

The Hebrew Word Nephesh

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The Use of Nephesh in the Old Testament.
This Is Appendix 13 From The Companion Bible.

* Used of God.

** Literally and "the soul of man... "

The word nephesh occurs 754 times in the Hebrew Old Testament. Each occurrence is noted in the margin, but it will be useful for the Bible student to have a complete list.

In the Authorized Version and Revised Version it is translated "soul" 472 times, while in the other 282 places it is represented by forty-four different words or phrases. In fifty-three of these places there is a marginal rendering which calls attention to the fact that the word is "nephesh", while in 229 passages the English reader has hitherto been left in ignorance of the fact. The English word "soul" is in every occurrence the rendering of the Hebrew nephesh, except in Job 30:15 and Isaiah 57:16. See the notes. The time has come to "open the book", and let it speak for itself. Henceforth, every one who uses The Companion Bible will have complete information as to the facts, and can use it in determining his definitions, making his own classifications, and formulating his doctrines as to the Biblical use of the word.

Though, with these two exceptions the English word "soul" always represents the Hebrew nephesh, nephesh is not always translated "soul".

This Appendix will exhibit all the varieties of translation; and, while it is not intended to teach either Theology or Psychology, it will give such information as will enable every Bible reader to form his own views and come to his own conclusions on an important subject, about which there is such great controversy.

This can be done only by giving every occurrence of the Hebrew word nephesh.

Each occurrence is noted in the margin of The Companion Bible; but it is well to present a complete, separate, and classified list of the recognized Lexical usages of the word; and the reader will be left to form his own judgment as to how far the following classification is correct.

The usage of the word nephesh by the Holy Spirit in the Word of God is the only guide to the true understanding of it.

It will be seen that the word "soul", in its theological sense, does not cover all the ground, or properly represent the Hebrew word "nephesh". The English word "soul" is from the Latin solus = alone or sole, because the maintenance of man as a living organism, and all that affects his health and wellbeing, is the one sole or main thing in common with every living thing which the LORD God has made. The correct Latin word for the theological term "soul" (or nephesh) is anima; and this is from the Greek anemos = air or breath, because it is this which keeps the whole in life and in being.

[The usage of the corresponding New Testament word psuche will be presented in a later Appendix.] The first occurrence of nephesh is in Genesis 1:20, "the moving creature that hath life (nephesh)". 1

The following are twelve classifications of nephesh:

A. Animals

1. Nephesh is used of the lower animals only, in twenty-two passages, and is rendered in nine different ways:-

1."creature". Genesis 1:21,24; 2:19; 9:10,12. Leviticus 11:46,46. 2."thing". Leviticus 11:10. Ezekiel 47:9.

3."life". Genesis 1:20, 30.

4."the life". Genesis 9:4. Deuteronomy 12:23, 23. Proverbs 12:10.

5."beast". Leviticus 24:18, 18, 18. (See margin).

6."the soul". (See margin).

7."breath". Job 41:21.

8."fish". Isaiah 19:10. (See margin).

9."her". Jeremiah 2:24.

B. Animals And Man

2. Nephesh is used of the Lower Animals and Man in seven passages, and rendered in three different ways :-

1."creature". Genesis 9:15, 16.

2."the life". Leviticus 17:11, 14, 14, 14. 3."soul". Numbers 31:28.

C. Man As Individuals

3. Nephesh is used of Man, as an individual person, in 53 passages, and is rendered in six different ways :-

1."soul".

Genesis 2:7; 12:5; 46:15, 18, 22, 25, 26, 26, 27, 27.

Exodus 1:5, 5; 12:4.

Leviticus 22:11.

Psalms 25:20.

Proverbs 10:3; 11:25, 30; 14:25; 19:15; 22:23 (Revised Version life); 25:25; 27:7, 7.

Jeremiah 38:16.

Lamentations 3:25.

Ezekiel 13:18, 18, 20, 20, 20; 18:4, 4, 4.

2."person".

Genesis 14:21; 36:6 (Revised Version souls).

Exodus 16:16.

Leviticus 27:2.

Numbers 31:40, 40, 46.

Deuteronomy 10:22.

Jeremiah 43:6; 52:29, 30, 30.

Ezekiel 16:5; 27:13.

3."person". Numbers 31:35. 4."any". Deuteronomy 24:7. 5."man". 2 Kings 12:4.

6."and". 1 Chronicles 5:21.

Not rendered (Numbers 31:35 **).

D. Man Performing Acts

4. Nephesh is used of Man, as exercising certain powers, or performing certain acts (may be often well rendered by emphatic pronouns) in ninety-six passages, and with eleven different renderings :-

1."soul".

Genesis 27:4, 19, 25, 31.

Leviticus 4:2; 5:1, 2, 4, 15, 17; 6:2; 7:18, 20, 21, 27; 16:29, 31; 17:12, 15; 20:6, 25; 22:6; 23:27, 30, 32.

Numbers 15:27, 28, 30; 19:22; 29:7; 30:2, 4, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

Deuteronomy 13:6. Judges 5:21.

1 Samuel 1:26; 17:55; 18:3; 20:3, 17; 25:26.

2 Samuel 11:11; 14:19. 2 Kings 2:2, 4, 6; 4:30.

Job 16:4, 4; 31:30 (Revised Version life).

Psalms 35:13; 120:6.

Proverbs 6:32; 8:36; 11:17; 13:2; 15:32; 16:17; 19:8, 16; 20:2 (Revised Version life); 21:23; 22:5; 29:24.

Ecclesiastes 4:8; 6:2. Isaiah 51:23; 58:3, 5. Jeremiah 4:19.

Ezekiel 4:14.

Micah 6:7.

2."man". Exodus 12:16.

3."any". Leviticus 2:1.

4."one". Leviticus 4:27.

5."yourselves". Leviticus 11:43, 44. Jeremiah 17:21.

6."person". Numbers 5:6.

7."themselves". Esther 9:31. Isaiah 46:2.

8."himself". Job 18:4 (Revised Version thyself); 32:2.

9."he". Psalm 105:18.

10."herself". Jeremiah 3:11.

11."Himself". Jeremiah 51:14. Amos 6:8 (used of Jehovah).

E. Man Having Animal Appetites

5. Nephesh is used of Man, as possessing animal appetites and desires, in twenty-two passages, rendered in five different ways :-

1."soul".

Numbers 11:6 (dried away).

Deuteronomy

12:15 (lusts),

12:20 (longs to eat flesh),

12:20 (lusts after),

12:21 (lusts);

14:26 (lusts), 26 (desires) 21:5 (loathes).

1 Samuel

2:16 (desires).

Job

6:7 (refused); 33:20 (abhors).

Psalm

107:18 (abhors).

Proverbs

6:30 (hunger);

13:25 (satisfying).

Isaiah

29:8 (empty), 8 (hath appetite).

Micah

7:1 (desired ... figs).

2."pleasure". Deuteronomy 23:24.

3."lust". Psalm 78:18. 1

4."appetite". Proverbs 23:2. Ecclesiastes 6:7.

5."greedy". Isaiah 56:11.

F. Man Having Mental Faculties

6. Nephesh is used of Man, as exercising mental faculties, and manifesting certain feelings and affections and passions, in 231 passages, and rendered in twenty different ways :-

1. "soul".

Genesis

34:3 (clave), 8 (longs);

42:21 (anguish);

49:6 (come not).

Leviticus

26:11 (not abhor), 15 (abhor), 30 (abhor), 43 (abhor).

Numbers

21:4 (discouraged).

Deuteronomy

4:9 (keep), 29 (seek);

6:5 (love);

10:12 (serve);

11:13 (love), 18 (lay up in);

13:3 (love);

26:16 (keep);

30:2 (return), 6 (love), 10 (turn).

Joshua

22:5 (serve); 23:14 (know).

Judges

10:16 * (grieved); 16:16 (vexed).

1 Samuel

1:10 (bitterness of), 15 (poured out);

18:1 (knit with), 1 (loved as);

20:4 (desires);

23:30 (desire);

30:6 (grieved).

2 Samuel

5:8 (hated).

1 Kings

2:4 (walk); 8:48 (return); 11:37 (desired).

2 Kings

4:27 (vexed);

23:3 (keep), 25 (turned).

1 Chronicles

22:19 (seek).

2 Chronicles

6:38 (return); 15:12 (seek); 34:31 (keep).

Job

3:20 (bitter);

7:11 (bitterness);

9:21 (know) (Revised Version myself);

10:1 (weary), 1 (bitterness);

14:22 (mourn);

19:2 (vex); 21:25 (bitterness);

23:13 * (desires);

24:12 (wounded);

27:2 (vexed);

30:16 (poured out), 25 (grieved).

Psalm

6:3 (sore vexed);
11:5 * (hates);
13:2 (take counsel);
19:7 (converting);
24:4 (not lifted up);
25:1 (lifted up), 13 (dwell at ease);
31:7 (in adversities), 9 (consumed with grief);
33:20 (waits) 34:2 (boast);
35:9 (be joyful);
42:1 (pants), 2 (thirsts), 4 (pour out), 5 (cast down), 6 (cast down), 11 (cast down);
43:5 (cast down);
44:25 (bowed down);

49:18 (blessed);
57:1 (trusts), 6 (bowed down);
62:1 (waits), 5 (wait);
63:1 (thirsts), 5 (satisfied), 8 (follows hard);
69:10 (chastened);
77:2 (refused comfort);
84:2 (longs);
86:4 (rejoiced), 4 (lift up);
88:3 (full of troubles);
94:19 (delight);
103:1, 2, 22; 104:1, 35 (bless);
107:5 (fainted), 9 (satisfied), 9 (filled with goodness), 26 (melted);
116:7 (return to rest);
119:20 (longing), 25 (cleaves unto the dust) 28 (melts for heaviness), 81 (faints),
129 (keep), 167 (kept);
123:4 (filled with scorning);
130:5 (wait), 6 (waits);
131:2 (quieted);
138:3 (strengthened)
139:14 (knows);
143:6 (thirsts), 8 (lifted up), 11 (bring out of trouble), 12 (afflict);
146:1 (praise).

Proverbs

2:10 (knowledge pleasant);
3:22 (be life to);
13:4 (desires), 4 (made fat), 19;
16:24 (sweet to);
19:2 (without knowledge), 18 (spare) (Revised Version heart);
21:10 (desires);
22:25 (get a snare to);
24:14 (wisdom unto);
25:13 (refreshes);
29:17 (give delight).

Ecclesiastes

2:24 (enjoy good);
6:3 (not filled); 7:28 (seeks).

Song Of Solomon

1:7; 3:1, 2, 3, 4 (loves);
5:6 (failed);
6:12 * (made me like chariots).

Isaiah

1:14 (hates);
26:8 (desire), 9 (desire);

32:6 (made empty);
38:15 (bitterness of);
42:1 * ; 52:2 (delight);
58:10 (drawn out), 10 (afflicted), 11 (satisfied);
61:10 (joyful)
66:3 (delights).

Jeremiah

4:31 (wearied);
5:9, 29 (avenged);
6:8 (depart), 16 (find rest);
9:9 * (avenged);
12:7 (dearly beloved of);
13:17 (shall weep);
14:19 (loathed);
31:12 (watered), 14, 25 (satiated), 25 (sorrowful);
32:41 * (whole);
50:19 (satisfied).

Lamentations

3:17 (removed), 20 (humbled), 24 (saith).

Ezekiel

7:19 (satisfied; 24:21 (pities).

Jonah

2:7 (fainted).

Habakkuk

2:4 (not upright).

Zechariah

11:8 (loathed), 8 (abhorred).

2."mind".

Genesis

23:8 (your).

Deuteronomy

18:6 (desire); 28:65 (sorrow).

1 Samuel

2:35 *

2 Samuel

17:8 (chafed).

2 Kings

9:15.

1 Chronicles

28:9 (willing).

Jeremiah 15:1. *

Ezekiel

23:17 (Revised Version soul), 18 * (Revised Version soul) 18 * (Revised Version soul),
23:22 (Revised Version soul) 28 (Revised Version soul) (alienated);
24:25 (Revised Version heart) (set);
36:5 (Revised Version soul) (despiteful).

3."heart". Exodus

23:9.

Leviticus
26:16.

Deuteronomy
24:15.

1 Samuel
2:33 (grieve).

2 Samuel
3:21 (desires).

Psalms
10:3 (desire).

Proverbs
23:7 (Revised Version himself);
28:25 (proud heart. Revised Version greedy spirit); 31:6 (heavy heart. Revised Version bitter in soul).

Jeremiah
42:20 (dissembled. Revised Version souls).

Lamentations
3:51 (affected. Revised Version soul).

Ezekiel
25:6 (rejoiced. Revised Version soul), 15 (despiteful. Revised Version soul); 27:31 (bitterness).

Hosea
4:8 (set).

4. "hearty". Proverbs 27:9 (counsel).

5. "will". Deuteronomy 21:14 (she will). Psalm 27:12; 41:2. Ezekiel 16:27.

6. "desire".
Ecclesiastes 6:9.
Jeremiah 22:27; 44:14.
Micah 7:3 (Revised Version soul).
Habakkuk 2:5.

7. "pleasure". Psalm 105:22. Jeremiah 34:16.

8. "lust". Exodus 15:9.

9. "angry". Judges 18:25.

10. "discontented". 1 Samuel 22:2.

11. "thymself". Esther 4:13.

12. "myself". Psalm 131:2.

13. "he". Proverbs 16:26 (Revised Version appetite).

14. "his own". Proverbs 14:10 (Revised Version its own).

15. "Him". Proverbs 6:16 .*

16. "himself". Jonah 4:8.

17. "herself". Isaiah 5:14 (Revised Version her desire).

18. "yourselves". Jeremiah 37:9.

19."man". Isaiah 49:7.

20."so would we have it". Psalm 35:25.

G. Man Being Destroyed

7. Nephesh is used of Man, (a) as being "cut off" by God; (b) and as being slain or killed by man, in fifty-four passages: and is rendered in eight different ways:-

(a).Soul cut off by God, in twenty-two passages, and rendered "soul".

Genesis 17:14.

Exodus 12:15, 19; 31:14.

Leviticus 7:20, 21, 25, 27; 17:10; 18:29; 19:8; 20:6; 22:3; 23:29, 30.

Numbers 9:13; 15:30, 31; Ezekiel 18:4, 20.

(b).Slain or killed by man, in thirty-two passages, rendered in eight different way:-

1."soul".

Joshua 10:28, 30, 32, 35, 37, 37, 39; 11:11. Jeremiah 2:34.

Ezekiel 13:19; 22:25, 27.

2."person".

Deuteronomy 27:25. Joshua 20:3,9.

1 Samuel 22:22. Proverbs 28:17.

Ezekiel 17:17; 33:6.

3."any". Leviticus 24:17.

4."any person". Numbers 31:19; 35:11, 15, 30, 30. 5."him". Genesis 37:21. Deuteronomy 19:6; 22:26. 6."mortally". Deuteronomy

19:11.

7."life" 2 Samuel 14:7.

8."thee". Jeremiah 40:14, 15.

H. Man Being Mortal

8. Nephesh is used of Man as being mortal, subject to death of various kinds, from which it can be saved and delivered and life prolonged, in 243 passages, rendered in eleven different ways:-

1."soul".

Genesis

12:13; 19:20.

Exodus

30:12, 15, 16.

Leviticus

17:11, 11. (Revised Version life).

Numbers

16:38 (Revised Version lives); 31:50.

1 Samuel

24:11; 25:29, 29, 29; 26:21 (Revised Version life).

2 Samuel

4:9.

1 Kings

1:29; 17:21, 22. Job 7:15; 27:8.

Psalm

3:2; 6:4; 7:2, 5; 11:1; 17:13; 22:20, 29; 23:3; 25:20; 26:9; 33:19; 34:22; 35:3, 4, 12, 17; 40:14; 41:4; 49:8, 15; 54:3, 4; 55:18; 56:6, 13; 57:4; 59:3; 63:9; 66:9, 16; 69:1, 18; 70:2; 71:10, 13, 23; 72:13, 14; 74:19; 78:50; 86:2, 14; 88:14; 94:21; 97:10; 106:15; 109:20, 31; 116:4, 8; 119:109, 175; 120:2; 121:7; 124:4, 5, 7; 141:8; 142:4, 7; 143:3.

Proverbs

18:7; 24:12; 29:10.

Isaiah

3:9; 10:18; 44:20; 53:10, 11, 12; 55:3.

Jeremiah

4:10; 20:13; 26:19; 38:17, 20; 44:7; 51:6 (Revised Version life), 45 (Revised Version yourselves).

Lamentations

1:11, 16, 19; 2:12; 3:58.

Ezekiel

3:19, 21; 13:18, 19; 14:14, 20; 18:27; 33:5, 9.

Hosea

9:4 (Revised Version appetite).

Jonah

2:5.

Habakkuk

2:10.

2. "life, lives".

Genesis

9:5, 5; 19:17, 19; 32:30; 35:18; 44:30, 30.

Exodus

4:19; 21:23, 23, 30.

Numbers

35:31.

Deuteronomy

19:21, 21; 24:6.

Joshua

2:13, 14; 9:24.

Judges

5:18; 9:17; 12:3; 18:25, 25.

Ruth

4:15.

1 Samuel

19:5, 11; 20:1; 22:23, 23; 23:15; 26:24, 24; 28:9, 21;

2 Samuel

1:9; 4:8; 16:11; 18:13; 19:5, 5, 5, 5; 23:17.

1 Kings

1:12, 12; 2:23; 3:11; 19:2, 2, 3, 4, 10, 14; 20:31, 39, 39, 42, 42.

2 Kings

1:13, 13, 14; 7:7; 10:24, 24.

1 Chronicles

11:19, 19.

2 Chronicles

1:11.

Esther

7:3, 7; 8:11; 9:16. Job 2:4, 6; 6:11 (Revised Version be patient); 13:14; 31:39.

Psalms

31:13; 38:12.

Proverbs

1:18, 19; 6:26; 7:23; 13:3, 8.

Isaiah

15:4 (Revised Version soul); 43:4.

Jeremiah

4:30; 11:21; 19:7, 9; 21:7, 9; 22:25; 34:20, 21; 38:2, 16; 39:18; 44:30, 30; 45:5; 46:26; 48:6; 49:37.

Lamentations

2:19; 5:9.

Ezekiel

32:10.

Jonah

1:14; 4:3.

3."ghost". Job 11:20. Jeremiah 15:9.

4."person". 2 Samuel 14:14 (Revised Version life).

5."tablets". Isaiah 3:20 (Revised Version perfume boxes). Hebrew "houses of the soul" = boxes of sent for the nose.

6."deadly". Psalm 17:9 (Hebrew "enemies against my nephesh").

7."himself". 1 Kings 19:4. Amos 2:14, 15.

8."me". Numbers 23:10. Judges 16:30. 1 Kings 20:32.

9."they". Job 36:14.

10"themselves". Isaiah 47:14.

11."yourselves". Deuteronomy 4:15. Joshua 23:11.

I. Men Who Are Dead

9. Nephesh is used of man, as actually dead, in thirteen passages, and is rendered in three different ways:-

1."the dead". Leviticus 19:28; 21:1; 22:4. Numbers 5:2; 6:11. 2."dead body". Numbers 9:6, 7, 10.

3."body". Leviticus 21:11. Numbers 6:6; 19:11, 13. Haggai 2:13.

J. Man In The Grave

10. Nephesh, in thirteen passages (all rendered "soul"), is spoken of as going to a place described by four different words, rendered as shown below:-

i."sheol" = THE grave (as distinct from keber, A grave), gravedom (or the dominion of death), in five passages, rendered in this connection in two different ways:-

1. "grave". Psalm 30:3 (Revised Version "Sheol"); 89:48 (Revised Version "Sheol", margin grave). Compare Psalm 49:10.

2. "hell". Psalm 16:10 (Revised Version "Sheol"); 86:13 (margin grave. Revised Version "pit". margin lowest Sheol). Proverbs 23:14 (Revised Version "Sheol", margin the grave).

ii."shachath" = a pit (for taking wild beasts); hence, a a grave. The Septuagint and New Testament take it in the sense of corruption; but, if so, not implying putridity, but destruction. Occurs in six passages, and is rendered in two different ways:-

1. "pit". Job 33:18, 28, 30. Psalm 35:7 Isaiah 38:17.
2. "grave". Job 33:22 (Revised Version "pit").

iii."shuchah" = a deep pit (compare all the occurrences, Proverbs 22:14; 23:27. Jeremiah 2:6; 18:20, 22). In one passage only :-

1. Pit. Jeremiah 18:20.

iv."dumah" = silence. Psalm 94:17. Total 754

NOTES

* Used of God.

** Literally and "the soul of man ... were 32,000".

1 It is used of the lower animals four times before it is used of man; and out of the first thirteen times in Genesis, it is used ten times of the lower animals.

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