

# Weekly Teaching

## February 8, 2019

The Ark of the Covenant held the Ten Commandments and was made of acacia wood.

Additionally, the Torah records that the Ark was overlaid with pure gold, inside and out.

The Talmud states that the reason for the use of pure gold both inside and out was to teach that a “scholar of Torah whose inside is not like his outside is not a true scholar.”

This is certainly true for all human beings; our true inner-selves should match up with what we project on the outside.

But, one might ask, why wasn't the Ark of the Covenant made wholly of gold and not of acacia wood? Isn't gold the standard of greater value?

We often compliment someone by saying they have a “heart of gold”, and I don't recall ever complimenting the person who has a “heart of acacia wood”.

Perhaps, while gold indicates material value and beauty, it isn't really as important as the tree. Gold doesn't “breathe” and doesn't organically grow.

The tree in Jewish tradition transforms the earth; it's why one of the greatest mitzvahs we can perform is to plant a tree, and the blessing we recite when doing so is praising God “for nothing lacking in our world because God created good creations and good trees for the benefit of humanity.”

The core of our humanity isn't gold, but wood; the symbol of our very lives...the living, breathing parts of ourselves that can appreciate the gifts God has granted us, and knowing that we have the obligation to share these gifts with others.

One cannot eat gold, but one can eat from the fruit of the tree.

And our very breath is interdependent on the thriving trees that must be in our midst.

Perhaps our heart can be made of gold, but our soul must come from the tree of our life; a life worthy of God's good creations and a life that breathes in and out in a constant state of love, kindness and compassion.

Shabbat Shalom,

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