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When Flattery Is In The Form of a Fake Smile

With the help of Hashem we will continue to discuss the element of wind; we are currently addressing **water-of-wind**, which is the root of the trait of *chanufah*\flattery. [Previously, we discussed **earth-of-water-of-wind**, and here in this chapter we will discuss **water-of-water-of-wind**].

Wind is the root of idle speech, and water-of-wind is to speak words of flattery, because it is speech (wind) which involves the pleasure of connection (water). **Water-of-water-of-wind** is a kind of flattery in which a person gives a fake smile to another in the hope of flattering him.

It is written, "*Just as water reflects one face to another, so does the heart of man reflect to another.*"^[1] When there is genuine feeling of mutual connection, the other person reciprocates the feeling. This is not flattery; it is genuine love, and it is *Ahavas Yisrael*. But when a person flatters another and it is not from a place of love in himself, rather for some superficial reason, the other will not reciprocate.

Three Kinds of Smiles

One kind of person smiles at another from an inner place in himself; this is the holy and good kind of smile, and it is not flattery.

Another kind of person will smile at another because he needs the other for something, therefore, he smiles at him, in the hope of receiving something in turn for his smile. This is also not flattery. However, it is not a genuine smile either, for it does not come from his inner essence.

But another kind of person smiles at another in order to flatter the person, and this is the evil trait of **flattery (chanufah)**. In his heart, he does not like the person, and the loving words coming out of his mouth are not in line with what he really feels in his heart towards the other person.

Three Kinds of He'aras Panim (Radiant Countenance) That Are Inward

Smiling at another is also called **he'aras panim** (a radiant countenance).

We find three kinds of *he'aras panim*. One meaning of it is to smile at another from your **p'nim** (inside). Another kind of *he'aras panim* is when the smile doesn't come from one's inside, and it is merely coming from the smile on a person's face. A third kind of *he'aras panim* is when it is a smile that stems from the evil trait of flattery; when one's heart does not match the words coming out of his

mouth.

Right now, we are discussing in particular the act of smiling at another for the sake of flattery, which is an evil use of the power of *he'aras panim*. We will delve into this matter more deeply now.

“He'aras Panim” When It Is A Revelation of G-dliness In The Person (Moshe Rabbeinu and Tzaddikim)

We find that Moshe had *he'aras panim*; he had a shining countenance on his face, and it shone so brightly that no one was able to look at his face. This *he'aras panim* which he merited was a revelation of G-dliness that shined outward from within him. On a general note, all wise Torah scholars possess a radiant countenance – it is written, *“The wisdom of man illuminates his face.”*

This is a holy kind of *he'aras panim*, in which the soul of a person illuminates outward. However, it is an inward kind of *he'aras panim*, because it is not being used with relation to others. Others can see it on his face, but the person who has it is not seeking to turn his *he'aras panim* outwards towards others. It's rather an inward revelation that can be seen on his outward appearance.

He'aras Panim of The Heart (Enjoying Life)

Another kind of *he'aras panim* comes from the heart. When a person's heart is shining, it can show up on his face; here again, the person doesn't use it to shine it outward to others.

An example of this power - when used for evil - is as follows: The Sages say that those who raise hogs and those who are wealthy because they charge interest (both evil sources of livelihoods) have faces that shine with a yellow color. Because these kinds of people are successful at what they do and live comfortable lives in which they don't have to work that hard to make a living, they are content, and therefore their faces shine with happiness. It is their heart inside which is happy with the successful kind of life they have.

Such a person is enjoying a very happy life (albeit evil), and therefore his heart and his face are shining with happiness. But this kind of person won't necessarily smile at others. This is a kind of *he'aras panim* that remains inward and doesn't shine outward; there are both good and evil ways to use this power.

He'aras Panim of the Body: A Radiant Face

A third kind of *he'aras panim* is when the physical body (*guf*) has a shine to it. An example of this is that the Sages state^[2] that wine reddens a person's face.

So these are three kinds of *he'aras panim*, and none of these are used with regards to smiling at others. In all of these scenarios, the *he'aras panim* remains inward (whether it is a holy or evil kind of *he'aras panim*), because it is not a *he'aras panim* being used to smile at others. It just means that the person's face has *he'aras panim* on it, and not because he uses it to smile at others.

To summarize all the kinds of “inward” *he'aras panim*: There is *he'aras panim* of the face, *he'aras panim* of the heart, and *he'aras panim* of the body.

Outward “He'aras Panim”

There is also second group of people with *he'aras panim*: those who show their *he'aras panim* **outward** towards others.

In the first scenario that we brought above (which had three examples), the person's inside is also revealed outward, but the person doesn't turn it towards people. But in the second scenario, the person turns his *pnim* (inside) outward towards others.

So there are two kinds of *he'aras panim*: when one's *pnim* is revealed outward but he doesn't actually turn it towards others, and when one actively shows *he'aras panim* towards others.

(On a deeper note, there is a perfected kind of *he'aras panim*, in which a person has both at once: his *pnim* is turned outward, and in addition, he turns it towards others.)

"Inward" He'aras Panim Vs. "Outward" He'aras Panim

Now that we've explained this, let's return to discussing our current topic, flattery, and how it relates to the concept of *he'aras panim*.

There is something fundamental to understand about the concept of *he'aras panim*. A person has a nature to sometimes reveal what's going on inside himself. That is activated even in the first kind of *he'aras panim*. The second scenario of *he'aras panim*, however, in which a person turns his *he'aras panim* towards others, and this takes it further: it enables a person to leave his natural limits and go beyond his private self. [We will explain here that there are both pros and cons to this ability].

In the first scenario of *he'aras panim*, the person still remains inward. In the second kind of *he'aras panim*, the person has left his limitations, for by smiling at others, a person leaves his private self.

What differences does it make? It makes a very big difference, as we are about to explain.

In the first scenario, which is "inward" *he'aras panim*, the person remains in his *pnim* (inwardness). As we have explained in the past, true *he'aras panim* to another emanates from one's *pnim*; in other words, true *he'aras panim* is not merely *he'aras panim*, but *he'aras pnim* [it is not just a smile on your face, but it is rather that you are shining your inner essence outward].

But in the second scenario of *he'aras panim*, in which a person actively turns toward others with an active smile, the person has totally gone outward from his *pnim*. This is a power that can be used for either evil or good; the point is, though, that it is always an exit out of one's private self.

The Danger Of Smiling At The Whole World

When one smiles at another, he is really leaving his private self, but he doesn't always feel this. When a person smiles at another out of a deep sense of true and absolute *Ahavas Yisrael* to others, and he feels truly "one" with another Jew, he won't feel how he's leaving himself, because since he truly feels that he is "one" with the other Jew, it doesn't even register by him as a transition.

(However, this is very rare, because even if a person is in touch with that deep part of the soul that loves all Jews, still, the lower parts of our existence (our body and our *nefesh habehaimis*) get in the way of this deep feeling of oneness with another, and this is what prevents one from actually feeling one with for others.)

Unless a person has a lot of *Ahavas Yisrael* – which is rare – he will feel like he is leaving himself and joining with another, when he smiles at another. He will feel like he is totally leaving himself and he connects to the other – and the danger here is that he is leaving his *pnim* (inner world) and going outward into the rest of the world when he smiles at people. He might leave his *pnim* behind totally, in favor of those whom he connects outwardly to.

A person is safe from spiritual dangers when he remains in his *pnim*, but when he connects outwardly to the world, he opens himself up to all kinds of dangers to his spirituality. He is not remaining in his *pnim* – rather, his *pnim* is going outward as he connects with others. He will connect with all kinds of people, and not everyone is good to connect to. Not only does he leave behind his own inner world where he was previously protected from spiritual harm - he is also likely to enter the *pnim* (inwardness) of another when he smiles at others, and he will connect himself to the evil and negative spiritual influences that are found in another person.

When one leaves his *pnim* because he wants to show his *panim* to others, and he turns to the *pnim* of another, the other will reciprocate. “As water reflects one face to another.” That is the concept of *he’aras panim*, in which a person radiates his *pnim* outward towards the *pnim* of another, and the other will in turn reciprocate the feelings.

However, even when a person shows genuine *he’aras panim* to another, there is a danger: the person whom he is connecting to might be an unsavory person, who will harm him spiritually now that the other has joined with him. With true *he’aras panim* to another, you are entering another’s *pnim*, and thus there is a danger to *he’aras panim*.

If a person wants to live a holy life, which requires one to live inwardly^[3], and he tries to smile at everyone, what will happen? First of all, he will leave his *pnim*. Secondly, he will connect to all kinds of people, some of which are not holy. And in addition, his *pnim* will connect to others’ *pnim*, both to the qualities of others as well as to the deficiencies of others, both to the holiness of others as well as to the not-so-holy parts of others!

A person who smiles at all people with his whole being is endangering his entire spirituality, because he is opening himself up to all kinds of connections that can bring him down spiritually.

What About Just Smiling In A Superficial Way?

Smiling at others doesn’t endanger one’s spirituality if the smile is superficial. We all know people who smile at everyone, but most of the time it is a superficial kind of smile; it is not a smile that comes from one’s *pnim*. It starts with the face and ends with the face; it is not about being *poneh* (turning) to the other’s *pnim*.

Sometimes, a smile on one’s face indeed brings another person’s face to smile, but it is usually just a smile of the face, and not a smile that emanates from the inner essence of the person.

On one hand, living in this way (of giving superficial smiles to others) has a plus to it, because the person doesn’t leave his *pnim*, since he isn’t going outward from himself. So it seems that a person who just pastes a smile on his face and he doesn’t put that much thought into it, is saving himself from the spiritual dangers he is susceptible to, as we explained here at length.

However, there is still a drawback to always smiling at others, even if it is only done superficially and not out of a desire for soul connection with others. It causes a person to live a very superficial kind of life.

For example, you can have an earnest person who reads statements of Chazal about the loftiness of smiling at others, and he also reads the famous letter of the Ramban that one should always smile at others - so he thinks that life is all about smiling at others. He thinks he has to smile at all people, and he doesn’t realize that all of this smiling is really scattering his soul inside. He doesn’t realize that he is becoming more and more superficial with the more he smiles at all people.

Maybe on his gravestone they’ll write that he smiled at all people, but the truth is, this person has

lived a very superficial life, for he never gave a genuine smile to others! He seemed like a nice person who always smiled at others and always had a good word to say to anybody, always making people happy by weddings and cheering up depressed people - but the truth is, he has lived a very false and superficial kind of life! He never once joined with another; it was all external and superficial.

Of course, sometimes, a person should indeed smile at others and say nice things to people, but this should only be done at certain times, when there is a need for it; it should **not** be a general way of life for a person. It is a kind of life which uproots the entire *pnim* of a person.

All that we have said here thus far is not referring to the kind of *he'aras panim* which appears on a person's face either because he is wise, or when it comes from his heart, or when it comes from his body.

With those kinds of *he'aras panim*, there is no danger to the person's spirituality, because he is not actively turning outward towards others. He is merely happy inside of himself, and although others can see that there is *he'aras panim* on his face, he is not using his *he'aras panim* to actively form a soul connection with others through his smile. Here, we are speaking about a reciprocal smile, which is when the smile truly stems from one's heart.

The Definition of A Genuine, Holy Smile

However, as we mentioned earlier, the heart of a person can be happy either for good or for evil, as we brought before. When the heart is happy, this creates an inward kind of *he'aras panim* in the person, which lights up his face. As we brought earlier from the words of our Sages, there are wicked people whose faces shine because they have happy lives, as the Sages state, and this happiness comes from their hearts. But this is the evil kind of *he'aras panim* that stems from the heart when a person is immersed in evil acts.

By contrast, the holy kind of *he'aras panim* which stems from the heart is when you truly feel a love for another, and therefore your face lights up when you see him. As it is written of Aharon HaKohen, "*And he will see you, and his heart will rejoice.*" When one who is truly happy to see another Jew's face, and when he feels that the other's joy is his own joy - that is true *he'aras panim* when he smiles at another. Such *he'aras panim* is coming from his *pnim* (inwardness), and it is also being *poneh* (turned) outwards to another. This is the genuine *he'aras panim*.

When To Smile, and When Not To Smile

However, even when one is giving this genuine kind of *he'aras panim* to others, there is subtle inner work to do here, as we will explain. (Later, with the help of Hashem, we will explain how this relates to the our current avodah with regards to fixing the trait of flattery).

When one is having genuine *he'aras panim* to another - when he is smiling at another from his own *pnim* - he has to make sure that he is not totally leaving his *pnim*. This requires an inner sense of balance.

So: how much should one smile at others? It depends. If a person knows that he can remain connected to his internal, spiritual world even as he's smiling at all kinds of people, then he can smile at others. But if he senses that he will lose all his spiritual levels when he smiles at other people, it is a sign that he should not allow himself to actively smile at others.[\[4\]](#)

Of course, there is always some degree of exiting outward from yourself when you smile at another, but as long as you can immediately return to your inwardness, you can allow yourself to go a little outward.

But as we said, if smiling at others is causing you to leave your *pnim* inwardness, your *avodah* is to refrain from *he'aras panim*. Although it appears that "it's a big *mitzvah* to smile at others", it is the truth what counts, and since this will cause you to have a spiritual fall, it's forbidden for you to allow yourself to go outward of yourself.

This excludes certain particular instances, as well as when it comes to honoring parents, or other unique circumstances, in which you have a *mitzvah* to smile at the person. The point of what we are saying here is that the **general** way to live life is to remain in your *pnim* as you give *he'aras panim* to others, and that if you cannot remain in your *pnim*, you are endangering your spirituality when you to enter into "*he'aras panim*" mode.

When You Have To Deal With Those Whom You May Not Connect With: Use Superficial Smiling

When you smile at another, are you smiling at his face, or are you turning to his inner essence? We can see that when a person smiles at another, it is often just a smile of the face, and it is not an active attempt to connect to other person's essence.

To illustrate, it is brought in *Halacha* that it is forbidden (for a man) to stare in a woman's face, at the face of a wicked person, or at the face of a non-Jew. Sometimes we have to look at a wicked person, like if we have dealings with him, or if looking at him will assist him in doing *teshuvah*. In these instances, we have to smile at the person for whatever reason, but we should not be attempting to connect to the person's essence. We can smile at him, but only from our face to his face, and not from our essence to his essence.

We see that a person can have internal *he'aras panim* yet keep himself inward, such as in the scenario of *he'aras panim* that wise people possess, in which their faces are lit up with wisdom, but they are not actively smiling at others. This is the kind of *he'aras panim* that should be used when dealing with those whom we are forbidden to show *he'aras panim* to. They can see *he'aras panim* on you, but you shouldn't be turning your *he'aras panim* outwardly towards them.

To give a simple example of this, a person making a *simcha* makes sure to give a smile on his face; he is not intending to smile at anyone in particular, and he is just pasting a superficial smile on his face. This is the kind of *he'aras panim* you can give towards people whom you may not give *he'aras panim* to.

Smiling At A Non-Wicked Person: How To Smile

But if you are dealing with someone whom you may give *he'aras panim* too – someone who does not present a spiritual danger to you – you can allow yourself to shine your *he'aras panim* towards his face, and you can even look into his eyes and show him a shining face and a nice smile. Indeed, the true way to give *he'aras panim* to others is to look them in the eye as you smile at them.

However, most people who smile at others don't really know how to smile with their faces, and it is usually just eye contact (and sometimes people kiss each other). But eye contact with another alone is a superficial kind of *he'aras panim* to another. Make sure to smile at his face, and give him your face, as you are looking him in the eye.

Smiling At A Holy Person

There are some rare times, however, where you can allow yourself not only to smile at another's face, but you can even allow yourself to connect to his inner essence. This is a very subtle matter, but you can try this on someone who is known as a holy or pure person; you may smile at him totally, with

your entire being, and let yourself connect with him, because there is no reason here to suspect that you will be harmed spiritually when you smile at him.

Smiling For “Kiruv” Purposes

Sometimes, for *kiruv* or for *chizuk* purposes, you also need to fully smile at others, but even in these circumstances, you must remember not to leave your inwardness when you connect with others. If you allow yourself to fully connect with another’s inner essence, you receive all his “data” – both the positive and the negative (and even if it’s positive, that doesn’t mean it is good for your soul to receive it), which harms your soul.

So even when you have to smile at another to draw him close to Judaism or to help him, make sure that you are only smiling at his face [to make him feel good] and that you are not trying to connect to the other’s inwardness.

Why Some Gedolim Smile, and Why Other Gedolim Don’t Smile

There are different kinds of people when it comes to the matter of smiling, and it depends on one’s soul root (*shoresh haneshamah*).

There are some people whose *avodah* on this world is to remain more inward, and it is not part of their task on this world to radiate themselves outwards towards others. For this reason, there were certain *Gedolim* who didn’t smile that much at others.

There were other *Gedolim*, however, who were more the “smiling” type, because their souls’ mission on this world was to radiate themselves outward towards the world. Therefore, there are souls whose personality is meant more for smiling as part of their mission on this world.

We all knew of different kinds of *Gedolim* in our current era – those that smiled a lot, and those who didn’t smile that much. It’s not an issue of who was greater; it was an issue of what their soul roots were.

One whose soul root is *pnim* is one whose *avodah* is to remain very inward, and therefore he doesn’t smile that much at others, while one whose soul was rooted in *chutz* (going outward) is meant to smile a lot at others.

(To clarify, “*chutz*” here does not mean simply that the *avodah* of these kinds of people on this world to simply go out into the world *chas v’shalom*; for the world is full of terrible spiritual dangers. Rather, it refers to those whose souls are meant to go *m’pnim el hachutzah* (to let their inside go outward).

So it’s not like how some people think, that one who doesn’t smile is a “cold” person inside. It is not quite the case. A person might very well have a warm heart towards others, and it just that his personality is that he doesn’t turn that warmth outwards toward others.

The words here are subtle - and deep.

Flattering The Wicked: Use Only A Superficial Smile

We have discussed the background of the concept of *he’aras panim* in order to return to discuss our current topic, which is how we can fix the trait of *chanufah*, flattery. We are discussing here *he’aras panim* when it stems from *chanufah*\flattery, which we have explained as a false kind of *he’aras panim*.

When a person smiles at another solely in order to flatter him, the person's *pnim* really hates the person! It is just that on his outside, he shows the other a friendly face. As we explained previously, flattery is when one speaks words to another that are not in line with what he really feels in his heart ("echad b'peh v'echad b'lev"). Flattery is not coming from the person's heart, for it is not the true feelings that one has towards another.

Not only doesn't it come from one's heart, but it comes from an internal contradiction in the person. One who is used to giving a superficial and fake smile to others has gotten so accustomed to a lifestyle of flattery that he is deeply enmeshed in it, and he doesn't even realize.

Chazal say that "it is permissible to flatter the wicked on This World" - what does that mean? To connect your inner essence as you smile at his face? Or even worse - to connect to the innerness of the wicked person? Surely this was not the intention of Chazal. One must be very careful when he has to engage in flattery with unsavory people.

This is really the downfall of the "group of flatterers" which Chazal describe, people that are so used to flattery that they are totally swept up in the superficiality and in the evil ways and habits of other people.

Although there are situations when we may flatter the wicked (as Chazal say), that should only be with **words** of flattery towards them, and not with *he'aras panim* to them. (In the next chapter, which deals with flattery that stems from **wind**-of-water-of-wind, we will address this). Even when you must give *he'aras panim* to wicked people, only give them a superficial smile, and don't give them a smile from within yourself.

When one engages in flattery, he leaves his *pnim* (inwardness) and in turn, he damages himself internally with the more and more flattery he grows accustomed to. And when one flatters the wicked on a regular basis, smiling at them and fully connecting with them, he falls down spiritually along with them.

The Hebrew word for "flattery" is *chanufah*, from the word *chein panim* (a charming face). Flattery is to show someone else a pleasant "face" and nothing more than that. It is not a feeling of love that comes from one's heart.

The Torah says that Noach was someone who found *chein* (favor) in the eyes of all people. He had real *chein*, as opposed to *chanufah*. He had real *chein* because he truly shined his essence outwards to people, and not because he was merely trying to flatter the wicked people of the generation with a smiling face.

Avoiding Flattery & Practicing A Genuine Smile

To conclude and actualize this concept, if someone wants to really internalize this lesson and overcome habits of flattery, he should try the following exercise.

Find at least one person whom he can have real *he'aras pnim* with - someone who you will practice giving a genuine smile to. Smile at him with your whole being, not just at his face, but because you are radiating yourself outwards towards the other person's inner essence.

However, in addition to this, it should be someone who will be open towards you and allow the soul connection. This is, indeed, hard to find.

The reason for this is because although most people can receive ***he'aras "panim"***, a smile of the face, most people are not emotionally capable of receiving ***he'aras "pnim"***, a smile that comes from

the inner essence. Meaning, not everyone you meet can handle your soul being shined upon his. The souls of many people [in our times] are covered over and concealed, and therefore, most people are unable to receive *he'aras panim* from you, even when you want to give it to them.[\[5\]](#)

If one has reached a higher spiritual level, he can feel the *he'aras panim* from his relationship with Hashem. But even if one is on this level, he should still find another person whom he can have real *he'aras panim* with, and by practicing genuine *he'aras panim* with another, this will chip away at the trait of flattery. In fact, the more a person gets used to real *he'aras panim*, the more he will naturally recoil from the fake *he'aras panim* of flattery.

Of course, it is obvious that if you want to chip away at flattery, one needs to simply avoid smiling at another out of flattery. That is the external part of the solution, but in addition to this, you have an inner work here to do: to find someone whom you can have real *he'aras panim* with, which will in turn lessen your habit of smiling at others out of flattery.

Getting used to this will eventually allow you to bask in the *he'aras panim* with Hashem – as it is written, *“Face to face I speak with him.”*

[\[1\]](#) *Mishlei (Psalms)*

[\[2\]](#) *Sanhedrin 70a*

[\[3\]](#) *For more on this concept of living within your neshamah (inner soul), see **Tefillah #083 - Retreat To The Soul** and **Tefillah #0133 - Sanctuary***

[\[4\]](#) *During the shiur, the Rav explained that “Each of us has an “individual” aspect which no one else has (as Chazal say, that every person should say “B’shvili Nivra H’Olam”, - “For my sake the world was created” - thus, no one should be allowed to enter into our most private aspects of our self. Although we need friends, we should not allow another friend into our most private and individual area of our soul. The outer layers of our soul require friendship and socializing, but the inner part of our soul must remain individual and alone from others. Even one’s “best friend” should not be allowed to enter into that private part of one’s soul, because the “alone” aspect of your soul is only for you to use in your relationship with Hashem.*

“Most people who hear this concept think that this is anti-social, or a lack of ahavah (love) towards others. But if someone understands this well, he knows that friendship and companionship is a need only for the outer and external layers of our soul; the part of our soul which connects to others is the part that we use to make friends with. The inner place of the soul, however, which is “alone” (“levad”) is only to be used in relationship with Hashem, and a person should not ever attempt to bring another person into that “alone” part of the soul.

“Although Chazal say “Either a friend or death”, there are limits to this, because a person also has the “alone” part of the soul which must be kept private from others. Hashem is called our “Friend” (see Shabbos 31a), and the part of the “alone” in our soul is the part which can recognize how Hashem is our “Friend.” The inner part of the soul lives “alone” from people, as if it’s in mourning from other people; it is alone and isolated from people, and it left to be “alone” with Hashem.”

[5] See also **Tefillah #020 - The Longing For A Smile**

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