

Toldot Shimshon

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Chapter IV – Mishnah 17

רבי שמעון אומר, שלשה כתרין הם, כתר תורה וכתר כהונה וכתר מלכות, וכתר שם טוב עולה על גביהן.

Rabbi Shimon said: There are three crowns: the crown of Torah, and the crown of priesthood, and the crown of royalty, and the crown of a good name supersedes them all.

"דעת קדשים בינה", בעלי התוספות ז"ל בריש מסכת ראש השנה, דבכל דוקמא תני "הו", אכל עדיון צריף עיון, מנינא למה לי. ועוד מה שדקדקו המפרשים, שלא הנה לו לשום הני"ו אלא באחרונה, שפך היא דרבה של תורה, כמו "את-המשכן את-ההלו ואת-מקסהו". ועוד, שנהא שיהם ארבעה עם "כתר שם טוב", ומהו "עולה על גביהן".

"The knowledge of the Holy One is understanding"¹: The Tosafists of blessed memory, at the beginning of tractate Rosh Hashanah (2a) note that in all places where the Talmud says there are a certain amount of a certain category, it teaches "there are" such-and-such a number of such-and-such a thing. For example, "there are four types of trustees,"² "there are three deficiencies [with regard to sacred animals],"³ "there are three types of wine not subject to [the *halacha* of] exposure,"⁴ "there are three types of houses,"⁵ "there are three types of stones,"⁶ and "there are three types of trees."⁷

Question 1: **But it still requires analysis—why is the enumeration necessary? Why not just say, "There is the crown of Torah, the crown of priesthood, and the crown of royalty"?**

Question 2: **Furthermore, there is a question about what the commentators were precise about: That [this Mishnah] should have placed the word "and" only on the final item, for such is the way of the Torah, as in "the Tabernacle, its tent, and its covering."⁸**

Question 3: **Further, why does this Mishnah say that there are three crowns, when it appears that they are four together with "a crown of a good name"?**

Question 4: **Finally, what does it mean that it "surpasses them"?**

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¹ Prov. 9:10 (omitting prefixed *vav*).

² Mishnah Shevuot 8:1; Shevuot 49a.

³ Chullin 17b.

⁴ Avodah Zarah 30a.

⁵ Mishnah Avodah Zarah 3:7; Avodah Zarah 47b.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Mishnah Avodah Zarah 3:7; Avodah Zarah 48a.

⁸ Ex. 35:11.

וַיֵּשׁ לֹאמֹר, דְּלִכְאוּרָה הִנֵּה סִלְקָא דְּעֵתִין שְׁפִתֵּי תוֹרָה אֵינּוּ כְּתוּרִים, שְׁהָרִי מִי שֵׁשׁ לוֹ כְּהוֹנָה אוֹ מַלְכוּת, אֵינָם זָזִים מִמֶּנּוּ אֶפִּילוּ רָגַע אֶחָד, אִף כְּשֶׁאֵוֹכַל וְשׁוֹתָה וְיָשָׁן וְעוֹמֵד בְּמִקוּמוֹת הַמְטוּוֹנִים בְּבֵית בְּמִרְחֵץ וְכַדוּמָה, לְעוֹלָם הוּא פֶהָן אוֹ מְלֵךְ. אֲבָל הַכְּתוּר תוֹרָה, כְּשֶׁהוּא עוֹמֵד בְּבֵית הַמְּרִחֵץ אוֹ כְּשֶׁהוּא יָשָׁן אוֹ מִתְעַפֵּק בְּעַסְקֵי הָעוֹלָם, אֵינּוּ יָכוֹל לְעַסּוֹק בְּתוֹרָה וְלֹא לְחַשׁוֹב בָּהּ, וְהַתוֹרָה זָזָה מִמֶּנּוּ וּמִמְחַשְׁבֹתוֹ בְּאוֹתוֹ הַזָּמָן. וְאִם כֵּן קִשָּׁה, לָמָּה הֵנִיחַ הַכְּתוּר תוֹרָה בְּרֵאשִׁית כּוֹלָם.

It can be said that initially one might have thought that the crown of Torah is not a crown like the others. For one who has priesthood or kingship—they do not depart from him even for a single moment. Even when he eats and drinks and sleeps and stands in unclean places, in the bathhouse and the like, he is always a priest or a king. But the crown of Torah—when he stands in the bathhouse, or when he sleeps, or when he engages in worldly matters—he cannot engage in Torah nor contemplate it, and the Torah withdraws from him and from his mind at that time. If so, there is a difficulty: Why did he place the crown of Torah at the beginning of the list of them all?

אֲבָל כַּד מְעִיָּנִינּוּ שְׁפִיר, ר' שְׁמַעוֹן סֵתָם הִיָּינוּ ר' שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחָאי, וְאֲזִיל לְשִׁיטְתִּיהָ דְּסִבְרָא "לֹא-יִמּוּשׁ סֵפֶר הַתוֹרָה הַזֶּה מִפִּיד", וְכִשֶׁם שְׁפִתֵּי כְּהוֹנָה וְכְּתוּר מַלְכוּת, מִי שֶׁזָּכָה בָּהֶם, הֵם דְּבוֹקִים עִמּוֹ תָּמִיד בְּכָל שְׁעָה וּבְכָל רָגַע, כְּפֶה הַכְּתוּר תוֹרָה מִי שְׁרוּצָה לְזַכּוֹת בּוֹ, צְרִיךְ לְקַיֵּם "לֹא יִמּוּשׁ סֵפֶר הַתוֹרָה הַזֶּה מִפִּיד", דְּמִשְׁמַע בְּכָל עֵת שְׁעָה וְרָגַע.

But when we examine it well, the anonymous “Rabbi Shimon” is Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, and he follows his own view, as he holds in Berachot 35b: “This book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth.”⁹ Just as for the crown of priesthood and the crown of kingship, when one has merited them, they are attached to him always, at every hour and every moment, so too for the crown of Torah. One who wishes to merit it must fulfill the requirement that “this book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth,” which implies at every time, hour, and moment.

וּמִשּׁוּם הַכִּי תָנָא, שְׁלֹשָׁה כְּתוּרִים הֵם, כְּלוּמַר, הֵם שְׁלֹשָׁה. לְאַפּוֹקֵי הַסִּלְקָא דְּעֵתִין, שְׁהַכְּתוּר תוֹרָה לֹא יִהְיֶה נֶחֱשָׁב לְכְּתוּר. וְעוֹד קִתְּנֵי "הֵם", כְּלוּמַר, כָּלֵם שְׁוִים, שְׁאִף כְּתוּר תוֹרָה דְּבוֹק עִמּוֹ תָּמִיד, כְּנ"ל. וְאֲדַרְבָּא, הַקָּדִים וְתַנִּי בְּרִישׁ כְּתוּר תוֹרָה, דְּאִיִּדִי דְּאִתִּי מְדַרְשָׁא, חֲבִיבָא לִיהּ. וְעוֹד, שְׁהַכְּתוּר תוֹרָה" אֲדָם זֹכָה בּוֹ מִחֲמַת טְרַחְו וְעַמְלוֹ, מַה שְׁאִין כֵּן הַכְּהוֹנָה וְהַמַּלְכוּת, שְׁבָאִים מְעַצְמָם בְּלִי טוֹרָה. וְעוֹד, שְׁהַתוֹרָה חֲבִיבָה יוֹתֵר מִכּוֹלָם, שְׁאִף בְּכֹהֵן וּמְלָךְ שְׁיִיד כְּתוּר תוֹרָה, דְּכְתִיב "בִּי מְלָכִים יִמְלֹכוּ", וְאִין נֹתַנְיָן מִתְּנָה לְכֹהֵן עִם הָאֲרָץ, וְהַסִּלְמִיד חֲכָם שְׁמִינִים לְבָרַךְ לְפָנָיו כֹּהֵן עִם הָאֲרָץ, חֲזִיב מִתָּה.

Therefore, the Tanna taught: “There are three crowns.” That is, they are three, to exclude the initial thought that the crown of Torah would not be considered a crown. He further teaches “there are,” meaning they are all equal in the respect that even the crown of Torah is constantly attached to him, as explained above.

On the contrary, he placed the crown of Torah first, that since it is derived via homiletic exposition of a Torah verse, it is dear to him. Further, a person merits the “crown of Torah” through his toil and labor, which is not the case with priesthood and kingship,

⁹ Josh. 1:8.

which come automatically, without personal effort. Further, the Torah is more beloved than all of them, for even in a priest and a king the crown of Torah applies, as it is written, “Through me, kings reign,”¹⁰ and one does not give priestly gifts to an unlearned priest,¹¹ and a Torah scholar who allows an ignorant priest to recite the blessing before him is liable to death at the hands of Heaven.¹²

Thus, the answer to Question 1, as to why the crowns were not just listed, but identified as three in number, is to teach that the crown of Torah is equal to the crown of priesthood and the crown of kingship. For each of these crowns, it is constantly attached to the one who wears them.

ולפי שהחכם שזכה נמי לקטר פהוונה ומלכות, לא סליק בשם של קטר תורה ואינו ניכר בו, שהרי אין קורין אותו אלא מלך וכהן גדול, משום הכי תני "וקטר פהוונה וקטר מלכות" בוי"ו, לומר שהקטר תורה הוא תוף הקטר פהוונה וקטר מלכות, אף על פי שאינו ניכר כל כך.

Question 2 asked why a *vav*, representing the word “and” was included not only for the final crown of a good name, but also for the crown of priesthood and the crown of kingship.

The answer is that **since a sage who has also merited the crown of priesthood and kingship is not designated by the name of the crown of Torah and is not recognized by it, for he is called only “king” or “high priest,” therefore it teaches “and the crown of priesthood and the crown of kingship” with a *vav*, to say that the crown of Torah is included within the crown of priesthood and the crown of kingship, even though it is not so recognizable.**

אם תאמר, והא לפי האמת, התורה אינה עמו תמיד. והכי נמי קשה לטברת ר' שמעון בן יוחאי, דאמר, "לא ימוש ספר התורה הזה מפיה" דברים ככתבן, והא אי אפשר לומר שהיה דברים ככתבן ממש, שבכמה פעמים ומקומות אי אפשר שהיה דברי תורה בפיו.

Perhaps you will say, but in truth the Torah is not with him constantly. So too it is difficult to understand according to the view of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who says that the teaching, “this book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth” is to be taken literally. But it is impossible to say that it is literally so, for in many instances and places it is impossible for words of Torah to be in his mouth, as discussed above.

ונראה לי, דר' שמעון בן יוחאי אזיל לשיטתיה, דבסוף בבא מציעא, שתי גנות זו על זו, והירק בינתיים וכו', אומר ר' שמעון, כל שהעליון יכול לפשוט את גדו ליטול, הרי הוא שלו, והשאר של תחתון. ופרש רש"י, והשאר של תחתון, דעליון גופיה אפקורי אפקר להו לגביה וכו'. עכ"ל.

It appears to me that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai follows his own view, for at the end of Bava Metzia (118b) we discuss a case of two gardens, one above the other, i.e., a garden on an upper terrace that borders another garden on the next lower terrace, and there are vegetables growing in between. “Rabbi Shimon said: Any [vegetables] that the [owner of the] upper

¹⁰ Prov. 8:15.
¹¹ Chullin 130b.
¹² Megillah 28a.

[garden] can stretch out his hand and take, those [vegetables] are his, and the rest [belong] to [the owner of the] lower [garden].”

Rashi explains: The rest belongs to the lower one, for the upper one himself has effectively declared them ownerless with respect to him, etc.

והכי נמי, עולם העליון ועולם התחתון הם שתי גנות זו על זו, והאדם בנתיים, שישיש לו להטות את עצמו או למעלה או למטה, והעליון רוצה שלא ימוש התורה מפיו, ועולם התחתון רוצה שיגלה בתענוגים של העולם. לסברת ר' שמעון, בכל זמן שיכול עולם העליון להמשיך אצלו זה האדם, הוא שלו, ועל זה נאמר "לא ימוש ספר התורה הזו מפיו". אבל בשעה שאוכל ושותה וישן, שאי אפשר לאדם להיות בלאו הכי, אין העליון יכול לפשוט את ידו וליטול, שהרי "נתי ביהם" אמרה תורה, וגם כשעומד בבית המרחץ ובבית הכסא הכי נמי, ושפיר מקרי "לא ימוש ספר התורה הזו מפיו" דברים ככתבו, במה שאפשר. שבמה שאי אפשר, עליון גופיה אפקורי מפקר להו.

So too here: the upper world and the lower world are like two gardens one above the other, and the person is in between, able to incline himself either upward or downward. The upper world desires that the Torah not depart from his mouth, while the lower world desires that he pursue the pleasures of the world. The person stands between competing domains—spiritual aspiration and physical necessity—and belongs to whichever exerts a legitimate claim at a given moment.

According to Rabbi Shimon, whenever the upper world can draw this person to itself, he belongs to it, and about this it is said, “this book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth” is to be taken literally. But at times when he eats and drinks and sleeps—for it is impossible for a person to live otherwise—the upper one cannot stretch out its hand and take, for the Torah said, “and you shall live by them.”¹³ I.e., we are commanded to live by G-d’s mitzvot, and not that die by them.¹⁴ In most cases, one may violate a prohibition in order to save a life, and certainly we are allowed to eat and drink, rather than starve ourselves to death in an attempt to fulfill the admonition that “this book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth.” Thus, the crown of Torah does not mean constant engagement in Torah in a literal sense, but as the maximal possible attachment within human limits.

Likewise, when he stands in the bathhouse or the privy. Thus it is appropriate that it states, “this book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth,” to the extent that it is possible. For that which is impossible, the upper one itself has declared ownerless.

ואתי שפיר, דהתם אמרינו, אמרוה קמי דשביר מלפא, אמרו ליה, אפרין נמטייה לר' שמעון. וקשה, דמאי שנא סברא זו של ר' שמעון שישבחה כל כך, יותר מכמה סברות אחרות ודינים אחרים של ר' שמעון עצמו. אלא לפי שמסברא זו מתרצת קושיא אחרת בדברי ר' שמעון עצמו, על שהיא דברים ככתבו, משום הכי שבחהו ואמרו, אפרין נמטייה וכו'.

This is well explained, for there in Bava Metziah, continuing the discussion of the terrace gardens, we say: “Efrayim the scribe, a student of Reish Lakish, says in the name of Reish Lakish: The halacha is in accordance with Rabbi Shimon. They stated [this case] before [the Persian]

¹³ Lev. 18:5.

¹⁴ Avodah Zarah 27b.

King Shapur. He [agreed and therefore they] said to him: Let us pay tribute to Rabbi Shimon.”¹⁵

It is difficult to understand: What is different about this reasoning of Rabbi Shimon that they praised it so much, more than many other reasonings and rulings of Rabbi Shimon himself? Rather, because from this reasoning, another difficulty in the words of Rabbi Shimon himself is resolved—regarding that statement that “this book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth” is to be taken literally within what is possible. Therefore, they praised him and said, “Let us pay tribute to Rabbi Shimon.”

ומה שפסיים "נכתר שם טוב עולה על גביהן", כלומר, הואיל שאמרנו שמי שזכה לכתר כהונה ומלכות, אף על פי שהוא חכם, לא סליק בשם של כתר תורה, ואינו ניכר בו כל כך, שבכלל פהן ומלך, היא גדולת התורה. מקל מקום, ב"שם טוב" אינו כך, שאף על פי שיהיה האדם נקרא חכם או פהן או מלך, אם זכה לשם טוב יותר מאחרים, נכתירוהו ונקראוהו אף בשם טוב, ויאמרו אותו החכם נאותו הפהן או המלך זכה לשם, כמו שאמרו רבבי עקיבא, אשריך שזכית לשם. ומשום הכי, אינו שנה לאחרים, ולא יתכן לומר "ארבעה כתרים הם", אלא הוא דבר בפני עצמו, ועולה על גביהן, שבכל הכתרים נזכר השם טוב עמהם.

We have explained above for Question 1 that our Mishnah identified there as being three crowns, rather than simply listing them, in order to show that the crown of Torah was equal to the crown of priesthood and the crown of kingship.

But then Question 3 asked about the listing of the crown of a good name, which would seem to bring the total to four crowns.

Also, Question 4 asked why our Mishnah concludes, “and the crown of a good name surpasses them.”

We have said that one who has merited the crown of priesthood and kingship—even though he is a sage—is not designated by the name of the crown of Torah and is not so recognizable by it. That is because within the category of priest and king lies the greatness of Torah.

Nevertheless, with a “good name” it is not so. For even if a person is called a sage or a priest or a king, if he merits a good name more than others, they will crown him and call him also by a good name. They will say: that sage, or that priest, or that king merited a good name, as they said regarding Rabbi Akiva, “fortunate are you that you merited a [good] name.”¹⁶ Therefore, the answer to Question 3 is that [a good name] is not equal to the others, but is superior to them, and thus it is not fitting to say “there are four crowns,” which would suggest that all four were equal to each other. Rather, [the crown of a good name] is a matter unto itself and surpasses them. Thus, the answer to Question 4 is that with regard to all the crowns, the crown of a good name is mentioned alongside them, rather than being silently incorporated into each of the other crowns. The crown of a good name is not a parallel crown, but is a qualitative enhancement that can accompany any of the other crowns.

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¹⁵ Bava Metziah 119a. In our version, “King Shapur says to them: “Let us pay tribute to Rabbi Shimon.”

¹⁶ Yevamot 16a.