

Sound the Shofar

The shofar is not just a symbol, but a ritual object that has been in use continuously since biblical times. While its predominate use today is in the High Holiday services, in the past it was blown to muster troops to war, during coronation ceremonies for kings, and as a musical instrument at the Temple.

“Sound the Shofar – A Witness to History,” a new exhibit at the Bible Lands Museum, Jerusalem, focuses on the shofar and the many ways that it has been presented from biblical times to today. One of the most prominent symbols of the Jewish people, its significance stems from the fact that it has accompanied the Jewish people throughout history, to be blown both at moments of great happiness and of great despair. One of the earliest representations of the shofar being blown was found in Mesopotamia and dated to the third millennium BCE. The exhibit includes a tombstone from the Byzantine Period (fourth to seventh century CE) adorned with a menorah, shofar, lulav, and Greek inscription as well as a fragment of a chancel screen from a synagogue from the same period that features a shofar, menorah, lulav, and etrog. Also on display are a facsimile of the section of the Rothschild Miscellany (1460-1480) with the shofarot prayer said on Rosh Hashana illustrated with a man blowing a shofar before worshippers and a facsimile of an illustration from the Mantua Haggadah (1560) showing the prophet Elijah announce the arrival of the Messiah by blowing the shofar.

The exhibit, which will be on display until February 2012, also includes shofars from around the globe that were used on a variety of significant occasions during different historical periods. They include a shofar from World War II and a shofar that was



(David Rubinger/Vedloth, Aharonot)



blown at the Western Wall at the conclusion of Yom Kippur during the British Mandate period, when the British authorities forbade doing so. A film about the underground group of shofar blowers that smuggled a shofar to the Western Wall on Yom Kippur every year throughout the mandate is being screened as part of the exhibit. One of the highlights of the exhibit, which is on display for the first time, is the shofar that IDF chief rabbi Shlomo Goren blew at the Western Wall on June 7, 1967, upon the liberation of the Old City of Jerusalem in the Six Day War. That shofar, which Goren borrowed from his father-in-law

for the occasion, has become a symbol of the unification of Jerusalem.

In addition, the exhibit explores how shofars are produced and features horns of some of the over 100 different animals that can be used as a shofar. The exhibit is accompanied by personal essays and reflections on the shofar by various Israeli public figures, such as Tal Brody, Asa Kasher, Dudu Fisher, and Shlomit Aloni. ■

ERETZ Staff

Bible Lands Museum, Jerusalem
25 Avraham Granot Street
Tel.: (02) 561-1066
www.blmj.org