

**A poem, dated 14 September 1941, calls upon Jews to wear the yellow star
with trust in God¹**

*Mogen Dovid*²

A newly shining star appears to light the sky
above this world of rage and hateful violence,
in which the air resounds with death's dejected cry,
in which your call, sweet peace, is hushed to silence,
in which the clarion sends a cruel and dreadful sound,
death floods the world as bloodily it rages.
And yet the star is old, though seemingly new-found:
the Maccabee³ star, every Jew's star through the ages.

It's meant now as a penal load on each Jew's chest,
intended as a mark of malediction;
to rob us of life's joys we love the best;
reduce us to the sum of each affliction
that fills us with such worry, suffering and pain
far worse than in the days that were much older.
Yet we're devoted to that star, time and again.
We'll wear it ever firmly trusting God, and ever bolder.

It is the Mogen Dovid, bright and holy star,
to which we gaze aloft in supplication,
which roams forever in the heavens broad and far,
which stands as our millennia-old foundation.
Not as a hurtful shame upon our chest it weighs.
Forever in God's nearness it's remaining.
We must be firmly mindful of this truth always:
The Mogen Dovid shines on high for us, unwaning.

But those who don't wear David's Star under duress –
the holy sign is not a duty for them –
they don't feel far from Judaism nonetheless,
Their Star of David's always in full sight, before them.

1 StA Mü, Familien 807. This document has been translated from German.

2 Ashkenazi pronunciation of Magen David, Hebrew for Shield of David. The poem was presumably written by Joseph Schachno, in whose literary estate it was found: Joseph Schachno (1876–1942), businessman; managed a womanswear business; moved from Nuremberg to Munich in 1935; deported on 22 July 1942 to Theresienstadt, where he perished.

3 Judas Maccabeus (died 160 BCE), Jewish freedom fighter in Judea, after whom the revolt of the Maccabees in the second century BCE is named; the rebellion was sparked by the religious edict of Antiochus IV, which required Jews to renounce their religion.

When in the coming days the shofar's⁴ call sounds clear and bright,
we'll heed the message that the Mogen Dovid's giving:
The thing that now is meant to be our blight
shall be our star of hope as long as we are living.

Munich, 14 September 1941
Devoted and dedicated to Director Stahl⁵

4 A shofar is a ram's horn that is blown on the Jewish High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah (New Year) and at the end of Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). In 1941 both holidays fell in the second half of September.

5 Karl Stahl (1882–1944), qualified engineer and businessman; director of the winemaking company Vereinigte Keltereien AG from 1918; took over a wine wholesaler in 1937; his business was closed down after the November pogroms of 1938; co-founder and chairman of the Munich branch of the Reich League of Jewish Combat Veterans; on its board from March 1938; chairman of the Jewish Community of Munich, 1941; deported on 17 June 1942 to Theresienstadt, where he was a member of the Council of Elders; deported on 12 October 1944 to Auschwitz, where he was murdered.