

The Holy Spirit in the Hebrew Scriptures

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Introduction

For many Christians, speaking about the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament¹ seems like an oxymoron (contradiction) and anachronism (mistiming) for two reasons: (1) Their presupposition that this Gift of God is only with believers after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (according to Acts 2) and His activities afterward (Acts 3-28). Against this claim stands plentiful material about the work of the Spirit of the Lord/God in the Hebrew Bible. (2) Their misunderstanding of Jesus's statement: "Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified" (John 7:39).² Christ's proclamation does not mean that the Holy Spirit was not present, active, and engaging during the Old Testament period (ample evidence testifies against this popular standpoint),³ but it signifies that the Spirit of the Lord could

¹ The basic concept of this paper was presented at the IX. South-American Biblico-Theological Symposium on Pneumatology in Iguassu Falls, Brazil, on May 20, 2011.

² See Luke 24:49; John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7; Acts 1:8. See also seven New Testament statements about the "Baptism of/with/in/by the Holy Spirit" (Matt 3:11-12; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16-17; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; 1 Cor 12:13). Compare with Luke 1:15 (John the Baptist); 1:41 (Elizabeth); 1:67 (Zechariah) where all these Old Testament saints were filled with the Holy Spirit before Pentecost or Jesus's glorification. Biblical quotations are from NIV unless indicated otherwise.

³ John Goldingay, "Was the Holy Spirit Active in Old Testament Times? What Was New About the Christian Experience of God?" *Ex Auditu* 12 (1996): 14-28; Wilf Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995).

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work during the Old Testament times only proleptically and was in action in anticipation of Christ's glorification, i.e., Jesus's victory on the cross, resurrection, and ascension. Hamilton states: "The sense in which the Spirit is yet to be given is that *believers* are about to receive Him at the glorification of Jesus."⁴ In other words, the cross of Jesus, i.e., His glorification (see John 13:31-32; 17:1-5),⁵ was authentication for the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament period of time and thereafter. The triumphant death of Jesus historically validated His activities, and Jesus's glorification was a seal for the involvement of the Holy Spirit in ancient times. Thus, the cross was the prerequisite for the giving of the Spirit of God to the world, and at the same time the justification and affirmation of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament dispensation. His activity was real and in full measure but depended as always upon the openness, cooperation, and readiness of God's people.⁶

In the same way, the forgiveness of sins and guarantee of salvation for the Old Testament saints, believers in a living Lord, was secured at the cross. They were saved by God's grace through faith in view of His

⁴ James M. Hamilton, Jr., *God's Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old & New Testaments* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2006), 62. See also, Geoffrey W. Grogan, "The Experience of Salvation in the Old and New Testaments," *Vox Evangelica* 5 (1967): 12-17; Sidney H. Hooke, "The Spirit Was Not Yet (John 7:39)," *New Testament Studies* 9 (1963): 372-380.

⁵ By His sacrificial life and victorious death for sinners, Jesus Christ glorified His Father and saved humanity. Each believer in Him has eternal life, the glorious result of His ultimate sacrifice for humanity. The Father glorified Jesus, i.e., resurrected Him to life and restored to Christ His previous position of glory (John 17:5; Acts 2:32, 36; 5:30-31; Phil 2:8-9).

⁶ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Indwelling Presence of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament," *Evangelical Quarterly* 82, no. 4 (2010): 315: "The coming of the Holy Spirit at the Pentateuch was a most significant work wherein the Spirit arrived in state, visibly and dramatically, thereby showing in time and space what had been experienced all along in the Old Testament was not unreal, but was fully part of the whole plan of God. . . . The factor that was new was the fact that all believers would now be incorporated into one body of Christ, regardless of their denominational identities, as they were baptized into one body and were given one Spirit to drink (1 Cor 12:13)."

He also asks a very pertinent question: "How could all of these old covenant persons have believed and been enabled to live sanctified lives if the Spirit of God did not dwell in them?" and to prove the point, he provides examples of Old Testament believers like Enoch, Noah, Joseph, Job, Bezalel, and David (Kaiser, 309).

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death (Gen 15:6; 22:17-18; Exod 12:13-14, 21-28; Num 21:6-9; Pss 32:1-2; 51:3, 12-13; Hab 2:4; Eph 1:4-10; Rev 13:8). In anticipation of Jesus's victory over Satan on the cross, grace was already applied to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden after they sinned (Gen 3:9, 15, 21). They were proleptically justified and saved. There was never any other way of salvation except through Jesus (Acts 4:12).⁷ John affirms the theological meaning of Christ's death by underlining that the Lamb "was slain from the creation of the world" (Rev 13:8), even though historically speaking, Jesus died on the cross two thousand years ago. Thus, God forgave Adam and Eve their sin, because of grace which streamed from Calvary. The Old Testament believers could experience the assurance and joy of salvation.

It is highly significant to recognize that in comparison to the written material from the Ancient Near Eastern texts the biblical teaching about the Spirit of God or the Spirit of the Lord has no parallel. Lloyd Neve correctly observes: "No other nation in the Ancient Near East spoke of gods as having a spirit. In a peculiar people with a singular Lord it was a unique concept."⁸ Nowhere in those texts can one find an expression "the spirit of [such and such god or gods]." Names of pagan gods are not associated with their own spirit or any spirit.

⁷ Similarly, after His ascension, Jesus was coronated as a High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary (Ps 110; Heb 6:19-20; 7:25; 8:1-2; 9:11-12, 24; 10:19-22), even though He acted as a High Priest during Old Testament times when He forgave the sins of sinners (see, for examples, Exod 34:6-7; Lev 16:16; Ps 32:1-2; 86:5; 103:3, 8-12). Christ's death started not only a new dimension of His life but also approved and authenticated all that was done before in Old Testament times!

⁸ Lloyd Neve, *The Spirit of God in the Old Testament* (Tokyo, Japan: Seibunsha, 1972), 1. But see a study by John Walton who argues that as in the Old Testament "the gods also endow life, authority and strength" even though he admits that "in the Ancient Near East . . . the literature lacks a more specific agent for this endowment, such as a spirit of the gods" (John H. Walton, "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Spirit of the Lord in the Old Testament," in David G. Firth and Paul D. Wegner, eds., *Presence, Power, and Promise: The Role of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academics, 2011], 65. Walton claims that "an Egyptian or a Babylonian from the ancient world reading or hearing the book of Judges, Samuel or Ezekiel would not be baffled about the SOL [Spirit of the Lord]. They would immediately associate it with their own understanding of the way that their gods worked" (Walton, 38). However, the fact stands that "there is neither Akkadian nor Egyptian use of the collocation 'spirit of [divine name]' to indicate empowerment by deity" (Walton, 38).

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Furthermore, it is extremely difficult to elaborate on the Spirit of the Lord, because the Holy Spirit is a very humble Person. He does not like to speak about Himself but about the Lord Jesus Christ and the Heavenly Father (John 15:26; 16:12-15) and influences the lives of people (Matt 12:31-32; John 16:8-11). It has to do with His role within the Godhead: He stands in the background and points to the other members of the divine We in the Plurality of Fellowship, in the Community of the Godhead (we call the Trinity or Triune God, because we have no better vocabulary to describe the Divinity).⁹ This is probably why the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament is an overlooked topic in biblical studies.¹⁰

⁹ See my article, "Toward Trinitarian Thinking in the Hebrew Scriptures," *Journal of Adventist Theological Society* 21, nos. 1-2 (2010): 245-275.

¹⁰ Several stimulating books and articles were published on the theme of the Spirit of the Lord in the Old Testament. The following references are representative samples: Daniel I. Block, "Gog and the Pouring of the Spirit," *Vetus Testamentum* 37 (1987): 257-270; id., "Empowered by the Spirit of God: The Holy Spirit in the Historiographic Writings of the Old Testament," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 1 (1997): 42-61; id., "The Prophet of the Spirit: The Use of *RWH* in the Book of Ezekiel," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 32 (1989): 27-49; Chad O. Brand, ed., *Perspectives on Spirit Baptism: 5 Views* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2004); W. J. Dumbrell, "Spirit and the Kingdom of God in the Old Testament," *Reformed Theological Review* 33 (1974): 1-10; David G. Firth and Paul D. Wegner, eds., *Presence, Power, and Promise: The Role of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011]; Gary Fredricks, "Rethinking the Role of the Holy Spirit in the Lives of Old Testament Believers," *Trinity Journal* 9 (1988): 81-104. John Goldingay, "Was the Holy Spirit Active in Old Testament Times? What Was New About the Christian Experience of God?" *Ex Auditu* 12 (1996): 14-28; Michael Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004); Geoffrey W. Grogan, "The Experience of Salvation in the Old and New Testaments," *Vox Evangelica* 5 (1967): 4-26; James M. Hamilton, Jr., *God's Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2006); id., "God With Men in the Torah," *Westminster Theological Journal* 65 (2003): 113-133; Wilf Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995); Kaiser, 308-315; Michael E. Lodahl, *Shekhinah Spirit: Divine Presence in Jewish and Christian Religion* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992); W. Creghton, Marlowe, "'Spirit of Your Holiness' in Psalm 51:13," *Trinity Journal* 19 (1998): 29-49; Neve; Gary Tyra, *The Holy Spirit and Mission: Prophetic Speech and Action in Christian Witness* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011); M. V. Van Pelt, W. C. Kaiser, and D. I. Block, "רוּחַ (#8120)," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. W. A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 3:1073-1078; Daniel B. Wallace and M. James Sawyer, eds., *Who's Afraid of the Holy Spirit? An Investigation into the Ministry of the Spirit of God Today* (Dallas, TX: Biblical Studies Press, 2005); John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit: A Comprehensive Study of the Person and Work of the Holy*

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Alister McGrath speaks about the Holy Spirit as “the Cinderella of the Trinity.”¹¹ In Christian studies, stress is usually put on Jesus Christ and Christ-centered teaching because He is our Savior or on the Heavenly Father who is our Creator. As it is in the fairytale of Cinderella, the main attention is given to the two sisters, so the theme of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament is somehow on the periphery of Christian thinking, and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is built on New Testament teaching. In addition, the Holy Spirit was behind the writing of the Holy Scriptures (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21), the only reliable source for knowing God. The Spirit of God is the ultimate Author of the Bible, and because He is humble and does not like to speak about Himself but points to the Father and to the Son, there is only a small amount of material about Him in the Scriptures. However, what is revealed is very important, beautiful, and powerful.

The Hebrew Scripture contains rich and sometimes even unique material about the Spirit of the Lord, so those specific thoughts are not repeated in the Newer Testament. To summarize the priceless teaching of the Hebrew Bible on the Spirit of God into one article is almost an impossible task. Crucial questions intrude: What can one know about the Holy Spirit on the basis of the Old Testament, from the Bible of Jesus Christ, His Apostles, and the Early Church? Who is the Spirit of God or the Spirit of the Lord? In this overview study, a big picture will be painted about the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament according to the three partied division of the Hebrew canon (the Torah, Prophets, and Writings).

The examination of the topic of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament is usually approached from a doctrinal point of view, because people want to know if the Holy Spirit is a mere influence or a person. Nevertheless, the main purpose of why the Bible speaks about the Holy Spirit is to point to His different functions and to testify that the Holy Spirit needs to lead us, and not that we should possess the Holy Spirit.

Spirit (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991); Leon J. Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976); Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing the Holy Spirit Through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academics, 2006).

¹¹ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 279.

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We cannot use the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit is the One who must use us. This presentation proceeds from the exegetical-theological perspective and is based on the inductive methodology.

Basic Terminology and Statistics

The Old Testament employs the word רוּחַ *ruakh* for the Spirit, but this term has a very broad semantic range. It can mean wind, breeze, spirit, Spirit, life, mind, character, attitude, side, and so forth. Its root is *rwkh* which most probably means to “breathe life,” “be refreshed,” or to “revive.”¹² The fundamental idea is that the Spirit gives, holds, and sustains life.

There are six basic meanings of *ruakh*:

1. Natural: wind, breeze, breeze, air, blast
2. Human: spirit, life, breath, mind, attitude, character¹³
3. Divine: Spirit (of God/the Lord, the Holy Spirit)
4. Supernatural: unclean or evil spirit, ghost
5. Abstract: spirit of falsehood, lying spirit, spirit of prostitution, spirit of judgment, spirit of wisdom
6. Spatial: side, direction.

¹² See, Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 924-926; Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Study Edition (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 2:1197-1201; Friedrich Baumgärtel, “Spirit in the OT,” in Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), 6:359-367; J. Barton Payne, “רוּחַ,” in R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980), 836-837.

¹³ The word *ruakh* can mean at least in two texts a character: (1) Ps 32:1-2: “Blessed is [the person] . . . in his spirit [i.e., character] there is no deceit”; and (2) Eccl 12:7: “. . . and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit [i.e., character; identity; memory] returns to God who gave it.”

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The word *ruakh* occurs 389 times in the Old Testament (378 times in Hebrew and 11 times in Aramaic).¹⁴ In carefully going through all of them, it must be stressed that some texts are quite difficult to categorize, because it depends how one reads the text in its context and understands its meaning and theology, so the exact meaning of some occurrences is a matter of interpretation. This is why the figures in the following statistics are approximate. The approach in this study is maximalist, i.e., a search for direct references as well as for allusions/hints to the divine Spirit wherever it is possible in the biblical text.

About 105 times (less than 30%) *ruakh* has a natural meaning, like wind (compare with John 3), breeze, air, etc. The *ruakh* refers to human spirit about 130 times (more than 30%) with the meaning of spirit, life, breath, mind, attitude, character. The term points to a supernatural (evil) spirit about 11 times (3%).¹⁵ The *ruakh* has an abstract meaning about 10 times (almost 3%)¹⁶ and refers to a side 10 times (almost 3%).¹⁷ It means that in around 30% (123 times) of all occurrences it points to the divine Spirit.¹⁸

The word *ruakh* is most of the time used as a feminine noun (less often masculine, like in Gen 6:3 or Num 11:31). This feminine gender in

¹⁴ Abraham Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Old Testament Using the Hebrew and Aramaic Text*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1993), 1063-1066; John R. Kohleberger III and James A. Swanson, *The Hebrew English Concordance to the Old Testament with the New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 1461-1463.

¹⁵ Judges 9:23; 1 Sam 16:14, 15, 16, 23; 18:10; 19:9; 1 Kgs 22:21; 2 Chr 18:20; Isa 19:14; Zech 13:2.

¹⁶ 1 Kings 22:22, 23; 2 Chr 18:20, 21; Isa 4:4 (twice); 28:6; Hos 4:12; 5:4; Mic 2:11.

¹⁷ 1 Chronicles 9:24; Jer 52:23; Ezek 12:14; 17:21; 42:16, 17, 18, 19, 20; Dan 8:8.

¹⁸ To compare these findings with other scholars, see Hildebrandt, 8-18; Richard E. Averbeck, "Breath, Wind, Spirit and the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament," in David G. Firth and Paul D. Wegner, eds., *Presence, Power, and Promise: The Role of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academics, 2011], 25-37; id., "The Holy Spirit in the Hebrew Bible and Its Connections to the New Testament," in Daniel B. Wallace and M. James Sawyer, eds. *Who's Afraid of the Holy Spirit? An Investigation into the Ministry of the Spirit of God Today* (Dallas, TX: Biblical Studies Press, 2005), 15-36.

The first three occurrences of the term *ruakh* in the Bible are the following: (1) Gen 1:2 ("the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters"); (2) Gen 3:8 where the spirit refers to the wind of the day ("Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool [lit. wind] of the day"); and (3) Gen 6:3 ("My Spirit will not contend with man forever"). Two of these verses relate to the divine Spirit.

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the Hebrew language does not mean that the Holy Spirit is a mother in the holy Trinity, because it is only a grammatical gender. In the New Testament, the term *pneuma* is neutral, and it can be replaced by the masculine personal pronoun “He” (Greek *ekeinos*); Jesus also speaks about another Comforter who will do great things (see John 14:16-18, 26; 15:26; 16:7-17).¹⁹

Only three Old Testament texts directly use the terminology “the Holy Spirit”: (1) Ps 51:11: “Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me”; (2) Isa 63:10: “Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them”; and (3) Isa 63:11: “Then his people recalled the days of old, the days of Moses and his people—where is he who brought them through the sea, with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he who set his Holy Spirit among them?” In other texts of the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit is referred to as “the Spirit of the Lord” or “the Spirit of God.” A sufficient example is found in Isa 63:10-14 where the Holy Spirit is identified as the Spirit of the Lord. That the Spirit of the Lord and the Spirit of God is the same Spirit is well attested in 1 Sam 10: “The Spirit of the LORD” in v. 6 is named in v. 10 as “the Spirit of God.” Thus, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Lord, and the Spirit of God refer to the same reality and entity.

In the Old Testament, the explicit expression “the Spirit of the Lord” is used 27 times²⁰ and the phrase “the Spirit of God” (or its equivalent) 19 times,²¹ thus these two formulations are mentioned altogether 46

¹⁹ For details, see Woodrow Whidden, Jerry Moon, and John W. Reeve, *The Trinity: Understanding God’s Love, His Plan of Salvation, and Christian Relationships* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2002), 66–77.

²⁰ The statement “the Spirit of the LORD” [*ruakh YHWH*] is used 27 times referring to the divine Spirit (Judg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Sam 10:6; 16:13, 14; 2 Sam 23:2; 1 Kgs 18:12; 22:24; 2 Kgs 2:16; 2 Chr 18:23; 20:14; Isa 11:2; 40:7, 13; 59:19; 61:1 [*ruakh ’adonay YHWH*]; 63:14; Ezek 11:5; 37:1; Hos 13:15; Mic 2:7; 3:8), but note carefully that this phrase is once qualified as “evil” [*ruakh YHWH ra’ah*] (1 Sam 19:9): “An evil spirit from the LORD came upon Saul” (NIV).

²¹ The phrase “the Spirit of God” [*ruakh ’elohim*] occurs 12 times in Hebrew referring to the divine Spirit (Gen 1:2; 41:38; Exod 31:3; 35:31; Num 24:2; 1 Sam 10:10; 11:6; 19:20, 23; 2 Chr 15:1; 24:20; Ezek 11:24), and 5 times in Aramaic [*ruakh ’elohin*] (Dan 4:8, 9, 18; 5:11, 14). Job 27:3 employs the Hebrew term *ruakh ’eloah* for “the Spirit of God,” and Job 33:4 uses *ruakh ’el* to convey the same meaning. In the story of Saul is the expression “the spirit of God” qualified in three instances as “evil” [*ra’ah*] (1 Sam 16:15, 16; 18:10). Also

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times, excluding 27 instances where “my (your, His) Spirit” refers to “the Spirit of the Lord/God” in the context.²² If one includes all other usages where the term *ruakh* relates to the divine Spirit, then they occur in an additional 50 places,²³ thus totaling the usage of this specific meaning in the Hebrew Scriptures to 123 times.

When these statistics are compared with the New Testament data, the following results appear: the word *pneuma* occurs 379 times, while *ruakh* is used 389 times in the Old Testament. The phrase “the Spirit of God,” *pneuma theou*, is used 19 times and “the Spirit of the Lord,” *pneuma kuriou*, 5 times, thus occurring altogether only 24 times, but these two phrases are attested to 46 times in the First Testament. The expression “Holy Spirit,” *pneuma hagiou*, occurs 90 times in the New Testament, but only 3 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. It means that the Older Testament likes to speak about the divine Spirit in terms of the Spirit of the Lord or the Spirit of God, but the New Testament prefers the term Holy Spirit.

The Torah

The Hebrew Canon consists of (1) the Torah, the five books of Moses; (2) the Prophets, the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings), and the Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the 12 minor prophets); and (3) the Writings (Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra–Nehemiah, and 1-2 Chronicles). How is the Holy Spirit presented in those sections? All three parts of the Hebrew Bible—Torah, Prophets, and Writings—elaborate on the Spirit of God/the Lord in a special way. It is also significant to observe which books of the Old Testament teach

in 1 Sam 16:23, the phrase *ruakh 'elohim* points in the specific context to the harmful (ESV) or tormenting (NLT) or evil (NASV, KJV) spirit of God.

²² “My Spirit” occurs 14 times (Gen 6:3; Prov 1:23; Isa 30:1; 42:1; 44:3; 59:21; Ezek 36:27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28 [Heb. 3:1]; 2:29 [Heb. 3:2]; Hag 2:5; Zech 4:6; 6:8); “Your Spirit” is mentioned 4 times (Exod 15:10; Neh 9:30; Pss 104:30; 139:7); “Your Holy Spirit” is attested only in Ps 51:11 [13]; “His Spirit” is used 6 times (Num 11:29; Job 26:13; Ps 106:33; Isa 30:28; 34:16; 48:16); and “His Holy Spirit” is employed twice (Isa 63:10, 11).

²³ The rest of all occurrences is as follows: Exod 15:8; 28:3; Num 11:17, 25 (twice), 26; 27:18; Deut 34:9; 2 Sam 22:16; 2 Kgs 2:9, 15; 1 Chr 12:18; 28:12; Neh 9:20; Job 4:9, 15; 15:30; 32:8; Pss 18:16; 33:6; 43:10; Isa 11:2 (trice); 11:4; 32:15; Ezek 1:12, 20 (twice); 2:2; 3:12, 14, 24; 8:3; 11:1, 19, 24; 18:31; 36:26; 37:5, 6, 8, 9 [trice], 10; 43:5; Hos 9:7; Zech 7:12; 12:10.

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what about the Holy Spirit. The subject is gradually unfolded until its climax in the New Testament (see, for examples, John 14:16-18, 25-26; 16:7-15; and the book of Revelation where the Spirit speaks and instructs).

In the Torah, the foundation of all biblical teaching, there are five direct passages about the “Spirit of God,” and surprisingly none about the “Spirit of the Lord.”²⁴ References to the divine Spirit are mentioned 16 times in 15 verses occurring mainly in three books—Genesis, Exodus and Numbers. These texts appear in the Pentateuch as follows:

1. Genesis 1:2

The first biblical mention of “the Spirit of God” describes His role and function at Creation. In the very beginning of the Creation account, a fundamental statement proclaims: “The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (Gen 1:2).²⁵ The word *merakhepet* (hovering) is used only here and in Deut 32:11 where it describes to care, protect, cover, and support the little ones by an eagle (see also Isa 31:5). Thus, the Spirit of God is not only present at Creation, but He is also the Sustainer of the newborn planet earth.

2. Genesis 6:3

The second occurrence is in the Lord’s statement: “My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal”(NIV). The NKJV translates it as follows: “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh.” The Spirit of the Lord’s activity is literally identified

²⁴ Genesis 1:2; 41:39; Exod 31:3; 35:31; Num 24:2. The phrase “the Spirit of YHWH” occurs in the Pentateuch only indirectly in Gen 6:3 where the Lord speaks about His Spirit. The word “Spirit” is used in Exod 15:8; Num 11:17; 11:25 (twice); 11:26; 27:18; the expression the “Spirit of wisdom” in Exod 28:3 and Deut 34:9; the terms “My Spirit” in Gen 6:3; “Your Spirit” in Exod 15:10, and “His Spirit” in Num 11:29.

²⁵ The expression *ruakh 'elohim* does not refer to the “wind of God” or “mighty wind” for the following reasons: (1) this phrase or its equivalent never points to the divine wind in the other 22 occurrences (see footnote no. 21 for the complete list of those usages); (2) in Gen 1, the word *'elohim* is used 35 times and always designates God; (3) the expression “and God said” (*wayyo' mer 'elohim*) occurs 10 times in the first Creation account and never means something else; (4) the author could use Hebrew unambiguous terms to convey the idea of a “strong wind,” but he chose not to do so. For details, see Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 111-115.

as “judging” (*yadon* from the Hebrew root *din*) which means that He wants to justify, save, deliver, and vindicate people, but He is unable to do so, because people are stubborn or indifferent to His calling.²⁶ God’s Spirit was striving with people, i.e., calling them to repentance before the Flood through His Spirit.²⁷ What would the Spirit of the Lord not do any longer? He would no longer be able to bring people to repentance and thus justify, save, deliver from their addictions to sin, and vindicate them. They were in rebellion, closed to His voice, so He was not able to do something for them; He could no more strive with them. They were flesh-oriented and living according to the flesh and not according to the Spirit (see Rom 8:4), as the next sentence indicates: “For he [humanity] is mortal [lit. flesh]” (Gen 6:3).

There are two possibilities for understanding the Hebrew word *beshaggam*, the first expression in the phrase “for he is flesh”: (1) *be* + *she* + *gam* meaning literally in + which + also, i.e., for, because (causative meaning); or better (2) to take it as a verb derived from the root *shagag* (*shagah*), to “sin,” “go astray,” “err”²⁸ plus the pronominal suffix “their” resulting in rendering “in their going astray.” A literal translation of the beginning of this sentence can be as follows: “My Spirit will not strive with man forever in their going astray; he [i.e., humanity] is flesh.”²⁹

3. Genesis 41:38

Pharaoh said about Joseph: “Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the Spirit of God?” This amazing statement made by a pagan ruler about the indwelling and endowing Spirit of God means that Pharaoh recognized that Joseph had special abilities, insights, wisdom, and understanding, because Joseph’s God gave them to him. When one realizes that in the extrabiblical material there is no phrase like “the spirit

²⁶ For the primary meaning of God’s judgment in the Bible, see my article “The Gospel According to God’s Judgment: Judgment as Salvation,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 22, no. 1 (2011): 28-49.

²⁷ Compare with 1 Pet 3:18-20.

²⁸ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, 992-993.

²⁹ Similarly, God’s judgment expressed in close connection to the Lord’s Spirit is mentioned in the following texts: Gen 6:3; Exod 15:7-10; Job 4:9; Ps18:16; Isa 11:4; 30:28; 40:7; 59:19; Hos 13:14-16; and Zech 7:12. See also the seven instances of the Spirit of the Lord working through judges according to the book of Judges.

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of (name of particular) god,” then the biblical text provides a strong hint/indication that the author’s intention (Moses) was to tell the reader that it was actually the Spirit of God which was in Joseph. This ambiguity is consciously left by Moses in the text. It is also crucial to recognize that it is actually the first explicit biblical occurrence of the indwelling power of the Spirit *in* a human being (Heb. *ruakh ’elohim bo*).

4. Exodus 15:8

“By the blast [Heb. *ruakh*] of your nostrils [Heb. *’ap*] the waters piled up. The surging waters stood uplike a wall; the deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea.” At the Exodus, God parted the sea and destroyed the Egyptian army through His divine judgment. There are two possibilities to understanding God’s action. Does it happen: (1) “by the breath/blowing/blast of His nostrils” (anthropomorphism) or (2) “by/with the Spirit/spirit of His anger” (picture of negative judgment)? The Hebrew word *’ap* means nose, nostrils, or anger, and the expression *ruakh* can be translated as wind, blow, spirit, or Spirit. The context decides the precise meaning of these words, so the interpretation of the sentence is crucial. Due to the poetic language of Moses’s song, which is full of metaphors and conveys intentionally a double meaning, the context may then indicate that the stress is on God’s judgment in which the Spirit of God is involved.³⁰

5. Exodus 15:10

This verse is in parallelism to v. 8 and conveys the same idea: “But you blew [Heb. *nashap*] with your breath [Heb. *berukhaka*], and the sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters.” One can also translate it: “You blew with your Spirit.” The Septuagint rightly puts it as “*apesteilas to pneuma sou*” “you sent your Spirit/spirit.” Again, the double allusion can be in the background by Moses’s deliberate poetic choice of saying that God’s judging activity was performed by His Spirit and not only by the natural wind.

³⁰ Similarly the idiomatic Hebrew phrase *’erek ’appayim* means literally a “long nose,” but expresses the idea of the “long suffering” of God, thus meaning “the patience of God” (Exod 34:6; Jonah 4:2).

6. Exodus 28:3

“And you shall speak to all the skillful persons [Heb. *khakmeyleb*] whom I have endowed [lit. filled; Heb. *male*] with the spirit of wisdom [Heb. *ruakh khokmah*], that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister as priest to Me” (NAS). It is important to note the vocabulary used in the biblical text, namely, people are “filled with the Spirit” meaning that they receive special skills to properly do God’s work.

7. Exodus 31:3

The Lord said about Bazalel: “I have filled [Heb. *male*] him with the Spirit of God.” It is the Lord’s first explicit statement that He filled a person with His Spirit. It means that person is endowed with specific abilities and four of the Spirit’s gifts are enumerated. Bazalel was filled “with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills.”

8. Exodus 35:31

“And he [the LORD] has filled [Heb. *male*] him [Bazalel] with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills.” This is a repetition of things stated in the previous passage.

Leviticus

Interestingly, the Holy Spirit does not occur in Leviticus, which is not surprising, because this biblical book deals with the sacrificial system, impurities laws, and ethics. However, the Holy Spirit is present in the symbols at the sanctuary, such as oil, light, and the *shekhinah* glory.³¹

9. Numbers 11:17

God stated to Moses: “I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take some of the power of the Spirit that is on you and put [Heb. *sim ‘al*] it on them. They will share the burden of the people with you so that you will not have to carry it alone.” The Spirit is like a fire

³¹ See Michael E. Lodahl, *Shekhinah/Spirit: Divine Presence in Jewish and Christian Religion* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992).

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which is not diminished when taken from Moses and given to others. The Spirit's fire spreads on. The intention of the text is to stress that the elders received the same Spirit as Moses and that they obtained the gift of leadership to assist him. They were commissioned and enabled by God to do this enormous task.

10. Numbers 11:25a

“Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke with him [Moses], and he took some of the power of the Spirit that was on him and put [lit. gave; Heb. *natan'al*] it on the seventy elders.” This is the fulfillment of God's promise given in v. 17.

11. Numbers 11:25b

“When the Spirit rested on [Heb. *nuakh 'al*] them, they prophesied, but did not do so again.” Their prophesying was a one-time and unique event for them by which God demonstrated to others that they were set apart by Him for a special work and equipped and empowered for it by God Himself.

12. Numbers 11:26

“However, two men, whose names were Eldad and Medad, had remained in the camp. They were listed among the elders, but did not go out to the tent. Yet the Spirit also rested on [Heb. *nuakh 'al*] them, and they prophesied in the camp.” God confirmed the call of these two individuals to leadership even though they were not present with the other elders.

13. Numbers 11:29

“But Moses replied, ‘Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!’” Moses wished that all believers could prophesy, be spokespersons for God, and lead others into and upon the path of righteousness. It would not diminish but enhance God's leadership role.

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Moses stayed humble and desired that others would have the same Spirit who enables for meaningful and effective service.³²

14. Numbers 24:2

“When Balaam looked out and saw Israel encamped tribe by tribe, the Spirit of God came upon [lit. was; Heb. *hayah ‘al*] him.” When the Spirit of God was upon Balaam, he was empowered to prophesy about God’s blessings for Israel and the coming of the Messiah (see especially Num 23:8-10, 20-23; 24:16-19). For the first time in the biblical text, there occurs a statement that “the Spirit of God was upon” a person who was thus able to proclaim the Word of God. This is a prophetic formula (see Judg 3:10; 2 Chr 15:1).

15. Numbers 27:18

“So the LORD said to Moses, ‘Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit of leadership, and lay your hand on him.’” Joshua is “a man in whom is the Spirit” [Heb. *‘ish ‘asher ruakh bo*]. It is an explicit expression about the indwelling of the Spirit of God *in* Joshua giving him the gift of wisdom and leadership. This time the Lord Himself declares this fact and not Pharaoh (compare with Gen 41:38).

16. Deuteronomy 34:9

“Now Joshua son of Nun was filled [Heb. *male’*] with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the LORD had commanded Moses.” The “spirit of wisdom” in Deut 34:9 may be a case of a circumlocution³³ and/or metonymy³⁴ standing for the “Spirit” who gives or bestows wisdom,³⁵ especially in light of Num 27:18: “So the LORD said to Moses, ‘Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and

³² On Numbers 11 and the role of the Spirit in the lives of Moses and the seventy elders, see Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing the Holy Spirit Through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 44–62.

³³ A circumlocution is an ambiguous or roundabout figure of speech using many words. It is an opposite of terseness, directness, or conciseness.

³⁴ Metonymy is used as a figure of speech in which one word or a phrase stands for another word with which it is closely associated.

³⁵ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 455.

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lay your hand on him.” (ESV) It is important to observe that in light of Isa 11:2 the Messiah is filled with the Spirit of the Lord, and it is further explained that it means he received the Spirit of wisdom.

It is astonishing that there is only one statement about the Spirit of the Lord in the book of Deuteronomy, and it is in the epilogue which was not written by Moses. It is interesting that Moses, the man of the Spirit (Num 11:17, 25), does not once mention the Spirit of the Lord in his three sermons recorded in this book. Instead, he speaks about God’s love (more than in the rest of the Pentateuch), and how His love motivates our love response. Deuteronomy is a book of love, and love is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22), so it may be that Moses speaks about the work of the Spirit in reference to love. This term includes the dimension of the Spirit. Only a new Moses, the Prophet Ezekiel, and the ultimate New Moses, Jesus Christ, will speak powerfully and explicitly about the work of the Holy Spirit (Ezek 36:27-28; John 14:16-18, 25-27; 15:26; 16:8-15)!

Prophets

Former Prophets

In regard to the Spirit of God, four observations are crucial about the former prophets of the Hebrew Bible:

1. The Time of Joshua

Surprisingly, the book of Joshua does not use the term “the Spirit of God.” The Lord fulfills His promise and provides the Promised Land as a gift to His people, but there is no statement about the activity of the Spirit of the Lord in spite of the fact that Joshua, the main figure of the book, is called “a man in whom is the Spirit” (Num 27:18). Even though the term “Spirit” is absent, it does not mean that God’s Spirit was not present in the lives of godly people (for example, regarding Caleb in Josh 14:14, it is declared that “he followed the LORD, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly”). The Spirit of the Lord led His people as Isa 63:11 assures that the Holy Spirit was among His people at the time of Exodus, and that “they were given rest [in the Promised Land] by the Spirit of the Lord. This is how you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name” (v. 14). It is also true that they were not given a complete

rest because of the unbelief and disobedience of many.³⁶ Nehemiah 9:20 states that God gave to His people His “good Spirit to instruct them” and did not withhold the manna and water from them (see also v. 30 and Zech 7:12).

2. The Period of the Judges

Paradoxically, in the time of unfaithfulness and apostasy during the period of the Judges, God’s Spirit was extensively working. The Lord sent them judges, and God acted, helped, and delivered His people from the oppression of their enemies and gave them freedom. In this way, the word of God assures readers that God was always ready to lead and help His people, and that He was not absent even in those days of disorder. If only they would have listened and cooperated, He would have put things in order and revived their lives.

The book of Judges mentions seven times the work of the Spirit:

- 1) 3:10: “The Spirit of the LORD came upon [Heb. *hayah ‘al*] him” (Othniel).
- 2) 6:34: “The Spirit of the LORD came upon [Heb. *labash*, dress, clothe] Gideon.”
- 3) 11:29: “The Spirit of the LORD came upon [Heb. *hayah ‘al*] Jephthah.”
- 4) 13:25: “The Spirit of the LORD began to stir [Heb. *pa’am*, impel, strike, stir] him” (Samson).
- 5) 14:6: “The Spirit of the LORD came upon him in power [Heb. *tsalakh ‘al*, come with power, rush, prosper]” (Samson).
- 6) 14:19: “The Spirit of the LORD came upon him in power” (Samson).
- 7) 15:14: “The Spirit of the LORD came upon him in power” (Samson).

These seven occurrences of the phrase “the Spirit of the Lord” demonstrate that it was the Lord who commissioned the judges in Israel

³⁶ Only the Holy Spirit can lead people to obedience! No wonder Joshua declared that the people were not capable of obeying God even though they claimed the opposite: “You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God” (Josh 24:19). Nevertheless he asked them to decide for God and to serve Him faithfully (24:14-15, 20, 23).

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for their special work. He enabled them to deliver Israel from oppression, give them freedom, care for, and lead them.

3. The Times of 1-2 Samuel

First-Second Samuel mention 9 times the activity of the Holy Spirit mainly in relationship to the life of the first two kings in Israel, Saul and David (1 Sam 10:6, 10; 11:6; 16:13, 14; 19:20, 23; 2 Sam 22:16; 23:2). In this crucial time of salvation history when the monarchy was formed, it is recorded that Saul was filled with the Spirit of God and prophesied (1 Sam 10:6, 10; 11:6), and his heart was changed under this influence (10:6, 9). When the Spirit of God came upon Saul, he was a different person.

It is specified also about the second king that “the Spirit of the LORD came upon David with power [Heb. *tsalakh 'el*, come with power, rush, prosper]” (1 Sam 16:13). The Spirit was leading and giving him insights in order to do God’s will and stayed with him “from that day forward” (ESV), as the same verse underlines. The Spirit of the Lord inspired David to speak as he himself expresses it: “The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue” (2 Sam 23:2). From these instances one learns that the Spirit of the Lord can change lives, give a new heart and power, and stir people to speak and to actions.

In sharp contrast to these positive works of the Holy Spirit, the biblical narrator reports that the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, because of his unbelief and rebellion against the Lord. As a result, instead of being full of the divine Spirit, he was possessed by an evil spirit: “Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him” (1 Sam 16:14). He started his reign very well but became a model of disobedience. That personal tragedy led to a national disaster and defeats. It is stated four times explicitly (16:15, 16; 18:10; 19:9) and once implicitly (16:23a) that the *ruach Elohim/YHWH ra’ah* (the evil spirit of God/the LORD) was controlling him. This tragic change and strange phenomenon in Saul’s life is explained by the preposition “from”: the “evil spirit *from* the Lord” (*ruakh ra’ah me’et YHWH*) came into king’s life to govern it (see 1 Sam

16:14, 23a).³⁷ One needs to understand the Hebrew thinking, which is in the background: what God allows is viewed as an action of God; what He permits is portrayed as coming from Him (see Job 1-2).

One possible additional occurrence regarding the Spirit may be found in 2 Sam 22:16: “The valleys of the sea were exposed and the foundations of the earth laid bare at the rebuke of the LORD, at the blast of breath from his nostrils [Heb. *minnishmat ruakh 'appo*].” The last phrase is quite difficult to translate literally, but the alternative rendering of this sentence may be: “At/from the blast/breath/blow of the Spirit of His anger.” Thus, this formulation can give the explanation to a parallel thought about the “rebuke of the Lord” mentioned previously in the verse. This rebuke would be God’s negative judging activity, namely, His anger expressed through the Spirit.

4. 1-2 Kings

Only five verses speak about God’s Spirit in 1-2 Kings, and they are mainly related to the work of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, and two of them in a hidden or “cryptic” way:

³⁷One can observe how the evil spirit from the Lord gained possession of Saul’s life. According to 1 Sam 10:6-10, Saul became a changed person under the influence of the Holy Spirit, but 1 Sam 16:14 reveals that the Spirit of the Lord departed from him, because (as the context explains) of his rebellious attitude toward God. This shift occurred in Saul’s life when he stubbornly turned from God and did not obey His explicit instructions (13:13-14; 14:24, 29-30, 43-46; 15:10-29). The literary unit (16:14-23) regarding Saul’s story with the evil spirit entering and controlling his life begins with a statement that the evil spirit came from the Lord (16:14). Then Saul’s servants twice said to him that it was an “evil spirit of God” which tormented him (1 Sam 16:15-16), thus being polite to him and not daring to openly identify his strange behavior with an evil spirit. Such a strong statement will be uttered at the end of this narrative section by the narrator who bluntly declares that it was an “evil spirit” who ruled Saul’s life (16:23). In 1 Sam 19:20-24, we read that Saul’s messengers and the king himself again praised God and prophesied under the power of God’s Spirit, or better to say, he behaved as a prophet (the Hebrew uses a rare Hithpael conjugation). However, he did not allow the Spirit to change him as had earlier occurred (16:6-10); now he only made a fool of himself when he stripped himself and lay naked (19:24). Others looked with contempt at his strange behavior. God desired to change Saul, but he did not let Him. He responded only superficially to God’s initiative of love, and his downfall only grew with jealousy against David (1 Sam 18-26). The total disaster came after his encounter with the witch of Endor (1 Sam 28; 1 Chr 10:13-14), and he committed suicide in the war against the Philistines (1 Sam 31:4-5).

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(1) 1 Kings 18:12. This text deals with Elijah's sudden move or traveling from one place to another accomplished by the Spirit. Obadiah, the king's servant, tells Elijah: "I don't know where the Spirit of the LORD may carry you when I leave you. If I go and tell Ahab and he doesn't find you, he will kill me. Yet I your servant have worshiped the LORD since my youth."

(2) 1 Kings 22:24. "Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah went up and slapped Micaiah in the face. 'Which way did the spirit [or better "Spirit"] from the LORD go when he went from me to speak to you?' he asked."

(3) and (4) 2 Kings 2:9, 15. Elisha wanted a double share of Elijah's spirit which should be taken as a reference to the Holy Spirit in light of Elisha's desire to experience a spiritual power in his ministry that could come only from God. Elisha's faithful ministry and mighty actions testify that the same Spirit who led Elijah guided and empowered Elisha. The group of "the sons of prophets" confirmed that the Elisha continued the work of Elijah in the same power when they witnessed how he divided the Jordan river (as did Joshua and Elijah). In this way, Elisha's ministry was authenticated: "The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha" (2 Kgs 2:15). The term "spirit" points beyond these two godly men, to God who commissioned them to ministry and equipped them for it by God's Spirit.

(5) 2 Kings 2:16. This verse refers to the hypothetical sudden movement or transportation of Elijah performed by the Spirit of God. After Elijah was taken by the Lord into heaven, the group of prophets said to Elisha: "'Look, . . . we your servants have fifty able men. Let them go and look for your master. Perhaps the Spirit of the LORD has picked him up and set him down on some mountain or in some valley.' 'No,' Elisha replied, 'do not send them.'"

Latter Prophets

Major Prophets

It is interesting that there is no reference to the Spirit of God in the book of Jeremiah. He probably does not want to confuse his audience and/or readers with this notion, because he struggled with false prophets who made references to their spiritual experiences, like visions, dreams, and divinations (Jer 14:14; 23:16). He tells plainly while playing with the meaning of the word *ruakh* that false prophets are not people of the Spirit

but of wind (Jer 5:13; see also 22:22), because there is no word of God in them.

The Book of Isaiah

The most occurrences in the entire Old Testament on the divine Spirit are in Isaiah and Ezekiel, altogether 47 occurrences. The twenty instances of the term *ruakh* "Spirit" in the book of Isaiah are distributed in the following manner:

(1)–(4) 11:2. "The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD" (NKJV).

(5) 11:4. The Messiah will judge and "with the breath [Heb. *ruakh*, the Spirit] of his lips he will slay the wicked."

(6) 30:1. "'Woe to the obstinate children,' declares the LORD, 'to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin.'"

(7) 30:28. "His breath [Heb. *ruakh*, Spirit] is like a rushing torrent, rising up to the neck."

(8) 32:15. ". . . till the Spirit is poured upon us from on high."

(9) 34:16. "For it is his mouth that has given the order, and his Spirit will gather them together."

(10) 40:7. "The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath [Heb. *ruakh*, the Spirit] of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass."

(11) 40:13. "Who can fathom the Spirit of the LORD, or instruct the LORD as his counselor?"

(12) 42:1. "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations."

(13) 44:3. "For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants."

(14) 48:16. "And now the Lord GOD has sent me [the Servant of the Lord], and his Spirit" (ESV).

(15) 59:19. "So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun; when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him" (NKJV).

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(16) 59:21. “As for me, this is my covenant with them,’ says the LORD. ‘My Spirit, who is on you, will not depart from you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will always be on your lips, on the lips of your children and on the lips of their descendants—from this time on and forever,’ says the LORD.”

(17) 61:1. “The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.”

(18) 63:10. “Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them.”

(19) 63:11. “Where is he who set his Holy Spirit among them, . . .?”

(20) 63:14. “. . . they were given rest by the Spirit of the LORD. This is how you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name.”

In the book of Isaiah there are the strongest hints to the Trinity in the Old Testament (see Isa 11:1-2; 42:1; 48:16; 61:1-2; 63:8-10).³⁸

The Book of Ezekiel

In the book Ezekiel, the word *ruakh* is employed 27 times, the most in the Hebrew Scriptures. In the first part of his book, he stresses the movement of the Spirit of God who transports physically (even the prophet); but in the second part, one finds very important theological statements. Without an exaggeration, one can say that the teaching of the Hebrew Bible about the Spirit of the Lord climaxes in the book of Ezekiel where God promises that by His Spirit He will move His people to obedience (36:27)!

(1) 1:12. “Each one went straight ahead. Wherever the spirit [*ruakh*, the Spirit] would go, they would go, without turning as they went.” Ezekiel sees in the first vision how the Spirit of God leads the movement of God’s chariot with His glorious throne on which is the Presence of the Lord Himself (1:28).

(2) and (3) 1:20. “Wherever the spirit [*ruakh*, the Spirit; mentioned twice in Hebrew] would go, they would go, and the wheels would rise along with them . . .”

(4) 2:2. “As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.”

³⁸ For further study, see Moskala, “Toward Trinitarian Thinking,” 271-273.

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(5) 3:12. “Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a loud rumbling sound as the glory of the LORD rose from the place where it was standing.”

(6) 3:14. “The Spirit then lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness and in the anger of my spirit, with the strong hand of the LORD upon me.”

(7) 3:24. “Then the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet. He spoke to me and said: ‘Go, shut yourself inside your house.’”

(8) 8:3. “The Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and in visions of God he took me to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the north gate of the inner court, where the idol that provokes to jealousy stood.”

(9) 11:1. “Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the gate of the house of the LORD that faces east.”

(10) 11:5. “Then the Spirit of the LORD came on me, and he told me to say. . . .”

(11) 11:19. “I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit [*ruakh*, the Spirit] in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.”

(12) and (13) 11:24. “The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the exiles in Babylonia in the vision given by the Spirit of God.”

(14) 18:31. “Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit [*ruakh*, the Spirit].”

(15) 36:26. “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit [*ruakh*, the Spirit] in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”

(16) 36:27. “And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”

(17) 37:1. “The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones.”

(18)–(24) There is an intentional ambiguity with the term *ruakh* in the vision concerning the dry bones lying in the valley. These dry bones, representing Israel, can be resurrected to new spiritual life only by God’s Spirit. This is already firmly established in the immediate context of 36:26-27. Now an illustration is added to make the point clear. The *ruakh* designates God’s breath and at the same time His Spirit (see vv. 5, 6, 8, 9 [trice], 10), but the primary stress is on the Spirit of the Lord,

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because the Spirit comes from Him (vv. 5, 6, 9, 14) and gives the real and full life (in contrast to vv. 7–8). The Word of God needs to be proclaimed to the bones, so Ezekiel prophesies to them (see vv. 4, 7, 9, 10, 12), but only when the Word of God and the Spirit of the Lord work together can true spiritual *life* occur.

(25) 37:14. “I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.”

(26) 39:29. “I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the people of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD.” In sharp contrast to God’s frequent proclamation in the book of Ezekiel that “I will pour out my wrath on you” (Heb. *shapak rukhi*; as in 7:8; 9:8; 20:8, 13, 21, 33, 34; 22:22; 30:15; 36:18; see also *shapak za’am* in 21:36 and 22:31), He promises: “I will pour out my Spirit” (Heb. *shapak rukhi*).

(27) 43:5. “Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.”

Minor Prophets

Only five minor prophets speak about the Spirit of God (11 times altogether): Hosea, Joel, Micah, Haggai, and Zechariah (nothing in the other seven books: Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Malachi). The full phrase “the Spirit of the Lord” is used only three times. An additional eight times, only “the Spirit” is mentioned in this corpus of the Holy Scriptures:

1. Hosea 9:7. The prophet is called the man of the Spirit: “The days of punishment have come; the days of recompense have come; Israel shall know it. The prophet is a fool; the man of the spirit is mad, because of your great iniquity and great hatred” (ESV).

2. Hosea 13:15. There is a double meaning intended in the text: (A) physical wind and (B) divine Spirit. The metaphor of the east wind refers to the Spirit of the Lord, because the stress is on the Spirit of the Lord who judges. The context of this verse focuses on judgment which is more than a natural catastrophe: “Even though he thrives among his brothers. An east wind [*ruakh*] from the LORD will come, blowing in from the desert; his spring will fail and his well dry up. His storehouse will be plundered of all its treasures.”

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3. Joel 2:28 [Heb. 3:1]. God promises that He will give His Spirit on different groups of people without regarding their social status. The Spirit will unite and lead people to service: “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.”

4. Joel 2:29 [Heb. 3:2]. More parallel details are given to the previous verse: “Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.” Note the inclusiveness of different categories of people in these two verses. There is no a gender barrier in the Spirit’s work. The Holy Spirit enables all who are open to His leadership to serve, to fulfill God’s mission. They need to be His willing servants!

5. Micah 2:7. “Is it being said, O house of Jacob: ‘Is the Spirit of the LORD impatient? Are these His doings?’ Do not My words do good to the one walking uprightly?” (NAS).

6. Micah 3:8. “But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin.”

7. Haggai 2:5. “This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.”

8. Zechariah 4:6. “So he said to me, ‘This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.”

9. Zechariah 6:8. “Then he called to me, ‘Look, those going toward the north country have given my Spirit rest in the land of the north.”

10. Zechariah 7:12. “They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the LORD Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the LORD Almighty was very angry.”

11. Zechariah 12:10. “And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born” (NAS).

Writings

Unexpectedly, in the biblical Wisdom Literature, there is little about the Holy Spirit. The phrase the “Spirit of God/the Lord” is not used in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, two wisdom books *par excellence*. This material underlines the fear of God. The Spirit who gives wisdom and is called the Spirit of wisdom (Exod 28:3; Deut 34:9; Isa 11:2) is only mentioned in Psalms (7 times) and Job (7 times). Other books in the Writing’s section which mention the divine Spirit are Daniel, Nehemiah, and 1-2 Chronicles. The survey in this collection of biblical books reveals the following:

The Book of Psalms

(1) **18:15 [Heb. 18:16]**. “The valleys of the sea were exposed and the foundations of the earth laid bare at your rebuke, LORD, at the blast [Heb. *neshamah*, breath] of breath [Heb. *ruakh*, Spirit] from your nostrils [*’ap*, anger].” One can translate the end of the verse in the following way: “. . . at the blast of the Spirit of your anger.” The double *entendre* of the text alludes to two aspects of life: one to God’s anthropomorphic behavior and the second to the divine judgment when the Spirit is involved in the punishment.

(2) **33:6**. “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath [*ruakh*, the Spirit] of his mouth.”

(3) **51:11 [Heb. 51:13]**. “Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.”

(4) **104:30**. “When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.”

(5) **106:33**. “For they rebelled against the Spirit of God, and rash words came from Moses’ lips.”

(6) **139:7**. “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?”

(7) **143:10**. “Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.”

The Book of Job

In the book of Job, one can find the following references to the divine Spirit:

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(1) **Job 4:9.** “At the breath [Heb. *neshamah*] of God they perish; at the blast [Heb. *ruakh*, the Spirit] of his anger they are no more.”

(2) **4:15.** “A spirit [Heb. *ruakh*, the Spirit] glided past my face, and the hair on my body stood on end.”

(3) **15:30.** “He will not escape the darkness; a flame will wither his shoots, and the breath [*ruakh*, the Spirit] of God's mouth will carry him away.”

(4) **26:13.** “His Spirit made the heavens beautiful, and his power pierced the gliding serpent” (NLT).

(5) **27:3.** “As long as I have life within me, the breath [Heb. *ruakh*, the Spirit] of God in my nostrils.”

(6) **32:8.** “But it is the spirit [*ruakh*, the Spirit] in a person, the breath of the Almighty, that gives them understanding.”

(7) **33:4.** “The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.”

The Book of Proverbs

There is no statement about “the Spirit of God” found in Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, and Esther. However, in Prov 1:23 is an interesting declaration of wisdom: “If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you”(ESV). If one connects the wisdom of chap. 1 (when the stage is set for understanding wisdom in the whole book) with the Wisdom of Proverbs 8 representing the divine Person, “Co-Creator with Yahweh,”³⁹ then this *ruakh* in 1:23 could be understood as the divine Spirit coming from the Wisdom of God.

The Book of Daniel

In the book of Daniel, the Aramaic expression *ruakh Elahin* about the prophet Daniel is used five times and consistently proclaimed by pagan rulers. Nebuchadnezzar states three times that “*ruakh 'elahin qaddishin beh/bak*,” namely that “the Spirit of the holy God is in him/you” (Dan 4:8, 9, 18 NKJV [Heb. 4:5, 6, 15]). The queen (mother) expresses to Belshazzar that “there is a man in your kingdom who has

³⁹ For an insightful interpretation of Wisdom in Proverbs 8, see Richard M. Davidson, “Proverbs 8 and the Place of Christ in the Trinity,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17, no. 1 (2006): 47.

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the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods” (5:11), and finally King Belshazzar remarks in his address to Daniel: “I have heard that the spirit of the gods is in you” (5:14). All three mighty pagans had some knowledge of the true religion as it is obvious from Dan 1–5. They express in their speeches the thought that the “Spirit of the holy God” (Belshazzar omits the adjective “holy”) is in Daniel who gives him unusual abilities to interpret dreams, “solve difficult problems” (5:16), and have “insight, intelligence and outstanding wisdom” (5:14). Even though there is an ambiguity in the usage of this Aramaic phrase *ruakh 'elahin* in Daniel, if one understands that there are no statements in extrabiblical material about the “spirit of god(s),” so their declarations need to refer to Daniel’s special faculties which come from the living God of Daniel (6:26). The author of this biblical book purposely left this ambiguity with the terminology which to a reader who is a believer in a true God and familiar with biblical revelation is a hint and a reference to the “Spirit of God”⁴⁰ without necessarily claiming that these three pagans had all these profound insights when they uttered this phrase. Daniel makes a deliberate parallel with Joseph in whom was the Spirit of God (Gen 41:38).⁴¹

The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah

Ezra has no verses related to the Spirit, but Nehemiah mentions two important proclamations in relationship to the leadership activities of the divine Spirit:

⁴⁰ See Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949), 99; John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989), 80; Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel: An Exegetical And Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture NIV Text*, The New American Commentary (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 131; James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1927), 225–226; L. Wood, *Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973), 131. The singular *theou* (God) is used in Theodotion’s text of Daniel in all 5 occurrences.

⁴¹ For the comparison between Daniel and Joseph, see Andrew E. Steinmann, *Daniel*, Concordia Commentary (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2008), 233. See also Derek Kidner’s comment on Gen 41:38 in his book *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1967), 196: “*The Spirit of God* would be a phrase coloured by polytheism for Pharaoh, who was not the last man in Scripture to speak more wisely than he knew (cf. Jn. 11:49-52).”

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(1) 9:20. “You gave your good Spirit to instruct them. You did not withhold your manna from their mouths, and you gave them water for their thirst.”

(2) 9:30. “For many years you were patient with them. By your Spirit you warned them through your prophets. Yet they paid no attention, so you gave them into the hands of the neighboring peoples.”

The Book of 1-2 Chronicles

In the last book of the Hebrew Canon are six statements about the Spirit of God mainly in connection with leadership and prophesying:

(1) 1 Chronicles 12:18. “Then the Spirit came on Amasai, chief of the Thirty. . . .”

(2) 1 Chronicles 28:12. “He gave him the plans of all that the Spirit had put in his [David’s] mind for the courts of the temple of the LORD and all the surrounding rooms, for the treasuries of the temple of God and for the treasuries for the dedicated things.”

(3) 2 Chronicles 15:1. “The Spirit of God came on Azariah son of Oded.”

(4) 2 Chronicles 18:23. “Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah went up and slapped Micaiah in the face. ‘Which way did the spirit from the LORD go when he went from me to speak to you?’ he asked.”

(5) 2 Chronicles 20:14. “Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Jahaziel son of Zechariah, . . .”

(6) 2 Chronicles 24:20. “Then the Spirit of God came on Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest.”

Thus, only the books of Psalms and Job (the beginning of the Writings section) and Nehemiah and Chronicles (the end of Writings, the last section of the Hebrew Bible) speak about the work of the Spirit of God.

A Summary of Usage

The summary of the overview of the usage of the word “Spirit” in the Hebrew Bible looks as follows:

- I. Pentateuch (employed 16 times)
- II. Prophets (occurred 79 times):
 - A. Former Prophets (21 times)
 - B. Latter Prophets (58 times)

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III. Writings (used 28 times)

It means that the usage of the word *ruakh* with the meaning of the divine Spirit occurs in the Hebrew Scriptures 123 times (16 + 79 + 28 = 123). This sense is attested with His different functions and situations.

Our study demonstrates that the frequency of this term with the reference to the Spirit of God/the Lord in the biblical books can be put into the following list: Ezekiel (27 times), Isaiah (20 times), 1-2 Samuel (9 times), Numbers (7 times), Judges (7 times), Psalms (7 times), Job (7 times), 1-2 Chronicles (6 times), Exodus (5 times), 1-2 Kings (5 times), Daniel (5 times), Zechariah (4 times), Genesis (3 times), Hosea (2 times), Joel (2 times), Micah (2 times), Nehemiah (2 times), Deuteronomy (1 times), Haggai (1 times), and Proverbs (1 times).

Verbs used with God's Spirit are *rakhap* (hover); *din* (judge, strive, contend); *hayah* (be, come); *male'* (fill), *labash* (dress, clothe); *pa'am* (stir, impel, strike); *tsalakh* (come with power, rush, prosper); *nuakh* (rest), *sim* (put), *natan* (put, give). There are seven passages in the Old Testament about "filling" (*male'*) of people with the Spirit, wisdom or skills (Exod 28:3; 31:3; 35:31; 35:35; Deut 34:9; 1 Kgs 7:14; Mic 3:8). Filling is actually equipping and enabling people to do God's mission. The prepositions employed in most cases with the Spirit of the Lord are *be* (in, with), *'al* (upon, on), or *'el* (to).⁴² When the Spirit of God is upon or in a person, it means that He leads and guides him or her. Each of the six occurrences of the "pouring out" (*shapak*) of the Spirit of the Lord (Isa 44:3; Ezek 39:29; Joel 2:28, 29; Zech 12:10; plus Isa 32:15 with a different verb for pouring *'arah*) appears in the context of God's affirmation of the covenant relationship with His people.

A Mere Power and Influence?

Is the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of God or the Spirit of the Lord only a force according to the Old Testament? Can one speak about the person of

⁴² On the basis of Isa 61:1-3, where it is proclaimed that "the Spirit of the Lord was on [Heb. *'al*] the Servant of the Lord (see also Luke 4:16-21), one should not overstress the differences in prepositions ("*be*" and "*'al*") and separate on this ground the empowering and indwelling by the Holy Spirit; because when the Holy Spirit came on the Messiah, He was also filled with the Spirit. It appears that, on the one hand, a denial of indwelling function of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament times, and/or seeing it only as an individual and exceptional experience and, on the other hand, a claim that it is only experienced by believers during the New Testament dispensation is without a solid biblical basis.

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the Holy Spirit or is He only an emanation of God? It is true that nowhere in the Bible (in the Old or New Testaments) is the Holy Spirit designated as a person; however, the Holy Spirit acts, behaves, and does things only a person can accomplish. These hints or allusions in the Hebrew Scriptures help to uncover the Spirit's identity. Consider the following examples where the Holy Spirit is associated with a number of attributes only characteristic of persons and completely inappropriate for an influence or power:

(1) The Spirit teaches and instructs. "You gave your good Spirit to instruct them. You did not withhold your manna from their mouths, and you gave them water for their thirst" (Neh 9:20).

(2) The Spirit leads and guides God's people. "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground" (Ps 143:10; also Isa 63:11-13).

(3) The Spirit can be angry. "Should it be said, O house of Jacob: 'Is the Spirit of the LORD angry? Does he do such things? Do not my words do good to him whose ways are upright?'" (Mic 2:7).

(4) The Spirit encourages and admonishes God's people. "For many years you were patient with them. By your Spirit you admonished them through your prophets. Yet they paid no attention, so you handed them over to the neighboring peoples" (Neh 9:30).

(5) The Spirit gives different abilities to do artistic work or perform leadership (Exod 31:3; Ezek 2:2; 3:12). "I [the LORD] have filled him [Bezalel] with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts . . ." (Exod 31:3).

(6) The Spirit reacts to human evil and leads people to repentance. "The LORD said: 'My Spirit will not contend with man forever . . .'" (Gen 6:3).

(7) The Spirit spoke through his servants. The last words of David are significant: "The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue" (2 Sam 23:2).

(8) The Spirit dwells (lit. "stands," "lives," "remains") among God's people (Hag 2:5; comp. Isa 63:11). "This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear" (Hag 2:5).

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(9) The Spirit came to, raised and transported Ezekiel. “The Spirit lifted me up between the earth and heaven” (Ezek 8:3; see also 2:2; 3:14; 11:1, 21; 43:5).

(10) The Spirit gives instructions and plans for building the Temple. “He [David] gave him [Solomon] the plans of all that the Spirit had put in his mind for the courts of the temple of the LORD ...” (1 Chr 28:12).

(11) On the other hand, people can rebel and grieve the Holy Spirit. “Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them” (Isa 63:10). R. N. Whybray explains: “God’s holy spirit . . . is here personified more clearly than anywhere else in the Old Testament, and is on its way to its later full development as a distinct hypostasis in late Jewish and in Christian thoughts.”⁴³ The Psalmist recounts that the people of God “rebelled against the Spirit of God” (Ps 106:33).

The result of these activities is crystal clear: the Spirit of the Lord/God is not a power but a Divine Person. Prophet Zechariah rightly declares: “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD Almighty’” (Zech 4:6). This is a very explicit statement that the Spirit is not a mere might, power, or force; the Spirit of the Lord is a Person who gives power!

Functions and Roles of the Holy Spirit

Due to the exegetical and theological basis of this study, it was discovered that the Person of the Holy Spirit has at least seven main functions in the Old Testament (these could have been expanded, but it was desired to keep the number as low as possible):

(1) The Spirit of God creates, but also sustains, provides for, cares, and protects God’s creation—He is the Creator and the Sustainer of creation. The Spirit also gives life and beauty to God’s creatures. These features of the Spirit of the Lord are documented in the following texts: “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). “When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth” (Ps 104:30). “His Spirit made the heavens

⁴³ R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40–66*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 258.

beautiful, and his power pierced the gliding serpent. (Job 26:13 NLT). “The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life” (Job 33:4). “By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath [*ruakh*] of his mouth” (Ps 33:6).⁴⁴ This creating Spirit is the Sustainer, cares for creation and each individual, and is concerned about ecological problems. If the Holy Spirit is the Creator than He is able to re-create, re-shape, and put together again our life and the world!

(2) The Holy Spirit convicts of sin, guides people to repentance and back to God, and He judges—He is the Leader and Judge. The Spirit of God is involved with judgment in a number of instances (see Exod 15:8; 2 Sam 22:16; Job 4:9; Ps 18:16; Isa 11:4; 30:28; 40:7; 59:19; Hos 13:14-16; and Zech 7:12). The Spirit leads the “physical” movement of God to the Temple, according to the vision of Ezekiel 1 and Ezekiel 8-11, but the Spirit also guides people in the right spiritual direction if they are willing to be led (Pss 51:11; 143:10; Isa 63:14).

The Spirit judges but does not want to condemn people only desiring that they return to the Lord. He also creates faith, revives people, and performs reformation in their lives. The conditions of this new life are plainly described: “‘Even now,’ declares the LORD, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.’ Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing—grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God. Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber. Let the priests,

⁴⁴ God’s breath (anthropomorphic language) gives life. The Hebrew terms *ruakh* (Spirit) and *neshamah* (breath) are parallel terms in several biblical texts. Observe the following passages where the breath of God and the Spirit of the Lord are two closely related concepts: “The Lord God formed the 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). “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth” (Ps 33:6). “As long as I have life within me, the breath of God in my nostrils, my lips will not speak wickedness, and my tongue will utter no deceit” (Job 27:3-4). “But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding” (Job 32:8).

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who minister before the LORD, weep between the temple porch and the altar. Let them say, ‘Spare your people, O LORD. Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’ . . . ‘And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the survivors whom the LORD calls’” (Joel 2:12-18, 28-32).

(3) The Spirit of the Lord/God commissions individuals to a specific work and ministry, gives spiritual gifts, and enables people to perform different tasks and accomplish assigned roles. He is the Giver—the empowering Spirit. For example, God gave to (1) Joseph and Joshua wisdom for their specific mission (Gen 41:38–39; Deut 34:9); (2) Bazalel and Oholiab artistic skills and knowledge in regard to building the Tabernacle (Exod 31:1-6; 35:30-36:2); (3) the judges leadership capacities to give God’s people freedom, break the oppression of their enemies, and care for them. “The Spirit of the LORD came upon” Othniel (Judg 3:10), Gideon (Judg 6:34), Jephthah (Judg 11:29), and Samson (Judg 13:24-25; 14:6, 19; 15:14-15).

Moses is a model of Spirit-filled leadership. He was dependent upon God’s Spirit and humbly exercised this ability without any jealousy, pride, self-sufficiency, or selfish ambitions (Num 11:29; 12:3; see also Heb 3:5). The seventy elders were given, after their commissioning, the same Spirit in order to help carry the burden of the people: “The LORD said to Moses: ‘Bring me seventy of Israel’s elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the Tent of Meeting, that they may stand there with you. I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take of the Spirit that is on you and put the Spirit on them. They will help you carry the burden of the people so that you will not have to carry it alone’” (Num 11:16-17). The Spirit of the Lord enables people to serve, minister, and fulfill God’s given

mission (Gen 12:3; Exod 19:4-6; Isa 45:22). Cooperation with others is a crucial characteristic of those who are blessed by the Lord.

(4) The Holy Spirit enables prophets to utter and proclaim verbally or in written form the Word of God and to prophesy—He is the Inspirer and Illuminator of God’s spokespersons.

The Spirit speaking through the prophets: “They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the LORD Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the LORD Almighty was very angry” (Zech 7:12). “For many years you were patient with them. By your Spirit you admonished them through your prophets. Yet they paid no attention, so you handed them over to the neighboring peoples” (Neh 9:30).

This prophetic Spirit giving visions: “The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the exiles in Babylonia in the vision given by the Spirit of God” (Ezek 11:24). “But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin” (Mic 3:8).

When the Spirit of God came upon the Prophet Balaam, he could only pronounce word from the Lord: “Now when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not resort to sorcery as at other times, but turned his face toward the desert. When Balaam looked out and saw Israel encamped tribe by tribe, the Spirit of God came upon him . . . ‘Even if Balak gave me his palace filled with silver and gold, I could not do anything of my own accord, good or bad, to go beyond the command of the LORD—and I must say only what the LORD says’ . . .” (Num 24:1, 2, 13). In this context, the Spirit also inspired Balaam to utter one of the most profound prophecies concerning the Messiah (Num 24:15-19).

(5) The Holy Spirit can move, lift up, raise, and transport His servants from one place to another—He is the Mover. The best examples are the prophets Elijah (1 Kgs 18:12; 2 Kgs 2:16) and Ezekiel (Ezek 2:2; 3:12, 14, 24; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 37:1; 43:5). “The Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet . . .” (Ezek 2:2); “Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the gate of the house of the LORD . . .” (Ezek 11:1); “Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court” (Ezek 43:5). Also the book of Acts records the episode of the evangelist

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Philip who was transported by the Spirit in order to witness to an Ethiopian high official (Acts 8:26-29, 39-40).

(6) The Holy Spirit instructs and encourages—He is the Teacher: “You gave your good Spirit to instruct them. You did not withhold your manna from their mouth, and you gave them water for their thirst” (Neh 9:20). He leads into the Truth in order for people to know and experience the truth, but He also gives teaching ability as, for example, in the case of Bezalel and Oholiab, the Messiah, and God’s faithful followers (Exod 35:34; Isa 11:2; 59:21; 61:1-3).

(7) The Holy Spirit changes and transforms lives—He is the Indweller, Sanctifier, and Re-Creator. He is the transforming Spirit. He abides with and in His people. He has the capacity to enable changes in our lives. The Spirit of God was not only empowering or endowing people in the Old Testament times (Exod 31:3; 35:31), but He also was indwelling in them (Gen 41:38; Num 27:18; Ezek 36:27-28; Dan 4:8, 9, 18; 5:11, 14).

The Spirit of God creates, regenerates, and resurrects to new life as is illustrated in Ezek 37:1-14 by the reviving and resurrecting of the dead bones. The Word and the Spirit of God brought life into completely dry bones. This is why God promises to give His Spirit to His people, because He wants to revitalize them to a new spiritual life. The fundamental biblical definition is unprecedented: the WORD of God plus the SPIRIT of God equals LIFE (see Gen 1:2-3; Ps 33:6; Ezek 37:1-14). This is true for the physical as well as spiritual life. Only when the Word and Spirit of God are accepted will true life spring forth: “‘I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel,’ declares the Sovereign LORD” (Ezek 39:29). “‘See, a king will reign in righteousness . . . the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field seems like a forest’” (Isa 32:1, 15).

Nowhere else in the book of Ezekiel is the Divine “I” so overwhelmingly concentrated as in the literary unit of 36:22-32. This stress on the “I” of God is used 24 times. He is in action and takes initiative, and His Spirit brings and guarantees obedience: “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; I will remove from you your heart of

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stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws” (Ezek 36:25-27).⁴⁵The Prophet Ezekiel explains how God will put His law in the mind of His people and how He will enable them to obey. This is only possible through the work of the Holy Spirit! These changes come as the result of the presence of the Spirit of God in life.⁴⁶

Life in the Lord and in His Spirit brings a believer into harmony with God and His will. The sequence of actions is crucial: God gives grace, saves, and commands obedience, and in our response to His initiative of love we need to make a decision to obey (this is our part in the process), however, we are unable to follow our decision and obey God’s law (Josh 24:19). But God is here to help, so He gives His Spirit to His followers to accomplish it. What God commands of His people, He always provides the means! God makes that obedience happen. Thus, obedience is God’s gift and not our performance or achievement. We can only decide, and He provides the willingness and power to follow our decision (see Phil

⁴⁵ God’s grace in bringing His people back to their own country and cleansing and forgiving them is given first. A heart transplant was needed in order to be able to follow God and His precepts: “When you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today . . . The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts” (Deut 30:2, 6, 10). The circumcision of heart is performed only by the heavenly Surgeon. David prays: “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Ps 51:10), and continues: “Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me” (Ps 51:11).

⁴⁶Twice in the book of Ezekiel God promised to give His Spirit to His people so they could obey His laws. Sandwiched between God’s promises is the action the people needed to take in response to God’s initiative.

(1) Ezekiel 11:19 announced what God will do: “I will give them an undivided heart and put a new Spirit in them.” He will perform a heart transplant: “I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God” (Ezek 11:19-21). This truth is reinforced and plainly stated in Ezek 36:26-27.

(2) Ezekiel 18:31 described what His followers needed to do in their response to God’s promise: “Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel?”

(3) Ezekiel 36:26-27 proclaimed what God would do: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” Thus, God’s activity demanded from the believers a proper response which was positioned at the center of these three statements. They needed to allow God to indwell, work in, and transform their lives.

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2:12-13). Both justification and sanctification are God's gifts experienced through faith. We are justified through faith as well as sanctified through faith. All is provided by God's grace and must be received through faith! Victory over sin is a gift of the Holy Spirit. The power of evil and slavery to sin is broken only by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The literal translation of Ezek 36:27 puts an emphasis on God's doing: "I will give my Spirit in you, and I will *do* that you will walk in my statutes and keep my laws, and you will *do* [them]." God declares: "I will do that you will do!" "I will move/cause you to obey!" Thus, God's law is not only put into our hearts by the work of the Holy Spirit, but obedience is accomplished as well only by the Holy Spirit! Praise the Lord for the gift of the Holy Spirit. He is the power of God to create a new life. He empowers people to accomplish God's given tasks, enables them to live in conformity with His standards, and helps them to lead others to Christ. He is the Life-giving Person of the Godhead.⁴⁷

Conclusion

There is rich material about the Spirit of the Lord/God in the Hebrew Scriptures. When all 123 occurrences regarding the divine Spirit are put together, one can discover that the Old Testament thinking is open to perceive the Spirit as a divine Person⁴⁸ as well as a manifestation of

⁴⁷God gives His Spirit to enable His followers to obey Him and His law. Thus, obedience is the result of God's working power in believers. From this perspective, it becomes transparent that the new covenant is based on the promise of God's Spirit. "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people" (Jer 31:31-33).

"For those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God" (Rom 8:14). The Spirit of God was active at the resurrection of Jesus: "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you" (Rom 8:11).

⁴⁸For examples, see hints for the deity and personhood of the Holy Spirit in Gen 1:2; 6:3; 1 Chr 28:11-12; Ps 51:11; Isa 32:15; 40:13; 42:1; 48:17; 59:21; 61:1; 63:10; Ezek 2:2; 3:14, 24; 8:3; 11:1, 5, 24; 36:27; 43:5; Zech 4:6, etc.

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God's Presence. This is why David prays: "Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me" (Ps 51:11). The psalmist's questions in Ps 139:7 point to the same observation: "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?" The Prophet Isaiah stresses in Isa 63:11-14 that we need to carefully listen and be sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit in order to do God's will and accomplish His mission in our life. The Spirit of God helps in our everyday struggles, changes our character, enables us to serve and powerfully witness to people about God's goodness.

The Holy Spirit is immanent but also transcendent. His Presence testifies of God's presence but also brings this divine closeness into the lives of the believers. He is a Person who is separate from the Father or the Son, and yet He is omnipresent (Ps 139:7-12). His actions demonstrate that He is more than an influence or mere power. His powerful manifestations of His Presence point to the fact that He is understood in the biblical witness as a divine Being. The Holy Spirit possesses attributes only belonging to God.

The Pentateuch is the foundation and core for the biblical teaching about the Holy Spirit. This basis for the various functions and roles of the Spirit of the Lord is then expanded in other parts of the Hebrew Bible, namely in the Prophets and Writings (except for physical movement or sudden transportation), as summarized in the following table with only some texts as representative samples:

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Function/Role of the Holy Spirit	Pentateuch	Prophets	Writings
1. Creates, Cares, and Sustains	Gen 1:2	Isa 34:16–17; 44:3 Ezek 37:14	Pss 33:6; 104:30 Job 26:13; 33:4
2. Leads to Repentance and Judges	Gen 6:3 Exod 15:8–10	Isa 11:4; 30:1, 28 Hos 13:15	Pss 18:16; 106:33 Ps 143:10
3. Gives Spiritual Gifts and Abilities, Commissions, and Equips	Exod 31:3; 35:31 Num 11:17 Deut 34:9	Judg 11:29 Judg 13:24–25	Job 32:8 Dan 5:11, 14
4. Enables to Speak, Write, and Prophecy	Num 11:25–26 Num 24:2	Ezek 11:24 Mic 3:8	Neh 9:30 2 Sam 23:2 1 Chr 12:18; 28:12
5. Moves, Raises Up, and Transports	(Isa 63:11, 14)	Ezek 8:3 Ezek 37:1	1 Kgs 18:12 2 Kgs 2:16
6. Instructs, Encourages, and Teaches	Exod 35:31–34	Isa 11:2; 59:21	Neh 9:20
7. Indwells, Changes, Transforms, Sanctifies, and Empowers	Gen 41:38 Num 27:18	1 Sam 10:6, 9 Ezek 36:27	Dan 4:8, 9, 18

The Old Testament teaching on the Holy Spirit paves the way for the New Testament interpretation of this biblical theme. What the Hebrew Bible presents in a nutshell, the New Testament enlarges in light of the first coming of Jesus and His victory over the forces of evil on the cross. These reflections are not radically new or different and do not contradict the Old Testament teaching regarding the Holy Spirit. It needs to be underlined that the same Spirit who worked in the Old Testament was

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active in the New Testament period and still is today. This close continuity between the work of the Holy Spirit in both Testaments is a biblical model, and this pattern needs to be retained in all interpretations regarding the Holy Spirit.

Two prayers of David should climax our reflections on the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, and we should also wholeheartedly pray: “Do not cast me from your presence and do not take your Holy Spirit from me” (Ps 51:11). “Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground” (Ps 143:10). Our ministry should be a Spirit-filled ministry, our lives should be Spirit-transformed lives, and our journey should be guided by the Spirit in order to be Spirit-oriented people. Only in this way can we fulfill our mission and live to the glory of God! Let us praise God for what His Spirit does for, in, and through us, and let us thank the Lord for this perfect and outstanding gift of the Holy Spirit. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

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