

# Labyrinth

I retired from work at the age of 62. People around me warned me I would go crazy for lack of activity. Some said I would be back to work in no time, but it was clear to me I was not going to get bored. Although I didn't know exactly what I was going to do, I knew there was a lot I could do.

From an early age, I was attracted to carpentry so I decided to set up a small carpentry shop in my backyard. I was equipped with amateur machines and tools. The only thing that remained was to decide what to build. Since I already had two grandchildren I thought I would start with some fine wooden toys. I built, a rocking horse, a walking bike and also a cradle for the soon-to-be-born Carmel.

One day my eldest son Yoav told me he was returning from a visit to Grandma and that she was complaining about how hard it was for her to embroider, she could no longer see well, could not thread the needles, and she might be thinking of replacing the embroidery with weaving, to which he quickly replied "Oh Grandma what is the problem? Dad will build you a weaving loom in no time..."

As Yoav went on telling the story I drifted into memories of forgotten sights from a distant childhood. Tovit, mother of a childhood friend sitting next to a loom weaving. Years later, I was a design student in Jerusalem, I'm sitting in a friend's rented house and see a huge loom in the room and think to myself how interesting it would be to build a loom one day.

So, yes, the seed was inside me but I never imagined that one day it would germinate.

I decided to do some research. On Google, I found Gonit, who runs a weaving workshop. Gonit heard my story and invited me to visit her studio in Yodfat where she told me her story:

I was born with the name Gonit, which means shades of colour. Since childhood, the secret of colors has fascinated me. Over the years I have researched the secrets of natural colouring and botanical print - I stay attentive to the plant world that surrounds us and experience the magic and power of nature in the changing seasons. The stone weights of the weaving loom are milestones in my life. As a child, I found stone weights of looms while wandering in the Jerusalem area hills. I made my home in Yodfat, located in the heart of the Galilee. The ancient city

of Yodfat had a very large weaving centre in Israel some two thousand years ago.

The weights of the looms scattered around the area are a reminder of the previously bustling life here and mark the path of my life.

My weaving is inspired by ancient traditions that are prevalent in our country, including weaving on the weight loom, ground loom and card weaving, which I research and develop into new horizons, adding new life to them.

In Yodfat I established an active centre for weaving, spinning and natural dyeing, which is a magical space for learning the ancient crafts. As part of the activities in Galilee, Jewish and Arab women (and men) creates an island of peace.

At the same time, the amazing process of motherhood brought me to the world of astrology, with the understanding that everyone brings a unique gift to the world. I sense that the threads woven between the landscapes of Galilee connects past, present and future, heaven and earth, and calls for a common human creation, the fruit of the rich cultural mosaic that makes up our region.



Shades of [Gonit](#)

After the visit to Gonit's studio, I decided to build a simple Rigid Heddle Loom though I still did not fully understand the basic principles of weaving. Gonit suggested to start building a Rigid Heddle Loom of a certain type that she let me copy. After several weeks of trial and error and many google searches for any weaving sites I could find, I finally built my first model. I took it to show Gonit who was very excited and suggested a barter deal

where I'll build another loom for her and in return she offered to teach me how to weave. A few weeks later the second loom was born.

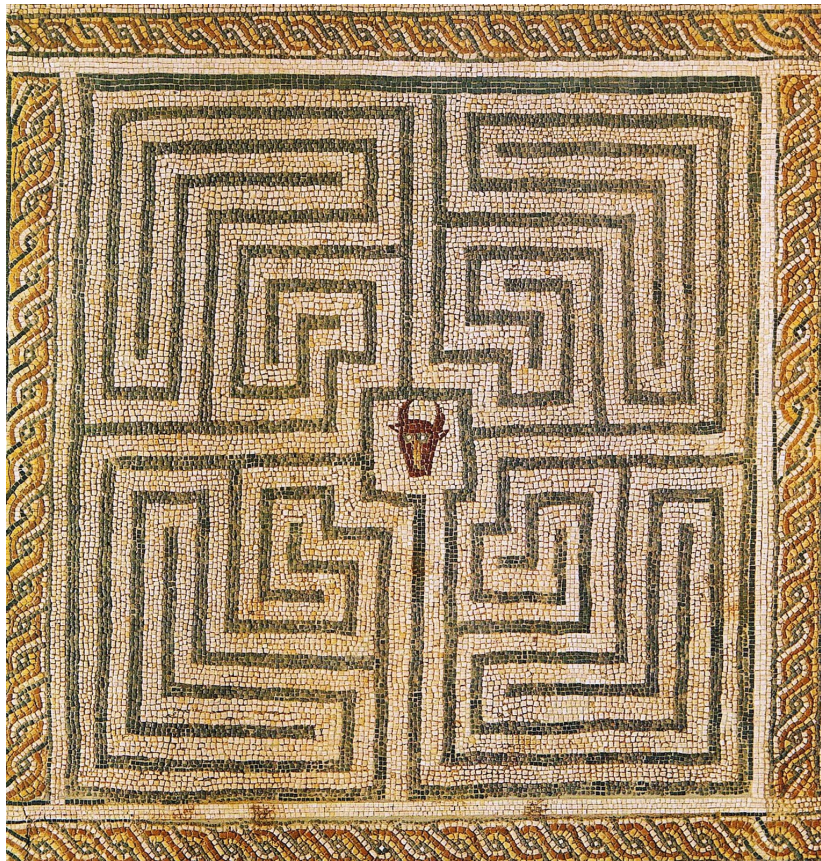
Quite quickly and surprisingly, people started to hear that I was a loom builder and repairer. People with old and broken looms of all kinds and from different places and eras started knocking on my door. I was happy to study and repair these looms and expand my understanding and expertise. Meanwhile, Grandma realized that the weaving work was too difficult for her and returned the first loom to me.

As I was learning to weave in Gonit's studio, I experimented independently with my first RHL at home in various projects. With time, the RHL was replaced with a floor loom, carpets and scarves were made and given to my children, friends and grandchildren, and more frame looms and narrow inkle looms for card weaving were created in the workshop.

Everyone who weaves knows that overwhelming feeling when you start looking for inspiration for your next fabric, browsing through books and the internet for the image that will accompany you over the coming months as you weave your new project. When I came across the image of this coin I was thrown back into my childhood days when I would doodle mazes in my notebook pages while sitting through boring Bible lessons.



Labyrinth stamped on a coin from the city of Knossos in Crete



finally I found my inspiration it was a third-century Roman mosaic depicting the labyrinth and Minotaur of Crete. Located in Conimbriga, Portugal.

In the city of Knossos in Crete, no traces of a labyrinth have been found but the famous myth of the Minotaur in the labyrinth of Crete has continued to ignite the imagination of many for generations. The story of the Minotaur has thrilled people for thousands of years and inspired myriad works of art. pottery, poetry, plays, the art of Picasso, operas, movies, and video games. The labyrinth/maze design may have served to help one find their spiritual path. While moving through a labyrinth, one would become increasingly lost in reference to the outside world and, possibly, would discover his true path in life. The theme of the labyrinth leading to one's destiny is most clearly illustrated in the known story from Greek mythology: Theseus and the Minotaur.

When Minos was vying with his brothers for kingship, he prayed to Poseidon to send him a snow-white bull as a sign of the god's blessing on his cause. Minos was supposed to sacrifice the bull to Poseidon, but, enchanted by its beauty, decided to keep it and sacrifice one of his own bulls. Poseidon, enraged by this

ingratitude, caused Minos' wife Pasiphae to fall in love with the bull, mate with it and give birth to the bull-headed man named Minotaur which fed on human flesh. Minotaur was imprisoned by King Minos in an intricate Labyrinth designed by Daedalus.

Since Minos was hardly interested in feeding his own people to the creature, he taxed the city of Athens with tribute which included sending seven young men and maidens to Crete every year who were then released into the labyrinth and eaten by the Minotaur.

Theseus, son of King Aegeus of Athens, vowed to put an end to his people's suffering. He volunteered as one of the tributes and left Athens in the ship with the traditional black sails hoisted in mourning for the victims. He told his father that, should he be successful, he would change the sails to white on the trip home. Once on Crete, Theseus attracted the attention of Minos' daughter Ariadne who fell in love with him and secretly gave him a sword and a ball of twine. She told him to attach the thread to the opening of the labyrinth as soon as he was inside and, after he had killed the Minotaur, he would then be able to follow it back to freedom. Theseus kills the monster, saves the youths who were sent with him, and escapes from Crete with Ariadne but abandons her on the island of Naxos on his way home taking her sister Phaedra whom he would marry. In his haste to reach Athens he forgets to change the sails on the tribute ship from black to white and Aegeus, seeing the black sails returning, flings himself into the sea and dies.

When I showed the image to Gonit, she declared that it was time to learn the art of tablet weaving. An age-old method used to create narrow fabrics with rich and complex patterns. This ancient weaving method embodies the genius of simplicity. In weaving her tapestries, Gonit has broken the boundaries of width and size accepted in the world for thousands of years and created amazing card rugs.



Gonit with 420 cards



I decided I wanted the fabric to be about 68 cm. wide. The entire Labyrinth is surrounded by four cm. selvedge. Since the nature of the selvedge is different from the Labyrinth itself Gonit decided to weave it separately on a narrow loom and later sew them around the fabric of the maze. I chose organic cotton yarns made by Lion Brand.

Based on experience, we realized that for the 4 cm margin required 20 cards and for the 60 cm wide maze required another 308 cards. Based on this data, I designed the images of the selvedge and the labyrinth on a rectangular pattern page and I was ready to go.

I started weaving of the selvedge on one of the narrow looms I built

myself quite some time ago, the work was quite simple and though there were some mistakes, I progressed at an excellent pace. I made the warp

long enough for all four edges around the fabric while leaving spaces for cutting them apart. As the warp was 420 cm long winding it down required lots of patience.

The first step towards weaving the Labyrinth was to prepare an old RHL to fit the job. I disassembled the parts in the center of the RHL and raised its back by means of two perpendicular boards connected to each other with a smooth rounded beam on which the warp will be spread. After threading the warp through the cards I had to tie the 1232 ends to the back warp beam. Soon enough I realized it was very difficult to maintain a uniform tension of the threads and decided to tie bundles of 12 threads-3 cards to a weight, But then there was a dilemma - where can I find hundred weights and how much should they weigh?

Gonit had couple of dozens of stones but it was too few and they were too large in size. Eventually I found small round flat lifting weights of 0.5 Kg each that seem to give a good even tension to the threads.

It took me a few lines of weaving before I noticed that the back beam I used to fix the loom was not durable enough to stand the weight. It could have break apart any moment now. I had to find a way to strengthen the beam that was supporting the spread warp. Struggled very carefully moving the warp threads from side to side I was able to screw in another reinforcing beam. Eventually I started weaving and slowly the maze image started to appear.

The fabric that was supposed to become square started to look overly elongated and rectangular and I realized that the design on the patterned page was not accurate enough and it was probably advisable to change the plan.

Unraveling everything I had already weaved seemed unlikely. Suddenly the whole process seemed to be more complicated and arduous than walking through a maze. I decided to change the plan, continue weaving the fabric and in order to keep the fabric symmetrical, towards the end go back to the original plan and thus maintain a bit more of a uniform look.

As I continue to progress up the fabric I have reached a stage where the fabric needs to be rolled down the loom, when another problem has been discovered. The large weight of the weights created grate friction that made it impossible to roll the fabric. I had to start lowering a large portion of the weights just to scroll down and then re-tie them to the threads.

At this point I have overcome all these challenges, I'm taking a short break to write this story, before I get quickly back to work. I hope that by the time you'll read, my labyrinth will be completed.