

KI SAVO (DEUTERONOMY 26:1-29:8)

Gateway to the Holy Land

2005 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Seplowitz

Before I moved to my current home, I lived in a neighborhood where almost every home on the street was occupied by orthodox Jews. As a result, it was very common to receive visits from agents of Jewish charitable organizations, offering to help us do the Mitzvah of supporting their noble causes. (See “*Tzedakah* -- Who Is Doing a Favor for Whom?”) However, once I moved to a new neighborhood a mile away, it all changed. I was the only orthodox Jew on the street. Very few live on the surrounding streets. It is neither time- nor cost-effective for the charitable institutions to send their representatives to this neighborhood.

On Purim night, many Yeshiva students go door-to-door, singing, dancing, and collecting for worthwhile institutions. This past Purim, it was quiet in the Seplowitz home. My son was out collecting *Tzedakah* with his friends, and I was sitting in the kitchen with my wife and daughters. Suddenly there was a knock on the door? Who could it be?

I opened the door and beheld a young Chassidic Yeshivah student. “*Ah freilichin Purim!*” he cried. “Happy Purim!” I invited him into my home, where the two of us sang and danced for a minute or so. I gave him a donation and thanked him for bringing a Mitzvah to my home.

“But how did you know to come here?” I asked.

“Simple,” he responded. “I just walked up and down the street, looking for homes with Mezuzahs!”

Mezuzah. That sheet of parchment in a case, attached to my doorpost. The Mezuzah tells the world who we are and what we believe. It also symbolizes our trust in G-d as the Guardian of Israel.

Our ancestors in Egypt sat in their homes eating Matzah and roasted lamb while G-d brought the Tenth Plague against the Egyptians. The Hebrews, to show their faith in G-d, painted each doorpost (“*Mezuzah*” in Hebrew) with lamb’s blood. They demonstrated that they were not afraid of the Egyptians or of their gods. (One of which is the lamb, which they had just sacrificed and roasted as a Seder dessert!) G-d saw the lamb’s blood on the doorposts of Israelite homes, leading Him to “Pass-over” the Israelite homes and afflict the Firstborn of Egypt.

When we place a Mezuzah on our doorways, we state our belief that it is G-d, not our expensive locks and alarm systems, Who is the source of our protection. (See the story of Unkelos, the Roman convert in "Sheepskin or Cheapskin?".)

The Mezuzah is placed on right-side doorpost of every entrance, whether to our homes, businesses, garages (yes! garage doorways!) and individual rooms. It goes on a bedroom, office, storeroom, walk-in closet.) It does not go on rooms where "not-so-honorable" things are done. You don't put Mezuzahs on a bathroom, or laundry room where dirty clothes are kept.

The Mezuzah reminds us to keep our actions and deeds honorable and holy.

Shortly before his death, Moses told the nation to prepare to enter the Land of Israel. He wanted to make sure that the Nation of Israel appreciated the sanctity of the Land they were about to enter. He didn't want them to repeat the mistakes of the Canaanites who were expelled from the Land due to their immoral behavior. (See Leviticus, 18:24-29)

"On the day that you cross the Jordan into the Land that G-d is giving you, set up great stones, and coat them with plaster. Inscribe on the stones all the words of this Torah, when you cross over, so that you may enter the Land that G-d gives you, a Land that flows with milk and honey..." (Deuteronomy, 27:2-3)

The Talmud explains that these twelve gigantic stones were inscribed miraculously with the text of the entire Torah, translated into the primary languages of the world. Rabbi Don Isaac Abarbanel writes that the purpose of the stones was to serve as a gigantic "Mezuzah."

We walk in the front doors of our homes and see a reminder of the fact that those homes exist only by the grace of G-d. My house is actually G-d's house. I'm just His tenant. A Mezuzah my door should remind me of my obligation to live in a way that brings honor to G-d. Dishonorable rooms don't get Mezuzahs.

Those big stones served the same purpose. The Land of Israel is G-d's Land. Those who entered the Land with Joshua set up those big "Mezuzahs" and were issued a BIG reminder:

Our Homeland exists only by the grace of G-d. We are tenants in G-d's Land. Those stones should remind the inhabitants of Israel to live in a way that brings honor to G-d. Lands where dishonorable things are done don't deserve those stones.

Wouldn't it be nice if the synagogue burners in Gaza and the religion haters in Tel Aviv were listening?

Have a great Shabbos.

