

How and where to affix a mezuzah?

QUESTION:

Which doors and rooms need a mezuzah?

ANSWER:

Every doorway of every room in a Jewish home needs a mezuzah, even if that doorway is never used, (with only a few exceptions, such as a bathroom).. A doorway is defined as an entrance way having two doorposts and a lintel (top piece) either square or arched. This rule also applies to all the doorways of every room in any building or space owned or rented by a Jew, even if the room is not used for living space, but as an office, store, factory, or for storage. Note however, that **a bracha (blessing) is only made** when putting up a mezuzah in a home.

Doorways that require a mezuzah that are sometimes overlooked include:

- Hallways
- Large walk-in closets
- Laundry room
- Attic
- Basement
- Porches and balconies
- Garage

QUESTION:

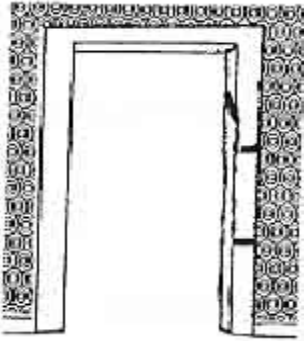
Where, exactly, is the *mezuzah* to be mounted?

ANSWER:

The *mezuzah* is placed on the right hand side of the door as you enter. The mezuzah should be affixed on a slight angle with the top of the mezuzah toward the inside of the room and the bottom pointed toward the outside (Ashkenazic custom).(See figure 1)

It may not be placed lower than the top third of the doorpost. In most homes, the doors are approximately 78 inches high. Hence, the lowest permissible height would be approximately 26 inches from the top.

Figure 1



One is obligated to attach a mezuzah to a doorway only when the doorway has two doorposts and a lintel connecting the doorposts.

If these conditions do not exist, an orthodox Rabbi should be consulted to determine whether or not that entryway requires a mezuzah.

The mezuzah should be spaced at least one handbreadth (approximately 3.25 inches) lower than the lintel

(See Figure2).

Figure 2

"kosher"



Not "kosher"



QUESTION:

What if my doorpost is very high or very low?

ANSWER:

If your door is much higher than 78 inches (90 inches or higher), many Rabbis would instruct you to affix the mezuzah according to shoulder height. This applies even if the shoulder-height is lower than the upper third of the doorway.

If the doorpost is very low, an Orthodox Rabbi should be consulted in order to determine where the mezuzot should be mounted.

QUESTION:

Can I mount the mezuzah lower than the upper third of the doorpost, in order to enable my children to reach and kiss it?

ANSWER:

No.

QUESTION:

If a doorway can be utilized as an entrance from either side, how do I then determine what is considered the right (as opposed to left) side? What if I'm not sure if all of my mezuzot are affixed properly?

ANSWER:

The laws defining the terms 'entrance' and 'exit' are multifarious and complex. It is therefore advisable to have a reliable orthodox Rabbi visit your home to make that determination.

QUESTION:

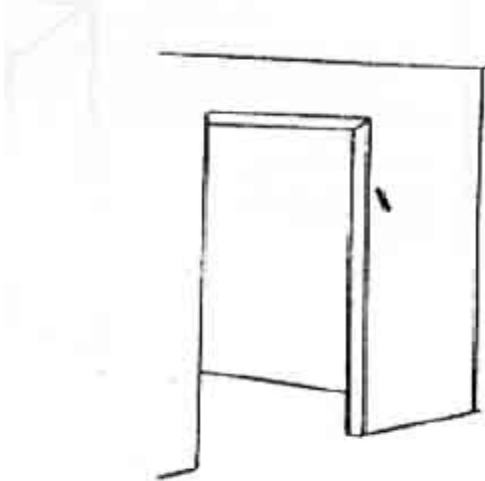
What if it is physically impossible to affix the mezuzah on the door post itself (i.e., there is no space on the doorpost, or a swinging door is installed which interferes with the mezuzah) ?

ANSWER:

In extenuating circumstances, such as the aforementioned examples, it would be preferred to drill a hole, less than a handbreadth deep, into the doorpost and place the mezuzah into the groove.

If that is not possible, then it would be permitted to affix the mezuzah behind the door provided it was placed on the doorpost under the lintel. (See Figure 3)

Figure 3



This halacha also applies if one is genuinely concerned that the mezuzah will be stolen or defaced were it to be mounted on the actual doorpost.

QUESTION:

If there is a stationary chest or the like in the doorway on the right side, where should the mezuzah be affixed?

ANSWER:

The mezuzah should be affixed on the side of the chest, provided the chest is ten handbreadths high (approximately 32 inches). (See Figure 4a)

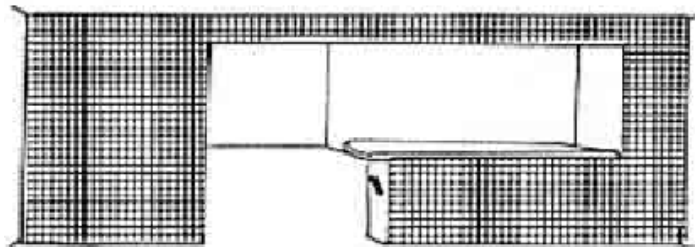
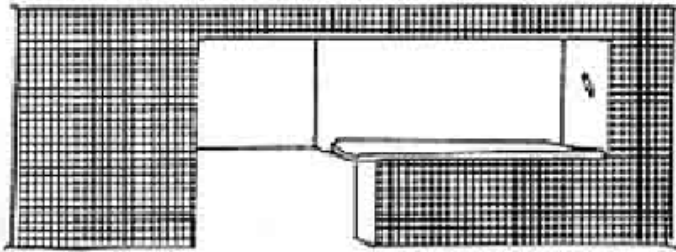


Figure 4a

If the chest is lower than ten handbreadths high or if the mezuzah will not be secure in that position, then the mezuzah should be attached to the right doorpost. (See Figure 4b)

Figure 4b

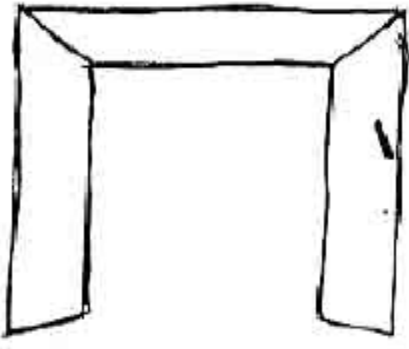


Should I always affix my mezuzah at the horizontal center of my doorpost?

ANSWER:

The mezuzah should be mounted on the outermost handbreadth (approximately 3.25 inches) from the outside of the doorpost.(See Figure 5a). If the doorpost or archway is very wide, caution should be exercised *not* to mount the mezuzah in the center of the doorway. Use the above measurement to determine the proper placement of the mezuzah

Figure 5a



However, when there is a protrusion along the height of the doorpost, some Rabbis would advise you to affix the mezuzah on the protrusion. (See Figure 5b)

Figure 5b



QUESTION:

Am I obligated to use nails or screws to mount the mezuzot?

ANSWER:

No. However, you may use glue or mounting tape. For this purpose, regular scotch tape or masking tape is not permitted.

QUESTION:

What must I do with old mezuzah cases, old mezuzah wrappings or nails previously used for mezuzot?

ANSWER:

Nails, screws and tape (that were used for mezuzot) may be discarded. However, mezuzah cases and mezuzah wrappings should be treated as "SHAIMOT", and require interment after their use.

QUESTION:

Is there a problem with clear lucite cases?

ANSWER:

It depends where the mezuzah will be placed. You may not use a lucite case:

- If it faces a bathroom.
- On a doorpost or archway **inside** a bedroom door.
- On any doorpost or archway of a room where babies' diapers are changed.

QUESTION:

How often should I check a Mezuzah?

ANSWER:

In time, the letters on a Mezuzah may fade or crack, which renders the Mezuzah not kosher. Thus, it must be checked at least twice in seven years. Many people have their mezuzot checked each year, especially during the month of Elul when we prepare for the New Year.

QUESTION:

Do all Mezuzot have to be returned to the same doorpost?

ANSWER:

It is Halachically preferred to have all of the mezuzot returned to their original doorposts or at least to the same type of entrance way (i.e. from one bedroom door to another, or from one archway to another).

A practical suggestion for anyone removing their mezuzot is to label each mezuzah case with a number (using masking tape or the like). The identical number is then taped on the doorpost itself. You must remember to request the scribe to replace all mezuzot in their original cases. When the mezuzot have to be remounted, match the numbers from your cases to the numbers on the doorposts.

QUESTION:

Is there a specific way of inserting the mezuzah in the case?

ANSWER:

Yes, make certain that the scroll is inserted in the proper position. The mezuzah is facing down like this:

Figure 6



If necessary, tape should be used to keep the scroll in the exact position.

QUESTION:

Who may affix mezuzot on my behalf?

ANSWER:

Any Jew above the age of Bar/Bas Mitzvah may affix a mezuzah on your behalf. A non-Jew may not.

BE CAUTIOUS: If you are having your home remodeled, make certain that non-Jewish workers do not remove and remount your mezuzot.

QUESTION:

May I affix mezuzot at night?

ANSWER:

Yes.