

B"H

LIKKUTEI SICHOS

On the weekly Torah readings and holidays

Volume 28 | Korach | Sichah 2



לקוטי שיחות
PROJECT
LIKKUTEI
SICHOS

INHERITING THE CROWN OF TORAH

From the Talks of
The Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson

© Copyright by Sichos In English 2026 ~ 5786

General Editor:
Rabbi Levi Sudak



Your feedback is appreciated — please share your thoughts at info@projectlikkuteisichos.org

1.

Three Crowns

Regarding the statement in our Torah portion that G-d designated the priesthood and its associated gifts exclusively for Aharon and his descendants; “It is an everlasting statute, an eternal covenant of salt before G-d, for you and your descendants... I am your portion and inheritance”¹ – the *Sifrei* states:²

“There are three crowns:³ the crown of Torah, the crown of priesthood, and the crown of kingship. Aharon merited the crown of priesthood, and took it; David merited the crown of kingship and took it. The crown of Torah, {however,} remains available. This is so as not to give an excuse to the inhabitants of the world⁴... the crown of Torah remains available to all inhabitants of the world, and whoever merits it, it is as if all three were available and he merited them all.”

The *Sifrei* concludes that the crown of Torah is greater than the other crowns, because “the very essence of the two {other} crowns comes only from the power of Torah, as it states,⁵ ‘By me kings reign.’”

A similar exposition is found in the *Gemara* (in brief):⁶

“There are three crowns: that of the *mizbeach*, the *aron*, and the *shulchan*. Aharon merited the crown of the *mizbeach* {priesthood} and took it; David merited the crown of the *shulchan* {kingship} and took it. The crown of the *aron* {Torah study} remains available; whoever wishes to take it, let him come and take it. Lest you say it is lesser {than the other two crown}, the verse states, ‘By me kings reign.’”⁷ {The kingship is dependent on the laws of the Torah}

The Rambam also cites this concept,⁸ stating:

“With three crowns the Jews were crowned: the crown of Torah, the crown of priesthood, and the crown of kingship. The crown of priesthood was merited by Aharon, as is stated,⁹ ‘And it shall be for him and his offspring after him a covenant

1) *Bamidbar* 18:19-20.

2) *Piska* 119.

3) The *Sifrei* begins with the phrase, “Consequently, you say there are three crowns....” See the commentaries on the *Sifrei* for an explanation of how this connects to the preceding text there.

4) The phrase “inhabitants of the world” seemingly implies all humanity. This likely means that the crown of Torah is left available so the nations of the

world cannot claim they were unjustly denied spiritual opportunity.

5) *Mishlei* 8:15.

6) *Yoma* 72b.

7) See *Koheles Rabbah* 7:1 and *Midrash Shmuel*, ch. 23.

8) *Hilchos Talmud Torah*, Ch. 3.

9) *Bamidbar* 25:13.

of eternal priesthood.’ The crown of kingship was merited by David, as it is stated,¹⁰ ‘His offspring shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me.’ The crown of Torah remains available, standing, and ready for all Yisrael, as is stated,¹¹ ‘Moshe commanded us the Torah, an inheritance of the congregation of Yaakov.’ Whoever wishes may come and take it. Lest you say those {other} crowns are greater than the crown of Torah, it states, ‘By me kings reign, and princes decree justice...’”

This requires explanation: The *Gemara* does **not** cite any scriptural proofs {to establish the source of these crowns}, even though the *Talmud* is a blend of law, scripture, and debate (and a similar omission is found in the *Sifrei*¹²). Yet specifically the Rambam, in a work explicitly characterized as a compilation of “laws and laws,”¹³ cites scriptural proofs?

2.

Sources and Discrepancies

The *Hagahos Maimoniyos*¹⁴ points out the source for the Rambam’s ruling. He notes that it is based (not only on Tractate *Yoma* — as the *Kesef Mishneh*¹⁵ suggests — but also) on *Avos DeRabbi Nassan*.¹⁶ Indeed, there we find scriptural proofs for all three crowns.

However, two of the verses cited there are **not** the ones the Rambam cites.

And more importantly, in *Avos DeRabbi Nassan*, the proofs from the verses are not brought in a positive context, as the Rambam brings them {to demonstrate that they were actively acquired}, but rather in a negative context — to demonstrate that the crown of priesthood and the crown of kingship cannot be obtained {by just anyone}, unlike the crown of Torah. {In other words, while the Rambam focuses on how these crowns were actively secured, *Avos DeRabbi Nassan* highlights that they are **no longer** available.}

This is the wording (of *Avos DeRabbi Nassan*):

“How so for the crown of priesthood? Even if one were to give all the silver and gold in the world, we cannot give him the crown of priesthood, as it stated,⁹ ‘And it shall be for him...’ {for Aharon and his descendants}. The crown of kingship: Even if one were to give all the silver and gold in the world, we cannot give him the crown of kingship, as is stated,¹⁷ ‘And David My servant shall be their prince

10) *Tehillim* 89:37.

11) *Devarim* 33:4.

12) See below, footnote 28.

13) Introduction of the Rambam to *Mishneh Torah*.

14) To Rambam, *Hilchos Talmud Torah* ad loc., subparagraph 1.

15) A similar approach is found in the *Lechem Mishneh* and in the Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch, Hilchos Talmud Torah*, beginning of ch. 4. See also the *Migdal Oz* to the Rambam.

16) *Avos DeRabbi Nassan*, beginning of ch. 41.

17) *Yechezkel* 37:25.

forever.¹⁸ But the crown of Torah is not so. For the toil of Torah, whoever wishes to take it, may do so, as it states,¹⁹ ‘Behold, whoever thirsts, let him come to water’ {referring to Torah}.”²⁰

Another point in the Rambam here stands out when compared to his wording elsewhere. In *Hilchos Melachim*,²¹ he writes: “Once David was anointed, he merited the crown of kingship, and the kingship is his and his male descendants’ forever, as is stated,²² ‘Your throne shall be established forever.’” This is **not** the verse he brings **here** {in *Hilchos Talmud Torah*} regarding how “The crown of kingship was merited by David; ‘His offspring... and his throne, etc.’”

Furthermore, the choice of the verse that the Rambam brings here as proof that Aharon merited the crown of priesthood — “as is stated, ‘And it shall be for him and his offspring after him a covenant of eternal priesthood’”²³ — requires explanation. Simply read, “And it shall be **for him**” does not refer to the standard priesthood that Aharon merited, but rather to the priesthood that was given as a specific, unique directive to **Pinchas** the son of Elazar (“and his offspring after him”).

It is therefore difficult to understand: Why does the Rambam cite **this** verse,²⁴ which does **not** speak about Aharon,²⁵ instead of **earlier** verses in the Torah that **explicitly** refer to the standard priesthood belonging to Aharon and **all** his sons (especially since he introduces it with the wording, “was merited by **Aharon**”)? For example, he could have

18) See *Binyan Yehoshua*, who explains that these verses were cited because they emphasize that the crowns pertain even to the present day. However, this does not seem to be the primary emphasis in *Avos DeRabbi Nassan*.

19) *Yeshayahu* 55:1.

20) See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 6, p. 299 and p. 301, for an explanation of the variation in the verses cited by the Rambam and *Avos DeRabbi Nassan*.

21) Ch. 1, Halachah 7.

22) II *Shmuel* 7:16.

23) It should be noted that in *Rabbeinu Yonah* to *Avos* 4:12, the verses regarding the crowns of priesthood and kingship are cited exactly as they are in the Rambam. Perhaps both the Rambam and *Rabbeinu Yonah* had a *Midrash* (which we no

longer possess) that cited these verses, or this was the text they had in *Avos DeRabbi Nassan*.

24) Although this verse is also cited in *Avos DeRabbi Nassan*, it does not compel the Rambam to use it. On the contrary, it is an established principle that the Rambam prefers to cite the most illustrative verse, even if it differs from the one used by the Sages (see *Yad Malachi*, rules of the Rambam, letter Daled). Indeed, in this very *halachah*, the Rambam brings different verses for kingship and Torah than those cited in *Avos DeRabbi Nassan*.

25) Furthermore, Pinchas did not become a *Kohen* until he killed Zimri (*Zevachim* 101b; Rashi on *Bamidbar* 25:13). Thus, the verse applies only to Pinchas, not to the other descendants of Aharon. Even according to the second opinion in *Zevachim*, the verse is interpreted merely as a blessing regarding his offspring.

used the verse in our Torah portion, “It is an everlasting covenant of salt... for you and your descendants with you” (or similar verses),²⁶²⁷²⁸ exactly as Rashi brings in the *Gemara*.²⁹

Additionally, we must understand another variation in wording in the Rambam compared to the wording in the *Sifrei* and the *Gemara*. There it states, “Aharon merited... **and took it**; David merited... **and took it**.”³⁰ The Rambam, however, omits the phrase “and took it,” stating simply: “The crown of priesthood was merited by Aharon; the crown of kingship was merited by David.”

3.

The Alter Rebbe

The Alter Rebbe transcribes the Rambam’s ruling in his *Hilchos Talmud Torah*,³¹ and he indeed omits the aforementioned verses that the Rambam brings, regarding how Aharon merited the crown of priesthood, and David of kingship.

Furthermore, regarding the crown of Torah, the Alter Rebbe writes:

The crown of Torah remains available, standing, and ready for all of Yisrael; whoever wishes may come and take it, as it is stated, ‘an inheritance of the congregation of Yaakov,’ for it is an inheritance for the whole Jewish nation.”

This means that even regarding the crown of Torah (where the Alter Rebbe does cite a verse — the same one as the Rambam), he diverges from the Rambam in two ways:

- a) He reverses the **order**: He first states, “whoever wishes may come and take it,” and only then brings the verse {as proof}, whereas the Rambam presents this in the reverse order.
- b) The Alter Rebbe adds the explanatory phrase, “for it is an inheritance for the whole Jewish nation,” which does not appear in the Rambam.³²

26) The *Mechilta* states: “Before Aharon was chosen, all the Jews were fit for the priesthood; once Aharon was chosen, all the Jews were excluded.” It brings two verses to support this: the one from our portion (“an eternal covenant of salt”) and the one from the portion of *Pinchas* (“And it shall be for him and his offspring after him”).

27) The *Sifrei* implies that the crown of priesthood is connected to what is stated in our portion. See there.

28) The simple reason might be that the verse in our portion does not explicitly use the term “priesthood.” Nevertheless, this remains difficult, as

the primary proof should seemingly come from a place that more explicitly details the eternal priesthood given to Aharon.

29) *Yoma* (cited in footnote 6).

30) And similarly in *Kohelos Rabbah*, *Midrash Shmuel*, and *Midrash Lekach Tov* there.

31) Ch. 4.

32) The fact that the Alter Rebbe only cites the end of the verse, is seemingly because this was the version of the Rambam he possessed.

4.

Halachic Purpose of the Crowns

This will be understood by first addressing a general difficulty regarding this entire subject:

As mentioned above, the Rambam is a compilation of pure *halachah*. What, then, is the halachic relevance here in *Hilchos Talmud Torah* that “With three crowns the Jews were crowned,” and that Aharon merited the crown of priesthood while David merited the crown of kingship?

Seemingly, one could suggest that this serves as an introduction to highlight the unique superiority of the crown of Torah, demonstrating that it is higher than the crowns of priesthood and kingship (“the crown of Torah is greater than both of them,” as the Rambam concludes in that *halachah*). This concept has a practical halachic impact, as the Rambam continues,

“The Sages taught,³³ “A *mamzer* who is a Torah scholar takes precedence over a High Priest who is an ignoramus, as it states,³⁴ ‘She {the Torah} is more precious than pearls’ — {meaning, more precious} than the High Priest who enters the innermost sanctum.”³⁵

{The word for pearls, “*peninim*,” is similar to the word for inner, “*lifnim*.”}

However, this explanation is insufficient. If this were the sole purpose, the entire lengthy elaboration would be unnecessary. It would have sufficed to mention briefly that there are two other crowns; the crown of priesthood and the crown of kingship.

Furthermore (and more importantly): If the Rambam’s objective here is {merely to establish} the *halachah* that “A scholarly *mamzer* takes precedence,” he should have detailed what exactly this “precedence” entails.³⁶ We find this in the *Mishnah*,³⁷ where this teaching appears as a continuation to the laws (in the preceding *Mishnah*³⁷) regarding who takes precedence to be sustained and to be redeemed from captivity. (The Rambam explicitly records these specific laws later in *Hilchos Matnos Aniyim*.³⁸)

Therefore, we must conclude that the subject of all three crowns and their specific details — that “the crown of priesthood was merited by Aharon” and “the crown of kingship was merited by David” — has *halachic* relevance to the nature of the crown of

33) *Horayos* 13a.

34) *Mishlei* 3:15.

35) *Hilchos Talmud Torah*, 3:2.

37) *Horayos* *ibid*.

38) End of ch. 8.

36) Some editions of the Rambam have “is more important” instead of “takes precedence.”

Torah in and of itself. It is not merely an introduction to establish its superiority relative to the other crowns.³⁹

Thus, our original question returns: How do these details add to our understanding of the crown of Torah?

The explanation cannot be that the Rambam only intended to emphasize the uniqueness of the crown of Torah, namely, that while the crowns of priesthood and kingship do not apply to all Jews (since “Aharon merited it... David merited it”), the crown of Torah applies to all Jews (similar to the exposition in *Avos DeRabbi Nassan*). Since if that were his intent, the Rambam would have used terminology more suited to that point, using terms of negation (**as in** *Avos DeRabbi Nassan*) or similar.⁴⁰

5.

The Crown of Torah

The explanation of this {discrepancy in the wording of the Rambam, as well as the general idea of the crowns,} is as follows:⁴¹

The precise wording of the Rambam serves to clarify the parameters and nature of the crown of Torah.

The term “crown of Torah” is cited in the *Talmud* regarding several matters, carrying different meanings. For example: In Tractate *Nedarim*, {it states}, “Woe to me that I have made use of the crown of Torah,” and “Whoever makes use of the crown of Torah {shall pass away}.”⁴² In this context, the term refers to the **honor** of the Torah.⁴³

In Tractate *Megillah* (according to the standard version),⁴⁴ “And one who makes use of the crown shall pass away... this refers to one who makes use of someone who studies

39) Note that the Rambam records this teaching as an independent *halachah*. However, in several editions, it is not an independent *halachah* but rather a continuation of *Halachah* 1.

40) Similar to the phrasing in *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Mishlei ibid.*, and others.

41) See what is brought further on (in a slightly different manner) in *Likkutei Sichos ibid.*

42) *Nedarim* 62a.

43) See Rashi and *Ran* there. This is also explicitly cited in the Alter Rebbe’s *Hilchos Talmud Torah*, ch. 4. Note, however, that when the Rambam discusses the prohibition of deriving benefit from the honor of Torah, he does not use the phrase “makes use of the crown of Torah,” but rather “derives benefit from the words of Torah.”

44) This is the version in our *Ein Yaakov*, and it is cited this way in *Tanya*, *Iggeres HaKodesh*, Epistle 29.

halachos, {which are} the crown of the Torah.”⁴⁵ Here, it refers to the *halachos* within the Torah.⁴⁶ There are other examples as well.⁴⁷

Similarly, {even} in the Rambam’s own terminology, the phrase “crown of Torah” possesses varying connotations depending on the subject matter being discussed. We find that the Rambam uses the term “crown of Torah” primarily to signify the greatness⁴⁸ of Torah (or the comprehension of Torah, and the like). For instance, in the *halachah*⁴⁹ {which states}: “A man should not marry the daughter of an ignoramus... for if he were to die or go into exile, his children will end up as ignoramuses, since their mother does not know **the crown of Torah**.”

However, in the *halachah* under discussion, where he cites the statement of the Sages regarding the three crowns, he does not mean the honor of the Torah, nor does he mean the study of the Torah’s *halachos* or {even} mere Torah study. Rather, he is referring to a **unique** virtue⁵⁰ concerning the Torah in general.⁵¹

In order to bring out more clearly the exact parameters of the **crown** of Torah (in this specific *halachah*), the Rambam discusses the crown of priesthood and the crown of kingship and {brings} the proofs from the verses, as will be explained.

6.

Eternity of the Crowns

The **crown** of priesthood and the **crown** of kingship are not {merely referring to the actual} service of the priesthood or the governing authority of the kingship themselves. For even before Aharon merited the **crown** of priesthood, there was already a {concept of} *Kohen* and the service of the priesthood {i.e., the firstborns}. Similarly regarding kingship: kingship already existed previously with **Shaul**, even before David merited the crown of kingship.

45) Megillah 28b.

46) As explained in *Iggeres HaKodesh* *ibid*. According to the *Bach*’s version, the phrase “crown of Torah” is omitted, meaning the passage simply forbids exploiting the honor of one who studies *halachos*.

47) See the Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 53:33.

48) In his commentary on the *Mishnah* in *Avos*, the Rambam seems to explain the word “crowns” simply as “virtues.”

49) *Hilchos Issurei Biah*, end of ch. 21.

50) Similarly, in *Hilchos Melachim*, “Once David was anointed, he merited the crown of kingship...”

51) This specific term is used several times later in this chapter of the Rambam. Perhaps this is exactly why the Rambam avoids using the term “crown of Torah” when discussing the prohibition of exploiting the honor of Torah — because in this chapter, the “crown of Torah” takes on a distinct, essential meaning. See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 27, p. 243ff.

What, then, is the conceptual change affected by the “crown of priesthood” and the “crown of kingship”?

The Rambam writes:

“The crown of priesthood was merited by Aharon, as it states, ‘And it shall be for him and his offspring after him, a covenant of eternal priesthood.’ The crown of kingship was merited by David, as it is stated, ‘His offspring shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me.’”

Meaning, when one merits the **crown** of priesthood or the **crown** of kingship, it becomes an **eternal** matter. It affects “him and his offspring... {as an} eternal priesthood,” “His offspring... forever.” And as the Rambam rules in *Hilchos Melachim* (regarding kingship): “Once David was anointed, he merited the **crown** of kingship, and the kingship is **his and his descendants’** forever.” {Meaning, the difference between the “crown” of *kehuna* and regular *kehuna*, or kingship is the eternal impact.}

However, this still requires further explanation: The Rambam rules that “kingship is an inheritance,”⁵² not only regarding the kingship of David, but kingship **in general** (even regarding the kings of the kingdom of Yisrael). Furthermore: “Not only kingship, but all positions of authority and all appointments in Yisrael are an inheritance for his son and grandson forever.”⁵³

How, then, does the Rambam connect the unique virtue of the “**crown** of kingship” to the fact that “the kingship is his (David’s) and his descendants’... forever” [and similarly regarding the crown of priesthood — that “it shall be... a covenant of eternal priesthood”]?

7.

Essence of Kingship

This {difficulty with the precise impact of the crown in an eternal way} can be understood through the following:⁵⁴

When the Rambam explains the concept of kingship regarding Jewish kings {i.e., those not descended from the Davidic line}, he writes:

“If a prophet appoints a king from the other tribes of Israel, and that king walks in the path of the Torah and its mitzvos and fights the wars of G-d, he is considered a

52) *Hilchos Klei HaMikdash*, ch. 4, *halachah* 20.
Hilchos Melachim *ibid*.

53) *Hilchos Melachim* *ibid*. And similarly in *Hilchos Klei HaMikdash* *ibid*.

54) See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 25, p. 125ff., and vol. 30, p. 99ff., for a lengthy discussion regarding the kingship of David.

king, and all the commandments of kingship apply to him. Even though the primary kingship belongs to David, one of his (the regular king's) sons will inherit his kingship."⁵⁵

This means that even when there is legitimate kingship among the kings of Yisrael (and it is in a manner where “one of his sons will succeed him,” it passes down as an inheritance to his sons), the “essence of kingship” nevertheless remains exclusively with David. The “**essence** of kingship” is completely absent among the kings of Israel.

The reasoning behind this is that the status of a king and kingship can occur in two different ways:⁵⁶

- a) A person is deemed a king because he carries out the functional duties of kingship, managing the actions and conduct of the state (as the verse says, “who will go out before them and who will come in before them,”⁵⁷ fulfilling the administrative details outlined by the prophet Shmuel⁵⁸). Seemingly, this functional leadership could also be accomplished by a viceroy, provided his appointment stipulates, “only by the throne shall I be greater than you.”⁵⁹
- b) A person is **inherently** and completely a king in his very essence.⁶⁰⁶¹

This is what is meant by the “**essence** of kingship”: The fact that the House of David possesses kingship is not merely that they **practically** function as kings (executing the duties of leadership);⁶² rather, they possess the “essence” — the intrinsic definition of kingship.

This is precisely the concept of the “**crown** of kingship” — it represents (not merely the practical execution of kingship, but) the very essence and definition of kingship.

55) *Hilchos Melachim* 1:8.

56) See *Hemshech* 5672, ch. 122.

57) *Bamidbar* 27:17.

58) I *Shmuel* 8:10ff. Rambam, *Hilchos Melachim*, ch. 4.

59) *Bereishis* 41:40.

60) See *Berachos* 34a.

61) See also *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 25, p. 122 (regarding David retaining his intrinsic kingly status

even during the six months he did not bring the kings' offerings).

62) The Ramban (*Bereishis* 49:10) suggests that kings from other tribes were essentially just judges or officers. However, even according to the Rambam, who rules that they are full kings obligated in all kingly commandments, the core “essence” of kingship remains exclusively with David.

8.

Transformation of Identity

Based on this, we can understand the accomplishment of David when he “merited the crown of kingship... the kingship is his and his sons’... forever.” In tandem with the transformation in the *institution* of the kingship itself, there occurs a profound transformation within the *person*, the king.

When kingship is merely an appointment to fulfill a functional role (similar to “all positions of authority and all appointments”), it remains an external addition to the king’s actual existence. He simply possesses {the faculties of} kingship (**just like** how a person possesses property). Therefore, the fact that his kingship is passed down as an inheritance to his sons operates like any standard inheritance: **Just as** one inherits the physical assets of the deceased, so too does one inherit his title and appointment.⁶³

As the Rambam states, “Whoever takes precedence regarding an **inheritance** takes precedence for **inheriting** the kingship,”⁶⁴ and “Whoever takes precedence for an **inheritance** takes precedence for the **authority** of the deceased.”⁶⁵

However, when one merits the “**crown** of kingship”, meaning he secures the “essence” of kingship, he himself becomes transformed. In this scenario, the concept of kingship is not merely an external addition to his core identity; rather, his very essence and existence become that of a king.⁶⁶

This is why the Rambam writes in *Sefer HaMitzvos*⁶⁷ that regarding any king who does **not** stem from “this honored line (the House of David), we consider him a **foreigner** regarding kingship, just as anyone other than the descendants of Aharon is considered a foreigner regarding the Temple service.”

Consequently, {since his very essence is transformed,} this becomes an **eternal** matter, “for him and his male descendants forever.” Since this {kingship} is the very essence and identity of the father, and an heir is a direct extension of the bequeather’s existence, the kingship naturally constitutes the essence and identity of the sons, and similarly their heirs forever.

63) And similarly regarding the inheritance of the position of High Priest, as explained in *Hilchos Klei HaMikdash*.

64) *Hilchos Melachim* *ibid*.

65) *Hilchos Klei HaMikdash* *ibid*.

66) See *Avodah Zarah* 44a, which states that the physical crown of the House of David would miraculously only fit a descendant who was truly worthy of kingship.

67) Negative Commandment 362.

This explains the Rambam's ruling (regarding the kingship of David):⁶⁸ "The kings of the House of David are those who endure forever... However, if a king were to arise from the rest of Israel, the kingship will {eventually} cease from his house." Although kingship does pass down by inheritance even for the kings of Israel (as the *Raavad* challenges {on that *halachah*}),⁶⁹ it does not possess the quality of true eternity. This is unlike the "kings of the House of David who endure **forever**" — because since David "merited the crown of kingship," his kingship is fused with the very essence and identity of what it means to be a king.

Just as this is true regarding kingship, it applies equally to the priesthood. There is the practical service of the priesthood, the actual **functioning** as a *Kohen*; and then there is the fact that "the **crown** of priesthood was merited by Aharon." Aharon merited the **crown** of priesthood, meaning he had secured the very essence of the priesthood. Since he possesses the essence of the priesthood, the priesthood became fused with his very essence (similar to how Judaism is the essential identity of a Jew, and likewise for a convert who converts according to *halachah*).

Therefore, the concept of priesthood for him exists in a manner of "for him and his offspring after him an **eternal** covenant of priesthood." It is in an eternal manner, exactly as explained above regarding a king.

9.

Divine Bestowal

Based on this, we can also understand why the Rambam, when discussing the "three crowns," states "Aharon merited it... David merited it" but **omits** "and took it."

Regarding the **functional** actions of kingship, and similarly the **actual service** of the priesthood, it is appropriate to say "and took it," as one takes and practically performs these duties. However, regarding the "**crown** of priesthood" and the "**crown** of kingship," meaning the very essence of priesthood and kingship, which affects a transformation within the person and becomes fused with his very being, there can be no "taking it" on one's own. Rather, one must be "**crowned**" by G-d.

Accordingly, it is also understood why the Rambam specifically cites the verses: "And it shall be for him and his offspring after him an eternal covenant of priesthood" (regarding the crown of priesthood), and "His offspring shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me" (regarding the crown of kingship). These verses emphasize the aforementioned parameters, as follows:

⁶⁸) *Hilchos Melachim* 1:9.

From the verse “And it shall be for him and his descendants after him an eternal covenant of priesthood,” two points are evident:

Firstly, that this comes from the Almighty. This is highlighted regarding the priesthood of Pinchas, as G-d gave him the priesthood⁶⁹ at that time⁷⁰ in a **unique** manner.⁷¹

Secondly, this became his very essence. This is why it is “for him and his **descendants after him** an **eternal** covenant of priesthood.” It is the very same “eternal covenant” for “him” as it is for “his descendants.”⁷² This concept is so fundamental that it defines the *halachah*. As the Rogatchover Gaon explains regarding this verse, “here⁷³ a novel law was introduced, that even if the descendants is invalid, his service remains valid.”⁷⁴ This proves that the priesthood is not an inherited right to perform an action, but an inheritance of essence; the son’s **primary**⁷⁵ essence is the exact same essence as his father’s.

Something similar is evident from the verse “His offspring shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me.” This verse follows the passage,

“If his sons forsake My Torah and do not walk in My judgments... I will punish their transgression with a rod, and their iniquity with plagues; but My loving-kindness I will not annul from him...”⁷⁶

“The Almighty promised him this,” that “kingship will not be cut off from the line of David forever.”⁷⁷ Following that, the verse concludes, “I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David. His offspring shall endure **forever**, and his throne as the sun before Me.” The kingship is established in a way where an interruption is impossible; it is an eternal throne (“as the sun before Me”), and this eternity applies to “his offspring forever.”⁷⁸

69) Unlike the covenant in our Torah portion, which was established through the priestly gifts (*Sifrei* and Rashi, *Bamidbar* 18:8).

70) See above, footnote 26.

71) He merited this because “he was zealous for G-d.” This contrasts with our portion, where the covenant followed Korach’s rebellion.

72) This contrasts with the verse in *Pekudei* (cited above, footnote 28).

73) *Tzafnas Paaneach* on the Torah, beginning of Parshas Pinchas (from *Kiddushin* 66b).

74) See *Tzafnas Paaneach* *ibid*.

75) The disqualifying act does not change his essence, similar to how a Jew remains a Jew regardless of the sin he committed (*Sanhedrin* 44a).

76) *Tehillim* 89:31ff.

77) Rambam, *Hilchos Melachim* 1:7.

78) Contrast this with the verse “Your throne shall be established forever” cited in *Hilchos Melachim*, where “forever” is said only regarding the throne and not explicitly regarding his offspring. Rambam uses this specific verse here in *Hilchos Talmud Torah* as an introduction to the crown of Torah, which is an inheritance for all of Yisrael, as will be explained.

10.

Inheritance of Essence

Based on all the above, we can now understand why the Rambam, before explaining and detailing the concept of the crown of Torah, introduces the details regarding the crowns of priesthood and kingship and their scriptural proofs. It is specifically through this {comparison} that the exact definition of the **crown** of Torah for the Jewish people is clarified, namely that:

“The crown of Torah remains available, constant, and ready for all of Jews, as it is stated, ‘Moshe commanded us the Torah, an inheritance of the congregation of Yaakov.’ Whoever wishes may come and take it.”

To preface this, at least briefly:

Similar to a literal “crown” of a king, there are⁷⁹ several royal objects, such as “**royal** apparel... and a horse on which he **rode**,” as well as the “royal crown” as independent entities, and then there is how the king (utilizes them and) is transformed by them. {Meaning, there are royal objects, in the aspect that they exist as objects, and then there is the aspect of the king’s relation to those objects, and how they affect him.}

So too with the Torah (and priesthood⁸⁰), there is the “**crown** of Torah” (in and of itself) — similar to the aforementioned explanation⁸¹ that this refers to the **halachos** of the Torah (not the debate, etc.) — and there is the **person** (who is not merely studying *halachah*, for which he must also “take it” at least at that moment, but rather) who is **crowned** with the crown of Torah.

Just as it is by the crown of priesthood and the crown of kingship, the definition of a “crown” involves three aspects: 1) The perspective of the object (*cheftza*). 2) The perspective of the person (*gavra*, or subject), how it becomes fused with his very essence. 3) The relationship between the {two, the} object and the person. The “crown” comes to the person in a manner where they are “crowned” (from the Almighty’s side),⁸² and afterward there can be the “taking it” and utilizing it — taking and doing with complete perfection. This same dynamic applies to the “crown of Torah.”

Based on this, a deeper dimension is added to the statement, “The crown of Torah remains available, standing, and ready for all Jews... whoever wishes may come and take

79) *Esther* 6:8. And see Rashi (6:9) who notes that the crown was deliberately not mentioned {by Haman as something to give Mordechai}.

80) The object associated with the crown of priesthood is arguably the incense.

81) Section 5.

82) The Rambam specifies that Aharon and David “merited” their respective crowns, rather than saying they were “given” to them (as found in *Rabbeinu Yonah*).

it.” It means more than just the fact that G-d gave the Torah in a way that anyone who wishes to study Torah has the ability to do so (“whoever wishes may come **and take it**”). Rather, “Yisrael was **crowned**”⁸³ — the Torah was **given to them** by the Almighty in a manner where it became fused with their very essence; it is “an **inheritance** of the congregation of Yaakov.”

In other words: “An inheritance of the congregation of Yaakov” means that the Torah is “available, constant, and **ready** for all Yisrael” — not that it is sitting “somewhere else” and **ownership** over it is acquired through **taking it** (“come and take it”) — but rather it is deposited within and has become **his very essence**. The directive to “come and take it” simply means that the crown of Torah (with which he is already crowned) should be accessed in a way⁸⁴ that allows him to **function perfectly** with (and through) it.

11.

Causing Action

Based on this, it is possible to explain why the Alter Rebbe (in his *Hilchos Talmud Torah*) omits the verses {regarding priesthood and kingship} and deviates from the wording of the Rambam later in the *halachah* (as mentioned above). It can be said that these two changes are interdependent.

By making this change — stating first “whoever wishes may come and take it,” and only then citing the proof from the verse “as it is stated, ‘an inheritance of the congregation of Yaakov,’” and adding “for it is an inheritance for the whole Jewish nation” — it is more strongly emphasized that this inheritance is not merely the fact that the Torah is “available, constant, and ready for all Jews,” and anyone **can** take it.

Rather, the very act of “taking it” is itself an inheritance for the whole Jewish nation. (It is not something **accomplished** entirely through one’s own independent action, but rather) it comes from above and becomes his very reality, as explained above. This, then, is the concept that the Rambam brings out through citing the verses regarding the crown of priesthood and the crown of kingship.

83) While absent in the *Sifrei* and *Yoma*, this precise phrase, “With three crowns was Israel crowned,” is explicitly found in *Sefer HaBahir* (152) and similarly in *Bamidbar Rabbah* (14:10).

84) See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 13, p. 115ff., regarding the three conceptual levels of Torah acquisition: inheritance, purchase (toil), and gift.

12.

The Practical Implication

Accordingly, the halachic relevance of this entire subject in the Rambam becomes clear.

The Rambam's objective here is not solely to highlight the **superiority** of the crown of Torah — which is why (as he states in the subsequent *halachos*) “A *mamzer* who is a Torah scholar takes precedence over a High Priest who is an ignoramus,” and “There is no *mitzvah* among all the *mitzvos* that is equal to Torah study,”⁸⁵ etc. (and consequently, according to *halachah*, there is a demand for alacrity, etc., in Torah study).

Rather, his primary objective is to demonstrate how the crown of Torah has an inherent connection and bond with every single Jew as his personal inheritance. From this, it is understood that attaining this crown through the methods the Rambam outlines later in these *halachos*⁸⁶ [such as, “He should not divert his mind to other matters, nor should he set his heart on acquiring Torah together with wealth and honor... this is the way of Torah, etc.,” and “Make your Torah study permanent and your work temporary,” among others] is not merely an enhancement of the *mitzvah* or the like. Rather, it constitutes the very fulfillment of “this *mitzvah* **properly**.”⁸⁷

(From the *Sichos of Shabbos Parshas Korach* 5728, and *Shabbos Parshas Emor* 5740)

85) Rambam *ibid.*, *halachah* 3.

86) *Halachah* 6 and onwards. See *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 27 (cited above), in the margins of footnote 50.

87) Rambam *ibid.*, *halachah* 6. Note that in *Hilchos Talmud Torah* (3:3), the Alter Rebbe omits the

Rambam's phrase “and to be crowned with the crown of Torah.” This is likely because the Alter Rebbe defers discussing the “crown of Torah” until chapter 4.