

מְזוּזָה

Mezuzah, Lesson 1

The Hebrew word “mezuzah” (מְזוּזָה) actually means “doorpost.” Why do you suppose HaShem wanted us to do something special with the doorposts on our houses and on the gates of our city? Well, it’s because we go through the doorway when we’re leaving to go somewhere, and we come back through the doorway when get back home. That means the doorway can be a constant reminder to us of something G-d wants us to remember, and here it is: *no matter what we’re doing, He wants us to be living life for Him.* When we come into the house we should remember that loving G-d means living the way He wants us to in our house. That means things like how we treat each other, what kinds of things we do together—in other words, He wants us to remember that He’s there in our home with us, so we should do those things that please Him.

The same thing is true when we leave the house. The mezuzah, that little case we attach to our doorpost, reminds us that wherever we go, HaShem is there with us, and that His ways should be in our thoughts and actions.

Inside the little container we attach to our doorpost is written the Shema, both the section from Deut 6:4 as well as the second time the Shema occurs, in Deut 11:13-21. Though the mezuzah may take on many different shapes and sizes (have you seen any that you remember?), the words which are written on the little scroll inside are always the same—it’s G-d’s word telling us to live according to His loving commandments.

Somewhere on almost every mezuzah is written the Hebrew letter ש, the first letter of שדי, from G-d’s name, *El Shaddai*. El Shaddai most likely means “the G-d Who gives children.” Now that means the name of G-d that has traditionally been connected with the mezuzah is the “family” name of G-d—the name that reminds us that we are His children, and He is our Father, which reminds us to honor Him.

It’s traditional to slant the mezuzah toward the inside of the house, and to touch it each time you pass through the doorway, whether coming in or going out. After touching the mezuzah and bringing your fingers to your lips, it will remind you that all that you say or do should be pleasing in HaShem’s sight, whether at home or away.

