

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

ELOKAI NESHAMA

The Pure Soul Within

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

My G-d, the soul You placed within me is pure. You created it, You fashioned it, You breathed it into me... Blessed are You, Hashem, Who restores souls to dead bodies.

אלקי, נשמה שנתת בי
טהורה היא. אתה בראתה.
אתה יצרתה. אתה נפחתה בי...
ברוך אתה ה' המחזיר נשמות
לפגרים מתים:

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the meaning



The Neshama for which we thank Hashem every morning is described in the bracha as “Tahora” – pure. The commentaries explain that the Neshama is Tahora because it comes from a pure place - a Makom Tahor – and actually consists of a *Chelek Eloka Mi'Ma'al* - so to speak, a part of Hashem that He has given us. Therefore, just as Hashem Himself is Tahor, so is our Neshama!

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

The Gift Of A Soul

We express gratitude to Hashem for restoring our life in the morning with a pure soul.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

G-dly Capacity

A person's mind may wander in many directions from sublime to mundane to impure and around again. It may happen in the course of seconds. One minute he is in the midst of learning, and the next, his mind flashes onto a news story he heard about an investment scam, leading him straight into enviously pondering the source of his neighbor's newfound wealth. Then he shakes himself free of his stray thoughts and gets back to his learning.

We often bemoan our own spiritual weakness and wonder, what are we made of, anyway? Why is the G-dliness within us so easily obscured? Why do our appetites, desires and curiosity so often get the best of us? These are thoughts that can lead to despair, causing a person to give up the effort of spiritual growth.

“Tahora hi – it is pure” this blessing tells us. Your neshama is within you, the core of your very being, and it is restored in all its purity each and every day. When you wonder what you're really made of, that is your answer.

The soul that gives each of us our spiritual identity comes from the primary source of purity – G-d Himself. The Torah relates: “And Hashem, G-d

formed the man of dust from the ground, and he blew into his nostrils the soul of life, and man became a living being.” The soul which Hashem blew into man conveys holiness and G-dliness into our physical being. It infuses every Jew with the ability to reach unlimited spiritual heights in Torah, *tefillah* and fear of G-d.

Before a person is born, the Gemara relates, he swears an oath to protect the purity of the soul he is given. When we say “*Elokai neshama*” each day, we remind ourselves of the purity within us, and our obligation to guard it as we make the choices that comprise our daily lives.

One of the lesser-known mitzvos, “*V'halachta b'drachav*” teaches that we are required to emulate G-d's ways, striving to be merciful, compassionate, righteous, and holy. Our potential to act in G-dly ways arises, according to the Nefesh HaChaim, from our status as a *tzelem Elokim* – a being created in G-d's image. Because our neshamas are invested with this spark of G-dliness, Man possesses what no other living being possesses – a capacity for giving and compassion. However, until we apply that capacity, it remains nothing more than potential.

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Clinging To The Light

A person is trapped in a mining tunnel – a nightmare come to life. All around him, there is nothing but darkness, and he knows that without air, he will perish within days. But as he looks around him, he realizes that he can discern shapes and outlines in the tunnel. The



darkness is broken by some source of light. He looks up above him and sees that there is an opening – a place where light and air are able to enter his underground domain. He realizes that he must cling to that spot, to

keep it in sight and make sure nothing obscures it, for it alone can keep him alive until he reaches the world on the other side of the tunnel.

Our pure, holy *neshama* likewise peeks demurely into our dark, physical existence. And yet, it is the source of our vitality, permitting the holiness and light of the spiritual world to illuminate our lives.

Try This!

Vividly imagine an object or scene that represents purity to you: a crystal stream, a brilliant diamond, the eyes of a small child, a clear blue sky. Picture it in detail, and let the image sink into your heart and arouse your emotions. Whenever you say the words “Haneshama she'nosatah bi tahora hi,” in your tefillos this week, visualize that image.

Did You Know

► **Body And Soul**

One recites אלקי נשמה - thanking G-d for restoring one's soul - immediately after reciting *Asher Yotzar* (Mishneh Berurah 6:12; 46:29) - which offers thanks for restoring one's body, because both are restored to us each day (Beur HaGra 4:1, s.v. 'Vyaish omrim').