| ON SITE |

BRUSHSTROKES OF HOPE AND TEARS

By Hadas Afik | MAY 7, 2014

Yossi Rosensteins traveling exhibit transforms all the emotions and yearning associated with Kever Rochel into a visual showcase

CLICK ON THE GALLERY BELOW TO VIEW THE PAINTINGS OF KEVER ROCHEL

In *Parashas Vayishlach*, we read about the death and burial of Rochel Imeinu "on the way to Efrasa... And that is where Yaakov buried her and placed a headstone over the burial site" (Bereishis 35:19–20). Rashi there explains, "that is the headstone of Rochel's burial site to this day," as a marker for Jews going into exile and — may it happen speedily — "coming back to their borders."

For artist Yossi Rosenstein, those words became a calling. His current traveling exhibit transforms all the emotions and yearning associated with Kever Rochel into a visual showcase.

Rosenstein was a promising young graduate of Ponevezh and Chevron yeshivahs when he considered entering what he thought would be the glitzy world of business — he had already been accepted as a member of the diamond bourse in London. But an inside voice told him that trajectory would kill the yearnings of his soul. Being honest, he realized he wanted to live a life of spirituality, not just to visit it once in a while. So he decided to abandon the promise of glitter and instead invest his energy into his G-d-given talent: creating a synthesis between what he calls the *heichal haTorah* and his special gift for art and creativity.

Jerusalem-born Rosenstein, 64, a ninth-generation Israeli descended from a prominent Slonimer chassidic family who today lives in Bnei Brak, taught himself to draw and paint when he was a *bochur*, and had his first exhibit when he was just 21 — in a Tel Aviv gallery whose proprietor was so captivated by his unusual style that he agreed to keep its doors closed on Shabbos.

Look at a painting in the unique genre Rosenstein developed and you'll have to look again: What looks like a crowd of people is really a cluster of candles. What looks like a group of Jews davening is really an intertwined mass of tefillin. Rosenstein's initial concept was to avoid drawing real people or giving specific personification to Torah characters — as dictated by some halachic authorities — and use stone, wood, and wax instead. But what emerged from that stricture is a unique style that draws in the viewer with such intensity that he feels he can connect to the innermost intentions of the Torah passages or mystical ideas represented.

Interpreting ancient truths to modern connoisseurs means combining modern symbolism with the techniques of classic art — an accomplishment that has become the benchmark of a "Rosenstein." Rosenstein's style became popular among budding artists within the Bais Yaakov system, and at the behest of *rabbanim* who wanted girls to learn art in a kosher environment, he created an art school that enabled them to learn popular techniques without having to stumble through foreign or impure art.

Until the Redemption

An artist's life is never routine, and you can forget about pinning most of those talented folks down to predictability. But sometimes a project is so important the artist stays with it for months, or even years. For Yossi Rosenstein, the flagship Kever Rochel Project was one such an undertaking. Rosenstein created 22 intricate, multilayered works relating to the *kever*, its place in history, and the mystery and mystical energy surrounding it. Each painting bears his unique stamp — the candles, the interplay of light, the connection and interface between past, present, and future.

"I decided to create 22 paintings, the number of letters in the *alef-beis*, each one of which would reflect a different angle relating to Rochel Imeinu and her relationship to her children — to every Jew," Rosenstein explains. "Until the final painting, which shows all of Am Yisrael united with Rochel Imeinu at the time of the Final Redemption.

"I chose Kever Rochel because it serves as a spiritual lighthouse in Israel. People from all over the world dream of coming there," he relates. "It's the only one of all the holy sites mentioned in the Torah, in the Navi and in the Midrash, as a place for *tefillos* and *yeshuos*. Throughout the generations, Arabs and Christians also visited the site, aware of the power of prayer there. I once read a document from a Christian pilgrim who visited Eretz Yisrael in the 15th century, relating that the local women would come to Kever Rochel and gather stones from around the structure to make amulets for an easy birth."

Today's road to Kever Rochel is surrounded by a security detail, but, says Rosenstein, the pilgrimage was never easy. In his research, he found original writings in which visitors described having prayed at the site more than a thousand years ago, and the many dangers that were present on the route to Beis Lechem. As he researched further, Rosenstein discovered that the site's external appearance has changed over the years. Historical records alternately describe one headstone plus eleven stones, four pillars topped by a dome, and eleven stones joined together that became one large headstone, covered by a greenish *paroches*. Throughout the years, there's been documentation of extensive destruction, perpetrated by residents of the surrounding Arab towns. But they would only destroy the structure, without desecrating the actual headstone, which they took care of and preserved.

In Rosenstein's paintings, Kever Rochel transcends many different time periods — but none of them are for sale. Instead, they'll be displayed in a wandering exhibit scheduled to appear at hundreds of Jewish centers around the world. Because, he says, "Rochel Imeinu is about all of us."

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Artist Yossi Rosenstein paints hope for Chanukah

Jenni Frazer talks to the Israeli creator of Life magazine's cover

By JENNI FRAZER
December 8, 2023, 12:08 pm

Hanukkah by Yossi Rosenstein

He is one of Israel's most famous artists, his paintings snapped up by collectors and selling for thousands of dollars. Yet, to hear Yossi Rosenstein tell it, his life in art very nearly didn't happen, and he might have stayed within his strictly-Orthodox community in Jerusalem.

Rosenstein, who was born in 1950 and today lives in Bnei Brak, is a ninth-generation Israeli, descended from a prominent Slonimer Chasidic family. He was talented at drawing in his youth, he says, but acknowledges that art did not figure much in his religious world.

Yossi Rosenstein

"Fifty-five years ago you could look at art only in a museum, in books and sometimes in a few galleries. There was no internet, nothing. But because in these places there would often be images of naked women – not nice for religious people to see – automatically all these things were outside my world."

Things changed, however, when Rosenstein was 17, visiting his aunt in Montreal. It was 1967 and Expo 67, a world fair, was taking place there and the teenage Rosenstein had to see what was on view.

"There were artists showing their work from all over the world", he says. "[It was] the first time I saw real art in full size, close to me. And it was amazing." All these years later, you can still hear the thrill in his voice as he recalls this first encounter. "First, I was astonished at how people could create this work. And then I wanted to know why we, religious people, could not have this, too".

Rosenstein regarded art then and now as “a gift from God – and we have to use it”. So excited was Rosenstein that he came back to his aunt from the Expo 67 and said he wanted to buy “colours, canvases, brushes – I wanted to make a picture”.

Menorah by Yossi Rosenstein

In his ignorance, he began to paint on the wrong side of the canvas, but he was so enthusiastic he started again, this time from inside the frame.

He had been making money in parallel with his yeshiva studies by playing drums, then guitar and organ, at weddings and simchas within his community. “But I stopped when I got married” – mainly because the weddings took place at night and he did not want to leave his new wife at home.

Rosenstein’s new-found enthusiasm for making art did not initially find favour in the strictly-Orthodox community. He explains: “We learn that beauty has to be found inside, not outside. If you are using outside, it means that you are not thinking like a Jew. We say, ‘Don’t look at a bottle from the outside, only look [at its contents] inside.’

“With art, everything is not real. This is why we have not had paintings in our community. But we also learn that if you can do it [something creative] it’s also a mitzvah to do it. We have to use everything that God gave us.”

Moses Would Speak by Yossi Rosenstein

But it was explained to him that it was possible to make art that was symbolic, which immediately struck a chord. Symbolism, for Rosenstein, meant the Torah – outwardly just a series of black marks on parchment but, if you had the key, there was a whole world waiting to unlock its secrets.

“I told myself, ‘I’m going to do the same with my art – and I will use the language that’s good for all over the world.’”

Angels in the Temple by Yossi Rosenstein

Encouraged by rabbis in Israel and the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rosenstein began to explore the joy of religious Judaism in his paintings, at first through oils and latterly through acrylic. He also set up schools, teaching many young Orthodox women who launched successful careers of their own.

But he was pretty sure he couldn't make a living from art. Instead, he qualified as a rabbi and then went into the diamond trade, working in London's Hatton Garden. "I said, I'll take three years at this and then I will go back to painting. If that doesn't work, I will return to the diamonds." He pauses and you can hear the grin in his voice. "I never went back to the diamonds."

Rosenstein had his first solo show in Tel Aviv in 1973. After three more solo shows in Israel, which attracted admirers from home and abroad, he was invited to show his work at the prestigious Manhattan art gallery Aberbach Fine Art. Since then, he has become an international success and, despite the fact that all his paintings show an aspect of Jewish life, from festivals to life cycle events, buyers of his work include many non-Jews.

Shabbat in Jerusalem by Yossi Rosenstein

The two paintings shown here, Hanukkah 1 and Menorah 1, depict some of Rosenstein's very different styles – he also does detailed representational pictures of important buildings in Jewish life, such as the Western Wall or Rachel's Tomb.

In Hanukkah 1, blurred figures are stretching out towards a golden chanukiah, glowing as if lit from within. Rosenstein says that candles, usually lit on the festivals, "are like mother love – they give of themselves without asking for anything in return", adding: "The miracle of Hanukkah is not just the miracle of the oil burning for eight days, but that our people come together and unite." This, he says, is an important message today.

And Menorah 1, with its sharp, bright blues and hot reds, has another meaning: "The menorah is the symbol of the Jewish people," he says. "The red is for the blood we gave in order to stay Jewish. This is not just a menorah – it is us."

For it is You Who will light my lamp by Yossi Rosenstein

All paintings © by Yossi Rosenstein
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האמן יוסי רוזנשטיין מציג: תערוכת רחל

האמן החרדי הבינלאומי מציג: 'תערוכת רחל' בסדרה ייחודית ומושקעת המוצגת בגלריית מצא ארט בימי החג

30.09.15 | 11:18 תגובות 13

אלי כהן

מי אמר שתואר חייב לבוא על חשבון עולמה של תורה?
14:19שימי פרקש כתבה מקודמת

מטורף: 10,000 ש"ח מלגה לתואר בחינוך לבוגרי ישיבות
05:37מקודם

זה מה שמקבלים המנויים החדשים של מפעל הפיס
04:32תוכן מקודם

עד לזמן האחרון הייתה "רחל אמנו" מזוהה במבנה המוכר בעולם היהודי כ"קבר רחל", מבנה ובתוכו מצבת רחל. המבנה נמצא במבואותיה הצפוניים של בית לחם, מדרום לירושלים, אליו עלו יהודים בכל הדורות לתפילות ולבקשות. כיום, בגלל

אילוצים בטחוניים, נבנה מסביב לקבר ומעליו מבנה מוגן אשר מסתיר את הסמל המרכזי שהיה חקוק בזיכרון היהודי הלאומי.

הצייר הבינלאומי הידוע יוסי רוזנשטיין צייר 22 ציורים המטמיעים ומנציחים סמל חשוב זה בתודעת הדור החדש. דור שעלול יהיה לאבדו. הסדרה מהווה אינטרפרטציה אישית של האמן, ובאה לבטא אספקט אינדיבידואלי ספציפי, של המושג הנצחי "רחל אמנו" בעיני היהודים באשר הם. בזמן מצוקה ורווחה, בשמחה ובעצב. הציורים מגשרים על פערים בציבוריות היהודית ומדלגים במרחבי המקום והזמן. בציורים מושם דגש על הכמיהה של כל אחד לישועה ותמיכה מאמא רחל הקיימת ועומדת לנצח לצדו של כל יהודי.

יוסי רוזנשטיין - תערוכת מורשת רחל אמנו

רח' דוד המלך 21 ירושלים צמודה למלון קינג דיויד. גלריה matsart גלריית מצא ארט זו הנחשבת כיום לגלריה המובילה בישראל, בחרה להציג לציבור אוסף חשוב זה בתערוכה מיוחדת. אשר תפתח לקהל הרחב בחג הסוכות. תערוכה זו מיועדת להיות תערוכה נודדת שתוצג במרכזי קהילות יהודיות מכל הזרמים ברחבי העולם. בשילוב סדרת הרצאות וקונצרטים בנושא מורשת ישראל עבר הווה ועתיד.

אספנים, שוחרי אמנות, וסלבריטאים רבים כבר הבטיחו את ביקורם בתערוכה. ס"מ. בגלריה 100Xס"מ וציור אחד בגודל 100 40Xהציורים באוסף זה הם בגודל 40

יהיו מוצגות יצירות נוספות פרי מכחולו של האמן יוסי רוזנשטיין. הציורים מצויירים בצבעי שמן איכותיים על קנווס.