

How to install a Mezuzah



Jews have been putting mezuzot on the doors of their houses since biblical days. We read the commandment concerning the mezuzah every time we read the Shema: "inscribe them [these words] on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."
The mezuzah reminds us of our relationship to God every time we leave our houses and every time we return.

A mezuzah can be made of practically anything: glass, wood, plastic, ceramic, clay, metal, but no matter what it's made of, the important part of the mezuzah is the parchment inside. The parchment contains two passages from Deuteronomy. The first passage is the first paragraph of the Shema (Deut 6:4-9), the second is the second paragraph of the Shema (Deut 11:13-21) which is not usually recited in Reform services. Both of these passages contain the commandment for affixing a mezuzah. To be kosher, these passages must be written by hand on parchment. You can get kosher parchments for about \$31 from our online

store.

The back of the parchment contains the word Shaddai which means "Almighty," but also stands for shomer delatot yisrael: guardian of the doors of Israel. If you place the parchment in the mezuzah case yourself, roll it from left to right so that the word Shaddai faces out. If your mezuzah has an opening, Shaddai should appear in it, otherwise align the word with the front of the case.

The mezuzah goes in the upper third of the right doorpost (as you're going in). The top of the mezuzah should be angled toward the inside, but if the doorpost is too narrow, it can be placed vertically. Before affixing the mezuzah, say the following blessing: Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech haolam, asher kidshanu v'mitzvotav v'tzivanu likboa mezuzah. Blessed are you Adonai our God, sovereign of the universe, who makes us holy with the mitzvot and commands us to affix a mezuzah.

A Translation of the Text in the Mezuzah "Hear O Israel, G-d our Lord is G-d the Only One You shall love G-d with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your power. These words which I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them to your children and you shall speak about them when you dwell in your house, when you travel on the road, when you lie down and when you arise. You shall tie them as a sign on your arm and as a head ornament between your eyes. you shall inscribe them on the doorposts of your home and your gates.

And it shall happen, if you obey my commandments which I command you today, to love G-d within all your hearts and all your souls that I will give the rains of the land in its proper time, the light rains and the heavy rains, and you will gather your grain, your wine and your oil. I will give grass in your fields for your livestock. You will have enough to eat and you will be satisfied. Guard yourselves, lest your hearts lead you astray and you will serve other gods and you will bow to them. G-d will then become angry with you and will withhold the rain, and the land will not produce its bounty. You will quickly be lost from upon the good land that G-d has granted you. You shall place these words on your hearts and on your souls. You shall tie them as a sign on your arms and they shall be head ornaments between your eyes, and you shall teach them to your children to speak about them when you dwell in your house, when you travel on the road, when you lie down and when you arise. You shall inscribe them on the doorpost of your houses and your gates. So that you and your children may live many years on the land that G-d has promised to your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth."

Tallit / Prayer Shawl

What is Tallit?

The tallit is a prayer shawl worn during morning services. Although only married men have to wear the tallit, it is customary for men over the age of Bar Mitzvah to wear them.

The tallit may be laid over the marriage canopy or be used as a burial shroud. Before putting on the tallit a prayer is said: "Blessed are You, O Eternal our God, Ruler of the universe, Who has sanctified us with your commandments, and commanded us to wrap ourselves in the fringed garment." The tallit is worn by most on the shoulders, while very religious Jews may wear it on their head. The tallit can be made of wool, cotton, or silk and is knotted on its four corners in accordance with the Biblical law.

Size selection

This Chart will assist you in choosing a Tallit in the proper size. This recommendation is based upon my years of experience. However, some people have their own opinion on how they like to wear their Tallit. *Please note: Size is in inches before finishing.

1) To wear a Tallit in a SHAWL STYLE use the Chart below:

Tallit Size (Width x Length)	Approx. Height/Type of Person
10 x 45	3 Ft. - Little Child
18 x 64	5 Ft. - Bar/Bat Mitzvah
18 x 72	5 Ft. 6 In. - Tall Bar/Bar Mitzvah
22 x 72	Under 6 Ft. - Regular Size Adult

36 x 72	Under 6 Ft. - X-Large Size Adult
22 x 81	6 Ft. and Taller - Slim Frame
27 x 81	6 Ft. and Taller - Large Frame

2) To wear a Tallit in a TRADITIONAL STYLE use the Chart below:

Tallit Size (Width x Length)	Approx. Height/Type of Person
36 x 72	Under 5 Ft. - Bar/Bat Mitzvah
48 x 72	Tall Bar/Bat Mitzvah or Small Adult
52 x 72	Regular Adult and Chupah Size
60 x 80	Large Adult and Chupah Size

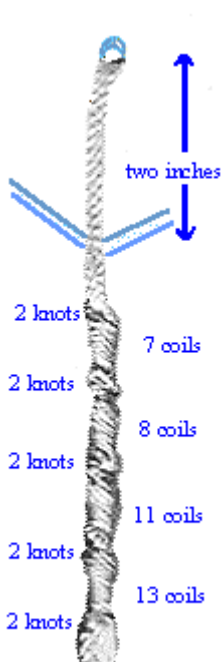
Tzitzit custom

It is a positive commandment to put tzitzit on any four cornered garment that you wear, as it says in Numbers 15:37-41:

The Lord said to Moses as follows: Speak to the Israelite people and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout the ages; let them attach a cord of blue to the fringe at each corner. That shall be your fringe; look at it and recall all the commandments of the Lord and observe them, so that you do not follow your heart and eyes in your lustful urge. Thus you shall be reminded to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your God. I the Lord am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I, the Lord your God.

As is apparent, this mitzvah is given in order to remember God, His great love, all of His commandments and to do them. While the large tallit is used specifically for prayer, it is a mitzvah in itself to wear a garment with tzitzit all day. Traditional Jews, therefore, wear a tallit katan (small tallit) all day and a large tallit just for morning prayers. The tallit is not worn at night because the mitzvah stipulates that one should see the tzitzit. (The implication is that this should be seen by light of day, not by artificial light.) The tzitzit have to be at the corners; but there is a question as to where the corner is on a four cornered piece of material. A general guide is that the hole be three or four finger breadths from the corner edges. There is an opinion that the tzitzit should hang on the side of the corner and not on the bottom toward the ground. There is a custom not to cut the tzitzit to shorten them, but to bite them with your teeth.

How to tie tzitzit: ritual macramé



Before you try tying tzitzit to your tallit, it is advisable to practice with twine or heavy string looped around a chair leg.

Although you can spin or devise your own tzitzit strands, it is easier to buy a tzitzit pack, which is available at most Hebrew bookstores.

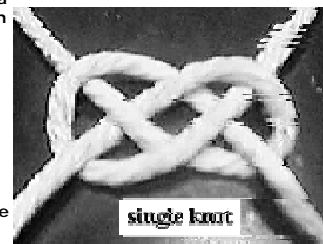
There will be sixteen strands in the pack (four long ones and twelve short ones; four off 60 inches and twelve at 40 inches). Separate these into four groups with one long and three short in each. The longer strand is called the shammash and is the one used for the winding. Even up the four strands at one end and push the group through one of the corner holes in the tallit. Even up seven of the eight strands (the four being doubled) and leave the extra length of the shammash hanging to one side.

With four strands in one hand and the other four in the other hand, make a double knot near the edge of the material. In order to fulfill the mitzvah of tzitzit, it is customary for you to say "l'shem mitzvat tzitzit," "for the sake of performing the mitzvah of tzitzit," each time you tie a knot. Take the shammash and wind it round the other seven strands in a spiral (seven turns).

Be sure you end the winding where you began, otherwise you may end up with 7½ or 6½ winds. Make another double knot at this point (four over four). Spiral the shammash eight times around. Double knot. Spiral the shammash eleven times around. Double knot. Spiral the shammash thirteen times around. Final double knot. This is the common, and halakhically precise type of tying. There are, however, two variations on this:

1. A Sephardic tying adds another dimension to the pattern: each time the shammash is brought around, take it under the previous wind before winding it further. This will produce a curving ridge around the tzitzit. This, too, should be practiced before trying it on the tallit.

2. Although not in strict accordance with the halakhah, some tie the tzitzit with the shammash spiraling 10-5-6-5 times respectively.



The symbolism for the numbers is central to the overall symbolism of the tallit. Seven and eight equals fifteen, which in gematria (numerology) is equal to the two letters yod and heh the first two letters of the Name of God. Eleven is the equivalent of vav and heh the last two letters of the Name of God. The total, twenty six, is thus equivalent and representative YHVH the four letter

Name of God. Thirteen is equivalent to the Hebrew word Ehad alef, chet, dalet which means One. So to look at the tzitzit is to remember and know that "God is One". According to the second way of winding, each section is a different letter of God's four letter Name. The central commandment surrounding tzitzit is:

וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ וּזְכַרְתֶּם אֶת-כָּל-מִצְוֹת יְיָ, וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם.

"And you should see it and remember all of God's commandments and do them".

How do the tzitzit do this?

In gematria, tzitzit = six hundred. In addition there are eight strands plus five knots. The total is six hundred and thirteen which, according to tradition, is the exact number of commandments (mitzvot) in the Torah. Just to look at them, therefore, is to remember all the mitzvot.

Choosing Tefillin

About Tefillin



Tefillin are two black leather cubes (boxes) that are worn by many Jewish men while at morning prayer. One of the cubes is called "Shel Rosh" and is placed on the forehead. The second is termed "Shel Yad", and is worn on the upper left arm. The cubes have long straps of leather attached to it which enable the man to wrap the tefillin on his head and arm. The straps of the Shel Yad are wound seven times down the arm and three times down the middle finger. Within the cubes are four sections of the Bible written on parchment paper. These sections declare the existence and unity of God and recall the liberation from Egypt. Once a man has had his Bar Mitzvah, he may wear the Tefillin during weekday prayers. Tefillin are not worn on the Sabbath (day of rest) nor on the Jewish holidays. The putting on of tefillin is like a ceremony in itself, for as the man puts on his tefillin, he recites a prayer. The use of tefillin stems from the Biblical commandment: "And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes" (Deut. 6:8). Today some women are reclaiming tefillin as part of their Jewish ritual.

Without a doubt tefillin are the most complex of the scribes activities, not in the writing but in the construction of the batim (housings) themselves which have to be perfectly square and take enormous efforts and craftsmanship.

They vary in quality, in the way they are made, and in their halakhic desirability. On the market today there are four types:

Peshutim (Simple Ones) - These are made using several pieces of parchment to form the inner walls of the head tefillin, glued within a slit square to divide it into the four required compartments. If the inserts are glued incorrectly then these batim are not kosher for use. The parshiyot inside commercially bought peshutim are generally of very poor quality, and often not valid for use.

Peshutim Mehudarim (Superior Simple Ones) - These make the box of the tefillin out of a single piece as required. They are typically made with 32 mm sides to the boxes, which are quite small. However, goat skin is used to form lighter weight batim, which when finished look almost identical to the more expensive cowhide type, but they are not as durable.

Dakkot (Thin Ones) - These are made by stretching a thin layer of parchment over a structural base similar to the peshutim. This outer parchment forms the entire box of the tefillin, including the inner as well as the outer walls and also the base, which is halachically desirable. Its extreme thinness, though, means that the tefillin can become halachically invalid relatively easily if knocked or through normal wear and tear.

Gassot (Thick Ones) - These are made entirely out of a single piece of thick leather (usually with inserts to ensure they close flat). This requires the repeated use of several tons of pressure in industrial presses as part of a complicated but delicate production plan. The resulting batim are so durable and thick that they can be renewed even if seriously damaged and they typically last a lifetime. Gassot are made with boxes varying in size from about 20 mm per side to over 40 mm, though sides of 31-36 mm are considered standard. The pictures on this page show Gassot being made from a single piece of skin.

The choicest cow-hide is used from the cheeks and the neck where it is the thickest. Thus only one pair of tefillin is produced for each head of cattle. After undergoing a softening process the leather is cut to the size needed and left to dry slowly in the open air for at least three months. The box shapes are then formed through the appliance of considerable pressure and gradually the shape we are familiar with starts to appear in the skin.

Each titura (cube), averaging 35 square millimeters in size, is sanded, squared perfectly, painted jet black with paint made from only kosher ingredients and measured, as many as twelve times. A lacquer finish provides wear resistant protection and a fine, faultless appearance which must be completely square or they are invalid for use.

On the head tefillin two shins, one with four heads protrude. Once the parchments are placed inside in the specified manner, involving wrapping them in pieces of parchment and tying them loosely with calf's hair. The batim are sewn shut with gidddin (sinew) from a kosher animal with one of the calf's hairs visible outside.

Finally, the leather retsu'ot (straps) which are black on one side and left plain are pushed through the ma'avarta (channel) and knotted according to the Ashkenazi or Sephardic custom.