



## GLOBAL WOMEN'S CAMPAIGN TO LEARN PIRKEI AVOS

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SHIUR #3

### פרק ד משנה י"ג

רבי שמעון אומר, שלשה כתר־ים הן: כְּתֶר תּוֹרָה, וְכֶתֶר כְּהֻנָּה, וְכֶתֶר מַלְכוּת, וְכֶתֶר שֵׁם טוֹב עוֹלָה עַל גְּבִיהֶן.

Rabbi Shimon would say: There are three crowns—the crown of Torah, the crown of priesthood and the crown of sovereignty—but the crown of good name rises on top of them all.

### YOU MAY WONDER

- Why does Rabbi Shimon say that there are three crowns and then he lists four?
- Why doesn't it simply say the crown of a good name is better or higher, why does he use the imagery that the crown of a good name goes on top of the others?

A person's crown refers to a way one beautifies her Neshama. When a person is doing the practical obligations of Yiddishkeit, and feels the need for more, she may want to turn inwards and work on perfecting her heart and mind. This Mishna lists some of the ways to do this and they are referred to as "crowns".

There are only three direct paths to beautifying the Neshama. The fourth crown, the crown of a good name, can only beautify the Neshama when it "sits on top of them" meaning when one has already achieved the other three crowns.

### CROWN OF A GOOD NAME – כְּתֶר שֵׁם טוֹב

A good name is something that is external. A name is how an existence outside of ourselves perceives us. A name is so different from our real essence that a person may even have a "good name" or reputation for inaccurate reasons.

This is why a good name is compared to mitzvos. Mitzvos can be very external to a person. When a person does a mitzvah she can be completely detached from how she really feels inside. A person can hate matzah, but if she has eaten the physical matzah, she has done the mitzvah. She can even do a mitzvah unknowingly, like dropping money on the street and a person in need finding it.

In truth, even mitzvos done in such a way are very valuable. These mitzvos are more important than any person's internal self-improvement or avoda. Interacting with physical people and objects to do Hashem's will brings holiness to the world and fulfills the purpose of creation and there is nothing more important than that!

**However, in order for the act of doing a mitzvah to become a "crown", to beautify not just the world but also a person's own Neshama, it needs to "sit on top of"-- to rest on-- the other three crowns. What are the three crowns?**



## כתר מלכות

### Crown of Kingship

This refers to how a person works on herself to accept Hashem as her King. She sets aside her personal desires and feelings, if they are not aligned, in order to obey the King. She has קבלת עול; she accepts the responsibility of Torah and mitzvos and Hashem's will. She is not burdened or complaining. She trusts and believes in the truth of Torah and acts accordingly. This is the foundational first crown that a person may work on achieving for her neshama.

How does it look when the crown of a good name – the crown of practical mitzvos, rests on the crown of malchus?

### Think and Discuss!

Think of a time when doing what Hashem wanted of you directly contradicted something you wanted. Like taking the extra minute to check lettuce properly without annoyance, even if we are in a rush or dressing in a way that complies with halacha even if we may be hot.

The crown may not be comfortable to wear but we certainly feel beautiful and honorable when we are able to wear it. However this is a reflection of a distant type of relationship that a person has with Hashem. A relationship that must suppress one's natural desires and submit to the One above.

## כתר כהונה

### Crown of Priesthood

This crown is how a person works on her relationship with Hashem to make it intimate and close. Once a year, on יום כיפור, the כהן גדול goes alone into the most intimate holy chamber of Hashem, the קודש קדשים. In the קודש קדשים the לוחות were kept which were unique because words written on them were engraved. Unlike ink on parchment which can be separated from the parchment, the holy words on the לוחות were eternally connected to the לוחות.

This reflects the idea that a person's desires and pleasures become totally in sync with Hashem's. She doesn't have to force herself to obey. She WANTS to do Hashem's will because she feels an intimate bond with Hashem and no other reality is important to her.

In this state, doing what Hashem wants feels natural to us. We may be tired yet we happily light Shabbos candles or we may not be wealthy, yet we happily share our money with others. This is because it feels good to be in sync with Hashem's will.

This would be the second crown that a person can work on acquiring to beautify her neshoma.

How does it look when the crown of a good name – the crown of practical mitzvos, rests on the crown of kehuna?

### Think and discuss!

- How can we achieve this feeling while doing harder things that Hashem wants?
- Can we develop a sense of holiness in keeping the halachos of taharas hamishpacha so that it is only natural that we want to keep our marriages in sync with Hashem's will?
- Can I be happy to dress appropriately knowing that I am dressing just as Hashem wants me to?

When acquiring this crown, the person is now doing Hashem's will naturally because she feels close and intertwined with Hashem. However, she still hasn't achieved the ultimate unity with Hashem.

## כתר תורה

### Crown of Torah

When a person learns Torah she uses her sechel, her brain.

A person's brain is a very real and physical part of her. By learning Torah Hashem's will literally becomes a part of her and is inside of her. She doesn't need to force herself to listen to Hashem's will, she doesn't even willingly make herself in sync with Hashem. When learning Torah she understands Hashem's will with her own brain and Hashem's will becomes indistinguishable from her own will.

Indeed, it now has become her own will.

Just like when we brush our teeth, we are not doing it because we have been forced. Neither are we doing it because we feel close to the dentist and we start to appreciate what he wants. We understand with our own brain the mechanics of healthy teeth and the importance of teeth brushing so much so that ultimately what the dentist wants, that we brush our teeth, is actually our will, too.

How does it look when the crown of a good name – the crown of practical mitzvos, rests on the crown of Torah?

### Think and Discuss!

- Can I immerse myself in learning Torah and Chassidus about covering my hair so thoroughly that my whole brain and perspective shifts? Or can I dress how Hashem wants because I have truly become sensitive to tznius and understand and relate to the whole idea?



### **“For You Too!”**

In truth, even doing mitzvos beyond the basic level, the crown of malchus, can be very difficult. Pirkei Avos was written for people who have perfected their keeping of mitzvos. The path forward in their avodas Hashem has been outlined clearly: how they can refine and perfect their neshama while doing the mitzvos.

Us regular people, however, who may be still perfecting our keeping of some of the mitzvos can still attain crowns. From time to time, when doing a mitzvah we can think about which crown we can make our mitzvah ride on, and we can perhaps try, for a moment, to be submissive to Hashem, in sync with Hashem, and even intellectually united with Hashem.

### **Stories for the Soul “Mesiras Nefesh”**

As a Bochur shliach in kfar Chabad Yeshiva, Rabbi Eli Nosson Silberberg would often ask Reb Mendel Furterfas to tell him about experiences in Siberia. After some nudging, Reb Mendel finally related the following story:

His first year in prison he was worried that he wouldn't have Matzah. He knew his family would send it, but it could easily be confiscated and not given to him. B"H shortly before Pesach he received a package of 6 matzos, which was a huge source of joy for him. At the same time, not knowing how many more Pesachs he'd have to spend behind bars, he worried about whether he would merit the same the next year. So he saved 3 of them, somehow always managing to keep them with him throughout the horrendous conditions in the camp, protecting them from starving inmates who would take them in an instant if they weren't constantly guarded.

Once a week, however, he'd have to bathe, during which he obviously couldn't hold on to the package of matzos. The solution? He gave half of his daily rations to a fellow prisoner in exchange for him watching his matzos while Reb Mendel bathed.

When the next Pesach came, Reb Mendel was overjoyed to once again receive a package of matzos, and once again he saved some for the following year, using the same method.

Rabbi Silberbergs younger brother Naftoli heard this story, and exclaimed, "Wow, you held onto Matzah for 2 years straight, guarding them, and giving away half your portion of food daily, that's mesiras nefesh!" Reb Mendel looked confused, and responded with genuine puzzlement "That's not Mesiras Nefesh"

After pondering Reb Mendel's response, Rabbi Silberberg concluded, that being that Reb Mendel cherished matzos literally to the degree that one would cherish a diamond worth a fortune, holding onto them with such devotion, and sacrificing meager rations for them, was indeed natural and did not entail unusual mesiras nefesh.

This is the effect of integrated and embodied chassidus, when a person appreciates the true value of a mitzvah!