

## "And you shall make the planks for the Mishkan of shittim wood standing up." (26:15)

*Chazal* state that *shittim* (acacia) wood does not bear fruit. It is a strong and tough wood which has limited practical application. What is the significance of this wood in regard to the *Mishkan*? It would seem that the wood selected to serve as the walls of the *Mishkan*, the mainstays of the edifice wherein the *Shechinah* would "repose," would be one which had many practical uses. We suggest that this choice imparts an important message. The planks of the *Mishkan* may be viewed metaphorically as the *Torah* scholars in a community. To the "simple" citizen they might not seem to contribute much of themselves to the practical welfare of the community. Indeed, in the *Talmud Sanhedrin 99b*, *Chazal* refer to one who claims *ibcr ik hbvt htnw* "What do the *Rabbis* do for us" as an *apikores*, free thinker or apostate. Apparently this attitude was not uncommon, even in the times of the *Talmud*. In the eyes of a shallow minded person, the *ben Torah* does not seem to "pull his own weight." The uneducated individual does not perceive that the *ben Torah* contributes to the development and sustenance of a community.

As *Chazal* teach us, however, this is not a *Torah* orientation. *Horav Aharon Kotler z.l.*, states that the *Torah* scholars are the "eyes" and "heart" of *Klal Yisrael*. They sustain the "body" of our people in two ways. First, they present us with a scholarly adjudication of *Torah* law, teaching us what is permitted and what is not, which approach to life's endeavor we may or may not take. In addition, their actual existence is the source of "*chiyus*," the lifeblood of *Klal Yisrael*. The *kerashim*, planks, were made of a wood which was *ohsng*, standing. This alludes to the notion that this wood seemed to be going nowhere, since it had no practical use. It was specifically this notion which Hashem chose to dispel. That which seems to be stagnant in our human eyes may actually be quite vital. What is important is the perspective in which Hashem views it.