not seem to be present, and the verses thus remain more disparate.

The final group that is condemned in the section is the "people of the land". This group could be interpreted as a powerful people with ties to royal house.[39] Like the description of priests in verse 26, this condemnation does not utilize explicitly metaphorical expressions, but is merely a statement of offenses. The condemnation has some overlap between the prophets of verse 25 and officials, but there does not seem to be references to explicit violence that was emphasized with the use of simile in those verses.

After all groups have been condemned, the oracle draws them together using the metaphor of siege that was also present in Ezekiel 13:5. Interestingly, the metaphor of siege warfare could hold significant gendered implications as warfare was an important setting for masculine performances that could either be successful or failures.[40] Since the prophets are also condemned here, the verse forms a clear link between the imagery of this chapter and Ezekiel 13.

An interesting detail is that in verse 22:30 Yahweh states that he has been looking for a man who could stand in breach. This may give this text additional gendered dimensions. Would this perhaps

[38] Lowenthal 1987, 75-76.
[39] Duguid 1994, 121; Bowen 2010, 137. Greenberg (1983, 463), however, sees the group as "the citizenry at large".
[40] Lipka 2016, 177-178.

imply that the prophets that are condemned in chapter 22 are specifically male prophets? Additionally, Ezekiel 22:30 might suggest that the different groups of the section shared a similar duty that could be conceptualized as a defense during the time of siege. In other words, while their transgressions were different, the consequences of these actions led to the eventual catastrophe. The fall of the land is their fault, which is made tangible via a metaphor that emphasizes the courage, choice, and direct causality of actions or inactions.

The final verse of the section issues the ultimate judgement for these groups. Prophets seem to share a similar fate with other authorities which is in contrast with Ezekiel 13:1-16, where the punishment was linked to the metaphor of plastering and deficient wall. However, there is an expression "I have brought their way upon their heads", which seems to imply some correspondence between the offence and the punishment.[41] Nevertheless, the text is explicit about the idea that the groups will be consumed in fire, which does not seem to suggest a highly differentiated fate for the groups.

4.4.2 The More Conventional Imagery of the Septuagint

Septuagint presents a reading that is different from the Masoretic text. These differences also concern the imagery of prophets. Aside from the lack of reference to cleansing in verse 24, the beginning of the text corresponds with the MT, but a major divergence can be seen in verse 25. Whereas the MT contained the accusation against the conspiracy of prophets, the text of Septuagint is a condemnation of leaders (οἱ ἀφηγούμενοι), who were also mentioned in Ezekiel 22:6. The Septuagint also lacks a mention of conspiracy, which was an immediately noticeable feature of the enemy image of the Masoretic text. Otherwise, the simile of lion and its elaboration corresponds well with the MT.

The Septuagint seems to present a far less problematic image than the Masoretic text. The leaders are a group that can be conceptualized rather well with the simile of lions. οἱ ἀφηγούμενοι is a term that is used of the members of royalty in LXX Ezekiel, which lends the simile additional suitability.[42] Hence, the content of the verse is free from the issues that were present in the MT. As noted earlier, the difficulties in the Masoretic text were related to the fact that the broad-scope simile was not elaborated in a sufficient or entirely appropriate manner. The elaboration and the use of leonine imagery seemed to have more in common with an enemy guilty of abuse of power than a specific conspiracy of prophets. All things considered, it is not surprising that many commentators and

[41] Wong 2001, 232-233.
[42] Duguid 1994, 22-23.

translators emend the text of MT with the Septuagint reading of verse 25.[43] as it is very likely that the Masoretic text contains a mistaken reading of אשׁר נשׂיאיה as קשר נביאיה.

While verse 22:25 of the Septuagint is about the powerful leaders who likely belong to the royalty, it also affects the imagery of prophets. The prophets are now only condemned once in the text and with expressions that do not create issues that were present in the Masoretic text. In other words, the characterization of the prophets is much more uniform, albeit less complex in the LXX. The difference that verse 25 causes is very significant.

The next few verses contain some differences when compared to the MT. The description of priests in 22:26 is fairly similar to MT, aside from the detail that the text may emphasize their inability to differentiate (διαστέλλω) between holy/profane and clean/unclean. Ezekiel 22:27 condemns the rulers (οἱ ἄρχοντες), and is similar to MT aside from the mention of destroyed lives. Verse 28, which is now the only condemnation of the prophets in the chapter has one interesting difference. The text seems to state that the prophets will fall. As the punishment against these groups is properly articulated in verse 31, the prophets are interestingly punished twice in the Greek text of the section. Additionally, only the smearing is mentioned, but not the plaster itself. This, however, does not necessarily affect the understanding of the metaphor too much, as the mere verb could easily be associated with image schemas and metaphors that were present in the Masoretic text. Moreover, the verse seems to hold a similar potential connection between the officials and prophets that was also present in the MT.[44]

Interestingly, verse 29 changes the people of the land from the oppressors to the oppressed. Additionally, it should be noted that the verse does not explicitly state who are the ones oppressing the people. One possibility is that the accusation would be directed to previously condemned group of rulers who could fit the role of group that abuses power.[45]

Another major difference can be noted in verse 30. As in chapter 13, LXX does not utilize the metaphor of siege warfare. Instead, Yahweh is looking for a man who is able to behave rightly and stand in front of him. The standing here is not elaborated by a definite location such as siege, but it

[43] See for instance NRSV. A departure from the trend can be seen in the commentary of Bowen (2010, 135), who argues that both can readings can be defended.
[44] Olley (2009, 389) argues that the prophets are deliberately covering the transgressions of officials.
[45] Olley 2009, 389.

refers to intercessory position between Yahweh and the land.[46] Whereas the MT had a clear connection between Ezekiel 22:30 and 13:5, similar link is not present in the Septuagint.

While the verse does not utilize the metaphor of siege, Yahweh is still seeking a man from the groups, which gives the text certain gendered aspect. However, the text of the LXX does remove the potential undermining of masculinity that is suggested in the Masoretic text. Additionally, the standing before Lord is much less specific than a siege, which is a concrete matter of life and death. However, the meaning is not entirely different from the MT, as the person who would have built a wall and stood in a breach would certainly be understood as behaving correctly.[47]

Finally, as in the Masoretic text, the prophets are judged with the other groups. Verse 31 the LXX curiously seems to direct the judgment also towards the land. Nonetheless, the texts are similar in the respect that they seem to advocate both shared judgement and punishment that somehow is in accordance to the misconduct of the groups.

4.4.3 Conclusions

After the examination of Ezekiel 22, it can be argued that the section adds certain interesting aspects to the imagery of prophets. One conclusion that can be made from the analysis is that the prophets and their faults can be linked to the failures of other authorities of the land. This is clearly explicated in verse 30 and 31 where all groups are both accused of inability to perform their duty and finally judged together.

When both MT and LXX have been examined, it is clear that the imagery of prophets is different in these texts. The Septuagint presents an idea of deceptive prophecy that is consistent with the text of Ezekiel 13. Masoretic text on the other hand contains a more novel idea of prophetic conspiracy that via leonine simile links prophets into violent behavior that is similar to the transgressions of the officials in verse 27. It should be noted that verse 25 of the MT contains significant issues. While the conspiracy of prophets could be a potentially effective enemy image, it is elaborated with a simile that does not seem to fit either prophets or conspiracy. The Greek text does not contain such issue, as leonine simile is applied to leaders of the land.

The Masoretic text of 22:25 may in fact raise an interesting question about the intentionality of some biblical enemy images. If that text is a result of a textual corruption, it has nonetheless led to a unique characterization of prophets. While enemy images can be very deliberately constructed and related to crises that necessitate identity formation within groups, there may also be an aspect of accidentality

[46] Olley 2009, 390.
[47] Nevertheless, Zimmerli (1979, 466) states that LXX "has not properly understood the text."

to their formation. This may be a significant issue that needs to be addressed when one applies the framework to biblical texts with complex and often largely uncertain history.

Finally, chapter 22 might have aspects that concern the gendered construction of the prophetic groups. Aside from the metaphor of siege warfare with its gendered implications, it should also be noted that only the male prophets seem to be included in the list of authorities. The language of the texts utilizes only the condemnations that were issued against the prophets of Israel in verses 13:1-16. The text does not return to daughters of your people of Ezekiel 13:17-23 or their transgressions. Furthermore, the seeking of man in verse 30 suggests that women were not included in the text. This may show that unlike their male counterparts, the prophesying women were not understood as belonging to the leaders and authorities of the land. Whatever the reason may be, the powerful women who were even able to profane Yahweh are spared from the additional condemnation.

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