

Creativity – Shemot 31:1-4

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:

רְאֵה קָרָאתִי בְשֵׁם בְּצַלְאֵל בֶּן־אֹרִי בֶן־חֹר לְמִטֵּה יְהוּדָה

וְאִמְלֵא אֹתוֹ רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים בְּחָכְמָה וּבְתַבּוּנָה וּבְדַעַת וּבְכָל־מְלָאכָה:

לַחֲשֹׁב מַחְשָׁבֹת לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּזָהָב וּבְכֶסֶף וּבְנִחָשֶׁת:

And Hashem spoke to Moshe Saying:

“See, I have called out by name Betzalel ben Uri Ben Chur of the tribe of Yehuda

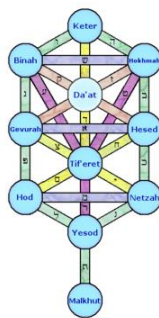
and I have filled him with a **ruach elokim** with **chachma**, **binah** and **daat** in every kind of craft

to make designs for work with gold, silver and copper

A discussion on Creativity based on Shemot 31:1-4

A Related Story:

"I grew up eating Jewish food, hearing Jewish jokes and arguments, attending an Orthodox synagogue and its Hebrew school. How could such things not affect my imagination, including my writing? On the other hand, my parents were quite secular in their outlook; "nominally kosher" might describe the household in certain matters. That contradiction, too, is part of me, so of my writing. In particular, I remember amid the terribly long Saturday morning services the beauty of the cantorial singing: the sounds of words in a language I couldn't much understand, but the sound far more expressive than the stiff, boring English translation I might glance at. Like an anchor, or like a life raft? . . .the sounds of words."
Robert Pinsky served as poet laureate at the U.S. Library of Congress from 1997 to 2000.



Some Interactive Resources:

TED Talk – Elizabeth Gilbert – “Your Elusive Creative Genius” – too long to show in a 301 but definitely worth showing parts of!

Sefirotic Tree – the primary Kabbalistic symbol. Why are chachma, binah and daat so close to the top?

Betzalel School of art – Show some pictures of the school of art in Jerusalem, perhaps some letters that Rav Kook sent in order to get it established. (Letters and story of its founding can be found online or in ‘the spiritual revolution of Rav Kook.’)

Some Textual Questions to ask Chanichim:

- What do you think “ruach elokim” means? “Ruach Elokim” is also used in the creation story? How does this relate?
- The only other people that have a “ruach elokim” in the Torah are Yosef and Bilaam – what is the connection between these three people?
- What do you think “chachma” “binah” and “daat” mean? What is Rashi’s take on them? Do any of them correspond to creativity?
- “Betzalel” literally means “in the shadow of God” – why this name? Why this tribe?

Some General Questions to ask Chanichim:

- How can Betzalel be seen as ‘creative’ when he was told exactly how to build the mishkan?
- Do you think “the comfort zone” is an enemy to creativity?
- What is the difference between “art” and “propaganda”?
- Why do you think Tzfat has become the artistic centre of Israel?

Some Personal Questions to ask Chanichim:

- What parts of your Jewish life do you consider creative or not creative enough?
- How does creativity relate to Shabbat? Do you feel creatively restricted on Shabbat?
- Do you ever find yourself jealous of someone else’s creativity? Do you think it is something that is ok to be jealous of?
- Do you think creativity makes you ‘free’ – is this a kind of freedom that our religion encourages?
- What areas do you think you are particularly creative in? Why do you think you have been given these gifts? How are you going to use them to impact the world? (This could be good to do as an activity where everyone draws circles with their gifts inside).

Other sources and quotes to bring into discussion:

Rashi on the Pasuk:

Chachma – what a person hears from others and learns

Binah – understanding a matter by one’s own intelligence deducing it from the things one has already learnt

Daat – holy inspiration

Pablo Picasso (artist):

“Every child is born an artist; the problem is staying an artist when you grow up.”

Maya Angelou (poet):

“You can’t use up creativity, the more you use, the more you have.”

Jordan Peterson (psychologist):

“The difference between art and propaganda is an artist has no idea what the final outcome will be.”

Einstein (physicist):

“Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world and all there will ever be to know and understand.”

Rav Kook on Creativity:

“I walk around me with an overwhelming jealousy of the secular world. It is a jealousy that consumes me. For is it really possible that the power of creativity has ceased in the religious world? How could this be?”

Gemara Brachot 55a:

“Bezalel knew how to combine the letters of the aleph bet that make up the world.”