

Inspiration as Seen (Mostly) through the Bible

Catherine Taylor

I read the Bible as the written account of God's love, interactions with, and self-sacrificing focus on humanity - as well as our various responses. I think God takes a great risk working with us mortals to represent Heaven; be we in-person liaisons, writers, translators, editors etc. "God with us" is a chancy venture – for Heaven. I appreciate that risk because I learn more and grow more when I try to represent Heaven's values to others. I see and work with people in my time who respond best to someone from their culture or who is working to understand their culture. For me this is an object lesson in how God works. I think inspiration is core to this collaboration between humans and Heaven. As with all things of Heavenly origin we have the inspiration given us of Heaven and we have the **choice** of what we do with it. Emmanuel; God with us. A complicated mix. This, of course, is my perspective and my "witness".

English definition of the word inspiration:

1. The drawing in of breath; inhalation.
2. The process of being mentally stimulated.

From the Latin *inspiratus* the past participle of *inspirare* "to breath into"

Since inspiration is about breath and Hebrew is a concrete language, I am making this study about the use of "breath" in the Bible. I found "breath" to be used in terms of individuals and communities; as beginnings, nurturing, guiding or warning. These entities responded to, grew with, or rejected the use of "breath" based on a variety of factors. With communities or people who chose to accept the "breath" of God the Bible tells stories of how they grew or changed. Examples, off the top of my head include Moses, Peter, Paul, David, Deborah, Abraham, Ruth, Sarah, Rahab, Maryand, extra Biblically as well as much later, Ellen White

Two examples of people who were given the breath of God and chose to be...well, shall we say, grumpy about having the breath or inspiration are Balaam and Jonah.

For me, David is an example of someone who grew, made terrible mistakes, was confronted by Nathan, turned around, learned, and grew more.

One of my favorite texts in the Bible talks about what happens when people choose to act from the breath of God... or the Spirit of Prophecy...

...those who prophecy speak to others for their strengthening, encouragement, and comfort I Corinthians 14:3.

So, I am taking you on a journey with me. Below are the ways or tools I have looked at in this study.

Lenses I have used to think about this study.

1. Principles, policies, practices, present truth.
2. Object Lessons
3. The original meaning of words
4. The importance of story and the arcs of story.
5. Literary Devices
6. The importance of understanding stages of growth in spiritual, cultural, and personal development.
7. Cultural humility and curiosity.
8. The importance of names and descriptors.
9. Notes and Reflections of Translators
10. My life Experience and how it affects me and this study.

Personal Lens

A childhood of asthma. For me the notion of breath and breathing in is visceral and personal. I got another reminder this week when walking in below freezing weather began to affect my respiratory centers. The metaphor of breathing in what is healthy giving life and breathing in what is toxic giving illness or possible death is not theoretical for me.

Object Lesson

Trees

I have included the following article on trees because they also have something to do with breathing in. As you will notice, all of us who choose to be around trees breathe in their healthy emanations. What we do with the benefits of that breathing has to do with who we are and choices we make.

Research is showing that visiting a forest or green space, sometimes for as little as five minutes, has quantifiable benefits for mental and physical health. Numerous studies in the U.S. and around the world are exploring the health benefits of spending time outside in nature, green spaces, and, specifically, forests. Recognizing those benefits, in 1982, the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries coined a term for it: shinrin-yoku or Forest Bathing. The reference list at the bottom of this article has links to that and other specific studies. Exposure to forests and trees boosts the immune system, lowers blood pressure, reduces stress, improves mood, increases ability to focus, even in children with ADHD, accelerates recovery from surgery or illness, increases energy level, and improves sleep. In the forest while we breathe in fresh air, we breathe in phytoncides, airborne chemicals that plants give off to protect themselves from insects. Phytoncides have antibacterial and antifungal qualities which help plants fight disease. When people breathe in these chemicals, our bodies respond by increasing the number and activity of a type of white blood cell called natural killer cells or NK. These cells kill tumor- and virus-infected cells in our bodies. In one study, increased NK activity from a 3-day, 2-night forest bathing trip lasted for more than 30 days. Japanese researchers are currently exploring whether exposure to forests can help prevent certain kinds of cancer. Numerous studies show that exercising in forests or simply sitting and looking at trees reduces blood pressure as well as the stress-related hormones cortisol and adrenaline.

The complete article is shared at the bottom of this study.

Biblical Principles found in the origin stories of the Bible (Genesis 1-11)

- a. *God is a God of love.*
- b. *Choice is an absolute mandate.*
- c. *Judgements are only an acknowledgment of choices we have made.*
- d. *Judgments are delayed, sometimes for centuries to give people, communities, and nations time to learn the qualities of God so they can make an informed decision.*
- e. *Dominion was given as an object lesson of the way Heavenly beings use power: protect, nurture, build life skills, serve the vulnerable.*
- f. *Relationships are sacred.*

- g. *There is a conflict with God and the serpent as to who is focused on our best good.*
- h. *God meets us where we are and offers skills and supports to bring us home.*

(A slightly larger explanation of this lens is at the bottom of this study)

Understanding Words: The Meaning of *Breath* -

1. *Neshamah* the breath of God: the Life force.
Genesis 2:7/; Job 4:9, 32:8, 33:4, 34:14, 37:10/Isaiah 57:16
2. *Yapah* – to gasp for breath like a woman in labor.
Jeremiah 4:31 – the cry of the daughter of Zion
3. *Ruah* – the wind; the immaterial part of a person that can respond to God; the seat of life. As with most things in Hebrew this word can have two sides to its meaning (patient/quick tempered or tempestuous/trustworthy) depending on the context. Genesis 2:7, 7:22/ Job 7:15, 12:10/Psalm 18:15, 33:6, 39:5, 104:29, 135:17/ Isaiah 40:17, 33:20, 59:19/Jeremiah 51:17,/Lamentations 4:20/Ezekiel 37: 5, 6, 8, 9, 10/ Habbakuk 2:17
4. *Nepos* – breath or by extension the life force, the seat of emotion and desire.
Genesis 1:30
5. *Epaggelia* – a promise given or what is promised. Psalm 39:5, 11, ; 62:9, 144:4/Isaiah 57:13

Greek

1. *Pneu* – the root word of Pneuma.
Acts 2
2. *Pneuma* – breath or blow, air in motion as something necessary to life.
3. John 3:8/ Hebrews 1:7/2 Thessalonians 2:8

Names of God used in these texts.

1. *The Lord God – Yahweh* – Brings into Existence whatever exists. Often used when God is making a covenant relationship. This name is usually seen as God's personal name.
2. *Lord - Adonai* – sovereignty or majesty. Adonai's syntactic usage is generally interpreted as plural of majesty.
3. *God – Eloah or Elohim* the Hebrew common noun used to refer to the true God in an honorific way.

4. *Almighty or Lord God Almighty – El Shaddai* – a longer description is found at the end of this study.
5. *Spirit of the Lord* – the Ruah of God
6. Greek – Holy Spirit – counselor, advocate, counselor
7. Greek words for God – *Theos*
8. Greek word for Lord – *Kyrios*
9. *Pater* – father

Place or Stage of Spiritual Development –

People in Biblical stories responded differently to the *breathing in inspiration* available to them (which was, from my perspective of the texts always available to them.) There are many works on spiritual or corporate development. I am attaching Kohlberg’s work at the end of this document so you can get a sense of options.

“Inspired” Communities –

1. The proposed structure of Eden in Genesis 1 and 2
2. The proposed structure of Israel in Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus
3. The proposed structure of the early Christian Community in 1 Corinthians 12-14
4. The new Earth

Yahweh – Neshemah – Ruah – The Word - pneuma

I had the rest of this study sent to Steve before I realized what I wrote to you all in Telegram. *There was a time when people (a person or two (John and Matthew)) literally heard The Word and wrote down what they saw and the words they heard.*

Then I started tracking. There was a time in the Biblical story where the personal God who covenanted with human beings (Yahweh) personally breathed life into us.

Then there was the time after Yahweh (even after sin the Deity is still using their personal covenant name) cursed the serpent. In those years ruah was the

description of the way the Deity could bring us breath and yet still give us choice about whether or not we use it.

Then there was the time that our Deity chose to be the Word incarnate and Jesus showed, very clearly, the character of God and the length's God self-sacrificing love would go to rescue us; and have witnesses that would write it down. He gave the promise of Pneuma, the breath. And, as always, there was the choice of whether or not we would choose to use that Breath.

Sin is that which causes harm to a relationship: with people, with animals, with the planet, with our Deity. The sin against the Holy Spirit would be that which harms our relationship with Pneuma. As is written in Revelation, Jesus knocks at the door; He doesn't bang it down. God will not be where God is not invited. The sin against Pneuma is to reject the Breath; just like Baalam did in His time.

Clearly, I don't think inspiration ended with the words of Biblical canon. Those who have the Spirit of Prophecy speak strength, courage and comfort. Those who chose to live a life that grows into Agape, self-sacrificing love, grow into a life that reflects the principles by which Jesus lived.

We all have the opportunity, every day, to choose to breathe healthy air. We have the opportunity to choose to make the journey. Like prophets or peasants, we have the chance to grow and change and love better.

Discussion Options

1. David and Naomi made similar decision paths with similar outcomes and had very different responses (See Psalm 51 and Ruth 1:20). What do you think their responses had to do with accepting or rejecting the breath (Inspiration of God)?
2. From what inspiration did David write Psalm 51? What was the mix of inspiration and his own choice?
3. With Samson, do you think inspiration ever left or his choices about how he dealt with inspiration affected his life at various points?
4. What do you think it is about is God's breath or God's inspiration that allowed stories like a usually avoid in Judges?
5. Why do you think the writer of Judges might have been inspired to share them?
6. What's it like for you to consider the possibility that God inspired not just writers, but editors and translators...and readers?
7. What are your criteria for deciding if something is God inspired or not?
8. Why do you think God might want to work with all of us to get Their message across?
9. I am working in some of my trainings to have people look at ways our weaknesses are our strengths. What are the ways you think Jeremiah's experience affected his message? Why do you think that mix might be important?
10. What is your criteria these days for assessing if a message someone is giving is inspired by God?
11. How do you see the breath of God/Holy Spirit/inspiration changing Paul over his life.
12. How do you see it changing Ellen White?
13. Moses?
14. How do you think stages of spiritual development affect the way a writer writes?
15. ...or a reader understands?
16. What's it like to deal with the unknown, uncontrolled, or intangible?

I may change my mind but, at the moment, I am planning to do something a little different and let you discuss the questions that are particularly important to you. I am glad you are getting this early, so you have some time to ruminate.

I wish you gentle, unexpected blessings.

Catherine

Addenda

Principles, Policies, Practices and Present Truth

Principles: foundational, constant, unchangeable. Most were delineated in the Eden story or origins.

For example –

- i. God is a God of love.*
- j. Choice is an absolute mandate.*
- k. Judgements are only acknowledgment of choices we have made.*
- l. Judgments are delayed, sometimes for centuries to give people, communities, and nations time to learn the qualities of God so they can make an informed decision.*
- m. Dominion was given as an object lesson of the way Heavenly beings use power: protect, nurture, build life skills, serve the vulnerable.*
- n. Relationships are sacred.*
- o. There is a conflict with God and the serpent as to who is focused on our best good.*
- p. God meets us where we are and offers skills and supports to bring us home.*

Policies: attempts to put principles into the behavior of the community at specific times, places or situations.

Some examples of this could include:

- a. Exodus 20 1-17*
- b. Isaiah 58*
- c. Leviticus 19:9*

Policies: God's destructive acts are in response to violence or acts that cause harm: preceded by examples of His love and warnings. God is protective of those who love. God gives escape options.

- a. Genesis 6:13 "I have decided to put an end to all living people because the earth is full of their violence...Ark concept.*
- b. Jonah and Assyria*

Practices: What people did in real life.

Just about anything after Genesis 2

Present truth: Specific focus of any given time

Examples can be: The Flood will come. I will create a separate nation to be close to Me and to be my Representatives of Love. The Messiah has arrived.

Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development,

A [comprehensive](#) stage theory of [moral](#) development based on [Jean Piaget](#)'s theory of moral judgment for children (1932) and developed by [Lawrence Kohlberg](#) in 1958. [Cognitive](#) in nature, Kohlberg's theory focuses on the thinking process that occurs when one decides whether a behaviour is right or wrong. Thus, the theoretical emphasis is on how one decides to respond to a moral dilemma, not what one decides or what one actually does.

Kohlberg's theory, though extremely influential, was based on research that used only boys as subjects. In the 1980s the theory was criticized by the American psychologist [Carol Gilligan](#) for universalizing patterns of moral development exhibited by boys and ignoring the distinct patterns characteristic of girls.

Theoretical framework

The framework of Kohlberg's theory consists of six stages arranged sequentially in successive tiers of complexity. He organized his six stages into three general levels of moral development.

Level 1: Preconventional level

At the preconventional level, [morality](#) is externally controlled. Rules imposed by authority figures are conformed to in order to avoid punishment or receive rewards. This perspective involves the idea that what is right is what one can get away with or what is personally satisfying. Level 1 has two stages.

Stage 1: Punishment/obedience orientation

Behaviour is determined by consequences. The individual will obey in order to avoid punishment.

Stage 2: Conventional level

Behaviour is determined again by consequences. The individual focuses on receiving rewards or satisfying personal needs.

At the conventional level, conformity to social rules remains important to the individual. However, the [emphasis](#) shifts from self-interest to relationships with other people and social systems. The individual strives to support rules that are set forth by others such as

parents, peers, and the government in order to win their approval or to maintain social order.

Stage 3: Good Boy/Nice Girl orientation

Behaviour is determined by social approval. The individual wants to maintain or win the affection and approval of others by being a “good person.”

Stage 4: Law and order orientation

Social rules and laws determine behaviour. The individual now takes into consideration a larger perspective, that of societal laws. Moral [decision making](#) becomes more than consideration of close ties to others. The individual believes that rules and laws maintain social order that is worth preserving.

Level 3: Postconventional or principled level

At the postconventional level, the individual moves beyond the perspective of his or her own society. Morality is defined in terms of abstract principles and values that apply to all situations and societies. The individual attempts to take the perspective of all individuals.

Stage 5: Social contract orientation

Individual rights determine behaviour. The individual views laws and rules as flexible tools for improving human purposes. That is, given the right situation, there are exceptions to rules. When laws are not consistent with individual rights and the interests of the majority, they do not bring about good for people and [alternatives](#) should be considered.

Stage 6: Universal ethical principle orientation

According to Kohlberg, this is the highest stage of functioning. However, he claimed that some individuals will never reach this level. At this stage, the appropriate action is determined by one's self-chosen [ethical](#) principles of [conscience](#). These principles are abstract and universal in application. This type of [reasoning](#) involves taking the perspective of every person or group that could potentially be affected by the decision.

El Shaddai

The Hebrew, names of God indicate qualities, actions, relationship or intent. They show up in different parts of the Bible and are used in different contexts by a variety of Biblical writers.

El Shaddai is usually translated to English as The Lord God Almighty. One of the roots of that word means *The Breasted One* or *The Many Breasted One*. The same name is also used to describe *The Lord of Heaven's Armies*.

El Shaddai first appears, in our scriptures, to Abraham. For 12 years Ishmael had been a reminder that Sari and Abram had not been able to have their own child; one they believed would be a part of their willingness to follow where God led. (Yes, I know, they had a few slip ups). As reported in Genesis 17: 1,2, Adoni appeared to Abraham and said ***I am the Breasted One that will nourish you. Walk before me faithfully and be blameless. I will make a covenant with you and will greatly increase your numbers. Genesis 17:1***

Decades later, El Shaddai appears to Jacob at a very scary pivot point.

Most of us have read about the time where Jacob did not trust that God would give him a much-desired legacy. Jacob conned Isaac and Esau, got caught, believed he had lost everything, and was escaping for his life. At this nadir of Jacob's spiritual experience, Isaac prophetically offers his vulnerable son comfort by saying *May the Breasted One bless you and make you fruitful and bless your numbers until you become a community of peoples. Genesis 28*

After the massacre at Shechem, Jacob again thought his family had committed an unpardonable sin. Adoni tells Jacob to take his family, go to Bethel, build an altar, and get rid of their foreign gods. It is there that El Shaddai appears to him and says ***I am the Breasted One. Be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you and, kings will be among your descendants.***

At the very end of his life, surrounded by his children on his deathbed, Jacob blesses his beloved Joseph with the fruitful blessing of The Breasted One.

Not included in the Abrahamic family story but in a time that seems to parallel patriarchal culture, the book of Job has more mention of The Breasted One than any other book in the Bible.

Years after the stories mentioned above, Balaam arrives at another dicey pivot point in Israel's experience. Paid by a Moabite king to curse Israel on the borders of the Promise Land, by the order of El Shaddai, and, very much against his own will, Balaam speaks:

The prophecy of one who sees clearly...who sees a vision from the Breasted One, who falls prostrate and whose eyes are opened: How beautiful are your tents, oh Jacob, your dwelling places Israel. Like valleys, they spread out, as gardens beside a river, like aloes planted by the Lord, Like cedars beside the water. Water will flow from their buckets; their seed will have abundant water. Numbers 24:3-7

This Breasted One prophecy is both a blessing to Israel and a warning to the king of Moab. The Breasted One has made Israel fruitful and brought them home to the promised land. The Breasted One will protect them from Moab and anyone else who tries to destroy the believing people.

With one exception, (Elkanah's prayer for the birth of Samuel), from the borders of Canaan, til the end of the Hebrew scriptures, the Breasted One becomes translated as The Lord of Heaven's Armies; the one who will protect Their people, vindicate those who trust in Heaven, and destroy those who chose to cause harm to the trusting vulnerable.

During Saul's early reign, as Israel prepares for battle, Samuel relays, *This is what the Breasted One says; I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel, when they waylaid them, as they came up from Egypt.* (1 Samuel 15:2)

A few years later a sheep herding teenager looks across the field at an armed giant of a man and says, *you come against me with a sword and spear and javelin but I come against you in the name of the Breasted One, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you defied. This day you will be delivered into my hand.*

We know how that turned out.

Years later, this same man wrote: *When the Breasted One scattered kings in the land it was like snow falling on Mount Zalmon. (Ps. 68:14)*

Ethan the Ezrahite wrote, *Who is like you oh Breasted One? You are mighty and your faithfulness surrounds you. Psalm 89:8*

In Ezekiel's first vision, *When the creatures moved, I heard the sound of their wings, like the roar of rushing waters, like the voice of the Breasted One, like the tumult of an army. (Ezekiel 1:24)*

And, finally, as Joel describes the end of those who cause harm, he writes *For the day of Adoni is coming; it will come like destruction from the Breasted One. (Joel 1:15)*

In the story of Abraham, the story of Jacob after Shechem, and the prophecy of Joel, God is simultaneously described as both the male Adoni (Lord) and as The Breasted One: two genders in one Being, simultaneously.

A Gift of Trees

Based on an article by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Research is showing that visiting a forest or green space, sometimes for as little as five minutes, has quantifiable benefits for mental and physical health. Numerous studies in the U.S. and around the world are exploring the health benefits of spending time outside in nature, green spaces, and, specifically, forests. Recognizing those benefits, in 1982, the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries coined a term for it: *shinrin-yoku* or Forest Bathing. The reference list at the bottom of this article has links to that and other specific studies. Exposure to forests and trees boosts the immune system, lowers blood pressure, reduces stress, improves mood, increases ability to focus, even in children with ADHD, accelerates recovery from surgery or illness, increases energy level, and improves sleep. In the forest while we breathe in fresh air, we breathe in phytoncides, airborne chemicals that plants give off to protect themselves from insects. Phytoncides have antibacterial and antifungal qualities which help plants fight disease. When people breathe in these chemicals, our bodies respond by increasing the number and activity of a type of white blood cell called natural killer cells or NK. These cells kill tumor- and virus-infected cells in our bodies. In one study, increased NK activity from a 3-day, 2-night forest bathing trip lasted for more than 30 days. Japanese researchers are currently exploring whether exposure to forests can help prevent certain kinds of cancer. Numerous studies show that exercising in forests or simply sitting and looking at trees reduces blood pressure as well as the stress-related hormones cortisol and adrenaline. Looking at pictures of trees has a similar, but less dramatic, effect. Studies examining the same activities in urban, unplanted areas showed no reduction of stress-related effects. Using the Profile of Mood States test, researchers found that forest bathing trips significantly decreased the scores for anxiety, depression, anger, confusion and fatigue. And because stress inhibits the immune system, the stress-reduction benefits of forests are further magnified. Green spaces in urban areas are just as important as rural forests. About 85% of the US population lives in suburban and urban areas

and may not have access to traditional rural forests. That's O.K. Gardens, parks and street trees make up what is called an urban and community forest. These pockets of greenspace are vitally important because they are the sources of our daily access to trees. Trying to focus on many activities or even a single thing for long periods of time can mentally drain us, a phenomenon called Directed Attention Fatigue. Spending time in nature, looking at plants, water, birds and other aspects of nature gives the cognitive portion of our brain a break, allowing us to better focus and renew our ability to be patient. In children, attention fatigue causes an inability to pay attention and control impulses. The part of the brain affected by attention fatigue (right prefrontal cortex) is also involved in Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Studies show that children who spend time in natural outdoor environments have a reduction in attention fatigue and children diagnosed with ADHD show a reduction in related symptoms. Researchers are investigating the use of natural outdoor environments to supplement current approaches to managing ADHD. Such an approach has the advantages of being widely accessible, inexpensive and free of side effects. Hospital patients recover from surgery faster and better when they have a "green" view. These patients may be stressed from a variety of factors including pain, fear, and disruption of normal routine. Research found that patients with "green" views had shorter postoperative stays, took fewer painkillers, and had slightly fewer postsurgical complications compared to those who had no view or a view of a cement wall. The invasion of the emerald ash borer, or EAB, (*Agrilus planipennis*) since 2002 has provided an unfortunate opportunity to look at the effect of tree-loss on human health. EAB is a non-native, wood-boring beetle that kills all species of ash (*Fraxinus*) trees within three years after infestation. In some communities, entire streets lined with ash were left barren after the beetle arrived in their neighborhood. A study looked at human deaths related to heart and lung disease in areas affected by EAB infestations. It found that across 15 states, EAB was associated with an additional 6,113 deaths related to lung disease and 15,080 heart-disease-related deaths. While the research in Japan is groundbreaking, we need more research on trees growing in each unique area. We share some of the same genera with Japan, like pine, birch and oak, which all give off different phytoncides, but we have different

species. The more we understand the trees in our local areas, the more applicable research will be.

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