

Dvar Torah
Kviut Hamezuzot
Center Makor Community Hub
8 MarCheshvan 5786 - October 29, 2025
Dr. Jesse Hefter

Shalom everyone, and welcome to this very special event. We are thrilled that you are all here this evening to participate in the dedication of the new Center Makor Community Hub and, in particular, the naming of Alan's former office in his honor.

Early in our Tefilla every day, we recite the Bracha of "La-Asok B'Divrey Torah" which roughly translates to "to be occupied in the words of the Torah". Rabbi Soloveitchik explains that La-Asok does not mean to be learning the Torah but rather to be occupied in the Torah. What does this mean? He continues by saying that the Jew moves through every day of their lives performing all kinds of activities, be they related to their community, their business, their friends, their families, or themselves.

In every one of these environments, we must always view our actions, and to an extent, our intentionality in what we do through the perspective of what the Torah asks us to do. The Torah extends into every nook and cranny of our lives and provides a pathway to increased awareness and deeper connectivity to ourselves, to those around us, and to the divine.

Among the 613 commandments found in the Torah is the mitzvah of placing a Mezuzah on the outward facing doorpost of our homes. How do we know that such an act is required?

In the 1st paragraph of the Shma prayer, the Torah tells us "Uche-savtam al mezuzot baytecha" - one should **write these words** on the doorposts of your home". The words the verse is referring to come earlier in this paragraph - and you shall love the L-rd your G-d with all of your heart, with all of your soul, and with all of your worldly possessions (your "me-od", literally, your muchness). In addition to bringing this charge with you, we are commanded to educate our children so that they understand the mission of the Jewish people and their role within that people.

Further, we are told to make sure that **reminders** of these goals, both physical and spiritual, are all around us, when we sit in our homes, when we travel, and when we drift off to sleep each night and wake up each morning. Each of the cubes of the Tefillin shall contain these verses. And finally, we are told to place the Mezuzah on the doorposts of our homes.

The mezuzah scroll - encased in a decorative cover for protection from the elements, that some gently touch or at least look at on the way out and into our homes, reminds us of our responsibilities as Jews at home and within the larger world.

There is a beautiful midrash, a rabbinic interpretation, on the verse in the book of Mishlay, Proverbs, in Chapter 8, Verse 34.

אַשְׁרֵי-אָדָם שִׁמַּעַ לִי לְשִׁקֹּד עַל-דַּלְתֵּי יוֹם | יוֹם לְשֹׁמֵר מְזוּזֹת פְּתָחַי:

“Happy is the person who listens to Me (says G-d) and diligently comes to my doors each day in order to watch/protect the mezuzot/doorposts of my entrances”

Asks the Midrash in Devarim Rabbah - What does it mean “to protect the doorposts of my entrances”? Rabbi Yehuda bar Sima said “Is there a mezuzah in a synagogue? Rather, just as the Mezuzah does not move from the entrance, so too, you will not move from synagogues and study halls. Sacred spaces will be part of your lives and the mezuzah, when placed at your doorposts, will create a sacred portal when you step in or out of your home.

The Imrei Emes, Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter, a Rebbe of the Ger Hassidic dynasty, writing around the turn of the 20th century goes a step further. He suggests that the Midrash is not instructing nor expecting that we, as Jews, spend all of our time in synagogues and study halls. To create a beautiful world, we need to leave the synagogue and study hall. Armed with our Torah intuition, we must go outside, each with our own talents and energies, to do our part to make the world better. How can we ensure that we take the right path, asks the Imrei Emes? In a fascinating turn, he explains that the verse in Proverbs expects each of us to take the synagogue and study hall within us. That is to say, that the effect of praying in the synagogue and the study of Torah must inform everything we do. We are all walking repositories of the Masorah - of Jewish tradition and Torah legacy.

For 25 centuries, the Jewish people have made sure that their doorposts contained a handwritten parchment upon which were written the mission statement of Judaism. For decades, Alan created a sacred space within these very walls, a space dedicated to the support of synagogues, the study of Torah, and a dedication to the beauty of art and music.

This evening, we stand together to dedicate these spaces with the placement of mezuzot. We pray together that these spaces will be ones that inspire. We pray that all who pass through these doors will be moved by the beautiful artwork that will adorn the walls but will also feel their own inner beauty. Finally, as we recite the last line of Kaddish - the great sacred song to G-d - May the One who creates peace in the heavenly spheres also create peace for us and for all of Israel and let us say - Amen.