

**"And they shall make an Aron of shittim wood... and you shall cover it with pure gold from within and without."  
(25:10,11)**

Although in the eyes of the beholder, the *Aron* appeared to be made completely of gold, it is a well known fact that this was only an overlay. The actual *Aron* was made of wood, sandwiched between outer and inner layers of gold. This seems enigmatic. It would be appropriate that this most sublime vessel, which housed the *Torah*, consist entirely of gold. Certainly gold would more readily reflect the magnificence and majesty of the Almighty. *Horav Dovid Feinstein, Shlita*, who raises this question, offers the following lesson to be derived from this "wooden" *Aron*. Wood is a living substance which grows and reproduces. In contrast, gold, which captivates its beholder with its beauty, is inanimate. Which one would make a more suitable repository for the *Torah*?

The *Torah* was given to human beings, who are made of flesh and blood. They are subject to the seductive influence of their *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, and must exert amazing strength to avoid falling prey to its constant blandishments. Nonetheless, this is life. One must live and grow in order to overcome these obstacles. Thus, a wooden *Aron* teaches us that the *Torah*, a tree of life, was not to be contained by the cold inert gold, regardless of its beauty. Rather, the *Torah* was given to living breathing, growing, human beings in order to enable them to attain eternal life.

Why then, asks *Horav Feinstein*, is the *Aron* covered from within and without with gold? The answer is that while a *Torah* scholar is subject to the same weaknesses as others, he must, nonetheless, attempt to purify himself to the greatest extent possible. Although he is human, he should aspire to reach the purity of an angel. Thus, the gold is also within to teach us that, even in privacy, a *ben Torah* should be pure. In the innermost parts of his private life, he should mirror the virtue he has achieved through *Torah* study. The gold within and without serves as the structure for the inner growth of the *Torah* scholar.