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בס"ד

# Limmud 2019: Textiles as Ritual Practice

Source Sheet by Sydney Switzer

### Genesis 1:1

(1) In the beginning, G-d created the heaven and the earth.

**בראשית א' א'**  
(א) בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:

### Genesis 1:27

(27) And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him;

**בראשית א' כ"ז**  
(כז) וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם | אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ

### *Zen and the Art of Knitting* by Bernadette Murphy

Knitting a sweater is a tremendous act of faith. One undertakes an ancient practice that requires hundreds of thousands of hand-wrought stitches and hours of concentration to translate and follow pattern instructions that seem written in an archaic language, or to create something completely new. Throughout, it's a tentative process. At any point, a firm tug on an unsecured piece of yarn could unravel the entire work. Because knitting uses no knots, every stitch is little more than a twisted and twined bit of yarn, each section a group of simple but tenuous webs. When the work is finished, though, those webs coalesce into a garment rugged enough to withstand a lifetime of wear.

It is in this tension - between the rigid and the provisional - that knitting best reflects the complexities of human life. As a metaphor for understanding the web of unity connecting all life, and as a practice that puts one in touch with the simultaneous fragility and strength of life, knitting is both expansive and fertile.

#### Sforno on Genesis 1:1

(2) ברא, He had converted “nothing” into “something.” There had been no need to invoke “time” in order to accomplish this.

#### ספורנו על בראשית א':א'

(ב) ברא עשה אינו ישנו ובוזה לא יפול זמן כלל:

#### *Zen and the Art of Knitting* by Bernadette Murphy

Best of all, knitting is slow. So slow that we see the beauty inherent in every tiny act that makes up a sweater. So slow that we know the project's not going to get finished today - it may not get finished for many months longer - and thus, we make our peace with the unresolved nature of life. We slow down as we knit. Our breathing and heart rate drop and knitters who've been at it a while experience a trancelike state that provides the same benefits as other forms of meditation.

#### Shabbat 133b

**Beautify yourself before Him in mitzvot.** Even if one fulfills the mitzvah by performing it simply, it is nonetheless proper to perform the mitzva as beautifully as possible. **Make before Him a beautiful sukka, a beautiful lulav, a beautiful shofar, beautiful ritual fringes, beautiful parchment for a Torah scroll, and write in it in His name in beautiful ink, with a beautiful quill by an expert scribe, and wrap the scroll in beautiful silk fabric.**

#### שבת קל"ג ב

התנאה לפניו במצות עשה לפניו סוכה נאה ולולב נאה ושופר נאה ציצית נאה ספר תורה נאה וכתוב בו לשמו בדיו נאה בקולמוס נאה בלבלר אומן וכורכו בשיראין נאין

#### *Zen and the Art of Knitting* by Bernadette Murphy

Knitting is a process craft. Anyone who sets out to knit with the sole objective of wearing the finished work will soon be disappointed. If the finished piece were the sole aim, one would purchase a mass-produced garment at a local mall for a fraction of the cost and time required to

make a sweater. The true joy comes from discovering the individual beauty of each segment, the feeling of accomplishment when completing a particularly difficult section, and the sense of challenge that lurks as you plan the next project. In other words, knitting is like life. We have to enjoy the journey if we expect the destination to mean much.

***God in Search of Man* by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel**

Awareness of the divine begins with wonder...Wonder or radical amazement, the state of maladjustment to words and notions, is, therefore, a prerequisite for an authentic awareness of that which is.

