GENESIS 1:2. Gone With The Wind

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And a Divine wind was blowing on the face of the waters

The correct translation of these two words, *ruah Eloqim* is the key to understanding the entire sequence of the creative process. In biblical Hebrew *ruah* originally means ‘wind’.

But in a metaphorical sense the word *ruach* can also refer to the soul, breath or Divine inspiration: an invisible intellectual or mental state that moves human beings, especially the prophets. On two occasions the Tora uses the expression *ruach Eloqim* in this sense, referring to a special kind of wisdom granted by God. 1). When Pharaoh marveled at Yosef’s wisdom (Gen 41, 38) he said that Yosef is “a man who possesses *ruach Eloqim* [‘ a special divine wisdom ’]”. 2). When God orders Moses to designate Betzalel (Exodus 31, 3) to be the architect of the Tabernacle, He tells him that He granted Betzalel *ruach Eloqim*, a divine wisdom, which was later called *ruach chokhma*, ‘a spirit of wisdom’ . Throughout the Tanakh, *ruach Eloqim* retains the same connotation: an extraordinary form of Divine wisdom or inspiration that is usually granted to a prophet. In the same way the Sages have used the term *ruach haqodesh* to refer to Divine inspiration.

The meaning of this and other metaphorical forms of the word ruach point to an invisible force that moves or transports by Divine command (we say in the hashkabot *ruach haShem tenichenu began eden*, referring – metaphorically – to a wind sent by God that lifts the soul of the deceased and takes it to Gan Eden).

But what can *ruach Eloqim* mean in our verse? The absence of any human being who may be the subject or recipient of a special Divine wisdom does not allow us to understand these

words in their common metaphorical sense as Divine inspiration, soul, etc.

THE CHRISTIAN TRANSLATION

Christian translations do not hesitate to translate *ruach eloqim* as “divine spirit ” or “spirit of God”. Why? Because one of the fundamental principles of Christian doctrine is the trinity, that is, the existence of the father, the son and the divine (or holy) spirit. The rendition “divine spirit” floating on the waters at the time of the creation of the world, is a confirmation of this Catholic doctrine. This “ideological” translation should not surprise us since, as we might one day explain, the Christian interpretation of the Bible has a fundamental objective: denying normative Judaism and affirming the doctrines of the church.

THE JEWISH TRANSLATION

The idea of □□*ruach Eloqim* as ‘the spirit of God’ is a concept totally foreign to Judaism and offensive to Jewish beliefs. It is an idea that if taken seriously goes against the Jewish principle of monotheism and dangerously approaches anthropomorphism, that is, the personification of God (“spirit” usually stands as oppose to “body” or “flesh”) .

The official Jewish translation, the Targum, which every vernacular translation should take as a reference, renders *ruach Eloqim* as WIND guided by God, that is: wind is not a blind random natural force, but an instrument in God’s creation.

A WIND COMING FROM GOD

With this understanding, we can see that in this verse that describes the inventory of planet earth, the Tora mentions the second physical element (the first is water) present on planet Earth at the time of its creation: the wind. And this wind, this text indicates, is guided by God. And while the Tora does

not explicitly mention it, Ben Ezra and Radaq explained that "wind" will be a divine auxiliary element in creation, and will be used by God on the third day to "dry" the land that emerges from the depths of the ocean. The wind as a Divine agent appears many times in the biblical text and in rabbinic literature. For example, the Tora explicitly mentions that God brought the locust plague to Egypt through a wind blowing from the east. Or that God opened the sea, drying it with His winds, so that the Jews could escape from the Egyptians. Ruach Eloqim means that God uses wind as one of His agents in "nature." Following the same idea, every day in our prayers we mention that God *"blows the wind to produce rain."*

King David in the beautiful words of his Psalms (Tehilim 104:4) coined an expression that very much paraphrases the words *Ruach Eloqim*. He said: *ruach se'ara osa debaro*, "the powerful wind that follows His command".