


11-16-2016

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Recommended Citation

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The Nature and Work of the Holy Spirit in the Pentateuch

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ATS/ETS Annual Meeting
San Antonio, TX
November 16, 2016

I. Introduction

The Hebrew word *ruakh* refers to the divine Spirit some sixteen times in fifteen verses¹ of the five books of Moses, and the Holy Spirit is also prefigured in several Pentateuchal passages dealing with typological aspects of the sanctuary services. Each of these passages contains profound insights into the nature and work of the Holy Spirit. It is the thesis of this study that all of the major aspects of the biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit are set forth, at least in nascent form, in the foundational divine revelation which comprises the Torah. We will examine each of these passages (or clusters of passages) in turn.

II. Pentateuchal Passages: Analysis

A. Hovering Creative Spirit (Creation)

1. Genesis 1:2: “The earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God [*ruakh 'Elohim*] was hovering over the face of the waters.”

In the second verse of the Bible, the Spirit of God is introduced in the context of creation. Gen 1:1 refers to the creation of “the heavens and earth” “in the beginning.” Whether this verse refers to the beginning of the entire universe (with “heavens and earth” a merism for the totality

¹Two occurrences of *haruakh* (“the Spirit”) are found in the single verse of Num 11:25. I have found persuasive evidence for reference to the Holy Spirit in twelve Pentateuchal verses utilizing the Hebrew word *ruakh* (Gen 1:2; 6:3; 41:38; Exod 31:3; 35:31; Num 11:17, 25, 26, 29; 24:2; 27:18; Deut 34:9), and a good case can be made that three additional verses employing *ruakh* refer to the Holy Spirit (Exod 15:8, 10, and 28:3, see discussion below).

of God’s creation in the universe) or to the beginning of the creation of this globe and its surrounding heavenly spheres on the first day of a literal seven-day creation week,² it is clear that the condition of the earth before God said “Let there be light” on the first day of creation week was an “unformed-unfilled” state. Verse 2 contains three circumstantial noun clauses to describe the condition of the earth at that time: (1) “the earth was without form and void [*tohu webohu*]; (2) “darkness was upon the face of the deep [*tehom*];” and (3) “the Spirit of God [*ruakh ’Elohim*] was hovering [*merachephet*] over the face of the waters.”

The nature of the *ruakh*. It has been suggested by many critical scholars that the last clause should not be translated to refer to the “Spirit of God” hovering over the waters, but rather to a “mighty wind” or “awesome gale” which was “sweeping/stirring” over the waters.³ In this reading the word *ruakh* is taken as referring to “wind” (a valid translation of this word in many biblical passages) and *’Elohim* is taken as expressing the superlative (as suggested for such verses as Gen 35:5; Ps 36:7 [ET 6]; Ps 80:11; Jon 3:3). Thus the expression would mean “a powerful, awesome, tempestuous, raging wind.”⁴

Several considerations lead me to conclude that this is not the proper interpretation of the clause. First, elsewhere in Scripture this Hebrew (or Aramaic equivalent) phrase never (19x)

²Both are possibilities according to the Hebrew text. See my discussion in Richard M. Davidson, “The Biblical Account of Creation,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 4–43.

³Commentators who suggest this kind of interpretation include, e.g., E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 3 (who translates as “awesome wind sweeping over the waters”; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, trans. J. H. Marks, Old Testament Library, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 49 (who translates *ruakh ’Elohim* as “a terrible storm”); Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis: A New Reading* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 40–41 (who translates as “the mighty wind”); R. K. Harrison, “Genesis,” *ISBE* 2:438 (who translates as “an awesome gale”). See also P. J. Smith, “A Semotactical Approach to the Meaning of the Term *ruakh ’elohim* in Genesis 1:2,” *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 81 (1980): 99–104.

⁴Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1–17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 111. Hamilton supplies this hypothetical translation, but then proceeds to show why this translation is not appropriate for this verse, and why the phrase *ruakh ’Elohim* should be translated “Spirit of God” (pp. 111-115). In the discussion that follows I am heavily indebted to the arguments summarized by Hamilton.

refers anything like “mighty wind.”⁵ For example, in the next occurrence of this phrase in Scripture, Exod 31:3, which we will look at below, there is a continuation of the creation motif linking “world building and tabernacle building.”⁶ In this creation setting, Bezalel the artisan is filled with the *ruakh 'Elohim*, which is clearly not a “tempestuous wind.”

Second, in the rest of Gen 1, *'Elohim* is consistently used as a name for God (35 times!), and is not used as a marker for the superlative. In fact, the use of *'Elohim* anywhere in Scripture simply to express the superlative has been seriously questioned.⁷ To take *'Elohim* as the superlative in Gen 1:2, expressing a “tempestuous wind” that is part of the unformed-unformed state of the earth, would contradict the use of the same term in the preceding verse to describe the God who creates the heaven and earth and in the succeeding verses the God who speaks, forms, and fills the unformed-unfilled earth.

Third, if the author had wished to speak of a great wind, there are natural and unambiguous Hebrew expressions he could have used: “great wind” (*ruakh gedolah*; see 1 Kings 19:11; Job 1:19; Jon 1:4); or “a stormy wind” (*ruakh tse'ara*; Ps 107:25; 148:8; cf. Ezek 13:11, 13); or “strong wind” (*ruakh kabbir*; Job 8:2).

Thus, the evidence favors translating *'Elohim* in this verse as “God.” But does the phrase

⁵Gen 41:38; Exod 31:3; 35:31; Num 24:2; 1 Sam 10:10; 11:6; 19:20, 23; 2 Chron 15:1; 24:20; Ezek 11:24. Three occurrences add the word *ra'ah* “evil” after the phrase, referring to “an evil spirit from God”: 1 Sam 16:15, 16; 18:10. Five verses have the Aramaic equivalent of the phrase, *ruakh 'elohin*: Dan 4:8, 9, 18; 5:11, 14.

⁶Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 112; cf. Michael Fishbane, *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (NY: Schocken, 1979), 12.

⁷See D. W. Thomas, “A Consideration of Some Unusual Ways of Expressing the Superlative in Hebrew,” *Vetus Testamentum* 3 (1953): 209–224, concludes his study: “In the Old Testament it is, I believe, difficult, if not impossible, to point to any unambiguous example of the use of the divine name as an intensifying epithet and nothing more.” Cf. Francis Landy, *Paradoxes of Paradise: Identity and Difference in the Song of Songs* (Sheffield: Almond, 1983), 315: “While I concede that the name of God may sometimes be used idiomatically, as a vague connotation of grandeur, the instances most commonly referred to are not always convincing [sic] e.g. Nineveh was a very great city before God (Jonah 3.3); it is the concern of God for the great city that is the point of the parable.” Landy points to other passages (Ps 36:7 and Ps 80:11) which he argues are not superlatives but indicate the “divine domicile.”

ruakh 'Elohim in Gen 1:2 refer to the “wind” of God or the “S(s)pirit” of God? Strong support for the translation “S(s)pirit of God” is usage elsewhere in Scripture. In all nineteen occurrences of the phrase *ruakh 'Elohim* outside of Gen 1:2, the meaning is “S(s)pirit of God,” not wind of God.

Despite this lexical evidence, several scholars have argued that the preferred translation in this verse is “wind of God,”⁸ citing evidence from the Aramaic targums and alleged parallels with the four compass winds of Marduk in the Mesopotamian creation story *Enuma elish*. However, the references in the Aramaic targums are actually indecisive,⁹ and the proposed parallels with *Enuma elish* are far from convincing.¹⁰

These scholars also suggest that God’s ability to control the cosmic waters is a sign of his power (e.g. Ps 89:10 [ET 9]), and thus reference to God’s “wind/breath” (and not his spirit) in Gen 1:2 would be an appropriate manifestation of His presence and antipode to the cosmic waters of chaos. However, what they fail to recognize is that in those parallel OT passages which are cited to show that the *ruakh* is a powerful wind demonstrating God’s presence (e.g., Exod 15:10; Isa 11:15; 40:7; and Hos 13:15), the wind is invariably a destructive force. As Hamilton points out, “In those passages where one has a legitimate choice between ‘breath’ and

⁸See, e.g. H. M. Orlinsky, “The Plain Meaning of *Ruakh* in Gen. 1.2,” *JQR* 48 (1957/58):174–182; R. Luyster, “Wind and Water: Cosmogonic Symbolism in the Old Testament,” *ZAW* 93 (1981): 1–10; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 17. Cf. Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis* (The JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: JPS, 1989), 5–6, who translates “a sweeping wind from God.”

⁹Targum Onqelos reads: “and a wind from before the Lord was blowing over the face of the waters.” But note that Targum Jonathan and the Jerusalem Targum, while retaining the word “blowing,” adds that it was a wind “of mercy” from before the Lord. The evidence from the LXX and the Vulgate does not support either translation, inasmuch as they employ passives (*epephereto* and *ferebatur*), “was brought/carried,” which could plausibly refer to either spirit or wind.

¹⁰See E. J. Young, *Studies in Genesis One* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1976), 41. As Hamilton summarizes: “In this myth Anu creates the four compass winds primarily as part of his arsenal to eliminate the antagonist Tiamat and then carry away her remains to a remote place. One would be hard-pressed to see any valid relationship between the *ruakh* of Gen. 1 and these storms or winds, called *abubu* and *imhullu*, which are Marduk’s weapons” (*Genesis 1–17*, 113).

‘spirit’ (cf. Gen 6:3; Job 27:3; 33:4; 34:14; Ps 104:30; Ezek 37:14), the emphasis is one of energizing, giving life and vitality, creating and not uncreating.”¹¹ In Gen 1:2 the *ruakh* is not a destructive but beneficent (creative) force, and thus is better translated by “S(s)pirit” and not “wind.”

That “S(s)pirit” is the preferred translation is evident from the use of the word which describe the S(s)pirit’s work: the participle *merakhepet*. This Hebrew word has been translated variously as “hovering” (NKJV, NIV, ESV, NLT), “moving” (NASB, RSV), “swept/sweeping” (NEB, Speiser, NJPS, NRSV), “swirled” (Fishbane). The translations referring to the idea of “sweeping” and “swirling” are obviously made to fit the idea of “wind.” But the only other occurrence of this verb *rakhap*¹¹ in the Pentateuch (and in fact the entire Bible),¹² Deut 32:11, refers to the protective hovering of the eagle over her young, not a “sweeping” wind.

In Ugaritic texts this verb is used several times, all in the Epic of Aqhat, and it is important to recognize that in each instance the verb *r/kh/p* is associated with an eagle,¹³ with the suggested meaning of “soar”¹⁴ or “flutter.”¹⁵ In both the biblical and extra-biblical parallels, the verb describes the action of birds, not the action of the winds.

Thus we may conclude that the translation “S(s)pirit of God” is preferable to “Wind of God.” But should we translate as “spirit” (with lower case) or “Spirit” (upper case) of God? Does this verse refer only to an influence or emanation from God (God’s “spirit”), or to a distinct

¹¹Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 113.

¹²I follow here the analysis in the *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (hereafter *HALOT*), which places the single other occurrence of *rakhap* as a separate root, *rakhap*¹.

¹³Aqhat, obverse, line 20: “Over him [Aqhat] eagles will soar, there will hover a [flight of b]irds”; 3 Aqhat, obverse, lines 31–32: “over him eagle[s] soar, there hovers a flight of bird[s]. Among] the eagles soars ‘Anat’”; 1 Aqhat, line 32: “Eagles so[ar] over the house of her father, there hovers a flight of birds.”

¹⁴Cyrus Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook*; *Analecta Orientalia*, 38 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965), 484, no. 2327.

¹⁵Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Part 1* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961), 25,

divine person (“Spirit”). Obviously, the Hebrew alphabet does not have lower and upper case letters, so the context must guide us in a decision. Many modern scholars, even including evangelicals, are reluctant to decide between the translation “spirit” and “Spirit” in this passage. Hamilton expresses the prevailing note of caution: “there is no way to tell from the Hebrew whether one should read ‘spirit’ or ‘Spirit.’ To translate “Spirit” runs the risk of superimposing trinitarian concepts on Gen. 1 that are not necessarily present.”¹⁶

Although it is true that the Hebrew does not differentiate with lower and case alphabetic letters, I am convinced that the immediate context and usage elsewhere in Scripture provides direction in order to decide this question.

Looking at the wider OT context, out of the nineteen occurrences of *ruakh 'Elohim* (or Aramaic equivalent) in the Hebrew Bible besides Gen 1:2, the phrase most frequently (16 out of 19 times) refers to the “Spirit” (not ‘spirit’) of God. The three times where the phrase refers to a malevolent “spirit” from God and not to the divine “Spirit” of God, the word *ra'ah* “evil” is added after the phrase to indicate this difference (1 Sam 16:15, 16; 18:10).

As we have already seen, the verb *rakhap* that accompanies the phrase *ruakh 'e'ohim* in Gen 1:2, in both its biblical and extra-biblical parallels, describes the action of birds, which are distinct intelligent beings, and not the action of the winds, impersonal forces. The meaning of

¹⁶Should we translate as “Spirit” (with upper case) or “spirit” (lower case) of God? Obviously, the Hebrew alphabet does not have lower and upper case letters, so the context must guide us in a decision. As noted in a previous footnote, the three times where the phrase refers to a malevolent “spirit” from God and not to the divine “Spirit” of God, the word *ra'ah* “evil” is added after the phrase (1 Sam 16:15, 16; 18:10). Should we translate as “Spirit” (with upper case) or “spirit” (lower case) of God? Obviously, the Hebrew alphabet does not have lower and upper case letters, so the context must guide us in a decision. As noted in a previous footnote, the three times where the phrase refers to a malevolent “spirit” from God and not to the divine “Spirit” of God, the word *ra'ah* “evil” is added after the phrase (1 Sam 16:15, 16; 18:10).

rakhap is simply “not suited to describing the blowing of a wind.”¹⁷

There is striking evidence in the biblical text that Moses consciously intended to intertextually link the reference to the “hovering” at the end of the Torah (Deut 32:11) with the “hovering” at the beginning (Gen 1:2). Not only do we find this rare word *rakhap* in both passages, but we encounter in the immediate context of each occurrence another rare word, *tohu* “formlessness.” The theological import of the linkage is unambiguous: Moses describes the call of Israel out of Egypt in terms of a new creation, a concept that was greatly expanded by later biblical writers, especially the prophet Isaiah (see Isa 4:5; 41:20; 43:1). As the earth was in a state of formlessness (*tohu*) at the beginning of creation week, so God found Israel in the formlessness (or wasteland, *tohu*) of the wilderness. As the S(s)pirit of God “hovered” (*rakhap*) over the face of the waters at the beginning of creation week, so God “hovered” (*rakhap*) over Israel as she came out of Egypt.

Because of this clear intertextual linkage by the inspired writer Moses, we are able to gain insights into the nature of the “hovering” in creation by examining the “hovering” of God in Deut 32, the Song of Moses.

We must make clear that the action of the bird is “to hover” over her young, and not “to brood over” or “incubate,” as some have suggested, based upon a secondary meaning of the cognate verb *rakhep* in Syriac. In Deut 32:11, the eagle is not “brooding over” unborn bird eggs; it is “soaring” and “hovering” over her young eaglets that have not yet learned to fly. Thus the picture in Gen 1:2 is not that of some Phoenician cosmologies, where a power from on high

¹⁷John H. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” in *Genesis—Leviticus*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 55.

incubated and hatched the World-Egg, as has been argued.¹⁸ As Cassuto points out, “the expression used in the Bible is *over the face of the waters*, and the waters of the deep are not an egg or anything resembling one.”¹⁹ Such cosmological notion of a divine power hatching a cosmic egg finds no trace in the Hebrew Scriptures, and the word *rakhap* never has the connotation of “brooding” or “incubating.”

Rather than “brooding over/incubating,” the picture is one of intimate care and protection in Deut 32:10–12:

He found him in a desert land And in the wasteland [*tohu*], a howling wilderness;
He encircled him, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirs up its nest, Hovers [*rakhap*] over its young, Spreading out its wings, taking them up, Carrying them on its wings, So the LORD alone led him, And *there was* no foreign god with him (vv. 10–12).

Because of Moses’ elaboration on the nature of the “hovering” in Gen 1:2 by his careful choice of the same rare terminology in Deut 32:10–12, we may conclude that a similar emphasis upon the personal “intimate contact”²⁰ and protective care are implied in the *rakhap* work of the *ruakh ’Elohim* in Gen 1:2 as in the simile of the eagle in Deut 32. Cassuto summarizes the picture of Deut 32 and its counterpart in Gen 1:2:

just as the young eaglets, which are not yet capable of fending for themselves, are unable by their own efforts to subsist and grow strong and become fully-grown eagles, and only the care of their parents, who hover over them, enables them to survive and develop, so, too, in the case of the earth, which was still an unformed, lifeless mass, the paternal care of the Divine Spirit, which hovered over it, assured its future evolution and life.²¹

The language employed goes far beyond an impersonal force or influence (“spirit”) to

¹⁸See *ibid.*, for details.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1967), 45.

²¹Cassuto, *Genesis*, 1:25. I see no evidence in Cassuto’s commentary that by using the word “evolution,” he is thinking of Darwinian evolution over long ages, but rather the progress of the six day creation week.

describe the personal nature of *ruakh* (God’s “Spirit”). Furthermore, what is described in Gen 1:2 as the work of “the Spirit of God” is depicted as the work of Yahweh in Deut 32 (v. 12). Again, Psalm 104, which I have elsewhere shown to be an inspired commentary on the creation week of Gen 1,²² affirms “the personal participation of God’s Spirit in the transformation of the earth.”²³ See especially v. 30, which concerns the creation of the birds, fish, and animals, and perhaps also the vegetation: “You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; And You renew the face of the earth.” Finally, John Sailhamer points out the intertextual parallel between “the Spirit of God” in the work of creation (Gen 1:2) and the “Spirit of God” in the work of constructing the wilderness tabernacle (Exod 31:3–5). Sailhamer, followed by many others, refers to the striking parallels between the two accounts, “showing that the writer intended a thematic identity between the two narratives.”²⁴ Especially relevant to this paper is that in both creation and the construction of the tabernacle the work (Heb. *mela’kah*) is to be done by means of the “Spirit of God.” “As God did his ‘work’ (*mela’kah*) of creation by means of “Spirit of God” (*ruakh ’Elohim*), so Israel was to do their work (*mela’kah*) by means of the “Spirit of God.”²⁵

I would go further than the Jewish scholar Cassuto in arguing that the “Spirit of God” is not only personal, but constitutes a separate Person in the Godhead. The context of Gen 1 as a whole, viewed against the even broader canonical context of both Old and New Testaments, provides strong intimations of a plurality of Persons in the Godhead in creation. Besides the

²²Richard M. Davidson, “Creation in the Book of Psalms: Psalm 104,” paper presented at the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference Faith and Science Council, Loma Linda, CA, 16 April 2008.

²³Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 135.

²⁴Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 55. For a summary of these parallels and bibliography of the numerous scholars who have recognized this intertextual connection, see Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 47–48 (esp. footnote 133).

²⁵Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 56.

mention of the “Spirit of God” (*ruakh 'Elohim*) in Gen 1:2, the creative Word is spoken throughout the creation account (ten times in Gen 1), which is interpreted in the Gospel of John as referring to the pre-incarnate Christ the “Word” (John 1:1). The “let us” of Gen 1:26, most probably “a plural of fullness,” implies “within the divine Being a distinction of personalities, a plurality within the deity, a ‘unanimity of intention and plan’ . . . ; [the] germinal idea . . . [of] intra-divine deliberation among ‘persons’ within the divine Being.”²⁶

I conclude that the weight of evidence favors taking the phrase *ruakh 'Elohim* in Gen 1:2 as a reference to the “Spirit of God,” a separate Person within the Godhead. At the commencement of creation week (and perhaps for an undisclosed time before, if we accept the passive gap interpretation of Gen 1:1–3), the Spirit of God was continually “hovering” (note the participial form indicating duration) over His “nest”—this earth in its unformed and unfilled condition—exercising constant watch-care and personal cherishing of, yes, eager expectancy concerning, the work of forming and filling that was to take place during creation week. This reference to the Spirit of God reveals a separate Person, with individualized actions and emotions, as part of the Godhead. I concur with the conclusion of H. C. Leupold: “Is it a mere potency in God or is it the Holy Spirit who is involved [in the term *ruakh 'Elohim* of Gen 1:2]? Or does the term refer to a principle or to a person? We must guard against overstatement of the case, but we maintain very definitely: the Spirit of God is the Holy Spirit, the third person in the Trinity. . . . Absolutely none other than the Holy Spirit is here under consideration.”²⁷

²⁶Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Meaning of ‘Let Us’ in Gen 1:26,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 13 (1975):65; see 58-66 for further discussion and critique of other views. Cf. Kidner, *Genesis*, 33; Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 133-134; John Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1996), 146-147; and the “Angel of the Lord” passages later in Genesis: Gen 16:7-13; 18:1-2 & 19:1; Gen 31:11-13; 32:24, 30; Hosea 12:3-6; 48:15-16 (on the latter, see Kidner, *Genesis*, 33).

²⁷H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1942), 49.

To be sure, there is not a full-blown theology of the Trinity in Gen 1, and we cannot be sure how fully was understood the nature of the Godhead in the time of Moses,²⁸ but this truth is set forth in nascent form here on the opening page of the Bible.

The work of the Spirit. Systematic theologians often refer to separate roles of the members of the Trinity in the work of creation, as well as in redemption: “In general, the Scriptures indicate that the work of the Trinity is from the Father, through the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. The Father originates, the Son executes, and the Holy Spirit perfects.”²⁹ Abraham Kuyper, Edwin Palmer, and other Reformed theologians, argue that Genesis 1 may be seen already to point embryonically in that direction. According to their argument, it is not the Spirit of God who “in the beginning . . . created the heavens and the earth” but “God,” who in context we may take as the Father (Gen 1:1). It the “Word” (i.e., the pre-incarnate Christ, according to John 1:1), issuing forth from God, who executes the Father’s will (Gen 1:3ff.; cf. Heb 1:1-2: “God has spoken to us by his Son . . . *through* whom He made the universe”). And the Spirit of God (the Holy Spirit) “hovers” in personal and protective care over the work of creation, even from the beginning.

Abraham Kuyper, in his classic *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, likens the relations among the members of the Godhead in creation to the work of building a palace:

The Father is the Royal Source of the necessary materials and powers; and the Son as the Builder constructs all things with them according to the counsel of

²⁸Leupold (ibid.) cautions that a full understanding of this might not have been forthcoming till later in salvation history: “Yet it would be inaccurate and premature to claim that this passage alone conveys this fact clearly to the mind of man. It may have been much later in the course of the fuller unfolding of divine revelation that the truth came home distinctly to the mind of believers that God’s Spirit was God, a separate person or *hypostasis*. Yet the harmony of the Word within itself and its inspiration by this same Holy Spirit necessitated that the statements made in earlier stages of revelation, nevertheless, are in accurate and full conformity with the truth.”

²⁹Edwin H. Palmer, *The Person and Ministry of the Holy Spirit: The Traditional Calvinistic Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958, 1974), 21.

God. . . This does not complete the work of creation. . . Thus to lead the creature to its destiny, to cause it to develop according to its nature, to make it perfect, is the proper work of the Holy Spirit.³⁰

Palmer argues that there are five aspects of the Holy Spirit's perfecting work in creation, viewed from the various OT creation passages. First, in Gen 1:1, 2 the Holy Spirit brought "a certain order out of what had already been made."³¹ Secondly, according to Job 26:13, the Holy Spirit "perfected" the work of creation by causing the heavens to be beautiful: "By His Spirit He has garnished ["made beautiful", Heb. *shiprah*, "beauty, fairness"] the heavens." Third, according to Ps 104:30, the Holy Spirit gave life to the birds, fish, and animals: "You send forth your Spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground." Fourth, according to the last part of the verse just cited, vegetation also receives life from the Spirit. Finally, in the creation of the human being, according to Gen 2:7, which uses the term "breath," compared with Elihu's words in Job 33:4 ("The Spirit of God has made me), implies that "The specific creative function of the Spirit seems to be the giving of life, indicating again that he did not necessarily create matter, but, taking the dust of the earth, he breathed into it the breath of life."³² Palmer sees these five aspects of the Spirit's creative work continuing in His work of recreation: "The creative work of the Holy Spirit, then, is all-embracing, pertaining both to the physical and spiritual realms. It began in a special way at creation. It continues throughout today, including even the re-creation of man."³³

Although this systematic construct presents a neat synthesis, it does not appear to be so simple when one takes into account the full data of Scripture, which presents the mysterious

³⁰Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, trans. Henri De Vries (London: Funk & Wagnals, 1900; reprint Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 21.

³¹Palmer, *Holy Spirit*, 23.

³²Ibid., 25.

³³Ibid., 27.

inter-connection and interplay and inseparable unity among the Members of the Godhead. For example, in Proverbs 8, both Father and Son are presented as “co-Creators” in the creation of the world.³⁴ What is more, the Reformed view of the Holy Spirit is built upon the premise that “the Spirit is *eternally* spirated, just as the Son was *eternally* begotten.”³⁵ But this premise does not appear to be the position of Scripture, in which all the members of the Godhead are fully equal, with no inherently different roles. My study of the Trinity has led to the conclusion that the different facets of work within the Godhead are not inherent from eternity but economically assumed in divine counsel with reference to the revelation of the fullness of the Godhead to created intelligences.³⁶

Regardless of whether we can clearly differentiate the specific work of the members of the Godhead (at creation or beyond), Gen 1:2 is a potent verse at the introduction of Scripture setting forth, in nascent form, the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit in the context of creation.

Jacques Doukhan summarizes well the intent of this passage: “The Spirit of God is not a natural element, a mere wind blowing upon the water. Although the physical idea of ‘wind’ or ‘air’ may also be implied, the participle ‘hovering’ clearly suggests a distinct person. The expression *ruakh ’Elohim* “Spirit of God” refers to a divine Person who will later be credited as

³⁴See Richard M. Davidson, “Proverbs 8 and the Place of Christ in the Trinity,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 33–54.

³⁵Palmer, *Holy Spirit*, 16.

³⁶With regard to the relationship between Father and Son, I wrote (Davidson, “Proverbs 8,” 54): “according to Prov 8, at the beginning of creation, we find a situation of equal members of the Godhead. Presumably by mutual consent, one Person of the Godhead is “installed” (*nsk* III) in a work of Mediator. While the Person we call the Father continued to represent the transcendent nature of the Godhead, the Person we know as the Son condescended to represent the immanent aspect of divinity, coming close to His creation, mediating between infinity and finitude, even before sin. This is not a subordination of the Son to the Father, but a voluntary condescension to be installed into a mediatorial work, representing the divine love in an immanent way to his inhabited universe.” We could extend this to the work of the Holy Spirit, representing divine love in (among other works) indwelling his creatures.

foreknowing and producing historical events (41:38).”³⁷

B. Striving/Convicting/Judging Spirit (Antediluvian World and the Exodus)

2. Genesis 6:3: “And the LORD said, ‘My Spirit [*rukhi*] shall not strive with man forever, for he *is* indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.’”

Genesis 6:3 comes at the beginning of the Flood narrative, Gen 6–9, which is a literary unity structured chiastically.³⁸ In this opening section of the Flood narrative (Gen 6:1–8) is given the divine justification (theodicy) for bringing the Flood upon the world. The immediate context is the marriage between “the sons of God” and “the daughters of men” (vv. 1, 2, 4). I cannot here enter the debate as to the meaning of this sinful practice which God was condemning, but elsewhere I have argued, and will assume in this paper, that the “sons of God” are the professed people of God from the line of Seth (Gen 5:1–32), and the “daughters of men” are the women from the rebellious line of Cain (Gen 4:16–24).³⁹

The nature of the Spirit. In the first part of the verse, it is clear that the expression *rukhi* “My Spirit,” introduced by the words, “And the Lord said,” refers to God’s Spirit. This form, *ruakh* plus the first person singular pronominal suffix, appear at least 34 times in the Hebrew Bible, and twelve of these occurrences clearly refer to God’s Spirit.⁴⁰ With God as the speaker in Gen 6:3, there can be no doubt that the expression “My Spirit” refers to the divine Spirit. The language of the latter part of the verse also makes clear that this is not merely an impersonal influence, but a personal being, the Holy Spirit (see discussion below).

³⁷ Jacques B. Doukhan, *Genesis*, SDAIBC 1 (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2016), 53.

³⁸ William H. Shea, “The Structure of the Genesis Flood Narrative and Its Implications,” *Origins* 6 (1979): 8–29; cf. Gordon J. Wenham, “The Coherence of the Flood Narrative,” *VT* 28 (1978): 336–348.

³⁹ See the main arguments and bibliography of supporters of this position and the other positions, in Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 181–184.

⁴⁰ Isa 30:1; 42:1; 44:3; 59:21; Ezek 36:27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 3:1 [Eng. 2:28]; 3:2 [Eng. 2:29]; Hag 2:5 (with article prefix); Zech 4:6 (with preposition *be* prefix); and 6:8.

The work of the Spirit. Each section of Gen 6:3 is fraught with questions of translation and interpretation that impinge upon the understanding of the work of the Spirit in this verse. There are three main problems, corresponding with the three sections of the verse. In the first section of the verse, the problem is to understand what exactly God says His Spirit will not do with humanity [*'adam*] forever [*le'olam*]. The traditional translation of the Hebrew verb *yadon* is “strive” or “contend,” deriving this word from the Hebrew root *din*. The Greek translation Symmachus seems to follow this derivation by translating as “to judge” (*krinei*). However, the form of *din* that would be expected here (Qal impf. 3ms of), is *yadin*, not *yadon*. Hence many translators have turned to the Septuagint, which translates as “to remain” (Greek, *katameinē*; followed by the Vulgate, *permanebit*). Hamilton suggests that the LXX translation may derive from the Hebrew *yadur* (from the root *dur*, “to dwell”) or *yalun* (from the root *lun*, “to lodge”), and also points to a verb *danan* or *dun* with the meaning of “remain” in the Talmud and Aramaic.⁴¹

Other scholars, not able to find a satisfactory Hebrew root behind this term, have looked at the cognate Semitic languages. Of the many suggestions made, here are a few. It has been postulated to connect *yadon* with the Arabic *dun* “to be humbled, humiliated, brought low,” and translate the verse as “My Spirit will not be humiliated in man forever.”⁴² But the question may be asked, How can humans humiliate God? E. A. Speiser associates *yadon* with the Akkadian root *dnn* and its noun forms which have the meaning of “personal substitute, surrogate, scapegoat,” and translates the clause “my spirit shall not answer [shoulder the consequences] for

⁴¹Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 266–7. C. Rabin, “Etymological Miscellanea,” *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 8 (1961): 388–389, also argues for the presence of this Hebrew verb in Gen 30:6. However, the consensus of scholars is that in this latter passage the verb is *din* “to judge” and not *dun* “remain.”

⁴²J. Scharbert, “Traditions- und Redaktionsgeschichte von Gen. 6.1–4,” *Biblische Zeitschrift* 11 (1967): 68 and note 9. Cf. the Jerusalem Bible rendering: “shall not be disgraced.”

man forever.”⁴³ But this does not seem to fit the context, since God has held humans responsible for their consequence since the entrance of sin. Another suggestion is to connect *yadon* with the Akkadian *danānu* and the Ugaritic root *dnn* “to be strong, powerful, rule,” and translate the clause: “My Spirit will not remain strong in [or sustain] humanity forever.”⁴⁴ But this presupposes a supernatural power from the sexual union of humans and fallen angels (in Gen 6:1–4), an interpretation which I have found to be incompatible with the text.

In summary of the present state of investigation on this term, John H. Walton rightly points out that no Hebrew root supports “abide”, and “none of the options suggested from comparative Semitics have won consensus.”⁴⁵ The two main choices represented in modern versions are the translations “to strive” (related to the Hebrew verb *din*) or “to remain” (following the LXX and Vulgate). Depending upon which of these translations one chooses, the next clause of the verse is interpreted to fit the respective translation. If one follows the versions which translate *yadon* as “strive/contend” (see NIV, NKJV, KJV, NASB,) this implies that God will give 120 more years of probation till He stops striving/contending and sends the Flood. If one follows the versions which translate *yadon* as “remain,” this implies that God will remove His Spirit and humanity’s flesh will die, and thus the 120 years refers to the shortening of lifespan (down to Moses’ lifespan in of 120 years in Deut 34:70).⁴⁶

⁴³E. A. Speiser, “YDWN, Genesis 6:3,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 75 (1956): 126–129. See idem, *Genesis*, 44; and the NJB.

⁴⁴von Rad, *Genesis*, 114. Von Rad takes “spirit” to refer to humanity’s “habitual physical life-potency,” and sees the text as saying that God “will not permit this superhuman power of life to grow powerful in man.” Cf. Ronald S. Hendel, “Of Demigods and the Deluge: Toward an Interpretation of Genesis 6:1–4, *JBL* 106/1 (1987): 13–26; p. 15; and Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 295. The existence of the town Dannah in Israel, mentioned in Josh 15:49, may come from a verbal root *dnn* not present in the Hebrew Bible, and may mean “stronghold, fortress.”

⁴⁵John H. Walton, *Genesis*, New International Version Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), p. 295.

⁴⁶Paul Kissling, *Genesis*, vol. 1, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2004), 266.

I am convinced that amid all the flurry of conjecture in proposing various non-extant Hebrew roots based upon Semitic cognate languages, scholars in recent decades have overlooked what was a fairly simple answer that satisfied a previous generation of scholarship. The Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on this verse only expends six lines to deal with the issue. The simple solution is captured in the formula: “The verb *dun* = *din*.”⁴⁷ The Hebrew verb *yadon* in Gen 6:3 comes from the root, *dun*, which is simply an alternate spelling of the verb *din* “to judge/strive,” paralleling the Hebrew verb *lun*, which also appears as *lin*. This is the solution proposed by various lexicographers.⁴⁸ It is supported by Job 19:29, which has the word *din* “judgment” but the Qere has *dun*. Further support is found in the nominal form *madon* “strife,” which occurs eleven times in the Hebrew Bible.⁴⁹ This solution does not require any conjecture based upon non-biblical Semitic cognates. I find it the most satisfactory solution to this lexical issue.

If *yadon* comes from *dun* = *din*, then the work of the Spirit in this passage is to be found in the meaning of the verb *din* (= *dun*). This verb has a basic meaning of “judge.” It is a legal term, which in its 25 occurrences in the OT can have various nuances of meaning: “to plead one’s cause, contend with, execute judgment.”⁵⁰ The term often refers to “the formal judicial process as a whole,” “the act of the judge.”⁵¹ Of the 25 occurrences of *din* in the Hebrew Bible, the preponderance of times the verb refers to the divine act of “pleading the cause” of human beings (15 times), several other times the semantic nuance is “execute judgment” (8 times), once

⁴⁷C. F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch: Three Volumes in One* (vol. 1 of *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, trans. J. Martin et al., 25 vols.; Edinburgh, 1857–1878; reprint, 10 vols., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 134. (I have substituted transliteration for the original Hebrew script.)

⁴⁸See, e.g., Gesenius’ *Smaller Lexicon*; Rosenmüller, *De Vers. Pent. Pers.*, 19.

⁴⁹Nine times as a noun meaning “strife” and two times as the name of a city, Madon.

⁵⁰*HALOT*, sv. *din*.

⁵¹V. Hamp, “*din*,” *TDOT*, 3:188.

“to contend with” (Eccl 6:10) and once (in the Nifal) “to quarrel, argue” (2 Sam 19:10).⁵² In the context of Gen 6:3, the idea “execute judgment” does not fit, since God has not yet executed judgment on the antediluvian world (this comes later in the Flood).

In Gen 6:3 it appears that the meaning of “strive,” which is adopted by many of the modern versions (NIV, KJV, NKJV, NASB, etc.) best fits the immediate context. But I suggest that the semantic nuance of *yadon* in this verse is not so much “strive” in the sense of “contending against” the ante-diluvian humanity, but in the sense of “striving for”, even “pleading the cause of” (as is the semantic nuance in the majority of occurrences of this verb in Scripture; see, e.g., Jer 30:13). The Spirit is “striving for” the people, with divine grace pleading and interceding on humanity’s behalf. The thrust of the passage is not upon divine condemnation, but upon “divine pleading grace”⁵³ seeking to win over humanity to God, warning them of the consequences of their sins, and entreating them to exercise repentance and reformation.⁵⁴

This interpretation seems to be confirmed by the NT reference to the work of the Spirit in ante-diluvian times. Although 1 Pet 3:18–20 has been the subject of much debate, I have found

⁵²*HALOT*, sv. *din*, confirmed by my own analysis of the verses.

⁵³ Doukhan, *Genesis*, 137.

⁵⁴This seems to be the interpretation of Ellen G. White. See *Signs of the Times*, Dec 20, 1877, par. 3-4: “God, whom men had slighted and dishonored and whose gracious love and benevolence they had abused, still pitied the race and in his love provided a refuge for all who would accept it. He directed Noah to build an ark and at the same time preach to the inhabitants of the world that God would bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy the wicked. If they would believe the message and prepare for that event by repentance and reformation they should find pardon and be saved. God did not remove his spirit from man without warning him of the sure result of his course in transgressing his law. He gave the message to Noah to be given to the people. ‘My spirit shall not always strive with man.’ A continual resistance and contempt of the entreaties and warnings from God through his servant Noah, would separate them from God, and the result would be infinite mercy and love would cease its pleadings. The Spirit of God continued to strive with rebellious man until the time of God had specified had nearly expired, when Noah and his family entered the ark and the hand of God closed the door of the ark. Mercy had stepped from the golden throne no longer to intercede for man.

Notwithstanding God was working to draw man to himself by the conviction of his Holy Spirit, man in his rebellion was drawing away from God, and continually resisting the pleadings of infinite love.

the weight of evidence to favor the interpretation that this passage refers to the Spirit's "preaching" to the ante-diluvian world, "who were formerly disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah."⁵⁵ The emphasis in this passage, like Gen 6:3, is the "longsuffering" character of God, His grace! The Holy Spirit "preached" (*kēryssō*, "made proclamation to") by His own convicting power, and by "striving with" the people through the entreaties of Noah, "preacher of righteousness" (2 Pete 2:5). This work of the Holy Spirit is described in the NT by Jesus when He said: "And when He [the Holy Spirit] has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8).

The condition of the ante-diluvian world. This interpretation makes sense of the next part of Gen 6:3, which constitutes the second major problem in the text, and which I suggest has been almost universally mis-translated in the modern versions. Most versions read similarly in v. 3 b: "for he is indeed flesh." But the word, translated "for" is not simply the causative *ki* "because", as found several times later in this chapter (vv. 7, 12, 13; cf. 7:1). It is rather the word *beshaggam*, which is a *hapax legomenon*. Scholars usually analyze this word as a combination of three Hebrew particles: *be* "in," *she* "which," and *gam* "also, indeed", together reading "in which also" or, in short "for, because."

But why would Moses use this cumbersome method of stating cause, when throughout the chapter he has elsewhere consistently used the causal preposition *ki* "because"? Furthermore, the particle *she* "which," a shortened form of *'asher*, is *never* elsewhere used in the Pentateuch! Everywhere else Moses uses the full form of the word, *'asher*. Thus it would be most unusual

⁵⁵For a summary of the evidence, see Clinton Wahlen, "Who Are the 'Spirits in Prison' To Whom Christ Preached?" in *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers*, Biblical Research Institute Studies, vol. 2, ed. Gerhard Pfandl (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2010), 418–421.

for him to employ the shortened form in this one place alone. In addition, as Hamilton points out, if the translation “because” is the correct one, then “the verse says that the stimulus for God’s retaliation is man’s nature—he is flesh—rather than man’s activity. It is what man is, rather than what man has done, that incites God not to permit his Spirit to remain in mankind forever.”⁵⁶ This interpretation flies in the face of the rest of the chapter, which sets forth specific actions of humanity as cause for bringing of the Flood, and not simply because of their nature of being “flesh.” Furthermore, the word *basar* “flesh” in the OT does not imply sinfulness, as it may sometimes in the NT, but rather refers to “what is frail, transient.”⁵⁷

The marginal reference of the NASB has recognized an alternative interpretation to this expression, one which has been noted by many other commentators, one which “easily circumvents the awkwardness of this verse.”⁵⁸ The word can simply be a combination of the preposition *be* “in” and the infinitive construct of the verb *shagag* (or *shagah*) “to sin, go astray, err” plus the third masculine plural ending *-am* “their.” Thus the clause would read: “in their going astray he [i.e., humanity] is flesh.” A number of the ancient Hebrew manuscripts support this reading.⁵⁹ While commentators like Hamilton find this solution attractive, the objection is raised that the verb *shagag* describes “sins committed ‘inadvertantly’ [i.e.,] sins that result from negligence or from ignorance,” and this does not fit the situation of the ante-diluvians “who act neither from negligence nor out of ignorance.”⁶⁰

However, in my recent personal study I have found that the meaning of the verb *shagag*

⁵⁶Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 267.

⁵⁷*HALOT*, sv. *basar*. See Isa 10:18; 31:3; Ezek 44:7; Ps 56:5; 78:39; Job 10:4; 2 Chron 32:8.

⁵⁸Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 267.

⁵⁹See C. D. Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (repr. New York: Ktav, 1966), 1021.

⁶⁰Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 268.

is basically “to go astray,” and is not limited to inadvertent sins; it can describe the entire range of conscious and un-conscious (witting and unwitting) sins.⁶¹ In this I concur with R. Laird Harris, who concludes that the sense of the verb *shagag* is “‘goes astray in sin’ or ‘does wrong’ or the like.”⁶² I would add, however, that, at least for the Levitical system, the *shagag* sin is one that is not defiantly high-handed, as is made clear from Num 15:22–31, which contrasts *shagag* sins with “high-handed” sins. Thus I would agree with the conclusion in the Keil & Delitzsch commentary: “sinning ‘in error’ is not merely sinning in ignorance . . . , hurry, want of consideration, or carelessness . . . , but also sinning unintentionally . . . ; hence all such sins as spring from the weakness of flesh and blood, as distinguished from sins committed with a high (elevated) hand, or in haughty, defiant rebellion against God and His commandments.”⁶³

If this distinction is maintained in the usage in Gen 6:2, the verb *shagag* is well-suited to describe the actions of the ante-diluvian world, and also the reference to “their going astray” precisely fits the theological context of the entire verse. In the first part of the verse, God states that His Spirit would not indefinitely continue to “strive for” or “plead with” humanity. In the next section of the verse, the clarification is made (not reason given) that “in their going astray” humanity is demonstrating its frailty and transience. By using the term *shagag*, which indicates humanity’s going astray but not a “high-handed” sin for which there is no forgiveness (in harmony with usage in Leviticus 4 and Numbers 15), God is implying that antediluvian humanity has not yet reached the point of no return. There is still probation lingering, before the

⁶¹See Richard M. Davidson, *Song for the Sanctuary* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, forthcoming), chapter 11.

⁶²R. Laird Harris, “Exodus,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 547–548.

⁶³C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: Pentateuch (Three Volumes in One)* (reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 2:303.

antediluvians have (in NT terms) committed the “sin against the Holy Spirit” (Matt 12:31), i.e., become so hardened in sin that there is no longer any human response to the pleadings of divine mercy.

The probationary period for the ante-diluvian world. In this light, the last part of the verse also makes excellent sense. The clause “yet his days shall be 120 years” does not refer to God’s lessening the life-span down to 120 years, as would be implied if one takes the word *yabon* as “remain” (see discussion above). Rather, in harmony with the legal context of *yabon*, understood as meaning “to strive/plead,” the clause refers to a probationary period of 120 years before God brings executive judgment upon the ante-diluvian world if they do not repent and reform their ways. God recognizes the “going astray” of humanity in their frailty and transience, but also reckons with the fact that persistence in such “going astray” will ultimately lead from *shagag* kind of sin (i.e., forgivable), to “high-handed” or rebellious and defiant sin—sin against the Holy Spirit in which the sinner has become totally “corrupt” (*shachat*) and thus unresponsive to the Spirit’s promptings. Such a condition of “corruption” is exactly what Gen 6:5–12 portray, prompting God to engage in an investigative judgment,⁶⁴ followed by the executive judgment of the Flood. By utilizing the same word *shachat* in Gen 6 for the nature of humanity as “corrupt” (*shachat*) and for God’s decision to “destroy” (*shachat*), the narrative implies that God’s destructive work in the Flood is simply allowing corrupt humanity to reap the consequences of

⁶⁴God comes again for a legal trial investigation before he brings the flood (Gen 6:1–13; see esp. v. 5, 12, 13 [NRSV]): “The Lord saw . . . And God saw . . . I have determined . . .”. Nahum Sarna (*Genesis*, 46) notes: “This phrase [“The Lord saw. . .”] has juridical overtones, implying both investigation of the facts and readiness for action.” Likewise, Umberto Cassuto recognizes the divine legal proceedings implied here: “[God, as it were, says:] sentence of destruction upon all flesh has been presented before My Court of Justice, and I have already to come to a decision concerning it, and I am about to execute it” (Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, vol. 2, trans. Israel Abrams [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1984], 57).

their choice.⁶⁵

In summary, this verse is a potent description of the Holy Spirit's work of merciful and patient "pleading with" sinners, convicting them of their sins, interceding in their behalf, and warning them of coming destruction if they persist in their sin. It is also a solemn reminder that the Spirit will not always "plead" in the sinner's behalf, but will withdraw His presence and pleading when conditions are reached in which the sinner no longer responds to the Spirit's promptings, leaving God no option but to bring executive judgment (which is actually giving sinners the full measure of what they themselves have chosen). This verse anticipates NT descriptions of the Holy Spirit's work of convicting sinners of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8).

3. Exod 15:8: "And with the blast/Spirit [*ruakh*] of your nostrils/anger [*'appa'im*] the waters were gathered together; the floods stood upright like a heap; and the depths congealed in the heart of the sea."

4. Exod 15:10: "You blew with Your wind//Spirit [*ruakh*], the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters."

The triumphant Song of Moses recorded in Exod 15 was composed and sung on the eastern shore of the Red Sea after Yahweh had parted the Sea for the Israelites at the time of their Exodus from Egypt to cross through and then allowed the waves to return to their place and drown the pursuing Egyptians. In this Song Moses mentions the waters of the Sea being gathered together by the *ruakh* of Yahweh's *'appa'im* (vs. 8). This has usually been translated as

⁶⁵See Richard M. Davidson, "Flood," *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 262: "The divine act of destruction is not arbitrary. God 'destroys' what humanity had already ruined or corrupted; he mercifully brings to completion the ruin already wrought by humankind." Cf. Chun Sik Park, "Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9" (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2005), 48–52.

“the breath/blast of Yahweh’s nostrils,” taken as a poetic metaphor indicating the divine source of the wind that divided the Sea (cf. Exod 14:21).⁶⁶ While the Hebrew word *ruakh* and can certainly mean “breath/blast” and *'appaim* can mean Hebrew “nostrils,” the term *ruakh* can also be translated as “Spirit” and *'appaim* can also be translated “anger.”

It is instructive to note that “the double meaning of *'aph* as ‘nose’ and ‘anger’ appears evidently only in Hebrew,”⁶⁷ and this double meaning has been recognized in Exod 15:8.⁶⁸ The word *'aph* is a derivative of *'anaph*, which is “used exclusively in the OT of the ‘snorting anger, violent rage’ of God.”⁶⁹ The word *'aph* refers to God’s anger some 177 times in the OT.⁷⁰ Exod 15:8 appears in the context of God’s wrath, as is apparent in the previous verse: “You sent forth Your wrath which consumed them like stubble” (Exod 15:7). Various scholars have recognized that the word *'aph* in Exod 15:8 refers not only anthropomorphically to Yahweh’s “nostrils” but also indicates divine wrath.⁷¹

If the word *'aph* has the double meaning of “nostrils” and “anger” in this passage, then it may be further suggested that the word *ruakh* may also have the double meaning of

⁶⁶See, e.g., Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 353.

⁶⁷E. Johnson, “*'anaph*,” *TDOT*, 1:351.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*

⁶⁹John I. Durham, *Exodus*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 3 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 201.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

⁷¹See, e.g., Martin L. Brenner, *The Song of the Sea: Ex 15:1-21* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), 101, who recognizes that the term *'aph* indicates “both nostrils and anger.” See also, Durham, *Exodus*, who translates v. 8 as “in the wind of your anger”; Terrence E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991), 167: “vs. 8 is likely understood as a subduing of chaos, in the sense of bringing it under control to be used by Yahweh (cf. Ps 18:15—God’ anger is explicit here—a simple reference to wind will not do; 33:7)”; Martin Noth, *Exodus*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 124: “the ‘blast of his nostrils’ (v. 8) refers to his raging anger”; and Robert L. Schreckhise, “The Rhetoric of the Expressions in the Song by the Sea (Exod 15, 1-18),” *Scandinavian Journal of Theology* 21/2 (2007): 208, who translates *'aph* as “nostrils” but acknowledges that the relationship of *'aph* “to the idea of anger is also accepted.” Note also that the LXX translates *'aph* in this verse by *thymos*, “wrath.”

“wind/breath” and Spirit, both in vs. 8 and in vs. 10.⁷² Such interpretation is supported by the allusions to both creation and judgment in Exod 15. Terrence Fretheim cogently argues that throughout the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:1-18) there are clear allusions to the creation account of Gen 1: “It is God as Creator who is fundamentally at work here.”⁷³ Likewise, the judgment setting for God’s action against the Egyptians (and their gods) is explicitly mentioned in Exod 12:12, and implicit throughout the Song of the Sea. The three other OT passages where *'aph* is explicitly linked with *ruakh*—Job 4:9; 2 Sam 22:16; and Ps 18:16—all occur in the context of divine judgment. Thus, reference to judgment and creation in this passage may provide an echo of the explicit references to the Spirit in the context of creation and judgment in antecedent passages (Gen 1:2; 6:3). While the primary imagery in vss. 8 and 10 is to a “blast of Yahweh’s nostrils,” there may well be polysemantic allusion to the “Spirit of Yahweh’s anger” Who is the source of this divine judgment upon the Egyptians.

C. Indwelling Spirit (Joseph)

5. Genesis 41:38: “And Pharaoh said to his servants, ‘Can we find *such a one* as this, a man in whom *is* the Spirit of God [*ruakh 'Elohim*]?’”

The context of this passage is the story of Joseph, in particular his recognition by Pharaoh as he is brought from prison and successfully interprets Pharaoh’s dreams. Joseph does not take any credit for the interpretation, but humbly tells Pharaoh: “God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do” (Gen 41:25). In light of the seven years of plenty followed by the seven years of famine which were about to befall the land of Egypt, Joseph advises Pharaoh: “Now therefore,

⁷²This possibility has been suggested to me by Jiří Moskala in several personal conversations during the summer of 2011.

⁷³See, e.g., Fretheim, *Exodus*, 167.

let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt” (Gen 41:33). He further advises on how to collect a reserve of food during the time of plenty so as to have food during the time of famine. In verse 37, we are told that “the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants.” According to verse 39, Pharaoh recognizes the reason for Joseph’s wisdom and discernment: “Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you.”

The nature of the *ruakh*. It is in this context that Pharaoh makes the statement recorded in vs. 38: “Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom [*bo*, lit. ‘in him’] is the Spirit of God [*ruakh ‘Elohim*]?” This is the first biblical mention of someone endowed with the “Spirit of God”! We must recognize that these words come from a heathen king who did not worship the God of Israel. Hence, his knowledge of the nature of the Spirit of God would be tintured by Egyptian theology, and not necessarily informed by the Hebrew religion. Nonetheless, the verse does indicate awareness of the indwelling presence of God in the life of Joseph, giving him wisdom and discernment beyond mere human capability.

But question arises, does the verse reflect only Pharaoh’s polytheistic theology or does it also reflect the monotheistic theology of Moses, the divinely inspired author? The language of *ruakh ‘Elohim* is precisely the same as that referring to the “Spirit [not spirit] of God” elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures (as noted above in our discussion of Gen 1:2). Kidner aptly remarks: “*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). We may compare this to the situation of Nebuchadnezzar, who in the fiery furnace saw one like “the Son of God.”⁷⁴

⁷⁴See discussion of the Babylonian king’s use of this phrase, in Denroy Black’s posthumous dissertation,

The work of the Spirit. The entire narrative of Joseph’s rise to power contains many thematic, verbal, and structural parallels to the story of creation in Gen 1.⁷⁵ This leads Hamilton to make the striking statement: “The Spirit of God that hovered over the watery mass (1:2) rests upon and abides in Joseph.”⁷⁶ Hamilton further suggests that, far from representing a rather unimportant reference hardly relevant to the understanding of the Holy Spirit in the Bible, “It is likely that the expression *God’s Spirit* in the pharaoh’s speech should be read as a theological statement on pneumatology.”⁷⁷ This would make sense particularly when we consider this is the first place in Scripture where it is stated that someone is endowed with “the Spirit of God.” Hamilton proceeds to show how the expression “God’s Spirit” in the context of this passage highlights important aspects of the Spirit’s work: “It demonstrates that Pharaoh, via his rhetorical declaration, understood Joseph’s skills: Joseph has no intrinsic ability that would explain his effective insight and counsel. For Pharaoh, Joseph is one who has been divinely equipped and gifted.”⁷⁸ Inasmuch as Pharaoh’s exclamation comes after Joseph has given the practical counsel as to how to proceed based upon the predicted years of plenty followed by famine, Pharaoh’s assessment may highlight this even more than his ability to interpret the dreams. Thus, suggests Hamilton, “in Pharaoh’s mouth the expression ‘God’s Spirit’ refers to ‘outstanding ability in the areas of political economy and statesmanship.’”⁷⁹ This reminds of a similar statement by

“A Study of the Term *bar elahin* in the Context of Daniel 3:24-28, the Old Testament, and Ancient Near Eastern Literature (Th.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2010), passim.

⁷⁵See Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 288–289, for the details of these links between creation and the first Adam, and Joseph, who may be regarded as a kind of “second Adam.” Cf. B. T. Dahlberg, “On Recognizing the Unity of Genesis,” *Theology Digest* 24 (1976):360–367, who traces the linkage between a number of the themes in the “primeval history” and the Joseph story.

⁷⁶Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18–50*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 503.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid. Cf. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 221: “the king was convinced that he [Joseph] was the

Nebuchadnezzar about Daniel after he had interpreted the kings' dream (Daniel 5:14).

We will have occasion to see a further development of this understanding of the indwelling Spirit (esp. in the lives of the 70 elders and Joshua), as we look at other passages of the Pentateuch.

D. Filling, Equipping, Illuminating Spirit (Bezalel and Oholiab and other artisans)

6. **Exod 28:3:** “So you shall speak to all who are gifted artisans, whom I have filled with the Spirit of wisdom [*ruakh khokmah*], that they may make Aaron's garments, to sanctify him, that he may minister to Me as priest.”

7. **Exodus 31:3:** “And I have filled him [Bezalel] with the Spirit of God [*ruakh 'Elohim*], in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all *manner of* workmanship. . . .”

8. **Exodus 35:31:** “and He has filled him [Bezalel] with the Spirit of God [*ruakh 'Elohim*], in wisdom and understanding, in knowledge and all manner of workmanship. . . .”

Dozens of chapters in the Pentateuch are employed to describe the beautiful structures and services of Moses' wilderness tabernacle. God Himself gave the plans (Exod 25:9, 40). He is the Great Master Designer! Not only does Moses record chapter after chapter of instructions about what was to be built (Exod 25–31), but then God inspires Moses to repeat the detailed description—this time indicating that the tabernacle had been built just as God had directed (Exod 35–40).

The nature of the Spirit. God did not give the plans for the tabernacle and then say, “Do the best you can to build it!” No, God also “called by name” the artist Bezalel, from the tribe of

one best qualified to execute the plans which he had proposed. It was evident that a divine power was with him, and that there were none among the king's officers of state so well qualified to conduct the affairs of the nation at this crisis.”

Judah to the task of designing, constructing, and furnishing the wilderness tabernacle (Exod 31:2). God’s “call by name” of an individual means “special choice for a particular purpose.”⁸⁰ Bezalel’s work was a sacred vocation; he was divinely “called.” God also “filled [Heb. *male*] him with the Spirit of God [*ruakh ’Elohim*], in wisdom and understanding, in knowledge and all manner of workmanship” (Exod 35:31). It is amazing to recognize that the first person in Scripture to be filled with the Spirit of God was not a preacher or priest or prophet, but an artist!

The work of the Spirit. Jo Ann Davidson calls attention to the significance of this divine gift of the Spirit: “Elsewhere in Scripture, the Spirit of God came upon certain persons who thereby became prophets, judges, or preachers, enabling them to proclaim the Word of God. However, in the book of Exodus, the Spirit of God empowers Bezalel ‘to devise artistic designs.’ The implication seems to be that the craftsmanship of Bezalel will express, in the medium and the language of art, the revelation of God.”⁸¹

The wording of Exod 31:3 and its counterpart in 35:31 should not be taken to mean that Bezalel received several different gifts. He received only one gift—the gift of the Spirit of God. This is indicated by the syntax of the sentences in these verses: the single direct object of the sentence is *ruakh ’Elohim* (“the Spirit of God”) and what follows are three prepositional phrases each beginning with *be* (“in” or “with”). To capture this nuance in Hebrew, we may translate Exod 31:3 (and 35:31 is virtually the same) as follows: God “filled him with the Spirit of God: in/with [regard to] wisdom, [‘and’ 35:31] in/with [regard to] understanding, and in/with [regard to] knowledge, and in/with [regard to] all craftsmanship.” J. Davidson fills out the meaning and

⁸⁰R. Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1973), 210.

⁸¹Jo Ann Davidson, *Toward a Theology of Beauty: A Biblical Perspective* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008), 29.

application of these four gifts of the Spirit: (1) “wisdom” (Heb. *chochmah*) denotes the “ability” or “aptitude to create artworks;” (2) “understanding/discernment” (Heb. *tebunah*) indicates the “intelligence” to work out “the technical problems of the divine ‘blueprints’;” (3) “knowledge/skill” (Heb. *da’at*) refers to the “technical skills” and knowledge of “the natural objects he would be representing;” and (4) “all craftsmanship” (Heb. *kol-mela’kah*) depicts the needed “patience for perfection, the pride of finesse,” “attention to detail.”⁸² In other words, “the way the filling of the Spirit of God affected Bezalel was to enable him to be wiser, more insightful, more knowledgeable, and more capable of any sort of work to which God assigned him.”⁸³

Various artistic talents were divinely gifted: “to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of artistic workmanship” (Exod 31:4–5; virtually identical with 35:32–33). “In sum, Bezalel is made expert by Yahweh himself for every kind of work necessary for fulfilling the instructions given to Moses on Sinai.”⁸⁴

Bezalel and Aholiab his associate were also given another gift, evidently by the same Spirit: the gift of teaching. According to Exod 35:34 (RSV and ESV): “And he [God] has inspired him [Bezalel] to teach, both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan.” The Hebrew for “inspired” is literally “put in his heart” (as in NKJV, NASB). Bezalel and Oholiab were given ability to teach others to do a host of artistic tasks: “all the work of the engraver and the designer and the tapestry maker, in blue and purple and scarlet and fine linen,

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Stuart, *Exodus*, 650.

⁸⁴John I. Durham, *Exodus*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 3 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987),

and of the weaver—those who do every work and those who design artistic works” (vv. 35–36). Not only Bezalel and Aholiab, but other artists were gifted by God: “every gifted artisan in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, everyone whose heart was stirred, to come and do the work” (Exod 36:2). Such teaching no doubt included “the learning process generally known as apprenticeship.”⁸⁵

In light of the preceding verses linking God’s Spirit with the gift of wisdom (together with additional biblical evidence I will provide in discussing Deut 34:9 below), I find it probable that the “Spirit of wisdom” (*ruakh khokmah*) in Exod 28:3 that filled gifted artisans to make the high priest’s garments, includes reference both to the Holy Spirit and to the gift of wisdom which the Spirit bestows (as in the other biblical passages using this expression *ruakh khokmah* or the equivalent Greek *pneuma sophia*). The parallel language of “filling” (*male*) and “Spirit” (*ruakh*) found in this verse and in Exod 31:3 and 35:31 supports this conclusion. As will be argued below with regard to Deut 34:9, the phrase *ruakh khokmah* probably should be translated “the Spirit who bestows wisdom.” In Exod 28:3, a general statement is made that “the Spirit who bestows wisdom” will give His gift of wisdom to the artisans, so that they can do their work according to the will of God, and later passages dealing with the gifted artisans—Exod 31:3 and 35:31—make even more explicit that it is the “Spirit of God” who “fills” the artisans with their wisdom (i.e., artistic abilities).

This leads to a discussion of the meaning of being “filled with the Spirit.” Doug Stuart argues forcefully that the reference to filling Bezalel and the other artisans with the Spirit of God in the book of Exodus constitutes an important corrective to common modern notions about what

⁸⁵Stuart, *Exodus*, 759.

it means to be “filled with the Holy Spirit.” The filling with the Holy Spirit here involved no “powerful emotional experience that produces sensations and feelings that are otherworldly.” It did not include a “second specific work of grace in one’s life, subsequent to and deeper than mere salvation/conversion, whereby God takes over more of one’s life than would be possible if one were simply a forgiven believer.” It did not entail “speaking in tongues”—“engaging in paratactic vocalization not associated with any earthly language”—as a “requisite sign of being filled with the Spirit and that apart from speaking in tongues the filling of the Spirit does not occur.” It did not refer to a kind of “drunkenness, in other words, characterized by a blissful loss of self-control.”⁸⁶ None of these is found in Bezalel’s being filled with the Spirit!

Stuart suggests that this passage points to the real meaning of “being filled with the Spirit” throughout Scripture: “‘being filled with the Spirit’ is a biblical idiom for ‘having from God the ability to do or say exactly what God wants done or said.’”⁸⁷ For Bezalel, being filled by the Spirit “meant that he could correctly construct the tabernacle and its furnishings exactly as God wanted them made . . .” For the prophet who is filled by the Spirit (which we will study below in regard to Balaam), being filled by the Spirit means “to speak God’s word forcefully and effectively—to say what God wanted said.” Stuart suggests that in the New Testament (see, e.g. the book of Acts) the idiom carries the same meaning: “each account of being filled with the Holy Spirit includes overt reference to its result: a speaker’s ability to speak God’s word as God wants it spoken (Acts 2:4; 4:31; 9:17; 13:9, 52).” Thus Stuart argues that “being filled by the Spirit” is not the same as the “New Covenant phenomenon of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.” Bezalel’ experience was not that of the indwelling Spirit; rather he was “aided by God’s Spirit to

⁸⁶Stuart, *Exodus*, 651.

⁸⁷Ibid.

do exactly what God wanted him to do, so the product of his craftsmanship was fully to God's high standards, essentially as if God had done it himself."⁸⁸

This does not mean that the "New Covenant phenomenon of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit" did not occur in OT times (as Stuart seems to imply). This was already demonstrated in the life of Joseph (see above), and will be seen to occur in the life of Joshua (see below) and throughout OT times (see especially the promise of Ezek 36:27).

E. Settling ("Resting"), Delegating/Appointing Spirit (Seventy Elders)

9. Numbers 11:17: "Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit [*haruakh*] that *is* upon you and will put *the same* upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear *it* yourself alone."

10 (two occurrences). Numbers 11:25: "Then the LORD came down in the cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit [*haruakh*] that *was* upon him, and placed *the same* upon the seventy elders; and it happened, when the Spirit [*haruakh*] rested upon them, that they prophesied, although they never did *so* again.

11. Numbers 11:26: "But two men had remained in the camp: the name of one *was* Eldad, and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit [*haruakh*] rested upon them. Now they *were* among those listed, but who had not gone out to the tabernacle; yet they prophesied in the camp."

12. Numbers 11:29: "Then Moses said to him, 'Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the LORD's people were prophets *and* that the LORD would put His Spirit [*rukho*] upon them!'"

⁸⁸Ibid., 651–2. Stuart also points to the NT examples in Eph 5:18–19 where filling by the Spirit is immediately followed by speaking as God would have one do.

Several verses in Numbers 11 refer to the Holy Spirit, as part of a single narrative involving the appointment of the seventy elders of Israel, and we will deal with these passages together. The occasion of this story is the complaining of the people of Israel at the instigation of the mixed multitude among them, in particular regarding the provision of food that only consisted of manna and did include the meat and other delicacies that they remembered eating in Egypt. Moses, in exasperation and desperation, cried out to God: “I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me” (Num 11:14). God responds to Moses’ plea for relief from his burden of responsibility by instructing Moses to gather together seventy elders of Israel: “bring them to the tabernacle of meeting that they may stand there with you” (vs. 17). Then comes the first reference to the Spirit in this narrative: “Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit [*haruakh*] that *is* upon you and will put *the same* upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear *it* yourself alone” (vs. 18)

Verse 25 describes how what God said He would do is exactly what happened : “Then the LORD came down in the cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit that *was* upon him, and placed *the same* upon the seventy elders; and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, although they never did *so* again.”

Two of the members of listed as among the seventy elders did not come to the tabernacle, but the Spirit came upon them nonetheless (v. 26): “But two men had remained in the camp: the name of one *was* Eldad, and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them. Now they *were* among those listed, but who had not gone out to the tabernacle; yet they prophesied in the camp.”

When Joshua objected to these two men prophesying, out of regard for Moses' authority, Moses reassured Joshua (v. 29): "Then Moses said to him, 'Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the LORD's people were prophets *and* that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!'"

The nature of the Spirit. Some have suggested that what is referred to in these passages is Moses' spirit, and not God's Spirit. But Moses himself lays this misinterpretation to rest in the verse we have just quoted (v. 29): "Oh that . . . the Lord would put His Spirit [*rukhi*] upon them all!"⁸⁹ It was God's Spirit, not Moses' spirit, who was placed upon the seventy elders. It is true that "the Spirit" was taken from Moses and put upon the elders, but this was in order to show that the work of the seventy elders was a delegation of responsibility from that which belonged to Moses. The text also seems to imply that Moses had been given sufficient measure of "the Spirit" to accomplish the work assigned to him, and it was his lack of trust in God and focus upon his own cares that called forth his request for assistance (note the exasperated, almost complaining remarks of Moses in vv. 11–14).⁹⁰

Other interpreters have argued that when God "took (lit. 'withdrew,' Heb. *'atsal*) from the Spirit [*min-haruakh*] which was upon Moses" that this lessened the amount of the Spirit that was upon Moses. But the wording in the Hebrew is very precise, although seemingly awkward: "the Spirit" (*ha-ruakh*) remains intact throughout. "The idea in this strange wording is clear

⁸⁹For further discussion of this issue of the spirit—whether human or divine—see Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 211, and bibliography supplied in his note 39.

⁹⁰See White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 380: "All their hardships, even their imaginary sufferings, they charged upon him; and their wicked murmurings made doubly heavy the burden of care and responsibility under which he staggered. In his distress he was tempted even to distrust God. His prayer was almost a complaint. . . . They [the 70 elders] would never have been chosen had Moses manifested faith corresponding to the evidences he had witnessed of God's power and goodness. But he had magnified his own burdens and services, almost losing sight of the fact that he was only the instrument by which God had wrought. He was not excusable in indulging, in the slightest degree, the spirit of murmuring that was the curse of Israel. Had he relied fully upon God, the Lord would have guided him continually and would have given him strength for every emergency."

enough: they will share the same Holy Spirit who animates and empowers Moses.”⁹¹ As Keil and Delitzsch Commentary illustrates: “the Spirit of God is not something material, which is diminished by being divided, but resembles a flame of fire, which does not decrease in intensity, but increases rather by extension.”⁹²

The use of the term “the Spirit” (*ha-ruakh*) with the article implies an entity with its own identity, and not simply an impersonal power or influence flowing from Yahweh. This is contrasted a few verses later when *ruakh* is used without the article and refers to “a wind [which] went out from the LORD and brought quail from the sea” (Num 11:31). The word “Spirit” (*ruakh*) with the article also found in Num 27:18 for “the Spirit” that indwelt Joshua, throughout Ezekiel as “the Spirit” which lifted Ezekiel up and carried him to various places (Ezek 3:13; 11:1, 24; 43:5); and for “the Spirit” by which David received the plans for building the Temple (1 Chron 28:12). It is none other than the Person of the Holy Spirit! (See references to this “Holy Spirit in OT passages like Ps 51:10 and Isa 63:10.)

The work of the Spirit. The language that is used in connection with the giving of the Spirit in this chapter is different than what we have encountered thus far in the Pentateuch. In the case of Joseph, the Spirit was “in” (Heb. *be*) him. In the case of Bezalel, the Spirit “filled” (Heb. *male’*) the artisan. Here in Numbers 11, the Spirit that was “upon” (Heb. *‘al*) Moses is “put upon” (Heb. *sim* or *natan* + *‘al*) the seventy elders. This latter expression of the Spirit being “put upon” someone is used elsewhere in OT Scripture for the special empowering of the Spirit upon the coming Messianic Servant (Isa 42:1; cf. 59:21). The Spirit also came “upon” the OT

⁹¹Ronald B. Allen, “Numbers,” in *Genesis—Leviticus*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 792.

⁹²Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, 3:79. Cf. *Sifre Numbers* 43.

judges giving them power to deliver God's people (e.g. Judg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29), and will be poured out "upon" ('*al*) flesh in the "last days," empowering people to prophesy (Joel 2:28 [Heb 3:1]; cf. Acts 2:16–17 for a partial fulfillment of this promise).

The work of the Spirit which was put upon the 70 elders was to equip them to be able to share the burdens that had been solely on Moses' shoulders heretofore. Yahweh stated this clearly (v. 17): "I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you (*ittka*), that you may not bear it yourself alone."⁹³ The phrase "burden of the people" (Heb. *massa' ha'am*) may be interpreted either as "the people's burden" or "the burden regarding [i.e. the responsibility and care for] the people." Although some have adopted the former interpretation,⁹⁴ the immediate context seems to point to the latter reading. Moses' had earlier complained to the Lord that he could not "bear [*nasa*] all this people" (v. 14), and had described to Yahweh the nature of this burden (v. 12): "Did I beget them, that You should say to me, Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child, to the land which You swore to their fathers?" Then he describes the complaining of the people in clambering for flesh meat (v. 13), which only made his burden heavier. Moses is thus describing his "burden" regarding the people, which involves his responsibility and burden of care for them.⁹⁵

It must be noted that at least some of Moses' administrative duties had already been shared with other leaders at the wise counsel of Jethro (Exod 18:13ff). A group of seventy elders

⁹³White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 381: "Like the disciples on the Day of Pentecost, they were endued with 'power from on high.' It pleased the Lord thus to prepare them for their work, and to honor them in the presence of the congregation, that confidence might be established in them as men divinely chosen to unite with Moses in the government of Israel."

⁹⁴See, e.g., Ashley, *Numbers*, 211.

⁹⁵See White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 380: "their wicked murmurings made doubly heavy the burden of care and responsibility under which he staggered."

also already appear in the Exodus narrative in Exod 24, when they accompanied Moses and Aaron and his sons up Mt. Sinai “to worship” (v. 1) and specifically to participate in the covenant ratification service (vv. 9–11). Thus it appears that this group had a special spiritual function in their assisting of Moses, and likewise in Num 11 “these elders must have been intended to give him spiritual support.”⁹⁶ At the same time, they were to be chosen from among Israelite leaders whom Moses knew “to be the elders of the people and officers [*shotrim*] over them” (v. 16). The word *shoter* had been used to describe “the (Israelite) foreman over the labor gangs in Egypt” (Exod 5:6, 10 14, 15 19),⁹⁷ and thus implied men of ability, faithful and experienced assistants.⁹⁸ In the context of murmuring and rebellion in which this narrative is embedded, the work of the elders would be partly focused upon stemming the tide of iniquity and even insurrection. “The task of the elders will be to help in the administration of the immense population, in its varied needs, especially in the context of the increasing impiety of the people.”⁹⁹ Roy Gane summarizes the possible difference between what was assigned in Exod 18 and this delegating in Num 11: “Whereas Jethro earlier advised Moses to delegate judges for handling disputes between the people (Ex. 18:13–36), here it is the Lord who takes initiative to make tribal leaders an extension of Moses and a buffer between him and their people.”¹⁰⁰ Jacob

⁹⁶Gordon J. Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1981), 108. Cf. Ashley, *Numbers*, 211: “The purpose here is not just administrative sharing, but sharing also in spiritual matters, in the people’s burden (see also 11:25–29).”

⁹⁷*HALOT*, sv. *shoter*.

⁹⁸White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 380: “The Lord permitted Moses to choose for himself the most faithful and efficient men to share the responsibility with him.”

⁹⁹Allen, “Numbers,” 794. Cf. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 380: “The Lord permitted Moses to choose for himself the most faithful and efficient men to share the responsibility with him. Their influence would assist in holding in check the violence of the people, and quelling insurrection.” Yet, White continues with the depiction of the “downside” of this appointment: “yet serious evils would eventually result from their promotion” (*ibid.*).

¹⁰⁰Roy Gane, *Leviticus and Numbers*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 581. It is only partially correct to say that the Lord took the initiative with regard to the 70 elders, since it was because of Moses’ lack of faith that God condescended to allow this delegation of responsibility.

Milgrom speaks of this group as an “advisory council of seventy,” and points out how “this institution survived in the seventy-member Sanhedrin, the supreme political, religious, and judicial body in Palestine during the Roman period.”¹⁰¹

The appointment ceremony for the seventy elders. The text indicates that Moses “gathered” the seventy elders and “stationed them” (lit. “caused them to stand”) “surrounding, all around” (Heb. *sabibot*, fem. pl.) the tabernacle. It must have been an impressive sight, with seventy men stationed all around the sacred tent! “Then the LORD came down in the cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and placed the same upon the seventy elders; and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon [*nuakh ‘al*] them, that they prophesied [*naba’*, Hithpael impf.]” (v. 25). The text does not make clear how the transfer of the Spirit from Moses to the elders took place, but it speaks of the Spirit as “resting upon” (Heb. *nuakh ‘al*) them. The Hebrew *nuakh ‘al* means “to settle down upon,” and is used of the ark “settling down upon” the mountains of Ararat (Gen 8:4), the locusts “settling down upon” the ground (Exod 10:14), and the soles of the feet “settling down upon the water” in crossing the Jordan (Josh 2:19). It will later refer to the Spirit which was upon Elijah “settling down upon” his successor Elijah (2 Kings 2:19), and of the Holy Spirit “settling down upon” the Messiah (Isa 11:2).

The miraculous external evidence for this “settling down” of the Spirit upon the seventy elders is that they began to “prophesy.” The verb “to prophesy” (Heb. *naba’* in the Hithpael) is used only here in the entire Pentateuch. This verb is a denominative of the noun *nabi’*, and basically means, “to act/speak like a prophet.”¹⁰² Scholars have suggested that the “prophesying” of the seventy elders was some kind of ecstatic behavior as is commonly

¹⁰¹Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: JPS, 1989), 65.

¹⁰²*HALOT*, sv. *naba’*.

understood to have happened among the non-Israelite prophets in the ANE, and perhaps in the case of Saul (1 Sam 10:10), but the text of Num 11 gives no hints of any ecstatic behavior. It is instructive to note that the Pentateuch refers repeatedly to prophets, and consistently the prophet is connected, not with some ecstatic behavior, but with proclaiming a message purported to be from the Lord (see Exod 7:1; Num 12:6; Deut 13:1–5; 18:15, 18–23).¹⁰³ Thus it does not seem likely that ecstatic behavior was the focus of the seventy elders “prophesying,” although the presence of physical phenomenon, such as accompanied the prophesying of Balaam (Num 24:1–4) cannot be ruled out.

Why was “prophesying” the sign to accompany the “settling down” of the Spirit upon the elders? It is fascinating to notice that the word “burden” (Heb. *massa*’) which Moses used for what he had borne and what the elders would share in bearing (v. 17), is the precise phrase which the later prophets would use in describing their prophetic message (see, e.g., Isa 13:1; Hab 1:1; Lam 2:14; Jer 23:33–38; Hos 8:10). The “burden” of the prophets was their “prophesying.”! Jer 23:33–38 even makes a pun using the two meanings (or according to *HALOT* the two different homophones) of *massa*’. In English we have a similar phenomenon, where we can speak of the “burden” as a literal load carried by an animal, and also the “burden” as the message of a speaker. It is possible that such homophonic pun was at the basis of Num 11, as God gave a prophetic “burden” to those who would be sharing the “burden” of the responsibilities with Moses.

According to the MT, this “prophesying,” as a public confirmation of the conferral of the Spirit, happened only once to the seventy elders: *welo’ yasaphu* “and they did not continue [to

¹⁰³In Gen 20:7 Abraham is called a “prophet” to Abimelech, but no indication is given of what that prophetic work entailed.

do it].”¹⁰⁴ The purpose of this external manifestation of the Spirit settling upon the elders that surrounded the tabernacle was “to honor them in the presence of the congregation, that confidence might be established in them as men divinely chosen to unite with Moses in the government of Israel.”¹⁰⁵ “It seems that the temporary gift of prophecy to these elders was primarily to establish their credentials as Spirit-empowered leaders rather than to make of them ongoing agents of the prophecy of the Spirit. Their principal task will not be revelatory; God still speaks through Moses.”¹⁰⁶ “The outward manifestation of the Spirit validated their appointment, evidenced their anointment, and evoked an announcement.”¹⁰⁷

The service was conducted at the tabernacle, the place of revelatory activity, with Yahweh Himself presiding, that it might be clear that the prophetic manifestation was from divine origin.¹⁰⁸ But two of the elders listed among the seventy did not appear at the sanctuary. According to rabbinic interpretation, they declined to come because of a feeling of inadequacy, and this interpretation is the one followed by Ellen White: “Two of the seventy, humbly counting themselves unworthy of so responsible a position, had not joined their brethren at the tabernacle; but the Spirit of God came upon them where they were, and they, too, exercised the prophetic gift.”¹⁰⁹ The Holy Spirit cannot be boxed in, and confined to conventional rules! Joshua, hearing of the prophesying of Eldad and Medad in the camp, was disturbed by this “irregularity,”¹¹⁰ and

¹⁰⁴This Hebrew phrase was reprinted by some ancient interpreters as *welo' yasuphu* “and they did not cease,” implying that their prophetic office was lifelong. Targum Onqelos, Targum Jonathan; the Vulgate and the KJV version follow this reading.

¹⁰⁵White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 381.

¹⁰⁶Allen, “Numbers,” 794.

¹⁰⁷R. Dennis Cole, *Numbers*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2000), 194.

¹⁰⁸Milgrom, *Numbers*, 65.

¹⁰⁹Targ. Jon., Sif. Num. 95, Sanh. 173. Cf. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 381.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 398.

also “jealous for the honor of his master,”¹¹¹ and cried out, “Moses, my lord, forbid them” (v. 28).

But Moses’ reply showed “his lofty, unselfish spirit” when he replied: “Are you zealous [Heb. *qana* ’] for my sake? Oh, that all the LORD’s people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit upon them!” Moses’ wish, stated in the optative mood “Would that it were so. . .” (Heb. *mi yiten*), expressed more than he knew, as the promise of Joel “I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh” (Joel 2:28; Heb 3:1) reached a partial fulfillment at Pentecost and will be ultimately fulfilled at the end of time!

Implications for the biblical theology of the Holy Spirit. Ronald Allen has rightly noted that “In a sense what occurred here in the desert is a presentment ahead of time of the bestowal of the Spirit on the believers in the Upper Room following the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.”¹¹² Or, as Cole puts it, “The process of the bestowing of the Spirit and the response of the seventy reflects a pattern of God’s working that is carried out in ultimate fashion in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon those who were gathered in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost.”¹¹³ In this account we have a foretaste of Pentecost—when the Holy Spirit Who inaugurated Christ as Priest King in the heavenly sanctuary also was poured out upon the waiting disciples in the Upper Room¹¹⁴—and a foretaste of the ultimate outpouring of the Spirit in the latter rain of the end time.

F. Inspiring/Revealing Spirit (Balaam)

13. Numbers 24:2: “And Balaam raised his eyes, and saw Israel encamped according to

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Allen, “Numbers,” 794.

¹¹³Cole, *Numbers*, 193.

¹¹⁴Acts 2:33; cf. Heb 1:9; Ps 133:2; Lev 8; Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 38–39.

their tribes; and the Spirit of God [*ruakh 'Elohim*] came upon him.”

This passage comes in the context of the urging by the Moabite king Balak for the prophet Balaam to come and to curse Israel. Out of greed for gain, Balaam finally agrees to come, but warns Balak that “The word that God puts in my mouth, that I must speak.” Numbers 23–24 record four different oracles of Balaam, utilizing the term “oracle” (*ne'um*) three times. This term is “the most solemn asseveration of divine truth that a human being can utter in the Lord’s name.”¹¹⁵ The first two oracles (Num 23) point back to Israel’s past while the last two (Num 24) focus upon the eschatological future messianic king. The distinction between the two sets of oracles is especially apparent from their introductions. The introduction to the first two oracles records that Balaam left Balak standing by the sacrifices as he went off by himself, while introduction to the last two oracles indicates that Balaam stayed with Balak (23:1–3, 15; contrast 24:1). Further, in preparing to receive the first two oracles it appears that Balaam involved himself in divinations, but not in the last two (24:1). Finally, the mode of divine revelation is stated differently. Regarding the first two oracles the record indicates simply that “The Lord met Balaam and put a word in his mouth” (Num 23:16; cf. vv. 4–5) and there follows the brief statement: “Then Balaam uttered his oracle” (Num 23: 7, 18). However, the last two oracles are both introduced with an elaborate reference to their visionary character: “Then he uttered his oracle: The oracle of Balaam son of Beor, the oracle of one whose eye sees clearly, the oracle of one who hears the words of God, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened” (Num 24:3, 15). “This unexpected language is used to prepare the reader for the heightened revelation that is about to come from the unwitting messenger. The oracles

¹¹⁵Harrison, *Numbers*, 317.

are building in intensity and in their depth of meaning.”¹¹⁶

Finally, and this is the focus of our study, the third oracle is introduced by reference to the Spirit of God: “And Balaam raised his eyes, and saw Israel encamped according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God [*ruakh 'Elohim*] came upon him” (24:2).

The nature of the *ruakh 'Elohim*. The term *ruakh 'Elohim* (“Spirit of God”) used in Num 24:2 is one that we have already encountered three times in our study of the Spirit in the Pentateuch (Gen 1:2; 41:38; and Exod 31:3). As in the other places, this is a term that denotes more than an impersonal influence emanating from God. It is the same Spirit that came “upon” Moses and the seventy elders (Num 11:17, 25, 26, 29) and is promised to “come upon all flesh” in the last days (Joel 2:28), which promise was partially fulfilled in the Upper Room at Pentecost (Acts 2:16–17). It is the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead!

The work of the Spirit. In Num 24 the Spirit of God carries out a work that was only temporarily and briefly carried out in the narrative of Num 11: the work of prophetic inspiration. Whereas the gift of prophetic inspiration (“prophesying”) was given to the seventy elders primarily for the purpose of validating their appointment as Moses’ assistants to help bear some of his burdens, here we see the Holy Spirit operating to inspire an established prophet of God in his work of speaking for God.

In this passage we have perhaps the clearest picture of physical phenomena that may accompany the “visionary state” of a true prophet of God. “Although lying prone, he now had his eyes opened fully . . . to see the revelation of the Lord. Balaam’s language is comparable to that found in later Hebrew prophets (Ezek. 13:7; Amos 1:1; Mic. 1:1) to describe his perception,

¹¹⁶Allen, “Numbers,” 904.

the verb . . . meaning ‘to receive in a vision.’”¹¹⁷ While receiving the vision, Balaam looked “with staring eyes” (NEB); he both sees the vision of the Almighty and hears the words of God, apparently oblivious to what was going on around him. “What Balaam was now seeing transcended the immediate limitations of time and space as he gazed into the future. The source of his vision was contained in and proceeded from the Almighty.”¹¹⁸

Note that the phraseology of Balaam in his self-revelation of Num 24:3–4 (“oracle,” one used by “God” (*’el*), “Spirit of God”) “is used by the great King David in 2 Sam 23:1–2. In the context of the future kingship in Israel (vv. 7-8), these words of Balaam provide a precursive pattern for the coming fulfillment of the anointed deliver [*sic*] for the kingdom.”¹¹⁹

The shift from a past-looking perspective (Israel’s divine election) in the first two oracles to a future-oriented perspective (Israel’s eschatological, Messianic-centered future) in the last two oracles is especially apparent in Balaam’s reference to Israel’s “Exodus.” In the second oracle, Balaam says of Israel’s past: “God brings *them* [plural] out of Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox” (Num 23:22). But in the third oracle, Balaam repeats the exact same line in Hebrew, except he utilizes the singular form, applying it to the future king (the representative “Israelite”): “God brings *him* [singular, not plural] out of Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox” (Num 24:8). The identity of the “him” as conquering king is clarified in the fourth oracle as the eschatological (“latter days,” v. 14) Messianic King: “I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; a Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel. . . .” (v.17). The Messianic King is portrayed as experiencing a new eschatological Exodus, recapitulating in His

¹¹⁷Harrison, *Numbers*, 317.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹¹⁹Cole, *Numbers*, 418.

life the events of historical Israel in their Exodus from Egypt.¹²⁰

Thus the work of the Spirit in inspiring the prophet, was both to “forth-tell” and “foretell” the message of God that was revealed to him in vision. This work of the Spirit will be seen repeatedly throughout the OT and NT as the various prophets are inspired by the Holy Spirit to faithfully deliver the divine revelation that they have received.

G. The Commissioning Spirit (Joshua)

14. Numbers 27:18: “And the LORD said to Moses: ‘Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit [*ruakh*], and lay your hand on him. . . .’”

15. Deuteronomy 34:9: “Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the Spirit of wisdom [*ruakh khokmah*], for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses.”

These two verses appear in the context of the ordination of Joshua to take Moses place as the leader of the children of Israel. In the account of Num 27:12–23, God reminds Moses that because of his rebellion against God in the Wilderness of Zin, he cannot go up with Israel into the Promised Land. Moses entreats God to provide a new leader in his place, “that the congregation of the LORD may not be like sheep which have no shepherd” (v. 17). God instructs Moses to “commission” (Heb. *tsawah*) Joshua to be the leader of Israel in his place. In Deut 34:9, after recording Moses’ death, the one who under inspiration added this account (possibly Ezra) reminds the readers that Joshua had taken Moses’ place. These two accounts together describe seven major elements involved in the commissioning of Joshua:

¹²⁰For further discussion, see Richard M. Davidson, “The Eschatological Literary Structure of the Old Testament,” in *Creation, Life, and Hope: Essays in Honor of Jacques B. Doukhan*, ed. Jiří Moskala (Berrien Springs, MI: Old Testament Department, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 2000), 356–357; cf. Friedbert Ninow, *Indicators of Typology within the Old Testament: The Exodus Motif* (Frankfort am Main; New York: P. Lang, 2001), 160–169.

- (1) Moses was to “take” (Heb. *laqach*) Joshua, i.e., to select him (v. 18).
- (2) The basis of this selection was that Joshua was “a man in whom is the Spirit” (v. 18).
- (3) Moses was to lay his hand (*samech yad*) on Joshua (v. 18). This was the central action in the commissioning service (see below).
- (4) Moses was to “set him [Heb. ‘amad in the Hif., lit. ‘cause him to stand’] before the priest and all the congregation” (v. 19), i.e., publically present Joshua.
- (5) Moses was to and “commission [Heb. *tsawah*, ‘command, charge, send him for his task’] him in their sight” (v. 19).
- (6) Moses was to give/invest (Heb. *natan*) some of his “authority” (Heb. *hod*, ‘honor, dignity, authority’) to Joshua, “that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient” (v. 20).
- (7) The result of the laying on of hands was that Joshua was “full of the Spirit of wisdom;” and “the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses” (Deut 34:9)

In a recent doctoral dissertation, Keith Mattingly has analyzed these passages in depth, demonstrating a rich theology of “commissioning” (or ordination).¹²¹ Mattingly’s major concern was to examine the meaning of the rite of laying on of hands. He demonstrates a multifaceted meaning of this ritual: (1) *identification* of Joshua as God’s man for leadership in Israel; (2) *confirmation* of the spiritual gifts already given to Joshua; (3) *initiation* of Joshua into office as “pastor/shepherd” of the people of Israel; (4) *investiture* of responsibility and authority and

¹²¹Keith Mattingly, “The Laying on of Hands on Joshua: An Exegetical Study of Numbers 27:12–23 and Deuteronomy 34:9” (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1997). See the summary of his findings in idem, “The Significance of Joshua’s Reception of the Laying on of Hands in Numbers 27:12–23,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 39, no. 2 (Autumn 2001), 191–208; idem, “Joshua’s Reception of the Laying on of Hands, Part 2: Deuteronomy 34:7 and Conclusion,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 40, no. 1 (Spring 2002), 89–103.

dedication to leadership; and (5) *transfer* of new spiritual power from the Lord's Spirit, through Moses, to act in behalf of the Lord and function better as a leader. Mattingly shows that in commissioning there is no automatic, sacramental bestowal of ecclesiastical power; success is based upon Joshua's dependence upon God by meditating upon His word and faithful obedience (see Joshua's thrice-repeated "charge": Deut 3:21–28; 31:1–8, 14, 23; Josh 1:1–9). Our special concern in this paper is the nature and work of the Spirit involved in this commissioning process.

The nature of the Spirit. The *ruakh* mentioned in Num 27:18 may be regarded, first of all, on the level of human "spirit," in light of Moses' address to God in the preceding v. 16: "Let the LORD, the God of the spirits [*rukhot*] of all flesh, set a man over the congregation." Yahweh, as the God the "spirits of all flesh," is to set over Israel a man of flesh in whom is spirit. This expression "God of the spirits of all flesh" is only found one other time in Scripture, in the context of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, used by Moses and Aaron as they intercede on behalf of the congregation in response to God's intention to consume the people (Num 16:22). Yahweh is the Sovereign God, "Source of the breath [*rukhot*] of all life,"¹²² and therefore can know what the spirit of a man really is like. When God identifies Joshua as "a man in whom there is spirit [*ruakh*]," this indicates "that YHWH knows who Joshua is and can guarantee Moses that Joshua possess the requisite spiritual qualifications and skills for leadership."¹²³ The term *ruakh* "spirit" also refers to the animating life principle and disposition of mind and attitude in humans; a "man of spirit" and may refer to one who is courageous, bold, energetic, and full of life—all qualities that characterized Joshua in his earlier works of

¹²²Milgrom, *Numbers*, 234.

¹²³Mattingly, "The Laying on of Hands on Joshua," 235.

leadership before being called to be Moses' successor.¹²⁴

But the term *ruakh* in Num 27:18 refers to more than human “spirit.” It also implies the indwelling of the divine Spirit. The lack of an article attached to *ruakh* does not preclude its being used for the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Chron 12:18; Ezek 11:24; 43:5). In light of the larger Pentateuchal context, where Moses is clearly endowed with the divine Spirit and shared some of this divine Spirit with the seventy elders (see Num 11:16–17, 24–25; see discussion above), one would expect that Moses' successor Joshua would also be endowed with the divine Spirit as was Moses and the 70 elders.¹²⁵ Furthermore, other examples in the OT indicate that it is the divine Spirit that comes upon the leaders of God's people.¹²⁶ Finally—and this is most decisive—the one other text in Scripture which refers to a “man” in whom there is “spirit” is concerning Joseph (Gen 41:38), and as we saw above, this “spirit” is specifically referred to as the “Spirit of God,” i.e., the divine Spirit. The similarity of language between the experience of Joseph and Joshua constitutes an intertextual parallel, inviting the interpreter to interpret the second reference (to Joshua) along the same lines as the first (Joseph). Thus, the indwelling *ruakh* in Joshua, described in Num 27:18, is ultimately the divine Spirit of God. Mattingly summarizes: “YHWH, the God of the spirits of all flesh, identified Joshua, a man in whom there is spirit. Joshua is thus

¹²⁴Ibid., 238–239. Compare the description of Caleb, Joshua's fellow-spy who brought back a “good report” from Canaan, who had a “different spirit [*ruakh 'acheret*]” than the ten spies, one who, God says, “followed Me fully” (Num 14:24). This phrase “follow fully” is also used of both Caleb and Joshua in Num 32:11, and literally means “completely filled themselves with YHWH,” which, as Mattingly explains (p. 316), implies “the idea of total obedience and dedication.” For discussion of the spiritual character qualities of Joshua, see Richard M. Davidson, *In the Footsteps of Joshua* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1995), 13–23. Cf. Ellen White's summary of Joshua's Spirit-inspired character traits: “Courageous, resolute, and persevering, prompt, incorruptible, unmindful of selfish interests I his care for those committed to his charge, and above all, inspired by a living faith in God—such was the character of the man divinely chosen to conduct the armies of Israel in their entrance upon the Promised Land” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 481).

¹²⁵Leon J. Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), 49–50.

¹²⁶The divine Spirit comes upon judges (Judg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14), on prophets (Num 24:2; 1 Sam 10:10; 1 Kgs 22:21–24), and on kings (1 Sam 11:6; 16:13).

indicated as one with an indomitable and courageous spirit. But more, as the giver of spirit, YHWH also identifies Joshua as one to whom he had “given a special Spirit, a Spirit that has changed him and endowed him for leadership.”¹²⁷

The same may be said of the “Spirit of wisdom” that “filled” (Heb. *male*’) Joshua after the laying on of hands by Moses, described in Deut 34:9. This is parallel to the description of Bezalel, who was “filled” (Heb. *male*’) with “the Spirit of God [*ruakh* *Elohim*], in wisdom” (Exod 35:32), which “Spirit” (as we saw in our discussion above) was to be identified with the Holy Spirit, who brought special wisdom to Bezalel beyond his previously-possessed aptitudes skills.

The work of the Spirit. According to Num 27:18, Joshua at the time of his installation into office already was indwelt by the Spirit. Just as the Spirit’s indwelling in Joseph gifted and equipped him with “outstanding ability in the areas of political economy and statesmanship,”¹²⁸ just as Bezalel’s being filled with the Spirit endowed him with wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and craftsmanship for the construction of the wilderness tabernacle, so Joshua was indwelt by the Spirit. “YHWH had already chosen, authenticated, and endowed him with a divine spirit of skill, ability, knowledge, and insight to qualify him for the work. This endowment was not something new or sudden, it was a permanent influence proceeding from God already dwelling in him rather than a temporary empowering for a specific action.”¹²⁹ Already before his installation as Moses’ successor, the Holy Spirit had endowed Joshua with the “divine charisma of leadership in the same fashion as later for Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah, and

¹²⁷Mattingly, “Joshua’s Reception,” 197.

¹²⁸Ibid. Cf. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 221: “the king was convinced that he [Joseph] was the one best qualified to execute the plans which he had proposed. It was evident that a divine power was with him, and that there were none among the king’s officers of state so well qualified to conduct the affairs of the nation at this crisis.”

¹²⁹Mattingly, “The Laying on of Hands on Joshua,” 238.

David through whom YHWH directed the affairs of His nation.”¹³⁰

Furthermore, according to Deut 34:9, Joshua was filled (Heb. *male'*)¹³¹ with the “Spirit of wisdom” (*ruakh khokmah*) as a result of Moses’ laying on of hands upon him. There are seven divine “filling” passages in the OT.¹³² Besides Deut 34:9, we have already looked at four more: Exod 28:3; 31:3; 35:31, 35. The sixth is 1 Kgs 7:14 (Hiram filled with wisdom), and the seventh is Mic 3:8 (Micah filled with power of the Spirit of the LORD). As we have already seen in our discussion of the four “filling” passages above, the divine “filling” with wisdom is always associated with a particular need (such as building the wilderness tabernacle, conquering the Promised Land). In each case, such as the “filling” of Bezalel and the other artisans with wisdom, “Each individual receiving the ‘spirit of wisdom,’ an otherwise worthy person previously endowed with excellent gifts, received additional gifts when commissioned for service. Each received an extra equipping by YHWH to make it possible for him, or her, to accomplish the task YHWH had delegated.”¹³³ Mattingly summarizes the focus of these passages: “wisdom that filled others was twofold: (a) a practical ability to accomplish tasks; and (b) the skill to lead which resulted from a receptive heart.”¹³⁴

We have already discussed the four occurrences of the expression “being filled with the Spirit of wisdom” in connection with its usage with regard to the artisans who constructed the sanctuary (Exod 28:3; 31:3; 35:31); there we noticed that this phrase is also used of the filling of

¹³⁰Ibid.

¹³¹See *ibid.*, 314–5 for a summary of evidence that *male'* in this verse is a stative Qal perfect verb (“was filled”) and not an attributive adjective (“full”) or noun (“fullness”).

¹³²See Richard G. Fairman, “An Exegesis of ‘Filling’ Texts Which Refer to the Doctrine of Filling” (Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1986).

¹³³Ibid., 320.

¹³⁴Ibid., 322.

the coming Messiah with the Spirit of wisdom (Isa 11:2).¹³⁵ We concluded that “‘being filled with the Spirit’ [of wisdom] is a biblical idiom for ‘having from God the ability to do or say exactly what God wants done or said.’”¹³⁶ A study of the “wisdom” (Heb. *khokmah*) mentioned elsewhere in Deuteronomy reveals four points of emphasis: (1) perceptive insight and the ability to judge; (2) impartiality and courage and trust in God; (3) obedience to God’s laws; and (4) recognition of where different courses of action would lead.¹³⁷ Such were the contours of the “spirit of wisdom” granted by God to Joshua in the commissioning service.

Prior to being filled with the Spirit of wisdom, Joshua already “possessed a broad intellect, an ability to comprehend his surrounding world, and a life experience informed by his acknowledgment of, and commitment to, YHWH.” But as a result of the laying on of hands,¹³⁸ Joshua was given “the practical skills to accomplish his mission; and . . . leadership skills with their attendant responsibilities, ability to interpret YHWH’s law, and ability to determine the results of various courses of action.”¹³⁹ Joshua already was indwelt by the Spirit, but because of the laying on of hands, he received “an extra measure of the spirit of wisdom mediated by the physical contact of Moses’ hands. . . . [T]his special gift of wisdom gave Joshua extra skills to better lead the children of Israel.”¹⁴⁰

The phrase “spirit of wisdom” (*ruakh khokmah* in Hebrew and *pneuma sophia* in Greek) has been interpreted/translated by many commentators/versions as referring only to a special gift

¹³⁵Other references where God gave individuals “[the spirit of] wisdom” include 1 Kgs 4:29; 5:12; 7:14; 2 Chr 1:10–12; and in the NT Acts 6:3; Eph 1:17.

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷Ibid., 322–6.

¹³⁸For evidence that the Hebrew word *ki* should be taken in the causal sense in this verse, see *ibid.*, 329–333.

¹³⁹Ibid., 328.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., 336–337.

of wisdom, but not as a reference to the Holy Spirit who gives this wisdom. But I find the evidence pointing to the probable conclusion that both the Holy Spirit and His gift of wisdom are in view in this and other passages of Scripture which utilize the phrase “spirit of wisdom.”¹⁴¹ Such is certainly the case in reference to the anointing of the Messiah in Isa 11:2: “The Spirit of the Lord [*ruakh Yahweh*] shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom (*ruakh khokmah*) and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.” Such also appears to be the case where the Holy Spirit is not explicitly mentioned. In our discussion of Exod 31:3 and 35:31 (above), we pointed out an explicit reference to the filling with the divine “Spirit of God” (*ruakh 'Elohim*) in connection with the gift of wisdom, and we noted that parallel language of “filling” with “the spirit of wisdom” appears in Exod 28:3, probably referring both to the filling with the Holy Spirit and with wisdom.

In the third and final occurrence of the phrase “Spirit of Wisdom” in Scripture, Eph 1:17, Paul prays for the Ephesian church, “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.” In the immediate context (vs. 13) this gift is given by the Holy Spirit. A parallel passage (1 Cor 12:8) likewise indicates that the wisdom is a gift of the Holy Spirit: “for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit.” Ellen White also supports this interpretation. After citing Eph 1:17, she states, “The ministry of the divine Spirit in enlightening the understanding and opening to the mind the deep things of God's holy word, was the blessing which Paul thus besought for the Ephesian church.”¹⁴²

¹⁴¹Biblical references containing the phrase “Spirit of wisdom” (*ruakh chokmah* or *pneuma sophia*) include Exod 28:2; Isa 11:2; and Eph 1:17.

¹⁴²Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, ix. In citing Eph 1:17, White capitalizes the word “Spirit” in the phrase “Spirit of wisdom” even though the KJV which she usually uses in quoting Scripture does not have this word

As further support for interpreting the phrase *ruakh khokmah* and *pneuma sophia* as referring both to the Holy Spirit (as the Giver of wisdom) and to wisdom (as the gift of the Spirit), we note several more passages in Scripture where the Holy Spirit is closely connected, even virtually identified with, wisdom. Note Dan 5:11, where the queen spoke to Belshazzar of Daniel as a “a man in your kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God; . . . light, and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him.” Belshazzar repeats a similar statement to Daniel in vs. 14: “I have heard of you, that the Spirit of God is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you.” Again, in the choice of the seven deacons in Acts 6, the Twelve instructed the rest of the disciples, “Seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, *full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom*, whom we may appoint over this business” (Acts 6:3). Later in this same chapter, at Stephen’s trial, it is recorded that those who disputed with Stephen from the Synagogue of the Freedmen “were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which He spoke” (Acts 6:10).

Eugene Merrill cogently argues that the phrase “Spirit of wisdom” (*ruakh khokmah* or *pneuma sophia*) means “the Spirit that bestows wisdom”¹⁴³ and thus includes reference both to the Holy Spirit and to the gift of wisdom which He bestows. Merrill points out that this Spirit that bestows wisdom “appears elsewhere in the Scriptures to meet similar needs (Exod 28:3; 31:3–6; 1 Kgs 4:29; 5:12; 7:14; 2 Chr 1:10–12; Isa 11:2; Acts 6:3; Eph 1:17).”¹⁴⁴

In light of the foregoing evidence, I conclude that according to Deut 34:9, Joshua received an added measure of the Holy Spirit, evidenced in an increased measure of wisdom, by

capitalized.

¹⁴³Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 455.

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*

means of the laying on of hands.¹⁴⁵ This extra measure of the Spirit of wisdom “confirmed Joshua’s work as leader of the covenant community.”¹⁴⁶ The people respected his authority as they had respected the authority of Moses. As with the experience of the 70 elders, the added endowment of the Spirit established Joshua’s credentials before the people as the Spirit-empowered successor of Moses.¹⁴⁷

H. Typology of the Holy Spirit in the Pentateuch

In addition to the fifteen passages in the Pentateuch which likely utilize the term *ruakh* to refer to the divine Spirit, we also find several features of the sanctuary furnishings and services that contain typology of the Holy Spirit.

1. The revealing Spirit—typology of the fire and finger of God in the first Pentecost at Sinai. The data in Exod 19 indicates that 50 days after the first Passover finds the people of Israel at Mt. Sinai: the Sinai experience comes at Pentecost time.¹⁴⁸ The parallels between the first Pentecost at Sinai and the Upper Room experience of Acts 2 are phenomenal. Just as at Mt. Sinai, in the Old Covenant on the first Pentecost there was earthquake, fire, mighty wind, and the finger of God writing the law (Exod 19-20; 32:15-16), so at the New Covenant Pentecost, the house shook, there was the sound of rushing wind, and tongues of fire descended on the waiting disciples (Acts 2:1-4), and the Holy Spirit (the “Finger of God,” cf. Mt 12:28 with Lk 11:20) wrote His law in their hearts and minds (cf. Heb 10:16; 2 Cor 3:3). The fire on Mt. Sinai and the

¹⁴⁵See *ibid.*, 454–5, for further support of the conclusion that this passage refers to the “divine Spirit” who gives the gift of wisdom: “This physical demonstration [of the laying on of hands] either accompanied the impartation of the divine Spirit or marked the recipient as one already endowed by that Spirit. . . . The principal gift of the Spirit here was wisdom, a necessary endowment if Joshua was to be able to take Moses’ place and successfully complete the conquest and occupation of Canaan.”

¹⁴⁶Mattingly, “The Laying on of Hands on Joshua,” 339.

¹⁴⁷See Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 455: “However that ministry of the Spirit might manifest itself in general, it was clear to Israel that Joshua was now properly certified and equipped to stand in Moses’ place as leader of the community (v. 9b; cf. Josh 1:17).”

¹⁴⁸See Richard M. Davidson, “Shavuot—Spiritual Lessons,” *Shabbat Shalom* 56, no. 3 (2009): 5–11.

finger of God writing the Ten Commandments thus typologically represent the revelatory presence of the Holy Spirit, and prefigure the work of the Holy Spirit in NT Pentecostal power.

2. The consecrating Spirit—typology of the anointing oil. Even though the term *ruakh* is not mentioned with regard to the anointing of the priests in the Pentateuch, in light of the immediate and later contexts, this anointing (consecration) service of the priests typologically involves the work of the Holy Spirit.

Leviticus 8 and Exod 29 describe the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood. We have already alluded to the washing of their bodies by Moses. The old clothes were discarded forever. Moses dressed them in their priestly vestments. The ram of consecration (Exod 29:22) was slain as a sin offering, and the blood was used to anoint three parts of the priests' bodies: the tip of the right ear, the right thumb, and the right big toe (Exod 29:20; Lev 8:24). Anointing oil was also applied along with the blood "on Aaron, on his garments, on his sons, and on the garments of his sons" (Exod 29:21; Lev 8:30). Here we see typified the consecration of the whole person (Lev 8:30, Heb *qadash*). The priest was to hereafter wholeheartedly listen to God (give ear to obedience¹⁴⁹), serve God (the hand¹⁵⁰), and walk with God (the foot¹⁵¹). His attention, his service, his direction in life were to be covered by the blood and energized by the Holy Spirit. Hereafter the priests were consecrated/ordained; literally, Moses "filled their hands" (*millē' yad*). Their hands were full with that one task—no room for sidelines and side issues. They were justified by the blood, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, set apart for divine service. The anointing oil poured out upon the head of the high priest also prefigures

¹⁴⁹Prov 2:2 and Deut 11:13, 14, etc.

¹⁵⁰Ecc 9:10.

¹⁵¹Deut 28:9; Lev 26:13; Ps 119:1; Prov 1:15, etc.

the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus Christ as Priest-King at His heavenly inauguration service at the time of Pentecost (Acts 2:22–23).¹⁵²

3. The illuminating Spirit—typology of the lampstand. The description of the sanctuary lampstand in the Pentateuch does not explicitly mention the Spirit, but in the larger context of the typology of oil in the OT and NT, we can see reference to the Holy Spirit in the illumination from the burning oil in the lampstand of the sanctuary's Holy Place.¹⁵³

The lampstand, unlike the other articles of furniture for the sanctuary that were minutely described, was given no stated height. The weight is clear, one talent, but it seems to be left up to the individual craftsmen to choose the appropriate height. This fact has been seen by some to imply in the very nature of the lampstand that there is no limit to the usefulness and witness of the Christian, no limit to the expansion of the basic talent that has been entrusted to him. The idea of growth is further substantiated by the design of the branches. They were to be in the shape of buds, blossoms, and the fruit of the almond. The almond was the first tree to blossom in the spring, and hence it became known as the “Awakener,” which is used as a play on words in Jer 1:11, 12. Christ takes up similar imagery of growth in grace in Mark 4:28. The close connection between life (the living almond branches as lampstand branches) and light proceeding from it, parallels John's description of Christ: “In him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). Paul draws together the imagery of the Awakener, new life, and

¹⁵²The oil flowed freely down Aaron's beard and even off the hems of his garments, according to Ps 133:2. When Christ was inaugurated as High Priest, the Holy Spirit Who anointed Him (Heb 1:9) was poured out in abundance upon the earth and thousands were converted in a day (Acts 2:22-23). See Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 38-39: “When Christ passed within the heavenly gates, He was enthroned amidst the adoration of the angels. As soon as this ceremony was completed, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in rich currents, and Christ was indeed glorified, even with the glory which He had with the Father from all eternity. The Pentecostal outpouring was Heaven's communication that the Redeemer's inauguration was accomplished. According to His promise He had sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to His followers as a token that He had, as priest and king, received all authority in heaven and on earth, and was the Anointed One over His people.”

¹⁵³See Exod 25:31–40; 37:17–24; Lev 24:1–4.

receiving light, into one saying: “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light” (Eph 5:14). Where there is life, there is naturally light.¹⁵⁴ When one has received the new life that Christ alone can give, he cannot help but shine in genuine Christian witness with the glow of the Holy Spirit (Zech 4:6).

Seven is the number of completeness, and yet the seven lamps are spoken of in the singular as one light (Exod 27:20; Lev. 24:2; Exod 37:17, etc.). Following the imagery used by Jesus in John 15:1ff., the stem or shaft (Exod 25:31) would stand for Christ as the Vine and the branches for His followers; but united to Him they are one Vine, one with Him as He is one with the Father (John 17). The oil burned in the lampstand is the figure of the Holy Spirit (Zech 4, especially v. 6), as the expression of the grace of Christ¹⁵⁵ which He supplies to the soul.

III. Synthesis and Conclusion

From the examination of the fifteen passages in the Pentateuch that contain the sixteen occurrences of the term *ruakh* with likely reference to the divine Spirit, and the three features of sanctuary typology directly involving the Holy Spirit, the basic contours of the doctrine of the Spirit emerge, which are expanded later in the Scriptures.

A. Nature of the Spirit:

1. A Divine Presence. The *ruakh 'Elohim* is not a mere “mighty wind,” but constitutes the Divine presence made manifest, at Creation, during the Flood, and in the lives of various OT leaders.

2. A Separate Person of the Godhead. According to the various Pentateuchal passages

¹⁵⁴Read the whole of Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* 1:353–354, for a beautiful exposition of this concept, which is really the secret that unites justification and sanctification.

¹⁵⁵Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 27 March 1894.

surveyed, the Holy Spirit is not only a divine influence, but a separate Person of the Godhead. He evidences personal qualities: He intimately hovers over the earth at the beginning of Creation week; He personally pleads with, convicts, prompts, rebellious humans to return to God before the Global Flood; He provides intelligence and wisdom to Bezalel and Ohiliab, and revelation with content to Balaam the prophet.

3. Representation of the Divine Immanence. The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament Pentateuch, as well as elsewhere in the Scriptures, reveals the aspects of the Godhead clustered around the concept immanence: He personally and intimately hovers close to the earth in Creation; He approaches and convicts the ante-diluvians; He indwells Joseph and Joshua; He “settles upon” the seventy elders; He fills and equips Bezalel and Oholiab; He inspires Balaam the prophet.

B. Work of the Spirit

From the references to the Holy Spirit in the Pentateuch emerge seven different facets of His work:

1. Hovering Spirit (Creation and Re-creation): Gen 1:2; cf. Deut 32:11.
2. Convicting/Prompting/Judging Spirit (before the Flood and perhaps at the Exodus):
Gen 6:3 and possibly Exod 15:8, 10.
3. Indwelling/Transforming Spirit (Joseph, Joshua): Gen 41:38; Num 27:18.
4. Filling/Equipping/Illuminating Spirit (Bezalel and Oholiab, the oil of the lampstand):
Exod 31:3; 35:31; Lev 24:1–4.
5. Settling (“Resting”), Delegating/Appointing Spirit (Seventy Elders): Num 11:17, 25, 26, 29.

6. Inspiring/Revealing Spirit (Balaam and the seventy elders, and the fire and finger of God at Sinai): Num 24:2; cf. Num 11:25, 26.
7. Commissioning/Installing/Consecrating Spirit (by laying on of hands for Joshua, and pouring of anointing oil for the priests): Num 27:18; Deut 34:9; Exod 29:7, 21; Lev 8:12, 30.

Each of these facets of the Holy Spirit's work will reappear in later portions of the OT and be expanded even further in the NT. But here in the Pentateuch we find the foundational presentation of the Holy Spirit's work in relation to humanity. Any extended discussion of the Holy Spirit in Scripture must be grounded in an understanding of these seminal passages of the Pentateuch.