

R' Yosi ben Kisma said, Once I was traveling and I met a man. He greeted me and I returned his greetings. He said to me: "Rabbi, where are you from?" I said to him, "I am from a great city of sages and scholars." He said to me, "Rabbi, would you like to live with us in our place? I will give you a million dinars of gold, precious stones and pearls." I said to him, "If you were to give me all the silver, gold, precious stones, and pearls in the world, I would not live anywhere but in a place of Torah. Indeed, so is it written in the book of *Tehillim* by David the king of Israel (*Tehillim* 119:72): "Better to me is the Torah of Your mouth than thousands of gold and silver." Furthermore, when a person passes from this world neither silver, nor gold, nor precious stones, nor pearls accompany him, only Torah and

And yet: Some people are blessed with a limited degree of *mazal* that enables them to bear children or even grandchildren, but not to reach a venerable old age. There are others whose *mazal* helps them attain an advanced age, but they cannot enjoy the privileges that often accompany it, because they are afflicted with poverty or other problems. It is difficult to find a person whose life is replete with all the prerogatives that comprise an elegant old age: longevity, descendants and wealth. The Mishnah states that the only way that all of these blessings can be realized in one person is if they come as a present, a charitable gift from Hashem.

Indeed, Shlomo HaMelech is quoted in the Mishnah as calling each of these benefits a crown, an *atarah*: *Longevity is an "atarah" of pride; The "atarah" of grandparents is their children's children; and, The "atarah" of the wise is their wealth.*

אמר רבי יוסי בן קסמא: פעם אחת הייתי מהלך בדורה, ופגע בי אדם אחד, ונתן לי שלום, והחזרתי לו שלום. אמר לי: רבי מאיזה מקום אתה? אמרתי לו: מעיר גדולה של חכמים ושל סופרים אני, אמר לי: רבי! רצונך שתדור עמנו במקומנו, ואני אתן לך אלף אלפים דגרי זהב ואבנים טובות ומרגליות? אמרתי לו: בני, אם אתה נותן לי כל כסף וזהב ואבנים טובות ומרגליות שבעולם - איני דר אלא במקום תורה! לפי שבשעת פטירתו של אדם אין מלוין לו לאדם לא כסף ולא זהב ולא אבנים טובות ומרגליות, אלא תורה

By using the same term for each, Shlomo implies that when all three are present they merge to form one crown. For if the crown of longevity is not accompanied by offspring and sustenance, it cannot be considered *a crown of pride* (as *Mishlei* says), and that is why the verse continues, *in the path of charity*⁶⁴ *it may be found*. For it is only thanks to Hashem's benevolence and beneficence that this particular individual has been blessed with all three of these prerogatives; it is not because of his merit or the astrological influences of his *mazal*. Truly, if the three *ataros* come through *mazal*, it is highly unlikely that they would all come to the same person.

64. Some commentaries (e.g., Ralbag) and translators render the term צדקה in this verse as “righteousness.” Rashi, however, understands it as “charity” and explains that contributing to charity increases the donor’s years. In his interpretation, the Alshich agrees with Rashi’s translation, but understands it differently. According to the Alshich, the verse does not speak of a kind man giving alms to the poor, but of Hashem’s charitable kindness to a particular individual.

good deeds, as it states (*Mishlei* 6:22): “When you walk it will direct you, and when you lie down it will watch over you, and when you awaken it shall address you.” “When you walk, it will direct you”— in this world; “when you lie down it will watch over you”— in the grave; “and when you awaken it shall address you”— in the World to Come. Also it says (*Chaggai* 2:8): “Mine is the silver and Mine is the gold, says the Lord of hosts.”

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Hashem acquired five acquisitions in His world, and these are they: One acquisition is the Torah, one acquisition are the heavens and the earth, one acquisition is Avraham, one acquisition is the people of Israel, and one acquisition is the *Beis HaMikdash*. The Torah, as it states (*Mishlei* 8:22), “Hashem created me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old.” The heavens and the earth, as it states (*Yeshayahu* 66:1), “So says Hashem: The heavens are My throne and the earth is My footstool; what house, then, can you build for Me, and where is My place of rest?”; and it says (*Tehillim* 104:25), “How abundant are your works, Hashem, You have made them all with wisdom; the earth is filled with Your acquisitions.” Avraham, as it states (*Bereishis* 14:19), “He blessed him, and said, Blessed is Avram by God (E-I), Most High, who acquired Heaven and earth.” Israel, as it states (*Shemos* 15:16), “Until Your nation, Hashem, shall pass, until this nation You have acquired shall pass”; and it says (*Tehillim* 16:3), “To the holy who are upon earth, the noble ones, in whom is all My delight.” The *Beis HaMikdash*, as it states (*Shemos* 15:17), “The base for Your dwelling that you, Hashem, have achieved; the Sanctuary, Hashem, which Your hands have established”; and it says (*Tehillim* 78:54), “He brought them to His sacred territory, this mountain that His right hand acquired.”