Literary Unity, Empirical Models, and the Compatibility of Synchronic and Diachronic Reading[1]

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There is a basic irresolution at the heart of contemporary biblical scholarship. It is everywhere acknowledged and nowhere resolved. Interpreters, regardless of scholarly training, religious heritage, or academic context, increasingly acknowledge that ancient Jewish texts are unique works of art, each bearing a distinctive ideological, rhetorical, and aesthetic character. At the same time, it is commonly allowed that this character is the product of (at least some) creative processes of composition and editorial shaping. Thus, the conviction is widely held and commonly expressed that the character of ancient Jewish literature requires an integration of approaches.[2] And yet, the great majority of scholarly production continues to focus attention on one aspect or the other: literary shape *or* compositional history. Indeed, few scholars are discussing the relationship between these approaches – synchronic and diachronic – in any sustained way.[3] Despite wide acknowledgement that both are somehow essential to the task of text-analysis, there has been only sporadic conversation about a cooperative application of the two approaches[4] and virtually no hermeneutical reflection on the attendant problems of an integrated approach.[5]

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[2] So, e.g., Odil H. STECK, *The Prophetic Books and their Theological Witness* (St Louis: Chalis, 2000; German original: *Die Prophetenbucher Und Ihr Theologisches Zeugnis: Wege Der Nachfrage Und Fahrten Zur Antwort: Wege der Nachfrage und Fährten zur Antwort* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996]); Wolfgang RICHTER, *Exegese als Literatur Wissenschaft: entwurf einer Alttestamentlichen Literatur Theorie und Methodologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971); Johannes C. DE MOOR, *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis* (OS 34; Leiden and New York: Brill, 1995). Ulrich BERGES, *The Book of Isaiah: Its Composition and Final Form* (Sheffield: Phoenix, 2012; German original: *Das Buch Jesaja: Komposition und Endgestalt* [Freiburg: Herder, 1998]), 1–37.

[3] Among the few to publish more than a single article on the subject are Marvin SWEENEY, Eep TALSTRA, John BARTON, and Rolf RENDTORFF (see bibliography). Speaking anecdotally, I often encounter two attitudes regarding this issue: the attitude that the issue is passé, an intellectual cul-de-sac of the1980s and 1990s, or that the two approaches are hermeneutically incompatible and thus any reflection on the problem is otiose.

[4] These are often limited to reflections on the compatibility or incompatibility of specific methods. See, e.g., Simeon CHAVEL, "At the Boundary of Textual and Literary Criticisms: The Case of כי in Lev 20:9," *Textus* 20 (2000): 61–70; Yair ZAKOVITCH, "Implied Synonyms and Antonyms: Textual Criticism vs. the Literary Approach," in *Emanuel: Studies in the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, and the Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov*, eds. Shalom M. Paul, Robert A. Kraft, Eva Ben-David, Lawrence H. Schiffman, and Weston W. Fields (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 833–49; Marvin SWEENEY, "Synchronic and Diachronic Concerns in Reading the Book of the Twelve Prophets," in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve: Methodological Foundations – Redactional Processes – Historical Insights*, eds. Rainer Albertz, James D. Nogalski, Jakob Wöhrle (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2012), 21–33. Alternatively, some scholars extol the merits of one approach over the other, as can be seen, e.g., in Rolf RENDTORFF, "Between Historical Criticism and Holistic Interpretation: New Trends in Old Testament Exegesis," in *Congress Volume, Jerusalem 1986*; ed. J. A. Emerton (VTSup 40; Leiden: Brill, 1988), 298–303 and H. G. M. WILLIAMSON, "Synchronic and Diachronic in Isaian Perspective," in *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis*, ed.

1.0 The 'Unity' of Ezekiel 36.16–38[6]

Most interpreters, whether for hermeneutical, ideological, or pragmatic reasons, begin from the same starting point: the finished literary product in a fixed form. In the case at hand, that product is usually identified as something similar if not identical to the (proto-)MT of Ezekiel. After this point, however, disputes and doubts begin. The misgiving of many synchronic scholars can be expressed in the following question: 'can one *reliably* reach beyond the basic conditions and phenomena of a literary work of art into its hypothetical pre-history?'[7] Beyond this basic question, however, there is great diversity of opinion regarding

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Johannes de Moor (OS 34; Leiden and New York: Brill, 1995), 211–226. The few works that make some effort at integration tend to prioritize one approach and offer suggestions for integration as a supplemental discussion, e.g., RICHTER, *Exegese*; Meir WEISS, *The Bible from Within: the Method of Total Interpretation* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1984; Hebrew original 1962). There are also numerous studies that juxtapose synchronic and diachronic without serious integration. To cite only three, see: Joy P. KAKKANATTU, *God's Enduring Love in the Book of Hosea: A Synchronic and fiachronic analysis of Hosea 11, 1–11* (FAT II/14; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); Serge FROLOV, *The Turn of the Cycle: 1 Samuel 1–8 in Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives* (BZAW 342; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004); Daniel H. RYOU, *Zephaniah's Oracles against the Nations: A Synchronic and Diachronic Study of Zephaniah 2.1–3.8* (Leiden: Brill, 1995). Something similar could be said for the new commentary series, the International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament (Kohlhammer).

[5] A rare exception is Alexander SAMELY, "Literary Structures and Historical Investigation: The Example of an Amoraic Midrash (Leviticus Rabba)," in *Rabbinic Text and the History of Late-Roman Palestine*, eds. Martin Goodman and Philip Alexander (PBA 165; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 185–215. Having more modest aims and results, see also James BARR, "The Synchronic the Diachronic and the Historical: A Triangular Relationship?" in *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis*; ed. Johannes de Moor (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 1–14; John BARTON, "Historical Criticism and Literary Interpretation: Is There Any Common Ground?" in *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder*; eds. Stanley Porter, Paul Joyce, and David Orton (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 3–15; and Bernard LEVINSON, "The Right Chorale: From the Poetics to the Hermeneutics of the Hebrew Bible" in *"Not in Heaven": Coherence and Complexity in Biblical Narrative*; eds. Jason Rosenblatt and Joseph Sitterson, Jr. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 129–153.

I will not be considering, except obliquely, most of those approaches that attempt to overcome the historical particularity of biblical texts for religious reasons, to preserve (or, perhaps, create) a voice for the bible in the contemporary world. These approaches almost always concede from the outset the need for a diachronic approach, whether in the form of 'historical-criticism' or 'grammatical-historical interpretation' or whatever (e.g., B. S. CHILDS, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* [Philadelphia: Westminster 1970] 97, 112; RENDTORFF, "Between Historical Criticism"; Mark BRETT, "Four or Five Things to do with Texts: A Taxonomy of Interpretative Interests," in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield*, ed. David Clines, Stephen Fowl, and Stanley Porter [JSOTSup 87; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990], 337–356), forestalling the more basic question of the compatibility of synchronic and diachronic reading strategies. I will also be avoiding any description of synchronic or diachronic approaches as 'interpretative' or 'exegetical' methods. As we will come to see, this touches directly on one of the debates about the two approaches. In my judgment, the two represent competing explanations of the array of literary features that give shape and texture to the documents of ancient Judaism, and they will be treated as such.

[6] The following observations on the structure of Ezek 36.16–38 are a synthesis of those made by Henry van Dyke PARUNAK, *Structural Studies in Ezekiel* (Ph.D. diss.; Harvard University, 1984); Moshe GREENBERG, *Ezekiel 21–37* (AB 22A; New York and London: Doubleday, 1997); Daniel I. BLOCK, *The Book of Ezekiel 25–48* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Paul Joyce, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (LHBOTS 482; London: Continuum, 2009); Franz SEDLMEIER, *Das Buch Ezechiel: Kapitel 25-48* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2013); and Thomas RENZ, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel* (VTSup 76; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1999).

[7] Roman INGARDEN, *Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*, (Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy; Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press,1973),

the aims and potentialities of synchronic reading.[8] Practitioners of a synchronic approach, though, hold two things nearly universally: a suspicion of the value and results of historical-criticism,[9] and a commitment to analysing texts as unities. In the case of Ezek 36.16–38, two

translator's introduction xxii-xvii; Alexander SAMELY, *Profiling Jewish Literature in Antiquity: An Inventory from Second Temple Texts to the Talmuds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), esp. 16–28.

[8] In my reading for this essay and only considering works that explicitly address the debate over synchronic and diachronic approaches, I have identified five definitions of the term 'synchronic.' (1) Synchronic refers to an 'ahistorical reading' versus diachronic, which is 'historical,' or as Eep Talstra prefers, synchronic means 'reading which admits only linguistic data' versus 'reading which admits non-linguistic data' (Eep TALSTRA, "Deuteronomy 9 and 10: Synchronic and Diachronic Observations," in *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis*, ed. Johannes de Moor (OS 34; Leiden and New York: Brill, 1995), 192–93; John SAILHAMER, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992], 7–16). (2) Synchronic refers to 'analysis of a text as it was realized at one time' as opposed to 'analysis of a text's changes through time.' (e.g., BARR, "The Synchronic the Diachronic," 3). In this case, the 'final form' is most frequently selected for analysis, though this not required. (3) Synchronic means 'analysis of the text as a unity' or an 'artefact' as contrasted with viewing the text 'as a composite' (e.g., Robert ALTER, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* [rev.ed.; New York: Basic Books, 2011]; Jan P. FOKKELMAN, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis* (2d ed.; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991]). (4) Synchronic approaches may value each text as a "literary work in its own right" (Marvin SWEENEY, "Synchronic and Diachronic Concerns in Reading the Book of the Twelve Prophets," in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve: Methodological Foundations – Redactional Processes – Historical Insights*, ed. Reiner Albertz, James Nogalski, and Jakob Wöhrle [BZAW 433; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012], 21–33). This approach foregrounds the poetic qualities of a text like literary structure, word-play, voice, point of view, characterization, and so forth without, necessarily, insisting on unity. (5) The synchronic approach "reads the text as an end," whereas historical-criticism "reads the text as a means" (Jan P. FOKKELMAN, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999], 4; Paul R. NOBLE, "Synchronic and Diachronic Approaches to Biblical Interpretation," *JLT* 7/2 [1993]: 131). By this definition, synchronic reading is very close to, if not identical with, "interpretation." Concern for the pre-history of a text is not, in this view, considered an *exegetical* activity. For the majority of scholars who use the term, 'synchronic' is a multifaceted word, incorporating elements of more than one of these five concepts. Elizabeth BOASE, for example, defines synchronic as "a reading of the text which considers it in its *final form*, reading the narrative sequentially and from an *a-historic* perspective" ("Life in the Shadows: The Role and Function of Isaac in Genesis—Synchronic and Diachronic Readings," *VT* 51/3 (2001): 312 n.2). Jacob HOFTIJZER defines the term as "the approach which aims at the definition and description of the *structure* of a text in the *final form* in which it is handed down to us" ("Holistic or Compositional Approach? Linguistic Remarks to the Problem," in *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis*, ed. Johannes de Moor (OS 34; Leiden and New York: Brill, 1995), 98 n.1). Likewise, Paul NOBLE characterizes 'synchronic' as an "interest in the final form of the text" and, in the very next sentence, as "literary" ("Synchronic and Diachronic," 131). In short, there is no common definition of 'synchronic' in biblical scholarship. Perhaps the only thing that is held universally is that 'synchronic' and 'diachronic' form a binary set.

[9] Meir STERNBERG, for example, laments "over two hundred years of frenzied digging into the Bible's genesis, so senseless as to elicit either laughter or tears" (*The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*, [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985], 13). See similar comments in ALTER, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 48; FOKKELMAN, *Reading*, viii, 2, 4, 7, 14, etc.; and Moshe GREENBERG, "What are Valid Criteria for Determining Inauthentic Matter in Ezekiel?" in *Ezekiel and His Book. Textual and Literary Criticism and their Relation*; ed. Johann Lust (BETL 74; Leuven: Peeters, 1986), 123–35. It is worth noting that many synchronic objections to the results of historical-criticism were based on out-dated methods and models. By the 1990's, Ed NOORT could sum up the effects of the ongoing debate as follows: "Diachronic approaches have a bad name outside of the specific historical questions in modern exegesis. Both methods and results are under heavy fire from many sides. The classic historical-critical approach has lost a lot of reputation and even in the heartland of diachronic exegesis, protestant Germany, new and other voices can be heard. On the other hand, many synchronic victories were not won by better positive arguments or by a better and convincing exegesis but by demonstrating the weakness of the diachronic positions, mostly as they were held at the beginning of the century" ("'Land' in the Deuteronomistic Tradition – Genesis 15: The Historical and Theological Necessity of a Diachronic Approach" in *Synchronic or Diachronic?*

features that exemplify 'unity' are routinely emphasized: the structure of the pericope and its verbal and thematic connections to the wider literary context.

1.1 Structure of Ezekiel 36.16–38

A prophetic announcement formula (וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר) stands at the head of Ezekiel 36.16–38, setting vv.16–38 apart as a text-segment. This text-segment is a complex of three oracles (vv. 17–32, 33–36, and 37–38) separated by the appearance of the prophetic messenger formula, כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהֹוָה, in vv. 33 and 37.[10] These divisions are reinforced in the MT by the appearance of *s^etûmôt* after each.

Of the three, the longest segment, vv. 17–32, has the most complex structure and will be our focus. The whole section is unified by the repetition of so-called 'keywords': גּוֹיִם, "nations" (vv. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 30),[11] קד״ש + שֵׁם + 1st person pronoun, "purify my name" (vv. 20, 21, 22, 23 *bis*), and words of defilement and purification like טה״ר, טמ״א, חל״ל, תּוֹעֵבָה.[12] Though, on the one hand, the oracle is unified by keywords, on the other, it is sub-divided by a transitional particle and by framing repetitions. First of all, vv. 22–32 have been set apart as the consequence portion of the oracle by the appearance of לָכֵן at the head of v. 22. (This division, too, is supported in the MT by the appearance of a *setûmāh* at the end of v. 21.) The accusation in the preceding verses (vv. 17–21) occurs in two movements that are divided structurally but not argumentatively. Structurally, vv. 17–19 are framed by the repetition of דַּרְכָּם + עֲלִילוֹתָם, "their way and their deeds." Verses 20–21 are likewise framed by the repetition of הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־בָּאוּ שָׁם/שָׁמָּה, "the nations to which they came." The two parts, though, comprise a single unbroken argument: Yhwh exiled Judah because she had defiled the land, but this caused a secondary defilement. The exile defiled Yhwh's name (i.e., damaged his reputation) among the nations.

The consequence section, vv. 22–32, is highly symmetrical. The unit is framed by the repetition of לֹא לְמַעַנְכֶם אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה in vv. 22b and 32a:

> v. 22b: Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus Adonai Yhwh said: <u>It is not for your sake that I am acting</u> (לֹא לְמַעַנְכֶם אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה)

> v. 32a: <u>It is not for your sake that I am acting</u> (לֹא לְמַעַנְכֶם אֲנִי־עֹשֶׂה) – an utterance of Adonai Yhwh

This unit too is comprised of two parts, one, which is mostly poetry, in vv. 22–27, and another, which is prose, in vv. 28–32. The two address the same three topics, each of which responds to one of the problems raised in vv. 17–21. Thus, vv. 24–27 and 28–32 represent a dual-response to the same three problems, as indicated in the following diagram:

36.17–21 ACCUSATION	36. 22–27 POETIC RESPONSE	36.28–32 PROSE RESPONSE
A. You defiled the land and yourselves (v. 17)	C' I will not act for your sake, but for my name's sake (vv. 22–23)	B" You will dwell in land again as my people (v. 28)

A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis, ed. Johannes de Moor [OS 34; Leiden and New York: Brill, 1995], 129).

[10] The occurrence in v.22 serves to introduce the consequence portion of the oracle in v. 17–32.

[11] This continues the use of the term in 36.1–15 (vv. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13*, 14, 15),

[12] חל״ל, vv. 20, 21, 22, 23; טמ״א, vv. 17 *bis*, 18, 25, 29; טה״ר, vv. 25 *bis*, cf. 33; תועבה, v. 31.

B. So I punished you by scattering you in many lands (vv. 18–19)	B' I will regather Israel from all *diaspora* (v. 24)	A" I will purify you (v. 29a)
C. Yhwh's name was defiled before the nations (vv. 20–21)	A' I will purify you (v. 25)	C" I will not act for your sake (v. 32a)

This, however, does not exhaust the connections between the parts. The poetic response to vv. 17–21 raises one topic that is not reflected in the prior accusation, namely, the transformation of the people such that they are empowered to keep the covenant (vv. 26–27). This topic is also reflected in the prose response, when it addresses the blessings of the covenant and evidence of the people's transformation, indicated by their shame and self-loathing. In both 22–27 and 28–32, this additional topic appears immediately after the divine promise to purify the people:

36.17–21 ACCUSATION	36. 22–27 POETIC RESPONSE	36.28–32 PROSE RESPONSE
A. You defiled the land and yourselves (v. 17)	**C'** I will not act for your sake, but for my name's sake (v. 22–23)	**B"** You will dwell in land again as my people (v. 28)
B. So I punished you by scattered you in many lands (vv. 18–19)	**B'** I will regather Israel from all *diaspora* (v. 24)	**A"** I will purify you (v. 29a)
		You will enjoy the blessings of the covenant, and manifest evidence of a changed nature (v. 29b–31)
C. Yhwh's name defiled before the nations (i.e., diaspora damaged his reputation) (vv. 20–21)	**A'** I will purify you (v. 25)	**C"** I will not act for your sake (v. 32a)
	I will give you a new heart and spirit, so you can keep the covenant (vv. 26–27)	

1.2 The Place of Ezekiel 36.16–38 in the Literary Context

Following the oracles against the nations (chap. 25–32) and the fall of Jerusalem (chap. 33), the focus of the book of Ezekiel turns more-and-more toward the future restoration. Chaps 34–39 attend to the return from *diaspora* and circumstances of the restoration, while chaps. 40–48 offer a visionary depiction of the restored land, focused, in particular, on the temple mount. In the MT, chapters 34–39 are segmented into six major parts, five oracle-complexes and one vision.[13] The oracle-complexes (34.1–31, 35.1–36.15, 36.16–38, 37.15–28, and 38.1–39.29) are initiated by the prophetic announcement formula, ויהי דבר־יהוה אלי לאמר, whereas the vision in 37.1–14 is headed by its appropriate announcement formula, היתה עלי יד־יהוה.[14] Ezekiel 36.16–38, thus, is presented as a bounded unit, delimited in an identical way to the surrounding text-segments.

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[13] Adapted from F.-L.HOSSFELD, "Das Buch Ezechiel" in *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*; eds. E. Zenger, et al. (7th ed.; KST 1.1; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008), 601–02.

[14] This unusual formula reflects the form of the pericope, being narrative not discourse and vision not oracle.

Ezekiel 36.16–38 is famously replete with locutions and themes shared with a wide array of texts in Ezekiel (esp. chaps 11, 16, and 20), Jeremiah, and P/H,[15] so it is unremarkable that there are additional verbal and thematic parallels to the immediate literary context, most notably to the preceding oracles in chaps 34.1–36.16. These are particularly notable in the last two oracles: vv. 33–36 and 37–38. I note the following connections:

Prevailing Image: rebuilding and replanting the land

Verbal Parallels (including antonyms) in black

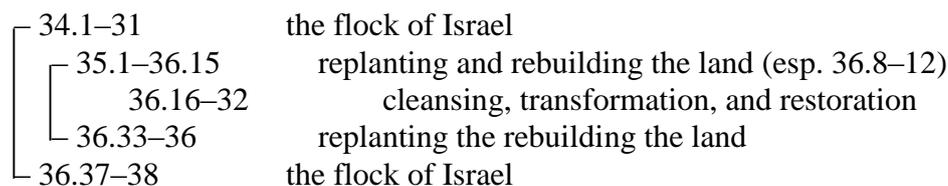|			
36.33–36	כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה בְּיוֹם טַהֲרִי אֶתְכֶם מִכֹּל עֲוֹנוֹתֵיכֶם וְהוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת־הֶעָרִים וְנִבְנוּ הֶחֳרָבוֹת: וְהָאָרֶץ הַנְּשַׁמָּה תֵּעָבֵד תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר הָיְתָה שְׁמָמָה לְעֵינֵי כָּל־עוֹבֵר: וְאָמְרוּ הָאָרֶץ הַלֵּזוּ הַנְּשַׁמָּה הָיְתָה כְּגַן־עֵדֶן וְהֶעָרִים הֶחֳרֵבוֹת וְהַנְּשַׁמּוֹת וְהַנֶּהֱרָסוֹת בְּצוּרוֹת יָשָׁבוּ: וְיָדְעוּ הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר יִשָּׁאֲרוּ סְבִיבוֹתֵיכֶם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה בָּנִיתִי הַנֶּהֱרָסוֹת נָטַעְתִּי הַנְּשַׁמָּה אֲנִי יְהוָה דִּבַּרְתִּי וְעָשִׂיתִי:	36.4a	וְלֶחֳרָבוֹת הַשֹּׁמְמוֹת וְלֶעָרִים הַנֶּעֱזָבוֹת
		36.9b–10	וּפָנִיתִי אֲלֵיכֶם וְנֶעֱבַדְתֶּם וְנִזְרַעְתֶּם: וְהִרְבֵּיתִי עֲלֵיכֶם אָדָם כָּל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל כֻּלֹּה וְנֹשְׁבוּ הֶעָרִים וְהֶחֳרָבוֹת תִּבָּנֶינָה:

Prevailing Image: human flock (human fertility)

Verbal Parallels in black

36.37–38	כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה עוֹד זֹאת אִדָּרֵשׁ לְבֵית־יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת לָהֶם אַרְבֶּה אֹתָם כַּצֹּאן אָדָם: כְּצֹאן קָדָשִׁים כְּצֹאן יְרוּשָׁלִַם בְּמוֹעֲדֶיהָ כֵּן תִּהְיֶינָה הֶעָרִים הֶחֳרֵבוֹת מְלֵאוֹת צֹאן אָדָם וְיָדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה: ס	36.10–11	וְהִרְבֵּיתִי עֲלֵיכֶם אָדָם כָּל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל כֻּלֹּה וְנֹשְׁבוּ הֶעָרִים וְהֶחֳרָבוֹת תִּבָּנֶינָה: וְהִרְבֵּיתִי עֲלֵיכֶם אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה וְרָבוּ וּפָרוּ וְהוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶתְכֶם כְּקַדְמוֹתֵיכֶם וְהֵטִבֹתִי מֵרִאשֹׁתֵיכֶם וִידַעְתֶּם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:
		34.31a	וְאַתֵּן צֹאנִי צֹאן מַרְעִיתִי אָדָם אַתֶּם

The two brief oracles closing the unit, vv. 33–36 and 37–38, have different prevailing images. Verses 33–36 emphasize the rebuilding and replanting of the land. Verses 37–38 highlight human fertility, depicted as a large, multiplying flock. These themes are developed in the preceding chapters, most explicitly, in chap. 34 and in 36.1–15. Ezekiel 36.9b–11 combines the two themes (absent the flock image), and thus, elements from those verses appear in both closing oracles.

Considered structurally, 36.33–36 and 36.37–38 address some of the key images and themes of the preceding oracle-complexes, 34.1–31 and 35.1–36.15, but they are in inverse order, creating a mirror-pattern:

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┌─ 34.1–31            the flock of Israel
│ ┌─ 35.1–36.15         replanting and rebuilding the land (esp. 36.8–12)
│ │    36.16–32            cleansing, transformation, and restoration
│ └─ 36.33–36           replanting the rebuilding the land
└─ 36.37–38          the flock of Israel
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[15] Many of these connections are discussed in this volume, especially in the chapters by BARTER and HÄNER.

Considered this way, 36.33–38 takes up and advances the topics of 34.1–36.15. Verses16–32 lies at the heart of the schema, which may be suggestive of its ideological or rhetorical centrality.[16]

These observations reinforce the view of some scholars that historical-critical approaches are not particularly meritorious. Historical-criticism, it is argued, overlooks evidence of textual unity or takes it as evidence of disunity. In this case, observations regarding the structure and topical unity of Ezek 36.16–38 and its verbal and thematic connections to the literary context have lead some Ezekiel scholars to one of two conclusions. Some have contended that 36.16–38 is original to the book if not the prophet or his immediate school.[17] Literary unity is taken to be evidence of authorial singularity. Others contend that whatever the prehistory of the pericope and book, the resulting unity places its literary prehistory beyond reach. Moshe Greenberg has been the most vocal champion of this latter approach. In a pair of manifesto-style essays written in 1977 and 1986, Greenberg called on the academy to abandon attempts to recover an "improved" text, either by historical-critical or text-critical means.[18] He contended, for example, that the OG and MT represent "two versions, each with its own quality and its own coherence."[19] He further argued, based upon finds in the Judean desert, that the MT was as old as the *Vorlage* of OG and that "this means that in the third century B.C.E. … several forms [of Ezekiel] were extant and considered authoritative."[20] For Greenberg, interpreters err when they cloud their vision with text-critical or historical-critical analyses (except in certain extreme circumstances).

The logic of this approach turns on the notion of 'cohesion' or 'unity.' Patterns are discerned in the shifting phenomena – in repeated or fluid topics and images, in repeated locutions, in consistency or change in genre or voice – and, thus, unity is discovered.[21] It is important that we acknowledge an assumption embedded in this approach. Before the features that create cohesion have been identified, there is already an assumption of unity. As the literary historian David Gershom Myers has put it: "Criticism, then, is the special activity of seeking the coherence which it postulates as a property of literary texts."[22] Even supposed instances of disunity – gaps, ambiguities, inconsistencies, redundancies, and the like – are viewed by interpreters like Greenberg as constructive qualities and represent deliberate

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[16] See further in William TOOMAN, "Covenant and Presence in the Composition and Theology of Ezekiel," in *Divine Presence and Absence in Exilic and Post-Exilic Judaism,* eds. Izaac J. de Hulster and Nathan MacDonald (FAT II/61; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 151–82.

[17] GREENBERG, *Ezekiel 21–37*, 738–40; BLOCK, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 338–43; Hector PATMORE, *Adam, Satan, and the King of Tyre: The Interpretation of Ezekiel 28:11–19 in Late Antiquity* (JCP 20; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 137–46.

[18] Moshe GREENBERG, "The Use of Ancient Versions for Interpreting the Hebrew Text: A Sampling from Ezekiel ii 1–iii 11," in *Congress Volume: Göttingen, 1977*; ed. J. A. Emerton (VTSup 29; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 131–148; "What are Valid Criteria." In the 1977 essay, GREENBERG singled out the following for particular criticism: CORNILL, FOHRER, EICHRODT, WEVERS, and ZIMMERLI.

[19] "Ancient Versions," 217.

[20] Ibid., 219.

[21] Structural unity is particularly highlighted in the works of Shimon BAR-EFRAT (*Narrative Art in the Bible* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989; reprint London: T & T Clark, 2004]), FOKKELMAN (*Narrative Art; Reading*), WEISS (*Bible from Within*), and GREENBERG (*Ezekiel 21–37*). It is not always clear what is implied by the term "unity."

[22] David Gershom MYERS, "Robert Penn Warren and the History of Criticism," *Midwest Quarterly* 34 (1993): 375–76.

choices by erudite composers. In other words, to be properly appreciated, the Hebrew Bible requires the same techniques of reading that are appropriate to modern works of literary art.[23]

2.0 Empirical Models and the Question of 'Unity'

In 1985 Jeffery Tigay introduced the term 'empirical models' into the discourse of historical-criticism. Tigay's edited volume, *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism*, contained an array of articles that explored how historical-critical theory might be informed by cases in which multiple stages of textual growth were documented in existing tablets and manuscripts.[24] Examples were drawn from a wide array of times and literatures in ancient Near Eastern antiquity: pre- and post-biblical, Akkadian, Hebrew, and Greek. Examining cases of documented textual growth allows certain trend to appear. Some of these trends validated common historical-critical assumptions; most significantly complicated them. Because of Tigay's volume and the work of those who followed up his ideas (to say nothing of related developments in the field of redaction-criticism) it is no longer sufficient to assume that editorial activity is revealed by cases of incohesion and incoherence in grammar, voice, style, theology, imagery, and so on. Such may be the case, but it cannot be assumed that ancient standards of cohesion and incohesion, or tolerances thereof, are identical to modern standards. To validate a diachronic hypothesis, one must now show from documentary evidence that ancient writers, in fact, practiced the types of textual interventions that are proposed. This has given rise, in recent years, to a large body of literature on literacy, scribalism, scribal practices, writing, and rewriting in Jewish antiquity.

The study of empirical models has had a secondary effect as well. It is increasingly evident that many cases of editorial intervention fill gaps, clarify ambiguities, flatten out grammatical discrepancies, and update language. In other words, a redacted text is, in many cases, a more coherent, more unified text.[25] Returning to our test-case, Ezek 36.16–38 is remarkable in that the Hebrew text shows almost no fissures in its surface features –abrupt or unanticipated changes in voice or mood, pronominals lacking antecedents, incomplete syntactic constructions[26] – and yet, there is significant evidence in the manuscript tradition

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[23] This point has been made by Bernard LEVINSON, "The Right Chorale," 29 and Marc Z. BRETTLER, "Coherence of Ancient Texts," in *Gazing into the Deep: Ancient Near Eastern and Other Studies in Honor of Tzvi Abusch* (ed. J. Stackert, B. Porter, and D. Wright; Bethesda: CDL Press, 2010), 411–19 (cf. STERNBERG, *Poetics*, 53, 409, 436–37). This tends to be asserted more strongly in biblical scholarship with respect to prose-narratives and poetry than it is for prose-prophecy or law.

[24] Jeffery TIGAY (ed.), *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism* (Philadelphia: University of *Pennsylvania* Press, 1985). Precursors to Tigay include George F. MOORE, "Tatian's *Diatessaron* and the Analysis of the Pentateuch" (reprinted in Tigay; original 1889); Thomas R. W. LONGSTAFF, *Evidence of Conflation in Mark? A Study of the Synoptic Problem* (SBLDS 28; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars, 1977); Herbert DONNER, "Der Redaktor: Überlegungen zum vorkritischen Umgang mit der Heiligen Schrift," *Henoch* 2 (1980): 1–30.

[25] There is a quietly developing debate about the limits of 'empirical models' attested in works like: Seth SANDERS, "What if There Aren't Any Empirical Models for Pentateuchal Criticism?" in *Orality and Literacy in Ancient Israel* (ed. Brian Schmidt; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014), 281–304; cf. Reinhard KRATZ, "Abraham, Mein Freund: Das Verhältnis von inner- und ausserbiblischer Schriftauslegung," in *Die Erzväter in der biblischen Tradition* (ed. Anselm HAGEDORN and Henrik PFEIFFER; Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2009), 115–36.

[26] Regarding the singular verb in v. 20, ויבוא, certain Cairo Geniza mss and *sebirîn* read plural ויבואו. More to the point, the antecedent is בת־ישראל, thus, the singular ("he," v. 20) and plural ("they," vv. 17–19, 21) are co-referential. Regarding the shift in person from third-person address (vv. 16–21) to second (vv. 22–36) and back again (vv. 37–38), Yhwh is addressing the prophet about Israel in vv. 16–21 and 37–38, whereas the prophet is instructed to recite vv. 22–36 to them (note the utterance formulae in vv. 22 and 36). On these and other salient

for the evolution of the pericope itself and its structural relationship to the surrounding chapters. Verses 23bβ–38 of Ezekiel 36 are famously absent in certain Greek and Latin witnesses (Papyrus 967 and Codex Wirceburgensis [*W*]), and are now widely accepted as a late expansion.[27] This is significant when one considers that 36.16–38 is a theologically central text, summing up and coordinating many of the book's claims regarding Israel's restoration. It draws together many elements from Ezekiel's deliverance oracles, coordinating them in a single portrait of the future restoration.[28] It incorporates many locutions and ideas from Jeremiah, coordinating the two books' linguistic and ideological profiles more closely,[29] and it harmonizes Ezekiel's deliverance oracles, most notably by coordinating the promise of the divine spirit (37.14) with that of a new heart and spirit (11.19–20) in 36.26–28.[30]

The empirical evidence presented by Pap967 has several important implications for our methodological reflections. First, the symmetrical structure of 36.17–32 was produced in the process of the text's diachronic development. The original oracle, vv. 17–23bα, included the accusations of impurity and a promise that Yhwh would act for his name's sake, but no specifics were offered in this context (one of the circumstances which inspired the large expansion, no doubt). The redactor or redactors responsible for 23bβ–38 supplied the double-response to the accusation and the two short supplemental oracles. This, in turn, indicates that redactional processes are responsible for the mirror-structure of chaps 34–36, intentionally or not.[31]

My main point, which is obvious by now, is that the literary unity of 36.16–38 and its integration with the arguments and themes of the book demonstrably are products of expansion and rewriting. Literary unity and compositional unity, it appears, are not correlates. The inverse is equally true. Incohesion and incoherence are not always suitable diagnostic tools for identifying cases of expansion and rewriting.

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details see Anja KLEIN, *Schriftauslegung im Ezechielbuch: Redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu Ez 34–39* (BZAW 391; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 140–68, esp. 141–48.

[27] Compare also Codex Bibliothecae Bodleianae Coptico-Bombycinus on which see M. N. van der MEER, "A New Spirit in an Old Corpus?: Text-Critical, Literary-Critical and Linguistic Observations regarding Ezek 36:16-38," in *The New Things: Eschatology in Old Testament Prophecy: Festschrift for Henk Leene* (F. Postma, K. Spronk and E. Talstra, eds.; Amsterdamse Cahiers voor Exegese van de Bijbel en Zijn Traities, Supplement series, 3; Maastricht: Uitgeverij Shaker, 2002), 147–58, esp. 148). The following have argued against the value of P967 as a witness to an alternate text-form of Ezekiel: F. V. FILSON, "The Omission of Ezek. 12:26–28 and 36:23b–38 in Codex 967," *JBL* 62 (1943): 27–32 and John W. WEVERS, *Ezekiel* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982). Though present in LXX[B], 36.23bβ–38 appears to be the work of a different translator than the surrounding text-segments, as was first recognized by H. St. J. THACKERAY, "The Greek Translators of Ezekiel," *JTS* 4 (1903): 398–411; *The Septuagint and Jewish Worship* (2d ed; London: British Academy, 1921), 37–39, 124–26.

[28] E.g., 36.23 ‖ 20.41b, 28.25, 39.25, 39.27b–28; 36.24 ‖ 20.41b–42a, 39.27; 36.26 ‖ 11.19, 18.31, 39.29b; 36.27 ‖ 11.20, 37.14, 37.24b; 36.28 ‖ 37.25a, 27b; 36.29 ‖ 34.29a; 36.30 ‖ 34.27a, 34.29b; 36.31 ‖ 20.43; 36.32 ‖ 20.44, 39.26

[29] E.g., 36.28 ‖ Jer 7.7; 16.15; 24.10; 25.5; 30.3; etc.; 36.31 ‖ Jer 7.3, 5; 18.11; 25.5; 26.13; etc.; 36.33 ‖ Jer 33.8

[30] See further Johann LUST, "Ezekiel 36–40 in the Oldest Greek Manuscript," *CBQ* 43 (1981): 517–33; William TOOMAN, "Covenant and Presence"; "Text History of Ezekiel" and "Ezekiel: (Proto-)Masoretic Texts and Texts Close to MT" in *The Textual History of the Bible*. Volume 1: *The Hebrew Bible*; eds. Armin Lange, Emanuel Tov, Matthias Henze, and Russell Fuller (Leiden and Boston: Brill, forthcoming).

[31] Among the few who would deny that biblical writers and redactors had the training or capacity to construct complex texts of any length are John BARTON (*Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel after the Exile* [London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1986], 141–54, esp. 149–51) and Karl VAN DER TOORN (*Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* [Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2007], 9–26, esp. 16).

3.0 Implications

The assertion that 'synchronic' and 'diachronic' approaches have different aims, and thus the critic's objectives should dictate the selection of approach, is rather commonplace in this debate. As Joel Baden has put it, "the two methods move in absolutely opposite directions. The conflict, such as it is, comes about when one method is used to address the questions for which the other was intended."[32] The difficulty with such an assertion, as we have seen, is that both synchronic and diachronic approaches begin from the same text (typically the MT) and account for the same data in different ways. Both describe the presentation features of the texts we possess, particularly patterns of coherence and incoherence. More to the point, they both make (possible) claims about how texts came to look the way that they do, that is, how the sequence of graphemes presented to us came about. Thus, the relationship of synchronic to diachronic approaches cannot be reduced to different aims or different text-analytic goals. They are not different hats that the critic can change at will, depending on the task of the day. Some of the data to be considered differs depending upon one's academic aims, to be sure. Not all of it is different, however, and the two approaches often make irreconcilable claims about this shared data.

Nonetheless, the two approaches are similar in one important respect. In Greenberg's synchronic view, for example, biblical texts are basically unified, coherent in their structures and ideas. The interpretive task entails articulation of those coherences. Gaps, contradictions, and redundancies are explained as shrouding deeper more elusive coherencies. For many historical scholars, ancient Israelite authors and readers are assumed to be every bit as intolerant of grammatical incohesion and logical or imagistic incoherence as we are. Diachronic analysis differs from synchronic analysis when inconsistencies and incoherencies are interpreted as signs not of strategy but of textual disruption. The same contradictions, gaps, and redundancies are often explained as the unplanned consequences of error (esp. text-criticism) or interference by a new hand (esp. historical-criticism). My point is this: synchronic and diachronic scholarship share *similar standards of what constitutes textual unity* and *both assume the normalcy of such unity.*[33] They differ, most fundamentally, regarding the causes of perceived disunity.

We have also seen that empirical evidence reveals limitations in both approaches that are particularly manifest when practitioners of either approach adopt the assumption of unity too rigidly. In the case of Ezek 36, the redacted text, including vv. 23bβ–38, has a highly symmetrical design and is more closely intertwined with the themes and arguments of the book as a whole. In other words, the text that appears most unified is the redacted text.

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[32] Joel S. BADEN, "The Tower of Babel: A Case Study in the Competing Methods of Historical and Modern Literary Criticism," *JBL* 128/2 (2009): 222–23. As NOBEL puts it, "one can note that critical and literary interpretations typically yield quite different *kinds* of understanding: The former helps us understand the text's *genesis* (acquainting us with the sources, traditions, and political-cultural milieu from which it emerged), whereas the latter aids us in understanding the text *semantically* (i.e., in grasping its meaning)." "What I am suggesting, however, is that the critical tools should not be given the task of helping us to understand the meaning of the final form, because they are simply the wrong tools for that job. It is not a *critical* undertaking, and therefore does not benefit from those aspects of the critical tools that make them critical" ("Synchronic and Diachronic," 134).

[33] STERNBERG, *Poetics*, 53, 409, 436–37; see related comments by LEVINSON, "Right Chorale," 29. Instructive, in this regard, are the comments and assumptions of Serge FROLOV and David CARR in the following exchange: Serge FROLOV "The Death of Moses and the Fate of Source Criticism," *JBL* 133/3 (2014): 648–60; David CARR, "Unified until Proven Disunified?: Assumptions and Standards in Assessing the Literary Complexity of Ancient Biblical Texts," *JBL* 133/3 (2014): 677–81.

Diachrony, in this case, is not betrayed – at least not readily – by some failure of cohesion or coherence. Nor is synchrony revealed by unity. Empirical evidence provides ample evidence to conclude that *neither assumption is suitable to the literature of Classical Hebrew*, at least in cases like Ezek 36.16–38. Ancient compositional practices, ancient reading competencies, and ancient tolerances are not entirely coextensive with the standard of textual unity shared by diachronic and synchronic approaches. It is perhaps worth noting, in this respect, that the more an approach is systematized the less likely it is to be able to account for the complexities of biblical literature. When incoherencies are assumed to be products of text-evolution, this assumption will overwrite or ignore the creative possibilities of deliberate incoherence and close the door to refection on the different standards of coherence and incoherence between ancient and modern readers.[34] Likewise, when incoherence is assumed to be the deliberate product of literary creativity, it flattens texts into singular voices from singular times robbing them of the deliberate and dynamic exchanges that characterise *Traditions-literatur*.

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[34] On this point in particular, see the forthcoming thematic issue of *HeBAI*: *Standards of (In)Coherence in Ancient Jewish Literature*, eds. D. Andrew Teeter and William Tooman.

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