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The Concept of "Chein" - Finding Favor

שיים שלום טובה וברכה חיים תן וחסד ורחמים עלינו - In the blessing of *Sim Shalom*, one of the things we ask for is to merit *chein* (finding favor).

Our Sages say that there are three things which have *chein* to us: our hometown, our purchases, and our spouse.^[1] There is also a concept of *chein* in areas in areas of interpersonal relationships. Eliezer found *chein* in Rivkah; Yosef found *chein* in the eyes of Potiphar. When we left Egypt, Hashem promised us that we found *chein* in the eyes of Egypt.

But the main concept of *chein* we find is with regards to the relationship between man and Hashem; such as when "Noach found *chein* in the eyes of Hashem". Our Sages explain that Noach wasn't deserving of his own deeds to be saved from the Flood, but he "found *chein*" in the eyes of Hashem, therefore, he was saved.

This is a matter which begs a question. Hashem is the Judge, who metes out reward and punishment as is fitting; nothing is hidden from before Him. So what does it mean to find *chein* in the eyes of Hashem? If Noach wasn't deserving of being saved, what does it mean that he found *chein* by Hashem? And how could finding *chein* override the judgment of Hashem which he was deserving of?

Chein is when a person 'finds' *chein*, and as a result, there is an awakening of Hashem's attribute of "Chanun", (mercy) where Hashem has mercy even upon the undeserving. Thus, *chein* is not just a matter of "finding *chein*", but it is a quality in the soul to possess. When a person has the trait of *chein*, he finds *chein* by Hashem, meaning, Hashem bestows upon him gifts which he is really undeserving of. *Chein* is from the word *chinam* (free), which hints to how a person receives free gifts from Hashem when he possesses *chein*.

Chein is a hidden, mysterious concept. What is the root of the concept of *chein*?

"Chochmah": Man's Avodah To Reflect The Wisdom of Hashem

Hashem created the world from His aspect of *chochmah* (wisdom), for it is written, "All of them, You made with wisdom". Being that Hashem created the world was created with *chochmah*, man has the task to reflect this *chochmah*, by exerting himself in the *chochmah* of Hashem, which is the Torah. Man's main man task on this world is thus to involve both his mind and his heart in the study of Torah, which is Hashem's wisdom.

Learning Torah must not only take up the space of our minds and our hearts - it also involves our mouth. There is a mitzvah to speak the words of Torah, “*And you shall speak in it.*” The Sages learn from this verse that one must speak only words of Torah, and not idle speech. Thus the main use of our speech on this world should be in speaking words of Torah.

Even before we speak, wisdom must fill our thoughts, so that we will speak from a place of wisdom and thought in ourselves. The *Ramban* says that one must think about what he says before he will talk. The main body of our speech should be about matters of Torah, as the *Rambam* writes concerning the ideal behavior of Torah scholars. Thus, we see that the concept of *chochmah* (wisdom) is present in both our thoughts and speech.

Not only must our thoughts and speech be an expression of *chochmah*, but even our deeds as well must stem from a place of *chochmah* in ourselves. The *Mesillas Yesharim* writes that the stage of *zehirus* (watchfulness) in our actions includes *cheshbon hanefesh* (self-accounting) before a person acts, while a person is in the act, and ever after a person has acted, he must later reflect on his actions. (It is brought that there are altogether four times of the year to make a *cheshbon hanefesh* - before going to bed at night, every Erev Shabbos, every Erev Rosh Chodesh, and Erev Rosh HaShanah). This is all a use of *chochmah* regarding the area of our deeds.

This is the depth of what it means to be a “*bar daas*” (one capable of understanding). It means that just as Hashem made His world with *chochmah*, so must our deeds be accompanied with *chochmah* - we must put thought into how we act, before we act, and reflect into what we did afterwards.

Thus, we see that *chochmah* must accompany us wherever we go. It is the root of where the Torah comes from. *Chochmah* must be present in how we think, in how we speak, and even in how we act - before we act, while we act, and after we act. Thus, the concept of *chochmah* envelopes all areas of our existence.

It would seem that there is nothing else to Creation and to mankind other than *chochmah*. After all, the world was created with *chochmah*. However, we are not one-dimensional [as we will soon explain]: there is a deeper dimension in us than our *chochmah*.

The Essence of the Yetzer Hora (Evil Inclination)

Hashem created a *yetzer tov* (good inclination) and a *yetzer hora* (evil inclination) which are the warring forces in man of choosing between good and evil. The *yetzer hora* is called an “old and foolish king” - it has foolish and illogical arguments, yet it manages to sway people, time and time again, using the same old tactics. Its purpose is to fight the holy intellect of a Jew’s soul. It sways a person from seeing the correct perspectives in life.

Not only does the force of the *yetzer hora* disguise itself in various temptations of life whereupon it can convince a person to commit a sin; its entire purpose is to steer a person away from a life of *chochmah*.

When a person sins unintentionally, the person has essentially lost his *chochmah*, and that was how he came to sin. When a person sins intentionally, of this Chazal say that a person does not sin unless a “*ruach shtus*” (spirit of folly) entered him.^[2] A person who sins intentionally is one who left the perspective of *chochmah*, he has left his *daas*, and he has instead become blinded by falsity. It is understood by our Sages as a form of ‘bribery’ (*shochad*); we know that even the wisest person can become corrupted when he is bribed. Why? It is because he loses his perspective of *chochmah*, and he enters into a foolish perspective.

When a person sins intentionally, it is not simply that he has lost the battle between holy *daas* and

evil *daas*. Rather, he has been uprooted from *chochmah*. This is the power of the *yetzer hora*, the 'old and foolish king', who fights our *yetzer tov* - essentially our *chochmah*, our wisdom that comes from the Torah; the proper way to live life. The *yetzer hora* doesn't just attack us in specific areas; that is but the result. Its essence is to cause a person to leave *chochmah* entirely.

This is the depth behind the words of the Sages that Torah can save a person from sin, even if he is not currently learning it. It is because the power of *chochmah* that is attained from the Torah can counter the person's idea to sin.^[3] [The war within us between our *yetzer hora* and *yetzer tov* is thus essentially a battle between *ruach shtus* and our *chochmah*].

How The Yetzer Hora Works

To summarize our words thus far, Creation is entirely composed of Hashem's *chochmah*, thus a proper life is a life of Torah, which is Hashem's *chochmah*. The entire concept of the *yetzer hora* is to remove a person from a life of this *chochmah*.

How exactly does the *yetzer hora* succeed in removing a person from *chochmah*, though?

There are four types of creations - the non-living, the plants, the animals, and social creatures (humans). When a person sins, he becomes lowered from the level of man to the level of animal, as it is written, "*They were comparable to animals.*" Man is created with *chochmah*, but when he sins, he falls from the level of *chochmah* to the level of *shtus* (foolishness). But how indeed is the *yetzer hora* able to bring a person down from the level of man to the level of animal?

When the power of good in man somehow goes missing, the *yetzer hora* can then gain power and step into the picture, where it can bring a person down from his level. It is essentially the absence of *chochmah* which allows the *yetzer hora* to step in and bring the person down to the level of animals.

The Point Above Reason and Understanding

Man needs a power that is above *chochmah*, then, which will not allow the *yetzer hora* to ever bring him down. In order to avoid being ensnared by the *yetzer hora*, he will need a higher power than *chochmah* which will keep him away from the *yetzer hora*'s hold.

Man contains the power of *chochmah*, which keeps him upright. *Chochmah* is the root force in Creation from which we were created with; all of Creation was made with *chochmah*, and man especially is made with *chochmah*. But we have another aspect of our nature which is higher than our *chochmah*. It is otherwise known as the point that is "*l'maaleh m'taam v'daas*", "above reason and understanding". We are able to act from a place in ourselves that is above logic. It is otherwise known as the power of *taavah* (desire).

Taavah is to yearn and desire something even when there is no logic and reasoning that can explain it. *Taavah* is rooted in holiness, in the yearning of the soul to connect to its Source.

Every power that exists can be used for either good or evil, and *taavah* often takes an evil direction, where it is channeled towards indulgence and lust. [Soon we will explain what we can do about this]. But in essence, there are two dimensions that comprise our existence: *chochmah*, which is the point of reasoning and understanding in ourselves, and *taavah*, the point that is above reason and understanding.

We were created with *chochmah*, but the deeper aspect in us is *taavah*. It is just that *taavah* can be used for either holiness or evil.

Chazal say that when a person sins, a *ruach shtus* has entered him; now we can understand this deeper. It is because the *yetzer hora* can convince a person to use the power of *taavah* in order to lust after an act of sin. Thus the *yetzer hora* is aiming to take away our *chochmah* by using our power of *taavah* for evil, whereupon our logical *chochmah* is switched with illogical *taavah* that is evil.

If that is true with regards to evil, the same is true in the side of holiness. There is a holy way to use *taavah*, whereupon it can aid us to avoid the pitfalls of the *yetzer hora*.

Accessing The Point Above Reason: Through Emunah

Being that *taavah* is an area that is above reason and understanding, we need a power that goes above logic in order to access it. One power we can use to reach this area is the power of *emunah* (belief in the incomprehensible). *Emunah* is an ability that goes above logical understanding; it is a higher power in the soul than *chochmah*. Therefore, using *emunah* can enable us to reach that are beyond the rational realm of logic. In that way, we will be able to avoid the arguments of the *yetzer hora*, by going above its logical and persuasive rationalizations.

Understandably, there is always more *chochmah* which one hasn't yet reached, but every person's comprehension stops at a certain point. Beyond the area of his comprehension is the area which our *emunah* can reach. The entire creation is all in the realm of *chochmah*, but the reality of Hashem [and one's personal belief in His reality] is beyond this realm; just like Hashem is above the limits of this creation, so can a person connect a place that is above all the limits of creation. The higher root of *chochmah* is thus *emunah*.

Emunah is the power in ourselves to act from a place that is above logic. Of course, *emunah* without *chochmah* is a delusional kind of *emunah*. But when there is *chochmah* based upon *emunah*, when *emunah* precedes the *chochmah*, this is the perfection of a Jew's soul. The Torah is Hashem's revelation of *chochmah* upon the world, but it was preceded with *emunah* in Hashem. Thus, our *chochmah* must be preceded with *emunah*, and then we are able to reach the place that is 'above reason and understanding', where are beyond the seemingly 'rational' arguments of the *yetzer hora*.

Thus, one must reach the area that is above *chochmah*; the point in ourselves that is beyond reason and understanding. We are already making use of it; when it is not used properly, it becomes channeled towards evil uses, where it becomes evil *taavah*; it becomes *ruach shtus*. But herein lays the key: the more *emunah* a person has reached, the more he can give up *taavah*, because he has reached the point that goes above reason and understanding, and therefore, he can give up the very desires and lusts which are in the area above his logical understanding.

Holy Desire

Besides for the power of *emunah*, there is also another power in the soul which can reach the point above reason and understanding. It is called '*taavah d'kedushah*', "holy desire."

It is described in the verse, "נפשי בלילה אייתר" - "My soul at night desired." This is referring the power of *taavah d'kedushah*, holy desire - the deepest desire of the soul of yearning for closeness with Hashem. The concept of *taavah d'kedushah* is rooted in the fact that Hashem has a desire to dwell on this world. Hashem has a desire for us, and we can reflect that desire back to Hashem. Our deepest *taavah* is to intimately connect ourselves with Hashem. It goes above all reason and understanding.

Understanding 'Chein'

Now we can understand better the idea behind *chein*, which is when one finds favor in the eyes of Hashem even when he is undeserving.

Noach found *chein*; Queen Esther found *chein*. It is illogical; it is above reason and understanding. Ask any person why a certain person has more *chein*. It doesn't make any sense; it just cannot be explained. Of course, people try to attach reasons to it and they try to understand why certain person is more charismatic and likeable, but this is only because people don't understand what it is; therefore they try to logically explain it. But *chein* really has no reason to it.

Chein is achieved by one who has 'found *chein*' in the eyes of Hashem. It cannot be understood or explained logically. Even when there is some logical reason to explain why a certain person has *chein* and he is charismatic and well-liked, it can never be the actual reason, for *chein* is rooted in the area that goes above reason and understanding.

Chein makes absolutely no sense. The Gemara says that the place a person lives in has *chein* to him, and this is true even if the place he lives in has drawbacks to it; a purchase is well-received by the buyer even if it is not perfected; and a wife has *chein* upon her husband, even if she is physically unattractive. The Sages say, "Anyone who has *chein*, it is a sign that he fears Heaven" - because when a person who has *yiras shomayim* (fear of Heaven), he receives *chein*. He has reached *yiras shomayim*, he has reached the point that is above reason and understanding.

Chein exists both in the sides of holiness or evil. An example of evil *chein* is when a man becomes entranced by a forbidden woman to him. But in the side of holiness, holy *chein* comes from the deep place in the soul that goes above reason and understanding, above all *chochmah*.

Our Request For Peace and Finding Favor

The request for peace in the blessing of "*Sim Shalom*" includes a request for *shalom* (peace), for *chein* (favor), and for *chaim* (life), which are all interconnected requests. The request for *chein* is really an extension of our prayer for the achievement of *shalom* in the world - because in order for us to attain genuine *shalom*, it cannot be achieved through the logical understanding of *chochmah* alone. True *shalom* can only be achieved through the point that goes 'above reason and understanding'.

The Prerequisites To Achieving Shalom\Peace

In order to reach true *shalom*, there must first be *emes* (truth), for the Torah is called a "Torah of truth"; this was explained in the previous class.^[4] But besides for the Torah's aspect of *emes*\truth, there is another aspect to the Torah: "*Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are paths of peace*" - the aspect of *shalom* (peace) in the Torah.

There are two great deep aspects contained in the Torah: its vast and G-dly *chochmah*, which we strive to learn; and the *emunah* in Hashem which we attach ourselves to through it. This is not to imply that these two concepts can be independent of each other, *chas v'shalom*. Rather, both *chochmah* and *emunah* are the two great, deep aspects of the Torah.

There is an aspect of the Torah that is "*chochmah*", which is the 'Torah of truth implanted in us'; but besides for this, there is another deep aspect to the Torah: *emunah* (faith). We 'believed' in Moshe as Hashem's servant and faithful shepherd, and thus we were able to receive the Torah.

The '*emunah*' aspect of the Torah implies that we have can reveal a yearning and desire for the Torah, for sweetness of the Torah, but even more so, it is when the Torah has *chein* to us - when we love the Torah from a place in ourselves that goes above reason and understanding. This is the meaning of how the Torah is called "*aishes chayil*" (woman of valor). Chazal state that we receive *chein* from the Torah when we learn it, for it is written of it, "*A beloved hind, inspiring favor.*" ^[5]

Thus, in the prayer of “*Sim Shalom*”, where we request *shalom* upon the world, we say specifically that *shalom* should come from *chein*; for *shalom* cannot be achieved logically. *Shalom* can only come from a place above reason and understanding; from *emunah*; from *taavah d’kedushah* – and more obviously, through *chein*.

As long as *shalom* is pursued logically, it can never be perfectly attained; it can only be a path towards *shalom*. *Shalom* is revealed through connecting to the depths of Torah, to the “Torah of life” that it is, to the Torah which places *chein* on those who learn it.

Thus, there are two aspects of connection to the Torah: *chochmah* [through pursuing *emes*\truth, a “Torah of truth”], and *chein* [through *emunah*, which is the “Torah of life”]. With these two aspects together, there is a revelation of “Hashem, Torah, and Yisrael are one” – we find *chein* in Hashem’s eyes; the Torah places *chein* on us; and all souls of *Yisrael* find *chein* to us, [because there is *shalom*]. Those are the three kinds of *chein* that exist.

In Conclusion

These are deep, amazing concepts about our soul, which describe the depths of our connection to “Hashem, Torah, and Yisrael”.

[1] Sotah 47a

[2] Sotah 2a

[3] Sotah 13a

[4] See **Tefillah #0164 - Truth Before Peace**

[5] *Mishlei 5:19*; see *Kesubos 77b*

Source: <https://bilvavi.net/english/tefillah-165-above-reason-and-understanding>