

"And they shall make an ark of shittim wood... and you shall plate it with pure gold, from inside and out shall you plate." (25:10,11)

In the *Talmud Yuma 72b Chazal* emphasize that one must cultivate an inner purity. They derive this from the *Aron Ha'Kodesh*, the symbol of *Torah*. It was to be plated with pure gold, inside and out. *Chazal* infer from this *pasuk* that "any *talmid chacham*, *Torah* scholar, whose inner essence is not in consonance with his outward purity/appearance can not justifiably be considered a *talmid chacham*. One must be "*tocho k'baro*," maintain a symmetry between his essence and the image he projects. All too often, we focus upon our external image and the impression we make upon others, while we seek to conceal our inner faults and deficiencies.

We may question *Chazal's* source, the *Aron Ha'Kodesh*. If one's inner self must be coordinated with the personality he projects outward, why was wood used in the *Aron* altogether? Should it not have been fashioned completely out of gold? **Horav Yosef Leib Bloch, zl**, suggests an insightful explanation which takes human nature into account. Regardless of his ability to attain and achieve spiritual distinction, man must reckon with his physical dimension. We must note that we are a composite of both physical and spiritual elements. It is impossible to totally divorce ourselves from our physical component with the desires that accompany it. Consequently, the inner essence and its metaphor, the inner section of the *Aron Ha'Kodesh*, cannot consist entirely of gold. We must make room for wood, which symbolizes man's human instinct and personality.

Why is wood the material that serves as a metaphor for the human component? We suggest that wood is a natural material that grows from the ground. It symbolizes growth and development. Hence, the lesson is that even the physical aspect of man can serve a higher potential. Under the influence of the gold/spritual dimension, one can sanctify his physical self, using it as a vehicle with which to reach greater spiritual heights.

What actually is the meaning of "*tocho k'baro*"? What transforms a *talmid chacham* into an inferior person? **Horav Avraham Grodzensky, zl**, offers a remarkable insight into the meaning of inconsistency within a *Torah* scholar. One does not have to sin excessively to be inconsistent. It is possible for one to study *Torah* with intensity and still be considered corrupt. A *Torah* scholar must be in total harmony with himself so that he performs all his actions in accordance with the *Torah*. His actions/deeds must be in consonance with his level of *Torah* scholarship, in congruence with his acquired wisdom and stature. Any form of evil or inconsistency is viewed as unsuitable to his essential character. The litmus test of a *talmid chacham* is whether his heart acts in concert with his good deeds, whether his outward actions truly reflects them in consciousness. One's internal perspective, motivation and intentions must be in harmony with his outward appearance. To have a sterling reputation for scholarship and erudition, while one's inner motivation is not absolutely good, is considered an inconsistency. If one's deeds do not emanate from a source of truth, if they do not reflect the feelings of his inner heart, then they are false. Such a scholar is not a *Torah* scholar.

The *Torah* scholar must be totally symmetrical, his good deeds emanating from the heart with an *emes*, truth. Otherwise, while they are not considered *aveiros*, they are blemished *mitzvos*. They do not reflect the truth, indicating, therefore, that the individual is not "*tocho k'baro*."