



TAKING WOMEN'S WORK TO ANOTHER LEVEL

When I read about our phenomenal foremothers and how talented they were, I think of the sisters around us who really embody their talents and spirit.

One exemplary individual whom I've had the privilege of interviewing, is the wonderful, multi-talented sister Zahira. She is an accomplished author and designer, full of good works, and her innovative textiles and skilled designs echo our foremothers; Tabitha (Acts 9:36) and Lydia (Acts 16:14). Sister Zahira brings the term "women's work" to another level of excellence. It is my hope and prayer that this interview inspires more sisters to work hard to bring forth their talents for the benefit of our people.

Name: Zahira Israel

Camp: IUIC Birmingham

Q1. How long have you been in the truth?

I've been in the truth for seven years.

Q2. What aspects of our foremother Tabitha do you relate to?

Relate!? I'm still striving. A question I ask myself regularly is, if I died today, would my works be missed so dearly that they pray for me to come back? My thoughts, nope! Nowhere close, so I head to the lab and get back to work. I often reflect on the sewing courses we have in place now. What ways can they be enhanced to surpass the lifespan of those currently utilizing them. Leaving behind timeless tutorials to make a difference.

Q3. How have you used other talents within your walk in the truth?

This question made me smile; I thank the Most High for our leadership. The offices/divisions I fulfil within the congregation have brought out talents in me I had no idea I had. One of which is event planning and coordination. I've used this talent to annually plan IUIC UK fashion shows, design team, young sisters' workshops and event planning, fundraising, family fun, as well as outreach. It's been a beautiful experience to see how our talents increase when we trade with one another.

Q4. When did you first learn to sew?

I first learned how to hand sew as a child. Growing up around my grandmothers I became very familiar with sewing. Both of my grandmothers were part-time seamstresses, they made doll clothes, curtains, handkerchiefs, and embroidery. Young ladies with basic domestic skills were the norm, so at the time, I didn't consider myself "gifted" or think I knew anything different from anyone else my age.

I strengthened my sewing while attending community college in Barbados. I was initially studying law and business with the intent of obtaining a law degree but years of frustration with the required course, led me to art and sketching as a way to escape the long and demanding lectures. I took the risk and followed through learning about textiles and fashion to then get my BA (Hons.) in fashion and MA in printed textiles for fashion and Interior.



Q5. What inspires you to teach sisters sewing and how did that start?

The inspiration comes from understanding no man is an island, we all rely on each other. Whether it be through the sewing team's fringing service of the t-shirts made from scratch or designer hoodies it's all a team effort. Another source of inspiration is simply that we are commanded to use and trade our talents. The more sisters that know how to do what I do the more likely they are to excel by learning how to work smarter and better and teaching others. The driving force that initiated all of this is my secret desire to have a textiles academy in Israel. I've observed much talent amongst our youth and feel an academy to teach our young girls about sewing, textiles and garment making would be beneficial for them and would filter out the nonsense that public schooling or after-school clubs would expose them to.

Q6. What scriptures do you think of when sewing for the body?

Ecclesiasticus 7:15 (KJV Apocrypha) Hate not laborious work, neither husbandry, which the most High hath ordained. Fringing in itself or sewing curtains is not a hard task at all but doing it under pressure in bulk when various factors are accumulated, you need to be disciplined and dedicated even when you don't feel like it.

Micah 2:10 (KJV) Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction. (This isn't our rest!)

Colossians 3:23 (KJV) And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; (whatever I do for my people has to be quality, nothing sloppy)!

Q7. If you could design a print for anyone in the truth who would it be and why?

That's a tough one! Each teacher has a different tone and personality. I can say that there are a couple that I have some colour palettes in the making for but to give one specific one, I can't say.

Q8. What inspires your print designs?

To be honest, subtlety. Israel, we are a world within a world! That concept alone is amazing. I enjoy creating art and print that has dual meaning, I often get inspiration from nature, architects, and social concepts.

Q9. How did poetry and book writing get involved?

I made connections with the process of designing a complete garment in contrast to a word to a poem/stanza. This was a peaceful discovery and being able to bridge the two together is a nice compliment. As mentioned before, the art of subtlety is where the inspiration comes from.

All the prints and garments were made by me. The prints of the maze work were inspired by the Northern Kingdom tribes and infrastructures which have influenced the early computer chips and programme development. I'm also very inspired by texture. For this piece I engraved and repeated Psalms 149 onto fabric in braille. (the sample above — I used reversed laser cutting onto denim) Braille is the dotted texture that enables those who are vision impaired to read - since they aren't able to see, they feel the dots to make out the words.

I am very proud of this all praises to the Most High.

Q10. So, what is next?

Back to the bank and keep trading and bartering!