

# THE STAR OF DAVID

by Avram Yehoshua

[THE SEED OF ABRAHAM](#)

It was hard for me, back in 1987, when the Lord was dealing with me about the ‘Jewish’ Star of David, because my heart, as a Jew, was bound up in the symbol. Being raised Jewish it had a lot of emotional meaning for me. When someone first suggested that it wasn’t *kosher*, and that I look into its history, I became defensive, but, I did research it and the more I looked into the matter, the more I became convinced that I could not, in good conscience, continue to use it on my stationary (letterhead and synagogue card) or wear it as jewelry, etc., because it was not a biblical symbol, but a pagan one. At best, it was a profane (common), ordinary symbol, the innocent placing of two triangles together. At worst, it had been taken from the occult and introduced into Judaism by Kabbalah,<sup>1</sup> Kabbalah picking it up from the occult. The following information was found on a Jewish book marker. It said that the Star of David was,

‘In use for many centuries and in many cultures, the *original hexagrams* were a part of *ritual magic* and cabalistic (also spelled; Kabbalistic) mysticism. It was only about two hundred years ago that the Star of David was appropriated as symbol of the Jewish people.’<sup>2</sup>

That’s not exactly what you want to read concerning something you wear around your neck or use on your stationary. *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia* under *Magen David* (Hebrew for Shield of David, a common term for the Star of David) has this:

‘*Mystical* symbol consisting of two superimposed triangles forming a star or *hexagram*; today regarded as a Jewish symbol. Although occurring in the Capernaum synagogue (3rd cent. CE), it was *in ancient times predominantly a non-Jewish decorative motif* (e.g. on Roman mosaic pavements), and is found in Christian churches in the Middle Ages, while *absent* from contemporary Jewish decoration and *not* mentioned in rabbinic literature. The name figures from the 13th cent. in the ‘practical Kabbalah,’ where it is *a magic symbol associated with the pentagram* or ‘Star of Solomon’ (with which it is frequently confused). The origin and period of its adoption as a Jewish symbol is a matter of dispute. It occurs in a specifically Jewish context in Prague in the 17th cent. The M.D. was adopted by the First Zionist Congress (1897) as a symbol, and figures on the flags of the Zionist Organization and of the State of Israel. It was used by the Nazis, in the form of a yellow star, as the Jewish ‘Badge of shame.’<sup>3</sup>

The so-called Star of David, or hexagram is a ‘magic symbol associated with the pentagram.’ The pentagram the most powerful symbol of the occult. The Lord specifically warns against this kind of thing in His Torah (Law of Moses). As Jews, and certainly as followers of Messiah Yeshua, we are not to look to

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<sup>1</sup> The first ‘Star of David’ associated with a Jew is seen on a gravestone of a Jewish man named David who practiced Kabbalah in the Middle Ages. It was around 1400 AD. Kabbalah is Jewish witchcraft. There is a Star of David in a third century AD synagogue in Israel, but it’s next to the 12 signs of the *zodiac*. In other words, that synagogue may very well have been used by people who weren’t Jewish, placing both the zodiac and their ‘Star of David’ there, or Jews who were not following the way of Torah.

<sup>2</sup> A 24 karat, gold plated Pagemarker™ Bookmarks; designed and manufactured by Marbex, Inc. © 1994.

<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey Wigoder, D. Phil., Editor in Chief, *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York–Oxford: Facts on File, 1990, 7th Edition), p. 618.

*Jewish* witchcraft (Kabbalah), magicians, mediums or sorcerers, etc., to guide us in our walk with the Lord, or protect us. We are certainly not to use their symbols as representative of Yahveh or His people Israel. God said,

‘When you enter the Land which Yahveh your God gives you, you must *not* learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses *divination*, one who practices *witchcraft*, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a *spiritist*, or one who calls up the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to Yahveh and because of these detestable things Yahveh your God will drive them out before you. You must be blameless before Yahveh your God. For those nations, which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, Yahveh your God has not allowed you to do so’ (Dt. 18:9-14).

Magic and Kabbalah are interrelated. Sorcery and magic are prohibited by Scripture<sup>4</sup> (Ex. 22:18; Dt. 17:2-7; 18:9-14). The six pointed star was found on Roman mosaic pavements, and so, it certainly could have been part of the ancient ‘Jewish’ synagogue in the third century, especially of Jews who believed in Gnosticism (paganism), or Kabbalah. An ancient synagogue in Israel has the 12 signs of the zodiac, which confirms that the Jews in that synagogue weren’t following Torah (if they were Jews at all; they could have been Gentile worshipers). The zodiac originated in ancient Babylon, before 1,000 BC. It’s predicated upon the knowledge of the movement of the sun, moon and stars and was worshipped by the pagans, and unfortunately, by too many ancient and modern day Jews. God warns Israel against using the stars as a way of determining the future:

“And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the Lord your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage.” (Deuteronomy 4:19)

Believers in Messiah Yeshua must not take the things of sorcerers (e.g. the Star of David), and use them for symbols of Yeshua or the Jewish people. We must be blameless before Yahveh our God:

‘But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil’ (Hebrews 5:14).

‘If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the Truth’ (1st John 1:6).

Barney Kasden, though, in wanting to uphold the Star of David within Messianic Judaism, writes:

“The earliest apparent mention of this symbol is found in the Talmud. In describing the reign of King Solomon, the mention is made of how he had power over demonic forces by the emblem on his ring known as the ‘Seal of Solomon’ (*Gittin* 68). Although the specific design of this seal is *not* described in this passage, it is also called the ‘Shield of David’ (*Magen David*) because according to later tradition this also appeared on King David’s battle gear.”

“The first concrete evidence in archaeology was found in the city of Sidon. This consisted of a ring with a seal on it in the shape of a six-pointed star, which was dated from the seventh century BCE. For those who have been to Israel, you will remember the famous six-

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 619.

pointed star on the synagogue of Capernaum. This structure has been dated from the second century CE but it is believed to be directly over the site of an earlier synagogue, the one likely used by Yeshua himself (Lk. 4:31-37).”<sup>5</sup>

Kasdan appears to have confused the Star of David (six pointed) for the Seal of Solomon (five pointed), as the Encyclopedia mentions the difference above (pentagram is a five pointed star). Be that as it may, he wants to foster a foundation for acceptance of the Star of David by speaking of archeological evidence makes it *kosher*, but this no more makes the Star of David biblical than finding crosses and fish symbols on the tombs of early Roman Gentile Christians. Perhaps they didn’t realize that those symbols were representative of the pagan gods, Tamuz and Dagon, respectively.<sup>6</sup> Today, most believers who wear the Star of David or the cross or who use the fish symbol, don’t realize it, either. That’s a very sad commentary on Messianic Judaism’s teachers, as well as the Church.

Kasdan speaks of the ring appearing in the Talmud, which lends itself to magic (that by the ring Solomon could control demons), but this is utter rabbinic nonsense. How would the author of *Gittin* 68, living at least 600–1,000 years *after* King Solomon, know if Solomon had a ring like that, if it wasn’t written in Scripture? Also, how could the writers of the Talmud know anything about the shield that David used for battle if it’s not mentioned in ancient literature (i.e. the Scripture or archeological finds)? The Rabbis love to make up legends that further enslave the Jewish people in darkness, and Mr. Kasdan unwittingly condones them.

What makes ‘the Star’ so anti-Torah, and therefore anti-God, is because of its magic and occult foundation, which Yahveh soundly condemns. Unfortunately, this practice is prevalent within Judaism (and Christianity) today: an interweaving of occult mysticism with the Scriptures and the *traditions* of the Jewish (or Christian) people. The Talmud began in Babylon, with all its pagan-occult influences, long after King’s David and Solomon were dead. The Kabbalah<sup>7</sup> is not part of the Word of God. Kabbalah is Babylonian gnosticism in Jewish clothes.

The ring of Solomon in the Talmud that Mr. Kasdan mentions has no specific star design, meaning that there is no way for us to know what actual design was upon it (the five points being given to the ring at a later date). This is a moot point, though, for the ring never existed, except in the minds of the Rabbis.

The ancient Phoenician city of Sidon, was *never* a city in Israel, but part of ancient Lebanon. Therefore, the ring that was found in the 7th century BC with the six pointed star was not the ring of a Jew, but of a pagan. Only it wasn’t known as the ‘Star of David’ to the pagan who wore it! It was a magic symbol. Obviously, this cannot be used to support the use of the Star of David for believers today.

Mr. Kasden also tries to lend biblical significance to the six pointed star by saying that an ancient 3rd cen-

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<sup>5</sup> This was taken from the website of Barney Kasdan at <http://www.kehilatariel.org/tract002.html>.

<sup>6</sup> For an excellent work on this and the cross see *The Two Babylons* by the Rev. Alexander Hislop. (Neptune, New Jersey, U.S.A: Loizeaux Brothers, 1959)

<sup>7</sup> Wigoder, *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, p. 535. Under Kabbalah: ‘The mystical religious stream in Judaism...In all periods it was influenced by foreign spiritual currents, such as GNOSTICISM and NEOPLATONISM...popular religious movement in the 16th cent. and again, later, in Hasidism...consisted of the use of Divine or Holy Names, the permutation and combination of Hebrew letters, *magical* formulae (amulets), etc. for healing the sick...hastening the advent of the Messiah,...The religious syncretism (the mingling and fusion of various oriental religions, mythologies, semi-philosophical notions, etc.)’ Some major concepts: ‘*transmigration* in human or animal form in order to make restitution and be cleansed...Man must restore the damage...complete restoration will lead to redemption and the advent of the Messiah.’ All these concepts are evil because they go against God and His Word; Kabbalah is truly Babylonian mysticism or witchcraft in Jewish clothes.

ture synagogue (which he wrongly states was a 2nd century synagogue) was believed to be over the site of the synagogue which Yeshua went to 200 years earlier. Yeshua's presence at the Capernaum synagogue, if it was in the same location as the 3rd century synagogue, hardly endorses the Star found in the later synagogue. The star spoken of in Capernaum, dating back to the 3rd century as the *Jewish Encyclopedia* states speaks of pagan or Christian influence, just as the zodiac found on another synagogue floor in Israel tells us that those Jews (if they were Jews) were not unduly influenced by their pagan neighbors.

There is no *biblical* evidence, whether Scriptural or archeological, that the so called 'Star of David' is a God given symbol for His people Israel, but there is extensive evidence that the so-called 'Star of David' originated in the occult and continues to occupy a place in it today, right after the pentagram. I could not see how I, as a representative of Yeshua and His Truth, could give legitimacy to an anti-biblical symbol. Therefore, I discontinued using the Star of David, throwing out everything that I had with it on it, because I could not biblically justify it. It was certainly from an ancient time, but it's certainly a symbol of paganism and the occult long before it came to be a symbol for the Jewish people.

One of the principals that I live by is to be able to biblically state to anyone, 'why I do the religious, ceremonial, symbolic things that I do.' I keep Shabat (Hebrew; Sabbath) because it is commanded (Ex. 20:8-11). I wear the *tzit-ziot* (tassels; Num. 15:37-41) because it is commanded, etc. I cannot defend the 'Star of David' that way. In 1983 the Lord of the Heavens and the Earth began shaking my theological, church leavened understanding of the Scriptures. I began to see the Word of God in His Light. I said to the Lord that I didn't want to walk in darkness of any kind, thinking that it was Light. For nothing of darkness, however brightly it might appear, has the Life of God in it. It may look good, but intrinsically, there is no real Light or Life within it.

Why do we Jews now have it as the symbol of ourselves? Because we Jews have always longed after the Gentile nations and their way of worshiping their gods. Stop a Jew (Messianic, traditional or secular, it doesn't matter) on the street and ask him why he wears Star of David and he will tell you that its Jewish or he wants to identify with the Jewish people. Tell him where it came from and what it means, and he will tell you that he doesn't care; it's not magic to him! This is not a good answer, though, for one seeking to walk in Messiah's Truth. It says that the Serpent was more subtle than all the beasts of the field.<sup>8</sup> Satan loves to pervert the Truth; to mix the perverse with the pure, as we find in both Judaism and Christianity (e.g. Sunday, the day of pagan worship of the sun, over 7th day Sabbath holiness; Easter, a pagan holy day, instead of Passover, etc.).

When believers 'don't care' about the origin and occultic practices that they participate in (i.e. Sunday, Easter and Christmas, and Kabbalah, etc.), or the wearing of occultic objects (the cross, the fish, and the Star of David), it says that their flesh is overruling the Holy Spirit. The Lord Yeshua said that when the Holy Spirit came that the Spirit of God would guide us into all God's Truth (Jn. 16:13), but this doesn't happen overnight. One has to truly desire God's Truth, which many times, goes against what is being practiced in Christianity and Judaism, which means that the person has to decide whose 'side' he wants to be on: God's or the world's.

As we walk with the Master, the Way gets narrower and narrower. Our flesh is continually put to the test: 'Which way do you want go?' It's nice to sing and dance and praise the Lord, but we are also called to walk after Him, to become like Him, to walk in His Truth and to be a living example of His Truth.<sup>9</sup> I can't

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<sup>8</sup> Genesis 3:1: "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which Yahveh God had made. And he said unto the woman, 'Yea, has God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the Garden?'"

<sup>9</sup> Rom. 2:20: 'a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowl-

imagine the Apostles wearing a 'Star of David' or a cross or placing a fish symbol on their Bibles because in their day they all knew what those symbols represented, and it wasn't the Jewish people or the Lord Yeshua. It was Satan.

'Everybody does it' is not biblical justification for walking in the way of the pagan, and not looking too closely as to why one does or thinks what they do. The Lord has specific words for Israel in relation to what we believe and therefore practice:

'When Yahveh your God cuts off before you the nations which you are going in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, beware that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How do these nations serve their gods, that I also may do likewise?' You shall not behave thus toward Yahveh your God, for every abominable act which Yahveh hates they have done for their gods. For they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, you must be careful to do. You shall not add to nor take away from it.' (Dt. 12:29-32)

This paper may be offensive to some. It is not my intention to hurt or to offend anyone, but there may be some that, like myself in the beginning, become defensive. May Yeshua help you to overcome your defensiveness and search out His Truth about the Star for yourself.

We must learn to discern the voice of our Savior and not give way to the Enemy of our soul who would deceive us into representing Yeshua in ways and symbols that speak of Satan. For those who have ears to hear and hearts to obey, may this paper be a tool in Yeshua's hand for your good.

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edge and of the Truth.'

2nd Cor. 13:8: 'For we can do nothing against the Truth, but only for the Truth.'

Gal. 4:16: 'So have I become your enemy by telling you the Truth?!'

Gal. 5:7: 'You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the Truth?!'

Eph. 4:25: 'Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.'

Eph. 5:9: 'for the fruit of the Spirit consists in all goodness and righteousness and Truth.'

1st Tim. 2:4: 'who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the Truth.'

2nd Tim. 2:15: 'Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, *accurately* handling the word of Truth.'

2nd Tim. 3:7: 'always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth.'

2nd Tim. 4:4: 'and will turn away their ears from the Truth and will turn aside to myths.'

Heb. 10:26: 'For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the Truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.'

1st John 1:6: 'If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and yet, walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the Truth.'

1st John 2:4: "The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him."

From [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud\\_0002\\_0013\\_0\\_12997.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0013_0_12997.html):

“MAGEN DAVID (Heb. מגן דָּוִד; ‘shield of David’), the hexagram or six-pointed star formed by two equilateral triangles which have the same center and are placed in opposite directions.”

“From as early as the Bronze Age it was used—possibly as an ornament and possibly as a magical sign—in many civilizations and in regions as far apart as Mesopotamia and Britain. Iron Age examples are known from India and from the Iberian peninsula prior to the Roman conquest. Occasionally it appears on Jewish artefacts, such as lamps and seals, but without having any special and recognizable significance. The oldest undisputed example is on a seal from the seventh century b.c.e. found in Sidon and belonging to one Joshua b. Asayahu.”

“In the Second Temple period, the hexagram was often used by Jews and non-Jews alike alongside the pentagram (the five-pointed star), and in the synagogue of Capernaum (second or third century c.e.) it is found side by side with the pentagram and the swastika on a frieze. There is no reason to assume that it was used for any purposes other than decorative...Neither in the magical papyri nor in the oldest sources of Jewish magic does the hexagram appear, but it began to figure as a magical sign from the early Middle Ages. Among Jewish emblems from Hellenistic times (discussed in E. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*), both hexagram and pentagram are missing.”

“The ornamental use of the hexagram continued in the Middle Ages, especially in Muslim and Christian countries. The kings of Navarre used it on their seals (10th and 11th centuries) and (like the pentagram) it was frequently employed on notarial signs in Spain, France, Denmark, and Germany, by Christian and Jewish notaries alike. Sometimes drawn with slightly curved lines, it appears in early Byzantine and many medieval European churches, as, for example, on a stone from an early church in Tiberias (preserved in the Municipal Museum) and on the entrance to the Cathedrals of Burgos, Valencia, and Lerida.”

“Examples are also found on objects used in the church, sometimes in a slanted position; as on the marble bishop’s throne (c. 1266) in the Cathedral of Anagni. Probably in imitation of church usage—and certainly not as a specifically Jewish symbol—the hexagram is found on some synagogues from the later Middle Ages, for example, in Hamelin (Germany, c. 1280) and Budweis (Bohemia, probably 14th century). In Arab sources the hexagram, along with other geometrical ornaments, was widely used under the designation ‘seal of Solomon,’ a term which was also taken over by many Jewish groups. This name connects the hexagram with early Christian, possibly Judeo-Christian magic, such as the Greek magical work *The Testament of Solomon*. It is not clear in which period the hexagram was engraved on the seal or ring of Solomon, mentioned in the Talmud (Git. 68a–b) as a sign of his dominion over the demons, instead of the name of God, which originally appeared. However, this happened in Christian circles where Byzantine amulets of the sixth century already use the ‘seal of Solomon’ as the name of the hexagram. In many medieval Hebrew manuscripts elaborate designs of the hexagram are to be found, without its being given any name. The origin of this use can be clearly traced to Bible manuscripts from Muslim countries (a specimen is shown in Gunzburg and Stasoff, *L’ornement hébraïque* (1905), pl. 8, 15). From the 13th century onward it is found in Hebrew Bible manuscripts from Germany and Spain. Sometimes parts of the masorah are written

in the form of a hexagram; sometimes it is simply used, in a more or less elaborate form, as an ornament. Richly adorned specimens from manuscripts in Oxford and Paris have been reproduced by C. Roth, *Sefarad*, 12, 1952, p. 356, pl. II, and in the catalog of the exhibition 'Synagoga,' Recklinghausen, 1960, pl. B. 4."

"In Arabic magic the 'seal of Solomon' was widely used, but at first its use in Jewish circles was restricted to relatively rare cases. Even then, the hexagram and pentagram were easily interchangeable and the name was applied to both figures. As a talisman, it was common in many of the magical versions of the mezuzah, which were widespread between the tenth and 14th centuries. Frequently, the magical additions to the traditional text of the mezuzah contained samples of the hexagram, sometimes as many as 12. In magical Hebrew manuscripts of the later Middle Ages, the hexagram was used for certain amulets, among which one for putting out fires attained great popularity (see Heinrich Loewe, *Juedischer Feuersegen*, 1930)."

"The notion of a 'shield of David' with magical powers was originally unconnected with the sign. It is difficult to say whether the notion arose in Islam, where the Koran sees David as the first to make protective arms, or from inner traditions of Jewish magic. From earlier times there is only one instance connecting the hexagram with the name David on a sixth-century tombstone from Taranto, southern Italy. There seems to have been some special reason for putting the hexagram before the name of the deceased. The oldest text mentioning a shield of David is contained in an explanation of a magical 'alphabet of the angel Metatron,' which stems from the geonic period and was current among the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz of the 12th century. But here it was the holy Name of 72 names which was said to have been engraved on this protective shield, together with the name MKBY, which the tradition of the magicians connected with Judah Maccabee."

"In cognate sources this tradition was much embellished. The name of the angel Taftafiyah, one of the names of Metatron, was added to the 72 holy names, and indeed an amulet in the form of a hexagram with this one name became one of the most widespread protective charms in many medieval and later manuscripts. (From c. 1500 onward the name Shaddai was often substituted for the purely magical one.) This must have provided the transition to the use of the term 'magen David' for the sign. What caused the substitution of the figure instead of the 'great name of 72 names' is not clear, but in the 16th century instructions can still be found stating that the shield of David should not be drawn in simple lines but must be composed of certain holy names and their combinations, after the pattern of those biblical manuscripts where the lines were composed of the text of the masorah. The oldest known witness to the usage of the term is the kabbalistic *Sefer ha-Gevul*, written by a grandson of Naḥmanides in the early 14th century. The hexagram occurs there twice, both times called 'magen David' and containing the same magical name as in the aforementioned amulet, demonstrating its direct connection with the magical tradition. According to other traditions, mentioned in Isaac Arama's *Akedat Yizḥak*, the emblem of David's shield was not the image known by this name today, but Psalm 67 in the shape of the menorah. This became a widespread custom and the 'menorah Psalm' was considered a talisman of great power. A booklet from the 16th century says:

'King David used to bear this psalm inscribed, pictured, and engraved on his shield, in the shape of the menorah, when he went forth to battle, and he would meditate on its mystery and conquer.'

“Between 1300 and 1700 the two terms, shield of David and seal of Solomon, are used indiscriminately, predominantly in magical texts, but slowly the former gained ascendancy. It was also used, from 1492, as a printers’ sign, especially in books printed in Prague in the first half of the 16th century and in the books printed by the Foa family in Italy and Holland, who incorporated it in their coat of arms. Several Italian Jewish families followed their example between 1660 and 1770. All these usages had as yet no general Jewish connotation. The official use of the shield of David can be traced to Prague, from where it spread in the 17th and 18th centuries through Moravia and Austria and later to southern Germany and Holland. In 1354, Charles IV granted the Prague community the privilege of bearing its own flag—later called in documents ‘King David’s flag, on which the hexagram was depicted. It therefore became an official emblem, probably chosen because of its significance as a symbol of the days of old when King David, as it were, wore it on his shield. This explains its wide use in Prague, in synagogues, on the official seal of the community, on printed books, and on other objects. Here it was always called *magen David*. Its use on the tombstone (1613) of David Gans, the astronomer and historian, was still exceptional, obviously in reference to the title of his last work *Magen David*. Except for one tombstone in Bordeaux (c. 1726), no other example of its being used on tombstones is known before the end of the 18th century. A curious parallel to the development in Prague is the one case of a representation of the Synagogue as an allegorical figure, holding a flag bearing the *magen David* in a 14th-century Catalan manuscript of the *Breviar d’amor* by Matfre d’Ermengaud (Ms. of Yates Thompson 31 in the British Museum).”

“The symbol early moved to other communities. Its use in Budweis has been mentioned above, and the Vienna community used it on its seal in 1655. In the following year it is found on a stone marking the boundary between the Jewish and the Christian quarters of Vienna (according to P. Diamant) or between the Jewish quarter and the Carmelite monastery (according to Max Grunwald). Apparently it was an officially recognized symbol. When the Viennese Jews were expelled in 1670 they took the symbol to many of their new habitats, especially in Moravia, but also to the Ashkenazi community of Amsterdam, where it was used from 1671, first on a medallion permitting entrance to the graveyard. Later it became part of the community’s seal. Curiously enough, its migration eastward was much slower. It never occurs on official seals, but here and there during the 17th and 18th centuries it appears as an ornament on objects for use in synagogues and on wood carvings over the Torah shrine (first in Volpa, near Grodno, 1643).”

“The use of the hexagram as an alchemical symbol denoting the harmony between the antagonistic elements of water and fire became current in the later 17th century, but this had no influence in Jewish circles. Many alchemists, too, began calling it the shield of David (traceable since 1724). But another symbolism sprang up in kabbalistic circles, where the ‘shield of David’ became the ‘shield of the son of David,’ the Messiah. Whether this usage was current in Orthodox circles too is not certain, though not impossible. The two kabbalists who testify to it, Isaiah the son of Joel Ba’al Shem (Jacob Emden, *Torat ha-Kena’ot*, p. 128) and Abraham Hayyim Kohen from Nikolsburg, combine the two interpretations. But there is no doubt that this messianic interpretation of the sign was current among the followers of Shabbetai Zevi. The famous amulets given by Jonathan Eybeschuetz in Metz and Hamburg, which have no convincing interpretation other than a Shabbatean one, have throughout a shield of David designated as ‘seal of MBD’ (Messiah



b. David), ‘seal of the God of Israel,’ etc. The shield of David was transformed into a secret symbol of the Shabbatean vision of redemption, although this interpretation remained an esoteric one, not to be published.”

“The prime motive behind the wide diffusion of the sign in the 19th century was the desire to imitate Christianity. The Jews looked for a striking and simple sign which would ‘symbolize’ Judaism in the same way as the cross symbolizes Christianity. This led to the ascendancy of the Magen David in official use, on ritual objects and in many other ways. From central and Western Europe it made its way to Eastern Europe and to Oriental Jewry. Almost every synagogue bore it; innumerable communities, and private and charitable organizations stamped it on their seals and letterheads. Whereas during the 18th century its use on ritual objects was still very restricted—a good specimen is a plate for mazzot (1770), reproduced on the title page of *Monumenta Judaica*, catalog of a Jewish exposition in Cologne...it now became most popular. By 1799 it had already appeared as a specific Jewish sign in a satirical antisemitic engraving (A. Rubens, *Jewish Iconography*, no. 1611); in 1822 it was used on the Rothschild family coat of arms when they were raised to the nobility by the Austrian emperor; and from 1840 Heinrich Heine signed his correspondence from Paris in the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* with a Magen David instead of his name, a remarkable indication of his Jewish identification in spite of his conversion. From such general use it was taken over by the Zionist movement. The very first issue of *Die Welt*, Herzl’s Zionist journal, bore it as its emblem. The Magen David became the symbol of new hopes and a new future for the Jewish people, and Franz Rosenzweig also interpreted it in *Der Stern der Erlösung* (1921) as summing up his philosophical ideas about the meaning of Judaism and the relationships between God, men, and the world. When the Nazis used it as a badge of shame, which was to accompany millions on their way to death, it took on a new dimension of depth, uniting suffering and hope. While the State of Israel, in its search for Jewish authenticity, chose as its emblem the menorah, a much older Jewish symbol, the Magen David was maintained on the national (formerly Zionist) flag, and is widely used in Jewish life.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Revised on 29 March 2016.