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The Seven Primary Emotions

There are seven primary, root emotions, which can be employed positively or negatively. They are:

Self-Love (Ahavah Atzmis): In its negative form, it manifests as unhealthy self-love, egoism, or narcissism; positively, it is healthy self-love or self-esteem.

Self-Hatred (Sinah Atzmis): In its negative form, it manifests as self-hatred; positively, it is self-improvement.

Pride (Hispaarus): In its negative form, it manifests as arrogance or haughtiness; positively, it is healthy confidence.

Victory (Nitzuach): This manifests as stubbornness; it can be used positively or negatively.

Admitting (Hoda'ah): In its negative form, it manifests as lack of assertiveness; positively, this is admitting in a healthy way.

Self-worth (Shiflus): In its negative form, it manifests as low self-esteem; positively, it is humility.

Connection (Hiskashrus): In its negative form, it manifests as an evil or unhealthy connection to someone else; positively, this is the ability to have healthy relationships.

These are the seven main emotions. Although we cannot explore each one in the fine detail it requires, we will try to understand their roots and gain a basic understanding of how feelings work.

Egoism - Misuse of Concentration

The first of the negative emotions is egoism, defined as an improper form of self-love.

The inner dimension of the soul is *achdus*, the power to be unified via concentration. Lack of unity is only manifest in the outer layer of the soul. Even the *nefesh habehamis* – the basic, animalistic layer of the soul that exists in every person (Jew or non-Jew) -- has the power to concentrate. Some people are more aware of this ability than others, but we all possess it.

The inner, G-dly layer of the Jewish soul has a higher form of concentration, in two ways. Firstly, the G-dly soul within us can concentrate on ***where it comes from***. This is the ability to concentrate on building a connection to the soul's Source (G-d). Secondly, the G-dly soul can concentrate on ***where it is going***. This is the ability to focus on one's unique purpose.

These are the two basic forces of concentration found in our G-dly soul: "Where do I come from?" and "Where am I going?" The first ability is called *d'veykus* (connecting to one's self through concentration), and the second is called *tachlis* (concentrating on a purpose).

The first ability – to concentrate on where one comes from – is not in the G-dly soul as a given. It must be developed. But the second ability – to concentrate on one's purpose – is within close reach of the G-dly soul.

We see that even non-Jews can be very focused and attain their goals. This is obviously not the ability of *d'veykus* (when Moshiach comes, even non-Jews will have *d'veykus*, but not now). It is the ability to have a goal, and it exists within even the lowest part of the soul in every human (Jew or non-Jew).

Anyone, even non-Jews who don't have the same level depth as the Jewish soul, can build a successful business, for example, based on being goal-oriented – whether financially, or simply building up a successful life in general. There exists within every person an ability to have a goal and work towards it.

A person becomes egotistical when he misuses this power to concentrate. Instead of being focused on a specific purpose, the egoist uses his ability to concentrate on loving himself and self-absorption.

It should be noted, however, that some people are self-absorbed not because they are egotistical, but because they are “scatterbrained” (*pizur hanefesh* - “scattering of the soul”). Such a person not only doesn’t worry for others; he can’t even worry about himself. Although he has no egoism, he is detrimental to himself because he has no power to concentrate and thus cannot work toward a goal.

People who are working toward a goal and using their power to concentrate on their goals are slightly self-absorbed, but those who are totally self-absorbed are misusing their power to concentrate.

This is the basic idea of improper self-love – when a person is self-absorbed and only worries about himself.

Setting Goals

How can we use egoism in a positive way?

The first possibility is to steer one’s power of concentration in the right direction by focusing on a goal. Even though this focus is on himself and *his* goals, if we can get such a person to work towards any goal, it would be a breakthrough for him, because he is slightly less focused on himself when he works toward a goal.

The more a person is clearly focused on a goal, he will see that he naturally doesn’t think so much about himself. He’ll slowly forget about his ego. He won’t be able to explain how he did it, but the reason is because he succeeded in concentrating on something else other than himself.

It must be emphasized that one has to *work* toward a goal and a purpose. If he learns how to use his abilities with no specific goal in mind, he is not using his concentration in the proper way. The point is to start concentrating on something else other than the self, which can only be achieved by concentrating on a goal.

This is the first step in ridding oneself of improper self-love and egoism: stop worrying about himself and steering concentration to work towards a goal.

Giving

A second way to stop egoism is becoming accustomed to giving something once a day. Giving contradicts self-absorption. To fulfill this directive, one does not need to open up a *chessed* organization from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M. and take constant phone calls! It's enough to give something once a day, every day.

After two months of this practice, a person will feel that he has accepted this act of giving, even though it contradicted his normal activities. This would be a good time to increase the acts of giving to twice a day, and continue increasing them as he becomes accustomed to each level.

In this way, a person stops living for himself all the time, and begins to live for others.

In the first possibility mentioned before, the person still remains within himself; all he has done is start to concentrate on something other than him. In this second approach, he has done something for another person, and he gets used to giving to others.

Obviously, one should not make extreme changes in his behavior all at once. The acts of giving should be done in small amounts, in stages, and with plenty of time in between each level to allow a person to get used to the changes. A person should only increase the giving he does after he feels that he has accepted these new small changes.

Also, these acts of giving cannot work towards redirecting egoism if they are performed mechanically. If a person gives out of a realization that he must learn to love others and that it is within his power to do so, he can succeed, because he is just uncovering the hidden love for others that has already exists within himself. He realizes that the function of his acts of giving is primarily to reveal that love, and thus giving to others can help him abandon his self-absorption. However, if a person gives perfunctorily, without this understanding, the giving will not help him emerge from his self-absorption.

There are many people who act very kindly towards others, yet fail in getting themselves to love others. This can happen when they are doing acts of kindness that are way above their comfort level, and instead of feeling a love to others by doing for them, they actually come to resent the recipient of their kindness. Because they are acting above their level in kindness, or have elevated themselves too quickly they don't really want to give what they are giving. They experience a frustrating contradiction in themselves because their soul isn't keeping up with their actions. Such people give so much to others, but instead of coming to love them, their resentment toward others grows the more they give.

Giving should be done with the intention to reveal the soul's potential. This is only achieved by combining *daas* with actions. *Daas* without action causes a person to live in his imagination. Nor is it good to act without *daas*, because then the actions won't have any effect. The ideal motivation is using action to uncover the soul's inherent love for another person. This will get a person to awaken within himself the ability to love others.

A person has a natural ability to love others. People often can't feel this natural love toward others because the animalistic layer of the soul uses love for its own selfish purposes. By doing things for other people, a person can awaken that natural love for others.

The *Sefer HaChinuch* writes, "The hearts are pulled after the actions." Doing things for other people, even when we don't feel love for them, can awaken the heart to truly love another.

The Root Is not Evil

There is a third, deeper approach to rid oneself of the negative manifestation of egoism. The outer layer of egoism is evil, while the root of self-love is not. How can self-love be positive?

There are two approaches to this conundrum. There are two basic forces of proper self-love in the soul - one in our G-dly soul, which is the root of all self-love; and one in the animalistic layer of the soul, which is also a proper kind of self-love (though it is not the root). When a person learns what true self-love is and how to use it, he is on his way to redirecting his egoism in a positive way.

Proper Love and the Balanced Soul

Before we learn how self-love can be good, we must first define "love."

Ahavah (love) has the same numerical value in Hebrew as *Echad* (one). Love is essentially to become "one".

How does this work? Love comes only when one unifies himself with something previously outside of himself. If one was already united with something to begin with, there cannot be love. But when two separate pieces come together and become unified into one, this creates love. This is the oneness and the love of marriage, as the verse states, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and cling to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." The fact that a woman once was part of a man isn't enough to create love between them; their love only occurs because they are two separate

entities coming together.

When a person succeeds in connecting to something that opposes him, unity is created, and that is love. If there was no opposition at the start, there cannot be love.

When something opposes a person, he naturally hates it, and this cannot bring love. Nor can a person truly love something that was always one with him. Love is only when something opposed a person and he succeeded in unifying it with himself despite the opposition.

Now that we have defined love - when two opposites unite - we can determine whether self-love is good or evil.

A person is able to love himself in spite of his awareness that there are many contradictions occurring within. If he wouldn't love himself, the only other possibility would be for him to hate himself because of all the contradictions that exist inside him, but we love ourselves even though we are full of contradictions. We naturally love ourselves because we make peace with the various contradicting forces within ourselves.

All of us have conflicting emotions. That is how Hashem made the world - everything in Creation has within it contradictory forces, and the same goes for people. We are full of contradictions. When a person succeeds in unifying all these contradictions within himself, he feels a love toward himself, and this form of self-love is not evil at all - it is pure. It is not self-absorption; it is to be at peace with oneself, to be unified within oneself, and it is a healthy self-love.

Balancing the soul enables a person to love himself in a pure and healthy way, and it is true love.

When a person has this proper self-love, he will come to understand himself, and will be emotionally healthy. These are the people that we see showering love and warmth upon others. How are they able to do that? They have balanced their inner conflicts and succeeded in loving themselves in a healthy way, having made peace with their inner conflicts. Their entire essence has become love, and they are thus able to shower love upon others.

A person who hasn't balanced himself has not yet uncovered this love toward himself; the love remains hidden. He must locate and reveal the love present in the G-dly layer of the soul.

Healthy self-love also exists within the animalistic layer of the soul (which is a lower form of healthy

self-love).

The Animalistic Layer of the Soul has its Shortcomings

The problems that stem from the *nefesh habehamis* -- the outer, animalistic layer of our soul -- are much more complex to remedy, because not only are there contradictory forces within, but there are also many shortcomings. This is what causes people to fall.

But our *nefesh Elokus* -- The G-dly soul within us -- contains only loftiness. There are levels to its holiness, as the verse says, "The face of Moshe is like the sun, and the face of Yehoshua is like the moon." Yehoshua's soul was on a very high level, but not as high as Moshe Rabbenu, because his soul was more balanced than Yehoshua's.

Thus, healthy self-love that comes from the G-dly soul depends on how much a person has balanced his inner contradictions.

The animalistic part in our soul, on the other hand, has more issues to deal with. Its four elements are the roots of all bad *Middos*: Fire (anger), water (desires), wind (haughtiness) and earth (sadness and laziness). Fire opposes water, and earth opposes wind. These contradictions are the cause of all of our shortcomings, and when a person becomes aware of his shortcomings, he can grow to dislike himself. The animalistic soul contains much more potential for self-destruction than the G-dly soul.

There are some who, upon discovering their shortcomings, do not feel threatened at all by this self-discovery. A person with *gaavah* (arrogance) is so haughty that he blocks out his awareness of his shortcomings. A person who with lustful desires isn't bothered by discovering his shortcomings, because he is so immersed in his hungers that his shortcomings don't disturb him at all. However, those who are drawn toward the element of earth have a hard time dealing with themselves when they discover their own inadequacies.

Even those who aren't earth-based are likely to suffer from dismay over their contradictions and weaknesses. Self-love must be present in both the animalistic and the G-dly layers of the soul in order to be developed in a healthy way.

If a person doesn't love himself, the obvious solution would seem to be to get him to love himself in an unhealthy way, by encouraging selfishness and self-absorption, but that is not the solution we are looking for. We must look for the true solution.

Fix Any Weakness through its Opposite

Understanding how we view our shortcomings can change the whole way we view life.

Any deficiency can be defined as a gap or hole, *nekev* in Hebrew, derived from the word *nekaivah* (woman). A Chava, the first woman, was lacking until she was completed by her opposite: man.

With this in mind, shortcomings can be viewed with a totally different perspective. We can remedy ourselves by strengthening the area or element that is the opposite of the problem. This will take care of both our contradictions as well as our actual shortcomings.

If, for example, a person has a problem that is rooted in earth, the problem can be fixed through its opposing element – wind. If the problem is water-based, it can be fixed by strengthening its opposite, fire. Problems with fire are fixed with water, and problems with wind are fixed with earth.

If a person has a problem with being lustful (a water-based problem, since desires come from the element of water), an inner “fire” can burn up his desires. If a person is over-active – a wind-based problem – he can fix it by strengthening the earth elements within him, becoming “lazy”. (We find the positive manifestation of laziness by the women who didn’t sin by the Golden Calf – the Sages say they were “lazy” not to sin).

It is natural to conclude that if one has a problem with *gaavah*, the solution would be to eradicate it; the same principle applies to lust and other weaknesses, but this approach is misguided. A problem cannot be remedied unless it is completed by its opposite. Thus, contradictions are essentially the root of fixing problems.

Serenity

We are not saying that a person should become a dreamer and imagine that he is no longer someone who gets angry, no longer is arrogant and no longer has any desires. Rather, one can know exactly where his weak points are and also know how to fix them.

When a person knows how to remedy his weaknesses, he is calmed. If he feels the deficiencies within himself and doesn’t know how to fix them, it can cause tremendous anxiety.

Maintaining Constant Balance

It is easy to tell ourselves, "I have problems with anger, I have problems with arrogance...I'm full of problems," and yet make no effort to remedy them.

Awareness of the importance of maintaining inner balance will help isolate the root of each problem and its solution by utilizing its opposite. This is not to say that a person won't have any more failures; will still have failures, but he will have a constant and essential inner balance.

Most people don't maintain constant inner balance, and try to fix their "*Middos*" as best they can, but he is like a person stumbling in the dark, searching for a light switch. One who balances himself lives with a deep, true love for himself.

All solutions to any problem lie within oneself. Difficulty ensues when we cannot balance the inner contradictions that plague the soul. Our job is always the same - to balance our soul.

Balancing the soul requires constant attention. An hour a day won't work. Balancing all the emotions, and their opposites, with the mind; balancing oneself with someone else, parents balancing their relationship with their children. Life is full of these situations, and they all require our attention.

If a person lives with balance, he is living with healthy self-love devoid of contradictions and hatred, either of himself or others.

Everything in Creation is a Breed

Here lies a deep point: everything in Creation is a breed[\[fs1\]](#) .

A Jewish person who is superficial is likely to think that every Arab is the same, but upon deeper inspection, he will discover that each Arab is a mixture of different backgrounds and elements, and that Arabs are in fact, not all the same. A secular Israeli will view all observant Chareidim as being all the same, and he has no idea that there are all kinds of Jews within this category.

From an external vantage point, it is difficult to determine individual nuances. A deeper look will almost always reveal shades of difference and individuality, a mixture of many different elements that comprise each person, and in turn, add a variety of contradictions within the larger group. The purpose of these differences is to balance the larger grouping as a whole.

We balance the mind with the Heart, we balance the different opinions in the Gemara all the time. Balance is the sum total of our *avodah*.

The Ultimate Solution for Egoism

Let us return to our first point. How does a person stop being egotistical?

The first solution we mentioned is to steer one's power to concentrate toward a goal. The second solution is giving to others, but there is a deeper solution for escaping egoism.

Lack of emotional balance is the root of egoism, because an egotistical person only sees one part of himself, and is blind to the many other parts of himself that are connected. It might take a long time for an egoist to love others, but eventually, if he learns how to balance himself, he will get there. It is very possible that he may become absorbed in himself while he focuses on maintaining his internal balance, but eventually he will get used to balancing himself with others and ultimately giving to them. He'll start with his wife or his children or his neighbors. He will realize that balance is constant work, and eventually his unhealthy egoism will be transformed into its positive direction. The true way to expand one's self is not through selfishness, but by balancing other people into one's life.

We are not saying that one should cease loving himself and only love others. Such a drastic change would be unrealistic. Instead, we are offering the egoist a way to love himself even more. When a person gets used to balancing his soul, even the animalistic layer of the soul will slowly receive some light from the G-dly layer of the soul, and achieve a balance with the G-dly soul.

Even when a person is eating he can work on balance. Some people like salty foods and dislike sweet foods, and vice-versa. By getting used to eating the type of food you don't like along with the one you like, you get used to the idea of balancing opposites. One shouldn't become a glutton in his pursuit of balance, but within the framework of one's already existing desires he can teach himself to balance them.

[\[fs1\]](#) Can you find the Hebrew word for this? Could not locate it in Hebrew version. "Breed" is too unclear.

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