



CELEBRATION OF

Learning

Hadran
- Encore

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Encore - *Hadran*

Jewish sources teach that when a group of people gathers together to learn Torah, the *Schechina*, God's Divine Presence, dwells among them. When we study together there's something profoundly intimate that gets created. It is created not only between the individuals studying but also with the sources studied, and of course, with the very Source of all sources itself. For the majesty of Jewish learning is not just in the accumulation of information, but rather in the accumulation of transformation. Such transformations within a committed group constitutes something sacred. A journey has been had. A mission accomplished. A circle completed.

And yet, when the end is reached, then what? Endings so often engender mixed feelings; the satisfaction born of completion, as well as the twinge of loss at the prospect of parting ways. As such, transition moments are often best met with ceremony; with a formal expression of appreciation given for the magic of what has unfolded.

In her book, *Exit: The Endings That Set Us Free*, sociologist and Harvard professor Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot explores the ways in which we mark the many endings of our lives. She writes of how ubiquitous 'exits' are; from the large-scale exits of death or divorce, to smaller micro-exits such as waving goodbye to a parent or a friend. She notes that society – to its detriment – most often focuses on beginnings and tends to ignore endings. She proposes that a ritualized marking of endings – big and small - is an invaluable act.

She writes, "I think there must be some relationship between our developing the habit of small goodbyes and our ability to master and mark the larger farewells...I certainly believe that the art of attending to, practicing, ritualizing, and developing a language for leave-taking in the most ordinary moments and settings augurs well for taking on the more extraordinary exits that life is sure to serve up."

Jewish Ritual Endings – And the *Siyum*

Wonderfully, Judaism offers ample ceremony for honoring exits and ushering forward transitions, from the weekly *Havdala* ceremony at the end of Shabbat, to the elaborate *Shiva* rituals marking the end of life.

One particular ending which is given exuberant attention within our tradition is the conclusion of a period of sacred study. Given the focus on the importance of learning within Judaism, it is no wonder that we have a ritual specifically crafted around the finale of a study. This unique ritual celebration is called a *Siyum*. It includes a celebratory meal, special prayers and the sharing of a teaching related to the studies completed.

One of the elements of the *Siyum* is the recitation of a beautiful passage found at the end of each tractate of the *Talmud*. This text seeks to address the emotional complexities of closure, allowing a personal moment of reflection, integration and acknowledgement at the end of a process. The passage expresses great warmth as if speaking personally to the book that was

studied saying, “We’re not really parting; this ending is a pivoting towards new beginnings. We’ll return to you. We’ll continue to share your glory and you’ll continue to bring glory to us. Our learning will continue to manifest itself in action. Our relationship continues.”

This ritual recitation is named by its first word: *Hadran*. *Hadran* is Hebrew for “Encore.” It is also aptly related to the Hebrew words for “glory” and for “returning.” The *Hadran* opens with the lines shared below. For our purposes, where the name of the Talmud tractate is usually inserted, we’ve written “*Year of Growth*”:

“We shall return to you, *Year of Growth*, and you shall return to us. Our thoughts are upon you, *Year of Growth*, and your thoughts are upon us. We will not be forgotten from you, *Year of Growth*, and you will not be forgotten from us.”

The statement has an affectionate tone to it; like a pledge of commitment to an ongoing relationship. It connotes that the learning has not just been a scholarly endeavor, but a type of personal relationship.

- *How might such a sense of affection and relationship reflect your group’s experience of learning through this Momentum Year of Growth?*

Craft Your Own Ceremony

We invite you to craft your own type of *Siyum* celebration of learning for your group to reflect upon your shared journey of Torah study. Consider inviting each participant to look through this book to select one specific text or idea that she is working on putting into practice in her life - personally, as a family, or in the community.

Make plans for how you’d like to rejoice in your celebration of learning.

Consider:

- *How will you offer the opportunity to look both back and forward?*
- *What reading might you like to include? Might you adapt a section from the *Hadran* ritual, perhaps the above paragraph, perhaps research it further, or select another reading?*
- *Where will your celebration take place and with whom?*

The following is a teaching that can be used for your processing and celebration at this end of your journey together:

The Jewish People is a living *Sefer Torah* and every Jew is one of its letters.

-The Baal Shem Tov
Founder of the Hassidic Movement in the eighteenth century

At some stage, each of us must decide how to live our lives. We have many options, and no generation in history has had a wider choice. We can live for work or success or fame or power. We can have a whole series of lifestyles and relationships. We can explore any of a myriad of faiths, mysticisms, or therapies. There is only one constraint--namely, that however much of anything else we have, we have only one life, and it is short. How we live and what we live for are the most fateful decisions we ever make.

We can see life as a succession of moments spent, like coins, in return for pleasures of various kinds. Or we can see our life as though it were a letter of the alphabet. A letter on its own has no meaning, yet when letters are joined to others they make a word, words combine with others to make a sentence, sentences connect to make a paragraph, and paragraphs join to make a story. That is how the *Baal Shem Tov* understood life. Every Jew is a letter. Each Jewish family is a word, every community a sentence and the Jewish people through time constitutes a story, the strangest and most moving story in the annals of mankind.

- Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks
A Letter in The Scroll



- *Reflecting upon the entire span of your journey – from your Momentum trip to Israel through the full Year of Growth – how do you view yourself as a “Letter in the Scroll”? What is your letter? What word are you a part of? What sentence? What story?*
- *In what ways is your connecting to the other women in your group like a gathering of letters into words, into sentences and stories? What is the story of your group’s journey together?*
- *Feel free to give expression to your experience in the form of journaling and/or sharing aloud. Consider utilizing other forms of expression, such as drawing, poetry or song.*

THE MEZUZAH: A REMINDER OF OUR EIGHT CORE JEWISH VALUES

As we near the end of our MOMentum Year-Long Journey and our Year of Growth learning, consider what might be a fitting reminder for you, of ways you want to live Jewish values?

The *mezuzah*, which has been featured on the doorpost of Jewish homes and institutions for generations, serves as a reminder of Jewish living. It is aptly placed on the threshold, as one stepping into or out of an experience. Indeed, the paragraph following the Shema is from the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:9), and it guides us to: “Inscribe them (the words of the Shema) on the doorposts (*mezuzot*) of your house and on your gates.”

It’s there as a reminder, to connect us with our best selves and with God. But it also encapsulates the eight core Jewish values that through Momentum we dove into, personalized, brought to life, and can continue to make our own.

What might you choose to be a regular reminder for you?

A *mezuzah* is a physical, regular reminder of the Momentum values we have explored.

Unity & Mutual Responsibility

While *mezuzah* casings can vary dramatically from one another, the text of their inner scroll (which is the actual *mezuzah*) is always the same. Etched on parchment, the text includes the

“*Shema*” prayer which speaks about God’s oneness. The Hebrew word for “oneness” is the same as the word for “unity, “*achdut*.” Though each *mezuzah* may look different on the outside, they each share the same scroll soul — reminding us that our family is part of one wholeness and that we have responsibility for one another.

Peace & Wholeness in the Home

Often the case is called a *bayit* (a home) – with the scroll on the inside (wholeness) holding everything together. Hundreds of years ago, there was a debate about the right way to hang a *mezuzah*. One sage said that it should hang vertically — to connect heaven and earth. Another said that it should hang horizontally — to connect people. Today, we hang the *mezuzah* diagonally to represent a “both and” solution, modeling the importance of listening to one another and ultimately doing what is respectful to all. Peace in a family requires listening and bridging different interests – seeking a wholeness that comes from a mindset of “both and” rather than “either or.”

Courage

A *mezuzah* represents a willingness to take a stand and act to oppose oppression. Right before the Jewish people left Egypt, they marked their doorposts, a courageous act given the cultural norms surrounding them. They slaughtered an

animal that served as a deity of the Egyptians and painted their own doorposts with the animals' blood. Manette Mayberg, Momentum co-founder, past President and trustee, writes: "The specified mark is not subtle, but a bold, emphatic statement using an Egyptian deity, risking potentially life-threatening retribution from their oppressors. God clearly had an eternal message in this, and it applies to us today. Demonstrating bold and fearless distinction—separating ourselves, our homes, and our institutions—has enabled our survival throughout the ages. Beginning with a mark of blood on their doors, the Jews who exited Egypt created a unique nation of people capable of sustainability against all odds. Distinction has been the eternal glue of the Jewish people, even as we were scattered to all four corners of the earth. God said, 'Mark your houses' because what you hold inside, the values that infuse your families, is the gift that will distinguish you for all time and ensure your survival."

Gratitude

As we enter and exit the spaces in our lives, may we feel a sense of appreciation for the people we interact with and the world around us. May we remember the Jewish teaching that one who is wise is one who learns from each and every person. May we remember not to take any person or any blessing in our life for granted. Gratitude requires a pause and turning inward to appreciate your blessings. So to is it with *mezuzah*. When we see

a *mezuzah* on the doorpost, it is a reminder to pause and reflect on what is inside, feel grateful for our blessings, before we go about our day.

Generosity

As we learned, welcoming visitors, *Hachnasat Orchim*, is a treasured Jewish practice. We attend to our guests as they enter and exit our homes. Situated on our doorposts, the *mezuzah* reminds us to treat our guests, and all people with whom we interact, in a thoughtful and generous way. Some have likened Jewish homes to the underground railroad, with the *mezuzah* as a symbol indicating 'this is a home of welcoming, warmth and love.'

Human Dignity

Each Mezuzah scroll must be hand-written by an expert scribe to be kosher. Let us adorn our doorposts with *mezuzot* that are not only ritually kosher, but also meet standards of human dignity. To do this, seek a scroll that is 'fair trade', offering scribes a fair living. One example of an organization doing this is MyZuzah.org. MyZuzah ensures the scribes are paid fairly for their work and their scrolls go through a most rigorous testing process.

Faithfulness & Trust

Passing the *mezuzah* can be a reminder to be our best selves, connecting to the ultimate Source of goodness. In that moment, we remember to open our eyes to the Godliness that exists in ourselves and in those around us. In Hebrew, the word for this value, ‘*emunah*’, stems from the same root as words for ‘art’ and for ‘caretaking’. The *mezuzah* and its encasing – often artistic – can remind us of the steadfast, faithful perseverance entailed in caring for children, creating any form of masterful art, and fostering a relationship with God.

Learning & Growth

We place the *mezuzah* on the top-third section of our doorpost, but not at the very top. As we reach up to kiss the *mezuzah*, we remember that there is always room to stretch, to learn, and to grow. We have developed through our Year of Growth journey, and we will find many more opportunities to grow – as a group, as individuals, and as families.

Reflection

The values of the *mezuzah* are global, no matter the generation, local customs or culture, Jews have had the same words marking their doorposts. Momentum offers you and thousands of women across the world a global sisterhood and connection.

As we celebrate the end of our MOMentum Year-Long Journey, let us consider how we can continue to support one another, stay involved in each other’s lives, and share Jewish values with our families, friends, and communities.

- Which Jewish value above resonates most with you?
- Which Jewish value will you think of when you pass a *mezuzah*?
- What are some ways that we can transition from this year-long Momentum experience and continue to support one another?
- Where might you take action to put up a *mezuzah* and how can you bring the Momentum values you’ve learned to make it most meaningful?

Blessing for Affixing a Mezuzah

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech haolam
asher kideshanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu likboa mezuzah.*
Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Master of the Universe,
Who has made us holy with His commandments and
commanded us to affix a *mezuzah*.

ברוך אתה אדני אלוהינו מלך העולם
אשר קדשנו במצוותיו וציוונו לקבוע מזוזה

To learn more about Mezuzah and how to affix it, to find fair trade kosher scrolls, or to plan a mezuzah affixing group gathering, check out MyZuzah.org

TRY IT OUT: PRACTICAL TIPS AND RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

Ideas for bringing the Year of Growth values into our family lives.

For Yourself or With a Partner

- Check out the podcasts, videos, and articles on [MomentumUnlimited.org](https://www.momentumunlimited.org)
- Select a phrase that inspires you, write it on a card and place it where you'll see it. Repeat the phrase to yourself a few times each morning with enthusiasm. Phrases you could consider:
 - I'm a letter in the Scroll of the Jewish People.
 - I am an important member of the Momentum movement.
 - I continue to learn and grow.

For Families with Children of All Ages

- Many *mezuzah* creation kits are available online; set aside a time with your family to create one together for a doorway in your home. Older children may enjoy going to a make-your-own pottery shop or a kiln to fashion their own *mezuzah* creations. Children of all ages may enjoy inviting friends or family to participate in the hanging of their special family *mezuzah*.

For Families with Young Children

- Read the PJ Library Book, *A Mezuzah on the Door*, by Amy Meltzer, and check out the reading guide, available here: <https://bit.ly/2KzdFFP>. Consider using some of PJ Library's suggestions for sharing stories about your own family *mezuzot*, choosing a new *mezuzah* for the house, or talking to your children about the meaning behind the *Shema*!
- Consider hanging a *mezuzah* in your child's room at the height levels of your child. Each year, you can move the *mezuzah* a little bit higher on the wall, marking how your child has grown.

For Families with Older Children

- Consider how you'd like to mark a transition in the lives of your children; a graduation, the completion of meaningful learning, the end of a sports season, the conclusion of college application season. You could host a small *Siyum*, perhaps inviting their friends to honor and celebrate what has just passed. Might there be a way to adapt the *Hadran* "Goodbye Ritual" for your children's transitions?

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

In this session we celebrate your Year of Growth!

The Guiding Questions in this Unit Are:

- *What ritual might you include in your celebration? Might there be an aspect of the Siyum / Hadran ritual that you can adapt for your group?*
- *Where will your celebration take place and with whom?*
- *How will you offer the opportunity to look both back and forward?*
- *What reading might you like to include?*

Meaning-ful Vocabulary

Encore	<i>hadran</i>	הדרן
Ending	<i>Siyum</i>	סיים
Book	<i>sefer</i>	ספר

Facilitating the Session

1. Seek Participant Input

In advance, invite a few sisters to take a small role in leading the session such as:

- Hosting the event
- Consider inviting each woman to reflect and share something such as a moment or experience this year that impacted how she sees the world, or a thought about bold ways of empowering and educating the next generation of the Jewish people such that they are a light and a blessing in our world. What questions might you invite the women to reflect on and send answers to in advance of the session?
- How might you honor the participants? Might you like each to send a photo that can be part of the session's décor?
- Ask if one or more of the women would like to share a way she brought home the learning from your last gathering.

**Involving participants helps them take ownership over their learning and prepares them to take the lead in their family and community!

2. Choose Your Session Activities (in advance)

How will you make this a meaningful and memorable celebration? Read in the introduction *The Art of a Great Session* for ideas and consider what will work well for your group. A purpose of this session is to synthesize the learning to take stock of what they absorbed over the year and to reflect on its meaning for them personally and as a group. **Soul Sparks** activities carry a particular power, and we encourage you to include them where possible.

3. Prep Your Space

Before the session begins, prepare the space to make it special and celebratory – what will work in your space and resources: ribbons, flowers, photos, or balloons? What will be fitting celebratory food and drinks? Arrange the space or seating to support connection. Think about what materials you will need and make sure you have everything prepared.

4. Welcome & Warm- Up

How might you honor and awe your group as you usher them into a celebration of learning? How might you help women connect with each other as they reflect back and look forward?

Reminder! Sisterhood Safe Space

Remind everyone that you are in your Sisterhood Safe Space of confidentiality and compassionate listening, free of judgment and unsolicited advice.

5. Intro & Inspiration

Plan how you will usher in participants to help them transition from the day-to-day to the delights of a different Momentum reality of your group celebration.

6. Soul Sparks Activities

There are several activities in the session that could help to deepen the meaning of your celebration:

Celebration of Learning

The *Celebration of Learning* sections describes the *Hadran* ritual of a traditional completion of learning. Consider including something along these lines in your celebration.

A Letter in the Scroll

The short text from Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks' text on *The Letter in the Scroll*, can help set meaning to the journey of learning and frame looking back and looking forward. Consider exploring it as a whole group or in pairs.

The Mezuzah: A Reminder of Our Eight Core Jewish Values

Place the core values in stations around the room on poster boards. Ask them to take a few to walk and review them silently to themselves, then ask them to go to the value that most resonates with them. Encourage the women to share with the others at their station what they've taken away from that value, or how they and their families have been influenced. Have the women move on to a value they would like to more strongly incorporate into their daily lives and ask them to reflect with the others at that station regarding how they can make a plan of action to reach their goals.

7. Reflection & Closing

How might you end the session with a high? Plan a way for individuals and for the group to reflect on how they will carry the learning into their lives and review options for further learning, including locally and through Momentum.

Direct the women's attention to the "**Try It Out: Practical Tips and Resources for Families.**" These suggestions offer ideas – by age group for bringing the learning back home. Encourage them to choose at least one thing they will do with their families. Encourage participants to arrange a time to connect with their other sisters following the conclusion of your Year of Growth. The sisterhood doesn't end here!

Extra! Program Ideas:

To enhance your session, you may want to consider the following:

- Inviting an artist for a pre-session gathering of making-your-own mezuzah activity or having one of the woman lead such an activity.



The sales of Year of Growth are used entirely to cover costs of creating, producing, distributing, and supporting the successful use of this educational resource.

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Ministry of Diaspora Affairs
Creating a common Jewish future