

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY OF EDMONTON

**רוח IN EZEKIEL 37 AND πνευμα IN JOHN 3:
ALLUSION, PUN AND TYPOLOGY**

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PREFACE

The idea for this thesis came about during the MA course Intermediate Hebrew Grammar and Readings with Dr. Anderson and myself. Through the process of translating Ezekiel 37:1-14, I came to appreciate the text. Specifically I liked the intimate nature of the language. When I brought this to Dr. Anderson's attention, he thought that there might be a comparison there with John 3.

Though it was not expected, the second Hebrew course The Hebrew Exegesis of Qoheleth with Dr. Anderson and my colleague Camoy Williams, also contributed to the ideas present in this thesis. The nature of **הבל** and its full semantic range became clear in that course. I am indebted to the discussions Dr. Anderson and I had about how this connected to Ezekiel 37:1-14.

Thus, though this is not necessarily the thesis I thought I was going to end up writing, I am sincerely grateful to Dr. Anderson, and Camoy for the dialogue they provided during these Hebrew courses and in MA supervisions.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines how the Hebrew word רוח is used in Ezekiel 37:1-14 and the Greek word πνευμα is used in John 3:1-21. Greek and Hebrew are two very different languages. Yet they often are paired together, since they are the two main languages used in the Christian Bible. They certainly have their differences, some are superficial like different letters and vowels, different grammatical rules, and even the direction in which they are written and read. However, some are more fundamental differences, for example Hebrew is known for its relatively few rules and many exceptions; whereas Greek is quite the opposite. However, despite all of these differences, the two languages do share some similarities.

Coincidentally, one of these similarities is the concept of “breath, wind, or spirit,” a rather wide semantic range for a singular word. Breath, wind or spirit is conveyed in the Hebrew word רוח and Greek word πνευμα. These two words will be the main focus of the first chapter of this thesis.

This thesis will also explore possible allusion, pun, and typology in these two texts. I will compare the use of רוח in Ezekiel 37 with the use of πνευμα in John 3. I will see if there are any demonstrable uses of allusion, pun and typology between these two texts. I will be looking to see if there are any thematic, symbolic, situational, or literary parallels, or commonalities between these two literary units. The main focus of this examination will begin with a linguistic analysis of the concept of “breath, wind and spirit,” and the different activities of each.

Chapter 1 will examine רוח in Ezekiel 37: 1-14. This will be followed by a word study on רוח. Then I will examine the Greek text of Ezekiel 37 in the Septuagint. I will also provide a translation and perform a word study on πνευμα there too. The complete texts in the original

languages, as well as their translations, can be found in the appendices. I will, however, only deal with the texts where רוח is explicitly found.

Chapter 2 will discuss allusion, pun and typology as hermeneutics with a theological application. I will discuss a few examples of how these have been used within the Bible itself, and by biblical scholars. Finally I will outline how I intend to use these methods in this thesis.

In chapters 3 and 4, I will do an exegesis of both Ezekiel 37:1-14 and John 3:1-21, respectively, within their context. I unpack each pericope with respect to its literary and historical contexts. This will provide a fuller picture of what the passages were saying when they were written, what they say within the literary unit of the Bible as a whole, and what they may say to us today.

In chapter 5 I will look more closely at the concepts of restoration and resurrection. I will discuss the problematics of death and afterlife in the Old Testament. I will then discuss the concepts of restoration and resurrection in Ezekiel 37 and John 3. I will also look at how these ideas have been addressed in other parts of the Bible, and any significance that they may carry.

Finally, in chapter 6, I will discuss the ideas that I have found connected to the concept of ‘breath, wind, and spirit.’ I will also outline any typological connections I may have found between these two pericopies. I will discuss what it could mean and any implications these comparisons might have theologically. Most importantly I will try to answer the question: Was Jesus alluding or using Ezekiel 37:1-14 as background to His discussion with Nicodemus in John 3:1-21?

Furthermore this thesis will seek to answer the questions: Can any comparisons be found through a typological reading of Ezekiel 37 and John 3? Are any allusions present in John 3 that would point to Ezekiel 37? If so, what are they, and what are their implications? I hope

that answering these questions will lead to a greater understanding of these two passages and the theology found within them.

CHAPTER ONE TEXT, TRANSLATIONS AND LINGUISTICS

In this chapter I will examine the Hebrew and Greek for “wind, breath or spirit” in Ezekiel 37 and John 3. By doing a word study on the two most significant nouns, I can examine any possible relation to one another and their possible purpose within these passages. I will look at what these words mean, and why they might have been chosen based on the context of the passages, and within the whole of the Bible. Finally, I will provide my translation of both texts and provide an argument explaining why I translated them the way I did. I will only deal with verses in Ezekiel 37 which use רוח and πνεῦμα in John 3. The full Hebrew text and translation of Ezekiel 37:1-14 can be found in appendices 1 and 2. The full Greek text and translation of John 3:1-21 can be found in Appendices 3 and 4.

Hebrew Text and Translation of רוח in Ezekiel 37:1-14¹

I will only translate the relevant verses employing רוח in Ezekiel 37:1-14 for this study. The full text and translation may be found in Appendices 1 and 2.

¹ הַיָּתָה עָלַי יְדִי־יְהוָה וַיּוֹצֵאֵנִי בְרוּחַ יְהוָה וַיְנִיחֵנִי בְּתוֹךְ הַבְּקָעָה וְהִיא מְלֵאָה עֲצָמוֹת:

¹The hand of YHWH was upon me and brought me out by the Spirit of YHWH and set me down in the midst of the valley; it was full of bones.

⁵ כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה לְעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה הִנֵּה אֲנִי מְבִיא בְכֶם רוּחַ וְחַיִּיתֶם:

⁵This is what my Lord YHWH says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will live.²

¹ Rudolf Kittel et al. eds., תורה נביאים וכתובים: *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, editio funditus renovata (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1977), 965-66.

6 וַנְתִי עֲלֵיכֶם גְּדִים וְהַעֲלֵתִי עֲלֵיכֶם בָּשָׂר וְקָרַמְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם עוֹר וְנָתַתִּי בְּכֶם רוּחַ וְחַיִּיתֶם וַיִּדְעַתֶּם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:

⁶ I will attach sinews to you, I will cause flesh to cover you, and I will cover you with skin; I will put breath in you and you will live. Then you will surely know that I am YHWH.”

8 וַרְאִיתִי וְהִנֵּה־עֲלֵיהֶם גְּדִים וּבָשָׂר עָלָה וַיִּקְרַם־עֲלֵיהֶם עוֹר מִלְּמַעְלָה וְרוּחַ אִין בָּהֶם:

⁸ I saw sinews and flesh ascended upon them and skin covered them from above; but there was no breath in them.³

9 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי הִנֵּבֵא אֶל־הָרוּחַ הַנִּבְּא בְּרִאָדָם וְאָמַרְלֵ אֶל־הָרוּחַ כֹּה־אָמַר:

אֲדַגֵּי יְהוָה מֵאַרְבַּע רוּחוֹת בָּאֵי הָרוּחַ וּפְתִי בְּהַרוּגִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיְחַיּוּ:

⁹ Then He said to me: “Prophecy to the Spirit, prophesy son of man and say to the Spirit: ‘This is what my lord YHWH says: Come Spirit, from the four winds and blow into these slaughtered and they will live.’”⁴

10 וְהִנֵּבֵאתִי כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוֵּנִי וַתִּבּוֹא בָהֶם הָרוּחוֹת וַיְחַיּוּ וַיַּעֲמֵדוּ עַל־רַגְלֵיהֶם חֵיל גָּדוֹל מְאֹד־מְאֹד: ס

¹⁰ So I prophesied as He commanded and the breath went into them and they lived. Then they stood on their feet – a very, very great army.

14 וַנְתִי רוּחִי בְּכֶם וְחַיִּיתֶם וְהִנַּחֲתִי אֶתְכֶם עַל־אֲדָמַתְכֶם וַיִּדְעַתֶּם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה דִּבַּרְתִּי וַעֲשִׂיתִי נְאֻם־יְהוָה: פ

¹⁴ I will put my breath in you and you will live. I will guide you into your land, then you will surely know that, I YHWH, spoke and I have fulfilled the oracle, declares YHWH.”

² I did not translate ‘behold’ in this passage because I do not think it is necessary to convey what the passage states. In addition, language such as ‘behold’ gives the translation an outdated feeling, and may actually prevent people from understanding what the passage means.

³ I translated this passage with the phrase ‘from above,’ because עלה conveys the sense of ‘ascend.’ I thought ‘from above’ was the best way to make the translation flow while retaining the sense of the word.

⁴ I capitalized ‘Spirit’ because it was accompanied by the definite article. This indicated to me that this is ‘the Spirit’ and not ‘a spirit.’

Word Study of רוּחַ in the Hebrew Bible and Ezekiel 37:1-14

The word רוּחַ will be the focus of this section. Its basic meaning will be defined first. Then I will examine how it has been used in the Old Testament. Finally, I will examine how it is used in Ezekiel 37:1-14. Hopefully this will demonstrate the meaning of the word in the Old Testament and how Ezekiel intended it to be understood. Then I will discuss what the implications of this word could mean, and how it is being used in Ezekiel 37.

Basic Definition and Etymology of רוּחַ

A basic definition is often the best place to start with a word. The *Brown-Driver-Briggs* lexicon defines רוּחַ as: “breath, wind, spirit... 1. *Breath* of mouth or nostrils... 2. *Wind*... 3. *Spirit*, as that which breathes quickly *in animation or agitation = temper, disposition.*”⁵ Though *BDB* begins with a rather simple definition, רוּחַ has grown to encompass a rather wide range of concepts that consistently include the ideas of ‘breath, wind and spirit.’

Further connotations can be seen in the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, which expands upon this basic meaning and goes into depth to unpack it.

The word *ruah*, which is perhaps onomatopoeic, may be considered a primitive noun based on a bilateral root. The Hebrew word *ruah*, however, presupposes a trilateral base *rwh* that evolved from the bilateral root; the same base is attested in Aramaic. The form may be classified as a verbal noun modeled on the infinitive, denoting an action: the ‘blowing’ of the wind or ‘respiration.’ By analogy it came to mean ‘breathing’ as a sign of life and hence ‘spirit’ and ‘life.’ From the same trilateral base probably come a few verbal forms along with their derived nouns: *rwh* qal, construed impersonally, ‘it becomes spacious (for someone),’ ‘feel relieved,’ along with the hiphil *heriah*, ‘smell,’ and the noun *reah*, ‘odor, aroma.’ The qal and pual forms are assigned by *GesB* and

⁵ Francis Brown *et al.*, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Coded with the Numbering System from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 924-25.

LexHebAram to a separate root meaning ‘be spacious’; Lys, on the other hand, identifies a single root, but believes the basic meaning is ‘be spacious’: *ruah* denotes primarily the empty ‘air,’ only secondarily air in motion or ‘wind.’ More likely, however, the spatial meaning found in Biblical Hebrew and other West Semitic language arose through association with deep breathing and the resulting sense of expansiveness and relief. Akk. *napasu* has a similar double meaning: ‘blow, breathe,’ as well as ‘expand.’ The basic meaning ‘wind,’ something fleeting and ephemeral, leads logically to the figurative sense of ‘impermanence’ and ‘futility.’⁶

What is interesting about רוּחַ is how it begins as a very simple concept: ‘air’ and expands to encompass a fairly wide range of meanings. As the *TDOT* demonstrates, the semantic range extends so far as to include similar meanings as הַבַּל, one of the words in Ecclesiastes.⁷ This is mainly seen in Fabry’s more ‘figurative’ meanings of the word. The definition that *TDOT* has provided lines up so well with the *BDB*’s basic meaning that goes much further.⁸ In addition the *TDOT*, does not add anything truly theological, at least not to their basic etymology and definition which I am using.

רוּחַ in the Old Testament and Creation Accounts

רוּחַ is a fairly common word in the Old Testament. According to the *TDOT*, it

occurs 378 times in the OT plus 11 times in the Aramaic portions of Daniel. It is usually feminine, but occasionally masculine. There are 38 occurrences in the Pentateuch, but none in Leviticus and only 2 in Deuteronomy; it is rare in legal material. Of fundamental importance are the 7 occurrences in the primeval history....There are 47 occurrences of *ruah* in the Former Prophets. It is especially frequent in the earlier historical narratives: 26 occurrences in Judges – 1 Samuel, plus 9 in the Elijah-Elisha cycle and 4 in 1 K. 22 (3

⁶ Heinz-Josef Fabry, “רוּחַ,” *TDOT* 13: 367-68. Since רוּחַ refers to moving air throughout the Old Testament, and not ‘empty air,’ I would argue that ‘moving air’ is a more likely meaning for רוּחַ.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Although theological dictionaries can be very useful, whenever they are used one must keep in mind James Barr’s book *The Semantics of Biblical Language*. In this book, Barr notes that theological dictionaries often read too much theology into words. It is important to be aware of this, and use caution when implementing theological dictionaries. See James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (S.C.M., 1983), 207.

in poetic texts). The Dtr redaction sees a special association of Yahweh's *ruah* with the leaders and prophets of the early period.⁹

Clearly, רוח is a well-established concept in the Old Testament. It is interesting to note that the Old Testament often translates this word as the 'wind' of God, or the 'breath' of God. I think that this is also the case in Ezekiel in order to convey the intimate sense through which God gives life to people both spiritually and physically. In Ezekiel 37, God leads the prophet among the bodies (Ezek. 37:2). He then re-creates them and gives them life (Ezek. 37:4-10). The idea that it is breath from God, conveys a sense of intimacy. Perhaps this intimacy is partly why the word is rarely present in legal Biblical literature. As the *TDOT* points out, רוח is significant in the primeval narratives, such as Genesis 1:2. This verse discusses how the Spirit of God, or the breath of God was present with God before the creation of the world, and "moved over the waters" (Gen. 1:2). However, it must be noted that Hebrew has another word that means breath, namely נשם. This is the word that Genesis 2:7 uses when describing how God breathed life into Adam. It is interesting, that at this most intimate time during creation, רוח is not used, though it is present in the creation. However, the semantics of נשמה must certainly be alluded to in Ezekiel 37.

הבל *and* רוח

I have briefly noted that רוח can possess similar connotations as the word הבל in some contexts. In fact, the Old Testament uses both words in conjunction with one another to convey a point. The *TDOT* brings this out well when it states that:

⁹ Fabry, "רוח," *TDNT* 13: 372.

In conjunction with ruah we also find → הבל hebel, ‘breath,’ ‘worthlessness’ (66 times: 32 in Ecclesiastes, 8 in Jerimiah, only 3 in the Dtr History, among which 2 K. 17:15 is probably borrowed from Jer. 2:5). This meaning seems to be far removed from the tempestuous whirlwind. When Isa. 57:13 says of idols that ‘the wind (ruah) will carry them off, a breath (hebel) will take them away,’ the image is probably that of a violent or devastating wind. Elsewhere, however, the idols themselves are called hebel, because they are impotent and powerless... But ruah itself can also stand for the worthlessness of idols.¹⁰

There seems to be a few similarities with these two concepts. They are sometimes used together to emphasize the ideas they are trying to convey. Both can relate to fleeting breath, destructive winds or the worthlessness and vanity of objects and even human life.

רוח in *Ezekiel 37:1-14*

Ezekiel 37:1-14 contains the word רוח ten times. The first occurrence is ברוח in verse 1. It is a noun with a ב preposition, which usually means ‘at, in, with, on, or as.’ However, in this verse it is acting as the means of instrumentality and therefore likely means ‘by.’ In verses 5 and 6, the simple noun רוח is used twice. In these two verses רוח probably means ‘breath,’ since the verses discuss the idea of living, and giving life, both of which require breath. ורוח is a noun with the ו attached to the front indicating a simple conjunction meaning ‘and,’ ‘so,’ ‘but,’ or ‘for.’ It is only present once in verse eight. I translate it as a contrastive ‘but,’ in order to convey the idea that though the bodies were being covered with flesh, the breath was still not in them.

הרוח makes up four of the ten uses of this word within this pericope. It is a noun with the definite article ה in front of the word. Although the Hebrew vocative has no grammatical indicator, the last occurrence of הרוח in verse nine is often translated as a vocative. This,

¹⁰ Ibid., 374. Cf. William H. U. Anderson, “The Semantic Implications of הבל and רעות רוח in the Hebrew Bible and for Qoheleth,” *JNSL* 25 (1999): 60-62.

therefore would translate as ‘O breath,’ a personification. In the midst of these four הרוח sits the word רוחות which contains the plural feminine ending ות, which lends itself to being translated as ‘winds.’ This feminine plural ending also indicates that the word is in a construct relationship with the word before it, making the phrase definite since the construct is definite. Therefore it is likely a translation of ‘the four winds.’ רוחי is the final instance of this word in this pericope, and is found in verse fourteen. It is a noun and has the first person possessive pronoun ך attached at the end, “my breath.”

Though רוה is not easy to translate anywhere in this text, verses nine and ten seem to be where רוה becomes truly confusing. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr notes this by saying:

Now, in an act unanticipated in vv. 5-6, Ezekiel is twice commanded to prophesy again, summoning ‘the breath’ or ‘the spirit’ (הרוח *haruah*). It is unclear at this point which translation of *haruah* best suits the context. The matter is further complicated when he is ordered, following the messenger formula, to evoke the *ruah* from ‘the four winds’ (רוחות מארבע *me’arba ruhot*) to ‘breathe’ (or ‘blow’?) upon ‘these slain.’ ‘Wind’ is yet another meaning of *ruah*, and the four winds (or the winds that blow from the four compass points – i.e., all winds) appear to be the powerful sources of the *ruah*, Ezekiel must summon.¹¹

In these verses in particular, it seems that רוה takes on the full range of its possible meanings. The reason may be that, this is the portion of the pericope where the attention is being focused on the רוה. It is quite possible that here רוה is meant to be a pun. I think that this is the case because it is so difficult to determine a singular translation for רוה. Indeed, this is the very nature of a pun, namely that one or more meanings of a word are meant or intended. I will discuss this more in chapter 3.

¹¹ Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *NIB* 6:1500.

In verses 1-8, the breath is an element of the vision, it is there but it is not fully unpacked. In verses nine and ten, however, רוּחַ becomes הַרוּחַ the main object of the sentence. In verses nine and ten it is commanded to act and does so. This is where a pun is most likely intended, because multiple meanings of רוּחַ are needed. Thus Ezekiel prophesies: “‘Come Spirit, from the four winds and breathe into these slaughtered and they will live.’ So [Ezekiel] prophesied as [God] commanded and the breath went into them and they lived” (Ezek. 37:9-10). This passage demonstrates what הַרוּחַ is, and what it does in relation to the verbs. It is wind, spirit and breath, and together it gives vital breath or life to those with none, the ones who are dead.

רוּחַ in the Septuagint’s Version of Ezekiel 37:1-14

A discussion about רוּחַ would not be complete without mentioning how it is translated in the Septuagint. In the Septuagint’s version of Ezekiel 37:1-14, רוּחַ is always translated as πνεῦμα.¹² This is the same word for ‘breath, wind, or spirit’ that is used in John 3:1-21. This suggests that the writers of the Septuagint understood the רוּחַ mentioned in Ezekiel 37:1-14 to stand for the same concept discussed in John 3:1-21.

Uses of רוּחַ in Prophetic Literature

It is interesting to note, as the *TDOT* does, that the word רוּחַ seems to go relatively out of use by the prophets, until the exile. It states:

¹² Launcelot Lee Brenton trans., *The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament and Apocrypha* (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1900), 1029.

The 8th-century prophets and Jeremiah almost never appeal to Yahweh's *ruah*; in fact, the word is uncommon in all the prophetic writings.... Not until the prophetic and postexilic period does *ruah* become once more a word of theological significance. The book of Ezekiel, with 52 occurrences, occupies a central position in this respect.¹³

Perhaps this could be because רוּחַ embodies the life-giving concept of God's wind or breath, as seen in Numbers 27: 16 which uses the word רוּחַ when it states: "God who gives breath to all living things" (Num. 27:16). Once it becomes apparent to the Israelites that God is no longer merely, threatening to leave them to their enemies, and has in fact done so, they start to receive messages from their prophets detailing how spiritually dead they really are. It is important to note, that though Ezekiel 37:1-14 contains one of these messages, that is not where the prophecy ends. As 2 Corinthians 3:6 states: "He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6). God graciously follows up with a message of new life, seen in this very prophecy. This prophecy is directed to a people who are so spiritually dead that, like the dry bones, there is no life found anywhere near them. Thus, it is only after Israel has died spiritually,¹⁴ that God shows them that they can live once again. Even spiritual death, and physical captivity, cannot prevent God from redeeming His people.

¹³ Fabry, "רוּחַ," *TDNT* 13: 373.

¹⁴This can be seen in Ezekiel 37:1-14, which notes that as a people Israel has been "cut off" from God (Ezek. 37: 11). This metaphorical death is further noted when God refers to raising Israel from their graves (Ezek. 37:12-14).

Greek Text and Translation of πνευμα in John 3:1-21¹⁵

I will only translate the relevant verses employing πνευμα in John 3:1-21 for this study. The full text and translation may be found in Appendices 3 and 4.

⁵ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς· ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, ἐὰν μὴ τις γεννηθῆ ἔξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος, οὐ δύναται εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ.

⁵Jesus replied: “Truly, truly I say to you if anyone is not born of water and the Spirit, he is not able to go into the kingdom of God.

⁶τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς σὰρξ ἐστίν, καὶ τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος πνεῦμά ἐστιν.

⁶Flesh comes from flesh, and the spirit comes from Spirit.

⁸τὸ πνεῦμα ὅπου θέλει πνεῖ καὶ τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ ἀκούεις, ἀλλ’ οὐκ οἶδας πόθεν ἔρχεται καὶ ποῦ ὑπάγει· οὕτως ἐστὶν πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος.

⁸The wind blows wherever it wants. You hear its sound but you do not know from where it comes from and where it leads to. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

Word Study of John 3:1-21

This word study will be examining the word πνευμα found in John 3:1-21. Much like what was done with πῶρ. This study will look at the word’s definition, etymology and meaning. I will also touch on how it has been used in the Bible as a whole, and how it is being used in this segment of John.

¹⁵ Eberhard Nestle and Erwin Nestle, *Nestle-Aland: Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th ed., (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 299.

Definition, Etymology and Meaning of πνευμα

Πνευμα is a word that, like רוּחַ, can usually be translated as ‘breath, wind or spirit.’ Frederick William Danker’s Greek-English Lexicon will be used to find a basic definition to start this etymological study. According to this lexicon πνευμα means:

1. Air in movement, *blowing, breathing*...
2. That which animates or gives life to the body, *breath, (life)-spirit*...
3. A part of human personality, *spirit*...
4. An independent noncorporeal being, in contrast to a being that can be perceived by the physical senses, *spirit*...
5. God’s being as controlling influence, with focus on association with humans, *Spirit, spirit*...
6. The Spirit of God as exhibited in the character or activity of God’s people or selected agents, *Spirit, spirit*...
7. An activating spirit that is not fr. God, *spirit*...
8. An independent transcendent personality, *the Spirit*.¹⁶

This demonstrates that though πνευμα does have the basic meaning of ‘wind, breath and spirit,’ unpacking what ‘spirit,’ means is difficult and requires several definitions to more fully explain the concept. To expand on this definition further, the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* says that:

Derived from πνέω, the verbal noun πνευμα means the elemental natural and vital force which, matter and process in one, acts as a stream of air in the blowing of the wind and the inhaling and exhaling of breath, and hence transf. as the breath of the spirit which, in a way which may be detected both outwardly and inwardly, fills with inspiration and grips with enthusiasm. Whether visibly or not there resides in the word an effective and directed power which it owed, not so much to the -μα, but rather to the basic idea of energy contained in the root *πνε-. This finds cosmologically representative expression in Plat. Phaed., 112b... From this there are logically developed and expanded the various occasional uses and nuances, both lit. and fig., acc. To the sphere or context of reality. Within these the forces of πνευμα may be seen in its varied nature and strength.¹⁷

¹⁶Frederick W. Danker, *BDAG*:833-36.

¹⁷Eduard Schweizer, *TDNT* 6:334-35.

It is interesting to note that this explanation of πνευμα is very similar in concept to the ancient Near Eastern idea of *numen*, which is a physical object filled with divine power.¹⁸ However, given the historical context, this is hardly surprising. Even in Greco-Roman society, *numen* was still a very active concept. However, this also demonstrates how similar πνευμα is to רוּחַ. Though they share similar translations, they also share similar etymologies once they have been unpacked. According to this dictionary, πνευμα in its most basic sense refers to moving air either as wind or breath. It is important to note that רוּחַ and πνευμα share most forms of translation in common. Namely the idea of vital breath, leading to life and encompassing spirit. However, it is worth noting that πνευμα is often described using fluid language.¹⁹ An example of this can be found in Acts 2:17 which describes πνευμα as a liquid to be ‘poured out.’ This same dictionary further expounds on what πνευμα means when it outlines it thusly:

1. Wind. In place of Homeric πνο (ι) ῆ, and occurring in both poetry and prose from Aesch. And Hdt.... πνευμα is used in the macrocosm physically for the breath of wind in its movement as a blowing force and also acc. To its distinctive invisibly rarefied materiality as an element... 2. Breath. Thus in the microcosm of organic life, and esp. in men and animals, πνευμα is physiologically the ‘breath’ which, again both process and matter, is either inhaled and exhaled in breathing... or medically, in distinction from ἀήρ as outside air, the ‘gas’ or ‘flatulence’ which circulates inside the organism... 3. Life. Breath may be discerned only in movement, and it is also a sign, condition and agent of life, which seems to be esp. tied up with breathing... 4. Soul. Next πνευμα takes on the meaning and function of → ψυχή, ‘soul.’ By virtue of its related character as the breath or principle of life, πνευμα is largely coterminous with ψυχή, and hence can easily be used in place of it... 5. Transferred Meaning: Spirit. In the metaphorical speech of poetry in particular, concrete natural processes such as the blowing of the wind or breathing express corresponding experiences of mental or spiritual reality.²⁰

These are the most important definitions that the *TDNT* discusses.

¹⁸ Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 3.

¹⁹ This is an idea provided by Dr. Muir of CUE during my theses defence.

²⁰ Eduard Schweizer, *TDNT* 6:335-36.

TDNT goes on to outline five more additional meanings that mostly expound upon ‘spirit.’ They include a breath that has physical and spiritual properties, inspiration, a divine breath, a cosmic power or manifestation of a god.

Finally *TDNT* discusses this as either the Holy Spirit seen in the New Testament or magical and supernatural spirits or demons. It is interesting to note that in addition to ‘breath, wind, and spirit’ πνευμα can also mean ‘soul.’ The distinction between soul and spirit is not always obvious, and indeed even here it is difficult to see. However, it seems to be the case that with respect to πνευμα, spirit refers to the non-physical portion of a person that separates from the body at death. Soul, on the other hand, refers to the vital breath that makes a person live. This is not an easy distinction to make, as an argument can be made that spirit and soul are connected, or are even the same thing.

Thus, though πνευμα and רוח share many common meanings, they also have some subtle differences, such as the fact that πνευμα can also mean ‘soul,’ where רוח does not. In addition, πνευμα does not convey the sense of pointlessness and uselessness that רוח may.

Πνευμα in the New Testament

Πνευμα is a fairly common word in the New Testament. As the *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* notes that this word occurs almost as often as רוח, which is impressive considering that the Old Testament is approximately three times the size of the New Testament. The *EDNT* states:

Πνευμα occurs 379 times in the NT. Of those, it unequivocally yields its original meaning (*strong wind/ breeze*) only 3 times. It frequently refers to the human πνευμα (*ca.* 47 times) and to evil spirits (*ca.* 9 times: → 2). It is quite often clearly used of God’s

πνευμα (*ca.* 275 times), whether absolutely (*ca.* 149 times) or specified... it is precisely as God's Spirit that the meaning of πνευμα varies among the NT writings.²¹

Clearly πνευμα is used in the New Testament to refer to God's Spirit. In and of itself, this one use of the word refers to many different activities that happened both in the New and Old Testaments.

4Q385 Deutero-Ezekiel

The different activities of πνευμα can be seen in the Dead Sea Scroll 4Q385, fr. 2, known as Second Ezekiel or Deutero-Ezekiel. This is sort of a version of Ezekiel 37:1-14 that focuses on the activity of the רוּחַ which, like πνευμα, acts on behalf of God to carry out His will. It states: "And He said again, 'Prophesy concerning the four **winds of heaven** and let the **win[ds of heaven]** blow [on them and they shall live]. And a great crowd of men shall stand and they will bless the Lord of hosts wh[*o* revived them.']"²² Here it quite explicitly notes that the רוּחַ from heaven comes to do God's bidding by blowing, reviving, and ultimately giving life. **This both parallels Ezekiel's four winds and αὐθιγεν in John 3: "born from above."**²³ This is very similar to how πνευμα is used throughout the Bible. The *EDNT* discusses this when it states that:

The oldest Christian statements concerning the πνευμα of God transmitted in the NT writings or presupposed there assert that the OT and Jewish expectations of the inspiring and vital πνευμα of the eschaton... has now been fulfilled. The reception of the πνευμα is discernable from external phenomena (cf. Gal 3:2; Acts 8:18), esp. miraculous healings (1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30), ecstatic prayer (glossolalia), and prophetic speech.... It is the πνευμα that inspired the OT authors (cf. Mark 12:36) and was active in the prophets of the early church.²⁴

²¹ Jacob Kremer, *EDNT* 3:118.

²² Géza Vermès, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York, N.Y., U.S.A.: Allen Lane/Penguin Press, 1997), 571. Emphasis mine.

²³ This will be further discussed in subsequent chapters.

In addition the *EDNT* notes that it also ties things like baptism and most things pertaining to Jesus – His conception, activities after baptism, and resurrection – to the activities of God’s πνευμα.

Interestingly, though the New Testament uses the term πνευμα often, it is almost always in reference to its ‘transferred meaning’ of ‘spirit.’ By ‘transferred meaning’ the *TDNT* is referring to the meaning that the word developed based on its other meanings, but did not necessarily possess from its origins. Though רוּחַ also may have this meaning, it is not as often the case. This is probably because the Old Testament does not mention the activities of God’s רוּחַ very often. Though occasionally, like in Genesis 1:2, this very thing is brought up, it simply does not occur with the same frequency or detail as in the New Testament.

Πνευμα in John 3:1-21

Πνευμα occurs only five times in this pericope. Of these, there are only two varieties. The first is πνεύματος, which can be found in verses five, six and eight. However, it has a genitive ending, making it possessive. Because of this, a case could be made to translate it as ‘Spirit of God.’

The other two instances are simply πνεῦμά, which occur in verses six and eight. They are in the nominative case, which means that they are the subjects of their sentences. They can be translated plainly as ‘spirit, breath or wind.’ Though the first one is probably best translated as ‘spirit,’ since it refers to the πνεύματος, the second one could very well be ‘wind.’ I would argue

²⁴ Kremer, *EDNT* 3:119.

for this translation because of the activities of the word, mainly to ‘blow.’ Although arguably ‘breath’ could blow, it is not the most obvious choice. Of this, the *TDNT* writes:

In v. 8a πνευμα means ‘wind.’ The wind in its incomprehensibility and uncontrollability is like the Spirit of God... the important point, however, is that the pneumatic, not the Spirit, is described thus. The ‘otherness’ of the one who is begotten by the Spirit is particularly heavily underlined herewith. The believer, concerning whose whence and whither the κόσμος knows nothing, is also beyond the reach of human perception. Though this faith will find active expression in αγάπη, birth of the Spirit does not as such signify moral renewal. It cannot be demonstrated, whether in its outworking or in its manifestation.²⁵

Barr’s warning regarding theological dictionaries must be kept in mind here. Thus *TDNT* can be used to inform us on what πνευμα means, and how it is being used the New Testament, but must be used cautiously. Having said that, what the *TDNT* has to say is significant because it emphasizes the incomprehensible nature of the spirit. This means that ‘wind’ serves to inform on the usual translation of ‘spirit,’ unpacking its nature and function. It demonstrates that the ‘spirit’ like the wind, goes where it will. It is difficult to understand or contain.

In many ways this mirrors רִיחַ from Ecclesiastes, “breath” or “vapor” which like the wind cannot be contained in one’s hands and it would be vanity to try. This is such a common theme in Ecclesiastes that the author often writes, like in 2:11: “everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind” (Eccl. 2:11). This can further be seen when Qoheleth writes: “The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course” (Eccl. 1:6).

This section of John is interesting because it discusses some of the functions of God’s Spirit. As the *NIDB* states: “The most familiar saying about the spirit deals with rebirth or birth

²⁵ Schweizer, *TDNT* 6:440-41.

from above – words directed to Nicodemus in John 3:6-8.”²⁶ Indeed, this is a very memorable portion of John, and it is all the more memorable because it goes into detail about how God gives new life. Here it is clear that the πνευμα gives new life through a spiritual rebirth.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has demonstrated the similarities of רוּחַ and πνευμα. Both words can mean ‘breath, wind or spirit.’ As a form of pun, they often convey multiple meanings with a single usage of either word. Both רוּחַ and πνευμα often embody the idea of incomprehensibility, especially when trying to convey the idea of ‘spirit.’ In addition they seem to connect well with הַבַּל, which has helped to inform the meaning of both words. I will now try to discover if these two similar words have an intertextual and typological relation to one another in Ezekiel 37:1-14 and John 3:1-21.

²⁶John R. Levison, *NIDB* 2:877.

CHAPTER TWO ALLUSION, PUN AND TYPOLOGY AS METHODOLOGIES

In this chapter I will lay out my methodology for reading Ezekiel 37 and John 3. Specifically I will examine possible uses of allusion and pun by Jesus between Ezekiel 37 and John 3. Allusion and pun are part and parcel of intertextuality or inner-biblical exegesis. I will also explore allusion and I will look at examples of Biblical allusion to see if it applies to John 3:1-21 and Ezekiel 37:1-14. I will examine Ezekiel 37:1-14 or John 3:1-21 to see if they exemplify puns between רוּחַ and πνεῦμα. Then I will articulate typology by defining what it is, how it can be used, and how it has been used in both scholarship and within the Bible itself.

Allusion

Allusion is defined by *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles* as: “1. A play on words, a pun... 2. A metaphor, a parable, an allegory... 3. A covert, passing, or indirect reference.”²⁷ This definition helps to convey how difficult it can be to detect an allusion, and why it should be used with a great deal of caution. In addition, even when one is detected, it can also be difficult to *prove* that it is an allusion. Michael Theophilus discusses this very matter in his book *Jesus as New Moses in Matthew 8-9: Jewish Typology in First Century Greek Literature*. Here he outlines both some of the difficulties of trying to use allusions and some of the ways in which it can be done properly. He writes:

While citations are fairly apparent, it is notoriously difficult to define what is and what is not an allusion. Furthermore, in the assessment of a proposed allusion, the method is not mechanical, but rather requires the appropriate conceptual understanding of the intended aesthetic parallel. Often the modern reader, attempting to straddle the hermeneutical chasm, errs in either identifying allusions where they are not, or missing allusions where

²⁷ Lesley Brown, *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 57.

they are. Amid this maze, there are several features which, when taken together, help to identify an intended parallel. They include: 1) key words or phrases (including order, meter and patterns), 2) similar circumstances, 3) similar narrative structure, 4) the proposed source is congruent with the theological trajectory of the document, 5) the author uses a similar or related allusion elsewhere in their work, 6) if there is a similar application of the OT source in other documents outside the one considered and 7) that there is appropriate rationale for the allusion or typological association. It is also important to note that typological association of Jesus and Moses is cumulative, not resting on the strength of any one argument but rather on the entire narrative's literary impression.²⁸

An important connection Theophilus makes is with **allusion and typology**. Both seek to detect symbols or metaphors within texts. Moreover, allusion and typology can also be used in conjunction with one another.

In this chapter, I intend to examine John 3:1-21 to see if there is an allusion present that refers backward to Ezekiel 37:1-14. In this way, allusion would act as a tool that helps to expound upon the typological reading. If there is an allusion present, then a fuller picture will emerge. Namely, typology that reads Ezekiel as pointing toward John, and allusion that sees portions of John as coming from Ezekiel. Because I will be dealing with allusion, pun and typology in relation to a prophetic text, this chapter will also look at inner-biblical exegesis. As Michael Fishbane writes in his article "Revelation and Tradition: Aspects of Inner-Biblical Exegesis," prophecy is by nature an inner-biblical exegetical text because of its need to be fulfilled. He writes:

With respect to oracles, however, the issue [of reinterpretation] is more extreme: reinterpretation is necessary precisely because the original oracle-revelation was not yet – or not conclusively – actualized.²⁹

Indeed, this is a real issue when dealing with prophetic texts. However, since allusion already requires some inner-biblical exegesis, this was an issue that would have been in play anyway.

²⁸ Michael Theophilus, *Jesus as New Moses in Matthew 8-9: Jewish Typology in First Century Greek Literature* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), xii-xiii.

²⁹ Michael Fishbane, "Revelation and Tradition: Aspects of Inner-Biblical Exegesis," *JBL* 99 (1980): 354.

Like most methodologies, inner-biblical texts must be used with caution in order to bring about the most likely and real findings.

Allusion is a big part of intertextuality in the Old Testament. Geoffrey Miller discusses “Intertextuality in Old Testament Research.” He dialogues on how there are two main methodological pathways that researchers can take when engaging in Biblical scholarship. With regard to the second approach, he notes that it:

[I]ncorporates a diachronic perspective as well. Here the focus is on identifying the specific connections that the author wants readers to perceive, as well as determining which text predates the others and, consequently, has influenced the others. ... Scholars adopting a more diachronic approach have debated whether perceived connections between texts can be attributed to authorial intent, or are merely coincidental. In order to prove the former, some scholars have articulated criteria for identifying intentional allusions. Paramount among these criteria are lexical similarities such as shared vocabulary and phraseology, but also important are parallels based on content or motif, and formal similarities between texts such as common genre, or shared structural features.³⁰

Miller notes some important criteria for identifying a true allusion. Though a more obvious marker for an allusion, a ‘**shared vocabulary and phraseology**,’ can be difficult to find when the original texts are not written in the same language. This is important to note when trying to identify an Old Testament allusion in a New Testament text. Though a word that means the same thing could be used, since there is a gap in translation, identifying a true allusion could be more difficult. In this case, the need for comparable themes, genres and content become all the more necessary. But a strong case can be made for allusion between **רוח** in Ezekiel 37:1-14 and **πνευμα** in John 3:1-21. However, Miller’s caution about finding true connections must be kept in mind. He states that

³⁰ Geoffrey D. Miller, “Intertextuality in Old Testament Research,” *CBR* 9 (2011): 284. Intertextuality is also known as Inner-Biblical exegesis. See again Michael Fishbane, “Aspects of Inner-Biblical Exegesis,” 343-61.

Closely related to the question of approach is the matter of how one determines bona fide connections between texts. Scholars have become increasingly sensitive to the problem of distinguishing genuine intertextual connections from coincidental similarities.³¹

This is once again a good reminder about the importance of using caution with allusion.

Examples of Allusion

The first example of allusion in Biblical research will be found in Dalit Rom-Shiloni's article: "How Can You Say, 'I am Not Defiled...' (Jeremiah 2:20-25): Allusions to Priestly Legal Traditions in the Poetry of Jeremiah." Here Rom-Shiloni argues that Jeremiah 2:20-25 contains an allusion to Numbers 5:11-31. He makes his case by examining the phrases used, and looking at the thematic structure and specific linguistics used. Based on these three components Rom-Shiloni concludes that

These three markers seem strong enough to suggest that Jeremiah, in his early utilizations of the marital metaphor for his prophecy against Jerusalem, has chosen to allude to the striking "legal curse" pronounced against the wife suspected of adultery of Numbers 5; and he has further combined this allusion with echoes of the Priestly formulae of defilement and purification. Through the allusions to the legal-cultic trial of the *sôtâ*, the prophet fleshes out his harsh accusation against the people.³²

This article makes an excellent case for a Biblical allusion. By using these principles, Rom-Shiloni made a strong case for an allusion based on linguistics.

Another example of Biblical allusion can be found in Matthew Thiessen's article "A Buried Pentateuchal Allusion to the Resurrection in Mark 12:25." Here Thiessen seems to follow the correct protocol by examining themes and specific words and phrases. However, his arguments are spread out, and a bit speculative. Only at the end does he try to revert back to his

³¹ Ibid., 294. See also John Barton, "Deja Lu: Intertextuality, Method or Theory?" in *Reading Job Intertextually* (eds. Katharine J. Dell and Will Kynes, LHBOTS 574; New York: T&T Clark International, 2013), 16.

³² Dalit Rom-Shiloni, "How Can You Say, 'I am Not Defiled...' (Jeremiah 2:20-25): Allusions to Priestly Legal Traditions in the Poetry of Jeremiah," *JBL* 133 (2014): 772-73.

original point, namely that of a pentateuchal allusion in Mark 12:25. This can be seen in his conclusion when he writes:

Given the evidence presented here, if the Sadducees agreed with the vast majority of people in the Greco-Roman world, they would have believed stars to be angelic beings. Thus, Jesus' assertion that those resurrected would be like the angels would have been understood to be a claim that the resurrected would in some way be astralized. In light of the common understanding current in early Judaism of God's promises to the patriarchs of starlike seed, Jesus' claim that the resurrected would be like the angels would have considerable pentateuchal support. Mark's Jesus connects the belief in an astralized or angelified afterlife—a belief based on early Jewish understandings of God's promises to the patriarchs in Gen 15:5; 22:17; and 26:4 – to Exod 3:6, where God names himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.³³

Though I do not agree with Thiessen's conclusions because they are speculative, I think that he still adds something to the discussion on allusion that has not really been stated yet. This is the need for a tight and precise argument when attempting to use allusion. Because of all the pitfalls that go alongside this form of methodology, one must use it carefully and critically. It must be based in solid linguistic work, and backed up with relevant shared themes, structure and genres in context. As demonstrated, allusion can be a powerful tool that helps inform interpretation of a text and what it is really saying. However, like all methodologies it has to be used with care and caution.

Pun

To begin with, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* provides a basic definition of what a pun is. But it should be noted that in Hebrew puns are often not humorous but simply wordplay. It defines it as: "A joke exploiting the different meanings of a word or the fact that there are words of the

³³ Matthew Thiessen, "A Buried Pentateuchal Allusion to the Resurrection in Mark 12:25," *CBQ* 76 (2014): 288.

same sound and different meanings.”³⁴ Although this definition revolves around a humorous usage, this is not always the case. This can especially be seen in Hebrew literature, where puns more often function as wordplay. A good example is Ecclesiastes 1:6 on רעה and רעה.³⁵ Another example of this occurs in Genesis 4:1, this passage states: “Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain” (Gen. 4:1). In the Hebrew the verb used here is ידע which means ‘to know,’ but can also mean ‘to have intercourse.’ As a Hebrew pun, here ידע means both: an intimate knowledge of his wife through intercourse. At times they maybe an accidental play on words. Puns may also occur during serious situations to inform on what is being conveyed. However, even in these situations a pun comes across as innately humorous and can serve to lighten up even a serious situation.

Salvatore Attardo defines what a pun is in his book *Linguistic Theories of Humor*. He notes that: “In the most common sense, puns are spoken jokes (or jokes meant to be interpreted as if read aloud). When one is discussing a pun's signifier, one needs only to refer to its phonological representation, but there are also instances of visual puns.”³⁶ This is particularly interesting since the texts being examined are texts and therefore may contain visual puns. However, since both Ezekiel 37 and John 3 are being read as texts now, they would have originally been conferred orally. A prophecy would have been spoken by Ezekiel to the people of Israel, and a conversation or argument is inherently oral by nature. Thus both Ezekiel 37:1-14 and John 3:1-21 meet this criteria for a pun. Therefore, my working definition of a pun will be:

³⁴ Angus Stevenson and Maurice Waite, eds., “Pun,” *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1164.

³⁵ Anderson, “The Semantic Implications of רעה and רעה in the Hebrew Bible and for Qoheleth,” 60-62.

³⁶ Salvatore Attardo, *Linguistic Theories of Humor* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), 109.

Spoken or written wordplay where one word conveys more than one meaning, or implies a second word that sounds the same.

Examples of Pun

Arguably, the Bible contains many puns. Hebrew is especially notorious for its puns. This section will detail just a few examples of these. One example can be found in Charles Halton's article "Samson's Last Laugh: The Š/ŠHQ Pun in Judges 16:25-27." Here, Halton argues for a pun, by saying that:

The author of the pericope in Judges forms a pun by providing an ironic situation in which both of the meanings of [קחש] and [קחשׁ] perfectly fit the context of 16:25-27. There is no orthographic difference between these two roots in an unvocalized text, and this leads to graphical ambiguity, these two roots also share a close phonetic similarity. The consonants [שׁ] and [שׂ] are often undifferentiated in certain Semitic writing systems, and at times these sounds interchange between analogues in different languages.³⁷

Halton makes a good case in this article for a pun. What is interesting is that this pun is clearly not a joke, given the serious nature of the situation regarding Samson's death. This is a good example of a pun functioning as wordplay without humor. It is also interesting how Halton uses the nature of an unvocalized text to further his case for a pun. This also demonstrates why Hebrew is so conducive to puns. Since vowels were not a part of the written language for so long, there is a certain ambiguity present in some words that lends itself well to a pun.

Another example can be found in Moshe Garsiel's article "Puns upon Names: Subtle Colophons in the Bible." Here he details several subtle and more obvious examples of notes that are puns on names. He writes:

³⁷ Charles Halton, "Samson's Last Laugh: The Š/ŠHQ Pun in Judges 16:25-27," *JBL* 128 (2009): 63.

It is our intention in this article to look into only one aspect of biblical colophons, that in which typical details appear in the form of indirect references. Or to put it in other words, biblical editors may make a subtle use of a technique defined in general literature as punning upon names, a device which is widely employed in various forms both in ancient and modern literatures.³⁸

Garsiel gives the name Isaiah as an example of a pun. He thinks this name has been punned in several books like Isaiah, 2 Kings, and 2 Chronicles. He writes that:

The prophet's name is so exploited in II Kings 19:20-34 and Isaiah 37:21-35, in which Isaiah concludes his speech of deliverance with a clause between a word derived from *yeshu'a*. This *inclusio* creates a correlation between his name and the main message of his prophecy. In Isaiah 37:20-21; 38:21 and II Chronicles 32:20-22 the puns bring the name and its midrashic derivation even closer together. It has also been pointed out that Ben Sira 48:20 adopts the same pun.³⁹

Again, what is so interesting about this is how humorless these puns are. Although they may not come off as something that a modern reader might consider a good joke, they contain *irony* which lends itself to a pun even in non-humorous situations. In addition, I think this article clearly outlines how prevalent puns are in the Old Testament. Of course, this too comes with a note of caution. The problem with puns is that it is very possible to find one where there is none. The methodological program of this thesis will keep all these things in mind while employing typology, allusion and pun.

Typology

Typology is a theological way of reading biblical texts. Specifically, how New Testament texts theologially read Old Testament texts. However, as Benjamin Ribbens writes in his article "Typology of Types: Typology in Dialogue," this has proven both difficult and all the more necessary given how typology has been used in the past. He notes that

³⁸ Moshe Garsiel, "Puns Upon Names: Subtle Colophons in the Bible," *JBQ* 23 (1995): 183.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 184.

A traditional interpretive approach to reading the OT as Christian literature... is typology. Proponents of typology commonly appeal to early church hermeneutical debates in order to validate typology as the proper counter to fanciful and ahistorical allegory.⁴⁰

Ribbens brings out how typology is not a new thing. In fact it has been in use for hundreds of years. He writes that it was commonly used by the early church, and can even be seen being used in the Bible itself, which demonstrates just how old this methodology really is. However, he quickly discusses one of the biggest problems with this methodology, namely that

A firm definition of *typology* has eluded [Biblical scholars], allowing diverse and at times contradictory conceptions all to fly under its flag. Still, for this very reason, it would be premature if typology were put to rest or swept into the amorphous term *figural reading* before determining how to define it in the first place.⁴¹

This is a very important point and demonstrates the need to define how this thesis understands typology, and how it will use it. Along these lines, the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* provides an adequate working definition when it notes that typology is:

From the Greek word for form or pattern, which in biblical times denoted both the original model or prototype and the copy that resulted. In the NT the latter was labeled the antitype, and this was especially used in two directions: (1) the correspondence between two historical situations like the flood and baptism (1 Pet. 3:21) or two figures like Adam and Christ (Rom. 5:14); (2) the correspondence between the heavenly pattern and its earthly counterpart, e.g., the divine original behind the earthly tent/tabernacle (Acts 7:44; Heb. 8:5; 9:24). There are several categories – persons (Adam, Melchizedek), events (flood, brazen serpent), institutions (feast), places (Jerusalem, Zion), objects (altar of burnt offering, incense), offices (prophet, priest, king).⁴²

This basic understanding of typology shows how the Old and New Testaments can be connected across the years and contexts that separate them. The themes, people, events and patterns in the

⁴⁰ Benjamin J. Ribbens, "Typology of Types: Typology in Dialogue," *JTI* 5 (2011): 82.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Grant R. Osborne, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 1117.

Old Testament can find greater fulfillment in the New Testament which deepens the meaning of both and furthers our understanding of the texts.

However, one cannot ignore the fact that even under this definition of typology, there exist subcategories. Jason Courtmanche discusses this in his book *How Nathaniel Hawthorne's Narratives Are Shaped by Sin: His Use of Biblical Typology in His Four Major Works*. Though this book may seem to be outside the scope of this thesis, Courtmanche's observations about typology are both interesting and accurate. He certainly has something to contribute to this discussion of typology. This can be seen when he states that

The history of typology contains a great deal of tension between orthodox and unorthodox typologies. In orthodox typology, the Old Testament is read as a series of prophecies of the New Testament. The types from the Old Testament are considered to be real, historical people and events that literally prefigure real, historical people and events from the New Testament.⁴³

Courtmanche notes that like most things pertaining to religion, there are both orthodox and unorthodox versions of typology. He defines orthodox typology as a methodology that uses historical, literal types that occur in the Old Testament – where these types find greater fulfillment in historical antitypes found in the New Testament.⁴⁴ By contrast his definition of unorthodox typology is a largely allegorical methodology that relies on abstraction and speculation rather than history.⁴⁵ This is interesting because it relates to what Ribbens' scepticism of typology. Courtmanche goes into this in more detail when he notes that the Bible itself uses orthodox typology, stating that:

In the orthodox Biblical typology of a theologian such as Saint Paul, Moses would be considered one of several types from the Old Testament who prefigures and is fulfilled by

⁴³ Jason Charles Courtmanche, *How Nathaniel Hawthorne's Narratives Are Shaped by Sin: His Use of Biblical Typology in His Four Major Works* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), 2.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 3.

Christ in the New Testament. Because Moses is considered an historical figure and a literal prefiguration of Christ, he cannot be regarded as an abstraction or a myth. Furthermore, orthodox typology does not look beyond the Old Testament for further examples of types or beyond the New Testament for antitypes, which are figures or events that fulfill the prophecies promised by the types of the Old Testament.⁴⁶

Courtmanche's definition of orthodox typology is what this thesis will be using. It will look to the Old Testament, specifically Ezekiel 37:1-14 to see if there are any types that can find greater fulfillment in an antitype found in John 3:1-21. However, one thing to note though, is that this thesis will also look at allusion to see if John 3 is making a reference back towards Ezekiel 37. We have already noted Theophilus' connection of allusion with typology. Though allusion is not necessarily an aspect of orthodox typology, it will help to gain a fuller understanding of what the two texts mean with respect to each other, the Bible as a whole and on their own. In order to distinguish orthodox typology, Courtmanche proceeds to outline what unorthodox typology is:

By contrast, unorthodox typology blends typology and allegory. In allegory, the type is an ahistorical abstraction rather than an historical fact. Therefore, in unorthodox typology Moses can be regarded as a mythical figure and Christ as a metaphorical rather than a literal fulfillment of this type. Furthermore, figures from Classical mythology whose stories are similar to those of Moses or Christ can be regarded as relevant figures in the development of an allegorical understanding of the types and figures.⁴⁷

Other non-Biblical texts can inform an interpretation of a Biblical text. They can do this by demonstrating the historical and fictional context that the Biblical text was written in, or show the impact that the Biblical text had in inspiring other writings. In addition, allegory is another method of Biblical interpretation that has been used historically. However, as Ribbens had pointed out, it stands in opposition to orthodox typology.

The previous discussion sets up a working definition of typology: it gives parameters and boundaries of this methodology for this thesis. However, throughout history, typology has not

⁴⁶ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 3.

always been used in this manner. Mason Lowance writes about this in his article “Biblical Typology and the Allegorical Mode: The Prophetic Strain.”⁴⁸ Although his classifications of typology are similar to orthodox and unorthodox, he prefers to use the terms “representative typology” in place of unorthodox typology, and “exegetical typology” in place of orthodox typology. One thing that Lowance points out, when he talks about exegetical typology, is how it provides *continuity for the Bible*. However, a danger may be where typology could superimpose continuity where it does not exist. This is a fair concern, and shows why one must be careful and cautious when using typology. It can certainly be a valuable tool to bring out continuity, but only when used with caution. As Lowance states:

Biblical or exegetical typology is derived from the practices of the early fathers and medieval theologians. They attempted to give continuity to the canon of Holy Scripture by demonstrating how the Old Testament prefigured the New through types and figures of which the New Testament persons and events were the antitype, or fulfillment. Thus, the historical Abraham became a type of God the Father in the sacrifice of his only son, Issac. In contrast to the purely representative type, the exegetical type exists in the historical context of linear time, and its relation to the substance it represents is that of foreshadowing, or adumbration, not of static, Platonic representation. The substance foreshadowed is denoted the antitype, and it usually exists in time, fulfilling the type. Rules for distinguishing the biblical figures—which are prophetic of Christ and his kingdom—from the Platonic, more allegorical symbolic representations... all concur on one central point: the most crucial distinction between the type and the allegorical trope involved a concept of linear time. The trope was a Platonic representation of one thing by another, but the type by definition preceded the antitype in the context of time, one element being instituted by the same author to foreshadow the other.⁴⁹

This focuses in on one key point for orthodox typology, namely the limitation that the type must come before the antitype in time. Since Ezekiel took place chronologically before John, then, it will be examined to see if a type can be found. Since the events recorded in John occur after

⁴⁸ In this article Lowance takes a more symbolic approach to typology. Historicity plays little to no part in this form of typology, because the ideas involved become abstract symbols. Although this makes connections across the Testaments, it also demonstrates why typology may not always be viewed as valuable, since it does not always tie itself to concrete events and historical facts.

⁴⁹Mason I. Lowance, “Biblical Typology and the Allegorical Mode: The Prophetic Strain,” in *The Stowe Debate Rhetorical Strategies in Uncle Tom's Cabin*, eds. Mason I. Lowance, Ellen E. Westbrook, and R. C. De Prosop (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 163.

Ezekiel, John will be examined for an antitype. Indeed, this is why this thesis will also look at the concept of allusion, to find out if any aspects of John point backward to Ezekiel.

Hindy Najman notes a similar distinction in typology. She discusses this in her article “Cain and Abel as Character Traits: A Study in the Allegorical Typology of Philo of Alexandria.” As Najman describes it, her distinctions in typology seem fairly similar to orthodox and unorthodox typology. She writes:

Central use of the term ‘tupos’ in an interpretation is insufficient... for classification of that interpretation as typological. It is also required that the interpretation operate within the framework of salvation history. It is in this sense of historicity that typology is said to be historical, whereas allegorical exegesis is said to be symbolic, spiritual and interested only in the cosmic and the eternal, not in the narrative of Scripture.⁵⁰

Though Najman’s point here is that she disagrees with this framework, she nonetheless clearly demonstrates how typology is usually looked at and defined. One of her main concerns is that a person’s presuppositions can muddy a ‘historical’ typological reading. She makes the point that these presuppositions should be assumed and used to define the form of typology that one uses.⁵¹ Her concerns need to be taken into consideration in this thesis.

To use Biblical typology correctly, one must be aware of how their presuppositions effect their methodology. In addition this shows that though finding a solid, agreed upon definition of typology can be a problem, and indeed has been a problem in the past, it is a problem that can be dealt with. Three separate scholars examine this methodology and essentially agreed upon how to define it. Though their terminology is very different, all three agree that under the label of ‘typology’ lie two categories that relate to either a more historical reading, or a more symbolic reading.

⁵⁰ Hindy Najman, “Cain and Abel as Character Traits: A Study in the Allegorical Typology of Philo of Alexandria,” in *Eve’s Children The Biblical Stories Retold and Interpreted in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (ed. Gerard P. Luttikhuisen; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 108-09.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Examples of Typology

Typology is an old form of methodology for reading Biblical texts. Although it can be seen in the Bible itself, it has been widely used since the Early Church Fathers employed it hundreds of years ago. June Hadden Hobbs outlines some of the history of typology in her article "Burial, Baptism, and Baseball: Typology and Memorialization in Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead*." Here, she discusses typology with respect to the Early Church Fathers. She mentions how they employed it, and even gives an example of how it was used. She states that:

As a method of biblical interpretation, typology has been around for a long time. Early church fathers such as Augustine, Origen, and Jerome employed typology to create connections between the Old and New Testaments. Sometimes they fought about the extent to which the symbol itself was important and how fanciful their interpretations might become.... But the basic strategy was to take a literal historical event or person described in the Old Testament as a type – that is, a symbol – and then finds its fulfillment in a New Testament antitype. One widely recognized example casts Jonah's three-day sojourn in the belly of a large fish as a type and finds the antitype in Jesus' three days in the grave.⁵²

Thus according to Hobbs, typology has been in use as a methodology for many years. Indeed, even small details like the number of days that Jonah spent in the belly of a fish, have been imbued with deeper meaning through a typological reading that connects it to Jesus's time in the grave. Jonah was thought dead after being cast into the sea, and swallowed for three days, only to reemerge ready to do God's work. So did Jesus physically die, and after a period of three days in the grave, He came out re-made with new life to proclaim God's saving power to humanity.

Kent Sparks looks at orthodox typology in his article "Gospel as Conquest: Mosaic Typology in Matthew 28:16-20." In it, he touches on just how many typological fulfillments Jesus is the center of. He notes that

⁵² June Hadden Hobbs, "Burial, Baptism, and Baseball: Typology and Memorialization in Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead*," *CL* 59 (2010): 243-44.

Jesus actually fills several typological roles in the so-called Great Commission. He is indeed the new Moses, but he is also Daniel's 'son of man' with 'all authority' as well as the conquering namesake of Joshua. When we add these biographical images to Matthew's explicit association of Jesus with King David (esp. 21:1-22) and his implicit association of Jesus with Joseph (in the birth narrative), with Elisha (who followed Elijah, i.e, the Baptist), and perhaps with Abraham/Isaac (Jesus as the sacrificed son), it becomes clear that Matthew's Jesus was every Jewish hero rolled into one. Jesus could be all of these things because only he among them could utter the divine promise that he would be with his people during their quest among the nations.⁵³

In this passage, Sparks actually brings up two good points. The first is noting that the writer of Matthew himself uses a well-known sort of typology in constructing his gospel.⁵⁴ This is not the only instance of typology in the Bible. Paul does it as well in Romans 5 when compares Adam to Jesus. He writes:

Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5: 18-19)

Sparks also points that Jesus is the Messiah, not a messiah, who fulfills the divine promises in the Old Testament.

So while typology has suffered from being difficult to define in the past, there does seem to be a growing consensus about what orthodox typology is, and how it has been used. Typology can demonstrate how Jesus not only fulfills the promises of the Old Testament, but also how He fulfills the callings and duties of some of the most notable figures in the Old Testament.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined three different methodologies or ways of reading texts: allusion, pun and typology. Allusion has been defined as an 'indirect reference.' Pun will primarily be looked

⁵³ Kent Sparks, "Gospel as Conquest: Mosaic Typology in Matthew 28:16-20," *CBQ* 68 (2006): 662.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

at as a play on words, or a single word meaning one or more things. Finally typology will be used to find an Old Testament type that has a New Testament antitype in which the type finds greater fulfillment.

This thesis will employ the historical, linear version of Biblical typology for a reading of Ezekiel 37. My working definition of typology for this thesis is: comparing a historical Old Testament type that occurs historically before the New Testament antitype. This comparison is able to demonstrate how the type finds greater fulfillment and meaning through the antitype.

These will be employed with the due caution expressed in relation to them. In subsequent chapters this thesis will try to determine which if any of them can be appropriately used for reading Ezekiel 37:1-14 and John 3:1-21. Done correctly, they have the potential to complement one another in order to inform each. They allow one to see a fuller range of meaning for key words and full pericopes alike.

These are my methodologies for reading Ezekiel 37 and John 3. I will examine whether or not Jesus is alluding to Ezekiel 37 and making puns with רוּחַ and πνεῦμα. Finally I will examine any typological significance between Ezekiel 37 and John 3.

CHAPTER THREE EXEGESIS OF EZEKIEL 37:1-14 IN CONTEXT

Introduction to Ezekiel 37:1-14

The book of Ezekiel primarily relates to an exilic prophet of the same name. As Henry McKeating notes in his book *Ezekiel*, Ezekiel likely lived around 597 BCE since this is when the first Babalonion deportation took place. He writes:

The first fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians took place in 597 BCE and resulted in the first deportation (2 Kgs 24.8-17). When the book of Ezekiel opens the prophet is in Babylon, and the implications of 1.1, 33.21, and 40.1 are that he had been among those first deported.⁵⁵

Since Ezekiel is an exilic book, it is much easier to determine the approximate timeframe in which the events of the book took place. McKeating is even able to figure out the date of Ezekiel's call, based on the date reported according to the Jewish calendar. He notes that: "According to the date given in 1.1-3 Ezekiel received his call to be a prophet near his home in Babylonia on 31st July 593. This is noted in the context of an elaborately described vision of the divine glory, enthroned upon *merkaba*, a throne-chariot."⁵⁶ The first chapter of Ezekiel also informs the reader that Ezekiel was a priest, and thirty years old when he was called (Ezek. 1:1-3). The same passage also states that Ezekiel's father was Buzi, and Ezekiel had already been living in exile before God called him to be a prophet.

Ezekiel 37:1-14 is commonly known as 'The Valley of Dry Bones.' This is a title that aptly refers to the main content of this pericope. It details how the prophet Ezekiel is shown a vision by God of a valley full of dry bones. Ezekiel both watches and participates as God re-creates the bodies and finally commands the רוח to bring them to life (Ezek. 37: 6-10). God then

⁵⁵ Henry McKeating, *Ezekiel* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 23.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

explains to Ezekiel that the dead bones represent all of Israel. Ezekiel is to prophesy to them, and God will bring them life as a nation and restore them as a people group (Ezek. 37:11-14).

This vision is interesting because it occurs after the Israelites are in Babylonian captivity. The impossibility of being restored to their land is compared to the impossibility of dry bones returning to life. However, the vision makes it clear that neither is impossible for the God that created all. His יהוה will both bring life to the dead corpses, and restore the Israelite people both geographically and spiritually.

The literary structure of Ezekiel 37:1-14 is as follows. Verses 1-3 act as an introduction, quickly pulling Ezekiel into a vision and establishing the main question: Can dry bones live? Verses 4-6 parallel verses 7-10. In 4-6 God describes the order in which He will re-create the flesh on the bones, and how He will give them life. In verses 7-10 this sequence of events takes place. Finally verses 11-14 act as an explanation for the vision. Here it is stated explicitly what the vision means for the people of Israel.

The problem that the people of Israel were experiencing was Babylonian captivity. However, the true issue was even more serious than that. Not only were they in captivity for the first time since God liberated them from Egypt (Ex. 12: 31-42), but this situation made it appear that God's promise that a Davidic descendant would always rule (Psalm 89: 3-4) was no longer being kept. The Israelites were not just in captivity, but were alarmingly far from God. Thus this prophecy acts as one of comfort. Through it God promises to restore them as His people, even in a hopeless situation.

Exegesis of Ezekiel 37:1-14

As Andrew Mein notes in his book *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, the sixth century BCE is indeed the historical context that fits this book best. He writes:

Whilst there are some connections between the book of Ezekiel and later apocalyptic literature, they are certainly no stronger than those which bind it to works which are more clearly prophetic, like Jeremiah.... Furthermore, although it is not inconceivable that the events of the sixth century that are described might be read as an elaborate code for the historical situation of the Hellenistic period, the book gives little in the way of explicit indication that it should be read so. Indeed, there is such a good fit between the events referred to in the book and what we know from biblical and cuneiform sources of the early sixth century (and particularly Jerusalem in the reign of Zedekiah) that for most interpreters it is unnecessary to seek a different historical context or set of political references.⁵⁷

As with most books, the dating of Ezekiel has come into question. Mein argues that though a later date of composition is possible, it is the sixth century context that fits best for a historical context. Therefore, when discussing an exegesis in the historical context, this thesis will assume that the context is that of the sixth century BCE.

As an exilic prophet, Ezekiel's prophecies often deal with the idea of restoration and renewal for the exiled Israelites. H. Van Dyke Parunak discusses this in his article "The Literary Architecture of Ezekiel's Mar·ôT ·Elôhîm," which looks at three of Ezekiel's visions as they pertain to his life and career as a prophet. He notes that

Though [Ezekiel] was a priest among the captives when he was called, he ministered among them in an entirely new sense when, as a prophet, he returned from his ordination. It was as though he came among them for the first time. And at the end of the book, having traced not only Israel's sin and punishment, but also her future restoration, his task is finished. He has come home to the land of Israel, in prophecy if not yet in fact, and home he will stay.⁵⁸

Indeed, Ezekiel's life at times mimicked his prophecies, or was used to convey them to the people. This can be seen in one of the more heart-breaking portions of this book, where Ezekiel's

⁵⁷ Andrew Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 44.

⁵⁸ H. Van Dyke Parunak, "The Literary Architecture of Ezekiel's Mar·ôT ·Elôhîm," *JBL* 99 (1980): 61.

wife dies. This occurs in Ezekiel 24:15-25, which is a prophecy that shows how Israel will lose the thing they love and not be allowed to mourn.

The Implications of Exile in Ezekiel 37:1-14

Ezekiel was brought into exile in the second wave of 598 BCE (Ezek. 1:1-3). Ka Leung Wong discusses this deportation in his book *The Idea of Retribution in the Book of Ezekiel*. There he notes that the

Events in the sixth century BCE formed a watershed in the history of Israel. In the first deportation by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BCE, king Jehoiachin, the nobles and leaders of the people were taken away to Babylon. At that time the temple remained intact and the southern kingdom Judah was still allowed to be ruled by the puppet king Zedekiah. But his conspiracy with Egypt against Babylon in 589/588 BCE led to a dire consequence. About two years later in 587/586 BCE Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem. This time the temple was destroyed, more people were exiled. Zedekiah was captured in an attempt to flee and was later blinded. Judah as an independent state existed no more.⁵⁹

This deportation left the Israelites in captivity for the first time since the exodus from Egypt. Pre-exilic prophets often spoke warnings to the Israelite people, cautioning them to return to God or face this dire situation. This can be seen largely with the Isaiah, and Jeremiah, as well as Minor Prophets like Hosea who urged Israel to be faithful to their God. Surprisingly, however, after the exile happens the message does not actually change that much. Though God still desires His people to return to Him, there is an added message of comfort. God promises that He will renew His people, even if it is a renewal that must now take place outside of the Promised Land. This is where Ezekiel 37:1-14 fits in as a prophecy of restoration. Like most prophecies it sees both a near future fulfillment and a distant future one. One of the ways in which a near future fulfillment can be seen, is in Israel's ability to forge an identity apart from their own land. Mein in his book *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile* discusses how the Israelite people changed and

⁵⁹ Ka Leung Wong, *The Idea of Retribution in the Book of Ezekiel* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1.

adapted ethically in the midst of the Babylonian exile. He notes that “Nebuchadnezzar’s deportation of a large number of people from Judah to Babylonia in 597 BCE has long been recognized as one of the most important events in the formation of Judaism, since it set a pattern whereby those living away from the land of Israel could maintain a distinct religious and cultural identity.”⁶⁰ This is interesting because it demonstrates how God in a way restored Israel as a people group, even though they were in captivity. Though they were in a foreign land, under foreign rule, God still kept them separate and protected their identity as the Israelites.

This may seem like a small matter, or a minor comfort, but given God’s promises to the Israelites it would have held great significance. This can be seen in the covenant that God made with Abraham. In this covenant God promised to give Abraham a nation, a land, and blessings. This can be found throughout Genesis. One example of it can be seen in Genesis 13:14-17 in which it states:

The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, “Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.” (Gen. 13:14-17)

Clearly passages like this posed a serious problem for the Israelite people who were without their land, and their own government. In addition, this exile was all the more painful because of the seemingly broken promise which was made to David. God states in a prophecy to David in 2 Samuel 7:16: “Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever” (2 Sam. 7:16). This was the promise which Psalm 89, an exilic Psalm, was referring to: “You said, ‘I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant, ‘I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations’”

⁶⁰ Mein, *Ezekiel*, 40.

(Ps. 89: 3-4). The exiled Judah expected this well-known promise to be kept by YHWH. Yet it appeared to have failed.

Risa Levitt Kohn, discusses this very thing in her book *A New Heart and a New Soul: Ezekiel, the Exile, and the Torah*. In she writes about what an impact the exile would have had on the Israelites, with respect to the Davidic covenant. She writes:

The destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the monarchy may have radically altered any beliefs the people would have held regarding the eternity of the house of David and the invulnerability of the Jerusalem Temple. The Judean leadership, the wealthy and the professionals were all forced into exile, while a large part of the poorer population remained. Those who stayed behind likely suffered economic poverty and national inactivity.⁶¹

Indeed, the valley of dry bones is referring to these ideas. More importantly, Israel had become spiritually dead as a people. The exile was only one of the symptoms that would lead to this diagnosis. However, even in death YHWH did not abandon His people. During the horrors of being taken captive, God still sought to bring the Israelites back to life spiritually, and as a nation.

In order to restore His nation to life, God called Ezekiel to be an exilic prophet. In fact, as Kohn notes, he was the first to function only during the exile as a prophet. She states that

The prophet Ezekiel resided in a large Jewish center in southern Babylonia at Tel-Abib, where he began preaching to his expatriated contemporaries (Ezek. 3.15). The traumatic events of the Exile provide the key to Ezekiel's prophetic message. Ezekiel was the first known Israelite prophet to function exclusively in the diaspora; he was the first to see visions of Yahweh outside of Israel.⁶²

This is an important point. The exile could have been taken as a sign that YHWH had abandoned Israel, that because of their sinfulness He had left them to their fate. However, it is not long after the very first deportation that God calls a prophet to prophesy to His people. This in and of itself

⁶¹ Risa Levitt Kohn, *A New Heart and a New Soul: Ezekiel, the Exile, and the Torah* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 105.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 106.

demonstrates that God was still there. Even in exile and spiritual death God had not abandoned them. Not only did God provide prophets to comfort His people, but He kept the priesthood in place. Though outside of the Promised Land and away from the temple, the Levitical priesthood still had a job to do. One of the struggles of being in exile was figuring out how to perform their functions as priests while away from the temple. Indeed, God emphasizes the fact that He is still with His people by having Ezekiel, a priest minister to the Israelites while they are in exile.

It is interesting to note that though Ezekiel reports several visions, there is only one that does not take place in Jerusalem. Nathan Phinney discusses this in his article “Portraying Prophetic Experience and Tradition in Ezekiel.” In it, he says that the “vision accounts comprise chs. 1-3, 8-11, 37:1-12, and 40-48, and the setting for these visions, with the notable exception of 37:1-12, is always Jerusalem.”⁶³ In a way this sends a message of comfort. Though separated from their home land, God continually reminds His people of where they came from and where they will be restored. Albert L. A. Hogeterp discusses this in his article “Resurrection and Biblical Tradition: Pseudo-Ezekiel Reconsidered.” His article is mainly about Ezekiel 37:1-14 and how it appears in a variety of formats. He notes that

Ezek 37,1-14 comprises a vision of return from exile and resuscitation of the house of Israel in terms of revivification in a valley of dry bones. The biblical narrative, as we encounter it in the Masoretic Text, the majority of Septuagint manuscripts and a Masada biblical manuscript, makes the point that the dry bones symbolically stand for the whole house of Israel (Ezekiel 37,11) which will be joined together again. The symbolical story is related in Ezek 37,1-10, while Ezek 37,11-14 explain this story in relation to the whole house of Israel as prophecy of return to the land of Israel and settlement in the land.⁶⁴

⁶³ Nathan Phinney, “Portraying Prophetic Experience and Tradition in Ezekiel,” in *Thus Says the Lord Essays on the Former and Latter Prophets in Honor of Robert R. Wilson*, eds. Robert R. Wilson, John J. Ahn and Stephen L. Cook (New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 236.

⁶⁴ Albert L. A. Hogeterp, “Resurrection and Biblical Tradition: Pseudo-Ezekiel Reconsidered,” *Bib* 89 (2008): 59.

Though this quotation refers to non-canonical passages, it still shows that the valley of dry bones was a prophecy that had several different meanings. Though at the time it was likely seen as a promise of return to their land, and perhaps a restoration as people group, it came to be interpreted much differently. Hogeterp mentions this when he discusses how this passage was understood by the Qumran community. He states that:

4QPseudo-Ezekiel 1 i-ii exhibits as apocalyptic vision which incorporates both resurrection for the pious in Israel and an eschatological notion of restoration. Textual dialogue in *Pseudo-Ezekiel* together with textual tradition in Papyrus 967 attest to an eschatological reading of Ezekiel 37 constituting an early part of biblical tradition.⁶⁵

This is interesting because the idea of bodily resurrection is difficult to pull out of the Old Testament. Though the Qumran community was a post-exilic community, they were perhaps more likely to entertain these ideas, much like their Pharisaic counterparts.⁶⁶ That this passage was seen in this light, by at least one group of people, makes it more likely that a typological comparison can be made between Ezekiel 37:1-14 and John 3:1-21.

One of the most striking features about Ezekiel 37:1-14 is how explicit it is in conveying its message. There is no doubt that this passage is talking about the dead. Though there is much discussion about who the dead are in this metaphor, and what the resurrection means, one point that is truly obvious is that there is no life in the valley without God's intervention. In his article, "We are Utterly Cut Off": Some Possible Nuances of (the Third Element) in Ezek 37:11," Saul M. Olyan discusses a phrase found in Ezekiel 37:11 that can also be found in other parts of the Bible. It examines what this phrase means, and the implications for Ezekiel. Specifically he looks at נגזרנו in Ezekiel 37:11. He notes that

⁶⁵ Ibid., 69. More will be said about 4Q385 later.

⁶⁶ The Essenes are almost certainly the branch of first century Judaism represented at Qumran. However, I am aware of the possibility that the Qumran community consisted of the Pharisaic branch of Judaism. But this is unlikely. Moreover, not all Essenes agreed on bodily resurrection. Cf. Kenneth Atkinson and Jodi Magness, "Josephus's Essenes and the Qumran Community," *JBL* 129 (2010): 341.

The associations of niphal גִּזַּר with death are easily established. Aside from Ezek 37:11, three of the five remaining secure attestations in the Hebrew Bible concern the dead or near dead (Isa 53:8; Ps 88:6; Lam 3:54). It can be argued that one of two other occurrences of niphal גִּזַּר concerns a separation from the cult and from society analogous to death (2 Chr 26:21).⁶⁷

This is interesting because it demonstrates that in the vision the people of Israel recognize their own death, and are sorrowful because of it. As Olyan further notes, this drastic state of death has some tremendous implications for their relationship with God. To further understand what this means, Olyan references Psalm 88:6, which uses the same term as Ezekiel 37:11. He writes:

Not only does Yhwh no longer remember the dead, a striking claim in and of itself; he does nothing for them. They are cut off from his hand, which seems to mean that they exist in a realm beyond the bounds of his activity and, perhaps, of his power. The dead, for their part, no longer speak of Yhwh's wondrous acts, his acts of covenant loyalty, his faithfulness, presumably because they no longer benefit from them and do not remember that they once did.⁶⁸

When one understands this as the state of Israel's relationship with their God, Psalm 88:6 emphasizes all the more the spiritual significance of the exile. They are spiritually dead, and so far from God that they seem to be forgotten by Him. The exile is only a symptom of this reality. And the reality is a grievous one, one that may have seemed impossible to return from. However, though Ezekiel's vision uses language and imagery that conveys the dire isolation that Israel is experiencing, it is not without hope. Through this vision God reminds His people that it is possible for them to be beyond His help. If they reject His covenant, they are in sheol and cannot benefit from Him. However, YHWH is a merciful God, who conveys this message with condemning imagery, but follows it with the promise of restoration. Olyan concludes:

Ezekiel 37:12-14 is a response specifically to the claim in the people's saying (v. 11) that Judeans are 'utterly cut off.' As I have argued elsewhere, this expression suggests that exiled Judeans view themselves as essentially 'dead' as a people, separated from YHWH

⁶⁷ Saul M. Olyan, "'We Are Utterly Cut Off': Some Possible Nuances of (the Third Element) in Ezek 37:11," *CBQ* 65 (2003): 45.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

in a matter not unlike those who are literally dead in the underworld according to a text such as Ps 88:5-6.⁶⁹

What is important for the Judeans is that Ezekiel 37:12-14 is God's response to this dire situation. The Judeans do not have to remain in a realm beyond God. Though they have wandered outside of His protective covenant, they do not have to stay there. However, though it is the Judeans who have rejected God's covenant, and wandered away from Him, only God can restore them. In this vision, the dry bones do nothing to restore themselves, only God can make them human again. Even after the bodies are physically restored, they can do nothing to live again until God causes breath to be in them and they live.

God's resurrection intervention needs to be discussed here. Christopher R. Seitz does this in his article "Ezekiel 37:1-14." He writes that unlike dreams or other vision accounts, there is nothing abstract about Ezekiel's experience of the valley of dry bones. In fact it is a very concrete and certain vision. He writes:

Here, as elsewhere, Ezekiel refuses to speak in realms of abstraction. We hear of bones, piles of them (v. 1). The prophet tramps through them (v. 2). There are sinews and flesh and stretched skin, sudden noises and the rattling of bones as they move (vs. 6-8). This is no abstract vision, vaguely displayed to the prophet's inner eye. One might have expected the smells to be described – if there were any to be described – as the prophet makes his way through this lonely valley. This however, is a scene of death, total death. Dry bones have no smell.⁷⁰

This emphasis on the dryness of the bones only serves to point out just how dead they are. Ezekiel states this outright when he remarks: "I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry" (Ezek. 37: 2). It is not a valley of fresh corpses that only need the breath of life to live again. It is not even a valley of decay that needs some minor bodily

⁶⁹ Saul M. Olyan, "Unnoticed Resonances of Tomb Opening and Transportation of the Remains of the Dead in Ezekiel 37:12-14," *JBL* 128 (2009): 493.

⁷⁰ Christopher R. Seitz, "Ezekiel 37:1-14," *Int* 46 (1992): 53.

repairs. It is a valley of dry bones that have long since died and decayed until not even a smell remains. Seitz further notes that

The final unit makes clear that the bones are the bones of Israel (37:11-14). But this clarification serves to disturb and to enhance the graphic character of the opening scene, with its steady emphasis on real death.⁷¹

This vision conveys a message that is easily said but not easily understood. Namely that Israel is geographically, politically, and most importantly, spiritually dead. Indeed, they have been so completely lost for so long that they can no longer return to life. They cannot bandage their wounds and come back into the covenant with YHWH. They are in a very serious and dangerous situation that must be understood. God goes to great lengths to make His people understand, and the exile is part of it. As Seitz concludes:

So it is that when he prophesies to these dry bones, as God had commanded him, a new image of exile is forthcoming. Exile is not just an alien land where Israel was not born, in contrast to the homeland for which she will long (Jer. 22:26-27). It is not just a place where Israel is left to learn a harsh lesson, intended to lead her to the knowledge and recognition of God, as Ezekiel himself so frequently insists. Exile is death.⁷²

When physical life still exists, a state of true death can be difficult to understand. But, according to the Bible, no truer death exists than being spiritually dead to God. Indeed, the exile is not a time out, and the prophecies are not tired warnings: both serve as signals of Israel's state. The message is clear: without God there is no hope of life for the Judeans.

Darrell W. Johnson touches on this in his book *The Glory of Preaching: Participating in God's Transformation of the World*. Johnson focuses primarily on how the text of the Bible interacts with a Preacher, and further affects his theology and life. While his focus may not be the same as mine, he provides interesting insight to Ezekiel 37. In his book he states that

⁷¹ Ibid., 54.

⁷² Ibid., 55.

While facing that hopeless situation, God brings Ezekiel, by the Holy Spirit, into the middle of a valley. Whether such a valley actually existed or was in the mind's eye of the prophet does not matter for the purposes God intends. God portrays Israel's predicament using a picture of the decaying bones of a defeated army. God heightens (or should I say, deepens) the sense of hopelessness by speaking of graves. See the graves, Ezekiel? Israel was decaying, defeated, dried up. Israel was dead.⁷³

Like Seitz, Johnson brings out the state of the bones. They are utterly dry. They are the bones of people who have long since ceased to live. There is no tissue, no remains, and no trace of flesh on any of them. They have been completely dried out and are as dead as can be. This acts as a foil to emphasize and demonstrate the life-giving power of the Spirit of God. It is through God's word, spoken by Ezekiel, that these dusty, dry bones are once again surrounded by flesh. It is the same word by which God first created mankind. As Johnson further notes: "The word of the Lord is living and active, powerful and creative. The word of God not only informs, it performs, it transforms. The word of God makes things happen."⁷⁴ Indeed, this is readily apparent in this passage. Just as in Genesis 1, God speaks אָמַר in both, and the power of His spoken word brings about the creation of all things. However, in this passage, it is not until He speaks to the Spirit that life enters the newly created bodies. But note that God's Spirit is also present at creation in Genesis 1:2.

The state of real death is not the only thing being conveyed through this vision. As Francesca Stavrakopoulou notes in her article, "Gog's Grave and the Use and Abuse of Corpses in Ezekiel 39:11-20," there are social and cultural implications that need to be addressed as well. Though she focuses more on Ezekiel 39, she astutely points out that in chapter 37 the dry bones do not receive any care, burial or mortuary rites. They are simply scattered on the surface, to be walked through. She writes:

⁷³ Darrell W. Johnson, *The Glory of Preaching: Participating in God's Transformation of the World* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2009), 23.

⁷⁴Ibid., 25.

In the well-known portrayal of the so-called Valley of Dry Bones in 37:1-14, motifs elsewhere associated with corpse abuse cluster together. The bones of the dead are exposed and displayed on the surface of the ground, while Ezekiel and Yhwh appear to play the role of voyeurs in viewing the dead. In its biblical context, the location of the bones in a valley (vv. 1-2) is suggestive of a cemetery, or a mythological geographical entrance to the underworld; thus the exposure of the bones on the surface of the ground is suggestive of the dislocation of these dead from the social frame. Abandoned without mortuary care, they are neither in the underworld nor with the living. Instead, they are alienated.⁷⁵

Though this is an interesting idea to ponder, the description of the corpses scattered on the surface and left unattended rather indicates the strong possibility of a battlefield. This is more likely the case than a “cemetery” or “entrance to the underworld,” which was an idea foreign to the Israelite religion. However, either way Stavrakopoulou is correct in noting that the bodies are abandoned without any care. Indeed, like most cultures Israel did care for its dead. As Rachel Hallote notes in her book *Death, Burial, and Afterlife in the Biblical World*, Israel’s dead often retained a role in their society. She writes that

When someone died in ancient Israel, his roles in the community and family certainly changed, but they did not disappear. Both the type and the place of burial reflect this. One of the most intriguing pieces of evidence that archaeologists have for the continued role of the dead in society is the location of the community’s burials. Cemeteries were only one option for the placement of the dead in the biblical world. The dead were also buried under the floors and in the walls of individual houses or in the middle of open fields.⁷⁶

However, in Ezekiel 37:1-14, the dead receive no burial at all. This continues to emphasize the state of Israel.⁷⁷ It also holds a sense of worthlessness and meaninglessness. As it stands Israel’s actions are unimportant, because they do not exist inside of any functioning framework. They neither belong to the living who have hope in YHWH, nor are they present in any kind of underworld where they might be honored or remembered. Instead they are alienated, and

⁷⁵ Francesca Stavrakopoulou, “Gog’s Grave and the Use and Abuse of Corpses in Ezekiel 39: 11-20,” *JBL* 129 (2010): 83.

⁷⁶ Rachel S. Hallote, *Death, Burial, and Afterlife in the Biblical World: How the Israelites and Their Neighbors Treated the Dead* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001), 29-30.

⁷⁷ NB Sarah, in keeping with Mesopotamian customs, was buried in a cave. See Genesis 23:19.

disregarded. God conveys a similar message in Jeremiah, when He states in a vision: “They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves” (Jeremiah 2:5). However, even in such a state of distress, YHWH desires to save them and give them new life in Him.

Creation and Re-Creation in Genesis 2 and Ezekiel 37

Indeed, the significance of the state of death is not the only point to note in this passage. The re-creation account also has much to offer. As Jacqueline E. Lapsley notes in her book *Can These Bones Live?: The Problem of the Moral Self in the Book of Ezekiel*, the process of making the dry bones live has some connections to the creation account in Genesis. She notes that

Chapter 37 also evokes God’s first creation of humankind: the spirit/breath/wind of Yahweh animates the human creature. The form of the vision mirrors its content. This is no static image; rather, it leaps across the imagination of the hearer in a dynamic movement.⁷⁸

Indeed, this portion of Ezekiel is just as descriptive as that which describes the scene of death.

In Genesis 2:7 God creates man out of the Earth and breathes into him the breath of life, and he lives.⁷⁹ As Lapsley points out this is very similar. God takes the dry bones, and layer by layer adds flesh to them. It is not certain where the flesh comes from, perhaps from thin air, or perhaps from the dust of the valley. Either way, God creates it. Just as in Genesis, God provides the newly made bodies with the breath of life, and they live. This is interesting because since the creation account in Genesis, God constantly works to keep His people alive physically and spiritually. Genesis conveys the fact that the election of Abraham happens so that Israel will be His nation. Through Israel, a bridge is supposed to be built that reaches the rest of the world. This can be seen when God states: “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I

⁷⁸ Jacqueline E. Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?: The Problem of the Moral Self in the Book of Ezekiel* (New York: W. de Gruyter, 2000), 170.

⁷⁹ Again, while the Hebrew term for breath in Gen. 2:7 is נִשְׁמָה, the semantics are consistent with רוּחַ.

will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:3). Much of the Old Testament is an account of God trying to correct His people and bring them back into a covenant with Him. Despite a sojourn in Egypt, demanding a king other than YHWH to lead them, and almost constant syncretism Israel had never quite been so far from God spiritually. However, in Ezekiel we see something akin to the flood account of Genesis. Here Israel has been declared dead and, like with Noah, God starts over. He metaphorically re-creates Israel, and gives them new life. He does not resuscitate old corpses, but actually forms new bodies over old bones and gives them new life. The message is clear, God will reform Israel into a new people, and they will live in Him again. In his article, “The Grammar of Resurrection in Isaiah 26: 19a-c,” Philip C. Schmitz discusses the references to resurrection in Isaiah 26 and parallels these images to Ezekiel 37. He states:

Note the conceptual similarity of Ezek 37: 1-14. In the process of resurrection as explained to Ezekiel in a vision (37:1-3), the bodies of the dead are the first reconstituted (vv. 4-5); then spirit (Hebrew רוּחַ) is infused in them, and they live again (v. 6). After Ezekiel’s first prophetic utterance (v. 7), the dry bones reassemble and become en fleshed; the newly reconstituted corpses are not yet alive, however, because ‘spirit [רוּחַ] is not in them’ (v. 8). A second divine commissioning (v. 9) and a second prophetic utterance (v. 10) are necessary to revive and revitalize the corpses. Oral tradition (*b. Sanh.* 92b) completes the parallel: the dead revived by Ezekiel’s intervention chanted a song of praise to God as soon as they came to life.⁸⁰

Although an “oral tradition,” cannot be used to base facts on since there can be no record of oral tradition, this is nonetheless an interesting way to end the vision. It is interesting because it emphasizes that God is re-creating Israel as His people. However, the point stands without the “oral tradition” as well. Schmitz ties the vision in with the exile by stating that “Ezekiel’s message of life after exile is nothing less than the prophetic declaration of life after death, of a

⁸⁰ Philip C. Schmitz, “The Grammar of Resurrection in Isaiah 26: 19a-c,” *SBL* 122 (2003): 148.

collective resurrection.”⁸¹ Given the situation that Israel was in as a nation, a message of comfort and restoration would have been welcome. However, this restoration would not come in the way that Israel may have expected. Instead of a physical rescue from captivity, like the Exodus account, this restoration would take place from captivity. Allen Dwight Callahan writes about this in his article “Perspectives for a Study of African American Religion: From the Valley of Dry Bones.” He discusses how the African-America community has acquired Ezekiel 37:1-14 as an emblem. He notes that the immediate restoration promised in this vision was the ability to remain a nation while in exile. He writes:

The prophet Ezekiel receives his oracle in Babylon, the land of captivity. God sends a spirit from the four corners of the world to completely restore the people of Israel. Once restored, God will then restore them to a land of their own.... The Babylonians had conquered Judah, destroyed the Temple, and took many Jews to Babylonia as prisoners. Inspired by the prophet Ezekiel, they continued to hold to their ancestral god in their unprecedented absence from the very land in which God had revealed God’s self to them. The ongoing revelation that marked their peculiar history would now continue in exile.⁸²

God would reform Israel as a nation, but a nation under foreign rule. However, and more importantly, He would reform them spiritually and give them life in Him once again.

Exegetical Focus on רוּחַ in Ezekiel 37:1, 5, 6 and 8

There are a few verses that require special attention. Those verses in Ezekiel 37 which specifically employ the term רוּחַ. Verse 1 is interesting because it notes how Ezekiel ended up in the valley of dry bones. Walther Eichrodt discusses this verse in his commentary *Ezekiel; A Commentary*. He notes:

⁸¹ Allen Dwight Callahan, “Perspectives for a Study of African American Religion: From the Valley of Dry Bones,” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 7 (2003): 45.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 52.

The experience of the vision begins with Ezekiel being seized by the hand of Yahweh as in 1.3 and 8.1, i.e. by an ecstatic trance in which the prophet's mind is made to serve a reality other than itself. This brings about a movement from one place to another, like that brought about by the spirit of Yahweh in 3.12, 14. Both passages speak of his being carried in a particular manner: the prophet is carried away from Tell Abib into the valley-plain, the place towards which 3.22f. similarly speaks of his being transported.⁸³

Eichrodt notes that this vision starts with “The hand of the Lord” (Ezek. 37:1) landing on Ezekiel and bringing him into the valley through God's Spirit. Eichrodt thinks that this was brought about by an ecstatic state. This is a legitimate theory, since this was frequently how prophets were made to prophesy in the Ancient Near East.⁸⁴ An example of this occurs in 1 Kings which states that the prophets of Baal “shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying” (1 Kings 18: 28-29). This demonstrates how prophets attempted to enter an ecstatic, frenzied state was utilized in order to prophesy. However, verse 1 is interesting because it does not indicate at all that Ezekiel even wanted to experience a vision. In this verse Ezekiel appears passive, as God grabs him and whisks him away with His spirit.

The next set of verses that need to be looked at closer are verse 5, 6 and 8. This set of verses will be dealt with as a unit because they detail the reconstruction of the body. So far I have discussed the death aspect of this vision. These verses, however, focus on reversing that state. Daniel Isaac Block makes two interesting points about this in his commentary *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48*. The first is about רוּחַ. He notes that רוּחַ begins to become ambiguous in verse 5. He states:

The use of the term *ruah* creates ambiguity. The shift in meaning from v. 1 is obvious, but it is difficult to decide whether *ruah* should be interpreted as ‘spirit’ or ‘breath.’ In

⁸³ Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel; A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 507.

⁸⁴ Jonathan Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East: A Philological and Sociological Comparison* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 37.

any case, *ruah* represents the divine animating force without which no life is possible (Jug. 15:19). Only God from whom all life derives (Eccl. 12:7), can revive these bones.⁸⁵

Block uses other Biblical passages to solidify what this רוּחַ is and what it does. He first refers to Judges 15:19, which discusses how Sampson's spirit was revived after he drank water. I do not think that רוּחַ is being used here in the same way that it is being used in Ezekiel 37. Though an interesting idea, I think that Block is overly speculative with this interpretation. However, his next reference does indeed support his points about רוּחַ. Ecclesiastes states that when a person dies, "the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it" (Eccl. 12:7). While this is a question, it seems to indicate that רוּחַ seems to be the thing that separates human life from death.

Block's second point primarily refers to verse 6. He notes: "The sequence involving bones, sinews, flesh and skin reflects an understanding of anatomy available to anyone who had witnessed the slaughter of an animal; it also reverses the decomposition process."⁸⁶ This ties in with verse 8, which notes that the bodies have been reconstructed "but there was no breath in them" (Ezek. 37:8), suggesting that the breath is the first thing that leaves the body when a person dies. This makes sense since the breath seems to be the thing that determines whether a person is alive or dead. Naturally, it would leave the body before the body started to decay.

Ecclesiastes and Ezekiel 37:1-14

The last section of verses that will specifically be looked at are verses 9-11. Walther Zimmerli covers this section in his commentary *Ezekiel*. He too notes that Ecclesiastes 12:7 refers to a רוּחַ that gives life. However, he states, that

⁸⁵ Daniel Isaac Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 1997), 376.

⁸⁶Ibid.

By contrast with Eccl. 12:7, it is not a רוּחַ ('spirit') which comes from God. Rather, this possibility of life seems to be regarded as something which pervades the whole world, which now blows upon the human corpses like a wind in order to transform them into living creatures.... But while the wind, for all its capricious veering from south to north (Eccl 1:6) and for all the unpredictability of its origin at any given moment (Eccl 11:5; Jn 3:8), can blow from only one place at a time, the irruption of the breath of life into the dead bodies is represented as an event which happens from all four points of the compass simultaneously – a רוּחַ of a mysteriously peculiar kind.⁸⁷

Although I think he makes some interesting points, I do not agree that the רוּחַ does not come from God. In Ecclesiastes 12:7 there is no evidence to suggest that the רוּחַ in Ecclesiastes does not come from God, but the רוּחַ in Ezekiel certainly comes from God. Indeed, given that the word is exactly the same, the function – giving life to the living – is exactly the same, and God commands both, so I conclude that they are the same concept and both originate from God.

Zimmerli, however, makes some good points about the nature of the רוּחַ. Specifically, he emphasizes how special this act of re-creation is. Though the רוּחַ is present on earth, giving life to all who have it, here God calls it from all areas of the earth to give life to the dead. It is also interesting to note that Zimmerli also makes the connections with Ecclesiastes 1:6 and John 3:8 that I have discussed. Indeed, this supports that notion that John 3:8 may in fact be an allusion to Ezekiel 37:9 and Ecclesiastes 1:6.

Ezekiel 37:9-11 is a passage full of anticipation. The bodies have been reformed, and await the breath of life. This account mirrors the ideas present in Genesis: “Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7). Here God commands the רוּחַ which gives life. He summons it from all corners of the earth to give life to the multitude of lifeless bodies on the valley floor. Ezekiel states that “breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army” (Ezek. 37:10). This demonstrates the power of God’s command of the רוּחַ.

⁸⁷ Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters 25-48* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 261.

Immediately all of the bodies come to life, and are in fighting shape. Verse 11 is where the meaning of the vision is made clear. It states that “these bones are the people of Israel” (Ezek. 37:11). Though Israel as a nation is in a seemingly hopeless situation, God commands the power to make them live as a nation again. Through His רוח He will restore Israel and re-create them as His people.

Ezekiel 37:1-14 is a vivid vision set during the exile. It contains a message of true death, a warning about Israel’s relationship with their God. It details how severe Israel’s condition is, and ties this condition in with the exile that they were experiencing as a nation. However, the message does not end there. YHWH is a creating God, and even death cannot separate Israel from Him. In the vision He promises to re-make Israel spiritually. He will reform them as His people, and allow them to live as Israelites while in exile.

Typology in Ezekiel 37:1-14

This chapter would not be complete without mentioning typology. Since Ezekiel 37 is an Old Testament text that occurs historically before John 3, I look to it for a type. In this pericope the type can be found in the concept of the רוח , which brings about the literal resurrection of the nation of Israel geographically. This geographical restoration is found in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah which document the three returns of the people of Israel to their home land. In this way they were corporately restored as a people to their home land, where they were free to worship their God and rebuild their temple. Although this is certainly a fulfillment of prophecy, a typological reading can lead to an even greater fulfillment. I will demonstrate this in relation to John 3 later.

Chapter Summary

During the time frame of Ezekiel, the people of Israel found themselves in a dire situation. They had just been deported from their land into Babylonian exile, and found themselves in captivity for the first time since Egypt. Worse than that, this very situation called into question God's Davidic covenant, and the promises God had made to His people over the years. The state of Israel's covenantal relationship with God, would have also been in question.

God acknowledges the state that Israel is in, and notes that it is akin to a state of total death and decomposition. However, instead of leaving Israel to their metaphorical death, God sends His prophet Ezekiel to comfort them. Through Ezekiel God sends Israel a message declaring that He will re-create them as a people and restore them geographically, and spiritually.

Allusion and pun were also found between Genesis, Ecclesiastes and Ezekiel 37. These will come into play in relation to typology in John 3.

CHAPTER FOUR EXEGESIS OF JOHN 3 IN CONTEXT

Introduction and Literary Structure of John 3:1-21

John 3:1-21 is a pericope that details Jesus' didactic exchange with the Pharisee Nicodemus. After this exchange has ended, the author of John expounds upon the meaning of Jesus' words. This section contains a well-known verse, namely John 3:16. The theme of this pericope is often identified as love.⁸⁸

John 3 is obviously situated between John 2 and 4. Therefore, to give an idea of the literary context that John 3 occurs in, I will briefly describe the events of John 2 and 4. Chapter 2 documents both Jesus' first miracle at the wedding of Cana, and how He cleared out the temple. Chapter 4 discusses Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman. It can be seen that chapter 3, which documents Jesus' love for people and His sacrifice that they can enter God's kingdom, occurs after Jesus establishes some of His power and authority in chapter 2, and before Jesus extends His love for people beyond the strictly Jewish community.

The literary structure of John 3:1-21 is as follows. Verse 1 identifies Nicodemus as "a Pharisee... a member of the Jewish ruling council" (John 3:1). Though Nicodemus seems to be an educated Jewish man, he seeks Jesus out by the cover of night. Verses 1-2a introduces this situation. Verses 2b-3 contains the first cycle of dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus. Verses 4-8 shows the second cycle of dialogue, which has increased in length. Finally verses 9- 15 contain the final cycle of dialogue, which has once again increased in length. Verses 16-21 have John's explanation of these interactions. This will be unpacked forthwith.

⁸⁸ Francis J. Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John: An Exegetical, Theological, and Literary Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 3.

Jesus identifies the problem being discussed in verse 3 stating: “no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are ‘born from above’” (John 3:3). Thus it becomes apparent right from the beginning that this is an important conversation. The problem presented here is the main problem that faces all of mankind: mortality. However, Jesus makes it clear that this is a problem with a solution. If one is re-born through the πνεῦμα they will be part of God’s kingdom and their death will not be eternal (John 3:5). This pericope is ultimately a message of salvation and comfort. It foreshadows Jesus’ crucifixion (John 3:14-15) with the promise that it will allow people to be re-born in God’s πνεῦμα and take part in His eternal kingdom.

Exegesis of John 3:1-21

The story about Nicodemus and rebirth occurs within the Gospel of John. This Gospel is not considered one of the synoptic Gospels because of the differences it has with the other Gospels.⁸⁹ Indeed, John is written with a very distinctive style that the other Gospel accounts do not share.⁹⁰ In addition, it also uses more theological language and imagery. Margaret M. Beirne talks about this style in her book *Women and Men in the Fourth Gospel: A Genuine Discipleship of Equals*. In it, she notes how the author of John typically highlights different aspects of each story that takes place. In John 3:1-21, he highlights Nicodemus. She writes:

The reader notes the distinctive Johannine touch which highlights the individual aspect of each encounter. In the case of Nicodemus, he is portrayed as coming alone to visit Jesus, whereas elsewhere in John and in the New Testament generally, the Pharisees are almost always seen to act as a group.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Carson discusses John’s relation with the other Gospels in his commentary. D.A Carson *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1991), 49-57.

⁹⁰ More about the Johannine tradition and community can be found in Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 59-91.

⁹¹ Margaret M. Beirne, *Women and Men in the Fourth Gospel: A Genuine Discipleship of Equals* (London: T & T Clark International, 2003), 71.

Right from the beginning this pericope sets itself apart as a unique event. The text tells us that “he came to Jesus at night” (John 3:2). In response Jesus tells Nicodemus how to get into the kingdom of God. It is interesting to note, that though this may have been the answer to the question Nicodemus had intended to ask, Nicodemus did not ask anything. Jesus volunteered this information after Nicodemus acknowledges that God is with Jesus. Though this may seem odd, it is Nicodemus’ confession that is of importance. It is what begins this discussion and shapes the subsequent pericope. Carroll D. Osburn discusses this in her article “Some Exegetical Observations on John 3:5-8,” where she notes that

The text of John 3:5-8, while not solid, does not exhibit any major textual problems. The interpretation of the passage, however, is quite varied. The principal statement of the topic of chapter 3 is the pseudo-confession of Nicodemus in verse 2.⁹²

She further notes that this same verse also challenges Nicodemus’s understanding of both Christology⁹³ and epistemology, which sets the tone for the following discussion. She states that both can be seen in how Nicodemus addresses Jesus.⁹⁴ Thus, though the beginning of this conversation may not immediately make sense, the subtleties of how Nicodemus addresses Jesus are what truly start it.

However, this is not to say that this pericope is free from confusion. Although it is well structured, there is still some ambiguity present. Thomas L. Brodie mentions this in his book *The Gospel According to John: A Literary and Theological Commentary*. This commentary discusses the format of John 3:1-21 by stating:

The episode is composed of an introduction (2:23-25) and a threefold pattern of question and reply. The questions, the first of which is merely implicit, are posed by Nicodemus.

⁹² Carroll D. Osburn, “Some Exegetical Observations on John 3:5-8,” *RQ* 31 (1989): 132.

⁹³As a first century Jew, Nicodemus would not have had a frame of reference for Christology. But this Christology may be spoken of after the fact of John. Keener debates this in his commentary: Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody: Hendrick Publishers, 2003), 537.

⁹⁴ Osburn, “Some Exegetical Observations, 132.

Each of Jesus' replies contains an introductory "Amen, amen, I say. . . ." Even though Nicodemus' questions, especially when taken with their introductions, become shorter (cf. 3:1-2,4,9), the replies of Jesus, as Brown (136) indicates, become longer (cf. 3:3,5-8,10-21). As a result, the three exchanges are increasingly long— three verses (1-3), five verses (4-8), and thirteen verses (9-21). The third reply is particularly prolonged and is generally regarded as consisting of two rather distinct parts: (A) the summary account of the need for the raising of (the Son of) humanity up to heaven (10-15); (B) the summary account of God's love and of the response of faith (16-21). Within these three increasingly long sections, the text is arranged in a repetitive spiralling manner⁹⁵

Some of the ambiguity in this text occurs during the third reply. It is unclear whether verses 16-21 are spoken by Jesus at all. Though it certainly could come from Jesus, it could also be a summarization made by the author of John. Either way, these verses provide a good summarization of what Jesus says to Nicodemus.

The background of this pericope are the ideas of resurrection, new birth, and new life.⁹⁶ These are the concepts that Jesus tries to convey to Nicodemus during their conversation. However, as Brodie notes, this does not happen without confusion. He writes:

In an effort to reach the rather stiff mind of Nicodemus, Jesus speaks of spirit through both a contrast and a comparison. The contrast is between spirit and flesh (3:6) and as such seems to be aimed at the point at which Nicodemus is in a form of mental paralysis— his preoccupation with flesh, with purely physical forms of birth. The comparison with the wind— pneuma means both "spirit" and "wind" —is brief, but it is a magnificently poetic vision (3:8), and it seeks to open up for Nicodemus some idea of the possibilities offered by the world of spirit.⁹⁷

Here Brodie briefly notes the importance that πνευμα holds in this discussion. It changes the boundaries of the conversation. One may further add that it teasingly uses ambiguity which is a

⁹⁵ Thomas L. Brodie, *The Gospel According to John: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 195.

⁹⁶ Morris emphasizes these themes in his commentary: Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, Rev. ed. The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 208-209.

⁹⁷ Thomas L. Brodie, *The Gospel According to John*, 197.

characteristic of intertextuality.⁹⁸ This effectively opening Nicodemus up to the metaphysical aspect of life. Brodie expands on this by stating: “the Spirit, and that which is heavenly/above, opens up new possibilities. It offers a whole new realm, a realm as mysterious as the wind. And it is with this poetic evocation of the mysterious world of the Spirit that Jesus concludes his second reply.”⁹⁹ However, I would argue that the connection with the wind does not end there.

Ecclesiastes 1:6 and John 3

I think that when Jesus says “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.” (John 3:8), He is alluding to the book of Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes uses the nature of the wind throughout the book as a metaphor of incomprehensibility. However, it could specifically be referring to Ecclesiastes 1:6 which states: “The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course” (Eccl. 1:6). The two passages share a similar theme, imagery and vocabulary. This is why I think that Jesus is making an allusion.¹⁰⁰ In addition, by making the allusion He further reveals on the nature of the Spirit. Thus like the wind, the spirit is difficult to grasp, seemingly unpredictable, and hard to define.¹⁰¹ The pun, however, is that Ecclesiastes bemoans the futility and meaninglessness of life because of

⁹⁸ William H. U Anderson, “Ecclesiastes in the Intertextual Matrix of Ancient Near Eastern Literature,” in *Reading Ecclesiastes Intertextually*, eds. Katharine J. Dell, and Will Kynes (London: Bloomburg T&T Clark, 2014), 158-60.

⁹⁹ Brodie, *The Gospel According to John*, 198.

¹⁰⁰ It is also possible that John 3:8 is making an allusion to Ecclesiastes 11:5, which states “As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother’s womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things.”

¹⁰¹ Ridderbos discusses the connection with the wind in his commentary: Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 129.

mortality. Indeed the main problem for Ecclesiastes is the fact that death empties life of any meaning.¹⁰²

The Kingdom of God, Regeneration and Baptism

Ezekiel 36:22-38 serves as the background to Ezekiel 37. This passage discusses how God intends to remake Israel as a people group, and further highlights the message present in Ezekiel 37. However, it also serves to emphasize the connection with baptism in John 3. This can be seen through passages such as Ezekiel 36:25-26 which state “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you” (Ezek. 36:25-26). Read typologically this passage seems to be referring to the baptism discussed in John 3. Thus, God uses water and the Spirit to cleanse and renew those who believe in Him.

According to Keith Essex, one note-worthy point about this pericope, is that it is the only place where John uses the phrase ‘kingdom of God.’¹⁰³ He discusses this in his article "The Mediatorial Kingdom and Salvation," in which he states:

The only uses of the expression “kingdom of God” in the gospel of John appear in 3:3, 5 (Jesus spoke of “My kingdom” three times in 18:36). The immediate literary context of 3:5 is 2:23-3:21, the account of Jesus’ interchange with a Pharisaic member of the Jewish Sanhédrin named Nicodemus. According to Jesus, Nicodemus was the preeminent teacher of the OT of all of Israel, yet he did not understand a basic OT teaching (3:10). Nicodemus was willing to acknowledge Jesus as a God-sent teacher based on the miracles which He had done in Jerusalem (cf. 3:2 with 2:23). However, Jesus confronted this man with the need of spiritual regeneration if he or anyone else was to “see the kingdom of God” (3:3). Jesus stated the one must be born from above to ever experience the realities of the kingdom. This was a concept that Nicodemus was unable to

¹⁰² These are ideas that arose in MA thesis supervision with Anderson.

¹⁰³ Although the phrase ‘Kingdom of God’ occurs only in this passage in John, it is worth noting that it is widely used in the synoptic gospels.

comprehend (3:4), therefore Jesus further explained the meaning of His words (3:3) in 3:5.¹⁰⁴

What is interesting is that Essex makes the case that Jesus' teachings may not have been new. He thinks that there is evidence for them in the prophets. Therefore, the Israelite people should have already had a relatively long period of time to gain an understanding of these concepts. He further writes:

Regeneration produced by one action involving water and the Holy Spirit was necessary for entrance into the kingdom. Jesus repudiated the notion that anyone who has only experienced physical birth during this age will enter the kingdom when it is established on the earth in the future. He also implied (3:10) that this truth was already revealed in the OT. The specific OT passage to which Jesus was referring was Ezek 36:25-27, which echoed Jer 31:33-34 and Ezek 11:19-20.¹⁰⁵

With respect to this I would make two points. The first is to note, that though this concept may have been discussed in the Old Testament, it may not have been fully developed nor understood. The second is that the act that Jesus is describing is likely baptism, which was a new practice to the Israelite community. They did have a practice known as מקוה, but there is a difference between that and baptism.¹⁰⁶ מקוה is a cleansing from ritual impurity and the Essenes practiced it daily. Indeed ceremonial washings were common in the first century, again most notably among the Essene community found in Qumran.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, it is much more likely that the prophets such as Ezekiel and Jeremiah were referring to ceremonial washings, which would have been known to them, rather than baptism, which was a onetime practice that came about in the New Testament.¹⁰⁸ First with John the Baptist, baptism of repentance (Acts 19:4), and then the one

¹⁰⁴ Keith Essex, "The Mediatorial Kingdom and Salvation," *MSJ* 23 (2012): 220.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Daryn Graham, "Jesus, Qumran and The Dead Sea Scrolls," *Compass* 49 (2015): 34.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

time baptism of Jesus with fire and the spirit (Mat. 3:11). It could have been these distinctions that lead to confusion for Nicodemus. However, Essex is correct in noting that these were not entirely foreign concepts, and did in fact have a background that should have helped Nicodemus understand what Jesus was talking about. However, the text tells us that it did not.

Ezekiel 37:1-14, and John 3:1-21 and God's Unique Work

Though this segment might seem like a simple exchange between Jesus and Nicodemus, the discussion actually covers a variety of topics. Charles H. Talbert discusses these in his book *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles*. In it he writes about how this passage is one in which Jesus explains where He gets His authority. He thinks that the exchange between Jesus and Nicodemus provides a further explanation for John 2:18-22, in which Jesus clears the temple and points to His resurrection to justify it. Talbert writes:

When the Jews demand to know his authority for rendering temple sacrifices impossible, Jesus appeals to his future resurrection. How can his resurrection legitimate non-involvement in Jewish temple worship? The answer comes in the Nicodemus episode that follows.¹⁰⁹

Thus according to Talbert, the exchange with Nicodemus emphasizes how only faith in the resurrection of Jesus can cause a person to be part of the kingdom of God. In addition Talbert notes that the new birth, life, and membership of God's kingdom can only be achieved by Jesus **and not by any purely mortal man. Just like Ezekiel 37:1-14, new life can only be brought about by God**, and not by any act of a sinful human being. Talbert writes:

At 3:12 the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus comes to an end; at 3:13 the theological reflections of the Evangelist begin... Verse 13 states the thesis. The new birth

¹⁰⁹ Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles* (Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys Pub., 2005), 101.

is not brought about by means of human ascent into heaven but by means of the descent-ascent of the Son of Man.¹¹⁰

This highlights the incomparability of Jesus. Jesus is the only one of His kind, the only one whose actions can deliver the world. Kasper Bro Larsen touches on this in his book *Recognizing the Stranger: Recognition Scenes in the Gospel of John*. He notes that “what creates the difficult epistemological situation in John is that Jesus is the only heavenly figure on earth (3:31b). He is on his own at the point of destination.”¹¹¹ It is no wonder that Nicodemus had difficulty understanding what Jesus was saying. Jesus Himself was an anomaly, describing things that had never before been possible, and would never again be possible for a human being. Larsen further notes that

the observers themselves generally have no previous experience of Jesus to relate to when confronted with him, and so, when he claims that he is the Son sent by the Father, his identity is judged from the way he lives up to the expectations attached to a heavenly emissary in Jewish tradition as John reconstructs it. The discussion of the adequacy of the expectations becomes crucial, and while there are many recognition scenes in the Gospel, there is also an intense discussion concerning the criteria of recognition (chs. 3; 5; 7–10, especially). The fact that Jesus is a stranger does not mean that observers meet him without presuppositions, but these presuppositions are of a different kind than in conventional recognitions. According to the Johannine ideology of identity, recognizing Jesus is not to identify him in relation to the observers’ first view of him, but to “receive him” (cf. ελαβον in 1:12), i.e., to acknowledge his claim to thematic roles— roles that are a part of cultural ideology and that are subject to alteration when Jesus assumes them and creates new ones as in the “I am” sayings.¹¹²

This really outlines the uniqueness of Jesus. It is not surprising, then, that a person previously unknown to the world would bring with Him new ideas. Although Nicodemus was able to somewhat acknowledge who Jesus was, he was not able to understand what Jesus was talking about, at least not at first. In this pericope Jesus discusses two realms of existence.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 104.

¹¹¹ Kasper Bro Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger: Recognition Scenes in the Gospel of John* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 87.

¹¹² Ibid., 87-88.

Heaven and Earth: Wind, Breath, and Spirit in John 3:1-21

Jesus contrasts the earthly with the heavenly for Nicodemus. By doing so Jesus seeks to create a bridge between them. Larsen discusses this by saying:

The Gospel posits two spatial and temporal realms or domains of reality, juxtaposed in stark contrast: a world ‘above’ – the removed world of spirit; a world ‘below’ – the roundabout world of flesh. This contrast is further solidified and accentuated through the application of a series of metaphorical oppositions to describe such worlds: light and darkness, life and death, truth and falsehood, grace and sin. In addition, within this two-tiered and conflicted construction of reality, the Gospel presents the other-world as not only preceding the this world but also giving rise to it: the world ‘above’ as anterior and creating, the world ‘below’ as posterior and created. The resultant relationship of creation and estrangement, however, is not pursued. Thus, the crucial question of how the this-world, which comes to be through the agency of the other-world, comes to stand in alienation from this other-world is never addressed.¹¹³

This describes the opposing points of the heavenly realms well. In addition, it also shows why these concepts are difficult to understand. The earthly realm is the only one that human beings know of, the heavenly realm is purely abstract. However, the important point that Jesus makes to Nicodemus in verses five and six is that a human being can be part of the heavenly realm only through regeneration.¹¹⁴ Jesus says: “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit” (John 3:5-6). However, this is language that can still be difficult to understand. This is why, as Fabian Larcher Thomas *et al.* state, Jesus then provides an example to help Nicodemus understand the nature of the Spirit. They state this in their commentary where they say:

The Lord diverts Nicodemus when he proposes an example and says: **The wind** (spiritus, wind, spirit) **blows where it wills**. In the literal sense, the same words can be explained

¹¹³ Fernando F. Segovia, and R. S. Sugirtharajah, *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings* (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 166.

¹¹⁴ Köstenberger discusses the need for regeneration by God in his commentary: Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 119.

in two ways. In the first way [as wind].... First, the power of the wind, when he says, **the wind blows where it wills**. And if you say that the wind has no will, one may answer that “will” is taken for a natural appetite, which is nothing more than a natural inclination, about which it is said: “He created the weight of the wind” (Jb 28:25). Secondly, he tells the evidence for the wind, when he says, **and you hear its sound**, where “sound” (vox, voice, sound) refers to the sound the wind makes when it strikes a body. Of this we read: “The sound (vox) of your thunder was in the whirlwind” (Ps 76:19). Thirdly, he mentions the origin of the wind, which is unknown; so he says, **but you do not know where it comes from**, i.e., from where it starts: “He brings forth the winds out of his storehouse” (Ps 134:7). Fourthly, he mentions the wind’s destination, which is also unknown; so he says, **or where it goes** you do not know, i.e., where it remains.¹¹⁵

Not only does this help the reader and Nicodemus understand what Jesus is talking about, but it also demonstrates the use of an allusion. Here, although πνευμα takes on the easier to understand translation of ‘wind,’ it still conveys an allusion. It does this by connecting itself to other passages in the Bible that reference the wind like Genesis 2:7, Ecclesiastes 1:6 and Ezekiel 37:1-14. By doing this it adds to the meaning conveyed by use of this single word. The wind blows wherever it wants, we do not know where it comes from or where it is going, but nonetheless we know that it is real. By expanding upon the nature of the wind, Jesus expands upon the nature of the Spirit, and better conveys what He is and what He does to Nicodemus. The Spirit is non-contingent, free and sovereign; and thus divine.

αωθεν and 4Q385 in Rebirth by the Spirit

Before I discuss αωθεν and 4Q385, something noteworthy about the grammar of this pericope is its liberal use of the plural ‘you,’ especially when Jesus is speaking. Because of this, it is possible that Nicodemus is supposed to represent a group of people, and Jesus is simply using him to convey a lesson. Willard M. Swartley notes this in his book where he says:

¹¹⁵ Fabian Larcher Thomas, James A. Weisheipl, Daniel Keating, and Matthew Levering, *Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 1-5* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 171-72. Emphasis original.

It is difficult to know where Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus ends. Since verse 12 is the last direct speech, marked by *I tell you*, some take it as the ending of the dialogue. Here, you is plural, but it is already plural in the second half of verse 7: *You must be born again* (NIV). This alternation between the singular and plural you suggests that Nicodemus represents a group. Since the rationale for understanding *born anew/from above* continues through verse 15, the dialogue may end there. This illustrates John's literary technique of moving from an encounter or a sign into a discourse, sometimes without a clear marker where one ends and the other begins.¹¹⁶

As Swartley notes, this is the interpretation of the John. However, as it is written in John, it seems that Nicodemus acts as a stand-in for a group of people. This group of people could represent a relatively small group like the Pharisees or Israel, or be so large as to encompass all humanity. However, given that Jesus states in this very section: "that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him" (John 3:15), it seems likely that Nicodemus represents all people who believe in Jesus and are saved through Him. As Swartley also notes, it is difficult to determine where Jesus finishes speaking in during His last speech. This is, as Swartley writes, because John frequently moves from an example to his exposition of it without clearly indicating which is which. However, with that said, the pericope works smoothly to convey the point of the exchange, namely that being reborn spiritually leads to the kingdom of heaven. Swartley further notes:

Jesus proceeds on the spiritual level of *anōthen*, being born from above—that, too is being born again, but of a different type. *Anōthen* can have any of three meanings: *again* (KJV, NIV), *anew* (RSV), or *from above* (NRSV). Jesus follows by luring Nicodemus into new categories of thought: being born of *water and Spirit*, contrasting birth *in the flesh* with birth of *the Spirit*, and pointing to the *Spirit-wind*: it blows where it chooses (vv. 5-8). Punctuating this, Jesus again declares, *You must be born from above, anew, again* (v. 7b). This is as mysterious as the wind, which blows where it will. *We do not know where it comes from or where it goes [v. 8c]. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit [v. 8d].* As *anōthen* has double meaning, so also *pneuma* may mean wind or *spirit/Spirit*.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Willard M. Swartley, *John* (Harrisonburg, Va: Herald Press, 2013), 104.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 105.

Swartley makes an important note about ἀνωθεν. It possess the semantic range of “anew, again or above.” He mentions how the spiritual context of this pericope lends itself best to a translation of ‘above.’ Swartley further writes that this encompasses the ideas of being born anew, or again but in a spiritual way. I agree with Swartley, thus I prefer a translation of ‘above.’ I think that the context of spiritual renewal, in John 3:1-21 requires a translation of ‘above’ best because it is consistent with the divine imagery of wind, breath and spirit – both in Ezekiel 37 and here in John 3. Jesus could also be factoring in 4Q385 with the “winds from Heaven” as a paraphrase of Ezekiel 37:9. At the same time, the passage also conveys the sense of the other possible translations of “anew,” or “again;” another pun.

Swartley also emphasizes the mysteriousness of spiritual re-birth. This mystery is added to through the use of ambiguous words such as πνευμα and ἀνωθεν. But, if we understand the use of such words to be Greek puns with the Hebrew הוה, it lessens the ambiguity and deepens the meaning. Although the mechanics of the process may be mysterious, the cost and result is clear. John Muddiman and John Barton discuss this in their commentary *The Gospels*. They note that chapters 3 and 4 together make it clear that Jesus must go to the cross in order for people to be re-born and live. They write:

In chs. 3-4 the discussions with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman show that the Son of Man, who comes from above and will be elevated on a cross, will give his Spirit, independently of Jewish and Samaritan places of worship.¹¹⁸

This helps the reader to keep in mind that without Jesus’ death atoning for our sins, being born of the Spirit has no effect, and is meaningless. Both things must take place for a human being to see the kingdom of God.

An important connection that still needs to be made is one between spiritual re-birth and baptism. Muddiman and Barton make this point well. They note in:

¹¹⁸ John Muddiman and John Barton, *The Gospels* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 186.

...vv. 4–8, the Greek expression [ανωθεν] in the Fourth Gospel generally means ‘from above’ (Jn 3:31; 19:11, 23), but Nicodemus interprets it as ‘again’, which is quite possible in Greek. Moreover, the evangelist lets him imagine the irony of an old person entering his mother’s womb. Jesus alludes to Christian baptism, which the Baptist has already predicted in 1:33.¹¹⁹

As they stated, though it is not an explicit reference, being born of the spirit alludes to John 1:33, which defines this very concept. There John the Baptist is quoted: “I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit’” (John 1:33). This helps to unpack the passage with Nicodemus. From it we can see that being part of the kingdom of Heaven requires spiritual re-birth, usually with correspondences with baptism.¹²⁰ However, as Muddiman and Barton further note, Jesus Himself plays a central role in making baptism effective:

The short parable on the ‘wind’ (the same word as ‘Spirit’ in both Hebrew, [רוח], and Greek, pneuma) prepares the reader for the mysterious origin and destination of the Son of Man which will be revealed in the following verses. vv. 9–15, the third question of Nicodemus in v. 9 is short and gives Jesus an occasion to reveal who he is and how he will influence humankind’s rebirth.¹²¹

The latter part of this pericope states quite clearly that Jesus must die on the cross for people to be able to be part of God’s kingdom. As Jesus says: “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him” (John 3:14-15). Thus this passage demonstrates that though the process of spiritual

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 194.

¹²⁰ I realize that Luke 23:32-43 demonstrates how baptism is not the only way to be spiritually re-born and enter God’s kingdom. However, my point is that spiritual re-birth through baptism seems to be the means of grace instituted in John 3:1-21, and is generally the way that people are born of the spirit, at least in terms of Lutheran theology. See Martin Luther, *Luther’s Small Catechism* (Champaign, Ill: Project Gutenberg, 1994), 4-5. Of course, this is a sacramental view that is not shared by all Christians.

¹²¹ Muddiman, and Barton, *The Gospels*, 194.

re-birth is mysterious, it is usually brought about through baptism, which is made effective through Jesus' atoning sacrifice.

The Meaning of the Dialogue and Baptism in John 3:1-21

Finally Muddiman and Barton discuss the dialogue with Nicodemus as a whole. They note that this pericope is truly about God's love for His people. Sin must be paid for with the Savior's life.

This passage notes that God sent His Son Jesus to pay this price for all people. They write:

This scene contrasts Nicodemus' earth-bound understanding with Jesus' wide perspective on God and the Spirit. The mysterious origin and direction of the wind prepares the reader for the heavenly things that Jesus is about to reveal. The Son of Man will be lifted up on the cross as a link between heaven and earth, and as a sign of God's love. The text moves from the night in the beginning of the dialogue to the light which those who do what is true will receive. Three short questions of Nicodemus receive three answers which progressively become longer and in vv. 16–21 end up in a kind of commentary (by Jesus or by the evangelist). Nicodemus in this chapter still hesitates before Jesus' claims. In 7:50–1 and 19:39 he will spiritually evolve and become a secret disciple of Jesus.¹²²

Though it may seem simple, this pericope seems to have a specific structure, with themes running throughout it in order to convey a very important point: Jesus's death provides eternal life to those who believe. Belief is provided through God's means of grace, namely baptism. This is how one is spiritually re-born. Martin Luther addresses this in his Small Catechism.

Baptism is not just plain water, but it is water contained within God's command and united with God's Word.... it gives the forgiveness of sins, redeems from death and the Devil, gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, just as God's words and promises declare....Water doesn't make these things happen, of course. It is God's Word, which is with and in the water. Because, without God's Word, the water is plain water and not baptism. But with God's Word it is a Baptism, a grace filled water of life, a bath of new birth in the Holy Spirit... It means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance, and die with all sins and evil lusts, and, in turn, a new person daily come forth and rise from death again. He will live forever before God in righteousness and purity.¹²³

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Luther, *Small Catechism*, 4-5. Again I am aware of other non-sacramental theologies. But here I am arguing for a particular perspective on the basis of elements in the Gospel of John.

For this understanding, Luther relies on texts such as Matthew 28:19 which states: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mat. 28:19). This is the word that Luther states is ‘united’ with the water of baptism. In addition he uses Titus 3:5-7:

He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life (Tit. 3:5-7).

Luther looks to this passage to support the idea that the Holy Spirit is present in the act of baptism, spiritually remaking a person so that they can enter God’s kingdom. Finally Luther uses Romans 6:3-4:

[D]on’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life (Rom. 6:3-4).

This supports Luther’s idea that baptism is not only a sacramental event but also a daily process that allows the Old Adam to share Christ’s death, while allowing the New Adam to share Christ’s resurrection and live forever in God’s kingdom. Though baptism is not the only way that this process of dying to sin and rising in Christ can take place, Luther emphasises that it is the one that the Bible outlines for us and makes readily available.

Connections with Rebirth, Baptism and the Insufflation in John 20:22

Life through belief ties in with a theme found within the Gospel of John. Namely that spiritual and physical re-creation or re-birth is a concept that seems to be a key aspect in the book. Annette Weissenrieder notes this in her article "Spirit and Rebirth in the Gospel of John." Here she discusses how the Holy Spirit brings new life, and how it connects to Jesus’ disappearance from His tomb:

The term ἐμφυσάω in antiquity conveyed an embodiment that goes beyond mere appearance. In the following, I aim to show that the hermeneutical key for understanding John 20:22 is not so much breathing as ancient embryology, which is an intimate moment within a body. Therefore, this scene may be interpreted as the answer to Nicodemus's question 'How can anyone be born after having grown old?' (John 3:3-9), and it refers to several other passages focusing on birth or being children of God.¹²⁴

Thus she proposes that the idea of new life, and rebirth is a literary theme that not only runs through the whole book of John, but also serves to imbue the text with deeper meaning. Weissenrieder explains that the new life that the Spirit gives shares intimate connections with a physical birth. She argues that the linguistics of John support this idea:

The reference most consonant with John 20:22 occurs already in chap. 3, in the dialogue about being reborn 'from above/anew' (ἀνωθεν is ambiguous). Nicodemus asks whether one who is old can enter a second time into the maternal womb or abdominal cavity (χοιλίη) can mean either) to be born, and Jesus in a wordplay replies that one must be born of water and spirit. One finds six references to being born of water or of water and spirit in 3:3-8.... There seems to be an interplay between a medical and a theological understanding of being born again and it is clear that Nicodemus refers to a medical-literal understanding of birth. Medically speaking this refers not only to the nourishment of the embryo with πνευμα and the solidifying of the embryo, as well as to the embryonic puff of πνευμα, but also to the bursting of the amniotic sac during birth, which is then connected to water, signifying the fluid in which the child flows out of the mother's womb.¹²⁵

This is noteworthy because the linguistics convey the intimate nature of the new life that Jesus gives through the Holy Spirit in baptism. God does not just transcendently, and in an unattached manner, watch as people perform rituals in hopes of being reborn. Much like a physical pregnancy and birth, God nourishes the new life with His Spirit, and intimately gives His own breath of life. Of course this is an allusion to God's life-giving act in Genesis 2:7. This also connects with John 20:22, where the resurrected Jesus appears to His disciples and breathes the Spirit of eternal life, into them (Gal. 6:8). Here in John 20:22 Jesus physically appears to His

¹²⁴ Annette Weissenrieder, "Spirit and Rebirth in the Gospel of John," *R&T* 21 (2014): 61-62.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

disciples and breathes the Spirit into them, thus revitalizing them and making them into the men who would spread the Good News. As Weissenrieder points out, this clearly ties to John 3, where Jesus discusses the very action He performs in John 20:22. Weissenrieder further notes the defining features of being born ‘from above’ when she notes:

Theologically speaking, John elaborates on the meaning of ‘being born of water’ in verse 6, saying that the one born of flesh is flesh, thereby distinguishing between two elements that belong together in birth from a medical perspective as well as a Jewish perspective: water and spirit. In John this makes sense when we see that the lexeme “spirit” refers to the expression ‘born from above ἀνωθεν,’ in verse 3. The tenses in chap. 3 make clear that the passage has a provisional nuance. Nicodemus is born of flesh, but he may be reborn of spirit. Ἐμψυσάω in 20:22 indicates that with Jesus’ appearance before the disciples the provisional nuance or perspective of the dialogue with the Jew Nicodemus is fulfilled, albeit without using the same language of giving birth through spirit from chap. 3. Instead it is clear that with the puff of the holy spirit which Jesus blows into the disciples they become children of God.¹²⁶

Thus Weissenrieder makes these ideas clear based on the linguistics of John. She demonstrates how these themes run through the book of John, contributing to its message and structure.

The exchange between Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3 actually conveys one of the most important points of John’s Gospel. It details how a person must be spiritually re-born to enter God’s kingdom and have eternal life. However, this can only take place if Jesus is crucified. His death leads to a sinner’s life. Because Jesus was ‘lifted up’ on a cross, people can receive spiritual rebirth and baptism. Because a person is baptized, they can believe in Jesus and this faith saves that person from eternal death. This pericope really emphasizes the work of God. His Spirit brings a sinner life, when they are dead as can be in trespass and sin. His breath causes His people to live. This process is as mysterious as the wind, but a person does not need to understand it in order to receive it.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 78.

Chapter Summary

I have discussed John 3:1-21 in this chapter which describes how a respected Pharisee came to Jesus in the secrecy of night to find out what he must do to become a part of God's kingdom. Through the course of three cycles of dialogue, Jesus explains that only by being "born from above" can a person or people group enter God's kingdom. By the end it becomes clear that this rebirth is only made effective through Jesus' own atoning death. This pericope is written in a distinct style which intentionally creates and uses ambiguity and mystery for Jesus to make His point: you must be "born from above."

All throughout John 3, it discusses the main ideas of resurrection, re-birth and new life through the *πνεῦμα*. With respect to the *πνεῦμα*, John 3 seems to allude to both Ezekiel 37 and Ecclesiastes 1, and possibly 4Q385, to describe its nature. But more prominently the allusion to Ezekiel 37. This leads to the idea that the *πνεῦμα* comes from God, as conveyed especially in 4Q385, and through it He gives life. This is perfectly consistent with Ezekiel 37 – specifically Ezekiel's statement: "Only you know LORD" (Ezek. 37:3). It is as mysterious as the wind, and as difficult to understand. This mystery is further embellished when *πνεῦμα* is understood as a pun, encompassing its full semantic range of 'breath, wind, and spirit' in a single entity and idea. Finally this pericope speaks of heavenly things, of a second life spent in the kingdom of God forever. However, this is something that can only be accomplished by Jesus' atoning sacrifice. Nicodemus could no more make himself be reborn, as a skeleton could give itself a new body and life – even as was the case in Ezekiel 37.

CHAPTER FIVE RESTORATION AND CORPORATE AND BODILY RESURRECTION

Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament

The idea of a resurrection after death is a difficult one to glean from the Old Testament. Philip Johnston notes this in his book *Shades of Sheol*. In this book, Johnston discusses the ideas of death, the underworld, resurrection and afterlife in the Old Testament. He notes that though passages such as Deuteronomy 32:39 and 1 Samuel 2:6 imply that God possesses the power to raise people from the dead, it does not state that God ever intends to do so.¹²⁷ Generally, the Old Testament does not demonstrate a concrete understanding of a personal resurrection leading to eternal life after death.¹²⁸

Daniel 12:2

The first explicit statement to personal bodily resurrection is in Daniel 12:2: “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.” Though this is the most explicit reference to life after death, Daniel is a rather late book and cannot speak to earlier theology. Of Daniel 12:2 Johnston states: “Finally, one text speaks unmistakably and unambiguously of personal resurrection.”¹²⁹ Indeed, Daniel 12:2 is a passage that provides great relief for those seeking a theology of personal resurrection in the Old Testament. What is interesting about Daniel 12:2 is that while it is discussing a multitude of people, it is primarily about individual resurrection. Though this passage is situated within the

¹²⁷ Philip Johnston, *Shades of Sheol: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament* (Leicester: Apollos, 2002), 219.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 227

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 225.

context of a long and detailed vision spanning from chapters 10-12, it nonetheless contains an explicit reference to life after death. As Johnston further notes:

This is clearly personal, individual resurrection ‘at the time of the end.’ It is also resurrection of both righteous and wicked, to eternal life and eternal contempt respectively. So here (at last) in the Old Testament there is a developed concept of resurrection. However, this may still be limited. First, as noted, the focus of these verses is Daniel’s people. They will suffer great distress, and those among them who are ‘written in the book’ will be delivered.... Secondly, the phrase ‘many of...’ probably means ‘many, but not all’, rather than ‘the many’, ‘the multitudes’ (as NIV). Thus it is exclusive of some, rather than inclusive of all. Thus even within Daniel’s people, it is only some who will rise.¹³⁰

Therefore, Johnston has demonstrated how even an explicit reference to resurrection and afterlife is not nearly as hopeful as one may desire. Though Daniel 12:2 does discuss ideas familiar with modern readers, such as a judgment and eternal life or condemnation, it does so in a very narrow sense. Likely, it applies only to a select portion of Daniel’s people and does not therefore do much to comfort that vast majority of people.

Isaiah 26:18

Another passage that shares a similar problem is Isaiah 26:18. Here Isaiah discusses physical resurrection: “But your dead will live, Lord; their bodies will rise” (Is. 26:19). This passage refers to a more corporate resurrection, though exclusive to the people of the Lord, that group would receive resurrection.

Intertestamental References to Resurrection in 2 Maccabees

However, earlier ideas of an after-life or a resurrection are difficult to find in the Old Testament. W. Meissner discusses this in his article, “Notes on Monotheism: Psychodynamic Aspects,” where he says:

¹³⁰ Ibid., 226.

Hebrew beliefs did not have a clearly developed notion of immortality. It was impossible for the Hebrew mind to conceive of the *ruach* or spirit of man existing without his body. The distinctions that later Greek thought produced had no place in the Hebrew conception of living man as a concrete totality. The concept of an after life is simply absent from the earlier books of the Old Testament. References to the restoration of Israel in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 37:1-14) or other references to the servant of Yahweh (Isaiah 53:10-12) cannot be taken as expressions of a doctrine of personal return to life. The belief in a personal resurrection emerges with startling abruptness in the Maccabean period (2 Maccabees 7:9, 11, 23) and there only in reference to the just.¹³¹

The book that Meissner mentions is found in the deuterocanonical texts. However, in my view they cannot be treated with the same authority since they are not canonical books. Meissner cites is 2 Maccabees 7 which discusses how seven Israelite brothers were tortured and killed for refusing to eat unclean meat. Although it is implied that the second brother has had his tongue cut out he nonetheless says: “you dismiss us from this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws” (2 Macc. 7:9, NRSV). Likewise verses 11 and 23 follow a similar theme. However, this deuterocanonical account takes place even later than both Isaiah and Daniel. Thus this supports the idea that both corporate and individual resurrection and after-life are late concepts, and mostly foreign to the majority of the Old Testament.

A Typological Reading of Ezekiel 37:1-14

Because the idea of an afterlife is such a late idea it is likely why Ezekiel 37:1-14 would have, at the time, been understood as a corporate resurrection as a nation. Philip Johnston notes with respect to Ezekiel 37:1-14 that

The vision of reconstituted and revived bodies clearly indicates a reconstituted, revived and restored people, as interpreted to the prophet in vv. 11-14. It is a dazzling parable of return from exile. But it says nothing about personal resurrection, even if it was later interpreted that way.¹³²

¹³¹ W. W. Meissner, “Notes on Monotheism: Psychodynamic Aspects,” *JRH* 7 (1968): 161.

Thus this vision would have given the Israelite people hope that they would one day be restored to their land, restored as a nation, and restored to God. However, it is unlikely that they would have understood it as a promise to be restored physically after death; even though Johnston notes that it would later be seen as such.

However, although that is not how this vision would have been understood in the original context that is how some have come to understand it. Caroline W. Bynum discusses this in her article “Images of the Resurrection Body in the Theology of Late Antiquity.” This article examines the ideas of death and resurrection found in the Bible and the writings of the early church fathers. In it she discusses how

Early Christianity, rabbinic Judaism, and the Koran all speak of the body that rises as bones or a seed. Christian exegesis, like rabbinic, came to read the dry bones of Ezekiel 37: 1-14 as referring not to the nation of Israel but to individuals.¹³³

Therefore, even though this passage would not have been read as a message of bodily resurrection, the Christian community which came much later adopted it, and took it to mean thus. Bynum furthers this point by stating that

Without a homeland – a clear sense of holy place to focus eschatological dreams – Christians projected into heaven their hope of reassemblage and sprouting. But their basic images retained the notion that the person in some sense survives in hard, material particles, no matter how finely ground or how widely scattered. The grave will not consume us.¹³⁴

Indeed, when read as a message of physical resurrection Ezekiel 37:1-14 is hopeful. It describes the power of God to create and resuscitate no matter the state of the dead. However, reading personal resurrection into Ezekiel 37:1-14 is just that: reading into it (eisegesis).

¹³² Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, 223.

¹³³ Caroline W. Bynum, “Images of the Resurrection Body in the Theology of Late Antiquity,” *CHR* 80 (1994): 233.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 234.

This is where typology becomes a legitimate and useful tool. It allows one to acknowledge what this passage meant in its historical context, while at the same time one can dig deeper to see if it holds any additional meaning beyond that. As a historical type, it possessed the function of restoring Israel geographically, politically, and most importantly, ‘spiritually.’ By God’s command, it would make Israel alive as a nation once more. However, as a type, *רוח* finds greater meaning and fulfillment in its antitype: *πνευμα* of John 3. Since *πνευμα* causes people to be reborn and enter God’s kingdom on an individual level, this adds to the typological meaning that *רוח* possesses. Steven Shawn Tuell touches on the ideas of resurrection in the New Testament in his article, "True Metaphor: Insights into Reading Scripture from the Rabbis." There he notes that

While the influence of Ezekiel’s vision on our New Testament may be uncertain, the resurrection of the body at the end of the age is assumed throughout...The New Testament confirms the statement in the Mishnah that the resurrection of the dead was a major point of doctrine for the Pharisaic rabbis.¹³⁵

The portion of the Mishnah that Tuell is referring to is Tractate Sanhedrin: Chapter 11, which discusses what happened to the resurrected bodies in Ezekiel 37. It states:

G. And should we derive [the opposite view] from the dead who Ezekiel resurrected?
 H. He accords with the view of him who said that, in truth, it was really a parable.
 I. For it has been taught in Tannaite authority:
 J. R. Eliezer says, ‘The dead whom Ezekiel resurrected stood on their feet, recited a song, and they died.’
 K. What song did they recite?
 L. ‘The Lord kills in righteousness and revives in mercy’ (1 Sam. 2:6).
 M. R. Joshua says, ‘They recited this song, “The Lord kills and makes live, he brings down to the grave and brings up” (1 Sam. 2:6).’
 N. R. Judah says, ‘It was true it was a parable.’
 O. Said to him R. Nehemiah, ‘If it was true, then why a parable? And if a parable, why true? But in truth it was a parable.’
 P. R. Eliezer, son of R. Yose the Galilean, says, ‘The dead whom Ezekiel resurrected went up to the Land of Israel and got married and produced sons and daughters.’¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Steven Shawn Tuell, "True Metaphor: Insights into Reading Scripture from the Rabbis," *TT* 67 (2011): 471.

This indicates that the Jewish community may have come to read Ezekiel 37:1-14 in a similar fashion. As Tuell notes, this cannot be known for certain. However, given that prophecies were regarded as having multiple fulfillments – short term and long term – it is entirely possible. Thus it can be seen that though Ezekiel 37:1-14 would not have historically been read as a text referring to physical resurrection, a typological reading of this pericope allows that to be an aspect of it.

Typology and Pun in Ezekiel 37 and John 3 for Rebirth and Resurrection

Given the vivid imagery that Ezekiel 37:1-14 provides, a picture of literal bodily resurrection is easy to construe. Indeed that is why this vision functions so well as a type. It allows a variety of ideas to be conveyed in one detailed depiction of an unbelievable event. Millard Lind notes this in his commentary *Ezekiel*. He states:

Modern interpreters generally agree that this vision is not about literal resurrection of dead bones of Israelites. Instead, it is about the renewal of Israel's life and return to their home. Nevertheless, the analogy is borrowed from an ancient concept of resurrection, and from early times both synagogue and church have interpreted it as a literal event. This vision describes no mere resuscitation of life which continues on the same previous plane, but a genuine resurrection of life from an old to a different order. Resurrection is the means by which the Lord will fulfill the three preceding sayings on renewal: a renewed community with a new heart and spirit, living in a renewed land, with a new shepherd leadership.¹³⁷

Thus, Lind provides a concise outline of many of the things Ezekiel 37:1-14 would come to mean. When this passage is read typologically, the “different order” that Lind speaks of can be interpreted as God’s kingdom (John 3:5). Indeed, a typological reading brings this vision to the

¹³⁶ Jacob Neusner, trans., *The Talmud of Babylonia: An American Translation XXIIIC: Tractate Sanhedrin Chapters 9-11*, BJS 87 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1984), 104-05.

¹³⁷ Millard Lind, *Ezekiel* (Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1996), 296.

greatest form of fulfillment. In the Kingdom of God, Israel receives a physical resurrection, and a return to theocracy. This was the form of government the Israelites had from Exodus 13 to 1 Samuel 8. However, since God's kingdom is not of flesh but of spirit (John 3:6), this theocracy will be perfect and last forever. Thus a typological reading of Ezekiel 37:1-14 and John 3:1-21 sees Ezekiel's vision fulfilled to the greatest degree, and in more ways than was originally thought possible.

Admittedly, the literary similarities are interesting. Both Ezekiel 37 and John 3 hone in on the words for 'breath, wind or spirit,' constructing major theological points around them. Both literary units expand the ideas of re-birth and new life to affect the whole book. Another interesting thing about the linguistics of these two pericopes is discussed by Ashley S. Crane in her book *Israel's Restoration: A Textual-Comparative Exploration of Ezekiel 36-39*. She examines the Septuagint's translation of Ezekiel 37:1-14. She notes that the LXX version usually translates רוח as πνεῦμα, though it will at times abbreviate it to convey which sense of the word they intend. She writes:

Whilst πνεῦμα, like רוח, may alternatively mean 'wind', 'breath' or 's/Spirit', we suggest that the various LXX MSS alternate between these meanings as is evident by their practice of abbreviating πνεῦμα as they do with κύριος and θεός. Fluctuation between abbreviating and not abbreviating may be stylistic, but v. 9, which has πνεῦμα abbreviated twice and once written in full in all representative LXX MSS, suggests theological intent.¹³⁸

This may further demonstrate the literary ties that these two chapters share. Though they are separated by many years, and were written in two different historical contexts, these two writings share a common concept. The LXX translation of Ezekiel helps to show that these two texts are indeed discussing the same thing insofar as early translators understood them. It is also important

¹³⁸ Ashley S. Crane, *Israel's Restoration: A Textual-Comparative Exploration of Ezekiel 36-39* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 91.

because the LXX is one of the oldest translations that exist of the Old Testament, giving the idea of intertextuality credibility. Furthermore, it could be some of the first signs of an allusion in John 3 to Ezekiel 37. Although allusions can be difficult to prove, this supports the idea that both texts are literarily referring to the same abstract concept. Namely, one that is both subtle and difficult to define. I think, that this is why they share similar words.

This is not something new to Biblical scholarship. Gary Manning has done much research into the idea that John draws upon the text of Ezekiel. In his book *Echoes of a Prophet: The Use of Ezekiel in the Gospel of John and in Literature of the Second Temple Period*, he discusses the various texts that Ezekiel has appeared in. This includes the Dead Sea Scrolls, second Temple literature, and the metaphors and allusions present in John. Although his focus is mainly on John 5, he makes it clear that John was well acquainted with Ezekiel, and used Ezekiel's concepts throughout his literature. Manning notes this:

The Gospel of John contains some of the most powerful images of Jesus that can be found in the Gospels. Jesus is described as the good shepherd and the true vine; the Holy Spirit flows as water and breath from him. Part of the power of these images lies in their antiquity. Shepherd, vine, water and breath had already served as powerful symbols in the Scriptures of Israel. In John's quest to explain the significance of Jesus, he draws on these images that were already familiar to his readers. While John uses images and quotations from the full range of the Old Testament, these particular images, as well as a few others, bear the stamp of one of Israel's most unusual prophets, Ezekiel. Ezekiel had the disconcerting habit of using familiar metaphors in unfamiliar ways; perhaps it is not surprising to find John using Ezekiel's metaphors in new ways to describe Jesus and his followers.¹³⁹

Thus, it would not be unreasonable to think that perhaps when John talks about the renewed life found through this concept of 'breath, wind and spirit,' he is making an allusion to Ezekiel 37. Interestingly enough, Manning also touches on the idea that John has certain literary themes that run throughout his Gospel. He notes that

¹³⁹ Gary T Manning, *Echoes of a Prophet: The Use of Ezekiel in the Gospel of John and in Literature of the Second Temple Period* (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 1.

John often modifies the language of his OT material in accord with contemporary Greek or Johannine style; he usually combines allusions to related OT passages; he resumes the topics of his allusions later in the Gospel; and he uses OT passages with consideration of their original sense.¹⁴⁰

This seems applicable to the passages that I am examining, which seem to keep the sense of the concepts being discussed in both John and Ezekiel. As I discussed earlier, this is likely why the texts contain the words that they do, namely because those words represent an identical concept, and convey the same sense. Interestingly enough, Manning speaks of the concept of life in Ezekiel 37 specifically. He states that:

A related theme found in most of John's allusions is that of life. In some ways, this is closely related to Ezekiel's use of life. Ezekiel 37 pictures Israel as dry bones, but God brings them to life. . . . John first alludes to the dry bones oracle in John 5 to describe Jesus' ability to give both spiritual and physical life.¹⁴¹

Indeed, this point is well made, and can certainly be seen in John 3 and Ezekiel 37. Both deal with the themes and ideas of renewal, resurrection and being re-made in some respect. This is most readily seen in Ezekiel 37:7-10 which depicts how the bones are re-made and given life by the *רוח* that God commands. This relates to John 3:5-6 which details spiritual re-birth. Though this is likely to be a direct allusion, on the basis that the themes and ideas are very similar.

This also demonstrates how typology is not the only way to detect possible connections between texts. Gary T. Manning, has done further work, looking into possible allusions in John. In his article "Shepherd, Vine and Bones: The Use of Ezekiel in the Gospel of John," he studies allusions that the book of John makes to the book of Ezekiel. He notes that "Although John never quotes Ezekiel, he makes several allusions to Ezekiel's metaphors."¹⁴² Direct quotations are

¹⁴⁰Ibid., 209.

¹⁴¹Ibid., 210.

¹⁴² Gary T. Manning, "Shepherd, Vine and Bones: The Use of Ezekiel in the Gospel of John," in *After Ezekiel Essays on the Reception of a Difficult Prophet* (ed. Andrew Mein, and Paul M. Joyce; New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 25.

certainly easier to both detect and prove. Though allusions do not possess that same ease, they similarly enrich the text that contains them. Manning notes some of these allusions when he writes:

John makes one faint allusion (John 5:21, 25-26) and one clearer allusion (John 20:22) to Ezekiel's oracle of the dry bones (Ezek 37:1-14). These two allusions draw attention to Ezekiel's vision of resurrection, as well as its interpretation as the giving of the Spirit... John's understanding of Ezekiel 37 is suggested by the way in which he modifies the image of the dry bones. As many have pointed out, John 5:21, 25-26 describes the giving of life in the present, and John 5: 27-29 describes the final resurrection.¹⁴³

Manning has detected quite a bit of imagery that certainly seems to be drawn from Ezekiel 37:1-14. Likewise, John 3 contains passages about the πνεῦμα that use similar enough words and phrases that it could be a reference to a couple of Old Testament passages. Specifically John 3:8 is likely making an allusion when it states that: "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). I would argue that the words and phrases are similar enough to the passage in Ezekiel 37:9 that it could be counted as an allusion: "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live'" (Ezek. 37:9). Again keep in mind the phrase from 4Q385 wind "from heaven." Similarly I think it could also be referencing Ecclesiastes 1:6 which states that "the wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course" (Eccl. 1:6). One of the reasons I think this is the case is because the Septuagint translation of these texts render πνεῦμα for רוּחַ. The only difference is that the Septuagint condenses the occurrences of πνεῦμα from the four that are recorded in the Hebrew text down to two in the Septuagint. Apparently after specifying twice that Ezekiel was to prophesy to the wind, the Septuagint did not find it necessary to state it a third time. However,

¹⁴³ Ibid., 40.

other than this minor difference, the words for רוח are directly translated as πνευμα. This demonstrates a shared vocabulary between the three texts.¹⁴⁴ Which, as noted earlier, is a main criteria for allusion. In addition, these three texts share similar imagery and phrases when discussing the wind. These things lead me to think that Jesus is making an allusion to Ecclesiastes 1:6 and Ezekiel 37:9.

It has been established that both רוח and πνευμα share the broad definition of ‘wind, breath and spirit.’ In addition these two words stand for such a similar concept that רוח is usually translated as πνευμα in the Septuagint. One of the things that is interesting about these two words is that their broad semantic range means they lend themselves well to puns. This is demonstrate well in John 3:8. John MacEvilly discusses this in his commentary. In it he discusses how πνευμα can be understood as ‘spirit,’ but how it also carries the traits of its other translations like ‘wind,’ which is the nature of a pun. He writes:

The leading interpretations of the verse [8] are reduced to two, founded chiefly on the meaning attached to the word ‘*spirit*.’ Some understand it to mean ‘*the wind*,’ as if our Lord meant to illustrate His teachings by a sensible matter, the operations and effects of the *wind*, which blows as ‘*it wills*,’ according to its natural tendency; and one knows not whence it comes or where it spends itself. But, its voice or sound is heard, either in the hurricane or the gentle breeze rustling through the trees; and then, applying the comparison, our Lord adds: ‘*so is every one that is born of the Spirit*,’ as if to say, the operation of the Divine Spirit, in the work of spiritual regeneration is invisible and imperceptible by the senses. You cannot know how it commences or how it terminates. But you only hear it in its effects, in its external operations. No wonder, then, if you cannot understand it.¹⁴⁵

Indeed, this is a good example of a pun that is simple wordplay. However, that is not to say that it is without purpose. The used of pun in this section serves to describe a fuller idea through the use of a single word.

¹⁴⁴ *The Septuagint*, 1029.

¹⁴⁵ John MacEvilly, *An Exposition of the Gospel of St. John, Consisting of an Analysis of Each Chapter, and of a Commentary, Critical, Exegetical, Doctrinal and Moral* (Dublin: M. H. Gill, 1902), 54-55.

John 3 describes the idea of spiritual rebirth and regeneration. This is a concept that MacEvilly also touches on in his book. He notes that

In this chapter, the Evangelist records our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus, in which he instructs him in the doctrine of spiritual regeneration – the absolute necessity, by the decree of God, to be born again spiritually, in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. He replies to Nicodemus's doubts by adducing several illustrations (1-13). He next records our Lord's teaching on the subject of faith, its necessity, and the heavy judgment in store for such as wilfully closing their eyes against Divine truth, refuse to believe (14-21).¹⁴⁶

Agency of Rebirth and Love

A major point that MacEvilly makes is the necessity of spiritual rebirth in order for a person to be a part of the kingdom of God. Pointing out this necessity makes the situation depicted in this pericope dire, much like the scene described in Ezekiel 37. Just as the Israelites need God's Spirit to be remade, and receive new life spiritually, so does Nicodemus and the group he represents require spiritual regeneration in order to be part of God's kingdom. David A. Croteau notes similar connections to Ezekiel 36 in his article "Repentance Found?: The Concept of Repentance in the Fourth Gospel." This article discusses the ideas of repentance in John, even though the book does not use the traditional language for repentance found in the other Gospels. He writes:

Jesus himself explains it again to Nicodemus in 3:5: to be born from above means to be born of water and spirit. While water has been interpreted as a reference to baptism, purification and natural birth, utilizing Ezek 36:25-27 makes an explanation easier. The themes in the Ezek 36 passage are of cleansing... and a new spirit.... God's desired response is that people will 'walk in My statutes' and 'observe My ordinances.' The whole passage is a call to repentance, to return to God, and a description of what God will do.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 51.

¹⁴⁷ David A. Croteau, "Repentance Found?: The Concept of Repentance in the Fourth Gospel," *MSJ* 24 (2013): 110-11.

Croteau makes an interesting connection with Ezekiel 36. And although John 3:1-21 conveys a sense of ‘cleansing,’ and ‘a new spirit,’ I do not agree with Croteau when he assumes that this means fulfilling the law. John 3:1-21 makes it clear that it is not through mortal or moral actions that a person can enter God’s kingdom. This can be seen in John 3:14-15 where it states: “The Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him” (John 3:14-14). However, although I do not agree with this particular conclusion, Croteau is correct in noting that this passage is very much about “what God will do.” He is also correct when he notes that

To be born of water refers to being cleansed and being born of the spirit refers to the Spirit that God will place in us. This ‘water-spirit’ is the origin of the regeneration that is demanded. Both of these result in living a radically different life; they involve changing. Jesus is exhorting Nicodemus to change his life, his manner of living; He is not calling for a change just in his way of thinking, but all of himself.¹⁴⁸

However, Croteau seems to think that it is Nicodemus who brings about the change. I would argue that though this passage very much requires a change in people in order for them to be part of God’s kingdom, it is a total change that only God can bring about, cf. ‘wind (spirit)’ just as in Ezekiel 37. If we could fulfill the law, and earn our own salvation, then there was no need for Christ’s atoning sacrifice on the cross. However, it is because of our inability to pay the price for our sin that Jesus had to pay it for us, that we can live in God’s kingdom forever. Luther notes that Christ’s sacrifice works primarily through baptism to daily destroy our sinful nature so that we can be part of Christ’s kingdom. He writes that baptism

means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance, and die with all sins and evil lusts, and, in turn, a new person daily come forth and rise from death again. He will live forever before God in righteousness and purity.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 111.

¹⁴⁹ Luther, *Small Catechism*, 5.

Our sin would not have to die daily with Christ, if we were capable of making ourselves good enough to enter God's kingdom. Therefore, though Croteau is correct in noting that a person must undergo a total change to enter God's kingdom, I disagree with the idea that it is a change that a mortal human being can accomplish. I think that this ties in with the ideas of corporate resurrection found in Ezekiel 37:1-14. Much like Ezekiel 37, people must be re-made, re-created, re-born of the spirit in order for them to enter the kingdom of God. Also like Ezekiel, this re-birth is not something that any mortal man can do for himself. We can no more re-make ourselves to be the kind of people that are capable of entering God's kingdom, than the dry bones can create new bodies for themselves and give themselves life. Both are wondrous acts of resurrection that only God can bring about. Both are motivated by the same thing: love. John 3:16 tells us that this is not a passing or superficial love, but rather a deep love that demands great sacrifice. It states: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). God's love for His people drives Him to make them whole, and give them a new life that can be shared with Him forever. To do this, Jesus had to suffer torture, shame, ridicule and ultimately death at the hands of those He came to save. This is why it is incorrect to assume that John 3:1-21 is a call to correct living. The pericope itself makes it clear that this is a call to rebirth through Jesus' atoning sacrifice. Donald G. Miller outlines this in his article: "John 3:1-21." He notes that this passage can be better understood. When it is read in the context of the book of John, focusing on the chapters that precede it. He notes that

This passage should be studied in the light of the author's purpose (1:30, 31): to produce a living faith in the historic man Jesus of Nazareth as the Jewish Messiah and also as the unique Son of God who has once for all 'exegeted'... God's nature as the loving Redeemer who 'saves' the world (3:16) by taking away its 'sin' (1:29). All that mortals may ever know about God is to be seen in Jesus who is 'a window into God at work.' And looking through that window we see God as holy love sacrificing himself for

mankind's sin in order that those who believe in him may receive the unmerited gift of his eternal life.¹⁵⁰

In his short exegetical piece on what John 3:1-21 means, Miller outlines the love and sacrifice required of God through Jesus to allow mortals to be part of God's kingdom. Ultimately that is what resurrection and regeneration is in these two pericopes. It is a picture of what God must do for people to live. By alluding to Ezekiel 37:1-14, John 3 makes this all the more obvious. There is not a thing that dry bones can do to make themselves live again, only God can give them life or make a person born "from above." Miller notes:

There is no way into the Kingdom, for Nicodemus nor for us, save a 'new birth,' a totally new beginning. Human efforts to set right the dislocation between humanity and God are futile. Nothing that humanity was or is or will be, nothing that humanity had or has or can get, nothing that humanity has done or is now doing or can do, nothing that humanity has known or knows or will know, can solve the human problem. There is no natural passage from the human to the divine; no possibility of an evolvment from the human order to God's order; no possibility of seeing the Kingdom of God without being 'born anew' or 'born from above' (3:3ff.). Divine generation, not human achievement, is the way of salvation.¹⁵¹

Here Miller does an excellent job of emphasizing how only God's actions can save. However, John 3:18-21 serves as a reminder that though this pericope is a testament to God's saving actions and sacrifice for mortals, some will still fall in judgment and die. It states: "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (John 3:18). Zane Clark Hodges discusses this in his article "Coming to the Light: John 3:20-21." Here he addresses this uncomfortable stipulation to God's gracious renewal. He writes:

In John 3:18, Jesus had declared that the believer does not stand under the judgment of God while the unbeliever emphatically does. Since that judgment is, for the nonbeliever, already a present reality, it can be explained in terms of the advent of light into a world of darkness (3:19a). The presence of this light forces on men a choice between the spheres

¹⁵⁰ Donald G. Miller, "John 3:1-21," *Int* 35 (1981): 174-75.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 175. This also tends to support a sacramental view of baptism in relation to John 3.

in which they shall move, and the unbeliever is one who has chosen to remain in darkness because his deeds are evil. Here it must be noted that, while the offer of life through Christ is always the offer of a free gift, nevertheless men's reasons for rejecting that offer are rooted in their preference for their sin to which they continue to cling. Thus they prefer the darkness to the light precisely because their deeds are evil (3:19b).¹⁵²

Here Hodges makes the case that the offer to be a part of God's kingdom can be rejected if a person follows after their sin and does not believe (John 3:16).

Chapter Summary

Both Ezekiel 37 and John 3 are very different texts that convey powerful messages of resurrection and restoration. When read typologically, Ezekiel adds to John by extending the promise of restoration and renewal to include the New Testament promises of bodily resurrection and new life in the kingdom of God as per Daniel 12. When John 3 is understood as containing allusions to Ezekiel 37, its message of renewal and resurrection become all the more powerful. It becomes clear that mortals can do no more than dry bones to re-create and resurrect themselves. This emphasizes the sacrifice that Jesus makes on the cross, and the love that God must have for His creation to carry out the sacrifice. God is such, that the Spirit is the agency of rebirth in both Ezekiel 37 and John 3.

¹⁵² Zane Clark Hodges, "Coming to the Light: John 3:20-21," *BSac* 135 (1978): 319.

CHAPTER SIX WIND, BREATH, AND SPIRIT IN EZEKIEL 37 AND JOHN 3

The correlations between ‘wind, breath and spirit,’ in Ezekiel 37 and John 3 seem to be quite numerous. They can be seen specifically in Ezekiel 37:7-10 and John 3:5-6. They can also be found in John 3:8 and Ezekiel 37:9 and 14. Although Ezekiel uses רוח for this concept and John uses πνευμα in the New Testament, the Septuagint makes it clear that these two words stand for the same idea.¹⁵³ This of course is because the Septuagint translates רוח as πνευμα. In addition, though Greek and Hebrew are very different languages, they both use a single word to describe the complex and multifaceted concept of ‘breath, wind, and spirit.’ **This alone is useful in identifying the use of רוח and πνευμα as a pun,** simply because a single use can convey up to three meanings, **and share a common vocabulary.**

This can certainly be seen in John 3: 1-21, which appears to contain quite a bit of imagery and a few metaphors on its own. Larry Paul Jones notes this in his book *The Symbol of Water in the Gospel of John*. In it he notes that although this pericope is a narrative about the late night discussion two people have, it seems to represent far more than this. He writes:

Although the two characters stand alone in this scene, Jesus and Nicodemus appear to represent more than two isolated human beings.... both characters at times use the first person plural verbal forms in their addresses. On two occasions Jesus also uses the plural form of the personal pronoun σύ when speaking to Nicodemus. In addition to that, the lengthily ‘credentials’ which introduce Nicodemus in 3.1, later recalled when Jesus refers to him as ‘the teacher of Israel’ (3.10), establish him as a representative of a larger group.¹⁵⁴

As Jones notes, their grammar alone indicates that far more is being discussed here than it may first appear. Although, with that said, one cannot be too shocked to realize that the scale of this

¹⁵³ *The Septuagint*, 1029.

¹⁵⁴ Larry Paul Jones, *The Symbol of Water in the Gospel of John* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 66-67.

discussion is far greater than Nicodemus ever dreamed, given the nature of the conversation. How one enters the kingdom of heaven is not a simple question with an ineffectual answer. Rather, the question itself lies within a grand scale, therefore one should not be too shocked to discover the Nicodemus represents far more than himself in this conversation. Indeed, this should in fact be very good news, as it means that more than just Nicodemus can enter the kingdom of God.

However, within these metaphors lies a discussion about how a person can be reborn spiritually. It is quickly revealed that the total transformation that a person must undergo in order to enter God's kingdom, can only be achieved by God through the πνευμα on behalf of man. The nature of the πνευμα and how it brings about this transformation is as mysterious as the wind itself. This connects with Ezekiel 37:1-14 which describes a process that Ezekiel claims only God understands (Ezek. 37:3). Jones states this when he writes:

Jesus then adds that those born of the Spirit can be compared with the wind, which blows where it will and, although one can hear it, one cannot know (οιδας) from where it comes or to where it goes (3.8).¹⁵⁵

This is one of the puns found in John 3:1-21. In John 3:8 it states: "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). Here the word πνευμα is used for both wind, and spirit. A single word, meaning two different things is a very common pun. Here the writer of John uses a pun to help the reader understand the nature of πνευμα. It is the 'spirit' that gives new life, that all who receive it are able to enter God's kingdom. This is best described in Ezekiel 37, which depicts the spirit actively giving life upon God's command. However, it is also like the wind. It is difficult to understand, and no one knows where it is or where it will be next. It is unpredictable and unfathomable. This passage also refers to Ecclesiastes 1:6 which states that

¹⁵⁵Ibid., 72.

“the wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course” (Eccl. 1:6), thus describing its roaming and mysterious nature. Yet, John 3 tells us that regeneration is like the wind, that in its incomprehensibility, we might understand it if only a little. A translation of wind can be very fitting, as it gives away another aspect of what the $\piνευμα$ or $רוח$ are. Specifically, that is the ‘wind of God,’ which is better conveyed by the third translation, breath. Ezekiel 37:14 frames this best when it states: “I will put my breath in you and you will live.” This verse demonstrates the internal pun of $רוח$ as wind, breath, and spirit. This is because all three translations fit perfectly here, and refer to the same thing. Wind, breath, and spirit refer to the same concept, but each translation endows this concept with a fuller meaning: it is a pun.

The idea that God’s breathe, and at the same time spirit gives life is an interesting idea, because it is one that has been present since Genesis 2:7. This passage states: “Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7). Though the word for ‘breath’ used here is $נשמה$ and not $רוח$, the imagery and themes of God intimately breathing life into His creation are so strong that I think a case can be made that both Ezekiel 37:9-10, and John 3:6-8 are alluding to Genesis 2:7. Much like Genesis 2:7 creation, Ezekiel 37:1-14 and John 3:1-21 contain detail examples of re-creation. In Ezekiel 37, God remakes the slain Israelites and as a final act of re-creation He commands His spirit to give them breath and cause them to live. Similarly, John 3 details the process through which God will remake all who believe in Him. He will make them spiritually re-born through baptism, and once they die He will raise them from the grave in re-created bodies to live in His kingdom forever.

Thus this רוח is the Spirit that God commands, at the same time it is also His breath that gives life to all that have it. This Spirit, or breath, is called πνευμα in the New Testament and according to John it remained with Jesus. John McHugh and Graham Stanton discuss this in their commentary. In it they note that “3.5-8 contain also four instances of πνευμα, hitherto found only at 1.32-33, which affirmed that the Spirit was permanently abiding upon Jesus... from the beginning of his ministry (1.33).”¹⁵⁶ The passage that McHugh and Stanton are referring to is:

Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit’” (John 3:32-33).

Thus they note that God’s πνευμα seems to come upon Jesus at His baptism and remain with Him. Therefore, when Jesus discusses making people re-born with Nicodemus He certainly possesses the means. However, that is not to say that because the πνευμα is with Jesus, that He is not also elsewhere. Ezekiel 37 makes it clear when Ezekiel commands the רוח: “Come, breath, from the four winds” (Ezek 37:9), that its lack of tangible physical form allows the רוח to be at multiple places or with the ‘four wind,’ all at once. However, As McHugh and Staton note, though the πνευμα does not have a tangible body, it is still perceptible. They write:

Some commentators take the verse [8] to be a parable about the wind, the sound of which is audible to all, though its origin and ultimate destination remain incomprehensible. In that case, οὕτως affirms that this parable is applicable to everyone reborn of the Spirit.¹⁵⁷

They pull out an interesting aspect of the πνευμα. Though it is impossible to understand, it can be known to human beings. Indeed verse eight states that like the wind people can “hear its sound,” and the implication is that we know what it is when we hear it. This conveys the sense of a mystery, though the blowing of the wind is no longer a mystery to us scientifically, the spiritual

¹⁵⁶ John McHugh and Graham Stanton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on John 1-4* (London: Continuum International Pub. Group, 2009), 229.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 230.

aspect of this comparison still remains a mystery today. Somehow people know the πνευμα though we have never seen it. This also speaks to the spiritual reality of the act of salvation.

Verse eight is also of note, because it is likely the one that is making an allusion both to Ezekiel 37:9 and Ecclesiastes 1:6, namely because all three share the imagery of the wind, as well as a common vocabulary. Although these are not direct quotations, the language does seem to be similar enough for an allusion to be present. Interestingly enough, as an allusion this means that the passages of Ezekiel 37:9 and Ecclesiastes 1:6 can provide a fuller image for John 3:8. Ezekiel 37:9 adds the idea that the πνευμα traverses the world alongside the winds, an action it seems to have been doing since Genesis 1:2 when it “was hovering over the waters” (Gen. 1:2) during the dawn of creation. This gives the πνευμα almost a sense of being omni-present in that it seems to be local with Jesus in John 3, and in the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37, while at the same time being present all around the world giving life to all that has it (Job 33:4).

Ecclesiastes in the Mix

Similarly, Ecclesiastes adds to this idea by giving the πνευμα the quality of roaming the earth like the wind. However, it is interesting to note that in Ecclesiastes 1:6, this roaming is imbued with the sense of futility and hopelessness, that all actions in this world are meaningless.¹⁵⁸ This is interesting because unlike all human actions the actions of the πνευμα are far from futile and meaningless. John 3 answers the futility and meaninglessness of a life without God. Though humans and their endeavors are without merit because ultimately death ends them, the exact opposite is true for the πνευμα. John 3 makes it clear that through Jesus’ atoning sacrifice on the cross, the πνευμα is able to give eternal life in God’s kingdom to “all who believe in [Jesus]” (John 3:16). Therefore, not only are the actions of the πνευμα without futility, but it effectively

¹⁵⁸ These ideas arose during supervision with Anderson.

redeems the actions of mankind, giving meaning to our lives and suffering. Since death was the force that ultimately made the lives and actions of mankind futile, then by removing death the *πνευμα* removes much of the futility. This is a concept that Ecclesiastes emphasizes through its vocabulary. It often uses the word *הבל* which has the basic meaning of ‘breath, or vapor,’ however, given how futile and meaningless life is its aspirant nature comes to give it the meaning of ‘vanity, futility, emptiness, or meaningless.’¹⁵⁹ This is not to say that Ecclesiastes loses anything because of this. Indeed its message of life’s senselessness and meaninglessness holds true for the universal human condition. It is only that people can take comfort knowing that God’s actions are not meaningless, Jesus’ sacrifice is not without hope, and the life-giving work of the *πνευμα* is not futile and our lives and suffering are therefore meaningful and purposeful. Though Ecclesiastes demonstrates how pointless a human being’s life really is, the good news is that Jesus’ life was not pointless, and it was not pointless on behalf of every person who believes in Him.

The above demonstrates how much can come out of a single verse of the Bible. J. D. Thomas writes about this same verse in his article "A translation problem: John 3:8." Though I have argued for a translation of ‘wind’ in John 3:8 because of the actions attributed to it, namely ‘blowing,’ Thomas notes how this is not always the case. He writes:

The official Catholic (Rheims Douay) non-Protestant version [of John3:8] of the post-Reformation period both render the expression as ‘the Spirit breathes,’ whereas all the protestant versions (done after the Reformation began) uniformly render it as ‘the wind blows.’¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹The aspirant nature of *הבל* is well known. Cf. Anderson, “The Semantic Implications of *הבל* and *רוח* in the Hebrew Bible and for Qoheleth,” 60-62.

¹⁶⁰ J. D. Thomas, "A Translation Problem: John 3:8," *ResQ* 24 (1981): 219.

The translation he is referring to is thus: “The Spirit breatheth where he will; and thou hearest his voice, but thou knowest not whence he cometh, and whither he goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8, Douay-Rheims). Though Thomas seems to be implying that this is the correct translation because it is older, I would argue that this is not necessarily true. Though a case can certainly be made for this translation, it is not without error. To begin with, this translation makes the πνευμα male, though it is gender neuter in the Greek. Although this is a minor point, it does serve to demonstrate that there is mistranslation here. He does, however, articulate the idea of wind “blowing.” These translation issues help illuminate the nature of the wind in order to help people understand the spirit’s nature.

Thomas further notes that in the Septuagint there seems to be a progression from a translation of ‘wind,’ in the Old Testament to ‘Spirit’ in the New. He writes:

Historically, *pneuma* means both ‘wind’ and ‘Spirit.’ The Septuagint has numerous uses of it as *wind*, and so in the classical writers, who rarely use it as *spirit*. By NT times, however, and in the NT, its common usage in *Spirit*, being found as *wind* only once (other than the questionable John 3:8 passage).¹⁶¹

Though Thomas is correct in noting that the New Testament does often use πνευμα with respect to the ‘spirit,’ that does not necessarily mean that every instance in which πνευμα occurs should be translated as ‘spirit.’ Furthermore, it is not a reason to translate John 3:8 as ‘spirit,’ since one common translation does not mean that a less common one cannot be used in a different instance. However, the benefit of the Bible’s common use of puns means that a single word can easily mean multiple things. Is John 3:8 referring to how the spirit breathes? Certainly, and His breathe creates life, but He can do this by comparing it to how the wind blows. With a pun, both can be understood in a single phrase. Indeed, the πνευμα is mysterious and so are its actions. This is what John 3:8 is trying to convey. It demonstrates the complex nature of the spirit, life

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 220.

and re-birth, through complex language and in doing so conveys both to the reader. Thomas notes this when he states:

For John 3:8 to say that the Spirit inspires men and then others get the saving message through them makes sense of this context, of other scriptural references on the point, and of the philological and historical considerations bearing upon this problem. How the Spirit begets through the word is not known to us through our five senses, and thus it is mysterious.¹⁶²

Thus, though there may be debate about how to translate πνευμα, it seems that either way, John 3:8 is discussing the nature of the Spirit which is difficult to understand. Though I understand Thomas's point, I ultimately do not agree with his translation. This is because I think that the words used and the context given better lends itself to a translation of 'wind' in John 3:8.

Thomas brought out the complexities and difficulties found in translating a text. Unfortunately these things cannot be avoided in the process of translation. If a text is not read in its original language, then the translator must decide what the original text is trying to convey. However, John 3:8 is not the only portion of this text that has some difficulties attached to it. J. G. Van der Watt's article "Knowledge of Earthly Things? The Use of επίγειος in John 3:12" discusses some of the difficulties found within the text of John 3:12. The term he hones in on is επίγειος which is usually translated in John 3:12 as 'earthly.' He notes that this term is a problem because Jesus seems to regard the πνευμα as an 'earthly thing.' Van der Watt writes:

[W]ithin the logic of this narrative it seems as if the τὰ ἐπίγεια refers to what was talked about in the preceding discussion between Nicodemus and Jesus. The exact problem lies here. Jesus has spoken about the new birth, the birth from the Spirit; how can this be described as τὰ ἐπίγεια or earthly things, which seems to be 'inferior' or less difficult to believe than the heavenly things? Surely, the Spirit with his actions could, and should, be related to the 'heavenly things' in this Gospel.¹⁶³

¹⁶² Ibid., 223.

¹⁶³ J. G. Van der Watt, "Knowledge of Earthly Things? The Use of επίγειος in John 3:12," *Neot* 43 (2009): 290. Jesus is referring to the larger picture and discussion, and John 3:8 shows how high above these ideas are from most.

Admittedly, this does seem odd. This is certainly the case after John 3:8, where Jesus emphasizes the incomprehensible nature of the πνευμα, which like the wind is unpredictable and beyond a person's understanding. However, like the wind, Jesus states that we can "hear its sound" (John 3:8), and recognize it, though it is a mystery to us. Van der Watt thinks there may be a solution to this peculiar problem. He thinks that perhaps the "earthly things," is actually referring to the human understanding of the spirit. Given the enigmatic nature that the πνευμα was identified with, this makes sense. He states:

The solution suggested here is that τα ἐπίγεια refers to the human acceptance of the experience of the birth from above through the Spirit, without being able to understand it properly. This seems to be the focus in 3:7-8, which is again referred to in 3:12 by the use of τὰ ἐπίγεια.¹⁶⁴

Though perhaps a minor detail, Van der Watt did do an excellent job at identifying John 3:12 as a place of confusion within the text of John 3:1-21. He also shows an interesting contrast of standard ideas present in the Mishnah.¹⁶⁵

Although perhaps not a problem John 3:11 is not without its difficulties. This verse is a portion of Jesus' final cycle of dialogue. This is where Jesus states: "Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony" (John 3:11). Here Jesus seems to provide a criticism of Nicodemus as a teacher of Israel. Though Nicodemus is a Pharisee, Jesus criticizes him for not having any new ideas, and thinking in the box. Benjamin Reynolds focuses on this verse in his article "The Testimony of Jesus and the Spirit: The 'we' of John 3:11 in its Literary Context." Reynolds' main focus is quite clearly the plural 'we' of the passage. However, he also notes the parallel ideas of speaking and testifying that are present in this verse. He notes:

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 308.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

Jesus' speaking and testifying, while not being synonymous, function in a similar manner in the Gospel. His speaking is testifying to what he knows, hears, and sees. His testimony is his words. Jesus' words and his testimony come from the Father who sent him. Jesus testifies and speaks the same things, whether it is the truth (8:40, 45- 46; 18:37), what he sees (3:11, 32; 8:38) or what he hears (3:11, 32; 8:26). The Father is the ultimate source of what Jesus speaks and testifies, makes known and judges, does and says. Jesus neither speaks nor does anything on his own.¹⁶⁶

This is noteworthy because it demonstrates the intimate nature between Jesus and the Father. Reynolds emphasizes that similarly to Ezekiel, Jesus says and does what God commands of Him. However, unlike Ezekiel Jesus' status as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), means that the resurrection and restoration that come from Him, will be actual instead of metaphorical. The bodies that He raises from the dead will live forever in God's kingdom.

Reynolds continues on to discuss the 'we' mentioned in John 3:11. He notes that though it is not a popular idea, the 'we' that Jesus' talks about could in fact be the πνεῦμα. Thus he further writes:

Another possible and rarely mentioned figure that could be included in Jesus' "we" is the Spirit. Due to the Spirit's close relationship with Jesus and the Father, the Spirit's actions, and the immediate context of Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus, it is extraordinary that the spirit has largely been ignored as a possible referent.¹⁶⁷

Reynolds makes a fair point here for two reasons. The first is simply because the πνεῦμα has been a main point of focus within John 3:1-21, and so it would not be a stretch to assume that He is also being discussed here. The second reason why this is possible is because John notes: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him [Jesus]" (John 1:32), when Jesus was baptized. Since there is no indication that the Spirit leaves Jesus, He is likely still present during John 3:11. Though this does not mean that the Spirit is not also roaming the earth

¹⁶⁶ Benjamin E. Reynolds, "The Testimony of Jesus and the Spirit: The 'We' of John 3:11 in its Literary Context," *Neot* 41 (2007): 173.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 177.

with the ‘four winds’ (Ezekiel 37:9), since this passage indicates that the πνεῦμα can be in many places at once. Essentially, the Spirit seems to be omnipresent. It does mean, however, that the πνεῦμα could also be upon Jesus, and therefore easily be included in the ‘we’ found in John 3:11. However, it is still more likely that the ‘we’ refers to Jesus, Nicodemus and all humans.

Wind and Water: Spirit and Baptism

Indeed, the activity of the Spirit is absolutely central in this pericope. The πνεῦμα’s role in this passage becomes all the clearer when the birth ‘of water and spirit’ (John 3:5), is an allusion to baptism. Jonathan S. Nkhoma discusses this in his book: *Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Essays: Biblical and Early Christianity Studies from Malawi*. In it he notes:

The connection between water baptism and the cleansing effected by the Spirit becomes even clearer in the Nicodemus story (3:1-15). Jesus declares before Nicodemus that unless one is born of water and the Spirit, one cannot enter the kingdom of God (3:5). Thus water becomes a powerful symbol of the cleansing that is, ultimately, effected through the Spirit, thus creating a new person out of the old one, a new person who is filled with the Spirit of God. In this way the rebirth which is from above is marked by the ritual of baptism of water in the Johannine community.¹⁶⁸

Here Nkhoma astutely makes the connection between spiritual rebirth, the spirit, and baptism. Through baptism the πνεῦμα allows a person to be re-born. Baptism is an act made effectual through Jesus’ atoning sacrifice on the cross. In this way, these things work together, so “that whoever believes in [Jesus] shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

In a fashion John 3 also ties in with Genesis 1:2. This passage details how the רוח was present with God before the creation of the world had even begun. It states: “Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (Gen. 1:2). What is interesting is that this passage really conveys how

¹⁶⁸ Jonathan S. Nkhoma, *Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Essays: Biblical and Early Christianity Studies from Malawi* (Oxford: Mzuni Press, 2013), 128.

essential the רוח is. It was called upon in Ezekiel 37:1-14 to give life to the newly re-created bodies, and it seems to be responsible for giving life to all who have it. However, what is interesting is that it has been fulfilling this role since the very beginning. Even when the earth was formless, the רוח was there right beside God in anticipation of what was to come. Ready to be part of the creation event. Ready to give life. This is important because it connects with the πνευμα in John 3. Here we see that even before Jesus has gone to the cross, to pay the price necessary to redeem His people, the πνευμα is present. Even though baptism will not be effective without Jesus' death, the πνευμα is waiting and ready to give new life and re-birth through baptism to all who believe. Much like its Old Testament counterpart, the πνευμα in this passage is ready to redeem believers from death and give them a new life in God's kingdom.

Chapter Summary

Thus the רוח of Ezekiel 37:1-14 and the πνευμα of John 3:1-21 have quite a few connections. In the Septuagint πνευμα is used in both passages to describe the concept of 'breathe, wind, and spirit.' The concepts of Ezekiel 37 outline an immediate prophetic fulfillment for the Israelites. However, it also points typologically to John 3 indicating a greater fulfillment in the future that includes concepts foreign to the Israelites like personal resurrection and an afterlife. In addition, although John 3 primarily discusses how the πνευμα, through Jesus' sacrifice, gives new life to believers so that they may live in God's kingdom forever, it also alludes to passages such as Ezekiel 37 and Ecclesiastes 1. By doing this, John 3 further informs the reader on the nature of the πνευμα and the power it has been given. Both πνευμα and רוח function as puns over the course of their texts. This is largely because of the abstract ideas that both πνευμα and רוח encompass. Although they can be best translated as 'breath, wind or spirit,' quite frequently they

mean two or more of their possible meanings in a single translation. Though there are different problems and questions present with both pericopes, they both detail God's saving actions through His Son and through His Spirit. Though Ezekiel 37 and John 3 are separated by many years, different contexts, and different audiences, they both point to the power that God possesses to redeem His people from death and make them live eternally.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has discussed the passages of Ezekiel 37:1-14 and John 3:1-21. Specifically it has examined the terms רוּחַ and πνεῦμα found in relation to allusion, pun and typology.

I looked at רוּחַ and found that it occurred 378 times in the Old Testament. One of these occurs during the creation account in Genesis 1:2, and in fact helps to demonstrate the ties that רוּחַ has with the ideas of creation. Both Ezekiel 37 and John 3 may also allude to Genesis 2:7, although the Hebrew is different, the vocabulary is similar. In Ecclesiastes, רוּחַ is also at times used in relation to הַבַּל which is quite interesting because it demonstrates some of the similarities these two words share. Indeed, I found that רוּחַ can even take on some similar meanings to הַבַּל, such as “breath” or even “futility.”¹⁶⁹

In Ezekiel 37 itself, רוּחַ encompasses all three of its basic meanings of ‘breath, wind, and spirit.’ Although translating this word seems straightforward for the first 8 verses, verses 9 and 10 demonstrated how a pun may be present in the text and lead to the difficulty of trying to pick a single translation for a word that likely means multiple things. I also looked at the Septuagint’s version of Ezekiel 37:1-14 and found that in that passage רוּחַ was translated as πνεῦμα. This demonstrates the idea that both terms refer to a very similar concept, namely the idea of ‘breath, wind and spirit,’ that is found in the Bible. In addition, the Septuagint indicates that both Ezekiel 37:1-14 and John 3:1-21 build major theological points around these concepts. Indeed, it also demonstrates that the early interpreters and translators understood both Ezekiel 37 and John 3 to be discussing the same concept.

I examined πνεῦμα in John 3:1-21. πνεῦμα and רוּחַ seem to refer to the same concept. So much so that in the Septuagint רוּחַ is translated as πνεῦμα. Πνεῦμα occurs 379 times in the New

¹⁶⁹ Fabry, “רוּחַ,” *TDNT* 13: 367-68.

Testament, which is one more occurrence than רוּחַ in the Old Testament. However, given that the Old Testament is roughly three times the size of the New, this shows just how common πνεῦμα truly is as a concept in the New Testament. Though both the πνεῦμα and the רוּחַ act on behalf of God, to fulfill God's commands, it is the πνεῦμα whose actions are tied directly to the events of Jesus' life. Therefore, when the 'spirit' is discussed with respect to Jesus' life and actions it would naturally be referred to as the πνεῦμα. The idea of a pun also presented itself in the John 3:1-21. It was most obvious in verse 8 which ties the πνεῦμα's nature to the wind. Not only does this act as a pun, but it is likely also an allusion to Ecclesiastes 1:6, which demonstrates how πνεῦμα also shares some similarities to הַבַּל in nature.

I have discussed the methodologies I intended to use for this thesis. By looking at the idea of allusion I found that it is easily defined as an 'indirect reference.' Interestingly enough, **allusion and typology share some major connection, since both try to find metaphors and symbols in a text.** Since I set out to see if I could find allusions between two texts that were not written in the same language, I put a **major emphasis on the requirements for a shared vocabulary and phraseology.** In addition, common themes, genres and content also became all the more important in accurately identifying a true allusion.

This thesis also looked at using pun as a form of methodology. Although English puns are often used as a form of humor, this is not the case for Hebrew, puns. In Hebrew puns usually function as wordplay, without any humorous connotations. Indeed, though the puns I have examined were not humorous, they do serve a purpose as they helped to inform more fully the meaning that רוּחַ and πνεῦμα are trying to convey.

Finally, I also looked at using typology as a methodology for this thesis. Typology generally shows how themes, people, events, and patterns that occur in the Old Testament find

greater significance and fulfillment in the New Testament. This thesis dealt specifically with orthodox typology, which means that the Old Testament text deals with actual events in history, instead of things like allegory. Typology works well with allusion, since typology looks forward for greater meaning and fulfillment, while allusion usually looks backward, referencing texts that have already been written. Together they create a fuller picture, and show how two texts can interact with each other and inform one another.

Ezekiel 37 details Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones. This vision describes how Israel is represented by valley filled with dry bones, bones completely devoid of any life. There is not even any decomposing flesh present anymore. This represents the state that Israel is in. They are truly dead geographically, politically, and, most importantly, spiritually. However, the vision also details how God promises to re-create Israel and make them live again, and is thus a message of comfort and hope.

The Babylonian exile was the first time that Israel had experienced captivity since they were slaves in Egypt. Given the Davidic covenant, this exile was all the more alarming. It seemed that not only was Israel without a homeland and a king, but they were also out of line with God's covenant. This demonstrates the truly dire nature of the situation that Israel was in. However, one of the first things that God does after the first deportation takes place, is to send a prophet to comfort them and let them know that they are not alone. But not only a prophet – God sent a priest as a symbol of continuing ministry in exile. The vision of the valley of dry bones showed how Israel would be able to adapt to their deportation and form an identity even away from their land. Although at the time the ideas of resurrection found in this vision would have only been interpreted as being restored by God primarily geographically to the Promised Land

(Gen. 12:1-13). But as an exiled people, and especially the Qumran community later, the Jews/Israelites understood the passage to mean bodily resurrection.

Indeed, this is not the only contribution that the Qumran community made to understanding both of these texts. 4Q385 discusses the concept of “winds from heaven,” which connects both with the “four winds” from Ezekiel 37 and with the concept of *αὐθθεν* found in John 3.

One of the things that this vision clearly conveys is the extreme states that Israel was in. They were not merely wounded, they were dead as a nation. They were not decaying, they were not even buried or in the underworld. They were in a state of complete deterioration and decay. They were denied mortuary care and burial. Moreover, they seemed to be forgotten by all, even God. However, as the vision progresses it becomes clear that God did not forget them. Though their state is so severe that there is nothing they can do to help themselves, they are still not beyond God’s help. Only God can do the impossible and make these bones live. In a spectacular act of re-creation, God reverses the process of decay. Layer by layer He creates new flesh on top of old bones and remakes every body in the valley. Finally, God calls His *רוח* from all four corners of the earth, and commands His Spirit to give His people life once more. In this way God re-makes His people Israel, and saves them from the grave. This, He promises Ezekiel, He will do for His nation. He will redeem them from captivity, He will reform their identity, and He will re-make His covenant with them. And so He did.

While different from the Synoptic Gospels, John is still a detailed account of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. As such it contains narratives such as the one seen with Nicodemus. The text states that Nicodemus was a Pharisee who came alone to talk with Jesus at night. Though Nicodemus does not actually ask Jesus a question, Jesus gives a reply. Given the secret nature of

this rendezvous, one assumes that this reply does indeed address whatever question Nicodemus had originally intended. Nicodemus and Jesus share three increasingly long cycles of dialogue during their exchange. And once they are assumed to be done speaking, the author of John elaborates on what the dialogue means. This pericope predominantly features the themes of resurrection, new birth, and new life. It becomes clear that the *πνεῦμα* changes the boundaries of the conversation, effectively removing the earthy parameters and adding a lot of confusion for Nicodemus. However, this confusion is not that surprising since ambiguity is one of the main characteristics of allusion, while typology can fill in. In this pericope is the idea of baptism co-joined with salvation, which would have been a new concept for Nicodemus.

Given the unique nature of Jesus, as true God and true man, it is only natural that new concepts would come from Him. Because Jesus came to earth and died a sinless death, the possibility of having a new life through Him became a reality. This pericope makes it clear that new life and entrance into God's kingdom is only possible through baptism, which is made effective through Jesus' atoning sacrifice. These are difficult principles to understand, and the mechanics of it are all the more mysterious to us. Indeed the heavenly realm is an abstract concept and is a point of misunderstanding for Nicodemus. To emphasize this mystery, and indeed to help explain it, John 3:8 makes an allusion to Ecclesiastes 1:6 and Ezekiel 37:9. This expands upon the nature of the *πνεῦμα*, while emphasizing its incomprehensible nature.

Indeed, everything about this passage is grand in nature. Even the grammar reveals more about Jesus' message. Though Jesus is only speaking to Nicodemus, He consistently uses a plural "you" when referring to him. This suggests that Nicodemus actually represents a group of people, and not just himself. Thus from the beginning it is clear that this conversation is significant and is a message intended for many. This makes sense given the nature of the

conversation. Jesus intends spiritual rebirth and God's kingdom to be available for many people, as already proclaimed in the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:1-13). Indeed the pericope specifies that it is for "whoever believes in [Jesus]" (John 3:16).

This pericope emphasizes the mystery of spiritual re-birth through the use of puns. Primarily it is πνευμα that is featured as a pun. Yes, God gives new life through His Spirit, but also through His breath or wind. All three are meant in these puns which can be seen in verses such as John 3:8. In this way, John's Greek uses non-humorous puns, a kind of Hebraism to unpack what is truly meant by πνευμα.

Quite possibly the hardest part of this pericope to understand is the idea of baptism conveyed in it. It seems that through the means of grace, which can be other things but here is primarily baptism, the πνευμα spiritually remakes people. They become spiritually reborn. Like with Ezekiel 37:1-14, this is a renewal that only God can bring about. We can no more make ourselves spiritually reborn, than dead bones can recreate their own flesh. However, this spiritual rebirth is only made effective through Jesus' atoning sacrifice through His death on the cross. If the Christ had not died for us, then baptism would have no effect and all would remain spiritually dead. This emphasizes the bottom line, which is God's love. John 3:16 conveys this when it states: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Because of God's love for His people, He commands His spirit to intimately breathe into us and give us life, to remake us as a new creation. He sent His Son to die in our place, that our new life might be made effectual, and that we would be sustained eternally in the kingdom of God.

Finally these acts culminate in our ability to enter His kingdom and life with Him forever. This ties in with the insufflation found in John 20:22, where the resurrected Jesus appears to His

disciples and breathes the Spirit into them, thus equipping them to spread the Good News. Just as Jesus breathed into the disciples to give them the Spirit, so does He give everyone the Spirit through their baptism, as demonstrated in John 3.

Though an explicit theology of bodily resurrection and after-life is difficult to find in the Old Testament, it does appear in passages such as Daniel 12:2, Isaiah 26:18, and the deuterocanonical book of 2 Maccabees 7. Thus, the context of Ezekiel 37:1-14 suggests that it would not have been understood as an account of literal physical resurrection, but rather a geographical restoration of the nation. However, this text did come to mean a physical resurrection in the Qumran community and in Christianity.¹⁷⁰ Though a literal physical resurrection and after-life was not meant at the time, typology allows this to become a greater fulfillment of this prophecy.

Typology allows for a wide breadth of ideas. So Ezekiel 37:1-14 does refer to a political, geographical and spiritual restoration for the Israelites. However, by connecting it to John 3:1-21 it also comes to refer to a spiritual re-birth through baptism that leads to physical resurrection, allowing the believer to be part of God's eternal kingdom. Thus, in a grand fulfillment, Ezekiel 37:1-14 refers to restoring Israel to a true theocracy in God's kingdom.

Although the book of John does not quote Ezekiel directly, it does make quite a few allusions to it. It does this by using similar words and by modifying the themes found in Ezekiel to refer to Jesus. Indeed, the common theme of life found in Ezekiel 37:7-10 is certainly used to describe Jesus' abilities in John 3:5-6. In addition, John 3:8 **is one of the most obvious allusions to Ezekiel 37:9**. Moreover, it is likely an allusion to Ecclesiastes 1:6 due to the shared vocabulary found in the Septuagint, as well as the similar imagery and phrases. Both John 3:8

¹⁷⁰ Hogeterp, "Resurrection and Biblical Tradition," 69.

and Ezekiel 37:14 employ puns as wordplay to provide a fuller image of the concept they are discussing, namely ‘breath, wind, and spirit.’ Read typologically, John alludes to Ezekiel to fill out the ideas of resurrection and afterlife. The passage of John 3:1-21 details ideas about spiritual rebirth, and emphasizes that being remade in this way is only effectual through Jesus. It connects very well with Luther’s ideas about baptism. This is because John 3 discusses the ideas of total re-birth through baptism, a means of grace, which is made effective through Jesus’ atoning death. Ultimately, the process described in John 3:1-21 is necessary for a person to live and not die eternally. It is a process that cannot in any way be achieved by a mortal human being. It is a process that requires great sacrifice from God, and is given by Him out of love. This is a common idea in Ezekiel 37.

The רוח or πνευμα described in the Old and New Testaments seems to possess the trait of omnipresence, since He roams the earth alongside the four winds, while also remaining on Jesus after His baptism. By comparing Him to the wind in Ecclesiastes 1:6, it becomes clear that the spirit is perceptible but mysterious. However, though the wind in Ecclesiastes 1:6 is an example of the futility of human existence, and emphasizes the uselessness of all actions because they all end with death, the Spirit does not possess these meanings. Indeed, quite interestingly, the Spirit is part of the process that defeats death’s meaninglessness: He brings meaning back into human existence. In this way He redeems mankind and their actions from the futility and worthlessness of death. John 3:1-21 makes it clear that Jesus acts and speaks what the Father commands. Part of this is the command to live and die on behalf of humanity, to redeem them from their sins and the death that owns them. It is also clear that the Spirit remains with Jesus and acts through baptism to make people re-born, which is made effective through Jesus’ atoning sacrifice. Through this process God does as He has always done, He redeems His people because of the

love that He has for them. Ultimately the question has remained the same over hundreds of years: “‘Son of man, can these bones live?’ So [Ezekiel] responded: ‘My Lord YHWH, only you know’” (Ezek. 37:3). And Jesus says “Yes.”

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Hebrew Text of Ezekiel 37:1-14¹⁷¹

- ¹הִתְהַלַּח עָלַי דְּ-יְהוָה וַיּוֹצֵאנִי בְרוּחַ יְהוָה וַיְנִיחֵנִי בְּתוֹךְ הַבְּקָעָה וְהִיא מְלֵאָה עֲצָמוֹת:
- ²וַהֲעִבִירֵנִי עֲלֵיהֶם סָבִיב וְהָיָה רַבּוֹת מְאֹד עָלַי-פְּנֵי הַבְּקָעָה וְהָיָה יְבִשׁוֹת מְאֹד:
- ³וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי בְּ-אָזְנִים הַתְּחַיֵּינָה הָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְאָמַר אֲדַגְּנִי יְהוָה אַתָּה יַדְעָתָּ:
- ⁴וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי הִנְבֵּא עַל-הָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם הָעֲצָמוֹת הַיְבִשׁוֹת שְׁמְעוּ דְבַר-יְהוָה:
- ⁵כֹּה אָמַר אֲדַגְּנִי יְהוָה לָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה הִנֵּה אֲנִי מְבִיא בְכֶם רוּחַ וְחַיִּיתֶם:
- ⁶וְנָתַתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם גַּדִּים וְהַעֲלַתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם בָּשָׂר וְקַרְמֵתִי עֲלֵיכֶם לְעוֹר וְנָתַתִּי בְכֶם רוּחַ וְחַיִּיתֶם וַיִּדְעַתֶּם כִּי-אֲנִי יְהוָה:
- ⁷וַיַּנְבְּאֵתִי כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִנִּי וַיִּקּוּל כַּהֲנַבְּאֵל וְהָיָה-רֹעֵשׁ וַתִּקְרְבוּ עֲצָמוֹת עִצָּם אֶל-עֲצָמוֹ:
- ⁸וַרְאִיתִי וְהָיָה-עֲלֵיהֶם גַּדִּים וּבָשָׂר עָלָה וַיִּקְרַם עֲלֵיהֶם עוֹר מִלְמַעְלָה וְרוּחַ אִין בָּקָם:
- ⁹וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי הִנְבֵּא אֶל-הָרוּחַ הִנְבֵּא בְ-אָזְנִים וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל-הָרוּחַ כַּהֲאָמַר וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל-הָרוּחַ הָאֵלֶּה וְחַיִּיו:
- ¹⁰וַהֲנַבְּאֵתִי כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי וַתָּבוֹא בָקָם הָרוּחַ וַיִּחְיּוּ וַיַּעֲמְדוּ עַל-רַגְלֵיהֶם חֵל גָּדוֹל מְאֹד-מְאֹד: ס
- ¹¹וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי בְּ-אָזְנִים הָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה כָּל-בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל הִמָּה הִנֵּה אֲמַרְיָם יְבִשׁוֹ עֲצָמוֹתֵינוּ וְאֶבְדָּה תִקְוַתֵנוּ נִגְזַרְנוּ לָנוּ:
- ¹²לְכֹן הִנְבֵּא וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם כַּהֲאָמַר אֲדַגְּנִי יְהוָה הִנֵּה אֲנִי פֹתֵחַ אֶת-
- קַבְרוֹתֵיכֶם וְהַעֲלִיתִי אֶתְכֶם מִקַּבְרוֹתֵיכֶם עַמִּי וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל-אֲדָמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל: ס
- ¹³וַיִּדְעַתֶּם כִּי-אֲנִי יְהוָה בְּפִתְחֵי אֶת-קַבְרוֹתֵיכֶם וּבַהֲעֲלוֹתִי אֶתְכֶם מִקַּבְרוֹתֵיכֶם עַמִּי:
- ¹⁴וְנָתַתִּי רוּחַ בְכֶם וְחַיִּיתֶם וְהִנַּחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם עַל-אֲדָמַתְכֶם וַיִּדְעַתֶּם כִּי-אֲנִי יְהוָה דְּבַרְתִּי וְעָשִׂיתִי נְאֻם-יְהוָה: פ

¹⁷¹ Rudolf Kittel, et al. eds., תורה נביאים וכתובים: *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, editio funditus renovata (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1977), 965-66.

Appendix 2 Translation of Ezekiel 37:1-14

¹The hand of YHWH was upon me and He brought me out by the Spirit of YHWH and set me down in the midst of the valley; it was full of bones. ²He lead me over them, encircling them round about. And look! There were a lot of bones upon the face of the valley. They were very dry. ³And He said to me: “Son of man can these bones live?”

So I responded: “My Lord YHWH, only you know.”

⁴Then He said to me: “Prophesy upon these bones, and say to them: ‘Dry bones hear the word of YHWH! ⁵This is what my Lord YHWH says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will live. ⁶ I will attach sinews to you, I will cause flesh to cover you, and I will cover you with skin; I will put breath in you and you will live. Then you will surely know that I am YHWH.’”

⁷So I prophesied as I was commanded. As I prophesied there was a noise and look! A vibration and the bones approached each other, bone to bone. ⁸I saw sinews and flesh ascended upon them and skin covered them from above; but there was no breath in them.

⁹Then He said to me: “Prophesy to the Spirit, prophesy son of man and say to the Spirit: ‘This is what my lord YHWH says: Come Spirit, from the four winds and blow into these slaughtered and they will live.’” ¹⁰So I prophesied as He commanded and the breath went into them and they lived. Then they stood on their feet – a very, very great army.

¹¹Then he said to me: “Son of man all of these bones are the house of Israel. And look! They are saying: ‘Our bones are dry and our expectations have perished, we have been destroyed.’ ¹²Therefore prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what my lord YHWH says: My people I will open your graves up wide and I will cause you to come out of them. Then I will bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³Then you my people will know that I am YHWH when I open your graves up wide and I bring you out of them. ¹⁴I will put my breath in you and you will live. I will guide you into your land, then you will surely know that, I YHWH, spoke and I have fulfilled the oracle, declares YHWH.’”

Appendix 3 Greek Text of John 3:1-21¹⁷²

3:1 Ἦν δὲ ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων, Νικόδημος ὄνομα αὐτῶ, ἄρχων τῶν Ἰουδαίων. 2 οὗτος ἦλθεν πρὸς αὐτὸν νυκτὸς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῶ· ῥαββί, οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἐλήλυθας διδάσκαλος· οὐδεὶς γὰρ δύναται ταῦτα τὰ σημεῖα ποιεῖν ἃ σὺ ποιεῖς, ἐὰν μὴ ᾗ ὁ θεὸς μετ’ αὐτοῦ. 3 ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῶ· ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, ἐὰν μὴ τις γεννηθῆ ἄνωθεν, οὐ δύναται ἰδεῖν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ. 4 λέγει πρὸς αὐτὸν [ὁ] Νικόδημος· πῶς δύναται ἄνθρωπος γεννηθῆναι γέρων ὢν; μὴ δύναται εἰς τὴν κοιλίαν τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ δευτέρου εἰσελθεῖν καὶ γεννηθῆναι; 5 ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς· ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, ἐὰν μὴ τις γεννηθῆ ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος, οὐ δύναται εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ. 6 τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς σὰρξ ἐστίν, καὶ τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος πνεῦμά ἐστιν. 7 μὴ θαυμάσης ὅτι εἶπόν σοι· δεῖ ὑμᾶς γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν. 8 τὸ πνεῦμα ὅπου θέλει πνεῖ καὶ τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ ἀκούεις, ἀλλ’ οὐκ οἶδας πόθεν ἔρχεται καὶ ποῦ ὑπάγει· οὕτως ἐστὶν πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος. 9 ἀπεκρίθη Νικόδημος καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῶ· πῶς δύναται ταῦτα γενέσθαι; 10 ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῶ· σὺ εἶ ὁ διδάσκαλος τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ταῦτα οὐ γινώσκεις; 11 ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω σοι ὅτι ὁ οἶδαμεν λαλοῦμεν καὶ ὁ ἑωράκαμεν μαρτυροῦμεν, καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἡμῶν οὐ λαμβάνετε. 12 εἰ τὰ ἐπίγεια εἶπον ὑμῖν καὶ οὐ πιστεύετε, πῶς ἐὰν εἶπω ὑμῖν τὰ ἐπουράνια πιστεύσετε; 13 καὶ οὐδεὶς ἀναβέβηκεν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εἰ μὴ ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. 14 καὶ καθὼς Μωϋσῆς ὑψώσεν τὸν ὄφιν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, οὕτως ὑψωθῆναι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, 15 ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων ἐν αὐτῶ ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον. 16 οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ’ ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον. 17 οὐ γὰρ ἀπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἵνα κρίνη τὸν κόσμον, ἀλλ’ ἵνα σωθῆ ὁ κόσμος δι’ αὐτοῦ. 18 ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν οὐ κρίνεται· ὁ δὲ μὴ πιστεύων ἤδη κέκριται, ὅτι μὴ πεπίστευκεν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ μονογενοῦς υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ. 19 αὕτη δὲ ἐστὶν ἡ κρίσις ὅτι τὸ φῶς ἐλήλυθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον καὶ ἠγάπησαν οἱ ἄνθρωποι μᾶλλον τὸ σκότος ἢ τὸ φῶς· ἦν γὰρ αὐτῶν πονηρὰ τὰ ἔργα. 20 πᾶς γὰρ ὁ φαῦλα πράσων μισεῖ τὸ φῶς καὶ οὐκ ἔρχεται πρὸς τὸ φῶς, ἵνα μὴ ἐλεγχθῆ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ. 21 ὁ δὲ ποιῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἔρχεται πρὸς τὸ φῶς, ἵνα φανερωθῆ αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔργα ὅτι ἐν θεῷ ἐστὶν εἰργασμένα.

¹⁷² Eberhard Nestle and Erwin Nestle, eds., *Nestle-Aland: Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th ed., (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 298-300.

Appendix 4 Translation of John 3:1-21

¹There was a man who was a Pharisee, Nicodemus was his name, a leader of the Jews. ²He came to Jesus at night and said to him: “Rabbi, we know that have come from God and have acted as a teacher. For no one is able to do these works that you do if God is not with him.”

³Jesus responded and said to him: “Truly truly I say to you, if one is not born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

⁴Nicodemus asked him: “How is a man able to be born once he is an old man? He is not able to enter the womb of his Mother a second time and be born!”

⁵Jesus replied: “Truly, truly I say to you, if anyone is not born of water and the Spirit, he is not able to go into the kingdom of God.⁶Flesh comes from flesh, and the spirit comes from Spirit. ⁷You should not wonder because I said to you: ‘You need to be born from above.’ ⁸The wind blows wherever it wants. You hear its sound but you do not know from where it comes from and where it leads to. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

⁹Nicodemus answered and said to Him: “How can this be?”

¹⁰Jesus responded and said to him: “You are the teacher of Israel and do not know these things? ¹¹Truly truly I say to you, what we know, we say; and what we have seen we bear witness to – and yet you did not receive the testimony. ¹²If you do not trust the things I have said to you about earthly things, how can you trust what I say about heavenly things? ¹³No one has gone into heaven except the Son of man, who came from heaven. ¹⁴For just as Moses raised up the serpent in the desolate place, the Son of Man needs to be raised up, ¹⁵that all who trust in Him might have life everlasting.

¹⁶For God so loved the world, that He gave His Son, His only Son, that everyone believing in Him would not be utterly destroyed but might have eternal life. ¹⁷For God sent his Son into the world not so that He might judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. ¹⁸The ones who trust in Him are not judged; but the ones who do not trust have been judged already, because they have not trusted in the name of the Son of God, His only Son. ¹⁹But this is the judgment: that the light has come into the world but men loved the darkness rather than the light – for their deeds were evil. ²⁰For all who do evil hate the light and will not come to the light, that they might not be disgraced because of their works. ²¹But those who practice the truth, come to the light that their works might be made manifest, that they have worked in God.

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