

THE BANNER ABOVE THE INEFFABLE NAME OF GOD

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The Shem ha-Meforash, the "Ineffable Name" of God was first revealed unto Moses.

Just as the Shema is at the very heart of the Jewish religion, so the Shem ha-Meforash is the very heart of the Shema. And both of these are symbolized by the Magen David.

When Moses met God at the burning bush and God sent him back to Egypt to deliver Israel from the bondage of slavery, Moses was fearful lest he be rejected by his own Israelite brethren.

"And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations" Exodus 3:13-15 (kjv)

However, the Hebrew used no vowels, and therefore that name was written with consonants only, which by themselves could not be pronounced. Therefore it is called the "Ineffable Name."

Additional information is contributed in this paragraph from The Holy Kabbalah:

Tetragrammaton, the so-called Ineffable or Unpronounceable Name, is the Name of Four Letters, YHWH, = YAHWEH or Y AHA WEH, the Jehovah of our incorrect rendering, which Hebrew scholarship has characterized as philologically impossible. It is Nomen Ineffabile, that is to say, inexpressible, because the vowels thereto belonging are now unknown, having passed out of memory after the destruction of the Temple in the year 70 A.D.

The Book of Jewish Knowledge states:

The oral tradition in the Mishnah laid down the rule: "In the Sanctuary, the name of God is to be pronounced in the Priestly Benediction as it is written: YHVH [the English equivalent of the Hebrew letters Yod Hay Vau Hay]; but outside the Sanctuary it must be paraphrased and pronounced as Adonai."

The Shem ha-Meforash is variously spelled in English YHVH, JHVH, or YHWH. It was considered such a holy name that "by the third century B. C. E. the pronunciation of the name YHWH was avoided, and Adonai, 'the Lord,' was substituted for it ... The avoidance of pronouncing the name YHWH is generally ascribed to a sense of reverence. More precisely, it was caused by a misunderstanding of the Third Commandment (Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11) as meaning 'thou shall not take the name of YHWH thy God in vain,' whereas it really means 'you shall not swear falsely by the name of YHWH your God'" (JPS).

The Jews were so fearful of taking God's name in vain that they refused to utter the holy name of God, and substituted Adonai wherever the name JHVH appeared in the Scriptures. Even so, the Magen

David hexagram represented to them the "Ineffable Name, the Shem ha-Meforash. In Symbols in the Church, there is the following illustration and caption:



It is easy to see therefore, that to the devout Jew the Magen David not only represents the one God of Israel, but also the holy name by which He is called. And since the "Ineffable Name" JHVH appears twice in the Shema, both the Shema and the Shema ha-Meforash find their clearest visible representation in the Magen David hexagram.

The flag bearing this emblem displays to all the world the message God gave to the Jews, that God is one, that He alone is to be worshiped, and that His name is the holiest name which human lips have ever uttered.

The real meaning of all this, however, is still hidden from Israel. For the very design of the Magen David reveals more, much more. It reveals who the one God truly is, and it reveals that His name (which contains the Tetragrammaton) is the name which is above every name. We shall see how the Shield of David unmistakably portrays the truth of Jesus' startling declaration, "I am come in my Father's name" (John 5:43).