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Other books that feature the Shema:

The Bedtime Sh'ma by Sarah Gershman

Other books that take place in contemporary American Jewish homes:

Fancy Aunt Jess by Amy Hest*

Chicken Soup by Heart by Esther Hershenhorn

Annie's Shabbat by Sarah Lamstein

A Box of Candles by Laurie Jacobs

The World's Birthday by Barbara Goldin*

The Purim Surprise by Lesley Simpson

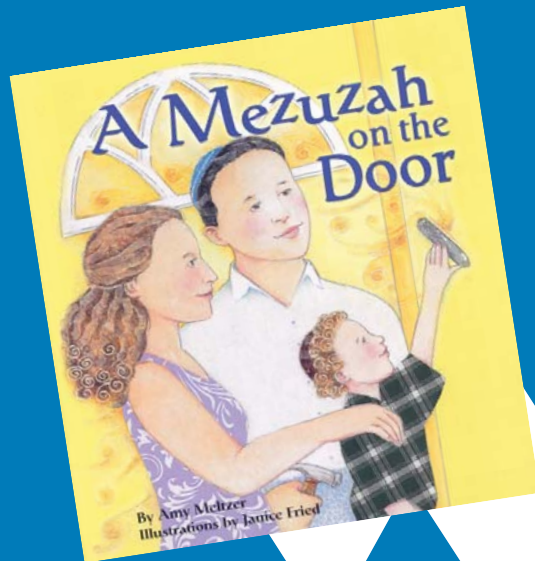
* No longer in print. Please look for this book at your library or at a used bookstore.

A Mezuzah on the Door

By Amy Meltzer

Illustrations by Janice Fried

Kar Ben, 2007





● Mezuzah

At the conclusion of *The Mezuzah on the Door* there is a wonderful explanation of this home ritual object, its origin and how to affix it. In addition, there are many references to other Jewish concepts, such as *Hanukkat Habayit* and *mitzvot* which are clearly explained in the text of the story.

● The Shema

When Noah and his mom are shopping for a *mezuzah* he is told that it contains the words of the *Shema*, which comes from the *Torah*. The *Torah* is the collection of the Five Books of Moses, and is the first of three sections of the Jewish Bible. In the final book of the *Torah*, Deuteronomy, are the words of the *Shema*, “Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.” This single sentence is considered to be the crux of Judaism as it affirms the Jewish people’s faith in one God. This sentence leads into three paragraphs which include a reference to a *mezuzah* on the “gates of our homes.” Traditional Jews recite the *Shema* during several parts of worship services, in the morning and at bedtime, and many other times, including upon one’s death bed. Because of its significance, Jewish teaching instructs that one have total concentration while reciting the *Shema*. It has become customary to close ones eyes or cover them while reciting the words to avoid distraction.



- Does your family have any *mezuzot* (plural of *mezuzah*) in your home? If yes, take a tour of the house and explore them. How many are there? Discuss the significance of them. Were they gifts? If so, from whom? For what occasion?
- If your family does not have any *mezuzot*, visit friends or relatives of someone who does. Ask about them and where they came from. If your children would like to consider affixing one (or more), plan a family discussion about this. If you live near a synagogue or Judaic store, bring your child and explore what they have for sale. Be prepared that when you buy the case, it does not include the parchment called the *klaf*. People are often surprised that this small piece Hebrew writing is expensive, but that is because it is made of animal skin, not paper, and is hand-written by a scribe.
- You and your children can make your own *mezuzah*. For young ones the easiest way is to take a container such as a plastic toothbrush holder or small jewelry box, and decorate it. You can also use self-hardening clay or Sculpey (which requires baking) to create a case which can then be decorated. Use markers, paint, or glue piece of yarn or other art supplies to make the case beautiful. You may purchase the *klaf* at a local synagogue or on line.
- Plan a party! You don’t need to be in a new home to celebrate. Just as Noah and his family did, host a *Hanukkat Habayit*, a dedication. Invite friends and family to celebrate as you affix the *mezuzah* to a doorpost in your home.