

The following Yeshivot offer a bachelors degree in Talmud. Yeshiva Gevoah of Lakewood, Ner Yisroel in Baltimore Chofetz Chaim in Queens , N.Y. .

chapter 3

Sculpture and Art

Are Jews permitted to paint figures of humans animals plants landscape ?

Are Jews permitted to make a sculpture of a human animals plants ?

RESPONSE

In Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Dayoh 141: the Bais Yoseph rules that a Jew is not permitted to create the likeness of a human . This prohibition is immediately modified and explained to mean only if the likeness has thickness on top of the surface or below the surface. However if the likeness is painted on a flat surface -a painting there exists no prohibition. The

Shach Ibid 141: explains the reason for the Biblical prohibition . God appears in the image of a human in the dreams of prophets. Whenever all prophets had a

vision of prophesy that God spoke to them it always occurred in a dream.

There exists a Lav a negative prohibition of imitating the likeness of God.

Likewise it is prohibited to create a likeness of Angels. The reasoning again is the same. Some Prophets had a vision or else saw with their eyes Angels. Jews therefore are prohibited from creating the likeness of Angels. Possibly the reason is in order to prevent false prophets who

viewed the image of God or Angels stating that God appeared to them having all the features of the work of art and God wants to create a new religion and abrogate Judaism.

However the prohibition of creating a sculpture of a human or an angel only exists if one creates a full length sculpture. However if one creates only half the likeness of a human or an angel the head and shoulders but no feet there exists no prohibition.

Yes, there exists other Commentators who dissent . They prohibit even a painting of a human on a flat surface.

However , Jewish practice is like the former opinions cited. We have photographs of Roshe Yeshivot heads of Yeshivot that are an image of their feet body and head.

Archeologists unearthed a synagogue in Syria that they dated to the year 259 ACE that have paintings on the walls of humans and angels.

Rabbis have permitted the Porochet- the cover in front of the Holy Ark where the scrolls of the Torah are stored -to be embroidered with the image of angels. Ibid 141:

As an aside from the above discussion it is of interest to note that the Rabbis interpreted the verse in the Bible Exodus and Deuteronomy that no man can see God and live to mean no man can see God while they are awake and live.

However , a prophet can see in his dream a vision of God.. Moses wanted to see God while he was awake. God informed him that no man can see God while awake and live. Moses different than all prophets received his prophesy while he was awake. He heard God , but

did not see Him. All the other prophets never received their prophecies while awake.

In view of the above Saadia Goan 1000 years ago interpreted the verse in the Bible Genesis that Eve had a conversation with the Snake as occurring

as a dream . Likewise Bilaam had a conversation with his donkey as occurring as a dream. Bible Deuteronomy

From the above we can learn a critical lesson about hashkafa theology-

to differentiate between miracles and enigmas in the Sacred Scriptures -the Chomosh the Pentateuch and Naach the other books of the Jewish Cannon of the Bible

The stories that relate events of the Persons mentioned in the Bible contain many enigmas. They do not necessarily

have to be interpreted literally.

Chapter 4

Are Jews permitted to create a planetarium?

RESPONSE

Yes. Although Jews are not permitted to create images of the sun moon planets stars nevertheless for educational purposes one can create images of the planets and stars. That applies to actually create a model with three surfaces length height width . Certainly it is permitted an image of one surface. Ibid 141