Any discussion regarding the composition of an individual’s body and the concept of having a soul must begin with examining a person’s substance. Scriptures define man, called adam in Hebrew, as a creature whose body was created from the material elements of the ground. These elements were arranged to form a body consisting of flesh, bone, and blood. At the same time, because mankind’s blood cells breathe air in order to give him life, the Hebrew language refers to man as a nephesh (a life that breathes).

The word nephesh is translated into the Greek of the LXX and NT as ψυχή (psuche), rendered into English as “soul.” Although only a narrow understanding of ψυχή (psuche) was originally intended by the translators, both the Greek term and the word “soul” can be misleading. They often take on the general Greek connotation of being an entity that is “alive” and “immortal,” capable of living separately from the fleshly body, i.e., a spirit life that has a conscious existence after the body’s death. As we shall demonstrate in Scriptures, the nephesh is the creature or person and is unable to be alive without a physical body.

The Composition of Adam

After Yahweh created the first man and woman, he called them both הָאָדָם (Adam). Adam not only became the personal name of the first man and the married name of his wife Eve, but it was also used as the generic term for all humankind. Accordingly, the expression הָאָדָם (ha-adam; the man) is found numerous times in the Hebrew text. A man (adam) is composed of אפַר (‘aphar), i.e., the material elements of the earth, which was taken from the הָאָדָם (adamah; the ground, red soil). The Hebrew term הָאָדָם (adamah) derives from the word הָאָדָם (adam), and means “to show blood (in the face), i.e., flush or turn rosy,” “ruddy,” “red, reddish brown.”

All the descendants of Adam, like their original earthly father, are also composed of the same אפַר (‘aphar) material. To demonstrate, Job defines humans as those “dwelling in houses of אפַר (khamar; clay), whose foundation is in הָאָדָם (aphar; material elements).” Meanwhile, both the first man and first woman were called “adam.” This is because the male was created first from the הָאָדָם (adamah; ground, red soil), while the woman was, in turn, produced out of the male. We are all called “adam” because that is what we are, everyone being a descendant of a man composed of הָאָדָם (adamah). In Genesis, we read:

And he, Yahweh eloahim, יְהוָה יְ’hוָה יְ (yat-sar; molded) ha-adam, ʼaphar from the adamah.”

In another passage, Yahweh tells Adam:
By the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the
adamah; for out of it you have been
taken; for ‘aphar you are, and to
‘aphar you will return.\(^12\)

Notice that Adam is ‘aphar. Nowhere in
Scriptures is a man (\(\text{adam}\)) said to be an immor-
tal soul or a “spirit being” inhabiting a physical
body. On the other hand, \(\text{adam}\) is scripturally de-

defined as a nephesh (breather) being who poss-

sesses ruach (unseen animating force), which, as

we shall see, is quite a different characterization.

The above scriptures prove that \(\text{adam}\) is a
material thing, i.e., ‘aphar. Abraham, as another
example, testifies to Yahweh, “I am אָרוּפ ה (‘aphar) and רְפָח (ephar; worthless material).”\(^13\)
The Hebrew term רְפָח (ephar) refers to “any-
thing worthless,” or something cast away, to “be-
strew,” like “ashes.”\(^14\) The numerous offspring
of Jacob are also referred to as “the ‘aphar of
Jacob,”\(^15\) i.e., they descend from the material
substance of Jacob; and in Job, we read that
upon death, “\(\text{adam}\) will return to ‘aphar.”\(^16\) The
book of Psalms informs us, “For he (Yahweh)
knows our form; remembering that we are
‘aphar.”\(^17\) In another verse from this same text,
David reminds Yahweh that when he takes away
the life force of men, “they expire and
they return to their ‘aphar.”\(^18\)

The Body of Adam

Yahweh אָרוּפ (bara; created) Adam by molding
the ‘aphar from the adamah into a גְּוֵי (gewiyah; body) of רְפָח (basar; flesh). More precisely,
these three terms can be defined as follows:

- אָרוּפ (bara): “to create; (qualified) to cut
down (a wood), select,” “formed, made . . . pro-
duced.”\(^19\)

The essential idea of גְּוֵי (gewiyah) is to form,
produce, and create something out of some-
thing else that already exists. For example, one
can bara a tree and then produce a chair—thus
the use of bara meaning, “to cut down.” The
concept of bara is that an already-existing ob-
ject or material is being altered, destroyed, or
reshaped to produce a new object. In the case of
man, ‘aphar from the adamah was molded to
create the human body.

- גְּוֵי (gewiyah): “a body, whether alive or
dead:—(dead) body, carcass, corpse,” “dead
body, carcase of men or animals.”\(^21\)

- רְפָח (basar): “to be fresh, i.e. full (rosy, fig.
cheerful),” “flesh (from its freshness); by extens.
body, person.”\(^20\)

- The Greek translation of this Hebrew
word גְּוֵי (gewiyah) is σῶμα (soma), meaning:
“the body (as a sound whole),” “the dead body,
carcase . . . generally, a body, i.e. any mate-
rial substance . . . the whole body or mass of a
thing.”\(^22\)

The גְּוֵי (gewiyah) or σῶμα (soma) of some-
thing is merely the mass and shape in which
that “thing” exists. For example, in 1 Corinthi-
ans 15:35-42, Saul speaks of different kinds of
bodies. Two great classifications used are
“heavenly bodies and earthly bodies.” Listed
among the heavenly types are the sun, the
moon, and the stars. Among earthly types,
there are men, birds, animals, fish, and so forth.
Plants also have bodies. A man’s body is de-

defined as רְפָח (basar; flesh) and bone.\(^23\) Yet there
are different kinds of fleshly bodies. Saul
writes, “Not every flesh is the same flesh, but
one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts,
and another of fishes, and another of birds.”\(^24\)

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\(^12\) Gen., 3:19.
\(^13\) Gen., 18:27.
to dust . . . ashes.”
\(^15\) Num., 23:10.
\(^16\) Job, 34:15.
\(^17\) Ps., 105:14.
\(^18\) Ps., 104:28.
\(^19\) SEC, Heb. #1254, “to create; (qualified) to cut down (a wood), select, feed (as formative processes);” HEL, p. 43, “created,
formed, made . . . cut, as with a sword or axe . . . make, form”; CHAL, p. 47, “create . . . cut down timber, clear ground, abs.
Jos 17'5, obj. woods 18.”
\(^20\) SEC, Heb. #1319, 1320; cf., HEL, p. 45; CHAL, p. 51.
\(^21\) SEC, Heb. #1472; HEL, p. 49; cf., CHAL, p. 57.
\(^22\) SEC, Gk. #4983, GEL, p. 788.
\(^23\) E.g., Gen., 2:21-24, 6:3; Exod., 30:32; Lev., 13:2; 2 Sam. 19:13; 1 Chron., 11:1; Job, 2:5; John, 3:6; and so forth.
\(^24\) 1 Cor., 15:35-42.
Therefore, Saul was demonstrating that human flesh was different from the flesh of animals, fish, or birds.

In Scriptures, when the body is dead, it is also called a נבל (nebelah), “a flabby thing, i.e., a carcass or carrion (human or bestial).”

This term is derived from the word נבל (nebel), “to wilt,” from the idea that a dead body has failed and is wilted; also by implication it refers to “a skin-bag for liquids (from collapsing when empty)” — the human body similarly being a container for water. When the person dies, his body dehydrates and becomes like a wilted bag. Another term used is נבלן (nidneh), meaning “a sheath,” or something that holds something else, as a sheath holds a sword. Daniel, for example, speaks of his body as a sheath that holds his נפש (ruach; unseen animating force).

**The Nephesh**

In Scriptures, the type of body that a man has is called a נפש (nephesh).

- נפש (nephesh), collective plural נפשים (nepheshim), is a primary root meaning “to breathe . . . a breathing creature, i.e. animal or (abstr.) vitality,” “an animal (that which breathes) . . . a person.”

- The Greek translation of the Hebrew word נפש (nephesh) which means, “breath” and “the life . . . mind, understanding.” Only by pagan Greek usage is the idea of “spirit” implied. Since the Greek translation of the New Testament is merely an attempt to express the Hebrew thought in Scriptures, we must use the Hebrew meanings and Scriptures to define the word.

In various English translations of the Hebrew and Greek terms, the words nephesh and psuche are rendered as soul, breath, life, creature, and mind. At the same time, נפש (nephesh)—a thing that breathes—must not be confused with the Hebrew word נשמת (neshamah), meaning a “breeze” and to “blow.” In turn, the term nephesh must also be clearly distinguished from the word נשמת (neshamah), or נשמה (neshamah), meaning, “a puff of air, i.e., wind, angry or vital breath, divine inspiration, intellect,” a “blast” of air. The neshamah deals with the physical act of breathing utilizing the lungs and nostrils. Nephesh must likewise be distinguished from the word נפש (nafach), meaning “to puff . . . inflate, blow hard.”

The difference between nephesh, neshamah, and naphach is best expressed in Genesis, 2:7, “And Yahweh Elohim molded ha-adam from the ‘aphar of the adamah, and naphach (blew hard) into his nostrils the neshamah (vital breath) of life and ha-adam became a living nephesh.” Notice that ha-adam (the Adam, the man) “became a living nephesh.” It does not say Adam has a nephesh. Instead, he is a nephesh. Equally, although fish, birds, and all other animals have a different type of flesh, they too are considered this type of creature. The following passages from Genesis demonstrate the point:

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26 SEC, Heb. #5034; cf., CHAL, p. 225, “wither & fall . . . wither, fall to ruin, wear out”; HEL, p. 157, “became shrivelled and fell (as flowers, &c) . . . wasted away . . . crumbled to dust.”

27 SEC, Heb. #5035.

28 HEL, p. 160; SEC, Heb. #5085; CHAL, p. 413.

29 Dan, 7:15.

30 SEC, Heb. #5314, 5315.

31 HEL, pp. 170f.

32 SEC, Gk. #5590; GEL, p. 903.

33 SEC, Heb. #5398–5399.

34 SEC, Heb. #5397; HEL, p. 175.

35 SEC, Heb. #5301; CHAL, p. 241; HEL, p. 169, “blew, blew upon . . . blew a fire . . . with expired.”
And Elohim said, Let swarm the waters with swarms of living NEPHESH, and let fowl fly above the land in the open expanse of the heavens. And Elohim created the great sea-animals and EVERY LIVING NEPHESH that creeps, which swarm the waters, after its kind, and every winged fowl after its kind.36

And Elohim said: Let the land bring forth the living NEPHESH after its kind, cattle, and creeper, and living thing of the land after its kind.37

And Yahweh Elohim formed out of the adamah every living thing of the field, and every fowl of the heavens, and brought them to ha-adam to see what he would call them; and all which ha-adam would call them, EVERY LIVING NEPHESH, that was its name. And ha-adam called names to ALL THE CATTLE, and to THE FOWL of the heavens, and to ALL LIVING THINGS of the field.38

The key to understanding the term nephesh is that it means “to breathe,” specifically in the blood. All creatures with blood breathe oxygen. The nephesh—which is both in the blood and is the blood—permeates the human body, and as we shall see below, it has two qualities, being both divine and material.

It is the exchange of oxygen in the blood (the act of breathing) that separates the flesh species, whether fish, fowl, animal, or man, from other bodies (stars, moons, planets, the earth, rocks, vegetation, etc.). Therefore, a nephesh is one type of a gewiyah (body). It is a fleshly body of sinews, skin, and bones containing blood and breathing oxygen. Since the exchange of oxygen in the bloodstream is throughout the body, being the life principle itself, nephesh is frequently translated as “life,”40 because a thing that is breathing is “alive.” Furthermore, after that thing dies, it is considered to have been “alive.” That scholars understand a nephesh as an oxygen-breathing, fleshly creature is demonstrated by the fact that the Hebrew word nephesh is often translated as “creature.”41

Nevertheless, the human nephesh is markedly different from the animal forms.

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36 Gen., 1:20f.
37 Gen., 1:24.
38 Gen., 2:19f.
39 Also see Jer., 2:34.
40 I.e., at Gen., 19:17, 19, 32:30; Exod., 21:23, 30, and so forth.
41 I.e., at Gen., 1:21, 24, 2:19, 9:10, 12, 15, 16; Lev., 11:46; etc.
Adam was created as a *nephesh* being, brought to life the moment that Yahweh blew the *neshamah* (vital breath) into his body. Yet this was not merely a breath of air. Yahushua defines this type of *neshamah* when, after his resurrection, he breathed upon his disciples and said, “Receive the sacred *ruach*.”

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The *neshamah* (vital breath) that Yahweh blew into Adam entered through his lungs and into his bloodstream. It then permeated every cell in Adam’s body, making him a living, breathing *nephesh*. As it activated the brain, Adam was given consciousness. The late 2nd century C.E. Christian writer Irenaeus reminds his readers, “at the beginning of our formation in Adam, the breath of life which proceeded from the deity, having been united to what had been fashioned, animated the man, and manifested him as a being endowed with reason.”

This act of Yahweh blowing a *neshamah* (vital breath = sacred *ruach*) into Adam is not to be confused with the vital breath that exists in the nostrils of animals.

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That a *nephesh* in the bodily form of a man is the human creature itself (a fleshly being which contains blood and breathes oxygen), and by extension, his mind is also substantiated by the following things the *nephesh* can do:

- A *nephesh* can eat flesh, fat, blood, or other materials.\(^{54}\)
- A *nephesh* can become hungry or thirsty.\(^{55}\)
- It can be refreshed by cold water.\(^{57}\)
- It can be placed in iron chains.\(^{58}\)
- A *nephesh* can kidnap a man.\(^{59}\)
- A *nephesh* can work.\(^{60}\)
- A *nephesh* can grieve, be glad, faint, love, and hate.\(^{61}\)
- A *nephesh* can either be alive,\(^{62}\) or dead,\(^{63}\) the latter case proving that a "*nephesh*" is not an immortal "soul" nor does it continue to live while dead.

The above-listed attributes of a human *nephesh* reveal that the *nephesh* is the person. This fact is confirmed in those places where the *nephesh* specifically designates an individual or person\(^{64}\) or is employed with a pronominal suffix to denote self.\(^{65}\) A *nephesh*, accordingly, is a type of life-form—one that is flesh, contains blood, and breathes oxygen. Therefore, it is a breather, an animal, a fish, a bird, or a man. Furthermore, the exchange of oxygen in the bloodstream is the type of body that distinguishes the *nephesh* creature from other forms of existence.

However, the flesh of man, from which his physical *nephesh* is formed, is not the same as the flesh and *nephesh* of animals. Saul, as we have said earlier, reminds us, "Not every flesh is the same flesh, but one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of fishes, and another of birds."\(^{66}\) Man’s physical *nephesh* was combined with the sacred *ruach* that had been given to Adam by Yahweh, therefore creating the living human *nephesh*. As a result, man’s mind, which is part of his *nephesh*, emanates from a different source of flesh, one which is superior to animals, birds, or fish.

The human *nephesh* was brought to life by Yahweh when he directly \(\text{\text{\text{naphach}}} (\text{phakh}; \text{blew})\)\(^{67}\) sacred *ruach* as the *neshamah* (vital breath) of life into the nostrils of the *gewiyah* (body) of Adam, thereby blending part of Yahweh, the divine, within the material creation of Adam (much as a man blends part of himself with the egg of a woman when she conceives a child). As a child is, in a sense, a combination of both his mother and his father, Adam is a combination of both a physical creation from the *'aphar* (dust) of the ground and the sacred *ruach*. Furthermore, although the "self" of the human *nephesh*, which will be raised back to life at the resurrection, is derived from the divine, his personality is created by

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\(^{54}\) Lev., 7:18f; 17:10f; Deut., 23:24.

\(^{55}\) Deut., 12:15f; Ps., 107:9; Prov., 19:15, 27:7; Isa., 29:8, 32:6; Mic., 7:1.

\(^{56}\) Ps., 35:13.

\(^{57}\) Prov., 25:25.

\(^{58}\) Ps., 105:18.

\(^{59}\) Deut., 24:6f.

\(^{60}\) Lev., 23:30.

\(^{61}\) Job, 30:25; Ps., 86:4, 107:26; Song, 1:7; Isaiah, 1:14.

\(^{62}\) Gen., 1:21, 2:7, 20, 9:10, 12, 15; and so forth.

\(^{63}\) Lev., 19:28; Num., 6:6; Hag., 2:13; and so forth.

\(^{64}\) E.g., Lev., 7:21, 17:12; Ezek. 18:4.

\(^{65}\) E.g., Judg. 16:16; Ps., 120:6; Ezek., 4:14.

\(^{66}\) 1 Cor., 15:39.

\(^{67}\) A form of नः (naphach), see SEC, Heb. #5301; HEL, p. 169; CHAL, p. 241.

\(^{68}\) Gen., 2:7.
means of the physical and cannot remain alive without a physical breathing body.

As a result, it is improper to translate the Hebrew word nephesh (also written “nefesh”) as “soul,” as is so often done, the latter being an English word for “a disembodied spirit of a deceased person.”

Dr. H. M. Orlinsky of the Hebrew Union College writes that the word “soul” had been eliminated from his new translation of the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament) because “the Hebrew word in question here is ‘Nefesh.’” He then adds:

Other translators have interpreted it to mean ‘soul,’ which is completely inaccurate. The Bible does not say we have a soul. ‘Nefesh’ is the person himself, his need for food, the very blood in his veins, his being.

**Genesis 35:18**

Some who know little about the Hebrew language will try to confuse the issue by pointing to Genesis 35:18, which tells the story of the death of Rachel as she was giving birth to her son Benjamin. Unfortunately, this verse is often falsely translated into English as, “and it happened as her soul was going out, for she died, that she called his name Benoni; but his father called him Benjamin.” Translating the phrase “בְּֽהֵֽעֵֽפֶשׁ (be-tsath nephesh)” to mean “her soul was going out,” they will then argue that her “soul” went out of her body at her death, implying that the soul is a disembodied spirit being.

Many scholars have recognized that this earlier translation of this verse is not in keeping with the Hebrew thought. To correct this error, the New International Version and the New Jerusalem Bible both render “בְּֽהֵֽעֵֽפֶשׁ (be-tsath nephesh)” to mean “she breathed her last”; A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon has “as her (breath =) life left her”! Moffatt has, “As her life went from her”; the Lindsell Study Bible gives, “last breath.” Nevertheless, there is another interesting way that this verse can be understood. To begin with, the Hebrew term translated as “was going out” is בֵּֽהֵֽעֵֽפֶשׁ (be-tsath).

- **ב** (be) means, “of place: in, among, with, near, before; never motion either to or in a place . . . of time: in, within . . . of the cause: for, because . . . of the rule: according to.”

  - **טָּשׁ (tsath), feminine נָֽפֶשׁ (nepesh),** is a form of יָֽצָה (yatsa), meaning, “to go (causat. bring) out.” By extension מָֽפֶשׂ can also be an “issue, i.e. (human) excrement—that (which) cometh from (out),” “to issue; soiled (as if excrementitious)—filthy,” “excrement; gen. dirt; fig. pollution:—dung, filth (-iness).” Yet tsath only takes on the connotation of “excrement” or “issue” because human excrement or issue “goes out.”

  The term מָֽפֶשׂ (be-tsath) refers to something or someone going out from something. A verse in 1 Kings, 6:1, for example, speaks of the sons of Israel מָֽפֶשׂ (tsath = going out from) the land of Egypt.” The verse at question in Genesis, 35:18, therefore, literally states (reading along with the Hebrew from right to left):

  וַיְהָלָם הַנְפֶשׁ מקִנְּפָר וַיִּקְּרֵא הָנַפֶשׁ בֵּן-אֵוני (And it happened with the going out from her nephesh and she called she died Ben-auni his name and she called she died)

  As a result, we can read this verse to say:

  And it happened with the going out from her nephesh, for that reason she died, and she called his name Ben-auni (son of my sorrow).

  The passage merely means that as the infant was “going out from” Rachel, i.e., out of her nephesh, “for that reason” two things happened: (1) “she died,” (2) “AND she called his name ben-auni (son of my sorrow).”
It was not Rachel’s *nephesh* that was going out, but the male child within her that was going out. Ancient writers and translations verify the understanding that Rachel died due to giving birth to this son. The LXX of Genesis, 35:18, for example, states:

> But it came as her ψυχήν (psuchê = nephesh) ἀφέναι (aphienai; was sending forth), for she was dying, she called his name the son of my pain.


Regardless of which understanding of Genesis, 35:18 one favors, the plain fact is, as W. J. Cameron, a professor of New Testament Language, points out, the deceased person’s body is referred to as a ἁμαρτολόγημα (nephesh muth; dead nephesh). Therefore, a human nephesh does not leave the body. Instead, even after death, it clings to and includes the body. In the case of mankind, his present corruptible nephesh is a combination of physical elements and sacred ruach. After death, the physical part of the nephesh, along with the physical body, is destroyed (dissipating by the process of rotting, by being burned up, eaten by wild animals, or some other such method). Meanwhile, the part of the human nephesh, which is divine ruach, as we will amply demonstrate later in our study, remains in the state of sheol until it is resurrected.

**Life Goes On**

Eve was created from a portion of the flesh and bone taken from the side of Adam. Eve at the time of her creation was already a living nephesh containing in her flesh the vital breath (sacred ruach) from Yahweh. Yahweh is not reported to have blown a vital breath into Eve, nor any other creature for that matter. This fact is why Adam is the only created being from the *‘aphar* (dust) of the ground said to be the son of Yahweh. For unlike all other life forms produced upon the earth, a part of Yahweh was placed directly within his physical form, combining a portion of the sacred ruach with the flesh and air-breathing function to create a living nephesh.

Eve became a living creature formed from living tissue already in existence (living nephesh from living nephesh, the scientific law of biogenesis).

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77Jos., Antiq. (Josephus, Jewish Antiquities), 1:21:3.
78Jub. (The Book of Jubilees), 32:33.
82See our forthcoming articles that discuss Sheol, Tartaros, and Heaven.
83Gen., 2:21–23.
85Cf., Heb., 7:4–10; Deut., 5:1–4, 29:14f; Rom., 5:12.
A woman’s egg and the man’s sperm both breathe oxygen (i.e., each cell takes in oxygen and releases carbon dioxide). In both cases, the egg and the sperm take in a supply of oxygen and nutrients from their respective parent to maintain themselves until they unite and begin using the mother’s blood for further nourishment. These cells are alive. They descend from Adam and possess his vital breath.

As cells divide and create newer cells, the fleshly body of Adam, which is infused with ruach, continues to grow and create the next generation, after generation. Subsequently, the child created in its mother’s womb, shortly after the sperm and the egg unite, breathes oxygen and takes in nutrients from its mother’s blood. In a short time, the child develops its independent air and blood circulation system, innate within its genetic makeup, until it is capable of independent life.

When born, a child can breathe on its own, taking its first breath to live independently from its mother. (In this same way, all other life forms on earth are programmed to automatically breathe air when born.)

Nevertheless, the human child, like Eve, already has the original “neshamah (vital breath) of life” innate within him and only requires oxygen to continue the process of being a living nephesh.

What Yahweh did with Adam was a special event because of who Adam was and what he is to become. His source of life came directly from his parent, Yahweh, just as a child’s source of life derives directly from his parents. As flesh grows and gives birth to flesh, the vital breath, being merged with the flesh, grows and continues within the offspring. Finally, at death, we give up the vital breath, and the nephesh dies—the sacred ruach portion of the nephesh entering into an unconscious “death sleep.”

This life chain continues from generation to generation. Flesh begets flesh, and a living nephesh begets a living nephesh (life begets life). In turn, since the creation of Adam, the nephesh type, which is called adam (mankind), can only be dead after it has been alive, for we were all alive in and are all derived from the original human creation, Adam.

**Conclusion**

The evidence demonstrates that humans are made of ‘aphar or material elements of the ground. This material was molded into Adam’s original flesh-and-blood nephesh gewiyah. It was imbued with sacred ruach, the very substance of father Yahweh, forming a living nephesh and a child of eloahim. The nephesh of this creature is the person or self. Adam’s nephesh body, infused with sacred ruach, was used to create Eve, and, in turn, through their offspring, they have been reproduced from generation to generation.

As we proceed with our Article Series, we will have much more to say concerning the thinking part of the nephesh and what happens to the mind after its death. But, for now, it is only important to conclude that you are a nephesh.

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86 The state of the nephesh after death is discussed in our forthcoming Articles: The Nephesh, Ruach, Ruach of the Mind, Sacred Ruach, and The Anointing Ruach.