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The G-dly Soul and the Animal Soul ^[1] _

Our emotions consist of two layers that are within the soul. ^[2] The nefesh habehamis is the lower level of the soul and is the root of our negative emotions. Deeper spiritual feelings exist in the nefesh haElohis which is the inner, G-dly layer of the soul.

[The *nefesh habehamis* ^[3] – the animal soul, is the soul that gives life to the physical body which is the source of animalistic desires as well as innate Jewish characteristics such as kindness and compassion. Although its initial desire is to seek out worldly, physical pleasures, it can be trained to desire spiritual pleasures instead through the guidance of the *nefesh haElohis* ^[4] – the divine soul.]

Most professors and psychologists deal primarily with the *nefesh habehamis*. The solutions and therapy they have devised only address the outer, superficial layer of the soul.

The Jewish People are “a nation of believers, who are sons of believers.” ^[5] We believe the Torah approach, which stresses that true solutions can be found in the deep feelings in our G-dly soul, and that this can shed light on our animalistic soul and heal unhealthy emotions.

Non-Torah Solutions Don't Work For Us

For example, lack of confidence is a common malady.

A person may have inherited the problem genetically, or life's events robbed him of his confidence. Perhaps he was raised in a certain kind of family, or was exposed to friends who didn't believe in him and chipped away at his confidence. Whatever the reason, it is more important to solve the problem itself than to dwell on its origins.

If the lack of confidence stems from the animalistic soul, the obvious solution is to work with those emotions and rebuild feelings of self-confidence. Getting another person to believe in him and point out his strengths can boost his confidence in those areas.

However, these solutions are superficial. True confidence can only be developed when we draw confidence from the inner, G-dly dimension of the soul. Focusing on the deeper emotions of the “*nefesh haElohis*” will enhance our *nefesh habehamis*.

This is not to imply that there is no point in working to improve the baser emotions, which are the emotions of the *nefesh habehamis*. Working with our *nefesh habehaimis* is an essential part of our spiritual development, but the Torah teaches awareness of the deeper part in our soul in addition to the baser emotions, and it is here that we can find the key to every emotional problem. The larger part of any emotional difficulty depends on how much we are using the “*nefesh haElokis*”, while only a small percentage of the problem is located in the animalistic layer of the soul.

The Torah approach is unique to the Jewish soul, both in the nature of our problems and in the soul’s complexity. The *Gemara*^[6] explains that the body of a Jew is different than the body of a non-Jew. If this is true for the body, then it would apply much more so to the Jewish soul.

It is clear then that we cannot bring any proof from non-Torah psychology, both in the nature of our problems and in how we treat them. Only our Sages, such as the Rambam, had the breadth of knowledge to analyze the souls of other nations and compare them to the Jewish soul. As we are not on that level, we can only be harmed by the application of secular psychology to heal [the Jewish] G-dly soul.

Jews Can Achieve Unity In Their Souls

All negative emotions – low self-confidence, negative self-image, etc. – originate in the *nefesh habehamis*, and all positive emotions come from a power of unity that is exclusive to the Jewish soul, which is known as “*da’as*”^[7]. The Rambam refers to our positive emotions and good *middos* as “*da’as*”^[8].

The power to unify the soul is only in the Jewish soul, since only Jews have the power of *da’as*. Moshe *Rabbeinu* possessed the ultimate level of *da’as*, and because of this he merited to be the one who gave us the Torah. *Da’as* is thus the root power of Torah, and it was given only to the Jewish people through the Torah we received. Non-Jews did not receive Torah, and therefore they also did not receive the unifying power of *da’as*. Even Bilaam, who was on the level of Moshe *Rabbeinu* in prophecy, did not have *da’as*.

Of the Jewish people it is written, “*And who is like your nation, Israel, one nation.*”^[9] Only the Jews are called “one” nation, because only we have “oneness” in our soul. The souls of other nations are a mixture of each of the seventy nations, and this disparity is reflected in their own souls; there is no oneness unifying all of the seventy “nations” within their souls. Negative emotions in the Jewish soul can all be unified into one root problem, while the negative emotions in the non-Jewish soul are seventy separate forces with nothing unifying them.

There is **another** way of describing the difference the Jewish soul and the non-Jewish soul.. There are 70 non-Jewish nations: Amalek, the root of all the nations, and the other seventy. Amalek is the archenemy of the Jews, and their evil is on the same level as the amount of good in the Jewish people. Just as the Jewish people are called “first”^[10], so is Amalek called “first” of the nations,^[11] and the root of all evil. Thus, **even** the evil present in the Jewish soul is rooted in the evil force of Creation called Amalek, and therefore, all our negative emotions are the seventy branches that stem from this one single power of evil, Amalek.

The essential difference between the Jewish soul and that of other nations is that the Jewish soul has one root that can be traced as the source of all of the evil emotions in the soul, with many details branching out from the root problem. The soul of a non-Jew has no root that connects together all of the myriad details in the soul.

Therefore, what may be effective for a non-Jew will not always be effective for a Jew, because the non-

Jew's soul is missing the element of *da'as*.

Connecting The Branches With the Root

The Jewish soul is comprised of a root, and there are branches (the emotions themselves) that are stemming from that root.

Therefore, the source of all emotional problems in the Jewish soul is whenever we confuse our branches with our root.

The non-Jewish soul has only branches, with no root connecting them all together. The solutions to their emotional problems lie in fixing their branches, as there is no root which can be traced as the source of the problems.

The Root Solution Is Concentration

Of course, we aren't saying that the Jewish soul can only have one problem. If we take ten Jews and ask them what they are missing in life, we will still get ten different answers. There can be many problems stemming from the *nefeshhabehamis*, so there are all kinds of emotional problems that people can have.

Whatever the problem is, there is always one root that is causing all the emotional issues. Any difficulties in the Jew's soul can be essentially pinpointed as a lack in the soul's branches being unified into one unit. It is when the **central point** in which everything lies is missing.

For example, if a person has a daily, organized schedule and a set job, his issues may be less troubling than someone who isn't organized. Lack of orderliness is often the center of many problems in a person's life, and as soon as a person gets an organized schedule, many of his problems vanish.

A person who lacks a set daily schedule is bored, and he has nothing to do. He gets up in the morning and wonders, "What am I supposed to do today?!" His mind begins to drift and takes him to all kinds of places, and he imagines and exaggerates all kinds of "problems." But if we can get him to concentrate on other things and take his mind off this unproductive thinking, his anxiety will diminish (Some people, however, will not be helped by this solution because they are very empty inside, and even their concentration is totally superficial; we are just stating a general example that shows how working on the core of a problem can conquer other problems as well).

Pharaoh forced the Jewish people into cruel labor, and the depth behind his scheme was to get them to work so hard to the point that they would be denied the opportunity to have any concentration going on in their souls. Their focus was completely occupied by the labor at hand. (In this case the power to concentrate is being used for evil, but the point is the same - that through concentrating on the task at hand, a person has less time to think about other things.)

Whatever it is that one is concentrating on, even it is something as mundane as trying to earn a living, it is still a step toward emotional health. We see that successful people learn how to concentrate fully on one subject, avoiding the idleness and boredom that leads to other problems.

By concentrating and unifying the many emotions going on in the soul, a person becomes calmer and is able to avoid many problems. But when a person's soul is scattered - *pizur hanefesh*, as the *sefer Chovos HaLevovos* writes - he will be full "troubles".^[12]

The Internal Contradiction In The Jew's Soul

When a Jew has an emotional problem, it is a symptom of a much deeper issue: the internal contradiction caused by the animalistic emotions he is experiencing which want nothing to do with Hashem's Torah and *mitzvos*.

The *nefesh habehamis* is totally materialistic and it cannot understand spirituality, while the G-dly soul wants to do the right thing; it wants Torah and *mitzvos*. Thus, every emotional problem in the Jewish soul can be summed up as an inner turmoil between two forces inside the soul - one force in us that wants to fulfill its base desires and give in to its bodily emotions, and one force that wants spirituality, the right thing.

The general outline of the solution, for all problems, is to achieve a **connection between** the two layers in our soul [which we will soon explain how to do].

Work With the Root of the Problem

Emotional problems in a Jew's soul are thus little more than "branches" of the problem. The core of the problem is that there is nothing **connecting** all of the emotions together in a Jew's soul.

The Chazon Ish explained^[13] that when we work on our middos, it's not our job to work on improving the hundreds of different middos we have. Our entire job is to find and work with the **root** of all our middos.

Many people who have seen those words are bothered, wondering: "That is not true. We need to work on our anger and we also need to work on our haughtiness, and we also need to work on each *middah* separately! We have to work on all our *middos*!"

But, the Chazon Ish revealed that the entire process of working on our *middos* can be summed up in "one" task: to find the problem at its **root**, and not to focus on the branches of the problem.

From the time Adam *Harishon* sinned and ate from the *Eitz HaDaas* the soul has been missing this essential element of unity.

There is no single power that unifies the good with the evil in our soul, in the current state of affairs.

We will receive the true power of unity in the future, but for now, everyone can try as much as he can to attain some degree of unity in his soul and thus cure himself of emotional problems.

Most people only begin to learn about their soul after they encounter difficulty, but we are never exempt from developing awareness of the soul (whether we are in therapy or not), because our souls are full of problems when left unfixed.

How The Animalistic Layer Of Our Soul Can Understand The Concept Of Unity

The *nefesh habehamis* in us cannot understand the language of anything spiritual or internal. Only the *nefesh Elohis* in us can comprehend spiritual concepts.

Every person is comprised of two totally different parts that understand different languages, unable to communicate with each other. Our souls^[14] understand the language of spirituality, while our body^[15] only understands physical gratification.

This concept of being unified into one ("*echad*") is a spiritual concept. The *nefesh habehamis* in us cannot comprehend it, and even if we try to convince our animalistic soul to accept something spiritual, it won't.

Therefore, we are not trying to get our animalistic soul to become G-dly; it is unrealistic to do so. It is impossible for the animalistic soul to accept the concept of how we must unify our soul's emotions.

The solution to this disconnect is rather to prove to our animalistic soul that it is possible to be unified at least for a non-spiritual purpose. This introduces the animalistic layer of the soul to the concept of unity on a level it can understand. The *nefesh habehamis* can accept the idea of "one" if it's not spiritually oriented, because there is no spirituality inherent in this basic idea.

For example, we cannot convince our animalistic part of the soul about a concept such as "We only have one heart, directed toward our Father in heaven." The non-spiritual part of our soul does not want to hear this nor accept this. But what we *can* do is introduce the concept of "one" to the animalistic soul in a way that it gets the idea of "one", without having to focus on any spiritual goal in particular.

By doing this, we are shining some of the light that comes from our G-dly soul onto our animalistic soul, by introducing it to the concept of unity. Even though it will be a non-spiritual kind of unity, it is still some degree of unity.

Utilizing The Power of Concentration

First, before we speak of solutions for those who are in deep emotional stress, we will speak of a general solution to deal with emotional problems. (Just like we know how to take care of our body, we need to learn how take care of our soul.)

We are speaking even of the emotions found in the animalistic layer of the soul. How can we have a healthy animalistic soul?

The best way to develop healthy emotions is to access the simple power of unity in the soul, which we can reach when we lead a life of concentration. In practical words- remain focused on what you are doing, and do not do two things at once.

When a person does many things at once, he gets in the habit of fracturing his focus. The soul then stops concentrating, and disconnects from the actions he is doing. The inevitable result will be scattered emotions. In the worst case scenario, if there is one emotion that is more extreme than all the other emotions, such a person can have an emotional breakdown.

This is the first part of the solution to emotional problems: Do one thing at a time. Don't do two things at once. Prevent your thoughts from floating somewhere else while you are doing something. Concentrate on what you are doing.

This may explain why some people have a hard time concentrating during *davening*. It is possible to *daven* out of obligation and not feel anything. When we **do** something, and our **feelings** aren't there, then our **thoughts** wander away from what we are doing. *Davening* is a spiritual manifestation of this problem, but it also exists for the non-spiritual: the tendency to "space out" when performing a task that is not of interest.

One can invite trouble when he isn't focused. Doing one thing, while thinking about something else at the same time, can be a recipe for disaster. The soul gets used to the idea that you can do many things at once and that you don't have to be thinking.

Our generation has more emotional problems than any other generation. In previous times, people were focused on what they were doing. Today, it's perfectly normal and acceptable to be talking on two different phone lines at the same time. To the first caller, the person says, "One minute...one

minute,” and then he talks to the next one on the other line. People who function this way from a very young age get used to doing two things at once. His mind becomes scattered, and the soul suffers from this.

Only a life of calmness and quiet can allow a person to focus on what he is doing. Even our animalistic soul can understand this. We see that when people want to do something they are interested in, they can focus very easily. The question is whether we can learn to focus all the time instead of in small increments.

Concentration Enhances The Quality of Life

The *Chovos HaLevovos*^[16] writes: “Smaller, pure amounts are bigger than big amounts, and big amounts that aren’t pure are just as good as small amounts – they are useless.”

When people try to “save” time and maximize each moment, it appears to be an admirable trait, but in reality it is detrimental to emotional health. A person gets used to doing so much without ever focusing totally on any one thing. People are doing too much, and there is too much emphasis on quantity over quality.

When we get used to focusing on what we do, we will begin to internalize what we are doing. Instead of just “going through” life, we will be connected to what we do and experience all that we can in a meaningful way.

The more we concentrate on what we do – actions and thoughts together and unified – the more our animalistic layer in the soul gets used to truly experiencing what the body is doing, and we start to enjoy life! We will feel vitality from living and from the concentration that we are putting into it.

Concentrating on what we do leads to experiencing what we do. When we experience what we do, and are concentrating and focused, then all the various emotions become connected into one unit. This is the general beginning of building healthy emotions.

^[1] **Editor’s Note:** Anyone who is familiar with the author’s previous sefarim knows that the soul is usually referred to as “neshamah”. Although this is the general term for “soul”, to be more specific, the “nefesh” is the lowest part of the soul, while the “neshamah” is a higher part in the soul. In the “nefesh”, there are two layers as well – a higher layer, called the “nefesh haElokis”, and a lower layer, called the “nefesh habehamis”. Sometimes these two layers are called the “body” and the “soul”; sometimes they are called two different “souls” in a person, and sometimes they are referred to as “layers” in the soul. For the sake of clarity, we have chosen to describe them as “layers” – such as the animalistic “part” in the soul, and the G-dly “part” in the soul. Part One of this sefer is about fixing our “nefesh habehamis”, while Part Two is how we can utilize our “nefesh haElokis”. It is recommended to first read the author’s previous seforim “Getting To Know Your Self” and “Getting To Know Your Soul” before reading this book.

^[2] Rav Chaim Vital, Sha’arei Kedusha, Part 3, Gate 2

^[3]
— ibid

^[4]
— ibid

^[5]
— Shabbos 97a

^[6]
— Shabbos 86b. The Chasam Sofer, 18th century leader of Jewry, explained in a well-known ruling that although surgery was successfully performed on a non-Jew's body, one cannot automatically assume that the same surgery will succeed for a Jew, as the body of a Jew is different than the body of a non-Jew and, therefore cannot transgress Shabbos to perform the operation.

^[7]
— Editor's Note: The loose translation of "da'as" is "knowledge" or "understanding", but because da'as is a broad concept, it can mean different things depending on the idea being discussed. In this chapter, da'as refers to a "connecting" power in the soul. Da'as can mean connection, as we see from the possuk, "And Adam knew (va'yeda) Chavah, his wife"; Rashi (ibid) refers to this "knowing" as having connected with her, in this case, through conjugal relations. Da'as can also be identified with the ability to "lead"; see Part Two Chapter Four. Da'as is also identified as the core of all the emotions; see Chapters Ten and Fifteen.

^[8]
— See Part Two Chapter Two for an in-depth analysis

^[9]
— Tefillas Minchah of Shabbos

^[10]
— Rashi to Beraishis 1:1, who cites the Midrash (Vayikrah Rabbah 36:4): "The world was created in the merit of Yisrael, who are called "raishis" (the first/the beginning)."

^[11]
— As it is written in Bamidbar 24:20 , "The first of the nations is Amalek"

^[12]
— Editor's Note: There is also an even deeper power of concentration found in the soul, and it comes from the G-dly layer only found in the Jewish soul. This is the ability to have d'veykus in Hashem, to be totally bound up with Hashem in utter concentration. But so far we have not been speaking about this deep kind of concentration; we are speaking about a level of concentration found even in the lowest layer of the soul, the nefesh habehamis - "animalistic" layer of the soul. Anyone can access this concentration and solve the root of most emotional problems stemming from the animalistic layer of the soul.

^[13]
— in the sefer Emunah U'Bitachon

^[14]
— our nefesh haElokis

^[15]
— our nefesh habehaimis

^[16] — Chovos HaLevovos 5:6

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