

THE PROPHET OF THE SPIRIT: THE USE OF *RWH* IN THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

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Pneumatology, "the doctrine of the Holy Spirit," is essentially a NT doctrine. Few branches of theology suffer from the neglect of the OT like the doctrine of the Spirit. When reference is made to this source it is generally handled in one of the following ways: (1) The OT data are quickly summarized as a preamble to the real stuff, the teaching of the NT. In the process, one senses impatience, the enterprise being engaged in more out of duty than genuine interest. (2) The OT is referred to only in passing, while the focus is fixed on the NT. (3) The OT is appealed to for the sake of analogy, as often as not to emphasize the discontinuity between the Spirit's operation in the two Testaments.

Some of the reasons for this wanton neglect are obvious. (1) For many, the expression "Holy Spirit" is a slogan. Since the phrase appears only three times in the OT (Ps 51:13 [11]; Isa 63:10, 11), it seems to be assumed that little interest or information is to be found there. (2) Our theological systems have denigrated the value of the OT as a whole, with the result that a general ignorance pervades all of evangelical Christendom at many levels. (3) We have made little effort to master either the language or the thought patterns of the Hebrews. Consequently, we have little comprehension of the forms of expression and idioms used in the OT. We do not recognize the Holy Spirit when we see him at work.

These are but a few of the hurdles that the next generation of Biblical scholars and theologians will need to overcome. The problem will not be resolved overnight. One of the first steps in recovering the OT for contemporary pneumatology, however, will be to examine systematically and deliberately each of the OT documents that has so much as a whisper to contribute to the subject. I offer this study as a modest proposal in that direction.

I. THE VOCABULARY OF THE SPIRIT

The richness of Hebrew vocabulary is reflected in the employment of three different expressions for "spirit" in the OT: *ʾwb*, *nšmh*, and *rwh*. The first of these is relatively rare, and its etymology remains obscure. The word denotes "a bottle made of skins" in Job 32:19, but this usage is

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exceptional.¹ Elsewhere the word is always associated with the spirits of the departed dead, being applied to (1) the ghosts themselves (Isa 29:4), (2) the pit used to call up departed spirits (1 Sam 28:7-8), and (3) the necromancer who makes contact with departed spirits to acquire information.²

The second term, *nšmh*, is only slightly more common, occurring twenty-four times.³ The verb *nšm* means "to pant," as in a woman in travail (Isa 42:14). The noun *nšmh* refers most commonly to "breath," whether of humans,⁴ or of God,⁵ or of breathing creatures/persons.⁶ It is used in particular of the principle that gives life to the body. As such it has its origin in God⁷ and may be withdrawn by him (Job 34:14 // *rwḥ*).

By far the most common designation for "spirit" in the OT is *rwḥ*. The term appears 378 times in the Hebrew text and an additional eleven in the Aramaic parts of Daniel.⁸ The word has been the subject of many previous studies.⁹ Its semantic range includes breath, wind, direction, spirit, mind (// *lb*). LXX translates *rwḥ* as *pneuma* in three-fourths of its occurrences. The remainder alternate among *anemos*, "wind," *pnoē*, "wind, vapor," and other anthropological terms such as *thymos*, *oligopsychos*, *haima*, *nous*, *psychē*.¹⁰ Of these three Hebrew words for "spirit," *rwḥ* is the only one to occur in Ezekiel. We turn now to a closer study of its usage in this book.

II. EZEKIEL: THE PROPHET OF THE SPIRIT

Ezekiel may well be described as the most "spiritual" prophet of the OT. Indeed he may well be designated "the prophet of the spirit," and that for more than one reason. First, the term *rwḥ* appears more often in his prophecy than in any other. To be sure, the fifty-two occurrences of the expression are almost matched by the fifty-one in Isaiah. The contrast with Jeremiah's eighteen occurrences, however, could hardly be greater. This is especially remarkable when one takes into account the strong influence Jeremiah's ministry had on Ezekiel in other respects. Even more remarkable is the total absence of *rwḥ* from Leviticus, from which many thematic and stylistic features are borrowed. With his emphasis on the spirit Ezekiel is obviously going his own way.

¹ Cf. A. Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Bible* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1981) 23, for references.

² Cf. Lev 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deut 18:11; 1 Sam 28:3, 9; 2 Kgs 21:6 (= 2 Chr 33:6); 23:24; Isa 8:19. For a study of the term see H. A. Hoffner, "ִּבְּ," *TDOT*, 1. 130-134.

³ Cf. Even-Shoshan, *Concordance* 787.

⁴ 1 Kgs 17:17; Isa 2:22; 42:5; Job 27:3; Dan 10:17.

⁵ Isa 30:33; 2 Sam 22:16 = Ps 18:16 (15); Job 4:9.

⁶ Josh 10:40; Ps 150:6; Isa 57:16; cf. the phrase "every breathing thing," Deut 20:16; Josh 11:11, 14; 1 Kgs 15:29.

⁷ Gen 2:7; Job 32:8; 33:4; 34:14 // *rwḥ*.

⁸ Cf. the tabulation of these and related forms by R. Albertz and C. Westermann, "*rûah*," *THAT*, 2. 727. A full discussion of *rwḥ* is provided on pp. 726-753.

⁹ For bibliography see Albertz and Westermann, "*rûah*."

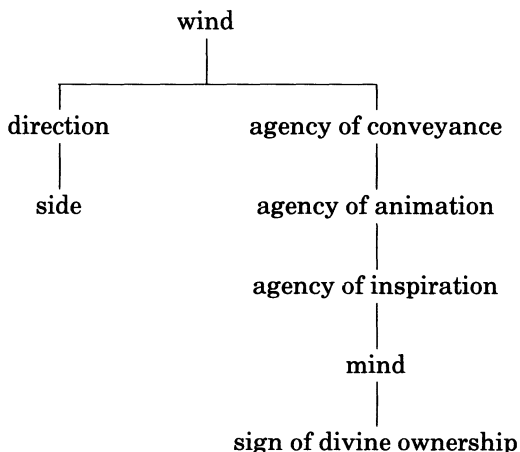
¹⁰ For these and others see E. Hatch and H. A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983 reprint), 3. 263, for references; F. Baumgärtel, *TDNT*, 6. 367-368.

Second, the expression is distributed widely throughout the book. As illustrated in Table 1, the occurrences of *rwḥ* are scattered throughout the messages of judgment upon Judah in part 1 (chaps. 1-24) and words of hope for the nation in part 3 (chaps. 33-48). However, except for Ezek 27:26, where *rwḥ* functions in a nontheological sense, it is conspicuously absent from part 2, the oracles against the nations (chaps. 25-32). This may be due to the nature of the material. On the other hand, it is remarkable that the prophet can go for eight chapters without once referring either to the spirit of man or God. One might speculate either that the Hebrew conception of the spirit was incomprehensible to foreigners, or that it differed so radically from that of her neighbors that it would have seemed incongruous for the prophet to speak of *rwḥ* in such contexts.

III. THE USES OF *RWḤ* IN EZEKIEL

The identification of Ezekiel as "the prophet of the spirit" must be qualified in accordance with the range of meanings he attaches to the term. As Table 2 suggests, he was much more than "the prophet of the spirit."

One of the marks of Ezekiel's literary genius is his mastery of ambiguity. He uses many words with different meanings, frequently making the switch within the same context. In some of those instances one cannot be sure whether he intends a singular sense or if both possibilities are in mind. We will observe this to be true with his usage of *rwḥ* as well. Indeed the usage of *rwḥ* seems to move in two different directions, as reflected in the following diagram:



In order to comprehend the scope of Ezekiel's use of *rwḥ*, each of these dimensions deserves separate study.

1. *rwḥ* as "wind." Since *rwḥ* denotes "wind" more than one hundred times in the OT, it is not surprising that Ezekiel should employ the word

this way as well. Whenever he does so, however, *rwḥ* appears in association with another term. Three times *rwḥ hqdym*, "the east wind," occurs. In 27:26 the east wind is a violent gale that destroys Tyrian galleys in the Mediterranean. In 17:10; 19:12, where *rwḥ* is rendered *anemos* by LXX, the phrase applies to the scorching sirocco that blows in off the desert causing the plants to dry up and wither. A third weather phenomenon is suggested by the expression *rwḥ sʿrh/sʿrwt*. In 1:4, as in Job 38:1; 40:6, *sʿrh* refers to a theophanic storm cloud.¹¹ The wind is described as coming from the north,¹² bringing with it a fiery cloud out of which emerges the prophet's inaugural vision. The plural form occurs twice in Ezek 13:11-13 where *rwḥ sʿrwt* denotes hurricane force winds that, along with deluging rain (*gšm šwtp*) and pounding hailstones (*ʿbny ʿlgbys*),¹³ function as destructive agents of Yahweh's wrath.

2. *rwḥ* as "direction." The use of *rwḥ* in 5:2 represents the first stage along one of the two branches of the semantic tree. The prophet is commanded to chop up one-third of his hair and scatter it "to the wind" (*zrh lrwḥ*), symbolic of divine judgment. The sense seems plain enough, but in the interpretation of the action in vv 10-12 *lrwḥ* is expanded to *lkl rwḥ*, "to every wind." In spite of LXX *eis panta anemon*, this phrase is probably better rendered "in every direction."¹⁴ The same is true of 12:14, where *zrh lkl rwḥ* recurs, as well as 17:21, in which the verb *prš* replaces *zrh*. In each instance being scattered "in every direction" is an act of divine judgment upon the nation. The directional interpretation is even clearer in 37:9c, which makes reference to *ʿrbʿ rwḥwt*, "the four winds." The expression finds a close parallel in Akkadian *šari erbetti*¹⁵ and reflects the hypothetical division of the earth into quadrants. In this connection, especially instructive for understanding the relationship between winds and directions is Jer 49:36:

whbʿty ʿl ʿylm ʿrbʿ rwḥwt I shall bring upon Elam the four winds,
mʿrbʿ qswt ḥšmym From the four ends of the heavens;

¹¹ *sʿrh* serves as a nearer definition of *rwḥ*, identifying the specific genus of wind, i.e. "tempest wind." Cf. GKC 131b; Joüon 131b.

¹² *špwn* is frequently interpreted mythologically here as Mount Zaphon. But this interpretation is unlikely for several reasons: (1) This usage is absent elsewhere in Ezekiel (even though of the 152 occurrences of *špwn* in the OT forty-six are in this book). (2) As the name of the sacred mountain, *špwn* occurs only four times in the OT, always in poetry (Isa 14:13-14; Ps 48:3 [2]; 89:13 [12]; Job 26:7). Cf. J. J. M. Roberts, "Mount Zaphon," *IDBSup* 977. For a recent refutation of the mythological interpretation of even these verses, however, see J. de Savignac, "Le sens du terme Saphon," *UF* 16 (1984) 273-278. (3) The imagery in the present chapter derives primarily from Babylonian iconography, whereas Zaphon was the residence of the Canaanite storm-god Baal. (4) According to v 1, it is the heavens that are opened to the prophet, not Zaphon. (5) The concern of the text is not to identify the place from which the deity proceeds but the direction from which the vision appears.

¹³ *ʿlgbš* is a loanword cognate to Egyptian *irgbš* (translated "crystals of emery" by G. R. Driver, "Ezekiel: Linguistic and Textual Problems," *Bib* 35 [1954] 151), Akkadian *algameš/šu* (*AHW* 35; *CAD*, 1/1. 337-338), and Ugaritic *algbt* (cf. *UT* 358 #168), all of which refer to a type of hard stone.

¹⁴ So *NJV*.

¹⁵ Cf. *AHW* 1192; *CAD*, 4. 256.

wzrtym lkl hrḥwt h³lh

And I shall scatter them in all these directions.

Even more picturesque is the NT text, Rev 7:1, which speaks of four angels standing at the four corners of the earth holding back the four winds of the earth.¹⁶

3. *rwḥ* as “side.” The tendency for *rwḥ* to denote a point on the compass culminates in Ezek 42:16–20, where the word is used of the sides of the sanctuary. These sides are defined more specifically as the measured east side (*rwḥ hqḏym*), the north side (*rwḥ hšpwn*), the south side (*rwḥ hḏrwm*) and the west side (*rwḥ hym*) respectively. A summary statement is provided in v 20: “He measured it on the four sides” (*l³rb^c rwḥwt*).¹⁷

4. *rwḥ* as “agency of conveyance.” The first stage in the evolution of the second semantic branch of *rwḥ* is represented by the use of the term to describe divine control over a person, specifically his supernatural transportation from place to place. Of the several figures employed by Ezekiel to describe Yahweh’s control over him perhaps the most graphic is the portrayal of the hand of Yahweh coming upon him. Variations of *wthy ʿlyw yd yhwḥ* recur repeatedly in the book (1:3; 3:14, 22; 8:1 [with *npl* instead of *hyh*]; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1). “Hand” is here used metaphorically of power, the overwhelming force with which God operates, as when he rescued Israel from the clutches of Egypt (cf. Deut 4:34; 5:15; 6:21; Ps 136:12). It describes the power with which God grips and energizes a person such as Elijah so that he is able to outrun the chariots of Ahab (1 Kgs 18:46). But in Ezekiel the “hand of Yahweh” gains complete mastery over his movements (Ezek 3:22; cf. 33:22) and transports him back and forth to distant places (8:1 ff.; 37:1; 40:1 ff.). As Heschel observes, this expression describes “the urgency, pressure, and compulsion by which he is stunned and overwhelmed.”¹⁸ Ezekiel is a man seized by God. This more than any other quality distinguishes him from the other prophets. It accounts for his mobility and immobility, the apparent lunacy of some of his actions, and his stoic response to rejection, opposition and grief.

But the prophet is also under the control of a *rwḥ*. In no fewer than a half-dozen instances he is described as being picked up by a *rwḥ* and wafted away to another location. In 3:12, 14 he is picked up and carried off to the exiles at Tel Abib. The pressure of Yahweh upon him is emphasized with the additional comment that the hand of Yahweh was strong upon him. In 8:3 he is picked up between heaven and earth and borne away to Jerusalem. The additional comment, *bmr³h ʿlhym*, “in divine visions,” suggests that the experience is not to be interpreted literally.

¹⁶ See further Dan 7:2 (Aramaic *ʾrb^c rwḥy šmy³*); 8:8; 11:4; Zech 2:10 (6); 6:5 (all *ʾrb^c rwḥwt hšmym*). Cf. also Matt 24:31.

¹⁷ Cf. also 1 Chr 9:24. See further Albertz and Westermann, “*rûah*” 728–729.

¹⁸ A. J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1962) 444. For a full discussion of the expression in its ancient Near Eastern context see J. J. M. Roberts, “The Hand of Yahweh,” *VT* 21 (1971) 244–251.

The prophet appears not to have actually left his room. As the vision nears its end he is picked up and brought to the east gate of Yahweh's house. When it is over he is raised once more and returned to the exiles in Chaldea. In 43:5 he is picked up and brought to the court of the visionary temple.

The anarthrous form of *rwḥ* in each of these texts highlights the ambiguity of the statements and renders the classification of this use of *rwḥ* difficult. The nature of its activity might suggest that it is merely a gust of wind that comes along (at the command of Yahweh, to be sure) and picks him up like a scrap of paper. However, several considerations point more specifically to the spirit of God. The temple vision is framed by references to the locomotion of the prophet by the spirit (8:1; 11:24) and contains one internal note of this experience (11:1). Moreover, in chap. 8, after Ezekiel has witnessed the first scene of the abominations being perpetrated in the temple precincts, each of the following three is introduced with the comment: "He brought me to. . . ." On the basis of v 3, and in the absence of any possible intervening antecedents, we should have expected a feminine form of the verb agreeing with the nearest subject *rwḥ*. But in each instance the verb is masculine (vv 7, 14, 16), suggesting that the one conveying him about is the same as the person who speaks to him and interprets the observations (vv 5, 6, etc.) The nearest masculine antecedent is the Lord Yahweh in v 1. Similar considerations apply to the broader context of 43:5.

The interpretation of this *rwḥ* as Yahweh's *rwḥ* is supported by two additional texts. In 11:24b the comment that the prophet was brought back to Babylon in a vision (*bmr'ḥ*) is expanded with *brwḥ 'lḥym*. In this instance, however, *'lḥym* need not signify God any more than it does in the expression *mr'wt 'lḥym* (1:1; 8:3), "divine visions."¹⁹ Nevertheless even this understanding raises it from the level of an ordinary wind to one that is controlled directly by God. If the previous texts leave the question open, the issue seems to be answered in 37:1. This time it is specified that, when Ezekiel feels the hand of Yahweh upon him, he is brought out to the valley of the dry bones *brwḥ yḥwḥ*, "by the *rwḥ* of Yahweh." Although even here the expression retains a certain ambiguity, it ties the conveying spirit directly to Yahweh. The phrase *rwḥ yḥwḥ* occurs elsewhere in the book only in 11:5. Its significance in this case is quite different, however, as we shall see below.

5. *rwḥ* as "agency of animation." Judging by frequency, for Ezekiel the employment of *rwḥ* to denote the animating, vitalizing force was more important than any other. The primary difference between this usage and that described in the preceding is the locus of the influence. When the *rwḥ*

¹⁹ *mr'wt 'lḥym* is usually translated "visions of God." Three considerations argue against this reading, however: (1) In the book *'lḥym* usually functions as an appellative rather than a proper noun. If visions of God had been intended, *mr'wt 'dny yḥwḥ* would have been used. So also M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20* (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1983) 41. For a full discussion of the names of God in Ezekiel see W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress,

lifts someone/something up and wafts him/it from place to place it operates upon the object from the outside. As "agency of animation," however, the *rwḥ* operates internally, like the breath of a living creature. But the distinction between "wind" and "breath" is not absolute and should not be pressed in each instance. In fact the process of breathing involves the making of wind. But it is the effect of this *rwḥ* upon a recipient that is our present concern.

In Hebrew thought it is the wind or breath of God that gives life to creatures. This notion is reflected in the expression *nšmt ḥym*, "breath of life,"²⁰ and finds its anthropological paradigm in Gen 2:7: "When Yahweh Elohim formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, the man became a living being." Some may object that the term for breath in this instance is *nšmh* and not *rwḥ*. But the close semantic relationship between the terms is demonstrated by their frequent conjunction in construct associations²¹ and as a coordinate²² and parallel pair.²³ The critical animating effect of the infusion and presence of the divine spirit is reflected in several texts. Isa 42:5 describes Yahweh the Creator as the one "who gives breath (*nšmh*) to people on it [the earth] and spirit (*rwḥ*) to those who walk on it." In Job 27:3 the beleaguered saint vows to retain his integrity "as long as breath (*nšmh*) is in me, and the spirit of God (*rwḥ ḥwḥ*) is in my nostrils," which is clarified in vv 5-6 as "until I die" and "all my days." The notion is expressed negatively in Job 34:14-15: "If he should decide, / He can recall his spirit (*rwḥ*)—that is, his breath (*nšmh*). / Then all flesh would expire at once, / And mankind would return to the dust." Even more picturesque is Ps 104:29-30: "You hide your face, they are terrified; / You recall their spirit (*rwḥ*), they expire and return to the dust. / You send back your spirit (*rwḥ*), they are created (*brʿ*); / And you renew the face of the ground."²⁴

This animating sense of *rwḥ* is common in Ezekiel, being frequently signaled by the presence of the preposition *bē*-. When the *rwḥ* enters an object it comes to life. Whoever opens the book of Ezekiel is immediately confronted with the animating effect of the presence of the spirit in the

1983), 2. 556-562. (2) What the prophet witnesses is not so much a vision of God (only the last few verses of chap. 1 refer to the deity himself) but a vision of divine, heavenly realities. (3) The form *mrʾwt ḥym* is not a true plural but a "plural of generalization." Cf. Joñon 136j; GKC 124e. As in 8:3 the expression is better translated as "divine visions" or "supernatural visions."

²⁰ The expression finds its counterpart in Akkadian *šaru balāti*. In Amarna Letter 143, Ammuniri of Berytus considers himself to be mere "dust" in the presence of his Egyptian overlord, who is "the breath of life."

²¹ Cf. Gen 7:22, *kl ʾšr nšmt rwḥ ḥym bʾpyw*, "all in whose nostrils is the breath of the spirit of life"; 2 Sam 22:16, *bgʾrt yhwḥ mnšmt rwḥ ʾpw*, "by the rebuke of Yahweh from the breath of the spirit of his nostrils." Cf. the parallel text in Ps 18:16 (15).

²² Job 34:14.

²³ Isa 42:5; 57:16; Job 4:9; 27:3; 32:8; 33:4.

²⁴ For further discussion of *rwḥ* as the animating principle of life see D. Hill, *Greek Words with Hebrew Meanings: Studies in the Semantics of Soteriological Terms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1967) 212-215.

opening vision. The divine throne-chariot is borne by four cherubim, each having eagles' wings and four different kinds of heads (Ezek 1:5-14). Although he is unable to identify the creatures precisely at first, the prophet is impressed by their vitality and refers to them with the general designation *hywt*, "living beings." (When the vision returns in chap. 10 he is able to identify them more precisely as cherubim.) These creatures are described as capable of moving about effortlessly in any direction and without turning in the process. The inspiration and direction for this motion is attributed in v 12 to the presence of the *rwḥ*: "Wherever the *rwḥ* wanted to go, they went; they would not turn as they went."

The presence of the article on *hrwḥ* here and in v 20 calls for explanation. Which spirit? The only previous reference to the *rwḥ* is found in v 4. As we have observed, however, there the word had denoted "wind," a sense that is impossible at this point. One may only conclude that "the *rwḥ*" that animates these "living creatures" is none other than the vitalizing principle of life that comes from God himself.

This interpretation finds support in vv 19-21, where each of the living creatures is associated with a complex system of wheels with which they moved about in perfect synchronism: "When the living beings moved, the wheels next to them would move, and when the living beings rose off the ground, the wheels would rise beside them, since the *rwḥ* of the living being was in the wheels. Whenever the former moved, the latter would move, and whenever the former rose off the ground, the latter would rise alongside them, for the *rwḥ* of the living being was in the wheels."

The use of the singular *rwḥ hḥyh* is striking in a context in which the creatures have otherwise been consistently referred to with the plural *hḥywt*. Most scholars have tended to understand *hḥyh* as a collective singular or distributive, "each living creature"—that is, the one beside each wheel.²⁵ Others see here an emphasis on the unity of the entire phenomenon.²⁶ Elsewhere I have argued that this incongruity of number is of a piece with the profusion of stylistic inconsistencies in the account of the vision and that it reflects the heightened emotional state of the prophet.²⁷ But if one be permitted to change his mind, I would now propose a different interpretation. It now appears rather significant that the singular form *hḥyh* should have been preserved in 10:17. Although the account of the second vision of the throne-chariot in chap. 10 has smoothed out most of the stylistic problems raised by chap. 1, *rwḥ hḥyh* remains in v 17. I would now argue that this is intentional and that the expression should be understood as "the spirit of life"—that is, the divine

²⁵ G. A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936) 27; W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 1. 20.

²⁶ Greenberg, *Ezekiel* 48.

²⁷ D. I. Block, "Text and Emotion: A Study in the 'Corruptions' in Ezekiel's Inaugural Vision" (forthcoming in *CBQ*).

animating principle.²⁸ The twofold occurrence of the explanatory clause, *ky rwḥ ḥḥyh b'wḥnym*, "for the spirit of life was in the wheels," in 1:20-21 and again in 10:17, seems to emphasize that these normally inanimate objects appear to the prophet to be as alive as the "living creatures" themselves. For him the unusual phenomenon may be attributed only to the presence of the life-giving spirit of God.

This vivifying, energizing effect of the spirit of God is also felt by the prophet personally. Twice he speaks of the spirit entering him. According to 1:28 Ezekiel had responded to the vision of Yahweh's glory by falling on his face. In his state of prostration, however, he had heard a voice, commanding him to rise in order that whoever was speaking might converse with him (2:1).²⁹ Simultaneous with this command, the revitalizing and energizing spirit entered him (2:2) and set him on his feet. Again the reader is frustrated by the refusal of the narrative to identify the source or nature of this spirit. Is it a sudden gust of wind that sets him upright? Or is it the spirit of Yahweh? The fact that the raising of the prophet occurs concurrently with³⁰ the sound of the voice suggests a dynamic and enabling power in that voice. We should probably associate the *rwḥ* that vitalizes the wheels with the *rwḥ* that energizes the prophet.

Ezekiel's experience is described in royal court language. Having been ushered into the presence of a monarch, a person would signify his subjection with the act of prostration.³¹ Only when the king had authorized one to arise would one dare to do so. Ezekiel realized that he had been ushered into the court of the divine king and that Yahweh was seeking an audience with him. But only the divine spirit could give him the authority or the energy to stand erect before God. To fall before a god is appropriate, but to remain on one's face once he has indicated a desire to speak is insulting to the deity. Ezekiel may have been a *bn ʾdm*, "mere mortal," but infused with the *rwḥ* he may—yea, he must—stand in God's presence. A second similar experience is recounted in 3:23-24.

No text in the entire OT portrays the vivifying power of the divine spirit as dramatically as 37:1-14. The unit is dominated by the tenfold recurrence of the *Leitwort* *rwḥ*. But the use of *rwḥ* is not uniform in this context. Impelled by the *rwḥ* of Yahweh, the prophet is brought to a valley that he observes to be full of very dry bones. The central issue in the chapter is introduced by the question that Yahweh poses to the

²⁸ Cf. LXX *pneuma zōēs*; Vg *spiritus vitae*. Ezekiel uses *ḥyh* instead of *ḥym* for "life" also in 7:13. Elsewhere this usage occurs only in poetry. Cf. Ps 74:19; 78:50; 143:3; Job 33:18, 20, 22, 28 (as a synonym of *npš*); 36:14. Cf. G. Gerleemann, "*ḥjh* leben," *THAT*, 1. 553.

²⁹ The ambiguity of *wyʾmr* is intentional, making it uncertain whether we should translate "it (i.e., the voice) said" or "he said."

³⁰ Note the construction in 2:2: *wtbʾ by rwḥ kʾšr dbr ʾly*, "And the *rwḥ* entered me while he spoke to me."

³¹ On which see S. Kreuzer, "Zur Bedeutung und Etymologie von *ḥištahʾwāh/yšthwy*," *VT* 35 (1985) 39-54; M. I. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1980) 187-251.

prophet: "Mortal, can these bones live?"³² In reply to the prophet's agnostic answer, Yahweh commands him to prophesy over the bones as follows: "I will cause *rwḥ* to enter you that you may live. I will overlay you with sinews, cover you with flesh, and form skin over you. I will infuse you with *rwḥ* and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am Yahweh" (vv 5-6). Ezekiel complies, and the bones come together with a mighty rattling, sinews overlay them, they are covered with flesh, and skin is formed over them. But alas! The prophet notes the absence of *rwḥ* (v 8).

The sixfold clustering of *rwḥ* in vv 8b-10a suggests that we have now arrived at the heart of the unit. The solution to the absence of the *rwḥ* is announced in v 9: "Prophesy to *hrwḥ*; / Prophesy, mortal. / Announce to *hrwḥ*: / Thus has the Lord Yahweh declared: / From the four *rwḥwt* come, O *rwḥ*! / Breathe³³ into these slain that they may live." At the prophet's word the bodies are vitalized and, like Ezekiel himself in an earlier context (2:2; 3:24), they rise to their feet.

The play on *rwḥ* in v 9 is obvious. The *rwḥ* that the prophet has summoned is the breath of life, the life-force that animates all living creatures. Here, however, it is being called from the four *rwḥwt*, which, as observed above, refers either to the four "winds" or the four "directions." The text is intentionally ambiguous. The interpretation of the dramatic parable is provided in vv 11-14. We now learn that the bones do not simply represent dead persons in general but the nation of Israel, which Yahweh will bring back to life like people resurrected from their graves. They will be reclaimed as Yahweh's people and brought back to the land of Israel. Perhaps necessitated by the demands of the figure, in vv 8-10 the *rwḥ* is portrayed as something external to God and that can be summoned by him.³⁴ If the role of the prophet had really been to represent Yahweh, he should have breathed over them his own breath.³⁵ But by merely adding the first-person singular suffix to *rwḥ* in v 14, Ezekiel produces an extremely significant shift in meaning. The *rwḥ* that will revitalize Israel is not the ordinary, natural life-breath common to all living things; it is the spirit of God himself. Only he is able to restore to life a nation that has been destroyed and whose remnant now languishes hopelessly in exile.

We turn back now to a related text, 36:26-27. Here *rwḥ* is juxtaposed with *lb*, which might suggest that "spirit" and "mind" are to be treated synonymously. The parallelism of the first two cola of v 26 is readily recognized when they are set out as poetry:

wntty lkm lb ḥdš
wrwḥ ḥdšḥ ʾtn bqrḇkm

And I will give to you a new mind;
And a new spirit I will put within you.

³² For a helpful discussion of the rhetorical strategy employed in the development of this theme see M. V. Fox, "The Rhetoric of Ezekiel's Vision of the Valley of the Bones," *HUCA* (1980) 1-15.

³³ The same verb *npḥ* is used in Gen 2:7.

³⁴ Cf. Fox, "Rhetoric" 15.

³⁵ Cf. Ezekiel's role in the sign action involving the steel plate in 4:3.

The common elements in the lines are the verb *ntn*, "to give," and the adjective "new," which is applied to both *lb* and *rwḥ*. The chiasitic structure is common in synonymous parallelism and may be merely stylistic. When examined more closely, however, the synonymous interpretation may be questioned on several counts. (1) As Robert Alter has convincingly argued, in poetic parallelism synonymity is seldom exact.³⁶ (2) The prepositions associated with the verbs are different. Whereas the new mind is given to (*l-*) Israel, the new spirit is placed within (*bqrb*) her. As we have seen, the placing of the spirit within someone or something has an animating, vivifying effect on the recipient. (3) The manner in which the two statements are elaborated upon in vv 26b-27 differs. The provision of the new heart is explained as a removal of the heart of stone from their flesh and its replacement with a heart of flesh. Which or whose heart is not specified. On the other hand, in v 27 Yahweh announces: *wṯ rwḥy ṯn bqrbkm*, "And I will put my spirit within you." Now we learn that the *rwḥ* referred to in v 26 is indeed Yahweh's spirit. Furthermore, the transforming effect of the infusion of this *rwḥ* is described: Yahweh thereby causes them to walk in his statutes and to observe his covenant standards. This suggests a radical spiritual revitalization of the nation. (4) The announcement of Yahweh's infusion of his own *rwḥ* is repeated in 37:14, suggesting that the entire unit (37:1-14) is an exposition of the notion introduced in 36:26-27. This is not surprising, since it is characteristic of Ezekiel to announce a theme briefly and then to drop it, only to return to it later with a fuller development.³⁷

But here Ezekiel again appears to have been influenced by Jeremiah. By juxtaposing Ezekiel's announcement of the infused *rwḥ* with Jeremiah's description of the new covenant in Jer 31:33, the similarities between the two texts become obvious:

Jer 31:33

ntty ṯt twrty bqrbm

.....

whyty lhm l'lhym

whmh yhyw ly l'm

I will have put my Torah within
them,

.....

And I will be their God,
And they shall be my people.

Ezek 36:27-28

wṯ rwḥy ṯn bqrbkm

.....

whytm ly l'm

wṯnky ṯhyh lkm l'lhym

And my spirit I will put within you,

.....

And you shall be my people,
And I will be your God.

It would appear that at these points they are describing the same event. What Jeremiah attributes to the infusion of the divine Torah, Ezekiel ascribes to the infusion of the *rwḥ*. In both the result is the renewal of the covenant relationship.

³⁶ R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Harper, 1985) 13-26.

³⁷ Cf. 5:11, which is expounded in 8:5-18; 37:26-28, which is developed in chaps. 40-48; 3:16-21, which is expanded in 18:1-32; 33:1-20.

Before we leave this subject, we must ask whether and how Ezekiel's vision of the role of the *rwḥ* in the future restored Israel differs from the operation of the Holy Spirit under the Old Covenant, as he understood it from his own tradition and experience. Some have argued that in ancient Israel the Holy Spirit came upon persons, whereas in the NT era he indwells the believer.³⁸ If this is so, then Ezekiel is predicting a phenomenon here of which he had heretofore no personal knowledge or experience. This interpretation, however, is questionable for several reasons.

First, it overlooks the indispensable animating role of the divine *rwḥ* in effecting spiritual renewal. It seems to assume that an ancient saint became a member of the people of God by merely attending to the Torah. But Israelite religion was from the beginning a heart religion. Jeremiah's call for a circumcision of the heart in Jer 4:4 was not an innovation but a recollection of a notion expressed in Deut 10:16, where the appeal is made to the Israelites to "circumcise their heart." Later, in 30:6, the divine role in this transforming work is emphasized: "Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love Yahweh with all your heart and with all your being, in order that you may live." Ezekiel's anticipation of a fundamental internal transformation—as described in Ezek 36:22–32—effected by the infusion of the divine *rwḥ* rests upon ancient foundations.

Second, it disregards the explicit witness of Ps 51:12–13 (10–11), one of only three OT occurrences of the expression *rwḥ qdš*, "holy spirit":³⁹ "Create for me a clean heart, O God! / And a steadfast *rwḥ* renew within me. / Do not cast me out of your presence, / Nor take your holy *rwḥ* from within me (*bqrby*)." In the context David stands before God fearing rejection, the loss of his salvation (*yšc*), and the sentence of death (*dmym*). His continued acceptance in the divine presence and the divine presence within him in the form of the *rwḥ* represent his only hope.

Third, it evades the evidence of the NT. When Nicodemus requests of Jesus an explanation for his ministry, the discussion quickly digresses to a lecture on the role of the spirit in the life of one who would enter the kingdom of God: "No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (John 3:5–8). One could interpret this statement as an innovative description of the work of the Holy Spirit in the new era, except that Jesus rebukes Nicodemus for being ignorant of these principles even though he was one of the leading theologians of the time. As far as Jesus is concerned, he is introducing nothing new. There can be little doubt that his statements here are based upon Ezek 36:25–29, a text with which the rabbi should have been familiar.⁴⁰

³⁸ J. F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965) 152.

³⁹ Cf. also *rwḥ qdšw*, "the spirit of his holiness," Isa 63:10, 11.

⁴⁰ So also D. Ewert, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament* (Scottsdale: Herald, 1983) 66.

Fourth, and most critically, the perception of radical discontinuity between the Holy Spirit's work in the two Testaments misses the point of the present context. It is unlikely that Ezekiel was self-consciously introducing a new notion with his promise of the transforming work of the indwelling *rwh* of Yahweh. He will have been well aware of Psalm 51. What concerns him, however, is the fundamental incongruity between the idealistic designation of his own people as "the people of God" and the reality that he observed. The problem was not the absence of the Holy Spirit to transform lives, but that this was not occurring on a national scale. The issue was one of scope. The emphasis in the present text, as in the broader context of Ezekiel 34-39 in general, is on national renewal and revival, not individual regeneration. In 36:25-29 Ezekiel anticipates the day when the boundaries of the physical Israel will be coterminous with the spiritual people of God. In this day a vast gulf separated the two.

6. *rwh* as "agency of prophetic inspiration." The involvement of the spirit of God in the inspiration of the OT prophets is well known. The notion is given classic expression in 2 Pet 1:21: "No prophecy ever had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." The involvement of the *rwh* in Ezekiel's prophetic inspiration is hinted at in several places, particularly where his influence is associated with the verbal utterance of Yahweh. Examples of this phenomenon are found in Ezek 2:2, "The spirit entered me as he spoke to me," and 3:24, "The spirit entered me and set me on my feet, and he said to me." The most explicit statement of his prophetic inspiration is found in 11:5a, *wtpl ʿly rwh yhw wyʾmr ʿly*, "The spirit of Yahweh fell upon me, and he said to me." Like his comment concerning the hand of Yahweh falling upon him (8:1), this expression occurs nowhere else.

The role of the *rwh* as agency of prophetic inspiration receives its most explicit statement in chap. 13. This text represents a woe oracle against false prophets, who posed as proclaimers of the will of God. Their authority and credibility as spokesmen for deity depended upon the presence of the divine *rwh*. When the services of the prophets were required they would employ special techniques and instruments to work themselves into an ecstatic frenzy that was interpreted as seizure by the spirit of God. Once in this state, whatever utterances they might make would be interpreted as an expression of the will of God.⁴¹

The great prophets of Israel deliberately rejected all such artificial methods for determining the divine will. Their messages were based instead upon direct and personal encounters with Yahweh at his own initiative. Instead of emphasizing the role of the *rwh*, whose apparent influence could be manipulated or coerced (cf. 1 Kings 22), they based their authority on *dbr yhw*, "the word of Yahweh," which came to them almost as an objective concrete entity directly from God himself. As Fohrer has pointed

⁴¹ The classic texts on the false prophets are 1 Kgs 22:19-23; Jer 23:13-40. For a discussion of false prophecy in Israel see G. V. Smith, "Prophecy, False," *ISBE* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 3. 984-986.

out,⁴² however, in his response Ezekiel deliberately distances himself from the false prophets. Being keenly aware of the control of the *rwḥ* of Yahweh over his own life, he dares to challenge head-on the fundamental premise on which false prophets operated: their claim to the divine spirit. Genuine and free charismatics on the one hand and officially accredited announcers on the other are to be distinguished. Calling and profession are not the same. This is not to say that the two were necessarily contradictory. Ezekiel may well have acknowledged some professional prophets as legitimate.

But it is apparent from the text that the prophets addressed by Ezekiel in 13:1-16 were charlatans. First, they are tautologically identified as "prophets who are prophesying." The redundancy betrays a sarcastic tone. As Davidson observed: "They prophesied and that without limit; their mouths were always full of 'Thus saith the Lord.'"⁴³ Apparently the people took their ranting seriously (cf. Jer 18:18). Second, they are "prophets from their own hearts." In v 2 the preposition *mn* on *nby^y mlbm* is a *mn* of source.⁴⁴ The expression finds analogies in several OT texts. According to Num 16:28, in response to the challenge to his leadership by Korah and his followers Moses declared: "Thus you shall know that Yahweh has commissioned me to do all of these things, for this was not my own idea" (*ky l^p mlby*). Similarly, Jeroboam's religious innovations are described as his own idea (*mlbw*, 1 Kgs 12:33 *qere*). Since Ezekiel's oracle displays many other affinities with Jeremiah he may have been influenced by his contemporary's own invective against false prophets (Jer 23:9-40), particularly the latter's use of the phrase *hzwn lbm ydbrw*, "They pronounce a vision of their own heart" (23:16). In each of these instances *lb* probably signifies "mind," suggesting that the false prophets' inspiration was no higher than that of ordinary human wisdom. Their messages were their own concoction, based upon their own evaluation of the situation and their own private judgment. They were merely spouting off private opinions while posing as spokesmen for God.

This charge receives further elaboration in the opening volley of the oracle itself (Ezek 13:3). Here Ezekiel charges the professional prophets with being fools. The adjective *nbl* is used in the wisdom literature of a special kind of fool, one who is arrogant (Prov 30:32), crude of speech (17:7), spiritually and morally obtuse (Job 2:10), a scoundrel (30:8).⁴⁵ Isaiah describes such a person in Isa 32:5-6: "A villain (*nbl*) shall no longer be called noble / Nor a knave be spoken of as a gentleman; / For the villain

⁴² G. Fohrer, *Ezekiel* (HAT 13; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1955) 69.

⁴³ A. B. Davidson, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1900) 84.

⁴⁴ MT *lnby^y mlbm* represents an unusual case of the construct form before a preposition. GKC 130a suggests that this is a sign of elevated style. Cf. Gen 3:22; Isa 28:9; Jer 23:23; Hos 7:5 (all with *mn*). The shorter text of LXX reads *pros autous* = *'lyhm*, as in 34:2; 37:4, a reading preferred by BHS and many commentators.

⁴⁵ The classic illustration is found in Nabal, the husband of Abigail (1 Sam 25:25). In the Psalms the *nbl* denies God (14:1; 53:2 [3]) and blasphemes him (74:22). Guilt-incurring foolish acts included sexual sins (Gen 34:7; Deut 22:21; Judg 20:6; Jer 29:23; cf. also Judg 19:23-24; 2 Sam 13:12) as well as cultic irreverence (Josh 7:15).

(*nbl*) utters villainous speech (*nblh*), / And his mind (*lbw*) plots evil, / To act impiously / And to express deviance (*tw^h*) toward Yahweh." Ezekiel's description of the prophets as *nbl^m* emphasizes their perverse and impious character.

Third, the false prophets "walk according to their own 'spirit'" (*hlk^m ^{hr} rw^hm*, Ezek 13:3).⁴⁶ Here *rw^h* is employed ambiguously. On the one hand, the reference is to their own "spirit," their auto-animation that inspires them to prophesy, as opposed to the *rw^h* of Yahweh, whose inspiration they claim. On the other hand, as we shall see in the discussion to follow, *rw^h* may also refer to their minds, functioning as a synonym for *lb* in v 2. The expression *hlk ^{hr}* differs slightly from the more conventional *hlk ^{hry}*, "to walk after" (cf. 20:16; 33:31). *^{hr}* is used in the sense of norm, standard, yielding "in accordance with."⁴⁷ In other words, far from taking their cues from Yahweh, these false prophets were merely giving vent to their own imaginations. Their self-inspired messages were a delusion.

Fourth, they lack divine insight. The expression *lb^{lty} r^w* is awkward. It seems to mean something like "without seeing,"⁴⁸ which could be interpreted in several ways. Since prophets are identified elsewhere as *r^wm*, "seers,"⁴⁹ and a vision could be called a *rw^h* (Isa 28:7) or a *mr^wh*,⁵⁰ this amounts to another denial of their genuineness. Moreover, the statement may also be an attack against their own lack of spiritual perception. However the false prophets "looked" upon themselves, the present situation, or their answer for it, it did not represent the perspective of Yahweh.

7. *rw^h* as "mind." The discussion of Ezek 13:3 has intimated that Ezekiel could also employ *rw^h* psychically as a synonym for *lb*, the seat of the emotions, the intellect and the will. This reflects a rather common usage in the OT.⁵¹ Ezek 3:14-15 provides a rare window into the emotional reactions of the prophet to his work. The enigmatic clause in v 14, *w^llk mr*

⁴⁶ LXX abbreviates and changes *hnb^y^wm hnb^l^m ^{sr} hl^k^m ^{hr} rw^hm* with its rendering *tois prophēteuou sin apo kardias autōn*. The last phrase seems to read *lnb^y m^lbm*. Cf. Cooke, *Ezekiel* 138, 142; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, 1. 285. For an explanation of how MT might have arisen see H. van Dyke Parunak, *Structural Studies in Ezekiel* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1978) 223-224.

⁴⁷ Cf. R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1967) #362. Note also 2 Kgs 13:2; 23:3; Isa 65:2; Job 31:7.

⁴⁸ Apart from Jer 27:18, which is textually problematic, this is the only occurrence of *lb^{lty}* + perfect in the OT. Davidson, *Hebrew Syntax* #149 r2, suggests the phrase means "that which they have not seen," comparable to *l^w r^w* (1 Sam 20:26). GKC 152x treats it like a relative clause governed by *l^w*, "according to things that they have not seen," which would provide a good parallel for Williams' interpretation of the preceding phrase. G. R. Driver, "Linguistic and Textual Problems: Ezekiel," *Bib* 19 (1938) 63; "Ezekiel: Linguistic and Textual Problems," *Bib* 35 (1954) 150, treats *r^w* as an abstract noun, "seeing," comparable to *hzw* in v 6. Cf. *šhw* in 47:5. Greenberg, *Ezekiel* 236, treats *lb^{lty}* like *lb^{ly}*, "in a condition of not." Cf. Num 14:16; Deut 9:28; Job 14:12; Ps 72:7.

⁴⁹ Cf. 1 Sam 9:9, 11, 18, 19; Isa 30:10; 1 Chr 9:22; 26:28; 29:29; 2 Chr 16:7, 10.

⁵⁰ Ezek 1:1; 8:3; 40:2; 43:3; cf. Num 12:6; 1 Sam 3:15; Dan 10:16.

⁵¹ It may also serve as a synonym for *npš*. For studies of the psychological use of the term see Hill, *Greek Words* 215-216; H. W. Robinson, "Hebrew Psychology," in *The People and the*

bhmt rwhy, has been rendered traditionally as "I went embittered in the rage of my spirit" or the like. However, the matter is not that simple.

hmh occurs thirty-two times in Ezekiel. Elsewhere it always bears the sense "rage, wrath" (often parallel to *ṣp*). Except for 23:25 it refers exclusively to divine anger. If "anger" were the intended sense here, however, the need for the preceding *mr* is questionable.⁵² LXX renders *hmt rwhy* as *ormē tou pneumatōs mou*, suggesting a spiritual rather than psychological impulse, perhaps a form of spirit possession.⁵³ This is certainly possible on the basis of the root *yhm*, which means primarily "to be hot," and the related *hmm*, "to be warm," which yields the substantive *hmh*, "glow."⁵⁴ In our text *hmt rwhy* could therefore be understood something like "the heat of my excitement, the ecstasy of my spirit." The choice of the unparalleled compound expression in place of *hmt* may have been intentional, to distinguish the significance of the word here from its usage elsewhere in the book. The addition of *rwḥ* provides a pleasant play on the word, which for the first time in the book refers to human disposition rather than the divine spirit. The reference then seems to be to the "glow of his spirit,"⁵⁵ which arose as a consequence of seizure by the spirit/hand of Yahweh.

mr, which precedes, is usually derived from *mrr*, "to be bitter."⁵⁶ It may be intended as an abbreviation for *mr npš*, "bitterness of soul," which occurs in 27:31⁵⁷ and which is related semantically to *hmt rwḥ*.⁵⁸ The term may have been inserted here for emphasis and/or as a wordplay on *mrd* and *mry*, both of which have appeared earlier.

The cause of the prophet's bitterness is not indicated, though several suggestions may be proposed. (1) He may have come to share the feeling of God over the hardened disposition of his countrymen.⁵⁹ (2) He may have begun to show the effects of the incorporation of his message—namely, the "lamentations, moaning and woe." (3) He may be responding to the predicted thanklessness of his task. Or all three may have been involved, since they are not mutually exclusive.

Even so, the traditional interpretation of the phrase seems awkward in the context. An alternative is to understand *mr* as deriving from *mrr*, "to

Book (ed. A. S. Peake; Oxford: Clarendon, 1925) 360–361; Albertz and Westermann, "rūaḥ" 739–742; E. Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* (New York: Harper, 1958) 161–163.

⁵² Perhaps this is why LXX omits *mr*.

⁵³ So G. Bertram, "ormē, ormēa, ormaō," *TDNT*, 5. 469.

⁵⁴ Secondarily *yhm* may refer to the sexual impulse of animals in heat. Occasionally *hmh* is used of venom (Deut 32:24, 33; Ps 58:5 [4]; 140:4 [3]; Job 6:4). Cf. Akkadian *imtu*, "poison, wrath," *AHW* 379; *CAD*, 7. 139–141; Ugaritic *hmy*, "venom," *UT* 397 #869a. In Hos 7:5 it denotes fever from wine.

⁵⁵ Cf. E. Vogt, *Untersuchungen zum Buche Ezechiel* (AnBib 95; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1981) 18, "die Glut seines Geistes."

⁵⁶ BDB 600. The word is attested in Aramaic (*DISO* 168); cf. Akkadian *marāru* (*AHW* 609; *CAD*, 10/1. 267–268).

⁵⁷ Also 1 Sam 22:2; Isa 38:15; Job 7:11; 10:1.

⁵⁸ The dropping of *npš* has necessitated the elimination of a preceding *b*, thus creating an adverbial accusative, as in 27:30.

⁵⁹ So Heschel, *Prophets* 307–322.

be strengthened, empowered," as in Ugaritic. In 1 Aqht 194–195 *mrr* is paired with *brk*:

<i>ltbrkn alk brkt</i>	Do bless me and I shall go blessed;
<i>tmrn alkn mrrt</i>	Strengthen me and I shall go forth strengthened.

Our text may then be translated: "I went forth strengthened in the fervor of my spirit."⁶⁰ Besides changing the entire significance of *mr ḥmt rwḥy*, the following comment is rendered more comprehensible—"Now the strong hand of Yahweh was upon me" (which otherwise looks strangely out of place)—and brought into closer harmony with v 15. By this interpretation, as the *rwḥ* is bearing Ezekiel aloft and wafting him away he is energized in a special way in the excitement of his spirit, an energizing power attributed in the following phrase to "the strong hand of Yahweh."

In several texts *rwḥ* is clearly the seat of mental activity. In 11:5–6 Ezekiel is called upon to expose the true and evil effects of the perverse thinking of the leaders of Jerusalem. As in v 3, the verb *ʔmr* describes a cognitive function that precedes decision and action: "to consider, reflect, think over." The full form of the expression is *ʔmr blb/llb/ʔl lb*, "to speak in/to one's heart," which has reference to internal communication, the nonverbalized speech that passes through one's mind. This interpretation is confirmed by the following idiom, *mʔwt rwḥkm*, "the things that arise in your mind." The former term is a *hapax* derived from the verb *ʔh* which occurs in a related idiom in 20:32, *ḥʔh ʔl rwḥkm*, "what comes to your mind," and 38:10, *yʔw dbrym ʔl lbbk*, "words that come into your mind." It is apparent from the idiom that *rwḥ* and *lb* are interchangeable. The use of *rwḥ* as the organ of mental activity constitutes just one of several clever wordplays in this chapter by which different nuances are introduced without expanding the vocabulary (cf. *rwḥ* = "agency of conveyance" in v 1; "agency of divine inspiration" in v 5a). The point of v 5b is that Yahweh is aware of the motives of the leaders without their mouths even opening to declare them. His gaze is able to penetrate the human mind.⁶¹ In 20:32 he is able to predict that their aspirations to be like the nations will not transpire.

Unfortunately not all texts are as clear as these. 11:19 contains Ezekiel's first announcement of Yahweh's predicted heart transplant and his infusion of a new *rwḥ*. The use of *rwḥ* appears to be intentionally ambiguous. Two considerations argue for treating it as the seat of one's mental activity. (1) The context has been dealing with people with a perverse *rwḥ* (v 5). The only effective cure for such perversion is the implantation of a new mind. (2) The parallel idiom, *lb ʔḥd*, "a single heart," deals with the seat of the intellect and the will. The present text may be viewed as an

⁶⁰ Cf. M. Dahood, "Qoheleth and Recent Discoveries," *Bib* 39 (1958) 308–310; *UT* 438 #1556. W. A. Ward, "Egypto-Semitic *MR*, 'Be Bitter, Strong'," *UF* 12 (1980) 357–360, has argued for an Egyptian derivation of the root. This "strong" interpretation has been cautiously rejected by L. Kutler, "A 'Strong' Case for Hebrew *mar*," *UF* 16 (1984) 114; D. Pardee, "The Semitic Root *mrr* and the Etymology of Ugaritic *mr(r)* // *brk*," *UF* 10 (1978) 259–260.

⁶¹ Cf. the use of *ʔh* with *lb* in 14:3, 4, 7.

exposition of Jer 32:39, *wntty lhm lb ʔhd wdrk ʔhd*, "I will grant to them a single heart and a single way."⁶² As this text suggests, Yahweh's goal is to instill in his people a singleness of mind that expresses itself in singleness of conduct. The antithesis of *lb ʔhd*, "single heart," is insincerity, the possession of two hearts, a double heart (*lb wlb*), as described in Ps 12:3 (2). David's loyal followers are commended in 1 Chron 12:34 (33) as those who assisted him *blʔ lb wlb*, "with undivided heart," and in v 39 (38) as men of *lbb šlm*, "perfect heart." In Ps 86:11 the psalmist prays that Yahweh would cause his heart to be united to fear his name (*yhd lbby lyrʔh šmk*). This demonstration of the single heart in the fear of Yahweh is echoed in the Jeremiah text, where the words quoted above are followed up with *lyrʔh ʔwty kl hymym*, "to fear me all the days."

The use of *rwḥ* and *lb* for the seat of the will and the mental organ is reminiscent of David's penitential psalm referred to earlier. His plea for the renewal of a "right spirit" (*wrwḥ nkwn ḥdš bqrby*, Ps 51:12) is a plea for steadfastness and stability of disposition. The source and nature of the new *rwḥ* spoken of by Ezekiel are not described. The absence of the article leaves the way open for several possibilities. As we have already noted, when the present theme resurfaces in Ezek 36:26-27 the nuance of seat of intellect and will recedes in *rwḥ* and gives way to Yahweh's own spirit, which will be infused into the nation.

One final text deserves comment in this context. In 21:12 (7) the prophet is commanded to groan publicly with broken heart and in bitter grief over the news of Jerusalem's impending doom. In response to the people's questions regarding the reason for his groaning, the prophet is to say:

<i>ʔl šmwḥ</i>	Because of the news,
<i>ky bʔh</i>	for it is coming,
<i>wnms kl lb</i>	every heart will melt,
<i>wrpw kl ydym</i>	and all hands will be feeble,
<i>wkhth kl rwḥ</i>	and every spirit will be faint,
<i>wkl brkym tlknh mym</i>	and every knee will run with water.

Here *rwḥ* clearly refers to the seat of the emotions. The fainting *rwḥ* represents but one symptom along with several others of the utter demoralization of the population.

8. *rwḥ* as "sign of divine ownership." We conclude our discussion of Ezekiel's use of the term *rwḥ* with a brief look at 39:29, according to which Yahweh's preservation of Israel from the threat of Gog is said to be based upon his having poured out his spirit upon his people. The full discussion of this text that I have published elsewhere need not be repeated here.⁶³ I wish only to make some observations relevant to the present topic.

⁶² Cf. Jer 11:20; 12:3; 17:10; Ps 26:2; 139:1-6, 23.

⁶³ For a more detailed analysis of this text and its significance in its context see D. I. Block, "Gog and the Pouring Out of the Spirit: Reflections on Ezekiel xxxix 21-9," VT 37 (1987) 257-270.

Although this is the only occurrence of the notion of "pouring (*špk*) the divine spirit upon" someone in Ezekiel, the idea recalls several other prophetic statements. In Joel 3:1, as in our text, the concept appears in a salvation oracle, specifically in the context of the renewal of the covenant and the restoration of prosperity and peace for Israel.⁶⁴ In Zech 12:10 the pouring of the spirit of grace and supplication occurs in the context of the restoration of the dynasty of David and God's renewed activity on behalf of Jerusalem and, in the broader context, of the renewal of the covenant.⁶⁵ Although a different verb is used in Isa 32:15 (*ʿrh*), once again the pouring out of the *rwh* from on high represents the divine activity that immediately precedes the restoration of peace and prosperity in Israel. These are normally the consequences of the reestablishment of the covenant. The covenantal context is unmistakable in Isa 44:1-4: "But now listen, O Jacob, my servant, / And Israel, whom I have chosen. / Thus says Yahweh who made you / And formed you in the womb, / Who will aid you: / 'Do not fear, O Jacob my servant, / And you, O Jeshurun, whom I have chosen, / For I will pour (*yšq*) water on the thirsty land / And streams on the dry ground; / I will pour (*yšq*) my spirit on your descendants, / And they will spring up among the grass / Like poplars by streams of water.' / This one will say, 'I belong to Yahweh,' / And that one will call on the name of Jacob; / And another will write on his hand 'Belonging to Yahweh' / And will name Israel's name with honor." The idea of pouring out the divine spirit is rooted in the perception of the *rwh* as a sort of divine fluid that covers the object.⁶⁶ In each of the texts cited, the pouring out of Yahweh's *rwh* signified the ratification and sealing of the covenant relationship. This represented the guarantee of new life, peace and prosperity. It served as the definitive act whereby Yahweh claimed and sealed the newly gathered nation of Israel as his own.

In the context of Ezek 39:29 the causal clause, "For I shall have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel," explains more than just the events described in the preceding verses—that is, the regathering of the

⁶⁴ Cf. Joel 2:18-3:2, specifically the first verse, "Then Yahweh will be zealous for his land and will have pity on his people," and v 27, which immediately precedes the reference to the pouring out of the spirit, "Thus you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am Yahweh your God, and there is no other; and my people will never be put to shame." In agreement with H. W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 67, the context requires that *kl bšr*, "all flesh," not be interpreted universally, as it is commonly understood, but for all Israel. In Peter's Pentecost sermon this original sense is respected. Acts 2:5 notes that the people gathered on the occasion were Jews from all parts of the empire. Peter himself emphasizes that he is speaking to the men/house of Israel. Cf. vv 22, 36. That he understood it in this restricted sense is confirmed by the need for a special revelation in Acts 10 to convince him to go outside the house of Israel.

⁶⁵ Note the reference to the covenant formula in 13:9, "I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'Yahweh is my God.'" Admittedly there is some distance between these two verses, and it may be argued that originally these were uttered as separate oracles. But the repeated references to "in that day" (12:11; 13:1, 2, 4) as well as the editorial juxtaposing of the oracles suggest some connection.

⁶⁶ Cf. D. J. A. Clines, "The Image of God in Man," *TynBul* 19 (1968) 82.

nation. It also explains Yahweh's fulfillment of his covenant with his people. The presence of the *rwḥ* of Yahweh, poured out upon his people, served as the permanent witness and seal of the *bryt šlwm* and the *bryt ʿwlm*. The pouring out of Yahweh's *rwḥ* upon the returned exiles guaranteed that he would never leave any of the house of Israel at the mercy of her enemies and that he would never hide his face from them again, as Ezekiel and his contemporaries had witnessed. In short, Gog becomes the agent through whom Yahweh declares concretely that 587 B.C. shall never repeat itself again.

The implications of this covenantal interpretation of the pouring out of the *rwḥ* for the progress of the Holy Spirit's activity in the book of Acts are tantalizing but may be touched upon only briefly. It hardly seems accidental that with the commencement of every new stage in the advance of the gospel and the incorporation of new groups of people into the covenant people reference is made to the manifestation of the spirit. The spirit comes upon the Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 2:4, 33, 38), the Samaritans (8:14-17), the Gentile proselytes of Judea (10:44-48; cf. 11:16), and the Gentiles of Asia Minor (19:6). It might also be noted that when Paul speaks of being sealed with/by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13; 4:30) he seems also to be speaking of the divine confirmation of the covenant.

IV. CONCLUSION

It is clear that in the OT the word *rwḥ* bears many different meanings. The nuances intended by the authors vary greatly, and the requirements of the context must determine the interpretation in each instance. Fundamentally the term signified "wind" or "breath." But in the hands of Hebrew psychologists (if one may speak of them as such) and theologians *rwḥ* seemed to open up numerous possibilities. When we are attempting to formulate a Biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit we can ill afford to do so without paying more careful attention to the OT understanding than we have done heretofore. After all, the outlook of the theologians of the NT was determined primarily by their sacred Scriptures and not by prevailing Greek notions. This applied to their anthropology and their pneumatology no less than their theology, their soteriology and their Christology.

When we think in terms of the OT understanding of the *rwḥ* of Yahweh, of which *to pneuma to hagion* is the counterpart, we should think first and foremost of the divine presence on earth. It was on this basis that the psalmist could cry out: "Where can I escape from your *rwḥ*? / Where can I flee from your presence?" (Ps 139:7). The *rwḥ* is the agency through which God's will is exercised, whether it be in creation, his dispensing of life, his guidance and providential care, the revelation of his will, his salvation (Isaiah 63), his renewal of unregenerate hearts and minds, or his sealing of his covenant people as his own. The Spirit of Yahweh is not a self-existent agent operating independently. In the words of A. R. Johnson, the divine spirit is an "extension of Yahweh's personality" by which he

exercises his influence over the world.⁶⁷ The *rwḥ* is the power of God at work among humankind. It is his creating, animating, energizing force. The *rwḥ* can hardly be identified as one other than God himself.

This does not mean that the Hebrews could not speak of the *rwḥ* as a concrete (or, better, fluid) entity, separable from Yahweh, as in Ps 104:30: "When you send forth your *rwḥ*. . . ." This, however, is anthropomorphic language. Yahweh's sending out his *rwḥ*, "breath," is analogous to his extending his arm, his smelling of an offering, his utterance of words with his mouth, his seeing and his hearing. Consequently, just as the activity of Yahweh's right arm represents Yahweh's own actions, so the work of his *rwḥ* signifies his own direct involvement. If a prophet could be so identified with Yahweh that what the prophet said God said, surely such an identification between the Spirit and Yahweh himself is not inconceivable. When the divine *rwḥ* acts, God acts.

The instruction provided by the prophets concerning God's activity in this world is both rich and complex. Ezekiel has served as the model teacher in this regard, for he not only spoke of the power of the spirit but also embodied it in his own person.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ A. R. Johnson, *The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God* (2d ed.; Cardiff: University of Wales, 1961) 36.

⁶⁸ Appreciation is expressed to Bruce Ware for his many helpful interpretive comments and to my assistants, Bradley Soukup and William Odermann, for their proofreading of the manuscript.