

Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Earth is the Lord's* (Chapter One, "The Sigh," p. 16):

"There were many who did not trust words, and their deepest thoughts would find expression in a sigh. Sorrow was their second soul, and the vocabulary of their heart consisted of one sound: "Oy!" And when there was more than the heart could say, their eyes would silently bear witness."

Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, *Likkutei Moharan* 8:1:

(https://www.sefaria.org/Likkutei_Moharan.8.1.3)

See how precious is the sigh and groan (the *krekhtz*) of a Jewish person. It provides wholeness [in place] of the lack. For through the breath, which is the *ruakh*-of-life, the world was created. As is written ([Psalms 33:6](#)), "... and by the *ruakh* of His mouth, their entire hosts [were created]." The renewal of the world will also come about by means of the *ruakh*, as in ([Psalms 104:30](#)), "You will send Your *ruakh* —they will be created; You renew the face of the earth."

This [*ruakh*] is also the vital force of human life. This is because man's breath is his life-force. As is written ([Genesis 2:7](#)), "He breathed into his nostrils *nishmat* (the breath of) life," and (ibid. 7:22), "All in whose nostrils was a *nishmat* (breath of) *ruakh*-of-life." Regarding this, wise men said: To the extent breath is lacking, so is life (Maaseh Tuviah, Bayit Chadash 2; cf. Zohar II, 24b).

We find then that the quintessential life-force of everything is its *ruakh*. Whenever a lack exists, it is essentially in the life-force, which corresponds to the *ruakh*-of-life of that thing. This is because it is the *ruakh* which gives that thing its existence.

And sighing is the extension of the breath. It corresponds to *erekh apayim* (patience)—i.e., extended *ruakh*. Therefore, when a person sighs over the lack and extends his *ruakh*, he draws *ruakh*-of-life to that which he is lacking. For the lack is in essence a departure of the *ruakh*-of-life. Therefore, through the sigh, the lack is made whole.