

Sounding the Shofar

A FEW TIMES A YEAR, before and during the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Jews gather in synagogues to listen to a sound that connects us to thousands of years of Jewish history. A trumpeter called a *ba'al tekiah* (lord of the blast) steps onto the *bimah* (platform) in front of the congregation and makes a series of resounding calls on an instrument called a shofar (plural: shofarot). The creation of shofarot from the hollowed-out horn of a ram or kudu is a tradition that dates from ancient times to present. This means that the sound that's heard on Rosh Hashanah today is the same one our ancestors heard in the Kingdom of Judah in 800 BCE.

Just as a shofar blast echoes Judaism's origins, the shofar in the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society connects Minnesota Jews to our earliest history in the state. It was originally owned by Kalman Lion, a *chazan* (prayer leader) who immigrated from Europe to Minnesota in 1856. Once he arrived, he joined Mount Zion in St. Paul—the only Jewish congregation in what was then Minnesota Territory. There were eight Jewish families living in the city at the time.¹ When Mount Zion members heard the blasts from Lion's shofar during the High Holidays, they also heard the sound of their past reverberating across the ocean and into their future in Minnesota.

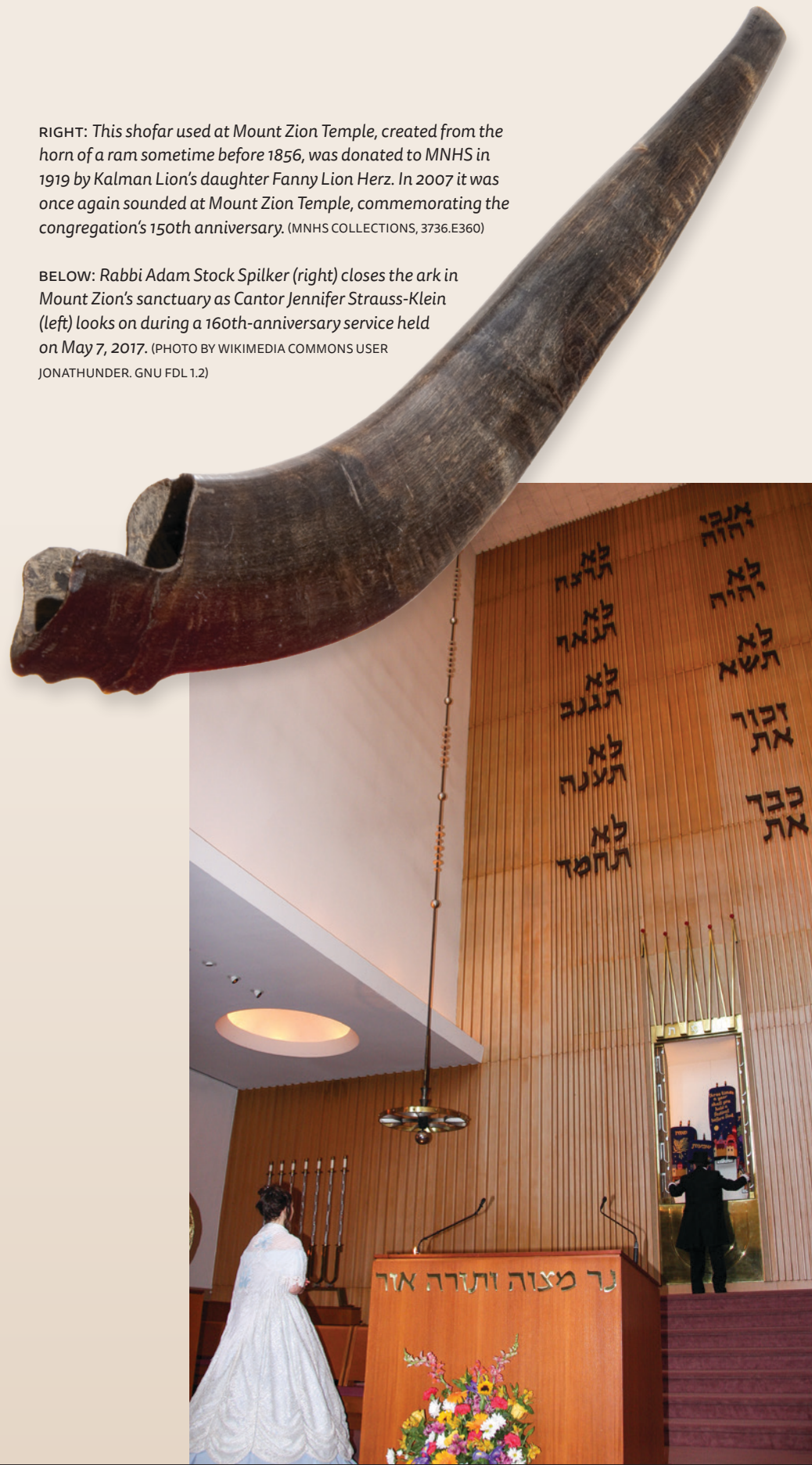
—Lizzie Ehrenhalt, with support
from curator Angelica Maier

Note

1. W. Gunther Plaut, *The Jews in Minnesota* (New York: American Jewish Historical Society, 1959), 31.

RIGHT: This shofar used at Mount Zion Temple, created from the horn of a ram sometime before 1856, was donated to MNHS in 1919 by Kalman Lion's daughter Fanny Lion Herz. In 2007 it was once again sounded at Mount Zion Temple, commemorating the congregation's 150th anniversary. (MNHS COLLECTIONS, 3736.E360)

BELOW: Rabbi Adam Stock Spilker (right) closes the ark in Mount Zion's sanctuary as Cantor Jennifer Strauss-Klein (left) looks on during a 160th-anniversary service held on May 7, 2017. (PHOTO BY WIKIMEDIA COMMONS USER JONATHUNDER. GNU FDL 1.2)





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