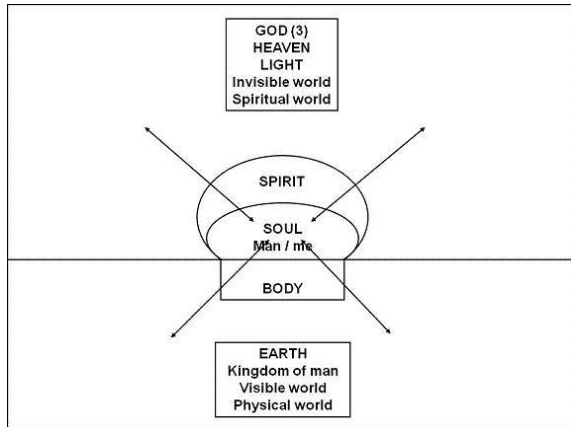


In the study 'God created mankind'¹ we explained that a human being is a soul. In this study the translation of the notion of 'soul' is discussed on the basis of a number of Bible verses from the O.T. The same thing is done on the basis of the N.T. in a separate study².



In the study 'God created mankind' we explained that Adam was created and that people are born as spirit, soul and body.

We also explained that the soul represents who a human being is as a personality, and that the body is given so that the soul, I, am able to express myself in the visible world, and that the spirit is given so that the soul, I, am able to express myself in the spiritual, invisible world.

The Hebrew word for soul is: '**nephesh**'. This word appears in 713 Bible verses and is translated in different ways.

Translation as 'soul'

The word '**nephesh**' is translated as '**soul**' approximately 1 time in 10.

Job remarks:

- *Another dies in bitterness of **soul**, never having enjoyed anything good. (Job 21:25)*

Bitterness is an emotion that affects people deep in their heart, their soul, and that influences a person's whole being.

From Proverbs:

- *A longing fulfilled is sweet to the **soul**, ... (Proverbs 13:19)*

A fulfilled desire awakens an emotion that calms the heart, the soul.

Again from Proverbs:

- *Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the **soul** and healing to the bones. (Proverbs 16:24)*

Just as blood flows through the whole of the body, kind words touch the heart, the soul, and influence the whole of the body.

The Psalmist experiences God's goodness and says to himself:

- *Return to your rest, my **soul**, for the LORD has been good to you. (Psalm 116:7)*

1 Study: God created mankind - Adam.
2 Study: The translation of 'soul' in Greek.



When God's blessing rests upon someone's life, he will find rest. This is not only physical rest, but rest in the soul, as a result of which his whole being relaxes.

Joy:

- *I delight greatly in the LORD; my **soul** rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, (Isaiah 61:10)*

Joy is something that affects the whole person and it is something that comes from inside, from the heart, the soul.

Translation as 'life'.

The word '**nephesh**' is translated as '**life**'.

God had said:

- *And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground - everything that has **the breath of life (a soul)** in it - I give every green plant for food." (Genesis 1:30)*

... that has a **soul**: God makes a distinction between plants and animals.

Plants live too, but they have a completely different kind of life than that of the animals.

Animals live because they have a **soul**, are a soul. An animal body without a soul is a dead body, out of which life (the soul) has literally disappeared.

Lot (Abraham's nephew) said to the angel:

- *Look, here is a town near enough to run to, and it is small. Let me flee to it - it is very small, isn't it? Then my **life (soul)** will be spared. (Genesis 19:20)*

Then my **soul** will be spared, then I will remain alive (remain present) in this world.

The prophet Elijah with the dead boy:

- *Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried out to the LORD, "LORD my God, let this boy's **life (soul)** return to him!" (1 Kings 17:21)*

Elijah actually asked for the child to be allowed to return to its dead body, so that it would live again, be active again in the visible world.

Job sighs:

- *For what hope have the godless when they are cut off, when God takes away their **life (soul)**? (Job 27:8)*

If God cuts off life, if He cuts off the **soul**, by claiming it, that person then no longer has any expectation in this world, because the body, with which he is able to express himself in this world, dies at the moment the soul leaves the body.



Translation as I-me-you-he-him-your-we-us-his/her(self)-them(selves).

The word '**nephesh**' is translated by **personal pronouns**.

Jacob said:

- *Let me not enter their council, let **me (in Hebrew: my soul)** not join their assembly, they have killed men in their anger ... (Genesis 49:6)*

When Jacob wished to have no part in the council of some of his sons, this was because he felt in his **heart, his soul**, that the plans they were making were wrong. He did not go along with them because he did not wish to be identified with their way of thinking in his spirit.

From Moses' song at the Red Sea:

- *The enemy boasted, 'I will pursue, I will overtake them. I will divide the spoils; I will gorge (literally: fill) **myself (my soul)** on them. I will draw my sword and my hand will destroy them.'* (Exodus 15:9)

The text could have been written as follows: *I will pursue, I will overtake them, I will divide the spoils, I cool my **wrath** on them. I will draw my sword ...*

However, as it says that the enemy will gorge **himself**, or, better still, will fill his **soul**, the meaning is that the enemy will release the revenge and the hatred living in his heart upon his enemy - quench his thirst for blood, in other words.

David and Jonathan:

- *After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan (the son of Saul) became one in **spirit (soul)** with David, and he loved him as **himself (as his own soul)**. (1 Samuel 18:1)*

Jonathan recognised a **soul** mate in David. He was deeply touched in his heart by David's personality. He recognized himself in who David was.

King David said:

- *Have mercy on me, LORD; heal **me (my soul)**, for I have sinned against you. (Psalm 41:4)*

King David did not ask God to be merciful to him so that his body would be healed. He recognised that he had sinned. He recognised that he had cherished wrong desires in his heart. That is why he asked God to heal **him**, his heart, his **soul**, from his sinful thoughts.

From the Psalms:

- *But God will redeem **me (my soul)** from the realm of the dead; he will surely take me to himself. (Psalm 49:15)*

The psalmist expected the realm of the dead to have no power over him. This did not mean that he expected to live forever in his body in this world, but that he was convinced that God was going to take **him** up, that his **soul**, he, as a spiritual being, was going to be taken up by God, in order to live forever with Him.



Isaiah prophesied about Jesus:

- *Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I (**my soul**) delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. (Isaiah 42:1)*

When God, as the divine Trinity and as a spiritual Personality, makes a decision, it says: **I** uphold and **I** will put.

“... *in whom I delight*” is also translated in this way.

However, the Hebrew text says: “... *in whom **my soul** delights*”.

In this last statement God expresses the feelings of His heart, which He cherishes for ‘His servant’ (His Son, Jesus).

That is why He does not say: “... *in whom I...*”, but “... *in whom **my soul** delights*”.

From the law given by Moses:

- *If you enter your neighbour’s vineyard, you may eat **all** the grapes **you want**, but do not put any in your basket. (Deuteronomy 23:24)*

As this is translated, it looks as if someone may go and sit down in his neighbour’s vineyard and eat as many of his grapes as he wishes, but that he may not fill a basket to take home with him. That is not what is meant.

A literal translation is something like: ..., *you may then eat grapes, to the satisfaction **of your soul**, but you may not ...*

This means that someone passing by may pick a few of his neighbour’s grapes and satisfy (the curiosity of) **his soul**, by tasting to see whether the grapes are already ripe, for example, or in order to know what type of grapes his neighbour is growing.

Another text from the law given by Moses:

- *Nevertheless, you may slaughter your animals in any of your towns and eat as much of the meat as **you want**, ... according to the blessing the LORD your God gives you. (Deuteronomy 12:15)*

In the previous verses God says that animals one wishes to offer Him as a sacrifice may not be slaughtered just anywhere, but only at the place He will designate.

However, God does permit slaughter and eating meat: ... *according to (the **desire of**) your soul, according to the blessing ...*

Therefore, if someone desires to eat meat, the animals may be slaughtered anywhere.

Other translations.

The word ‘**nephesh**’ is translated in **other ways**.

And God said:

- *Let the water teem with living **creatures (souls)**, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky. (Genesis 1:20)*
- *Let the land produce living **creatures (souls)** according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. (Genesis 1:24)*



Adam became a 'living being' - a 'living **soul**' would be a better translation -, by the breath of life God that breathed into his body.

The animals are also designated as 'living **souls**', even though they were brought forth from the earth, by the power of God's Word.

Abraham followed God's call.

- *He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the **people (souls)** they had acquired in Harran, (Genesis 12:5)*

When Abram departed he took his wife and Lot with him, together with all the goods they had acquired, and the **souls**, the people who were in their service.

Abraham purchased a grave to be able to bury Sarah:

- *If you are **willing (If it is according to your soul)** to let me bury my dead, then listen to me and intercede with Ephron son of Zohar on my behalf ... (Genesis 23:8)*

When Sarah, Abraham's wife, died, he asked the Hittites to intercede with Ephron to sell him a piece of ground so that he could bury Sarah.

Abraham was not concerned with the Hittites giving him a good deal; he wanted them to make a decision in accordance with their **heart, their soul**. Abraham considered it important for them to agree in their heart with the idea that he, as a foreigner, would bury Sarah in their ground.

Sichem was in love with Jacob's daughter.

- *But Hamor said to them, "My son Shechem has his **heart (soul)** set on your daughter. Please give her to him as his wife. (Genesis 34:8)*

Sichem, Hamor's son, was in love with Jacob's daughter - not slightly, but with all his **soul**, his whole being, his whole personality, all his desires and emotions were involved.

Jacob moved to Egypt:

- *All **those (all souls)** who went to Egypt with Jacob - those who were his direct descendants, not counting his sons' wives - (the total number of **souls**) numbered sixty-six persons. (Genesis 46:26)*

It says literally: *All the **souls** who went with Jacob to Egypt ..., all **souls** sixty-six.*

David flees from king Saul:

- *Then David fled from Naioth at Ramah and went to Jonathan and asked, "What have I done? What is my crime? How have I wronged your father, that he is trying **to kill me** (in Hebrew: to take my **soul**)?" (1 Samuel 20:1)*

King Saul had been persecuting David for years, because he realised that David would succeed him as king.

If king Saul had taken pleasure in taking life, murdering someone, he could have taken any person in his neighbourhood.



He was determined to remove David as a personality (as a **soul**) from this world however, and to do so he had to kill David's body, so that he would no longer be able to express himself as a personality in this world.

From the Psalms:

- ... *The LORD protects and preserves the - they are counted among the blessed in the land - he does not give them over to the **desire (soul)** of their foes. (Psalm 41:2)*

The psalmist could have written: ... You do not give him over to his enemies.

That would mean that God would prevent the enemy from taking him prisoner.

However, as the text says 'to the desire', to the **soul** of his enemies, it means rather that God will prevent those who have regard for the weak from being given over to the hatred and the revenge living in their enemies' heart.

From Proverbs:

- *The **(desire, soul)** of the wicked crave evil; their neighbours get no mercy from them. (Proverbs 21:10)*

The 'desire', the '**soul**' refers here to the desires in the heart, which encourage doing evil.

From the law on the sacrifice for sin:

- *Say to the Israelites: 'When **anyone (a soul)** sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD's commands ... (Leviticus 4:2)*

In the Old Testament 'anyone' is usually a translation of 'iysh', the Hebrew word for 'man'.

As the Hebrew here does not have 'iysh', 'a man', but 'nephesh', '**a soul**', who sins unintentionally, that is because that person acted without being conscious of the fact that the inclinations of his **heart** went against God's commandments.

The prohibition against eating blood:

- ***Anyone (any soul)** who eats blood (**that soul**) must be cut off from their people. (Leviticus 7:27)*

God institutes a ban on eating blood.

He could have said: *Anyone (any man) who eats any blood, that human being (that man) must be cut off from his people.*

As God says that any **soul** who eats blood must be cut off, He is not only concerned with the act of eating blood, but He couples such eating to desire emanating from the **heart**. What is important to God is that people act according to the conviction of their heart, in this case the conviction that they do not wish to eat blood, because this is what God requires of them.