

## The Spirit in the OT 2.      Divine Spirit, human spirit, life and death

### The Creation of the human being in Genesis 2

*Humans are dust animated by the breath of God.*

Genesis 2:7 (NRSV) then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath (*nishmah*) of life; and the man became a living being (*nephesh chayah*).

Death: "You are dust, and to dust you will return" (Gen 3:19) - removal of the life force / breath.

### The Judgement of the Flood

(Gen 6:3, 17) Then the LORD said, 'My spirit (*ruach*) shall not abide in (or contend with, Hebrew meaning uncertain) mortals for ever, for they are flesh; their days shall be one hundred and twenty years.' .... "For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath (*ruach*) of life; everything that is on the earth shall die.... (Gen 7:15, 22) "They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath (*ruach*) of life. .... everything on dry land in whose nostrils was the breath (*ruach*) of life [NASV of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath (*nishmah*) of the spirit (*ruach*) of life] died.

### Psalm 104 - a celebration of creation

*Extends the idea of dust animated by the breath of God to all living creatures, not just humans:*

Vv 27-30 (NRSV) These all look to you  
to give them their food in due season;  
when you give to them, they gather it up;  
when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.  
When you hide your face, they are dismayed;  
when you take away their breath (*ruach*), they die  
and return to their dust.  
When you send forth your spirit (*ruach*), they are created;  
and you renew the face of the ground.

### Ecclesiastes - a pessimistic reading

Eccl 3:19-21 (NRSV) For the fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath (*ruach*), and humans have no advantage over the animals; for all is vanity. All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again.  
21 Who knows whether the human spirit (*ruach*) goes upwards and the spirit (*ruach*) of animals goes downwards to the earth?

Job 27:3-5 (NRSV) "As God lives, who has taken away my right,  
And the Almighty, who has made my soul (*nephesh*) bitter,  
as long as my breath (*nishmah*) is in me  
and the spirit (*ruach*) of God is in my nostrils ....  
until I die I will not put away my integrity from me.