

**The Restoration of Israel: Ezekiel 36-39 in Early  
Jewish Interpretation: A textual-comparative  
study of the oldest extant Hebrew and Greek  
manuscripts.**

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**I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.**

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## Abstract:

While many have noted the differences between the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts for Ezekiel, they have done so largely to rediscover an earlier Hebrew text, or to determine which variant preserves the better reading, frequently with the aim of establishing a ‘critical text’ for their commentaries. This often leaves the other variant(s) in a sense ‘incorrect’, often attributed to various forms of scribal error.

This thesis adopts a ‘textual-comparative’ methodology that accords each textual witness equal status as an interpretive trajectory, enabling each to be ‘heard’ in its own right. The aim of this thesis is to examine these different witnesses with a view to determine what they might tell us about the way Ezekiel 36-39 was interpreted by each particular community. This entails comparing the oldest extant Hebrew and Greek texts both intra-linguistically and trans-linguistically, noting any variants, and exploring possible interpretive reasons for them.

This study finds that the Greek translators were familiar with both languages, and that they often exegetically and interpretively interacted with the text before them. The Greek (LXX) is both translation and interpretation of the Hebrew. Other interpretations are found in ‘inserts’ or ‘plusses’, occurring in both the Hebrew and Greek texts.

Included is an examination of Papyrus 967 (P<sup>967</sup>), which exhibits a different chapter order (chapter 37 follows 38-39), and is minus 36:23c-38. Rather than finding that these differences result from error, or that P<sup>967</sup> is a maverick text, we find that it is closest to what was probably the Hebrew *Urtext*. All other extant Hebrew and Greek texts then exhibit theological interaction; the change of chapter order exhibiting a ‘call to arms’, and the inserted pericope (36:23c-38) exhibiting a ‘call to purity’. Our research methodology thus elucidates the earliest Jewish interpretation of the Restoration of Israel in Ezekiel 36-39 (*ca.* 200-50 BCE).

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I dedicate this thesis to my wife, Debbie.

In memory of my mother,  
who saw this by faith,  
Eva Muriel Crane  
1930 – 2005

Rev. Ashley S. Crane  
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