

Lia Lynn Rosen

Albuquerque, New Mexico

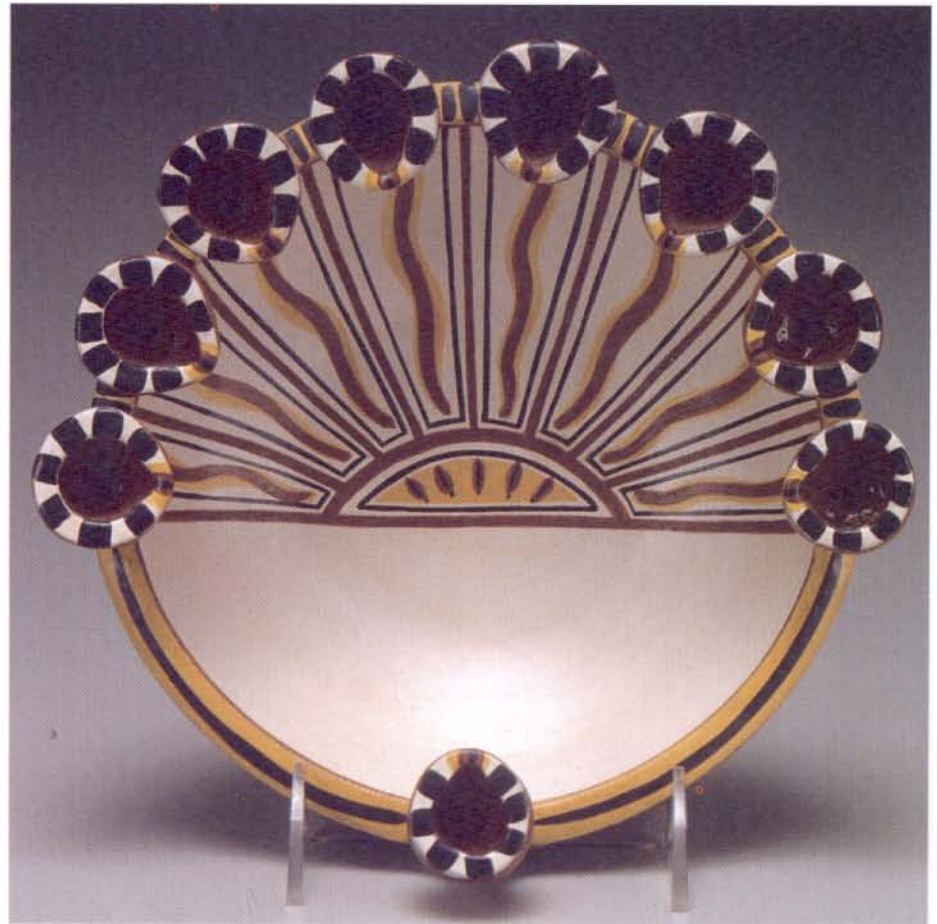
Kavanah is an untranslatable Hebrew word that applies the idea of moral intensity to creative action. It is a quality present in the vessels Lia Lynn Rosen makes to inspire new rituals, to give people comfort and courage and renewed hope.

"Most Jews are not praying three times a day, but their needs and fears are as great as ever," notes Rosen, who was part of the first wave of the Jewish Renewal movement in the 1970s. Today we face cancer, AIDS, and all the other illnesses of our bodies and our society. Rosen believes that religion can find ways to address the fear that comes with these threats.

During a family year in Israel when Rosen was thirteen, she learned Hebrew and still believes language training is

the most vital part of Jewish education. In her last years of high school in Madison, Wisconsin, Rosen began to develop an interest in pottery. Summer programs at Iowa's South Bear School of Pottery under a disciple of the Bauhaus school taught her skill, discipline, and artistry in the European style. In the mid-1970's when she heard there was a Bauhaus-style silversmith creating Judaica at the New York Jewish Museum, Rosen visited the workshop of Ludwig Wolpert and was greeted with the revelation that craftsmanship *that* good and artistry *that* individual could be used to make Judaica in non-traditional styles.

Moving to the Southwest in 1987 gave Rosen one more link connecting 'Adam' to "Adamah," the elemental human being to the soil from which the Bible says human beings were made. Jews, exiled, expelled and displaced for millennia, have had to survive without connection to the earth under their feet. For Rosen, earthenware offers a healing sense of connection. She likes teaching both adults and children by taking



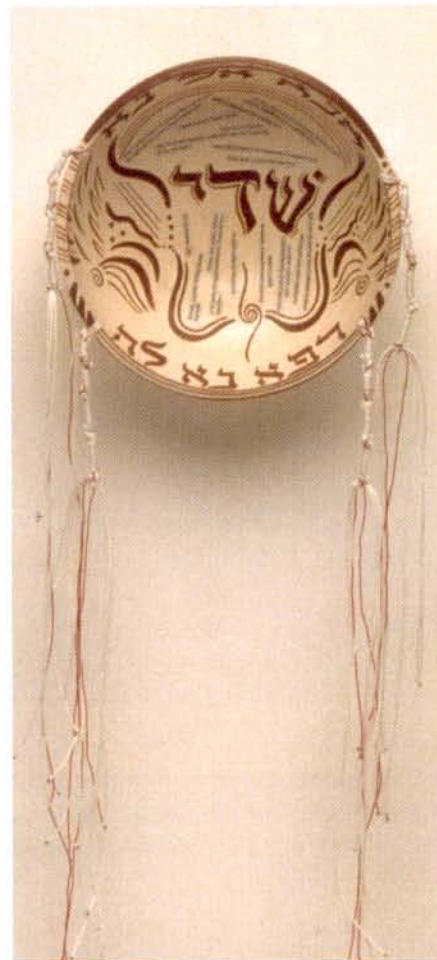
Bowl-style "Returning Sun" Menorah, by Lia Lynn Rosen. Clay, slip, glaze, 10" diameter. Seen from above, as here, the sun motif is clear. Since Chanukah often coincides with the solstice, Rosen's design celebrates not only the relighting of the Temple lamps but also the celestial re-lighting of the earth. The piece may be used with oil or candles.

them out to dig their own clay. After they have worked and shaped the clay, they can help add fuel to the outdoor pit where it is fired, thus experiencing the whole process.

The same desire to draw the larger connections leads Rosen to combine design elements from North African Berber women and those from Pueblo women potters, even as she makes objects for traditional Jewish ceremonies. She draws from the Jewish tradition to re-introduce the handwashing ritual bowls and vessels for Rosh Chodesh celebrations. Meanwhile, in new directions, she creates blessing bowls and mezuzah cases to hold an individual's chosen blessing.



In memory of a gay friend who was killed. Inscription: "Peace upon him, and his memory is a blessing."



In support of those with breast cancer. Inscription: "Please God, heal her/ Shaddai."



In support of a friend living with AIDS. Inscription: "From strength to strength, may our strength increase." The protective hand takes the shape of a dove. The silent letter Alef at the center of the design was a personal symbol used by the friend who had the disease that silences so many.

War Zone/Blessing Shields, by Lia Lynn Rosen. Eathenware, underglaze, sealer, string, text, diameter 9 1/2" diameter, depth 3 1/2".

After a friend died of cancer and an aunt had a mastectomy, Rosen created her first "War Zone-Blessing Shield." The War Zone is cancer; the shield is a handmade work of love inscribed with prayers. The words "Please, God, heal her!" come from Exodus at the time of the illness of Miriam. The word "Shaddai" is one of the names of God. As it literally means "my breasts," it is sometimes adopted in women's ceremonies to convey the comforting image of the protective, nurturing giver of life. Adorning the edges of the bowl are tzitzit—those ritually knotted fringes that remind Jews of the omnipresence of God and of moral law. The shield might be thought of as a prayer in clay. Or,

with its words of love and courage, it might be seen as a sort of mizrach, indicating that in this direction lies hope. Another shield was made for a friend living with AIDS, and a third is in memory of a gay friend who was killed.

When Rabbi Zalman Schacter-Shalomi, one of the guiding spirits of the Jewish Renewal movement, saw the shields, he called Rosen with praise and suggestions of other quotations and phrases that she might use in other similar works.

Rosen is involved in a Master's of Education degree at Columbia to prepare for further teaching, but continues to ponder ideas for meaningful vessels. "I want my work to nurture," she says.



Bench-style "Sun" Menorah, by Lia Lynn Rosen. Earthenware, slips and glazes, 10 x 9". This backwall menorah, which draws design inspiration from North African pottery and from America's Southwest, can use either candles or oil.



Shechinah Olla, by Lia Lynn Rosen. White earthenware with underglazes, 11" x 15". Inscription: "Shechinah of Peace, Shechinah of the heavens." An olla is a water bowl traditionally used by Pueblo women. On this one the Hebrew lettering fits the Pueblo-like design as though the combination had been incubating since 1492 when Columbus's Jewish-born translator came ashore and stayed in the New World. Evolving rituals include using the bowl as focus for meditation or as a receptacle of prayers. During sharing times, it may be passed around to indicate whose time it is to lead or to speak.

"An image can have power like a prayer."



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