

מדרש

Midrash

Bereshit Rabbah 14:9

ON GENESIS 2:7

The soul is identified by five names—nefesh, ruah, neshama, haya, and yeḥida—each reflecting a different aspect of its nature, such as its association with blood, its movement upward and downward, its connection to intellect, its endurance when the limbs perish, and its uniqueness amid the body's paired limbs. Even in sleep, when the soul partially withdraws, it continues to sustain and warm the body, drawing vitality from above so that life is preserved. Because every breath testifies to this ongoing divine sustenance, a person is obligated to praise the Creator with each breath, as neshama (soul) is read as neshima (breath) in "Let every soul praise God." AI SUMMARY

It [man's soul] is called by five names: nefesh (Genesis 2:7), ruah (Ezekiel 37:14), neshama (Genesis 2:7), yeḥida (Psalms 22:21), haya (Psalms 143:3). Nefesh – this refers to blood, as it is stated: "For blood is the soul [nefesh]" (Deuteronomy 12:23). Ruah – because it ascends and descends, as it is stated: "Who knows the spirit of the sons of man? Does it ascend upward?" (Ecclesiastes 3:21). Neshama – this refers to man's intellect, as people say: Intellect is good. Haya – because all of one's limbs may die, but it [the soul] remains alive [haya] in the body. Yeḥida – because all of one's limbs are in pairs, but it [the soul] is solitary [yeḥida] in the body.

This is what is written: "If He directs His attention to him, his spirit [ruḥo] and his soul [nishmato] He will gather to him" (Job 34:14). Rabbi Yehoshua bar Nehemya and the Rabbis, Rabbi Yehoshua bar Nehemya said: If God would direct his attention to this person, his spirit would already be in His hand. "And his soul He will gather to him" – [if He would gather the soul into one single place] in his body, the

entire man would die. Rather, when a person sleeps, the soul warms the [entire] body so that it does not get too cold and die.

The Rabbis say: If God would direct his attention to this person, and his spirit [ruah] would already be in His hand, "and his soul He will gather to Him" on High, the entire man would die. When a person is sleeping, however, the soul [neshama] [is left within him, and it] warms the body so it will not get too cold and die. That is what is written: "The spirit [neshama] of man is the lamp of the Lord" (Proverbs 20:27).

Rabbi Bisni, Rabbi Aḥa, and Rabbi Yoḥanan say in the name of Rabbi Meir: The neshama fills the entire body, and when a person sleeps, it ascends upward and draws life for him from above. Rabbi Levi said in the name of Rabbi Ḥanina: For each and every breath that a person takes, he must laud the Creator. What is the source? "Let every soul [neshama] praise God" (Psalms 150:6) – [read instead:] Let every breath [neshima] praise God.