

THE DIALOGUE

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR THE CHABAD HEBREW SCHOOL COMMUNITY

What is Really Valuable?



King Artiban, the Parthian king, was particularly proud of the priceless jewel he sent to Rabbi Yehudah HaNassi. After all, Rabbi Yehudah HaNassi - the brilliant rabbi and scholar who compiled the Mishne - was one of the wealthiest Jews in Israel at the time. "I am most curious to see how Rabbi Yehudah HaNassi will repay me. I am most curious to see the gift he will send to me in return," said the king to his trusted advisor.

Imagine his confusion when the return gift was a small scroll! "I send you an priceless gem, and this is what you send me?! Something that can be gotten for a few coins?" asked the king.

The Rabbi answered, "You sent me something that I must hire a guard to watch. I sent you something that will watch over you!"

(Talmud Yerushalmi, Peah 1:1)

THE MEZUZAH

On the doorposts of traditional Jewish homes (and many not-so-traditional homes!), you will find a small case called a Mezuzah. (Mezuzah is the Hebrew word for "doorpost".)

While we see the case (which could be as decorative as one's imagination, and made of any materials or design), it is what is *inside* that is important. Inside the Mezuzah case is a parchment scroll with the famous SHEMAH prayer written on it. By having the prayer written on our doorposts, it helps us keep mindful of Hashem's presence in our lives.

On the back of the scroll, a name of G-d is written. The scroll is then rolled up and placed in the case, so that the first letter of the Name (the letter Shin) is visible (or, more commonly, the letter Shin is written on the outside of the case).

The Mezuzah is a constant reminder of Hashem's presence in our lives.

To know that our Creator cares for us and loves us...what a powerful feeling!



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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

When you see a Mezuzah on a doorpost, how does it make you feel?

What would you answer someone who says, "We're all Americans. Why do we need to do Jewish stuff?"

Hashem is always with us, loving us and taking care of us. How does being aware of this affect our relationship with Him? What impact does it have on our day to day lives?