**Soul and breath: A prayer**

*In the absence of all the communal gathering that provides comfort and focus, I have written a prayer to help us cope*

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Though it is necessary, it is really painful to have religious institutions, gatherings, and rituals taken away, just when so many of us are feeling vulnerable and are seeking something more transcendent than COVID-19. This tefillah is my attempt to reach for that transcendence. Putting pen to paper, inspired by Tanakh (Bible) and Hazal (our sages) has helped me connect to what I am praying for during these uncertain days. I hope it can do the same for others. May all of our individual and collective prayers be answered.

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| **“Soul and Breath”** | **“נשמה ורוח”** |
| Our God, the souls and breaths that you have placed within is are pure You created them, You fashioned them, You breathed them into us and You preserve them within us, And for each and every breath we must praise You, As is written, “Every *soul* (*neshamah*) shall praise God,” “Every *breath* (*neshimah*) shall praise God. | א-לוהינו, נשמות ונשימות שנתת בנו טהורות הן אתה בראתן אתה יצרתן אתה נפחתן בנו ואתה משמרן בקרבינו, ועל כל נשימה ונשימה חייבים אנחנו לקלס לך כדכתיב ,כל הנשמה תהלל י-ה,[[1]](https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/soul-and-breath/" \l "_ftn1) כל הנשימה תהלל י-ה[[2]](https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/soul-and-breath/" \l "_ftn2). |
| Lord of souls and breaths, We seek out Your face, and Your spirit to hover over the deep that has opened up To breathe into us once again the breath of life For we are in great travail – all who bear the breath of life And we do not know what to do. | אדון הנשמות והנשימות, מבקשים אנו את פניך ואת רוּחַך לרחף על פני התהום שנפתח להפיח בנו עוד נשמת חיים כי בצרה גדולה אנחנו כֹּל אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁמַת רוּחַ חַיִּים בְּאַפָּיו ובאפיה ואנחנו לא נדע מה נעשה |
| Instill within all medical teams and world leaders a spirit of wisdom To understand, to discern to learn, to teach and to do A spirit of counsel and might to renew their strength. And instill within all of us a spirit of knowledge to protect ourselves And the fear of God to care for our fellow – the weary, the exhausted and infirm And to honor our elders. | תן בכל צוותי הרפואה ומנהיגי תבל רוּחַ חָכְמָה להבין ולהשכיל ללמוד וללמד ולעשות ורוּחַ עֵצָה וּגְבוּרָה להחליף את כוחם ותן בנו רוּחַ דַּעַת לשמור על נפשותינווְיִרְאַת ה’[[3]](https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/soul-and-breath/" \l "_ftn3) לטפל בזולת, בעיפים וביגעים ובנחשלים, ולהדר פני זקנינו. |
| Bless us with a spirit of forbearance for we have not enough strength against this great multitude that comes against us. And fulfill through us that which is written: “Thus said God the Lord, Who created the heavens and stretched them forth, Who spread forth the other and that which comes out of it, Who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk therein. I, the Lord have called you in righteousness and have taken hold of your hand and protected you…” | ברך אותנו עם ארך רוח כי אין בנו כח לפני ההמון הרב הזה הבא עלינו[[4]](https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/soul-and-breath/" \l "_ftn4) וקיים בנו מה שכתוב: ” כֹּה-אָמַר הָאֵ-ל ה’ בֹּורֵ֤א הַשָּׁמַיִם וְנֹוטֵיהֶם רֹקַע הָאָרֶץ וְצֶאֱצָאֶיהָ נֹתֵן נְשָׁמָה לָעָם עָלֶיהָ וְרוּחַ לַהֹלְכִים בָּהּ  אֲנִי ה’ קְרָאתִיךָ בְצֶדֶק, וְאַחְזֵק בְּיָדֶךָ וְאֶצָּרְךָ …”[[5]](https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/soul-and-breath/" \l "_ftn5) |

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[[1]](https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/soul-and-breath/" \l "_ftnref1) Tehillim (Psalms) 150:6  
[[2]](https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/soul-and-breath/" \l "_ftnref2) Bereshit (Genesis) Rabbah 14:9  
[[3]](https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/soul-and-breath/" \l "_ftnref3) Isaiah 11:2  
[[4]](https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/soul-and-breath/" \l "_ftnref4) II Chronicles 20:12  
[[5]](https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/soul-and-breath/" \l "_ftnref5) Isaiah 42:5-6

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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