



Spirit of God E8: Let's Take a Breath and Review

Official Transcript

Speakers:

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[Spirit 1.0: God's Essential Gift of Life, Breath, and Energy (0:00-20:03)]

[BibleProject theme]

Jon: Welcome to BibleProject podcast. Take a big breath with me. [breathes in] And let it out. [breathes out] What is that? Oxygen? Breath? Wind? Those are all words we use in English, but in biblical Hebrew, it's all one word, "*ruakh*." And it's how the Hebrew Bible talks about God's personal, life-giving energy, his power and presence, or simply "Spirit." We're halfway through a series on the Spirit of God, and we've looked at how God's *ruakh* shows up in many ways in the Hebrew Bible. And it's been a lot for me to wrap my head around. Maybe the same is true for you. So today, Tim and I slow down, take a breath, and review what we've learned so far in our study of *ruakh*. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

[Musical break: BibleProject theme (0:56-1:02)]

Jon: Hey, Tim.

Tim: Hello, Jon. Hi.

Jon: Hello.

Tim: Hi.

Jon: We are right in the middle of a series of conversations around the Spirit of God.

Tim: We are. The Spirit of God.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And in real time, we recorded, like, seven in a row.

[BibleProject theme fades out]

Jon: Kind of were in it.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And then took a—what, three-week break?

Tim: Yeah, it's been about three weeks.

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Jon: And have done a bunch of other things since then.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And so—

Tim: Now we're jumping back in to—

Jon: Now we need our mind back in.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. So maybe this is a good opportunity to see what stuck from our conversations—

Jon: Yeah. [laughs]

Tim: —three weeks ago, because a lot of ideas about work and parenting have gone through our minds since then. [chuckles]

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: Okay, we're doing a refresh on Spirit of God. And so basics are: In the Hebrew Bible, *ruakh* is a Hebrew word to describe an invisible energy that makes a visible impact in the world. And it can be described as the thing animating the trees, the thing animating you and me—

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: —our breath that we inhale and exhale—

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: —and even though it's invisible, the space between me and the tree, if I'm standing in front of one, is filled with *ruakh*.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: And so I—it's very intuitive to say the thing blowing the trees is the thing that I inhale and blows me around. [laughs] Like—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: You know? There's that. And then, whoever it is that's behind all of reality that's making all of it go must be someone who is above and beyond all, who's making it all work and carrying it, originated it, sustaining it. And so it's not just a *something* blowing the trees around or blowing me around, [chuckles] it's *someone*. It's God in my nostrils.

Jon: As Job would say.

Tim: As Job would say. So “Spirit of God” becomes a way to talk about the invisible, personal energy, personal presence of a person that animates all things. And those are its three most basic meanings throughout the Hebrew Bible.

Jon: And as we got into that, I really wrestled with the paradox, which is that God is not the wind.

Tim: Mmm.

Jon: God is not my breath. God is not in my nostrils.

[Tim laughs]

Jon: However—

Tim: [laughs] Yeah.

Jon: In God, I live and move and have my being.

Tim: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Mmm.

Jon: [Tim backchanneling throughout] Yeah. In the biblical imagination, when you watched the wind blow the waters to recede so dry ground was visible, and now you can walk through—

Tim: Yeah, like in the Exodus.

Jon: Moses—like in the Exodus.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: That is God's *ruakh*.

Tim: Oh, hmm. Yeah. Well, actually, what it says is—in Exodus 14—is, “God *sent* a *ruakh*.”

Jon: God sent a *ruakh*.

Tim: It creates a little distance between God and the *ruakh*.

Jon: Okay. Okay. So there's a sense of distance?

Tim: And here we're—well, here—we're to it. Here we are. This is biblical language about God—is actually doing a lot of heavy lifting in terms of, what are—classically, these would be questions and conversations in their own, what we call, like, philosophy of religion— [laughs]

Jon: [chuckles] Yeah.

Tim: —but conceptions of God that in—especially in monotheist religious traditions, of which ancient Israelite religion and Judaism and Christianity—where if you believe that all reality must have its source in one who's the source of all things. We're talking about someone who is above and beyond anything we could possibly imagine because it's outside of all categories of our thought. But if that one really has created something other than God's self and is holding it in existence, sustaining it, then you can't go anywhere or any-when or encounter anything or any-who where you're not also in some way encountering that one, because the whole thing is—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —right?—sustained by the one. And the primary way the biblical authors talk about how you encounter the direct presence of God in the tree, in the wind, in the food, in each other, in my body, is to say that the *ruakh* of Elohim is blowing those trees, is parting those waters, and is animating me. But then there'll be other times where the

biblical authors will really want to make a distinction and say God *sent* a *ruakh* to part those waters.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And that's creating some distance to say, like: That really was God parting the waters, but of course, we all know there's way more to God than just the thing parting the waters right now.

Jon: Yeah. Okay, so to try to say it clearly— [chuckles]

[Tim chuckles]

Jon: That in the biblical imagination, nothing exists or is sustained without God, but everything is not God.

[Tim laughs]

Jon: So there's this—

Tim: Right. Right, right, right.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] We're in the middle of this paradox, which is: Nothing can exist without God. And so when we experience something like the wind, we are experiencing something that is closely connected to the energy of God. But at the same time, God is not the wind. And so there's some separation. And so in the same way as living, breathing humans, we could not exist and have life without God's sustaining power, but we are not God. But God is in us, and we are in God. And this—this is the biblical frame.

Tim: Yeah. Yep. Yeah. In philosophy of religion or theology, you know, the words “transcendence” versus “immanence” are often the words used to talk about these. So transcendent, above and beyond all. Immanent meaning, like, right here in the midst of everything.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And that both are true.

Jon: Ah.

Tim: And actually, both are necessary if God really is [pause] God— [laughs]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —the way that monotheistic traditions conceive of God.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: In a polytheist tradition, you can have a God who created everything, and then you can have many different spiritual beings who are, like, overseeing everything.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And it's all delegated—right?—and you can kind of split it out that way. But in a monotheistic worldview, you have to find a way to *have language* to talk about—

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: —God being both outside and above the system, but also personally present within the system—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —because the system wouldn't be without that one.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And there you go.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: “Spirit of God” is the primary way the biblical authors talk about God within the system—present within the system.

Jon: Mmm. When God is within the system, Spirit becomes the metaphor.

Tim: Yeah. Mmm, not—and it's not the only way. God's word, God's wisdom—

Jon: Ah.

Tim: —God's name—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: —and angels— [chuckles]

Jon: [laughs] God's messengers?

Tim: —are other ways. But “Spirit of God” is a way of trying to name as direct as you can—like, *it's God*. It's the Spirit of God that animates everything, but it is also distinct from God. This is Genesis 1:1 and—this is the beginning sentences of the Bible. “In the beginning, *Elohim* created the skies and the land.”

Jon: “Now, the *Spirit of God* hovered . . .”

Tim: “Now, the land was”—right?—“without form, without inhabitant, darkness was over the surface of the abyss waters, but the *ruakh Elohim* is right there fluttering in the midst

of—over the waters.” So God created, but it’s “Spirit of God” that’s present within the unformed potential to create.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And there you go. If we’re trying to find an English word—we did this years ago—that gets underneath—what’s underneath—what do wind and breath and the personal presence of a being have in common? What’s a word to describe what’s underneath all of them? And we did come across this word “energy”—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —we were excited about.

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: And as it turns out, as we’re going to turn to the depiction of the Spirit of God in the New Testament, what we’re going to find is the two words that are most associated with “spirit” in the New Testament are “holy” and “power,” energy.

Jon: Mmm. Yeah.

Tim: It’s the Greek word *dunamis*—

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: —from which we get dynamite, [chuckles] power.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So yeah, what we’re after in talking about *ruakh* is: There is something—and this is, again, going—we’re recapping for ourselves—

Jon: Yes.

Tim: [laughs] —and it’s saying things that we said in episodes one and two—but there’s something energizing everything all around us, because everything’s moving and changing all around us.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] Nothing is static. If a human set of eyes starts being really attentive to everything happening around us, nothing is ever staying the same. It’s all in a state of flux and change. Our bodies, the environment, the rock, the tree, the—it’s all changing. So in a way, what we think is real and permanent—

Jon: Oh, yeah.

Tim: —is actually the most transient, temporary, fleeting thing you could imagine.

Jon: Have you ever done the thought experiment of speeding up time—

Tim: Oh.

Jon: —and how it would feel like vapor?

Tim: Right.

Jon: Everything would.

Tim: Totally. Yes.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] You've seen that, like, a flower—speed lapse photography—blossoms and then dies within, like, a few seconds.

Tim: That's right. Yeah. Yeah. And other species help us with this, like the mayfly.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: You know what I mean?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: They just, like—they just come out of the water—

[Jon laughs]

Tim: —no—I forget: Are they the ones that have no mouths?

Jon: The salmon fly has no mouths. There's other things—

Tim: There you go. Okay. Yes. There's some species of fly that has no mouth.

Jon: I'm sure there's lots.

Tim: Because they don't consume any energy after they hatch.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: They just exist for a couple of weeks and spend all their energy laying eggs, mating, and then they die. So that's sped up for us, but for that creature, that's like their whole lifespan.

Jon: Yeah. Right.

Tim: Their perception of time is super different than ours. [laughs]

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And that's what the biblical authors are trying to say of: God is *ruakh*. God is the thing underlying that's the most real and permanent and stable in the midst of this sea of change and transience.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And to say God is spirit is to make that kind of claim.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And which is to say that God isn't material in the way we imagine it. God's more real than material.

Jon: Mmm.

[Tim laughs]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: To be immaterial is actually to be more real—

[Jon laughs]

Tim: —in the biblical imagination.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: God is *ruakh*, and he has given a gift of *ruakh* to all living things. This is in the early Genesis narrative we covered.

Jon: Oh, yeah. Mhm.

Tim: So the life that I have and the body that's animated by it and the mind that can perceive and be responsible and then make distinctions between what is good and bad and better and best—like, all of that is a sharing in and a gift of God's *ruakh* to me.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] Okay. Yes. So that is God's *ruakh*, a gift to me. And then the next wrinkle becomes: Well, in some way, actually, that's my *ruakh*.

Tim: Right, yeah. That's right.

Jon: It's no—it's—

Tim: Loaned.

Jon: It's loaned to me.

Tim: It's on loan. [laughs]

Jon: Yeah. So I can now talk about having a spirit or a *ruakh*.

Tim: Mhm. Right.

Jon: My thoughts, my intentions, my perceptions of the world, my ability to do things in the world—all of that is now my *ruakh*.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: I don't have it unless God has given it to me. But now, it's not strictly God's. It's also mine.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah, God shared.

Jon: God shared.

Tim: God shared, and so now it's a thing that God and I are doing together. That is—
[chuckles]

Jon: And now—

Tim: [chuckles] That is, my—

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: —my life is a thing God and I are doing together.

Jon: But my *ruakh* can get misaligned with God's *ruakh*.

Tim: Yes. That's right. Yes, that's right.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] So to think of them as kind of one thing, like God gave it to me and now I share it with him, there's a union there. But there's a sense of enough separation where my *ruakh* could go a completely different way.

Tim: That's right. Well—yeah, I mean, re—there's limits, you know?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So I have to work within the grain of my limitations as a creature.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] But within that realm of limitations, there's just huge opportunity and freedom given to us. And this is the picture of the humans in the garden. And what God says is, "*Hey, let's do this together.*" Like: "*Take care of this for me. Work and care for this. You've got my breath and*"—this is our interpretive framework of the Eden story—"*I'm going to teach you what you need to know. Don't try and learn by yourself by taking from the tree. Trust my word and my command, and we're going to do this together so that you can share in the kind of oversight over this tiny bit of creation*" that's like an image of God's oversight over all reality.

Jon: Yeah. *“My Spirit is already—is giving you life. Now let my word and wisdom give you life.”*

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. That’s right.

Jon: More union.

Tim: That’s right. So that goes wrong. Humans make a foolish—they’re deceived, and they make a foolish decision. And so then when God chooses to exile Adam and Eve from the garden back to the dust of death from which they came, it’s a decision on God’s part to say, *“Mmm, humans aren’t capable of having my ruakh for as long as it’s possible to carry them.”* It could carry them forever—

Jon: Oh, right.

Tim: —because it’s God’s *ruakh*. [laughs]

Jon: Sure.

Tim: I mean, [chuckles] it’s, like, infinite *ruakh*. But it’s too real for the humans. It’s too much power for this state of folly that they’re in.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So better to loan them *ruakh* for a short duration so they can only do so much damage to each other and themselves. And then God’s going to work a plan to bring about *someone* who will fix this mess so that the *ruakh* can be restored to the humans permanently. That’s one way to imagine the arc of the biblical story.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] So when the biblical prophets start talking about the *ruakh*, they talk about *someone*, like a messiah figure, who’s so in union with God’s *ruakh*—we looked in passages in Isaiah, for example, that talk about this child from the line of David who just breathes the Spirit of Yahweh and wisdom and justice—so they’re just in union with Yahweh, animated by God’s Spirit. But then, that one is going to share that Spirit with a crew and start recreating a new humanity that can really live with the Eden Spirit of God in them in a way that will get the project back on track.

Jon: Wait, so the crew—

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] But yeah, the Messiah’s got a crew. He’s going to share his Spirit that makes him one with God with a crew that can, as it were, restore the Spirit to them. And so we looked at Ezekiel, and about God replacing the heart which got all screwed up by that snake’s deception and what the heart wants and desires.

Jon: Yeah. And we talked about how the heart is a pretty closely related idea to the spirit.

Tim: Oh, yes, they're often close synonyms, the heart and the spirit.

Jon: This was another thing for me to try to reorient myself to.

Tim: Yeah, good.

Jon: Because they become very similar in some passages. But they're different. They're different ways to talk about the human experience.

Tim: Yes. Yes. Yes. Yeah.

Jon: The heart is a very holistic way to think about it, my inner life. Because in the heart, I think and I feel and I have ideas and motivations and planning and all that—

Tim: Desire and purpose.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah, all that.

Jon: That's in the heart.

Tim: In the Bible, that's the heart. It's not the brain.

Jon: Yeah. [laughs]

Tim: [laughs] In the Bible.

Jon: Right.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Yeah. We would call that the mind—

[Tim laughs]

Jon: —or the brain.

Tim: Right. And actually, there are times when “mind” is actually a really good English word—

Jon: For “spirit”?

Tim: —to translate some uses of “heart” in the Hebrew Bible—

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: —*and* sometimes for uses of the “spirit.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Okay, because if that's heart, then spirit is—it's those things, but you're really talking more about the—the energy?

Tim: Yeah. The invisible thing that's driving me and that goes on to make a visible impact in the world.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: So it's still my thoughts and it's still my perceptions and all that stuff—

Tim: Yes. Yeah.

Jon: —but when I'm talking about it as *ruakh*, I'm thinking of it more as—

Tim: The energy.

Jon: The energy.

Tim: The energy. The idea that's invisible but that comes to me and then makes its home in me—

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: —and then the energy that drives me to make that idea into reality in the world so that now there exists a cup of coffee.

[Jon laughs]

Tim: I'm holding a cup of coffee—

[Jon laughs]

Tim: —that was an idea in my mind when I walked in to work today.

Jon: Yeah. Okay. [pause] So this is a lot of reorientation, though—is—

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] The inner life of the heart—we would maybe even sometimes call that our mind. But you could also call that your spirit. This is—so these are all really interconnected ideas.

Tim: Yes. But again, spirit's more about the energy—

Jon: Spirit's more about the energy.

Tim: —heart is about, specifically, a desire and purpose.

Jon: Okay. Okay. Intention.

Tim: If you look at uses of heart versus spirit in the Hebrew Bible and in the New Testament, it's typically the associations. Mhm.

Jon: And the prophets say we need a new heart and we need a new spirit.

Tim: Yes. Yes. We desire the wrong things, and then we are energized to—

Jon: In the wrong way.

Tim: In the wrong way.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: We're just, like, bad—yeah, bad news. Yeah.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: But man, look at the stuff humans do to each other. And look at the stuff that humans *think up*—

[“Pleasant Places” by Lofi Sunday, Yoni Charis fades in]

Tim: —and want to do to each other.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It's not good.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: There is a lot of good, but it's not all good. Some of it's really, really, really horrible.

Jon: Well, I think you traced the main line of our conversation. There was a couple other things I just want to flag because they've been hard for me to process.

Tim: Mhm.

[Musical break: “Pleasant Places” by Lofi Sunday, Yoni Charis (19:36-20:03)]

[Spirit 2.0: Individuals Supercharged for Specific Tasks (20:03-36:58)]

Jon: In the Hebrew Bible, when the Spirit of God shows up in a fresh way for someone —like, we all exist because of God’s Spirit, but then the Spirit of God could come up in a new way. And you started calling that, like, a 2.0.

Tim: Oh, sure. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[“Pleasant Places” by Lofi Sunday, Yoni Charis fades out]

Jon: And I wanted this really clean story where when the Spirit of God comes in that fresh way, it just—

Tim: Hmm. It sticks?

Jon: It sticks—

[Tim laughs]

Jon: —and it plusses you up in the right way.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: And you created a couple wrinkles for me.

Tim: Ohhh, yeah, yeah. Yes. Yes, with the Saul story, especially.

Jon: Yes, the Saul story.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] One wrinkle is that in the culture of the time of the Hebrew Bible, when people were filled by a spirit, not necessarily Yahweh’s Spirit, but just prophets, that there was this conception that you would lose yourself and get connected to something else.

Tim: Yes. That’s right.

Jon: So you kind of lose your mind.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. So Saul ends up, like, naked on the ground, losing control of himself. That's right.

Jon: Right. And so that would be a normal—you'd be like, "*Oh, that's what the prophets do.*"

Tim: Mhm. Mhm. People being so overpowered or overwhelmed by the presence of a divine presence, a *ruakh*, that they—

Jon: Yeah. Some energy outside themselves.

Tim: —as it were, lose their mind, or they become a madman—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: We looked at that phrase, "like a maniac"—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —is connected to a divine spirit coming on certain prophets. And while that was a typical understanding of what happens when a divine *ruakh* gets a hold of a human, the biblical authors want to highlight something else as the ideal union of God's *ruakh* in a human.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And what they depict is a human who's very much in possession of their—all their faculties. [laughs]

Jon: Yeah. Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Yes.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: And when we looked at a story of, like, Joseph or Daniel, when they're—

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: David, in a lot of situations—when they're then filled with God's *ruakh*, they're just—they—the things that they were already good at get real plussed up.

Tim: Yeah. Gets supercharged. Yes.

Jon: Get supercharged.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Okay. So that's a flip that the authors of the Bible want for—especially for their setting.

Tim: Yeah, yeah. Yes.

Jon: Because in my setting, that's just what happens. You just get—

Tim: You get plussed up.

Jon: You get plussed up.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. No, and we're going to see that in the New Testament, too, especially in Luke and Acts. Well, and also in Paul. They want to make very clear that you can tell the Spirit of God that comes from Jesus as a human being who's in possession of their faculties, all directed in the purpose of love and service of God and neighbor.

Jon: Okay, so—but then that's the wrinkle, is that: In the Hebrew Bible, that's not taken for granted.

Tim: Oh. [laughs]

Jon: Right?

Tim: Okay, so actually, I have thought about this since we talked last.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] So one way to think about it is: Adam and Eve are like human getting Spirit 1.0, like life breath. And they do poorly with it. They make dumb decisions. And so it's taken from them, and they return back to death.

Jon: Mmm. Okay.

Tim: So at baseline then, every human you're going to meet in the story has the *ruakh* of God in their nostrils for a short duration of time, and then they go back to the grave. But God's not satisfied with that. Like, that was—that's not the ultimate dream. So what God's going to do is pick a family out of humanity and give his presence, give his word, his wisdom, his commands to them so they can be the vehicle of, like, changing this whole situation. And what God will do occasionally for some of the people from that family is give them a gift of the *ruakh*. And that's these passages that we're looking at: a Joseph, a Bezalel, a Saul, a David. And so that's what I'm calling 2.0, because they're already breathing.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So they already have the Spirit of God in them in one sense.

Jon: Mhm. Yeah.

Tim: But then they get this additional charge—

Jon: Yes.

Tim: —this additional boost. [laughs]

Jon: And the additional charge should make you more of yourself.

Tim: Well— [pause] it—

Jon: But in a plussed-up way.

Tim: Oh, su—right. That's the ideal.

Jon: That's the ideal.

Tim: That's the ideal. And then all of a sudden, though, you get Saul, and he's doing Adam-and-Eve-type folly with his supercharge of the *ruakh*.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So it's like the double crisis.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: It's, like, he's both abusing his 1.0 *ruakh* [chuckles] by—right?—directing it towards foolishness and he's *squandering* this super boost of God's *ruakh*. And man, how tragic is that? That's why Saul's story is so tragic. And then the story focuses in on his heart. The language is about his heart and how fundamentally he was just not aligned with God at his core. Whereas David is depicted in his early years as someone who just—his heart was in alignment with Yahweh. So when he gets the 2.0 spirit-boost charge, you get what, in the author's eyes, is ideal Eden-type stuff breaking out into the world.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Until—

Jon: At least for a while.

Tim: Until he blows it big time. Mhm.

Jon: So 2.0 spirit, this new energy-breath of God that people get to have— [pause] at a baseline, it's meant to not make you get out of your mind. It's meant to make you become more of who God made you.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah, more in line with the mind and energy of God.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. That's what Moses wanted for all of the people.

Jon: Yes. So that's what it's meant to do.

Tim: Yeah. Mhm.

Jon: And that's different than what was happening in the cultures around them.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] However, that doesn't mean that's what's going to happen. When you get the plussed-up energy, you could still use it for folly—

Tim: Yeah, you can—just like—yep. That's right.

Jon: —you're saying, in the same way that 1.0 spirit can be used for folly.

Tim: That's right.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: That's helpful.

Tim: Yep.

Jon: And why can some people handle it, and other people not handle it? And you're saying: There's something about the heart.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] It's connected to the heart. That's right. Which is why Ezekiel puts the most precise language to it that you get in the Hebrew Bible. He says, *"Okay. If God's going to ever have a humanity to work with that's going to create the Eden ideal in the world, it's going to have to be a new heart. God's going to have to take out the normal type of human heart and put in a new heart directly. And God's going to have to"*—"I will put my *ruakh* in you and make it so that you walk in my decrees and my commands and my laws." So Ezekiel can only imagine this story working out in a positive way if God does something to the humans that no human in the story has been able to do with their *ruakh*. And then, *paragraphs* after saying that, Ezekiel starts talking about a figure called a new David. Well, actually, what he starts talking about is how, basically, even though all humans are alive and Israel's alive, they're dead. They're like a valley of dry bones. And they need to be filled with the *ruakh* to do what God has designed them to do. And then he starts talking about: *"Okay, and when that happens"*—

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: —*"then this guy David's going to come and lead the people into that new Eden."*

Jon: Hmm. Yeah. Okay, one more thing.

[Tim laughs]

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] So in the New Testament—and we'll get into it—when the Spirit comes, it's for everyone. In the Hebrew Bible, it seems like the Spirit just comes on very specific people for specific things, like a Bezalel for a moment—or like in the Judges, which we didn't look at, these figures that'll, like, empower them to do the thing that they needed to do. And then we also talked about how, especially when it relates to the leader who's supposed to lead Israel, like, the Spirit only comes on one person at a time. So the Spirit was on Saul, but then went on David. What's the idea? Is the idea that—who gets to get 2.0 in the Hebrew Bible?

Tim: Yeah. Yeah, that's interesting. So I think Moses sets the baseline hope: Everybody. *"I wish all of them were so filled with the 2.0 ruakh of God that they were all prophets."* If you heard any Israelite talking, you would hear God talking. That's what he hopes for.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So that's the many, the Spirit on the many.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: But in order to make that happen, you have to begin with at least the 2.0 Spirit working for *someone*. And I think that's how the Saul and David story is—where that's focusing is: Who's the *one* who's going to responsibly hold and steward that Spirit 2.0 power? And it's going to need to be someone like David was in his early years.

Jon: Because there's so much potential for it going wrong—

Tim: Yeah. Yes. Right, right.

Jon: —that to give that power to a person—

Tim: Ooh. Yeah, that's good.

Jon: Right? That's—

Tim: That's good.

Jon: There's so much at stake.

Tim: Mhm. That's right.

Jon: And so to do that for everyone is almost reckless.

Tim: Mhm. Totally, yeah.

Jon: So while that's the ideal, let's at least get it right with one person.

Tim: Yeah, with one. That's right. And then that one can set the pattern for what a human life looks like fully supercharged, plussed-up with the *ruakh* of God. Let that be the pattern. And what's interesting is in David's early years, he's depicted as somebody who refuses to take the life of Saul. And even though he does— [chuckles] he is a warrior, and he fights other battles, so he kills people, those battle efforts are depicted by the author in the sense of rescuing and defending life. But he refuses to act violently towards Saul. So there's a non-violent strand of David's activity that the biblical authors really want to highlight, that he didn't seize power by force.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So all of this is setting a mold, as it were, for how the biblical authors want, in the New Testament, to portray Jesus as somebody who's fully in union with the Spirit of God more than anybody has ever been, and then his life pattern sets the mold for what a real, 2.0 Spirit-human life looks like. And what it looks like is a life of sacrificial love for your neighbor.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: [Jon agreeing throughout] So sometimes, in the Hebrew Bible, the hope is the Spirit on the many. Other times, it's focusing in on one leader at a time. And you need that one. And I think the way the Spirit on the many and the one—how those ideas go together in the Hebrew Bible is you need the one to pave the way for the Spirit to come on the many.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Because if it comes on the many too soon—

Jon: Right. [chuckles]

Tim: Well—

Jon: Many problems.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Okay. And then there's also—hmm. There's that distinction, but then there's also, it feels like, the distinction of the Spirit of Yahweh coming in order to empower that David-type leader. Then there's a Spirit of Yahweh coming just to help out for a special task that needed to be done. That's the Bezalel kind of thing—

Tim: Oh.

Jon: Or I'm thinking about, like, Joseph.

Tim: Yeah, I think all those, whether it's Joseph or Bezalel or Moses, any of the judges or David, those are all different variations and narratives exploring how we need *someone*. We need the Spirit to come on the one.

Jon: Even a Bezalel story is that way?

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah. Because it's about one thing that will result—

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: Yeah—when the Spirit of God comes on someone, and it works right, is you get—you get Eden, and you get the tabernacle, which is a symbolic Eden.

Jon: Yeah, okay. So the Spirit coming on someone in a new way in the Hebrew Bible—it's a more rare event. It's a very special event.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah, I mean, it's probably—it's not a huge list, like a dozen.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Like Joseph, Bezalel, Moses, the judges, Saul, David, the prophets. So you can add the prophets here, but they're more specifically towards word and signs spoken to God's people, whereas these leaders are about action in the world, making stuff happen. Prophets were more like political commentators. [laughs]

Jon: So this is interesting. So everyone's filled with God's Spirit. We all exist because of God's Spirit. That's 1.0. Well, this is not working. Maybe the solution is more Spirit, right?

Tim: Mmm. Yeah, more.

Jon: More Spirit.

Tim: Yeah, more power.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: And what we see is God giving that opportunity, but very selectively.

Tim: Mmm. And not to the many.

Jon: And not to the many.

Tim: Yeah. That's right.

Jon: Because obviously—

Tim: Yeah. If humans can't—

Jon: [laughs] Handle a little bit—

Tim: —do well with Spirit 1.0—

Jon: [chuckles] Yeah.

Tim: Right. Oh, that's an interesting way to kind of put it together. I like that.

Jon: Right. Which helps me, then, when you get to someone like Moses being like, "*I wish everyone was filled with Spirit.*"

Tim: [chuckles] Yeah.

Jon: You'd be like, "*Hold on, dude*"—

Tim: Yeah. [laughs]

Jon: [laughs] "*Hold your horses.*"

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: "*Do you know what you're asking?*"

Jon: Yeah. "*Do you know what you're asking for?*"

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And then if you get to Ezekiel and he's like, "*Yeah, everyone's going to have a new heart with a new Spirit.*" It would be like, "*Really? Is that even possible?*" It makes it—

Tim: Yeah, and again, it's as possible as dead people rising and living again.

Jon: Ohhh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Tim: That's how—that's how possible it is. [laughs]

Jon: Okay. Right. That's how it's supposed to feel.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: To me—

Tim: Mmm.

Jon: —coming from—

Tim: Ohhh.

Jon: [Tim backchanneling throughout] —a Christian tradition, coming from where the Spirit in everyone—that's just taken for granted. Like, to look back from that lens, it's hard for me to have a perspective of, like, how rare and special—

Tim: Yes.

Jon: —and strange that should feel.

Tim: Oh, man, that's so good. That's why the gift of the Spirit was so apocalyptic for the apostles.

Jon: Mmm. Okay.

Tim: That's why pre-Pentecost post-Pentecost is, like, a major, major fault line in New Testament thought. Whereas, if you grew up in the Christian tradition 2,000 years post-Pentecost, you're just kind of like, "*Well, I don't know, hasn't Spirit always been around?*"

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] "*Isn't that what it means to be a Christian?*" And you're like, "*Yes, but. . .*" It was shocking that that was the moment that the Spirit finally was going out to the many through the gift of the Spirit through the one risen Jesus. And it's new creation, resurrection-from-the-dead life kind of Spirit coming.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. But once it becomes a new normal, as it were—

Jon: Right.

Tim: —it's easy to forget. I really appreciate how you put that together. It's too much to handle.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Even Spirit 1.0 is too much to handle.

Jon: Right.

Tim: So God will work with a few to give Spirit 2.0.

Jon: Mhm. And then we get all these stories of just how messy that is.

Tim: Yes. Sometimes it works. Most often, it's complicated.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And sometimes, it really doesn't work.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Like a Samson or a Saul. Mhm.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: But you got these figures like a Joseph or a David or a Daniel, and it really does seem to be working in a beautiful way.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. Yeah. And those stories become the model that especially Isaiah and Ezekiel build off of as they look forward and they say, “*Well, it’s going to need to be—a rescue figure is going to need to be like the 2.0 Spirit David from his good period.*”

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And that’s—that’s the hope. And what if the Spirit that’s on that one could then go out to a many through that one?

[“Chilling In London” by Lofi Sunday, Just Derrick fades in]

Tim: I think then we could make something happen in the world.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And that’s the hope of the Hebrew Bible.

[Jon laughs]

Tim: And that’s exactly what the apostles are trying to tell us is what happened through the life, death, and the resurrection of Jesus and the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost. And that sequence of events is the pivot of history, the apocalypse of history.

[Musical break: “Chilling In London” by Lofi Sunday, Just Derrick (36:32-36:58)]

[Looking Forward to the “Holy” Spirit in the New Testament (36:58-47:58)]

Jon: The other thing that you have foreshadowed is that when we get into the New Testament, the phrase “Holy Spirit” will become very common—

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: —where, as we’ve been reading through the Hebrew Bible—

[“Chilling In London” by Lofi Sunday, Just Derrick fades out]

Tim: —that phrase maybe showed up a couple times.

Tim: Oh, yeah, great. Okay, this is perfect. This is great. So let’s do a quick vocab check as we shift from the Hebrew Bible into Second Temple literature and New Testament. A really interesting concordance fact that anybody could look up for themselves if you know how to use a concordance is, in the Hebrew Bible, *ruakh* appears almost 400 times. But it could be “wind” or “breath.” About seventy-five of those are referring to God’s *ruakh*. Seventy-five.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And of those seventy-five times that God’s *ruakh* is talked about, the phrase Holy *Ruakh* or literally a *ruakh* of holiness appears two times. [chuckles] So “Holy Spirit” is—you’ll find it twice in the Old Testament.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: If you flip to the last quarter of the Christian Bible, which is the New Testament in terms of page length, the last quarter, the Greek word [Tim pronouncing the word in different ways] *pnevma* or *pnuema* as Westerners learn that word—

Jon: [Jon pronouncing the word with a silent P] Or *pneuma*— [chuckles]

Tim: [Tim pronouncing the word with a silent P] Or *pnuema* as nobody ever said.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: In terms of ancient Greek, [laughs] no one—no one ever said it that way. The word appears again almost 400 times in the New Testament. And the phrase “Holy Spirit” appears—

Jon: How often is it referring to God versus—

Tim: Oh, yeah, I've got a breakdown here. In the New American Standard, it refers to either a human spirit or a divine spirit [chuckles] 373 of those 379 times.

Jon: That's right. Almost all the times.

Tim: Yeah. So "breath" is just used a few times, and "wind" is only used a couple times too. Super interesting. But the phrase "Holy Spirit," which only appeared two times in the Old Testament, appears ninety times in the New Testament.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: It's—and "Spirit of God"—

Jon: Which was the typical way.

Tim: —which was the main way used in the Hebrew Bible, only appears twelve times in the New Testament. So there's a vocabulary shift that has happened. And what's interesting is if you look in Second Temple literature, like the Dead Sea Scrolls, in the literature that, today, some of it is found in the Catholic Deuterocanon or the Apocrypha, you can watch the vocabulary shift taking place real time—

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: —because those are texts that date from like the three to 200s BC on into the one and 200s AD. And you can trace the vocab development.

Jon: Hmm. Like, tracing it, meaning, you can watch "Holy Spirit" become more and more popular?

Tim: Become a more common term. Yeah. And "Holy Spirit" is just taking an attribute that's true of God—he's holy, meaning unique, set apart—

Jon: Other.

Tim: Other. And that is true of God all over the Hebrew Bible.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And so as language and awareness of God's presence in the Spirit gets developed, the phrase Holy Spirit becomes more and more dominant in Jewish thought and literature.

Jon: Hmm. Is there any hypothesis about why that is?

Tim: Yeah, probably. I probably should have found that book and read it—

[Jon laughs]

Tim: —but I—but I didn't. [laughs] I've just more done the concordance search to see through. Actually, probably. There are some—probably some hypotheses out there, and I don't know what they are off the top of my head. I mean, holiness is a core attribute of God in the Hebrew Bible. Like, think of Isaiah 6, what the Seraphim are singing about God in the heavenly temple: "Holy, holy, holy. . ." Maybe in a—in the Greek and Roman environment that was so saturated with polytheism, so many deities, that the unique otherness and transcendence of the God of Israel—that became a more important attribute—maybe?—in the Second Temple period. I don't know. I'm making that up. I'll have to test out that hypothesis.

Jon: Since spirit is such a common idea—right?—that you're breathing it in, that it's around you—

Tim: Mmm. I see. Yeah, yeah.

Jon: —that it's a way to help you just remember.

Tim: Yeah: "*We're talking about the one—the Spirit of the one and only.*"

Jon: The one and only.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] That, like, while it feels very common, you're breathing it in all the time, remember, this is from the transcendent, completely other. So it's to help —it—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: —keep that paradox?

Tim: Yeah. Mhm. Yeah, that's great. That's great. This is going to—your question's now going to bother me.

[Jon laughs]

Tim: It's going to stick with me.

Jon: Now you got to go find that book? [laughs]

Tim: [chuckles] Now, the next time we talk, I need to go figure out who's written about that. But there you go. The vocabulary shift is right there.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Two times in the Hebrew Bible, you get "Holy Spirit." Ninety times in the New Testament.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It's just a huge shift. And so let's just name—as we turn to the New Testament, let's just name something: that all of the New Testament literature, which is Second Temple Jewish literature that comes from a Messianic sect [laughs] or group—

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] —connected to Jesus of Nazareth—that New Testament literature is uniquely—mmm—saturated with the language of “spirit” and Holy Spirit. And that all through the narrative accounts of the Gospels, of Acts, of the letters of Paul and the other apostles that actually are older than those narrative accounts, language about them having a new experience of God's presence is foundational to this literature. Phrases like “God has given us the Spirit,” or these phrases, “receiving the Spirit,” or “the Spirit dwelling,” using the language that Israel used about its temple and tabernacle—so God dwelling like the cloud or the fire dwelling in the temple—the—Christians use that to talk about the Spirit living in *them*. However you want to give an account of what the New Testament is and its language of “spirit,” you have to say something has happened that made them start talking in this way, language permeated with the language of “spirit,” of receiving as a gift this new experience of the Spirit. And it's associated with prophecy, with speaking, with signs and wonders, with healing, with joy, laughter, happy—like, happiness, generosity, people sharing their stuff with each other, people eating and celebrating meals. This is all connected to [laughs] the Spirit throughout the New Testament. Something happened. And when the New Testament authors give an account of what happened, Luke-Acts is really the place to go. The Spirit is mentioned six times in the Gospel of Mark, for example. The Spirit's mentioned twelve times in the Gospel of Matthew. The Spirit's mentioned eighteen times in the Gospel of John. And you're like, “*Okay, wow, we're ramping up.*” And the Spirit of God is mentioned twenty times in the Gospel of Luke. So Spirit's mentioned more in Luke than of any of the other accounts of Jesus in the New Testament.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And then Luke is volume one of a two-volume work. Acts, where the Spirit appears fifty-eight times. So far and away, Luke-Acts is the runaway winner—

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: —when it comes to a narrative account from Jesus into the early church highlighting the activity and presence of the Spirit. So what I think we should do is take two episodes to just focus on the Spirit and the story of Jesus in Luke—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: —and track the main lines, like: what are the basic ideas and how they develop? And then: What is going on with the Spirit in the book of Acts? What are the main themes? How does it develop? And in doing so, we'll, I think, discover somebody telling us the story of Jesus and his early followers that fits like the hand in the glove for all of these themes from the Hebrew Bible that we just recapped.

Jon: Hmm. Okay.

Tim: At least I think that's what'll happen.

[Jon laughs]

Tim: But I never know—

[Jon laughs]

[BibleProject theme fades in]

Tim: —where these conversations are going to go. So does that sound good?

Jon: That sounds great.

Tim: Okay.

Jon: Cool.

[Musical break: BibleProject theme (45:15-45:19)]

Jon: Thanks for listening to this episode of BibleProject podcast. Next week, we'll start exploring the Spirit of God in the Gospel of Luke, and we'll see that the gospel begins with a lot of *ruakh*.

Tim: [audio clips from Spirit of God E9: An Outbreak of the Spirit in Luke] Luke's pulling out all the stops. Everything about Jesus of Nazareth, his conception, his transition into public life—it's an outpouring of the Spirit.

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[Phone beep]

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[Phone beep]

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[BibleProject theme fades out]

[BibleProject sonic logo]