

# SUPPORTING THE ARON

by Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein

*The staves shall be in the rings of the Aron. They shall not be removed from it.*

Meshech Chochmah: Chazal tell us<sup>[2]</sup> that removing the *badim* from the *aron* is halachically forbidden. Like other prohibitions, it is punishable by lashes. Now, the *aron* is not the only major appliance of the *mishkan* that comes with staves. Both the altar and the table were equipped with staves. Regarding those two, however, the Torah only specifies that the staves be in place while they are being moved. Apparently, removing their staves at other times is not objectionable. Why are the staves of the *aron* different?

A midrash tells us that the *Aron* is identified with the Crown of Torah. Whereas not everyone is even eligible to wear the crown of *kehunah* or of monarchy, the Torah crown is available to anyone who wants to crown himself with it, simply for the asking. Thus there is constancy to the *aron* not shared by the other *kelim*.

Anyone, then, can have a relationship with Torah. But practical considerations can curtail the *talmid chacham's* career. To thrive, the *talmid chacham* requires support from others. This may take the form of handouts, or of creating investment opportunities for the financially strangled. This support is alluded to in our *pasuk* by the staves – the items through which the journey of the Torah becomes possible.

The gemara<sup>[3]</sup> notes that in commanding the building of the *aron*, both the singular<sup>[4]</sup> and the plural<sup>[5]</sup> form of the verb is used. The Torah alludes to the roles of the few and many. By using both forms, the Torah suggests that the single *talmid chacham* should be assisted by the larger group of townspeople ready to offer their assistance. This universal support of Torah knows no restriction or limit. It must come all of the time; the staves representing support of the Torah must never be removed.

We can also suggest a different approach from the one we have taken till this point. It builds on a well-known position of the Rambam. He writes<sup>[6]</sup> that the menorah in the *beis hamikdash* was lit not only at night, but in the morning as well. This is readily understandable. The light functioned as a reminder to the world of the presence of the *Shechinah* in the midst of the Jewish people. Its role was not to provide illumination. "Does G-d need light?"<sup>[7]</sup> Lighting the menorah each morning drove

home this point. The menorah would provide no useful illumination during the brightness of the day. People who understood that also comprehended that its function did not change at night. Just as it did not serve to provide illumination by day, its role was not to provide useful light at night either. The daytime lighting impressed upon us that we needed to look elsewhere for the symbolic significance of the mitzvah; it was not to be found in the practical role of providing light.

The staves of the *aron* stand in a similar position. When the *aron* was at rest, they served no clear practical function. From this we realized that even when the *aron* was transported from place to place, the staves did not contribute functionally. As Chazal teach us,<sup>[8]</sup> the *aron* carried its bearers – not the opposite! As the symbolic abode of the One Who carries the universe, nothing needs to carry Him. The *badim* played no part in making it possible to bear the weight of the *aron* as it travelled. .

<sup>[1]</sup> Based on Meshech Chochman, Shemos 25:15

<sup>[2]</sup> Yoma 72A

<sup>[3]</sup> Yoma 72B

<sup>[4]</sup> Devarim 10A

<sup>[5]</sup> Shemos 25:10

<sup>[6]</sup> Hilchos Temidim U-Musafim 3:10

<sup>[7]</sup> Shabbos 22B

<sup>[8]</sup> Sotah 35A

---