

THE BANNER ABOVE SHIELD OF DAVID

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Last week I showed you how the flag of Israel surprises the world by having as its symbol the shield of David, not the Menorah.

This central figure of Israel's flag was an emblem of rather obscure origin, the Magen David or Shield of David, a six-pointed star composed of two intertwined equilateral triangles. MAH-GUN DAVID

WHY? Because God is giving a testimony of himself. This week I'm going to show how the Magen David is testimony of Jesus Christ.

The Menorah, the sacred seven-branched candlestick, has a long and illustrious history as an emblem closely associated with the life of the nation of Israel. The Concise Dictionary of Judaism declares that it is the "symbol of Judaism, older than the Temple itself." Instructions as to its design, shape, and construction were all given to Moses by God. Jewish tradition has it that there was a Menorah in heaven, and when God revealed to Moses how to make the golden candlestick for the Tabernacle, He took Moses up into heaven and showed it to him. It is certainly true that God cautioned Moses to make all things "after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount" (Exodus 25:40). Further, we are told in Numbers 8:4: "And this work of the candlestick was of beaten gold, unto the shaft thereof, unto the flowers thereof, was beaten work: according unto the pattern which the LORD had shewed Moses, so he made the candlestick."

Not only in the Tabernacle, but when Solomon's glorious Temple was built, the candlestick was placed in it. The Menorah has been part of Israel's life ever since Moses directed the making of it after the pattern of God, and Israel has cherished it as a representation of God's presence in their midst. It seems strange that this figure was not used in the flag of Israel, for it clearly is the oldest and most revered symbol in Israel's long history.

To the undoubted amazement of many, the symbol chosen to be the central figure of Israel's flag was an emblem of rather obscure origin, the Magen David or Shield of David, a six-pointed star composed of two intertwined equilateral triangles.

What is the origin of the six-pointed Star of David? It is said to have been the form of the shield borne by King David. Archaeologists digging in the ruins of the ancient Biblical city of Sidon have excavated a design in the form of this

same star. Like the seven-branched Menorah, the Magen David, composed of two triangles, has been a symbolical ornament of Judaism for many centuries. It was found in the Capernaum synagogue of the third century and on a Jewish tombstone in southern Italy, likewise dated as early as the third century of the common era. It reached its present name and acceptance as major Jewish symbol.

It is evident that from its first recorded appearance, the Shield of David referred to God Himself and to the name by which He revealed Himself to His people. The book, *Christian Symbolism in the Evangelical Churches*, states:

The six-pointed star ... (known) as "the Star of David" ... is also called "the Star of Creation," this name having reference to the last sentence of Genesis 1:31. It is sometimes employed as an emblem of God. The six points referring to His attributes: power, wisdom, majesty, love, mercy, and justice.

In the twelfth century, it was said that "the holy Name of 72 names" was "engraved on this protective shield." Each name represented an attribute of God, hence when all the known names of God were engraved on the Magen David it meant that all that God was to Israel was represented by this figure.

In *The Judaic Heritage* by Rabbi R. Brasch are some very interesting historical sidelights concerning the Magen David:

God was praised as "the Shield of David" in one of the benedictions which on every Sabbath and holy day conclude the second lesson, the reading of the prophetic portion—the Haftarah.⁹ It is ... not beyond the range of possibility that the Shield of David ... owes its existence to a spiritual battle and was created in the sixth century B.C.E. during the Babylonian exile, in opposition to the teachings of Zoroaster ... In its philosophy of dualism, it [Zoroastrianism] taught that not one God, but two powers, ruled the universe. Ethically speaking, they were good and evil, while cosmologically they were expressed by light and darkness ... Jewish prophecy raised its voice against the dangerous new doctrine... To the forceful voice of prophetic protest was added an even more powerful symbol The Magen David.

We now begin to understand why the Magen David and not the Menorah was chosen to be the central figure of the flag of Israel. It reveals the God of Israel! But that is not all.

This flag also reveals that Jesus is the one God of Israel, as both Old and New Testament Scriptures teach. The One they crucified is the One they "ignorantly worship"! God planned for that symbol to be on Israel's flag so that Israel, and the world, might know who their God and Messiah truly is!

1. Dagobert David Ranes, *Concise Dictionary of Judaism*, p. 168.

2. David C. Gross, *1,001 questions and Answers About Judaism*, p. 262.

3. Mary Elting and Franklin Folsom, *Flags of All Nations and the People Who Live Under Them*, p. 74

4. Philip Birnbaum, *A Book of Jewish Concepts*, p. 328.

5. David Dagobert Ranes, *Concise Dictionary of Judaism*, p. 159.

6. Thomas Albert Stafford, *Christian Symbolism in the Evangelical Churches*, p. 83.

7. Wigoder, *op. cit.*, xi, 695.