

# SO MUCH POTENTIAL

*by Rabbi Moshe Peretz Gilden*

Three vessels in the Mishkan (Tabernacle) bore a crown: the Ark, the Golden Altar, and the Table that held the showbread. For all three G-d commanded, "and you shall make...a gold crown all around." For the Table, however, G-d repeated the demand with the added detail, "and you shall make a gold crown on its molding all around" (Shemos/Exodus 25:25). What is the significance of repeating the commandment? And what are we being taught by adding a molding onto which the crown is affixed?

Kli Yakar (1) expounds on the representational significance of each of these vessels. The Ark contains the Tablets of the Decalogue and embodies the power and protection of Torah, the Altar epitomizes service of G-d, and the Table symbolizes the majesty, wealth and honor of the King of Kings.

Darash Moshe (2) expounds that in the human realm, majesty and wealth contain great potential for abuse and destruction, manifested in haughtiness, self-absorption and tyranny. This crown is capable of bringing great evil into this world, destroying the bearer and others around him. But this crown also has the potential to shower others with kindness and blessing. The Torah, therefore, needed to underscore that the crown of the Table in G-d's holy Tabernacle is one that has only positive promise. The Hebrew for "its molding" - *misgarto* - can also be translated as "its enclosure." The Table's crown communicated that the crown of majesty, wealth and honor only serves as a source for holiness when it also serves as an enclosure, a fence to safeguard against stumbling into evil acts.

Mesilas Yesharim (3) is one of myriad Jewish Ethicists who reiterated that the world was created for mankind's use in their service of G-d. The Torah does not espouse the belief that the physical world and physical pleasures are inherently evil, that the highest form of service of G-d is the rejection of the earthly realm. Rather, the Torah charges the Jew with the opportunity to use this world and its pleasures for the service of G-d and the pursuit of holiness; to grow spiritually in this physical world and, thereby, infuse holiness into this otherwise mundane material existence. The lure of the physical for its own sake is powerful, requiring durable safeguards to assure the Jew does not stumble. But G-d put each of us into this world to grow from this challenge and He gave us the Torah as a guidebook to navigate our way. It must be a trial in which we can ultimately succeed.

Have a Good Shabbos!

*(1) Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim Lunshitz; c.1550-1619; Rosh Yeshiva/Dean in Lemberg and Rabbi in Prague; a*

*leader of Polish Jewry*

(2) Rabbi Moshe Feinstein; 1895-1986; Rosh Yeshiva/Dean of Mesivtha Tifereth Jerusalem in New York City; the leading Halachic/Jewish legal decisor of his time and one of the principal leaders of Torah Jewry through much of the last century

(3) "Path of the Just", one of the most popular Mussar (introspective Jewish self-improvement) works in Jewish literature; a moving, inspiring work describing how a thoughtful Jew may climb the ladder of purification until he attains the level of holiness; authored by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, 1707-1746 of Padua, Italy, and Amsterdam

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