



Kleinere Beiträge



Ezekiel 14,10–11: ‘The Beatings Will Continue until Morals Improve’?

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Abstract

In Ezekiel’s argument about idolatrous inquirers and persuadable prophets (Ez 14,1–11), how – if at all – does the restoration envisioned in V. 11 relate to the punishment envisioned in V. 10? In this essay I will assess a variety of older arguments about the relation of V. 11 to the preceding verses. In light of its outlook and vocabulary, I will argue that V. 11 has been composed in light of other passages in the book that emphasize divine transformation in the process of spiritual restoration.

Keywords

Ez 14,1–11 – idolatry – transformation – Fortschreibung

1 Introduction

“God kills in order to save.”¹ This is Walther Zimmerli’s conclusion to his analysis of Ez 14,1–11. Other commentators offer similar assessments.² These are attempts to account for how V. 11 relates to the preceding verses, and in particular V. 10:

ונשאו עונם כעון הדרש כעון הנביא יהיה: למען לא־יתעו עוד בית־ישראל מאחרי ולא־יטמאו עוד בכל־פשעיהם והיו לי לעם ואני אהיה להם לאלהים נאם אדני יהוה:

14,10 “And they will bear their punishment – like the punishment of the inquirer, so will be the punishment of the prophet – 11 in order that the house of Israel will no longer go astray from me and will no longer defile themselves with all their transgressions. And they will be my people, and I will be their God” – utterance of Lord Yhwh.

But do these interpretations of Ez 14,10–11 adequately represent the book’s outlook regarding the people’s moral identity and its transformation? Is it true that the spiritual restoration envisioned in the book will be brought about by harsher punishments – “the beatings will continue until morals improve”? Will killing off a few idolatrous inquirers and persuadable prophets result in a restored covenant relationship? In this essay I will assess arguments about the relation of V. 11 to the preceding verses, and will argue that V. 11 has been composed in light of other passages in the book that emphasize divine transformation in the process of spiritual restoration.

2 The Contents and Organization of Ezekiel 14,1–11

Ezekiel 14,1–8 concern Yhwh’s response to the one who comes to consult a prophet while also contemplating גְּלוּלִים. After a narrative introduction in V. 1 that establishes the setting and characters, V. 2 depicts a response that

1 *Walther Zimmerli*, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, transl. Ronald E. Clements (Hermeneia), Philadelphia, PA 1979 [1969], 309.

2 See e.g. *A. B. Davidson*, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, Cambridge 1892, 95: “Yet all these judgments of God have a far-off merciful end in view. They are a blast of fire and of judgment to consume the sin of the people (Is. iv. 4), and when the tempest is overpast the sky rises clear behind – that the house of Israel go no more astray ... but that they may be My people and I may be their God.”

begins with a Prophetic Word Formula. The material falls into three sections: V. 1–3, a statement of Yhwh's response to idolatrous inquirers who have come to Ezekiel; V. 4–5, a legal scenario describing idolatrous inquirers who come to a prophet and Yhwh's negative response; V. 6–8, a call to turn plus a more elaborate description of idolatrous inquirers and Yhwh's negative response, concluding with a Recognition Formula. Each of these sections are linked by repeated vocabulary. The descriptions of Yhwh's negative response are increasingly forceful, beginning with an ironic "answer" in V. 4.6 and ending with the "cutting off" of the inquirer in V. 8. The use of legal terminology familiar to us from Lev 17,³ the combination of this legal terminology with prophetic terminology,⁴ and the use of patterned repetition with variation⁵ suggest that this material is not a transcript of prophetic speech, but a well-crafted literary composition. Verses 1–8 form a cohesive and coherent unit, and could stand on their own; strictly speaking, V. 9–11 are not essential to their argument.

Nevertheless, V. 1–8 *do* raise issues that are not fully addressed if these verses stand alone.⁶ Given that they depict the scenario of the one who inquires of Yhwh by a prophet while contemplating other deities, this raises the question: what kind of prophet would allow himself to be consulted by such a person? The answer is: only an easily swayed (V. 9, יפתה) prophet, one who tells people what they wish to hear (cf. chap. 13).⁷ Verse 9 therefore grows quite naturally out of the problem presented in V. 1–8,⁸ and the articular "the prophet" (V. 9a, הַנְּבִיא) presumes the scenario presented earlier. Verse 9 also attributes the prophet's suggestibility to Yhwh himself, as a means of entrapment to bring about the prophet's destruction. Verse 10 represents an explicit attempt to link

3 *Walther Zimmerli*, Die Eigenart der prophetischen Rede des Ezechiel, in: ZAW 66 (1954) 1–26 [esp. 20]; Ezekiel 1 (see note 1) 302–305. See further *Moshe Greenberg*, Ezekiel 1–20 (AB 22), Garden City, NY 1983, 252.

4 *Corinna Körting*, The Cultic Dimension of Prophecy in the Book of Ezekiel, in: M. J. Boda et al. (Hg.), The Prophets Speak on Forced Migration, Atlanta, GA 2015, 121–132.

5 *Greenberg*, Ezekiel 1–20 (see note 3) 251–252; *Tobias Häner*, Bleibendes Nachwirken des Exils. Eine Untersuchung zur kanonischen Endgestalt des Ezechielbuches (HBS 78), Freiburg i.Br. 2014, 209.

6 So also *Leslie C. Allen*, Ezekiel 1–19 (WBC 28), Dallas, TX 1994, 207.

7 Note that Ez 14,1–11 has been placed at the end of a series of units that are thematically linked by concerns about prophecy: 12,21–25,26–28; 13,1–16,17–23.

8 Zimmerli compares the presentation of the two offenders (the inquirer, V. 1–8; the prophet, V. 9) to the presentation of the two parties in Num 5,11–31 (husband and wife); *Zimmerli*, Ezekiel 1 (see note 1) 306. However, it seems to me that these two texts are quite different at the level of formal structure. Moreover, in Ez 14 both parties are presented as guilty, whereas in Num 5 the guilt or innocence of one of the parties is what is under consideration.

V. 1–8 and V. 9 together even more closely, emphasizing the parity of the judgment on the inquirer of V. 1–8 and the prophet of V. 9. Zimmerli argued that the use of legal language throughout V. 1–9 leads the reader to expect a concluding statement precisely of the kind we see in V. 10.⁹ He (and others) concluded that V. 1–11 are a compositional unity,¹⁰ though some have taken V. 9–11 as a later addition.¹¹ But it is the relationship of V. 11 to the preceding material that for me raises interesting questions about conceptual unity. The first word in V. 11 (לְמַעַן, “in order that”) appears to subordinate the rest of the verse to the preceding material – but is this in fact the case?

- 9 *Zimmerli*, Ezekiel 1 (see note 1) 305: “For the Old Testament I have shown that the formula לְמַעַן אֲשַׁמְּךָ is used outside of Ezek 14 in thirteen references (including Ezek 44:10, 12) exactly like the synonymous formula אֲשַׁמְּךָ אֲשַׁמְּךָ (in eight texts, including Ezek 23:49) in order to qualify decisively a sacral-legal offense.... Ezek 14:10 shows this formula precisely in the position which its form would lead us to expect, as the concluding summarizing statement about the worshipper of idols and the prophet questioned by him, when the legal aspect of the case has been dealt with in detail in vv 7f and 9.”
- 10 *Zimmerli*, Ezekiel 1 (see note 1) 305: “A careful consideration of the inner movement of thought, with regard to the insight we have obtained into the legal style, appears to me ... to favor the unity of the section.” So also *Gustav Hölscher*, *Hesekiel, der Dichter und das Buch: Eine literarkritische Untersuchung* (BZAW 39), Giessen 1924, 86–87 (though Hölscher views V. 1–11 as a legendary, post-Ezekielian composition); *Allen*, *Ezekiel 1–19* (see note 6) 195–96; *Thomas Krüger*, *Geschichtskonzepte im Ezechielbuch* (BZAW 180), Berlin 1989, 353–354, 523.
- 11 According to Herrmann, V. 9–11 are a later insertion by Ezekiel: “Nach der abschliessenden Formel von 8 ist 9–11 eine theologische Weiterführung des vorangehenden. Daß diese Verse der späteren Profetie des Ez angehören, zeigt schon die deuteronomische Bundesformel, die bei Ez nur noch 36,28; 37,23, 27 und etwas modifiziert 34,30 (stärker verändert 34,31) vorkommt”; see *Johannes Herrmann*, *Ezechiel, übersetzt und erklärt* (KAT 11), Leipzig 1924, 87; so also *Shemaryahu Talmon* and *Michael Fishbane*, *The Structuring of Biblical Books*, in: *ASTI 10* (1975) 129–153 [137]. For Fohrer, V. 9–11aα are a later addition, and V. 11aβ and 11b are still later glosses; see *Georg Fohrer*, *Ezechiel* (HAT 13), Tübingen 1955, 76–77. Wevers took V. 9–11 as a “postscript” and “afterthought” by the prophet, and V. 6, 7* as later additions from the school of Ezekiel; see *John W. Wevers*, *Ezekiel* (NCBC), London 1969, 11–13. Odell is ambivalent: “Ezekiel 14:9–11 does not easily fit its context. A recognition formula in v. 8 suggests that the oracle against the inquirers has come to an end. On the other hand, the lack of introductory formulas would suggest that these verses represent a continuation of the previous speech”; *Margaret S. Odell*, *Ezekiel*, Macon, GA 2005, 163. Pohlmann has a completely different compositional model for the book compared to the authors above; he understands V. 7–11 as the core of this section, with V. 1–6 as later material. See *Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann*, *Das Buch Hesekiel (Ezechiel)*. Kapitel 1–19 (ATD 22/1), Göttingen 1996, 198.

3 The Relationship between V. 10 and V. 11

A glance at the history of interpretation will reveal that there is a remarkably wide range of perspectives on the relationship between V. 10 and 11. They can be broadly categorized into three positions: first, the position that V. 11 expresses the result of V. 10; second, the position that only V. 11a expresses the result of V. 10; and third, the position that V. 11 does not express the result of V. 10.

3.1 *Position One: V. 11ab Is Subordinate to, and Expresses the Result of, V. 10*

Those who see V. 11 as subordinate to V. 10 vary considerably as to how punishment is believed to result in spiritual restoration. First, there are those who claim that Yhwh's judgment is somehow *redemptive* in nature. In the introduction above, I noted Zimmerli's claim that "God kills in order to save." Regarding V. 10–11, he furthermore states: "Here, as the final goal of Yahweh's judgment, the restoration of the covenant is wholeheartedly affirmed."¹² Precisely how judgment results in a restored covenant is not entirely clear; Zimmerli repeatedly refers to this as a "mystery."¹³ Similarly, according to Daniel Block, V. 11 "serves not only to declare Yahweh's purpose in his judgment, but also to offer a splendid ray of hope for the future. Although Yahweh must deal harshly with his people, his objectives are redemptive."¹⁴ Again, it remains unclear *how* judgment is supposedly "redemptive."¹⁵

¹² Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (see note 1) 309.

¹³ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (see note 1) 309.

¹⁴ Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24* (NICOT), Grand Rapids, MI 1997, 435–436.

¹⁵ See also the puzzling statement by Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel (Interpretation)*, Louisville, KY 1990, 72: "Even here, however, judgment is not the last word; otherwise stated, judgment is a function of the divine will to save and confer life. For the verdict is preceded by an invitation to repentance." But the presence of a call to turn (V. 6) does not make judgment redemptive! The same critique can be applied to Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, trans. Cosslett Quin (OTL), Philadelphia, PA 1970 [1965–66], 184: "[Verse 11] renews the warning call of v. 6 and reminds us of the chief aim of divine retribution: it is in order that Israel may be brought back from where she has gone astray, and cleansed from the apostasy by which she has become unclean for Yahweh and been cast out of fellowship with him, and thus – (here the announcement of the punishment is wholly transformed into a promise of salvation) – be united once more with her Lord in God's covenant." So also Karin Schöpflin, *Theologie als Biographie im Ezechielbuch. Ein Beitrag zur Konzeption alttestamentlicher Prophetie* (FAT 36), Tübingen 2002, 319–320: "14,9–11 dürfte als in mehreren Schritten gewachsene Anreicherung anzusehen sein, die zunächst den Propheten als das menschliche Gegenüber der Fragenden in den Blick nimmt (V.9), dann die beiden Fälle unter dem Stichwort des Schuld-Tragens als korrespondierend zusammenfaßt (V.10)

Second, there are those who argue that Yhwh's judgment is *purgative* in nature: once the idolatrous inquirers and persuadable prophets are exterminated from the people, the covenant relationship is restored. Darr and Kraetzschmar are representative of this position,¹⁶ and Körting (who argues that the guilt of the inquirer and the prophet leads to the defilement of the community) seems to be as well.¹⁷

Third, there are those who argue that the judgment of V. 10 functions as a *deterrent* to Israel, terrifying them into turning from idolatry and/or preventing them from idolatry in the first place. This allows Yhwh's goal of a covenant relationship to exist unhindered. Hölscher, Allen, Pohlmann and others are representative of this position.¹⁸

und zum Schluß als Ziel dieses göttlichen Strafhandelns die Wiederherstellung einer intakten Beziehung zwischen YHWH und seinem Volk nennt (V.11). Der Schlußvers bietet somit einen Heilsausblick."

- 16 *Katheryn Pfisterer Darr*, "The Book of Ezekiel," in: L. E. Keck (Hg.), *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 6, Nashville, KY 2001, 1073–1607 [here 1209]: "The destruction of both guilty parties will have a purging effect upon the house of Israel: No longer will they stray from God or defile themselves with their sins. 'Then,' Yahweh asserts, 'they shall be my people, and I will be their God' (recall 11:20). Such is the ultimate goal of Yahweh's punishments – that the covenant relationship between God and Israel be restored." So also *Richard Kraetzschmar*, *Das Buch Ezechiel (HKAT)*, Göttingen 1900, 137 (on V. 8f.) "kein Wort von einer drohenden Katastrophe über Jerus., dafür aber ein Hinweis auf die messian. Zeit, deren Anbrüche nichts mehr entgegensteht, sobald die Bethörer des Volkes beseitigt sind v. 11"; 139 (on V. 11) "Sind Götzendiener und falsche Proph. beseitigt, so kann die Messiaszeit und mit ihr die Verwirklichung einer idealen Bundesgemeinschaft zw. Jahve und Isr. eintreten."
- 17 *Körting*, *Cultic Dimension of Prophecy* (see note 4) 129, 130. In support of the idea that the guilt of the inquirer and prophet defiles the entire community, Körting cites Jacob Milgrom. However, Milgrom is speaking about the contagiousness of *ritual* impurity, not moral impurity: "Still, cadavers and fluxes become baneful not when their impurity is contracted by an Israelite but only if it remains on his person. Like contagious disease, it spreads and becomes more virulent unless it is cured and purified"; so *Jacob Milgrom*, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AB 3)*, New York, NY 1991, 310. Moral impurity is not contagious to others in the way that ritual impurity is; see *Jonathan Klawans*, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism*, Oxford 2000, 28.
- 18 So *Hölscher*, *Hesekiel* (see note 10) 86: "Der Zweck der Drohung ist, daß Israel nicht mehr abirre noch sich verunreinige"; *Allen*, *Ezekiel 1–19* (see note 6) 197: "This selective punishment that exposed blatant compromise and its prophetic fostering was to serve as a deterrent for the rest of the exiles ... The mingled notes of dire punishment and passionate appeal earlier in the piece here find resolution in the statements of God's ultimate purpose"; *Pohlmann*, *Hesekiel* (see note 11) 201: "Sein Hauptanliegen ist die Reinheit des Jahweglaubens; er sieht sie in Gefahr und erkennt darin die Gefährdung der Einheit des Jahwevolkes. Diese Einheit gilt es zu wahren, indem alles unterbunden und ausgedehnt wird, was das Band der Einheit, den einigenden Jahweglauben, schwächt, korrodiert. Durch Abstoßen der 'unreinen' Elemente kann die Reinheit und damit der

Fourth, there are those who argue that the judgment of V. 10 has a *pedagogical* function. According to Greenberg, “God’s immediate punitive purpose has an educative final aim – to bring the errants back to him.”¹⁹ A rather different understanding of pedagogy is espoused by Odell. According to her, it is not punishment *per se* that leads to restoration, but Yhwh’s sovereign manipulation of prophets and questioners (V. 9) that leads the people to recognize his sovereignty.²⁰

Fifth, according to Ewald, the punishment of V. 10 has a *diagnostic* function: Yhwh makes an example of those he punishes in order to “take hold of the rest by the heart” and determine whether they can be rehabilitated.²¹

It seems to me that there are a number of difficulties in taking the restoration in V. 11 as dependent on the punishment in V. 10. First, the idea that the punishment in V. 10 has a redemptive function is problematized by the fact that divine judgment is never depicted as redemptive in the book of Ezekiel. It may sometimes bring about *recognition* of Yhwh; but such recognition is also attributed to e.g. Ammonites and Philistines (25,7.17), and is clearly not redemptive in these instances.²² At the individual level, divine judgment simply results in death (e.g., 9,5–6; 11,7–11.13; 17,15–16; 18,20; 23,46–47) or exclusion (e.g., 13,9). At a larger level, divine judgment actually creates problems: it stands in tension with Yhwh’s oath to bring Israel out of Egypt into the land (20,6 vs. 20,8.13.15.23.32),²³ and leads to the profanation of Yhwh’s name in exile (36,17–20). Conversely, when spiritual transformation is described in Ezekiel, it

Bestand der Eigenwelt bewahrt werden.” So also *Ferdinand Hitzig*, *Der Prophet Ezechiel* (KeH 8) Leipzig 1847, 96; *C. F. Keil*, *Biblicher Commentar über den Propheten Ezechiel* (BCAT 3/3), Leipzig 1882 [1868], 136; *G. A. Cooke*, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel* (ICC), Edinburgh 1936, 152.

19 *Greenberg*, *Ezekiel* 1–20 (see note 3) 254.

20 *Odell*, *Ezekiel* (see note 11) 163–164: “Finally, the concluding statement of purpose, which ends with Yahweh’s declaration of the covenant formulary, ‘Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God,’ completes the deliberations against the exiles’ spiritual condition by yet again insisting on Yahweh’s exclusive claim to Israel. As long as they harbor idols in their hearts, there can be no covenant. But even in the midst of this situation, Yahweh uses the prophets to bring about the rehabilitation of the people. The divine strategy is the use of deception.... Yahweh counters their indirection with misdirection, all with the aim of bringing the people to recognize his sovereign claim.”

21 So *Heinrich Ewald*, *Die Propheten des alten Bundes*, vol. 2, Stuttgart 1841, 262: “um durch ein solches Beispiel gewaltiger und augenscheinlicher Strafe einmal wieder mächtig die übrigen am Herzen zu fassen, ob ihr Jahven entfremdetes Herz noch zu bessern sey!”

22 *Paul M. Joyce*, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel* (JSOT.S 51), Sheffield 1989, 89–90.

23 See *Rainer Albertz*, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.*, trans. David Green, Atlanta 2003 [2001], 365.

is due to Yhwh's gift of a unified heart and new spirit (11,19–20; 36,26–27) or to Yhwh's cleansing and deliverance from sin (16,63; 36,25,29; 37,23).²⁴ And when the covenant formula is mentioned elsewhere (11,19–20; 36,25–28; 37,23,27), it is always linked with transformative action rather than judgment.

Second, the idea that divine punishment successfully functions as a purgative presumes an optimistic outlook on the people in which only a few “bad apples” are to blame – here, the idolatrous inquirers and persuadable prophets.²⁵ But as Zimmerli pointed out, such an outlook is excluded here in 14,1–11 by the accusation in V. 5 that the entire “House of Israel” is estranged from Yhwh and stands under threat of divine punishment.²⁶ Moreover, such an optimistic outlook is excluded elsewhere by passages such as Ez 2,3–5; 3,7; 12,1–2; 20,30–31, which depict the prophet's contemporaries as chronically rebellious.

Third, the idea that divine punishment is a deterrent that can successfully regulate Israelite behaviour²⁷ seems implausible as an outlook in the book of Ezekiel. Punishments that one would imagine to be successful deterrents are not: in Ez 18,2, the condition of exile is being all-too-easily explained away in the proverb about sour grapes. And in Ez 23,5–11, Jerusalem sees but is not deterred by the destruction of Samaria; instead, it attempts to out-do its sister-city in unfaithful behaviour. But more importantly, the purpose of punishment is never described as a deterrent in Ezekiel, in contrast to the depictions of punishment in e.g. Num 26,10; Dtn 19,(16–)20; Am 4,6–11.

Fourth, Greenberg's thesis that divine punishment is educational is problematized by the fact that the “errants” he identifies as being educated are in

24 In Ez 20,42–44, Israel's self-loathing seems to be triggered by the bare fact that Yhwh has repatriated Israel from exile (unless this passage presumes the gift of the new heart and spirit described elsewhere).

25 The only depiction of a “purgings” in the book occurs in Ez 20,38, where “rebels and transgressors” will be purged out of the people in the wilderness. But this motif seems to be required as a component of the “new exodus” argument in 20,33–38, which includes an allusion to Israel's wilderness traditions in which “rebels” were destroyed. Note that a subsequent transformative experience for the rest of the people is depicted in V. 41–44, where the very act of being repatriated by Yhwh creates a change in them (note also the shared language and outlook between 20,41–44 and 16,61,63; 28,25; 36,23–24,31–32).

26 Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (see note 1) 307 (on V. 5): “the divine saying does not restrict itself with this threat of judgment to individual men, but shows immediately the deeper truth that this holy wrath has in mind ‘Israel’ when speaking about the individual sinner”; 309: “What then would remain of his people? We cannot see how, from a human point of view, any possibility remains for the people.” For a different perspective, see *Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann*, *Ezechielstudien* (BZAW 202), Berlin 1992, 7–8.

27 Ironically, according to Ez 23,48, Yhwh's judgment on Jerusalem will be a deterrent for other “women” – i.e., countries (cf. 23,10); both 5,14–15 and 23,48 use forms of the root יָדַח to speak of other countries being “admonished” by the punishment of Jerusalem.

fact those who are being *killed* by Yhwh (V. 8, “I will set my face against that man ... I will cut him off”;²⁸ V. 9, “I will stretch out my hand against him and destroy him”). And with respect to Odell’s thesis: why would we expect the people to learn from and be transformed by Yhwh’s manipulation of prophets if they have not learned from his other even more catastrophic actions?

Fifth, Ewald’s thesis that the punishment of V. 10 has a diagnostic function anachronistically attributes a positive sense to the word “capture” (תפש) in V. 5. But the images associated with this word in ancient Israelite and Second Temple-period texts are thoroughly negative.²⁹ The verb תפש is regularly used for the capture of cities in battle (Dtn 20,19; Jos 8,8; 2 Kön 14,7; 16,9; 18,13), for the capture of individuals in battle (Jos 8,23; 1 Sam 15,8; 23,26; 2 Kön 14,13; Ez 12,13; 19,8–9), and even for sexual assault (Dtn 22,28). Our earliest extant interpretations of Ez 14,5 are found in LXX and 1QH^a 12.15–21, which understood תפש as punitive and not restorative.³⁰ It is only in the Targum that we find the first attempt to soften the harshness of this image.³¹

To sum up: the claims that the punishment in V. 10 has a purgative, deterrent, pedagogical or diagnostic function do not take into account the book’s pessimistic outlook on the people’s moral identity. As I will demonstrate below, V. 11 has a close literary connection with passages that emphasize divine transformation in the process of spiritual restoration.

3.2 *Position Two: Only V. 11a Is Related to V. 10*

The second position – that only V. 11a is dependent on V. 10 – is represented by Georg Fohrer, who takes V. 9–11aα as a later addition to V. 1–8. He sees the punishment described in V. 10 as a deterrent intended to prevent the apostasy

28 Note that Greenberg takes “cut off” (V. 8) as referring to “early, untimely death;” *Greenberg*, *Ezekiel 1–20* (see note 3) 250.

29 BDB (s.v. תפש) glosses the verb in V. 5 as “terrorize them”; see also *Arnold B. Ehrlich*, *Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel: textkritisches, sprachliches und sachliches*, vol. 5, Leipzig 1912, 48; *Cooke*, *Ezekiel* (see note 18) 151: “Jahveh’s answer is a threat of punishment”; *Schöpfelin*, *Theologie als Biographie* (see note 15) 315: “Das Verb *תפש* besitzt sonst stets eine gewalttätige Konnotation; wörtlich verstanden müsste V.5a ein Strafwirken YHWHs umreißen.”

30 LXX translates it with *πλάγιάσθη* “turn aside, lead astray.” 1QH^a 12.19–21 paraphrases and condenses Ez 14 to describe the psalmist’s enemies and their fate: “For you, God, will answer them (תענה להם) by judging them in your strength, according to their idols (גלוליהם) and according to the multitude of their transgressions (פשעיהם), in order to capture (למען יתפשו) in their thoughts the ones who are estranged (נזורה) from your covenant. And you will cut off (תכרת) in judgment all the men of deception.”

31 Targum Jonathan translates Ez 14,5 as “in order to bring near (בדיל לקרבה) the house of Israel, to put repentance into the heart of those who turned aside from my worship.” Rashi also follows this interpretation; see *Menahem Cohen* (Hg.), *Miqra’ot Gedolot ‘HaKeter’*: *Ezekiel*, Ramat Gan 2013, 70.

described in V. 11a α (he understands V. 11a β is a “supplementary gloss”). Fohrer takes the description of the restored covenant in V. 11b as a further addition, quoting 11,20.³²

Fohrer’s identification of V. 11b as a gloss suggests that he feels it problematic to link the covenant formula to Yhwh’s punitive action. However, I am not convinced that he fully succeeds in either explaining the problem or in offering a full solution. First, Fohrer’s view that the punishment in V. 10 is a deterrent is subject to the same criticism that I raised earlier. Second, if V. 11b is a “gloss” that quotes 11,20, what is the redactor’s motive for adding it here? This remains unexplained. But as I will argue below, I believe Fohrer was on the right track with his comparison of 14,11 to 11,20.

3.3 *Position Three: V. 11 Does Not Express the Result of V. 10*

The third position – those who see V. 11 as unrelated to the punishment in V. 10 – is represented by Rudolf Mosis, John Wevers, and Keith Carley, and Paul Joyce. According to Mosis, V. 11 cannot be logically related to the statement of V. 10 that the punishment of the inquirer and the punishment of the prophet will be the same. How can the *equality* of punishment (V. 10b) guarantee the absence of straying and rebellion (V. 11)?³³ Therefore, the statement “in order that the house of Israel may no longer go astray ...” (V. 11) is for Mosis directly subordinate to the command in V. 6 to speak “to the house of Israel,” and indirectly envisions the “goal and result” of its urging to “turn from your idols.”³⁴

I would certainly agree with Mosis that the future faithfulness of Israel and restored covenant relationship envisioned in V. 11 have nothing to do with the statement in V. 10b about the equality of punishment. But as far as I know,

32 Fohrer, Ezechiel (see note 11) 76, 77: “Der Prophet aber macht sich seinerseits schuldig und wird ebenso bestraft wie der schuldige Frager. Auf diese Weise soll Israel davor bewahrt werden, weiterhin von Jahwe abzufallen.... dl 11b, ‘Und sie sollen mir zum Volk werden und ich ihnen zum Gott, ist der Spruch des Herrn Jahwe’ = zitierende Gl nach 11:20.”

33 Rudolf Mosis, Ez 14,1–11 – ein Ruf zur Umkehr, in: BZ 2 (1975) 161–194 [187]: “Wenn erkannt ist, daß V.10 ein eigenständiger Satz mit eigener Aussage ist, der die Rechtsbelehrung abschließt, kann der Zweck- bzw. Folgesatz V.11 nicht mehr unmittelbar mit V.10 verbunden werden. Was V.11 gesagt wird, kann nicht das Ziel oder das Ergebnis dessen sein, daß die Schuld des Fragers und des Propheten gleich ist. Wenn die Rechtssätze V.7f.9 samt den abschließenden feststellungen V.10, wie hier dargelegt, den Sinn einer Rechtsbelehrung haben, die den Umkehruf V.6 begründet und die Dringlichkeit der geforderten Abkehr von den Götzen unterstreicht, kann V.11 auch nicht mehr direkt und formell auf die Verse 7–10 bezogen werden.”

34 Mosis, Ez 14,1–11 (see note 33) 187: “V.11 nennt also direkt das Ziel des göttlichen Auftrags an den Propheten, zum Haus Israel zu sprechen, indirekt natürlich auch das Ziel und die Folge der in der aufgetragenen Rede geforderten Umkehr.”

no one has suggested that it does. Those who take V. 11 as dependent on V. 10 understand it to be dependent on the *first* clause (stating that inquirers and prophets will be punished) rather than on the second clause (stating that their punishments would be equivalent) – and it is not difficult to find examples of similar syntactic constructions.³⁵

John Wevers and Keith Carley come to a result similar to Mosis, but by means of an argument about the text’s formation.³⁶ They reconstruct V. 4–5.8 as an original oral prophecy and V. 9–10 as an Ezekielian extension to the original prophecy.³⁷ They take V. 6.7.11 as later additions.³⁸ In their reconstruction, the effect of adding V. 6.11 is to turn an original oracle of judgment into something hopeful: they understand V. 6 as interpreting V. 5 in a positive manner, and V. 11 as envisioning the result of the “turning” spoken of in V. 6. Thus Wevers and Carley understand the word לִמְעַן in V. 11 not as immediately subordinate to V. 10, but as connected in a rather broad sense to an idea associated with V. 6.

It seems to me, first, that Wevers and Carley are overly optimistic about our ability to reconstruct prophetic speech from behind what is generally acknowledged to be an exceedingly literary text.³⁹ Second, they appear to be working with a form-critical assumption that a proclamation of judgment

35 The clause יִרְאוּךָ לִמְעַן in 1 Kön 8,40 is clearly dependent on the verbs in 8,39a, and not on V. 39b (“because you alone know the heart of all the sons of humanity”). Similarly, the clause וְיָדַעְתָּ לִמְעַן in Jes 45,6 is dependent on 45,5bα (“I will gird you”), and not on V. 5bβ (“and you have not known me”).

36 *Wevers*, Ezekiel (see note 11) 111–113; *Keith Carley*, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel (CBC)*, Cambridge 1975, 87–88.

37 *Wevers*, Ezekiel (see note 11) 111: “Verses 9–11 constitute a peculiar problem in that they deal with a specific problem arising out of the situation described in verse 3, but it appears as a postscript after the oracle is completed. There is no good reason for not understanding it as precisely that – an afterthought by the prophet but necessary to a complete statement of the case.”

38 *Wevers*, Ezekiel (see note 11) 113: “11. This is not part of the original account. As a redemptive function for the preceding sacril law it is in character completely different from its parallel in verse 5. In content it comes closer to the mind of the writer of verse 6. For the covenant formula, cf. on 11.20. On the other hand, it presents a prophetic ideal which would be shared by all prophets”; *Carley*, Ezekiel (see note 36) 88: “6f. The first of these additions (verse 6) specifies the purpose of verse 5, to bring about the people’s repentance. The second (verse 7) largely repeats verse 4, but the case no includes a reference to alien(s), as often in priestly law (e.g. Lev. 17:10).... 11. Like verse 6, this addition looks to the goal of the prophecy, envisaging an obedient nation no longer defiled by contact with idols.”

39 See *Albertz*, *Israel in Exile* (see note 23) 347: “the evidence suggests written composition from the outset.” See also *Schöpfung*, *Theologie als Biographie* (see note 15), 343.

and an appeal to turn are incompatible,⁴⁰ and on this basis isolate both V. 6 and 11 as only loosely and secondarily connected to the surrounding material. Third, their claim that V. 6 “specifies the purpose of V. 5”⁴¹ attributes a positive meaning to the word “capture” (שׁוּבָה) that is, as I argued above, anachronistic. Finally, the claims of Mosis, Wevers, and Carley that the future faithfulness of Israel (V. 11) is envisioned as the “goal and result” of Yhwh’s command to speak about turning (V. 6) is one that seems foreign to the rest of the book, which does not depict “turning” as a realistic response to the prophet’s message. In fact, the book takes a consistently negative position on the people’s response to the prophet.⁴² Furthermore, a number of scholars have convincingly argued that the book of Ezekiel reflects a pessimistic stance on human moral agency⁴³ and the possibility of repentance.⁴⁴

The last representative of the position that V. 11 is not dependent on V. 10 is Paul Joyce, who (as far as I can tell) is the only commentator to explicitly remark on the tension between the judgment in V. 9–10 and the restored relationship described in V. 11. He ascribes this tension to the prophet himself: “YHWH cannot, it seems, allow the ‘cutting off’ of Israel to be the last word.... While this

40 Note however the following examples: Jer 18,11; 25,4–6; 36,3; Ez 18,30; Joel 2,1–13, and the comments of *Zimmerli*, Ezekiel 1 (see note 1) 308; *Allen*, Ezekiel 1–19 (see note 6) 195.

41 *Wevers*, Ezekiel (see note 11) 112: “6 This is an expansion by a later writer reflecting on v. 5. The divine purpose behind laying hold of the hearts is that Israel may repent and abandon all idolatry”; *Carley*, Ezekiel (see note 36) 88: “6f. The first of these additions (verse 6) specifies the purpose of verse 5, to bring about the people’s repentance.”

42 See e.g. Ez 3,7; 21,5; 33,7–9, and note the placement of 33,17.20.30–33 after 33,11.

43 For the conception of the moral self in Ezekiel, see *Jacqueline Lapsley*, *Can These Bones Live? The Problem of the Moral Self in the Book of Ezekiel* (BZAW 301), Berlin 2000, esp. 106–107; *Carol A. Newsom*, *Moral “Recipes” in Deuteronomy and Ezekiel: Divine Authority and Human Agency*, in: *HeBAI* 6 (2017) 488–509 [esp. 508].

44 For the function of calls to “turn” (only in Ez 14,6; 18,30; 33,11), see *Joyce*, *Divine Initiative* (see note 22) 57–59, 69–70 (for Joyce, the calls to “turn” establish Israel’s responsibility and Yhwh’s openness, but do not constitute a program for restoration); *Baruch J. Schwartz*, *Ezekiel’s Dim View of Israel’s Restoration*, in: M. S. Odell and J. T. Strong (Hg.), *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives*, Atlanta, GA 2000, 43–67 [esp. 45–47]; *The Ultimate Aim of Israel’s Restoration in Ezekiel*, in: Chaim Cohen et al. (Hg.), *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism*, FS S. Paul, University Park, PA 2008, 305–319 [311]: “For Ezekiel, Israel’s ultimate obedient subservience will be YHWH’s doing, not the result of repentance. Repentance is a feat of which (he comes to believe) they are incapable, and this is precisely why YHWH must refashion their hearts and perform expiation for them”; *David A. Lambert*, *How Repentance Became Biblical: Judaism, Christianity, and the Interpretation of Scripture*, Oxford 2016, 115: “the prophet’s call to ‘turn back,’ indeed, the very rhetoric of ‘turning’ as a possibility, ends up serving as nothing more than an extension of the prophetic function of blame.”

verse could be seen as a more optimistic addition, it is better understood as illustrating the tensions within Ezekiel’s perception of the divine purposes.⁴⁵ However, the function of the word למען remains unclear. Still, it seems that Joyce feels there is a gap in the logic of the passage – and this highlights the issue I am attempting to explain.

4 Ezekiel 14,11 as *Fortschreibung*

How then is V. 11 related to the preceding material? First, I would agree with Wevers, Carley, and Joyce that the למען of V. 11 is not directly dependent on V. 10 (though I would disagree that it goes back to V. 6).

Second, it seems clear that a faithful house of Israel and a restored covenant relationship would by definition be free from the idolatry and false prophecy described in V. 1–10. But while V. 11 envisions Yhwh’s ultimate goal, the punishment in V. 10 should not be understood as a description of the *means* to achieve this goal. Verse 11 envisions the state of affairs after the problems described in V. 1–10 are solved, but it does not tell us *how* the problems are solved.

Third, building on a number of commentators who have noted the similarity of 14,11 to 37,23,⁴⁶ I want to go further and propose that V. 11 was actually composed in light of 37,23.⁴⁷ Note the identical vocabulary in the two passages:

למען לא־יתעו עוד בית־ישראל מאחרי ולא־יטמאו עוד בכל־פשעיהם והיו לי לעם ואני אהיה להם לאלהים נאם אדני יהוה:

45 Paul M. Joyce, *Ezekiel: A Commentary*, London 2009, 125.

46 Herrmann, *Ezechiel* (see note 11) 87; Cooke, *Ezekiel* (see note 18) 152; Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19* (see note 6) 197, 208; Körtling, *Cultic Dimensions* (see note 4) 131. Levin refers to 14,11 as a “Sekundärparallele” to 37,23; see Christoph Levin, *Die Verheißung des neuen Bundes in ihrem theologiegeschichtlichen Zusammenhang ausgelegt* (FRLANT 137), Göttingen 1985, 215.

47 For Zimmerli, Ez 37,20–23(24a) was an insertion to the surrounding material made by the prophet or his disciples; see Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters 25–48*, trans. James D. Martin (Hermeneia), Philadelphia 1983 [1969], 271–272, 275–276. Recent scholarship has dated Ez 37,23 considerably later, in the Persian period: see e.g. Anja Klein, *Schriftauslegung im Ezechielbuch: Redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu Ez 34–39* (BZAW 391), Berlin 2008, 86–88, 215, 223–224, 369–370, 409; Christophe Nihan, *De la fin du jugement sur Jérusalem au jugement final des nations en Ézéchiel: Ézéchiel 33–39 et l’eschatologie du recueil*, in: Jacques Vermeylen (Hg.), *Les Prophètes de la Bible et la Fin des Temps. XXIII^e congrès de l’Association catholique française pour l’étude de la Bible* (Lille, 24–27 août 2009), Paris 2010, 99–146 [114–118].

14,11 in order that the house of Israel will no longer go astray from me *and will no longer defile themselves with all their transgressions. And they will be my people, and I will be their God* – utterance of Lord Yhwh.

ולא יטמאו עוד בגלוליהם ובשקוציהם ובכל פשעיהם והושעתי אתם מכל מושבתיהם
אשר חטאו בהם וטהרתי אותם והיירלי לעם ואני אהיה להם לאלהים:

37,23 *And they will no longer defile themselves* with their idols and with their detestable things and *with all their transgressions*.⁴⁸ And I will save them from all their apostasies⁴⁹ in which they have sinned, and I will purify them. *And they will be my people, and I will be their God.*

It seems to me that Ez 14,11 is an instance of *Fortschreibung*. I think we must envision a scribe who reads 14,1–10, remembers 37,23 and sees it as the solution to the problems in 14,1–10, and then writes V. 11 in light of this. The statement in 37,23 supplies the missing information needed to explain how Israel's transformation is brought about. It is only after Yhwh saves and purifies his people from their transgressions that the covenant relationship will be restored. The word "in order that" in V. 11 presumes Yhwh's transformative action in 37,23, and perhaps not coincidentally mirrors the syntax and wording of 11,20 and its relationship to 11,19:

ונתתי להם לב אחד ורוח חדשה אתן בקרבכם והסרתי לב האבן מבשרם ונתתי להם לב בשר: למען בחקתי ילכו ואת־משפטי ישמרו ועשו אתם והיירלי לעם ואני אהיה להם לאלהים:

11,19–20 And I will give them a single heart, and I will put a new spirit within them.⁵⁰ And I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, *in order that* they will walk in my statutes, and will keep my ordinances and do them. *And they will be my people, and I will be their God.*

Furthermore, the first two clauses of 14,11 take up the two individuals described in V. 1–8.9 and transform them by metonymy into larger behavioural problems

48 LXX lacks an equivalent to פשעיהם ובכל פשעיהם, probably due to parablepsis; see *Leslie C. Allen, Ezekiel 20–48 (WBC)*, Dallas, TX 1990, 190.

49 The MT reading מושבתיהם (= Vg; Syr) is probably an error by metathesis for מושבותיהם (cf. Jer 3,22; 8,5); see σ' αποστραφωσ (LXX απομωσ).

50 Reading בקרבם with other witnesses instead of בקרבכם in B19a (see BHS).

to be solved. The first clause in V. 11 employs the verb *תעה*, used in Jes 9,14–15; Jer 23,13.32; Mi 3,5 to accuse prophets of misleading Israel. Thus Ez 14,11aα “no longer go astray” (*לֹא־יִתְעוּ עוֹד*) envisions freedom from bad prophetic leadership of the kind described in V. 9. The second clause in Ez 14,11 uses the verb *אמט*, which is frequently used to describe the effects of idolatry (so 37,23; see also 20,7.18.31; 22,3.4; 23,7.30). So V. 11aβ “no longer defile themselves” envisions freedom from the idolatry that is described in V. 1–8.

5 Conclusion and Significance of Findings

The syntax of Ez 14,11 initially seems to suggest that the punishment in V. 10 will be the cause of Israel’s spiritual transformation, resulting in a restored covenant relationship. While many commentators have assumed that this is indeed the case, the book’s pessimistic outlook on Israel’s moral identity calls into question the idea that more punishment will effectively purge, deter, or educate the people in order to produce faithful behaviour. The idea that divine punishment is redemptive is foreign to the book of Ezekiel. Likewise, the idea that “turning” (V. 6) will result in a transformed people and a restored covenant relationship also seems to be problematised in the book.

In this essay I have argued that Ez 14,11 is an instance of *Fortschreibung*. It represents the work of a scribe who has read 14,1–10, remembers 37,23 and sees it as the solution to the problems of idolatry and bad prophets, and then writes V. 11 in light of this. The word *למען* (“in order that”) in V. 11 presumes Yhwh’s transformative action described in 37,23. In addition, the statements in V. 11 that Israel would “no longer go astray” and “no longer defile themselves” treat the *individuals* (the persuadable prophets and idolatrous inquirers) from V. 1–9 as representative of the *larger problems* of bad prophecy and idolatry from which Israel would be cleansed.

By demonstrating that V. 11 has been composed in light of other passages in the book that emphasize divine transformation in the process of spiritual restoration, I have made a contribution to our understanding of how the book of Ezekiel wrestles with the problem of how to achieve a purified and faithful community. This sheds light on our understanding of ancient Israelite conceptions of moral identity and its transformation.⁵¹ But my findings in this essay also have implications for our understanding of ancient Jewish reading habits and editorial practices. The kind of reflective and additive literary activity that I have proposed here is in no way unusual, but occurs on a variety of levels in the

51 See further Newsom, Moral “Recipes” (see note 43).

process of composition and transmission of the book of Ezekiel.⁵² For a similar example, we might consider Ez 28,25–26. This passage is widely recognized as an interpolation, an oracle of salvation for Israel that has been inserted into the oracles against the nations (Ez 25–32).⁵³ It is built entirely from locutions taken from elsewhere in Ezekiel and the prophetic corpus. Similarly, a number of plusses in proto-MT Ezekiel are interpolations that are constructed from vocabulary found elsewhere in the book.⁵⁴ These examples reflect what can be seen in the transmission of many other ancient Jewish texts: namely, that scribes often drew on material from the larger context in order to construct the supplementary material that they inserted into the text.⁵⁵

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- 52 For examples of textual supplementation in Ezekiel and other prophetic books, see *Walther Zimmerli*, *Das Phänomen der »Fortschreibung« im Buche Ezechiel*, in: J. A. Emerton (Hg.), *Prophecy*, FS G. Fohrer (BZAW 150), Berlin 1980, 174–191; *Anja Klein*, *Prophecy Continued: Reflections on Innerbiblical Exegesis in the Book of Ezekiel*, in: VT 60 (2010) 571–582; 'Biblicist Additions' or the Emergence of Scripture in the Growth of the Prophets, in: S. M. Olyan / J. L. Wright (Hg.), *Supplementation and the Study of the Hebrew Bible* (Brown Judaic Studies 361), Providence, RI 2018, 125–145; *William A. Tooman*, *Gog of Magog. Reuse of Scripture and Compositional Technique in Ezekiel 38–39* (FAT 2/52), Tübingen 2011.
- 53 So e.g. *Herrmann*, *Ezechiel* (see note 11) 185; *Zimmerli*, *Ezekiel 2* (see note 47) 100; *Allen*, *Ezekiel 20–48* (see note 48) 98. Note the repetition of V. 22.24 in V. 26b to frame the contexts of V. 25–26a (*Wiederaufnahme*).
- 54 See e.g. MT Ez 1,26–27 and MT 8,2 (which have been expanded in light of each other); MT Ez 2,3 (which represents an assimilation to 20,38); MT Ez 6,10 (which represents an assimilation to Ez 14,22–23); and MT Ez 11,12 (which represents an assimilation to Ez 5,7); *Timothy Mackie*, *Expanding Ezekiel: The Hermeneutics of Scribal Addition in the Ancient Text Witnesses of the Book of Ezekiel* (FRLANT 257), Göttingen 2015, 127–129, 156–159, 161–162.
- 55 See *David Andrew Teeter*, *Scribal Laws: Exegetical Variation in the Textual Transmission of Biblical Law in the Late Second Temple Period* (FAT 92), Tübingen 2014, 34–160.