

Star of David is popular perfin design

Floyd Walker examines the perfin use of the "ancient" symbol of Judaism

Wo fewer than 40 perfin patterns include the Star of David either as the entire pattern or as part of the pattern. Only the circle and the triangle are more commonly used as designs on perfins.

It shows up only twice by itself as a U.S. perfin, and appears with a B in the center in two other U.S. patterns.

Curiously enough, it appears most frequently as a perfin on German stamps.

That last point is particularly interesting because the Star of David is generally viewed as a symbol of Judaism, just as the swastika is generally viewed as the symbol of Nazi Germany. Neither view is factual.

The Star of David is actually two equilateral triangles laid one over the other—with the apex of one triangle pointing up and the apex of the other pointing down. The result is a six-pointed star called, technically, a hexagram.

It is rarely called a hexagram, though. It is known by such names as Solomon's Seal, the Shield of David, and, most popularly, the Star of David.

Historically, there is no real connection between the symbol and either Solomon or David and the symbol has no particular meaning in either secular or religious Judaism.

The origin of the symbol really isn't known. It does show up as a design on some early synagogues and as a symbol on the flag of some Jewish organizations. It first gained widespread association with Judaism when Theodor Herzl used it as an element in the banner of the Zionist movement at the end of the last century.

Some religious scholars have attributed deep theological significance to the Star of David. The top triangle points upward, to-

ward God, while the lower triangle points downward, toward the real world. Some say the intertwining makes the triangles inseparable, like the Jewish peo-

daism and the Star of David has continued to this day.

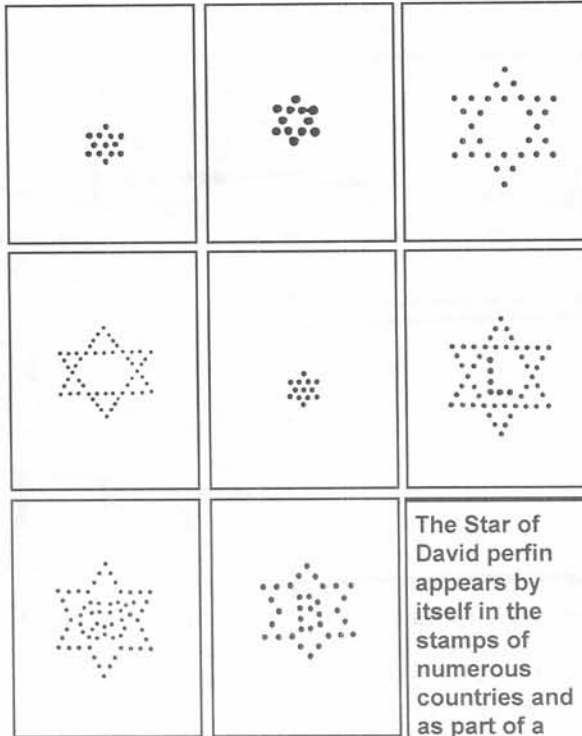
When the State of Israel was formed in 1948, the Star was used as the central design element of the new nation's flag—a symbol of defiance of the Nazi attempts to annihilate the Jews.

The symbol's use on perfins is not particularly related to Jewish businesses or Jewish causes. Many firms used the design because it was relatively simple and a little more generic than the standard initials most commonly used in perfin patterns.

Aside from its use as a perfin, the Star of David is often seen as a cancellation on early U.S. and foreign stamps. Postal officials in Costa Rica, Canada, Peru, France, and Russia all used the symbol as a cancel. Once again, there was no religious meaning involved; it was just a fairly simple symbol to carve into the cork or rubber canceling devices.

The only identified U.S. perfin pattern featuring the Star of David used alone is the personal perfin of Jacob Kiskner of New York (See note on page 100). The Star of David with a B in the center is the pattern of the Burroughs Adding Machine Company of Detroit.

In addition to the U.S. and Germany, the symbol appears as a perfin on the stamps of Great Britain, the Netherlands, Denmark, Argentina, France, Poland, Switzerland, and Canada.



The Star of David perfin appears by itself in the stamps of numerous countries and as part of a design in the stamps of still more countries. At least 40 perfins feature the Star of David in some form.

ple. Others suggest that the three sides represent the three types of Jews: Kohanim, Levites, and Israel.

Interesting though these suggestions may be, they apparently have little basis in historical fact. The closest thing to an official Jewish symbol is the menorah.

The intertwined equilateral triangles is a common symbol in the Middle East and North Africa, and is generally thought of as a good luck symbol.

It was Adolf Hitler who made the Star of David synonymous with Judaism. He decreed that Jews in the Third Reich identify themselves with the six-pointed star on their clothing, their homes, and their businesses, and the connection between Ju-

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erfins Club member Jack Kisner is the owner of one of only two Star of David patterns on U.S. perfins. The user of the other pattern, a small Star of David, has not been identified.

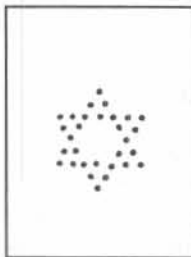
Kisner's pattern has been used on U.S. and U.N. postage stamps and on the stamps of Kisner's Park Avenue Local Post.

Kisner first used the perfin on February 7, 1985. The perforator is a single headed device made by Baddeley Brothers of London.

Kisner lost several members of his family in the Holocaust. He credits his maternal grandmother with starting him on collecting stamps. She used to send him all the new stamps from Russia. She was shot to death in her doorway in Slavuta in the Ukraine when she refused Nazi orders to leave her house.

Kisner says he created his Star of David perfin when he discovered that no other Jewish-owned company in the United States had ever used such a pattern.

If you would like a copy of Jacob Kisner's Star of David for your collection, send current U.S. stamps to him and he will perforate them. Please send only current stamps and be sure to enclose a stamped, self-addressed return envelope with sufficient return postage. Kisner may be reached at 254 Park Avenue South, Penthouse F, New York 10010.



The Star of David has been used twice as patterns on U.S. perfins. The user of the small pattern, at left, is unknown. The pattern at right is owned by Jacob Kisner of New York City.
