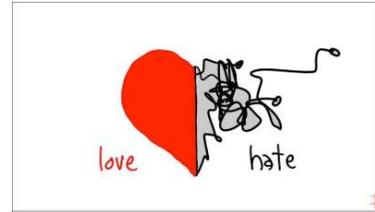


## Middah Reflection #7

### Activisms of Love and Hate

By Shmuly Yanklowitz



Should we fight for justice with hearts full of love or hearts full of anger? Which is more rewarding? Which is more productive? Which must we cultivate as religious activists?

Rav Soloveitchik argued (*A Theory of Emotions*, 183):

“Of course, love is a great and noble emotion, fostering the social spirit and elevating man, but not always is the loving person capable of meeting the challenge of harsh realities. In certain situations, a disjunctive emotion, such as anger or indignation may become the motivating force for noble and valuable action.”

Some have argued that hate may be constitutive of love. The great German philosopher Nietzsche wrote: “He who cannot hate, also cannot love.” The French writer George Sand, on the other hand, argued that hate can itself be an expression of love and that indignation over oppression and injustice is the highest expression of love.

Perhaps, at times, we cannot be commanded or persuaded to emote and that we must merely obey our ontological situation and affective destinies? Could it be that the emotional life that accompanies our service in the world is all just relative to our different personalities? If so, are all personalities equally fit for hitting the streets?

In addressing these questions, we can look for insight to the five-dimension personality model, nicknamed the "Big Five," proposed by Lewis Goldberg:

1. Extraversion - outgoing and stimulation-oriented vs. quiet and stimulation-avoiding
2. Neuroticism - emotionally reactive, prone to negative emotions vs. calm, imperturbable, optimistic

3. Agreeableness - affable, friendly, conciliatory vs. aggressive, dominant, disagreeable
4. Conscientiousness - dutiful, planful, and orderly vs. laid back, spontaneous, and unreliable
5. Openness to experience - open to new ideas and change vs. traditional and oriented toward routine

Can it not be that (on scale 3) both a “dominant” personality and a “conciliatory” personality are equally capable of bringing about great revolutions? How about (on scale 4): the spontaneous and the orderly? Don’t we need them both?

Stripping our guilt for the emotional lives that we find ourselves destined for, we can embrace and elevate our personalities and their concomitant emotional realities to become who we must and fight for whom we must. They are crying out to us! Momentarily we transcend ourselves with exhilaration but then we inevitably retreat to find ourselves within our familiar souls. Ultimately we only have one heart to guard and it is here to stay. As Rav Shlomo Carlebach said:

“If God had given me two hearts, I could use one for hating and the other one for love. But since I was given only one heart, I have only room for love,” (Holy Brother, 179).

While we may differ in our traits we must unite in our love, thereby actualizing the human spirit and giving merit to our creation.