

THE MITZVAH OF MEZUZAH:

1. The word 'mezuzah really means 'doorpost', but the term has come to represent the mitzvah in general as well as the parchment written on.
2. Among the 613 mitzvot in the Torah, there is a positive command to affix a mezuzah to the doorposts of your residences.
3. The source for the mitzvah is in the Book of Devarim (Deuteronomy): chapter 6, verse 9.
4. The mitzvah is to be fulfilled both day and night; by men and women.

WHAT A MEZUZAH CONSISTS OF:

1. A mezuzah consists of two paragraphs from the Torah: the portion of Sh'ma Yisroel in the Book of Devarim 5: 4-9; and the portion of V'hoyo-im-shamoa (Ana it will happen if you obey ...) in Devarim 11: 12-21.
2. These portions must be written on parchment, with special ink, by a qualified scribe.
3. The text must be written in a single column on 22 scored lines, and every letter must be properly written; for even one letter written incorrectly invalidates the mezuzah.
4. On the back of the parchment, the word 'Sha-dai' is written, along with certain other letters.
5. When ready, the parchment is rolled (not folded or creased) from left to right; so that the first word to appear when opened would be the 'Sh-ma'.
6. The mezuzah is then placed in a protective cover or case and is ready to put up on the doorpost.

PLACES THAT REQUIRE A MEZUZAH:

1. All permanent dwellings need a mezuzah.
2. The requirement extends to every interior room of a house as well, except for undignified areas such as bathrooms,
3. A storage or utility room that is in regular use, such as a garage or boiler room should have a mezuzah.
4. A 'Succah'-used only for the holiday-does not need a mezuzah; but a trailer or camper-it used as a dwelling-must have a mezuzah.
5. If a room has two entrances, both require a mezuzah

WHERE TO PUT THE MEZUZAH:

1. The mezuzah should be affixed to the doorpost on the right, determined by way of entry into the room.
2. The mezuzah should be placed within the upper third of the doorpost, but not within the uppermost four inches.
3. It should be attached at an angle with the top slanting into the room.

Please note: Aside from the more obvious room settings, there are a variety of physical arrangements which are not so clear-cut; and depending upon such factors as room and doorway configuration and size, and actual use of such spaces-they may or may not call for a mezuzah. To get clarity on what to do under such circumstances, please consult with a competent rabbinic authority.

THE BLESSING:

1. Just before attaching the mezuzah, one should say the following blessing-'Baruch Ata Ado-nai Elo-heinu Melech Haolam asher kidshanu b'mitzvosav v'tzivanu Ilk-bo'a mezuzah' Blessed art Thou, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to affix a mezuzah.
2. The mezuzah, in its case, is then nailed, screwed or glued in place.
3. When putting up more than one mezuzah, only one blessing is recited for all of them; and one should not talk of, or get involved in other matters until all the mezuzahs are up.
4. Any household member of Bar or Bas Mitzvah age can recite the blessing and put up the mezuzah.
5. Places that require a mezuzah and a blessing include: an entrance to a house; doorways more than 40 in. high; and all rooms of a house.
6. The following need a mezuzah but no blessing is recited: a retail or wholesale store; a business office; a storage room or walk-in closet; a room without a door.

7. The following do not need mezuzahs: bathrooms, saunas; a doorway less than 36 in. high; a room whose area is less than 36 sq. ft.; and temporary dwellings.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

1. When moving into a rented home or apartment, you have up to 30 days to install the mezuzahs; though the sooner it is done, the better.
2. If the home is your own, the mezuzahs must be put up as of the first day you reside there.
3. When moving you should not remove the mezuzahs of your old residence unless the new occupants are non-Jews.
4. Mezuzahs should be examined twice every 7 years by a qualified scribe to make sure they have not deteriorated.
5. Since a mezuzah is a sacred object, it must be treated with respect. It should not be abused or left on the floor, and it must be placed in Sha-mos or Genizah when it is no longer Kosher.
6. Many have the custom, when passing through a doorway, to touch the mezuzah as a sign of reverence for the mitzvah.
7. Finally; the laws of mezuzah are many, and the aim of this brochure is to just provide some basic guidelines. Far more than being 'the last word', this is very much 'the first word' on the subject. If you have any specific questions, we encourage you to consult with a qualified Rabbinic authority.

'Baruch Ata Ado-nai Elo-heinu Melech Haolam asher kidshanu b'mitzvosav v'tzivanu Ilk-boa mezuzah.'

SACRED SPACE

Judaism maintains a concept of 'sacred space.'

We all understand that certain 'spaces' in our lives are more dignified than others: a kitchen or a living room is more dignified than, say, a bathroom.

But some places—in the world and in our lives—are also 'holier' than others. For example, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem has an inherent, sacred quality.

A synagogue is a sacred place.

And our homes: there is a lot we can do to make our homes a more sacred place.

So be it a mountain, a desert, an office or a home—there are places that, by virtue of our conduct—can be made more sacred.

But who would ever imagine that something as transient as a 'Threshold' could be a sacred space. Yet this is precisely where we put a mezuzah.

THRESHOLD

The universe is so vast and a threshold is so small—you pass through it with a single step.. what significance could it possibly have?

But consider: A threshold is a boundary; always separating a more public area from a more private one—a home from a street, an office from a waiting room ... an in-side from an out-side.

A threshold stands between two worlds; yet—it is also the point at which two worlds touch. So a threshold separates , .. and connects.

And it is this space that we sanctify with a mezuzah.

What can this mean?

G-D IS EVERYWHERE

A mezuzah contains life's most important lessons, literally, in capsule form: that G-d is one; G-d is everywhere; that G-d presides—governs and guides—every aspect of our lives; that we are obliged to love G-d, follow in G-d's ways, and that we must lovingly transmit these teachings to our children.

This message is posted, at eye level, on every Jewish threshold—to remind us wherever we go, regardless of how public or private the setting we are in—that we are to carry these ideals with us. And especially as we shift through the revolving door of life—moving from one situation to another—we tend to lose sight of these ideas; so the mezuzah is there to remind us that these teachings are a constant—applicable always and everywhere.

To the extent that we succeed in making the lessons of the mezuzah an active part of our daily lives ... to that extent we succeed in giving tangible expression to Divine ideals. We thereby join Heaven and Earth, G-d to man, and create our own sacred space—wherever we are and wherever we go.

The next time you step over a threshold... think about it.