

THE HAMSA

"Hamsa" is the Arabic word for five. It is customary for Arabs and Jews from the Middle East to raise their hand (five fingers) for good luck and the hamsa has emerged as a symbol associated with warding off the ayin hara (an evil eye).



Yad, the hand, in Judaism symbolizes Divine power, protection, and blessing. There are many interactions in our texts and tradition between people, and between God and the Jewish people where the hand is mentioned for blessing.



A few examples:

- Jacob blesses his grandchildren with the right hand (Breishit 48:14).
- Psalm 145 (Ashrei) speaks of God "opening the hand and satisfying the desire of every living being."
- In Shmot 17:11, we see that when Moses raised his hand, the Jews were successful in battle against Amalek.

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