

# JEWISH VALUES THROUGH WOODWORKING

A Guide To Connecting Heritage & Hands ♥



**NO TWO PROJECTS ARE ALIKE, JUST AS WE ARE EACH DIFFERENT**



## CREATING THE CONNECTION

Woodworking is a tremendous medium for all learners because it is kinetic, tactile, and organic.

We offer you this guide so you can use woodworking in the service of instilling Jewish values into our youth.

In the pages that follow, we've outlined a few tenets of Judaism; you can choose a Jewish value to use as a lens into woodworking, create Jewish themed projects, and create programming around holiday themes that use woodworking as a learning aid.

## Jewish Values through Woodworking

### Overview:

Woodworking is a tremendous medium for many kinds of learners because it is kinetic, tactile, and organic.

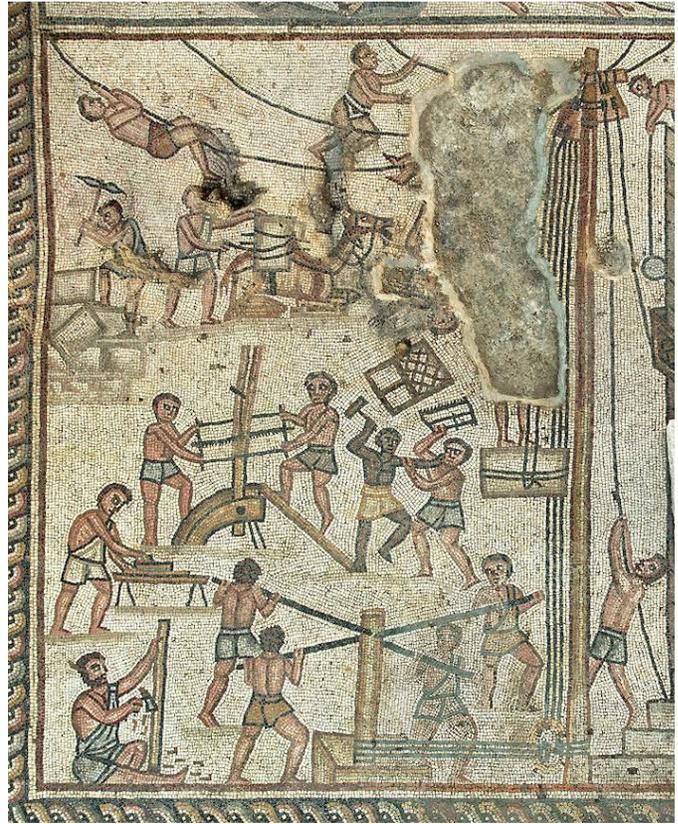
No two projects are alike just as we are each different.

We offer you this guide for you to use woodworking in the service of instilling Jewish values into our youth.

You can choose a Jewish value to use as a lens into woodworking, create Jewish themed projects, and create programming around holiday themes that use Woodworking as a learning aid.

Many thanks to:

- Rabbi Rachel Marder - Congregation Beth El
- Rhonda Lillianthal – JCC Greater Metrowest
- Rikva Nelson – Program Director, Jewish Learning Center - Congregation Beth El



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### Melacha/Melachot

Also known as creative work that God and only humans can do. This differs from Avodah; slavery, or mindless work

Jewish Examples	Woodworking application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Combining the spiritual and the physical</li> <li>● There is no Torah without flour; if you don't make bread, sustain yourself, you can't study torah.</li> <li>● What god created in the 6 days of work</li> <li>● The 39 works you cannot do on the shabbat</li> <li>● Eyshet Chail (A woman of valor). She seeks out wool and linen and her hands work willingly.</li> <li>● The Tabernacle was created by Jews working together</li> <li>● Hidur mitzvah – the value of beautifying our mitzvot such as making ritual objects</li> <li>● Psalm 90 v17 May god firmly establish the work of our hands; make it last, help us to build things that last; may the things that we contribute to this world outlast us</li> <li>●</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Value of working with your hands</li> <li>● Value of creating objects that will outlast you</li> <li>● Value that Judaism places on creative work</li> <li>● Value that women are makers even more than men</li> <li>● There is sacredness in everyday objects such as the ones you are creating</li> <li>● IE, a mezuzah is not decoration, it is sacred which teaches us that we need to be mindful about everyday activities even walking into a room</li> <li>● Building – God instructs Moses to instruct all who have wisdom of the heart, whom I have endowed with the spirit of wisdom, to make Aaron's vestments... (Ex. 28:2). The Hebrew is often translated as "skillful," but it says "chachmei lev," which means wisdom of the heart. The ability to build and to think creatively is a divinely endowed ability, and is considered sacred. Other examples of big building projects include Noah's ark and the Temple.</li> </ul>

## Tzedaka

In the Bible, tzedakah means “righteous behavior” and is often paired with “justice.” In Jewish thought and tradition, material support for those in need is not a matter of “charity”—a term that implies generosity beyond what may be expected—but a requirement.

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/tzedakah-101/>

Jewish Examples	Woodworking application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Al Tifrosh min Ha Tzibur</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don't separate from the community is an essential part of any group activity</li> <li>Help each other and expect to be helped (if you finish early or see someone struggling)</li> </ul>

## Tikkun Olam

We are tasked with doing good deeds to make the world whole from the shards

Jewish Examples	Woodworking application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In reference to individual acts of repair, the phrase “tikkun olam” figures prominently in the Lurianic account of creation and its implications: God contracted the divine self to make room for creation. Divine light became contained in special vessels, or kelim, some of which shattered and scattered. While most of the light returned to its divine source, some light attached itself to the broken shards. These shards constitute evil and are the basis for the material world; their trapped sparks of light give them power.</li> <li><a href="https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/tikkun-olam-repairing-the-world">https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/tikkun-olam-repairing-the-world</a></li> </ul>	<p> It is our responsibility to protect the planet.</p>

## Jewish Values through Woodworking

### Ometz Lev

Strength of heart - courage is not about outward displays of bravery but rather about inner strength and the ability to overcome fears and challenges

Jewish Examples	Woodworking application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● David and Goliath - Goliath was a mortal man but David went forth and did it.</li> <li>● In the creation story God works hard for six days and then rests. There's a value in hard work, and treating oneself and one's workers with the dignity of rest on Shabbat.</li> <li>● Chazak v'ematz (Moses' charge to the people to have strength and courage)</li> <li>● Chazak, chazak vnit chazek; what we say when we finish reading a book of the Torah; it takes a lot of strength and grit to finish a book of the Torah.</li> <li>● The Musar movement; a whole thought among Hasidim and liberals about self-improvement and facing your personal struggles. (With Heart and Mind by Allin Moranis) has attributes you want to work on. EG, be slow to anger</li> <li>● Why is it important to pray 3 times a day. Creating a 'habit' or mindset by exercising your mind via prayer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🎬 Grit - you keep sanding until the surface is smooth</li> <li>🎬 Struggle - you keep sawing even if it is challenging</li> <li>🎬 Growth mindset - "I don't know how to do this now but I can learn!"</li> <li>🎬 Practice and you will become better.</li> </ul>

### Shemitah

Every 3 years fields go fallow to let the fields rest. This mindfulness of our environment can also be applied to forgive all debts so that we 'reset' everything.

Jewish Examples	Woodworking application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● T'bishvat - every tree that was planted that year has to be counted as that year and left for 3 years until fruits are picked</li> <li>● We shake the Lulav in many directions. Part of that reason is to remember and respect where it came from</li> <li>● Blessing over bread - we focus on where it came from</li> <li>● From dust to dust - we take nothing with us</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sustainability - repair, don't replace; by learning woodworking, we can be more self-sufficient and reduce consumerism</li> <li>● Garden of Eden - because we were given intelligence and chose to eat from the tree of knowledge so we are the 'keepers' of the world</li> </ul>

## Mitzvah gedola lihilot b'simcha tamid

It is an important mitzvah to be happy  
<https://www.aish.com/sh/s/48970561.html>

Jewish Examples	Woodworking application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A student once approached Reb Zusha and asked, "How is it that you are happy all the time, when deep in your heart you know you will never reach the level of greatness that Abraham and Moses reached?"</li> </ul> <p>Rabbi Zusha smiled and replied, "When it is time for my soul to depart and come before God, He will not ask me, 'Why were you not as righteous as Abraham or Moses?' He will ask me, 'Why didn't you become as righteous and holy as Rabbi Zusha?' "</p> <p>All God asks of us is that we do our best according to our own potential. What makes me happy is knowing that we are striving to achieve my utmost.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Caleb and Joshua goes into Canaan and goes with 10 others. The other spies are giving stories that make it seem impossible to succeed. But C and J had god on their side and were mentally present to see what was truly there such as milk and honey and thus worth the effort</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creativity comes from happiness</li> <li>Doing things you enjoy, such as crafts, are a mitzvah</li> <li>There is no perfect project</li> <li>The project you make is wonderful so enjoy it</li> <li>Be present mentally and you can slow down and enjoy what you are making</li> </ul>

## B'tzelem elochim

"We are created in the image of God, if you will, and we are obliged to return the favor."

Rabbi Arthur Green

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/created-in-gods-image/>

Jewish Examples	Woodworking application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everyone is holy, everyone is sacred, beautiful as we are.</li> <li>Four children of the seder; each one is different and requires a different approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> We are created in the image of G-d. What we create is individual as are we each. When we create, it connects us to G-d</li> <li> Feb is Jewish with Disabilities Awareness month.</li> <li> Opportunity to create things for people with disabilities</li> </ul>

## The Four Woodworkers

Just like the four sons in the Hagaddah, there are four kinds of woodworkers. Ones who follow the rules, ones who want to dive right in, ones who are confused, and ones who seem lost but are contemplating deeper ideas.

[https://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach\\_cdo/aid/1486118/jewish/The-Four-Children-Explained.htm](https://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach_cdo/aid/1486118/jewish/The-Four-Children-Explained.htm)

<p>Wise - What does the wise [son] say? "What are these testimonies, statutes and judgments that the Lord our God commanded you?" (<a href="#">Deuteronomy 6:20</a>)" And accordingly you will say to him, as per the laws of the Pesach sacrifice, "We may not eat an afikoman [a dessert or other foods eaten after the meal] after [we are finished eating] the Pesach sacrifice. (<a href="#">Mishnah Pesachim 10:8</a>)"</p>	<p>The wise woodworker asks, "What are we building today and where are our instructions to follow?"</p> <p>And you shall say, "we are transforming a plank into a project. The instructions are written on the board in the front of the room. Follow them and rest assured that your project will be made well."</p>
<p>Evil - What does the evil [son] say? "What is this worship to you?" (<a href="#">Exodus 12:26</a>)" 'To you' and not 'to him.' And since he excluded himself from the collective, he denied a principle [of the Jewish faith]. And accordingly, you will blunt his teeth and say to him, "For the sake of this, did the Lord do [this] for me in my going out of Egypt" (<a href="#">Exodus 13:8</a>)." 'For me' and not 'for him.' If he had been there, he would not have been saved.</p>	<p>The mischievous woodworker asks, "why are we following directions? I want to make what I want to make!"</p> <p>And you shall pair this woodworker with the wise woodworker and say, "When you show that you know how to use the tools safely and how to do some projects, we will let you make what you want to make."</p>
<p>Simple - What does the innocent [son] say? "What is this?" (<a href="#">Exodus 13:14</a>)" And you will say to him, "With the strength of [His] hand did the Lord take us out from Egypt, from the house of slaves" (<a href="#">Exodus 13:14</a>)."</p>	<p>The timid woodworker will ask, "I don't know how to do any of this. Those instructions on the board are just words."</p> <p>And you shall say, "Thank you for speaking up. The project will make more sense with a diagram. It may be that you learn better visually. There. Does that help?"</p>
<p>Doesn't know to ask - And [regarding] the one who doesn't know to ask, you will open [the conversation] for him. As it is stated (<a href="#">Exodus 13:8</a>), "And you will speak to your your son on that day saying, for the sake of this, did the Lord do [this] for me in my going out of Egypt."</p>	<p>And, for the woodworker who does not what to ask? You shall start the conversation by gently asking, "Do you have any questions I can answer for you about this project?"</p> <p>And they may pause, then say, "Oh, I actually understand this project, I was just thinking about a way to make it more interesting."</p>

## Jewish Projects

Project	Jewish Equivalent
Keepsake Box	Make a tzedaka box
String Art	Make a Mogen David or a Hamsa
Cutout Car	Here comes the train "H'nai Rakevet" song
Jigsaw Puzzle	Could literally do a jewish overlay with mod podge and then cut it out
Wren Bird House	Israel is on the flight path from Europe to Africa
Guitar	Musicians like David the harp player. His tribe, the Levites were teachers and musicians
Mezuzah	Could be simpler by layering wood so I don't need to build a box shape
Seder plate	1x10 pine cut into a rought
	Portable ark
	Mini Sukkah

### Famous Jewish Carpenters

#### Bezalel and Solomon

It is no accident that Bezalel and King Solomon, the great builders of our tradition are the two who are considered the most wise.

Throughout the last few portions, Bezalel is characterized as wise-hearted. He represents the seamless merger between the cognitive and the intuitive, between the contemplative and the pragmatic. Everything he creates is as if he were standing in “the shadow of the eternal.”

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/bezalel-standing-in-the-shadow-of-god/>

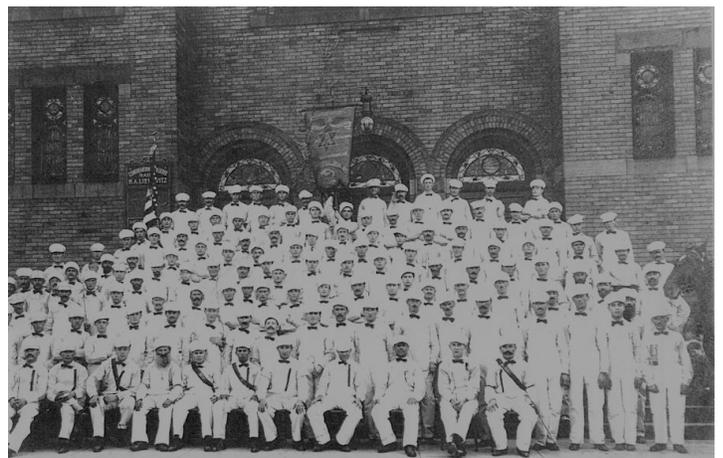
#### Ashkenazi last names related to trades

Ackerman — plowman  
Baker/Boker — baker  
Blecher — tinsmith  
Fleisher/Fleishman/Katsoff/Metger — butcher  
Cooperman — coppersmith  
Drucker — printer  
Einstein — mason  
Farber — painter/dyer  
Feinstein — jeweler  
Fisher — fisherman  
Forman — driver/teamster  
Garber/Gerber — tanner  
Glazer/Glass/Sklar — glazier  
Goldstein — goldsmith  
Graber — engraver

Kastner — cabinetmaker  
Kunstler — artist  
Kramer — storekeeper  
Miller — miller  
Nagler — nailmaker  
Plotnick — carpenter  
Sandler/Shuster — shoemaker  
Schmidt/Kovalsky — blacksmith  
Shnitzer — carver  
Silverstein — jeweler  
Spielman — player (musician?)  
Stein/Steiner/Stone — jeweler  
Wasserman — water carrier.

<https://slate.com/human-interest/2014/01/ashkenazi-names-the-etymology-of-the-most-common-jewish-surnames.html>

#### Jewish Carpenter's Union



<http://www.clevelandjewishhistory.net/ins/jewish-carpenters-union.htm>