Three Levels of the Soul

according to Rabbi Yehoshua Ibn Shuaib Derasha for Parshat VaYechi

Nefesh - The force within us that drives us to physically grow and seek out physical sustenance, similar to that of plants. Most active in the "Aliya" periods. Housed in the Liver and departs us when we die.

Ruach - The force within us that facilitates basic emotions and the five senses, pursues desires and seeks to avoid physical harm, similar to that of animals. Most active in the "Amida" periods. Housed in the Heart and departs us when we die.

As we physically age, our soul ages as well. It passes through different stages, each of which contains its own priorities and emphasis. In the first two stages, the physical body is developing and strengthening. In the latter two stages, the physical body is weakening. As the body weakens, the soul transitions to more spiritual pursuits.

Aging of the Soul

Stage: Yaldut (0-20) Bachrut (21-40) Yeshishut (41-60) Ziknah (61+)
Age: Susati 1:9 Yonati 2:14 Kalati 5:1 Tamati 5:2
Reference in Shir Hashirim: Source in Shir Hashirim: Pursuit of the physical Pursuit of Torah uMitzvot Cleaving to God Completion of the soul
Characteristic of this stage: Pursuit of the physical

Phases of the Soul

Time of day when most active: Morning Afternoon Night
Age when most active: (0-20) (21-40) (41+)
Part of soul most active during this phase: Nefesh Ruach Neshama