

As I resume this column after a leave of absence for surgery, I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank the Almighty for restoring my capacity to breath through my nose. The verse in Psalms says, "Every Soul (neshama) should praise the Almighty." The Talmud notes that the word "neshama" shares root letters with the word "neshima" which means breath. This, they teach, alludes to the fact that one should thank God for every breath he or she takes.

Breathing is truly an amazing art, one that we often take for granted, along with all other normal bodily functions. To be constantly in touch with the myriad miraculous occurrences that take place constantly in our bodies would be to live in a constant state of ecstasy. Unfortunately, we get used to even the most amazing occurrences and they lose their effect upon us. Many times we don't appreciate the blessings of our lives until they are withheld from us. It then becomes easier to praise God for each breath.

The subject of breathing is directly related to Rosh Hashanah. The Talmud states that the shofar must be blown with "neshima," the pure, unadulterated breath of the individual. Here we find the convergence of our previous remarks. The neshima (breath) is understood by the neshama (soul). Those hearing the shofar blast are truly hearing the voice of the soul. The otherworldly voice connection with their soul awakens within them a striving for a higher and deeper connection to the Creator who originally "breathed" the neshama into the nostrils of the first man.