

THE SOUL

Are humans nothing more than sophisticated animals? Is there nothing animating the body other than physical processes? If not, what constitutes the secret of Life? Why can't a dead body move, isn't it physically the same? Perhaps it's lacking "current", like an unplugged appliance – an extremely complex and sophisticated apparatus full of great potential when plugged in, but lifeless when the current is cut. But if there is a spiritual entity that energizes matter, what differentiates man from other life forms? Where does this ethereal energy come from, how does it connect to the physical and how can it be perceived?

In the following verse from the Creation Story, G-d revealed the answers to all these questions, and more. The verse deals with two planes, body and soul. We'll first consider the body before delving into the realm of the soul:

Genesis 2:7

וַיִּצְרֶה אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם, עֹפֶר מִן הָאֲדָמָה, וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו, נְשֵׁמַת חַיִּים; וַיְהִי הָאָדָם, לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה.

"G-d formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul".

Body

Note: Some find it hard to accept that Adam's body was literally formed from the earth like a clay figure. If so, you might consider the verse as a figurative way of expressing that the body is comprised of chemical elements and minerals found in the ground.

Sanhedrin 38a,b

תניא היה ר' מאיר אומר אדם הראשון מכל העולם כולו הוצבר עפרו...אמר רב אושעיא משמיה דרב אדם הראשון גופו מבבל וראשו מארץ ישראל ואבריו משאר ארצות.

R' Meir said, Adam was created from dirt gathered from the entire earth (Rashi in chumash explains that G-d brought earth from the 4 corners of the world to the place of the altar). R' Oshiya in the name of Rav said, Adam's torso was made of earth from Babylon, his head from The Land of Israel and his limbs from all other lands.

This has interesting ramifications:

1] The fact that man's body was formed from earth allows for burial as in the verse, "dust you are, and to dust you will return." (3:19). 2] That it was taken from the four corners of the Earth may be what enables man to adapt to all environments, unlike animals who are mainly indigenous to specific regions and habitats. 3] That the body was fashioned on the site of the altar may explain mankind's seeming preoccupation with Jerusalem and the Temple Mount.

Man's body was formed lying face down, with the head to the east, right hand to the south, left hand to the north, and legs to the west. Each direction represents a different force:

east – *shechina*, divine presence; south – *chesed*, kindness, giving; north – *gevurah/din*, control/judgment; west – *malchut*, receiving (and disseminating). This illustrates what should be man's ideal "orientation": the mind should be directed towards G-d and spirituality, greater effort should be spent on loving kindness, less emphasis should be placed on strict judgment, while all of one's positive attributes should be channeled down, concentrated and unified for the practical benefit of the world.

Parenthetically, according to Kabbalah, man's orientation among the "forces" during creation reveals what should be the proper alignment during procreation. Consider the following:

Berachot 5b

תניא אבא בנימין אומר על שני דברים הייתי מצטער כל ימי...ועל מטתי שתהא נתונה בין צפון לדרום דא"ר חמא ברבי חנינא אמר רבי יצחק כל הנותן מטתו בין צפון לדרום הויין ליה בנים זכרים שנאמר (תהילים יז) וצפונך תמלא בטנם ישבעו בנים.

Abba Binyamin says, regarding two things I made great effort my entire life...that my bed should be placed between north and south as R' Chama son of R' Chanina said in the name of R' Yitzchak, one who places his bed between north and south will have male children as it is written, "[Those who are oriented to the north], you shall fill their bellies with [male] children".

The Kabbalists explain the gemmora as follows: during the union between husband and wife, the bed should be placed *between* north and south, meaning *from* east to west, such that the man, lying face down, will have his mind toward the east and spirituality, his right to the south and loving kindness, his left to the north and self-control, and his "legs" to the west, receiving and concentrating his positive energy in order to contribute and disseminate it productively to his wife and progeny. Being spiritually "in-tune" in this way helps ensure the correct orientation and character of the children created from such a union.

The body is not a purely physical creation. In fact, one of the stages in which G-d created all existence was by directing Divine Energy/Light (*Or Ein Sof*) through Ten Emanations (*Sefirot*). These points of Emanation actually became reflected or manifested in the human body, expressing on one level man having been created in the image of the Divine (*Tzelem Elokim*). Without going into too much detail, the general correlation is as follows:

<u>Sefira</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Body Part</u>
(Keter	Crown	cranium)
Chochma	Wisdom	right brain
Binah	Understanding	left brain
Da'at	Knowledge	brain stem
Chesed	Loving Kindness	right arm
Gevurah	Judgment	left arm
Tiferet	Beauty	torso, heart
Netzach	Eternity/Victory	right leg
Hod	Splendor	left leg
Yesod	Foundation	reproductive organ
Malchut	Kingship	crown of organ

Note: Theoretically, there are 11 sefirot, as above. However, Keter and Da'at are complimentary and are not reckoned together. Therefore practically, only 10 sefirot are considered. They are divided into three triads, Malchut standing on its own as a receptacle and transmitter of them all.

A brief explanation of the *sefirot* is as follows: Keter is undifferentiated, all-encompassing divine will, the primal precursor engendering Chochma and Bina. Chochma is pure undefined intelligence, anatomically associated with the right hemisphere of the brain; Bina is the crystallization of that intelligence into definable detail, anatomically associated with the left hemisphere. Da'at is the confluence of the two, resulting in the ability to derive and discern new knowledge. Chesed (Abraham) is associated with the right, it being preferable to Gevurah (Isaac) on the left. Tiferet (Jacob) is the perfect synthesis of the two. Netzach (Moses) represents victorious leadership on the right, while Hod (Aaron) compliments it with the splendor on the left. The fusion of the two results in Yesod (Joseph), the perfect balance of giving and restraint that serves as the foundation of Malchut (David), which receives, rules over and expresses all of the attributes in harmony.

After having discussed the elevated nature of the body as receptacle of soul, let's explore the loftiness of the soul itself:

Soul

Consider the following statements regarding the greatness of Adam:

Sanhedrin 38b

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב אדם הראשון מסוף העולם ועד סופו היה שנאמר (דברים ד) "למן היום אשר ברא אלהים אדם על הארץ ולמקצה השמים ועד קצה השמים" כיון שסרח הניח הקדוש ברוך הוא ידו עליו ומיעטו שנאמר (תהילים קלט) "אחור וקדם צרתני ותשת עלי כפך" אמר ר"א אדם הראשון מן הארץ עד לרקיע היה שנאמר "למן היום אשר ברא אלהים אדם על הארץ ולמקצה השמים עד קצה השמים" כיון שסרח הניח הקב"ה ידו עליו ומיעטו שנאמר "אחור וקדם צרתני וגו'".

R' Yehuda said in the name of Rav, Adam reached from one side of the world to the other, as it is written, "since the day that G-d created man upon the earth, from one end of the heavens to the other end of the heavens" (Deut. 4:32). Once he sinned, G-d placed His hand upon him and reduced him etc. R' Eliezer said, Adam reached from the earth to heaven etc.

This is obviously not referring to Adam's physical size, but rather his spiritual stature. Adam's soul was extremely great and lofty.

Bereishit Raba 8:9

Man's soul radiated such great spiritual light that the angels mistook him for G-d and intended to say praise before him as they say before G-d.

According to the Kabbalah (Arizal, Sefer HaLikutim, Gen. #3 p 26; Ramchal, Tikunim Chadashim #8), if Adam and Eve had refrained from partaking of the Tree of Knowledge, they would have been permitted to eat from the Tree of Life on Shabbat, and then from the Tree of Knowledge. However, they corrupted their extremely holy, divine soul. When they

sinned, they incorporated evil into themselves, greatly lowering their souls and tainting the souls of their children after them. This happened on two levels. First, when the Serpent enticed Eve to transgress G-d's command, in the words of our sages, he "injected" his impurity into her. This is explained in two ways. On a purely spiritual plane – meaning the Serpent seduced her mentally, implanting within her impure thoughts of rebellion against G-d. Alternatively, it refers to the Serpent enticing her physically as well, injecting her with his impurity. Either way, this "injection" of evil caused spiritual corruption for her and her offspring forever. Second, both she and Adam went against the will of G-d, ingesting the forbidden fruit, thereby incorporating within themselves evil and corruption.

Note: The source of the idea that the Serpent enticed Eve physically, is the Sefer HaBahir. There, the author elaborates that the Serpent's injecting its impurity in Eve left its impact on her and her children in the form of a snake running through the center of the body. It can take charge of a person causing harm and destruction, or can be tamed and harnessed for good. The tongue can rattle off evil speech on the one hand, or express words of Torah and prayer on the other; the spine can serve as a conduit for harmful messages to the body, or direct it to perform mitzvot; the head of the sexual organ can release poisonous venom destroying marriages and lives, or can serve as the antidote to that venom by building marriage and imparting new life.

Dimensions of Soul

Consider the following verses regarding the creation of living creatures other than man:

Genesis 1:20,24

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יִשְׂרָצוּ הַמַּיִם, שָׂרָץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה; וַעֲוֹף יַעֲוֹף עַל הָאָרֶץ, עַל פְּנֵי רְקִיעַ
הַשָּׁמַיִם...וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים, תּוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה לְמִינָהּ, בְּהֵמָה וְרֶמֶשׂ וְחַיְתוֹ אֲרָץ, לְמִינָהּ;
וַיְהִי כֵן.

And G-d said, "Let the waters swarm a swarming of living creatures, and let fowl fly over the earth, across the expanse of the heavens...And G-d said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kind, cattle and creeping things and the beasts of the earth according to their kind," and it was so.

Compare this with the following verse (quoted above) about the creation of man. What are the differences regarding the spiritual dimension, or soul, between the two?

Genesis 2:7

וַיִּצְרֶה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם, עָפָר מִן הָאֲדָמָה, וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו, נְשֵׁמַת חַיִּים; וַיְהִי הָאָדָם, לְנֶפֶשׁ
חַיָּה.

"G-d formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul".

Fish and animals are called simply "*nefesh chaya*", a living soul, which refers to the basic life-giving aspect of soul similar in all living organisms. The verse regarding man, in addition to making reference to this "*nefesh chaya*", also refers to two other dimensions of soul, namely "*vayipach*" and "*nishmat chaim*". The following table summarizes the three aspects of soul mentioned regarding man:

<u>Hebrew</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>Aspect of Soul</u>
" <i>nefesh chaya</i> "	Living soul	<i>nefesh</i>
" <i>vayipach</i> "	Breathed	<i>ruach</i>
" <i>nishmat chaim</i> "	Breath of life	<i>neshama</i>

In addition to *nefesh*, which is the basic life force, man has other aspects of soul called *ruach* and *neshama*. Shortly, we shall see sources that refer to additional dimensions of the soul as well, and we will describe the purpose of each.

Aspects/Characteristics of the Soul

The Midrash actually lists five names pertaining to the soul:

Bereishit Raba 14:9

The soul has five names: nefesh, ruach, neshama, chaya and yechida.

Early commentators (Rambam, Introduction to Avot, Ramban on Gen. 2:7, Rav Sa'adya Gaon) understand this to mean that there is one soul that is responsible for different human aspects or attributes. This one soul is simultaneously referred to by different names according to its different aspects. They also bring examples from verses throughout the Scriptures.

The soul is called *nefesh* since it is the life force engendering growth, physical needs, and desire:

Deuteronomy 12:20

כִּי תֵאָוֶה נִפְשְׁךָ לֶאֱכֹל בֶּשֶׂר בְּכֹל אֶרֶץ נִפְשְׁךָ, תֹאכַל בֶּשֶׂר
"When your nefesh desires to eat meat"

Job 33:20

וְזָהַמְתּוּ...נִפְשׁוֹ מֵאֲכֹל תֵּאָוֶה
"His nefesh shall abhor dainty food"

The soul is called *ruach* because it is the source of emotion and speech:

Ecclesiastes 7:9

אַל תִּבְהַל בְּרוּחְךָ, לְכַעוֹס
"Be not hasty in your ruach to be angry"

Proverbs 29:11

כָּל רוּחוֹ, יוֹצִיא כָּסִיל
"The fool vents all of his ruach (emotions)"

II Samuel 23:2

רוח יְהוָה, דָּבַר-בִּי ; וּמָלְתוּ, עַל-לְשׁוֹנִי
“The ruach of Hashem spoke within me”

The soul is called *neshama* because it is responsible for thought and intellect:

Job 32:8

וְנִשְׁמַת שְׂדֵי תְבַיִם
“The neshama of the Almighty gives men understanding”

In addition, these early commentators explain that the soul is called *chaya* since it derives its life (*chai*) from G-d while *yechida* (oneness) refers to the soul's uniqueness.

Levels of Soul

The Kabbalists (Derech HaShem Part 3, ch. 1, Nefesh HaChaim 1:14) understand that the above-mentioned reference to five names of the soul refers to five different levels of soul, each responsible for a different function, that are interconnected like links in a chain.

The lowest level of soul, *nefesh*, is referred to by the Kabbalists as the “animal soul”. It is transmitted through the genetic material at conception and directs physical development and characteristics particular to each species. Man's animal soul is nevertheless unique in that it engenders imagination, memory, and intelligence, and is also eternal, unlike that of animals which dissipates upon death.

The Zohar (2:94b) explains that since *nefesh* is the lowest level of soul, it is *nefesh* that connects to the body. However, even though it is the lowest level of soul, it is still very ethereal and much higher than the physical body. Its point of connection then, must be at the most “spiritual” element of the body. This is the blood. There are different opinions about where this interface exists:

- R' Bachaya (Lev. 17:11) asserts that the *nefesh* resides in the smallest quantity of life-giving blood in the body.
 - Tosafot (Sotah 5a) maintains that this quantity of blood is that which is in the heart.
 - Rambam (Oholot 2:2) suggests that this quantity of essential blood is that which one was born with.
- Arizal (Etz Chaim, Shaar HaMochin 5) explains that *nefesh* actually resides in the highest fraction of blood, which is that which sustains the brain, the interface between the physical and spiritual.

The four upper levels of soul - *ruach*, *neshama*, *chaya*, and *yechida*, one above the other, comprise what the Kabbalists call the “Divine Soul”. Connected like links in a chain, they are anchored to the *nefesh* in the blood. As described above, *ruach* is responsible for emotion and speech, while *neshama* is the source of thought and intellect. However, the Kabbalists offer sources for the names of the two higher levels of soul as well:

Chaya:

Psalms 143:3

כִּי רָדַף אוֹיֵב, נַפְשִׁי ; דָּכָא לְאָרֶץ, חַיָּתִי

“The enemy has persecuted my soul (nafshi), he has trodden chayati to the ground...”

Job 33:18

יַחֲשֹׁךְ נַפְשׁוֹ, מִנִּי שָׁחַת ; וַחֲיָתוֹ, מֵעֵבֶר בַּשֶּׁלַח

“He keeps back his soul (nafsho) from the pit, and chayato from perishing from the sword”.

Yechida:

Psalms 35:17

הַשִּׁיבָה נַפְשִׁי, מִשְׁאַיְהֵם ; מִמְּכַרִּים, יַחֲדִתִּי

“...rescue my soul (nafshi) from their destructions, yechidati from the lions”.

In these verses, the juxtaposition of the term *nefesh* with the terms *chaya* and *yechida* indicate that the latter are also levels of soul. The significance of these names can be learned from the glassblower analogy given by the Kabbalists to illustrate G-d's imparting the soul into man:

When a glassblower chooses to fashion a vessel, he first melts sand (taken from the earth) into a formless mass of glass. He then inhales a breath of air, exhales it, sending a moving column of air through a tube, impacting the glass and fixing its shape. From this last stage of impact back to the initial inhalation, the analogy to the levels of soul is as follows. The outermost layer of moving air impacts the vessel and comes to rest there – this is the *nefesh*, which means “rest”. This layer of air is preceded by a column of moving air, essentially wind - this is *ruach*, which means “wind”. This wind is an extension of the breath of the glassblower – this is *neschama*, which means “breath”. The breath is a manifestation of the life of the glassblower – this is *chaya* which means “life”. Finally, the glassblower's life is engendered by his unique soul – this is *yechida*, which means “unique”.

According to this, we are in a continual state of spiritual mouth-to-mouth resuscitation with G-d, who constantly breathes of His own divine soul into us. This is the meaning of what the Zohar says, “He who exhales, of Himself He exhales”.

Soul of Jew and Non-Jew

According to Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzatto (1700's, Italy) in *Derech HaShem* 2:4:1-9, Adam was originally created with a perfect soul. He was equally balanced between good and evil. After the sin, he plummeted to a fallen state, and his children were born into this fallen state. Nevertheless, man was given a chance to recover his original perfection.

However, since man did not take advantage of this opportunity, eventually it was taken away. From that time, each nation became its own “root” from which “branches” would perpetuate that nation with its own characteristics. Abraham was an exception, raising his soul to the level of Adam, and forming a new superior “root” and resulting “tree” and

“branches” for his offspring. Abraham’s “tree” included 600,000 branches, the souls that were at Mt. Sinai from which all Jews descend. They correspond to 600,000 letters of the Torah (Zohar 3:273a, Zohar Chadash 74d).

Non-Jews have souls of Adam in his fallen state. Nevertheless, they have a mitzvah to perfect their souls through the 7 mitzvot. In this way, they may merit the World to Come, but will have a lower status than Jews who kept the 613 mitzvot. Still, non-Jews can convert, detaching themselves from their ancestral “tree” and join the “branches” in Abraham’s “tree”, receiving a new infusion of elevated soul.

Manifestations of Soul in Man

Some universal human phenomenon may be explained according to the presence of a holy, pure and divine soul within us:

- First, the human quest for improvement may be driven by the soul’s innate yearning for perfection.
- Also, interestingly enough, no matter how much people have, they are never satisfied with their material standing. This is explained in Mesilat Yesharim (ch. 1) with the allegory of a lost princess who was taken in by a villager. No matter how many sackcloth garments or potato meals he provided her, it could never compare to the fineries she was accustomed to and deserved. Such is the relationship between the soul and the body – no amount of physical pleasures can satiate the spiritual yearning of the soul. True fulfillment can only be reached through spiritual pursuits. This is particularly true for “The Wandering Jew”, who wanders this world in search of fulfillment in a myriad of ideals and causes, but will never be truly happy until he provides his Jewish soul what it really wants and deserves, namely Torah and mitzvot.
- Another interesting phenomena that may be explained on the basis of soul is the human tendency for belief, especially among children. In fact, Karl Jung said that most older patients “suffer” because of lack of belief. This tendency “to believe” is also apparent in times of crises. Similarly, universal feelings of conscience and morality point to some underlying propensity for good in all human beings. Really, people feel good about doing good. In this light, the Vilna Gaon said that heretics are “good” people, meaning people who consciously reject good as directed by G-d nevertheless seek to be good in other ways.
- Interestingly, studies indicate that hypnosis, while able to influence people’s behavior, cannot cause people to commit serious crimes such as murder. Perhaps the soul just won’t let them.
- Also, the phenomena of guilt, the need to ask for and receive forgiveness, including an extreme form of atonement-seeking such as returning to the site of the crime, may all be explained by the subliminal presence of the spiritual entity we call soul.