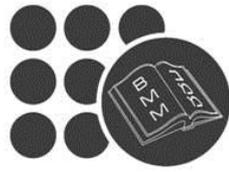


# Parshat Teruma

## Art: Kosher Creativity or Dastardly Design



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בית מדרש מורשה

### Source 1: Shmot 25:8 and 11

And they shall make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst

וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשִׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכְכֶם

And you shall overlay it with pure gold; from inside and from outside you shall overlay it, and you shall make upon it a golden crown all around.

וְצִפִּיתָ אֹתוֹ זָהָב טָהוֹר מִבֵּית וּמְחוּץ תִּצְפְּנֶנּוּ וְעָשִׂיתָ עָלָיו זָר זָהָב סָבִיב

### Source 2: Mishlei/Proverbs 31:30

Charm is false and beauty is futile; a God-fearing woman, she is to be praised.

שֶׁקֶר הַחַן וְהַבֵּל הַיָּפִי אֲשֶׁה יֵרָאֵת ה' הִיא תִתְהַלָּל

### Source 3: Rambam Shmonah Prakim (Introduction to Pirkei Avot) Chapter 5

If a person feels sadness settling upon him, he should remove it with songs and forms of music; walking in the gardens and beautiful buildings, and sitting with beautiful pictures, and such things that expand the soul, and remove this dark worry from himself. And his intention in all of this should be to have a healthy body, and the purpose of his health – that he will know.

אם התעוררה עליו מרה שחורה, יסירה בשמיעת שירים ומיני נגינות, ובטיול בגנות ובבניינים נאים, ובישיבה עם צורות נאות, וכיוצא בזה ממה שירחיב הנפש, ויסיר דאגת המרה השחורה ממנה. ותהיה הכוונה בכל זה - שיבריא גופו, ותכלית בריאות גופו - שידע

### Source 4: Bereishit/Genesis 29:17

Leah's eyes were tender, but Rachel had beautiful features and a beautiful complexion.

וְעֵינֵי לְאָה רַכּוֹת וְרַחֵל הָיְתָה יְפֵת תֶּאֱרָר וְיְפֵת מְרֻאָה:

### Source 5: Reported in the name of the Vilna Gaon by his great-nephew

The explanation of this matter by the Goan, zatzal, of Vilna, the verse says: "Charms is false..." but this is difficult: If charm and beauty are futile and false, how does the Torah praise with someone false, that is says "Rachel had beautiful features..." And he saus, that beauty is futile and false if it is alone; but when a woman reveres Hashem, it is a great level. And this is the explanation: "Charm is false... a God-fearing woman, she is to be praised" the she he refers to the grace and beauty

פירש דבר זה הגר"א ז"ל מווילנא, הפסוק "שקר החן וכו'" (משלי לא, ל), וקשה, אם חן ויופי הוא הבל ושקר, איך משבח הכתוב בדבר שקר, שאמר "ורחל היתה וכו'". ואמר הוא ז"ל, שהיופי הוא הבל ושקר אם הוא לבד, אבל באשה יראת ה' היא מעלה גדולה. והכי פירושו, "שקר החן וכו' – אשה יראת ה', היא", היינו החן והיופי המוזכר למעלה, "תתהלל".

### Source 6: Article – Human Creativity: Art and Halakha by Aytan Kadden

Art forms which are indeed fostered through halakha are calligraphy (ט"ם) music (טעמי המקרא) and poetry (שירה במקרא, תהילים)

### Source 7: Extracts from Rav Kook's Letter to Bezalel Art School

How good it is to know, that this sign of life [art in the Jewish world] is not just a sign empty of all true substance, but it has fruit and benefit! This important subject, or

ומה נכבד הוא לדעת, שאות-חיים זה איננו רק אות ריק מכל תוכן ממשי, כ"א יש בו ג"כ פרי ותועלת. המקצע החשוב הזה, של האמנות היפה, יוכל באמת להביא ברכה ולפתח שערי פרנסה וכלכלה למשפחות רבות מאחינו היושבים על אדמת הקודש. והיה פריו למאכל ועלהו לתרופה<sup>5</sup>. והוא יפתח ג"כ את רגש היופי והטהרה, שבני ציון היקרים מוכשרים לו עד מאד, ירומם נפשות רבות ומדוכאות לתת להן הסתכלות בהירה ומאירה, על הדת החיים, הטבע והמלאכה, על כבוד העבודה והחריצות. כל אלה הנם פרינציפים נשאים, שממלאים את נפש כל איש עברי רגשי גיל והדר.

beautiful faith, can truly bring Bracha and open the gates of Parnassa for many families living in the Holy Land... And it also upons the feelings of beauty and purity, to which the dear children of Zion are very much predisposed. It raises many and downtrodden souls to give them a clear and illuminated vision, of the glory of life, nature and productivity, of the honour of work and diligence. And of these of exalted principled, that fill the soul of every person Jewish person with rejoicing and splendour...

In general, with the faith-based desire for beauty, that is made physical through art, human creativity, our nations relates to the world in a positive and friendly way – but also within limitations. We are careful to avoid drunkenness and going too far, even in the most elevated things...

לכללות חמדת היופי האמנותי, המתגשם ביצירות מעשיות. מעשי ידי אדם, מתייחס עמנו לעולם ביחש טוב וחיביב, אבל גם מוגבל. נוהרים אנחנו משכרון והפרזה, אפילו מהדברים היותר נשגבים ונעלים.

היופי בעצמו כבר עלול הוא להתהפך בידי ההמון הגס למין גלוסקא-שמנונית ומשקה משכר, אם לא יוכל לינק מהדר האמת המדעית והמוסרית.

Beauty contains within itself the risk of being changed by the coarse populace into junk food and intoxicating liquor, if it doesn't draw from the true beauty of knowledge and morality.

Source: London Jewish Chronicle – September 1935

**Rabbi Kook on Art**  
**Kasher Jewish Sculpture**  
**REMBRANDT AND DIVINE LIGHT**  
BY A. MELNIKOFF

As an artist I am interested in the Biblical prohibition of making graven images, that has had so much influence in the creation of Jewish art.

One day I talked to the late Rabbi Kook about this prohibition. I asked him whether it is true that somewhere in our holy commentaries there is a passage which says that under certain conditions sculpture is allowed to be done by Jews?

The Rabbi knitted his brows. "Let me see, let me see," he was saying to himself. A few moments later he brought down huge *Amaroth* from the shelves; he piled them up on the table; he opened one after another, moving his delicate fingers along the lines of the holy script as he read. This went on for half-an-hour. He looked like a hunter on the trail, a hunter after truth and knowledge. At last he stood up triumphantly. "Here it is," he said. "Now listen to what our sages say about your question."

I don't remember the exact wording he quoted, but it was something like this—"Our sages say," he read out, "that it is allowed to Jews to make images, if these are done imperfectly and maimed."

"In that case," I replied, "I am sure my sculpture is *kasher*."  
"Why?" he asked.  
"Because my work is far from being perfect."  
Now was his turn to laugh. He was all kindness. We talked about Art and he told me the following story:  
"When I lived in London I used to visit the National Gallery, and my favourite pictures were those of Rembrandt. I really think that Rembrandt was a *Tzadik*. Do you know that when I first saw Rembrandt's works, they reminded me of the legend about the creation of light? We are told that when God created light, it was so strong and pellucid, that one could see from one end of the world to the other, but God was afraid that the wicked might abuse it. What did He do? He reserved that light for the righteous when the Messiah should come. But now and then there are great men who are blessed and privileged to see it. I think that Rembrandt was one of them, and the light in his pictures is the very light that was originally created by God Almighty."  
I have read much about Rembrandt, but none gives such a vivid description of his genius as this. Only a man as pure of heart and soul as Rabbi Kook could have seen Rembrandt in that light.

Picture: Rembrandt etching: Jews in the Synagogue, 1648

