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1] The *Nefesh HaChaim* [Shaar 1, Perek 4] describes here the concept that there are upper, spiritual realms that exist – the “*olamos ha’elyonim*.”

What exactly are these upper realms? Has anyone here ever seen them?!

One of the Sages said, “I have seen *b’nei aliyah* (those who ascend in spiritual growth) but they are few.” A *ben aliyah* is someone who mainly resides “above” – someone who considers himself to exist on a spiritual plane.

Can this be the intention of the words of the *Nefesh HaChaim*, when he speaks of “upper realms”? Is a *ben aliyah* someone who resides in the upper realms?! Don’t we live here, on this world?!

Yes, we live here, on this world. But the *Nefesh HaChaim* means that although we live on this world, we can live a non-materialistic kind of existence – when we gain the perspective of our soul. From our body’s viewpoint, we live on this world – but our soul inside us lives in the upper and spiritual dimension. In the end of the day, we all have a body, and therefore we live on this world. But the soul inside us lives in the spiritual dimension, the upper realms.

Only someone who lives an internal kind of life merits to understand what the upper realms is. But it is not just something that is attained only by *tzaddikim*. It is a reality that can be accessed through **anyone’s** heart! It is a matter contained in the depths of our heart and mind.

The upper realms are not some dimension that is far-off over “there” somewhere. The upper realms are within us!

Knowing about this is the key to entering our inner work. If a person doesn’t have this perspective, then he views the concept of the upper realms in a superficial way, thinking that the upper realms and the angels are somewhere “there”, far away, while “we humans” are here, on this earth. With this superficial perspective, a person will never work on himself to try and experience the upper realms; he learns about it in *sefer Nefesh HaChaim*, but it doesn’t have any practical relevance in his life...it just remains as some intellectual concept he has read about....

The upper realms is a heart matter. Anyone can feel them, as long as the person works on himself in the proper way.

Only Jews possess this ability to get in touch with the upper realms, because only Jews can reach their heart. Non-Jews, by contrast, are called *areili lev* – those whose “hearts are blocked.” The non-Jew does not contain a spiritual heart that can experience spiritual realities.

The upper realms imply that they are “upper” from us and thus far away, but really they are within reach. It is not a world of fantasy. Of course, Heaven is definitely above, and this is the simple meaning of “above”. But the concept of “*b’nei aliyah*” shows us that a person can reside in his heart and in this way be above the current world. Every person has a heart – and every person can therefore become from the *b’nei aliyah*.

Our avodah from this is to understand that whatever takes place in the upper realms is really found in our own heart. It is for this reason that we seek to purify our heart.

2] The *Nefesh HaChaim* continues that the heart of man is all-encompassing, for our heart represents the *Kodesh HaKodashim* (the innermost chamber of the *Beis HaMikdash*).

Thus, the *Nefesh HaChaim* reveals to us a profound concept, that although the general *Beis HaMikdash* has been destroyed, there is still a *Beis HaMikdash* within us, in each of us on a personal level – and it is in our *nefesh*\soul – in our *heart*. It a totally existing reality.

What is our *nefesh*\soul? Our soul is not our emotions, nor is it our fantasies (even our constructive kinds of fantasies). **Our soul is the essence in us which recognizes holiness as a reality.** This is the meaning of our “heart”; in our heart, there is our *daas* – our deep awareness to reality. The way we gain our *daas* of the heart is through purifying our heart.

If a person doesn’t purify his heart, his emotions are undeveloped, and they are merely “on top” of his heart, not “within” his heart. Many people do not feel the reality of spiritual matters, and the reason for this is because they haven’t yet accessed their true, deep emotions of the heart. They are merely using their undeveloped emotions, which are only “on” the heart, not “in” the heart. As proof to this, many people often view their spiritual moments of elation as just “feelings” that are deemed as mere inspiration, but not more than that.

Only when a person enters his inner recesses of his heart does he access his true feelings, because the true feelings are within the heart. He can then discover his personal *Kodesh HaKodashim* – he can feel spirituality as a real, existing dimension.

When a person prays, the Sages say that his heart should be facing the *Kodesh HaKodashim*. This is not for a person to imagine that he is facing the *Kodesh HaKodashim*. It is rather for a person to reach a place in himself, in his heart, in which Hashem Himself dwells – as it is written, “*And I will dwell amongst them.*”

The heart of a person is a place in which the *Shechinah* dwells. When a person reaches the inner recesses of his heart, he will be able sense the words of the *Nefesh HaChaim* here as a palpable reality. All of the words in sefer *Nefesh HaChaim* are not meant to be mere inspiration – they are rather *Hilchos De’os*, the “laws of our knowledge.”