

Dorm Dilemma

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► The Matter of the Mezuzah:

Nothing says “home sweet home” like a *mezuzah*. This small scroll of the *Shema* encased in a container that’s placed on your doorpost (two-thirds of the way up on the right side at an angle pointing into the room) can be a quintessential piece of Jewish dorm décor. And you can buy a *mezuzah* practically anywhere that sells Judaica items; or, if you’re like most college students living on the cheap, take advantage of the occasionally free *mezuzot* giveaways from Hillel or other Jewish organizations on campus.

But before you put up a *mezuzah*, talk to your roommate—it’s his/her room, too. You might begin by simply explaining the purpose of a *mezuzah*: it fulfills the *mitzvah* set out in the second part of the *Shema*, the *V’ahavta*: “And you shall inscribe them [these words] on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” By putting a *mezuzah* on our doors, we are reminded of God’s *mitzvot* every time we enter and leave our homes. It’s also common practice to touch the *mezuzah* as we enter our house and then kiss our hand to show our love for God.

If your roommate understands a *mezuzah*’s symbolism and importance to you, he/she may say, “sure, hang it up.” If the answer’s “no, I’m uncomfortable with the idea,” try to reach a compromise, like putting the *mezuzah* on the inside of the doorway, where it will be less noticeable. Rabbi Rick Sherwin of Congregation Beth Am in Longwood, Florida says this compromise is acceptable according to Jewish law, but it should be considered a last resort. Should your roommate refuse to compromise, consult your RA and, if needed, the RA’s supervisor. If neither of them can help, keep in mind that there are other ways to fulfill this *mitzvah*. For example, you can think of God every time you enter and leave your home regardless of whether there’s a *mezuzah* on your doorpost. And the *mezuzah* contains the *Shema*, which you can say every morning and night, “when

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For additional information, contact Hillel Director Joan Robins at (540) 458-8443, or robinsj@wlu.edu. Also visit our Web site hillel.wlu.edu