The Story of the Magen David

Magen David Adom
SAVING LIVES IN ISRAEL

for Kindergarten through 3rd Grade
Lesson Planner
by Stacey Frishman Delcau, RJE
Goals:

- To talk about the people/places that help us to feel safe (in a Jewish context).
- To give students the opportunity to learn about an organization in Israel that helps its citizens to feel safe and taken care of.
- To learn about the symbol of the Star of David.
- To teach the message this symbol embodies—the Magen David is the symbol of safety and assures all Israelis that help is on the way.

Objectives:

- Students should be able to (SSBAT) verbalize what people/places make them feel safe.
- SSBAT draw a picture of the Magen David.
- SSBAT verbalize what Magen David Adom means in English.
- SSBAT verbalize why we should care the safety of the people of Israel.
Themes and Ideas addressed in lesson

_atoms_Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh Lazeh- All Jews are responsible for one another
_atoms_Jewish Symbols

Time: 25-30 min session

Materials:
_atoms_Color picture of the MDA ambulance
_atoms_Handouts of the blank ambulance picture
_atoms_Handouts of the blank shield
_atoms_Handouts of the Magen David (Star of David)

Optional Materials:
_atoms_Books on the story of King David: Segal, Lore. The Story of King Saul and King David. Schocken Publishing, 1991. (Intended for older audiences 8-11, but can be adapted)
_atoms_Freehof, Lillian S., Stories of King David and Stories of King Solomon. JPS, 1955. (Enchanting retellings of classical midrashim and folktales. Kids love these stories)

Teacher’s Note:
Many of the discussions in this lesson are intended for a 2nd or 3rd grade audience. For a Kindergarten or 1st grade audience, concentrate your discussion on the message the symbol sends- that the Magen David is the symbol of safety and help in Israel. This lesson will most likely take a shorter period of time (15 minutes instead of 30 minutes). Use the coloring pages to focus the students.
Set Induction

**Time:** (10 min)

Can you think of a time where you needed someone’s help to feel safe? Did you fall from your bike and hurt yourself? Have you had a broken bone?

- Name a few times when you needed someone else’s help to feel safe.

*Handout copies of the blank shield, page 15*

- What does a shield do?

It protects! It keeps people safe. During war, it often saves their lives. Some warriors used to draw symbols on their shields. They felt that it would help protect them.

- Ask students to draw a picture on their shield of a person or a place that keeps them safe.

*King David was a great king in Jewish tradition. When he had to defend himself and his people, legend has it that he had a special symbol on his shield to help keep himself safe. Let’s imagine that his shield had a special star on it.*

*Today, we call this symbol the “Star of David.” This star kept King David safe when he was in trouble.*

*Originally, when people saw this star, they were reminded that God was also protecting them, especially in the story of King David.*

*Show a picture of the Star of David. Ask if any of your students have seen this symbol before.*

King David used a star on his shield.

- Ask students to share what is on their shield by asking:

- What things keep us safe?

- Does God help keep you safe?

In addition, discuss things that might not be on their lists including: teachers, schools, fire trucks, ambulances, police, etc…

- Why is it important to have people or things that keep us safe?
Activity 1: (7-10 min)

In Israel, the Jewish homeland, there are many people who want to feel safe.

We care a lot about the people living in Israel because according to the Talmud, an important Jewish book of laws- “kol yisrael arevim zeh lazeh” which means: “All Jews are responsible for one another.”

What are you responsible for in your life? Looking after a brother or sister? Making sure you take care of your belongings?

We help make sure that those things we are responsible for stay safe.

Magen David Adom

In Israel, there is an organization similar to the ambulances, firemen, and Red Cross that help us here in America.

✧ When do you see ambulances?

Whenever someone is really sick, is hurt, or needs help (just like King David did).

Just like we have the Red Cross in America, Israel has an organization, which in Hebrew is called “Magen David Adom.”

Did you know that we already learned what “Magen David” means? We talked about it at the beginning of the lesson. It is the special symbol on King David’s shield.

What is a Magen David? Star of David (or Shield of David)

So now that you know what the first part of this Hebrew phrase means, let’s learn the second part of the name of this special organization.
Show the color picture of an MDA ambulance. Ask the students where the Magen David is on the ambulance. Once they point it out, ask them what is special about this star.

*It is red!*

**Adom** in Hebrew means red.

What is red also the color of?

*Blood!*

Magen David Adom not only helps keep people safe, it gives people blood when they get seriously hurt. This is very important because we all need blood to stay alive. MDA supplies 97% of all of the blood for hospitals and the general population and 100% of the blood used by the Israel Defense Forces.

**Magen David Adom means the “Red Star of David.”**

What do you think the people in Israel would do without Magen David Adom?

People in America think that this is such an important organization that they even started a group to help support Magen David Adom with their tzedakah money.

This reminds us about the Jewish value of kol arevim zeh lazeheh- Jewish people taking care of other Jewish people around the world and making sure to keep them safe.

Why do you think this is important?
**Concluding Activity**

(7-10 min)

Handout copies of the blank pictures of an ambulance on page 10.

Have the students draw a picture of the Magen David on the ambulance as well as their symbol from their shield.

If you have time, ask the students to share what they drew and why.

Display the students’ pictures, or if you send them home, include a note about what the student’s studied about Magen David Adom in this lesson.

**Optional Activity**

If you use this lesson during Simchat Torah or Yom Ha’atzmaut, you can easily connect the theme of teaching about the Magen David as a Jewish symbol in conjunction with a lesson on the Israeli flag.
Other Online Resources

Teacher background material on the Magen David (Star/Shield of David):

(www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/star.html)

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.

(www.aish.com)

Originally, the Hebrew name Magen David -- literally “Shield of David” -- poetically referred to God. It acknowledges that our military hero, King David, did not win by his own might, but by the support of the Almighty. This is also alluded to in the third blessing after the Haftorah reading on Shabbat: “Blessed are you God, Shield of David.”

A more practical theory is that during the Bar Kochba rebellion (first century), a new technology was developed for shields using the inherent stability of the triangle. Behind the shield were two interlocking triangles, forming a hexagonal pattern of support points. (Buckminster Fuller showed how strong triangle-based designs are with his geodesics.)

(www.wikipedia.com)

Judaism understands the Star/Shield of David as equating with the number seven, that is, the six points plus the center. The earliest extant Jewish text to mention it is the Eshkol Ha-Kofer by a Karaite, named Judah Hadassi, from the 12th century CE: “Seven names of angels precede the mezuzah: Michael, Gabriel, etc. ... Tetragrammaton protect you! And likewise the sign, called the ‘Shield of David’, is placed beside the name of each angel.” By this century, the Star of David was already used in Jewish amulets. Likely it is called a “Shield” because of its protective mystical function.
The number seven has religious significance in Judaism, e.g., the six
days of Creation plus the seventh day of rest, the six working days
in the week plus Shabbat, the Seven Spirits of God, as well as the
Menorah in the ancient Temple, whose seven oil lamps rest on three
stems branching from each side of a central pole. And so on. Perhaps,
the Star of David came to be used as a standard symbol in synagogues
because its organization into 3+3+1 corresponds to the Temple’s
Menorah, which was the more traditional symbol for Judaism in
ancient times.

Exact origins of the symbol’s relation to Jewish identity are unknown.
Several theories were put forward. According to one hypothesis, Star
of David comprises two of the three letters in the name David. In its
Hebrew spelling, it contains only three characters, two of which are
“D” (or “Dalet”, in Hebrew). In ancient times, this letter was written
in a form much like a triangle, similar to the Greek letter “Delta”, with
which it shares a sound and the same (4th) position in their respective
alphabets, as it does with English. The symbol may have been a
simple family crest formed by flipping and juxtaposing the two most
prominent letters in the name.

A popular folk etymology has it that the Star of David is literally
modeled after the shield of the young Israelite warrior David (later
to be King David). In order to save metal, the shield was not made
of metal but of leather spanned across the simplest metal frame that
would hold the round shield: two interlocking triangles. No reliable
historical evidence for this etymology exists.
Shield of David
This Lesson Planner can be downloaded at www.afmda.org.