

## **"And I shall speak with you from atop the cover... that is on the ark of the testimonial tablets... and you shall make a table of shittim (acacia) wood." (25:22,23)**

In a novel exposition, a number of commentators explain the juxtaposition of the *Shulchan* to the *Aron* in the following manner. The *Shulchan* attests to an individual's integrity and worthiness for *Olam Haba*. The *Shulchan* is the symbol of prosperity. It represents the demand upon every Jew to share his material abundance with those less fortunate than he. The *Shulchan* testifies that its owner has fulfilled his obligation to others.

*Rabbeinu Bachya* cites a custom that was performed by a number of pious individuals in France. They would have their table taken apart in order to build their *aron*, coffin. This reinforces the concept that a man takes nothing with him as his earthly remains are laid to rest. Only the charity and kindness that he has extended to others accompany him upon his eternal journey. Consequently, the *Aron* represents man's encounter with the Eternal, and the *Shulchan* symbolizes man's credits which assist him in rendering it a positive encounter.

The *Sheivet Sofer* rebuked those tailors who permitted themselves to take some leftover material for personal use. Not only did this appropriation diminish the value of the intended garment, but it was pure *geneivah*, theft. He cites a poignant story that took place in the city of Brisk. A tailor called for the *chevra kadisha* to prepare his table and make it into a coffin in which he would be buried. He also requested that his tailor's measuring stick/tape be placed in his hand after he was placed into the *aron*. The table and the yardstick would provide testimony that he never deceived anyone in business. This paragon of rectitude understood the only value system which is accepted in *Olam Haba*.