

Supplying The World With Shofars

By Carol Green

(WZPS) — The heir to a 3,000 year-old profession, Israeli born Zvi Bar Sheshet is one of two of the world's shofar makers. The ancient craft of shofar making in the Bar Sheshet family began in 16th century Algiers and Zvi Bar Sheshet has no desire or intention other than to continue this time-honored and most worthy profession.

In a tiny workshop above Haifa's main commercial district, a young man practices an ancient craft. The craft is shofar making - the manufacture of the ram's horn instrument blown annually to welcome the new year and call the faithful to repent.

A Family Tradition

The cherub faced manufacturer, Zvi Bar Sheshet, works painstakingly, in accordance with guidelines set down in the Talmud. Dressed casually in jeans and a T shirt, Bar Sheshet appears an unlikely heir to a three thousand year old profession. Yet Bar Sheshet regards his sacred craft with great seriousness. At present, he is one of two people in the world who manufacture shofars. Together with another manufacturer in Tel Aviv, they supply all the world's needs.

For Zvi Bar Sheshet, shofar making is a family tradition as well. The tradition was begun by Bar Sheshet's illustrious ancestor, 16th century Spanish sage Rav Yitzchak Bar Sheshet, known as Haribash. When Haribash left Spain, during the inquisition, to go to Algiers, he noticed that his new community did not have proper shofars. He took it upon himself to solve this problem, and since then generation after generation of Bar Sheshets have been making shofars.

Zvi Bar Sheshet learned shofar making from his father Meir. The elder Bar Sheshet, who recently retired after over fifty years of shofar making, learned the craft as a boy in Casablanca, Morocco. When he came to Israel in 1946 aboard the ill fated Exodus, he brought the ancient technique with him and established the Haifa workshop.

As a boy Zvi Bar Sheshet entertained thoughts of becoming an auto mechanic, but he found himself drawn to his father's workshop. As he got older he began spending more and more time in the workshop, first observing and then helping his father. By the time he completed army service, it was clear that he would take up the ancestral trade.

Making a Shofar

Shofar making, explains Zvi Bar Sheshet, is a

sophisticated and complex endeavor, requiring great care each step of the way. Jewish law dictates procedures at each step. The horns must come from a wild ram or goat and Bar Sheshet orders these horns from South Africa. Because they are to be used in a sacred ritual, Jewish law further demands that the horns be free from any crack or blemish. Thus horns must be carefully scrutinized before they can become shofars. Bar Sheshet estimates that one ton of horns will yield one hundred shofars.

After making his selections, Bar Sheshet brings the horns back to his workshop where

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Nazi Party Founded In Switzerland

ZURICH (WNS) — The founder of the fledgling Swiss National Socialist Party said here that his immediate goal is to improve the image of the Nazis with the public and that he also intends to present a list for the communal elections to be held here next year.

While the press in

general considers Ernst Meister a screwball, the formation of the first National Socialist Party in the country has evoked some concern among Jews. Most Jews interviewed, however, said that the open anti-Semitic attitudes of the party are not likely to generate wide support. Meister, 40, agrees that the name and image of his party leaves a lot to be desired, but not so the ideas it promotes. The former member of National Action, a fascist movement, and the vice-president of its Zurich section, Meister told a local weekly that "many in other parties support my ideas. The only problem is that they are irritated by the name. Our primary problem is one of image."

But Meister says he has no intention of changing the name of his party and will do all he can to legitimize it with the public. In recent interviews he said that Switzerland is ripe for a new Nazi Party to rise to its previous clamor. Asked about the mass killings of Jews by Hitler, Meister said, "that is not so tragic. Again, the problem is the lack of a good image." He is described as an electrical engineer and according to press reports he lives alone in an apartment on Zaehring Street. Meister reportedly has angered the National Action, from which he was expelled in 1983, because he is conducting a recruiting drive among its members and supporters, who are much less strident in their public statements. There is no indication of how many members Meister's party has. Most reports note that it is composed of only a few persons.

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