

The Lecture Series With Reb T (Biweekly): The Shiur where we talk a topic per session with some practical lessons, Tonight's topic is "The Heart of Art "

Sources from [Sefaria.org and elsewhere](#) (unless noted otherwise); Lookout for the Points To Carryover (PTC's), to take with you hopefully from the Shiur

All Shiurum on [shiurenjoyment.com/shiurim/shiurim-reb-t/](#) -Shoutout to Jake W. & Eli N.!

The Lecture Series, The P.A.L., The Audio D.T., and O.T. Talk Show are on different Podcast Forums while the Audio DDD daf show is on Shiur enjoyment

If you have any feedback, questions, comments, suggestions, topic ideas, or just want to reach out, please feel free to email me anytime at rebt@shiurenjoyment.com

The Shiur should also serve as a zechus and yeshua and refuah for anyone sick or needing a yeshuah or refuah especially those with any sickness, any illness, any machalah, any condition, or any salvation needed, may everyone be healed completely, b'karov.

In the traditional sense of the word, I am not an artist. Yes, I always loved doodling, drawing, coloring, cutting, pasting , and the like, but I am by no means a true real "artist." However, artistry goes beyond the paintbrush, when we use our creativity to bring beauty and different things given to the world, that might be art in and of itself. Art is when we use creative expression to bring elements to the world.

Wikipedia defines art as

a diverse range of (products of) [human activities](#) involving creative [imagination](#) to express technical proficiency, beauty, emotional power, or [conceptual ideas](#).^{[1][2][3]}

There is no generally agreed definition of what constitutes art,^{[4][5][6]} and ideas have changed over time. The three classical branches of [visual art](#) are [painting](#), [sculpture](#), and [architecture](#).

^[7] [Theatre](#), [dance](#), and other [performing arts](#), as well as [literature](#), [music](#), [film](#) and other media such as [interactive media](#), are included in a broader definition of [the arts](#).^{[1][8]} Until the 17th century, art referred to any skill or mastery and was not differentiated from [crafts](#) or [sciences](#). In modern usage after the 17th century, where aesthetic considerations are paramount, the [fine arts](#) are separated and distinguished from acquired skills in general, such as the [decorative](#) or [applied arts](#).

The nature of art and related concepts, such as creativity and [interpretation](#), are explored in a branch of philosophy known as [aesthetics](#).^[9] The resulting [artworks](#) are studied in the professional fields of [art criticism](#) and the [history of art](#).

Art therefore has different roles and different applications and can be expressed in different ways.

[LinkedIN points out](#)

Art can be beneficial for improved creativity, improved memory, improved communication skills, improved problem solving skills, stress relief, more positive emotions, release of hidden

emotions or feelings, increase of emotional intelligence, improving the senses, better mobility, and you become more aware of the details.

So the benefits of are really abound. For kids especially, arts, as well as crafts, is a wonderful medium and gives many benefits.

[redtri.com explains](#)

For example,

It improves their coordination and fine motor skills.

Arts and crafts usually require kids to use both hands in a certain manner, which can help them develop fine motor skills and bilateral coordination. For example, drawing dots and lines, cutting with scissors, and even simply tearing a piece of paper are all quite demanding tasks in terms of dexterity – and kids enjoy doing them. This can help them develop faster and become more skilled in other daily activities such as tying their shoes, dressing, using kitchenware, etc.

It helps them express themselves.

Kids tend to be very visual about everything that happens around them, and they generally absorb a lot of information every day. However, there will always be kids who are naturally shy and not that comfortable with expressing themselves in words. Those kids may look for different, more visual ways to express their emotions and thoughts – and arts and crafts can give them what they need. It is a safe environment that they can control and shape in any way they want by using any materials they like. This is why parents might get a better insight into how their child is feeling or what they are thinking by encouraging them to participate in arts and crafts activities.

It makes them more creative and productive.

There are no limits to children's imagination, and arts and crafts are a great way for them to turn that endless imagination into something more productive. There are many materials, colors, shapes, and activities they can choose, which allows children to explore different options and pick those that they find the most enjoyable. And who knows, they might even discover a fun hobby, like drawing, that can later become a lucrative career, like graphic design.

It helps them develop other skills.

Young kids usually begin using pens by scribbling random things. However, the thing is, the more they scribble, the better they will be at controlling the pen and their movements across the paper. So, as they learn to control their own movements, they will also learn how to create different shapes, which will eventually lead to creating letters. In other words, the more they scribble, the faster they'll master everything they need in order to write clearly. Also, you can encourage scribbling by giving them colorful gel pens—scribbling with such fun pens will make them want to do it all the time!

It inspires them to think critically.

Art comes with endless possibilities and choices—will their house have a red roof or black? Will they draw a dog or a cat? How will they draw the clouds and the birds? All these choices inspire kids to think critically, decide, and evaluate their own decisions so they can repeat them or change them the next time. This way, they will become more comfortable with thinking about

different possibilities and more confident about making their choices. Plus, it will also make them more likely to try different combinations and come up with their own ideas, which is an extremely useful skill at all ages.

It helps them socialize.

Arts and crafts create a common ground for all the kids who may have different interests or simply haven't met yet, because most of them will love creating things with their hands—and see what other kids have created. When it comes to creativity, it doesn't matter how old they are or what race they are – the only thing that matters is what they can make. And since children are naturally curious, they will gladly approach another child if they like what that kid has drawn, built with Lego blocks, or colored.

There are many benefits of arts and crafts for kids, from helping them socialize and express themselves to helping them develop other skills and think more critically. So, if you want your child to have fun and experience all these benefits, encourage them to take part in such activities – they are both fun and useful, and your kid will definitely enjoy exploring their own imagination.

[aish.com points out with author riva pomeranz](#)

Van Gogh painted flowers and wheat fields; Chagall painted goats and flying, ethereal figures; Rabbi Yonah Weinrib paints spirituality and expressions of Godliness. Quiet, unassuming, and permeated with humility, Weinrib has devoted his life to interpreting and portraying Torah through art.

His works range from beautiful renditions of the Grace after Meals to painstaking micro-calligraphy interpretations of Jewish passages and prayers, and intricate, eye-opening illuminations of Jewish philosophy and tradition. His work illustrates how art and calligraphy contain much more than meets the eye.

"Art is a work of the soul, reflective of a deeper sense of where a person is coming from," Rabbi Weinrib explains. "In Jewish thought, art is about the spiritual beauty and the essence it embodies. The external is only a way to exalt the inner spirit. And, of course, beauty brings the viewer to a higher dimension."

[mishpacha.com points out https://mishpacha.com/the-artists-perspective/](https://mishpacha.com/the-artists-perspective/)

With author Rivki Rabinowitz

In November 2016, a fire destroyed a studio in Moshav Beit Meir, 15 minutes outside of Yerushalayim, and with it, 1,500 original paintings, 1,200 works on paper, and numerous sculptures. Yoram Ra'an's story is one of emunah and the unique combination of what is borne when passion and level-headedness coexist.

About nine years ago, the author had the privilege of visiting Ra'an's studio, which was alive with greenery, animals, nature — a true creative's dwelling. The studio was flooded with light and layered with artwork: large canvases, saturated with color and movement, as well as smaller pieces, moody and layered. The author was always a follower of his work, but seeing the process changed the experience for him.

Yoram describes the desire to create as the need to express something that can't be put into words. His work has inspired an entire generation of artists, which he uses to propel himself to

create unique color schemes and techniques. It's the indefinable combination of those factors that creates beautiful and mysterious experiences, where he is constantly reinventing the wheel. K'shmo kein hu — ra'anana means "ever fresh."

Creating a piece requires constant experimentation and boundary pushing, where revealing new perspectives through different iterations and movements often yields the most memorable pieces. He recalls one scenario where the Sheraton Plaza in Jerusalem had commissioned a painting, which organically evolved into an abstract piece of eagle's wings. As guests ventured through the halls of the hotel, they would study the painting, and ultimately, the consensus was that it was too abstract for their tastes; it was unquantifiable and hard to understand. Of course, hours of work had gone into the piece, and in Ra'anana's discouraged state, he splashed paint and water over it with abandon, turning the canvas every which way, until horizontal became vertical. From the layers, a stately figure appeared, and then — another facial image. Before it dried, he stood the canvas up and let the paint spill out.

In his definition of hishtadlus, Ra'anana describes someone who puts in all his effort and nothing works. Believe that Hashem will come from the sidelines and give you something you didn't even initially set a goal to achieve, he says.

On that infamous day in November, Yoram and his wife watched from a hundred meters away as the fire, with its insidious destruction, rendered his art ash.

Remarkably, unbelievably, even in that moment and the moments following, he looked to his wife and said, "Only good will come out of this because it's min haShamayim, and we will rebuild. Art can be remade, and my family is okay. We can go forward b'simchah."

Now, four years later, he describes the property as being 10 times more lush, having literally grown out of the devastation, with 2,000 working art pieces to show for it. Ra'anana, by definition: fresh, luxuriant. And so it is.

How amazing and inspiring. We should look at the art around us and appreciate what Hashem has given into our lives.

From chabad.org with writer Tuvia Bolton

Once there was a great and wise king who loved roosters. He was so inspired by their majestic fierceness, their flashing colors, their every graceful move, that he commissioned hundreds of artists to draw giant paintings of roosters to hang on the wall of his palatial throne room. But to his dismay, none of the portraits were to his liking. He invited greater artists, and then even greater ones, but was left unsatisfied.

So he sent invitations to three of the greatest artists in the world, along with fine presents and promises of fame and fortune. Each would receive fifty thousand gold pieces, in addition to a fine house with servants and all their needs, for one year, and at the end of that time the king would pay one million gold pieces for any picture that found favor in his eyes. The year passed swiftly, and word of the three pictures spread throughout the kingdom.

The day of the unveiling arrived. A massive stadium, built especially for the occasion at the king's orders, was packed with thousands of noisy people. On the stage were the three huge canvases, each covered with its own ornate curtain.

The crowd fell silent as the first artist approached his canvas, hesitated a moment, took hold of the cord that opened the curtain, and turned to face the king. The king nodded, and the artist, without even turning around, triumphantly pulled the cord. A hum went up from the crowd. It was a masterpiece.

The king rose from his royal seat, walked to the picture, examined it from near and from afar, and announced: "It is truly a work of genius, but . . . it is not exactly what I want."

The crowd was abuzz as the king returned to his seat and motioned for the second artist to approach. The same scene repeated itself: silence, tension, the victorious pull of the cord. This time, when the painting was uncovered, shouts of "Bravo!" were heard. But the king, although he admitted that the picture was exquisite, was still not satisfied.

Finally the third artist approached and stood by his picture. Again the king nodded. But the artist, before he pulled the cord, made a request. "Your Majesty, I humbly ask that you make no judgment of my work until fifteen minutes after it is unveiled." An unusual request, but the king nodded in agreement. The artist pulled the cord and revealed—the crowd gasped—an empty canvas!

"What is the meaning of this?!" shouted the king, but remembering his promise, he fell silent.

The artist, meanwhile, had paid no attention to the king's outburst. He was concentrating on the empty canvas before him, palette in one hand and brush in the other. Suddenly he began to paint. The colors flowed from his very being. The lines danced, changing like fire, like a rushing river, like a field of wheat, like the eyes of a child, of a king.

And then, after ten minutes, the picture was finished and the artist turned to face the king.

Everyone was so silent you could hear only the wind; everyone was frozen as though hypnotized. Then someone broke the spell and began clapping, then another and another, until the crowd was like thunder, on their feet, whistling, clapping and shouting, "Bravo! Bravo!" The king rose from his seat with open arms, walked to the artist and embraced him with tears in his eyes. "This is what I have been seeking!" The other two artists raised his arms in victory and were weeping with emotion.

Sometimes we just need to take an empty canvas and fill it with wonder, with beauty, with color, and with paint. Our own lives can be that canvas and we should do what we can to splash the color of life onto the painting with our life brushes through doing mitzvot and Chessed and with being involved in Torah and Torah learning.

From chabad.org with author Sara Trapper-Spielman

As far back as Esther Pam Zibell can remember, she's always been drawing. Although the artist, now in her 50s, grew up in the vibrant art world of France, she decided not to attend art school in order to "keep something very fresh" in her paintings," she says.

Zibell instead found strength in paving her own path when it comes to her artwork. She admits that attending art school might have taught her valuable techniques, but she always preferred a

personal, albeit more difficult, approach. In fact, it is her life and its surroundings, including the presence of fellow artists and Chassidic neighbors, that continue to inspire and influence her work.

When she became an Orthodox Jew almost 30 years ago, she turned to Jewish and Chassidic life as inspiration for her art. She focused first on universal, biblical themes, such as the creation of the world. When Zibell became a follower of Chabad-Lubavitch two years later, she says, she turned to portraying "every day Jewish life as is, [and] to feel the soul behind it, not just plain reality."

"When you become religious, you have to find yourself again," she says in reflection. "You find out you can really be yourself, you don't have to paint a certain way."

She soon discovered that imagination and creativity could be consistent with religious life...

"Becoming religious made me realize how G-d is behind everything; G-d guides my hand in art," she continues. "I always ask G-d when I begin a painting that it should help someone do teshuvah or enjoy Jewish life some more."

Realize that Hashem is the one behind you pushing you to reel the paint onto the picture that is your life. Find the inspiration to unleash your art and your potential.

[Art can be done by anyone, especially those that have special needs. Listen to this from chabad.org from 2015 with author Ronelle Grier](#)

Their space may be limited for now, but their creativity knows no bounds. While construction is underway for the 18,000-square-foot Farber Soul Center, a group of talented artists with special needs are using a nearby temporary space to showcase their skills in a preview of what's to come.

The Farber Soul Center, named for William "Bill" and Audrey Farber of West Bloomfield, Mich., whose \$2.4 million matching gift made the project possible, will include an art studio, gallery and kosher cafe. There, young adults with special needs will learn vocational skills, develop their creativity and share their newfound talents with the greater community.

The Soul Center Mini pilot program was launched this spring in a temporary studio housed in Walled Lake, Mich., a few miles from the center's permanent location in West Bloomfield. In a space designed by the program's art director Brian Kavanaugh, eight young-adult artists meet twice a week to work on projects with the help of facilitating artists and volunteers. They spent the first few sessions trying out different mediums, such as weaving, printmaking, painting, laser-cutting and graphic design to determine which ones felt most comfortable for the artists. Aislinn Wendrow, 22, who has autism and is nonverbal, discovered an aptitude for abstract painting; several of her creations adorn the walls of the studio lobby. "The whole creative process is making her generally more confident," says her mother, Tali Wendrow. "She's really coming into her own. There's respect for who she is as an artist."

Facilitating artist Carolyn Morris is struck most of all by the sense of community that has developed among the artists. "The people who are weaving are talking to the people who are making clay, inspiring joint projects and togetherness," notes Morris, a weaver and fiber artist whose colorful woven *mezuzahs* have become popular gift items.

Morris' son, Sam, 22, who has autism, enjoys spending time at the Soul Center Mini, both as an artist and a volunteer.

"I like the people, and I like helping others be creative," says Sam, who prefers to paint pictures and operate the laser-cutter—a machine that can produce specialty etchings on a variety of materials, including metal, leather, wood, acrylic, plastic, paper and cardboard, as well as soaps and candles.

An exciting new focus has been creating items for the local bar and bat mitzvah market, including centerpieces, custom giveaways, decorations, gifts and accessories. Offerings include a vast array of professionally designed items, such as silk-screened T-shirts and sweatsuits, sign-in boards, mugs, flashlights, carabineers, jewelry, headphones and other products in a wide range of colors, styles and materials. Custom logos can be designed to complement any theme, or existing artwork can be incorporated into distinctive items like leather bracelets or other personalized gifts.

"The possibilities are endless," says Soul Center merchandiser Jordan Shifman, a former Friendship Circle teen volunteer with a background in fashion merchandising. "The community will be able to purchase custom gifts for their bar and bat mitzvahs, all the while giving adults with special needs vocational skill training."

Family gift items are also available, such as personalized Kiddush cups, cutting boards, Shabbat candlesticks, candles—even an engraved Plexiglas menorah. The products offered for sale are competitively priced, with the earnings going to the artists and the program. "It gives the individual artists the opportunity to earn money for their work, which helps them feel valuable and productive," explains Bassie Shemtov, who with her husband, Rabbi Levi Shemtov, founded Friendship Circle of Michigan 20 years ago.

At a recent volunteer event, 21-year-old Jordan Weinfeld proudly handed out keychains he engraved with the laser-cutter at the Soul Center Mini.

"The people are great, and I've learned a lot," says Jordan. His mother, Nancy, says the program has helped Jordan become more responsible while providing an environment where he feels socially accepted.

According to the Shemtovs, the idea for the Soul Center came about when they realized the needs had changed significantly for those "kids" who began participating with the organization in 1995. The former children were now young adults who needed more vocationally oriented programs.

Motivated by her belief in the power of art as a means of unleashing creativity, Bassie Shemtov began to research and visit art-studio programs across the country. She discovered places where artists with special needs were successfully creating, displaying and selling their works.

"I always knew teens and young adults [with special needs] were amazing, but I was totally blown away by what I saw," she says. "No one dreamt that some of these people were artistic until they were given the opportunity."

The Soul Center will feature cutting-edge digital arts such as photography, animation and 3D printing, in addition to traditional art such as painting, ceramics, weaving, jewelry and mixed media.

"This is not 'arts and crafts', but art that people will buy and display in their homes and offices," says Rabbi Shemtov.

The Farber Soul Center, which is being designed by the architecture firm Neumann Smith. The Soul Cafe, which will begin with a limited menu and expand service as the program grows, will provide training and employment for adults with special needs who are interested in culinary arts and food service. The Shemtovs foresee it as a gathering spot where members of the community can enjoy good food in a unique environment.

“It’s a place where you bring your soul, and your soul will be touched,” says the rabbi.

The Farbers’ son, David, and his wife, Nanci, longtime Friendship Circle supporters, look forward to the opportunities the new center will bring to its participants and the community.

“This is a natural extension of what Friendship Circle already does,” states Nanci Farber.

Friendship Circle of Michigan is a nonprofit organization that utilizes a large core of dedicated teen and adult volunteers, coupled with devoted staff members, to provide programs, classes, camps and other services for hundreds of local children with special needs and their families. Several Michigan school districts also participate in educational programs in the Weinberg Village, part of the Lifetown facility on the Meer Family Friendship Campus in West Bloomfield, Mich.

Many community donors and foundations have responded to the project so far, led by the Dresner Foundation, which sponsored the Art Studio space. Anyone contributing \$50 or more will receive a gift created by an artist with special needs.

What an amazing way to look for an unleash creativity, especially for those who have special needs.

I think of the Yachad Gifts program which used to do exactly the same idea, empowering those with special needs while contributing to society around them, through making gift baskets and the like for different occasions.

chabad.org also points out the power of pop art on streets and walls (not graffiti but real art)

[From author Yoni Brown from 2019](#)

Amid the bustle of Jerusalem’s iconic First Station, new flashes of color adorn the walls of the historic railroad station, now an outdoor mall. Three Shabbat candles shine brightly from a pop-art mural, spreading their glow on a colorful backdrop. Street art is a very contemporary medium, but the message of this piece is timeless.

The piece is called “Spread Your Light–To The Street,” and its creator, New Jersey-based rabbi and artist Yitzchok Mouly, sees it as an expression of the Baal Shem Tov’s call to spread the wellsprings of *chassidus* outward. “This is literally bringing the message of *chassidus* to the street,” said Mouly.

Mouly’s work is featured along with that of eight other international artists in the Jewish Street Art Festival, which is part of the Fourth Jerusalem Biennale, an art exhibition held once every two years. This time round, the Biennale is showing the works of more than 200 artists from 15 countries.

“The idea behind the festival is to highlight street artists who feature Jewish themes or content in their work,” Hillel Smith, street artist and lead curator of the festival, told Chabad.org. “Street art provides an opportunity to put art in front of people when they aren’t expecting it. As a result, it

has the power to engage with people directly—to present them with ideas and initiate a conversation with them.”

The public reception has been fantastic, said Smith: “People were taking selfies with our murals before they were finished! It’s rewarding to see the work be embraced so quickly.”

Mouly (known as “The Pop-Art Rabbi”) did another piece of street art for the festival, this one located just outside the Old City on the Artist’s Colony building. “They had these seven covers over air-conditioning units, and they asked the artists to do a series of paintings on them. The theme “Seven Days of Creation” made sense, and I was asked to do Shabbat,” explained the artist. “Certainly, Shabbat is all about spreading light.” Nothing quite captures this sentiment better than Shabbat candles.

In the wake of the [synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh](#) in 2018, Mouly was searching for a way to artistically demonstrate the victory of light over darkness. He painted one piece specifically dedicated to the Pittsburgh victims on the theme, but as [Chanukah](#) rolled around, he felt he needed to do more.

“I wrapped my family’s RV in black vinyl, added the words ‘#Light Over Darkness’ and printed a menorah right at the bottom,” described the artist. “Armed with a 100-plus bright markers, we drove through New York and New Jersey, visiting schools and places where [menorah](#) lightings were being held. We’d ask people to commit to doing a mitzvah and then write it on the wall. The act of writing it on the wall brings light in addition to the light of the mitzvah itself.”

The Biennale asked if he could do something similar in Jerusalem. He settled on a design for an interactive installation that explored the theme of light over darkness, as well as the theme of this year’s Biennale, “L’Shem Shamayim” (“For the Sake of Heaven”). Built during the holiday of [Sukkot](#) as a [sukkah](#), the aim is to encourage passersby to complete the structure with their light.

Constructed of a reflective plexiglass exterior and completely white interior, the reflective nature of the exterior draws observers into the space. “To me, the [sukkah](#) is an interface between heaven and earth,” he said. “The walls of the structure are a blank canvas.” He encouraged people to complete the space by doing a mitzvah or committing to doing one, and then place a sticker depicting a flame anywhere on the wall.

As the walls are filled, the internal space becomes a visual representation of *mitzvot* changing the world. The goal is to make people think about the spiritual effect of their physical actions—how even the smallest positive step elevates one’s surroundings.

What a great way to bring art out into the streets and right to people, especially to inspire them.

[chabad.org points out from 2013 from author Menachem Posner](#) how an office or center can be transformed by art, even a Chabad house or Chabad center

Nestled among the boutique bars and bookstores of the trendy Monkland Village section of Montreal, Chabad of NDG has become the “go-to” place for Jewish art.

According to Rabbi Yisroel Bernath, who directs the Chabad center there, “as surprising as it may seem, until last year, Monkland Village did not even have one art gallery.”

In early 2012, Chabad opened the Monkland Art Gallery with the first rotating exhibit featuring Montreal artist Jamie Shear. Every month, the gallery features the work of another Jewish Montrealer, showcasing an eclectic mix of paintings and photographs by both aspiring artists and established painters.

Located in the all-purpose area of the Chabad center, the gallery adds an artsy feel to the Chabad center. Joe Pleet, a 33-year-old who frequents Chabad of NDG, says it's "nice to have paintings on the walls. There are some really nice ones. But the rabbi is so joyful and inspiring that nothing can distract us from the services and classes that he leads."

Bernath, who serves as curator, explains that the art gallery takes the edge off some preconceived notions. "Some people come with their stereotypes of stuffy, formal synagogue attendance. Having a gallery here allows them to see Judaism in another light."

He adds that every new exhibit starts with a *vernissage*, or preview of an art exhibition, featuring wine, cheese and the chance to interact with the displaying artist. "There are people who came through our doors for the very first time at a vernissage," says Bernath.

Artist Haim Sherrf, whose exhibit included a black-and-white series, as well as a klezmer scene created using a "spatula technique," says his gallery preview proved refreshingly different from the norm.

"This was very special. There was a lot of interest from young couples and singles," explains Sherrf. "I have displayed in dozens of museums, galleries and at fundraisers, but the crowd was different here. Instead of middle-aged couples looking for something to complete a collection or decorate their home, there were young people who were looking to connect to the art itself. I love that they connected to images of tradition."

Sherrf, a Chassidic Jew, says the gallery fit well with his *raison d'être*—using his artistic gift to connect people to their Jewish roots. In fact, the Lubavitcher Rebbe—Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory—told him many years ago that art would be his life purpose, serving as a living example of Judaism.

In 1977, the Rebbe wrote to the chairman of a Chassidic art exhibit in Michigan that ". . . those who have been Divinely gifted in art, whether sculpture or painting and the like, have the privilege of being able to convert an inanimate thing, such as a brush, paint and canvas, or wood and stone, etc., into living form. In a deeper sense, it is the ability to transform to a certain extent the material into spiritual."

This is apparent in the current exhibit, which features photos Bernath shot on a recent trip to Israel.

Titled "My Land: A Photo Journal of the Land of Israel," each photograph and caption seeks to connect viewers to another aspect of the Holy Land. For example "Dear G-d" is a close-up of notes stuffed into a crevasse in the Kotel, the Western Wall. The caption explains how Jews who pray at the wall customarily leave notes with their prayers and wishes in cracks in the ancient stone wall, built by King Herod more than 2,000 years ago as a support for the Temple Mount. The notes depicted were written by Jews from Montreal and inserted into the wall by Bernath.

"I never thought of myself as an artist," says the rabbi, who seemed surprised by the high volume of interest—and sales—his display has generated.

"I just took the pictures with a regular camera, using 35mm film. Nothing was touched up or changed. Using old-fashioned film adds a special flavor that digital just does not capture. People

look at the photos, and they are shocked. They say, ‘You did this? I never knew you were an artist!’”

“And I reply that neither did I.”

Art is a truly powerful thing, especially when coming from the heart with core Torah values.

Even Shitsel, the amazingly popular show about Chassidic life on Netflix, showcases the main star, Kive, or Akiva Shtissel, as an artist, a Tzayar, which is somewhat controversial in his circles. He goes back and forth about his talent, ultimately embracing it as his passion and calling.

In talking about Shtissel, aish.com points out with author Ruchi Koval

“Hey,” the voicemail played, *“please call me back, a fellow Shtisel watcher is insisting that ultra-Orthodox people don’t say I love you to their spouses - she’s wrong, right? Okay, call me back.”*

This is the [phenomenon known as Shtisel](#), the viral show on Netflix about an Israeli ultra-Orthodox family that has gripped the attention of, well, everyone. Educators like me are tickled pink: for the first time fellow Jews are pursuing us with curiosity-driven, Netflix-fueled questions about Jews, observance, Judaism, Israel, and more.

The Jewish themes emerging from the Shtisel phenomenon are many, and while the show is meticulously researched and executed, it’s not perfect.

One of the themes that cuts through the seasons is the role of art and music in the family, and more broadly, in the ultra-Orthodox world. The viewer senses the tension between these two poles and one can almost feel the turmoil: the ultra-religious young adult breaks away from religious constraints to pursue artistic dreams (typically, screenplay written by just one such character). But the truth, and the show, are not that simple and not that lazy.

In truth, the “Jewish answer” to that question may not be the same as the cultural answer to that question, and that is a universal interest with *Shtisel*: where do the cultural and the religious truths converge and diverge? The Shtisels are deliberately not any specific sect of Judaism. They’re not Chasidic, they live in the Geula neighborhood, they’re anti-Chabad, anti-Zionist, but what *are* they? We don’t know.

Many other ultra-Orthodox groups would embrace artists, like the Breslov group depicted by Akiva’s spiritual-seeking friends, or even the Chabadniks so hatefully rejected by his father. Art itself as a Jewish form is celebrated, and as Libbi tells Akiva, God-given talent must be used. In fact, King David himself wrote in the book of Psalms (35:10), “All my limbs will say, G-d, who is like you?” Whatever talents or gifts you have, you must use them to glorify God - whether that means to make an honest living, bring joy to others, or glorify themes of truth and beauty.

The climax of the art conflict comes at the very end when Akiva finally does use his considerable talent to paint his best painting ever - of a woman, vaguely linked to his own mother figure, sitting with a baby. The painting is excellent. It’s a tribute to his long-emerging grief over his mother’s passing, and a statement of his mother’s support of his art.

But to use your talents for God - which has strains in different aspects of the show and of course in life - is a must. Everyone agrees on that.

Art comes in many forms and many ways. Whatever art you can make, you can produce, you can bring out, you must do so. To not would be an ultimate waste. Make the world more colorful and bright. Paint that canvas with whatever you can bring and can contribute. The world will be better overall for doing so.

Let's Look at some sources.

The source that brings to mind how to be careful in art and what you paint or draw is from [Exodus 20:4](#)

You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth.

Source again making literal representation of certain things

Sefer HaChinukh 27:1

To not make a statue: To not make statues that will be worshiped; even if the one that makes them does not worship them, the making is itself forbidden, [so as] to push off the stumbling block. And there is no difference between his making it with his hand or commanding someone else to make it, as it is stated (Exodus 20:4), "You shall not make for yourself a statue or any depiction." And the one who commands to make it is the one who causes its making - that is the opinion of Rambam, may his memory be blessed (Sefer HaMitzvot LaRambam, Mitzvot Lo Taase 4). **And the opinion of Ramban, may his memory be blessed, (on that entry in Sefer HaMitzvot) it that there is no prohibition here except for not making idols with the intention of worshipping them.** He also wrote that this negative commandment should not be counted from this scripture, as this verse only warns about the prohibition of idolatry which comes with the death penalty; but with the making of idols, the whole time that he does not worship them, the only thing he is liable for is lashes. And he, may his memory be blessed, wrote that this whole verse of "You shall have no," is considered one negative commandment [that] warns not to concede the divinity of anything besides Him; whether he accepts it as a god - meaning to say that he says to it, "You are my god" - or bows down to it, or worships it in one of the four forbidden worships or worships it with the worship that is particular to it. Rather, he wrote that the [prohibition] of making idols and their preservation is extrapolated from the verse (Leviticus 19:4) of "Do not turn to idols or make molten gods for yourselves." And I wonder about that which Rambam, may his memory be blessed, wrote that there is no difference if he made it with his hand or if he commanded to make it - as behold, the one who commands is a dispatcher, and it is an established [principle] for us that a dispatcher is exempt.

[Avodah Zara 42-43](#)

The Master said: Figures of all constellations are permitted, except for the following celestial objects: The sun and the moon. The Gemara asks: **What are we dealing with here? If we say that the reference is to one who forms these figures,** i.e., if Rav Sheshet is discussing the issue of which figures it is permitted to **form, is forming figures of all the other constellations permitted? But isn't it written: "You shall not make with Me gods of silver, or gods of gold, you shall not make for you" (Exodus 20:20)?** This verse is interpreted to mean: **You shall not make figures of My attendants who serve before Me on high,** i.e., those celestial bodies, including the constellations, that were created to serve God. **..Rather,** it is **obvious** that this *halakha* is referring to a case **where one finds vessels with these figures on them, and this is as we learned in the mishna: In the case of one who finds vessels, and upon them is a figure of the sun, a figure of the moon, or a figure of a dragon, he must take them and cast them into the Dead Sea.** This indicates that it is permitted to derive benefit from any other vessels that were found and that had figures on them. The Gemara asks: **If it is a case where one finds vessels with these figures on them, say the middle clause of Rav Sheshet's statement: Figures of all faces are permitted, except for the human face.** Now, **if it is a case where one finds vessels with figures on them, is a vessel with the figure of the human face forbidden? But didn't we learn in the mishna: In the case of one who finds vessels, and upon them is a figure of the sun, a figure of the moon, or a figure of a dragon, he must take them and cast them into the Dead Sea?** This indicates that a vessel with **the figure of a dragon is forbidden, but a vessel with the figure of a human face is not. ..Rather,** the Gemara concludes, it is **obvious** that the statement that the figure of a human face is forbidden is referring to a case **where one forms a figure, and this is prohibited, in accordance with the statement of Rav Huna, son of Rav Yehoshua, who states (43b) that the interpretation of the verse: "You shall not make with Me gods of silver, or gods of gold, you shall not make for you" (Exodus 20:20), is: Do not make of Me, i.e., do not form the figure of a person, who was created in the image of God. ...The Gemara asks: If it is referring to a case where one forms a figure, say the last clause of Rav Sheshet's statement: All figures are permitted except for the figure of a dragon. And if it is referring to a case where one forms a figure, is forming the figure of a dragon prohibited? But isn't it written: "You shall not make with Me gods of silver, or gods of gold"?" ...The Sages interpret this verse as referring to the heavenly constellations, which indicates that it is prohibited to form only these figures, but it is not prohibited to form a figure of a dragon. ..Rather,** the Gemara concludes, it is **obvious** that this *halakha* is referring to a case **where one finds a vessel with the figure of a dragon, and this is as we learned in the mishna: In the case of one who finds vessels, and upon them is a figure of the sun, a figure of the moon, or a figure of a dragon, he must take them and cast them into the Dead Sea.**The Gemara asks: **And is it permitted to form these figures? But isn't it written: "You shall not make with Me gods of silver, or gods of gold" (Exodus 20:20), which is interpreted to mean: You shall not make figures of My attendants who serve before Me,** i.e., those celestial bodies that were created to serve God, including the sun and the moon. ...In answering, **Abaye said: The Torah prohibited only the figures of those attendants that one can possibly reproduce something that is truly in their likeness.** Since it is impossible to reproduce the sun and the moon, the prohibition does not apply to these entities.**As it is taught in a baraita: A person may not construct a house in the exact image of the Sanctuary, nor a portico in the exact image of the**

Entrance Hall of the Sanctuary, nor **a courtyard corresponding to the Temple courtyard**, nor **a table corresponding to the Table** in the Temple, nor **a candelabrum corresponding to the Candelabrum** in the Temple. **But one may fashion a candelabrum of five or of six or of eight lamps. And one may not fashion a candelabrum of seven lamps even** if he constructs it **from other kinds of metal** rather than gold, as in extenuating circumstances the Candelabrum in the Temple may be fashioned from other metals. The *baraita* continues: **Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda says: One may not fashion a candelabrum of wood either, in the manner that the kings of the Hasmonean monarchy fashioned it.** When they first purified the Temple they had to fashion the Candelabrum out of wood as no other material was available. Since a wooden candelabrum is fit for the Temple, it is prohibited to fashion one of this kind for oneself. **Abaye said: The Torah prohibits fashioning figures of only those attendants that are in the upper heaven, i.e., the supreme angels in the highest firmament, but it does not prohibit fashioning the celestial bodies, e.g., the sun and the moon, despite the fact that they too are located in heaven...** **And if you wish, say** there is yet another answer: Fashioning figures in order **to teach oneself is different, as it is taught** in a *baraita* with regard to the verse: **“You shall not learn to do like the abominations of those nations” (Deuteronomy 18:9): But you may learn in order to understand the matter yourself and teach it to others.** In other words, it is permitted to perform certain acts for the sake of Torah study that would otherwise be prohibited.

PTC. Be careful with what you draw or with what you paint or what you make or do. Make sure it is leshem shamayim and for Hashem and to bring glory to the world, and that you make permitted thing in permitted ways

[Shulcah Aruch, Torah Yeah, 141](#)

- 1) Mehaber: All the images of star worshippers found in villages are forbidden, since, apparently, they were made as idols, but those found in cities are permissible, since they were certainly made for the sake of beauty, unless they stand at the entrance of the city, and an image of a staff or a bird or a ball or a sword or a diadem and a ring is in the hand.

[Rabbeinu Bachya on Exodus 20:4](#)

In our verse the Torah also staggers the description of the danger of idolatry; first you must avoid putting faith in any phenomena besides G'd; next you must not construct something which could become an idol; third, you must watch out that you will not prostrate yourself to an idol. The Torah commences with the relatively mild sin describing how it will lead to the most serious kind of sin.

This leads us to the apparent contradiction of the construction of the commandment in Exodus 25,18 to construct two golden cherubs, which sounds as if “the same mouth which prohibited making molten images permits them” (Ketuvot 22) in a different context. [G'd is the only One who knows when to allow or even order the making of symbols. Seeing He allows in one context He must have His reasons for prohibiting it in other contexts. Ed.]

The expression *וכל תמונה*, means: “any kind of likeness.” [not “every likeness.”] It is similar to verse 10 in our chapter *לא תעשה כל מלאכה*, “do not perform any kind of work.” Alternatively, the word *כל* in the phrase *לא תעשה לך פסל וכל תמונה*, could refer to the attribute *כל*, which would

represent one of the likenesses of what is found in the celestial regions., i.e. אשר בשמים ממעל. The “כל” referred to is the likeness of some celestial phenomenon. The same applies in Deut. 4,23 where the Torah warns against כל פסל תמונת כל, ועשיתם לכם פסל תמונת כל, “from making for yourselves a molten image, a likeness of כל, concerning which the Lord your G’d has commanded you.” Here too the word כל may be understood as a reference to something specific rather than as a reference to “all” or “any.”

The words אשר בשמים ממעל, “of what is in the heavens above,” refer to images of angels or other celestial beings the likeness of which we are not to reproduce. Examples would be such angels as: Ophanim, Seraphim or Chayot Hakodesh, categories of angels which we speak about in our prayers. Even though we have not seen these angels we must not portray their likeness as it corresponds to our imagination. The words ואשר בארץ מתחת, “or those that are on earth below,” refer to three-dimensional reproductions of either human beings or animals or birds which populate the earth. The words ואשר במים מתחת לארץ, “or which are in the water below the earth,” refer to all manner of fish. We must not make accurate three-dimensional reproductions of these either. Neither must one construct likenesses of the demons inhabiting the domain under the surface of the earth (Mechilta Bachodesh section 6).

This verse teaches also that earth is positioned above water. This is the reason for the wording: “which is in the water beneath the earth.” We have a verse in Psalms 136,6 לרוקע הארץ על המים, “who spreads the earth above the waters” which makes this point even more directly. It is commonly assumed that the demons consist of three varieties (Chagigah 16). Some reside in the atmosphere and cause people to dream at night. Some reside within our bodies and tempt men into sinful conduct. Some reside within the bowels of the earth. If G’d had allowed these demons to surface they would be powerful enough to devastate the terrestrial universe.

Our sages (Mechilta Bachodesh section 6) added that the words אשר בשמים include the sun, the moon, and the stars, as well as constellations of stars, signs of the zodiac. The word ממעל includes the angels, whereas the words ואשר בארץ include man, beast and birds. The word מתחת, includes insects, reptiles and the like. The words ואשר במים include the fish in the sea and rivers; the words מתחת לארץ include the demons. Pessikta Zutrata on our verse confirms this interpretation.

PTC. Paint things or make things that ill inspire others and uplift others with good messages with Torah values and ideals

[Berakhot 16a:7](#)

.MISHNA: The primary issue in this mishna is the requisite degree of concentration when reciting *Shema*. **Laborers engaged in their work may recite *Shema* while standing atop the tree or atop the course of stones in a wall under construction, which they are not permitted to do for the *Amida* prayer, which requires intent of the heart.**

[Exodus 31:2](#)

See, I have singled out by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. I have endowed him with a divine spirit of skill, ability, and knowledge in every kind of craft; to make designs for work in gold, silver, and copper, to cut stones for setting and to carve wood—to work

in every kind of craft. Moreover, I have assigned to him Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and I have also granted skill to all who are skillful, that they may make everything that I have commanded you:

[Exodus 35:30-31](#)

And Moses said to the Israelites: See, the LORD has singled out by name Bezalel, son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. He has endowed him with a divine spirit of skill, ability, and knowledge in every kind of craft

[Berachot 55a](#)

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani said that Rabbi Yonatan said: Bezalel was called by that name on account of his wisdom. When the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses: Go say to Bezalel, “Make a tabernacle, an ark, and vessels” (see Exodus 31:7–11). Moses went and reversed the order and told Bezalel: “Make an ark, and vessels, and a tabernacle” (see Exodus 25–26). He said to Moses: Moses, our teacher, the standard practice throughout the world is that a person builds a house and only afterward places the vessels in...

PTC. Use your talents for good and for others especially in art or craft and especially to help inspire others

[Bava Batra 45b](#)

Rava raises an objection from a *baraita* to support the opinion of Rabba: With regard to one who gives his cloak to a craftsman, and then the craftsman says: You fixed two dinars as my payment, and that one, the owner, says: I fixed only one dinar as your payment, then, so long as it is so that the cloak is in the possession of the craftsman, it is incumbent upon the owner to bring proof that the fee was one dinar...

[Pesachim 55a:12](#)

MISHNA: ...the Rabbis say: The practitioners of only three crafts are permitted to perform labor until midday on Passover eve, and they are: Tailors, barbers, and launderers, whose work is needed for the Festival...

PTC. Make sure you are involved in necessary and functional art and work to help contribute to the world in a good and positive way

[Berachot 43b](#)

And Rav Zutra bar Toviya said that Rav said: What is the meaning of that which is written: “He has made everything beautiful in its time, and he has placed the world in their heart, yet so man cannot find out the work that God has done from the beginning even to the end” (Ecclesiastes 3:11)? This teaches that each and every individual, God has made his work pleasant for him in his own eyes. In that way, each individual will be satisfied with his work, enabling the world to function properly.

PTC. Be proud of what you make, what you create thanks to Hashem, and what you contribute to the world whether in painting, crafting, writing, music, or the like

[Mishneh Torah, Sales 14:10](#)

...Similarly, craftsmen in a specific profession may establish provisions and agree that one should not work on the day on which another is working or the like, and that anyone who violates these guidelines will be punished in such and such a fashion.

[Shabbat 133b:5](#)

...What is the source for the requirement of: “This is my God and I will glorify Him”? **As it was taught** in a *baraita* with regard to the verse: “**This is my God and I will glorify Him [anveihu]**, the Lord of my father and I will raise Him up.” The Sages interpreted *anveihu* homiletically as linguistically related to *noi*, beauty, and interpreted the verse: **Beautify yourself before Him in mitzvot**. Even if one fulfills the mitzva by performing it simply, it is nonetheless proper to perform the mitzva as beautifully as possible...

PTC. Make things for Hashem and the world as beautiful as possible, especially within art through drawing and painting

[Arachin 10b](#)

...The Sages taught in a *baraita*: **There was a flute in the Temple; it was smooth and it was thin**, i.e., its sides were thin; **it was made from reed, and it was in existence from the days of Moses. The king issued a command and they plated the flute with gold, but then its sound was not as pleasant as it was previously. They therefore removed its plating and its sound was then as pleasant as it was before. Similarly, there was a cymbal in the Temple...**

[Sukkah 51b](#)

It is taught in a *baraita* that Rabbi Yehuda says: **One who did not see the great synagogue [deyofloston] of Alexandria of Egypt never saw the glory of Israel. They said that its structure was like a large basilica [basileki], with a colonnade within a colonnade. At times there were six hundred thousand men and another six hundred thousand men in it, twice the number of those who left Egypt. In it there were seventy-one golden chairs [katedraot], corresponding to the seventy-one members of the Great Sanhedrin...**

[Yoma 38a](#)

GEMARA: The Sages taught in a *baraita*: The craftsmen of the **House of Garmu were expert in the preparation of the shewbread, and they did not want to teach others the secret of its production. The Sages dismissed them and sent for and brought craftsmen from Alexandria in Egypt**, a large city with many experts. **And those craftsmen knew how to bake like the members of the House of Garmu did, but they did not know how to remove the bread from the oven like they did...**

PTC. Enjoy and appreciate the beautiful things Hashem made for this world and bought to this world especially through the laborers and artists

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