

What is the Meaning of Nephesh

Introduction:

1) What does it SAY?

- a) The Hebrew word *nephesh* [Strong's # 5315] is used 757x in the OT.

2) What does it MEAN?

- There appear to be at least 11 different ways this word can be interpreted.

a) *The inner self* (357/757)

i) Law

- (1) Gen. 23:8; 27:4, 19, 25, 31; 34:3, 8; 35:18; 42:21; 49:6
- (2) Exod. 4:19; 15:9; 23:9
- (3) Lev. 16:29, 31; 17:11; 20:25; 23:27; 26:11, 15, 16, 30, 43
- (4) Num. 21:4, 5, 23:10; 29:7; 30:2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
- (5) Deut. 4:15; 29; 6:5; 10:12; 11:13, 18; 12:15, 20, 21; 13:3, 6; 14:26; 18:6; 21:14; 23:24; 26:16; 28:65; 30:2, 6, 10

ii) Prophets

(1) Former Prophets

- (a) Josh. 22:5; 23:11, 14
- (b) Judg. 5:21; 10:16; 16:16; 18:25
- (c) First Sam. 1:10, 15, 26; 2:16, 33, 35; 17:55; 18:1 (3x), 3; 20:3, 4, 17; 22:2; 23:20; 25:26; 30:6
- (d) Second Sam. 3:21; 5:8; 11:11; 14:19; 17:8
- (e) First Kings 1:29; 2:4; 8:48; 11:37; 19:4
- (f) Second Kings 2:2, 4, 6; 4:27, 30; 9:15; 12:4; 23:3, 25

(2) Latter Prophets

- (a) Isa. 1:14; 10:18; 15:4; 19:10; 26:8, 8; 29:8; 38:15; 42:1; 46:2; 51:23; 53:11; 55:2, 3; 58:3, 5, 10; 61:10; 66:3
- (b) Jer. 3:11; 4:19; 5:9, 29; 6:8, 16; 9:9; 12:7; 13:17; 14:19; 15:1, 9; 17:21; 18:20; 20:13; 22:27; 26:19; 31:12, 14, 25; 32:41; 34:16; 37:9; 42:20; 44:7; 40:19; 51:14
- (c) Ezek. 4:14; 16:5; 18:3; 23:17, 18, 22, 28; 24:21, 25; 25:6, 15; 27:31; 36:5
- (d) Hos. 4:8; 9:4
- (e) Amos 6:8
- (f) Micah 6:7; 7:1, 3
- (g) Hab. 2:4
- (h) Zech. 11:8

iii) Writings

- (1) First Chron. 22:19; 28:9
- (2) Second Chron. 6:38; 15:12; 34:31
- (3) Job 3:20; 6:7, 11; 7:11, 15; 9:21; 10:1; 11:20; 14:22; 16:4; 18:4; 19:2; 21:25; 23:13; 24:12; 27:2; 30:16, 25; 32:2; 33:18, 20, 22, 30; 36:14

- (4) Psalms
- (a) Book 1 (1-41): 3:2; 6:3; 10:3; 11:1, 5; 13:2; 16:10; 17:9, 13; 19:7; 23:3; 24:4; 25:1, 13; 26:9; 30:3; 31:7, 9; 33:20; 34:2; 35:3, 9, 12, 13, 17, 25; 41:4
 - (b) Book 2 (42-72): 42:1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 11; 43:5; 44:25; 49:18; 54:4; 55:18; 57:1, 4, 6; 62:1, 5; 63:1, 5, 8, 9, 10, 18; 71:13, 23
 - (c) Book 3 (73-89): 77:2; 84:2; 86:2, 4, 13; 88:3, 14; 89:48
 - (d) Book 4 (90-106): 94:17, 19, 21; 103:1, 2, 22; 104:1, 35; 106:15
 - (e) Book 5 (107-150): 107:5, 9, 18, 26; 109:20, 31; 116:7, 8; 119:20, 25, 28, 81, 129, 167, 175; 120:2, 6; 123:4; 124:4, 5, 7; 130:5, 6; 131:2; 138:3; 139:14; 141:8; 142:4, 7; 143:3, 6, 8, 11, 12; 146:1
- (5) Prov. 3:22; 6:16; 11:17; 13:19; 14:10; 16:17, 24; 19:18; 31:10, 23; 22:5, 23, 25; 23:7; 24:12, 14; 25:13, 25; 29:17; 31:6
- (6) Eccles. 4:8; 6:2, 3, 9; 7:28
- (7) Song of Sol. 1:7; 3:1, 2, 3, 4; 5:6; 6:12
- (8) Lam. 1:16, 19; 3:17, 20, 24, 51, 58
- b) *The life of a person* (214/757)
- i) Law
 - (1) Gen. 12:13; 19:17, 19, 20; 32:30; 37:21; 44:30
 - (2) Exod. 21:23, 30; 30:12, 15, 16; 31:14
 - (3) Lev. 11:43, 44; 24:17, 18
 - (4) Num. 16:38; 31:50; 35:30, 31
 - (5) Deut. 19:6, 21; 22:26; 24:6
 - ii) Prophets
 - (1) Former Prophets
 - (a) Josh. 2:13, 14; 9:24
 - (b) Judg. 5:18; 9:17; 12:3; 16:30; 18:25
 - (c) First Sam. 19:5, 11; 20:1; 22:23; 23:15; 24:11; 25:29; 26:21, 24; 28:21
 - (d) Second Sam. 4:8, 9; 14:7, 14; 16:11; 18:13; 19:5; 23:17
 - (e) First Kings 1:12; 2:23; 3:11; 19:2, 3, 4, 10, 14; 20:31, 32, 39, 42
 - (f) Second Kings 1:13, 14; 7:7; 10:24
 - (2) Latter Prophets
 - (a) Is. 3:9; 38:17; 43:4; 44:20; 47:14; 53:10, 12
 - (b) Jer. 4:30, 31; 11:21; 19:7, 9; 21:7, 9; 22:25; 34:20, 21; 38:2, 16, 17, 20; 39:18; 40:14, 15; 44:14, 30; 45:5; 46:26; 48:6; 49:37; 51:6, 45
 - (c) Ezek. 3:19, 21; 7:19; 13:18, 20; 14:14, 20; 17:17; 18:27; 22:25, 27; 32:10; 33:5, 6, 9
 - (d) Amos 2:14, 15
 - (e) Jonah 1:14; 2:7; 4:3
 - (f) Hab. 2:10
 - iii) Writings
 - (1) First Chron. 11:19
 - (2) Second Chron. 1:11
 - (3) Esther 4:13; 7:3, 7; 8:11; 9:16, 31

- (4) Job 2:4, 6; 13:14; 27:8; 31:30, 39
- (5) Psalms
 - (a) Book 1 (1-41): 6:4; 7:2, 5; 22:20, 29; 25:20; 31:13; 33:19; 34:22; 35:4, 7; 38:12; 40:14
 - (b) Book 2 (42-72): 49:8, 15; 54:3; 56:6, 13; 59:3; 66:16; 70:2, 71:10; 72:13, 14
 - (c) Book 3 (73-89): 74:19; 78:18, 50; 86:14
 - (d) Book 4 (90-106): 97:10
 - (e) Book 5 (107-150): 116:4; 119:109; 121:7
- (6) Prov. 1:18, 19; 2:10; 6:26, 32; 7:23; 8:36; 13:3, 4, 8; 14:25; 15:32; 18:7; 19:8, 16; 20:2; 23:14; 29:10, 24
- (7) Lam. 2:19; 5:9
- c) *The person or persons, life/lives* (115/757)
 - i) Law
 - (1) Gen. 12:5; 14:21; 17:14; 36:6; 46:15, 18, 22, 25, 26, 27
 - (2) Exod. 1:5; 12:4, 15, 16, 19; 16:16
 - (3) Lev. 2:1; 4:2, 27; 5:1, 2, 4, 15, 17; 6:2; 7:18, 20, 21, 25, 27; 17:10, 12, 15; 18:29; 19:8; 20:6; 21:11; 22:3, 6, 11; 23:29, 30, 32; 27:2
 - (4) Num. 5:6; 6:6; 9:13; 15:27, 28, 30, 31; 19:13, 18, 20, 22; 31:19, 28, 35, 40, 46; 35:11, 15, 30
 - (5) Deut. 4:9; 10:22; 19:11; 24:7, 25
 - ii) Prophets
 - (1) Former Prophets
 - (a) Josh. 10:28, 30, 32, 35, 37, 39; 11:1; 20:3, 9
 - (b) First Sam. 22:22
 - (2) Latter Prophets
 - (a) Is. 49:7
 - (b) Jer. 2:34; 31:25; 43:6; 52:29, 30
 - (c) Ezek. 13:19; 18:4, 20; 27:13
 - iii) Writings
 - (1) Prov. 10:3; 11:25, 30; 19:2, 15; 27:7, 9; 28:17, 25
 - (2) First Chron. 5:21
 - (3) Lam. 3:25
- d) *Life or state of being alive* (20/757)
 - i) Law
 - (1) Gen. 9:4, 5
 - (2) Lev. 17:11, 14
 - (3) Deut. 12:23; 24:15
 - ii) Prophets
 - (1) Former Prophets
 - (a) 2 Sam. 1:9
 - (b) 1 Kings 17:21, 22
 - (2) Latter Prophets
 - (a) Jer. 38:16

- (b) Jonah 2:5
- iii) Writings
 - (1) Job 12:10
 - (2) Eccles. 2:24
 - (3) Lam. 1:11; 2:12
- e) *Craving/throat* (16/757)
 - i) Prophets
 - (1) Is. 32:6; 56:11; 58:10, 11
 - (2) Ezek. 16:27
 - (3) Hab. 2:5
 - ii) Writings
 - (1) Psalms
 - (a) Book 1(1-41): 27:12; 41:2
 - (b) Book 4 (90-106): 105:22
 - (2) Prov. 6:30; 12:10; 13:2, 25; 16:26; 23:2
 - (3) Eccles. 6:7
- f) *Living thing* (16/757)
 - i) Law
 - (1) Gen. 1:20, 21, 24, 30; 2:7, 19; 9:10, 12, 15, 16
 - (2) Lev. 11:10, 46; 24:18
 - ii) Prophets
 - (1) Ezek. 47:9
- g) *Corpse or body* (9/757)
 - i) Law
 - (1) Lev. 22:4
 - (2) Num. 5:2; 6:11; 9:6, 7, 10; 19:11, 13
 - ii) Prophets
 - (1) Hag. 2:13
- h) *Throat* (5/757)
 - i) Law
 - (1) Num. 11:6
 - ii) Prophets
 - (1) Is. 5:14
 - (2) Jer. 4:10
 - iii) Writings
 - (1) Psalms
 - (a) Book 2(42-72): 69:1
 - (b) Book 4 (90-106): 105:18
- i) *Breath* (2/757)
 - i) Prophets
 - (1) Is. 3:20
 - ii) Writings
 - (1) Job 41:21
- j) *The dead* (2/757)

- i) Lev. 19:28; 21:1
- k) *Life or animation* (1/757)
- i) Ruth 4:15

3) How does it APPLY?

- a) Nephesh is not a simple concept to translate and interpret. Context is the key.
- b) While people and animals are both nephesh (Gen. 1:20; 2:7), people are distinct from animals for the following reasons:
 - i) Only people are the image of God (Gen. 1:16, 27).
 - (1) Reflected in dominion (Gen. 1:28).
 - (2) Reflected in higher levels of understanding and reasoning (Dan. 4:16; Ps. 73:22; 2 Pet. 2:12; Jude 1:10).
 - (3) Reflected in language, literacy, mathematics, and music.
 - (4) Reflected in the degree of creativity.
 - ii) Only people have an eternal destination (Ecc. 3:21).