The Best Antidote Against Memory Loss

Maimonides asserts that certain Mitzvot act as our “protective angels.” One of these Mitsvot is the Mezuza. But what do we have to protect ourselves from? What protection does the Mezuza offer us? Let’s see. The Mezuza is now more necessary than ever. We live super-hectic lives. We are overwhelmed with all kinds of worries and distractions. Material needs that we must solve urgently, bills to pay, jobs we have to do, tests we have to pass, competition we must face, etc. All these issues demand our total attention, NOW! We are so distracted occupying ourselves with a thousand urgent matters, that we forget to focus on the most important thing in life: The purpose of our existence.

Obviously, “the meaning of life” is only relevant to those of us who believe in God. Whoever believes that we are in this world by a cosmic accident that produced life by chance billions of years ago, and that we, human beings, are a fortuitous mutation of apes, should not worry about the question of “purpose.” If God does not exist, there is no “purpose” to look for. Just go ahead doing what you have to do to survive, observing the laws of the jungle.

However, those of us who do believe that God created the universe, and life, and created us, know that He must have done it with a purpose. Pursuing that purpose, and keeping it in mind once we find it, is what gives meaning (= direction) to our life.

Theoretically, we should have this thought in mind permanently. Everything we do should be focused almost exclusively on realizing the meaning of our lives.

But the ironic reality is that a person can believe in God, have clarity about his own existential purpose, and yet he might be so busy in solving his worldly problems, that he might end up “forgetting” the purpose of his life. If this becomes a permanent issue, it is like a spiritual suicide. The greatest human tragedy, perhaps.

Now we can better understand the role of the Mezuza. The Mezuza contains within it the Shema Israel: the basic

statement of the Tora that asserts the existence of God. Every time we enter a room, we cross a door, or we go from one place to another, we stop briefly to touch, connect with the Mezuza. This pause compels us to interrupt our worldly thoughts and to remember our Creator. The Mezuza helps us to recenter, to refocus our minds, to regain consciousness of the meaning of our lives: what is really important. The Mezuza is the antidote against that dangerous kind of existential forgetfulness.

Maimonides explicitly mentions this "segula" of the Mezuza. In Mishne Tora, Hilkhot Mezuza 6:13 he says. *"One should take great care in [the observance of the Mitsva of] the Mezuza. Each time one enters or leaves [a room], one must connect with the name of God [which is written in the Mezuza]. In this way, a person awakens from his [spiritual] lethargy, [letting go] his obsession with worldly vanities. Thus, one recognizes that there is nothing that will accompany him for all eternity except the knowledge of the Creator [that is, the ever clearer awareness that God exists]. This will help him to regain full consciousness [of the purpose of his life], and he will thus follow the paths of righteousness. "*

Maimonides calls the Mezuza (and the Tefilin and the Tsitsit) "angel of protection". Since it protects us from forgetfulness, and does not allow us to unfocus ourselves from our mission in life. HaRambam concludes: "These are the angels that prevent a person from sinning, as it is written [Tehilim 34: 8]:" The angel of God [these three Mitsvot] are around those who fear Him, protecting them."