

The Spirit in the OT 1

Spirit, Breath, Wind

Terminology:

Old Testament The Hebrew word is רֹּחַ (ruach) - spirit / Spirit, wind, breath

New Testament The Greek word is Πνεῦμα (pneuma) - Spirit / spirit, wind, breath

The Spirit is only called “Holy Spirit” four times in the Old Testament - in Psalm 51:11, Wisdom 9:17 (but cf 1:5 and 7:22) and Isaiah 63:10 and 11. In each case it is “your / his (=God’s) holy spirit). Not used as a name here - ‘holy’ is an adjective describing the Spirit of God.

Most commonly Spirit / Spirit of God / Spirit of the Lord.

The Spirit of the Lord is God present and active in the world.

The Spirit, Wind and Water

The רֹּחַ moving over the waters as a precursor to creation.

1. The Creation Story in Genesis 1

Gen 1:1-3 (NRSV) In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.

Gen 1:1-3 (NASB) In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

2. After the Flood - Recreation

Flood story found in Genesis 6-9

God “undoes” creation in Noah’s Flood. Told as an ‘un-creation’.

After the Flood is a kind of re-creation, starting with the רֹּחַ blowing over the waters of the Flood. God then establishes a covenant with all of creation.

Gen 8:1-3 (NRSV) But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and all the domestic animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided; the fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained, and the waters gradually receded from the earth.

3. Crossing of the Red Sea - the culmination of the Exodus (Creation of Israel)

Ex 14:21 (NRSV) Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided.