

Individual Talents (Teacher Guide)

Source Sheet by Andrew Galitzer

Optional Hook: I noticed people like wine, so I figured we'd start out with that.

1. Bamidbar Rabbah 13:16

As the numerical value of yayin (wine) is seventy, so there are seventy modes of expounding the Torah.

במדבר רבה י"ג:ט"ז

כשם שיין, חשבנו שבעים, כך יש שבעים פנים בתורה.

So many approaches to Torah. Just like there are so many different people: It is so amazing for me to visit communities and schools and meet people there. Every person is different and unique. So interesting to speak with them and hear about their story and background/life.

2. Gemara Brachot 58a

Our Rabbis taught: If someone sees a crowd of Jews, he recites: "Blessed is He Who knows all secrets". For the mind of each is unlike another just as their faces are unlike each other.

ברכות נח.

תנו רבנן: הוֹאֵה אוֹכְלוֹסֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, אוֹמֵר: "בָּרוּךְ ... חֵכֶם הָרִזִּים" — שֶׁאִין דַּעְתָּם דּוֹמָה זֶה לָזֶה, וְאִין פְּרָצוּפֵיהֶן דּוֹמִים זֶה לָזֶה.

Case study of Betzalel:

3. שמות ל"א:ב"ו

רָאָה קִרְאָתִי בְשֵׁם בְּצַלְאֵל... וְאַמְלֵא אֹתוֹ רוּחַ אֱלֹקִים בְּחֶכְמָה וּבְתַבּוּנָה וּבְדַעַת וּבְכָל-מְלָאכָה: ...לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּכָל-מְלָאכָה: ...בְּלֵב כָּל-חֹכֵם-לֵב נָתַתִּי חֶכְמָה וְעָשׂוֹ אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי:



Exodus 31:2-6

See, I have singled out by name Bezalel... I have endowed him (Bezalel) with a divine spirit of skill, ability, and knowledge in every kind of craft...to work in every kind of craft. I have also granted skill to all who are skillful, that they may make everything that I have commanded you

Question: Does anything from the Passuk stand out?

Question: Why weren't Moshe/Leviim/Kohanim chosen to build the Mishkan?

- They had their own role, this was for someone else
- **Rashi:** Shows everyone can be involved, regardless of shevet / social rank (Betzalel)

was from Yehudah - kingly, and Oholiav was from Dan - not special)
Question: Why does it say Melacha instead of specifically building?
 - A: Relates to all forms of Avodat Hashem, including building Mishkan, and more.

Now, we will go through some sources explaining the significance of Betza'el being endowed with this talent and its significance (given talent for purpose of serving G'd)

2. Ibn Ezra on Exodus 31:6:2

AND IN THE HEARTS OF ALL THAT ARE WISE-HEARTED I HAVE PUT WISDOM. To do work. Also one finds in human nature the ability to devise intricate geometric forms without ever having studied this science.

אבן עזרא על שמות ל"א:ו' ב'

ובלב כל חכם לב. לעשות מלאכה כי גם זה ימצא בתולדת האדם שיוציא מלבו דברים עמוקים במלאכת המדות והוא לא למד החכמה.

Explanation: No need to study 4-6 years in Drexel University, Hashem blessed them with the talent (maybe doesn't apply in our everyday, we have the potential and have to refine it. In desert, maybe they didn't have those opportunities)

Notice the words Ibn Ezra focuses on: it applies to every "Chacham Lev" or every heart. So each person has a special ability to do a specific work

3. Rashbam on Exodus 31:6:1

G'd had already equipped those with the required talent to carry out the work.

רשב"ם על שמות ל"א:ו' א'

ובלב כל חכם לב - שיבא לעשות המלאכה, כבר נתתי בהם חכמה ועשו וגו'.

*So we are all born with particular talents to serve G'd in specific ways. Let's look at some sources which show that each of us are **different** which creates a society of purpose:*

4. Rav Kook

(Excerpt from The Spiritual Revolution of Rav Kook By Ari Ze'ev Schwartz)

Each unique talent is built on specific personality traits that contradict other traits and a person cannot be gifted with them all. For example... take a poetic person who has tremendous talents in music; he or she may not be capable of understanding practical wisdoms such as engineering or machines. And the opposite is also true.

This is the great pain that exists in the world: there are strengths and talents that are scattered and contradictory. Nevertheless, the path of truth, which is the path of God, requires **each individual to be strong and confident in his or her own talents**, and at the same time to honor and respect the talents of others.... It is through the combining of different talents within each individual that a society is formed. (KYK 1, Pinkas Rishon I'Yaffo 67)

Main point: We shouldn't try to be good at **everything**—focus on your

gifts/interests. Don't need to be a renaissance man. We should each do something that contributes to the whole (complementary and unity).

5. Rav Yehudah Amital

(Excerpt from *Jewish Values in a Changing World*, page 70)

According to Rabbi Kook, every person is required to find his own unique path in serving God, and not to assimilate into his life ways of serving God that are not suited to him.... This approach combines greatness and humility; **a person must recognize what is suited to him, and not adopt what is inappropriate for him.** According to this approach, all competition disappears, for every person has a goal of his own.

Ramchal emphasizes this in *Mesilat Yesharim*: Avoid jealousy by focusing on yourself. You have a different role/mission than others.

Example: Comparing artwork to other artists leads to jealousy (like me)

Rather, compare your artwork / yourself to your previous self and aim for improvement (SHOW COMIC PROGRESSION AS EXAMPLE)

- Same with every talent/skill: hard to see your improvement / compare, still need to reflect to find it.

6. Shemot Rabah 40:3

The passuk says "See I called Betzalel" because Moshe may have thought that he was commanded to build everything and then lost that privilege. G'd therefore *showed* Moshe the Book of Adam with all the future generations to see that Betzalel was predestined to be given the talent to build the Mishkan

שמות רבה 40:3

קראתי בשם בצלאל, אין כתיב כאן, אלא ראה קראתי, 'אתה מוצא' כשעלה משה "ועשית מגרת...ועשית שלחן"... כך כל מעשה המשכן הביא לו ספרו של אדם הראשון והראה לו כל הדורות... אמר לו כל אחד ואחד התקנתיו מאותה שעה, וכן בצלאל מאותה שעה התקנתיו, הוי: ראה קראתי בשם בצלאל

Follow-up questions to ask:

- Now, why do you think Moshe wasn't chosen to build the Mishkan?
- Why might Moshe have thought he was supposed to build the Mishkan? ('you')
- How can this relate to feelings of jealousy and envy? What do you think?

7. Dr. Abba Borowich, Psychiatrist

(Interview, 2022)

Each person has to find what they love and what they are talented at, which is usually the same thing. Find something that you are good at and you love to do and your world will be blessed and you'll be as successful as you can be... because there is no internal resistance.

- According to Dr. Borowich, how should one choose a career? Why does it matter?

- Have you found something you are talented at yet? If you have, how can you direct that to Torah and God?

Extra References about unity / complimentary people:

Mishkan / BHMK: On its own, each beam, thread, and piece of metal means nothing. Only when it all comes together does it form the beautiful Mishkan.

Letter in the Scroll: all connected and each with our own role to play in the Jewish story: our story

- Rabbi Sacks idea of each of us representing one letter of the Torah, coming together to form a live Torah

Final questions:

- Why was it important to specify someone as the builder of the Mishkan?
 - Possible answer: so there is no bribery or competition for the position, rather everyone will know Betzalel was chosen by God.
- What do you think of this idea and how it relates to your life? How can your talent / interests be used in your Avodat Hashem

Andrew is a Jewish artist and cartoonist who studied in Yeshivat Eretz HaTzvi. He has a comic for every Parsha in the Torah and teaches kids how to make their own comics and drawings! The Torah Comic Book and Comic Workshops are available now. Visit TorahComics.com or email art@andidrew.com for more.

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