

Your Crowning Glory

This week, in pop-culture, clothing was largely represented on stage, both literally and figuratively. The Oscars on Sunday evening, per usual, presented people dressed elegantly, daringly, and in some ways quite inappropriately (of course not to mention Neil Patrick Harris' creative take on "Birdman"). Stars dressed to impress. That's what they do. It's what fuels them, and what's get the crowd going. Additionally, the week has been brought to a close over the roaring internet debate: [is the dress black and blue or gold and white](#)? (Personally, I have absolutely no idea.) Regardless, clothing takes a very noticeable place in our society. In many ways, we let what our stars wear take the center of our culture.

In this week's parsha, Parshat Tetzaveh, the Torah goes to great lengths to describes the dress of the Kohanim (priests). But why? For this very small percentage of the nation (at the time, only five people) what is the purpose of dedicating almost an entire parsha towards discussing their attire?

The answer, I believe, is found at the conclusion of the parsha where the clothing seems to no longer be the topic at hand. Throughout the seventh aliyah (30:1-10), the Torah seems to be presenting a throwback to last week's parsha as it describes the Alter and its specifications. However, it is indeed pointing out a much larger theme. The third pasuk writes: "You shall cover [the Alter] with pure gold, its roof and its wall all around, and its horns, and you shall make for it a gold crown, all around." The commentators emphasize the word "crown". In fact, the Gemara in Yoma 72b points out that this is one of three vessels in the Tabernacle that a "crown" is connected to—the other two being the Table of the showbread (Shulchan) and the Ark (Aron) of the Testimonial Tablets, both of which were discussed in last week's parsha.

The Gemara goes on to explain that the crown of the Alter, discussed this week, belongs to Aharon HaKohen, the crown of the the Table of the showbread belongs to David HaMelekh, and the third crown belongs to all those who wish to come and take it.

The idea of three crowns is a common one in Judaism. Pirkei Avot teaches (4:17): "There are three crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of kehuna (priesthood), and the crown of kingship." But, what are these crowns? Are they physical? spiritual?

Crowns in general serve no purpose. They are worn by royalty, but they contain no innate power. However, crowns, like the person they sit atop, represent something. When a king dons his crown he is saying that he is above the people, but he is with them—in fact, he is the people. He not only leads them, but he represents them and gives them an image to look up to.

The same is true for clothing. The way we dress ourselves represents who we are. Whether that's by the logos on our chests, or the colors of our socks, our clothes reflect how we want to be viewed by the rest of the world.

Thus, the crown of kehuna doesn't mean to solely represent the male lineage of Aharon, but also to uphold to the values of Judaism, and to bring spirituality and peace into the world.

The crowns discussed in Pirkei Avot are the same. A king has the role to bring the majesty of God into the world; his crown is his jewel which spreads that light. And, as for the crown of Torah, the role of the bearer is to spread the enlightened values of HaShem into the world. Through teaching and expounding Torah and the ideals of Judaism, this is made possible.

Interestingly, whereas the other two crowns are claimed by those who are Kohanim or who are kings from the tribe of Yehuda, the crown of Torah is granted to all who want be a part of it. In fact, the Torah even specifically differentiates the crown of Torah from the other two. Whereas for the Table and Alter, the pasukim say, "קָבַיִם נָהָב זָר לוֹ וְעָשִׂיתָ" / "make for it a gold crown" (25:24, 30:3), regarding the Ark the pasuk says, "קָבַיִם נָהָב זָר עָלָיו וְעָשִׂיתָ". Though translations fail to notice the contrast, by using the word וְ in juxtaposition to the word עָלָיו, it differentiates between something that is specifically designated and something that is openly available to whomever wants it.

What makes the Torah so amazing is that anyone who wants to have a part of it is free to come and take it—keep it for himself or share with the world. The crown is available for the taking, and its greatness is that anyone who wishes to wear it can. It doesn't matter what they've done, but rather what they wish to accomplish.

What we wear, but more importantly what we stand for is a representation of ourselves to the world. Thus, the Mishneh from Pirkei Avot concludes: "But, the crown of a good name rises above them all."

The greatest of crowns are not those we wait for, but those that await for us. As Theodore Herzl said, "הדגא וז נ'א וצרת בא!" / "If you will it, it is no dream!" If you want to achieve spiritual greatness, or even just spiritual growth, there's no point of waiting. Rather, go out, and grab it. The crowns are waiting! And, what does it cost to achieve them? Being kind in business, being a person others want to look up, opening up and reading the parsha...

Greatness is waiting. Go and grab it.

**Shabbat Shalom!
Benji Zoller—Lebron**

Quote for Shabbos: "The greatness of a man is not in how much wealth he acquires, but in his integrity and his ability to affect those around him positively."—Bob Marley

