



A Mezuzah on the Door

By Amy Meltzer

Reading this story of Noah’s adjustment to his family’s move brings a great opportunity to explore the feelings children experience as a result of major life changes. Whether stemming from a move, an addition to the family, an alteration in a work situation, or some other key change in family circumstances, both this story and your discussion can help reassure your children that all kinds of feelings are natural and experienced by others.

If your home contains *mezuzot* (plural of *mezuzah*, Hebrew for “doorpost”), explore them. Discuss their significance. Were they gifts? How is each unique? If your family has no *mezuzah*, plan a conversation to consider adding one or more to the doorpost(s) of your home, with at least one placed at a height reachable by children. Take your youngsters to see the *mezuzot* at your local synagogue or Judaica store. (When you buy the outer case, it often does not include the parchment, called the *klaf*.)

Consider making a *mezuzah* with your children. Take a container such as a plastic toothbrush holder or small jewelry box and decorate it, or use clay or Sculpey (which requires baking) to create a case. Use markers, paint, yarn or other art supplies to beautify the case, and purchase the *klaf* at a synagogue or online.

You don’t need to be in a new home to celebrate! Just as Noah’s family did, host a *Hanukkat Habayit*, a dedication. Invite others to celebrate as you affix a *mezuzah* to a doorpost in your home.

The Shema

A *mezuzah* contains the words of the *Shema* (literally, “hear” or “listen”). The *Shema* comes from the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. In the Torah’s final book, Deuteronomy, we find these words of the *Shema*: “Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.” This single sentence is considered the crux of Judaism, the affirmation of the Jewish people’s belief in one God. These words lead to three paragraphs that include references to a *mezuzah* being placed, as a reminder, on the “doorposts of your homes....” Traditional Jews recite the *Shema* during several parts of worship services, in the morning and at bedtime, and on many other occasions. Because of its significance – and in order to effect total concentration while reciting the *Shema* – it has become customary to close one’s eyes or cover them while reciting its words.

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