only after the latter was created out of earthly materials. With all other living beings, the life-force in them was created together with their physical bodies.

אַתָּה מְשַׁמְּרָהּ בְּקִרְבִּי – Once a person is born, he needs God's constant supervision and protection to keep his soul within his body.

וְאַתָּה עָתִיד לִיטְלָהּ מִמֶּנִּי – The soul is immortal; it remains in existence after the body dies. That is why we say that God "takes" the soul, not that He destroys it.

וּלְהַחֲזִירָהּ בִּי לֶעָתִיד לָבוֹא – At some time in the future, God will resurrect the dead, as our prophets have taught.

Rabbenu Yosef Hayim

Man's soul consists potentially of four parts: the *nefesh*, the *ru'ah*, the *neshama* and the *neshama* of the *neshama*, which is also called *haya*. Not everyone is privileged to have all these spiritual aspects, however. Some people have only a *nefesh*, while others manage to gain a *ru'ah* as well. When Ribbi Shim'on bar Yohai said (*Sukka* 45b), "I see that there are very few people who have risen to a high level," he was referring to those people who have earned a *neshama* of the *neshama*.

The Arizal taught that even those people who never rise to the level where they gain the higher aspects of the soul still have a connection to them through their connection with Adam, the first man. His great soul encompassed those of all the people who would ever live on earth. As long as a person strives to serve God properly, he is connected with his original source and it is as if he has all the four aspects of soul. This can be likened to a thick cable that reaches from the highest point in Heaven down to earth. If anyone attaches himself to that cable, even with a thin cord, he is attached to Heaven as well.

When we recite the blessing of *Elohay neshama*, we thank God for granting us these four aspects of the soul, for each of us has these four aspects, either within one's own soul or through one's connection with Adam. That is why we use four expressions – "נְתַתָּ בִּי, בְּרָאתָהּ, יְצַרְתָּהּ, נָפַחְתָּהּ בִּי, You gave it, You created it, You formed it and You breathed it into me."

The term טְהוֹרָה (pure) in this blessing refers to the highest of the four dimensions, that of *Atzilut*, which is the realm of the *neshama* of the *neshama*. The term בְּרָאתָהּ refers to the dimension of *Beri'a*, which is the realm of the *neshama*. The term יְצַרְתָּהּ refers to the dimension of *Yetzira*, which is the realm of the *ru'ah*. The term נָפַחְתָּהּ בִּי refers to the dimension of *Asi'a*, where the aspect of *nefesh* is connected. Nevertheless, the term *neshama* is also a collective name for all the aspects of the soul.

The significance of saying that God keeps our souls within our bodies is that God acts in a manner different from mortals. If a king gave a precious gift to a servant, it is up to the servant to guard it from being stolen or broken. The king cannot be expected to be responsible for the gift once it is in the recipient's possession. In contrast, God gave people the most precious of gifts – the soul – but He continues to guard it and protect it throughout our lives. This is the meaning of the phrase "אַתָּה מְשַׁמְּרָהּ בְּקִרְבִּי – You guard it within me." The extra term "within me" refers to another remarkable kindness that God performs, that God deposited the soul, a completely spiritual entity, and blended it within our physical bodies of flesh and blood. This is arguably the greatest of all miracles.

Before *Shaḥarit*

The *Milta Beta'ama* (page 39) cited a handwritten anonymous manuscript stating that everyone must be aware that God created our bodies and our souls so that we will use them to serve Him. We were not given them simply for our own pleasure. Everyone must be aware that the soul is not his own property; it remains in God's possession. He places the soul in the body to enable the person to serve Him. Since our worship of God is exemplified by our prayers, we recite the blessing of *Elohay neshama* before beginning *shaḥarit*. This demonstrates that we understand that our prayers and praises are the purpose of our existence.

דיני ברכת "אלהי נשמה"

כח. מעיקר הדין אין צריך לסמוך ברכת "אלהי נשמה" לברכת "אשר יצר", מפני שאין ברכת "אלהי נשמה" נחשבת לברכה הסמוכה לחבירתה. ומה שאינה פותחת בברוך, היינו משום שהיא ברכת ההודאה, וברכות ההודאות אינן פותחות בברוך אפילו אינן סמוכות לברכות אחרות. ומכל מקום טוב ונכון לסמוך ברכת "אלהי נשמה" לברכת "אשר יצר", לחוש לדעת הפוסקים שסוברים כן. [הליכות עולם ח"א עמ' נ]

Elohay Neshama

Relation to *asher yatzar*

28) Technically, it is not necessary to recite the blessing of *Elohay neshama* immediately following the blessing of *asher yatzar*. The two are not considered a set of blessings. Our Sages did not require the opening phrase of בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' for the blessing of *Elohay neshama* since its purpose is to thank God for His kindness. This category of blessing never requires the opening phrase of בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' even when the blessing is not part of a set of blessings. Even so, it is best to recite this blessing immediately following that of *asher yatzar* in deference to those *Poskim* who ruled that it is required.[324]

324. The *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Vayeshev* halakha 2) instructs us to recite the blessing of *Elohay neshama* immediately following that of *asher yatzar*, based on the teaching of the *Sha'ar Hakavanot*. Maran the Rishon Letziyon (*Halikhot Olam* Vol. I, page 50) pointed out that the Tosafot (*Berakhot* 46a) stated that the blessing of *Elohay neshama* is not part of a set of blessings. If the person does not need to relieve himself at this time, he recites this blessing without prefacing it with the blessing of *asher yatzar*. Therefore they asked why it does not begin with בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', and they answered that since the entire purpose of this blessing is to express thanks to God, it does not need that introductory phrase. This is repeated by the Tosafot in *Pesahim* 104b.

Rabbenu David Abudarham concurred with this answer, and the *Arba'a Turim* and Maran in the *Shulhan Arukh* (6:3) adopted it as well, pointing out that the blessing we recite to thank God for bringing rain and ending a drought likewise does not begin with בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'. The *Matte Yehuda* (46:2) testified that many people have the custom of reciting the blessing of *Elohay neshama* only after they arrive in the synagogue, long after they have recited the blessing of *asher yatzar*. This is because they are not a set of blessings that belong together.

Nevertheless, Rabbenu Asher (responsa 4:1) ruled that since the blessing of *Elohay neshama* does not begin with בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', it is correct to recite it immediately following the blessing of *asher yatzar* as if they are a set of blessings. The *Bayit Hadash* commented that Rabbenu Asher agreed that this is not a genuine solution, nor is it imperative, but it is a pious and virtuous way to fulfill these mitzvot. Harav David ben Zimra (responsa Vol. I, #222) wrote that according to the kabbalists these two blessings are a set. Maran the Rishon Letziyon commented that this is pertinent only to the very devout who conduct themselves in all matters according to the Kabbalah. See more about this in responsa *Yabia Omer* (Vol. IV, #2:1; Vol. VIII, #7:2).

Melekh Ha'olam

In order for any blessing to be valid, it must state that God is King of the world, as explained in the *Shulhan Arukh* (214) and the *Yalkut Yosef* (ibid.). The text of the blessing of *Elohay neshama*, however, does not include this statement. This would not matter if we say that it is connected to the blessing of *asher yatzar*, for then the words "King of the world" in the first blessing would count for the second blessing as well. Since we follow the opinion that they do not form a set of blessings, how is it that the blessing of *Elohay neshama* is missing these words?