

Shlom Bayyit

Jewish Home Security

It's not that elaborate home alarm system or McGruff, your barking guard dog. It's not the local police or those timers that turn on your lights at appropriate times. For the Jewish people, it is that **Mezuzah** on the doorpost of your house that serves to "guard your going out and your coming in." (Psalms 121:8)



Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, in his book, *Jewish Literacy*, says, "When a Jew enters his house, he sees the **Mezuzah** and is thereby reminded how he should act in his home. Likewise, when a Jew leaves the house, the **Mezuzah** reminds him of the high level of behavior he is expected to maintain wherever he goes." The **Mezuzah** designates our home as a Jewish one and reminds us of our connection with God and our traditions.

The Mezuzah - what it isn't.

- The mezuzah box is often mistakenly referred to as the **Mezuzah** but it is just its protective case.
- The mezuzah case generally features the Hebrew letter *Shin* which represents the first letter of one of the 70 names for God – *Shaddai* – an acronym for the "Guardian of the doorways of Israel."

The Mezuzah - what is it?

- The **Mezuzah** is a small parchment within the case that is inscribed with 2 sections from Deuteronomy. *The Shema* "...and you shall inscribe them (the commandments) on the doorposts of your house..." and its companion passage. (6:4-9 and 11:13-21)
- To hang a **Mezuzah** is to fulfill a biblical commandment.

The Mezuzah – DO's

1. The **Mezuzah** should be placed on the doorpost of your new home within 30 days of taking occupancy.
2. Affix the **Mezuzah** to the upper third of the doorpost on the right side as you enter the house or room.
3. Tilt the **Mezuzah** with the upper part slanting inward toward the house or room.
4. Before affixing the **Mezuzah** a blessing is recited:
Barukh atah Adonai, Elohaynu, melekh ha-olam - Blessed are you, Lord, our God, king of the universe
asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav vitzivanu lik'boa mezuzah - who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to affix a mezuzah
5. The **Mezuzah** scroll must be prepared correctly to be considered kosher. A Jewish scribe, a *sofer*, painstakingly writes the 22 lines and 713 letters of the inscription, on kosher parchment using a kosher quill.
6. The **Mezuzah** scroll, if damaged, is no longer kosher. So, in accordance with the laws of Halakha, check it twice every seven years.
7. When you pass through a door with a **Mezuzah**, touch it and then kiss your fingers as an expression of your love for and gratitude to God and Torah and as a reminder of the mitzvot contained within it.
8. A **Mezuzah** with an artistic case makes a great gift for weddings, housewarmings or other special occasions. Many beautiful and decorative **Mezuzah** cases are on display at our TBR gift shop.

The Mezuzah - DON'Ts

1. Observant Jews affix the **Mezuzot** on all doorposts but not bathrooms, very small rooms like closets, or temporary structures like a *sukkah*.
2. The **Mezuzah** should not be removed when you move from your home, unless the new owners are known not to be Jewish. It should then be removed to prevent the possibility that it will be desecrated.
3. The **Mezuzah** scroll, if copied, photographed, or computer written is invalid.

As we Jews strive for spirituality within the comfort of our homes, as well as in our synagogue, it is a welcoming notion that, with the hanging of the **Mezuzah**, we are protected by that "Higher Authority." The **Mezuzah** is meant to bring merit, holiness and protection to those Jews who dwell within.