



Harp and Lyres on display at the workshop

harp that the Leviim played, in their actual size. Until that point, the instruments on display were quite small. Michah decided that before he would fill the order, he had to research how the instruments actually looked.

"I began researching the subject. Although the Tanach discusses the *klei HaMikdash*, there are no pictures. The research also lent a lot of importance to the way in which the instruments were constructed. We knew that it wasn't just another instrument on order.

"The only visual representation of a harp was a coin from the Bar Kochba era, which may be the last testimony of how they looked, because the actual instruments were taken captive during the Churban. We took pictures of those coins, blew them up, and from there derived how the harps looked.

"According to what I learned in Gemara, there are harps comprised of eight strings, some made of seven, and those made of just two strings." He says that a seven-string harp is a standard harp, eight strings is what is referred to as a *shminis* (*Lamnatzeiach al hashminis*), while a harp of ten strings is called an *asor*, as in *B'neivel asor zamru lo*. "The Harp of David, a lyre, had ten strings that were made of the tendons of the ram that Avraham Avinu saw by Akeidas Yitzhak," Michah expounds. "In the Beis HaMikdash, the Leviim used a harp with seven strings. When Mashiach comes, an eight-stringed *shminis* will be used, while in Acharis HaYamim, a ten-stringed harp will be used. I construct all these different types of harps."

The Gemara states that the orchestra in the Beis HaMikdash was comprised of no less than 4,000 Leviim who played in two shifts a day. On regular days, only part

"We arrived on Erev Rosh HaShanah, and I did not understand why there were cars and trucks on the road in the biblical Land, instead of camels and donkeys...."



A painstaking process goes into the making of each harp



of the orchestra played together, while on the Shalosh Regalim, it seems that all the Leviim played together, because the music could be heard all the way to Jericho.

Better a Lyre Than a Diamond

Machon HaMikdash isn't Michah's only customer. Over the years, the workshop has fielded many unique requests, from people who ordered the instruments to mark emotional events, or for other strange reasons.

One summer day a female tourist entered the shop; pointed to one of the harps, saying, "That one is meant for me," and left. The next day she came back with her husband, so he could hear the experts explain the uniqueness of the harp. Despite the impressive explanation, the woman's husband told her that he would never let her buy the harp. The two left.

The next day there was a thunderstorm that lasted the entire day. It was very odd weather — rain and thunder during the summer. The day after that, the couple returned and the husband said that he wanted to buy the harp.

After their previous visit, he had told his wife, "You're wasting my money on toys." She replied, "Choose a sign. If it happens, then it is destined from Above for me to have the harp." He chose a sign: "Tomorrow there will be thunder and lightning," assuming that such a thing was impossible in Tammuz in Israel. But indeed, the thunder and lightning came.

The stunned husband returned to buy the harp.

Another very touching story occurred when a group of tourists visited the workshop. One of the women related that she had an autistic grandson whose only means of communication with the world was through musical instruments. He was able to play any instrument he touched. "I really want to buy him a lyre, but I don't have money," she said. Another woman in the group related that several days earlier, she had lost a diamond ring and was expecting compensation from her insurance company. She declared that she didn't want to buy another diamond ring, but rather, to donate the money to the first woman so she could buy her grandson a lyre. And she did.

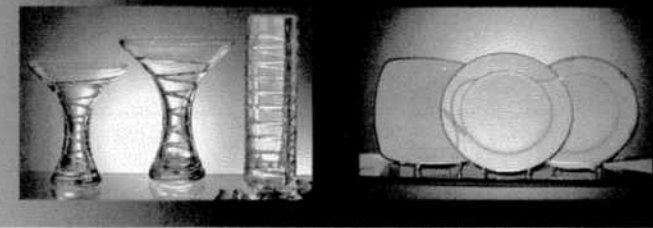
One question that Michah is frequently asked is how one learns to play these ancient instruments. "I always reply that one has to follow the ways of David HaMelech, whose heart overflowed with emotion. He didn't attend music school, but when he had some feeling in his heart, he simply played. The ensuing song is the "*Shir Chadash*" that will illuminate Zion in the future." ■



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