

“The Connection of Breath, Wind, and Spirit in the Scriptures”
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An Excursus to *Spirit, Soul, Body: The Blueprint of Man in the Image of God*
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THE CONNECTION OF BREATH, WIND, AND SPIRIT IN THE SCRIPTURES

In Old Testament Hebrew, *ruach* means breath, wind, spirit or Spirit, among others. NASB (considered more “literal” than most) translates the 375 uses of *ruach* with 29 different English words: “Spirit” or “spirit” a total of 206 times; as “wind” or “air,” 110 times; and as the concept of “breath,” 34 times.¹

We know physical creation is speech, manifesting the drama of the spiritual realm into the physical.² The physical atoms that comprise air, wind, and breath are manifestations of spirit in the spiritual dimension. The fact that air pervades our atmosphere is a parable of the Spirit of God being omnipresent (Ps. 139:7-12).

God’s prophecy in Ezekiel 37 gives a clear education of the connection between physical air and spiritual spirit. In this passage *wind*, *breath*, and *Spirit* are all the same Hebrew word: *ruach*. The context from the preceding chapter teaches that in regeneration God gives us a new *spirit* and then puts His *Spirit* into us (36:26-27). In chapter 37 God showed Ezekiel a valley of dry, disconnected bones, which He later interpreted as the whole house of Israel (vv. 1-2, 11). Ezekiel was called the “son of man” throughout as a foreshadow of Christ (e.g. Mt. 26:64). God asked the question, “Can these bones live?” (v. 3). The word for *live* (*chayah*, also in verses 5 and 14) and its derived adjective (*chay*) appear in Genesis 2:7 as “breath of life” and “*living* soul.” God commanded Ezekiel to prophesy: “O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones, ‘I will cause *breath* to enter into you, and you shall live’” (v. 5). Ezekiel prophesied, the bones rattled, and came together (v. 7). Sinews connected the bones and flesh covered them, but they had no *breath* (v. 8). God again commanded Ezekiel to prophesy: “Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Come from the four *winds*, O *breath*, and *breathe* on these slain, that they may live’” (v. 9). When it happened, they were raised to their feet as an exceedingly great army (v. 10). God Himself interpreted this vision, “And you will know that I am the LORD [Yahweh], when I open your graves and bring you up out of your graves, O My people. And I will put My *Spirit* in you, and you shall live; and I will place you in your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and that I have performed it, declares the LORD” (vv. 13-14). As stated, *wind*, *breath*, and *Spirit* are all the same Hebrew word, *ruach*. The air in our lungs is a parable, illustrating the Creator’s sustaining life in our spirits.

This connection is also seen in Christ’s death: “Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my *spirit*!’ And having said this he *breathed* his last” (Lk. 23:46). When the greater reality (spirit) left, so did the parable (breath).

Jesus said in John 3:8, “The *wind* blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the *Spirit*.” The ESV footnote points out that the same Greek word, *pneuma*, is used for both *wind* and *Spirit*.

Perhaps the clearest passage concerning breath and spirit is John 20:22. The resurrected Christ Jesus “*breathed* on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy *Spirit*.’” God in flesh symbolized giving His Spirit to His disciples by giving them His physical breath! This was the first fulfillment of Ezekiel 37. The next fulfillment was at Pentecost when a mighty rushing *wind* dramatized the pouring out of the *Spirit* of Christ into the Church (Acts 2:1-4, 17, 33).

The whole of Scripture makes clear: physical air manifests the drama of spirit from the spiritual realm into the physical realm. This is why we can read Genesis 2:7, where God blew into Adam’s nostrils the breath of life, and discern that the physical oxygen represented the Creation of immaterial spirit in his material body. Next time you breathe, praise the Lord! “Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!” (Ps. 150:6).

¹ The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon, “Ruwach,” <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/ruwach-2.html>

² See Rom. 1:20; Ps. 19:1-4, 50:6; Job 12:7-9; and the booklet *Light Shines in the Darkness* at ProjectOne28.com.