

## נִשְׁמָת

כָּל חַי תְּבָרַךְ אֶת שִׁמְךָ, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
וְרוּחַ כָּל בָּשָׂר תִּפְאָר וְתִרְוָמָה וְכִכָּר מִלִּפְנֵי תָמִיד.  
מִן הָעוֹלָם וְעַד הָעוֹלָם אַתָּה אֵל  
וּמַבְלִעַדִּיךְ אֵין לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ גּוֹאֵל וּמוֹשִׁיעַ  
פּוֹדֶה וּמַצִּיל וּמַפְרִיחַ וּמַרְחֵם  
בְּכָל עֵת צָרָה וְצִוְקָה אֵין לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ אֵל אַתָּה.  
אֱלֹהֵי הָרְאוּשׁוֹנִים וְהָאַחֲרוֹנִים, אֱלֹהֵי כָל בְּרִיּוֹת  
אֲדוֹן כָּל תּוֹלְדוֹת, הַמְהַלֵּל בְּרַב הַתְּשַׁבְּחוֹת  
הַמְנַהֵג עוֹלָמוֹ בְּחֶסֶד וּבְרִיּוֹתָיו בְּרַחֲמִים.  
וַיְהוֶה לֹא יָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן  
הַמַּעֲזִיר יְשָׁנִים וְהַמְּקִיץ נֹדְדִים  
וְהַמְּשִׁיחַ אֱלֹמִים וְהַמְּתִיר אֲסוּרִים  
וְהַסּוֹמֵךְ נּוֹפְלִים וְהַזּוֹקֵף כְּפוּפִים.  
לֵךְ לְבִדְךָ אֲנַחְנוּ מוֹדִים.  
אֵלֹהֵינוּ מִלֵּא שִׁירָה בָּיָם  
וּלְשׁוֹנֵנוּ רְנָה בְּהִמּוֹן גִּלּוֹי  
וּשְׁפָתוֹתֵינוּ שִׁבַּח בְּמִרְחָבֵי רִקְיעַ  
וְעֵינֵינוּ מְאִירוֹת כְּשֶׁמֶשׁ וְכִכָּר  
וְיָדֵינוּ פְּרוֹשׁוֹת בְּנִשְׁרֵי שָׁמַיִם  
וְרַגְלֵינוּ קָלוֹת בְּאַיִלוֹת

נִשְׁמָת כָּל חַי The soul of all that lives: This magnificent poem is composed of two parts. The first, according to Rabbi Yohanan is the "blessing of the song"

## THE SOUL

of all that lives shall bless Your name, LORD our God,  
and the spirit of all flesh shall always glorify  
and exalt Your remembrance, our King.  
From eternity to eternity You are God.  
Without You, we have no king, redeemer or savior,  
who liberates, rescues, sustains  
and shows compassion in every time of trouble and distress.  
We have no king but You, God of the first and last,  
God of all creatures, Master of all ages,  
extolled by a multitude of praises,  
who guides His world with loving-kindness  
and His creatures with compassion.  
The LORD neither slumbers nor sleeps.  
He rouses the sleepers and wakens the slumberers.  
He makes the dumb speak, sets the bound free,  
supports the fallen, and raises those bowed down.  
To You alone we give thanks:  
If our mouths were as full of song as the sea,  
and our tongue with jubilation as its myriad waves,  
if our lips were full of praise like the spacious heavens,  
and our eyes shone like the sun and moon,  
if our hands were outstretched like eagles of the sky,  
and our feet as swift as hinds –

mentioned in the Mishna as a conclusion to saying Hallel in the *sefer* service on Pesah (*Pesahim* 118a). Just as there, so here, it stands as a conclusion to the recitation of Psalms. The second part, beginning "To You alone we give thanks," is mentioned in the Talmud (*Berakhot* 59b) as a thanksgiving prayer for rain.

The first section is an extended meditation on the final words of the book of Psalms: "Let all that breathes praise the LORD." Hebrew has many words for soul, all deriving from verbs related to breathing. *Neshama* – the word linking this passage to the end of Psalms – means to breathe deeply, as we

אין אֲנַחְנוּ מִסְפִּיקִים לְהוֹדוֹת לָךְ  
 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ  
 וּלְבָרֵךְ אֶת שְׁמֶךָ  
 עַל אַחַת מֵאַלְף אֲלָף אֲלָפִים  
 וְרַבִּי רַבּוֹת פְּעָמִים הַטּוֹבוֹת  
 שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ עִם אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְעִמָּנוּ.  
 מִמַּצָּרִים גָּאַלְתָּנוּ, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, וּמִבֵּית עֲבָדִים פָּדִיתָנוּ  
 בָּרַעַב וְנָתַתָּנוּ וּבִשְׂבַע כָּל־כֶּלֶתָנוּ  
 מִחֶרֶב הִצַּלְתָּנוּ וּמִדָּבָר מִלִּטָּתָנוּ  
 וּמִחֲלָיִים רָעִים וְנֶאֱמַנִים דָּלִיתָנוּ.  
 עַד הִנֵּה עֲזוּרָנוּ רַחֲמֶיךָ, וְלֹא עֲזוּבָנוּ חֶסֶדְךָ  
 וְאַל תִּטְּשֵׁנוּ, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, לְנֶצַח.  
 עַל כֵּן אֲבָרִים שֶׁפִּלְגָת בָּנוּ  
 וְרוּחַ וְנִשְׁמָה שֶׁנִּפְחַת בְּאַפֵּנוּ, וְלִשׁוֹן אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַת בְּפִינוּ  
 הֵן הֵם יוֹדוּ וַיְבָרְכוּ וַיִּשְׁבַּחוּ וַיִּפְאֲרוּ  
 וַיִּרְמְמוּ וַיַּעֲרִיצוּ וַיִּקְדִּישׁוּ וַיִּמְלִיכוּ אֶת שְׁמֶךָ מִלִּפְנֵינוּ  
 כִּי כָל פֶּה לָךְ יוֹדֶה וְכָל לִשׁוֹן לָךְ תִּשְׁבַּע  
 וְכָל בֶּרֶךְ לָךְ תִּכְרַע וְכָל קוֹמָה לִפְנֶיךָ תִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה  
 וְכָל לִבָּבוֹת יִירָאוּךָ וְכָל קָרֵב וְכָל־יֹזֵם יִזְמְרוּ לְשִׁמְךָ  
 בְּדָבָר שְׂפָתוֹב  
 כָּל עֲצַמֹתַי תֹּאמַרְנָה יְהוָה מִי כָמוֹךָ  
 מִצִּיל עָנִי מִחֶזֶק מִמָּנוּ, וְעָנִי וְאֲבִיוֹן מִגְּזֹלוֹ:

תהלים לה

are able to do in a state of rest. Hence the sages said that on Shabbat we have "an extra soul." In the still silence of the turning world it is as if we hear all

still we could not thank You enough,  
 LORD our God and God of our ancestors,  
 or bless Your name  
 for even one of the thousand thousands  
 and myriad myriads of favors  
 You did for our ancestors and for us.  
 You redeemed us from Egypt, LORD our God,  
 and freed us from the house of bondage.  
 In famine You nourished us; in times of plenty You sustained us.  
 You delivered us from the sword, saved us from the plague,  
 and spared us from serious and lasting illness.  
 Until now Your mercies have helped us.  
 Your love has not forsaken us.  
 May You, LORD our God, never abandon us.  
 Therefore the limbs You formed within us,  
 the spirit and soul You breathed into our nostrils,  
 and the tongue You placed in our mouth –  
 they will thank and bless, praise and glorify, exalt and esteem,  
 hallow and do homage to Your name, O our King.  
 For every mouth shall give thanks to You,  
 every tongue vow allegiance to You,  
 every knee shall bend to You,  
 every upright body shall bow to You,  
 all hearts shall fear You,  
 and our innermost being sing praises to Your name,  
 as is written:

"All my bones shall say: LORD, who is like You?  
 You save the poor from one stronger than him,  
 the poor and needy from one who would rob him."

Ps. 35

that lives sing a song of praise to God who brought the universe into being, sustains it, and guides the destinies of all things.

The second section is composed around a phrase from Psalms: "All my