

Detextualizing and Retextualizing the Torah: Writing and Performing Deuteronomy in the Second Temple Period

Laura Quick
University of Oxford

Scholars of the religions of ancient Israel and Judah encounter these traditions primarily through the textual remains of the Hebrew Bible. While we might nuance our accounts via comparative textual evidence or through the remains of material culture, it is the Hebrew Bible that determines our scholarly task. Through this bookish lens, it is easy to forget therefore that “book religion” was itself not a constant but rather has a history of its own in ancient Israel and Judah’s religious tradition. In “The Canon and the Cult,” Konrad Schmid considers the importance of the exile and destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 587 BCE for the development of “book religion.”¹ According to Schmid’s developmental scheme, earlier encounters with God had been expressed through ritual acts in the Temple cult. With the destruction of the Temple, this cult of ritual performance was replaced by text, which came to function as a new means of encountering the deity. As Schmid reconstructs it, this innovation was in part anticipated already in the book of Deuteronomy, the early core of which dates just prior to the exile in the seventh century BCE.² In support of this, as many scholars have noted, it is in Deuteronomy that we first begin to see references to textual authority.³ Nonetheless, as Schmid has recognized, “Deuteronomy does

¹ Konrad Schmid, “The Canon and the Cult: The Emergence of Book Religion in Ancient Israel and the Gradual Sublimation of the Temple Cult,” *JBL* 131 (2012): 289-305.

² For a late-seventh-century date for the early core of Deuteronomy, see esp. Bernard Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Eckart Otto, *Das Deuteronomium: Politische Theologie und Rechtsreform in Juda und Assyrien* (BZAW 284; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999); idem, *Das Deuteronomium im Pentateuch und im Hexateuch* (FAT 30; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000); and Laura Quick, *Deuteronomy 28 and the Aramaic Curse Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

³ Jean-Pierre Sonnet, *The Book Within the Book: Writing in Deuteronomy* (BibInt 14; Leiden: Brill, 1997); Joachim Schaper, “A Theology of Writing: Deuteronomy, the Oral and the Written, and God as Scribe,” in *Anthropology and Biblical Studies: Avenues of Approach*, ed. Louise Joy Lawrence and Mario I. Aguilar (Leiden: Deo, 2004), 97-110; idem, “The Living Word Engraved in Stone: The Interrelationship of the Oral and the Written and the Culture of Memory in the Books of Deuteronomy and Joshua,” in *Memory in the*

not introduce a strict book religion; the cultic functions of Israel's religion remain dominant at this stage."⁴ Deuteronomy as a literary work, then, exists on a continuum between cultic and book religion. This is reflected in the remarkable interplay between the oral and written, the ritual and the textual, in Deuteronomy – after all, for all its references to writing and text, Deuteronomy as a whole is framed as the *speech* of Moses.⁵ Thus despite the desire that the words of Deuteronomy be written upon the stones of Mount Ebal and publicly displayed in Deuteronomy 27, it is not by text alone that these words are disseminated, but through speech and hearing (Deut. 6:6-9, 20-25; Deut. 31:10-13).⁶ Deuteronomy, itself a written artifact, develops and demands a particular attitude towards the ritual performance of written text. But this observation only further highlights a paradox embedded in the work itself: it is a set of written instructions whose authority is derived from its performance as the speech of a legendary instructor. One way to account for this is that Deuteronomy blends two genres in its presentation: instruction, which is spoken; and monument, which is inscribed and prone to self-referentiality.⁷ This complexity further underscores the limitations brought by a contemporary, book-centered lens.

Already in the earliest reception of the book, the inner-biblical reference to the discovery of the “book of the law” by Josiah in 2 Kings 22, we find a similar interplay between a written

Bible and Antiquity: The Fifth Durham-Tübingen Research Symposium (Durham, September 2004), ed. Stephen Barton et al. (WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 9-23. In Deuteronomy, all the major players are depicted as writing: Moses writes in Deut. 31:9; Yhwh in Deut 4:13; 5:22; 9:10; 10:4; the people of Israel must write down the words of Torah once they are in the land in Deut. 6:6-9; 11:18-21; 27:3, 8; while the king must write his own copy in Deut. 17:18. Deuteronomy makes frequent references to its own textuality (Deut. 28:58, 61; 29:19, 20, 26; 30:10), while the canon formula is explicit that nothing must be added to or taken away from its written words (Deut. 4:2; 13:1).

⁴ Schmid, “The Canon and the Cult,” 293.

⁵ On the importance of the speech performance frame in biblical literature, see Jacqueline Vayntrub, *Beyond Orality: Biblical Poetry on its Own Terms* (London: Routledge, 2019).

⁶ For further discussion on the interplay between writing and ritual in the book of Deuteronomy, see Quick, *Deuteronomy 28 and the Aramaic Curse Tradition*, 159-78.

⁷ On the connections between Deuteronomy and the Northwest Semitic monumental genre, see further *ibid.*, 137-58.

text and the public performance of reading.⁸ After finding the scroll, Josiah prescribes a number of reforms for the religious life of his kingdom. The motif of book-finding in holy places was common in antiquity, where it served to legitimate cultic reform by couching the innovation either as a “return” to behaviors of the past, or by providing a divine origin for the impulse.⁹ Both are at play in 2 Kings 22, and so the discovered scroll serves to undergird Josiah’s cultic and religious innovations. At the same time, for all of the correspondences between Josiah’s reforms and the laws of the book of Deuteronomy,¹⁰ the text of Kings refers back to the “book of the law” only to a remarkably limited degree. While the rhetorical strategy of the find seems to be to legitimate the reform by reference to textual authority, it is only with one of his final acts, the reinstitution of the Passover festival, that Josiah actually makes recourse to this: “Observe the Passover of the Lord your God, *as prescribed in this scroll of the covenant*” (2 Kgs 23:21). This may be a narrative about a text, but even more than this, it is a narrative about a performance: the scroll is discovered and then publicly read aloud before all the people of Judah, ending in a communal cultic act with the celebration of the Passover festival.

2 Kings 22 thus reflects a particular attitude towards texts and their participation in ritual life that is dependent upon ideas espoused in the book of Deuteronomy. No other book of the Torah is so self-explicit about both its “writerly” but also its readerly and performative contexts, and this complexity is developed by the inner-biblical allusion to the “book of the law” in 2 Kings 22. In the following, I argue that the embedded interplay between text and performance is also reflected and developed in another early textual interaction with the book of Deuteronomy. The book of Deuteronomy was one of the most popular and central religious texts in the

⁸ Following de Wette, this book is commonly identified with an early core of the book of Deuteronomy. See Hans-Peter Mathys, “Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wettes *Dissertatio critic-exegetica* von 1805,” in *Biblische Theologie und historisches Denken: Wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Studien aus Anlass der 50. Wiederkehr der Basler Promotion von Rudolf Smend*, ed. Michael Kessler and Martin Wallraff (Basel: Schwabe, 2008), 171-211.

⁹ Katherine Stott, “Finding the Lost Book of the Law: Re-Reading the Story of ‘The Book of the Law’ (Deuteronomy—2 Kings) in Light of Classical Literature,” *JSOT* 30 (2005): 153-69.

¹⁰ Affinities between Josiah’s reforms and the concerns of Deuteronomy include Deut. 17:3 // 2 Kgs 23:4, 5, 11; Deut. 12:2ff. // 2 Kgs 23:8, 13, 14; Deut. 18:8 // 2 Kgs 23:9; Deut. 16:5ff. // 2 Kgs 23:22, 23.

Judaisms of the Hellenistic period,¹¹ and the Deuteronomic influence upon compositions of this period has been largely unpacked in the secondary literature.¹² I argue that Deuteronomy was a particularly significant text for another composition of this period, although this has remained largely unacknowledged in scholarship. The *Exagoge* of Ezekiel Tragicus provides 268 verses of the biblical story of Moses written in iambic trimeter in the guise of a classical tragedy.¹³ The play is unique as both the earliest Jewish drama, as well as the longest extant Hellenistic tragedy.¹⁴ However, scholars have often overlooked an alternative productive avenue for understanding the play, as a form of biblical exegesis.

It is frequently noted that, on the whole, Ezekiel follows the biblical story of the Exodus closely.¹⁵ Yet there are a number of significant places where the *Exagoge* diverges from the

¹¹ Twenty-nine Hebrew and one Greek copy of Deuteronomy were found at Qumran, while a further one copy each were found at the nearby, near contemporary sites of Wadi Murabba'at, Nahal Hever and Masada.

¹² See for example Hindy Najman, *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism* (SJSJ, 77; Leiden: Brill, 2003); Sidnie White Crawford, "Reading Deuteronomy in the Second Temple Period," in *Reading the Present in the Qumran Library: The Perception of the Contemporary by Means of Scriptural Interpretations*, ed. Kristin de Troyer and Armin Lange (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 127-40; Timothy H. Lim, "Deuteronomy in the Judaism of the Second Temple Period," in *Deuteronomy in the New Testament*, ed. Maarten Menken and Steve Moyise (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 6-26; Laura Quick, "Deuteronomy, Book of," in *T&T Clark Encyclopedia of Second Temple Judaism*. Vol. 1, ed. Daniel Gurtner and Loren T. Stuckenbruck (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 156-9.

¹³ The play is preserved as seventeen fragments in Eusebius of Caesarea's *Praeparatio Evangelica*. Eusebius is himself quoting the lost work of Alexander Polyhistor (105-40 BCE), and several of these same fragments can be found in Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata*; and *The Commentary on the Hexameron* by Pseudo-Eustathius of Antioch.

¹⁴ On the *Exagoge* in the context of the later Jewish dramatic tradition, see Sarit Cofman-Simhon, "From Alexandria to Berlin: The Hellenistic Play *Exagoge* Joins the Jewish Canon," in *Jews and Theater in an Intercultural Context*, ed. E. Nahslon (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 23-36. On Hellenistic tragedy, see Agnieszka Kotlińska-Toma, *Hellenistic Tragedy: Texts, Translations and a Critical Survey* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

¹⁵ Two significant divergences are the dream of Moses in ll. 68-89; and the description of the phoenix in ll. 254-69.

account found in the book of Exodus, reading the Exodus story in light of traditions from the book of Deuteronomy. This takes a dual form in the *Exagoge*, evident in both small, lexical connections between the play with characteristically Deuteronomic language alongside global influence from Deuteronomic themes and imagery in the presentation of Moses. Taken together, these differing modes of Deuteronomic influence establish a clear exegetical relationship between the *Exagoge* and the biblical book. The *Exagoge* thus retextualizes Deuteronomy in its re-writing of the Exodus narrative. At the same time, it detextualizes Deuteronomy, staging the story as a drama. The re-writing of Torah in the *Exagoge* is thus both textual but also performative, enacting Torah on stage – and this can be understood as a response to trajectories already found in Deuteronomy and its self-presentation as a written object that nevertheless demands to be read and performed.¹⁶

The *Exagoge*: Staging the Exodus Story in Alexandria

The context of the drama is not easy to establish. Scholars have been unsure whether to situate Ezekiel Tragicus within the third or second centuries BCE, and in favor of the earlier dating, it was certainly the case that the third century was a particularly active time for the production of Hellenistic drama.¹⁷ Yet one of the foremost scholars of the play, Howard Jacobson, is convinced that Ezekiel Tragicus lived in the second century. In this context, he argues that a distinctly anti-Egyptian rhetoric pervades the play, suggestive that it was written at a time of tension between Egyptians and Greeks, but before the Jewish diaspora had begun to experience Greek hostility.¹⁸ The drama is therefore likely located somewhere between the translation of the Torah into Greek in the mid-second century BCE, and the first half of the first century BCE, when it was extracted by Alexander Polyhistor. The location of Ezekiel Tragicus in Alexandria is easier to substantiate and has been accepted by almost all scholars of this text, although it should be said that the evidence for this is likewise conjectural. During the Hellenistic period, Alexandria was home to

¹⁶ Perhaps the most famous example of an instruction for a performative utterance in the book of Deuteronomy is the command for the Israelites to proclaim “‘A wandering Aramean was my ancestor’” (Deut. 26:5).

¹⁷ See Kotlińska-Toma, *Hellenistic Tragedy*, 221.

¹⁸ For Howard Jacobson’s arguments concerning the dating of the play see *The Exagoge of Ezekiel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 11-13.

both the largest, and the most Hellenized, Jewish diaspora community. The transformation of Jewish ideas into Greek guise had already begun here with the translation of the Torah into Greek. The tragedian demonstrates clear mastery over classical literature and forms,¹⁹ and it should be remembered that Alexandria was, after all, the leading center for Greek scholarship in the Hellenistic period.

The audience for which he was writing, whether Greek and/or Jewish, is similarly difficult to ascertain, but I follow Jacobson in favoring both a Jewish and non-Jewish audience.²⁰ Certainly this requires some qualification, especially as some scholars have questioned whether the play was written to be performed at all. In response to this latter question, Jacobson has argued against the idea that some of the more fanciful elements of the drama – the bush which does not burn being a case in point²¹ – count against the possibility of performance: “[w]e have ample evidence that Greek plays included representations of phenomena that would have demanded a sophisticated and highly developed stagecraft.”²² Similarly, elements that may have proven impossible to stage, such as the plagues, are presented in speech as prophecy (ll. 132-51), though no such prophecy of the plagues occurs in the biblical text. Ezekiel has elaborated upon the biblical tradition due to the conventions of the genre. Ezekiel is in good company here, as

¹⁹ Ezekiel makes many references to classical tragedy, chief among these being to works by Euripides, although as Jacobson has definitively shown, Aeschylus’ *Persians* was also a decisive influence. See *The Exagoge of Ezekiel*, 71. The description of the phoenix in ll. 254-69 also seems to draw on classical tradition, in this case the description of the phoenix in Herodotus 2.73. Both Herodotus’ phoenix and Ezekiel’s have yellow and red plumage and are described in size by comparison to an eagle. See also the suggestions of Jane Heath, “Ezekiel Tragicus and Hellenistic Visuality: The Phoenix at Elim,” *JTS* 57 (2006): 23-41, who has argued that the pericope is an *ekphrasis*, and makes use of other literary devices typical to a Greco-Hellenistic context as well.

²⁰ Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel*, 8.

²¹ For a discussion of this and some of the other challenges in staging the *Exagoge*, see Howard Jacobson, “Two Studies on Ezekiel the Tragedian,” *GRBS* 22 (1981): 167-75.

²² Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel*, 98-9. Cf. Pierluigi Lanfranchi, *L’Exagoge d’Ezéchiel le Tragique: Introduction, texte, traduction et commentaire* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 35-8.

similarly large-scale acts such as warfare are often represented verbally in classical tragedy.²³ As Agnieszka Kotlińska-Toma has reminded us, drama “was in ancient times the very best means of reaching the general public”²⁴ – and clearly the Hellenized Jews of Alexandria attended theatrical performances. Philo frequented the theatre (*Ebr.* 177; *Prob.* 141), and he mentions all three of the major tragedians by name.²⁵ This seems even to have been the case among the intellectual elite in Palestine: Josephus records the construction of three theatres built by Herod the Great, in Jerusalem (*Ant.* 15.268),²⁶ in Jericho (*Ant.* 17.161) and at Caesarea (*War.* 1.415).

Broadly speaking, the play may be divided into eight sections. The opening act begins with a lengthy prologue spoken by Moses, who recalls the fate of the Hebrews in Egypt following the flight of Jacob from Canaan (ll. 1-13). Moses also recalls his childhood, deviating from the brief account of this in LXX Exod. 2:1-10 to provide details concerning his education. The education of Moses seems to have been a significant concern for many writers during the Second Temple period.²⁷ As we shall go on to see, following Deuteronomy’s depiction of Moses

²³ For example, the messengers’ description of warfare in the *Persae* and *Septem* of Aeschylus, and in Euripides’ *Phoenissae*. Ezekiel also makes use of this technique in the messenger’s description of the crossing of the Red Sea in ll. 193-242. This is a significant divergence from the biblical account, which is explicit that “not even one of them remained!” (LXX Exod. 14:28). It is likely that Ezekiel has strayed from the biblical account here due to the conventions of the genre.

²⁴ Kotlińska-Toma, *Hellenistic Tragedy*, 199.

²⁵ Aeschylus (*Prob.* 143), Sophocles (*Prob.* 19), and Euripides (*Prob.* 99, 116, 141). On Philo’s relationship to classical drama, see Erkki Koskenniemi, “Philo and Classical Drama,” in *Ancient Israel, Judaism, and Christianity in Contemporary Perspective: Essays in Memory of Karl-Johan Illman*, ed. Jacob Neusner et al. (Lanham: University Press of America, 2006), 137-51.

²⁶ Albeit Josephus is himself critical of this. Indeed, there does seem to have been some controversy over the suitability of the theatre for a Jewish audience. The *Letter to Aristeeas* recalls the story of Theodektes, a tragic poet who wished to adapt some of the biblical stories into one of his plays – only to be struck down with cataracts (*Aristeeas* 316).

²⁷ On the theme of Moses’ education in contemporaneous writings, see Hanna Tervanotko, “‘The Princess Did Provide All Things, as Though I Were Her Own’: Reading Exodus 2 in the Late Second Temple Era,” in *Early Jewish Writings*, ed. Eileen Schuller and Marie-Theres Wacker (Atlanta: SBL, 2017), 143-64; and Erkki Koskenniemi, “Moses—A Well-Educated Man: A Look at the Educational Idea in Early Judaism,” *JSP* 17 (2008): 281-96.

as the paradigmatic biblical author and scribe, Moses' education was particularly important to Ezekiel Tragicus. The play follows the description of Moses' fatal confrontation with the Egyptian in LXX Exod. 2:11-12, and his subsequent flight from Egypt upon its discovery.²⁸ The prologue ends with the arrival of seven maidens (ll. 59), likely Sephora (for Hebrew Zipporah) and her sisters, who in the full version probably functioned in the role of the chorus, something which is left out from Eusebius' extracts.

The extracts pick up with Sephora describing how she met and married Moses (ll. 60-7). She gives the name of her homeland as "Libya... inhabited by tribes of various peoples, Ethiopians, black men" (ll. 60-2). This is likely an attempt by the tragedian to reconcile Sephora's homeland in Midian of the biblical account with the brief and enigmatic description of Moses' marriage to an unnamed Cushite woman in Num. 12:1.²⁹ Sephora's description of her

²⁸ Albeit there are slight divergences from the biblical account here, likely reflecting the desire of the tragedian to make his character palatable to a non-Jewish audience. LXX Exod. 2:11 is explicit that it is the Egyptian who is beating the Jew, whereas Ezekiel Tragicus merely recalls the pair in a violent, but apparently equal, confrontation. This disparity prompted Jacobson to ask why Ezekiel should have turned the biblical episode, a conspicuous manifestation of Egyptian persecution, into "a simple altercation in which neither man plays the villain?" (Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel*, 43). This recalls other, contemporaneous strategies for dealing with the event: Josephus ignores the conflict entirely, while Philo attempts to justify Moses' actions in killing the Egyptian man by magnifying the latter's villainy (*Mos.* 1.44; cf. Acts 7:24). Clearly there was discomfort felt with this particular episode from Moses' career. The second fight which Moses breaks up is between "two Hebrew men" in the biblical version (LXX Exod. 2:13). In the *Exagoge*, the fight is merely between two men fighting "even though they are kin" (l. 49). For a Jewish audience, familiar with the contours of the Exodus story, it would be taken for granted that the kindred men were both Hebrews. But for a Greek audience unfamiliar with the story, the fighting men might just as well be Egyptian, since it is only their relation and not their precise ethnic affiliation which is stressed. According to Jacobson, this strategy saw off the potential criticism that the Jewish people fought among themselves, or that Moses' fellow Jews had informed on him to Pharaoh (ibid, 80). These potential criticisms may also have influenced Philo's treatment of the life of Moses, which leaves out the episode entirely (cf. *Mos.* 1.46-7).

²⁹ On this verse, see Philip Yoo, "'He Married a Cushite Woman!' On the Text of Numbers 12:1," in *To Gaul, to Greece and into Noah's Ark: Essays in Honor of Kevin J. Cathcart on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Laura Quick et al. (JSSS 44; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 37-48.

father also significantly builds upon that character. In LXX Exod. 3:1, Moses' father-in-law is simply the priest of Midian. But in the *Exagoge*, Raguel "rules this city here, and judges men" (l. 64). Priestly, judicial and royal personae coalesce in this figure, although this development may in part stem from Exod. 18:13, where Ithor advises Moses on the construction of a judicial system. The next fragment is the account of Moses' dream and its subsequent interpretation by Raguel. The dream begins with Moses perceiving a throne on Mount Sinai, upon which a "noble man" is sitting, wearing a crown and holding a scepter (ll. 68-72). The figure vacates his seat in favor of Moses, who is given the crown (ll. 74-6). A "multitude of stars" then bow down to Moses, who counts them (ll. 79-80). Finally, Moses, "being startled," wakes up (l. 82). Raguel interprets the dream as referring to Moses' earthly kingship and prophetic abilities (ll. 83-9). Although this is unprecedented in the biblical story of the Exodus, nevertheless Ezekiel Tragicus draws upon traditional biblical images and metaphors here. Moreover, dream accounts are added to the story of Moses in other Hellenistic era texts. The destruction of Egypt and the rise of Moses are foretold by a prophecy or dream in Jos. *Ant.* 2.205; 2.212 and Pseudo-Philo's *LAB* 9.10 (albeit the revelation here occurs prior to Moses' birth and is devoid of the symbolic imagery found in the *Exagoge* dream). The most obvious analogues to Moses' dream in the *Exagoge* are to the extended throne visions of Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.³⁰ There are also connections to the Joseph story, unsurprising given the prevalence of dreams in that particular pericope. By blending biblical traditions of the enthronement of God with elements from the story of the rise of Joseph in Egypt, Ezekiel Tragicus is able to significantly develop the figure of Moses here, attributing to him a kingly and prophetic function.

Following this divergence, our extracts pick up with the story of the burning bush from Exodus 3, albeit this is slightly truncated, avoiding Moses' attempts to get out of his divine mission. This may be a concession to a gentile audience: Jacobson has argued that Ezekiel Tragicus did not want to portray Moses in a bad light.³¹ The plagues are presented next, albeit in speech as prophecy (ll. 132-51), though no such prophecy of the plagues occurs in the biblical text. It is likely that Ezekiel has elaborated upon the biblical tradition due to the conventions of the genre. Large scale acts such as the plagues may have been difficult to stage, while similarly

³⁰ God is seated upon a throne in 1 Kgs 22:19; Isa. 6:1; Ezek. 1:26; 10:1; and Dan. 7:9.

³¹ Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel*, 102.

epic scenes such as warfare are often represented verbally in classical tragedy.³² Next, the Passover regulations are described. The crossing of the Red Sea is put into the mouth of an Egyptian messenger, apparently the sole survivor of the event. This is a further divergence from the biblical account, which is explicit that “not even one of them [sc. the Egyptians] remained!” (LXX Exod. 14:28). Once again, this divergence is likely a matter of dramatic convention, relating to the possibilities of stage-craft. A survivor is needed in order to narrate the events. The final fragment finds Moses and the Hebrews at the oasis of Elim, adding a new detail concerning a mysterious bird that was spotted there. While the phoenix is thus a new invention of Ezekiel Tragicus to this part of the Exodus story, the addition may nevertheless have derived from the use of the lexeme φοῖνιξ for the palm trees at Elim in LXX Exod. 15:27.³³ The fragments end here, and it is not known if this act constitutes the final scene of the play, or if the play went on to record the rest of the wilderness wanderings, the death of Moses and the arrival of the Israelites in the Promised Land.

Rewriting the Exodus in Light of Deuteronomy

In general, the divergences discussed above between the *Exagoge* and the biblical story of the Exodus as found in the Septuagint translation may be accounted for with a number of simple explanations. At times, it seems that Ezekiel Tragicus has had to develop beyond the Exodus story due to the conventions of the genre of tragedy. Actions are described in direct speech according to the possibilities of ancient stagecraft. A number of the discrepancies we noted from the text of LXX Exodus 1-15 seem designed to counter any negative stereotypes concerning the Jewish people. While the dream of Moses is a new development, it is nevertheless a

³² For example, the messengers’ description of warfare in the *Persae* and *Septem* of Aeschylus, and in Euripides’ *Phoenissae*.

³³ On the history of this latter suggestion, see Lanfranchi, *L’Exagoge d’Ezechiel le Tragique*, 239. Indeed, Mitchell Dahood has suggested that the Hebrew lexeme חֹל in Job. 29:18 be translated as “phoenix.” See “Nest and Phoenix in Job 29,18.” *Biblica* 48 (1967): 542-44; idem, “*Hól* ‘Phoenix’ in Job 29:18 and in Ugaritic,” *CBQ* 36 (1974): 85-8. This is particularly interesting in light of the LXX translation of Job 29:18, referring not to “sand,” the usual value of חֹל, but φοῖνιξ, “palm tree.” Ezekiel may also have been influenced by the story of the quail in Exod. 16:13; certainly, Josephus telescopes this episode into the Israelites’ stay in Elim (*Ant.* 3:9). In *Wisdom* 19:11, the quail is described as a wondrous new type of bird.

characteristic of some of the Hellenistic authors to add a dream report into the story of Moses.³⁴ In some cases, additions or deviations may be related to Ezekiel's misreading the Greek text of Exodus, whether intentionally or otherwise, with the phoenix at Elim being a case in point.³⁵ On the whole, Ezekiel Tragicus has provided a fairly faithful version of the Exodus story akin to the version found in the LXX of Exodus 1-15, albeit couched in dramatic guise as a tragic play.

However, a close reading of the play brings further discrepancies to the fore, and it is in these elements that we see the influence of Deuteronomy upon Ezekiel Tragicus. These small lexical connections between the *Exagoge* and LXX Deuteronomy, while individually insufficient to establish an exegetical relationship between the two texts, become significant when the cumulative weight of the evidence is considered together: we will note a number of instances where local preference for Deuteronomic language is evident. LXX Exodus 1 begins with the entrance into Egypt of Iakob and his sons and their households, listed by name: "Rouben, Symeon, Leui, Ioudas, Issachar, Zaboulon and Benjamin, Dan and Nephthali, Gad and Aser. But Ioseph was in Egypt. Now all souls from Iakob were seventy-five" (LXX Exod. 1:2-5). But this is greatly truncated in Moses' opening words in the *Exagoge* prologue, who remarks "When Jacob, leaving the land of Canaan, went down to Egypt having only seventy alive with him..." (ll. 1-3).³⁶ A typical way that scholars have dealt with this discrepancy is to refer to the MT of Exod. 1:5, which also gives the number of Jacob's descendants as "seventy." Correspondingly, it is argued that Ezekiel Tragicus is favoring a Hebrew text equivalent to the later MT, or perhaps a

³⁴ Jos. *Ant.* 2.205; 2.212; *LAB* 9.10.

³⁵ A similar misreading of the Greek text of Exodus may have given rise to Ezekiel's description of the "household things" brought along by the Israelites during their escape from Egypt (l. 209). This must have derived from LXX Exod. 10:10, 24; 12:37, which uses the lexeme ἀποσκευή to translate Hebrew הָבֶלֶת, "child." While the Hebrew term unambiguously refers to "children" who are carried along with the fleeing Israelites, ἀποσκευή can mean both "children" and "equipment" in Septuagintal Greek. See Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel and Katrin Hauspie (eds.), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (rev. ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), 219.

³⁶ 4QGen-Exod^a also agrees with the LXX that Jacob had seventy-five descendants. On this verse at Qumran, see Natalio Fernández Marcos, *The Septuagint in Context: Introduction to the Greek Versions of the Bible* (trans. W.G.E. Watson; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 73.

Greek translation of this proto-MT, against the tradition in the Septuagint.³⁷ On the other hand, the LXX of Deut. 10:22 states that “Your fathers went down to Egypt having only seventy sons.” The difference in the numbers of Jacob’s descendants between Deuteronomy and Exodus was clearly a cause of concern among some Second Temple period biblical interpreters. *Jub.* 44:33 follows Exodus in recording the number seventy, albeit even here its list of the individuals differs from the biblical version. Pseudo-Philo’s *LAB* 8.11 records the number as seventy-two. Ever the creative exegete, Philo explains the discrepancy according to his philosophy of the senses: once Jacob had beheld God, he extirpated the five outward senses, and so the number of souls accompanying him fell from seventy-five to seventy (*Migr. Abr.* 199-201). But Ezekiel Tragicus does not engage in any such creative interpretive solutions. He simply follows the tradition of LXX Deuteronomy, against the number recorded in the LXX of Exodus. This also explains why Ezekiel Tragicus does not provide the names of Jacob’s sons, as we find in LXX Exod. 1:1-5: he prefers the briefer and more truncated account found in LXX Deut. 10:22. A number of further elements confirm this suggestion. The passage in the Exodus speaks of Jacob and his sons “coming” (εἰσπεπορευμένων) into Egypt. But Ezekiel Tragicus recalls their “descent” (κατήλθ’) into the land of the Egyptians (l. 2). This shares the same element with LXX Deut. 10:22, which also speaks of a “descent” (κατέβησαν) into the land.³⁸ Accordingly, I suggest that for the opening words of Moses in the prologue to his play, LXX Deut. 10:22 provided the authoritative Exodus tradition for the tragedian. If this is the case, then there is no need to posit a Hebrew version as Ezekiel Tragicus’ source text for the number “seventy” in this instance.³⁹

³⁷ On the history of this suggestion, see Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel*, 41-2.

³⁸ Cf. also LXX Deut. 26:5, which also talks of a “descent” (κατέβη) to Egypt.

³⁹ This undermines one of the key pieces of evidence that scholars have utilized in order to argue that Ezekiel Tragicus was utilizing a Hebrew rather than Greek version of Exodus. But it was not a Hebrew text of Exodus 1 that the tragedian was utilizing here, but rather the Greek text of Deuteronomy. Other elements in the *Exagoge* also clearly suggest that it was a Greek and not a Hebrew text that Ezekiel Tragicus had at his disposal. Thus while Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel*, 106, has connected Ezekiel’s avoidance of the term “leprosy” from the MT of Exod. 4:6 (מצרעת, “leprous,” a *pu’al* participle of the root צרע, “to be a leper”) to an attempt to counter the anti-Semitic claim that the Jews were a leprous people who were banished from Egypt (see e.g. Jos. *Ap.* 1.233; 2.8), the lexeme λέπρα is actually not used in the LXX of

LXX Deut. 10:22 goes on to recall that while in Egypt, God made the Israelites “as the stars in the sky in number.” Earlier, we noted that the dream of Moses adopts and develops ideas found in the Joseph story. In the Joseph story, Joseph is made vice-regent to Pharaoh, and gifted with Pharaoh’s own ring, a golden collar, and other royal garments (LXX Gen. 41:42-3). In ll. 74-6 of the *Exagoge*, this is clearly adapted in Moses’ recollection that “to me he gave the scepter, and on the great throne he said to sit. The noble being gave me the crown.” Joseph dreams that “the sun and the moon and eleven stars were doing obeisance to me” (LXX Gen. 37:9), with the celestial objects representing his family members. This is immediately interpreted by his father Jacob as foretelling Joseph’s rise to power. This recalls ll. 79-80 of the *Exagoge*, where “the multitude of stars fell down upon their knees” to Moses, interpreted by Raguel as referring to the Israelites: Moses will be a “judge and leader of men” (l. 86). The reference to the stars bowing down to Moses is thus dependent upon both the dream of Joseph and the tradition in Deuteronomy, in which the Israelites are described as numerous as the stars. While other biblical texts certainly also utilize this analogy (for example, in God’s promise to make Abraham’s descendant as numerous as the stars in Genesis 15), it is instructive that the verse in LXX Deuteronomy that provides this tradition is precisely the verse which elsewhere seems to have informed Ezekiel Tragicus. It also provides an interpretive key to the dream. Some commentators have noted the disjuncture between the dream, which seems to describe Moses’ rule in cosmic terms, with Raguel’s interpretation, which understands this as a terrestrial rulership.⁴⁰ In this context, the reference to the stars, which in LXX Deut. 10:22 refer to the Israelites, must also be understood as referring to the Israelites in the *Exagoge* dream: Moses is to rule over his people, exactly as Raguel interprets the dream.

In the scene of the burning bush (ll. 90-131), God tells Moses that he is appearing to him since he has “seen my servants’ suffering and pain” (l. 108). This is clearly dependent on LXX Exod. 3:9, where God announces that “the cry of the sons of Israel has come to me, and I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.” But a striking difference between

Exod. 4:6. Instead, Moses’ hand is simply said to become “like snow” (ἐγενήθη ἡ χεὶρ αὐτοῦ ὡσεὶ χιόν), just as in l. 130 of the *Exagoge*. Ezekiel is simply following the LXX as his source-text, against the Hebrew version. For another example where the Greek must have been the tragedian’s source, see n. 35, above.

⁴⁰ See e.g. Jane Heath, “Homer or Moses? A Hellenistic Perspective of Moses’ Throne Vision in Ezekiel Tragicus,” *JJS* 58 (2007): 1-18.

the two accounts is the description of the Israelites as δούλων ἐμῶν, “my servants,” in God’s speech in the *Exagoge*. While at first glance this may not appear too troubling, it is actually the case that the book of Exodus never describes the Israelites as the “servants” of God, perhaps finding such a sentiment distasteful due to their years of servitude in Egypt.⁴¹ Instead, the descriptions of the Israelites as the “servants” or “slaves” of God is actually the language of the book of Deuteronomy, although Leviticus 25 also utilizes this metaphor. However, while the Israelites are described as God’s οἰκέται and his παῖδες in LXX Lev. 25:55, it is only in LXX Deut. 32:36 where we find precisely the same lexeme (δούλοις) applied to the Israelites in order to describe their relationship with God. Once again, Ezekiel Tragicus is marrying the Exodus story to traditions and metaphors from the book of Deuteronomy.

In the Passover regulations described in ll.152-92, we find further instances of Deuteronomic influence. The tragedian describes the haste in which the Jews must leave Egypt: “be fully clothed, and keep your shoes on your feet, and in your hands be holding your staves, *for hurriedly* (ἐν σπουδῇ) the king will order everyone to leave the land” (ll. 180-3). A similar instruction for haste is certainly found in LXX Exod. 12:11, relating to the eating of the Passover lamb: “Now in this way you shall eat it: your loins girded and your sandals on your feet and your staves in your hands. And you shall eat it *with haste* (μετὰ σπουδῆς)—it is the Lord’s Pascha.” But far closer to the language of the *Exagoge* is LXX Deut. 16:3, “you came out of Egypt *in haste* (ἐν σπουδῇ).” This is also the case in the provisions for the sacrifice. Exod. 12:2-5, 21 requires a spring lamb for a sacrifice; however, in Deuteronomy the sacrifice is to include both lamb and calves (πρόβατα καὶ βόας; LXX Deut. 16:2). The difficulty which these two accounts created led to creative solutions even within the Bible itself. The two accounts are harmonized in the book of Chronicles, where the bovine sacrifice is interpreted as a separate sacrifice of “sacred offerings.” Only the lamb sacrifice is understood to constitute the Passover sacrifice proper (2

⁴¹ In MT Exod. 4:23, God tells Moses to ask Pharaoh to let the Israelites go so that they may “serve” him, using the *qal* imperfect of עָבַד, “to serve.” While not explicitly called “servants” or “slaves,” the Hebrew can be interpreted as referring to the Israelites as the servants of God. This is not the case for the Greek of Exod. 4:23, however, which translates the Hebrew verb with λατρεύω, with the more precise meaning of service or worship cultically, especially by sacrifice. See Lust, Eynikel and Hauspie, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, 752. Thus LXX Exod. 4:23 describes the Israelites as *worshippers* rather than servants or slaves.

Chron. 35:7-13). But once again, Ezekiel Tragicus does not try to reconcile the discrepancies between the provisions in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy. Instead, he agrees with Deuteronomy that the sacrifice should comprise lamb and calves (πρόβατα καὶ μόσχους βοῶν; l. 176). This latter exegetical move has also been noticed by Jacobson, who suggests that this may provide evidence for the antiquity of the use of Deuteronomy as part of the Passover Scriptural reading already in Hellenistic times, although he admits that there is “no evidence” of this in antiquity.⁴² Given the frequent instances in which Ezekiel Tragicus seems to favor the Greek text of Deuteronomy over that of Exodus discussed above, this speculation is unnecessary: the tragedian was promoting the traditions of Deuteronomy over the book of Exodus, despite the fact that it was the Exodus story that was the subject of his drama. Thus, where these traditions disagree, it is the Deuteronomic text that he follows.

Deuteronomy’s Moses in Alexandria

In the above, I have argued that Ezekiel Tragicus privileged the language of the Exodus traditions found in the Greek translation of the book of Deuteronomy, when this diverged from the version in the book of Exodus. This can be seen in the number of lexical connections between the *Exagoge* and LXX Deuteronomy explored above. But more than this, favoring Deuteronomy allowed the tragedian to say something specific about the role and function of Moses in his drama. Moses is presented in diverse ways by the different books that make up the Torah. Moses the man is humble and tongue-tied, wondering how he can face Pharaoh and save the Israelites (Exodus 3-4). Moses the magician performs magical acts in order to bring about the ten plagues upon the astonished Egyptians (Exod. 7:14-12:36). Moses the priest performs sacrifices (Lev. 8:14-23) and blesses the people (Exod. 39:43). But the Moses of the book of Deuteronomy is significantly different from the character found in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, or Numbers. Moses is never described as a prophet in these texts.⁴³ Deuteronomy, on the other hand, considers the possibility of post-Mosaic prophets “like Moses,” and in so doing characterizes Moses as the paradigmatic prophetic figure (Deut. 18:15, 18; 34:10). In

⁴² Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel*, 84, 130.

⁴³ Although certainly in Num. 12:8, Moses’s access to God is unparalleled.

Deuteronomy 32-33, Moses provides an extended poetic vision of Israel's future.⁴⁴ Deuteronomy emphasizes Moses as a maker of both law and covenant, which in the ancient Near East were the prerogative of kings. The appointment of Joshua as his replacement in death is also reminiscent of a royal succession. In Deuteronomy, Moses leads the Israelites as if a monarch.⁴⁵ Most significantly, as we have seen, Deuteronomy presents Moses as a writer of texts.⁴⁶ Moses writes a scroll of the law and transcribes a song as witness against the future sin of the Israelites (Deut. 31:9, 24-26, 19-22). Moses thus becomes the exemplary scribe, ultimately understood as the author of the Torah itself. Moses is couched as wise teacher, and the law as his wisdom teachings.⁴⁷ Thus in Deuteronomy, Moses is a prophet, a leader, but most importantly, he is a scribe – and it is this figure which is recalled in the *Exagoge*.

The exalted characterization of Moses as found in Deuteronomy was continued and extended in the extra-biblical texts.⁴⁸ Much ink has been spilt on the ways in which Moses is couched by Philo. In particular, Erwin Goodenough has unpacked the Hellenistic conception of kingship that underpinned Philo's presentation of Moses, in which imitation of the deity was utilized in order to promote the concept of the divine election of the king.⁴⁹ In Philo, divinity is

⁴⁴ Outside of the Torah, within the Hebrew Bible only Hos. 12:14 refers to Moses explicitly as a "prophet." On the indistinct portrayal of Moses as a "prophet" across the Hebrew Bible, see David Petersen, "The Ambiguous Role of Moses as Prophet," in *Israel's Prophets and Israel's Past: Essays on the Relationship of Prophetic Texts and Israelite History in Honor of John H. Hayes*, ed. Brian Kelle and Megan Bishop Moore (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 311-24.

⁴⁵ On Moses as a royal figure, see Danny Mathews, *Royal Motifs in the Pentateuchal Portrayal of Moses* (LHBOTS, 571; London: T&T Clark, 2012).

⁴⁶ To be sure, Moses is possibly depicted as writing in Exod. 17:14; 24:4, 12; 34:27, however in some of these instances there is ambiguity concerning whether it is Moses or God himself who is to do the writing. In Exod. 17:14, Moses writes – but then must performatively rehearse the written words within Joshua's hearing, so arguably the textuality here is a little different.

⁴⁷ Thus, there are numerous intertextual connections between the book of Deuteronomy with the language of Proverbs, see Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 260-71.

⁴⁸ For an excellent treatment of this phenomenon, see Najman, *Seconding Sinai*.

⁴⁹ Erwin Goodenough, *The Political Philosophy of Hellenistic Kingship* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1928), 88-91; idem, *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (New Haven: Yale

extended toward Moses, who calls him by the double title “god and king” (*Leg.* 1.40, *Sac.* 9, *Det.* 161, *Mig.* 84; *Mut.* 19, *Som.* 2.189), likely a development from *Exod.* 7:1, where God is said to have made Moses like an אלהים to Pharaoh. The lexeme אלהים can mean a proper noun, “God,” or a plural noun, “gods,” or even “divine beings.” In any case, Moses is said to have been made an אלהים only in the eyes of Pharaoh and is certainly not divinized in the biblical account as such. But building from the biblical text of Exodus and influenced by Hellenistic aretology, with roots in Pythagorean tradition,⁵⁰ Philo’s Moses becomes “a piece of work, beautiful and godlike, a model for all those who are willing to copy it” (*Mos.* 1:159).⁵¹

If we consider Moses’ characterization in the *Exagoge*, it is clearly the Deuteronomic image of the figure that Ezekiel Tragicus had in mind. Gone is the humble Moses of Exodus 3-4: while Moses does declare that he is “not eloquent... my speech is broken and weak” (ll. 113-4), his protestations are much less developed and lengthy than the paralleled account in the book of Exodus.⁵² Moses is no longer a magician, either. In the biblical text, certain plagues stem from various actions of Moses which seem related to the realm of sympathetic magic, a type of magic based on imitation or correspondence: Moses’ staff is struck upon the water in order to turn it to blood in *Exod.* 7:17; Moses sprinkles handfuls of soot in order to create the plague of boils (*Exod.* 9:8), while the plague of fire from heaven is brought about by Moses waving his hands in the sky (*Exod.* 9:23); locusts are brought about by Moses stretching his hand out over the land of Egypt (*Exod.* 10:12); and darkness covers Egypt by his raising of the hand towards heaven (*Exod.* 10:21). But in the *Exagoge*, Moses’ role in bringing about the plagues is reduced. In God’s speech predicting the plagues, the various calamities stem directly from God rather than Moses, who speaks utilizing first person verbs (ἐμβάλῳ, l. 135; πάσω, l. 136; πικράνω, l. 141;

University Press, 1935), 186. See more recently Louis Feldman, *Philo’s Portrayal of Moses in the Context of Ancient Judaism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

⁵⁰ Najman, *Seconding Sinai*, 96.

⁵¹ That is not to say that Philo does not pick up or continue the Deuteronomic vision of Moses – indeed, his Moses is explicitly a “king, lawgiver, high priest, prophet” (*Mos.* 2.292). Nor does Philo think that Moses should be worshipped as a god. See Peder Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria: An Exegete for His Time* (NTS, 86; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 22.

⁵² Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel*, 102, suggests that Ezekiel Tragicus is attempting to tone down the obstinacy Moses shows in Exodus.

θήσω, l. 144; πέμψω, l. 145; ἀποκτενῶ, l. 147; παύσω, l. 148). In the only instance in which the hint of a ritual-like action remains, the sprinkling of the soot, it is God rather than Moses who is to perform the action (“I will sprinkle ashes from an oven over them,” l. 136). As Jacobson has argued, it is a characteristic of the drama to play down anything supernatural in Moses’ role or nature.⁵³ And neither is Moses a priest. The Passover regulations of ll. 152-92 of the play are repeated twice, and in order to account for this Jacobson suggests that the second set of provisions (ll. 175-92) are spoken by Moses rather than God.⁵⁴ While this may be so, Moses is hardly acting in a priestly role here, but instead as a lawgiver, instructing the Israelites in the various prescriptions and prohibitions of the festival. He neither sacrifices nor blesses the people in the *Exagoge*.

Instead, the Moses of the *Exagoge* is presented as a prophet, king, and wise man, extending the exalted portrayal of the character from Deuteronomy. Two scenes make this connection in particular. The depiction of God vacating his throne in favor of Moses in this dream has been understood by some scholars as suggesting the divinization of the figure, in line with the traditions of Moses as god found in Philo and discussed above. Accordingly, Moses in the *Exagoge* is sometimes also utilized as an example of this post-biblical phenomenon.⁵⁵ Yet in the interpretation of the dream provided by Raguel, the dream is understood to emphasize Moses’ royalty and prophetic abilities: “You will be exalted on a mighty throne, and you yourself shall be a judge and guide for man. And you will see the whole earth, both things below, and things above the heaven of God. And you will see the things that are, that were, things that will be” (ll. 85-9). In this context we noted earlier that the description of the stars bowing to Moses in ll. 79-80 utilized imagery from Deuteronomy to describe the Israelite people: it is the Israelite people who will bow down to Moses; he is an earthly king. Thus, it is only by disconnecting the dream from its interpretation that the portrait of Moses as quasi-divine in the

⁵³ Ibid, 81, 164.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 121.

⁵⁵ For example, by Wayne Meeks, “Moses as God and King,” in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, ed. J. Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 354-71, here 359; Howard Jacobson, “Mysticism and Apocalypticism in Ezekiel’s *Exagoge*,” *ICS* (1981): 272-87; John Lierman, *The New Testament Moses: Christian Perceptions of Moses and Israel in the Setting of Jewish Religion* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 90-102.

Exagoge can be maintained. But recognizing the Deuteronomic imagery employed by Ezekiel Tragicus suggests an interpretation of the dream in line with Raguel: Moses is prophet, king and scribe, but no god – just as he is in Deuteronomy. This is particularly interesting in light of the treatment of Moses at the hands of Philo. While Ezekiel Tragicus, as the author of a classical-style tragedy, is surely just as Hellenized as his fellow Alexandrian, nevertheless his Moses does not undergo the same process of divinization as does Philo's. The playwright maintains an image of Moses that is more consistent with the biblical book of Deuteronomy.

A significant deviation found in the *Exagoge* from the biblical presentation of Moses is in the treatment of Moses' childhood. In common with other Jewish texts from the Hellenistic period, the *Exagoge* describes Moses' education. A number of texts highlight the role of Amram, Moses' father, in his education (Jos. *Ant.* 2.210-37; *LAB* 9:9-16; *Jub.* 47:9); while Philo devotes a lengthy passage to the instruction of Moses in pagan arithmetic, geometry, metre, rhythm, and harmony (*Mos.* 1.23). In Acts 7:22 Moses is explicitly trained in the wisdom of the Egyptians. The *Exagoge* elides these two types of education, the Jewish and the Egyptian, crediting the role of Moses' birth mother in socializing the infant in his Jewish background ("my mother brought me to the princess's quarters, telling and relating to me everything regarding my ancestral race," ll. 33-5); and Pharaoh's daughter with his "royal education" (l. 37). Uniquely, in the *Exagoge* both modes of education, the Jewish and the pagan, are stressed. Moses the wise scribe is competent in both Jewish and Hellenistic worlds – just as was the playwright. Ezekiel wrote to depict Moses and therefore Judaism as the heir to the classical scholastic tradition. At the same time, he also stressed that Moses nevertheless remained faithful to and firmly at home in Jewish tradition, "everything regarding my ancestral race," too. Ultimately, the Deuteronomic imagery utilized by Ezekiel Tragicus in his presentation of Moses affirm the reputation and significance of that character, and so of the Jewish religion itself.

Detextualizing the Torah: Deuteronomy on Stage

In the foregoing, I have explored the use of the book of Deuteronomy by Ezekiel Tragicus in the creation of his *Exagoge*. I have argued that the book of Deuteronomy was a particularly instructive text for the Alexandrian tragedian, and so he often privileged its treatment of the Exodus story when this diverged from the traditions found in the book of Exodus. In so doing, Ezekiel Tragicus was able to craft an image of Moses as prophet, leader and scribe, extending the

complex characterization of Moses in Deuteronomy. This way, the tragedian could develop the character of Moses as a unique and exalted figure. While this helps us to access and understand the context of Hellenistic Judaism in Alexandria, it also relates to and brings into sharper focus native trajectories already embedded within the book of Deuteronomy itself. In Deuteronomy, written texts must be re-oralized as a part of the community's ritual life. In the *Exagoge*, this idea is taken to its fullest articulation, and the story of the Exodus, seen through the lens of Deuteronomy, is performatively enacted on the stage. Recently, Rachel Bryant Davies has made the interesting suggestion that the play functioned as something like a proto-Haggadah, allowing the Jews of Alexandria to vicariously take part in the festival despite their distance from the Jerusalem temple.⁵⁶ Of course, this argument must necessarily remain speculative due to the absence of evidence for the Passover Scriptural reading in the Hellenistic period. Nevertheless, Davies' suggestion foregrounds the dynamic interaction between written text and the demand for its ritual performance found in Deuteronomy and reflected in its early reception in texts like 2 Kings 22 and the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel Tragicus. Though Deuteronomy was itself an important step in the advent of "book religion" and the increasing importance of textual authority, the biblical book and the textual responses it inspired continue to detextualize the written word, even as they textualized religious authority in the first place. This paradox between detextualization and retextualization in the book of Deuteronomy was well understood in antiquity, as demonstrated by its early reception. Perhaps more so than any other book of the Torah, Deuteronomy is a book ripe for performance.

Abstract: The book of Deuteronomy develops a remarkable interplay between the oral and written, the ritual and the textual. Deuteronomy, itself a written artifact, develops and demands a particular attitude towards the ritual performance of written text. Already in the earliest reception of the book, the inner-biblical reference to the discovery of the "book of the law" by Josiah in 2 Kings 22, we find a similar interplay between a written text and the public performance of reading. In the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel Tragicus, this idea is taken to its fullest articulation, and the story of the Exodus, seen through the lens of Deuteronomy, is performatively enacted on the

⁵⁶ Rachel Bryant Davies, "Reading Ezekiel's *Exagoge*: Tragedy, Sacrificial Ritual, and the Midrashic Tradition," *GRBS* 48 (2008): 393-413.

stage. Though Deuteronomy was itself an important step in the advent of “book religion” and the increasing importance of textual authority, the biblical book and the textual responses it inspired continue to detextualize the written word, even as they textualized religious authority in the first place.

Keywords: Deuteronomy; 2 Kings 22; the *Exagoge*; Writing; Ritual; Performance.