

# Artist Statement | *Interlaced, Interwoven*

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When I first learned to weave, in the Fall of 2020, my loom was a site of mourning – a place where, every evening after work, I grieved my father’s recent passing. In the months after he died, I searched for a practice through which I could reconnect with my breath and body. I went on long runs and hikes. I played the fiddle and baked bread. That year, for my birthday, I was gifted a rigid heddle loom – large enough to weave scarves, towels, and wall hangings, but small enough to fold and pack into a closet. Over time, as I learned to make cloth, I began to see woven patterns everywhere – on leaves and pine cones, sidewalks and shutters, overgrown lawns and rippling waters. Soon, what had begun as a practice of mourning had transformed into one of attention.

In the years since, weaving has invited me into deeper relationship with my heritage and ancestors – with my great-grandfather, Mișu, who spent his life as a tailor first in Romania and then in New York City; and with my grandmother, Suzana, who sewed clothes and spun tales and collected some of the most beautiful textiles I’ve ever seen.

There is a reason, I think, that weaving is such a universal and sacred practice. Weaving attunes us to our fundamental interconnectedness – to the fragile, invisible strands stretched between us all. Weaving, that is, reminds us what we all know intuitively. Just as a scarf is held together by hundreds, if not thousands, of interlocking strands, so too our lives are intricately bound up with one another’s.

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The pieces in *Interlaced, Interwoven* reflect my journey not only as a weaver, but also as a storyteller, educator, and student of Jewish wisdom and culture. Specifically, these six tapestries were inspired by the multifaceted role that weaving plays in Jewish tradition.

In the book of Exodus, weaving is described as one of several sacred practices – along with spinning, woodcarving, stonecutting, and so on – that went into the construction of the Mishkan (tabernacle). For this reason, weaving is one of the *39 Melachot* – the forms of labor that are prohibited on the Sabbath. Elsewhere, creation itself is described as an act of weaving. Job exclaims to God, “You clothed me with skin and flesh / and wove me of bone and sinews.” And in Psalm 139, the speaker offers, “It was You who created my conscience; / You wove me in my mother’s womb [...] I was shaped in a hidden place, / woven together in the recesses of the earth.” God, in these passages, is described as a *weaver* – a weaver of worlds, a weaver of stories.

Relatedly, in Psalm 104, it is written: “O Eternal One, my God [...] You are clothed in glory and majesty, / wrapped in a robe of light.” And in the talmudic-era *Bereshit Rabbah*, the author suggests that the world itself emerged from this sacred textile – this primordial light. In fact, this midrash inspired Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, the pioneering founder of Jewish Renewal, to design his renowned rainbow tallit.

Across Kabbalistic texts, weaving is similarly described in cosmological terms. Kalach Pitchei Chockmah, written in the 18th century by Moses Chaim Luzzatto, describes the world as a “single” or “composite” weave. “The Supreme Mind,” Luzzatto writes, “created a weave from which emerges all the different phenomena we see revealed in the world.” And in the later work Sulam on Zohar, Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag compares Moses’ staff – understood, in some Jewish traditions, as one of ten magical objects

created by God at the end of the sixth day of creation — to a weaver’s beam.

Clearly, weaving — as both a practice and a metaphor — plays an illuminating, albeit strange, role in Jewish conceptions of creation. In my own artistic practice, I am drawn to the notion that weaving is a form of prayer, or ritual. One path, amongst many, towards the divine — whether we call it God, nature, cosmos, or mystery.

The tapestries in *Interlaced, Interwoven* were also inspired by mystical Jewish teachings on color — specifically, a passage from a rather obscure text entitled *Pardes Rimoni* (Orchard of Pomegranates) by the 16th century Kabbalist Moses ben Jacob Cordovero. In Chapter 10, entitled “The Gates of Color,” Cordovero explores the colors associated with the *sefirot* — ten “emanations,” or channels, through which God is present in the world. Although Cordovero emphasizes that the divine is pure light, lacking any color, he nonetheless suggests that colors are gateways to the sacred. “Colors are many in their manifestation,” he writes, “but one in their source.” In other words, colors evoke God — divinity made accessible to us.



Towards the end of the text, Cordovero writes, “The entire work of unification is to return the many colors to their root in the simple light, where there is no color at all.” Though I am no expert in Kabbalah, I find myself deeply moved by the idea that prayer is an act of unification, even repair — a gathering of light.

What is the artist’s role in this process? What might we learn — what might we reveal — by combining, experimenting with, and yes, *playing with*, color?

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As the sun rises and sets each day, bathing Mayyim Hayyim in holy light, it is my hope that these tapestries — with their golden threads and undulating patterns — will shimmer ever so slightly. May these pieces draw our attention to all that is mysterious in this world, all that is sacred.

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