

Creating Virtual Celebrations of Jewish Observance For Mezuzah Hanging

A mezuzah is affixed to the doorpost of Jewish homes to fulfill the mitzvah (Biblical commandment) to "write the words of G-d on the gates and doorposts of your house" (Deuteronomy 6:9). Some interpret Jewish law to require a mezuzah in every doorway in the home except bathrooms (which are not a living space), laundry rooms and closets, if they are too small to qualify as rooms.

Supplies / Objects You and/or Others will need

1. A mezuzah / klaf (this is the parchment which is contained in the case, which contains the prayers written on the parchment). Because the commandment is to 'write the words' many sources would say that a mechanically printed copy of those words doesn't suffice to fulfill the commandment
2. A mezuzah case. [This can be simple or ornate, but it is to protect the parchment from the elements and affix the parchment to the doorpost.] According to halakha, the mezuzah should be placed on the right side of the door or doorpost, in the upper third of the doorpost (i.e., approximately shoulder height), within approximately 3 inches (8 cm) of the doorway opening.
3. A copy of the prayer said when putting up the mezuzah (which is contained in its case) A copy of the blessing is below.
4. A computer, laptop or phone in which to film the events and broadcast the video and audio to participants.
5. Although it is not a halachic requirement, many eastern European Jews concluded the ceremony with a drink of schnapps to wish a 'L'Chaim.' So, if you wanted to have others participate, tell them to have a special libation available for the end of the ceremony.

Timetable for Preparing for and Observance of Holiday / Practice

Halacha requires Jews living in the Diaspora (outside of the land of Israel) to affix the mezuzah / mezuzot within thirty (30) days of moving into the rented house or apartment. For a purchased home or apartment, the mezuzah should be affixed immediately upon moving in. *However*, should you be thinking of hanging such mezuzah / mezuzot after such periods (Jewish observance is a continuum for many of us, so if you didn't comply with Halachic requirements, to do it late is better than not doing it at all).

Links to Videos and Other Resources which can assist you in

- Wikipedia Article on Mezuzah: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mezuzah>
- Blessing. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_iTp3AU7y4

- History of the Mezuzah in 60 Seconds.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7PX-O_Xi2Y
- How to Put on a Mezuzah by Rabbi Kauffman
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qrIzk43dpE>
- Boundaries: Why I hang the mezuzah with Mayim Bialik
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EspYJ5NYHKE>
- A Miniature Torah: <http://www.jtsa.edu/a-miniature-torah>
- Why Put a Mezuzah on Every Door <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xH35pa8L1k>
- A site built to celebrate a new home and hanging of the mezuzah (& includes a mezuzah related joke. <https://rabbidavidp.wixsite.com/mazaltov/new-home>
- Shalom Sesame: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DiMUYnhDYDo> [This is particularly relevant if you or your family or friends have many younger members.]

Your Invitation: Do's and Don'ts

1. Because the affixing of the mezuzah case, particularly by nails or brads, would be considered 'work' within Halachic law, we would suggest not to have such ceremony during Shabbat.
2. And because the actual mezuzah / klaf is hand written on animal skin, you should treat it as holy as Torah, and handle it as little as possible, as oils from your fingers can damage the skin and potentially cause the hand-written letters - which are made with a special ink - don't come off the parchment.
3. Look at a Jewish calendar and you might try not to hold such a ceremony during a holy day (which, remember, in Judaism, begins on the evening prior to the day.)
<https://www.hebcal.com/>

Assigning parts / roles to participants so that they feel more a part of the celebration

- Because the ceremony is very simple, i.e., say the single prayer and hang the mezuzah, the 'celebrant' can add historical context to what, for most Jewish households, is a relatively small event.
- Wikipedia, in the Legal Battles in the United States section, details court cases in Illinois, Florida and Texas, and an unsuccessful attempt to prevent mezuzah bans in the United States. Reading such material can enrich the event.
- Ask one of the participants to find and share pictures of doorposts from historical Jewish cities around the world, and the indentation found for such mezuzah. See image below from Fez, Morocco, where the Jewish community had a relatively positive history.
<https://goingplacesfarandnear.com/tag/jewish-quarter-of-fez/>



Adapting this traditional Jewish Observance to a Virtual / Zoom / Conferencing Software

- Since mezuzah hanging was just 'done' without much of a ceremony or ritual, making the ritual 'more important' with the family and friends will help elevate the ceremony, particularly in this period of social distancing.

Virtual Software Issues:

1. If you're going to show any videos, particularly from a website, we'd strongly suggest that you download such videos to your computer so that bandwidth of downloading and bandwidth of uploading your ceremony to the other participants don't stress your internet bandwidth.
2. *If possible*, connect your computer with a wired connection (as opposed to wireless), as wireless is more 'temperamental' in nature. Even if your computer doesn't have an Ethernet port, you may be able to connect via USB, USB C.

Blessing which are a part of this celebration (in Hebrew, Transliterated and English)

[We are providing the 'traditional' blessings which are used during this celebration in Hebrew,

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְקַבֹּעַ מְזוּזָה

Transliterated (Hebrew, but typed in English letters) and English, so that no matter what your Jewish Literacy is, you can make this celebration / tradition, a part of your family history. Blessing of children in the English translation, if that is where you are most comfortable with now, is still participating in this time-tested Jewish ritual. If and when you become comfortable with the Hebrew - whether reading from the Hebrew or the transliterated text, you can take that next step.

Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam, asher qideshanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu liqboa' mezuzah.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who sanctified us with His *mitzvot*, and commanded us to affix a *mezuzah*.

Adding to the Ceremony / Ritual, because of Zoom, which you might not normally do.

- An explanation why you selected the mezuzah case(s) in which the mezuzah/klaf are stored.
- If you're inviting family and friends which haven't seen your home, you can take them on a video tour of your new home.
- Adding some of the historical nature of homes in Jewish parts of the world which had the doorposts, whether wood or stone, carved out for the mezuzah to fit. You can still see such indentations in some of those doors, even though Jews haven't lived in such homes for hundreds of years.
- Some rabbinic sources interpret Jewish law to require a mezuzah in every doorway in the home except bathrooms (which is not a living space), laundry rooms and closets, if they are too small to qualify as rooms. IF you have placed mezuzot in those spaces each with a decorative case, your tour can also highlight such, and if any of the 'cases' have significance to you, you can tell the virtual guests about them.