



The Messianic Seal

Warm Holiday Greetings in Yeshua!

A Jewish Jewel from Israel

On our recent Mercy Mission to the Land we gathered information on a fascinating discovery made in 1999 concerning what has come to be known as "The Messianic Seal." We had been aware of this emblem but were waiting for God's time to examine this particular jewel. The time is now.

The Messianic Seal, consisting of a menorah, a *magen david* (star of David), and a fish was discovered on artifacts in a grotto near the tomb of King David on Mt. Zion. Some have speculated that the grotto was actually a mikvah used by the original Messianic congregation lead by Ya'acov ben Yosef (James the son of Joseph), the half-brother of Yeshua. The grotto is adjacent to the traditional location of the Upper Room, the meeting place of the first *talmidim* (students) of Yeshua. The logical conclusion drawn from this find is that the first century Jewish believers in Yeshua used the Messianic Seal as a symbol of their faith in Messiah. Although some question the archaeological authenticity of the Seal, it has a message for us at this Hanukkah season and in these days preceding the return of Messiah.

The Hanukkah Connection

In the book, **The Messianic Seal of the Jerusalem Church**, Reuven Schmalz, artist and student of history, sets the historical stage for the Messianic Seal. He begins with the Maccabees, the well-known heroes of the Hanukkah story, whose bravery and faith in the one true God we extol each year as we celebrate the holiday. Schmalz gives us something new to consider. Antiochus Epiphanes, the Selucid king and villain in the Hanukkah story, deposed Onias III, the reigning High Priest in Jerusalem. Onias' position was hereditary. He was of the House of Zadok, the ones chosen by God and appointed by King David to enter the Holy of Holies and make atonement for God's people (Ezekiel 44:15). Antiochus actually sold the holy office of High Priest to the highest bidder. Eventually, he outlawed the office altogether.

Following the defeat of the Syrian-Greeks by the Maccabees and the rededication of the Holy Temple, Jonathan the Maccabean took the High Priestly office for himself, beginning the transfer of the high Priesthood from the Zadokites to the Maccabees. This era in Jewish history is usually referred to as the Hasmonean Dynasty. According to Schmalz, the Maccabees did not maintain their original religious zeal but succumbed to Hellenistic forces. By the time of Yeshua, their descendents, the Sadducees, had become an aristocratic group, members of the ruling class of society.

The Essene Connection

The Zadokites considered the Maccabean priests illegitimate imposters. The Hasmonean priesthood stood their ground and even persecuted the priests of the line of Zadok. This resulted in the Zadokites and their followers fleeing to the wilderness of Damascus. This group formed the sect that became known as the Essenes. The prophetic banner of the Essene community was Is. 40:3: *"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God."* A major focus of the Essene sect was the "Kingdom of God." They spoke of the "Sons of Light" and "Sons of Darkness" and considered the Temple to be polluted by the latter. The kingdom age would begin when the "Sons of Light" defeated the "Sons of Darkness."

The Spread of the Essene Movement

The Essene movement spread from the wilderness of Damascus across the Golan Heights to the Galilee. According to Schmalz, new converts came mostly from among the lower peasant classes (am-ha-aretz). One of the groups that sprang from this sect was the Nazarenes, Essenes who were looking for a Messiah to come from the Davidic line.

By the time of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D., there were Essene groups throughout the land of Israel, including Qumran by the Dead Sea. Not all Essene groups were alike. Some lived celibate, monastic lives apart from society while others lived more normal lives. The Essene quarter in Jerusalem was located on Mt. Zion and had its own gate called the Essene Gate.

Some Biblical scholars believe that John the Baptist was an Essene. The Bible tells us that he was in the desert until his showing unto Israel (Luke 1:80). He taught the Essene doctrine of the "Kingdom at hand," performed the Essene baptism for the remission of sins and echoed the Isaiah 40:3 motto which the Essenes used to describe themselves.

When Yeshua (Jesus) appeared on the scene, He began preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. In doing so He more closely aligned Himself with the Essenes than with any other faction within Judaism, i.e. the Pharisees or the Saducees etc. It is interesting that Yeshua chose to celebrate His last supper (Passover Seder) in an upper room in the Essene quarter of Jerusalem. The "Upper Room" was most probably located directly above the tomb of King David. The Nazarenes would have considered this a holy place, given their Davidic loyalties. Picture Yeshua, celebrating His last Passover, upon the throne of David—literally! The long-awaited Messiah of the House of David had come.

Nearly 2000 years later an elderly Greek monk, digging on Mount Zion near King David's tomb, found numerous artifacts believed to have been part of the worship of the early Nazarene followers of Yeshua, the Messiah.

Elements of the Messianic Seal

The three-part Messianic Seal is unique in composition since it is actually formed by only two symbols, a menorah and a fish. As they join together, they form a Star of David. Many interpretations have been given to the symbols comprising the Seal. The menorah (candelabra) represents the light of God, the Glory of God, the Torah, God's covenant with the Jewish people, and most recently, the State of Israel and Judaism itself.

The fish has been used from earliest Messianic times as a symbol of Nazarene Judaism (called "Christianity" more than a century later). It was also symbolically associated with the Essene and Nazarene practice of water immersion (baptism). The original Body of Believers who worshipped at the Messianic synagogue on Mount Zion consisted of Jewish believers who had all been immersed. The fish is also an ancient biblical symbol of resurrection and eternal life. It eventually became extremely popular as a Christian symbol because of an acrostic in the Greek language. The initial letters of five Greek words forming the word for fish (Ichthys) can stand for: *Iesous Christos Theou Yios Soter*—Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior (Yeshua Mashiach, God's Son, Savior).

The fish is at the bottom of the Messianic Seal: Yeshua, the Root and Offspring of David (Revelation 22:16), is the foundation of the Body.

The Magen David, Star or Shield of David as it appears in the Messianic Seal, has been a point of controversy on a number of levels. First of all, it has been generally believed that this symbol of Judaism was not used until Medieval times. Secondly, many feel strongly that the Star of David is an occult symbol. It certainly has had a turbulent history, having even been used as a badge of shame during the Holocaust. Today the Star of David is a symbol of pride and glory on the flag of Israel. The Star of David has become a symbol of Israel, Zionism, and especially the Davidic Kingdom and the coming Messiah. Was the six-pointed star used as an ancient occult symbol? Perhaps. Those who say that its real name is the Seal of Solomon insist that it is still used as such. Others say that the Jewish Star of David always has a top and bottom point lined up vertically, while the star used in occult rituals is rotated so that the two side points line up horizontally (Petah Tikvah Magazine, Vol. 16, No. 4).

Raymond Fischer makes a connection between the Star of David and the ancient Hebrew alphabet. The letter *dalet*, equivalent to our English "D," was shaped like a triangle. Two of these triangles one at the beginning and one at the end, formed part of the name David. Israelites going to war may have adapted a symbol comprised of two intentional equilateral triangles (*dalets*) representing the name of the warrior king, David.

What is the truth? **Yeshua is the truth.** As far as the Star of David goes, we are not prepared to reject it as an occult symbol. But then, we also don't condemn Christians who celebrate Christmas, even though the holiday has pagan origins. We Messianic Jews still stomp on a glass at the end of our weddings, a tradition with pagan roots as well. We have decided not to allow the devil to have the Magen David. (We are not letting him have the rainbow either.) If you don't agree with us, please pray for us—don't write.

Ari ben Levi, in an article on the Messianic Seal, makes a point worth pondering: the Star of David is formed only by the union of the Menorah and the Fish. "We are taught by this symbol that Torah without Grace will not reveal Messiah, and Grace without Torah will not reveal Messiah—Messiah is properly revealed only when Torah and Grace are in perfect balance." Nice thought. Ari sees Yeshua as the Star of David, the Messiah, who came forth "a star out of Jacob" (Numbers 24:17). He was also the shoot that came forth from the stump of Jesse, King David's father. David's star reminds us of this "Son of David."

A Symbol of Unity

There is no doubt that the Messianic Seal makes a strong statement about the Jewishness of believing in Yeshua (Jesus). It proclaims not only Jesus' Jewishness but the Jewish foundation upon which His body is built. It is a perfect symbol for Christians who love Israel and the Jewish

people and find a fullness and a richness in the Jewish roots of their faith. For Jewish believers it affirms that Jews remain Jews once they meet the Messiah Yeshua.

Perhaps even more significant is the message of unity implicit in the Messianic Seal. It is a symbol that brings Jews and Christians together, even Jesus and Jews together. When the menorah and the fish join, a third part of the symbol is revealed: the Star of David. Truly, only Yeshua can bring Jews and non-Jews together as One. He is the King of the Jews who will one day reign from the throne of King David on Mount Zion. He is the "Bright and Morning Star" and the "Root and the Offspring of David" (Revelation 22:16). Reuven Schmalz has made an interesting observation on the Seal as it pertains to unity: "The fish tends toward the earth, the worldly home of man, while the candelabra tends toward heaven, infinity and God. The essence of the Star of David, signifying the Stump of Jesse, thus becomes the unifying factor between God and man." The Messianic Seal thus speaks of unity between Jews and non-Jews, Jesus and other Jews and God and man (both Jews and non-Jews): a three-part symbol with threefold unity. Enough said! Order yours this month—in gold or silver.

22 New Jewish Jewels TV programs

While in Israel, we taped the Israel segments of the 22 new **Jewish Jewels** programs on the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This month on December 20-22, we will be taping the teaching portion of the programs with Dr. Ben Gigi in the studio of Coral Ridge Ministries here in Ft. Lauderdale. The estimated cost of each program is \$3,000 (\$1,000 less than our previous series because we can tape more at one time). However, the \$1,000 less isn't helping much since our ministry income has plummeted due to our Israel Mercy Mission. Funds that were sent in for Israel are being used ONLY as designated. Now we need help reaching the thousands of Jewish people in the U.S., Europe and Australia who watch us every week. Many more are watching than we realize. When we landed at JFK after an 18 hour journey home, an elderly Jewish man standing next to us was the only other passenger that had to walk to the Jet Blue terminal. We invited him to walk with us. We chatted briefly and helped him find the way. Then as we were parting he looked at us and said: "I know you. You're the Jewish Jewels." "And who are you?" Jamie asked. "I'm Rabbi T. from West Palm Beach. I see you on TV." Jamie immediately reached in her purse and gave the rabbi a key ring with the Hebrew blessing on it which he read and was pleased with. We told Rabbi T. about our Mercy Mission and then parted for our separate flights. You never know who is watching you! You will not know until Heaven how many souls you have touched for eternity through your loving, generous giving to this ministry in the name of the Messiah, the Son of David, Yeshua.

Much Love,

Neil and Jamie

If you are interested in sponsoring a program (\$3000) or being a partial sponsor (\$1000), please call the Jewish Jewels office at 1(800)293-7482 and speak with Sheryl. Sponsors will be acknowledged by a brief statement at the end of the program. The statement may be in memory or in honor of a loved one or may be used to communicate information about your business. Since these programs will probably be aired until the Messiah returns, **your program** will be viewed many many times! (If you cannot sponsor a complete program, any gift will be a help.)

December Offers

While in Israel, we acquired **Messianic Seal Pendants** available in either beautiful 14K Gold or

sterling silver. Be sure to order yours this month—either for yourself or as a meaningful holiday gift!

We also recommend reading **The Messianic Seal of the Jerusalem Church** by Reuven Schmalz (100 pg. softcover with color photos) for a thorough history and examination of this important emblem.

Our music CD this month is **Shomer Yisrael (Keeper of Israel)** by Kol Simcha – traditional & contemporary sounds. You'll especially appreciate their rendition of "Roni Bat Zion" ("Rejoice Daughter of Zion") sung in Hebrew, Russian, and French!

Please consider an "end-of-the-year" investment in the Jewish Jewels outreach to the House of Israel. It is God's time to reach His ancient Covenant people, and we know He will bless your investment with heavenly dividends (Genesis 12:3).

GOD BLESS YOU! WE LOVE YOU!