

From My Desk 2026-03 Homes filled with blessings

This winter has been the coldest so far this century. All of Florida has been subjected to near or just below freezing temperatures, and snow (!) in the 'panhandle'. The playground across the street from where I am staying is empty; parents find it too cold to come out and watch their children play. And forget about outdoor dining, which, even in January, is always available. (Ohio has experienced temperatures below 0, but Ohioans are more used to *bitter* cold than Floridians are to even *mild* cold). So, residents are safely ensconced in their homes with the heat on.

The record breaking cold, and absence of people on the street has triggered my thoughts about the importance of having a warm home to shelter us. A heated home is a blessing we sometimes fail to recognize. Indeed, a home -warm and safe -is the bedrock of our lives. Without one, we become homeless- God forbid. And, Florida has its share of homeless as well. Florida has opened its warming centers to all who need them.

These extreme conditions, and the resulting lack of people on the street has prompted my thoughts about our homes. Of course, helping the homeless is a mitzvah. But, we need not wait to help the homeless to say words of appreciation about our own homes. Indeed that is precisely the function of the "House blessing" or Birkay ha-bayit, which hangs in many Jews' front hallways.

It goes like this:

**בְּרַכַּת הַבַּיִת:**

בְּזֶה הַשָּׁעַר לֹא יָבֹא צָעַר.  
בְּזֹאת הַדִּירָה לֹא תִבּוֹא צָרָה.  
בְּזֹאת הַדָּלֶת לֹא תִבּוֹא בְּהֵלָה.  
בְּזֹאת הַמַּחְלָקָה לֹא תִבּוֹא מַחְלוּקָת.

בְּזֶה הַמָּקוֹם תְּהִי בְּרָכָה וְשָׁלוֹם.

**Blessing for the home:**

Let no sorrow come through this gate.  
Let no trouble come in this dwelling.  
Let no fright come through this door.  
Let no conflict come to this department.  
Let there be blessing and peace in this place.

This lovely prayer was probably written by Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum around the year 1800. A much earlier sentiment about Jewish values characterizing a home was written by King Solomon, in his Book of Proverbs (24:3-4):

A house is built by wisdom, and is established by understanding;  
By knowledge are its rooms filled with all precious and beautiful things.

A warm, safe home is a blessing. A warm, safe home suffused with Jewish values is a double blessing. And a warm safe home filled with Jewish values and blessed with the gifts of serenity and peace is a triple blessing. May this triple blessing come upon your home and mine.

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