

Empowered by the Spirit of God: The Holy Spirit in the Historiographic Writings of the Old Testament

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Introduction

In 1988 I read a paper at the annual convention of the Evangelical Theological Society in which I began, "Pneumatology, 'the doctrine of the Holy Spirit,' is essentially a New Testament Doctrine." Little has happened since then to change my opinion.¹ Although several detailed studies of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament have appeared in the meantime,² the effect of these on New Testament and systematic theological treatises is disappointing.³ When scholars refer to the Old Testament, it is generally handled in one of several ways: (1) Old Testament data are quickly summarized as preamble to the real study, the teaching of the New Testament or the Church Fathers; (2) Old Testament texts are referred to in passing, while the focus is fixed elsewhere; (3) Old Testament texts are helpful for illustrative purposes, as often as not to demonstrate the discontinuity between the Spirit's operation in the two testaments. The lack of serious interest in the Old Testament may be attributed in part to linguistic⁴ and hermeneutical⁵ factors. However, since standard concordances only cite three occurrences of the expression, "Holy Spirit,"⁶ it is often assumed that little interest or information is to be found there.

The issue of "The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament" is obviously too large and too complex to deal with in a single paper. This investigation will be confined to one

specific type of Hebrew literature—the historiographic writings, including both the Deuteronomistic (Joshua-2 Kings) writings and those often referred to as the work of the Chronicler[s] (1-2 Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah).⁷ This paper will follow the pattern established in the earlier essay on Ezekiel, beginning with a statistical study of the forms, frequency, and distribution of the term *rûah* followed by a survey of its breadth of meaning.

I. The Forms and Distribution *Rûah* in the Historiographic Writings

By word count, the Deuteronomistic and Chronistic historiographic writings together make up exactly one-third of the Hebrew Old Testament.⁸ By comparison, only 18% (68) of the 378⁹ occurrences of *rûah* in the Hebrew Old Testament appear in this material. Expressed in terms of density, whereas the ratio of occurrences of *rûah* to the total number of words in the entire Old Testament is 1:785, for these writings the ratio is 1:1494. On the surface, this diminished density of *rûah* in the historiographic writings suggests that the historians had a considerably less spiritual outlook on life than the other authors of Scripture, particularly poets and prophets.¹⁰

Within the historiographic writings themselves *rûah* displays an uneven distribution.¹¹ The Deuteronomistic historians used the term more frequently than the Chroniclers.¹² Within the former the

most striking feature is the relatively high frequency of the word in Judges¹³ and the Samuel narrative. It never occurs in the protracted narrative of David's family troubles, despite the fact that the Spirit of Yahweh came upon him at his anointing and remained on him from that time on (1 Sam 16:13).

With respect to form, the most conspicuous detail is the relatively high frequency of use of the bound form, *rûah*. Of the 68 occurrences, 41 (60%) involve a construct relationship with another noun.¹⁴ Together the bound phrases *rûah-ʿēlōhîm*, "Spirit of God" (10x) and *rûah-yhwh*, "Spirit of Yahweh" (17x) make up more than half of these.¹⁵

II. The Uses of *Rûah* in the Historiographic Writings

Time constraints prevent even a summarizing of these issues here, except to note that the word *rûah* means fundamentally "wind, air in motion,"¹⁶ and that 68 of the 389 occurrences of *rûah* in the Old Testament¹⁷ occur in the historiographic texts—slightly more than 20%.¹⁸ The word is used in its primary *meteorological* sense of "wind" six times,¹⁹ never in the derived sense of "direction, compass point," and only once (1 Chron 9:24) does it denote "side," the reference being to the "four sides" (*rûhôt*) of the Temple. The word is frequently employed *anthropologically*, sometimes as an alternative to *něšāmâ*, human "breath,"²⁰ though in some of these (Jos 5:1; 1 Kgs 10:5 = 2 Chron 9:4), the word may also function as an alternative to *nephesh* "life, vitality,"²¹ or *lēb*, "heart, mind."²²

Of the 68 occurrences of *rûah* in the historiographic writings, two-thirds employ the term *theologically*, that is with reference to the divine *rûah*. This usage is most ob-

vious in genitive expressions like "the Spirit of Yahweh" (*rûah yhwh*, 17x²³) and "the Spirit of God" (*rûah-ʿēlōhîm*, 10x²⁴), in suffixed forms in which the pronoun refers to deity (Nu 9:20, 30), and when *rûah* is the object of a verb of which God/Yahweh is the subject (Jdg 9:23). However, as we shall see below, in many instances it is difficult to tell whether the *rûah* spoken of is *the* Holy Spirit or another spirit at Yahweh's disposal.

III. The Operation of the Spirit of God in the Historiographic Writings

We turn now to a closer examination of the nature and methods of the divine spirit's operation in the historiographic texts. In the earlier work it was observed that in general the Spirit functioned as the agent or agency of God's effective presence.²⁵ It was on this basis that the psalmist cried out, "Where can I escape from your *rûah*? / Where can I flee from your presence/face (*pānēkā*)?" (Ps 139:7). Along with Yahweh's "glory," his "name," his "hand," his "messenger" (*malʾāk*), his prophet, his "face" and his "wisdom," the divine Spirit represented one more metaphor for the presence of Yahweh, active in creation, dispensing life, guidance and providential care, revelation of his will, salvation, renewal of unregenerate hearts and minds, or sealing of his covenant people as his own. However, our use of the term *agency* should not be misconstrued to imply that the divine *rûah* is merely a force, without personality. The biblical evidence and orthodox credal statements affirm the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity. At the same time, we cannot imagine that the Old Testament saints had a clear understanding of the Trinity.²⁶ The *rûah* is his creating, animating, energizing force, which can

hardly be identified as one other than God himself.²⁷ But how did the Spirit of Yahweh function? That is the question we must answer.

In discussions of divine action involving the *rûah* scholars tend to concentrate on two types of activity: his role in Israel's charismatic leadership and her ecstatic prophecy.²⁸ But the issue is much more complex than this, not only for the Old Testament as a whole,²⁹ but even for individual books.³⁰ Even though *rûah* does not occur with great frequency in any historiographic book, taken together these writings reflect a complex and polychromatic Israelite pneumatology.³¹

A. RŪAH as Agency/Agent of Providence

The historiographic texts under review here spend little time on creation, let alone the manner in which the universe was made. However, an extremely significant statement of Yahweh's control over the universe and all the forces of nature occurs in what the narrator identifies as David's song of praise to Yahweh for rescuing him from Saul, 2 Samuel 22:2-51.³² In the context of a lengthy description of the cosmic effects of the theophany, and in words reminiscent of Moses' celebration of Yahweh's victory over the Egyptians in the Song of the Sea (Ex 15:8), David declares,

Then the channels of the sea were seen,
the foundations of the world were laid bare,
at the rebuke of Yahweh, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils (v. 16).

Alluding to the strong east wind with which the narrator says Yahweh drove back the sea and divided the waters (Exod 14:21), this poet perceives the *rûah* as divine breath with which the world is controlled and the forces in opposition to

Yahweh are defeated.

B. RŪAH as Agency/Agent of Conveyance

The operation of the Spirit of God that bears the closest connection with the basic meaning of the term *rûah*, that is "wind," involves his picking up an individual and transporting that person to another place. But this occurs only twice, both texts involving the prophet Elijah. In 1 Kings 18:12 the prophet Obadiah complains to Elijah, his professional superior, that if he goes to Ahab and announces that Elijah is around, the *rûah* of Yahweh will carry him away (*nāsā'*) to some unknown place, and then he (Obadiah) will incur even greater ire from the king. In 2 Kings 2:16 the "sons of the prophets," Elijah's professional understudies, lament the disappearance of their master. Not having seen the fiery chariots and horses that transported him up into heaven, they hypothesize that Elijah might have been picked up (*nāsā'*) and thrown down (*hišlîk*) on some mountain. The narrator does not explain why they made this suggestion. The fact that this issue arises twice in the Elijah narrative suggests people had come to accept this unusual divine taxi service for the senior prophet. However, the use of the verb *hišlîk*, "to cast," in 2 Kings 2:16 suggests an event less positively providential and raises the possibility that what Elisha saw as heavenly horse-drawn chariots the "sons of the prophets" experienced as a tornadic [divine] wind.³³

C. RŪAH as Agency/Agent of Conscriptio/ Empowerment

More significant theologically are those texts in which the *rûah* conscripts and empowers God's people for divine service. The formula for this charismatic endowment varies from the simple *wattēhî 'al PN*

rûah yhw, “the Spirit of Yahweh came upon PN” (Jdg 3:10; 11:29),³⁴ to the more dramatic *wattišlah ‘al PN rûah yhw*, “the Spirit of Yahweh rushed upon PN” (Jdg 14:6,19; 15:14; 1 Sa 11:6),³⁵ to the figurative *rûah yhw lābēšā ‘et PN*, “the Spirit of Yahweh clothed PN” (Jdg 6:34). While these may be treated as stylistic variations of expressions for the same phenomenon, they evoke different images, especially the latter two. The verb *šalah* occurs in only two other contexts, in one of which (2 Sa 19:18) its meaning is uncertain. But Amos 5:6 is instructive. Here it is used of fire breaking out and consuming everything in its path, suggesting a sudden burst of unrestrained energy. The declaration of Gideon being clothed by the *rûah* evokes a picture of a man wrapped in divine spiritual garb.³⁶

These passages provide the primary basis for the common misperception that in ancient Israel the Holy Spirit typically came upon persons, whereas in the New Testament he indwells believers.³⁷ However, these cases must be seen as exceptional rather than typical or normative, even for the Old Testament, for several reasons. First, in each case the person upon whom the Spirit comes has been singled out to liberate an oppressed people. Second, in each case the Spirit’s activity was driven by a concern for the national good, not primarily an individual’s relationship with God. Third, in most cases the person chosen was an unlikely candidate for divine employment.³⁸ Fourth, when the Spirit of Yahweh empowers these men their authority is immediately recognized, as evidenced by the way in which the Israelite forces rally behind them. We may conclude, therefore, that the *rûah* functions as the agency/agent through which Yahweh arrests otherwise unqualified and resistant individu-

als and thrusts them out into his service.³⁹

In this context reference should also be made to Judges 13:25, according to which “The spirit of Yahweh began to stir Samson in Mahaneh Dan. ” Because the Qal form of the verb *pā’am*, “to stir,” is unattested elsewhere its meaning here is uncertain. However, the significance of this verse becomes evident if we disregard the chapter division and relate it to 14:4-7. It is apparent from the following narratives that, left to himself, Samson would never get involved in the LORD’s or even Israel’s agenda. Therefore, through his *rûah*, Yahweh intervenes in Samson’s life so that the agenda set for him in vv. 5-7 might begin to be fulfilled. Accordingly, Samson’s trip to Timnah was an expression of divinely induced restlessness, for, as 14:4 declares, he [Yahweh] was seeking an opportunity to incite the Philistines and thereby disturb the comfortable *status quo* that existed between them and Israel.

D. RŪAH as Agency/Agent of Prophetic Inspiration

In Nehemiah 9:20, Ezra praises God for the gracious gift of the *rûah ṭôb*, “good spirit,” given to instruct his people. However, judging by the frequency with which it occurs, it appears that no activity of the Spirit of God was more important to Hebrew historiographers than his role in prophetic inspiration. The basic (and normative) paradigm of prophetic utterance is expressed by David, the self-designated “darling of the Strong One of Israel”⁴⁰ in 2 Samuel 23:1-2.⁴¹ After opening with the signatory formula, *nē’um dāwid ben yiššay*, “the declaration of David, son of Jesse,” he declares the authority of his utterance (2 Sa 23:1-3):

The Spirit of Yahweh speaks through me,

His word is upon my tongue;
The God of Israel has spoken,
The Rock of Israel has said to me. . . .

David obviously has no questions about the fact or method of his own inspiration. Because the *rûah* of Yahweh speaks through him, he functions as God's mouth.

The Chronicler seems especially interested in the prophetic effect resulting from the Spirit of Yahweh coming upon /rushing upon/clothing an individual.⁴² The milder form of the idiom occurs twice. In 2 Chronicles 15:1 the Spirit of God comes upon (*hāyētā 'al*) Azariah ben Oded, giving him a message of hope (vv. 2-7) for Asa in a time of great crisis. According to 2 Chronicles 20:14 the Spirit of Yahweh comes upon Jehaziel, inspiring him to encourage Jehoshaphat and the people by announcing that the battle to follow belongs to Yahweh. The more dramatic version of the idiom also occurs twice. According to 1 Chronicles 12:18[19], the Spirit clothed the chief of David's thirty primary military officers, inspiring him to announce their allegiance to the fugitive king—designate and pronounce a blessing upon him. In 2 Chronicles 24:20 Zechariah stands above the people clothed by the Spirit, and rebukes them for abandoning Yahweh. Since, of the persons so affected, only Azariah is formally referred to as a prophet (2 Ch 15:8) it appears that professional prophets did not have a monopoly on this kind of inspiration. Nevertheless, according to Nehemiah 9:30, even the Levites acknowledged the historical role of the prophets as Yahweh's agents through whom the *rûah* admonished (*hē'id*) his people.

These six references present the normal face of prophecy, even as it was understood by Peter: "No prophecy in Scripture

ever came from the prophets themselves, or because they wanted to prophesy. It was the Holy Spirit who moved the prophets to speak from God" (NLT). But in this context we should also consider 2 Kings 2:9 and 15. On the surface it appears that when Elisha requests a double portion of the *rûah* of Elijah he may be simply asking for twice the heart, twice the vitality, or twice the spiritual fortitude of his predecessor. As we have seen, this anthropological usage of *rûah* was common. However, Elisha's use of the mantle in parting the waters of the Jordan (vv. 13-14) and the response of the prophetic guild when he returned to Jericho (v. 15) points in an entirely different direction. "The spirit of Elijah" is a metonymic figure of speech for "the Spirit of Yahweh which resides upon Elijah," inspiring and energizing him to perform his prophetic tasks and issue his prophetic utterances. This interpretation is supported by the series of events described in vv. 16-25, whose purpose is to demonstrate that Elisha does indeed wear the prophet's mantle.

But we have yet to consider several more complicated cases of prophetic inspiration involving Saul (1 Sa 10:1-13; 18:10-12; 19:24) and the professional prophet, Micaiah ben Imlah (1 Ki 22:1-28; cf. 2 Ch 18:1-27). Scholars have relied heavily upon the former to reconstruct the nature and history of prophecy in Israel. However, in view of the many extra-ordinary features in these narratives, it is doubtful any of these reflect the normal or normative face of prophecy at any time in Israel.

Regarding Saul's first prophetic experience, described in 1 Samuel 10:1-13, we note first of all the purpose of Saul's prophetic performance.⁴³ The narrator places the event within the context of Yahweh's selection of him as king in response to the

people's demand (1 Sa 8:1-22). Having been the guest of honor at a ritual meal hosted by Samuel, and witnessed only by his servant and thirty invited guests (1 Sa 9:22-24), and having been anointed in a private ceremony (10:1), it was necessary to confirm Saul's election in his own mind, and also to alert the public to his new status as *nāgîd* over Yahweh's inheritance. Following customary laws of evidence requiring three witnesses,⁴⁴ Samuel predicts three events: (1) Saul will encounter two men near Rachel's tomb who will inform him his father's donkeys have been found; (2) At the oak of Tabor he will meet three men loaded with food provisions which he shall accept from their hands; (3) Near the Philistine garrison at the "hill of God" he will encounter a procession of prophets accompanied by musicians. When he meets them the Spirit of Yahweh will rush upon him and he will prophesy. In v. 7 Samuel specifically declares the purpose of these three encounters—they are attesting signs (*ʔōtôt*) of his *nāgîd*ship.⁴⁵ The significance of this observation will become more apparent later.

Second, although the prophetic inspiration which Samuel promises will occur to Saul when the Spirit of Yahweh rushes (*šālah*) upon him,⁴⁶ (1 Sa 10:6), the addendum that he will become a different person (*wēnepaktā*) *l'îš 'ahēr* prepares the reader for an extraordinary event. This promise is explicitly fulfilled in v. 9, where the narrator declares that God changed his heart.⁴⁷ Since this kind of language is never used elsewhere for prophetic inspiration one may conclude that the narrator recognized the extraordinary nature of this prophetic moment.

Third, unlike most (but not all) prophetic events in the historiographic writings, here the verb *nbʔ*, "to prophesy," is

not associated with prophetic utterance but prophetic action. Indeed the only people who speak are Samuel and the witnesses. They interpret Saul's action as evidence that he has joined the prophetic guild. The profession of the people whom he joins is classified as prophetic (*nbʔ*, v. 5), but none of them appears to be making any prophetic pronouncements. Based upon a later event (1 Sa 18:10-12) we may speculate about the nature of Saul's prophetic activity at this point, but that is all. In any event, it was shocking enough to immortalize it in a proverb.⁴⁸

Saul's second prophetic experience, recounted in 1 Samuel 18:10-12, is quite different from the first and even more bizarre. While David is entertaining him musically, a bad Spirit of God (*rûah ʔlōhîm rāʔ*) rushes (*šālah*) upon him, causing him to prophesy (*hitnabbēʔ*) and hurl his spear at David with the intention of pinning him to the wall. Here the formula for Spirit possession conforms to customary patterns, but the narrator recognizes the anomalous nature of this expression of prophecy, and characterizes the divine Spirit as *rāʔ*, "bad." To understand the meaning of this expression we must recognize that Hebrew *rāʔ* bears a bivalent sense of moral malignancy and experiential misfortune, analogous to English "ill," which refers primarily to moral evil⁴⁹ and secondarily to unpropitious conditions.⁵⁰ Accordingly, the word is not to be interpreted in a moral sense here, as if the Spirit of God is morally defective, but in the normal profane sense, "bad," as opposed to "good."⁵¹ This Spirit is "bad" because the effects of his possession are negative and destructive for the object.

The description of Saul's third prophetic experience in 1 Samuel 19:24 resembles the first more than the second, primarily be-

cause of the link with Samuel and the prophetic guild. Saul's own prophesying follows that of three delegations of messengers (*mal'ākīm*) sent to make contact with Samuel. These delegations are frustrated, however, because as soon as the messengers come within sight of the senior prophet and his professional colleagues the Spirit of God comes (*hāyâ*) upon them and they begin to prophesy, though the nature of their prophetic activity is not recorded. In desperation, Saul finally determines to contact Samuel himself. But on the way the Spirit of God comes (*hāyâ*) upon him and he prophesies (*hitnabbē*) all the way to Naioth. When he comes before Samuel he tears off his clothes and lies naked before him all that day and all night.⁵² The witnesses to this bizarre activity interpreted it as prophetic and reiterate the earlier proverb concerning him.

Critical scholars have had a picnic with these texts. Many interpret Saul's ecstatic experiences as a "primitive" form of prophecy, in contrast to "classical" prophecy represented in the writing prophets from Amos to Malachi.⁵³ But we should rather characterize his behavior as extraordinary physical expressions of Spirit possession, divinely induced non-verbal declarations. God is speaking through Saul. The witnesses and the readers of these texts are called upon to receive the communication and interpret it.⁵⁴ In fact, this activity, induced by the Spirit of Yahweh coming/rushing upon Saul bears a close resemblance to his receiving the *rûah rā'â*, "bad Spirit," sent by God (1 Sa 16:14-24), a subject to which we will turn later.

We turn our attention now to 1 Kings 22 (= 2 Ch 18),⁵⁵ a text which scholars have long exploited to analyze the relationship between true and false prophecy.⁵⁶ Our interest is focused on two aspects of this

account: Micaiah's response to Ahab's cynical comment to Jehoshaphat that his (Micaiah's) prophecies are always negative toward him (vv. 19-23), and the interchange between Micaiah and Zedekiah, one of Ahab's false prophetic lackeys (vv. 24-25), where the *rûah* enters the picture. The latter conversation raises serious questions concerning the validity and normativeness of the ideas expressed. Does Micaiah recount a real vision, or is he making this up for rhetorical purposes? If one concedes that the visionary experience was real, does this mean that the image envisioned corresponds to reality? The account also raises at least two moral questions. How could Micaiah, a true prophet of Yahweh, lend his unqualified support to the prophecy given by the false prophets (vv. 14-15)? And how could God authorize a Spirit to lie to the false prophets? These questions are not easily answered.

It may be helpful to begin at the end. In the light of the preceding discussion, Zedekiah's question, "How did the Spirit of Yahweh pass from me to speak to you?" is readily understood. This false prophet is well aware of the nature of prophetic inspiration: it derives from the Spirit of God. While Zedekiah would probably have accepted in principle that two or more prophets may possess the Spirit of Yahweh simultaneously, he recognizes that this Spirit cannot inspire two fundamentally contradictory predictions. Since Zedekiah is absolutely sure of his own prophetic status, the rhetorical question he raises demands a negative answer: the Spirit of Yahweh cannot possibly have passed from him to Micaiah.

Micaiah presents a more complex and more difficult image of prophecy. The picture of Yahweh enthroned in the heavens and surrounded by his hosts is familiar

enough from other theophanic accounts. Even the designation of the attendant who presents himself⁵⁷ to Yahweh as a *rûah* is understandable in the light of the identification in Zechariah 6:1-8 of the four chariot horses that patrol the earth on God's behalf as "the four *rû'ôt* of heaven who go forth after standing before the Lord of all the earth."⁵⁸ But this *rûah* is obviously not the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. Though he operates on Yahweh's behalf, he⁵⁹ has independent identity.

The verbal picture of the proceedings in the heavenly court finds its inspiration in earthly courts, such as the one Ahab himself will host. Accordingly, Yahweh's call for a volunteer to draw⁶⁰ Ahab into mortal battle sounds like the kind of appeal one might hear from a human monarch.⁶¹ Similarly the discussion that follows among Yahweh's courtiers, until this *rûah* steps forward with a plan to lure Ahab. He will appeal to the king's vanity by placing an affirmative message on the lips of his own courtiers. In so doing the *rûah* adopts the role of a double agent, pretending to operate on Ahab's behalf, but in reality achieving God's agenda. No report is given of Yahweh's authorization of the *rûah*, but Micaiah's explanation in v. 23 telescopes the entire process, placing responsibility for the events that are about to transpire squarely on God's shoulders. He has put a *rûah* in the mouths of these prophets to lure Ahab to his death. Unlike the false prophets, whose spiritual eyesight is seriously blurred by cataracts, this true prophet has a clear picture of theological realities. Ahab may gloat over the alliance he has struck with Jehoshaphat and march out arrogantly against the Aramaeans, but even his times are in Yahweh's hands. At the same time Yahweh is also sovereign over false proph-

ets, and, as in the case of Balaam in Numbers 22-24, may indeed speak truth through them.⁶²

For those who find an ethical problem in Yahweh employing such tactics I offer several observations. First, this is a visionary figure of speech, portraying heavenly realities in cultural terms familiar to the human audience.

Second, the expression *rûah šeqer* usually rendered "lying spirit," is quite ambiguous and need not necessarily attribute moral defect to the *rûah*. If Micaiah had intended to be unequivocal he would have said, "Yahweh has put *děbar šeqer* "a deceitful word," in the mouth of all these your prophets" (v. 23).⁶³ At the same time, it is possible that *rûah šeqer* should be interpreted anthropologically rather than theologically, referring not to a divine spirit put in the mouth of the prophets, but a deluded disposition.⁶⁴ Accordingly, rather than translating *rûah šeqer* as "lying spirit," the phrase may also be interpreted as "spirit/disposition/mind set of emptiness, futility."

Third, the message the false prophets have proclaimed in v. 6, and which is echoed precisely in vv. 12 and 15, turns out actually to be true, not false. This has rarely been recognized, but like so many extra-biblical oracles, this pre-campaign pronouncement is delightfully ambiguous.⁶⁵ The Hebrew translates literally, "Go up, the Lord/Yahweh has given into the hands of the king." But this raises several questions: What has he given, and to which king? Modern interpreters are as deluded as Ahab's prophets in thinking that the object of the verb is "Ramoth-Gilead,"⁶⁶ and identifying the king as Ahab.⁶⁷ On the contrary, the implied object is "you," and the king into whose hands "X" is given by Yahweh is the *melek*

ʾārām referred to in v. 3.⁶⁸

Fourth, given Micaiah's juxtaposing of "Yahweh has put a *rûah šeqer* in the mouth of all these your prophets," with "Yahweh has declared disaster against you" (v. 23), the hearers and readers are driven to associate the *rā'â* ("disaster") primarily with the thrice-repeated declaration of Ahab's prophets, rather than Micaiah's second pronouncement (v. 17). At the same time, although v. 17 does not mention the king, it functions as an exposition of the earlier prophecy, describing the consequences of its fulfillment for the nation.

In the light of the foregoing, it appears that the cryptic oracle uttered by Ahab's prophets in vv. 6 and 12 and repeated by Micaiah in v. 15 was inspired by God. Furthermore, it was a true prophecy, whose significance for the nation is announced by Micaiah in v. 17. However, because of its ambiguity it could be understood otherwise. According to Micaiah's explanation in vv.22-23, the positive interpretation offered by Zedekiah and the other prophets in vv. 11-12 derives not from the deceitfulness of the prophecy⁶⁹ but from the "spirit of delusion" which Yahweh had implanted in their mouths.⁷⁰ By putting a *rûah šeqer* into the false prophets' mouths God causes them to misinterpret an oracle of defeat as a promise of victory, to put a positive spin on a negative pronouncement. Indeed, one may conclude that in the context, following Ahab's confiscation of Naboth's patrimonial land, Yahweh has deliberately incited Ahab to pick a fight with the Aramaeans so they could serve as the agents of the punishment predicted by Elijah in 21:17-24.⁷¹

E. The RŪAH as Agency/Agent of Disaster

The account of Ahab being lured to his death reminds us of another function of

the Spirit of Yahweh in the Old Testament: as an agent of disaster in human experience. The distinctive feature of the contexts in which this occurs is the characterization of the *rûah* as a *rûah rā'â*, "a bad spirit." Not that this phrase is limited to these contexts. We have already observed that at least on one occasion a *rûah ʾēlōhîm rā'â* "a bad spirit of God," rushed upon Saul, inspiring prophetic behavior (1 Sa 18:10-12). However, to the extent that this *rûah* drove Saul to simultaneous irrational and violent behavior (he tried to pin David to the wall with his spear) it is clearly a *rûah rā'â*, "a bad spirit." Similar expressions occur in four other contexts: Judges 9:23, 1 Samuel 16:14-23, 19:9, and 2 Kings 19:7.

First, according to Judges 9:23: "God sent a bad spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem." In a narrative that is exceptionally secular⁷² and in which humans appear to be the determiners and victims of their own fate, this verse is the key to the author's disposition toward the events described. Taking a page out of the Canaanite political science notebook, Abimelech seized the throne of Shechem, eliminated all but one of his brothers and secured the loyalty of the Shechemite nobles. Everything seemed under control until God intervened, sending a bad *rûah* between Abimelech and the nobles to punish him/them for the murder of Jerubbaal's (Gideon's) sons. The use of the verb *šālah* "to send," puts this *rûah* in a category with other agents sent out by Yahweh, either as messengers (e. g. prophets and *mal'ākîm*) or agents of judgment. This *rûah* obviously belongs in the latter class, along with fire, plague, bloodshed, wild beasts, the sword and famine.⁷³ Because of this *rûah* former allies become mortal enemies. In the end, although the

immediate cause of Abimelech's death was a resourceful woman of Thebez (Judg 9:53), ultimately the circumstances that led to his ignominious death were caused by the *rûah* sent by God.

In the second text, 1 Samuel 16:14-23,⁷⁴ the narrator deliberately distinguishes the *rûah rā'â* from "the Spirit of Yahweh" by noting that the "bad spirit" filled the vacuum left when the Spirit of Yahweh departed from (*sārâ min*) Saul (v. 14), and by referring to it as *rûah ʿlōhîm*, rather than *rûah* Yahweh.⁷⁵ In this context both the narrator and Saul's servants describe the effect of the bad spirit on Saul with the Piel form of the verb *bʿt*, "to terrify, terrorize," which in this context is best translated "to torment."⁷⁶ It appears, however, that this *rûah* did not torment Saul relentlessly, but periodically, with some sort of mental derangement.⁷⁷ The treatment prescribed by the servants, and observed to be effective by the narrator, was a skillfully played harp.

But what is the significance of the work of the *rûah* in this passage? Obviously its role relates to a most significant turning point in the history of Israel and her monarchy—the transfer of divine authority and support from Saul to David. According to v. 13 the Spirit of Yahweh rushed upon David at the time of his anointing, which has necessitated the comment in v. 14a. In the sense reflected in this context, the Spirit of Yahweh cannot rest upon two people simultaneously.⁷⁸ The "bad spirit of God" does not replace the Spirit of Yahweh merely to occupy empty space. The observed effects of its presence demonstrate for the entire court the transfer of divine support. The *rûah*, which functions as an agent of torment, finds its positive counterpart in David, whose inspired musicianship brings healing to the king.⁷⁹

Recognizing the difference between the two men, Saul's servants identify their master's spiritual torment on the one hand and see in David all the marks of divine favor on the other—gifted musicianship, nobility, military experience, prudence in speech, handsome appearance (v. 18). Most importantly, whereas the narrator notes that the Spirit of Yahweh had departed from Saul, it is the servants of Saul who say, "Yahweh is with him [David]" (v. 18). Accordingly, this "bad spirit of God" functions as more than the agent of torment for this tragic figure; his activity signals to observer and reader an important moment in *Heilsgeschichte*.

In 1 Samuel 19:9 Saul's encounter with the "bad spirit" bears some resemblance to 1 Samuel 18:10-12, but one may also note several striking differences. First, this spirit is identified as *rûah yhw̄h rā'â*, "a bad spirit of Yahweh," rather than "a bad spirit of God," perhaps reflecting a diminished contextual need to distinguish the empowering and authorizing Spirit of Yahweh from the punitive agent of God. Second, whereas in the previous context David's playing of the harp brought relief to Saul's spiritually tormented condition, here the bad spirit comes on him *while* David is playing his harp. Rather than calming his nerves, the music excites him and drives him to throw his spear at David with the intention of killing him.⁸⁰ But this time Saul's enraged action is not accompanied by prophetic activity. Through his *rûah* Yahweh actively brings about Saul's destruction.

In 2 Kings 19:7 the *rûah* is not identified either as *rûah ʿlōhîm* or *rûah yhw̄h*. However, the grammatical construction, "I will put (*nātan*) a *rûah* in him," and the effects of the *rûah* suggest a phenomenon similar to 1 Samuel 16:14-23. Through this action

Yahweh causes some kind of mental derangement so that the king of Assyria hears rumors and lifts the siege of Jerusalem to return home, where he dies. As in the previous two texts, this *rûah* functions as an agent of divinely imposed disaster.

In all these texts the activity of the *rûah* comes dangerously close to the role played by demons in ancient Near Eastern thought. In general demons were conceived of as agents of the gods, whose role was to execute divinely decreed blessings and punishments for sin, the latter usually by inflicting their victims with illnesses. It appears, however, that in the first millennium B. C. a revolution in conception occurred as demons came to be increasingly associated with the netherworld, which was thought to be populated by them.⁸¹ The extra-biblical preoccupation with demons contrasts sharply with the picture in the Old Testament, which fails to develop a sophisticated demonology.⁸² The texts that have been discussed provide the closest analogue to ancient Near Eastern conceptions, and may explain why in later Jewish usage *rûah* came to denote "demon."⁸³ However, it must be emphasized that, in contrast to these magical texts, in our passages the identity of the *rûah* remains vague, and the spirit's role is clearly subservient to Yahweh.

F. The RŪAH as Agent/Agency of Messianic Adoption

More intriguing than any other reference to the *rûah* in the historiographic writings is the narrator's notice in 1 Samuel 16:13 that when Samuel anointed David the Spirit of Yahweh "rushed upon him [and remained on him] from that day on." The relationship between the anointing of David and his receipt of the Spirit deserves

a study on its own. We have time here to make only a few summary comments.

First, as Weisman has reminded us, we must distinguish between two types of royal anointing: as a private rite of divine nomination, and as a public rite of inauguration.⁸⁴ Our text involves the former.⁸⁵

Second, when Samuel anoints David he stands in for God, so that from now on David is "Yahweh's anointed,"⁸⁶ and never referred to as "Samuel's anointed."⁸⁷

Third, whereas the narrator had described Samuel's act of anointing Saul with the verb *yāšaq* "to pour" (1 Sa 10:1), here he uses the ceremonial term, *māša'* "to anoint" (16:13), thereby betraying his bias against the Saulide kingship.

Fourth, the *rûah* of Yahweh comes upon both David and Saul in connection with their anointing, but the way in which this occurs and the effects are fundamentally different. Whereas Saul's inspiration is delayed (10:2-13), David's appears to occur simultaneously with the anointing. Whereas in Saul's case the coming of the Spirit is subordinated as the third of three signs of his divine nomination, and demonstrated by extraordinary prophetic behavior, David needs no signs to prove his divine election, and no evidence of the Spirit's coming upon him is noted.

Fifth, as if anticipating the departure of the Spirit from Saul in v. 14, the narrator notes that the *rûah* rushed upon David "from that day forward." The phrase *mēhayyôm hāhû' wāmā'lā* expresses the author's conviction, based on hindsight, that the Spirit which came upon David in this instance was never retracted.⁸⁸ Remarkably, unlike the charismatically endowed judges and Saul (11: 6), with respect to David the coming of the Spirit is never associated with mighty acts of salvation or valor. In fact, not once in the fol-

lowing lengthy account of David's life does the narrator mention the Spirit again.

In the light of these observations, it would seem that, contrary to common opinion, at David's anointing the Spirit of Yahweh is not simply transferred from Saul to David.⁸⁹ It seems that the genres of Saul's and David's experience of the Spirit were fundamentally different. Saul experienced the Spirit's presence *after* his anointing as a sign of his divine nomination (in response to the people's demand) and as a mark of divine empowering. Apparently this expression of the Spirit's presence was temporary, tentative, and intermittent, in stark contrast to David, who received the Spirit at the time of his anointing, and this Spirit remained with him throughout his life. The simultaneity of David's anointing and his receipt of the Spirit suggest this was confirmation that he was indeed "the man after God's own heart/mind" (1 Sa 13:14).⁹⁰ The prophet's act of liquid anointing coincided with Yahweh's act of spiritual anointing, a truth grasped by another prophet in Isaiah 61:1:

The Spirit of the Lord Yahweh is upon me,
Because Yahweh has anointed me. . . .

If one may here appeal to the evidence of extra-historiographic writings, David's anointing by Samuel and the simultaneous rushing of the Spirit upon him were understood to constitute the adoption of David as "the son of God."⁹¹ While this subject is far beyond the scope of this paper, this conclusion raises interesting possibilities for the interpretation of the narratives of Jesus' anointing in the synoptic Gospels. In all accounts his baptism is followed by the descent of the Spirit [in the form of a dove] and the divine declaration: "This is/You are my beloved Son

in whom I am well pleased."⁹²

IV. Summary and Conclusions

My agenda in this paper has been limited. I have tried to come to an understanding of the operation of the Holy Spirit in the historiographic writings of the Old Testament. Whether or not these conclusions will be supported by the remainder of the Old Testament record must await similar analysis of those texts. However from this discussion one may draw the following conclusions.

First, the historians of ancient Israel had a sophisticated and complex view of God who was both transcendent and present in their midst. Whereas poets and psalmists would celebrate the former quality, the historians tended to focus on the latter. They saw divine imminence expressed in a wide variety of ways: in meteorological phenomena, in historical events, in the *kābôd* that led them in the desert and then settled in the Temple, in their rulers, in *mal'ākīm*, in prophets, but especially in the Holy Spirit of God. As I concluded in an earlier article (see endnote 2), the Holy Spirit is the agent/agency through which God expresses his presence among and acts on behalf of or against human beings. Through the Spirit heaven and earth are linked; God and humankind brought together. More than this, through the Spirit God sets in motion, God energizes, God vitalizes, God inspires earthlings.⁹³ According to R. Koch, the *rūah* is a mysterious (*geheimnisvoll*), supernatural (*übernatürlich*), and amazing (*wunderbar*) power.⁹⁴

Second, the operations of the Holy Spirit under the old covenant were diverse in nature and scope. We must stop drawing simplistic contrasts like "In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit came upon people; in the New Testament he indwells them." Not only were both operations true

under both dispensations, neither comes anywhere near capturing the fundamental element in the Spirit's activity, which was to animate and empower individuals and groups for divine service.⁹⁵

Third, the intervention of God in human affairs through his Holy Spirit often caught the recipients of the Holy Spirit and the observers of his action off guard. If God refuses to be reduced to human categories in general, this was certainly true of the operations of his Spirit. Through his Spirit he would seize unwilling and undisposed persons and send them out to accomplish great acts of deliverance; he would inspire one farm boy anxious about his father's donkeys to prophesy with the professionals, and another shepherd lad to burst out in poetic praise; he would frustrate the schemes of humans bent on sinister plots; he would claim the youngest son of a Bethlehem farmer as his adopted son; he would lay bare the ocean depths and make channels in the sea—all with his *rûah*.

Fourth, the Old Testament portrayal of the Holy Spirit of God is both colored by and limited by the vocabulary available to describe his person and actions. The use of the term *rûah* for God's presence is by definition a figure of speech. The metaphor speaks of God's real but mysterious presence and activity. He acts with the power of wind, the liveliness of breath and the intensity of human decision-making, but always safeguarding his divine mystery. Like breath and wind, the presence of God's Spirit is evident only by its effects.⁹⁶ Much has been made in feminist writings of the fact that the Holy Spirit represents the feminine side of God. While many explanations for the feminine gender of *rûah* have been offered,⁹⁷ von Soden's suggestion of an association with

nephesh, "soul, person," or *něšāmâ*, "breath," both of which are feminine in Hebrew, remains the most likely solution. In any case, the gender of the word says nothing about the gender of the entity referred to by the word. Any suggestion that the Spirit was perceived as a feminine divine being or as the feminine side of God because *rûah* is feminine⁹⁸ is as ludicrous as to imagine that the masculine form of *nāšîm*, "women," reflects the masculine "feel" the Hebrews had for what is signified by the word *îššâ*, "woman," or that the feminine gender of names for body parts that occur in pairs suggest they are somehow feminine or effeminate.⁹⁹

Fifth, while the descriptions of the Spirit's operation open the door to the later development of a Trinitarian doctrine, the historiographic writings do not support the existence of such a doctrine in Old Testament times. If one must have a Trinity consisting of Father, son and Holy Spirit, based on the expressions actually found in the Old Testament, Yahweh would probably be the Father, the *rûah* of Yahweh, obviously the Holy Spirit, but the son would be David and/or one of his descendants as adopted son or vassal of Yahweh.

Obviously this is not the last word on "the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament," but this study is offered for the readers' reflection and discussion. If in the process understanding of the Holy Spirit has increased, then the one who has sent the Holy Spirit to give spiritual life to his people and to energize them for his service will be glorified.

ENDNOTES

¹ This is an expanded version of the plenary paper by the same name presented to the Evangelical Theological Society in New Orleans, November 21, 1996.

² Subsequently published as “The Prophet of the Spirit: The Use of *RWH* in the Book of Ezekiel,” *JETS* 32 (1989) 27.

³ J. Moltmann (*Der Geist des Lebens: Eine ganzheitliche Pneumatologie* [Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1991]) is a welcome exception, inasmuch as he devotes more time and offers a fairer treatment than most to the Old Testament witness. According to his index of biblical references, 175 Old Testament references are cited, compared to 275 from the New Testament. This compares with T. Oden (*Life in the Spirit: Systematic Theology: Volume III* [San Francisco: Harper, 1992]) of whose 8 1/3 pages of index only 1 1/2 are devoted to the Old Testament, despite the fact that the occurrences of *rûah* in the Old Testament and in the New are almost identical: 389:379 (OT:NT). According to the index, John Rea (*The Holy Spirit in the Bible: All the Major Passages About the Spirit: A Commentary* [Lake Mary: Creation House, 1990]) devotes almost twice as much space to the New Testament texts as to the Old.

⁴ In addition to L. J. Wood’s, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), we may now refer to H. Schüngel-Straumann, *Rûah bewegt die Welt: Gottes schöpferische Lebenskraft in der Krisenzeit des Exils*, *Stuttgarter Bibelstudien* 151 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1992); W. Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995); R. Koch, *Der Geist Gottes im Alten Testament* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991; a reworking of his earlier *Geist und Messias: Beitrag zur biblischen Theologie des Alten Testament*, 1950); M. Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von RUAH im Alten Testament: Eine wort- und satzsemantische Studie* (Giessen: Brunnen Verlag, 1992).

⁵ See Gordon Fee’s massive work, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Hendrickson, 1994), which has a nineteen page quadruple columned index of biblical references, but Old Testament references take up only six and one-half columns. Fee’s use of Old Testament studies, such as those cited in the previous notes, is limited.

⁶ Unlike the New Testament, the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and Aramaic. Since theologians in general have less facility with these languages than with Greek, the effort needed to comprehend the thought patterns of Old Testament authors is seldom expended.

⁷ Much of the devaluation of the Old Testament derives from the distinctions drawn between Law and Gospel in hermeneutical schools like Lutheranism and Dispensationalism.

⁸ Strictly speaking, “Holy Spirit,” *rûah qêdôšâ*, never appears; all three occurrences are paraphrastic: *rûah qodšô*, “spirit of his holiness” (Isa 63:10,11); *rûah qodšêkâ*, “spirit of your holiness” (Ps 51:13[11]). Compare the following constructions: *‘am qādôš*, “holy people” (Dt 7:6); *gôy qādôš*, “holy nation” (Ex 19:6); *mayim qêdôšîm*, “holy water” (Nu 5:17); *‘îš ‘êlôhîm qādôš*, “holy man of God” (2 Ki 4:9).

⁹ We might also include Ruth and Esther, but *rûah* never occurs in these books. The need for this specific investigation was reinforced by a paper by John Goldingay, “Was the Holy Spirit Active in Old Testament Times? What Was New About the Christian Experience of God?” read in October 1996, at the North Park Theological Seminary’s Symposium on the Holy Spirit. Goldingay cites dozens of OT references, but only one (Ne 9:20) derives from the historiographic texts, cre-

ating the impression that these have nothing to contribute to the discussion.

¹⁰ 101,565 of 300,613 = 33%. The figures, which are derived from E. Jenni, ed., *Theologisches Hand-Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* (Munich and Zürich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag/Theologischer Verlag, 1979 [hereafter cited as *THAT*]) 539-40, exclude the Aramaic sections of Daniel, Ezra, Jeremiah 10:11, and Genesis 31:47.

¹¹ To this figure we may add eleven occurrences of the word in the Aramaic portions of Daniel.

¹² According to the tabulation of R. Albertz and C. Westermann ("*rûah*," *THAT*, 2. 727) the ratio for Psalms is 1:500; for Job, 1:269; for Proverbs, 1:329; for Qoheleth, 1:124. For the prophets as a whole the ratio is 1:466; for Isaiah and Ezekiel, 1:332 and 1:360 respectively. In the Pentateuch the density of *rûah* is much less than in the historiographic writings, with the ratio of occurrences of the word to the total word count being 1:2,104.

¹³ See Table 1.

¹⁴ The ratio for the former is 1:1,482 (47/69,655); of the latter, 1:1,679 (19/31,910). Significantly Deuteronomy, which critical scholarship tends to treat as the theological prologue for the Deuteronomistic history, displays a much lower frequency, 1:7,147 (2/14,294).

¹⁵ 1:988 (10/9,884).

¹⁶ In Chronicles the ratio is 67%.

¹⁷ Cf. A. Evan-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Bible* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1981) 1065.

¹⁸ Cf. J. Reiling, "Holy Spirit," *Dictio-*

nary of Deities and Demons, 792; Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von RUAḤ*, 37-38; R. Albertz and C. Westermann, "*rûah* Geist," *THAT* 2. 726-26.

¹⁹ Of these, eleven are found in the Aramaic portions of Daniel.

²⁰ See *Appendix A* for a survey of the semantic range of *rûah* in these writings.

²¹ 2 Sa 22:11; 1 Ki 18:45; 19:11 (*tris*); 2 Ki 3:17.

²² The close association of *nēšāmâ* and *rûah* is reflected in (1) bound constructions like *nišmat rûah ḥayyîm bēʿappāyw*, "the breath of the spirit of life in his nostrils" (Ge 7:22) and *nišmat rûah ʿappô*, "the breath of the spirit of his nostrils" (1 Sa 22:16; cf. Ps 18:16); (2) the use of these as a word pair in poetic parallelism in this order (Isa 42:5; Job 4:9, 27:3) and reversed (Isa 57:16; Job 32:8, 33:4); (3) as a coordinate pair (Job 34:14). That this usage of *rûah* was common in Northwest Semitic is demonstrated by the figurative comment in the eighth-century B. C. Aramaic Sefire Inscription, *KAI* 224:2, *zy ybʿh rwh ʿpwh* literally "who seeks the breath of his nostrils," but meaning "who seeks asylum." See J. C. L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*, Vol. II, *Aramaic Inscriptions* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975) 46-47, 52.

²³ 1 Ki 21:5. Cf. Jdg 15:19 (of Samson); 1 Sa 30:12 (of an Egyptian brought to David). In these instances, where the gender of *rûah* is reflected, either by verb or modifier, *rûah* is always construed as feminine. The assimilation of *rûah* with *nēšāmâ*, "breath," and *nephes*, "soul, life," probably accounts for the Hebrew

perception of the "spirit" as feminine. So also W. von Soden ("Der Genuswechsel bei *Rûāḥ* und das grammatische Geschlecht in den semitischen Sprachen," *Zeitschrift für Althebraistik* 5 [1992] 57-63) who observes that whereas *rûah* is construed as masculine in close to half the instances in which it bears its primary sense, "wind," it is overwhelmingly feminine (32 out of 42 instances in the Old Testament; only 5 of the 42 are masculine). Cf. the discussion by M. Dreytza, 182-88. *Contra* Dreytza (p. 185), however, Jos 5:1 and 1 Ki 10:5 (= 2 Chron 9:4) do not necessarily construe *rûah* as masculine; the masculine verb form *ḥâyâ* often functions for the feminine.

²⁴ Dt 2:30; Jos 5:1; Jdg 8:3; 1 Sa 1:15; 1 Ch 5:26, 28:12; 2 Ch 21:16, 36:22; Ezr 1:1, 5. Von Soden's contention that the Israelite-Jewish notion of "spirit" (*Geist*) is without analogy ("Der Genuswechsel," 59) is contradicted by Punic evidence. Note *KAI* 79:6-10, "Anyone who removes this stone . . . Tinnit will judge the *rḥ* of this man." For further references see J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions*, Handbook of Oriental Studies 21 (Leiden: Brill, 1995) 1066.

²⁵ Jdg 3:10, 6:34, 11:29, 13:25, 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Sa 10:6, 11:6, 16:13, 14a, 19:9; 2 Sa 23:2; 1 Ki 22:24 (= 2 Ch 18:23); 2 Ki 2:16; 2 Ch 20:14.

²⁶ 1 Sa 10:10, 16:15, 16, 23a, 18:10; 19:20, 23; 1 Ki 18:12; 1 Ch 15:1; 2 Ch 24:20.

²⁷ "Prophet of the Spirit," 48-49.

²⁸ Even we moderns have great difficulty explaining the concept. A. R.

Johnson rightly opined (*The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God*, 2nd ed [Cardiff: University of Wales, 1961] 36) that the divine Spirit was understood as an “extension of Yahweh’s personality” by which he exercises control over the world.

²⁹In the words of John Calvin, “It is the Spirit who, everywhere diffused, sustains all things, causes them to grow, and quickens them in heaven and in earth.” *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ET London: SCM/Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960) 1. 13-14.

³⁰See Reiling, *DDD*, 792-93.

³¹As recognized by the studies of Hildebrandt (*Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*, 104-9) and C. Westermann, “Geist im Alten Testament,” 223-30.

³²Cf. my work on the book of Ezekiel in “The Prophet of the Spirit,” 27-49.

³³While the Old Testament view of the *rûah* bears some resemblances to the Egyptian understanding of *ka*, the divinely originating vital force, within the ancient Near Eastern context Hebrew pneumatology went its own way. For a good summary of ancient Near Eastern analogues see J. Breck, *Spirit of Truth: The Holy Spirit in Johannine Tradition*, Vol. I, *The Origins of Johannine Pneumatology* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1991) 43-76.

³⁴The song also appears with minor variations in Psalm 18. For a study of its literary function in this narrative context see J. W. Watts, *Psalm and Story: Inset Hymns in Hebrew*

Narrative, JSOTSup 139 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1992) 99-117.

³⁵The genre of this experience differs slightly from that witnessed in 1 Ki 18:46, where the “hand of Yahweh” (*yad yhwh*) comes upon the prophet (*hâyâ ’el*) and energizes him so he is able to outrun the chariots of Ahab.

³⁶The formula occurs with prophetic effect in 19:20,23.

³⁷The same formula occurs with different effects in 1 Sa 15:6,10; 18:10 (prophecy), and 16:13 (messianic adoption?).

³⁸LXX translates *lābaš* with *endúuw*, “to endue.” According to Luke 24:49, Jesus borrows the same figure of speech when he tells his disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they are “clothed” (*endúsethe*) with power from on high.

³⁹J. F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965) 152.

⁴⁰Othniel was a proselyte conscripted into leadership; Gideon was stubborn and faithless at best, and semi-pagan at worst; Jephthah was an opportunist of questionable spiritual character who tries to secure victory with a stupid vow *à la* the Canaanites; Samson was a self-centered playboy who frittered away his high calling and exercised his talents for purely selfish ends; Saul was a reluctant and incompetent leader, a tragic figure in a time of great national crisis.

⁴¹A milder form of empowerment/inspiration occurs in Dt 34:9, according to which Joshua was filled with the spirit of wisdom (*rûah ḥokmâ*) when Moses laid his hands on him. Then the Israelites listened to him and did as the Lord had com-

manded Moses. The expression *rûah ḥokmâ* occurs elsewhere only in Ex 28:3.

⁴²The probable meaning of *nē’îm zēmirôt yišrā’el*, traditionally rendered “the sweet psalmist of Israel.” For discussion see P. K. McCarter, *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 9 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1984) 477.

⁴³On the literary function of this poem in its narrative context see Watts, *Psalm and Story* 170.

⁴⁴The forms of the idiom are identical to the Spirit’s conscripting/empowering a charismatic (if not spiritual) leader discussed earlier, but the effects are different.

⁴⁵For further discussion see D. V. Edelman, *King Saul in the Historiography of Judah*, JSOTS 121 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991) 52-53.

⁴⁶Cf. the three signs for Moses in Ex 4:1-9.

⁴⁷This is the same title cited by Yahweh in 1 Sam 9:16 when he forewarns Samuel that he is to anoint Saul. In the following verse, when he describes Saul’s function he uses the verb *‘āšar* “to restrain, to control,” rather than *mālak*, “to rule [as king].” In fact, both Samuel and the narrator are extremely circumspect in the way they speak of Saul’s office. Samuel has no hesitancy to use the term *melek* “king,” in his *mišpaṭ hammelek*, “Disposition of Kingship” (1 Sa 8:10-19), in his “Reflections on Kingship” (1 Sa 12:1-25), or when he quotes the people (1 Sa 10:19), but in his engagement of Saul, he never assigns *melekship* to him. As for the narrator, when he writes of the people’s involvement

in the process of kingmaking, *melek* is used freely (1 Sa 8:1-9, 19-21; 10:19,24; 11:15), and he uses the term *mēlūkā*, “kingship” (1 Sa 10:25; 11:14), but he never refers directly to Saul as *melek*.

⁴⁸ For the association of the root *nbʿ*, “to prophesy,” with the coming of the *rūaḥ* see 2 Ch 15:8.

⁴⁹ *wayyahāpāl lō ʾēlōhīm lēb ʾaḥēr*, literally, “God changed for him another heart.”

⁵⁰ Vv. 11-13. Ironically the proverbial question is “Is Saul also among the prophets?” rather than “Is Saul also among the kings?”

⁵¹ Note expressions like “ill will,” “ill repute,” “ill feelings toward someone.”

⁵² Cf. *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) 37-38.

⁵³ Cf. Ne 9:20.

⁵⁴ In the light of 1 Sa 15:35 there is some question whether Samuel even looked upon Saul.

⁵⁵ See for example J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1962) 47-83.

⁵⁶ Cf. 2 Ki 9:11, where Elisha’s non-verbal and verbal prophetic activity is interpreted as “madness” (*mēšuggāʿ*).

⁵⁷ My references are all to the Kings account.

⁵⁸ For a detailed study see S. J. de Vries, *Prophet against Prophet: The Role of the Micaiah Narrative (1 Kings 22) in the Development of Early Prophetic Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978). For a history of the interpretation of this text see W. Roth, “The Story of the Prophet Micaiah (1 Kings 22) in Historical-

Critical Interpretation 1876-1976,” in *The Biblical Mosaic: Changing Perspectives*, ed. R. M. Polzin and E. Rothman (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 106-31.

⁵⁹ The masculine gender of *rūaḥ* in this context is determined by this spirit’s identity as a member of the heavenly council, which elsewhere consists exclusively of masculine members. See the following note.

⁶⁰ Elsewhere the attendants around Yahweh’s throne are designated *bēnē ʾēlōhīm*, “sons of God” (Job 1:6; 38:7), *malʾākīm*, “messengers, angels” (Ps 103:20; 148:2), or *šēbaʾīm*, “hosts” (Ps 103:21; 148:2). Our text includes this *rūaḥ* among the *šēbāʾ haššāmāyim*, “host of heaven” (v. 19). The author of Hebrews speaks of angels as “ministering spirits” (*leitourgika pneūmata*) sent out [by God] to minister to the elect (Heb 1:14).

⁶¹ The gender of *rūaḥ* here is masculine.

⁶² The verb *pātâ* means “to be open-minded, gullible.” The range of meanings of the piel extends from “to persuade” (Hos 2:16) to “seduce” sexually (Ex 22:16).

⁶³ It also finds a divine parallel in Isa 6:8.

⁶⁴ Contra G. T. Montague (*The Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition* [New York: Paulist Press, 1976] 27), who writes on this text, “The fact that one or many may claim to speak in the Lord’s name or by his spirit is not an automatic assurance that their prophecy is true and conducive to good.”

⁶⁵ The expression *⊕ m dēbārīm bēpeh*, “to put words in the mouth,” occurs

with Yahweh as subject and a prophet as object in Nu 22:38; 23:5,12,16; Dt 18:18; with *nātan*, Jer 1:9; 5:14. Cf. human subject and object in Ex 4:15; 2 Sa 14:3,19; with Yahweh as subject and Israel as object, Isa 51:16; 59:21.

⁶⁶ On *šeqer* as a substitute for *šāwʾ* “emptiness, vanity, futility,” compare Ex 20:16 and Dt 5:20.

⁶⁷ The ambiguity is not erased by the addition of *wēhašlah*, “and succeed,” to “Go up” (*ʿālēh*) in vv. 12 and 15. The verb *šalah* in *hiphil* does indeed usually mean “to succeed, to achieve a goal,” but whose agenda is intended is not specified. Naturally the false prophets assume it is Ahab’s, but in reality it is Yahweh’s goal that is achieved.

⁶⁸ Note the misguided insertion of “it” by all modern English translations: NRSV, REB, NAB, NJB, NAS, NIV, NLT. NJPS brackets “it.” Not even Meir Sternberg (*The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985] 406-7), the most sensitive of all literary critics notices, let alone grasps, the significance of the omission. Nor does S. J. de Vries (*Prophet Against Prophet*, 19), who provides the most thorough literary study of this text.

⁶⁹ See Sternberg, p. 406.

⁷⁰ Cf. v. 31. There is also delightful irony in the repetition of *bēyad melek [ʾārām]*, “in the hand of the king [of Aram]” (v. 3) and *bēyad hammelek*, “in the hand of the king” (v. 6).

⁷¹ As J. J. M. Roberts insists in “Does God Lie? Divine Deceit as a Theological Problem in Israelite Prophetic Literature,” *Congress Volume:*

- Jerusalem* 1986, VTS 40; ed. J. A. Emerton (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 211-20.
- ⁷² Ezekiel raises the issue of divinely-inspired false prophecy in Ezek 14:6-11.
- ⁷³ Cf. Yahweh's inciting of the conflict between Samson and the Philistines during the settlement period (Jdg 14:4).
- ⁷⁴ In this the longest literary unit in the book, the narrator refers to God only three times: vv. 23, 56, and 57. God is also mentioned twice in Jotham's fable (vv. 9,13), but these are outside the primary plot.
- ⁷⁵ The book of Ezekiel provides a remarkably complete series of punitive agents: fire (ʿēš, 39:6), plague (*deber*, 14:19,21;28:23), bloodshed (*dām*, 23:3), famine (*rāʿāb*, 5:16; 14:13,21), wild beasts (*ḥayyâ rāʿâ*, 5:17; 14:21), the sword (*ḥereb*, 14:21).
- ⁷⁶ The phrase "bad spirit of God" (*rûaḥ ʿlōhîm rāʿâ*) appears five times in ten verses (vv. 14,15,16,23a,23b).
- ⁷⁷ As in Jdg 9:23, but unlike 1 Sa 19:9.
- ⁷⁸ Cf. L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, rev. ed. translated under the supervision of M. E. J. Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 1994) 147; D. J. A. Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1995) 2. 244. In 2 Sa 22:5 (= Ps 18:5) the verb describes the overwhelming effects of destructive torrents.
- ⁷⁹ Cf. the earlier references to *rûaḥ* as "disposition, mental state." R. P. Gordon (*I & II Samuel: A Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986] 152) speaks of bouts of Kierkegaardian melancholia.
- ⁸⁰ See further below.
- ⁸¹ *tôb lô*, "it was good to him" (vv. 16,23), answers to *rāʿâ*, "bad," in *rûaḥ rāʿâ*.
- ⁸² 1 Sa 18:10-12 was discussed in an earlier context because of the association of the *rûaḥ* with prophecy.
- ⁸³ For summaries of ancient Near Eastern conceptions see J. Black and A. Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary* (London: British Museum Press, 1992) 63-65; G. J. Riley, "Demon," *DDD* 447-49.
- ⁸⁴ See the discussion by J. K. Kuemmerlin-McLean, "Demons," *ABD*, 2. 138-40; also Koch, *Geist Gottes* 35-38.
- ⁸⁵ The expression *rûaḥ rāʿâ*, "bad spirit," represents an exact equivalent to *rûaḥ bšth*. "the evil spirit," mentioned in numerous Aramaic amulets from the early Christian period. For a study of these and other magical texts see J. Naveh and S. Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1985). See especially 7:6, but also 3:4 and 7:12. These demons could be either male or female (*zkr wnaqbh*). One, whom the author of the amulet inscription is trying to exorcise, is called "Fever [and] Shivering" (*rwḥh dmtqrʿ ʿšth ʿwryth*, 9:1; cf. Naveh and Shaked, pp. 82-83); another is called *rwḥ grmyh*, "demon [that causes sickness] of the bones" (1:20-21, on which see Naveh and Shaked, p. 45). But this late Jewish usage was anticipated by the Nabataeans, who also employed *rḥ* with this sense. A second century B. C. incantation text opens with an address to *rwḥʿ*, "O Spirit," which is paired with *ʿtryʿ*, "O Aʿattars," which Naveh understands as "gods, spirits, or demons" (J. Naveh, "A Nabatean Incantation Text," *IEJ* 29 (1979) 116).
- ⁸⁶ In "Anointing as a Motif in the Making of the Charismatic King," *Biblica* 57 (1976) 378-98, Z. Weizman provides an excellent study of anointing narratives. For additional studies see E. Kutsch, *Salbung als Rechtsakt im Alten Testament und im Alten Orient* (Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1963); R. de Vaux, "The King of Israel, Vassal of Yahweh," in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, trans. D. McHugh (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972) 152-80; T. N. D. Mettinger, *King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1976) 185-232.
- ⁸⁷ For the accounts of David's public anointing see 2 Sa 2:1-4 (as king of Judah) and 5:1-5. Saul is also anointed twice: privately in 1 Sa 9:22-10:8, and publicly in 1 Sa 11:15 (following LXX).
- ⁸⁸ 1 Sa 16:6; 2 Sa 12:7; 22:51; 23:1. On the notion of "Yahweh's anointed," see S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, trans. G. W. Anderson (Oxford: Basil Blackwood, 1956) 56-95.
- ⁸⁹ The same had been true of Saul: 1 Sa 10:1; 12:3,5; 15:17; 24:6,10; 26:9,11,16,23; 2 Sa 1:14,16.
- ⁹⁰ Mettinger (*King and Messiah*, 247) dates v. 13 in the reign of Solomon. But his suggestion that the idea of the divine anointing of David did not emerge until after David's reign misunderstands the relationship between the divine and the public anointing.

⁹¹ Thus Edelman (*King Saul*, 117), who opines further, "Once the divine spirit is bestowed upon a human it cannot be totally removed. Therefore the transferral of 'good spirit' from the rejected king to the king-elect requires its replacement with some form of divine spirit." This understanding is implied also in D. Howard, "The Transfer of Power from Saul to David in 1 Sa 16:13-14," *JETS* 32 (1989): 473-84, though, as the title suggests, the author places the emphasis on the transfer of power rather than the Holy Spirit.

⁹² This comment is not intended as a description of David's character, but as a declaration of his divine election. David has been in God's mind (*lēb*) from the beginning.

⁹³ The principal references to Davidic "sonship" are found in 2 Sa 7:14; Ps 2:7; 89:27-28 [Eng 26-27]. For discussion of the Davidic kings as "sons" of God see Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 259-75; T. Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel: A Study on the Formation and Development of Royal-Dynastic Ideology*, BZAW 142 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977) 108-9. For a discussion of the adoption formula in Ps 2:7 see H.J. Kraus, *Psalmen*, rev. ed., BKAT 15 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1978), Vol. I, 150-52; O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*, trans. T. J. Hallett (New York: Seabury, 1978) 247-56.

⁹⁴ Mt 3:16-17; Mk 1:11; Lk 3:22. The three parts of the declaration all echo covenantal and Messianic notions in the Old Testament. (1) *Su ei o uios mou*, "You are my son," is an adaptation of Ps 2:7, which in turn

is an adaptation of the adoption formula, "I will be his father and he shall be my son." Cf. M. Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East," *JAOS* 90 (1970): 190-95. In covenantal contexts "sonship" signifies "vassalage" (Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 266). (2) *o agaphētos*, "The beloved," translates Hebrew *ʾāhab*, which means fundamentally "covenant commitment." Cf. M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992) 81-84. "The beloved one" echoes the narrator's circumstantial comment in 2 Sa 12:24, *wyhw̄h ʾāhēbō*, "Now Yahweh loved him [Solomon]." (3) *en soi eudokhsa*, "in you I am pleased," alludes to the election of David as the man after Yahweh's own heart (1 Sam 13:14). On *eudokeō* G. Schrenck comments ("*eudokeō*" TDNT 2. 740), "What is meant is God's decree of election, namely the election of the Son, which includes His mission and His appointment to the kingly office of Messiah."

⁹⁵ Cf. H. Schüngel-Straumann (*Rûah bewegt die Welt*, 96) who concludes that, used theologically, the *rûah* is that divine power which sets in motion.

⁹⁶ Koch, *Geist Gottes*, 50.

⁹⁷ M. Welker (*Gottes Geist: Theologie des Heiligen Geistes* [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1993] 58-108) identifies the following experiences of the power of the Spirit: (1) In rescuing people from collective crisis and sin; (2) in defending people in the face of persistent threat; (3) in the public transformation of people in power

and structures of power; (4) in the exposure of evil and lying spirits; (5) in the concentration of the presence of God (as *numinosum*).

⁹⁸ Cf. Goldingay, p. 10.

⁹⁹ Schüngel-Straumann (*Rûah bewegt die Welt*, 18-21) offers a survey of the main suggestions.

¹⁰⁰ Otherwise, New Testament writers thinking in Hebrew but writing in Greek should have rendered *pneuma* feminine instead of conforming to the customary neuter.

¹⁰¹ Cf. the comment of John Macquarrie (*Thinking About God* [New York: Harper and Row, 1975] 130), which reflects common thinking:

There is the simple matter too that the Hebrew word for spirit, *rûah*, is of feminine gender. To be sure, this is a grammatical convention, but the gender of nouns have [*sic*, has] usually reflected some of the "feel" that people have had for what these words signify, and the origins of gender can sometimes be traced back into mythology. . . . in *rûah* feeling rather than reason, intuition rather than inference, the Dionysian and orgiastic rather than the Apollonian and the intellectual are typical.

TABLE 1

Texts	<i>rûaḥ</i>	<i>hârûaḥ</i>	<i>rûaḥ-</i>	<i>rûḥeka</i>	<i>rûḥô</i>	<i>rûḥām</i>	<i>rûḥôt</i>	Totals
Deuteronomy			1		1			2
Joshua	2							2
Judges	1		7		1	1		10
Samuel Narrative ¹	1		10					11
David's Rise ²			4		1			5
David's Rule ³	1		2					3
David's Family Troubles ⁴								
Solomon ⁵	1							1
Divided Kingdom ⁶	3	3	6	2				14
Judah ⁷	1							1
Chronicles	2	2	10				1	15
Ezra-Nehemiah			1	2	1			4
Totals	12	5	41	4	4	1	1	68

¹ 1 Samuel 1:1–16: 23; 19:18–24; 28:3–25.

³ 2 Samuel 6:1–9:13; 20:23–24:25.

⁵ 1 Kings 1:1–11:43.

² 1 Samuel 17:1–19:17; 20:1–28:2; 2 Samuel 1:1–5:25.

⁴ 2 Samuel 10:1–20:22.

⁶ 1 Kings 12:1–2 Kings 17:41.

⁷ 2 Kings 18:1–25:30.

Appendix A: The semantic range of *Rûaḥ* in the historiographic writings.

1 Meteorological Usage

- 1.1 Wind 2 Sam 22:11; 1 Kings 17:45;
1 Kings 19:11; 2 Kings 3:17
- 1.2 Side 1 Chron 9:24

2 Anthropological Usage

- 2.1 Breath Judg 15:19; 1 Sam 30:12; 1 Kings 10:5; 1
Kgs 21:5; 2 Chron 9:4
- 2.2 Mind/Heart/Soul (*lêb nephesh*) Deut 2:30; Josh 2:11;
Josh 5:1; Judg 8:3; 1 Sam 1:15;
1 Chron 5:26; 1 Chron 5:26,
2 Chron 21:16; 1 Chron 28:12;
2 Chron 36:22; Ezra 1:5

3 Theological Usage

- 3.1 Agency/Agent of Providence (Divine Breath)
2 Sam 22:16
- 3.2 Agency/Agent of Wisdom, Instruction, Admonition
Deut 34:9; Neh 9:20
- 3.3 Agency/Agent of Conveyance 1 Kings 18:12;
2 Kings 2:16
- 3.4 Agency/Agent of Conscription Judg 3:10; Judg 6:34;
Judg 11:29; Judg 13:25; Judg 14:6;
Judg 14:19; Judg 15:14; 1 Sam 11:6
- 3.5 Agency/Agent of Prophetic Inspiration
- 3.5.1 Normative Prophecy 2 Sam 23:2; 2 Kings 2:9;
2 Kings 2:15; 1 Chron 12:18[19];
1 Chron 15:1; 2 Chron 20:14;
2 Chron 24:20; Neh 9:30

- 3.5.2 Ecstatic Prophecy 1 Sam 10:6; 1 Sam 10:10;
1 Sam 18:10; 1 Sam 19:20;
1 Sam 19:23; 2 Kings 22:24;
2 Chron 18:23

3.5.3 Member of the Heavenly Court

- 2 Kings 22:21; 2 Kings 22:22;
2 Kings 22:23; 2 Chron 18:20;
2 Chron 18:21; 2 Chron 18:22

3.6 Agency/Agent of Disaster Judg 9:23;

- 1 Sam 16:14; 1 Sam 16:15;
1 Sam 16:16; 1 Sam 16:23;
1 Sam 19: 9; 2 Kings 19:7

3.7 Agency/Agent of Messianic Adoption

- 1 Sam 16:13; 1 Sam 16:14