

Terumah-Crown of Wealth for Avodas Hashem  
By Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh

In the instructions on how the *shulchan hapanim*, the table for the showbread was to be made we find a special emphasis on the crown and the border. The Torah tells us to make a *zer* and a *misgeres*. The *zer* was a crown similar to the crown on the aron and the altar for incense. Rashi brings a dispute as to what *misgeres* means. One view is that it is a border like a molding extending above the table. The other view is that it was a border that extended below the tabletop. Both are typical of fancy tables used by kings and aristocracy. The Sforno and the Netziv understood that there were actually two crowns on this special table.

My Rosh yeshiva, Rav Moshe Feinstein, Zt'l, in one of his drashos brings all the above quoted opinions. He concludes Rashi's understanding seems to be the most suitable. Then he asks why there is so much emphasis on the crowns and on the fancy borders on the table and not more than a simple phrase of making a gold crown by the Aron and altar for incense. He answers by saying that Torah and Kehuna, symbolized by the aron and altar for incense respectively, are not crowns everyone sees readily. True, they are crowns but one has to appreciate Torah and Kehuna to see the crown they are worthy of. However, the crown of wealth is obvious to everyone. Kingship can only come about through wealth. Wealth commands a certain respect in people's eyes whether or not it should be this way. Even in a democratic country such as the United States we don't find a poor person running for President. We are all familiar with the expression 'money talks' and all of its ramifications.

What is important for us to realize is that in order to be really worthy of the crown of wealth and power, we have to use it only for avodas Hashem. Rav Moshe explained that this is the real need to make fences and crowns. We have to make fences to see that the Torah is preserved and this has to be done by those who possess the crown of Torah but use it only to further people in their avodas Hashem. This is the only purpose for any crown; authority should be used to lead everyone else onto the proper paths of serving Hashem. Even when one has this crown of wealth, it must be utilized only in service of Hashem as for example to get people to emulate giving large amounts of Tzedakah. Another example might be that if people see a wealthy powerful person in the community doing good things it could lead to wanting to do the same good things in any area of Torah and Mitzvos. Towards the end of Chapter 9 of Yirmiyahu which we read on Tisha B'av morning we find a similar idea. The verses [9:22-23] read the following: 'Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man with his strength or the rich man with his riches. Only with his one should boast, that he knows me who does kindness, justice, and righteousness for in these is my desire, says Hashem.' How are we to understand this? After all, Chazal made so many statements decrying arrogance, even for a good thing. However, Rav Moshe explained that the idea is not to brag. Rather the idea is that whatever Hashem gave to us, whether wisdom wealth or power, should be used for Hashem's service and when we do use whatever Hashem gave each of us as individuals, then Hashem delights in us.