

## They shall make an Ark of shittiim wood...You shall cover it with pure gold...and you shall make on it a gold crown all around. (25:10,11)

Three of the four primary *Klei haMishkan*, appertenances of the *Mishkan*, had crowns/ golden rims, decorating them: the *Aron HaKodesh*; Ark; the *Shulchan*, Table; and the *Mizbayach*, Altar. The *Menorah*, candelabra, did not. This fact corresponds with the words of *Chazal* in *Pirke Avos*, 4:13, "There are three crowns: the crown of *Torah*, the crown of *Kehunah*, priesthood, and the crown of *malchus*, kingship. The crown of *shem tov*, a good name, is greater than them all. " The *Aron HaKodesh*, which contained within it the two *Luchos* upon which were inscribed the *Aseres Hadibros*, Ten Commandments, corresponds with the *kesser Torah*, crown of *Torah*. The *Mizbayach Hazahav*, Golden Altar, upon which the *Kohanim* offered incense, corresponds to the *kesser Kehunah*. The *Shulchan*, upon which the special shewbread was placed, corresponds to the *kesser malchus*. The *Menorah* had no crown. It is parallel to the *kesser shem tov*, which uniquely does not need a crown. Why is this? What distinguishes the *Menorah/shem tov* from the other primary *Klei Hamishkan*?

The *Shem Mishmuel* offers a profound explanation, which is based upon an understanding of the concept of the "crown", that is represented by these objects of holiness. The *Torah* uses the word "zer" for the decorative crown. This word is closely related to the word "nazir," as in the nazirite who vows to dedicate his life to holiness. He maintains a sublime lifestyle, abstaining from wine and avoiding contact with a corpse for the designated period of *nezirus*. The reason for this is stated by the *Torah*, "For the *nezer* (crown) of G-d is upon his head." (*Bamidbar* 6:7) *Ibn Ezra* explains that while all human beings are subject to their earthly desires, the *Nazir*, who bears the crown of G-d, transcends these desires. He is a true king, for he reigns over himself. The "zer" signifies transcendence. It implies one's ability to raise himself above the common desires which captivate the average human being. As the crown of a king sits above his head, so, too, does the spiritual diadem set a person above the behavior pattern typical of the mundane physical world.

The three vessels which are surrounded by a *zer*: *Aron - Torah*; *Shulchan - Malchus*; *Mizbayach - Kehunah*, all suggest areas in which the individual must rise above potentially harmful elements. The foundation of Jewish life and observance is *Torah* study. Yet, this lofty experience can present a compelling challenge for one who is insecure. Superiority in *Torah* erudition may lead to arrogance and feelings of false superiority. The king also might permit the respect and honor accorded to him to go to his head. He might overrate himself so that he expects -- or even demands -- undeserved deference from his subjects. The *Torah* places specific restrictions upon the Jewish king in order to circumvent this risk. The *Kohen* also holds a position of importance. The community needs his spiritual guidance, his atonement and service in the *Bais HaMikdash*. To the unscrupulous, this can be an opportunity to take advantage of others. Whenever one has power, he has the potential for abuse. Thus, these three gifts to *Klal Yisrael* demand special safeguards to prevent their misuse. The crowns on the *Aron*, *Shulchan* and *Mizbayach* represent

this constant challenge.

The *Menorah* which represents the *shem tov*, good name, which is attainable by everyone, has no crown. The lamps of the *Menorah* shine forth with the glow of the pure Divine light for all who wish to share in its brilliance. No potential for impropriety is associated with the *Menorah*. It is inherently good, shining its light for those who are prepared to receive it. Hence, the *Menorah* does not need the protective nature of the "zer."

The *Shalosh Regalim*, Three Festivals, are each associated with judgement. The *Mishnah* in *Rosh Hashanah 1:2* tells us that the world is judged at four junctures of the year: On *Pesach* for the grain; on *Shavuot* for the fruit; on *Succos* for the water. The *Shem Mishmuel* applies this thesis to the three festivals vis-a-vis *Shabbos*. Each of the Festivals can be related to one of the crowns. On *Pesach*, *Klal Yisrael* achieved nationhood. They became a royal nation, as a result of their unique relationship with the Almighty King. Thus, the crown of *malchus* is linked to *Pesach*. *Shavuot*, the Festival commemorating *Kabolas HaTorah*, corresponds with the *kesser Torah*. *Succos*, by its nature, represents the all encompassing embrace of the Almighty for all Jews. *Succos* is closely connected to *Aharon HaKohen* who embraced all Jews equally. Furthermore, the *Ananei Ha'kavod*, Clouds of Glory, which were granted to *Klal Yisrael* as a result of Aharon's merit, are commemorated by our *succos* until this very day. In these ways, *Succos* and *Kehunah* are strongly linked to each other.

As a result of the risk of danger associated with the three concepts, we must take care to ensure that one does not "lose it" on *Yom Tov*. The possibility for spiritual abuse is greater during these times. Thus, the need for constant introspection, and the added knowledge that Hashem is scrutinizing our behavior, lends an air of solemnity to the Festival.

In contrast, *Shabbos* contains no element of judgement. *Shabbos* is similar to the *Menorah* that has no golden rim, whose light shines pure and clear to all who seek it. Indeed, the *Arizal* states that there is no potential for abuse in the atmosphere that prevails during *Shabbos*. It is a day during which one can experience a feeling that is *me'ein Olam Habah*, of the spiritual pleasure of *Olam Ha'Bah*. Everything can be used for spiritual growth on *Shabbos*. May we all merit that day when this experience will be enjoyed by all of *Klal Yisrael*.