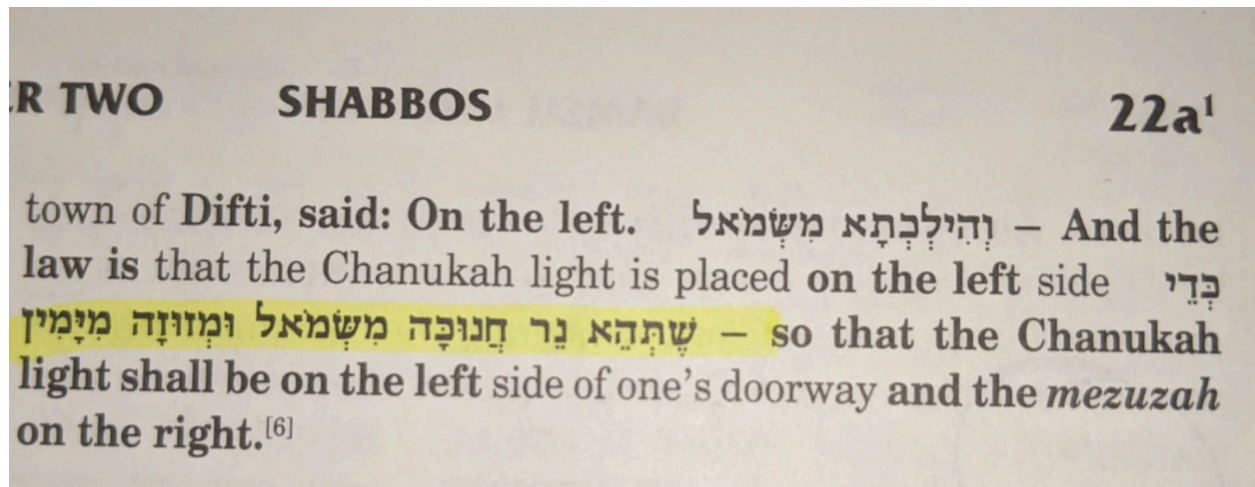


## DAF Ditty Shabbes 22



Our Daf (Shabbas 22) writes that the halacha is like Rav Shmuel who argues for placing the Menorah on the left side of the doorway. The reason is that:

וְהִילְכְתָּא מִשְּׂמָאל, כְּדִי שֶׁתְּהֵא נֵר חֲנוּכָּה מִשְּׂמָאל וּמִזְוָה מִיְמִין.

**Shmuel from Difti said: On the left. And the halakha is to place it on the left so that the Hanukkah lamp will be on the left and the mezuzah on the right.**

*(One who enters the house will be surrounded by mitzvot (ge'onim)).*

Yoma 11b gives us a biblical source for the placement of the Mezuzah on the right side of the doorway:

אלא ביתך למה לי כדרבא דאמר רבא דרך ביאתך וכי עקר איניש כרעיה דימינא עקר ברישא

The Gemara then asks: **Rather, why do I** need the emphasis of the verse: **Your house**, if every house is obligated in the mitzva of *mezuzah*?

The Gemara answers: This could be understood **in accordance with** the opinion of **Rava**, as **Rava said**: Your house is interpreted to mean that the *mezuzah* is placed in **the way that you enter** the house. **And when a person lifts** his foot to begin walking, **he lifts his right foot first**.

Therefore, the *mezuzah* is affixed on the right side of the doorway.

Interestingly the verse ( וכתבתם על־מזוזת ביתך ובשעריך: )

“inscribe them on the doorposts of **your** house and on your gates”

is taken to specify not merely the mitzva on private homes, rather it refers to the physiological/dynamic act of entering the very house.

Just as you step forward using the *right* leg, (talmudic gait analysis lab!) so too the *mezuzah* placement should reflect the same *rightness*....Rava conflates and mirrors the dominance of the right foot (**right-handers** are 95% **right-footed** and 66% **right-eyed**.) with the dominance of the right side of the portal.

I find it interesting that our gemoro then reverses the Mitzva of Menorah placement (for the sake of “being surrounded” ) as you walk through the door. For using the logic of the Yoma passage I would have thought both Mitzvos should be placed on the right side for the same physiological reason! The human body’s preference for the right should be mirrored by both mitzvot.

It seems “being surrounded” is more important. What is “being surrounded” simply right and left sides. The right side (dextra) is *chesed* and the left side (sinistra) is the darker side of *gevurah*.

As we enter our homes the Mezuzah protects: (The source can be found in *Mechilta* as well as the Zohar which claims that Ex 12:7 and 23 are the prooftexts for the protective concept of Mezuzah:

*Now consider: The blood of the Passover sacrifice was but of little weight, for it was required but once, not for all generations, and by night only, not by day; yet He would ‘not allow the destroyer... to strike you.’ How much more will He not permit the destroyer into the house which bears a **mezuzah**, which is of greater weight, seeing that the Divine Name is repeated there ten times, it is there by day and night, and it is a law for all generations.*

And regarding the Menorah and protection we find in the Raya Mehemna the following:

*Certainly the vessel of the Holy One blessed be He is the Shechina. She is the vessel that serves her Master. She is His Menorah, as it is said: "Seven times a day I praise You because of Your righteous judgments". (Psalms 119:164).*

Both the right and left, the Mezuzah and the Menorah accompany us as we enter the sacred home. They protect us (or the Mitzva associated with them, if you are mythically less inclined). And this “being surrounded” trumps the referents from Yoma for the right sided dominance.

### Addendum

The field of neuroscience has changed tremendously. MRI, fMRI, CAT scan, PET scan, and enhanced EEG technologies have all dramatically improved our understanding of the interrelation between the two hemispheres of the brain and whether the older theories of dominance are too naive.

For instance, a study of the resting state MRI scans of 1011 subjects, ages 7-29, showed no statistically significant hemispheric preferences, i.e. lateralization of brain functioning. The conclusion of the last study was: “Lateralization of brain connections appears to be a local rather than global property of brain networks, and our data are not consistent with a whole-brain phenotype of greater ‘left brained’ or greater ‘right-brained’ network strength across individuals.”

In a study, scientists analyzed data from sports and found that the criteria for right handedness was *cooperation* whereas left handedness was *competition*! (statistics put left handedness at 10-30%) (<https://www.livescience.com/19968-study-reveals-lefties-rare.html>) Primates do not show any discrepancy.

The history of work with split brain patients is fascinating. These individuals have usually had their corpus collosums cut as part of a last-resort surgery to treat epilepsy. Researchers including Roger Sperry and Michael Gazzaniga were the pioneers in this area

Roger Sperry's split brain experiments can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SaZcIVvLmeM>

For an excellent review of the role that neuroimaging has played in our understanding of hemispheric specialization see [Herve, P.Y., Zago, L., Petit, L., Mazoyer, B., & Tzourio-Mazoyer, N. \(2013\). Revisiting human hemispheric specialization with neuroimaging. \*Trends in Cognitive Sciences\* 17, 69–80.](#)