



# **BONES & BREATH**

**EZEKIEL 37:1-14 MIDRASH**

PRESENTED IN FOUR PARTS

**CORNERSTONE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP**

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# INTRODUCTION

Taking our cue from the Jewish midrash<sup>1</sup> tradition, the follow homilies are all based out of a study of Ezekiel 37:1-14, but with different approaches ranging from contextual to creative to mysterious. Each teacher read from a different translation (NIV, NLT, LEB, ESV) and unfolded<sup>2</sup> a unique aspect of the text.

As we take in this tapestry of interpretation, let us notice both cohesion and nuance, overlapping and differing perspectives that provide a rich and inviting posture into the story of God.

It is our hope that you will feed<sup>3</sup> on the Word and be encouraged to further worship the Father in Spirit and Truth<sup>4</sup> as revealed through Jesus Christ.

*Pastor Justin*  
on behalf of the  
Preaching and Teaching Team

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<sup>1</sup> see [https://www.hebrew4christians.com/Articles/Seventy\\_Faces/seventy\\_faces.html](https://www.hebrew4christians.com/Articles/Seventy_Faces/seventy_faces.html)

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 119:130 – The unfolding of Your word gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

<sup>3</sup> see John 21:15-18

<sup>4</sup> see John 4:21-24

## EZEKIEL 37:1-14 (NIV)

1 The hand of the LORD was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. 2 He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. 3 He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

I said, "Sovereign LORD, you alone know."

4 Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! 5 This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. 6 I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'"

7 So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. 8 I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

9 Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" 10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.

11 Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' 12 Therefore prophecy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. 13 Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. 14 I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.'"

# PART 1 : PSYCHOLOGICAL HORROR

WRITTEN BY RUTH MARTIN

The book of Ezekiel. It's one of those books of the Bible that we know takes up a lot of space in the Old Testament, but it's a weird book we perhaps like to avoid. There are parts about feces and blood, chapters laying out strange behaviors on Ezekiel's part and Ezekiel experiencing crazy visions, chapter after chapter about God's judgment, you get the picture. It's just more comfortable if we don't read it.

Today we're exploring a passage that for me, and possibly many of you, is the primary image that comes to mind when I think of Ezekiel. But these popular 14 verses are contained within this messy book. We cannot cut these verses out of the broader message of the book of Ezekiel.

So what is this book of Ezekiel all about? What is going on behind the scenes of this passage?

This prophetic book is a collection of God's critiques of Israel spoken through a man named Ezekiel. And to get a sense of what led up to Ezekiel's time, 600 BC, we need to talk briefly about the covenant Yahweh made with Israel. Yahweh's covenant with the Israelites basically meant that, as long as they obeyed Yahweh, Israel would be his blessed people representing Yahweh to the rest of the world.

Their covenantal blessing was fundamentally actualized in the physical land of Canaan--the actual dirt and farms, the city and territory of the land Yahweh gave to the Israelites. Israel's "blessed-ness" depended on their obedience to Yahweh. If they did not obey Yahweh, their disobedience would be met with curses. Deuteronomy 28 lays out Yahweh's blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. The curses for disobedience pile up onto each other, culminating in the loss of the territory and land Yahweh had given them.

Yahweh's covenant with the Israelites is the overarching backdrop of Ezekiel.

Fast forward to 100 years before Ezekiel's time, the nation of Israel has already split into two kingdoms. The northern kingdom (called Israel and the worse of the two kingdoms) had already been uprooted and exiled by the Assyrians. The southern kingdom, called Judah, while not as 100% evil as their northern kin, were definitely not in right relationship with Yahweh God. They had obedient seasons but also wickedly disobedient seasons. 100 years before the exile, Judah had an evil king, Manasseh, who championed worship of gods other than Yahweh, going so far as to building altars to other gods in the Jerusalem temple, Yahweh's house. 2 Kings 21:9 says "...Manasseh led them astray so that they did more evil than the nations the Lord had destroyed before the Israelites." Manasseh took Judah in a direction that would inevitably bring about the curses of breaking the covenant.

A few years after Manasseh died, his grandson Josiah became king. This is the guy who is famous for becoming king at age 8 and for finding the book of the law, which contained the terms of the covenant that we just looked at. Learning about the book of the law spurred Josiah to undo the evil Manasseh had established. Judah was back on track! But the reforms did not stick. After Josiah died, Judah fell right back into idolatry and wickedness. Though there were moments of obedience, Judah was not too different from Israel, the northern kingdom.

Not only were Yahweh's people in Judah extremely unstable at this point, but the surrounding political powers were shifting. Babylon was gaining control, overthrowing Assyria and

squashing Egyptian uprisings. Judah found itself caught in Babylon's spreading rule. Babylon took over Judah and set up a vassal king, Jehoiakim, in Jerusalem, but Jehoiakim later rebelled against Babylon, causing Babylon to exile a first group of Israelites. Ezekiel was a part of this group of exiles. Ten years later, a second Jewish rebellion against Babylon occurred, which Babylon responded to by destroying Jerusalem and the temple and also exiling the majority of the Israelite population.

Between these two occurrences of exile, the Israelites believed that the temple would not fall. The popular prophets at the time were proclaiming a false hope that Jerusalem would remain in glory, Yahweh was still with his people. Ezekiel's call to be a prophet occurred during these years, and the first half of his book dismantles the Israelites' misplaced optimism; Ezekiel's message communicates to the Israelites how and why Yahweh's presence already left the temple, and there was a future judgment coming from Yahweh that would utterly gut Judah.

These prophecies were realized in the destruction of the temple and the burning of Jerusalem. After this devastation occurred, Ezekiel's prophecies shift, no longer describing a horrible judgment but now responding to the fundamental questions the exiles were asking.

Our passage today is one of these messages to the exiled, post-temple destruction Israelite population. The exiles were in a severe identity crisis. They not only experienced violent trauma, but their belief system literally burned down in front of them. Christopher Wright, in his commentary on Ezekiel, calls their situation "psychological horror." So much of what provided identity to the Israelites was destroyed. The covenantal promised land? Stripped away from them. The Davidic kingship that was supposed to last forever? Humiliated and subservient to pagan Babylonian rule. The physical manifestation of Yahweh's presence, the temple? Burned to the ground.

Their situation—physical, emotional, spiritual—is difficult for me to grasp.

When I think of America's collective story, it's one of resilience. Though we may experience traumatic events, like 9/11 or mass shootings, we bounce back, for good or for bad. Defeat is not to be found in the American narrative. Perhaps that mindset is where Judah found itself before the destruction of Jerusalem? "Though bad things happen, we will not fall. Our destiny is secure." But what happened to Jerusalem, the temple, and Yahweh's chosen people was supposed to be impossible. That which was said to be eternal was destroyed. Can we fathom a situation like that?

Perhaps in our own lives, there were commitments, jobs, beliefs, that were supposed to last forever but did not? For Judah, their identity, security, and hope were no longer guaranteed. Their fate as Yahweh's chosen people seemed not to be reality.

Were the fall of Jerusalem and the temple a sign that Yahweh was defeated by Babylonian gods? Was Yahweh weak, not actually reigning above the nations as we thought? Is he incapable of protecting us? Or was this terrible devastation indeed a judgment delivered by Yahweh himself, as Ezekiel said? Was it actually our sin, not our ancestors' wickedness, that brought on Yahweh's judgment? Does this mean Yahweh has given up on us? If the worst curse has now occurred, is Yahweh's covenant with us broken?

The Israelites were in a place of hopelessness and defeat. This is the attitude that Yahweh, through Ezekiel, is addressing in this passage.

# PART 2 :: AS GOOD AS DEAD

WRITTEN BY NICKI HABECKER

Ezekiel. Priest of God. Exiled. Prophet of God. Captive in Babylon. Prophet to Jerusalem under siege. Twenty-two years as a mouthpiece of God—visions and oracles. Twenty-two years acting out God's divine word in prophetic symbolism. Living in the presence of God but despised by the people. Watchman announcing divine judgment. Watchman announcing future hope.

His prophetic focus was uniquely on Israel. Israel as a holy people of a holy temple, the holy city, the holy land. By defiling her worship, Israel had become unclean, unholy and defiled the temple, the city, the land. In his third vision, Ezekiel is transported to a valley strewn with dry bones. Old, dead, dry bones. Absolutely no life. Representing Israel. Dead as a nation. No longer a people.

And God says to Ezekiel, "Son of man, can these bones become living people again?" As Ezekiel looks at the heaping pile of bones I wonder if he saw himself as a failure. Years of prophesying, years of agonizing and to what end? Dead, dry bones. At the end of his imagining and hope I hear a sigh, "O Sovereign Lord, you alone know the answer to that."

"Speak a prophetic message to these bones and say, 'Dry bones, listen to the word of the Lord.'" This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Look! I am going to put breath into you and make you live again!" The first prophecy ends with a familiar statement from the book of Ezekiel, "and then you will know that I am the Lord." The Sovereign Lord's message is clear. Any new life is God's doing.

As Ezekiel prophesies, the bones come together with a great rattling noise. Bone to bone, ligaments creating joints, deep muscles, superficial muscles, skin. Ezekiel watches as bones join bones and bodies are formed. This image is not entirely reassuring. It reminds me more of a zombie apocalypse. The undead dead. In other prophetic images of restoration, there is dancing and singing and rejoicing when old things are made new and dead things made alive. But here, the dry bones, while formed into whole bodies, are just...there.

I'm reminded of Genesis 2:7 where God molds and perfectly forms Adam...sculpted from dust and dirt. But bodies without breath are not alive. God breathes into Adam and he becomes...living.

In Scripture when we hear "four winds" it is describing the divine touching the natural. It is God's power being made manifest in the world. God says to Ezekiel, "Speak a prophetic message to the winds, son of man: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says; Come, O breath, from the four winds! Breathe into these dead bodies so they may live again.'" Wind. Breath. Spirit. Life.

In verses 11-14 God explains the vision to Ezekiel. The dry bones represent the whole house of Israel. And their complaint, "Our bones are dried up, our hope is lost, our nation is finished." These bones are not the ones who were killed during the two-year siege of Jerusalem. These are not the bones of those who died of starvation, sickness, or in battle. These are the one who have survived...in exile.

They believe they are cut off from God's presence. They believe the covenant is severed, David's eternal kingship undone. And they are cut off from their land. And the temple? Their symbol of "God with us", the very presence of God...utterly destroyed. For the exiles, being cut off from God means they are as good as dead.

So, if the dry bones represent the living exiles, then this entire vision is not concerned with the reality of death, but with despair. The exiles are the survivors, yet they have dug their graves with their fear of God's absence. Into this hopelessness Ezekiel offers a shockingly simple metaphor of divine presence... the ready availability of breath.

In just fourteen verses, the word *ruach* occurs nine times. It is translated as "breath" (verses 5, 6, 8, 10), "wind" (verse 9) and God's own spirit (14). We would lose the metaphorical force if we neatly divided the words. Whether *ruach* is translated in one place as breath, another as spirit, or in another as wind, it is all the same life-giving force...it is all from God.

And it is in this sense that breath and breathing become a metaphor for divine presence. This divine breath that brought life to Adam can breathe life into dead bones. And just like all of Israel's history, it is God initiated.

God chose Israel, an unknown people, a slave nation, and gave them His own law. He brought them to a good land, with little cooperation from them (Ez 20:5-14). And God takes the initiative again. God's Spirit will bring new life to a people who are dead as stone, dead as bones. Ezekiel has already told them this...twice!

Ezekiel chapters 11:19-20 and 36:26-28 say, "And I will give them singleness of heart and put a new spirit (*ruach*) within them. I will take away their stony, stubborn heart and give them a tender, responsive heart." AND... "I will put my Spirit (*ruach*) in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations. And you will live in Israel, the land I gave your ancestors long ago. You will be my people, and I will be your God."

God brings utterly, dead, dry bones together. The bones can't help. God attaches ligaments, tendons and muscles to make them strong; skin to give them form. But it is only when God tells the prophet to speak the *ruach*, the spirit, or breath, that the spirit breath blows from the four winds and the bodies live and stand. God again is reminding Israel of His great love for them, that He has not abandon them. That they are still His people and He is still their life-giving God.

# PART 3 ::: CAUGHT IN THE IN-BETWEEN

WRITTEN BY JUSTIN RYAN BOYER

He brought me out and showed me the mass grave. Hundreds, thousands of fleshless carcasses scattered everywhere. They littered the landscape as though desolation just finished with a weeklong festival and the clean-up crew had yet to arrive. The white-washed ground filled with femurs and skulls and ribcages from the elderly and infant alike went on as far as the eye could see. There was no hope in the distant horizon. I knew how broad the destruction was as I scanned the surface, but I wondered also how deep the catastrophe sank into the brown dirt and into the red clay of the earth.

"Son of Man," he called to me, "can *these bones* live?"

I found myself frozen in time, caught in between a question and an answer, stuck in the middle of a call and response. I looked upon the multitude of massacre, but at first, I could only think of she... of her... my wife... the delight of my eyes<sup>5</sup>. Were her remains out there in the desecration? Was her lifeless frame tossed and tormented, dispersed as part of those picked clean from the jackals and vultures?

I remembered when I lost her and how God commanded me not to lament or weep or shed any tears; to groan quietly (if there is such a thing) until a time came later when I could open my mouth. Those around asked me "Why are you acting like this?" as I physically portrayed at the Lord's word the wasting away of God's people because of sin. The delight of the people's eyes, the sanctuary, the temple, the land was going to be removed, just as the delight of my eyes was taken away.

Though now my hands are open and my jaw is loose, I can still feel the remnant of angst I carried back then. Back then my clenched fists and gnashing teeth questioned Yahweh if he had truly ever delighted in anything at all or if he had ever lost anything precious to him. I know the answer to that question now. I find a strange solace in God knowing he gets what it's like to not always get what is purely desired.

"Son of Man," repeated in my mind, "can these bones *live*?"

I don't know, I ponder to myself. Is resurrection possible? I mean there was the prophet Elijah. He cried out to the Lord about the widow's son who died, that the child's life would come into him again and it did. And the prophet Elisha too, there was that other boy who was dead for days but then God through Elisha warmed the child's body and brought him back from the dead. But...

But that's different... this is different. Those were individuals, those were singularities, those were corpses that still had flesh on them and still resembled humanity and life even if only superficially. This, this is different. This is a field, a legion of failure. This is decay run its course, these bones aren't newly dead, they've been this way for generations.

"Son of Man," his words echoed once again, "can these bones live?"

I don't know. I do not know! Can despair die? Can death be dethroned? Can hopelessness be upheaved? My heart is sick from thinking things can change; hope takes its good old time in

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<sup>5</sup> Ezekiel 24:15-25



*not* showing up.<sup>6</sup> I don't know that I even want to put myself in a place thinking that something could transform, imagining that something could be different than what is so evidently right in front of me.

Doubting the circumstances at hand, but believing in the greatness of God, I snapped out of my time-warp and answered as sincerely as I could, with four words of surrender: *Lord Yahweh, You Know.*

And with that, the story, as you know it, unfolded.

My friends in years to come have always argued with each other about if this vision was happening now or if it was an explanation to what had already happened or if it was to happen sometime in the future. "Is it literal or allegorical" they would ask me. I would simply tell them that what I do know is that it's true and from the mouth and mind of Yahweh, and if that wasn't enough, nothing else would inspire hope and trust within us. They always roll their eyes and continue in their conversation.

I now also know that Yahweh is a God who wants to fill things. Bones and Breath belong together. Yahweh formed the first person and breathed life into him. Yahweh commissioned Adam and Eve to fill the earth with his own image. Yahweh told Noah to build an ark, so he could fill it with salvation and re-creation. Yahweh instructed Moses about the tabernacle and David the temple so that his own presence could fill those spaces. Structure and vitality belong together in our lives.

Yes, Yahweh is spirit, but he longs to inhabit. Yes, those born of the spirit are like the wind in that you don't quite know where it's coming from or where it's going<sup>7</sup> and yet the wind, the spirit of God, wants to dwell with humans in substance. God's breath doesn't just want to dissipate into nothingness, it desires to embody.

Could one day our long awaited Messiah bring about the fullness of Yahweh's divinity in physical form?<sup>8</sup> I have seen the glory of God empty from the temple<sup>9</sup> and yet I feel deep in my own bones as though through an emptying<sup>10</sup> of some type, Yahweh's presence might become flesh and commune with us in a way we have yet to know and by that fill *the earth* with the glory of the Lord just as the waters cover the sea.<sup>11</sup> I wonder... I wonder.

I also wonder, reminiscing back on the Dry Bones, what would have happened if I would *not* have prophesied when Yahweh told me too. Would those bones have come together? Would life have entered them? I know Yahweh is faithful to do all he has spoken, but I know that our, that my faithlessness vandalizes the land and invites chaos to reign.

As the body without breath is dead, so also dependence on God apart from works is dead.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Proverbs 13:12

<sup>7</sup> John 3:8

<sup>8</sup> Colossians 2:9

<sup>9</sup> See Ezekiel 1

<sup>10</sup> Philippians 2:6-7

<sup>11</sup> Numbers 14:21, Isaiah 11:9, Habakkuk 3:3

<sup>12</sup> James 2:26

# PART 4 :::: FLIPPING THE SCRIPT

WRITTEN BY BARRY NAUM

He brought me out What do we do when God does something that we think is outside of His character? Something so unexpected that it turns upside down everything that we think we know about Him and who He is - or, more importantly, who we are in relation to Him? What do we do when the Most High God, Ruler of All Creation and of All Authority, flips the script on us?

Like in Exodus, where Scripture says that God "repented" from the punishment He had planned for people of Israel for their iniquity with the Golden Calf. No . . . no. God doesn't repent. God doesn't need to repent. I repent. I am convinced and convicted by the rightness of His position and thus change my direction and move to where He is; not vice versa. It doesn't work that way. That is not how I understand this whole "God and Man" thing is supposed to work. (I think I'll just turn that page of the script.)

Or in the Gospels, where Jesus walks on the raging waves and tells Peter to step out of the boat in the middle of the tempest and do the same thing? It's fine for Jesus to be waltzing on a hurricane; terrific, great, even. That's totally consistent with who He is, and His ability, and His track record; but to tell me to do the same thing? No, that's not right. No, that will cause me to sink. (Good thing that was Peter who so impetuously invited that nonsense. I'll comfortably turn that page, too.)

Despite our lofty notions of self, when it comes to the script, we actually are quite comfortable with knowing that God is God and we are not. We are fine with the notion that there are things that He is supposed to do that we are not; that there are aspects of Him that we can never reach (and probably shouldn't try); that we stretch to meet Him; that He does not conform to and comply with us. This comfort and understanding is to us a key component of the framework, of the boundaries, of the narrative that allow this Divine Relationship to make sense to us. This framework keeps us in our place, and maybe more importantly - if we're being honest - it keeps Him in His. This is the script that we will gladly memorize; this is the supporting role that we will happily play.

But God often seems to flip the script - like in Ezekiel 37.

It's not the bringing of muscle and sinew and life itself to piles of ancient dry bones. As weird as that thing may be, that thing is also well within the nature of the God who formed man from dust and woman from a rib of that man, and who formed each of us in our mothers' wombs. If we believe the latter things, there is nothing inconsistent with the former thing. Bone and muscle and sinew and blood and life are the medium of much of His art. That's just God being God and doing God things.

What He did with Ezekiel more subdued, but as earth-shaking as it was subtle, if we stop to consider the implications. It's right there, in verse 9.

Throughout the Bible, God spoke to His prophets and told them to speak to people - usually to warn them of God's portending wrath and to call them to repentance and back to seeing themselves, their world, and Him the way that He sees them; in short, to bring man into alignment to God.

But here, God instructs the prophet to speak to something (or someone) else. He says to Ezekiel, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.'"

"Prophesy to the breath. Prophesy to the breath."

The phrase itself feels like wind. Whisper it to yourself:

"Prophesy to the Breath. Prophesy to the Breath."

And "the breath" of which God speaks here is indeed the "Ruwach."

Ruwach. Whisper that: "Ruwach. Ruwach"

The word itself sounds like breath.

And it has many meanings, from breath of the lungs of living creatures, to more complex connotations of mind, emotion, and spirit. Indeed, the "ruwach" of Ezekiel 37 is the same "Ruwach" of Genesis 1, where "The RUWACH of God was hovering over the face of the waters."

And in Genesis 2, where, "The Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the RUWACH of life, and the man became a living creature."

Now whisper the phrase as if you aren't saying it all; rather say it as if it is a command that you have received and are repeating to yourself as the voice of someone else - THE SOMEONE ELSE.

"Prophesy to the Breath. Prophesy to the Breath."

Does your heart leap? I'll bet Ezekiel's heart leapt when He heard that command, when THE SOMEONE ELSE told him to prophesy to "THE RUWACH;" to "THE BREATH."

Grasp the implication. Because here, God commands the prophet to prophesy to the very source of life itself - THE BREATH that hovered over the face of the waters before creation itself and THE BREATH that brought life to Adam.

Though reminding the prophet in the very same sentence that he is nothing but a mortal "son of man," God thus also appears to command the prophet to prophesy TO GOD.

But wait. That's not the way this thing works. Is it? The script just totally flipped.

But what is prophesy but speaking the truth of God? What is prophesy but simply speaking what God has already spoken and is speaking now? When the prophets of old called the kings and kingdoms of that age to obey the Lord and implored the people to find their First Love, these prophets were only speaking the truth of what God already most deeply desired.

When Moses pleaded with God to remember His people and to relent from the destruction that He planned for them, Moses only spoke the truth to God that God first spoke to His people. "They are yours." And so God, indeed, came to where Moses and His people were, and He changed His course to meet them. "Yes. They are mine."

"Prophesy to the Breath."

When Peter spoke to Jesus and told his Lord to command him to leave the boat, Peter only spoke the truth of what Jesus already knew to be true about Peter - that Peter, too, could tiptoe on the typhoon. "Call me a water walker." "Yes. You are a water walker."

"Prophesy to the Breath."

All God has ever wanted of His prophets - indeed, of His people - was that their spirits would connect to His own Spirit. All God has ever wanted was for His people to desire what He desires; to speak what He speaks - so that He can give life to dry bones, so that He can calm raging storms, indeed, so that He can bind and loose in the spiritual realm what we bind and loose on Earth. Ultimately, that is the core of prophesy.

"Come to me," He says, "and I will come to you."

"Speak to me," He says, "and I will speak to you."

"Prophesy to the Breath."

So what do we do when God says to us that He will accomplish the fantastic and bring about the impossible? That He will give life to our structures? That He will bring to life those things that have recently died or have been dead for so long? That He will do all of these things *if only we would speak truth to Him, if only we would connect our hearts to His heart, our minds to His mind, our spirits to His very Ruwach?* What do we do?

"Prophesy to the Breath."

God desires to incarnate Himself in our lives, by indeed bending to where we are and even conforming to and complying with what we ask of Him - when our spirits are connected in desire to His. That is entirely in the nature of who God is, because more than anything, He wants us to know Him fully and to be known by Him in full. He has always, and only, desired to be ONE with us, and has always bent to where we are, whether in the midst of conflict with Him, or on the rolling and storm-tossed tides, or in our various valleys of dry and lifeless bones. He is like a father who just wants to hear His children say to Him that they want what He wants, so that He can be with us where we are and do the things that He has always wanted to do. He is, after all, Abba.

"Daddy, can You do this?" "Yes. Yes, my child, I can. I'm so glad you asked. Let's do this!"

In the end, that is fully consistent with what He did when He Himself took on the same flesh and blood as man and woman and sacrificed that flesh and blood so that man and woman could commune with Him and be brought from death to life; from the grave into glorious light.

In fact, that was always the script. It never flipped. It is the Covenant.

"Prophesy to the Breath."

## GOSPEL READING<sup>13</sup>

At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").

When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah." Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said.

With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

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<sup>13</sup> Mark 15:35-39 + Matthew 27:45-54