



Praying WITH Passion

GIVING MORE MEANING TO OUR TEFILLAH - ONE WEEK AT A TIME ISSUE NO. 12

Tefillah Focus Of The Week: **ELOKAI NESHAMA** *The Pure Soul Within*

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

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.

“It infuses every Jew with the ability to reach unlimited spiritual heights in Torah...”

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.

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. Because this capacity for giving is embedded in Man’s soul, giving should come naturally. However, until we apply that capacity, it remains nothing more than potential. “*V’halachta b’drachav*” goes far beyond a spontaneous (cont. P. 2)

One of the lesser-known mitzvos, “*V’halachta b’drachav*” teaches that as G-d is merciful, we are required to be merciful; as He is compassionate, righteous, and holy, so must we be. Our potential to act in G-dly ways arises, according to the Nefesh HaChaim, from our status

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.

Theme:

An essential concept of the prayer

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

Insight:

Deeper meanings of the theme

The soul that gives each of us our spiritual identity derives 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

Word to the Wise: Meaning within the meaning

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



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(INSIGHT cont.)

impetus to do someone a favor. It is the policy that governs all one's interpersonal relationships, even when one feels overwhelmed, slighted or wronged.

The mitzvah is all-embracing because that is the only way one can truly emulate G-d's attributes. According to the Sefer *Tomer Devorah*, the 13 attributes of Divine mercy set the template for fulfilling "V'halachta b'drachav." In this vein, *Tomer Devorah* points out that even when a person sins, G-d still sustains him. For instance, if he were eating non-kosher food, G-d could cause him to lose the power to swallow. Instead, He allows him to act in a manner than runs contrary to His will until he arrives at *teshuvah*. In emulating G-d, therefore, we are called upon to benefit even those with whom we are not friendly.

Halacha:

One recites אלהי 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').

Visualize:

Images that bring the prayer to life

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,

"The darkness is broken by some source of light."

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.

Take It With You:

Your personal connection to the prayer

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

(cont. P. 3)

Did You Know: An insight for the week ahead.

Reciting "Elokai Neshama" after Shacharis

Q I came late to Shacharis and was unable to recite the morning blessings. Can I recite "Elokai Neshama" after I have completed Shacharis?

A If you remember that you did not recite Elokai Neshamah during *Pesukei D'Zimrah*, say it then (Tefillah K'Hilchasa, 9:24, citing HaRav Elyashiv). If you remember anytime from the birkot Kriat Shema until saying the bracha of Mechaye HaMaisim, you should explicitly have in mind when you say the blessing of Mechaye HaMaisim that you do not wish to discharge your obligation of saying *Elokai Neshamah* by means of the blessing of Mechaye HaMaisim. You may then say the blessing of *Elokai Neshamah* after

Shacharis according to all authorities (see *Iggros Moshe Orach Chaim* 5:20, Os 12).

If however you only realize that you forgot to say Elokai Neshama after finishing the Shemonei Esrei, *Mishneh Berurah* (Siman 52:9) cites different opinions whether you may still say it. Therefore, you should not say it, but yet not protest if someone else does say it, as there are authorities to rely on who hold that you should indeed say it. In any case, if you did not say *Elokai Neshamah* and went to sleep after Shacharis, upon waking up you may certainly recite *Elokai Neshamah*.

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(TAKE IT WITH YOU cont.)

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.

Your Personal Tefillah Trainer:

Exercising mind, memory and imagination to carry kavannah into your davening

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.

Try This!

To track your progress, give yourself a check for each day you have Kavannah in "Elokai Neshama"

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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