

The Art of Jewish Living

KAVANA

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Isaac Brynjegard-Bialik

PAPERCUTS



"Rise Up"

Isaac Brynjegard-Bialik is a synthesizer, harmonizing tradition and modern culture, scholarship and aesthetics, playfulness and profundity, all present in his wonderful works of art. An LA resident, we were fortunate to have Isaac display and demonstrate his craft at our Betzalel Fest, a celebration of Jewish Art. He will be offering workshops here at KM, and we can all enrich our lives by Isaac's inspiration.

"Rise Up"

This papercut, "Rise Up" featured on our first cover of *KAVANA* is very significant. "Rise Up" presents the figure of Betzalel standing in front of the parted curtains of the *mishkan*. Its title comes from a speech bubble in Betzalel's cloak: "Simply rise up to the task at hand," reflecting the choice that each person must make to contribute to the building of a community.

In the Book of *Shemot* (Exodus) we read that Betzalel has been named by God to build the *mishkan* — the desert tabernacle which houses the tablets Moses received on Mount Sinai. The name "Betzalel" means "in the shadow of God," and it is written that God granted him skill in all of the arts in order to design and build the *mishkan* — but he was not solely responsible for its construction. We are told that all of the Israelites — each member of the community — contributed what they could: their goods, their talents, their commitment to the community's goals. In "Rise Up," Betzalel represents each individual Israelite then and now, coming together in a kehillah *kedoshah* — a sacred community.

Midrash tells us that God showed Betzalel a heavenly model for the *mishkan*, which Betzalel represented in his plans; the blueprints he holds in this papercut reflect the movement of planets and heavenly bodies in the skies. Betzalel's hammer and his clothing are constructed of cut-up Thor comics; just as the person who can lift Thor's hammer is deemed worthy to control its power, so too does the person who commits to picking up a hammer (or any gift) in service of the community find the power to help; it is the choice to rise up and serve that gives one the power to do so.



Isaac at KM's Betzalel Fest

The blue, purple and crimson of this papercut match the colors of the *mishkan* as described in *Shemot* 36:35-37, while at the same time, the brown wood of the ark and jagged lines of the *ner tamid* (eternal light) are modeled on the sanctuary at Temple Ahavat Shalom. There are speech bubbles and panels throughout the piece, hinting at more midrash. The bit of green grid in the blueprints comes from a Green Lantern comic; John Stewart was an architect when gifted with the green will-powered ring, and many of the creations he built with it to protect and defend others reflected his original calling.

As the first issue of *KAVANA*, this cover was chosen as a reminder, a call to all of us, to live "in the shadow of God," in quest and joy, of the 'art of Jewish living.'



"Shalom"