

Ruach Ha-Kodesh - 'The Spirit of Holiness'

In the Bible

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ: וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תְהוֹ וְבֵהוּ
וַחֲשָׁדָּ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:

1. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,
2. the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.
And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Adapted from the Jewish Encyclopedia, *Ruach Ha-Kodesh*

What the Bible calls "Spirit of Yh /vh" and "Spirit of Elohim" is called in the Talmud and Midrash "Holy Spirit" ("Ruach Ha-Kodesh," never "Ruach Kedoshah," as Hilgenfeld says, in "Ketzergesch." p. 237). Although the expression "Holy Spirit" occurs in Ps. 51:12 (*see below*) and in Isa. 63:10-11 it had not yet the definite meaning which was attached to it in rabbinical literature: in the latter it is equivalent to the expression "Spirit of the Eternal One," which was avoided on account of the disinclination to the use of the Tetragrammaton (see, for example, Targ. to Isa. 40: 13). It is probably owing to this fact that the Shekhinah is often referred to instead of the Holy Spirit. It is said of the former, as of the Holy Spirit, that it rests upon a person. ...

...The visible results of the activity of the Holy Spirit, according to the Jewish conception, are the books of the Bible, all of which have been composed under its inspiration. All the Prophets spoke "in the Holy Spirit"; and the most characteristic sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit is the gift of prophecy. ...

... all creatures live only through the spirit given by God. In a more restricted sense, however, the spirit of God is not identical with this life-giving spirit. God pours out the Divine spirit upon all whom are chosen to execute God's will and behests, and this spirit imbues them with higher reason and powers, making them capable of heroic speech and action (Gen. 41: 38 - *Joseph interpreting dreams*; Ex. 31:3 - *Betzalel is inspired by God to build the Tabernacle*; Num. 24:2 - *Bilaam blesses the tents of Israel*, etc.). This special spirit of God rests upon an individual; it surrounds that person like a garment (Judges 6:34 - *see below*; II Chron. 24: 20); it falls upon a person and takes them by the hand (ex. Ezek. 37:1 - *see below*). ...

From Psalm 51

לֵב טָהוֹר בְּרָא־לִי אֱלֹהִים וְרוּחַ נָכוֹן חִדָּשׁ בְּקִרְבִּי: אֶל־תִּשְׁלִיכֵנִי מִלְּפָנֶיךָ
וְרוּחַ קְדֹשְׁךָ אַל־תִּקַּח מִמֶּנִּי:

12. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a constant spirit inside me.
13. **Do** not cast me away from your presence; and do not take **your holy spirit** from me.

From Judges 6

וְרוּחַ יְהוָה לָבָשָׁה אֶת־גִּדְעוֹן וַיִּתְקַע בְּשׁוֹפָר וַיִּזְעַק אַבְיָעָזֶר אַחֲרָיו:

34. But the spirit of the Eternal One came upon (literally, 'enrobed') Gideon, and he blew a shofar; and Abiezer mustered behind him.

Ruach Ha-Kodesh - 'The Spirit of Holiness'

Ezekiel 37:1

הִיָּתָה עָלַי יַד־יְהוָה וַיּוֹצֵאֵנִי בְרוּחַ יְהוָה וַיְנִיחֵנִי בְּתוֹךְ הַבְּקָעָה וְהִיא מְלֵאָה
עֲצָמוֹת:

1. The hand of the Eternal One was upon me, and carried me out in the wind (or 'by the spirit') of the Eternal One, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones.

In a famous vision of the world to come, the Holy Spirit will rest upon all:

from Joel 3 (in Christian Bibles 2:28ff.)

וְהָיָה אַחֲרֵי־כֵן אֲשַׁפּוּךָ אֶת־רוּחִי עַל־כָּל־בֶּשָׂר וְנָבְאוּ בְנֵיכֶם וּבְנֹתֵיכֶם זְקֵנֵיכֶם
חֲלֻמוֹת יַחֲלֹמוּן בְּחוּרֵיכֶם חֲזִינֹת יִרְאוּ וְגַם עַל־הָעֲבָדִים וְעַל־הַשְּׂפָחוֹת
בַּיָּמִים הַהֵמָּה אֲשַׁפּוּךָ אֶת־רוּחִי:

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit.

In Rabbinic Literature

In the Rabbinic Period which corresponds to the early Christian Era, The Holy Spirit becomes identified with the Shekhinah, the indwelling Presence of God. The Shekhinah never leaves the people and shares in their tribulations, having compassion upon them. It is almost - as if one could say such a thing - as if it has an independent existence from God, as the following midrashim suggest.

Midrash Exodus Rabbah - 32:8

Moses said to God: 'Thou dost send an angel with me? Were these the conditions? Didst Thou not promise: And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land (Ex. III, 8), and now Thou sayest, BEHOLD, I SEND AN ANGEL BEFORE THEE? "If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence"' (*ib.* XXXIII, 15).¹ God, however, replied: 'For I will not go up in the midst of thee' (*ib.* 3). Moses then said: 'Thou sayest an angel, and I say "If Thy presence go not with me"; well, we will see whose words will abide.' This is why it says, *And Moses said unto the Eternal One: See,² Thou sayest unto me, etc. (ib. 12).* God answered: 'By thy life. My presence³ shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest' (*ib.* 14); whereupon the Holy Spirit cried aloud, 'Forasmuch as the king's word hath power... Whoso keepeth the commandment shall know no evil thing' (Eccl. VIII, 4 f).⁴

1) Cf. *supra*, ¶ 3; *infra*, XLV, 1.

(2) This word implies, see whose word will abide.

(3) I Myself will go, even as thou desirest.

(4) Teaching that the righteous can annul God's decree, as Moses did on this occasion.

Ruach Ha-Kodesh - 'The Spirit of Holiness'

Midrash Deuteronomy Rabbah 3:11

Moses came down from heaven with the Tablets in his hand, but he did not break them until he saw with his own eyes what they had done. Whence this? For it is said, *And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the Calf* (Ex. XXXII, 19). At that moment *Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands* (*ib.*). The Holy One, ever to be blessed, thereupon said to Moses: 'You would not believe Me that they had made a Calf unto themselves,' as it is said, *They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them* (*ib.* 8). The Rabbis say: From this expression Moses seized a hint how to find some defence for Israel. He said before God: 'Sovereign of the universe, I have received commands, have I then transgressed any one of them? They have received no commands and therefore they did not know.' God thereupon exclaimed: 'Moses, have they not been commanded?' He replied: 'No. What didst Thou declare at Sinai? 'Thou didst not say, "I am the Eternal One your God," but *I am the Etermal OneThy God* (Ex. XX, 2). Thou didst not say, "Ye shall have no other gods," but Thou *shalt have no other gods'* (*ib.* 3). Hence, '*O Eternal God, destroy not Thy people and Thine inheritance'* (Deut. IX, 26).

R. Hiyya b. Abba said: Moses left no corner in heaven upon which he did not prostrate himself in prayer.² And what did he say? What can the closed³ mouth say? Another explanation: '*O Lord God, destroy not Thy people and Thine inheritance.*' R. Hiyya b. Abba said: When the defender [Moses] had finished, the Holy Spirit pleaded⁴ on their behalf and spoke thus to Israel: '*Be not a witness against thy companion* (E.V. "neighbour") *without cause, and deceive not with thy lips'* (Prov. XXIV, 28). '*Be not a witness against thy companion without cause'*: this refers to Israel who are called 'Companions of God' as it is said, *For my brethren and companions' sake*, etc. (Ps. CXXII, 8). '*And deceive not*': [this refers also to Israel] of whom it is written, *But they deceived Him with their mouth* (*ib.* LXXVIII, 36). Although you declared at Sinai, '*We will do, and obey,*' yet you did not fulfil this. To God [the Holy Spirit] said: 'Say not: *I will do so to him as he hath done to me* (Prov. XXIV, 29), but "*O Lord God, destroy not Thy people and Thine inheritance*".'

(1) Cf. Ex. R. XLIII, 5; the singular form implies that the commands were spoken to Moses only.

(2) I.e. he used every conceivable argument (E.J.).

(3) Read סגור 'closed' for סבור. Moses felt himself incapable of further prayer. The present reading may be retained rendering: What can a mouth even gifted with understanding say further?

(4) Lev. R. VI, 1.