

"Betzalel made the Aron of shittim wood." (37:1)

The *Torah* attributes the building of the *Aron* to Betzalel. *Rashi* explains that because Betzalel was *moser nefesh*, sacrificed himself with remarkable diligence to make sure that the *Aron* was built to exact perfection, he was considered to be its prime builder. Interestingly, in response to the *Torah's* previous statement, "Vaya'asu Haron, and they made the *Aron*," *Chazal* question why the *Torah* writes, "and they" in the plural. In contrast, regarding other vessels the *Torah* had stated *Va'asos*, "and you should make," in the singular. *Chazal* suggest that the *Aron* represents *Torah* study. Thus, everyone is welcome to join in creating the *Aron*, so that they will all share in the *Torah*. We may now question Betzalel's attitude toward building the *Aron*. Why was he careful to do as much as possible himself? If Hashem desired that the construction of the *Aron* should be a collective project, Betzalel should have restrained himself, giving others an opportunity to share in the task.

Horav Baruch Sorotzkin, zl, infers a significant principle from Betzalel's behavior. When it concerns *Torah* study, one should not rely upon others. While the *mitzvah* of *Torah* study and dissemination is placed upon everyone, the individual must act as if he is the only one who can successfully carry out the command. *Torah* is the lifeblood of our people. It sustains us spiritually, as it guides our moral behavior. To study *Torah* and see to it that others do the same is as much a personal *mitzvah* as it is a collective one. When our lives and the lives of others are at stake, we do not sit back and wait for help from an external source.