

A Penny For Your Thoughts

There is a Zohar teaching on our portion (-Vol II 117b) that tells a story of how once, while Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai was sitting with his "*chavraia*" (the name used for this group of holy students), and they were discussing secrets of the Torah, Rabbi Shimon saw that Rabbi Yosei, "*was thinking of worldly matters.*" Rabbi Shimon said to him, "*Yosei, rise up and complete your portrait, for a letter (on a spiritual level) is missing within you.*" --Rabbi Shimon noticed that because Rabbi Yosei was thinking of "*worldly matters,*" therefore there became a lacking in his "*portrait*" and one letter of his name (others explain it to be a the letter *yud* from his title Rebbe -רבי) was missing.-- After which, "*Rabbi Yosei "rose up" and rejoiced in the words of Torah... Rabbi Shimon looked at him and said, 'Rabbi Yosei, now you are complete... and your portrait is complete.'*" Rabbi Shimon then went on to say teachings upon the verse (in our portion; -Exodus 39:30), "*And he (the Zohar changes the verse's text from *they* to *he*) made the 'tzitz' (the High Priest's forehead-plate).*"

Question: How is it possible that Rabbi Yosei, of the great among the *Tannaim* (Sages of the Mishnaic Age: 3488--3950 (273 BCE--190 CE)), while in the presence of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, together with Rabbi Shimon's *chavraia*, and studying secrets of the Torah, should be thinking of "*worldly matters*"?! While, on the other hand, if we are to say that Rabbi Yosei's thinking was with Torah-law allowing him to break from hearing the secrets of the Torah (which would explain why Rabbi Shimon didn't admonish Reb Yosei for "*bittul (nullifying (belittling))*". Meaning, not learning Torah when one is obligating to be studying) *Torah*"), then why did Rabbi Yosei's thinking cause the lack of a letter of his name?

Explanation: First, a little about Rabbi Yosei: (i) Rabbi Yosei was not always of the, "*Torah is their vocation,*" of the *chavraia*, who only studied Torah. Rather, he worked as a tanner, as well. (ii) Rabbi Yosei also occupied himself with communal needs. --See for example Sanhedrin 19a, "Rabbi Yosei returned the matter to its former custom in Tzippori (his city), that the mourners would stand and all the people would pass... Rabbi Yosei instituted an ordinance in Tzippori that a woman should not walk in the market and have her son following behind her (rather, he should walk in front of her), because of an incident that happened (bandits abducted a child)... Rabbi Yosei instituted an ordinance in Tzippori that women should converse in the bathroom, because of the (restrictions on women being) secluded (with men). Since the public bathrooms there were outside the city a man might enter to take advantage of a woman, but he would be ward off by the women's conversation)."

Thus, we now understand that the "*worldly matter*" thoughts of Rabbi Yosei, which overrides Torah-study, was that of Communal Matters. Nevertheless, (even though communal matters override Torah-study because of the necessary outcome for the public), concerning the person himself, who has to stop his learning and there is the loss of Torah-study, hence, this caused in Rabbi Yosei the lack of a letter in his name. --See for example by Mordechai, that before he was appointed minister by King Achashverosh, in which he was able to benefit the Jewish people, he was ranked *fourth* among the Sages, and once appointed minister, because he had to study Torah less, he was lowered to *fifth*.

Rabbi Levi Yitchchok, father of the Rebbe, teaches (-Likkutei Levi Yitzchok, page 158) upon this story of the Zohar that Rabbi Yosei was not thinking meaningless thoughts, G-d forbid! Rather, he was thinking, "*Toil of Conversation,*" which is of, "*Great Matter*".

That Talmud (-ibid 99b) states:

"*Rabbi Elazar says: Every man was created for labor, as it is stated (-Job 5:7), 'Man is born for toil.' I do not know whether he was created for toil of the mouth (speech), or whether he was created for the toil of labor. When (-Proverbs 16:26) states, 'For his mouth presses upon him,' you must say that he was created for toil of the mouth. And still I do not know whether it is for the toil of Torah or for the toil of conversation*. When (-Joshua 1:8) states, 'This Torah scroll shall not depart from your mouth,' you must say that he was created for the toil of Torah.*"

*See *Toras Menachem*, (Vol 52, Page 33): The Rebbe explains, "*Toil of Conversation,*" as toiling to make sure that our words are always honest and faithful (Maimonides (Hilchois Daos 5:1): "*A wise man needs to be recognized in his... speech*"), which draws forth "*G-d's Conversation*" of (-Ethics 5:1), "*With Ten Utterances did G-d create the world,*" being that we must consistently draw forth from G-d an ongoing *Ten Utterances*, in order to keep the world in existence. Then the Rebbe explains that in particular, "*Toil of Conversation*" refers to *Prayer*, which is about refining and rectifying one's physicality, the coarseness and ego his body and of his *Animal Soul*. This brings the fulfillment of G-d's desire for creation, that we make this world a befitting dwelling place for G-d.

The mere fact that the Talmud has a thought that "*Man is born for toil*" could mean "*Toil of Conversation*" over "*Toil of Torah* (study)" tells us: (i) We are speaking of a "*Toil of Conversation*" of great value. (ii) Even after the conclusion of "*Toil of Torah,*" we are not to negate the greatness of "*Toil of Conversation.*" On the contrary: (a) One must first work the "*Toil of Conversation (Prayer; Self-refinement)*" in order to be able to have any true "*Toil of Torah.*" (b) We are speaking here of the great and vital *Service* of refining oneself that all our "*Worldly Matters*" should be only of (-Ethics 2:12), "*All your actions be for the sake of heaven,*" and of (-Proverbs 3:6), "*In all your ways know Him (G-d).*" (c) Which in turn brings forth G-d's ongoing *Ten Utterances'* existence to the world. And (d), brings about the fulfillment of G-d's primary purpose for creating the world, that we make for Him a dwelling place here below..

Nevertheless, even this great and vital "*Toil of Conversation*" is not in comparison to "*Toil of Torah*". For "*Toil of Torah* (called (-Zohar Vol III 149b) "*Words of Holiness*") draws a *Light of Divinity* which transcends far above and beyond the divinity of the "*Ten Utterances* (called (-ibid) "*Words of a Layman*")" vitality of the world.

Deeper Yet: We still need to understand, albeit "*Toil of Torah*" is incomparably greater than "*Toil of Conversation,*" nevertheless, this does not explain why the great and vital service of "*Toil of Conversation*" would cause Rabbi Yosei to lose a letter of his name? More so, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok explains that each of these great and holy sages served G-d in accordance with the spiritual root-source of their soul within the *Ten Sefirot (Emanations)* of the *World of Divinity*, called *Atrzilut*. Rabbi Yosei's soul's root-source was the *Tenth Emanation: Kingship*, which serves as the spiritual source to the *Lower Worlds*. This is why Rabbi Yosei's service was of, "*Toil of Conversation,*" drawing forth from G-d an ongoing vitality and existence for the world: "*Worldly*

Matters.” Thus, how could this cause the lacking of a letter in his name, when this is specifically the service matching to his soul, and thus, his name?! Is Rabbi Yosei hereby to feel sad over the service G-d chose for his soul, because it inevitable will take away from his “*Toil of Torah*,” and hence, create a loss in his name?!

Additionally, why was it Rabbi Shimon, and not Rabbi Yosei, who saw when Rabbi Yosei lost, and then regained, a letter of his name?

Precisely because this is the service for the soul of Rabbi Yosei, therefore, for Rabbi Yosei, “*thinking of worldly matters*,” performing the, “*Toil of Conversation*,” was not a lacking at all, not in his “*portrait*,” and not in his “*name*”. It is only at times when Rabbi Yosei was sitting as a member of Rabbi Shimon’s *chavraia*, who were, “*Torah is his occupation*,” that Rabbi Yosei’s not being in the “*Toil of Torah*” created a lack within his name. This is why only Rabbi Shimon, the head of the *chavraia*, was the one that saw the loss and the return of a letter in Rabbi Yosei’s name.

Even Deeper: Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the *Alter Rebbe*, writes in his *Shulchan Aruch* (-*Laws of Torah-study*, 1:4):

“*And the Sages also said that every soul needs, for its correction, to engage in PaRDaS (four dimensions of Torah-study) as much as it can comprehend and know. And anyone who can comprehend and know a lot, and is lazy, and did not comprehend and know but a little, will need to come in incarnation until he comprehends and knows everything that his soul can comprehend from the knowledge of the Torah, in the simple meaning of the laws, indications, homiletics, and secrets. Because all that his soul can comprehend and know from the knowledge of the Torah is its (the soul’s) correction, its completion. And it is impossible for it to be corrected and completed within the ‘Bond of Life: G-d,’ in its (the soul’s) source, from which it was hewed, without this knowledge. And therefore the Sages said, ‘Rejoice he who comes here (Heaven: Garden of Eden) with his (Torah) studies in his hand, so that he does not have to come in incarnation to this world.’*”

However, if it is not that one is *lazy*, but rather, it is in accordance with *Torah Law* that he is exempt from more Torah-study, of him the *Alter Rebbe* (-*Torah Ohr*, Megillat Esther 98c) explains in one of two ways:

- (i) This in itself (that life has set up for him, that according to the Torah, he is exempt from studying more Torah) is a proof that his soul is not relevant to, nor needs, anymore (than he is obligated) comprehension of Torah. Rather, for his soul, it is enough (-*Menochois* 99b), “*one chapter in the morning, and one chapter in the evening*.”
- (ii) Being that he is, “*occupied* (with Torah-study) *as much as he can*,” therefore, “*G-d will complete for him*,” that which he deserves (his soul’s capacity), but is not successful to comprehend through study.

The difference between these two (a. whether it is all the soul is relevant to, or b. whether G-d will completes his Torah comprehension for him) is dependent upon whether the reason for his not being able to study more Torah is:

- (i) He is occupied (in accordance with Torah Law) with his personal needs and sustenance, which means that his soul is not of the “*Masters of Torah*,” but of the “*Masters of Good Deeds*.” Therefore, his soul suffices with, “*one chapter in the morning, and one chapter in the evening*.”
- (ii) He is occupied (in accordance with Torah Law) with someone else’s needs, and especially with Communal Needs, then, “*G-d will complete for him*,” that which he deserves (his soul’s capacity), but is not successful to comprehend through study. More than this, G-d blesses him with great success in his Torah-study, that he will achieve a lot of comprehension in a little amount of time, as we find (-*Jerusalem Talmud*, Brochois 5:1, concerning the *Early Chassidim*, who spent 9 hours a day in prayer), “*Being that they are Chassidim, there was a blessing placed in their Torah-studies*,” and so too concerning giving charity that it creates that (-*Torah Ohr* 1b), “*His mind and heart are refined thousand-fold*.”

This is the meaning of the afore mentioned story of the Zohar: That which Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai noticed that Rabbi Yosei was lacking the letter *yud* (יוד), (which refers to the letter *yud* of G-d’s name (יהוה), which refers to the first of the *Ten Emanations: Wisdom*, which illuminates the *World of Divinity: Atzilut*, which, in our *Service* refers to the “*Toil of Torah*,” which is higher than “*Toil of Conversation*”) was the proof that at this moment it was being demanded of Rabbi Yosei to “*rise up*” from his *Service* of “*Toil of Conversation*,” and instead presently occupy himself with “*Toil of Torah*,” in the “*Torah is his occupation*” fashion of the *chavraia* of Rabbi Shimon.

More than this, being that this was an *auspicious* moment within Torah matters, thus, Rabbi Yosei’s Torah comprehension was now be “*manifold more*,” therefore, with this learning of, “*Rabbi Yosei rose up and rejoiced in the words of Torah*,” all that Rabbi Yosei had previously lost out in his Torah-comprehension (due to his communal obligations to think about “*Worldly Matters*”) was now “*completed*,” as Rabbi Shimon told Rabbi Yosei, “*now you are complete... and your portrait is complete*,” including that which was lost to Rabbi Yosei previously.