



The Pulse of Shabbat

By HaRav Eli Mansour (Shiur E13)

Do you know how to praise and thank Hashem? Have you ever tried? There is an inspired Tefilah called נשמת that is recited at the key moment of Shabbat. Let us learn about the magic.

The Center of the Middle

Rav Chaim Brim זצ"ל, of ירושלים עיה"ק, taught that Shabbat is the middle of the week. And if you are looking for the absolute center, the heart of Shabbat, you will find its pulse at the recitation of נשמת on Shabbat morning in שחרית. The center of the middle is the spiritual apex of the week.

The Power of Praise on Shabbat

The Zohar¹ teaches that all the praises and songs that כלל ישראל sing on Shabbat rise to a far higher spiritual place (אצילות) than similar praises can reach during the weekdays.

And of all the praises and songs of Shabbat, teaches the Zohar², every word of נשמת כל חי is measured and numbered, carrying limitless significance.

Special חזן for נשמת כל חי

Here is but one indication of the significance of the נשמת. In the Sephardic custom, there is a special חזן, who is tasked with rendering the נשמת כל חי each week. There are several modalities for this powerful תפילה and the חזן chooses a different one each week. Indeed, there

is no way that we can overstate the significance of נשמת כל חי.

The upgraded נשמה

The נשמה יתירה – the extra Neshama with which we are imbued on Shabbos – does not come at one time; it comes in stages. The בן איש חי, citing the אריז"ל says that at precisely the moment when we recite נשמת כל חי we get an upgrade, a חוספת נפש.

The Gematria of נשמת כל חי

The abbreviation of נשמת כל חי is נכ"ח which equals 78, which is three times the ineffable Name of Hashem (י-ה-ו-ה). The בן איש חי asserts that even those without a background in Kabbalah can, and should, think about the threefold name of Hashem when saying the words נשמת כל חי.

He adds that the two words, כל חי equal 68, which is also three names of Hashem, but this time it is the name א-ה-י-ה, before and after the ineffable name. That same 68 is the Gematria of חיים.

We cannot and therefore we do?

There is a paradox in נשמת כל חי which bears analysis. We open by recognizing that it is

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¹ זוהר פ' ויקהל

² זוהר פ' תרומה



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incumbent on each living soul to praise Hashem. We then state a disclaimer; we cannot do so.

And we state that our inability to properly praise Hashem is owing to our limitations:

אלו פינו מלא שירה פים, ולשוננו רנה כהמון גליו, ושפתותינו שבח כמרחבי רקיע, ועינינו מאירות כשמש וכגרות, ונדינו פרושות כנשרי שמים, ורגלנו קלות כאילות אין אנהנו מספיקים להודות לך

For even if we had all the capacity imaginable, our mouths were filled with song like the sea, our tongues as full of praise as the multitude of waves ... we still could not the You sufficiently, Hashem, for even one of the millions of kindnesses that you performed for me, for us and for our ancestors.

After declaring that we are inadequate to the task of praising Hashem, it seems odd that we would then proceed to do exactly that:

על כן אברים שפלגת בנו ורוח ונשמה שנפחת באפינו ולשון אשר שמת בפינו הן הם ידו ויברכו וישבחו ויפארו

Therefore, with the organs that You set within us, and the spirit and soul that You breathed into our nostrils and the tongue You placed in our mouth, all of them shall thank and bless, praise and glorify...

If we just said that we cannot, why do we not concede the game and go home?!

A משל – a parable

A king had a Jewish advisor in whom he placed great trust. That trust earned him the jealousy of the other, non-Jewish advisors who went to great lengths to undermine the king's trust in the Jew.

To demonstrate the Jew's disloyalty to the king the other advisors suggested that the king request of the Jew to honor the king with a banquet. They predicted that the Jew would be unhappy at having spent his personal wealth on the king's honor and would be unable to conceal his displeasure.

Indeed, the king made this request of the Jew and as predicted, the Jew was clearly distressed at the lavish banquet that he set for the king's honor.

The king wanted to test the assertion that the Jew was unhappy with his outlay of funds for the king's honor. He asked the Jew to proffer another banquet in his honor, this time, though, the banquet would be at the king's expense, and he handed the Jew a sum of money to cover the expenses of the dinner.

To the king's chagrin, the Jew came to the second banquet in a joyous spirit, toasting the king and demonstrating great joy. The king could not resist the conclusion that the Jew had been unhappy when he had to spend his own funds on the king's honor and the king confronted the Jew with his findings.

The Jew explained himself to the king. 'When I was putting together the banquet for the king, I was in constant concern that perhaps I had not done enough. And as much as I invested in the banquet, I had the gnawing thought that I could have and should have done more for the king's honor.' 'However,' went on the Jew, 'when the king designated the funds for his honor, then I was no longer concerned. So long as I spent every cent that the king designated, then this



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honor is what he seeks, and not more. Without that worry, I was full of joy and praise.'

That is why we state our inadequacy at the outset. If we were endowed with limitless capacity, we would be stuck. There would be no way to properly honor the King, Hashem. We would have to fall silent. But now that You, Hashem have given us our limited mouth and our human spirit, then we can joyously sing out Your praises, for *You* have shown that ours are the praises that You seek, and not the praises of superhumans.

המנהג עולמו בחסד – the Great Driver

Rabbi Mazouz שליט"א offered a novel understanding of the expression in נשמת where we declare that Hashem is המנהג עולמו בחסד. The standard understanding of those words is true that everything that Hashem does in leading the world is done with חסד – kindness. We deserve none of Hashem's kindnesses and it is correct to point that out.

But, Rabbi Mazouz, said, the expression can also be translated to be that Hashem is 'the Kind Driver of the World' since the word המנהג contains the word נהג – driver. After all, look at how the world is 'driven' by Hashem.

With a circumference of 24,000 miles the Earth rotates on its axis fully every 24 hours. That means that we, on the Earth, are spinning at the speed of 1,000 miles per hour. Does it feel like you are moving along at 1,000 mph? Have you even been on a moving vehicle of any sort, at

any speed, and not felt a bump here and there, some turbulence, some unease? This is no roller coaster ride as some plane rides tend to be. There is no clatter as the train runs over the gaps in the tracks. It is smooth sailing at 1,000 miles per hour! What a Kind Driver!!

Measure the words of נשמת – for your own sake

If we take the joyous task of praising Hashem at נשמת seriously we will discover that we are the big winners in the process.

We conclude נשמת with the words (that are slightly different depending on our customs, but all have this text if only on the ימים נוראים)

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|---------------|------------|--------------|
| תִּתְּרוּ מָה | יִשְׁרִים | בְּפִי |
| תִּתְּבַרְךָ | צִדִּיקִים | וּבִשְׂפִתַי |
| תִּתְּקַדְּשׁ | חֲסִידִים | וּבִלְשׁוֹן |
| תִּתְּהַלֵּל | קְדוֹשִׁים | וּבִקְרֹב |

You can see יצחק and רבקה embedded into the closing section of נשמת כל חי. Their תפילות were answered and the future of our Nation was granted to them with the birth of Yaakov Avinu. Just as they were answered, so, too, is one who praises properly answered. Divine Mercy is awakened through our praises and songs and even *unspoken* prayers are answered.

תקובל תשבחתנו ושירתנו ברצון אכיר

May our praises and songs be received with grace

אמן כן יהי רצון

Takeaway: I will try to focus on the unique opportunity to recite נשמת