

The Mighty Mezzuzah on the Doorpost

A mezzuzah is a container that holds a kosher parchment, which is then affixed to the doorpost of Jewish homes. In order for the parchment to be kosher, it has to be hand-written by a sopher, a Jewish scribe, and it has to be in perfect condition; this is why the parchment is often more expensive than the mezzuzah case itself! Note, that the parchment is always sold separately - if there is a piece of paper that comes with the mezzuzah, the chances are it is not a kosher parchment!

The first line of the parchment says, "Hear O Israel, the LORD is our G-d, the L-RD is one!" This is found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21. On the back of the parchment, three letters are written to represent the name of G-d, which is rendered Shaddai. These three letters are shin, dalet, and yud. When the parchment is inserted into the case it is rolled up so that the scripture references are on the inside and the outside letter shin is visible. A mezzuzah is normally attached to each of the doorframes of your house, and there is a dedication ceremony with a brief blessing when it is put up, especially the one on the front door.

The mezzuzah should be placed on the right-hand side of the door frame, slanted at the top towards the front door of the house. It is customary to touch the mezzuzah with your hand when entering the home and then kiss your hand; this is to express love and respect to G-d. As said before, in a religious Jewish house a mezzuzah will be on every doorframe in the home except for the bathroom.

Mezzuzahs come in all different sizes, from 2" to 8" tall. In Israel they are often very large, but in America they tend to be slightly smaller and more discrete. They can be made of brass, pewter, wood, ceramic, glass, stone, or any other material, as elaborate or simple as you want, decorated with children's designs, gold and silver, jewels, or anything else that the artist has chosen to work with. A lot of mezzuzahs, just like much judaica in general, are made in India and China, but if you have the option, it really is better to buy mezzuzahs that are made in Israel. Not only will you support your brothers and sisters there, but you will also get a better quality product. After all, for an item that is going to be containing kosher scripture, what else would you want than something made with love and care in the land of Israel?! Having said that, there are of course many other mezzuzahs that are beautiful, and you can see a wide selection from Israel and elsewhere on the web.

About the Author

Adam Barnett works for Studio Shofar Judaica & Gifts and hopes to help educate the judaica market to better understand judaica products in general. Visit us to learn more about mezzuzahs and other judaica items at <http://www.studioshofar.com/mezzuzot.html>

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