



Volume 4. Issue 45

## Crowns

*Rabbi Shimon* says: '[There are] three crowns: the crown of *Torah*, the crown of priesthood, and the crown of kingship and the crown of a good name rises higher than them. Avot (4:12)

This *Mishnah* raises a number of reasons. How are the three crowns linked? Are the three crowns indeed equal as they appear? Perhaps most pressing, why does the crown of a good name "rise above" the other three?

The three original crowns are not on the same level. On the contrary, all commentators agree that the crown of *Torah* is the highest of the three. *Rashi* explains:

[There are] three crowns and one is not similar to the [other] two because the other two are not given equally to all men; ...it is impossible for a man to be a priest if he is not born of priests and similarly it is impossible to be a king unless he is suitable for kingship [but] the crown of *Torah* is accessible to any who would learn *Torah*... therefore the crown of *Torah* is greater than these two.

Why does *Torah* being accessible to all make it greater than the others? The answer lies in the essence of *Torah*. Acquiring *Torah* requires effort. To acquire kingship and priesthood, one must simply be born into the position. However, while anyone may acquire the crown of *Torah*, few do because of the difficulty involved.

*Rabbeinu Yona* reinforces *Rashi's* logic providing a source:

He who wishes to merit [the crown of *Torah*] will come and merit [it] and this crown is greater than the two [other] crowns as our rabbis said, there are three crowns (*zer*): the crown of the table (*shulchan*) and the crown of the altar and the crown of the lid which is upon the box within which was placed the *Torah*... Inside the screen (within the *Kodesh Ha'Kodashim*) is placed the lid and its crown. And the [other] two are placed outside the screen. Here is proof that the *Torah* is more honoured than the table which represents the table of kings and the altar which is the crown of priesthood, that they burn on it every day.

The *Rambam* presents the connection between the three crowns stating: "[The crown of *Torah*] is greater than the two and in it there are the two." The *Torah* therefore encompasses the other two crowns. However, the reason is not immediately apparent. An answer can be found in this week's *Parashah* (*Vayikra*, 10: 8-11):

And *Hashem* spoke unto *Aharon*, saying: 'Drink no wine nor strong drink, not you, or your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting, that you shall not die; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations. And that you may put difference between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean; and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the *Hashem* has spoken unto them by the hand of *Moshe*.'

And similarly, in *Devarim* (33: 10)

They shall teach *Yaakov* the ordinances, and Israel the law; they shall put incense before You, and whole burnt-offering upon Your altar.

We see therefore that the priesthood is a part of *Torah* because priests are intended to be the vessel by which others can access *Torah*, whether through worship or learning.

The king of Israel, on the other hand, has two goals. The first is to provide a system of government to order society, critical for a *Torah* society (*Avot* 3:2):

*Rabbi Chananya* the deputy of the high priest says pray for the fortunes of the kingdom because without fear of it men would swallow their fellows alive.

We also see that the king has a responsibility to act in a fashion which is for the welfare of *Torah* (*Rambam, Hilchot Melachim* 4:10):

In all that he does, his acts should be for the sake of *Hashem* and his aim and goal should be to uplift the true religion, to fill the world with justice, to crush the power of evildoers and to fight the wars of *Hashem*.

The connection between kingship and *Torah* is clear in two respects: the king must create a climate in which *Torah* can exist and then he must do his utmost to help *Torah* thrive.

Finally the *Rambam* draws the link between *Torah* and a good name:

The crown of a good name will arrive from the *Torah*, that is to say, knowledge of it and the deeds it mandates, for from them will arrive the true good name.

In other words, it appears that a good name, or good reputation, is a concept analogous to *kiddush Hashem* where people see a Jew positively fashioned by *Hashem's* law. This then explains why the crown of a good name is considered above *Torah*, as it is the outward and public manifestation of all that the *Torah* entails.

Alex Tsykn

**Revision Questions**

אבות ד' ד' ל"ז

- Why does *R' Levitas ish Yavneh* say that one should be very humble? (ד': ד')
- What does *R' Yochanan ben Bruka* say will happen to one that desecrates the name of *Hashem* in secret? (ד': ד')
- According to *R' Yishmael* what will happen to one who learns: (ד': ה')
  - For the purpose of learning and teaching?
  - For the purpose of learning and “doing”?
- Who does *R' Tzadok* cite when warning against using *Torah* for self aggrandizement? (ד': ה')
- Complete the following statement of *R' Yosi*: (ד': ו')
 

\_\_\_\_\_ את התורה  
 ” \_\_\_\_\_ את התורה  
 וכל המחלל את התורה
- From which three things does *R' Yishmael* say that a person who avoids strict judgement is saved from? (ד': ו')
- What three qualities does *R' Yishmael* attribute to an overconfident judge? (ד': ז')
- What two warnings do *R' Yismael* provide a judge? (ד': ח')
- What does *R' Yonatan* say regarding on who fixes time for learning despite being in poverty? (ד': ט')
- What four things does *R' Meir* say regarding learning? (ד': י')
- What does *R' Eliezer be Ya'akov* say is the result of performing one *mitzvah*? Transgressing one sin? (ד': י"א)
- According to *R' Yochanan HaSandler* what is the result of a gathering that is *le'shem shamayim*? (ד': י"א)
- How does *R' Eliezer ben Shamu'a* say that one should treat: (ד': י"ב)
  - The honour of his students?
  - The honour of his friends?
  - The awe of his *Rebbi*?
- According to *R' Yehuda* why should one be careful with his learning? (ד': י"ג)
- According to *R' Shimon bar Yochai* what are the three crowns and what (other) crown rises above them all? (ד': י"ג)
- What does *R' Nehorai* say when *Torah* learning is not found in one's locale? (ד': י"ד)
- Complete the following statement of *R' Yanai*: (ד': ט"ו)
 

אין בדינו לא \_\_\_\_\_ ואף לא \_\_\_\_\_
- Complete the following statement of *R' Matya ben Charash*: (ד': ט"ו)
 

הוי \_\_\_\_\_ כל אדם  
 והוי \_\_\_\_\_ לאריות ואל תהי \_\_\_\_\_ לשועלים
- To what does *R' Ya'akov* compare this world? (ד': ט"ז)
- According to *R' Ya'akov* what two things are better than the entire *Olam HaBah*? (ד': י"ז)
- According to *R' Ya'akov* what is better than the entire *Olam HaZeh*? (ד': י"ז)

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**Next Week's Mishnayot...**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
30 <sup>d</sup> March כ"ג אדר ב'	31 <sup>st</sup> March כ"ד אדר ב'	1 <sup>st</sup> April כ"ה אדר ב'	2 <sup>nd</sup> April כ"ו אדר ב'	3 <sup>rd</sup> April כ"ז אדר ב'	4 <sup>th</sup> April כ"ח אדר ב'	5 <sup>th</sup> April כ"ט אדר ב'
Avot 4:18-19	Avot 4:20-21	Avot 4:22-5:1	Avot 5:2-3	Avot 5:4-5	Avot 5:6-7	Avot 5:8-9

