

Sfas Emes on Noach, in simple English. Studied on Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan, 5787 (October 11, 2026). Each segment has a plain translation ("What it says") and an explanation ("What it means").

Part 3: "Bring My Soul Out of Confinement"

The main idea: The body covers the soul the way the ark covered Noach. On Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh, and the festivals, the gates open above, and hearts open below. In the future, even small openings will be enough to see the face of God.

Segment 1: "Bring my soul out of confinement"

WHAT IT SAYS

The Midrash says Noach came out of the ark. The verse says, "Bring my soul out of confinement, to thank Your name." During the six days of work, the gate is closed. The body and the physical world cover the light of the soul. But there are times when the gates open in Heaven. Then the hearts of people who serve God also open below. The verse says "bring out to give thanks." So a person cannot give thanks and praise at every time.

WHAT IT MEANS

- The Midrash says Noach was closed in the ark for twelve months. The Sfas Emes says the ark is like the body. Noach was safe, but shut in. The soul is also safe, but shut in the body.
- Yechezkel 46:1 says the inner gate is closed during the six days of work. It is open on Shabbos and on Rosh Chodesh.
- When the gate opens above, it also opens below. A person's ability to give full thanks depends partly on the holiness of the time, not only on effort.

Segment 2: Open gates make praise possible

WHAT IT SAYS

The verse says, "Open for me the gates of righteousness, and I will enter them and thank God." It also says the gate is opened on Shabbos and on the new month. So on Shabbos it is good to give thanks. On Rosh Chodesh we say Hallel.

WHAT IT MEANS

- The gates open first. The thanks come after. This order is fixed.
- That is why the Shabbos psalm says, "It is good to give thanks to God." It is also why Hallel is said on Rosh Chodesh.

Segment 3: Only what has no death in it can fully praise God

WHAT IT SAYS

The verse says, "The dead do not praise God." This means anything that has death in it cannot praise God properly. Who can express all of God's power? Only on Shabbos and festivals does an extra soul come down. This soul has no death in it, and it has no end, because it comes from God above. Shabbos is "a day of souls, not of the body." It is the time when Israel bear witness to God.

WHAT IT MEANS

- The Sfas Emes takes a verse about the dead and makes it wider. Anything limited cannot match God's infinite praise.
- The body cannot try harder to reach this. The answer is a different tool: the extra soul of Shabbos. It is deathless.
- On Shabbos, a Jew bears witness that God made the world.

Segment 4: Inheritance by measure, and the extra soul as a gift

WHAT IT SAYS

In the Midrash, Avraham inherited the land by measure. Yaakov inherited "a portion without borders." On the weekdays, life comes in measured amounts. On Shabbos, the extra soul has no limit. That is why the Torah says God blessed the seventh day. Before that, it says creation was completed, and everything had its measure. On Shabbos there is no measure. The extra soul is called extra for two reasons. It is beyond a person's limits in this world, because it is like the World to Come. And it does not come from a person's deeds. It is a gift from God. This is the same gift Noach received when "he found favor in the eyes of God."

WHAT IT MEANS

- **Level.** The extra soul goes beyond the measured life of the body and the weekday. It is like the World to Come.

- **Source.** The extra soul is not a payment for work. It is a gift of grace. The Zohar says Noach is Shabbos, and Shabbos brings help from above nature.
- The first teaching said Noach stood on support he did not make alone. This is the same idea.

Segment 5: In the future, every month and every Shabbos

WHAT IT SAYS

The prophet says, "From new month to new month, and from Shabbos to Shabbos, all flesh will come to bow before Me." The Sages said that in the future we will see the face of God every month and every Shabbos. The festivals already gave us three visits a year to the Temple. Every new month should have been a Yom Tov, a holy day. The Tur says the sin of the Golden Calf is why they were not.

WHAT IT MEANS

- The gates already open on Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh. So what is new in the future? The question is: if the gates are open now, what will change?
- The Tur says the three festivals match the three Avos. The twelve months match the twelve tribes. The sin of the Golden Calf took the months away from the men and gave them to the women, who had no part in that sin.

Segment 6: Large openings, small openings, and our ability to feel them

WHAT IT SAYS

The festivals have large openings. Rosh Chodesh has small openings. If our souls were repaired, we would feel the light through these small openings. But the verse says, "Your sins have separated." So we do not feel them. Today we do not even see God's face in the Temple on the festivals. In the future, when we are repaired, the openings on the new month and Shabbos will be enough. A whole year of service earned three visits to the Temple. In the future, the service of each month and Shabbos will earn that merit.

WHAT IT MEANS

- Sin does not stop the light. It blocks our ability to feel it.
- *Example:* A radio station broadcasts all day. A radio that is out of tune hears only the strongest signal. When it is tuned, the faint stations come in too.
- The narrator's reading: if Rosh Chodesh is a Yom Tov we cannot yet feel, then it is not a minor day. It is a day with a real opening.

Segment 7: Why we say Hallel on Rosh Chodesh

WHAT IT SAYS

In the time of the Temple, the main Hallel was said on the festivals, when people went up to see God's face. Now that we do not have this, Hallel is only a remembrance. So on Rosh Chodesh too, we can say Hallel, because the gates open then too. All that holds us up now comes from the merit of the time when the Temple stood, and from the power of the future times. Holiness gives a blessing before and after. This is true of all Jewish customs. As the verse says, "If they are not prophets, they are the children of prophets."

WHAT IT MEANS

- The Gemara (Taanis 28b) says that Rav saw people in Bavel saying Hallel on Rosh Chodesh. Rav said the custom of their fathers is in their hands. So Hallel on Rosh Chodesh is a custom.
- The Sfas Emes says festival Hallel today is also only a remembrance. So the difference between festival Hallel and Rosh Chodesh Hallel becomes smaller.
- We live between the past of the Temple and the future of the Geulah (redemption). Rosh Chodesh Hallel is our way of reaching toward the Rosh Chodesh that is not yet fully revealed.

Segment 8: *Ya'aleh V'yavo*

WHAT IT SAYS

Even now, the gates open in Heaven every Rosh Chodesh. So we ask: "May our remembrance rise and come, on this day of Rosh Chodesh." We are asking to be remembered in the light and the gate that open on this Rosh Chodesh. The verse says, "God called the light 'day.'" We also ask for the remembrance of Mashiach ben David. That is part of what is yet to come.

WHAT IT MEANS

- Each Rosh Chodesh has its own light. A day is its light. When we say *B'yom Rosh HaChodesh hazeh* ("on this day of Rosh Chodesh"), we ask to be remembered inside today's opening.
- The Geulah is when this gate will be felt fully. So we draw on it now.
- *Ya'aleh V'yavo* connects three things: the open gate now, the Temple we remember, and the Geulah we draw from.

THE MAIN LESSON

The soul asks to leave its enclosure. Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh, and the festivals are the times when it can. The light comes through every opening. What changes is whether we can feel it. In the future, even the small openings will be enough.

Questions to think about:

1. Which small openings this year did you walk past without feeling the light?
2. The extra soul is a gift, not a payment. How does that change the way you prepare for Shabbos?
3. When you say *Ya'aleh V'yavo*, stop on the word *hazeh* ("this"). Ask to be counted in this month's opening.