



Published on [www.bilvavi.net](http://www.bilvavi.net)

[Home](#) > Nefesh haChayim Gate 1 - 006 Man Is From Above

---

## Nefesh haChayim Gate 1 - 006 Man Is From Above

### נפש החיים 006 שער א פרק ה

**1]** Based on what we have just learned in the last chapter [*Nefesh HaChaim*, Shaar 1 Perek 5, which is about the concept of *gadlus h'adam*], we can see that most of the difficulties that people go through are really because they have a poor sense of self-worth. They view themselves as living solely on this earth, and that they have nothing to do with the upper realms. People tend to think that they are bodies, and not souls.

This is the meaning of the statement in Chazal, "I have seen *b'nei aliyah*, but they are few." There are few people who truly see themselves as being a spiritual entity from above, as most people view their bodily existence as being the main point of their existence.

**2]** Without having this perspective that the *Nefesh HaChaim* writes about [that we have to see ourselves as existing on a spiritual plane], then even when a person learns Torah, he is still viewing himself superficially, because he thinks that he is found only on the earth. He is unaware that he realize dwells above in Heaven, where he comes from.

When a person learns Torah and when he does the *mitzvos*, he has to realize that he is really connected to Heaven above. We are really found near Hashem, in the realm that is called *Atzilus* - the realm of closeness to Hashem. This is where we come from, and this is where we exist. We must have this awareness when we learn Torah and when we do the *mitzvos*. If we have this perspective in mind, then we are indeed attached to the highest realm as we learn Torah and do *mitzvos*.

To illustrate, once a person asked the Chazon Ish a question when he is in middle of learning. He answered the person, "I'm not here." The Chazon Ish realized that when he learned Torah, he was not here on this earth, but above in Heaven - in the highest realm.

This concept here is not just mere intellectual information. It is a reality that can be sensed: that we are connected to above.

The same is true with *davening*; we need to feel when we daven that are found in the upper realms. A person has to feel when he davens, "There is only me and Hashem."

This is not a world of fantasy.

Without being aware of this concept, a person will simply try to picture what the upper realms look

like, how the angels look - how the *Ofanim* look, how the *Chayos* look... but this is nothing but fantasy.

To know what the upper realms are, a person has to live them. This is by realizing that although he has to deal with worldly matters, such as working for a living and taking care of his family, he can still consider himself as a Heavenly existence. A person has to realize that our essential existence is that we are near Hashem, and that we have nothing else in our life other than Hashem; that is where we mainly exist, and it is just that we also have to have dealings with the physical world.

We are in Heaven and then we return to this physical world, and then we repeat the cycle, back and forth. This is the concept known as *rotzoh v'shov* - "running and returning."

**3]** However, we can ask the following. If man is so great, for his soul is hewn from above, from the *Kisei HaKavod*, then why was Adam cursed with "*Earth you are, and to earth you shall return*"? Man is called "earth", as a result of the sin; doesn't this contradict or greatness?

The answer to this is that the depth of the curse placed on mankind is that we do not realize our greatness. We view ourselves as an earthly existence - "*Earth you are*" has initially become our sense of self-esteem, as a result of Adam's sin. But our essence is that we are a soul from above; we are inherently great, but mankind was cursed in that he doesn't start out life with his proper self-awareness.

Even a *Ben Torah* learning his entire life doesn't always have the right perspective about himself. He might still be viewing his existence is mainly being physical; he thinks that he is a body, and that he has nothing to do with the words of the *Nefesh HaChaim* that we are really a spiritual kind of existence.

As an example, most people are very afraid of death. Why are people so afraid of death? They shudder at the thought that their body will one day disintegrate into the earth. People usually fear death because they see death as an end to their existence, which they think is their body.

But if someone lives a life of the soul, he doesn't fear death. He instead views death as "leaving one room and entering another room", as Chazal describe the transition of death.

**4]** In Slobodka, the view of thinking was that of *gadlus h'adam*. The Yeshiva of Slobodka [headed by the Alter of Slobodka, who was Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt"l] focused on the concept of *gadlus h'adam* as their main mentality in serving the Creator: that a person has to be aware of his inherent greatness. In Novhardok, however, the view of thinking was the opposite: they focused on *shiflus*, to focus on human weaknesses and lowliness, and thus prevent ourselves from becoming arrogant. In Novhardok, arrogance was seen as the main downfall of mankind, and thus the Yeshiva of Novhardok focused their students on rooting out the slightest trait of arrogance.

Although they were clearly opposite views in how to serve the Creator, the underlying essence between these two ways was really one and the same: they are both about the greatness of man! It was just that in Novhardok, they placed on emphasis only on the greatness of a Jew's soul, so that a person does not come to be arrogant with his body; that through focusing on the greatness of the soul, a person will come to true humility.