

The Works of the Spirit of God in Public Leadership: A Review of Selected Readings in the Old Testament

Abraham Nortey

Abstract

Pentecostalism, as a strand of Christianity, has made substantial contributions to both Christendom and nation-building. Much has been discussed regarding the impact of Pentecostals on national development and the role of the Holy Spirit in the spiritual lives of believers and the church. However, when it comes to Old Testament biblical studies, there has been limited attention given to the role of the Holy Spirit in public leadership and His influence on society. Despite the existing literature on the subject, a common challenge is the hesitance to definitively conclude whether the continuous, abiding presence and actions of the Spirit of God (*ruach 'elohim*) operate in the same way as the Holy Spirit depicted in the New Testament. The aim of this work is to re-emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit in public leadership, administration, and societal development as illustrated in the Old Testament. It posits that the same Holy Spirit celebrated in the New Testament empowered figures such as Daniel, Joseph, and Moses, as well as artisans like Bezalel and Oholiab, granting them exceptional gifts that set them apart as adept leaders and skilled architects of their time. Furthermore, there is ample biblical evidence showing instances of the Spirit's continuous presence in these Old Testament leaders. This paper will conduct textual analyses of selected biblical passages to support its conclusions.

Keywords: Spirit of God, Gifts of the Spirit, Public Administration, Leadership and Pentecostalism

Introduction

There is a considerable body of work on the role of the Holy Spirit in the spiritual life of a Christian.¹ He empowers believers for ministry and service, convicts them of sin, and bestows spiritual gifts for the edification of the church. The Holy Spirit also elevates even the most ordinary tasks, allowing them to be performed with distinction.² Similarly, in contemporary Ghanaian societies, Pentecostal communities have shown a remarkable capacity to excel in various spheres. Individuals from Pentecostal and charismatic backgrounds have effectively harnessed social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube to promote the spread of Christianity. Programmes such as Alpha Hour, led by Elvis Agyemang of Grace Mountain Ministries, along with initiatives from the Church of

¹ Cf. Astley G. Mitchel, *The Empowerment of the Holy Spirit* (Accra: Christian Faith Publishing, 2020), 13 and David Stone, *The Holy Spirit: Understanding and Engaging with the Third Person of the Trinity* (New York: RWG Publishing, 2023), 1.

² David Stone, *The Holy Spirit: Understanding and Engaging with the Third Person of the Trinity*, 1.

Pentecost and other similar groups, have used these channels to organise various activities, including online prayers and gospel preaching.³ These efforts have significantly contributed to the dissemination of the gospel in audio-visual formats, reaching audiences in Ghana and beyond.

Apart from some Pentecostals reaching out to people with the gospel, they have actively moved on to play essential roles in politics. In the year 2022, the leaders of Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (GPCC) led by their president at the time, Paul Frempong Manso, voiced their stance on the LGBTQ+ bill before the parliament of Ghana and also speak against the menace caused by *galamsey* in some selected mining sites and rivers in Ghana⁴. Additionally, they spoke out against the destructive impact of *galamsey* in certain mining sites and rivers in Ghana. Amid the COVID- 19 pandemic, the general perception of the church by skeptics as a place where monies are extorted for the benefit of the clergy was to some extent defused.⁵ The Church of Pentecost and other Pentecostals supported the government with their facility at Pentecost Convention centre and in various forms to help combat the pandemic.⁶ This impressed the Akuffo Addo government to give the Church of Pentecost for instance a national award.

In the realm of leadership, there has been a remarkable rise of individuals with Pentecostal backgrounds in Ghanaian politics. Notable figures include Dr. Yaw Osei Adutwum, the Minister of Education under President Akufo-Addo's administration,⁷ and Mr. Sammi Awuku, a former Youth Organizer of the New Patriotic Party, both of whom are Pentecostals.⁸ In the past, many Christians viewed politics as a domain dominated by dishonesty and ungodliness. However, today, Pentecostals are encouraging their members to engage fully in the political arena at all levels. Furthermore, Pentecostals have begun to focus on the chieftaincy institution, empowering church leaders to motivate their members with Acts 1:8, emphasizing that one role of the Holy Spirit is to equip them for political engagement. They are encouraged to recognise that by gaining political influence, they can meaningfully contribute to discussions that reflect the transformative power of the gospel on national issues.

³ Pastor Elvis Agyeman is the Pastor in charge of Grace Mountain Ministries, a Charismatic church in Ghana.

⁴ Read details of the news from www.ghpage.com published on the 16th of October, 2022.

⁵ Read more from Stan Chu Ilo, *A poor and Merciful Church: Illuminative Ecclesiology of Pope Francis* (New York.: Orbis Books, 2018).

⁶ Pentecost Convention Centre was given by the church of Pentecost leadership to accommodate COVID-19 patients during the pandemic.

⁷ Read more about Yaw Osei Adutwum from www.moe.gov.gh

⁸ Refer to mobile.ghanaweb.com to read more about Samuel Awuku.

The preceding discussion has offered an overview of the involvement of Pentecostals in significant matters and community development, drawing from a diverse array of sources, including social media and various forms of literature. While there is an abundance of material concerning the role of the Holy Spirit in the church, the available resources on the Old Testament tend to limit the discussion to instances where He empowers individuals occasionally, rather than as a permanent presence, as seen in the New Testament.⁹ The sections that follow will explore Old Testament examples of how the Holy Spirit operated in various public figures in roles of leadership and administration. It is important to note that all the gifts observed in the New Testament, with the exception of speaking in tongues, were also present in the Old Testament.¹⁰ More significantly, there are only a few instances where He remained with individuals permanently.

Old Testament Modules of Pre-Pentecostal Gifts

The Old Testament illustrates how the Spirit of God empowered ordinary individuals to achieve remarkable feats and fulfill significant responsibilities assigned to them. According to Obisakin, the Holy Spirit operated primarily within individuals in the Old Testament.¹¹ God appointed prophets and prophetesses—sometimes referred to as judges—endowing them with the spiritual or supernatural gifts necessary to carry out specific tasks for particular communities.¹² Whenever God had an assignment, He selected a person and equipped them with the required power and abilities to ensure the successful completion of the work.

Looking ahead to the New Testament era, where the Gifts of the Holy Spirit would be bestowed upon believers en masse, we find Old Testament references anticipating this Pentecostal outpouring.¹³ This shift would mean that the Spirit's power would not be limited to a select few but would instead be accessible to the broader community. For example, Moses expressed his desire for everyone to prophesy like him (Num. 11:29). Similarly, the prophet Joel envisioned a wider outpouring of the Spirit, as he proclaimed in Joel 2:28-29:

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all
flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men

⁹ This is the position of scholars like Patricia King, *Spiritual Revolution: Experience the Supernatural in your life through the Holy Spirit* (Connecticut: Destiny Image Publishers, 2006); Gregg Allison and Andreas J. Kostenberger, *The Holy Spirit* (Maryland: B & H Publishing Group, 2020), 4.

¹⁰ Read more from 1 Corinthians 12: 3-11.

¹¹ Lawrence Olufemi Obisakin, *God the Holy Spirit: The Mystery of Christianity* (Abuja: Spectrum Book Limited, 2007), 22-23.

¹² Lawrence Olufemi Obisakin, *God the Holy Spirit: The Mystery of Christianity*, 24.

¹³ Read 1 Corinthians 12: 4-11, Acts 2

shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even upon the menservants and maidservants in those days, I will pour out my spirit (RSV).

In the following section, the significant roles of the Spirit of God – *ruach 'elohim* – in the Old Testament will be explored, highlighting the important functions He performed in the assignments given to specific individuals.

Bezalel and Oholiab: Endowment with Creativity by the Spirit of God (Ex. 31:3-11; 35)

God endowed humanity with the special gift of creativity through His Spirit. Bezalel, a layman rather than a priest or Levite, was the architect responsible for the design and construction of the Tabernacle. He was described as being filled with the Spirit of God (*ruach 'elohim*), which granted him skills, intelligence, and knowledge in various forms of craftsmanship. This included the ability to devise artistic designs and work with gold, silver, and bronze, as well as cutting stones for setting and carving wood – essentially excelling in every craft (Ex. 31:3; 35:31). The infilling of the Holy Spirit mentioned in Exodus 31:3 was a rare event in the Old Testament. Known as the Spirit of God (*ruach 'elohim*), the Holy Spirit (*ruach hagadosh*) empowered Bezalel and Oholiab, enabling them to carry out the diverse craftsmanship that the LORD commanded for the establishment of the Tabernacle.

Oholiab, appointed by God as Bezalel's assistant, hailed from the tribe of Dan. He was recognized as “an engraver, designer, and embroiderer of blue, purple, and scarlet yarns, as well as fine twined linen” (Ex. 38:23). Together, Bezalel and Oholiab were the architects behind all the woodwork in the tabernacle, including the tent of meeting, the ark, the mercy seat, and various sacred tables and utensils. Their contributions extended to metalwork as well, designing elements such as the golden lampstand, utensils, and the altar of incense. Additionally, they crafted the Holy garments for Aaron and his sons, adhering closely to God's specifications. To ensure the successful completion of the tabernacle, God instructed Bezalel and Oholiab to impart their craftsmanship knowledge to others (Ex. 35:34).

Examining the exceptional skills demonstrated by Bezalel and Oholiab, one could rightly conclude that these men were blessed by the Spirit of God. Their receipt of direct commands from God indicates that it was indeed God working through them (Ex. 31:11). Furthermore, the African Bible Commentary¹⁴ emphasises that God can utilise ordinary individuals just as effectively as He uses prophets and priests, empowering them with His Spirit to achieve remarkable feats. These individuals apply their professional and

¹⁴ Read more from Abel Ndjerareou, *Exodus* (Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), 125

specialised skills in service to God. Typically, God assigns significant projects or tasks requiring spiritual leadership to accomplish.

One of the roles of the Holy Spirit is to bestow upon individuals special abilities for performing both natural and supernatural tasks or assignments. In Acts 1:8, we see that one of the primary functions of the Holy Spirit was to empower the disciples for evangelism. Prior to this, the disciples had shared the gospel in various locations (Lk. 10:1-11), but the results were not as remarkable as those observed following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:41). It is through the Spirit of God that Oholiab and Bezalel were enabled to undertake such multifaceted assignments. Their ability to construct the tabernacle, create intricate metalwork, tailor garments for the Levites, and produce the sacred incense and perfume truly reflects the grace of God at work.

The next question to explore is the nature of the gifts possessed by Bezalel and Oholiab. Bezalel, for instance, was bestowed with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge in various forms of craftsmanship. Similarly, Oholiab and a group of artisans also received the gift of wisdom (Ex. 31: 3-6). When the Apostle Paul described the various gifts stemming from the same Holy Spirit, he mentioned both wisdom and knowledge as gifts intended for the benefit of believers (1 Cor. 12: 4-10). While one could argue that the wisdom and knowledge they received were ordinary rather than mysterious, the fact that God dwelled within them and directed them through His Spirit to fulfill the specific tasks assigned suggests otherwise.

If this perspective holds true, one could also argue that it is the same God who endowed Bezalel with knowledge and craftsmanship that endowed Peter with the word of knowledge, enabling him to reveal the deceptions of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. In 1 Corinthians 12, the gifts of wisdom and knowledge are presented as divine endowments meant to serve God. The word of wisdom grants an individual insight into the mysteries of hidden events, allowing them to explain these mysteries clearly.¹⁵ In contrast, the word of knowledge provides understanding about these mysteries through prophecies and divine insights, offering counsel in difficult situations.¹⁶ In contrast, the word of knowledge provides understanding about these mysteries through prophecies and divine insights, offering counsel in difficult situations. Just as the architectural design of the tabernacle, the priestly garments, the unique ingredients for the anointing oil, and the utensils remained enigmatic to the average person, Oholiab and Bezalel were able to access this specialised knowledge because it was revealed to them by the Spirit of God.

¹⁵ Jay Werman, *An In-depth explanation of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (New Jersey: Ministerial Publication, 2011), 25.

¹⁶ Ashish Raichur, *Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Bangalore: Church and Word Outreach Publisher, 2023), 148.

In this regard, I respectfully disagree with Crosley, who views the skills possessed by Bazalel and Oholiab as forms of natural intelligence rather than as gifts of the Spirit, as described in the New Testament. According to him, such skills can be acquired through one's natural environment and, unlike the gifts of the Holy Spirit, do not constitute spiritual gifts from God.¹⁷ However, I believe that the special skills endowed by the Spirit of God are indeed spiritual gifts. A skill transforms into expertise only when one undergoes vocational training and, with time and experience, develops those abilities further. In my opinion special skills possessed by a man that are acquired through the endowment of the Spirit of God is equally a spiritual gift. A gift only becomes a skill when one receives training on a vocation and after sometime develops the skills better to gain experience.

Richard S. Hess views the architectural skills of Bezalel and Oholiab as supernatural, contrasting them with Hiram, the architect Solomon employed to build the temple:

First, Bezalel and Oholiab are explicitly named and appointed by God, according to the text of Exodus. Hiram is not. Instead, Solomon seeks Hiram out and he comes and does 'for Solomon' all required labour....Third, Yahweh called Bezalel and Oholiab by name....and gave them wisdom for their task....This again contrasts with Hiram, whose skill is attributed to his father, a citizen of Tyre who was a bronze worker. Hiram is described as skilled in the Area of metallurgy.¹⁸

When examining Bezalel and Oholiab, it appears that they may possess inherent natural talents that were awakened by the Holy Spirit, enabling them to carry out their architectural tasks with exceptional skill. However, this talent is not merely innate; it is a divine gift bestowed by Almighty God, allowing them to partake in His creative power to fulfill the requirements for wooden, fabric, and metal works in the tabernacle. In contrast, Hiram's architectural abilities do not compare to those of Bezalel and Oholiab, as his skills were acquired through his father's teachings.

Next, we turn to Moses, whose distinctive spiritual gift seems to stem from the presence of the Holy Spirit within him. He had the unique ability to impart the spirit of prophecy to others through the laying on of hands. This indicates that the Spirit of God did not merely visit him temporarily but resided with him continually, enabling him to pass on this gift to others in a manner akin to the reception of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament.

¹⁷ Robert O. Crosley, *Close encounter with God: Unveiling the secret of the hidden God* (Houston Texas: Strategic book publishing, 2010), 45

¹⁸Cf. Richard S. Hess, "The Spirit and creativity", in *Presence, Power and Promise: The Role of Spirit of God in the Old Testament*, ed. David G. Firth & Paul D. Wegner (New York: Orbis Press, 2011), 10.

Moses' Administrative Roles and the Enablement of the Holy Spirit

The Israelites had no doubt that Moses was filled with the Spirit of God (*ruach 'elohim*), as indicated in Isaiah 63:11-14. It is evident that the primary manifestation of the Spirit's presence in Moses' life was through the powerful acts of deliverance experienced by Israel under his spiritual leadership. Christopher J. H. Wright rightly recognizes the significant role of the Spirit in empowering Moses with the abilities necessary for effective leadership.¹⁹ While he accurately highlights this, it is also a recurring theme found among the judges, prophets, and kings of the Old Testament.

It is crucial to observe that God used Moses not just once but consistently throughout his leadership and administrative responsibilities in Egypt and during the exodus in the wilderness. Unlike the judges, who were empowered by the Spirit for temporary tasks, Moses' situation was distinctly different. He is described as a man full of the Spirit (Deut. 34:9; Num. 11:25). In this context, one can agree with Lawrence Olufami Obisakin, who argued that Moses, the lawgiver, was continuously filled with the Holy Spirit – perhaps throughout his forty years in the wilderness. Obisakin further noted that Moses was so anointed that he could communicate with God at any time, in any place, and on any topic.²⁰

Obviously, God used Moses to perform several miracles to validate his choice as the leader to bring the Israelites from Egyptian bondage.²¹ First, he made Moses cast his rod down before Pharaoh and it turned into a serpent (Ex. 7:8-9). Without such powerful miracles Moses would not have been able to convince Pharaoh at all since the Egyptian palace was not a stranger to such practices. Pharaoh equally has wise men (*'anshie hachammim*) and sorcerers (*mekassephim*) to do similar miracles. God making Aaron's rod swallow the serpent is to prove that Moses's God was a mighty God. The ten plaques recorded in Exodus 7-10 were solid evidence that Moses was not an ordinary man but a true servant of God endowed with supernatural gifts. One consistent feature of the work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament was miracles. If anyone exemplifies divine gifts beyond imagination, it is Moses. While both Elijah and Elisha parted the River Jordan, Moses parted the Red Sea. Some scholars suggest that the Hebrew term for the Red Sea,

¹⁹ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing the Holy Spirit through the Old Testament* (Oxford: Monarch Books), 45.

²⁰ Lawrence Olufemi Obisakin, *God the Holy Spirit: The mystery of Christianity* (Abuja: Spectrum book limited, 2007), 32.

²¹ Read Ex. 7; 14; Ex. 33 about miracles and wonderful things Moses did.

yam suph (Ex. 15:4), translated as “Sea of Reeds,” casts doubt on this miracle.²² They argue that it was not an actual sea that he parted, but rather that the Israelites traversed a marshy area. However, the point remains that no sea historically matched the description these scholars attribute to the event. The details provided in the Bible indicate that the author was well aware of a real sea at that time. *Yam suph* does not necessarily need to be linked to *reed* based solely on its literal meaning; it may simply be another name for the Red Sea. Furthermore, when the Holy Spirit descended in Acts chapter 2, one of the key actions facilitated by the Apostles was the performance of various miracles. Thus, the crossing of the Red Sea – or Sea of Reeds, as some call it – not only involved passage but a miraculous parting, solidifying Moses’ place among miracle makers.

Moses’ ability to lead the community in the desert stemmed from the empowerment granted to him by the Spirit. First, he appointed the seventy elders. When this significant event occurred, the Lord descended in a cloud, spoke with Moses, and took the Spirit that was upon him, placing it upon the seventy elders. As Eldad and Medad returned to the camp, the Spirit of Moses rested on them, and they began to prophesy. It is crucial to note that this transfer of the Spirit from Moses to the seventy is of great importance. This event suggests that the Spirit continually dwelled within Moses, which is quite unusual for the Old Testament. Such an experience parallels the workings of the Spirit of the Lord in the New Testament. Once the Spirit rested upon the early church, He remained and could be imparted by Spirit-filled individuals, like Ananias the disciple (Acts 9:17) or Peter the Apostle (Acts 10:44). By examining how God took the Spirit from Moses and bestowed it upon the seventy elders, one can infer that while Moses possessed the Spirit of God at all times, this was distinct from the temporary visitation of the Spirit that would come upon leaders in the Old Testament and later depart.

The Spirit of prophecy, in this context, is not meant to prompt the seventy elders to prophesy – an event that is not recorded – but rather to bestow upon them deeper wisdom, knowledge, and discernment, equipping them to be effective leaders in addressing the issues presented by the people. The incident involving Eldad and Medad prophesying outside the camp was merely a temporary phenomenon. Thus, this gift serves the purpose of enhancing leadership capabilities. Moses willingly obeyed God’s directive to share the source of his leadership – the Spirit of God – enabling these men to assume significant leadership roles on his behalf.

²² Cf. from James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: the Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (New York: University Press, 1996), 56.

Wilfred Hildebrandt acknowledges that the various roles Moses fulfilled as the leader of Israel—judge, lawgiver, prophet, intercessor, miracle worker, and provider—were successful due to the enduring presence of God with him and the *ruach* that brought God’s plans and miracles to fruition.²³ While this statement summarizes the concept of the Spirit’s permanent operation, it lacks detailed classic examples. However, such instances are fully manifested and understood through the narrative of the anointing of the seventy elders with the prophetic gift.

In the latter part of his ministry, Moses, guided by the Spirit, selected Joshua as his successor. Recognizing Joshua’s personal and natural attributes, Moses chose him to lead Israel. To enhance Joshua’s leadership capabilities, Moses laid hands on him during the official inauguration ceremony in the presence of High Priest Eleazar (Numbers 27:18-23). From that moment, Joshua operated with a spirit of faith, boldness, and courage. Alongside Caleb, he exhibited unwavering faith in God when the twelve scouts were sent to Canaan to survey the land and report back (Num. 14:6-10). It was not through mere apprenticeship under Moses that Joshua acquired his leadership abilities as a military leader; rather, it was the anointing of the Spirit of God by Moses that endowed him with wisdom and the skills necessary for effective leadership and administration. This scenario illustrates that it was indeed the Spirit that made Moses a dynamic leader throughout his tenure.

The Spirit and Daniel’s Exceptional Leadership Acumen and Statesmanship (Dan 4:8; 5:12; 6:3)

The Spirit empowers individuals to possess knowledge that others lack, perceive what others may overlook, and accomplish remarkable feats. It nurtures various qualities within a person, distinguishing them from the rest.²⁴ A prime example is Daniel, a young man who was profoundly influenced by the Spirit of the Lord, to the point that even the foreign rulers of Babylon acknowledged the distinctive hand of God in his life.

When King Belshazzar became alarmed by mysterious writing on the wall—something none of his enchanters and diviners could decipher—his queen’s words became crucial to our discussion:

...Let not your thoughts alarm you or your colour change. There is in your kingdom a man in whom is the spirit of the holy gods...because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams,

²³ Winfred Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*. (Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1993), 108.

²⁴ Tokunboh Adeyemo, *Africa’s Enigma and Leadership Solutions*. (Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers Limited, 2009), 99.

explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar (Daniel 5:10-12 RSV).

The queen's recognition of the Spirit's presence in Daniel provided him with a significant advantage over Belteshazzar's enchanters, facilitating his ascent into higher political positions. The Babylonian wise men consistently struggled to interpret or narrate King Nebuchadnezzar's secret dreams, but Daniel, empowered by the Spirit of God, was able to serve three successive kings of Babylon and Persia through his gifts of interpretation, knowledge, and wisdom. In this context, the word of knowledge revealed to Daniel insights in dreams that were beyond the comprehension of ordinary men, while the word of wisdom allowed him to receive accurate revelations from the Lord regarding future events. When discussing interpretation of tongues, it is important to note that this special gift enables the explanation of words spoken in a foreign language in a language known to the listener. The writing on the wall was in a foreign language that, even when read, would not be understood by Belteshazzar himself unless it was interpreted; *mene' mene' teqal ûphasîn*.²⁵ The Spirit enabled Daniel not only to read this foreign script but also to interpret its meaning. It is important to note that speaking in tongues is not solely for prayer; it is often a means through which God conveys messages, much like prophecy within the church. Clearly, the voice behind the writing was divine, and it requires someone filled with the Spirit of God to discern its meaning and communicate it to others. While such occurrences are rare in the Old Testament, understanding how the Spirit used Daniel in this instance is crucial for our discussion.

The pagan queen, unfamiliar with the Spirit of God, concluded that it was the Spirit of the holy gods who endowed Daniel with his remarkable abilities. Interestingly, she may not have been referring to the deities of Babylon, since Daniel's faith was widely acknowledged. Her expression could very well be her way of recognising God's unique gift to Daniel. Throughout his life, Daniel experienced success and favour at every turn, as the Bible notes that he possessed an excellent spirit (6:3). The exact nature of this "Excellent Spirit" is not elaborated upon. Could it imply that Daniel performed his duties with exceptional knowledge and distinction? Or perhaps that God gifted him with unique talents that allowed him to excel in all endeavors? If that is the case, then this concept of an Excellent Spirit could align with one of the key roles of the Holy Spirit.

Discussing the works of the Spirit necessitates an exploration of the miracles recorded in the book of Daniel. This book recounts a series of miraculous events that God orchestrated during the Babylonian exile, demonstrating that Daniel and his friends were indeed servants of the Most High God, YHWH. Through these miracles, God showcased

²⁵ Cf. My transliteration of Daniel 5: 25

His omnipotent power over human affairs. For instance, Daniel and his friends experienced extraordinary health and vitality after consuming only vegetables for ten days. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were miraculously preserved amid execution by fire, joined in the flames by a fourth figure of heavenly appearance (Daniel 3:16-28). Additionally, Daniel emerged unscathed when his friends deceived the king into ordering the execution of his most trusted statesman by lions; he survived that ordeal as well (Daniel 6:10-23).

One could argue that the accounts in the Old Testament, which showcase how God used Daniel and his friends to unveil mysterious truths, serve as a precursor to the similar events that occurred in the New Testament during the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. The final story about Joseph follows a comparable trajectory, highlighting the role the Spirit of God played in his accomplishments in Egypt.

The Spirit behind Joseph's Dreams (Gen. 41)

In Genesis 41, Joseph speaks with prophetic authority as he reveals to Pharaoh that God has communicated through his dream what is about to unfold. He then proceeds to interpret the dream. Notably, the Scripture does not suggest that the Spirit of the Lord descended upon Joseph prior to his understanding and interpretation of the vision. What is particularly striking is Pharaoh's acknowledgment of his encounter with Joseph. He states, "Can we find such a man as this, in whom is the Spirit of God?" (Gen. 41:38 RSV).

Why would God cause a pagan to express such a statement, much like in the case of Daniel? Earlier, Joseph asserted, "God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do."²⁶ If Joseph acknowledged that God was the source of the dream given to Pharaoh, could it not also be the case that this same God inspired Pharaoh to proclaim that Joseph possesses the Spirit of God? David G. Firth thoroughly critiques this assertion, identifying several complexities in understanding the work of the Spirit in this context. Firth contends that when Pharaoh refers to the "Spirit of God," it may be interpreted by his attendants as the spirit of the Egyptian gods. However, he points out that in 41:39, Pharaoh speaks directly to Joseph, affirming that God has shown him this dream.

In this context, the Hebrew word used for "revealed" is *hodi'ah*, which is the infinitive construct form of the *hiphil* verb. If Pharaoh intended to use the plural form, he would have employed the plural version of the *hiphil*, *hodi'ot*. Firth further examines that utilising the infinitive absolute form of the *hiphil* verb renders Pharaoh's statement ambiguous, as it does not specify number or person. Consequently, this ambiguity allows

²⁶ Read Gen. 41: 25 RSV

for the possibility that the knowledge revealed to Joseph could be attributed to either God Almighty or the gods of Egypt.

However, Firth concludes that the infinitive form of the verb resonates with Israelite readers, who recognise *Yahweh* as the one true God. This aligns with Joseph's revelation in Genesis 41:16, where he emphasises that God provided Pharaoh with a favorable interpretation rather than claiming it as his own. Additionally, when Joseph explained the source of Pharaoh's dream, he used the term *elohim* for God, which can be understood in the plural sense but is paired with the masculine singular verb *ya'aneh* (He has answered). This construction typically indicates a reference to Israel's God rather than using *elohim* generically for gods.²⁷

Firth's underlying argument in his analysis of Joseph's dream and its interpretation is that it originated from God. Divine communication often occurs through dreams and visions, employing symbols and events that require interpretation. Only those who have been endowed with the gift of understanding can provide the necessary insights.

Lawrence Olufemi Obisakin noted that Joseph's dream serves three functions: First, dreams often have a prophetic purpose. Second, such dreams are given by God. Third, interpretation can successfully be accomplished with God's assistance.²⁸ Dreams serve various functions; they can predict both divine blessings and impending difficulties. A significant role of the Holy Spirit is to reveal mysteries to us:

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come (John 16:13 RSV).

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions (Joel 2:28 RSV).

I wholeheartedly agree with Lawrence Olufemi Obisakin's perspective. Joseph's dream was a divine gift that enabled him to operate in the prophetic realm. The gift of prophecy provides insight into God's will regarding current or future events, guiding His people on the appropriate actions to take in order to experience His blessings continually.²⁹

²⁷ David G. Firth, "The Spirit and leadership: Testimony, Empowerment and Purpose", in *Presence, Power and Promise: The Role of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament*, eds. David G. Firth and Paul D. Wegner (New York: Intervarsity Press, 2016), 15-32.

²⁸ Lawrence Olufemi Obisakin, *God the Holy Spirit: The Mystery of Christianity* (Abuja: Spectrum Books Limited, 2007), 34.

²⁹ Barry L. Bandstra, *Reading the Old Testament: Introducing the Hebrew Bible* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publisher, 2004), 195.

While there is no explicit mention of Joseph utilising the gift of prophecy, we can infer its presence from the outcomes of his many dreams.

According to Darryl Blackwell, although the Holy Spirit did not indwell individuals during Joseph's time, the gift of dream interpretation functioned similarly to the gifts of the Holy Spirit available to believers today.³⁰ He identifies this gift as the word of wisdom, asserting that without it, one cannot effectively interpret dreams and visions.³¹ It is important to note that the word of wisdom provides insight into how to act concerning a mysterious subject revealed to an individual. Roderick L. Evans made a similar observation, stating that prophecy manifests the word of knowledge and wisdom in action.³² This gift serves as a vital tool that allows prophets to convey divine guidance regarding what God desires His children to do at specific moments. Therefore, both Obisakin and Blackwell hold a shared perspective on the prophetic significance of Joseph's dreams.

Additionally, Joseph's profound guidance on how Egypt should prepare for the impending famine highlights his operation in the word of knowledge. This concept does not refer to an all-encompassing understanding but, as Linda Triska explains, it encompasses crucial information supernaturally inspired by God. This gift is bestowed upon an individual for a specific purpose at a particular time, enabling them to effectively minister to others.³³ Triska further notes that this gift allows God to reveal hidden and secret matters. Those who possess this gift may gain insight through dreams, visions, or even through impressions or inner voices.³⁴ Roderick L. Evans aptly observes that these mediums of revelation do not stem from human intuition, feelings, or thoughts, but are instead divinely inspired.³⁵ Joseph exemplified this gift, which complemented his prophetic role within these narratives. In his later years, he prophesied that God would return to visit the Israelites in Egypt, instructing his brothers to carry his bones with them to the Promised Land at the appropriate time (Gen. 50: 24-25).

³⁰ Darryl G. Blackwell, *The Joseph Effect* (Maryland: Christian Faith Publishing, 2019), 32.

³¹ Darryl G. Blackwell, *The Joseph Effect*, 2-4.

³² Roderick L. Evans, *The Prophetic Mantle: The Gift of Prophecy and Prophetic Operations in the Church Today* (North Carolina: Abundant Truth Publishing, 2019), 195.

³³ Linda C. Triska. *Works of His Hands: Targeting your Spiritual Gifts* (New York: Christian faith publishing, 1995), 3.

³⁴ Linda C. Triska. *Works of His Hands: Targeting your spiritual gifts*, 4-5.

³⁵ Roderick L. Evans, *The Prophetic Mantle: The Gift of Prophecy and Prophetic Operations in the Church Today* (North Carolina: Abundant Truth Publishing, 2019), 195.

Conclusion

The presence of the Holy Spirit has been evident throughout the Old Testament, mirroring many trends found in the New Testament. This paper has argued that the notion of the Holy Spirit coming and going—appearing only to accomplish specific tasks—is not consistently supported in the Old Testament. There are notable instances, such as in the life of Moses, where His abiding presence is clearly felt. Furthermore, it is asserted that many of the remarkable feats achieved by individuals in the Old Testament were orchestrated by the Spirit of God (*ruach 'elohim*). The Holy Spirit was instrumental in empowering artisans like Bezalel and Oholiab, as well as leaders such as Moses, enabling them to perform extraordinary tasks in Egypt and during their time in the desert. Similarly, it was the Holy Spirit that endowed figures like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Joseph with unique gifts, allowing them to significantly influence foreign lands and gain respect and recognition for YHWH among foreign kings. Contemporary discussions often focus on how leading Pentecostals contribute to the socio-political development of their nations and the role of the Holy Spirit within the church. However, the Old Testament models provide compelling evidence of the substantial work the Holy Spirit accomplished through individuals to shape nations and societies.

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