

**"Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood, with rooms; you shall make the ark. And you shall pitch it within and without... A light/window you shall make for the ark." (6:14,16)**

*Horav Aharon Levine z.l.* uses the ark as a metaphor for the Jewish home. *Chazal* explain that gopher wood is actually cedar wood. As the cedar tree stands tall, towering above the other trees, so, too, should the Jewish home exemplify lofty goals and ideas in establishing the spiritual foundation of the Jewish family.

The roots of the cedar tree are firmly implanted in the ground and will not yield even to the strongest winds. The Jewish home must also have its perspective on life firmly rooted in *Torah hashkafah*, philosophy, rendering it immune to the heretical winds of change. As the cedar grows straight, resplendent in its upright posture, our moral lives must be impeccable as well, the paradigm of integrity and virtue.

Furthermore, the ark was lined "within and without with pitch", to protect it from the elements. So, too, must the Jewish home be rendered impervious to the double standard of acting one way at home and another way in the street. As the ark needed a window, so must the Jew look out of his home, and not completely isolate himself from his community. Involvement is an integral part of Judaism. The ark's door alludes to the openness of the Jewish home, standing ready to serve all those that approach it. The three floors of the ark may represent the three pillars upon which the world exists: *Torah*, study; *avodah*, serving Hashem; and *gemillus chasadim*, acts of loving-kindness.

*Horav Levine* notes that every specie had its own "room." This reflects a respect for privacy, *tznius*, which has always been the standard of the Jewish home. If we construct our homes following the blueprint of the ark, we will be prepared to travel the sea of life and brave the vicissitudes which imperil those who venture out without safeguards.