



Book of Ezekiel

Chapter 13

*Theme: Prophecy Against Pseudo Prophets
and Prophetesses*

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Theme: Prophecy against pseudo prophets and prophetesses.

Missler Introduction: False Prophets

Chapter 13 is an elaboration of 12:24, “For there shall be not more any vain vision not flattering divination within the House of Israel.” This was talking about false prophets, and this chapter elaborates on this issue. See Deut. 13:1-5.

Note also from Rev 13 we see them doing lying wonders, from 1 Tim 4:1 we read about the doctrines of demons, and in 2 Thess 2:9 and other places on the same issue. We need to be prepared to recognize that when the deceiver does come, he is going to do miracles! Those miracles can be counterfeits that seem to defy our technology.

The question which arises when one sees a miracle performed is, “By whose authority is it performed?” Is the miracle evidence that God is working through them? Not necessarily! We need to find out who the glory of the miracle is being given to. If it is anyone other than our Lord, we should have a problem with the miracle and the person performing it.

Do not regard the evidence of a miracle as a mechanic to focus your allegiance. Deut 13 is talking about the fact that we should that expect Satan, when the time comes, will be capable of miracles.

The penalty for a false prophet is death. Deut 18 explains why most prophets generally gave a double prophecy, sort of a double image. One would be a foreshadowing kind of thing for a later fulfillment of the big one. This was one of the ways a prophet was validated. If the first one came to pass and was validated through history, it was confirmation that God would also perform the major event.

The most dramatic example of this is the First and Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Prophets foresaw His First Coming in some 300 or more prophecies in the Old Testament. These were fulfilled in His ministry. There are over 500 prophecies about His Second Coming. We know that these, too, will be fulfilled, because the ones about His First Coming were fulfilled with precision.

2 Tim 3:13 says, “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.” One of the interesting things to recognize is that deception is reflexive. Those who deceive get so skilled at it that they start believing their own propaganda themselves. They swallow their own stories.

“He has married the vein,” the miners would say of a prospector who was so convinced he had found a vein, that he would no longer look critically at the data. He had irrationally, irrevocably become the victim of his own perceptions, his own beliefs.

The Tribe of Ephraim had come to be in such deep trouble that there was no extracting it from its own deceptive claims. Hosea 4:7 says, “Ephraim is joined to idols: Let him alone.” That is awesome judgment. “Let them alone: They be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch,” Matthew 15:14 says.¹

¹ Chuck Missler, Notes on Ezekiel, khouse ministries, khouse.org

Clarke Introduction: This chapter denounces heavy judgments against the lying prophets who flattered the people, in the midst of their sin and danger, with false hopes of peace and security, vv. 1-9. The work of these deceivers is beautifully compared to a frail and insolent piece of building, which can never stand against the battering elements of heaven, (the Chaldean forces), which God will commission against it, vv. 10-16. In the remaining part of the chapter woes are denounced against false prophetesses who practiced vain rites and divinations, with the view of promoting their own gain by deceiving the people, vv. 17-23.²

WBC: The term *false prophets* is not used in the OT, but historical perspective is right in so designating them. There were two classes of false prophets: those who were representatives of some object of worship other than the true God, e.g., Baal, Moloch (cf. Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal, I Kgs 18:19ff.); and those who falsely purported to speak in the name of Jehovah (cf. Micaiah's opposition to the prophets of Ahab, I Kgs 22:5-28). The strongest denunciations of these deceivers are by Jeremiah, who opposed them on moral, personal, and political grounds (Jer 23:9-32). During the dying gasps of Jerusalem, Hananiah opposed Jeremiah at home (Jer 28), and Ahab, Zedekiah, and Shemaiah opposed him in Babylon (Jer 29:15-32). Ezekiel in this chapter also exposes the false prophets and the false prophetesses.³

McGee Introduction: In chapter 13 we have the prophecy against the false prophets, the pseudoprophets and prophetesses. Notice that the women were also getting involved in this. Have you ever noticed how many cults and isms have been founded by women or how women play a very prominent part in them? It may not be popular to say that, but it was true in Ezekiel's day and it is true in ours.⁴

The main stumbling block to the acceptance of the prophetic call to sober thinking and repentance was the optimistic forecast of false prophets. In a nutshell the theology of these "prophets" was that God was inseparably bound to the Temple in Jerusalem. He could never abandon that place. In chapter 13 Ezekiel addressed a word to these prophets. Then he blasted their female counterparts.⁵

Condemnation of the male false prophets 13:1-16

Ezekiel first confronted the male false prophets, and then he explained the reasons that God would judge them.

The characteristics of these prophets 13:1-7

² Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

³ Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 13:1). Chicago: Moody Press.

⁴ McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 12:28). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 13:1-23). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

Ezekiel 13:1

And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Dake: [And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying ...] this is the 18th prophecy in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 13:1-23, fulfilled). The next prophecy is in Ezekiel 14:2.⁶

Twenty-two Predictions—Fulfilled (Dake):

1. Woe to the foolish shepherds that follow their own spirit and have seen nothing (Ezekiel 13:3).
2. My hand will be upon the prophets that see vanity and that divine lies (Ezekiel 13:9).
3. They will not be in the assembly of My people.
4. They will not be written in the writing of the house of Israel.
5. They will not enter into the land of Israel.
6. You will know that I am Jehovah God (Ezekiel 13:9,14,21,23).
7. An overflowing rain, great hailstones, and a stormy wind will rend your wall of untempered mortar (Ezekiel 13:11).
8. When it is fallen men will say, Where is the daubing wherewith you have daubed it (Ezekiel 13:12)?
9. I will even rend it with a stormy wind in My fury (Ezekiel 13:13).
10. There will be an overflowing rain in My anger.
11. Great hailstones in My fury will consume it.
12. I will break down the wall and bring it to the ground (Ezekiel 13:14).
13. The foundation will be discovered and it will fall.
14. You will be consumed in the midst thereof.
15. I will accomplish My wrath upon the wall and upon them that daubed it with untempered mortar, and they will be no more (Ezekiel 13:15).
16. Woe to the women that prophesy, that sew pillows to all armholes and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls (Ezekiel 13:18).
17. I am against your pillows, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go that you hunt to bring to your groves (Ezekiel 13:20).
18. Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver My people out of your hand (Ezekiel 13:21).
19. They will no more be in your hand to be hunted.
20. You will see no more vanity (Ezekiel 13:23).
21. You will see no more divination.
22. I will deliver My people out of your hand.

LAN: This warning was directed against false prophets whose messages were not from God, but were lies intended to win popularity by saying whatever made the people happy. False prophets did not care about the truth as Ezekiel did. They lulled people into a false sense of security, making Ezekiel's job even more difficult. Beware of people who bend the truth in their quest for popularity and power.⁷

⁶ Dake Study Notes, Dake Study Bible

⁷ Life Application Bible Notes

McGee 1-3: What was the problem? These prophets prophesied “out of their own hearts.” God have mercy on the man who stands in the pulpit and gives his own viewpoints and does not give the Word of God. Now it is possible to make a mistake in interpretation, and I have sometimes made mistakes. However, let me make it clear that I am attempting to interpret the *Word of God*. These men were merely giving what they thought: how to make friends, influence people, think positively, be self-reliant, and think of yourself as a wonderful individual, not as a sinner. This was their message: “Everything is all right in Jerusalem.”

Condemnation of the Prophets (13:1–16).

Ezekiel was directed to prophesy against “the prophets of Israel.” In both Jerusalem and in Babylon among the captives (cf. Jer 29) these men “prophesied,” i.e., proclaimed messages which they claimed to be oracles from God. This group, however, prophesied from their own heart. They were foolish because they had confused their own desires and hopes with divine communication. These prophets had “seen nothing,” i.e., they had not received any special revelation from God. They were following “their own spirit,” not the Holy Spirit of God (13:1–3). These prophets deserved a divine “woe” for several reasons.

First, the prophets were undermining the nation. They were like foxes among the ruins of a city. These little creatures had no concern about their habitat. They made no effort to repair the ruins, but in fact did further damage to them. So it was with the false prophets (13:4).

Second, the prophets had shown no courage in battle. In time of war a brave soldier would rush to any break in the defensive perimeter and defend it until the position could be secured. These prophets, however, had not “gone up into the breaches” in the moral and spiritual walls of the nation. They did not cry out against sin, nor call for repentance. They made no effort to extend or strengthen that wall. The physical walls of Jerusalem did not protect God’s people from hostile attack. Rather their faith in God and obedience to his word were their protection. Yet that wall had been severely eroded. God needed faithful preachers to stand in the gaps in the wall, to defend those gaps, to rebuild the walls at those points by calling the nation back to obedience (13:5).

Third, these prophets were making false claims. They were using the vocabulary of true prophets when they said, “the Lord declares” (lit., oracle of Yahweh). The Lord, however, had not spoken to them. What they were proclaiming was “a false vision” which had no more authority behind it than “a lying divination.” They could only “hope for the fulfillment of their word.” In a point-blank question Ezekiel asked these prophets whether or not this accusation was true (13:6f.).

Because they had dared to present lies in the name of God, the prophets stood condemned. Ezekiel had a real oracle of the Lord for them: “Behold I am against you!” God’s powerful “hand” would be against those who saw false visions and uttered lying divinations. These men, so popular at present, would one day be excluded from citizenship among the people of God. Their names would not appear in the national registry. They would not return from captivity to the land of Israel. This punishment would bring to these deceivers a true knowledge of the God with whose word they had trifled (13:8f.).

To justify his harsh words against these religious leaders, Ezekiel became more specific in his accusations. The prophets had misled God’s people by promising “peace”

when there was no peace. He likened them to wall builders. The national wall of false hopes and clever political schemes had been plastered over with “whitewash” by these prophets. A wall held together by whitewash rather than mortar could not possibly stand for long. A terrible storm of divine judgment was brewing, a storm of “violent wind, flooding rain” and “hailstones.” The wall would fall! When it did these false prophets would be mocked for using “plaster,” i.e., their lying visions, to hold together a wall. Ezekiel was charging the prophets with lending credibility to a national policy which was doomed to failure (13:10–12).

So that wall, crafted by the national counselors and held together by the assurances of the “prophets” would fall. God would tear it down; he would lay bare its foundations, i.e., the false theological notions upon which their national policy was built. The “prophets” would be destroyed along with their wall. Through this terrible experience men would learn the true nature of God. They would see that the Lord had poured out his wrath on both the wall and its plasterers. To jar the memory of his people in that day, and to stimulate sober reflection, God would say to them, “the wall is gone and its plasterers are gone.” The false prophets who saw “visions of peace” for Jerusalem would be nowhere to be found when that delusion was shattered by the harsh realities of God’s judgment (13:13–16).⁸

They're following their own imaginations; they have really seen nothing from God. They are proclaiming their own visions, their own ideas.

ESV 1–9: Introductory and concluding formulas as well as distinctive content bracket these verses from those that follow. The basic indictment—prophets speak their own delusions—is voiced in vv. 2–3 and developed throughout. The metaphors of vv. 4–5 are striking: like **jackals** (v. 4; cf. Jer. 9:11) they are no more than scavengers, when they ought to have been sentinels (Ezek. 15:5; cf. 22:30; Ps. 106:23). Hammering home the point, Ezek. 13:6, 7, and 9 each make explicit reference to **false visions** and **lying divinations**, the latter referring to the manipulation of some object to discern a divine message (v. 8 varies this pattern slightly). For this combination, cf. Jer. 14:14.

ESV 13:1–14:11: False Prophecy, True Prophecy. Chapters 13–14 express condemnation of speaking false prophecy and of ignoring true prophecy. The subject has already been broached in 12:24 in terms now repeated throughout ch. 13. The passage falls into two main sections: the condemnations against false speaking (ch. 13) and against false seeking (14:1–11).

ESV 1–23: False Prophets. Two groups come in for condemnation: male “prophets” who simply prophesy delusions (vv. 1–16), and women who are prophets by pretense (vv. 17–23). Each group is addressed twice, so that the broad architecture of ch. 12 is also seen here (two groups of two oracles). The masculine and feminine references tend to break down toward the end of the chapter. Although the text is difficult, it remains clear that the issue is not gender. The themes developed here appear in concentrated form in Mic. 3:5–7.

⁸ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 13:1–16). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

Constable 1-3: The Lord gave Ezekiel a message for the prophets who were devising messages for the Jews from their own hearts and calling them prophecies from Yahweh. He was using the word "prophet" ironically; these were not true prophets, but they claimed to be such. Ezekiel was to announce judgment on these false prophets. They were foolish (Heb. *nabal*) because they disregarded God's word and relied on themselves. This is the essential mark of this type of fool in the Old Testament (cf. 1 Sam. 25; 2 Sam. 13:13; Ps. 14:1; 74:18).

It is not clear in this chapter whether the Lord was speaking primarily of the false prophets in Jerusalem or in exile. Probably He meant false prophets in both places.

In the same way that impersonating a police officer is a crime in modern society, because it harmfully defrauds people who trust and obey the police, impersonating a true prophet of the Lord was, by God's law, a fraudulent misleading of Israelites in Ezekiel's day.⁹

Ezekiel 13:2

Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD;

Dake: [that prophesy out of their own hearts]

Eleven Sins of False Prophets

1. Prophesy out of their own hearts (Ezekiel 13:2).
2. Pretend that God is speaking His word through them.
3. Follow their own spirit (Ezekiel 13:3).
4. Have not gone up in the gaps to help Israel (Ezekiel 13:5).
5. Have not made up the hedge to protect Israel and help her to stand against her enemies.
6. Have seen vanity and lying divinations and claimed the Lord has spoken to them (Ezekiel 13:6-7).
7. Made others to have hope that they would confirm their predictions (Ezekiel 13:6).
8. Have spoken vanity (Ezekiel 13:8-9).
9. Seen lies and uttered them.
10. Seduced God's people, predicting peace when there is no peace (Ezekiel 13:10,16).
11. Built up a wall of hope of untempered mortar (Ezekiel 13:10).¹⁰

Clarke: That prophesy out of their own hearts—Who are neither inspired nor sent by ME. They are prophets out of their own hearts. They have their mission from their own assumption, and proceed in it from their own presumption. Such either go of themselves, or are sent by man. Such prophets, ministers, preachers, and clergy have been a curse to the Church and to the world for some thousands of years.¹¹

⁹ Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, 2010

¹⁰ Dake Study Notes, Dake Study Bible

¹¹ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

WBC: Ezekiel here refers sarcastically to the prophets of Israel, false prophets who prophesy out of their own hearts, i.e., their emotions and desires. He discloses the source (v. 3), content (:vv. 4, 5), and result of their message (vv. 6, 7), and the doom of the false prophets (vv. 8, 9). 3. Foolish prophets. A play on words: *nfbî.îm nfbālîm*, something like “profitless prophets.” Folly is primarily a moral rather than an intellectual deficiency. In the book of Proverbs, for example, wisdom is set forth as the “fear of the Lord,” and folly as disregard for him and his precepts. The force moving these prophets was **their own spirit** and not the Spirit of the Lord.¹²

BKC: The message of the false prophets came from their own imagination (cf. v. 17), not from God. Ezekiel was challenging the source of their message. Since their message came from their own spirit, Ezekiel could rightfully claim that they had seen nothing.¹³

hearts. Or “minds”

Ezekiel 13:3

Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!

Dake: [foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing] Six characteristics of false prophets:

1. Deception (Ezekiel 13:2-3,8,16)
2. Foolishness (Ezekiel 13:3)
3. Slyness (Ezekiel 13:4)
4. Irresponsibility (Ezekiel 13:5)
5. Lying (Ezekiel 13:6-9)
6. Seduction (Ezekiel 13:10)

BSB: There is a play on words here (cf. Jer 1:11, note) as Ezekiel describes his adversaries as “foolish prophets.” “Prophet” is *navi* (Heb.), and “fool” is *naval* (Heb.). In the present day a “fool” is one lacking in intelligence, but among the ancients a “fool” was one blind to spiritual claims (Ps 14:1; see Prov 1:7, note). Ezekiel’s condemnation of these “foolish prophets” was prompted by their determination to proclaim messages from “their own hearts” and to go their own ways (v. 17; cf. Prov 12:15, note; Isa 53:6).¹⁴

¹² Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 13:2). Chicago: Moody Press.

¹³ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 13:1–3). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹⁴ Believers Study Bible

Ezekiel 13:4

O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts.

Dake: [are like the foxes in the deserts] Not only were the false prophets as sly as foxes, but like the foxes who find homes among the ruins of cities, so these prophets found profit in the ruin of their country.

Clarke: **Thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts**—The cunning of the fox in obtaining his prey has been long proverbial. These false prophets are represented as the foxes who, having got their prey by great subtlety, run to the desert to hide both themselves and it. So the false prophets, when the event did not answer to their prediction, got out of the way, that they might not be overwhelmed with the reproaches and indignation of the people.

WBC: Ruins were as congenial to them as to gambling foxes, and they increased the devastation. 5. They failed to stand **in the breaches**, to stop the invading disaster (cf. 22:30; Ps 106:23). Nor did they build a **wall** of moral and spiritual counsel for Israel in the coming crisis. **The day of the Lord.** Cf. on 7:7.

BKC: Not only was the message of the false prophets untrue; it was also dangerous. The false prophets were like jackals among ruins. The word for “jackals” (*šû ‘ālîm*) may be rendered “foxes” (the normal Heb. word for jackal is *tan*). Though some feel Ezekiel emphasized the destructive nature of foxes, they are not generally known for their destruction. It is probably better to understand that Ezekiel was referring to the nature of the foxes’ dwelling places. Just as foxes consider ruins to be a perfectly acceptable “home,” so also the false prophets were able to flourish in a crumbling society.

Chuck Smith (4-6): So here were these false prophets going around. They had not really heard from the Lord, but they were saying, "Well, the Lord says," "Well the Holy Spirit told me," or, "The Holy Spirit showed me," or, "God has shown to me." And then they go around seeking for others to confirm their words.

Now, the tragedy of the church is that there are false teachers and false prophets in the church today doing the same thing. Speaking in the name of the Lord when God hasn't spoken. Saying, "Oh, the Lord says," or, "The Holy Spirit showed me," when they are talking out of their own spirits and their own hearts. Jesus warns about these men. He said, "They are wolves in sheep's clothing. Beware of these false prophets." Paul warned over and over again against these false prophets that were going around deceiving the people, speaking in the name of the Lord. Peter warns against them in a very heavy indictment, as does the little book of Jude. These men who speak in the name of the Lord have been the curse of the church from the beginning, but they've always existed. Clear back into this Old Testament period, there were those false prophets. And God spoke out against them in Jeremiah; God spoke out against them through Isaiah; and God is now speaking out against them here in Ezekiel. They have not really helped the people; they've hurt the people.¹⁵

¹⁵ Chuck Smith, pastor notes, Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa CA

Constable 4-5: The Lord compared these false prophets to foxes or jackals (Heb. *shu'alim*) that prowled around among ruins looking for holes in which to hide (cf. Neh. 4:3; Lam. 5:18). The same Hebrew word refers to both animals. They had not tried to repair conditions that had resulted in Israel's weakness and vulnerability nor had they strengthened the nation spiritually (cf. 22:30). Building the wall around the house of Israel so it could stand in the battle of the day of the Lord refers to preparing the people for the invasion and siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. The only concern of foxes and these prophets was their own welfare and selfinterests. They contributed nothing to the welfare of other needy people.

Ezekiel 13:5

Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD.

Dake: [gaps] Breaches in the walls or defenses. The idea is that in the time of siege when gaps were made in the walls, it was the duty of the leaders to go up and defend their country, by filling in the gaps to stop the inroad of the enemy. Instead of encouraging the people to repent and turn to God in the time when He was making a breach in Israel, the false prophets would not stand in the gap. Instead, they caused the people to hope in things which would bring the judgment of God and the ruin of the nation.

Dake: [the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD] By sin the people had stripped themselves of the protection of God, and they lay exposed to the foe. The false prophets were responsible for the nation being encouraged in rebellion against God and their enemies whom He had sent to chasten them.

Clarke: **Ye have not gone up into the gaps**—Far from opposing sinners, who are bringing down the wrath of God upon the place, you prevent their repentance by your flattering promises and false predictions. Ye have neither by prayers, example, nor advice, contributed any thing for the preservation of the place, or the salvation of the people's souls.

BKC: The false prophets, Ezekiel said, had not gone up to the breaks in the wall to repair it. Israel's moral walls were ready to collapse, but the false prophets did nothing to help. The day of the LORD has an eschatological meaning in most Old Testament passages where it refers to the Tribulation period, the second coming of Christ, or the Millennium (cf. comments on "Major Interpretive Problems" in the *Introduction* to Joel). But in this passage it seems to refer to the coming judgment by the Babylonians.

Nelson: The **day of the LORD** refers to times when God triumphs (see 7:19; 30:3). The phrase is particularly used by the prophets to describe those periods in which God is unusually active in the affairs of His people, either for deliverance or for judgment (see

Joel 2:1; Zeph. 1:7). In that day, God will actively bring about His purposes for the world: He will rescue the righteous and judge evildoers.¹⁶

Ezekiel 13:6

They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made *others* to hope that they would confirm the word.

Dake: [seen vanity] They have seen vanity. This means they believed their own lies and tried to confirm their own predictions.

WBC: Lying divination. To divine means to obtain an oracle from a god by drawing lots (cf. 21:21). To gain knowledge of secret things by superstitious means was forbidden Israel (Ex 22:18; Num 23:23; Deut 18:10, 11), and divining was disparaged (cf. Ezk 13:7, 9, 23; 21:29; 22:28; Mic 3:6, 7, 11). Saying, The Lord saith. *Oracle of the Lord (nf.um Yahweh)*, the formula of true inspiration (cf. Amos, who uses it 21 times, 2:11, 16, etc.). They expect him to fulfill their word (RSV). There was no external criterion for true prophecy. “While the true prophet had the witness in himself that he was true, the false prophet might not be aware that he was false” (Jer 23:21, 31; A. B. Davidson, *op. cit.*).

BKC: 6-9. The false prophets claimed to represent God, but He did not claim them. Because of their false words and lying visions, He was against them. Ezekiel mentioned three aspects of their judgment. First, they would not belong to the council of God’s people. The false prophets had enjoyed favor among Israel’s leaders. They were in positions of influence both in Jerusalem and in the exile; but after their prophecies were proved false, they would lose this favor. Second, besides losing their places on the council, they would also not be listed in Israel’s records (i.e., their names would not be recorded in the city’s list of citizens). To be excluded from the list would deprive an individual of the rights of citizenship (cf. Ezra 2:62). These false prophets would be excommunicated from the fellowship of Israel. Third, the false prophets would never again enter the land of Israel. They would die as captives in a foreign land.

Nelson ; The false prophets, such as Balaam, practiced **divination** (see Josh. 13:22). This was the pagan art of finding “divine” guidance through such means as astrology, reading sheep livers and other animal organs, and consulting spiritists or witches to communicate with the dead (see 1 Sam. 28:3–19). These prophets hoped to receive some kind of revelation. But they did not find the truth for they were not searching for it where God had clearly pointed it out—in the Law and the prophets. By prefacing their predictions with **the LORD says**, these false prophets were deceitfully claiming that God had spoken to them when in fact He had not. God’s prophets never sought visions through the methods of divination (see Deut. 18:10; Mic. 3:6), instead they received their visions and prophecies through the Spirit of the Lord.

¹⁶ The Nelson Study Bible

Constable 6-7: When these prophets claimed to speak a message from the Lord they were only uttering falsehood and presenting the results of deceptive pagan divination. The Lord had not sent them, yet they expected their prophecies to come to pass. Yahweh asked them if their claimed revelations from Him were not really just false visions and lying divinations.

Today there are also many 'false prophets' ministering in religious places, leading people into judgment rather than turning them to Christ and the security of a life of peace with God and eternity with him (cf. 2 Cor 11:13-15).

Ezekiel 13:7

Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The LORD saith *it*; albeit I have not spoken?

Dake: [Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The LORD saith *it*; albeit I have not spoken?] This is question 11. The next question is in Ezekiel 13:12.

Chuck Smith (7-8): That's heavy. God just doesn't like you speaking in His name your own ideas, your own thoughts. "Well, the Lord showed me..." I had a fellow one day that was one of those, "The Lord told me" kind, you know. And the Lord told him to go out into the desert and he went out there and the Lord told him this and the Lord told him that, and the Lord told him this, and you know. And he lost all his money, and he lost all this and he got sunburned and dehydrated and everything else, and, "Why would God do that to me? Why would God...?" And it was obvious that the guy was nuts, you know, that God didn't speak to him. If God had told him to do all these things then it wouldn't have, you know, messed up; it wouldn't have ended in a calamity. And then he wants to blame God for all of the misery that he went through. "Well, the Lord told me this." I said, "Well, if the Lord told you to do all those things, then why are you asking me why the Lord would do something? Ask Him if He tells you all that stuff. The Lord didn't tell you to come to me, because I don't have any sympathy for you." But I get tired. How can you argue when a person says, "Well, the Lord told me to do it"? Well then, what can you say? You say, "Oh, man, you're nuts. The Lord didn't tell you that." But, you know, you don't want to say that to a person. But, they don't leave you anywhere to go. We need to be careful about that; "Thus saith the Lord," or, "The Lord said," or you know, "The Lord told me." We've got to be careful about that. I think that we use that much too loosely. God doesn't like that, speaking in His name when He hasn't spoken. And God said, "I'm against you. You that say, 'The Lord saith,' when I haven't spoken."

The reasons for their judgment 13:8-16

Ezekiel 13:8

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I *am* against you, saith the Lord GOD.

Dake: [Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord GOD] Sixfold judgment on false prophets:

1. I am against you (Ezekiel 13:8).
2. My hand will be upon the prophets that see vanity and divine lies (Ezekiel 13:9).
3. They will not be in the assembly of My people.
4. They will not be written in the writing of the house of Israel.
5. They will not enter into the land of Israel.
6. They will know that I am Jehovah God.

The divine judgment on all false prophecy and knowledge is given in this verse; it is **nonsense**. The Hebrew word for *nonsense* is translated “in vain” in Ex. 20:7.

Constable 8-9: The Lord told these false prophets that He opposed them for what they had done. He would act against them by removing them from positions of influence among His people, depriving them of the rights of citizenship in Israel (cf. Ezra 2:62; Luke 10:20; Rev. 3:5; 20:15), and preventing them from returning to the Promised Land. They had failed as “watchmen” over the house of Israel (cf. 3:16-21). The fulfillment of these judgments would prove to them that Yahweh was Lord (cf. Exod. 7:5).

Ezekiel 13:9

And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord GOD.

Missler: There is a three-fold judgment predicted here which God pronounced upon these false prophets.

- 1) They will not come into the council of God’s people; that is, they will not get the authority they implicitly seek in this office of prophet.
- 2) Their names would be omitted from the register of Israel, as in Ezra 2:62.
- 3) They shall never return to the land.

“My People” - God’s phrase, shows up 7x in this chapter. The reason He is so hostile to the false prophets is because of the endearment to Him of His people that these false prophets are deceiving.

Dake: [in the assembly of my people] They will not be among the counselors, the ruling body or elders of My people, or be honored with the leading men of Israel.

Dake: [written in the writing of the house of Israel] This could have a twofold meaning:

1. Be written in the register kept of all citizens of Israel.
2. Be written as true prophets in the inspired writings of Israel.

Clarke: **They shall not be in the assembly of my people**—They shall not be reputed members of my Church. They shall not be reckoned in the genealogy of true Israelites that return from captivity; and they shall never have a possession in the land; they shall be exhereditated and expatriated. They shall all perish in the siege, by the sword, the famine, and the pestilence.

WBC: A threefold punishment of the false prophets is predicted. At the present they have prestige and influence, but in the new kingdom they shall not be in the assembly of my people (cf. Gen 49:6; Ps 89:7; 111:1), nor be enrolled in the register (i.e., list) of the house of Israel (RSV; cf. Ezr 2; Neh 7; Ex 32:32, 33; Isa 4:3; Mal 3:16), neither shall they enter the land of Israel (cf. Ezk 20:38; Jer 29:32).

Because these false prophets had prophesied messages that contradicted God's truth (v. 10), they were condemned. The Lord would separate them from God's people, from membership in the nation of Israel, and from life in the land. **enter into the land:** The false prophets would not participate in the future restoration of the people to the Promised Land.

ESV: The punishment is total exclusion. The council (Hb. *sod*) of my people provides an oblique contrast with the "council of the Lord" (Jer. 23:18, 22), where the prophet should stand.

Chuck Smith: Ho,ho,ho, boy, that is heavy duty. When God's people are assembled together in that heavenly scene, these guys aren't going to be there.

Chuck Smith (9-10): So they built a wall and other guys come along and they daub it with untempered mortar, and thus, it has no strength. It's going to fall in the day of battle. But notice what they were saying. And Jeremiah was saying, rebuking, saying... it was God said through Jeremiah, "Scarcely have you healed the hurt of my daughter Israel, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace." Oh, but they were making positive confessions, weren't they? Well, you don't want to say war and desolation, that's terrible, you know. That'll happen to you if you say that. Make a positive confession. Oh, but God says that positive confession is a lie. It's not going to do you any good to go around saying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace, saith the Lord. And God really rebuked them for those positive confessions, because God had not promised peace and it was hurting the people. They were denying the truth; they were trying to escape the truth and denying the truth. They were actually lying when they were saying, "Peace, peace," and there is no peace. So, they're building a wall that is not going to stand, because one guy will say it and another will come along and confirm it, "Oh yes, thus saith the Lord. The Lord showed me the same thing, brother. Oh hallelujah." Untempered mortar.

Ezekiel 13:10

Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and *there was no peace*; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered *mortar*:

Dake: [one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar] This perhaps refers to the walls which were made of beaten earth rammed into molds or boxes to give it shape and consistence, then emptied from the molds on to the wall, layer by layer, so that it could dry as the work went on. Such walls could not stand the effects of weather, and houses built of this material soon crumbled and decayed. To protect them mortar was made to plaster the walls with so that water could not soften the hard, dried mud. If the mortar was mixed with lime it answered a good purpose; if the lime was left out it was called untempered mortar, and this kind was no protection from the elements (Ezekiel 13:10-12).

Clarke: **One built up a wall**—A true prophet is as a wall of defense to the people. These false prophets pretend to be a wall of defense; but their wall is bad, and their mortar is worse. One gives a lying vision, another pledges himself that it is true; and the people believe what they say, and trust not in God, nor turn from their sins. The city is about to be besieged; it needs stronger fortifications than what it possesses. The prophet should be as a brazen wall for its defense; and such my prophets would have been had the people received the word from my mouth. But ye have prevented this by your lying vanities; and when you have perverted the people, you pretend to raise up a rampart of specious prophecy, full of fine promises, for their defense. What one false prophet says, another confirms; and this is like daubing over a bad wall with bad mortar, which prevents its blemishes and weaknesses being discovered, though it has no tendency to strengthen the building.

LAN: 10-12 These false prophets covered their lies (a “flimsy wall”) with “whitewash” - a pleasing front. Such superficiality can’t hold up under God’s scrutiny.

WBC: The false prophets announced peace, when there was no peace. See Mic 3:5; Jer 6:14; 8:11; 23:17.

The next section reads, literally, *and he* (the people) *is building a party-wall* (*ḥayis*, only here in the OT; a wall of stones loosely piled together without mortar), *and behold them* (the prophets) *daubing it with marly clay plaster, or whitewash*. The prophets acquiesced in the people’s attempt to defend the city, hiding its weakness by lying prophecies.

BKC: The false prophets were saying, Peace, whereas Ezekiel was predicting destruction. Their deceptive ministry was like a flimsy wall covered with whitewash. Instead of calling Israel’s attention to the serious cracks in its moral foundation (v. 5), these prophets were “dabbing plaster” to hide the deficiencies. A white paste, formed from the chalk deposits in Israel, was used to plaster over the rocks that formed the walls of most houses. This plaster hid uneven rocks under a smooth surface. The prophets were compounding Israel’s difficulties by hiding problems that needed to be exposed.

ESV 10–16: A further connection with Jeremiah (Jer. 6:14; 8:11) brackets this second oracle: the false declaration of peace (also Ezek. 13:16). The false prophets' word of peace puts a delusive veneer on people's hopes.

Constable 10-11: Judgment would come on them for misleading the Lord's people by falsely predicting peace when no peace was coming.

There are two interpretations of the references to whitewashing, the literal and the metaphorical. The literal interpretation understands God to be saying that when the residents of Jerusalem built their walls (Heb. *hayis*, a flimsy partition) and houses, believing that they were secure, the false prophets supported their efforts by adding the whitewash. They should have warned them to prepare for coming judgment rather than helping them beautify the walls of their homes. The coming divine judgment would descend on Jerusalem like a rainstorm with hailstones and violent winds and destroy their beautifully whitewashed walls.

The metaphorical interpretation, which most commentators took and which I prefer, understands God to be saying that these false prophets were putting a good front on the situation in Jerusalem, saying peace rather than judgment was coming. They were compounding Israel's difficulties by hiding problems that needed to be exposed and corrected. Ezekiel was to tell them that invasion would come, like a rainstorm with hailstones and violent winds, and that their facade of a future for the people would then come crashing down (cf. Matt. 7:24-29).

The false prophets were compared to those who build an unsafe wall and cover up its defects. The untempered mortar [AV] was actually whitewash, which is useless for strengthening insecure walls. Smooth words of false messengers hid from the people the actual seriousness of their spiritual condition. To daub with untempered mortar [or plaster with whitewash], in the metaphorical sense, is to flatter, to use hypocrisy. When the false prophets confirmed the people in their evil ways, by their approval they were whitewashing the flimsy spiritual structure of Israel.

Ezekiel 13:11

Say unto them which daub *it* with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend *it*.

Clarke: **There shall be an overflowing shower**—That shall wash off this bad mortar; sweep away the ground on which the wall stands, and level it with the earth. In the eastern countries, where the walls are built with unbaked bricks, desolations of this kind are often occasioned by tempestuous rains. Of this sort of materials were the walls of ancient cities made, and hence the reason why no vestige of them remains. Witness Babylon, which was thus built. See the note on Ezekiel 4:1.

WBC: There is a play on the words **whitewash**, *tāpēl* and **fall**, *nāpal*. Three elements in nature will make the wall to fall (cf. v. 13). **Great hailstones.** Omit the MT *and you*. 13. Cf. Mt 7:24-27. Hailstones. The unusual word *elgābīsh* (only here and in 38:22) is probably the Akkadian *algamešu*, “crystal,” and so, “ice crystals.” 14. Will I break down

the wall. The prophets were buried beneath the collapsing walls (cf. Isa 25:12; Lam 2:2; Amos 9:1).

BKC: 11-12. Since the false prophets had deceived the people by plastering over an unsafe wall (v. 10), they would be blamed when the wall collapsed. God's judgment would break down the flimsy wall of Israel. Heavy rain ... hail stones ... and violent winds (cf. v. 13) would beat against the wall and it would collapse. Then the people would ask the prophets, Where is the whitewash you covered it with? The "whitewash" was their false prophecies; and when Jerusalem was destroyed, this would be revealed.

Chuck Smith (11-14): That phrase over and over and over again, sixty-two times in this book, "And ye shall know when I bring My judgments, when I bring My word, when My word comes to pass," and that, of course, is the purpose of prophecy. Is when the prophecy comes to pass that ye shall know that He is the Lord. That it is God who has spoken and that God can speak of things before they happen. And sixty-two times God spoke and spoke of when it was fulfilled, "ye will know that I am the Lord."

Ezekiel 13:12

Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed *it*?

Dake: [Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed *it*?] Question 12. The next question is in Ezekiel 13:18.

Constable: When the walls, or the picture of the future that the false prophets had painted, had collapsed, the people would ask a question. They would question the materials out of which they constructed the wall, either the literal wall or the wall of false speculation. It had proved inadequate and unreliable.

An attractive external appearance is no substitute for intrinsic soundness.

Ezekiel 13:13

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even rend *it* with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury to consume *it*.

BKC: When wind ... hail-stones ... and ... rain would cause the wall of Jerusalem to fall (cf. v. 11), the prophets would be destroyed in it, for God's wrath would be against them.

Constable 13-14: The Lord promised to send a violent storm of judgment on His people in Jerusalem because of His anger against them and to destroy the people's homes and the false prophets' vision of the future. Then the foundations of their homes and the false prophets' vision would lie exposed for all to see, and the false prophets themselves would perish in the judgment. Then they would know that the Lord was God.

Ezekiel 13:14

So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered *mortar*, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that *I am* the LORD.

Ezekiel 13:15

Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered *mortar*, and will say unto you, *The wall is no more*, neither they that daubed it;

Constable 15-16: The Lord would destroy both the people's homes, or the false vision of the future that these prophets painted, as well as the prophets themselves, those who promised peace to Jerusalem when no peace was coming (cf. Matt. 18:7).

It is a common failing for preachers to want to speak pleasing and appeasing words to their people, but if they are to be true to their calling they must be sure to receive and to impart nothing but God's clear word, irrespective of the consequences. When church leaders encourage their people in sub-Christian standards or unbiblical ways they make themselves doubly guilty.

Ezekiel 13:16

***To wit*, the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and *there is no peace*, saith the Lord GOD.**

This is an idiomatic way of conveying the idea that their work comes to nothing; sort of like the New Testament analogy of building on a rock or on the sand. Unless the Lord builds it, it has no value.

Condemnation of the female false prophets 13:17-23

There were female as well as male prophets in Israel (Exod. 15:20; Judg. 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14; Neh. 6:14; Luke 2:36) and in the early church (Acts 21:9; 1 Cor. 11:5). However there were far fewer female than male prophets, and there was no formal order or class of female prophets. God raised up female prophets according to His sovereign purposes occasionally, but He usually used males for this ministry. Females who were not true prophets sometimes claimed to be such, just as males did.

Although a limited number of oracles directed at women are found in the OT, the present prophecy against female false prophets has no equal.

Ezekiel 13:17

Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them,

To the Women False Prophets: There were no priestesses in Israel; but there were some prophetesses, such as Miriam, and Huldah and Deborah. This is the only Old Testament passage where God speaks out against the false women prophets.

Dake: [**Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own heart**] See details of this prophecy, note, Ezekiel 13:1. The prophetesses were as guilty of fallacy and sin as the prophets, so this special section concerns them (Ezekiel 13:17-23). On certain occasions God did pour out His Spirit upon women and they prophesied like the men who were anointed of Him.

Clarke: **Set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy**—From this it appears that there were prophetesses in the land of Israel, that were really inspired by the Lord: for as a false religion necessarily implies a true one, of which it is the ape; so false prophetesses necessarily imply true ones, whom they endeavored to imitate.

That there were true prophetesses among the Jews is evident enough from such being mentioned in the sacred writings. Miriam, the sister of Moses Exodus 15:20; Numbers 12:2; Deborah, Judges 4:4; Huldah, 2 Kings 22:14; Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, Luke 2:36; the four daughters of Philip the deacon, Acts 21:9.

Calmet observes that there was scarcely a heresy in the primitive Church that was not supported and fomented by seducing women.

LAN: In the Bible, the gift of prophecy was given to women as well as men. Miriam (Exodus 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), and Huldah (2 Kings 22:14) were prophetesses. But the women mentioned here are more like the witch of 1 Samuel 28:7, and they are condemned for disheartening the righteous (Ezekiel 13:22).

WBC: Several godly, gifted women are referred to in Scripture as prophetesses: Miriam (Ex 15:20); Deborah (Judges 4:3, 4); Isaiah's wife (Isa 8:3); Huldah (II Kgs 22:14); Anna (Lk 2:36); and the four daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9). In the present paragraph, the prophetesses, or rather sorceresses, were counterparts of the false prophets, forerunners of the modern palmists, fortunetellers, and mediums.

BKC: 17-19. Ezekiel turned from the false prophets (vv. 1-16) to address the false prophetesses (vv. 17-23). They were called the daughters of your people who prophesy out of their own imagination (cf. v. 2). True prophetesses ministered in both Old and New Testament times (Ex. 15:20; Jud. 4:4-5; 2 Kings 22:14; Acts 21:8-9). However, the "prophetesses" Ezekiel denounced were like mediums or sorceresses.

These prophetesses sewed magic charms on all their wrists and made veils of various lengths for their heads. The Hebrew word for "magic charms" occurs in the Old Testament only in this passage (Ezek. 13:18, 20). This practice probably came from Babylonian magic rituals, in which magical knots and bands were bound to various parts of the body to ward off evil spirits or to heal diseases. These "good-luck charms"

supposedly had magical powers. The “veils” were long drapes that were placed on “their heads” and that covered the prophetesses’ bodies, possibly to convey the impression of mystery.

The purpose for the magic charms and mysterious veils was to ensnare people. Especially in times of uncertainty and turmoil, frauds and charlatans seem to prey on the fears of the gullible. These sorceresses would “tell the future” or provide a “good-luck spell” for a few handfuls of barley and scraps of bread, either as payment for the divination or as a means employed for divination. In some cultures barley was used in occult practices either as an offering to the spirits or as a means of trying to determine the future. Whatever the case, these prophetesses were employing fraudulent practices as a hoax and were making a living off the fears of others. God said they were really lying to My people (v. 19).

The results of the prophetesses’ work ran counter to Israel’s best interests. You have killed those who should not have died and have spared those who should not live. The prophetesses should have exposed and denounced evil practices in Jerusalem (cf. 2 Kings 22:13-20). But instead they let the wicked (“those who should not live”) go free.

McGee 17-18: Ezekiel is to resist the false prophetesses—“Set thy face against the daughters of thy people ... and prophesy thou against them.”

In Genesis 10:8–9, Nimrod is called a mighty hunter before the Lord. Actually, he was a hunter of the souls of men. That is also what these false cults do—they hunt out the souls of men.

The women were involved in this also. In 2 Peter 2:1 Peter said, “But there were false prophets also among the people [that is, Israel], even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.” Today we have many women who are involved in spiritualism with its mediums and fortune-tellers and necromancers and witches. There are quite a few in Southern California—I always thought we had them, but now they openly claim they are witches.

“Woe to the women that sew pillows to all armholes.” What these women were doing was giving out amulets, a little something to put on your arm, to keep you from getting sick or to protect you from harm. “And make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls!” They give you a handkerchief which they have prayed over, and it will help you get well (as if there were merit in that rather than in the Lord)! My friend, what you see about you today is *not* new. It is as old as the human race. When Ezekiel clearly denounced it in his day, it was “the word of the LORD” not his own word.

Condemnation of the Prophetesses (13:17–23).

Prophetesses were also on the scene. Like their male counterparts, they prophesied “from their own heart.” Unlike the prophets, they were not so much preachers as practitioners of occult arts. They sewed magic bands full of incantations and charms on the wrists. They made veils of various sizes to put over the heads of their clients. Perhaps this was some sort of mind control measure. They made a living for themselves by hunting down the lives of God’s people. This probably means that for a price, they would use their witchcraft to harm the innocent (13:17f.).

Ezekiel offered a specific example of how these women worked. They would examine handfuls of barley and bread crumbs for “signs” that sick people would either live or die. On the basis of these auguries the prophetesses would forecast the death of the righteous and promise life to the wicked. They “profaned” God before his people by their (1) methodology, (2) motives, and (3) message. They lied to God’s people, and the people were only too eager to listen to their lies. Thus these women were doing serious damage to the faith of Israel (13:19).

The Lord declared his hostility to these prophetesses. He would rip off their bands and veils. The souls held captive by magic spells would be liberated. These women had “disheartened the righteous with falsehood.” At the same time they had “encouraged the wicked not to turn from his wicked way” which was his only hope of salvation. When the judgment began to unfold these women would no longer “see false visions or practice divination.” God would deliver the faithful from the clutches of these ruthless women. When they saw their hold on the population shattered, they would come to know the true nature of God (13:20–23).¹⁷

ESV 17–21: Attention turns to women who give prophecies of their own devising. The term “prophetess,” usually found with genuine agents of God (e.g., Miriam in Ex. 15:20; Deborah in Judg. 4:4; Huldah in 2 Kings 22:14), is avoided with reference to these impostors. Focus shifts resolutely onto magical practices that are very difficult to clarify any further. The striking language of hunt for souls (Ezek. 13:18, 20) identifies this generally as illicit spiritual manipulation. Such behavior is forbidden (e.g., in Lev. 19:26, 31; Deut. 18:10–14).

minds. The same Hebrew word (*leb*) is translated “hearts” in v. 2 (the word can take either meaning).

Now, there were these gals there in Jerusalem also who took the title of a prophetess and they were prophesying out of their own hearts.

Constable: The Lord also directed Ezekiel to speak judgment to the female false prophets who were concocting their own messages and passing them off as divine revelations (cf. Isa. 3:16—4:1; 32:9-13; Amos 4:1-3; Mic. 3:5).

Ezekiel 13:18

And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the *women* that sew pillows to all armholes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive *that come* unto you?

Dake: [sew pillows to all armholes] Some think these were pillows sewed for the divans—something to lean upon and make their consulters comfortable while the

¹⁷ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 13:17–23). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

prophetesses pretended to give them revelations and guidance. Others think this refers to magic charms upon all wrists, for it is so translated in some versions.

Dake: [make kerchiefs] False prophetesses put magic kerchiefs or veils over the heads of those who consulted them, as if preparing them to receive the answer or revelation they sought. The verse could read, Sew pillows for every elbow to rest upon and make coverings for the head of every age, to lead them astray.

Dake: [the head of every stature] The head of men of every age, old and young, great and small, if only they had the price to pay them.

Dake: [to hunt souls] To hunt the souls of men who will consult them about their problems.

Dake: [Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive that come unto you? And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies?] Questions 13-14. Next, Ezekiel 14:3. Will you promise your victims life?

Clarke: That sew pillows to all arm holes—I believe this refers to those cushions which are so copiously provided in the eastern countries for the apartments of women; on which they sit, lean, rest their heads, and prop up their arms. I have several drawings of eastern ladies, who are represented on sofas; and often with their arm thrown over a pillow, which is thereby pressed close to their side, and against which they thus recline. The prophet's discourse seems to point out that state of softness and effeminacy to which the predictions of those false prophetesses allured the inhabitants of Jerusalem. A careless voluptuous life is that which is here particularly reprehended.

Clarke: And make kerchiefs—The word kerchief is French, *couvre chef*, that which covers the head; hence handkerchief and neck handkerchief, and pocket handkerchief are pitifully improper; because none of them is used to cover the head, from which alone that article of dress has its name. But what are we to understand by kerchiefs here? Probably some kind of ornamental dress which rendered women more enticing, so that they could the more successfully hunt or inveigle souls (men) into the worship of their false gods. These they put on heads of every stature—women of all ages, *komah*, of every woman that rose up to inveigle men to idolatry.

The word *mispachoth*, translated here kerchiefs, and by the Vulgate *cervicalia*, bolsters, Calmet contends, means a sort of nets used in hunting, and in every place where it occurs it will bear this meaning; and hence the use to which it is here said to be applied, to hunt souls.

These magic charms and veils were used in witchcraft practices. They were advertised as good luck charms, but were used to ensnare the people in idolatry.

WBC: Who sew magic bands upon all wrists and make veils for the heads of persons (RSV). The puzzling expressions in this verse apparently describe features of “sympathetic magic” whereby the sorceress fastened magic influence upon her inquirers by the tying of knots and the shrouding of the persons in veils varying in length according to their stature. It was believed that like effects like, that a desired result could be obtained by mimicking it, and that things once brought into contact continue to act upon each other after being separated. In the hunt for souls. Or *persons* (cf. BDB, p. 660b. So in vv. 19, 20; 17:17; 18:4, 22, 27). The prophetesses made victims of those who consulted them, hunting down some persons and keeping others alive for their own profit, or keeping their own persons alive.

Chuck Smith: Now it sounds like they are in some kind of witchcraft, occultist kind of practice, in the sewing of these pillows onto the armholes and putting these little bonnets on, that is for every size of head, every stature, so for every size head they were making little bonnets that they could wear.

Constable: He was to announce Yahweh's judgment on these women who sewed cloth bands to place on the wrists and floor-length veils on the heads of themselves or the objects of their "prophesying." They used these aids to impress people and to cast spells on (to influence) people to bring them under their power (cf. Jer. 7:18; 44:17, 19).

The activities attributed to these women suggest that they were more like witches or sorcerers than prophets [cf. 1 Sam. 28:7].

Ezekiel 13:19

And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear *your* lies?

Dake: [ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies] You will pollute Me among My people for small amounts of barley and a few pieces of bread, thus killing the ones that should not die, because of your lies you tell to your victims.

WBC: Will ye pollute me ... ? Better, And ye have profaned me. To pollute or profane is the opposite of to sanctify. It is to bring God down to the sphere of the common, the false, the unworthy (cf. 20:39). With (not *for*) handfuls of barley and with (not *for*) pieces of bread, used to obtain the oracles (cf. Jer 44:15-19). To slay the souls that should not die, i.e., the righteous; to save the souls alive that should not live, i.e., the ungodly (cf. v. 22; Hos 6:5; Jer 1:10). Contrast the work of the true prophet, set forth in Ezk 3:16-21.

Chuck Smith: In other words, they were divining for anything, you know, "Give me a handful of barley and give me your wheat and I'll tell you your fortune, ya know. Cross my palm with a dollar, deary, and I'll a tell you what's going to come, you know." And so, God is speaking out against them.

Now, they were slaying the souls by telling them, "Hey, things are going to be all right. You've got a bright future. There's going to be a handsome man that's going to come into your life and you're going to live happily ever after." And these people were not listening to the word of God and the warnings of God because of the comfort that they were receiving.

Constable: Ezekiel was to announce judgment on those who indulged in these occult practices and perverted justice for only a little food or as a means of divination.

In some cultures barley was used in occult practices either as an offering to the spirits or as a means of trying to determine the future.

These women had been willing to put some to death who did not deserve to die and to save others from death who did deserve to die. This was the result of their lying to God's people, who loved to listen to their lies.

Ezekiel 13:20

Wherefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make *them* fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, *even* the souls that ye hunt to make *them* fly.

Dake: [I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls] Sixfold judgment of false prophetesses:

1. I am against your pillows wherewith you entice men into your gardens or groves where you practice magical arts on them (Ezekiel 13:20).
2. I will tear them from your arms, and liberate your victims.
3. I will also tear your kerchiefs and deliver My people from you (Ezekiel 13:21).
4. They will no more be in your hands to deceive and enrich yourselves.
5. You will see no more vanity or divinations, for I will deliver My people from you (Ezekiel 13:23).
6. You will know that I am Jehovah.

Dake: [fly] Hebrew: *parach* (HSN-6524), to break forth as a bud; to bloom; to spread; to fly by extending the wings; to flourish. Here the idea seems to be that of ensnaring men like birds to get them in their hands and hold them captive to their spells of magic and divination. Or, it could possibly mean to hunt souls to promise them prosperity and blessing through their pretended revelations.

Clarke: The souls that ye hunt to make them fly— *lephorechoth*, into the flower gardens, says Parkhurst. These false prophetesses decoyed men into these gardens, where probably some impure rites of worship were performed, as in that of *Asherah* or Venus.

WBC: Magic bands with which (RSV; following Dold's Old Lat., the Syr., Targ., and Vulg. in place of MT *where*) you hunt the souls, or persons (omit, with the LXX and the Syriac, MT *for flying ones*). *Pārah*, "to fly" is an Aramaic word, perhaps a gloss. And I will let the souls, or persons, that you hunt go free. This is Cornill's emendation, reading,

“like birds” (so Ewald), instead of “for birds.” This may also be an Aramaic gloss as above. 21. To be hunted. Cf. verses 18, 20.

Chuck Smith: Seems like they were probably into setting up curses, you know, against people, going into these little incantations, putting pins in the dolls, and this kind of thing, in trying to create a fear in the minds of the people, "Oh, they put a hex on me."

BKC: 20-21. God said His anger would be vented against the false prophetesses and that He would neutralize their power. He would tear their magic charms . . . from their arms and would set free the people they ensnared like birds. Also God would tear off their veils and save His people from their hands. These sorceresses would then be exposed as charlatans, and their gullible clients would desert them.

Constable 20-21: The Lord promised to oppose their practice of using magic bands to hunt down innocent lives. He would tear these bands from their arms and release the people that these false prophetesses had snared like birds. He would also tear off the veils they used to hunt the innocent and free those whom they had hunted down. These women were using some sort of magic to control people. Then these false prophetesses would know that the Lord was God.

Ezekiel 13:21

Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

Clarke: Your kerchiefs—Nets, or amulets, as some think.

And, of course, the righteous people, when they see this kind of junk it hurts. You think, "Oh God, you know, how long You going to let them go?"

Ezekiel 13:22

Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life:

[with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life]

By lies you have turned the righteous aside from truth; and by promising life for a price you have made the wicked to feel secure without turning from their wicked ways.

Clarke: With lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad—Here is the ministry of these false prophetesses, and its effects. They told lies: they would speak, and they had no truth to tell; and therefore spoke falsities. They “saddened the souls of the righteous,

and strengthened the hands of the wicked.” They promised them life, and prevented them from repenting and turning from their sins.

WBC: Because you have disheartened ... although I have not disheartened (RSV).

The second verb is, literally, *pained*. The verbs are *kā.â* and *kā.ab* respectively. Cornill uses “pained,” *kā.ab*, in both places. By promising him life. Literally, “so as to keep him alive.” Whatever encourages sin is false (cf. Jer 23:22). 23. No more ... delusive visions (RSV); i.e., falsehood, as in verse 6. The judgment of diviners is at hand. Cf. 12:24; Mic 3:6, 7; Amos 8:11. The issue will be that Jehovah shall be known in truth.

BKC: 22-23. The prophetesses had disheartened the righteous with their lies and encouraged the wicked not to turn from their evil ways. This directly opposed God’s purposes for the people.

When God would judge the prophetesses the people would then realize that these women had lied. And the prophetesses themselves would be forced to admit their sin. God would banish false visions and divination (see comments on Deut. 18:10) from Israel and save His people from their terrible deception.

ESV 22–23: Those with spiritual power ought to strengthen the righteous and cast down the wicked; however, this has been inverted. The Hebrew of v. 22 is ambiguous in its reference, but the announcement of v. 23 (you shall no more) identifies the targets as the female false prophets of the preceding oracle. The conclusion (v. 23) forms a doublet with v. 21: God will deliver his people from this malicious power.

Chuck Smith: You're comforting those that are dying in their wickedness, and because of the comfort you are giving they are not repenting; they are not turning away from it. It's much like many of those ministers today who stand in the pulpits and say, "There's no hell, you don't have to worry. Every day and in every way the world is getting better and better and better. We're on the verge of the glorious millennium, the glorious age is about to be ushered in." And people are attracted. And it's interesting to me that in this religious science and spiritism and so forth, that most of the practitioners are women. Did you ever notice that? In this theosophy, religious science and all of these metaphysical type of things, most of them teaching and all are women. And so the Lord really has a word against them here.

Constable 22-23: Because these false prophetesses discouraged the righteous with falsehood without divine authorization and encouraged the wicked to continue in their wickedness, they would no longer see false visions or practice divination. They would die. The Lord would deliver His people from their deadly hands, and they would know that He was the Lord.

"Modern-day fortune tellers are rather similar to the women described in this passage. Fortune tellers, interestingly, are usually women, and they tend to dress in a rather elaborate manner, often wearing clothing or jewelry associated with the occult arts, comparable to the 'muffs' on the prophetesses in ancient Israel (v. 18). They tend to give their advice in darkened rooms, where the attitude of the inquirer is influenced in an eerie

way, and this corresponds to the veil put over the inquirer in Ezekiel's description (v. 18). They are paid for what they do, just as the ancient women were (v. 19), and their advice is always dangerous (v. 19) because it leads people astray from the truth of God, that truth being the only way to live and not die eternally. They are frauds, who envision 'lies' (NKJV, 'futility,' v. 23) because their predictions are fabrications made up from their own minds (v. 17), just as was done in Ezekiel's time."

Ezekiel 13:23

Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations: for I will deliver my people out of your hand: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

God will indeed bring false prophets to an end. Similar passages can be found in Amos 8; Micah 3; and Zech 13 in which God takes off after them. The good news is that His people are delivered in spite of the false prophets.

Clarke: Ye shall see no more vanity—They pretended visions; but they were empty of reality.

Clarke: Nor divine divinations—As God would not speak to them, they employed demons. Where God is not, because of the iniquity of the people, the devil is, to strengthen and support that iniquity. And if he cannot have his priests, he will have his priestesses; and these will have a Church like themselves, full of lying doctrines, and bad works.