

Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife. (25:21)

Both Yitzchak Avinu and Rivkah *Imeinu* prayed fervently for a child. The *Kaf HaChaim* (281:8) cites the *Sefer Chesed LaAlafim* who states: “We have a *kabbalah*, tradition, handed down from Rav Yehudah HaChasid who taught that when one is confronted with a difficult challenge, committing to recite the *Nishmas* prayer (we recite *Nishmas* on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* at the end of *Pesukei D’Zimra*. We also recite it at the end of the *Pesach seder*) in the presence of a *minyan* is a *segulah* for deliverance. The *tefillah* is attributed to Rav Elazar Azkari, who lived in Tzfas during the time of the *Arizal*. Deeply immersed in the mystical teachings associated with Jewish spirituality, he composed several well-known liturgical poems, including *Nishmas Kol Chai*. The *tefillah* is a heartfelt expression of gratitude, praising Hashem for the breath of life and acknowledging Him as the Source of all existence. The significance of reciting this prayer lies in its power to deepen our connection with Hashem and to cultivate a constant sense of gratitude. It reminds us to acknowledge Hashem’s continuous flow of blessings He had bestowed upon us. Through its powerful words, we are reminded to take pause to reflect upon what we owe Hashem and to offer our constant gratitude for His Beneficence.

What does this have to do with the *parshah*? The *Sefarim HaKedoshim* (quoted by Horav Sholom Ben Tzion Felman, *zl*), derive an allusion from our *parshah* to the recitation of *Nishmas*.

Va’ye’etar Yitzchak l’Hashem l’nochach ishto, “Yitzchak prayed opposite his wife,” the word *l’nochach* is *roshei teivos* for *lomar nishmas kol chai*. Furthermore, says Rav Felman, the *Kaf HaChaim* records this *segulah*, positive ritual/incantation, as *siman reish-pay-alef*, which spells the word *rofeh*. The letters of *rapo* stand for *afar*, dust, and *pe’er*, beauty/majesty. This alludes to the idea that one who considers himself as dust, will, with Hashem’s blessing, merit to be *rapo*, healed. This will enable him to be elevated to *pe’er*, majesty.

The *Steipler Gaon, zl*, was wont to tell a pregnant woman that, prior to giving birth, she should be *mekabel*, accept upon herself, that, if all goes well, she will recite the *tefillah* of *Nishmas Kol Chai* in gratitude to Hashem. Likewise, he would instruct one who was about to undergo a surgical procedure to recite *Nishmas* following the surgery. He suggested reciting the entire *Nishmas*, followed by the *tefillos Ha’Keil b’satzumos* through *Yishtabach*, concluding with the blessing, but not uttering Hashem’s Name. He also added that one may recite this *tefillah b’yechidus*, alone, without a *minyan*.

More than reciting *Nishmas*, I think we should underscore the concept of “living” *nishmas*. We must constantly reiterate the notion that nothing in life (especially life itself) should be taken for granted, reinforcing the notion that each moment is a miracle. This perspective encourages a profound awareness of gratitude to appreciate the small and large gifts of life, and acknowledgment of the Divine Presence in every aspect of our existence.

Horav Tzvi Elimelech Spira, zl, of Dinov was a leading *Chassidic Rebbe*, founder of the Dinov

dynasty. He was a prolific writer, best known for his *Bnei Yissaschar*, by which title he is also called. The custom in the city of Dinov was that Rav Tzvi Elimelech would sing the *Shabbos* morning *tefillos*. As he would sing, he would gaze through the window and see the lush green rolling hills, the splashing colors of the various flowers set against the deep blue sky. This would inspire him to sing the *Nishmas* prayer with great emotion. He was blessed with a beautiful voice which, together with his elevated love for Hashem, brought forth an otherworldly sound.

His feelings of gratitude to Hashem added life to the words, *Ilu malei pinu shirah ka'yam*, "If our mouths were filled with song like the sea is full of water, and our tongues as full of joyous song as the sea waves, and our lips as full of praise as the breadth of the heavens, our eyes as brilliant as the sun and the moon, and our hands as outspread as the eagles of the sky, and our feet as swift as deer, we still could not thank You sufficiently."

The sound of his melodious voice carried beyond the immediate *shul*. Week after week, the gentile shepherds would hear the song/*tefillah* wafting over the country plains. They would halt their work in order to listen attentively to the saintly *Rebbe's* singing. Many would even walk to the *shul* and stand outside, mesmerized by what they heard.

When the *Rebbe's* time on this world came to an end, his *chassidim* who would *daven* with him every week felt as if their hearts had been torn. All week they mourned, but when *Shabbos* arrived, they made a noble attempt at restraining themselves. They would shed no tears of sadness on the holy day. When they reached the *Nishmas* prayer, however, the *chazzan* who led the services stopped to swallow a tear. Suddenly, the congregation heard the *Rebbe's* melody filling the *shul*. How could this be? They looked outside to see the gentile shepherds singing their *Rebbe's* song.

I will go so far as to suggest that a song of gratitude to Hashem, especially one authored by someone as saintly as Rav Elazar Azkari and sung by the holy *Bnei Yissaschar*, has enormous spiritual power. It elevates a person's soul and transports him to a different realm.