Summary

Scholars generally agree on the fact that Ezek 33 is a turning-point of the book into a hope for Israel. As the ground for this hope they state that God will accomplish restoration by reason of his faithfulness to Israel whatever their moral state toward God is. In Ezek 36, however, it is explicitly stated that the motivation of Israel’s restoration is not for Israel’s sake (36,22d and 36,32a) but for God’s holy Name (36,22f). Moreover, when reading the book of Ezekiel, one does not read much about a merciful and a forgiving God, not about a picture of repentant Israel. So, this study of Ezek 33-39 ask a question about what the basic argument for the restoration in the book of Ezekiel is.

In methodology, it can be suggested, generally speaking, that the previous works of the book of Ezekiel in both synchronic and diachronic approaches can not escape the criticism that they have dealt with the text from their text external concerns (e.g., authors, sources, literary composition and even their own theological position). Furthermore, they have even been difficult to judge and determine how the textual structure displays itself since the main problem of constructing the structure of the text is due to the complex features of the text. Thus this study emphasizes that an analysis of the Ezekiel texts should concentrate much more on the text’s hierarchical structure as means of communication, and that the theological implication of them should depend much more on both analyses of the participants’ actions and the discourse flow in the text. This research, therefore, suggests three analytical steps to provide the fundamental text-linguistic data for reading and understanding the complexity in Ezek 33-39: (1) constructing a syntactic hierarchy of the text (Chapter 2), (2) decoding the relations and functions of each part of the text with focusing the question of who the participants are and how they act and shift in the discourse (speaker, addressee, actors, etc.) (Chapter 3) and (3) communicating with the texts as a theological discourse (Chapter 4).

In Chapter 2, through a line by line reading of Ezek 33-39, this study presents the clause hierarchies of the text with a translation by identifying the surface linguistic features of the text that signal its information (clause hierarchies in Table 2.1 through 2.7 and a translation in Table 2.1T through 2.7T). It provides an evidence that the text has a multilevel hierarchical structure. Based on the text-syntactic features, seven major divisions in Ezek 33-39 are proposed: 33,01a-20d, 33,21a-33d, 34,01a-31e, 35,01a-36,15d, 36,16a-37,14g, 37,15a-28c and 38,01a-39,29c. Clause 33,01a (Wayyiqtol with the explicit subject) is assigned to level ‘0’ in the hierarchy since no corresponding clause is available in the present text. Clause 33,21a (וָהִי + time reference) is also one of the
paragraph markers at the clause-level and is again assigned to level ‘0’ in the hierarchy since this marker can denote the start of a new discourse and there is no connection to the immediate preceding section thematically. Thus, two major divisions in Ezek 33 can be identified: 33,01a-20d and 33,21a-33d. In clauses 33,21a-33d, the WayX clause (יְהִי + explicit subject) in 33,23a indicate to open a new narrative (NQ). Since the participants, ‘I’ (אֲלֵי) and ‘the Lord’ (יהוה) in 33,23a continue in the clause in 33,23a and the same speaker (1st singular person, Ezekiel) is part of the foreground information found in clauses 33,21a-23b, clause 33,23a is subordinated to clause 33,21a. Subsequently, the repetition of the identical construction of clause 33,23a (an introductory statement, יְהִי יְבִרְרֵיהַת אלִי) occurs five times more in Ezek 34-39 with opening a new narrative (NQ) in the discourse (34,01a, 35,01a, 36,16a, 37,15a and 38,01a). These all are syntactically connected with 33,23a as parallel under the government of clause 33,21a. For ease of discussion, however, this study handles these in five divisions separately (34,01a-31e, 35,01a-36,15d, 36,16a-37,14g, 37,15a-28c and 38,01a-39,29c). These text segment boundaries serve as an independent base for exploration of participants’ action in the discourse and the discourse flow in Ezek 33-39.

In Chapter 3, reading and understanding Ezek 33-39 as a discourse has been concluded that the discourse of Ezek 33-39 consists of two major sections: 33,01a-20d and 33,21a-39,29c. The shorter first part has been identified as a part of the previous narrative section (N) which begins with clause 32,17a (the + time reference). In the much longer second part, clause 33,21a denotes a new narrative (N) starting and governs hierarchically a short report (33,21a-22f) and six narratives (NQ) that start with the phrase יְהִי יְבִרְרֵיהַת אלִי (WayX) found in 33,23a-33d, 34,01a-31e, 35,01a-36,15d, 36,16a-37,14g, 37,15a-28c and 38,01a-39,29c. This chapter observes the participants’ shifts and actions in the text of Ezek 33-39 (provided in 3.1 through 3.7) and summarize the result of linguistic analysis of Ezek 33-39 presenting in the form of graphic layout (Figures 1 through 7). For the next step of this research, section 3.8 tries to make the transition from a linguistic discourse analysis to questions of theology and interpretation. Thus, the following questions are addressed: Who are the main participants in each of the textual segments? What type of communication and debates are going on between them? What are their interests? Whose past and future are being discussed in these chapters? The summaries and theological questions raised from the discourse of Ezek 33-39 are provided in 3.8.1 through 3.8.7.

Chapter 4 discusses how an account of the theology of hope and restoration, based on the text-linguistic analyses presented in the previous chapters, contributes to the study of the theological...
themes and tensions of Ezek 33-39. It is about the main theme of this study (i.e., the concept of restoration) not as a theological topic in general, but as an action through which God is engaged in a rearrangement of the roles played by Israel, the nations, the land or the cult on the larger stage of the world and the history of God with his people. Through looking first into the contribution of the main participants that are interacting in these texts, this chapter elucidates not only how the sections have been formed and what discourse these sections represent, but also what the theological implications (i.e., the theological discourse) of these texts are.

In Ezek 33,01a-20d, Ezekiel’s audience has evidently misunderstood ‘the way of God’ (33,17b and 33,20b) since they have not understood the value of righteousness and wickedness (33,12d-16e). They even did not consider whether their own way was right or not (33,17a-19c). The words of Israel in 33,10h and 33,20c express their stubbornness and their failure to comprehend the divine words in spite of God’s generous explanation (33,02d-06i) and application (33,07c-09f) to them. On God’s side, thus, no more communication with them is possible since they do not want to change their mind and their behavior (cf. 33,31a-32e). The only thing left that needs to be mentioned is the principle (i.e., ‘each of you I will judge according to his own way’) whether they heed the warning or not. This negative view on Ezekiel’s audience in exile is continually sustained even in the hopeful messages of Ezek 33-39.

In Ezek 33,21a-33d, Wilson’s account of one-directional communication on account of Ezekiel’s dumbness (God → people) throws light on the message of the city’s fall and the absolution of his dumbness in combination with the account in 33,21a-22f. Wilson interprets that the destruction of Jerusalem signifies the reinstatement of Ezekiel’s prophetic task (the absolution of dumbness in 33,22). Even though that is the case, however, in the text there is no longer any possibility for him to intercede with God for his contemporary audience on account of their ungodliness. Moreover, the following two observations even support this negative view on them: First, Ezekiel’s contemporary audience is never related to any of the hopeful messages in the discourse of Ezek 33-39. Secondly, the expressions of the knowing of God by Israel in the discourse of Ezek 33-39 also never indicate their participation in the restoration. Rather they refer to the participation of a new Israel in the future. Concerning the future owner of God’s land, two groups are introduced in the discourse: those who have remained in the homeland (33,24b-29d) and those who are in exile (Ezekiel’s audience in 33,30c-33d). But the text again presents that both groups are disqualified as the owner on account of their iniquities (33,25d-26d) and ungodly behavior (33,30d-32e). From these negative statements, therefore, the discourse of Ezek 33,21a-33d makes the reader focus on how the following discourse lays open a new beginning for the participants in the future.

In the discourse of Ezek 34, there are two different addressees of God’s words: the shepherds of
Israel (34,02e-10h) and those who are shepherded by God (34,11a-31e). In spite of the different addresses, however, the two parts share the same participants and the same concern for ‘my flock’. In the first part, the actant ‘the shepherds of Israel’ actually seems to occupy an introductory role in the discourse since God’s main concern in censuring the shepherds is to claim his ownership of his flock and to be able to make a new beginning with them. Through moving the addressee from the shepherds to Israel in the second part, the main dialogue between God and Israel concentrates on the main topic, reorganizing Israel as God’s people. In this part, Israel is divided into three categories by three different sets of pronominal references: the whole Israel including ‘my flock’ (3\textsuperscript{rd} masculine plural), an evil group of Israel excluding ‘my flock’ (2\textsuperscript{nd} masculine plural) and ‘my flock’ only (2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} feminine plural). The discourse suggests that God allows the whole flock to join in his deliverance because they include his real flock, but the evil flock among them will be winnowed and judged in the course of deliverance (34,22c; cf. 20,35-38). Moreover, ‘my flock’ indicates a future generation of Israel who will be God’s people and not any of two groups that are contemporaries of Ezekiel. So, the whole Israel (3PlM & 3Pl-) that will join in God’s reorganization is not the evil Israel as such, but rather a future generation. Thus, the whole Israel will be reorganized and be called ‘my people’ in the future. In this way God reorganizes his people for the restoration.

In Ezek 35,01a-36,15d, the negative message in the discourse leads to Mount Seir facing total destruction and desolation in public while the whole earth rejoices (35,14b). But the prophetic signal for the mountains of Israel turns out to be God’s complete restoration of the land as a place of his people (36,07a-12e) and of its honor (36,14a-15d). In the discourse of judgment (35,01a-15g), Edomite’s presumptuous challenge to God will be settled by the final judgments (35,03c-04b, 35,06d-09b, 35,11b-g and 35,14b-15e), and, as a result, they will know that God is the Lord (35,04c-d, 35,09c-d, 35,12a-b and 35,15f-g). In the discourse of restoration (36,01a-15d), the dominating thought of the discourse focuses on the transformation of the land and less on the punishment of Edom. Any direct punishment of the enemy’s challenges is not mentioned there. Instead, the mainline of the communication in the discourse is God’s words to the mountains of Israel and not to the enemy. The two references of enemy’s claim are only presented here as a topic of conversation. Through the flow of the discourse, the first claim for the land as the enemy’s own possession (36,02b-d) is transformed into God’s reorganization of the mountains of Israel: the land’s fertility (36,08a-11e) and its knowing of God (36,11f-g), and its reoccupation and possession by ‘my people Israel’ (36,12b-e). The second claim for the land conveyed by the mockery in 36,13b-d provides the ground for the fundamental transformation of the land’s bad reputation into honor toward the inhabitants (36,14a-15d) in the course of God’s response to them. Therefore, by the
achievement of two contrasting goals (i.e., both the judgment of Mount Seir (35,03e-04d in general; 35,06a-09d and 35,11a-12b and 35,14a-15g in detail) and the restoration of the mountains of Israel (36,07a-12e and 36,14a-15d)), the reader is guided towards God’s ultimate goal: the reorganization of the land for his people and, after that, also for his Name.

In Ezek 36,16a-37,14g, the main communication by the text is not about Israel’s restoration as such; rather it is about the vindication of God’s holy Name in the world. Through the flow of discourse, the following four regards support this conclusion. First, the divine inner dilemma which is exposed by 36,21a was not about the restoration of sinful Israel by simply forgiving their iniquities. Rather God worried about his dealing with his holy people on earth as the fundamental sign his presence in the world. Second, in this text the vindication of God’s holy Name is more important than Israel’s restoration. Moreover, Israel’s ashamedness is the result of God’s restoration rather than the cause. Third, through considering the text-linguistic subordination of clause 37,01a under clause 36,16a, the reader’s attention should be directed more to God’s explanation of the miraculous event (37,11a-14g) than to the event (37,03a-10f) itself. It is because the implication of this particular position and connection in the discourse should be considered properly. Fourth, the tension found in the contrast between the depair of Ezekiel’s audience (37,11f-h) and God’s revival (37,12d-14g; especially the spirit’s reorganization of Israel in 37,14a-b) reinforces the fact that God, in his dealing with his people Israel, is concerned with them as a fundamental sign of his presence on earth.

In Ezek 37,15a-28c, after the introduction of a series of actions in 37,15a-17b, God commands Ezekiel to perform a curious symbolic action (37,19a-20c) and prophesy the implied meaning of it (37,21a-28c) before the eyes of Ezekiel’s contemporary audience (‘the children of your people’ in 37,18b). In terms of participants, however, the implied meaning has nothing to do with Ezekiel’s contemporary audience but with ‘the children of Israel’ (37,21c), which is a reference to God’s real people in the future (cf. 37,23d-25e and 37,27b-c). God does not dialogue with Ezekiel’s audience about the future. Ezekiel is only commanded to tell it to them. In short, the prophetic words are addressed to Ezekiel’s audience, but the text does not mention any reaction from them. Since the participant ‘the children of Israel’ in this passage apparently indicates a new Israel in a future event, what God prepares in these prophesies for the future is not a type of restoration designed for complying with Israel’s actual desire and hope (cf. 36,22a-32f and 36,37a-d). Rather it is a restoration that will change Israel itself into a new Israel. In the discourse, God promises to re-establish Israel as his holy nation (one future holy nation) through sanctifying Israel in the sight of the nations.

The fulfillment of God’s design for the future as described by Ezek 38-39 has three implications.
First, God’s holy Name is not allowed to be challenged and profaned any longer. The reorganized new order to be established in his land, his people and his kingdom cannot be challenged anymore by any threat. Thus, the profanation of the holy Name will have ended. Second, Gog’s aggression is unable to threaten the holy Name: rather it will become the cause to make it publicly known as the very proof of the restoration. Through the feast of God’s sacrifice, all nations on earth will have to recognize God’s presence and holy Name from that day onward. In this way, God sanctifies himself in public and the restoration of all participants in the future event will be fulfilled in a new order: cleansing ‘the land’ by the house of Israel (39,25c-27b), solving the nations’ misunderstanding (39,21a-24b), the restoration of Israel (39,25c-27b) and the vindication of God’s holy Name in the sight of many nations (39,27c-28c). The holy Name is now visible on earth. Third, Israel is instrumental to the Name, but the Name is not instrumental to Israel. The restoration of Israel is not for their sake, rather it is for the sake of the holy Name. For that reason, Israel is restored as his people and his Name will be connected to the promised land forever.

In Ezek 33-39, the refrain, [you/they will know that] “I am the Lord”, occurs twenty times. The knowing of God is introduced not with only one particular participant in the course of the text, but with various participants: one time for the mountains of Israel, eleven times for the nations (including the Mount Seir, Idumea, Gog and Magog) and eight times for Israel. For that reason, this research discusses the refrain separately as a general theme in 4.1.8. On the basis of the text-linguistic hierarchy, this refrain (knowing of God) in Ezek 33-39 is always mentioned as the result (the goal of God’s actions) rather than as a part of its account. The knowing of God in Ezek 33-39 is accomplished in two ways: first, as a public experience for the nations (both being judged and by becoming a witness) and second, as a special restorative action regarding the mountains of Israel and the new Israel. Clearly the knowing of God plays an important part in the vindication of God’s holy Name since it can rely on the new visible markers of God’s presence in the world.

In section 4.2, this research concludes the meaning of restoration in Ezek 33-39 on the basis of text-linguistic analysis. First, Ezekiel’s hopeful message speaks neither about a simple return to God by Israel’s repentance, nor about any unconditional forgiveness by God’s mercy. Moreover, the future in Ezek 33-39 is not stated as dependent on any condition, but as a result of what has been set in God’s design. Here it is important to remember that in the discourse of Ezek 33-39 the sinful Israel is unable to change their tragic situation whereas a new Israel will participate in the restoration of God’s future design will be held by the participation of a new Israel. Therefore, all the future events in Ezek 33-39 relate not to the sinful Israel but to a new Israel. Second, the restoration of Ezek 33-39 alludes not to an individual affair between God and Israel, but to public events in the world, i.e., to the mountains and to the new Israel, even to the nations. It seems that Ezekiel’s restoration takes
into consideration all the participants in the world. In the event of judgment over the nations, God’s judgment on them leading to their knowing of God is not only a public answer, it is also the prophecy of his future design on earth. In the other response to the nations, which is related to restoration, the nations become witnesses to fix their misunderstanding about God’s honor as the mighty one. The actions of God (all aspects of God’s reorganization) that they are going to witness highlight the complete restoration of God’s holy Name on earth. They are present on the scene to make clear that the restoration is a public affair: it is all about God’s Name. They participate through gaining the right knowledge of God’s presence on earth in his people Israel. Third, the special relationship of God, Israel and the mountains of Israel, which are summarized in Table 4.3, is distributed over the hopeful messages of Ezek 33-39. God initiates the re-creation of the land and of Israel for the sake of his holy Name. Through him, the devastated land is converted into a dwelling place like Eden, and, as a result, it will know God. Through its cleansing, sinful Israel is renewed as God’s people so that they will recognize and know him again as their God. Both the land and Israel will know God. With fertility and safety, the land prepares itself for the new Israel as their possession to reside in. Thus, God’s reorganization is not simply to return Israel into the land but to create a special relationship between Israel and the land in his new order. In this way, both the land and the people of Israel will serve again as visible markers of the presence of God’s holy Name on earth. Fourth, the restoration in Ezek 33-39 highlights all the restorative events on earth, either as God’s response in public or as a special experience for Israel. What does God aim at through these events on earth? All of the events in the restoration aspire to fulfill God’s aim with his design of the future. This aim can be described as the establishment of his presence on earth, as a sign to the world. Therefore, the fact that God himself vindicates his holy Name in the sight of the nations is not only meant to restore his land and his people Israel, but primarily it is his way of making his presence re-visible for all of the world. Accordingly, the restoration is God’s presence on earth as an inescapable sign for all in the world.

Finally, section 4.3 evaluates the theological view of this research on two important features of Ezekiel’s restoration in connection with the traditions ((1) the relationship between the prophecies of judgment and restoration and (2) the (mis)understanding of Israel’s defeat as a sign of God’s impotence), in order to present that the theology of hope and restoration in Ezek 33-39 has its own logic and fair position with a systematic arrangement in terms of participants and their actions. After establishing a fair position of Ezekiel’s restoration in dialogue with the traditions which might had given their influence on the book of Ezekiel, in section 4.3.3. this research summarizes three unique features of restoration in Ezek 33-39.