Ezekiel

Current Debates and Future Directions

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Extension and Allusion:
The Composition of Ezekiel 34

MICHAEL A. LYONS

1. Introduction

Ezekiel 34 shares locutions with Leviticus 26, the final section of the so-called “Holiness Code” (H). The frequency, distribution, and use of these locutions (which are a subset of a larger number of shared locutions between Ezekiel and H) indicate that this is not a case of coincidence, but of literary dependence. But what is the direction of literary dependence? Some have argued that Lev 26 is part of a late post-exilic redactional layer in the Pentateuch and that it is borrowing these shared locutions from Ezekiel.¹ For example, it has been claimed that “the literary relationship between Lev 26 and Ezekiel makes more sense if the author of H has the various oracles in Ezekiel before his eyes; the contrary assumption that the prophet (or his disciples) would have scattered their source throughout the book … is difficult to admit.”² It seems to me, however, that this would be

² Nihan, Priestly Torah, 543.
no more difficult to admit than to claim that the author of John’s Apocalypse has scattered references to Ezekiel throughout his book.3

Nevertheless, it is a legitimate question to ask why, if in fact Ezekiel is using H, locutions from Lev 26 are “scattered throughout Ezekiel.” Furthermore, there are locutions from elsewhere in the book of Ezekiel and from other prophetic literature present in Ezek 34 that must also be accounted for. In this essay I will argue that Ezek 34 is the borrowing text, not the source text; and that the author is not merely “scattering references,” but is referencing other texts in accordance with a consistent literary strategy of extension, modification and coordination.4 However one dates Lev 26, one cannot simply assume that Ezek 34 is earlier, for as Anja Klein has recently argued, Ezek 34 has its own complex compositional history.5

2. The Contents of Ezekiel 34

The contents and compositional history of Ezek 34 can be outlined as follows: it contains two oracles, each introduced with the messenger formula (vv. 2 and 17). The first oracle (Ezek 34.2–10) is directed against the “shepherds of Israel,” who have been harming the flock. The second oracle (Ezek 34.17–22) is directed against the strong rams and goats, who have been harming the weak members of the flock; this oracle is marked by the repetition of the verb שפט “judge” (vv. 17, 20, 22). The problems addressed in these denunciations are resolved in each case by a description of the action that God will take to remedy the situation. The first

3 See Beate Kowalski, Die Rezeption des Propheten Ezechiel in der Offenbarung des Johannes, SBB 52 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2004).


5 Klein identifies five literary layers in Ezek 34 (Schriftauslegung, 67–77), as well as a number of smaller additions (pp. 38, 56). These five layers are part of a more comprehensive eight layers of redactional activity she isolates in Ezek 34–39 (pp. 350–73, 409). While my stratification of these chapters differs from Klein’s in several respects, her careful and insightful work was invaluable for clarifying my ideas on Ezek 34.

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oracle clearly comprises the basic layer of material in this chapter. But what is the origin of this oracle? On the one hand, it is difficult to accept Klein’s suggestion that vv. 1–10 are a post-exilic addition to the book critiquing Israel’s Persian overlords. The text argues that Israel was “scattered” (פוץ, vv. 5, 6) because the shepherds failed to do their duty, and if this “scattering” is a metaphorical reference to exile (cf. Ezek 11.16–17; 12.15; 20.23; etc.), then one could hardly accuse Persian rulers for failing to prevent this. Pohlmann’s suggestion that these are post-exilic Israelite leaders faces the same problem. On the other hand, Klein is quite correct to point out the difficulties involved in taking these verses as a pre-587 oral proclamation against the political and religious elites of Jerusalem. The current location of vv. 1–10 seems incongruous, placed as they are after the report of the city’s destruction in ch. 33. And the destruction of Jerusalem’s elites in 587 BCE is not really an appropriate fit for YHWH’s claim that he will “demand my sheep from their hand” (Ezek 34.10). A possible solution to these difficulties would be to understand vv. 1–10 as a purely literary oracle composed for the book, rather than as an oral oracle that had been textualized or as a later redactional insertion to the book. These verses are addressing a group that does not exist in the present in order to deal with the current effects of poor leadership in the past, and to claim that YHWH will provide an alternative to such leadership. This oracle has been placed here to solve a problem that has been raised earlier (cf. accusations of bad leaders in Ezek 8.11–12; 11.1–3; 13.1–7; 17.1–21; 21.30–31; 22.6, 25–28), but has not yet been given a solution. The somewhat artificial feel of this oracle in its current context may also be due to the fact that it is a reworking of the oracle against the bad shepherds in Jer 23.1–2.

It is unclear whether the second oracle (vv. 17–22) originated from the prophet Ezekiel, or whether it is a redactional extension of vv. 2–10. Whatever the case, Zech 10.2–3 provides a terminus ad quem for the combination of Ezek 34.2–10,

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6 Klein, Schriftauslegung, 38.
9 Klein, “Prophecy Continued,” 576: “bad shepherds can hardly be threatened with a judgement that has already taken place.”
10 See Zimmerli, Ezekiel 2, 216.
12 Zimmerli (Ezekiel 2, 222) and Allen (Ezekiel 20–48, 159) treat both vv. 2–10 and 17–22 as oracles of the prophet himself; Klein (Schriftauslegung, 57–58, 77, 366) and Greenberg (Ezekiel 21–37, 707) treat vv. 17–22 as a later Fortschreibung built off of the flock image (though for Klein even vv. 2–10 are redactional). Klein (p. 77) points out the lack of connections between vv. 17–22 and other texts in Ezek 35–39 and suggests that this implies that vv. 17–22 are the latest redactional layer. However, vv. 11–16 may depend on vv. 17–22 as well as on vv. 2–10; note the use ofיִנַּה “Here I am!” (v. 11, from v. 20; attested only in Ezekiel, and with a following perfect
17–22. Zech 10.2–3 takes vocabulary from Ezekiel (עֹזִיבָת/ "goats," Ezek 34.17 // Zech 10.3; אַרְעָב/ "shepherds," Ezek 34.2 ff // Zech 10.3; cf. רִאשׁוֹנִי/ "lack of a shepherd," Ezek 34.8 // Zech 10.2; כָּבָּד/ "flock," Ezek 34.2, 17, etc. // Zech 10.2; see also the reference to Ezek 34.4 in Zech 11.16) and brings it into the already-existing “flock” metaphor (cf. Zech 9.16; 11.3 ff). The reference to “goats” in Zech 10.3 is awkward in context, and makes sense only as a reference to Ezek 34.14.

The remainder of the material in Ezek 34 consists of three units (vv. 11–16, 23–24, 25–31) which are literary developments (Fortschreibungen) of the basic layer. These do not stand on their own but presume the basic layer. The numerous repetitions, differences in outlook, and extension of ideas in these units point to a process of literary development.15 Of course, there are different ways to explain this literary process: some would attribute most (if not all) of the material in ch. 34 to the prophet Ezekiel,16 while others would see a series of redactional expansions that build on a (possibly Ezekielian) core.17 In this essay, I want to explore the possibility of a model that includes redactional expansion.

In the first oracle (Ezek 34.1–10), the problem raised in vv. 2–6 (the shepherds have eaten and neglected the flock) is apparently solved in vv. 7–10: the shepherds will be removed from their position, and God will deliver his sheep from them. But the first redactional unit (vv. 11–16, which are introduced with a new messenger formula) develops vv. 2–10 by focusing on two issues that have not been addressed: the fact that the flock has been “scattered” (v. 6), and the question of who is to be their shepherd now that the previous shepherds have been removed. According to vv. 11–16, God himself will seek out the “scattered” (v. 12) sheep, and he will be their shepherd. These verses repeat the wording of the earlier oracle: v. 4 is repeated almost in entirety in v. 16; “scattered” (Ƹי) from vv. 5–6 is repeated in v. 12; “seek” (ירש) and “deliver” (חצתי) from v. 10 are repeated in vv. 11–12, “search” (בקשתי) from v. 6 is repeated in v. 16, and “feed the flock” from vv. 2, 3 is repeated in vv. 13–15. Finally, the scope of the redact-

13 See Greenberg, Ezekiel 21–37, 709.
14 David Petersen also argues for a connection to Ezekiel, but suggests that Zech 10.3a is a later expansion based on the shift from the singular “shepherd” in v. 2 to the plural “shepherds” in v. 3; see Petersen, Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi, OTL (Louisville: WJKP, 1995), 73. However, if one removes v. 3a, the following material in v. 3b is not a plausible continuation of v. 2. It seems better to understand v. 3a not as a later interpolation, but as an authorial reference to Ezekiel that creates a lack of cohesion in context.
15 Klein, Schriftauslegung, 32.
17 So e.g. Cooke, Ezekiel, 373 and Greenberg, Ezekiel 21–37, 707 (who see vv. 17–31 as a later addition); Allen, Ezekiel 20–48, 158–61 (who sees vv. 23–24, 25–30, 31 as later additions). Zimmerli, Ezekiel 2, 212–13, 220, 222, suggests that Ezekiel the prophet is both the source and the editor of the units in vv. 1–24, with vv. 25–30, 31 deriving from Ezekiel’s disciples.

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tional unit vv. 11–16 addresses concerns of the wider diaspora, not just the exiles in Babylon: the wording “seek my flock from their hand … and deliver my flock from their mouth” in v. 10 has been widened to “seek … and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered” in vv. 11–12. Moreover, this statement is temporally situated by means of the last clause in v. 12, “on a day of cloud and thick darkness” (בִּיְום עָנָן וּֽעָרֶפֶל). This unexpectedly ominous language (borrowed from Zeph 1.15) situates the deliverance of Ezek 34.11–16 after a judgment that is global in scope (cf. Zeph 1.18; note also how this locution is used in Joel 2.2).

The second redactional unit is vv. 23–24, which is clearly set off from the preceding unit (vv. 17–22) by the inclusio “I will judge between one sheep and another” in vv. 17 and 22. Verses 23–24 develop the earlier claim of vv. 11–16 that God would act as the shepherd by stating that God will appoint David as the “shepherd” (v. 23, from v. 12) to “feed” (v. 23, from vv. 13–15) the flock. The comment that God will appoint “one shepherd” (v. 23) – a thought that remains unexplained and undeveloped in this chapter – is an indication that vv. 23–24 do not flow out of the preceding context, but are a later addition to it. And the 3mp reference in v. 23 (“I will raise up over them”) lacks an antecedent in vv. 17–22, indicating that it was placed here with reference to another text-segment. The clear connection between vv. 23–24 and Ezek 37.24–25 suggests that vv. 23–24 were intended to coordinate the restoration described in ch. 34 with the restoration described in ch. 37, and perhaps also with material in Jer 23.4–5 (though these verses are also compositionally complex).

The third redactional unit is vv. 25–30(31). How is the function of this unit in context to be explained? As Zimmerli notes, the “flock” imagery has almost

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18 This widening of the scope of restoration can be seen elsewhere in the book; compare e.g. Ezek 11.14–21 (which promises restoration for Ezekiel’s community) with e.g. Ezek 20.40 (“the entire house of Israel, all of it”); 39.25 (“the whole house of Israel”); note the plus in MT Ezek 39.28 (“I will not leave any of them behind there”). On the distinction between a “gola-oriented redaction” and a later “diaspora-oriented redaction” in the book, see K.-F. Pohlmann, Das Buch des Propheten Hesekiel (Ezechiel) Kapitel 1–19, ATD 22/1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 27–32; though see also the concerns of Rainer Albertz, Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century, trans. David Green (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 349–50.

19 Zimmerli (Ezekiel 2, 216) on the one hand fails to account for the scope of the judgment envisioned here. Klein (Schriftauslegung, 34) on the other hand takes v. 12 as an interpolation in the redactional layer vv. 11–16 because of the “Day of YHWH” reference. But it seems to me that v. 12 is not foreign to the outlook of vv. 11–16, and should be located within this layer.

20 Cf. Greenberg, Ezekiel 21–37, 702 (“the idea is elaborated in 37.15–22, 24 and is out of context here”).

21 The two passages share the phrases “one shepherd” and “my servant David” (Ezek 34.23; 37.24), and the description of David as “prince” (34.24; 37.25; though in 37.24 he is called “king”). For Klein’s reconstruction of these passages, including their relationship with Jer 23, see Schriftauslegung, 362–64.

22 Most take v. 31 as a separate redactional note; cf. Klein, Schriftauslegung, 37–38, 58–59; Allen, Ezekiel 20–48, 159; Zimmerli, Ezekiel 2, 221–22. It is possible that it could be included with vv. 25–30 as an attempt to coordinate these verses with the preceding units, restating the
entirely vanished in vv. 25 ff. While it is possible that these verses were an independent oracle of the prophet, there are good reasons for understanding them as a redactional extension of the previous material and as another attempt to coordinate ch. 34 with other passages. First, we do in fact see the repetition of the words “rescue” (v. 27, from vv. 10) and “prey” (v. 28, from vv. 8, 22). Here, however, the referent of the word “prey” is extended to describe an external foreign threat, not simply an internal one as in the verses above. Second, the description of security and fertility in vv. 25–30 presumes and builds upon the return to the land described in v. 13. Third, the sudden use of covenant terminology signals a shift in topic. The phrase “covenant of peace” (v. 25) and the covenant formula (v. 30) align the description of restoration with the argument of Ezek 37.26, 27. The phrase “disgrace of the nations” (v. 29) picks up the argument of Ezek 36.6, 15 and aligns it with the description of restoration here in Ezek 34. Moreover, it is possible that the coupling of safety from wild animals and security in the forests (v. 25) is drawing on and reversing of Hos 2.14 (though stating this in the language of Lev 26.6). Finally, it is this unit in which locutions from Lev 26 are heavily clustered, and, as Klein argues, it is the use of the “flock” imagery in the preceding verses of Ezek 34 that dictates the nature of the material (images of security and fertility) that is borrowed from Lev 26. Ezek 34.25 ff therefore stands at some distance from the preceding material, which (as argued above) contains a redactional extension in vv. 11–16 displaying the concerns of a late-exilic or post-exilic situation.

combined covenant and assurance formulas of v. 30 (cf. Greenberg, Ezekiel 21–37, 704) in the now-familiar terminology of the earlier pastoral imagery.

Zimmerli, Ezekiel 2, 220–21.

Cf. Klein, Schriftauslegung, 364; Allen, Ezekiel 20–48, 159; Zimmerli, Ezekiel 2, 222; Hossfeld, Untersuchungen, 283, 285–86. It is worth noting that even Greenberg – whose “holistic” approach is not typically marked by an impulse to distinguish levels of redactional activity – argues that vv. 17–24 and vv. 25–31 are a later supplement to the preceding verses; see Greenberg, Ezekiel 21–37, 707.

See Levin, Verheißung, 218: “Bevor dies geschehen ist, hat die Verheißung aus Ez 37,26–27 in Ez 34,25–31, dem Anhang des großen Hirtenkapitels Ez 34, eine weitere Ausgestaltung erfahren.”

On the relationship of Hos 2.20 to Ezek 34.25, see Klein, Schriftauslegung, 183, 204–10.


According to Klein, Ezek 34.25–30 is a redactional extension of 34.23–24 (Schriftauslegung, 364), which is itself a redactional extension of the diaspora-oriented layer 34.11–15 (p. 360, 362). See also Hossfeld: “Im Unterschied zu ihrer Vorgängerin orientiert sich sprachlich und theologisch zum priesterlichen Schrifttum hin, insbesondere zur Priestergrund-schrift und zum Heiligkeitsgesetz” (Untersuchungen, 527); “Die fünfte Bearbeitungsschicht zeigt ihren späten Standort noch dadurch an, daß in ihr ein editorisches Bemühen greifbar wird; sie versucht, sowohl den eigenen Makrotext abzurunden, als auch im Hinblick auf die benachbar-
If the plausibility of the model outlined above is granted, then we have a situation in which a post-exilic dating of Lev 26 cannot be determinative for the direction of dependence. Ezek 34 has its own complex history that must be accounted for. To determine the direction of dependence, we must look at the function of the shared locutions themselves in their respective contexts.

3. The Direction of Dependence

Before discussing the function of Ezek 34.25 ff in context, we need to establish its relationship to the Holiness Code. It must be noted at the outset that not every individual locution shared by these texts can be used to determine the direction of dependence. The two clearest examples of directionality can be found in Ezek 34.4 (which occurs in the earliest layer of this chapter’s material) and Ezek 34.26 (which is one of the editorial extensions to the basic layer).

The locution “rule with harshness” (רדה בפרך) occurs a total of four times in only two contexts: in Lev 25.43, 46, 53 and in Ezek 34.4. The word “harshness” (פרך) itself is rare, occurring a total of six times; other than the four instances already mentioned, it appears elsewhere only in the locution “serve with harshness” (עבד בפרך) in Exod 1.13, 14. As Klostermann pointed out over a century ago, when the author of Ezek 34.4 employs the locution “rule with harshness,” he glosses the rare word “harshness” with the more common word “strength,” resulting in the syntactically awkward but semantically comprehensible statement “with strength you ruled them and with harshness” (בחזקה רדיתם אתם ובפרך). This interpretive technique demonstrates the direction of literary dependence because it betrays an awareness of and interaction with its source text. Ezekiel 34.4 is therefore the borrowing text.

29 See e.g. Grünewaldt, Heiligkeitsgesetz, 379–81.
30 While the Holiness Code is composite, and while it undoubtedly underwent editorial activity after its composition, I do not see any evidence that the passages I am examining here belong to different strata.
31 This is also acknowledged by Nihan, though of course from the perspective of his own model in which Lev 26 is dependent on Ezek 34: “the dependence of Lev 26 on Jeremiah and Ezekiel cannot be consistently demonstrated for each of these parallels taken individually”; Nihan, Priestly Torah, 544.
32 Klostermann, “Heiligkeitsgesetz,” 400; cf. Cooke, Ezekiel, 374; Milgrom, Leviticus 23–27, 2227–28. Zimmerli (Ezekiel 2, 205) prefers LXX’s “the strong you subdued with hardship” (καὶ τὸ ἰσχυρὸν κατειργάσασθε μόχθῳ), but this makes little sense in light of the preceding clauses of v. 4. It seems more likely that LXX has misread MT’s gloss as an adjective (“the strong,” cf. v. 16) rather than as a noun (“strength”) and omits בתים because the verb no longer requires an object pronoun (understanding בדעת as “rule over”).
33 On interpretive expansion as evidence for the direction of literary dependence, see Richard L. Schultz, The Search for Quotation: Verbal Parallels in the Prophets, JSOTSup 180 (Sheffield: Authors e-offprint with publisher’s permission.
The locution “rain in its time” (גשם + בעתו) occurs only three times: in Lev 26.4; Jer 5.24 (though here in an expanded form);34 and Ezek 34.26.35 But the occurrence in Ezek 34.26 displays a syntactic incongruity, shifting from singular to plural: “I will send down the rain in its time; they will be rains of blessing.” How do we explain this sudden incongruity? It seems likely that the shift in number reflects an awareness of Lev 26.4, which uses the plural form: “I will give your rains in their time” (ונתתי גשמיכם בעתם). Lev 26.4 can be explained without reference to Ezek 34.26, but the passage in Ezekiel requires an explanation – one that can be supplied if it is alluding to Lev 26. This is only one of several instances of incongruity in the book that demonstrate that Ezekiel is the borrowing text.36

4. The Use of Lev 26.3–13 in Ezek 34.25–30

Now that I have made a plausible argument that Ezek 34 is borrowing from the Holiness Code in these instances, it remains to identify the other shared locutions and determine whether they display modifications that can be explained by a consistent strategy of literary reworking. Ezek 34.25–30 contains nine locutions found in Lev 26.3–13:

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34 Jer 5.24, “Rain, early and late, in its time” (גשם יורה ומלקוש בעתו).
35 For v. 26b, MT has והורדתי הגשם בעתו, while LXX has καὶ δώσω τὸν ὑετὸν ὑμῖν. Neither of these can be derived from the other. For further discussion of the problem, see Zimmerli, Ezekiel 2, 210, and Block, Ezekiel 25–48, 294 (“No solution so far proposed is convincing”).
36 KLEIN (Schriftauslegung, 188) notes the following example: the word “dwelling” (משכן) as a reference to God’s habitation appears in Ezekiel only in Ezek 37.27 (it appears as a reference to a human habitation in 25.4). Ezekiel’s preferred term (31x total) is “sanctuary” (מקדש), which he actually uses in Ezek 37.26, 28. Why would Ezekiel suddenly refer to God’s habitation with a word he never uses elsewhere for this purpose, and in immediate proximity to the word he usually uses? The likely explanation is that Ezekiel is borrowing the locution “I will put my dwelling in your midst” (ונתתי משכני בתוככם) from Lev 26.11 and reworking it into two statements: “I will put my sanctuary in their midst forever” (וֹנַתֵּתי את־מקדֶשִׁי בתוכם לְעֹלָם) in Ezek 37.26, and “my dwelling will be with them” (והיה משכני עליהם) in 37.27. Note that this borrowed material is juxtaposed with a borrowing of the covenant formula from the same context (Lev 26.12) in Ezek 37.27. Another example is found in Ezek 6.3–7; this oracle is directed against the “mountains of Israel,” but its incongruous mention of “your bones” (v. 5b) and “your dwelling places” (v. 6) presume the human addressees of Lev 26. The shared locutions in this oracle include “high places” (Lev 26.30 > Ezek 6.6), “incense stands” (Lev 26.30 > Ezek 6.4, 6), “cities a waste” (Lev 26.31 > Ezek 6.6), and “desolate” (Lev 26.31 > Ezek 6.4, 6). MT Ezek 6.5a adds an additional locution (“I will put corpses … idols”) taken from Lev 26.30. For other examples, see Lyons, Law to Prophecy, 62–64.

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v. 25 “I will finish off wild animals from the land” (from Lev 26.6);37
v. 25 “live securely” (from Lev 25.5), also in modified form in Ezek 34.28;38
v. 26 “rain in its time” (from Lev 26.4);39
v. 27 “the tree of the field will yield its fruit” and “the land will yield its produce” (in inverted form, from Lev 26.4);40
v. 27 “break the bars of their yoke” and “to serve” (from Lev 26.13);41
v. 28 “there will be no one who terrifies” (from Lev 26.6);42
v. 30 “I, YHWH, am their God, and they are my people” (from Lev 26.12), though the MT of Ezek 34.30 has inserted the reassurance formula.43

We can explain these shared locutions as borrowings by the author of Ezek 34.25–30 in the following way: his strategy is to take up and extend the pastoral imagery of the earlier units in Ezek 34, enriching this imagery with H’s language of security and plenty.44 Moreover, the presence of covenant blessing language from Lev 26.3–13 in Ezek 34 functions as a reversal of H’s covenant punishment language (Lev 26.14–39) that has been used throughout the book of Ezekiel. Finally, the use of material from Lev 26.3–13 in this section was likely motivated by its use elsewhere in the book: for example, Lev 26.9 is used in Ezek 36.9–11, and Lev 26.11–12 is used in Ezek 37.26–27. The use of Lev 26 in this redactional layer of Ezek 34 therefore stands in continuity with the use of the Holiness Code elsewhere in Ezekiel, both in the original material and in later additions.45
In addition to this strategy of enrichment by intertextual allusion, the author employs two other literary strategies. First, the author changes H’s conditional covenant blessings (שָׁלוֹם, Lev 26.3) to unconditional blessings. This is in keeping with the outlook found throughout the book of Ezekiel: extreme pessimism about Israel’s capacity for repentance, and an emphasis on YHWH’s initiative and exclusive action in the restoration process. If in the future Israel will be empowered (Ezek 11.19–20) – or even forced (Ezek 36.27) – to obey, covenant blessings can be reconceptualized as unconditional guarantees.

Second, the author heightens H’s covenant blessings to create the glorious description of restoration in vv. 25–30. For example, in v. 25, he combines H’s “I will put peace in the land” (Lev 26.6) and “I will maintain my covenant with you” (Lev 26.9) into “I will make for them a covenant of peace” (Ezek 34.25). As Klein points out, in Lev 26 “peace” is merely one of the blessings of the covenant, whereas in Ezekiel the covenant itself is characterized by peace. Indeed, the description of the covenant in Ezek 34 lacks any of the punishments found in Lev 26 or other Pentateuchal covenant texts. The author also heightens H’s “you will live securely in the land” (Lev 26.5) into “they will live securely in the wilderness” (Ezek 34.25). Whereas in H security was envisioned as “lying down” (שָׁכֵב, Lev 26.6), Ezek 34.25 envisions an even greater security, with the ability to “sleep in the forests” (יַשְׁנָו בְּיעָרֵי).

In v. 26, the author moves from the issue of internal security to the issue of fertility. He not only borrows H’s promise of fertility (“I will give your rains in their time,” Lev 26.4), but heightens it by interpreting the rains as blessings that God will bring down upon the people (“they will be rains of blessing,” Ezek 34.26).

In v. 27, the author moves from the issue of fertility to the issue of security from external powers. He borrows from H the imagery of liberation from Egypt (“brought you out … from being slaves … broke the bars of your yoke,” Lev 26.13) and uses it to describe future liberation from those who might enslave Israel. He also transforms H’s self-introduction formula (“I am YHWH,” Lev 26.13) into a self-revelation formula (“They will know that I am YHWH,” Ezek 34.27) and temporally attaches it to the imagery of liberation (“They will know that I am YHWH when I break the bars of their yoke and rescue them from the hand of those who enslave them,” Ezek 34.27).

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46 Zimmerli, Ezekiel 2, 220.
48 Klein, Schriftauslegung, 188.
49 That the people could hope for liberation from slavery in the Persian period can be seen in Ezra 9.8, 9; Neh 9.36. The idea of “being in exile” and the hope for restoration can be seen in even later texts such as 4Q385 2.3, 9; 4Q386 1.ii.2–3.
In v. 28 the author continues dealing with the problem of security. He picks up the word “prey” from the preceding sections (Ezek 34.8, 22), where it was used to describe the exploitation of the people by their leaders and by the upper class, and uses it here in a wider fashion to describe exploitation by foreign powers (“they will no longer be prey for the nations,” Ezek 34.28a). Because he is now discussing external threats, he repeats here again the promise of security from Lev 26.5 that he had used above (v. 25) to describe security from internal threats.

It seems to me that it is more likely that Ezek 34.25–30 has borrowed from Lev 26 than that Lev 26 has borrowed from Ezekiel, because the locutions described above have been subjected in Ezekiel to a consistent strategy of modification. It is noteworthy, then, that some accept the kind of redactional model I have outlined here, but argue that the additions to Ezek 34 – which they date to the late Persian period – are being used by Lev 26. One reason given for this conclusion is that Lev 26 contains parallels with Amos 4.6–11, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Deuteronomy. It is claimed that these parallels indicate a literary dependence that is only possible if Lev 26 is part of a very late layer of material in the Pentateuch. Nevertheless, I remain doubtful about this line of argumentation. To be sure, there are verbal parallels between Amos 4 and Lev 26, including shared words (“bread,” “rain,” “sword”) and clauses (“not be satisfied,” “I will strike you,” “I will send pestilence”). But the conclusion that these parallels indicate literary dependence – or that H is the borrowing text and that it must be dated after the exile – has yet to be established. The direction of dependence between the material in Lev 26 and Ezek 34 can only be determined by a comparison of their shared locutions in context. However, I do think it likely that H continued

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50 Why mention here that “the animals of the land will not eat them” (v. 28b) if the matter at hand is security from enemies abroad, and if safety from animals is already mentioned in v. 25? Perhaps the author is reversing the theme of wild animals that become numerous after depopulation (cf. Exod 23.29; Deut 7.22; Isa 7.23–24).

51 I agree with GRÜNWALDT (Heiligkeitsgesetz, 350) that one way to identify the direction of literary dependence is to find modifications that can be correlated with an editorial strategy: “Um einer Lösung näher zu kommen, müßte man nachweisen können, daß entweder Lev 26,4–6.13 oder Ez 34,25–30 sicher redaktionelle Tendenzen enthält, von woher sich eine Bearbeitungsmotivation aufzeigen ließe.” The difficulty lies in determining which text is a departure from and response to the other.

52 So NIHAN, “Holiness Code,” 115; see also LEVIN, Verheißung, 222–25; GRÜNWALDT, Heiligkeitsgesetz, 351.

53 NIHAN, Priestly Torah, 543: “It is generally acknowledged that Lev 26 depends on Ez 34. Several details support this indeed, in particular the fact that other central prophecies in Ezekiel are combined in Lev 26:3–13 with the reception of Ez 34. In the section on threats, the plagues described in v. 18–33 do not only have parallels in Am 4:6–11 (a passage generally recognized as a late addition to Amos) and in Deut 28, but also in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.” So already WELLHAUSEN, Prolegomena, 381–82; see also OTTO, “Innerbiblische Exegese,” 180–82.

54 For example, Hans Walther Wolff, Joel and Amos, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 212–14, also notes the similarity between Amos 4:6–11 and Lev 26; he too argues that Amos 4:6–11 in its present form is later than the earliest material in Amos, but does not conclude that Lev 26 is post-exilic.
to be supplemented and modified even after its use in the book of Ezekiel, before reaching the form in which we now have it.55

5. Conclusion

To sum up: in this essay I have argued that Ezek 34 is a composite text consisting of two oracles that have been extended by redactional additions coordinating the basic material with other passages in Ezekiel and with other prophetic books. I have furthermore argued that the locutions present in both Lev 26 and Ezek 34 should be explained as a literary strategy in which material in Ezekiel is being enriched with imagery taken from the covenant blessings of Lev 26, which is in turn modified to fit the outlook of Ezekiel.

The production of prophetic books out of earlier prophetic traditions seems to have been motivated largely by attempts to discern YHWH’s continuing involvement in history after the trauma of invasion and exile.56 But as is now widely recognized, the books now making up the prophetic corpus were further edited in light of each other. Specifically, prophetic descriptions of restoration after judgment in the prophetic corpus have been redactionally coordinated with each other.57 This was likely due to the development of a prophetic theology of history (including a dissatisfaction with current religious and political conditions in light of the hope for restoration expressed in prophetic texts) and the development of an idea of Scripture and the resulting growth of a Scripture collection.

55 Lev 26.44 is a post-exilic retrospective addition, and the differences between v. 42 and v. 45 may also point to editorial activity.


This process of redactional coordination is quite noticeable in Ezekiel. It occurs not only here in Ezek 34, but elsewhere as well, and is particularly prominent in Ezek 38–39. Moreover, this coordination continues even in the subsequent textual transmission of the book. As Klein notes, “prophecy in the Book of Ezekiel is to a high degree prophecy continued: Existing prophetic texts are referred to and interpreted in the course of the book…. the book as a whole seems to be designed as an ideal compendium of prophetic tradition. As such, it both fulfills and concludes Old Testament prophecy.”

Bibliography


—. Anja Klein, “Prophecy Continued,” 581–82.


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