

Tattoos and Judaism Havruta Session

Source 1

Leviticus 19:28

(28) Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor imprint any marks upon you: I am the LORD.

How do you interpret this line from Leviticus? Were there differences in interpretations between yourself and your havruta partner(s)? If so, were there contradictions between different interpretations? What do you think was the original intent of writer?

Source 2

Conservative Response by Rabbi Alan Lucas

“In our day, the prohibition against all forms of tattooing regardless of their intent, should be maintained. In addition to the fact that Judaism has a long history of distaste for tattoos, tattooing becomes even more distasteful in a contemporary secular society that is constantly challenging the Jewish concept that we are created *b'tzelem Elokim* (in the image of God) and that our bodies are to be viewed as a precious gift on loan from God, to be entrusted into our care and [are] not our personal property to do with as we choose. Voluntary tattooing even if not done for idolatrous purposes expresses a negation of this fundamental Jewish perspective.”

As tattoos become more mainstream, do you think that rabbi's should become more open minded to tattoo culture? Additionally, do you think that attitudes such as Rabbi Alan Lucas' may alienate young people who participate in tattoo culture from being active in Jewish community life?

Source 3

Reflect on the picture and texts while answering the following questions.

In the short video “80064”, creator Artur Zmijewski persuades an elderly Auschwitz survivor Józef Tarnawa to have the faded number on his forearm refreshed by a tattoo artist.



Why do you think the Józef Tarawa to have his faded number refreshed? Do you feel that it served as an act of ownership towards an experience he didn't initially have a choice in?

“80064” has been screened internationally in both film festivals and contemporary art museums, stirring praise, criticism, and controversy. When asked why Zmijewski created this film, he responded with the following answer: "When I undertook this film experiment with memory, I expected that under the effect of the tattooing the "doors of memory" would open, that there would be an eruption of remembrance of that time, a stream of images or words describing the painful past." Do you feel that it was appropriate for Zmijewski create this video? What do you think this film communicated to audiences? What type of emotions of the description of “80064” stir up in you?

Recently, second and third generations of Holocaust survivors are replicating the tattoo of their parent/grandparent as a way of memorializing the memory of the Holocaust and legacy of their family member.

Do you feel that this is an appropriate way of memorializing the memory of the Holocaust and legacy of their family member? Why or why not? What does such a phenomenon communicate about the role of the Holocaust in Jewish identity?

Source 4 Questions

There has been a recent move in tattoo culture to use tattoos as a way for covering up scars caused by surgeries, former abusive relationships, addiction, self harm, etc.



A bluebird tattoo designed and placed to cover the scars from multiple surgeries.

Can the act of getting tattoo be considered a mitzvah if it serves a tool for personal growth, forgiveness, and moving past painful experiences from the past?

Bibliography

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