

The Spirit of God, Spirit of the Lord, the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

The Word for Spirit in Hebrew (רוּחַ ruakh) means also wind, storm, compass point (= direction of the wind, like east, west etc.), breath and can speak of the condition of a person. When the word ruakh is used together with God or the Lord, it is not always translated as "Spirit", but sometimes as "wind" or "storm". The context must help of course to decide. But even if we translate "Spirit" of God, the Hebrew native speaker might have still felt the presence of the more literal "wind" or "storm" (see Exodus 15:8.10; compare also John 3:8). In fact ruakh is another anthropomorphism like the "hand of God" (Ex 6:1) or "the arm of the Lord" (Is 53:1): You can say, the "Spirit of God" is the "breath of God" or the "wind of God" or the "storm of God". The borders of meaning are dizzy here. What unites the "wind" or "spirit" motive is that all is invisible:¹ You can see neither of them, only the effects of the wind or the spirit on the visible world. That might be a reason why the "Spirit" of God or the Lord is used so often: It is a way to see God's invisible hand reaching out from the invisible world into ours.

I. The Qualities of God's Spirit

- A. He is God (Isaiah 30:1; 31:3; 40:13).
- B. He is omnipresent (Psalm 139:7).
- C. He is omniscient (Is 40:13 in its context).
- D. He is holy (Psalm 51:11; Is 63:10; 63:11).
- E. He is good (Psalm 143:10; Neh 9:20).
- F. He has emotions (Is 63:10 וַיִּעֲצֹבוּ אֶת־רוּחַ קְדָשׁוֹ; Mic 2:7 הֲקִצֵּר רוּחַ יְהוָה וַיִּהְיֶה²).
- G. He is sending people for a special task and gives them the gifts they need for that (see below): Is 48:16. Which implies a will and a plan with the ability to think.
- H. He is related to the presence of God:
Ezekiel sees the Glory of God coming like a windstorm or whirlwind (רוּחַ סְעָרָה) in Ez 1:4. Four Cherubs are also part of the mobile throne presence of God with wheels and their spirit in the wheels (1:20; 1:21; 10:17). We can assume that the "windstorm" represents the Spirit of God, who is guiding the spirit of the living creatures where the throne of God has to go (1:12).
- I. He is related to the word of God (Prov 1:23; Is 34:16).

1: See VANGEMEREN WILLEM A.: «New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis», vol. 3, 1997, p. 1073, article רוּחַ.

2 The Hebrew texts are given according to the WLC (Westminster Leningrad Codex, <http://whi.wts.edu/WHI>), as taken from the Sword Module WLC maintained by Martin Gruner (<http://www.crosswire.org/sword/modules/ModInfo.jsp?modName=WLC>).

J. He is likened to

1. wind or storm (Psalm 147:18; Is 40:7),
2. something fluid, often like life giving water (Prov 1:23 the personified wisdom is speaking; Is 32:15; 44:3; Joel 2,28-29; Ez 39:29; Zech 12:10),
3. the oil of anointment in 1 Sam 16:13: Samuel anoints David with oil to be king of Israel. At the same time God a kind of "anoints" David with the Holy Spirit, so that "the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward" (וַתִּצְלַח רוּחַ יְהוָה אֶל-דָּוִד מֵהַיּוֹם הַהוּא וּמִעַלָּה).

II. The role of God's Spirit in creation and in sustaining the creation

- A. He had a role in the creation of the world (Gen 1:2),
- B. of the heavens (Job 26:13; Ps 33:6),
- C. and of the living creatures (Ps 104:30),
- D. especially of mankind, creating men and sustaining their life (Gen 6:3; Job 27:3; Job 32:8; 32:18; 33:4; 34:14; Psalm 104:30; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Is 42:5).

III. The role of God's Spirit in judgment and salvation

A. During the first exodus

1. at the Reed Sea: Ex 15:8 "By the blast of your nostrils the waters were piled up"³ (וּבְרוּחַ אַפִּיךָ נִעְרְמוּ מַיִם), Ex 15:10: "But you blew with your breath, and the sea covered them" (נִשְׁפְּתָה בְרוּחְךָ כַּסְמוֹ יָם),
2. guiding Israel through the wilderness to the promised land (רוּחַ יְהוָה הַנְּיַחֵנוּ),

B. during the second and messianic exodus (Is 11:15),

C. in saving David (2 Sam 22:16 מִנְּשַׁמַּת רוּחַ אֲפֹי; Ps 18:15),

D. in judging the wicked (Job 4:9 מִנְּשַׁמַּת אֱלֹהִים יֹאבְדוּ וּמְרוּחַ אֲפֹי יִכְלֹי; Job 15:30),

E. in the judgment and salvation of God's People

Is 4:4 spirit of judgment and spirit of burning (בְּרוּחַ מְשַׁפֵּט וּבְרוּחַ בָּעֵר);

Is 28:6 spirit of judgment (בְּיוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיֶה יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת לְעֵטְרַת צְבִי וְלַצְפִּירַת),
(תִּפְאָרָה לְשָׂאֵר עַמּוֹ: 6 וְלִרוּחַ מְשַׁפֵּט לְיוֹשֵׁב עַל-הַמְּשַׁפֵּט),

Is 30:28 as an overflowing stream judging the nations,

Is 40:7 as a blowing hot wind of judgment (כִּי רוּחַ יְהוָה נֹשֶׁבֶה בּוֹ),

Is 59:19 (כִּי-יָבֹא כִנְהָר צָר רוּחַ יְהוָה נֹסְסָה בּוֹ:),

Hosea 13:15 (יָבֹא קָדִים רוּחַ יְהוָה מִמִּדְבָּר עֲלֶיהָ),

Zechariah 4:6 (לֹא בְחֵיל וְלֹא בְכֹחַ כִּי אִם-בְּרוּחִי),

Zech 6:8 (רְאֵה תִּיּוֹצְאִים אֶל-אֶרֶץ צָפוֹן הַנִּיחֻוּ אֶת-רוּחִי בְּאֶרֶץ צָפוֹן:),

Zech 12:10 (וְשִׁפְכְתִי עַל-בֵּית דָּוִד וְעַל יוֹשֵׁב יְרוּשָׁלַם רוּחַ חַן וְתַחֲנוּנִים וְהִבִּיטוּ אֵלַי אַתָּה)

³ Quoted according to the Netbible (www.bible.org) as other quotations below.

(אשר־דָּקְרוּ).

IV. God's Spirit as Instructor and Guide of God's People

A. in the 40 years of the wilderness: "You imparted your good Spirit to instruct them "

Nehemiah 9:20 (וְרוּחְךָ הַטּוֹבָה נָתַתָּ לְהַשְׁפִּילָם).

B. God's presence is part of his covenant promise (Hag 2:5 (וְרוּחִי עִמָּדֶת בְּתוֹכְכֶם)).

V. God's Spirit empowering people for certain tasks

A. Helping to be a wise and just ruler

1. Joseph becomes Egypt's vice minister (Gen 41:38),

2. Mose (Numbers 11:25; Is 63:11),

3. Israel's seventy elders (Numbers 11:25-26),

4. Joshua (Numbers 27:18; Dt 34:9),

5. Othniel (Judges 3:10; על־הֵיָהּ come upon),

6. Gideon (Judges 6:34 clothed לְבָשָׁה אֶת־נֶדְעוֹן וְרוּחַ יְהוָה לָבְשָׁהּ אֶת־נֶדְעוֹן),

7. Jephthah (Judges 11:29 come upon וְנִתְּהִי עַל־יָפֶתַח רוּחַ יְהוָה וְנִתְּהִי עַל־יָפֶתַח רוּחַ יְהוָה),

8. Samson (Judges 13:25 וְנִתְּהִי עַל־רוּחַ יְהוָה לְפַעֲמוֹ וְנִתְּהִי עַל־רוּחַ יְהוָה),

Judges 14:6 (וְנִתְּהִי עַל־רוּחַ יְהוָה),

Judges 14:19 (וְנִתְּהִי עַל־רוּחַ יְהוָה),

Judges 15:14 (וְנִתְּהִי עַל־רוּחַ יְהוָה),

9. Saul 1 Sam 10:6 (וְצָלְחָה עָלָיָהּ רוּחַ יְהוָה וְהִתְנַבֵּיתָ עִמָּם וְנִתְּהִי עַל־רוּחַ יְהוָה),

1 Sam 10:10 (וְנִתְּהִי עַל־רוּחַ יְהוָה וְנִתְּהִי עַל־רוּחַ יְהוָה),

1 Sam 11:6 (וְנִתְּהִי עַל־רוּחַ יְהוָה וְנִתְּהִי עַל־רוּחַ יְהוָה),

1 Sam 16:14 (וְרוּחַ יְהוָה סָרָה מֵעַם שָׁאוּל וּבִעַתְתוּ רוּחַ־רָעָה מֵאֵת יְהוָה),

1 Sam 19:23 (וְנִתְּהִי עָלָיו גַּם־הוּא רוּחַ יְהוָה),

10. David (1 Sam 16:13 וְנִתְּהִי עַל־רוּחַ יְהוָה אֶל־דָּוִד מֵהַיּוֹם הַהוּא וְנִתְּהִי עַל־רוּחַ יְהוָה);

2 Sam 23:2 רוּחַ יְהוָה דִּבְרָ־בִי;

1 Chron 28:12; Psalm 51:11),

11. The king of Israel as anointed one (Lam 4:20),

12. The Messiah Is 11:2; 11:4; 42:1 (the servant of the Lord); 61:1.

B. Inspiring good workmanship for tabernacle and temple

1. for Tabernacle related work (Ex 28:3; 31:3; 35:31)

2. for the Temple: David's plans given to Solomon

(1 Chron 28:12 ... וְתִבְנֶיית פֶּלֶא אֲשֶׁר הָיָה בְּרוּחַ עִמּוֹ לְחִצְרוֹת בֵּית־יְהוָה ...)

C. Gift of prophecy:

1. Israel's 70 elders (Numbers 11:25-26),

