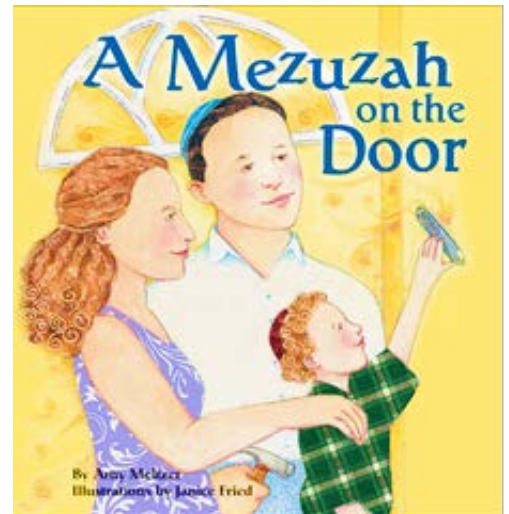


A Mezuzah on the Door

By Amy Meltzer

Program Focus

Age group: Ages 4-7
 Time frame: 45-60 minutes
 Central value: Creating a Jewish Home



Synopsis

This book tells the story of a young boy's move to a new home. His transition is eased by the ritual of hanging up a mezuzah and the celebration of a *chanukat habayit*, a traditional Jewish housewarming/home dedication party.

Goals

The primary goal of this program is to introduce families and involve children in the making and mitzvah of hanging a mezuzah.

During the program families will:

- Discuss the significance and purpose of a mezuzah
- Look at *mezuzot* (plural of mezuzah), both the case and the *klaf* (the scroll inside)
- Create a mezuzah case
- Learn about the connection between the Sh'ma prayer and the mezuzah
- Learn about a traditional klaf including the Shma prayer, and make a "creative klaf"
- Practice hanging a mezuzah

Submitted by

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Plan in advance

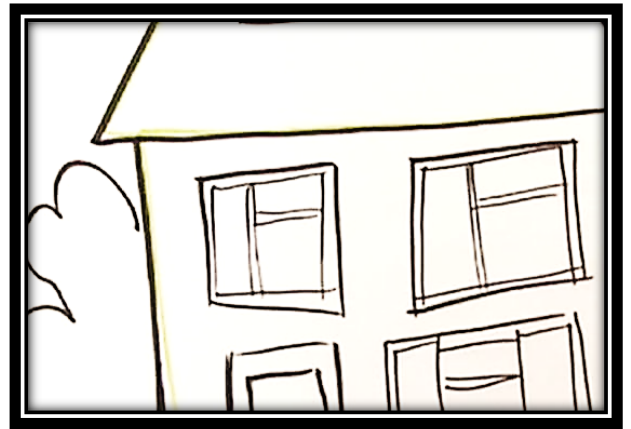
Prepare “What makes you feel comfortable?” Activity

Materials

- White copy paper
- Markers and/or crayons
- Tape to hang pictures

Advanced Preparations

1. Obtain large piece of chart or butcher block paper with outline of a large house



Prepare Jewish Scavenger Hunt

Materials

- Clipboards with paper and writing implement (optional)

Prepare Jewelry Box Mezuzah Case

Materials

- White or gold cardboard bracelet boxes ~ 8” x 2” (can be purchased from jewelry store, Michael’s, or various online retailers)
- Collage materials: feathers, foam shapes, buttons, sequins, stickers
- Bowls, foil pie plates, or other rimmed container to hold collage materials
- Foam mounting tape, cut into 6” strips and affixed to the bottom of the jewelry box, on the side that would attach to the wall.
- Elmer’s glue in small disposable cups or bowls (one glue container for every 3-4 participants)
- Inexpensive paint brushes (one brush per child)
- Paper plates
- Sharpies for labeling mezuzot



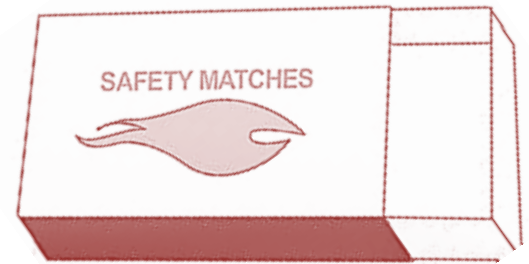
Advance Preparations

- Place glue, brushes, and collage materials in bowls at all tables, or at one central table
- Place a jewelry box TOP (not the bottoms) at each work space.

Prepare Match Box Mezuzah Case

Materials Needed

- White matchboxes (emptied) –can be purchased from Amazon and many party stores
- Masking tape
- Craft sticks (aka tongue depressor), plain or colored
- Tissue paper (more than one color) cut into 10-15 one-inch squares
- Bowls, foil pie plates, or other rimmed container for tissue paper
- White glue diluted slightly with water in small bowls or cups
- Inexpensive paintbrushes for glue
- Adhesive gems, beads, ribbon, etc. (optional)
- Foam mounting tape cut to length of craft stick, to mount to doorframe
- Paper plates as work surface



Advance Preparations

1. Use masking tape to attach the craft stick to the back of the matchbox lengthwise.
2. Don't tape the box shut – the inside part of the matchbox should still be able to slide freely.

Prepare Creative “Klaf”

Materials

- Writing and drawing materials
- Parchment like paper cut slightly shorter than length of box used for mezuzah case and 2-3 times the width. Some paper should have the word sh'ma written in bold outline so children can color it, and some should be blank, for children who want to write the sh'ma or make their own prayer.

Prepare to Attach Mezuzah

Materials

- Sample mezuzah
- Doorway or picture of door drawn on large piece of paper

Introduce with activities

Comfort Activity

Directions

1. Ask families to draw a picture of what helps them feel safe or comfortable in their home.
2. When families are done, ask them to affix their picture to the inside of the large house.
3. Invite families who are finished to participate in the Jewish scavenger hunt (next activity).



Jewish Scavenger Hunt

Directions

1. If you are meeting in a Jewish space, such as a JCC, synagogue or Jewish school, have families walk around the building and find things that identify the space as Jewish. They can write, draw, remember their answers, or use cameras/cell phones to take pictures.
2. Consider how you will gather families together based on your meeting space.
 - Will they all be close enough to hear your voice?
 - Do you need to limit how far from your program area they can venture?
 - Will you have a signal, such as music or an intercom announcement to indicate that it's time to return?
3. Make sure to let families know when and how you will be reconvening.

Introduce the Story

Today we are going to read a book called **A Mezuzah on the Door**. It's about a boy who moves to a brand new home. One of the things that help him feel safe in his new home is a mezuzah. Who has ever heard the word mezuzah before? Let's see if we know what a mezuzah is. I'm going to ask you a question, and I want you to raise your hand when you think I've given the right answer. You'll have three choices.

Who thinks **THIS** is a mezuzah? (Hold up a mezuzah CASE.)

Who thinks **THIS** is a mezuzah? (Hold up a mezuzah scroll/klaf.)

And who thinks **THIS** is a mezuzah? (Walk over to a door post and point to the one of the side frames. Don't point to an actual mezuzah case if one is hanging on the door.)

Guess What? You're ALL right! The word mezuzah means three things – the case that holds a piece of parchment with prayers/Hebrew words/the Sh'ma written on it, the parchment that goes inside, AND the door post, the part of the door that stays still and doesn't move when you open and close a door.

We take a Mezuzah like this (show the parchment), and put it inside a mezuzah like this (show the case) and we hang it on a Mezuzah like this (point to the door frame.) When we read the book, we'll hear more about what's inside a mezuzah and why it makes Noah feel so much more comfortable in his new house.

Read the story

Transition

Point to the house drawings. I see that many of you had a chance to draw something that makes you feel safe in your home. Who can tell me something they put in their picture?
(Take a few comments).

Encourage Participation

- Encourage children to sneeze along with Mr. Gollis (ah-CHOO!)
- Pause the story when Noah says “You can see the tiny Hebrew letters on the paper inside.” Hold up the klaf/parchment. Ask children if they know what they klaf is really made of. “We’ll find out in the story. Listen carefully.”
- When Maya begins to play her violin at the party, pause after “an enthusiastic rendition of.....” Encourage children to finish the sentence by asking “What song do you think she played?” “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star!”

Transition Activity: SHIN

Today we are going to have a chance to make our own mezuzah cases. If you have several examples of different types of mezuzot, hold them up or pass them around. Every mezuzah case is different – you’ll get to choose the materials and colors that you like best, just like Noah picked out his very own mezuzah.

We are also going to have a chance to make something to go inside our case. It won’t be a kosher klaf, because that is made with very special materials, by someone who studies for a long time to learn how to write the letters in a special way. But, we can try to write or color some of the words from the prayer that go inside. Does anyone remember from the story what prayer is written inside the mezuzah? That’s right, the SH’MA. Before we create our klaf and make our mezuzah, let’s make the sounds and shapes of the sh’ma.

What sound do you hear at the beginning of the word sh’ma? (Exaggerate the SHHH sound when you say the word.) That’s right, SHHHH. In Hebrew, the letter SHIN makes that sound. It’s the first letter of the word Sh’ma. Here’s what SHIN looks like: (show attachment). Let’s see if we can make that shape with our fingers. Who would like to try to make it with their whole body? Can you make one with your family or a friend? Many mezuzot have the Hebrew letter Shin on the case. If you would like to put a Shin on your case, you can try to draw one, or you can use Shin stickers (Benny’s Educational Toys) to add to your case when you are all done.



(The Shin on a mezuzah does not traditionally stand for the Shin of Sh’ma, but for Shaddai, one of God’s names.)

Follow Up activities and resources

Make Jewelry Box Mezuzah Cases

While gathered together, explain that the children should look at all the different collage materials and select some materials they think they would like to use on their mezuzah case. (You can suggest a limit of items for their first trip – such as “choose 10 things, you can always go back for more!”) Tell them that once they have chosen their items, then they can sit down at a spot with a jewelry box.

Model choosing a few items and then demonstrate putting glue with a brush on the BOX (not the decoration) and placing a decoration on the box top (not the sides).



Directions

1. Distribute paper plates and invite children to choose collage materials.
2. Children can use same paper plate as a work surface, or give them a second paper plate if necessary. (Working on a paper plate makes both clean up and taking home of the not-yet-dry-project much easier.)
3. While families are working, explain to parents that when their families are finished they should come get a box bottom for their mezuzah and write their child's name on it. Top can be placed on mezuzah bottom immediately, or parent can wait until the top is dry.
4. Invite families to visit the “creative klaf” station when finished.

Make Match Box Mezuzah Case

Directions

1. Place glue on each work table. Distribute tissue paper and decorative materials at all tables.
2. Place a matchbox/craftstick at each work space on a paper plate.
3. While gathered together, explain that children will decorate the box with layers of tissue paper. Model brushing a thin layer of glue on matchbox and pressing individual layers of the tissue squares on box (except on the open ends). Remind children that they can do as many layers of tissue paper as they like. They can add other decorations when they are finished.
4. Send participants to tables to get started. Circulate with a sharpie or place one on each table so parents can label the paper plate with child's name.
5. If participants accidentally glue the matchbox shut, instruct parents to run a sharp knife through the seams when dry.
6. When participants are finished, distribute mounting tape strips to affix to the back of the mezuzah.
7. Invite families to visit the “Creative Klaf” station when finished.



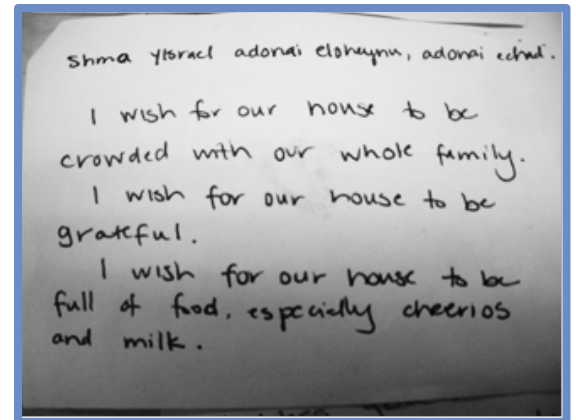
Additional Mezuzah Case Ideas

- Paint wooden mezuzah cases
- Glue stick mezuzah
- Lego mezuzah

Make Creative “Klaf”

Directions

1. Invite families to choose one or both kinds of paper, and create a prayer for the inside of their mezuzah case:
 - What is something you are thankful for?
 - What is something special or important that you hope for?
 - How do you want people to feel in your home?
2. Child can draw or parent can write his/her thoughts.



Attach Mezuzah

Directions

1. Gather group together
2. Demonstrate where on a door you place a mezuzah – on the right side, top pointed inward.

When we hang a mezuzah we say a blessing, or a bracha. Repeat after me (recite one or two words at a time):

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Haolam Asher Kidshanu B'mitzvotav V'tzivanu Likboa Mezuzah.

3. Practice hanging a mezuzah: *Who would like to try to put their mezuzah up on the door?*
4. Invite families to hold their mezuzah up on the door or door picture. If you don't have several doors in the room, consider drawing more than one picture of a door, so everyone can have a turn without too long of a wait time.

Sing “I See a Mezuzah”

By Judy Caplan Ginsburgh

*When I come to the door of a Jewish home I see a Mezuzah (3x)
I know I'm in a Jewish place when I see a mezuzah*

*When I come to the door of a synagogue, I see a Mezuzah (3x)
I know I'm in a Jewish place when I see a mezuzah (2x)*

- Found on Judy Caplan Ginsburgh's cd (*My Jewish World: Kids Songs for Everyday Jewish Living*)
- Listen at <http://new.music.yahoo.com/judy-caplan-ginsburgh/tracks/i-see-a-mezuzah-217566240>
- Preview or purchase at <http://www.amazon.com/I-See-A-Mezuzah/dp/B0028HB350>

Resources for parents, teachers, families

Nurturing the Family

Suggest that families do their own “Jewish Scavenger Hunt” in their home. Besides their new mezuzah, what shows that their home is Jewish?

Take home package for families:

- Mezuzah FAQ's (see attached)
- Small copy of traditional klaf
- Blessing sheet for affixing the mezuzah

Contact a local Judaica shop to see if they would like to offer a discounted coupon for participants to distribute at the event.

Following the program, try to e-mail each family, thanking them for coming. Include information about local sources of mezuzahs or parchment if they are interested. Include links in case they are interested in learning about the mezuzah, such as these videos about how to hang a mezuzah. If you have permission, attach a few photos from the event.

- [Mezuzahs: What's on the Door?](#) From InterfaithFamily.com
- [Serious mezuzah hanging youtube video](#)
- [Funny mezuzah hanging video](#)
- [Mezuzah info](#) from My Jewish Learning
- [Mezuzah info](#) from Chabad

MEZUZAH FAQ's

Gathered from a variety of traditional and non-traditional sources.

Where did the idea for the mezuzah originally come from?

- The mezuzah is based on the Torah-based mitzvah of binding a sign on the doorposts of your house. Why might the Torah describe this idea?
- There is evidence that in ancient semitic cultures there were often signs of different kinds placed by people on doorposts.
- Many people date the mezuzah back to the time when we were slaves in Egypt. It is known that the Egyptians used to place a sacred document at the entrance to their houses.
- When God brought the tenth and final plague, the death of firstborn Egyptian males, the Israelites were instructed to dab lamb's blood on their doorposts as a sign for the Angel of Death to "pass over" their homes.
- Originally an abbreviated version of the Shema was carved into the doorpost. Later the present 22 lines were written on a piece of parchment and fastened to the doorpost. Then it was placed in a hollow reed and attached to the doorpost. Finally it was placed in containers.

What does the presence of the mezuzah remind us?

- The mezuzah reminds us to follow God's commandments.
- The mezuzah reminding us of God's commandments and helps us to stay away from doing wrong.
- The mezuzah serves as a constant reminder of what we already have but often need to remember - God's omnipresence and the potential for our home to be a holy place.
- Maimonides claimed that the mezuzah reminded us, each time we left our home and ventured into the world, that worldly affairs were unimportant. Others see the mezuzah as a reminder that we must behave ethically, following the commandment, as much outside the home as inside.
- These days the mezuzah additionally serves to identify a house as a Jewish household, and reminds us of our own Jewish identity in our homes and when we go out into the community.

What is the true "heart" of the mezuzah - the klaf or the cover?

- The mezuzah consists of a decorative cover or case containing a klaf, a parchment with the Shema and Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21 lettered on it.
- The parchment or klaf is the real mezuzah and the case is meant to hold the mezuzah and make it possible to attach it to the doorpost.

Why is the letter "Shin" written on the outside of the Mezuzah cover?

- "Shin" stands for the word "Shaddai" (pronounced "Shad-eye") which is one of God's names. (generally translated as Almighty God).
- The most common explanation is that it is an acronym for "shomer daltot Yisrael" (Guardian of the doors of Israel).
- During the Middle Ages, some people viewed the mezuzah as a protective amulet and even added to it mystical names of God; however the sages inveighed against this belief and eventually it faded away.

What makes a mezuzah kosher?

- An authentic "kosher" mezuzah must be made from the skin of a clean (kosher) animal as described in Leviticus 11. It must be hand-written, with no mistakes by an authorized sofer (scribe), and must have twenty-two lines.
- Just like a Torah, none of the letters can be rubbed off or torn, so scrolls need to be checked every so often to make sure they have not been damaged by the weather or elements.

On which doorposts in our house do we put a mezuzah and on which doorposts do we not put a mezuzah. Why?

- A mezuzah is affixed to every door in the house except a room used for personal purposes (e.g. bathroom).

Why do we affix the mezuzah on the top-third of the right hand side of the doorpost?

- Why the right-hand side? The Talmud learns this from the word "your house" (beit'echa), which can be rendered "as you enter" (bi'atcha).
- In Jewish tradition, the right side, which is understood as the side of strength, has always had a preference to the left - with the exception of Tefillin which is generally worn on the left hand and the Chanukah Menorah which is always lit on the side of the doorway leading to the house. In this position the word Shaddai is most visible.
- The mezuzah is always on the right hand side as we enter, the side of hesed - love, to remind us that everything we do in the home should emanate from loving thoughts. When the family is joined by bonds of love, the home is one of blessing and peace.
- Why at the top third of the doorway? To remind people to reach upward to God, the mezuzah is mounted at approximately eye level. People have to look up to see the mezuzah, and have to reach up to touch it.

Why is the mezuzah placed at a slant on the doorpost?

- Why is the mezuzah affixed at a slant? Opinions vary, but some say the custom began as a compromise. According to Lutske, the 12th-century scholar Rashi argued about this issue with his grandson, Rabbenu Tam. Rashi believed the mezuzah should hang vertically, while Rabbenu Tam insisted on horizontal placement. The argument was based on the Torah text "You shall speak of them when you rise up (thus, it should be vertical) and when you lie down (thus it should be horizontal.)" With a bit of negotiation, the mezuzah was posted obliquely and angled inward, a placement that is now customary.
- The Mezuzah is placed at a slant to remind us how important it is to do everything possible to make peace in the home.

Why do we kiss the mezuzah when we enter the house?

- It is Jewish tradition to kiss holy objects as a gesture of reverence.
- Many Jews follow the custom (of Talmudic origin) to kiss the mezuzah upon entering the house by first kissing one's fingertips and then transferring the kiss to the mezuzah. Some recite the prayer "May God guard my going out and my coming in now and forever" as they kiss the mezuzah.
- Kissing the Mezuzah gives you a moment to reflect on the spiritual purpose of your home life and offers you an opportunity to re-orient yourself to Godliness when you enter the sanctity of your home and when you leave it to re-enter a world that is far from Godliness.

Does the mezuzah have magical powers to protect our homes?

- There has been some disagreement over the significance of the mezuzah. Some people think of it as an amulet which helps protect their house.
- At one point kabbalistic symbols and inscriptions were added to the inscription in the mezuzah to enhance its protective function. The "shaddai" on the back of the parchment is a remnant of this and was an abbreviation for "guardian of the doors of Israel."
- A different view, more prevalent today, is that the mezuzah protects us not against external harm but against sinning. (Again, this is the traditional interpretation of the Torah text).

About the Mezuzah

Mezuzah means "doorpost," and the word is often used to describe the decorative case placed on the doorpost of a Jewish home. However, the term correctly refers to the *klaf*, the small parchment scroll that is placed inside the case. The *klaf*, which must be handwritten in Hebrew by a scribe, contains two passages from the Biblical book of Deuteronomy (Chapter 6, verses 4-9 and Chapter 11, verses 13-21). They affirm the belief in One God who commands us to follow the commandments and to affix a mezuzah to the doorpost as a reminder.

The mezuzah should be placed in the top third of the right side of a door, tilted to face inward. Most Jewish families place a mezuzah on the front door of their homes; others put them on the doors of every room excluding the bathrooms.

The following prayer is recited when placing a mezuzah on a door:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְקַבֹּעַ מְזוּזָה.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam
Asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu likboa mezuzah.*

*Blessed are You, Adonai
Who has commanded us to affix the mezuzah.*

