

THE MEZUZAH TEST

Concealing and Revealing our Judaism



[1] CAN WE WEAR OUR JEWISHNESS IN PUBLIC?

In his book *The Case of Democracy*, Natan Sharansky proposed a threshold test for a free society, called 'The Public Square Test':

"If a person cannot walk into the middle of the town square and express his or her views without fear of arrest, imprisonment, or physical harm, then that person is living in a fear society, not a free society. We cannot rest until every person living in a 'fear society' has finally won their freedom."



In 2023, amidst a rising wave of antisemitic incidents, Jewish communities worldwide face a common challenge: Can they express their Jewish identity in public without fearing harm?

A recent incident in Los Angeles, where an intruder broke into the home of a Jewish family shouting 'Free Palestine' and 'Kill Jews,' highlights this concern. The assumption was that the perpetrator identified the family as Jewish due to the presence of a Mezuzah on their door. Similar unsettling events have unfolded in Canada, Germany, and France.

Drawing inspiration from Sharansky, we can term this predicament "**The Mezuzah Test.**"

Consider the following:

- ◆ Why is it crucial for people of all backgrounds to be able to express their identities publicly?
- ◆ When at risk of being targeted, do you believe people should hide their identities?
- ◆ Have you ever faced the dilemma of deciding whether to conceal or reveal your Jewish identity? If so, what choice did you make?



[2] WHAT IS THE MEZUZAH ACTUALLY ABOUT?

As a result of antisemitic incidents, some Jews are seeking ways to discreetly maintain their Mezuzahs, while others are opting to remove them out of fear that their homes might be targeted. Navigating the decision to conceal or reveal our Jewish identity poses a complex dilemma with no clear-cut answer. **Yet, before determining whether to hide, remove, or retain our Mezuzah, it is worthwhile to delve into the significance behind having one in the first place.**

To gain a deeper understanding of the Mezuzah, watch [this video](#) or read [this article](#), and then contemplate:



WATCH



READ

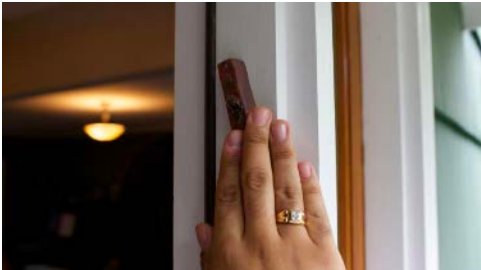
- ◆ What does the Mezuzah symbolize?
- ◆ Why is it important to affix it to our doorpost?

Enclosed within the Mezuzah are scrolls with verses from the Torah that emphasize the covenant between God and the Jewish people. Hanging the Mezuzah on our doorpost serves two purposes.

1. **A Reminder:** The Mezuzah serves as a reminder; by placing it on our door, we recall our identity, origins, and our role in the world each time we enter and exit our homes.
2. **Protection:** Similar to how toddlers have comforting stuffed animals or toys, we affix the Mezuzah to our door with the belief that it symbolizes God's protection, fostering a sense of safety and security for our household.



Source: My Jewish Learning



Source: reformjudaism.org

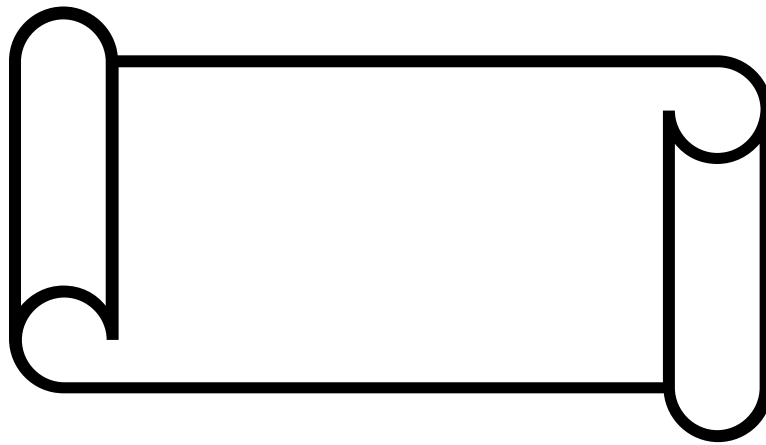


[3] EXERCISE: MY PERSONAL MEZUZAH

With the two purposes of the Mezuzah in mind, follow these prompts to make your own, personal Mezuzah. Then share with others what you have created and why:

Exercise 1: What must you remember? Make your personal Mezuzah scroll.

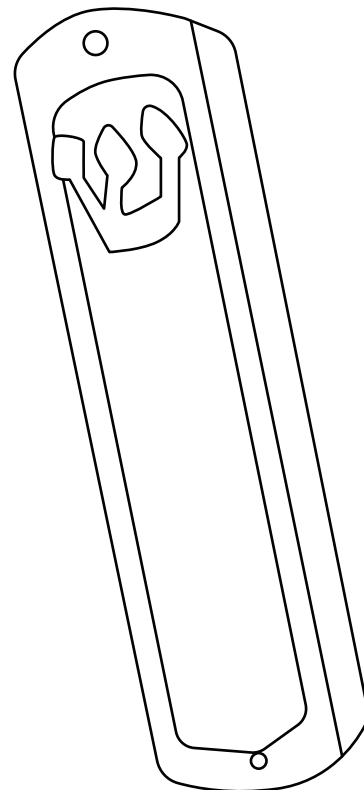
- ◆ What aspects of your Jewish identity do you aim to consistently uphold?
- ◆ What elements of your family's and community's Jewish history do you wish to always remember?
- ◆ What enduring aspects of your role in this world do you want to always keep in mind?



Exercise 2: What makes you feel safe?

Create your own Mezuzah case.

- ◆ Consider places, objects or people that make you feel safe and protected. With these in mind illustrate your Mezuzah.



[4] WE ARE NOT ALONE

In response to an antisemitic incident that took place in Toronto, a post of a non-Jewish woman on X (Twitter) went viral, for sharing her own Mezuzah affixed to the door of her home:

Consider:

- ◆ In what ways do Susie's actions impact what we called "The Mezuzah Test"?
- ◆ What is an act of solidarity that you can take, to make sure that other people from other backgrounds can reveal their identity with pride?