

First — What the Compound Name Pattern Actually Is

The phenomenon you're referring to are the *El* and *YHWH* compounds — names like:

- *YHWH-Yireh* (*the Lord will provide*) — Genesis 22
- *YHWH-Rapha* (*the Lord who heals*) — Exodus 15
- *YHWH-Nissi* (*the Lord my banner*) — Exodus 17
- *El-Shaddai, El-Elyon, El-Roi*, etc.

These are **revelatory name-events** — moments where a character facet of God is disclosed through circumstance and encoded in a name-compound. The key feature is that the second element **defines what YHWH is shown to be in that moment or essentially**.

Isaiah 11:2-3 and 9 are **not** compound divine names in that formal sense — but your instinct is correct that something structurally similar is happening. What Isaiah is doing is arguably more sophisticated: rather than compounding the name once, he is **deploying a series of construct-state pairings** that function like compound names stacked in sequence. Each *רוח* + genitive is essentially disclosing a facet of character.

Working Through Each Term

רוחַ יְהוָה — *Ruach YHWH* — Spirit of YHWH

This is the governing term and the one most like a formal compound. *Ruach* in **Hebrew** carries the semantic range of wind, breath, and spirit — but critically, it also carries the sense of **animating force and executive presence**. When *Ruach* is bound to *YHWH* in construct, it is not merely saying "*a spirit that belongs to YHWH*." It is saying: **the animating, executive, outward-moving presence of YHWH himself — his active reach into the created order**.

In **Isaiah's** theology specifically, *Ruach YHWH* is consistently associated with **creative and judicial power** — the force by which **YHWH** acts in history. So the compound here is declaring: *this ruler will have YHWH's own active, executive presence resting on him*. That is the umbrella under which everything else follows.

רוּחַ חִכְמָה וּבִינָה — *Ruach Chokmah u'Binah* — Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding

Chokmah (חִכְמָה) — This is the **Hebrew** word typically translated "*wisdom*" but its semantic range is more concrete than the **English** implies. **Chokmah** in the **Hebrew** corpus is **practical, skilled wisdom** — the word used of craftsmen who build the tabernacle (**Exodus 31**), of the wise administrator, of someone who knows *how to act rightly in the real world*. It is not abstract philosophical wisdom. It is **wisdom that produces right outcomes through skilled discernment of reality**.

Binah (בִּינָה) — From the root **בִּין**, meaning to discern, distinguish, perceive clearly. *Binah* is the capacity to **see between things** — to perceive distinctions that are not immediately obvious, to understand *why* something is as it is, to trace causes and implications. Where *chokmah* is knowing how to act, *binah* is **the penetrating insight that correctly reads the situation in the first place**.

Together as a pair:

The character being highlighted is a ruler who **accurately perceives reality as it is (binah) and knows exactly what to do with that perception (chokmah)**. This directly anticipates **verse 3-4**, where the ruler judges not by appearances but by what is actually true.

רוּחַ עֲצָה וְגִבּוּרָה — *Ruach Etsah u'Gevurah* — Spirit of Counsel and Might

Etsah (עֲצָה) — "*Counsel*" but again the **English** is softer than the **Hebrew**. *Etsah* is **deliberate, purposeful planning that leads to decisive action**. It is the word used

for the counsel of a king's war council, for the purposes of **YHWH** that cannot be thwarted (**Isaiah 46:10** uses the same root). It carries a sense of **strategic intentionality** — not merely advice given but a determined plan formed and held.

Gevurah (גְּבוּרָה) — This is **might, strength, heroic power** — the word used of warriors, of acts of great power. But in Isaiah's theological context, *gevurah* paired with *etsah* is doing something specific: it is saying that this ruler's **counsel will not be impotent**. The persistent failure mode of human rulers is that they either plan without power to execute, or exert power without wisdom to direct it. This pairing explicitly closes both gaps — **the plan and the power to carry it through are both present**.

The character being highlighted: a ruler in whom **strategic wisdom and executive force are unified** — whose purposes cannot be frustrated because he has both the mind to plan and the strength to act.

רוּחַ דַּעַת וְיִרְאַת יְהוָה — Ruach Da'at v'Yirat YHWH — Spirit of Knowledge and the Fear of YHWH

This third pair is the most theologically charged and the one that most directly engages your compound-name instinct.

Da'at (דַּעַת) — This is **intimate, relational, experiential knowledge** — the deepest Hebrew word for knowing. It is the word used for the knowledge between a husband and wife, for the knowledge of God that is the goal of covenant relationship (**Hosea 4:1, 6:6**). *Da'at* is not information about something — it is **the knowledge that comes from being in genuine relationship with the thing known**. Applied to **YHWH**: this ruler *knows YHWH* from the inside, not merely about him from the outside.

Yirat YHWH (יִרְאַת יְהוָה) — Here is where your compound-name instinct is most directly vindicated. *Yirat YHWH* — the Fear of **YHWH** — is itself a near-compound in Hebrew wisdom literature. It functions as a **technical term** meaning: the

orientation of a person who is correctly aligned with who **YHWH** actually is — who perceives his weight, his authority, his holiness accurately and orders their entire life in response.

Notice that in verse 3, the text immediately says:

וְהָרִיחוּ בִּירְאַת יְהוָה — "**and his delight/breath will be in the fear of YHWH**"

The verb **וְהָרִיחוּ** — "*delight*" here is from the same root as the word **רִיחַ** (*riah*), which means **to smell, to scent, to catch the scent of**.

It literally means **Jesus will "delight/perception/discernment will be in the fear of YHWH"** — or more literally, he will "scent" or "be attuned to" the fear of YHWH, with the sense of keen, intuitive discernment.

In a word play, clearly not intended by **Isaiah**, but still consistent with the thought is that "fearing the Lord" will be as natural and constant to Him as breathing.

The character being highlighted in this pair: a ruler who **knows YHWH relationally and from the inside** (*da'at*), and whose entire character is shaped by **accurate perception of who YHWH is** (*yirat YHWH*) — and this is as effortless to him as breathing.

Isaiah 11:9 — *Da'at* Returns

Verse 9 closes the unit with:

כִּי-מִלְאָהּ הָאָרֶץ דַּעַה אֶת-יְהוָה כַּמַּיִם לַיָּם מִכְסִּים "**For the earth will be full of the knowledge (*de'ah*) of YHWH as the waters cover the sea.**"

De'ah is a variant form of *da'at* — the same root, the same relational-intimate knowledge. This is not accidental. Isaiah is **forming a bracket**: the ruler in verse 2 is endowed with *da'at* of **YHWH**, and the outcome in verse 9 is that this *da'at*

floods the entire earth. The character quality of the ruler becomes the condition of the world under his rule.

This is the compound-name dynamic at its most expansive: the intimate, relational knowledge of YHWH that rests on this ruler is not contained — it **propagates outward until there is no space left that it does not fill**, just as water does not partially cover a sea.

The Unified Character Portrait

When you read all three pairs as facets of a single character disclosure — which the grammar and structure support — what emerges is:

Pair	What is disclosed
Chokmah / Binah	He reads reality truly and acts in it skillfully
Etsah / Gevurah	His purposes are formed wisely and cannot be frustrated
Da'at / Yirat YHWH	He knows YHWH from within and is natively oriented to him

And the *Ruach* **YHWH** over all of it is saying: **this is YHWH's own active presence resting on a human figure** — which is precisely what makes the character portrait possible. A man could not hold all of this by human capacity. The *ruach* is the explanation for why it coheres in one person.

Isaiah is essentially doing in narrative-poetic form what the compound divine names do in a single word: **he is disclosing who this figure is by disclosing what rests on him.**