

“MAGEN DAVID (. . . shield of David), symbol consisting of two superimposed equilateral triangles, forming a hexagram. It was used for decoration and as a magical sign in many civilizations and in various parts of the world, but was not known as a specifically Jewish symbol in biblical and Talmudic times. Where it appears in Jewish contexts, as in synagogues and on tombstones, it had a purely ornamental function. The phrase itself appears in the third benediction after the reading of the *haftarah*, where it is a designation for God. According to the authoritative study by Gershom Scholem, Jewish groups took over the designation *seal of Solomon* from Islamic magic sources. As a luck sign it appeared on magical versions of the *mezuzah* from the tenth century. It is uncertain whether the term *shield of David* arose in Islamic or Jewish mystical circles. Although appearing in a number of Jewish contexts, it first had an official Jewish usage in Prague, probably as a heraldic symbol, and spread from there in the seventeenth century to other European countries. . . .” (*THE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF THE JEWISH RELIGION*, New York • Oxford, © 1997 by Oxford University Press, Inc., pp. 433-434.)