

Persuasion and Allusion

The Rhetoric of Text-Referencing in Ezekiel

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Introduction¹

THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL is a fruitful area for the study of techniques for persuasion in communication.² Indeed, the prophet after whom the book is named is depicted as one who attempts to persuade his audience: his contemporaries describe him as one who uses tropes (משלים, Ezek 21:5), and they gather to hear his speeches like they would the love-songs of a popular singer—but fail to act upon what he says (Ezek 33:30–32). Of course, this literary depiction of rejection is itself an argument, one that is meant to persuade the *reader* of the book.

The rhetorical goals and techniques of the prophet Ezekiel and of the book that bears his name have received significant attention in the last thirty-five years. This focus can be traced back to Michael Fox's 1980 article

1. It gives me great pleasure to dedicate this essay to John Sailhamer, who introduced me to the study of Biblical Hebrew, innerbiblical text-referencing, and the history of interpretation.

2. Dale Patrick and Allen Scult define rhetoric as “the means by which a text establishes and manages its relationship to its audience in order to achieve a particular effect”; see Patrick and Scult, *Rhetoric*, 12. Compare Michael V. Fox: “Rhetoric is persuasive discourse (persuasive in intent if not in accomplishment). Rhetorical criticism may be defined first of all as the examination and evaluation of such discourse for the nature and quality of its suasive force”; Fox, “Ezekiel’s Vision,” 2.

on the rhetoric of Ezekiel's vision of the valley of bones,³ and numerous other studies have been produced since then.⁴ Most recently, Dalit Rom-Shiloni has examined the rhetoric of communal exclusion in the exilic and post-exilic period. Her analysis includes a description of how the book of Ezekiel functions as a response to the Jerusalemites who were marginalizing those deported in 597 BCE.⁵ Yet another way in which the rhetorical function of prophetic speech and literature is being studied is in the application of trauma theory.⁶ It is increasingly appreciated that the prophetic books represent an attempt to grapple with the trauma of deportation and resettlement, provide answers to the questions arising from this trauma (Why did this happen to us? What is the status of our relationship with Yhwh?), and instill hope for the future.⁷ Still, there is much room for further research.

The question I would like to answer in this essay is: How does Ezekiel's attempt to persuade his audience influence the way he alludes to earlier traditional priestly material? Specifically, how do his rhetorical goals affect his selection and modification of locutions from the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17–26)? By "allusion" I mean instances where an author deliberately uses material from another literary work without overt mention of the act of referencing, the title of the literary work referenced, or the name of its author.⁸ Of course, while the relationship between the Holiness Code and Ezekiel is widely recognized, the direction of dependence is a contested issue. I have addressed this matter elsewhere, and in this essay I will take the position that Ezekiel is borrowing from the Holiness Code.⁹

3. Fox, "Ezekiel's Vision."

4. See for example Matties, *Rhetoric of Moral Discourse* (1990); Stevenson, *Vision of Transformation* (1996); Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts* (1999); Renz, *Rhetorical Function* (1999); Kelle, "Dealing with the Trauma of Defeat" (2009).

5. Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity*, 139–97.

6. See Garber, "Traumatizing Ezekiel," 215–35; Garber, "Vocabulary of Trauma," 309–21; Smith-Christopher, "Ezekiel in Abu Ghraib," 141–58; Smith-Christopher, "Reading War and Trauma," 253–74.

7. See Floyd, "Prophetic Books," 276–97.

8. See Miner, "Allusion," 13–15; Ben-Porat, "Literary Allusion," 105–28. On different approaches to the study of allusion, see Hebel, "Allusion," 135–64.

9. For arguments that Ezekiel borrows from H, see Lyons, *Law to Prophecy*, 61–67, 76–145; Levitt Kohn, *A New Heart*; Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27*, 2348–65; Driver, *Introduction*, 47–50, 145–51. For arguments that H in its current form borrows from the book of Ezekiel, see Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, esp. 543–45; Nihan, "Holiness Code," 81–122; Grünwaldt, *Heiligkeitsgesetz*, 349–51, 365–66; Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 379–84. For arguments that both texts borrowed from each other during a complex process of literary development, see Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 46–52.

Situation and Rhetorical Goals

The situation to which Ezekiel the prophet speaks is clear from the book: he and his contemporaries were deported from Jerusalem in 597 BCE and have been resettled in Babylon; ten years later, Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed and its remaining citizens deported. Ezekiel describes his fellow-exiles as “rebellious” and “unwilling to listen” (Ezek 2:3–8; 3:7). They refuse to admit culpability (18:2–3), are tempted to assimilate (20:32), and are in despair about the possibility of national restoration (37:11). The prophet’s task is to explain the reason for the exile, justify the destruction of Jerusalem as Yhwh’s punishment for the people’s behavior, prevent assimilation and despair, and convince his fellow-exiles that national restoration is possible.

It is important to note that the persuasive techniques of Ezekiel the speaking prophet are often different than the persuasive techniques of the literary product that bears his name. For example, the rhetorical function of a prophetic sign act must be distinguished from the function of a sign act report. What we have in e.g. Ezekiel 4–5 is a literary composition: originally separate oral sign acts have been juxtaposed, combined, re-arranged, and augmented. In fact, it must be recognized that the entire book of Ezekiel is not a mere transcript of prophetic speech, but is actually a narrative about what Yhwh told the prophet to say.¹⁰ For this reason I will not attempt to reconstruct the oral message of the prophet. But given that the book of Ezekiel is a late-exilic composition,¹¹ the rhetorical *situations* addressed by the prophet and by the book—and the persuasive goals of each—are largely the same.¹²

10. Note the comments of Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, 16: “The book of Ezekiel develops its argument with the reader by narrating the story of a prophet’s unfolding argument with his exilic audience. In this way the book addresses its own audience by having the audience in the book addressed by the prophet. In other words, it is a communication by being a narrative about a communication.”

11. On the composition and date of the book of Ezekiel, see Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 351–54; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 68–74. Many identify redactional additions to the earliest form of the prophetic book. As I understand these, they are largely examples of *Fortschreibungen*—that is, editorial extensions of existing contextual arguments. The rhetorical function of these is a worthy topic of study in its own right. In the examples I consider below, however, it will not be necessary to distinguish between various levels of the book’s editorial history.

12. See Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, 42.

The Rhetorical Role and Techniques of Allusion in Ezekiel

According to Thomas Renz,

the book aims at a renewal which begins with the reading in exile, but will only be complete when Israel worships Yahweh “on a very high mountain” without again defiling the land . . . At first, the readers were only asked to see the end of Jerusalem as the result of her sin, then they were asked to “judge” Jerusalem, and with Jerusalem their own rebellious behavior. In the oracles against the nations the readers were invited to see the same pattern of rebellion against Yahweh at work which had brought Jerusalem to its end. The readers are encouraged to see that rebellion against Yahweh reduces Israel to the level of other nations and does not have a future, since Yahweh will destroy pride against him everywhere. Thus they will realise that assimilation into other nations will only continue the rebellious history of the past and consequently will not open up a future for their community. Chaps. 33–48 then show that the beginning and end of New Israel is the acknowledgement of Yahweh’s kingship which has the promise of transformation.¹³

As I will demonstrate, each of the arguments described above by Renz are built from locutions that have been borrowed from the Holiness Code.

Evaluating Israel’s Actions

Ezekiel must first convince his contemporaries of their guilt. Without making this case, he has no grounds from which to argue for the necessity of spiritual restoration. Moreover, the notion of guilt plays the central role in Ezekiel’s attempt to explain the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation (see, e.g., Ezek 5:11; 7:9; 8:17–18; 9:10; 15:8; 16:36–43; 23:30; 36:17–19). As he borrows locutions from the Holiness Code (H) for this purpose, he uses several techniques to make his arguments more persuasive. The primary technique is *genre transformation*: Ezekiel transforms H’s laws into accusations. For example, in Ezek 22:7–12 the prophet takes locutions from the laws in Leviticus 18–20 and frames them as the “abominations” of what he calls “the bloody city” (cf. Ezek 22:2):

13. Ibid., 229–31.

They treat father and mother with contempt among you; they act with extortion towards the alien in your midst; they oppress orphan and widow among you (Ezek 22:7 // Lev 20:9). You despise *my sacred contributions*, and you *profane my sabbaths* (Ezek 22:8 // Lev 19:3, 8). *Slandering men* are among you in order to shed *blood*, and they eat on the mountains among you; they commit lewdness in your midst (Ezek 22:9 // Lev 19:16). *The nakedness of a father one uncovers* among you; *the woman unclean in her menstrual period* they rape among you (Ezek 22:10 // Lev 18:7–8, 19; 20:11). And one *commits abomination with the wife of his neighbor*, and in *lewdness* another *defiles his daughter-in-law*; and another among you rapes *his sister, the daughter of his father* (Ezek 22:11 // Lev 18:9, 15, 17; 20:10). They take bribes among you in order to shed blood; *you take interest and accrued interest*; and you violently profit from *your neighbor* by *extortion*. And you forgot me—utterance of LORD Yhwh. (Ezek 22:12 // Lev 19:13; 25:36)

Other techniques that Ezekiel employs for persuading his audience of their guilt include the *repetition* and *patterning* of the borrowed locutions. For example, in Lev 18:4–5 we find the following command:

My ordinances you shall do and *my statutes* you shall keep so as to *walk in* them; I am Yhwh your God. And you shall keep my statutes, and *my ordinances by which a man will live if he does them*; I am Yhwh. (Lev 18:4, 5)

In Ezekiel 20, the prophet turns this into an accusation and repeats it (with minor variations) in Ezek 20:13, 16, 21, 24:

They did not *walk in my statutes* and they rejected *my ordinances, by which a man will live if he does them*.

This repeated accusation is placed in a chronological framework moving from the exodus out of Egypt (note that according to vv. 7–9, the people rebel even before they leave!) to the journey through the wilderness to the entry into Canaan. This repetition and patterning creates the argument that Ezekiel's contemporaries are incorrigible, and that they perpetuate the same pattern of behavior as their ancestors (20:4, 30).

Another example of repetition and patterning occurs in chap. 18. Here, Ezekiel's contemporaries have refused to admit their own guilt; they find it easier to explain their exilic condition as the result of their parents' sins (18:2–3). To persuade them of their own culpability, the prophet transforms prohibitions from Lev 18, 20, and 25 into the legal scenario in Ezek 18:5–9:

If a man is righteous and does justice and righteousness—if he does not eat on the mountains, and does not lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, and does not *defile the wife of his neighbor, and does not come near a woman in her menstrual period* (Ezek 18:6 // Lev 18:19–20; 20:10), and does not oppress anyone (but restores to the debtor his pledge), does not commit robbery, gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, *does not give at interest, and does not take accrued interest*; withholds his hand from iniquity; does true justice between one man and another; *walks in my statutes, and has kept my ordinances* so as to act faithfully—he is righteous; he will surely live. Utterance of LORD Yhwh. (Ezek 18:8–9 // Lev 18:4–5; 25:36–37)

This language is repeated and arranged in a three-generation pattern in which Ezekiel attributes the keeping or breaking of H's laws to a righteous father (vv. 5–9), a wicked son (vv. 10–13), and a righteous grandson (vv. 14–17) in order to argue that righteousness and guilt are not transferred across generations. Rather, Ezekiel argues, God will hold the present generation responsible for its own sinful actions.

Yet another technique that Ezekiel employs when convincing his audience of Israel's guilt is that of repeating a locution from H while *creating puns* on its various meanings.¹⁴ The use of wordplay increases the audience's level of engagement with the material. It can also elicit admiration, which would have the effect of creating a bond between the prophet and his audience, increasing the persuasive force of the argument. For example, in Ezek 5:5–8 the prophet borrows from Lev 18:4–5, “you shall do my ordinances (משפטים), and you shall keep my statutes so as to walk in them.” He first turns this into an accusation in Ezek 5:7a: “you did not walk in my statutes, and you did not do my ordinances (משפטים).” But he then plays on the word משפטים, using it in two different senses in the following clauses: in v. 7b he accuses the people of not even¹⁵ following the *customary practices* (משפטים) of the nations, and in v. 8, he claims that God will respond by carrying out *acts of judgment* (משפטים) against the people.

14. In Greco-Roman rhetoric, this would be labelled *antanaclasis* or *refractio*. See Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 9.3.68. For a typology and description of rhetorical figures and their function in modern advertisements, see McQuarrie and Mick, “Figures of Rhetoric.”

15. On the text of 5:7b, see Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 151, who notes that the absence of the negative in some textual witnesses “is an attempt to soften the severity of the original statement in line with 1:12.”

Ezekiel's use of repetition in crafting his accusations is, as ancient rhetoricians argued, a technique that increases the clarity and force of argument.¹⁶ But the repetition itself constitutes an accusation, demonstrating that his arguments have not been taken to heart. Had his audience accepted his initial indictments, there would be no need to continue to repeat the accusations that he had fashioned from H's laws. Repetition can therefore be an attempt to underscore the *veracity* of the argument: as Lewis Carroll's Bellman says, "What I tell you three times is true."

Linking Actions to Consequences

Throughout the book, Ezekiel makes the argument that the fall of Jerusalem was both necessary and justified, and that it must be seen as Yhwh's judgment for the people's actions (e.g., Ezek 8:17–18; 9:8–10). In making this argument, Ezekiel attempts to persuade his audience that certain actions have consequences, thereby providing a rationale for their own exilic condition. This is a harsh message; but those who research trauma are aware that for survivors of a disaster, a negative explanation can be better than no explanation at all.¹⁷ This argument is conveyed through a number of rhetorical techniques: first, the reader watches the prophet being told to act out the exile of the Jerusalemites for the sake of his own audience in an attempt to make them "see" (Ezek 12:1–11; note the repetition of the word (ראה)). Second, Ezekiel creates a play on words (Ezek 14:22–23) to argue that the arrival of survivors from the fallen city will constitute a "comfort" (נחם) to his own community: the survivors will function as evidence that the disaster was not arbitrary or undeserved (חנם).¹⁸ By this argument he forges an explicit causal connection between "the ways and deeds" of the Jerusalemites and "the disaster which [Yhwh] brought upon Jerusalem." Of course, this linkage of actions to consequences is paradigmatic for the condition of Ezekiel's own community.¹⁹

16. So Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 8.2.24: "Consequently we shall frequently repeat anything which we think the judge has failed to take in as he should."

17. On the human impulse to explain disaster, and on certain kinds of self-blame as coping mechanisms, see Janoff-Bulman, "Aftermath of Victimization," 28–30; Janoff-Bulman, "Adaptive Strategies," 180–92. Regarding the impulse to rationalize disaster, Gillian Mezey points out that "there is a marked reluctance to accept the accidental nature of violent crime"; see Mezey, "Psychological Responses," 176.

18. See Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 451–52.

19. The attempt to link actions to consequences appears in the book's emphasis on causality, seen in the repeated use of the word "because" (ען); this occurs 40x in Ezekiel, almost half of the entire occurrences in the Hebrew Bible. Cf. Ezek 5:7–8, 9, 11; 13:8;

Ezekiel also borrows and transforms locutions from the Holiness Code in order to convince the exiles that their disaster was warranted and divinely planned judgment. The primary technique that Ezekiel uses here is to *transform* H's conditional and remedial covenant punishments into oracles of imminent or present judgment. The punishments in Lev 26 are presented as God's actions to induce repentance. The author creates this effect by listing the punishments in order of increasing intensity, and by separating them into groups with refrains that clearly state their restorative purpose: "if despite this you will not obey . . ." (Lev 26:18, 27); "if you continue hostile to me, and are not willing to listen . . ." (26:21); "if in spite of these you are not disciplined back to me . . ." (26:23). However, when Ezekiel uses the threats from H, he argues that the judgment against Jerusalem is final and total: the punishments are *not* restorative, and there is *no* room for appeal. For example, note Ezekiel's argument in Ezek 5:11–12, where he uses H's locutions to make an explicit causal link between their actions and judgment:

Therefore, as I live—utterance of LORD Yhwh—surely, because (יִשְׁׁ) *you have defiled my sanctuary* with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, so also I will shave off, and my eye will not have pity, and also I will not have compassion. A third of you will die by the *plague*, and by famine they will be finished off in your midst; a third will fall by the *sword* around you; and a third *I will scatter* to every wind, *and I will unsheathe a sword after them.* (Ezek 5:11–12 // Lev 20:3; 26:25, 33)

Ezekiel also combines the technique of transformation with the techniques of *repetition* and *patterning* of borrowed locutions. The locutions he repeats most frequently come from H's covenant punishments in Lev 26:22, 25, and 33.²⁰ As I noted above, repetition was a technique that ancient

15:8; 16:36–37; 20:15–16; 21:29 [ET v. 24]; 23:35; etc.). It can also be seen in the book's emphasis on equivalence in punishment, where Yhwh promises that he will (or did) punish the people "according to their/your ways" (Ezek 7:3, 8, 9; 18:30; 24:14; 33:20; 36:19; 39:24).

20. "And *I will send wild animals* into you, and *they will bereave you*, and *they will cut off your cattle* and diminish you, and your roads will be desolate" (Lev 26:22 // Ezek 5:17; 14:13, 15, 17, 19, 21; 25:13; 29:8; 33:27); "*And I will bring against you the sword* that avenges the covenant, and you will gather yourselves into your cities, *and I will send a plague* into your midst, and you will be given into the hand of the enemy" (Lev 26:25 // Ezek 5:12, 17, 6:3, 11–12; 7:15; 11:8; 12:16; 14:17, 19, 21; 28:23; 29:8; 33:2, 27); "*And I will scatter you among the nations*, *and I will unsheathe a sword* after you; and *your land will become a desolation*, *and your cities will be a waste*" (Lev 26:33 // Ezek 5:2, 12; 6:6, 8, 14; 11:16; 12:14, 15, 20; 14:15, 16; 15:8; 19:7; 20:23; 22:15; 29:9, 10, 12; 30:7, 12, 23, 26; 32:15; 33:24+27+28, 29; 35:3–4; 36:4, 19, 34, 35).

rhetoricians spoke of as a way to increase the force of one's argument.²¹ Accordingly, Ezekiel repeats these locutions and patterns them in an attempt to persuade his audience of the *extent* and *severity* of judgment. For example, he takes H's punishments in Lev 26:22, 25, 33 and distributes them into a three-part pattern in Ezek 5:12 ("a third by plague/a third by sword/a third scattered"), and into merismic patterns in Ezek 6:12 ("far off/close by/left over"); in 7:15 ("outside/inside"); and in 33:27 ("in waste places/on the surface of the field/in strongholds and caves").

Limiting the Options of His Audience

Ezekiel refers explicitly to two potential problems for the exiles—the temptation to assimilate (Ezek 20:32) and the temptation to trust in foreign powers (29:16). A third problem would be the temptation to despair in the face of the arrogance and hostility of surrounding nations. The oracles against the nations in Ezekiel represent an attempt to prevent these potential problems from becoming realities.²² In these oracles, the surrounding nations are condemned for their hostility to Jerusalem and joy at its fall (e.g., Ezek 25:3, 6, 8, 12, 15; 26:2) and for their pride (e.g., Ezek 27:3; 28:2–6; 29:3; 32:2). Remarkably, locutions from the Holiness Code are used even here: Ezekiel tries to convince his audience of Egypt's downfall by applying the language of H's covenant punishments to Egypt!²³

Creating Hope

Finally, Ezekiel must convince his audience to move from despair to hope. Because they have no obvious and empirical grounds for believing in national and cultic restoration, Ezekiel must appeal to things other than current or imminent political events. To accomplish this, he borrows and transforms the traditional language of the Holiness Code in order to propose a radical and permanent solution.

21. In his treatise titled *On Style*, the ancient rhetorician Demetrius suggested of the use of repetition to create "elevation" (μέγεθος, §66), "vividness" (ἐνάργεια, §211), and "forcefulness" (δεινότης, §267–268) in one's arguments. Brian Vickers traces the rhetorical use of repetition throughout history as a way to "express passion"; see Vickers, "Repetition and Emphasis," 85–113. See also McQuarrie and Mick, "Figures of Rhetoric," 429–32.

22. See Raabe, "Ezekiel's Oracles against the Nations," 187–207.

23. See e.g. Ezek 29:8, 10, 12; 30:6, 18, 23. See also OAN Edom (Ezek 25:13) and OAN Sidon (28:23).

The first technique that Ezekiel uses to provoke hope is the *transformation* of H's conditional covenant blessings into unconditional guarantees. To the degree that Ezekiel has been successful in convincing his audience of their incorrigibility, he has created a new problem for himself: what reason does he have for thinking that they might be willing—or even able—to repent? Or worse: supposing they do repent, what would prevent them from lapsing into apostasy yet again? Ezekiel's radical solution is to present the idea of an unbreakable covenant (Ezek 16:60). While borrowing H's covenant blessings to describe future restoration in Ezek 34 and 36, Ezekiel strips them of their conditional character, and makes them unconditional. Moreover, the book simply omits H's covenant punishments when describing future hope: these will be unnecessary, because Yhwh will transform the people. So H's "If you walk in my statutes . . ." (Lev 26:3) is turned into "I will give them a heart of flesh, *in order that they will walk in my statutes*" (Ezek 11:19–20). Or even more forcefully, in Ezek 36:27: "I will put my Spirit within you and *make you walk in my statutes*."

This need for a permanent solution is reflected in the book's repetition of the phrase "never again" (לֹא עוֹד): the people will "never again profane [Yhwh's] holy name" (Ezek 20:39; 43:7); there will "never again be a prickly thorn or painful briar among all those around them" (28.24); they will "never again be prey" (34:22, 28); "never again be consumed by hunger" (34:29); "never again experience the insults of the nations" (34:29; 36:15); "never again experience the disgrace of famine" (36:30); "never again be two nations, and never again be divided into two kingdoms" (37:22); "never again defile themselves with their idols, detestable things, and transgressions" (37:23). The land will "never again" bereave its people of children, devour them, or cause them to stumble (36:12, 14, 15). Finally, Yhwh will "never again hide his face" from the people (37:29).

Other techniques that Ezekiel uses to provoke hope are the *reversal* of H's punishments and the *heightening* of H's covenant blessings. For example, H's punishment "I will scatter you among the nations" (Lev 26:33a) is reversed into "I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the lands" (Ezek 34:13; cf. 11:17; 20:34, 41). H's punishment "your lands will be desolate and your cities a waste" (Lev 26:33b) is reversed into "the cities will be inhabited, and the waste places rebuilt" (Ezek 36:10; cf. 36:33–36). But Ezekiel does not simply reverse H's punishments; he also modifies H's blessings in order to make his own model of restoration more extravagant than the description of the relationship in H. Not only will Israel "live securely in the land" (Lev 26:5), but they will "live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the forests" (Ezek 34:25). The word "securely" is repeated three times (Ezek 34:25, 27, 28) to underscore its importance as

a solution to the problem of the harassed flock described in Ezek 34:1–6. Not only will there be “rain in its season” (Lev 26:4; Ezek 34:26b), but these will be “rains of blessing” (Ezek 34:26c). Ezekiel not only repeats H’s blessing about the elimination of wild animals (Lev 26:6; Ezek 34:25), but he also reverses H’s punishment of destructive wild animals (Lev 26:22; Ezek 34:28). He describes both people and land as a “blessing” (Ezek 34:26), and reverses H’s punishment of enemy attack (Lev 26:25, 32) to claim that the people will “no longer be plunder for the nations” (Ezek 34:28). So by borrowing the traditional imagery of peace and plenty, he appeals to emotion; but he attempts to make his appeal even more persuasive by heightening the imagery.²⁴ And to address the potential counter-argument that such hope is unrealistic given the people’s checkered past, Ezekiel makes future hope contingent on divine initiative rather than on human initiative (Ezek 36:22),²⁵ and turns H’s conditional blessings into guaranteed blessings.

Conclusion

In this essay I have identified Ezekiel’s text-handling techniques: the transformation of the genre and modality of material from his source text; the reversal and heightening of material from his source text; and the use of repetition, patterning, and wordplay in the presentation of material from his source text—in these cases, traditional priestly material found in Leviticus 17–26. I have argued that Ezekiel’s techniques of allusion can be explained in terms of rhetorical effect: that is, they represent attempts to increase the force of his arguments, or to counter the attitudes and arguments of his contemporaries.

To what extent was Ezekiel successful in his rhetorical endeavor? Was his audience “ashamed of their iniquities” (Ezek 43:10)? We can only guess at the reaction of the first exilic readers of this book. But what we do know is that the book of Ezekiel had a profound effect on later readers in the Second Temple period. These readers looked forward to the restoration described in Ezekiel 37 (4Q3852.9; 4Q386 1.ii.2–3) and welcomed the spiritual transformation promised in Ezek 36:25–27, 33 (1QS 3.7–9; 4.21–22; John 3:5; Titus 2:14; 3:5–6; Heb 10:22). And the details of Ezekiel’s vision in Ezek 40–48 (a very high mountain with God’s city on it; life-giving water and trees for healing; a place where God himself dwells with his people) appear in John’s vision of cosmic transformation (Revelation 21–22). Ezekiel’s powerful use of earlier texts as scripture lie behind what

24. See Lyons, “Extension and Allusion.”

25. Joyce, *Divine Initiative*, 126: “Israel’s obedience will be the result rather than the cause of deliverance, part and parcel of the restoration and certainly not a condition upon which it depends.”

later readers recognized: the explosive potential of the book of Ezekiel to create hope for God's work in the future.

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