

Three Crowns

The Three Crowns poster is inspired by the Mishnah in *Pirkei Avot* (4:13).

<i>Pirkei Avot</i> 4:13	פרקי אבות ד:יג
Rabbi Shimon says:	רבי שמעון אומר
There are three crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of priesthood (<i>kehunah</i>), and the crown of kingship (<i>malchut</i>). And the crown of a good name (<i>shem tov</i>) supersedes them all.	שְׁלֹשָׁה כְּתָרִים הֵם, כְּתָר תּוֹרָה וְכְתָר כְּהֻנָּה וְכְתָר מַלְכוּת, וְכְתָר שֵׁם טוֹב עוֹלָה עַל גְּבִיּוֹתָן

What follows is a collection of activities connected to Rabbi Shimon's teaching. The collection is meant to work with learners from a variety of backgrounds, and the activities can be adapted according to the needs of learners. While these activities can certainly be used on their own, they are intended to work in conjunction with the Three Crowns poster, which is [available at JTeach.org](https://www.jteach.org/).

Crown Me—Create three crowns, one for *malchut*, one for *kehunah*, and one for Torah. As you create them, consider how each one will look different from the other ones. What materials should each one be made from? Are the materials the same for each of them? What unique characteristics should each one have to demonstrate what it represents? Create a fourth crown for a good name. What makes that one particularly special? Is it more ornate or simpler than the other ones?

You Wear It Well—There are different types of crowns/headpieces that people can wear for various types of royalty. Try on birthday crowns, tiaras, top hats, and other crowns. How does each one feel on your head? Which one feels the most special? What characteristics of each one amplify different feelings?

Literally a Good Name—The Baal Shem Tov was the original Hassidic master. He led a group of people who believed that Torah learning and doing *mitzvot* should raise people up and help them cling to God. Though his given name was Yisrael ben Eliezer, his followers gave him the moniker Baal Shem Tov—the master of a good name. Explore more about the Baal Shem Tov and learn some of his [stories](#). Tell one of those stories to your family and/or friends. Discuss the message of the story and how that message might lead one to have a *shem tov* themselves. Group option: Divide into *chevrotot* (paired learning partners), and each pair gets a different story that they read and discuss together; each pair then presents their story and its message to the larger community.

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Royally Purple—The color purple is often associated with royalty. That association informed the color palette of the 3 Crowns poster. Add some royalty to your own environment by decorating in purple. How does adding purple change the feeling of the environment? Compare how purple feels to how other colors feel.

A Priestly Class—The Torah states that the Jewish people are [to be a *mamlechet kohanim*](#), a nation of priests. Discuss with the community: What does it mean to be a nation of priests among other nations? How does being a *mamlechet kohanim* affect our interactions with people who are not Jewish? Find areas in which you and your Jewish community can lead the greater community. What Jewish values will be most important to showing leadership in the greater community?

Even Better by Comparison—According to Kohelet ([Ecclesiastes 7:1](#)), “A good name is better than good oil.” The Midrash in *Kohelet Rabbah* ([7:1](#)) explains many of the ways that a good name is better than good oil (e.g. “Good oil is temporary. A good name is eternal.” “Good oil is for the wealthy. A good name is for the poor and the wealthy.” List other “good” things that a good name is better than. Similar to *Kohelet Rabbah*, write comparisons that demonstrate why a good name is better.

Three Is a Magic Number, or Maybe Four Is—The Mishnah discusses three crowns. List, draw, and/or create an interpretative dance for what else comes in threes. See how many things you can come up with. (One hint: there are three forefathers.) If you add the *keter shem tov*, you have four crowns. See how many things you can come up with that come in fours. (Another hint: there are four foremothers.) As a bonus, rank each of elements of the trios and quartets and evaluate why a particular element comes out on top.

A Good Plan, a Plan for Good—Develop a plan to give yourself a *shem tov*. Consider not only what you think gives a person a *shem tov* but also what others might think is necessary for a *shem tov*. If you think you have a *shem tov* already, make a plan to make it even better. Reflect on who decides whether a person has a *shem tov*.

And I Quote...—The poster makes sure to include the name of the person, Rabbi Shimon, who put forth the teaching about the different crowns. This is in line with the Mishnah that states that anyone who says something in the name of the one who said it brings redemption to the world ([Pirkei Avot 6:6](#)). Find other teachings in [Pirkei Avot](#) that are meaningful and create a collage that includes these teachings. Expand your horizons and find other meaningful quotations, ancient and modern, as well. Make sure to include who said each quotation that you include and remember to check that the quotations are being attributed accurately. Bonus points if the teachings contain something about crowns.

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Dance as Though No One Is Watching—Hold a dance party. Let loose and enjoy moving to the music as though no one is watching. (Those who cannot, or will not, dance can help pick tunes.) If possible, find a place to dance where, in fact, no one is watching. Reflect on how and why dancing feels different when no one is watching. [The Sages posit](#) that how one acts when no one is watching can be more important than how one acts when others are watching. Discuss how this teaching fits with the pursuit of a *shem tov*. How do people's actions while alone affect their public actions? Can someone truly have a *shem tov* if they act differently in private?