

## Isaiah 11:2 — The Hebrew Text

The verse reads (transliterating):

**רוּחַ חֵכְמָה וּבִינָה** — and the Spirit of YHWH will rest upon him **וְרוּחַ דָּעַת וְיִרְאַת יְהוָה** — spirit of wisdom and understanding **וְרוּחַ עֲצָה וּגְבוּרָה** — spirit of counsel and might **וְרוּחַ דָּעַת וְיִרְאַת יְהוָה** — spirit of knowledge and the fear of YHWH

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### What the Grammar and Structure Actually Show

#### 1. The syntactic break is real and significant

The first clause — **וְרוּחַ חֵכְמָה וּבִינָה** — is a **complete verbal clause**. It has a verb (**וְנָחָה**, "and it will rest"), a prepositional phrase (**עָלָיו**, "upon him"), and a subject (**רוּחַ יְהוָה**, "*the Spirit of YHWH*"). It is **grammatically closed**.

The following three pairs are **noun phrases without a governing verb**. They do not continue the syntax of that first clause. They sit in apposition — but the question is: apposition *to what*?

#### 2. The three paired noun phrases are structurally parallel to each other — not to the first clause

Look at the pattern:

- **רוּחַ** + noun + **וְ** + noun
- **רוּחַ** + noun + **וְ** + noun
- **רוּחַ** + noun + **וְ** + noun

This is meticulous, triadic parallelism. Three pairs, each headed by **רוּחַ** with its own construct relationship. This is **not** a list that reads "X, namely: a, b, c." It reads structurally as "X. [Then:] a, b, c" — three independent *ruach* designations deployed in parallel.

If the intent were to use the six as **descriptors of the first**, Hebrew has tools for that. The author could have used a relative clause (אֲשֶׁר, "which is..."), or written the six as a single extended construct chain flowing out of רוּחַ יְהוָה. He did neither. He **resets** with a fresh רוּחַ three times.

### 3. The pairing structure argues *against* the six being a description of one

If the six terms were an unpacking of רוּחַ יְהוָה, you would expect them to function as attributes — essentially adjectives or genitives modifying that one spirit. Instead, each רוּחַ stands independently with its own construct relationship. The author is **not saying** "the Spirit of YHWH, which is wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and fear." He is **enumerating**.

### 4. The Masoretic accentuation supports structural separation

The *atnach* (the major disjunctive accent, functioning somewhat like a strong comma or half-stop) in the Masoretic Text falls under יְהוָה in the first clause, creating a deliberate pause **before** the three *ruach* pairs. This accentuation marks רוּחַ יְהוָה as standing **apart** from what follows, not as the head term being elaborated.

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## The Contextual and Thematic Evidence

### 5. Isaiah's pattern of enumeration in this section

**Isaiah 11** is working in highly structured, almost liturgical enumeration. **Verses 3–5** continue with stacked clauses about the ruler's character. **Verse 6–8** stacks animals. The **mode of the passage is list-making**, not unpacking a single concept. This contextual grain strongly favors reading the *ruach* terms as a list.

### 6. The audience — Judah under Assyrian pressure

**Isaiah** is making a claim to a specific audience about a coming ruler who will be comprehensively endowed — endowed in ways the current **Davidic** monarchy is

visibly *not*. The rhetorical force is **totality and comprehensiveness**, which is better served by enumeration (seven distinct endowments resting on him) than by elaboration of one. The point is accumulation, not definition.

## 7. The "seven" in Semitic literary culture

While you asked not to go outside the text, it's worth noting that **within Isaiah itself and the broader Hebrew literary corpus**, seven is the number of completeness and totality. The structure of *one + three pairs* producing seven is exactly the kind of structure an **Isaiah-era** author would deploy to signal **comprehensive, complete endowment**. The form itself is making a rhetorical argument.

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### The Bottom Line

The weight of the evidence — syntactic structure, the reset רוח at each pair, the **Masoretic** accentuation, the self-contained verbal clause of line one, the enumerative mode of the surrounding passage, and the rhetorical context — **favors reading these as seven distinct ruach designations**, with רוח יהוה as the first and governing one, and the three pairs as six additional specifications of what will rest upon the coming ruler.

The reading that treats the six as descriptors of the one requires you to explain away: (a) why the author reset רוח three times instead of using construct chains, (b) why the first clause is syntactically closed, and (c) why the **Masoretic** accents separate line one from the rest. Those are real grammatical costs.

**The text leans toward seven.** The six are not there to tell you what the *Spirit of YHWH* is — they are there to tell you what else *rests upon him*.