



Publishing Department

Part of our work in the publishing department consists of answering questions. Our readers contact us by email and via our social media channels. Due to Israel's war against Hamas, many of the current questions revolve

around the global rise of anti-Semitism and how to combat it. In this context, we asked Mottel Baleston, a beloved teacher at Ariel's School of Messianic Jewish Studies, to answer the question about the origin of the *Magen David*, the Star of David. There is much speculation about the origin of this symbol of Jewishness,

and quite often, this speculation supports anti-Semitic rhetoric and stereotypes that have led to terrible suffering among the Jewish people for millennia. So we desperately needed a balanced and solid answer to this question, and who better to give it than Mr. Baleston? Here is what he wrote:

How Did the Jewish 'Star of David' become a Symbol for Jewishness?

By Mottel Baleston

If one sees enough social media posts, eventually anti-Semitic thoughts and memes are sure to be encountered. While most of these make little sense and are based on misinformation or simple racist bigotry, occasionally there is a post that makes some people wonder. One such post is about the origin of what is called in Hebrew the *Magen David*, "the Shield of David," a six-pointed star that is universally seen as a symbol of Jew-



ish identity. Because I tend to follow some of the Christian theology groups on social media, it was disturbing to see several occasions when professing believers were spreading the very misinformed and anti-Semitic lie that the Shield of David is an occult symbol. When one reads the rest of that individual's postings, it is clear that they are desperately looking for some item, even if nonsensical, to justify an anti-Jewish conspiratorial mindset. In contrast, a quick internet search shows you that it is a five-pointed star that is most often used by the occult. At the same time, a five-pointed star is usually adorning the top of Christmas trees. Does that mean Christians are using such stars for occult practices? Of course not. That is nonsensical. Even more nonsensical is the idea that Torah-practicing Jews are using a six-pointed star as an occult symbol, especially as the Torah strictly warns against occult practices. Then again, logic, accuracy, and honesty are not the strong suits of racists or anti-Semites.

The most ancient symbol of Jewish identity is the seven-branched menorah. Through the discoveries of archaeology, we have seen it on buildings and items of the Jewish community from 2,500 years ago. The menorah represents the original lampstand that stood in the Holy Place in the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. By the time of circa 200 C.E., we see the six-pointed *Magen David* slowly start to appear on distinctly Jewish buildings and stonework.

Six Theories

Several theories have been proposed about the origin of the *Magen David*.

First, the designation "Shield of David" is the original and ancient name because it was the symbol used on the shields of David's army when they went into battle. While this explanation seems simple and attractive, as of yet, no archaeological or textual evidence exists to support it.

Second, the star has 12 straight edges and is used as a symbol of Judaism to represent the 12 tribes. There are modern graphics with the names of each tribe written alongside each straight edge.

Third, some in traditional Judaism hold that each of the triangles' three corners represents the continuous relationship between the Creator, Israel, and the Torah. Some in Christendom see the three as body, soul, and spirit. Some Messianic Jewish believers interpret the three points of each triangle as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Fourth, in recent years, all sorts of devotional meanings for the three points have arisen, limited only by imagination. Examples include the triads of kindness, love, compassion and honor, devotion, honesty.

Fifth, historically, an alternate name for the six-pointed star was "the Seal of Solomon." This idea holds that King Solomon had a large signet ring of six points, which was pressed into warm wax on documents as a sign of his authority.

For the **sixth** suggestion regarding the origin of the six-pointed star, I present the reason that makes most sense to me, and it is one that you may never have heard. During the First Temple period and the lives of Kings David and Solomon, the Hebrew alphabet was written in characters that looked very

different from what you see today. Our current set of Hebrew letters only became dominant after the return from the Babylonian Captivity, where many of these basic shapes were derived from the characters the Jewish people encountered in Babylon and wrote out in Aramaic. Scholars call the form of pre-captivity Hebrew letters "Proto-Hebrew." These were the letters in use in King David's day. In Hebrew from any time period, the name David is made up of the letters Dalet, Vav, Dalet (דוד)—or, as we might express it in English letters, DVD. So, there are two different letters in David's name, with the Dalet repeated. In the Proto-Hebrew of King David's day, the letter Dalet was represented by a triangle (<), much the same as the Greek letter Delta (Δ). So, if you take the two triangles that represent the two Dalets in David's name and invert one, you wind up with the *Magen David*, the Shield of David. Any Hebrew speaker of the time of the Kingdom of Israel would have recognized the two Dalets superimposed on one another as a logo for David, their king.

In the end, it must be said that all of these possibilities, while interesting, are speculation. We can add the question of the origin of *Magen David* to the long list of questions we will have in the Messianic Kingdom!



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