

## Terumah

In this Sidrah, Terumah, we hear G-d's commandment to build a Tabernacle and its furnishings. First and primary was the Ark, "And they shall make an ark of *shittim*-wood." "And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it."<sup>1</sup>

Wood and gold have opposite properties. Wood can rot away, and be diminished by disintegration. But wood of a tree can grow as long as it is rooted. Gold can not grow, but it retains its entity. For Torah the combination of wood and gold is necessary. One must remember and preserve that which he learned. And he must constantly strive to learn more—to grow and spread the leaves and deepen the roots.

Everyone who ever learned in a Cheder or Yeshivah gained a very fine basic knowledge and understanding of Torah. What a pity if he were to lose it by forgetfulness and disuse. The studies of youth are so precious. Parents and teachers gave of themselves so much unstintingly, of their time, money, energy, heart and soul. It is imperative to preserve their teachings by continuing to grow in Torah. By learning every day, you grow every day spiritually and intellectually.

The Sages<sup>2</sup> tell us that Bezalel made three arks—one of wood and two of gold. The wooden ark he inserted between the two golden. Thus the wooden was covered by gold within and without. Why make three arks? Why not simply cover the wooden ark with an overlay of gold as he did with the walls?

The *Midrash*<sup>3</sup> quotes the verse, "I am asleep, but my heart is awake." And the Midrash then comments, "I am asleep about the end of days, the Messianic era, but I am awake says the Almighty. I am asleep about the Mitzvoths, but the merit of the forefathers is awake. I am asleep about the Golden Calf, but G-d flails over me."

There are three deterrents to authentic Jewish living. One is the plight of the Jewish people—the Galuth, the oppressions, the Holocaust, the problems of Israel. It seems there is no end to all troubles. This impels us to study Torah—to look for answers, to find faith and hope. The secular Jew has the questions, but, alas, he has nowhere to turn. The Torah Jew knows G-d has the answers.

The second is simply habit. He would go to the Synagogue and even to the Beth Midrash to study Torah. But he is constrained by the habit of not going, and laziness has set in. If you don't develop the habit, you thus develop the habit of not going. But the remembrance of parents may evoke a reawakening.

The third is shame. He is ashamed of his family, neighbors, friends and himself. He absented himself so long, and pronounces it is too late anyway. After all these years how could he return to the Gemorah. What will all say about his sudden change. But G-d urges, encourages, cajoles and beckons. It is not too late. Take out the Gemorah or other Torah book. Don't remain lethargic or apathetic. Wake up and live!

There are three arks. For some it is wooden and for some golden. For some it is inner and for some outer. But all contain the Torah.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Shmos 25:10-11
2. Yoma 72b
3. Shir Hashirim 5:2. Midrash Rabba ibid. Shmos Rabba 33:3