



THE STAR OF DAVID

Perhaps the best known and most widely recognized symbol of ethnic and national identification to be seen anywhere is the *Magen David*, pronounced **mah-gèn dah-veèd**, literally meaning, "Shield of David." The hexagram, or six-pointed star, consisting of two superimposed equilateral triangles is universally understood as a representation of the Jewish people and the State of Israel.

Though the use of this symbol in Europe and the Middle East began hundreds of years before Christ, it was not until the nineteenth century that it became associated exclusively with Judaism. It would appear as if it was claimed then by Enlightenment Jews in the mainstream of society as a parallel to the Christian use of the cross.

At the first Zionist Congress in 1897, the Star of David, as it is popularly known, was chosen to represent the Zionist Movement, the progress of which culminated in the birth of the modern State of Israel. It was no surprise, therefore,

when the flag of Israel was designed with the Magen David as its prominent feature in blue, between two blue stripes, on a field of white.

The Star has also been used disdainfully by the enemies of the Jewish people. During the Holocaust, Jews were required to wear a yellow Magen David to identify them

as part of the company of he despised. It is ironic, but characteristic of the resiliency of the Jews, that this "badge of shame" is now displayed proudly in a great variety of

ways, including jewelry, art, and architecture.

In Israel a red Magen David is the symbol of the humanitarian organization which is the counterpart to the American Red Cross.

It would appear as if the term, Shield (or Star) of David, has no connection with King David, but rather came about as a result of some type of mystical connotation associating the symbol with supernatural protection.



THE YEAR OF JUBILEE

“And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof” (Leviticus 25:10a)

1998 is a very special year to Jewish people around the world and particularly to Jews in Israel, for it is the year in which they celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the modern State of Israel. The official observance began with the first night of Hanukkah, December 23, and continues for a whole year. However, the actual anniversary date is April 30, 1998 when Israel Independence Day is observed. This date is the start of the fiftieth year after David Ben-Gurion proclaimed Israel as an independent state at the conclusion of the British Mandate on May 14, 1948. The disparity in dates is due to the difference between the length of the Jewish calendar and the Gregorian calendar in popular usage. (See *Heart's Desire*, Vol .2, No.3 for a detailed explanation of the difference between the Jewish and Gentile dating systems.)

There are many special events scheduled in Israel and throughout the world in commemoration of this very important anniversary. What followed Israel's first Independence Day in 1948 was a fifteen month war in which the vastly outnumbered Israeli army resisted the attempts of enemy forces from five nations to destroy the infant nation. It would appear as if the hostility has not lessened in the years intervening!

THE LOOK OF THE LAW

Among the various customs of the more religiously observant Jews, one of the most unusual is the practice among Orthodox men and boys of letting their sideburns grow into sidecurls, called *peyote* (pronounced **pay-òte**). Like many practices among the Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox, this one comes from a very strict, literal application of Old Testament Levitical Law.

The basis of the practice is Leviticus 19:27:—

Ye shall not round the corners (Hebrew *peyote*) of your heads; neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard.

The Oral Law states that the sideburns must be long enough to be gripped between two fingers, though many ultra-Orthodox Jews do not cut them at all. Similarly, the Biblical text and its commentary provide the basis for the practice of not shaping one's beard.

Hebrew Christian Fellowship
P.O. Box 177
Dresher, PA 19025-0177
Phone: (215) 887-3447
e-mail: hcf1033@aol.com
© 1998

Back issues, as well as complete sets, of *Heart's Desire* are available upon request from Hebrew Christian Fellowship.