

Mezuzah *Maven*

A Pictorial Guide

With Contemporary Commentary on

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch

Laws of mezuzah

RABBI ZE'EV KRAINES

Illustrated by Gil Meir Jankelow

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Over the last years of his prodigious life, our father, Rabbi Kraines OBM, created a sefer which would guide everyone and anyone regarding correct Mezuzah placement, a sampling of which you see before you. His beautiful persona and “pleasant Torah ways” permeate every line of this Halachic - yet engaging and even captivating – Torah treatise. It is noteworthy that he passed away at age 65, the gematriah of Mezuzah. This was just the beginning. He planned on launching a website mezuzahmaven.org which would service the public, worldwide, but his failing health delayed this goal. Prior to his passing, he directed his sons to continue with the project. A preliminary website was created on his Sheloshim, and will (please G-d) be renovated and fully launched on the first yartzeit, the 4th night of Chanukah. Most are unaware of the finer details of Mezuzah placement which may render this most meaningful Mitzvah invalid. This sample will give you an idea of how much mezuzahmaven.org can help you. The sefer and the website are amongst the many lasting legacies of our father, through which the sun of his Torah continues to shine over South Africa.

The Kraineses

Questions? Email shmuelkraines@gmail.com



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Introduction

The story of this book's origins deserves to be told. Over thirty years ago, I began my communal life as Assistant Rabbi in Brith Shalom Beth Israel Congregation in Charleston, South Carolina. You may be surprised to find out that BSBI, founded in 1854, is the oldest continuously active Ashkenazic shul in the United States. Since I was a rabbi, the community assumed that I was a thorough expert in the laws of mezuzah, and I soon found myself doing "house calls" around the neighborhood. However, though I had learned through the laws of mezuzah, I very quickly discovered that I was totally unprepared to handle the practical application of these principles arising from the weird and wonderful world of modern architecture.

From that time onwards, I have been perplexed by open plan living areas, staircases without walls, sliding glass patio doors and many more puzzling dilemmas. Thankfully, with the help of several excellent *sefarim* and the guidance of many rabbis, I have been able to find solutions for many of these halachic problems.

Recently, I decided that I was long overdue for a comprehensive review of these important halachos. As I began my research, it occurred to me that I should record the halachic solutions to these common conundrums and put a small illustration next to each one. The only obstacle to accomplishing this cunning plan was my inability to draw!

That's when I made a call to R' Gil Meir "Gareth" Jankelow, presently of Yerushalayim, whom I knew as an accomplished architect here in South Africa. Gil Meir and his family have been members of my Ohr Somayach Sandton community from its inception, and we had worked together on various projects over the years.

After he expressed his excitement to work with me on this endeavor, I proposed that we do it properly and produce a book. I realized that I was not the only rabbi that faced these halachic issues almost daily, and that therefore we would be providing a welcome and necessary service. Moreover, as R' Chaim Kanievsky points out, Jews are often in situations where they must solve these problems on their own.¹

From the outset, let me clarify that the scope of this work is very limited. It is not a comprehensive digest of the many areas of halachic discourse concerning the laws of mezuzah. It serves only as a general guide to the placement of mezuzot in common situations, according to my understanding. Though I was guided by several competent halachic authorities and by the published opinions of great rabbis, I cannot emphasize enough that my suggestions should not be taken as final halachic judgments. Rather, these general guidelines and the accompanying illustrations can aid in posing accurate queries to halachic authorities in each local setting.

Indeed, R' Moshe Feinstein has cautioned against considering any ruling found in a printed digest as a *psak* halachah.² Until a *posek* renders a decision on a specific case, one must assume that perhaps its details may not be analogous to the model found in the book. Especially, in questions of mezuzah

¹ R' Chaim Kanievsky, *Mezuzot Beitecha* (Bnei Brak: Private, 1963), Introduction.

² Introduction to *Igros Moshe*, Vol. 1.

placement, a slight variation of circumstances will produce a radically different halachic outcome. In many instances, this could invalidate the mitzvah on a Torah level.

Nevertheless, I feel there is benefit in offering my own halachic suggestions instead of merely copying out all the relevant opinions found in the *poskim*. I have noted that the bewildering task of placing mezuzot commonly rests on the shoulders of Jews, often women, who do not have easy access to rabbis who could come to their homes and instruct them. Providing them with a confusing kaleidoscope of mutually-exclusive options would be of little benefit. I have heard this complaint many times about other halachic works in English that perplex the layman with a virtual smorgasbord of opinions.

Therefore, I have chosen, in most cases, to offer a single solution to the model cases in the book, for those who want to rely on my book, for whatever reason. I have also carefully referenced the sources of my ruling and, in many cases, referred to conflicting rulings as well.

My footnotes and bibliography will reveal that I have consulted many excellent halachic works in my research. I have also discussed many issues with several rabbis. I am particularly grateful to Rabbi Eliyahu Feldman, author of *Agur B'ohalecha*, a thorough and deeply researched work on the laws of mezuzah. In many cases, I have relied on the rulings recorded in his magnificent compendium. In addition, Rabbi Feldman has generously given me of his time to elucidate many complex areas.

I would appreciate greatly any corrections or comments regarding this handbook as well as suggestions for the future.

Rabbi Ze'ev Kraines
Sandton, South Africa

A DEEPER LOOK

A Symbol of Faith and Identity

The prominent display of the mezuzah on our doorways is an eternal symbol of Jewish identity on every continent and in every age. Gouged out hollows in the doorways of Vilna, Cordova, Baghdad, and other cities around the world wordlessly recount the poignant story of the stops along our people's arduous journey. Even today, as we drive around our cities, we unconsciously keep a lookout for mezuzot on doorposts as tell-tale signs of Jewish presence.

But our mezuzah is more than merely a display of Jewish identity. It broadcasts our identification with the fundamental beliefs and principles of our people and its historic destiny. Ramban passionately asserts in his classic Torah commentary:

*For he who purchases a mezuzah for a small coin, affixes it to his doorway, and contemplates its message has acknowledged the Creation, Divine Providence, and Prophecy. Indeed, he has proclaimed his belief in all aspects of the Torah.*³

R' Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, in his monumental work *Horeb*, classifies the mitzvah of mezuzah as a "testimony," a symbolic observance representing truths which form the basis of Jewish life. It shares this designation with Shabbat and Yom Tov, which continually rejuvenate our connection to our historic mission and our destiny:

*The Biblical passages "Shema Yisrael" and "V'haya im shamo'a" should be written on the entrances of every house, thereby hallowing the house (and indeed every place specially set aside for human activities) as an abode where Hashem is ever present and where service of Hashem is fulfilled, thus testifying that all one's life, all that one endures, is accomplished through Hashem.*⁴

The significance of the Jewish doorway as both a portal to our inner life and a broadcaster of our identity to the outside emerges right from the dawn of our history. Indeed, at the first Pesach seder, way down in Egypt land, Hashem commanded that we daub the paschal lamb's blood on our doorposts and lintel to mark the inviolate sanctuary of the Jewish home. In our times, as well, the inscription of the Divine Name י-ו-ה on the back of the mezuzah parchment indicates that Hashem's presence follows us in all our wanderings. As *Talmud Yerushalmi* teaches:

*The Holy One Blessed Be He has attached His great name to Israel. This can be compared to a king who possessed a small key to his palace. He said, "If I leave it as it is, it will be lost. I shall make for it a chain, so that if it is lost, its chain will identify it." In the same way, Hashem said, "If I leave Israel on their own, they will be swallowed up among the nations. Rather, I will attach my Great Name to them, and they shall survive!"*⁵

Constancy and Universality

Perching silently and unobtrusively on our doorposts, the mezuzah is far from a passive adornment or a talisman. Rather, we are challenged to engage with its message with our minds — and even with our emotions. Our encounter with mezuzah is meant to ignite a spark of love deep within our hearts.

³ Ramban, *Commentary to the Torah*, Shemos 13:16.

⁴ *Horeb*, Intro. to Section II, p. 187.

⁵ *Yerushalmi*, *Pei'ah* 2:6 cited in *Sha'arei HaMezuzah* p. 182.

Rambam accordingly chose to incorporate the laws of mezuzah in *The Book of Love*, the second book of his monumental *Mishneh Torah*. As he explains in his introduction: “*I will include within it [the book] all the Mitzvot... which were commanded to us so that we will love Hashem and constantly remember Him.*”⁶

This “constant remembrance” is a defining feature of mezuzah. Once one affixes a mezuzah to his doorway, the mitzvah, its effect, and its reward keep pumping while he goes about his daily life and even while he sleeps. This quality, together with the fact that mezuzah is incumbent on all Jews, indicates to us that Hashem considers this mitzvah to be essential and indeed indispensable to our lives: Women, as well as men, are obligated in the mitzvah as it is not time-bound. Even children must be trained in its observance.⁷ As Rambam teaches:

*A person must show great care in [the observance of the mitzvah of] mezuzah because it is an obligation which is constantly incumbent upon everyone.*⁸

The classic work *Chovos HaLevavos* illustrates this concept with a fascinating observation. It notes that in the Creator’s wisdom he has provided us with resources in proportion to their necessity. Because a constant supply of oxygen is an absolute prerequisite for survival, He has surrounded us with a vast atmosphere and arranged for its replenishment. Similarly, life-sustaining water is abundantly distributed around the globe and renewed through the rain cycle.⁹ In the same way, the constancy and universality of mezuzah indicate that its observance is crucial for our spiritual nourishment. *Sefer HaChinuch* asserts that with time the mezuzah’s very presence will inevitably influence our character and inner awareness.¹⁰

For this reason, the Sages prescribe that we should place the mezuzah at the outermost handbreadth of the doorpost so that we will encounter it immediately upon entering.¹¹ As Rambam explains: “*...whenever a person enters or leaves [the house], he will encounter the unity of the name of the Holy One, Blessed Be He, and remember his love for Him.*”

Protection

Clearly, as with every mitzvah, one’s primary intention in affixing a mezuzah should be solely to fulfill Hashem’s commandment. Nevertheless, our Sages revealed to us that in the merit of our obedience, special protection will be bestowed upon us. In the words of Rabbeinu Asher,

*...it may seem as if one intends to make for himself a talisman for protection! Rather, he should perform the mitzvah correctly to fulfill the word of the Creator, Blessed Be He, and He will guard us and be our shelter on our right side.*¹²

The Zohar explains that the mezuzah protects the inhabitants of the house not only in their home but also from the time they leave the house until they return home: “Not only is a man protected in his

⁶ Rambam, *Introduction to Mishneh Torah*.

⁷ Rambam, *Hilchos Sefer Torah* 5:10.

⁸ Rambam, *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Sefer Torah* 6:13.

⁹ *Chovos HaLevavos, Sha’ar HaBechinah*.

¹⁰ *Sefer HaChinuch*, Positive Mitzvah 16.

¹¹ *Menachos* 33b.

¹² Rosh, *Hilchos Mezuzah* 18.

house, but G-d protects him both when he goes out and when he comes in, as it is written, ‘G-d shall guard thy going out and thy coming in, etc.’ ”

The Talmud also advises that we should place the mezuzah on the outer handbreadth of the doorpost so that the whole house will benefit from its protection.¹³

In a famous story, the Talmud relates how the Roman convert Onkelos fell afoul of his uncle, the Roman Emperor, because of his conversion to Judaism.¹⁴ Soldiers were sent to arrest him, but they abandoned their task, indeed converting to Judaism instead. Finally, in exasperation:

...Again he [the Roman Emperor] sent another cohort ordering them not to enter into any conversation whatever with him [Onkelos]. So, they took hold of him; and as they were walking on, he saw the mezuzah which was fixed on the door-frame and he placed his hand on it, saying to them: “Now what is this?” and they replied: “You tell us, then.” He said, “According to universal custom, the mortal king dwells within, and his servants keep guard on him without; but [in the case of] the Holy One, Blessed Be He, it is His servants who dwell within while He keeps guard on them from without; as it is said: “The Lord shall guard your going out and your coming in from this time forth and for evermore.” Then they, too, were converted to Judaism.¹⁵

Protection from Sin

This “guarding” is interpreted variously by the commentaries. Basing himself on an Aggadic teaching,¹⁶ Rambam writes that the protection is from sin. As we encounter the mezuzah and its message on our doorposts, we are reminded of Hashem’s omnipresence and of our loving commitment to keep His commandments:

Whoever wears tefillin on his head and arm, wears tzitzis on his garment, and has a mezuzah on his entrance, can be assured that he will not sin because he has many who will remind him. These are the angels who will prevent him from sinning, as [Tehillim 34:8] states: “The angel of Hashem camps around those who fear Him and protects them.”¹⁷

Seemingly, according to this approach, the protective blessing of the mezuzah is only fully realized if one heeds its reminder and is spurred to lead a virtuous life.

Protection from Damage

Rabbi Yehudah Loew (Maharal of Prague) writes that Hashem’s protection flows logically and naturally from the message of the *Shema Yisrael* and *V’haya im Shamo’a* paragraphs inscribed in the mezuzah’s parchment: Since by affixing a mezuzah, one is placing his home and family at the service of the King of the universe, it follows that the Divine Sovereign would spread His protective wings over those who have thus taken refuge in Him and guard them from all harm. He adds that though

¹³ *Menachos* 33b.

¹⁴ Onkelos is known to us as the editor of the Aramaic Targum translation of the Torah that bears his name. Elsewhere, the Talmud identifies him as the nephew of the Emperor Titus (*Gittin* 56b) or Hadrian (*Hagahos HaGra*, Op. cit.)

¹⁵ *Avodah Zarah* 11a. See *Menachos* 33b.

¹⁶ *Menachos* 43b. From this source alone, it does not appear that a mezuzah has a specific power of protection from sin greater than that of tzitzis and tefillin. Moreover, Rambam could be saying that the protection is only achieved if one is careful in all three mitzvot. Cf. *Igros Moshe*, Y.D. 2:141:2-3.

¹⁷ Rambam, *Hilchos Sefer Torah* 6:13.

tefillin also contain these same paragraphs as well as two others, the mezuzah stationed on our “shelters” provides this unique protective effect.¹⁸

Kol Bo suggests that the letters of the Divine name ו-ד-י, customarily inscribed on the outside of the mezuzah parchment, also allude to the phrase שומר דירת ישראל (Guardian of the doors of Israel).¹⁹

Length of Days

The Torah itself describes the great power of mezuzah observance to protect our lives and the lives of our young offspring:

*You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and upon your gates. So that your days and the days of your children shall be prolonged...*²⁰

Conversely, The Sages warn of the negative consequences arising from its neglect.²¹

Mazikin: Negative Spiritual Energies

Rashi asserts that the mezuzah has the spiritual power to protect the house from the negative spiritual energies commonly referred to in the Talmud as *mazikin* (damagers).²² The Midrash derives this concept from the daubing of Jewish doorposts with blood to prevent the *mashchis* (destructive force) from entering their homes on the night of the Pesach Exodus:

*Is not the matter logical? If, regarding the blood of the korban Pesach in Egypt that was only for a night, the Torah writes “He will not allow the mashchis [to come into your home],” even more so [in the merit of] the mezuzah, which contains ten inscriptions of the ineffable Name and applies day and night for all generations, will He prevent the mashchis from entering.*²³

In *Zohar Chadash*, R’ Yossi bar Yehudah teaches that a mezuzah affixed to the doorpost of a home serves as a protection against the messengers of evil. When confronted by the name of Hashem, which is on the exterior of the mezuzah, these messengers of harm realize that Hashem is watching over this domicile and they will refrain from entering. R’ Nahorai adds that the word “mezuzot” is a combination of the words “zaz” and “maves” which mean literally: Death: Move away!²⁴

This factor has halachic and even monetary implications. The Talmud rules that one who moves from a house may not remove its mezuzot.²⁵ Doing so would expose the home to *mazikin* and thereby cause possible damage to the subsequent dweller.²⁶ The Sages report that this disregard for the safety of the subsequent dweller can have severe consequences:

¹⁸ Maharal, *Nesivos Olam, Nesiv HaAvodah* 15. Tefillin contain an additional two paragraphs.

¹⁹ *Kol Bo* 90.

²⁰ *Devarim* 11:20-21.

²¹ *Shabbos* 32b; See *Tur Y.D.* 285:1.

²² Commentary to *Menachos* 33b.

²³ *Mechilta* 22:76.

²⁴ *Zohar Chadash, Rus* 84a

²⁵ *Bava Metziah* 102a; *Shulchan Aruch Y.D.* 291:2.

²⁶ *Tosafos, Bava Metziah* 101b.

*But when he leaves, he must not take it with him...It once happened that a man took it away with him, and he buried his wife and two children.*²⁷

The famous Rabbi Meir of Rothenberg at one point ruled that his *Beit Hamidrash* was exempt from mezuzah placement. He reported that during that period, he sensed the presence of *mazikin* disturbing his afternoon rest.²⁸

Whether the nature of this protective power is moral, physical or spiritual it remains merely a secondary byproduct of the awesome power embedded in the fulfillment of the Divine Word itself.

Our rabbis are disturbed by the skewed perspective of those who degrade the mitzvah of mezuzah by treating it as no more than a good luck charm. Rambam chastises those who write the names of Angels and other sacred names inside the mezuzah:

*Not only do these fools nullify the mitzvah, but furthermore, they make from a great mitzvah [that reflects] the unity of the name of the Holy One, Blessed Be He, the love of Him, and the service of Him, a talisman for their own benefit. They, in their foolish conception, think that this will help them regarding the vanities of the world.*²⁹

Hear O Israel

Although the Torah does not openly specify which words to write on our doorposts, the Oral Law teaches that “these words” refers to the two paragraphs where the mitzvah of mezuzah is found: the first and second paragraphs of the Shema Yisrael. Similarly, though the Torah does not specify which scrolls must be placed in tefillin, the Oral Law prescribes the four paragraphs where the mitzvah of tefillin is found — the first two paragraphs of Shema, as well as two others at the end of Parashas Bo.

The Torah’s choice of these power-packed Divine messages is obviously because these paragraphs contain fundamental values and beliefs of Judaism. According to the classic *Chovos HaLevavos*, the opening words of the Shema, “Hear O Israel,” does not refer to hearing of the ear, but rather to the acceptance of the heart. Indeed, the Torah continues “And these words, which I command you this day, shall be on your heart,” which means to cleave them to our inner being.³⁰

Each phrase of the following verse — “You shall love Hashem your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your resources” — is supremely meaningful and challenging:

Your heart — We must control all the desires of our heart and sublimate them in service of Hashem.

Your soul — We must be ready to give up our very souls rather than abjure the faith of our fathers.

Your resources — We must be willing to devote our energies and our money towards the fulfillment of the commandments.

The Torah continues with, “You shall teach them to your children” — the all-important commandment to learn and teach Torah to one’s children and to one’s fellow Jews. Torah study is

²⁷ *Tosafos, Bava Metziah* 102a.

²⁸ *Tur Y.D.* 286:10. See also *Darchei Moshe Y.D.* 286:4, citing *Mordechai*.

²⁹ *Hilchos Sefer Torah* 5:4.

³⁰ *Chovos Halevovos* 1:Introduction.

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the life-blood of Jewish continuity. Without continuous study, we would be clueless as to how to navigate the ever-changing circumstances of our lives.

The Shema paragraph ends with the mitzvot of tefillin and mezuzah, which cause us to remember the Creator and express our constant devotion to Him. As *Song of Songs* exhorts: "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm" (Songs 8:6).

The Talmud also asserts that the principles of the Ten Commandments are contained within the Shema Yisrael.³¹ For example:

Hear O Israel Hashem is our G-d | *I am Hashem your G-d.*

Hashem is One | *You shall have no other gods before me*

You shall love Hashem | *You shall not take the name of Hashem your G-d in vain (One who loves a king, will not swear falsely in his name).*

The second paragraph of the mezuzah speaks about the importance of sincere prayer — the service of the heart. Among many other themes, it also explores the principle of reward and punishment, the significance of the Land of Israel, and the core dynamic of Jewish history: exile and redemption.

With all this in mind, we can understand the classic commentator Ramban's assertion that he who buys a mezuzah and affixes it to his doorway is thus acknowledging and broadcasting to the world his devotion to the central beliefs of Judaism.³²

SAMPLE Q & A: RIGHT-HAND PLACEMENT

RIGHT-HAND PLACEMENT & MULTIPLE DOORS

סעיה ג צריד לקבעה בימין הנכנס. ואם קבעה בשמאל, פסולה, וצריד להסירה ולקבעה בימין ויברך עליה.
 ואין חלוק בזה בין אטר לאינו אטר

Kitzur 3. The mezuzah must be affixed on the doorpost on the right side as one enters. If it is affixed on the left, it is invalid and must be removed and affixed on the right side, with a new berachah. In this regard, there is no difference whether one is left-handed or not.

General Principles of Right-Hand Mezuzah Placement

The Torah commands us to place a mezuzah on the right doorpost as we enter a room or a gate.³³ Even if all the dwellers in the home are left-dominant, the mezuzah is placed on what would be called the "right" for most people.³⁴

³¹ *Yerushalmi, Berachot 1:5*

³² *Ramban, Commentary to Shemos 13:16*

³³ *Yoma 12b.*

³⁴ *Rema Y.D. 289:2; Shach 289:5.*

This requirement generally poses no problem when affixing the mezuzah to the main entrance of the house. However, determining the proper placement of mezuzot on interior rooms which are accessible from several entrances can be quite daunting.

Whenever possible, a rabbi should make these determinations as there are many factors that must be considered, and a mezuzah placed in error on a left doorpost is invalid.³⁵ In most cases, a misplaced mezuzah must be transferred to the correct post and a new *berachah* recited.³⁶ However, if a rabbi does not say that the present position is incorrect, but rather suggests that it is preferable halachically to move it to the other post, a new *berachah* is not necessary.

סעף ד שני בתים אשר לכל אחד יש פתח לרשות הרבים או לחצר, ובמחיצה אשר ביניהם יש גם לכל אחד פתח לרשות הרבים או לחצר, ובמחיצה אשר ביניהם יש גם כן פתח, והשתא יש להסתפק בפתח זה באיזה צד יתן את המזוזה אולינו בזה בטר הפר ציר. פרוש, במקום שנעשים הצירים להדלת שהדלת נפתחת לתוכו, זהו עקר הבית, ונותנים את המזוזה בצד הימין שנקנסים לתוכו. ודוקא קששני הבתים שוים בתשמישם. אבל אם אחד הוא עקר תשמישו, בזה לא אולינו בטר הפר ציר, אלא לעולם נותניו את המזוזה בצד הימין שנקנסים להבית אשר עקר תשמישו שם, אפלו הדלת נפתחת לתוך השני

Kitzur 4. When there are two rooms, each room with a doorway opening onto a street or a courtyard, and in the wall between the rooms there is also a doorway, the proper mezuzah placement on the doorway between the two rooms is unclear. The determining factor in this regard is the “indication from the hinge,” that is: the side where the hinges are attached and towards which the door opens. This is considered the primary room, and we affix the mezuzah on the right side of one who enters that room.

The above applies only when the two rooms are used equally. However, if one of the rooms is more actively used, in that case, we are not guided by the “indication from the hinge.” Rather, the mezuzah must be affixed on the right as one enters the room more actively used, even if the door opens into the other room.

Determining Right-Hand Placement in Doubtful Situations

The details of this important halachic determination are many, and preferably a rabbi should be consulted in cases of doubt. Nevertheless, the following order of priorities can be followed as a general guideline.

- Priority 1 – Internal
- Priority 2 – Main entrance
- Priority 3 - Main room
- Priority 4 - Indication from hinge³⁷

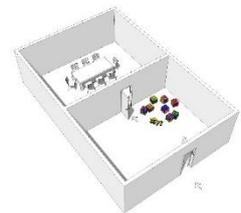


Figure 1: Priority One: Internal

Priority One — Internal

³⁵ *Shulchan Aruch Y.D.* 289:2.

³⁶ *Beit Yosef Y.D.* 289; *Bei'ur HaGra Y.D.* 289:9.

³⁷ *Chayei Adam* 15:8; *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 11:4. Cf. *Agur B'ohalecha* 27:14, who opines that most authorities hold that the indication from the hinge takes precedent over the main room factor.

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If a room has only one entrance, it is obvious that the mezuzah is placed on the right side of one going into that room.

This is true even if the door of the room is hinged so that it opens into the external room.³⁸ The direction of the door's swing is not enough of an indication to negate the fact that the doorway is an entrance to the inner room.

This is also true even if the inner room is used much less than the outer room.³⁹ For example, if a formal dining room, used on rare occasions, is accessed only by walking through a busy family room, the mezuzah is nonetheless placed on the right of one going into the dining room.

Priority Two — Main Entrance

Often rooms can be accessed from more than one door, and therefore one of them cannot be defined as internal to the other. The doorway between two such rooms can be looked at as both an entrance and an exit from the one to the other. In these cases, one assesses the direction that people primarily take when going from one room to the other and places the mezuzah on the right of one going in that direction.⁴⁰

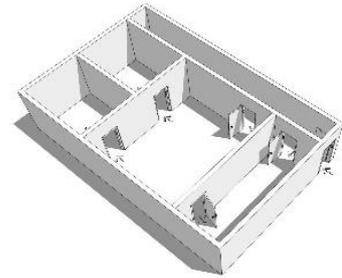


Figure 2: Entrance from two directions

For example, a bedroom may have a second door from the garden, which is used from time to time. Coming from the garden, the main bedroom door is then also an entrance into a hall as much as it is an entrance into the bedroom. Nevertheless, since one generally enters from the hall into the bedroom from its main door, the mezuzah is placed on the right post of that entrance, going in.⁴¹

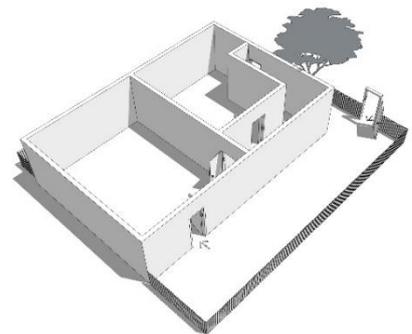


Figure 3: Main Entrance

Priority Three — Main Room

When none of the rooms is more internal than the other, and the primary direction of traffic between them is equal, we then look at the quantity of time spent in each of the rooms. The room one occupies the most is then called the “main” room, and the less used room is thought to lead into it. One places the mezuzah on the right side of the entrance to the “main” room.⁴²

³⁸ Priority 4.

³⁹ Priority 3.

⁴⁰ This is determined by the first entry through the doorway and not by the subsequent re-entry into the original room.

⁴¹ *Da'as Kedoshim* 289:11; *Igros Moshe Y.D.* 1:176; *Chovas HaDar* 8:4; *Agur B'ohalecha* 27:13. The language of *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* here is ambiguous regarding the criteria of “main entrance.”

⁴² *Chayei Adam* 15:18; *Agur B'ohalecha* 27:25; *Sha'arei HaMezuzah* 13:17. Cf. *Da'as Kedoshim* 289:12, who asserts that one considers the qualitative importance of the activities, e.g. sleeping vs. eating.

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For example, mezuzot are placed on the right of corridor doors which lead into the rooms that they service. This is true even if those rooms are not considered more internal than the corridor as they can be accessed from another door.⁴³ It is also true even if the doors swing into the corridor.⁴⁴

Priority Four — Indication from the Hinge

In Talmudic times, doors were not set into the doorways but rather hinged on the inside of the room, so they could not be tampered with from the outside. As such, the position of the hinge was a clear indication of which room was considered internal. Nowadays, we assume that the swing of the door into one area indicates the direction of entry.⁴⁵

In the Absence of a Clear Indication

If both rooms are accessible from the front door, equally trafficked, equally used, and there is no indication from the hinge (e.g. the doorway leading between them has no door), both doorposts can be considered right doorposts of an entrance, and one can place the mezuzah on either one.⁴⁶

Multiple Doors – Right-hand placement

Q: Our house is quite confusing as it has many rooms and multiple doors. My question concerns the placement of a mezuzah in the doorway between our living room and a small side room. Our front entrance hall has a door opening into the living room and, right alongside it, another door into the side room. Thus, both these rooms are equally accessible to the front entrance. The living room and the side room are connected by a door.

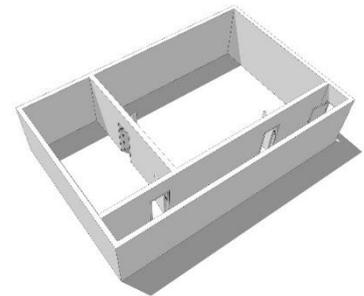


Figure 4: Multiple Doors

Generally, people enter the living room from the front entrance hall and continue to the side room. Which post of the living room/side room door should get the mezuzah?

A: The mezuzah should be placed on the right of one going into the side room. Since none of the rooms are deemed to be internal to the other, one then looks at the main direction of traffic.

This is true even though the living room is considered the main room in relation to the side room.⁴⁷ This is also true even if the door is hinged so that it opens into the living room.⁴⁸

5 [continued]) Affixing Mezuzot on Both Doorposts in Doubtful Situations

Q: Here's a "headscratcher!" I can't decide whether the mezuzah should go on the post to the right of a person going from my living room to my family room or on the right of one coming from the family room. I asked my rabbi whether I should put mezuzot on both posts to make sure that I

⁴³ Priority One.

⁴⁴ Priority Two.

⁴⁵ *Chayei Adam* 15:18; *Agur B'ohalecha* 27:25.

⁴⁶ *Shevet HaLevi* 2:152; *Agur B'ohalecha* 27:36. One should not recite a *berachah* on this placement. Cf. *Igros Moshe Y.D.* 1:176, who exempts this doorway completely.

⁴⁷ Priority Three.

⁴⁸ Priority Four.

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have fulfilled the mitzvah according to all opinions. He told me that affixing two mezuzot was not a correct solution as it may be a violation of the Torah's commandment: "Do not add on to the mitzvot."

I am confused because I know that many people put on two types of tefillin to fulfill that mitzvah according to two opinions. That's just one example; there are many times that we do a mitzvah in two ways in doubtful situations. Why is mezuzah different?

A: As your rabbi said, the halachic custom is to refrain from affixing mezuzot on both posts in a doubtful situation as this may be considered "adding on" to the mitzvot.⁴⁹ However, though this is the custom, your question is spot on, and many authorities have addressed it. In fact, some of them have asserted that there is no problem with affixing two mezuzot.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, for whatever reason, the fact remains that many of our rabbis have reported that they have never heard that your solution was implemented.⁵¹

If indeed there is no clear objective criteria to help you choose one post over the other, you may use your subjective judgement and place the mezuzah on the right post of a door you deem to be more logically an entrance rather than an exit.⁵²

⁴⁹ *Mezuzot Beitecha, Sh'ar HaTziun* 289:45, citing Chazon Ish. Maharam Shik, cited in *Binyan Tzion* 100; *Agur B'Ohalecha* 15:4.

⁵⁰ *Binyan Tzion* 100.

⁵¹ *Daas Kedoshim* 286:25; *Shevet HaLevi* 2:152:1; *Minchas Yitzchak* 1:9.

⁵² *Shevet HaLevi* 2:152; *Agur B'ohalecha* 27:36. One should not recite a *berachah* on this placement. Cf. *Igros Moshe Y.D.* 1:176, who exempts this doorway completely.