

What is the Magen (shield) of David

By

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We see this symbol everyday and on the flag of Israel it is the Magen David which is mistranslated as Star of David. It is the most recognizable symbol of Judaism today. Where did this come from? What is a Magen anyway? Should this be a symbol that Karaites should adorn ourselves or use. Where in the Tanakh does it reference this symbol was worn or created by Ha Melekh David. Today we will be walking through my search for the Magen David.

The first place I checked was the Tanakh. Did they wear the Magen David after his death? Adah (Ayin-Dalet-Hey) which is the verb that is translated as adorn/adorns/adorned (5710). While it talks of Jewelry, and ornaments it never talks about a six pointed star. I then looked for the word Magen which does appear in the Tanakh 60 times. Magen (4043) (Mem-Gimmel-Nun-sofit) a masculine noun. It is from the verb form ganan (Gimmel-Nun-Nun-sofit) (1598) which means defend. Magen is the Hebrew word for Shield. So we are looking for the Shield of David. So there should be at least one of these references which say something about a Shield of David. In David's time (Seferim Shemuel) and his Tehillim (Psalms) the mention of a Magen is used to describe Yehovah in most cases.

Shemuel Bet (II Samuel) 22:3 O YHVH, the rock wherein I take shelter: **My shield**

(**maginiy מגיני**), my mighty champion, my fortress and refuge! My savior, You who rescue me from violence!

Shemuel Bet (II Samuel) 22:31 The way of El is perfect, The word of YHVH is pure. He

is a **shield (magen מגן)** to all who take refuge in Him.

Shemuel Bet (II Samuel) 22:36 You have granted me the **shield (magen מגן)** of Your protection [Salvation] And Your providence has made me great. [and your humbleness has made me great].

Tehillim (Psalms) 3:3 (4) But You, O YHVH, are a **shield (magen מגן)** about me, my glory, He who holds my head high.

The rest of Tehillim follow the basic thought of chapter 3 verse 3. Yehovah is his (David's) Shield (Magen). To look for yourselves here is a list of references.

Tehillim 7:10 (11) 11 My shield (**maginiy מגיני**) is with Elohim, who saves the upright in heart.

Tehillim 18:2 (3), 31 (31), 35 (36)

3 YHVH is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my rock, in Him I take refuge; **my shield (maginiy מַגִּינִי)**, and my horn of salvation, my high tower.

31 As for HaEl, His way is perfect; the word of YHVH is tried; He is a **shield (magen מָגֵן)** unto all them that take refuge in Him.

36 You have also given me your **shield (magen מָגֵן)** of salvation, and your right hand has held me up; and your condescension hath made me great.

Tehillim 28:7 YHVH is my strength **and my shield (umaginiy מַגִּינִי)**, in Him has my heart trusted, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoices, and with my song will I praise Him.

Tehillim 33:20 Our soul has waited for YHVH; He is our help **and our shield (umagenu מַגִּינֵנו)**.

Tehillim 59:12 Slay them not, lest my people forget, make them wander to and fro by your power, and bring them down, YHVH **our shield (maginenu מַגִּינֵנו)**.

Tehillim 84:9 (10) Behold, O Elohim **our shield (maginenu מַגִּינֵנו)**, and look upon the face of your anointed.

Even in The prophets there is no mention of this Magen of David. So where does it come from. For this we must look outside the Tanakh.

In the Jewish Encyclopedia, it tells us that it is not even mentioned in the rabbinic literature. I did searches on the Internet and found conflicting dates for the earliest know evidence that it existed.

The earliest Karaite source that mentions it is *Eshkol ha-Kofer* of the [Karaite](#) Judah Hadassi (middle of the 12th cent.), says, in ch. 242: "Seven names of angels precede the [mezuzah](#): Michael, Gabriel, etc.... [Tetragrammaton](#) protect thee! And likewise the sign called 'David's shield' is placed beside the name of each angel." It was, therefore, at this time a sign on amulets.

I found this reference quoted in many encyclopedias. So for amulets it was used as a way of protection.

We can see this in Kabbalah sites like...

http://headcoverings-by-devorah.com/FramedArt_MagenDavid.htm

“In Kabbalah the two triangles of the Magen David represent the dichotomies inherent in man: good vs. evil, spiritual vs. physical.

The triangle pointing up symbolizes our good deeds - which go up to heaven and activate a flow of goodness back down to the world - symbolized by the triangle pointing downward.

Tradition is that King David used this six-pointed symbol to signify that G-d shielded him in war - that G-d rules over the universe and protects us from all six directions: North, South, East, West, Up and Down.”

Never in the Tanakh does it reference HaMelekh David having such a shield.

The Jewish Encyclopedia (1901-1906) tells of the Magen of David.

a tax of 40 silver marks in half-yearly payments. This patent, however, which contains benevolent provisions regarding the legal status of the Jewish community, was not meant seriously, for in the following year Günther would have extorted money from the Judendorf had not the citizens of Magdeburg frustrated his design lest they should lose the securities they had deposited with the Jews. When Ernst von Sachsen entered the city as archbishop in the year 1476, the Jews also did homage to him; but in 1492 the archbishop, yielding to the inflamed passions of the citizens and the clergy, decreed the banishment of the Jews from Magde-

Banished 1492. burg on account of an unimportant altercation between two Jews and two monks. The edict was enforced nine months later after the councilor Von Sudenburg had paid the Jews the equivalent of their houses and goods. More than 1,400 emigrated. The synagogue of the Judendorf was turned into a chapel in honor of the Virgin Mary and named "Marienkappelle," and the name "Judendorf" was changed to "Mariendorf" (see H. A. Erhard, "Das Judendorf bei Magdeburg und der Erzbischof Ernst zu Magdeburg, Judenverfolgung im Jahre 1492," in Ledebur's "Archiv für die Geschichtskunde des Preussischen Staates," 1830, i. 318).

Of the internal life of the community up to the time of its banishment very little is known. It submitted religious questions to Meir Rothenburg (d. 1298; Responsa, No. 32, ed. Cremona, 1557) and to various French scholars. At the time of Isaac ben Moses of Vienna (1200-70) there lived in Magdeburg a Rabbi Hezekiah ben Jacob, with whom the former was in correspondence (Steinschneider, "Hebr. Bibl." viii. 2). In the fifteenth century Jacob Mölln mentions a scholar, Rabbi Isaac, of Magdeburg ("Minhagim," Hilkot Hanukkah). At that time the community seems to have been active and flourishing and to have had a yeshibah which was attended also by students from other places, who were assured of safe-conduct by a patent of protection issued in 1410.

After the banishment (1492) no Jew was allowed the right to settle in Magdeburg, whose magistrate, in a letter to the king dated Sept. 14, **Permission 1711,** speaks of that right as "a high to Return. royal favor." It was not until 1720 that a Jew, Gumpert by name, obtained permission to reside in the Altstadt of Magdeburg, and up to 1806 only one protected Jew at a time enjoyed this privilege. If Jews attempted to remain in the Neustadt, the council of the city was soon forced to expel them, as is seen from the case of Lewin Bauer (see M. Spanier, *l.c.* pp. 392 *et seq.*).

The present community did not come into existence until the third decade of the nineteenth century. Its first preacher, who was also the principal of the newly founded religious school of the community (the first of its kind in North Germany), was Ludwig PHILIPPSON, who was rabbi from 1833 to 1862 (Kaysersling, "Ludwig Philippson," pp. 47 *et seq.*, Leipzig, 1898). Philippson, in his reminiscences, speaks of an old rabbi named Salme, to whom he was for a time assistant. Philippson was succeeded as rabbi by M. GÜDEMANN (1862-66) and

M. RAHMER (1869-1904). During Rahmer's illness Grzymisch was his substitute. A new synagogue was built in 1850-51. The community has a burial association, institutions for the support of invalids, widows, and orphans, various other benevolent foundations, a Jewish women's society, and a society for Jewish history and literature.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Güdemann, *Zur Gesch. der Juden in Magdeburg*, Breslau, 1896 (= *Monatsschrift*, xiv. 241 *et seq.*); *Statistisches Jahrbuch des Deutsch-Israelitischen Gemeindebundes*, 1903, p. 46.

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M. Sc.

MAGDEBURG LAW (MAGDEBURG RIGHTS): General name for a system of privileges "securing the administrative independence of municipalities," which was adopted in many parts of Germany, Poland, and Bohemia ("Encyc. Brit."). Usually it was introduced into the Slavic countries at the instance and for the benefit of the German merchants and artisans, who formed the most important part of the population of many cities. Jews and Germans were always competitors in those cities, and as the Jews lived under special privileges and were not considered a part of the native population, not only were they excluded from participating in the benefits of the Magdeburg law, but their condition usually was rendered worse wherever it was introduced. In Wilna, where the Magdeburg law was granted to the municipality as early as the fourteenth century, the Jews were expressly excluded from its benefits, but in the near-by city of Troki the Jewish community secured from Grand Duke Casimir Jagellon the Magdeburg rights for itself, and independently of the Christian community, which had received the same rights earlier. This grant, dated March 27, 1444, gave the Jews of Troki equal rights with their Christian neighbors (see LITHUANIA).

One of the most interesting provisions of the Magdeburg law relating to Jews was that a Jew could not be made "Gewaersmann," that is, he could not be compelled to tell from whom he acquired any object which had been sold or pledged to him and which was found in his possession. This actually amounted to permission to buy stolen property.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Bershadski, *Litovskie Yevrei*, pp. 221, 234, 241 *et seq.*; Fuenn, *Kiryah Ne'emanah*, p. 6, Wilna, 1890.

H. R.

P. Wl.

MAGEN DAWID ("David's shield"): The hexagram formed by the combination of two equilateral triangles; used as the symbol of Judaism. It is placed upon synagogues, sacred vessels, and the like, and was adopted as a device by the American Jewish Publication Society in 1873 (see illustration, *JEW. ENCYC.* i. 520), the Zionist Congress of Basel (*ib.* ii. 570)—hence by "Die Welt" (Vienna), the official organ of Zionism—and by other bodies. The hebra kaddisha of the Jewish community of Johannesburg, South Africa, calls itself "Hebra Kaddisha zum Rothen Magen Dawid," following the designation of the "red cross" societies.

The Jewish view of God, which permitted no images of Him, was and still is opposed to the acceptance of any symbols, and neither the Bible nor the Talmud recognizes their existence. It is noteworthy, moreover, that the shield of David is not mentioned in rabbinical literature. The "Magen Dawid," therefore, probably did not originate within

Rabbinism, the official and dominant Judaism for more than 2,000 years. Nevertheless, a David's shield has recently been noted on a Jewish tombstone at Tarentum, in southern Italy, which may date as early as the third century of the common



A "Magen Dawid" from a "Mizrah."

era (see Herbert M. Adler in "J. Q. R." xiv. 111). The earliest Jewish literary source which mentions it, the "Eshkol ha-Kofer" of the Karaite Judah Hadassi (middle of the 12th cent.), says, in ch. 242: "Seven names of angels precede the mezuzah: Michael, Gabriel, etc. . . . Tetragrammaton protect thee! And likewise the sign called 'David's shield' is placed beside the name of each angel." It was, therefore, at this time a sign on amulets.

In the magic papyri of antiquity, pentagrams, together with stars and other signs, are frequently found on amulets bearing the Jewish names of God—"Sabaoti," "Adonai," "Eloai"—and used to guard against fever and other diseases (Wessely, "Neue Zauberpapyri," pp. 68, 70, and note). Curiously enough, only the pentacle appears, not the hexagram. In the great magic papyrus at Paris and London there are twenty-two signs side by side, and a circle with twelve signs, but neither a pentacle nor a hexagram (Wessely, *l.c.* pp. 31, 112), although there is a triangle, perhaps in place of the latter. In the many illustrations of amulets given by Budge in his "Egyptian Magic" (London, 1899) not a single pentacle or hexagram appears. The syncretism of Hellenistic, Jewish, and Coptic influences did not, therefore, originate the symbol. It is probable that it was the Cabala that derived the symbol from the Templars (see Vajda in "Magyar Zsidó Szemle," xvii. 314 *et seq.*; German reprint in Grunwald's "Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Jüdische Volkskunde," x. 138 *et seq.*). The Cabala, in fact, makes use of this sign, arranging the Ten Sefirot, or spheres, in it, and placing it on amulets (see illustrations, *Jew. Encyc.* i. 181, 550; iii. 475).

The pentagram, called **Solomon's seal**, is also used as a talisman, and Henry thinks that the Hin-

du derived it from the Semites ("Magie dans l'Inde Antique," p. 93, Paris, 1904), although the name by no means proves the Jewish or Semitic origin of the sign. The Hindus likewise employed the hexagram as a means of protection, and as such it is mentioned in the earliest source, quoted above. In the synagogues, perhaps, it took the place of the mezuzah, and the name "shield of David" may have been given it in virtue of its protective powers. The hexagram may have been employed originally also as an architectural ornament on synagogues, as it is, for example, on the cathedrals of Brandenburg and Stendal, and on the Marktkirche at Hanover. A pentacle in this form, ✧, is found on the ancient synagogue at Tell Hum. Charles IV. prescribed for the Jews of Prague, in 1354, a red flag with both David's shield and Solomon's seal, while the red flag with which the Jews met King Matthias of Hungary in the fifteenth century showed two pentacles with two golden stars (Schwandtner, "Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum," ii. 148). The pentacle, therefore, may also have been used among the Jews. It occurs in a manuscript as early as the year 1073 (facsimile in M. Friedmann, "Seder Eliyahu Rabbah we-Seder Eliyahu Zuṭa," Vienna, 1901).

BIBLIOGRAPHY: M. Grunwald, *Jahrb. für Jüdische Gesch. und Literatur*, vol. iv., Berlin, 1901; *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Jüdische Volkskunde*, x. 137-140, Hamburg, 1902; B. Vajda, *Zur Gesch. des Davidsschildes*, in *Magyar Zsidó Szemle*, 1900, xvii. 310-322; Zunz, *Ritus*, p. 149 (the 57th Psalm on David's shield in the form of the menorah); D. Mayer, *Der Aberglaube des Mittelalters*, p. 257, Basel, 1884. J. L. B.

MAGGID. See CABALA.

MAGGID: Itinerant preacher, skilled as a narrator of stories. A preacher of the more scholarly sort was called "darshan" and usually occupied the official position of rabbi. The title of "maggid mesharim" (= "a preacher of uprightness"; abbreviated מ"מ) probably dates from the sixteenth century. There always have been two distinct classes of leaders in Israel—the scholar and rabbi, and the preacher or maggid. That the popular prophet was sometimes called "maggid" is maintained by those who translate "maggid mishneh" Zech. ix. 12, by "the maggid repeats" (Löwy, "Beḳoret ha-Talmud," p. 50). Like the Greek sophists, the early maggidim based their preaching on questions addressed to them by the multitude. Thus the *Pesikta*, the first collection of set speeches, usually begins with "yellammedenu rabbenu" (= "let our master teach us"). An excellent example is the *Passover Haggadah*, which is introduced by four questions; the reciter of the answer is called "maggid." When there were no questions the maggid chose a Biblical text, which was called the "petiḥah" (opening).

The greater popularity of the maggid as compared with the darshan is instanced by the fact that the people left the lecture-room of R. **Popularity** Hiyya, the darshan, and flocked to hear R. Abbahu, the maggid. To **of the** please the sensitive Hiyya, Abbahu modestly declared, "We are like two merchants, one selling diamonds and the other selling trinkets, which are more in demand" (*Soṭah* 40a).

Magen David (<http://www.jewfaq.org/signs.htm#MagenDavid>)

The Magen David (shield of David, or as it is more commonly known, the Star of David) is the symbol most commonly associated with Judaism today, but it is actually a relatively new Jewish symbol. It is supposed to represent the shape of King David's shield (or perhaps the emblem on it), but there is really no support for that claim in any early rabbinic literature. In fact, the symbol is so rare in early Jewish literature and artwork that art dealers suspect forgery if they find the symbol in early works.

Scholars such as Franz Rosenzweig have attributed deep theological significance to the symbol. For example, some note that the top triangle strives upward, toward G-d, while the lower triangle strives downward, toward the real world. Some note that the intertwining makes the triangles inseparable, like the Jewish people. Some say that the three sides represent the three types of Jews: Kohanim, Levites and Israel. Some note that there are actually 12 sides (3 exterior and 3 interior on each triangle), representing the 12 tribes. While these theories are theologically interesting, they have little basis in historical fact.

The symbol of intertwined equilateral triangles is a common one in the Middle East and North Africa, and is thought to bring good luck. It appears occasionally in early Jewish artwork, but never as an exclusively Jewish symbol. The nearest thing to an "official" Jewish symbol at the time was the menorah.

In the middle ages, Jews often were required to wear badges to identify themselves as Jews, much as they were in Nazi Germany, but these Jewish badges were not always the familiar Magen David. For example, a fifteenth century painting by Nuno Goncalves features a rabbi wearing a six-pointed badge that looks more or less like an asterisk.

In the 17th century, it became a popular practice to put Magen Davids on the outside of synagogues, to identify them as Jewish houses of worship in much the same way that a cross identified a Christian house of worship; however, I have never seen any explanation of why this symbol was chosen, rather than some other symbol.

The Magen David gained popularity as a symbol of Judaism when it was adopted as the emblem of the Zionist movement in 1897, but the symbol continued to be controversial for many years afterward. When the modern state of Israel was founded, there was much debate over whether this symbol should be used on the flag.

Today, the Magen David is a universally recognized symbol of Jewry. It appears on the flag of the state of Israel, and the Israeli equivalent of the Red Cross is known as the Red Magen David.

Chai

This symbol, commonly seen on necklaces and other jewelry and ornaments, is simply the Hebrew word Chai (living), with the two Hebrew letters Chet and Yod attached to each other. Some say it refers to the Living G-d. Judaism as a religion is very focused on life, and the word chai has great significance. The typical Jewish toast is l'chayim (to life). Gifts to charity are routinely given in multiples of 18 (the numeric value of the word Chai).

Hamesh Hand

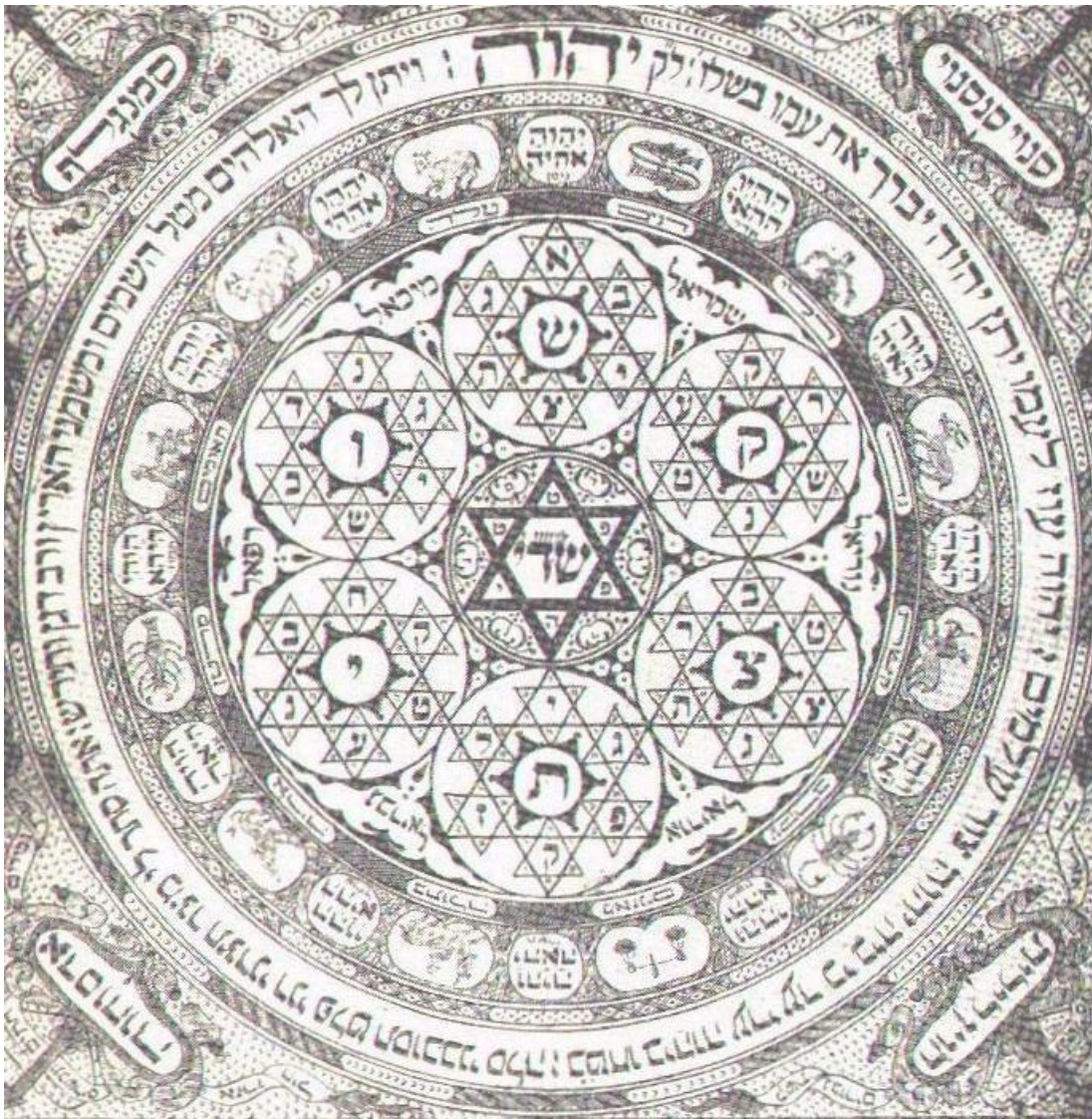
The hamesh hand or hamsa hand is a popular motif in Jewish jewelry. Go into any Jewish gift shop and you will find necklaces and bracelets bearing this inverted hand with thumb and pinky pointing outward. The design commonly has an eye in the center of the hand or various Jewish letters in the middle.

There is nothing exclusively Jewish about the hamesh hand. Arab cultures often refer to it as the Hand of Fatima, which represents the Hand of G-d. Similar designs are common in many cultures. Why it has become such a popular symbol among Jews? I haven't been able to find an adequate explanation anywhere. My best guess: in many cultures, this hand pattern represents a protection against the evil eye, and the evil eye has historically been a popular superstition among Jews.

Many of these symbols have significance in superstition and Kabbalist mysticism.

We see further an integration of magen into Kabbalah ritual art.

Magen David as used by Kabbalah



<http://scheinerman.net/judaism/rituals/star.html>

The hexagram first appears as a magical symbol in the early Middle Ages, especially in Muslim and Christian countries, and was used on notarial seals as well as for architectural decoration on churches. It appears that the hexagram was employed even earlier by the Karraite Judah Hadassi in the mid-12th century in connection with amulets and names for God. However, at this time it did not symbolize either God or the Jewish people; its precise meaning is unclear, but scholars have suggested that it suggested God's protecting power, hence the association with a "shield." The star was also employed in Kabbalah at this time; the ten sefirot were arranged within the six-pointed star and it was used in amulets. It further appears that the hexagram and pentagram were used interchangeably until this period, and then the six-pointed star gained favor, as it was associated with the notion of a "shield" of God and taken to have magical powers when used as an amulet. From the 14th century through the 18th century, the terms "shield of David" and "seal of Solomon" were used in magical texts indiscriminately though the hexagram ascended in popularity as the pentagram

diminished in popularity. It is in this context that the Prague Jewish community chose to use the hexagram as its symbol when King Charles IV granted them the privilege of having their own flag in 1354.

Predating the Hexagram before its use in Judaism

The Magen David was used before becoming a symbol of the Jewish people. It was religious symbol long before its use by Tzionist.

“During ruling of one of the last Samanid emirs Nūh ibn Mansūr ar-Ridā (ruled in 365 - 387/976 - 997) which was the second son and the successor of the above mentioned Mansūr ibn Nūh, one of his official 'Amīd al-Dawla Fā'iq al-Khāssa has issued in 368/978-79 in Balkh a copper *fals*, on which Vers side in the middle is represented the six-pointed star - hexagram, made of two opposite triangles, in a combination to the Arabian letters [www.zeno.ru: coin 20649]. On other copper *fals*, issued in the same 368/978-79 year in Balkh by the same Fā'iq al-Khāssa, in a floor of the Vers is represented the five-pointed star - a pentagram constructed of lines [www.zeno.ru: coin 20654].

The six-pointed star (hexagram) which is known also as "a seal of Solomon" or "a star of David", was widely used in Middle Ages in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Now it is a symbol Judaism though in this religion this symbol was used only since XII century³. Its presence on the Samanid coin is the earliest case of use of this symbol in these three religions⁴. It is possible to assume, that its occurrence has been connected with strengthening of the Judaic community existed in X century in Balkh and its area. In X century one of city gates of Balkh referred to Bāb al-Hadīd (the Gate of Judas) [al-Istakhri, p. 278]. In the area of medieval Balkh is mentioned a settlement named Jahūdanak that means Small Jahūdan or Small Yahūdan [Jakut, vol. 2, p. 167]. Nearby of Balkh in Gūzgānān on a way from Tāliqān to Fāryāb was situated a city named Jahūdān [Hudud al-'Alam, p. 107] or Yahūdān [al-Jakubi, p. 287] which referred to also al-Yahūdiyya, i.e. the Judaic city [al-Istakhri, p. 271; al-Moqaddasi, p. 347, 348].

However, the origin of hexagram was connected with Buddhism and India where this symbol for the first time has been fixed in the temples functioned long before new era. In Tantrist schools of the Buddhism and Induism the hexagram is a symbol of the classical mandala personifying the god Naru-Narajana. Corners of the top and bottom triangles making hexagram, personify six faces of the god Shiva and the god Shakti. It is possible to assume, that this symbol was borrowed in religions of the Near East from the Buddhism where it had deeper roots. In the modern Buddhism hexagram it is considered as the scheme of achievement of the highest step of Chakra in which a man becomes a part of the Universe.”
(<http://www.transoxiana.org/11/kamoliddin-samanids.html> , Prof. Dr. Shamsiddin Kamoliddin, On the Religion of the Samanid Ancestors*)

Predating the Pentagram in the BCE

The five pointed star was used earlier than the 6 pointed star in Israel.

“The five-pointed star (pentagram) was used by various people all over the world since very ancient times. It was the most widespread magic symbol of an antiquity. Probably, that this symbol has been invented independently by many civilizations and expresses any deep laws of the device of the world, the person and a society. Its images have been found on the walls of the Neolith cave parking, among the picture inscriptions of ancient Egypt, on clay tablets of Mesopotamia (IV millennium BC), and on walls of temples of the Indians of Maya in the Latin America. The pentagram was a symbol of followers of Pithagor (586 - 506 BC) in the ancient Greece, and it was a symbol of Jerusalem in the IV century BC. In Judaism, Christianity and Islam it is also known as "a seal of Solomon" or "David's star". The pentagram was used also in the Buddhism and other ancient religions of India and China as one of symbols of a mandala. In the doctrine of Taoism it symbolizes the five elements of the Eastern cosmology - wood, metal, earth, fire and water.

Thus, this sign also can be considered as one of symbols of the Buddhism. Occurrence of these Buddhist symbols on the Samanids coins could be connected with opposition and response of the Samanids to actions of the Buids, which, having captured in 334/945 actual authority in Bagdad, have declared themselves successors of the Sasanid kings and began to esteem and revive some pre-Islamic and Zoroastrian cultural values.” (<http://www.transoxiana.org/11/kamoliddin-samanids.html> , Prof. Dr. Shamsiddin Kamoliddin, On the Religion of the Samanid Ancestors*)

When was the Hexagram used for all the Jewish people

The Tzionist movement was the driving force to make the Hexagram a Jewish symbol.

“When thinking of Jewish symbols, one of the first to come to mind is the Magen David. However, the Magen David was not always a Jewish symbol. The Magen David or the hexagram [six-sided figure] was found in early remains of the Nabateans from the first century. It appeared in Israel in the second century CE at Kfar Nahum alongside pentagrams [five-sided figure] and other designs but seemingly without any symbolic overtones.

Magen David means "Shield" of "David" and the term "shield" or "magen" is used often in Jewish prayers. However why David's shield? Legend has it that Solomon had a magic ring which bore a pentagram, the Druids believed the sign contained magical powers and in fact it was the Kabbalist Joseph Gikatilla who mentions the hexagram for the first time in the 13th century. Many stories abound but the one I find most appealing is that God protected David from six sides - hence the origin of the Magen David, a six-pointed star.

Gershom Scholem believes that Prague is the starting point of the Magen David's rise into the Jewish world and traces this to the flag displayed by the community, a yellow Magen David on a red background. In the 1650s Vienna chose the hexagram as its seal and the ghetto's boundary marker from 1656 shows a cross in a circle and a Magen David containing a circle. When the Jews were expelled

from Prague in 1630, it is believed that the Magen David was introduced into the different communities where they moved. In 1512, once again in Prague, the Magen David became a printer's mark and by the mid 16th century Tobias Foa incorporated the Magen David as part of his printing logo in Venice. The Foa family continued to use it in the 18th and 19th century in Amsterdam.

Jews were forced to wear the yellow star during the Holocaust and it became a symbol of mockery. Gershom Shalom sums up this duality: "The sign which in our own days has been sanctified by suffering and dread has become worthy of illuminating the path of life and reconstruction. Before ascending, the path led down into the abyss; there the symbol received its ultimate humiliation and there it won its greatness." (<http://www.doingzionism.org/resources/view.asp?id=46>)

So what should this symbol mean for us today. Should we wear it or display it. What does the Tanakh feel about symbols which would have been used by the nations for their worship of their elohim?

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 7:25-26

²⁵You shall consign the images of their gods to the fire; you shall not covet the silver and gold on them and keep it for yourselves, lest you be ensnared thereby; for that is abhorrent to the YHVH your Elohim. ²⁶You must not bring an abhorrent thing into your house, or you will be proscribed (cursed) like it; you must reject it as abominable and abhorrent (detestable), for it is proscribed (cursed thing).

We are not to worship the objects which were for the land's inhabitants. We were not to possess them.

Shemot (Exodus) 23:24

²⁴you shall not bow down to their gods in worship or follow their practices, but shall tear them down and smash their pillars to bits.

We were to destroy those objects.

Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:4

4 Do not turn to idols or make molten gods for yourselves: I YHVH am your Elohim.

We are not to turn to things which are fessels / idols.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 12:30-31

³⁰beware of being lured into their ways after they have been wiped out before you! Do not inquire about their gods, saying, "How did those nations worship their gods? I too will follow those practices." ³¹You shall not act thus toward the YHVH your Elohim, for they perform for their gods every abhorrent act that YHVH detests; they even offer up their sons and daughters in fire to their gods.

Yehoshua (Joshua) 24:14

¹⁴“Now, therefore, revere the LORD and serve Him with undivided loyalty; put away the gods that your forefathers served beyond the Euphrates and in Egypt, and serve YHVH.

Shemot (Exodus) 20: 3-4

⁴You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image (fesel – carved, formed image 6459), or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth.

Amos 5:25-26

25 Yea , you bore the booth of your King and Kiyyun (Saturn), your images the star (kokav) of your gods (elahykhem) which you made for yourselves! 26 Therefore I will take into exile you beyond Damascus, says Yehovah, elohey of hosts his name. In my searching, I found that kiyyun in Assyrian was kaivanu and regarded as a god. This is related to the Persian god kaivan or keyvan which is Saturn. Here were they star worshipping? Is this the star symbol as the Magen David today? It is not clear from the text that it was one and the same but we see they were worshipping a god from the east and making images of stars.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 4:15 – 20

¹⁵For your own sake, therefore, be most careful—**since you saw no shape when YHVH your Elohim spoke to you at Horev out of the fire**—¹⁶not to act wickedly and make for yourselves a sculptured image in any likeness whatever: the form of a man or a woman, ¹⁷the form of any beast on earth, the form of any winged bird that flies in the sky, ¹⁸the form of anything that creeps on the ground, the form of any fish that is in the waters below the earth. ¹⁹And when you look up to the sky and behold the sun and the moon and the **stars**, the whole heavenly host, you must not be lured into bowing down to them or serving them. These YHVH your Elohim allotted (chalaq - divided) to other peoples everywhere under heaven; ²⁰but you YHVH took and brought out of Egypt, that iron blast furnace, to be His very own people, as is now the case.

So we are told not to have a sculptured image that would represent another god or the worship of them. Could the Magen David be such an image? Could it have been used as a luck charm, an amulet, a symbol whose use comes from beyond the Euphrates or Egypt. There appears to be evidence of such. Could it be from Kabbalah? And for that matter it was not on David's shield as we have seen. David's Shield or Magen was Yehovah which is the one who protected him. That is who our shield or Magen is today. The six pointed star was not even used in Jewish circles until the Common Era. Next time you see this symbol, consider whether its use is as benign as it seems or could it be a fesel.

It is up to you to decide whether it should or should not be used.

