



לעבן מיט'ן רבין

IN HONOR OF OUR BELOVED
REBBE
AND HIS CONTINUED
WORLD LEADERSHIP
AND IN HONOR OF
MY BELOVED MOTHER
BLUMA BATSHEVA BAT FREIDA
DEDICATED BY **DAVID WALKER**



THE REBBE ENCOURAGES THE FLEET OF
MITZVAH TANKS ABOUT TO EMBARK, SUMMER 5734.

Tanks Against Assimilation

THE STORY OF HOW THE 'MITZVA TANKS'
CAME TO BE - TAMMUZ 5734



Today, when we pass a mobile home packed with *bochurim*, its sides painted with tefillin, Shabbos candles, and mezuzos, with loudspeakers hanging on to the roof blasting Jewish music, we barely give another glance. Yet in the early 5730s (1970s), the sight of such an apparition was bound to surprise. Beginning in the summer months of 5734, the Rebbe began a huge *shturem* in the *mitzvoim* (at the time, just five), which led directly to the invention of the 'mitzva tanks.' We present

here snippets from the diary of a *bochur* in 770, Yitzchok Meir Sossover, written in Tammuz of that year, which shows, day by day, how it came about.

But first, a bit of background from the months leading up to it:

On 23 Iyar 5734, terror struck the city of Ma'alot, in Eretz Yisroel. A group of Palestinian terrorists entered a school and took 85 children hostage. After a two day standoff, a unit of the Israeli army



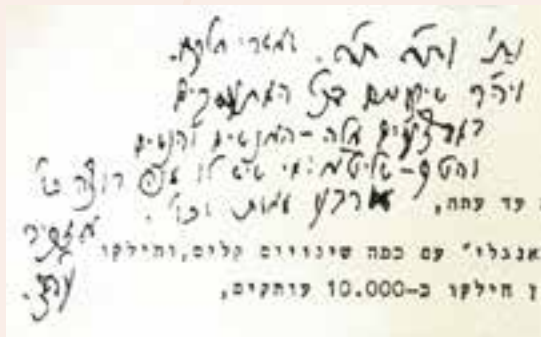


ISRAELI SOLDIERS BEGIN THE ASSAULT ON THE HIJACKED SCHOOL BUILDING IN MAALOT, ISRAEL.

broke into the school and rescued the children. In the ensuing chaos, the terrorists lobbed grenades towards the hostages and 22 children were killed, *r"l*. The next day, a number of the mezuzos in the school were found to be *possul*, and as the death toll rose, so did the number of *possul* mezuzos.

The next two Shabbosim, the Rebbe spoke at length about *mitvza mezuzah*, that mezuzos are *שומר דלתות ישראל*—guardians of the doors of Israel. Not that the children were *chas v'shalom* killed because the mezuzos were *possul*. Rather the mezuzos are like a soldier's helmet. Going into battle without it does not automatically condemn one to tragedy, but in case anything happens, wearing a helmet will offer protection. As such it must be seen to that every Jewish home should have kosher tefillin and mezuzos. These *sichos* were later edited by the Rebbe, something highly unusual in those years, and one of them was published specifically for Israeli soldiers to learn.

On 15 Sivan, the Rebbe held a surprise *farbrengen* dedicated to *mitvza mezuzah*. the Rebbe said that he wanted to speak about it on a weekday so



people out of town can hear it live (via hook-up). The Rebbe announced that anyone who went on *mitvzoim* would receive a dollar from him, and those in foreign countries would receive money in their local currency.

A few days later, the Rebbe wrote an encouraging response to a *duch* of *mitvzoim*: “נת' ות"ח ת"ח: ואשרי חלקם, ויה'ר שיקוים בכל המתעסקים במבצעים אלה - האנשים והנשים והטף - שליט"א: מי שיש לו מנה רוצה - Received with many thanks. Fortunate is their lot. May all those who are involved in these *mitvzoim*—men, women, and children—*shlita*, see the fulfilment of the phrase: one who has one hundred wants [two hundred, and one who has two hundred wants] four hundred, etc. I will mention them at the Ohel.”

On Thursday, 24 Sivan, as the Rebbe was leaving 770, he stopped for a moment to look at a car that was parked in front of 770 with an image of a mezuzah on it.

MONDAY, 27 SIVAN

Tzach sent the Rebbe a report of yesterday's meeting. The participants each donated \$202, the *gematria* of 'מבצע', and resolved to meet again on Motzei Shabbos. The answer was short and sharp: “הרי עד אז יכולת ואפשר למבצעים שליט"א: —Until that time [i.e. Motzei Shabbos] the participants in the *mitvzoim*, *shlita*, could take over New York and the surrounding areas, in a pleasant and peaceful manner”. Attached was *tzedakah* in the amount of \$267, the *gematria* of 'מבצע מזווה'.

Until that time the participants in the mitvzoim, shlita, could take over New York and the surrounding areas

TUESDAY, 28 SIVAN

Reb Dovid Raskin publicized the Rebbe's response from yesterday, adding that whoever wanted could donate \$267, the *gematria* of 'מבצע מזווה'. On the opposite side of the street were five trucks that tzach rented for *mitvzoim*, with tefillin

and mezuzos painted on the sides. When the Rebbe left at night he walked slowly in order to look at the trucks, and the car drove slowly on the street so that the Rebbe could see the trucks from the other side as well.

WEDNESDAY, 29 SIVAN

The Rebbe again looked at the trucks on his way home.

THURSDAY, 30 SIVAN

When the Rebbe left 770 at night, he looked for the trucks which for some reason were not parked there. I heard that the Rebbe remarked to Rabbi Krinsky that the trucks were “tanks against assimilation.”

SHABBOS PARSHAS KORACH, 2 TAMMUZ

The Rebbe arrived from his home at 9:45 AM and looked intently at the trucks parked on Eastern Parkway.

When the Rebbe came down for the farbrengen, he said that he is farbrenging because of the recent *hisorerus* in the *mivtzoim*. Since there was a *shturem* about it, he wants to farbreng about it as well.

The Rebbe spoke about the tremendous success of the *mivtza mezuzah*, and how the general public was responding very well to the campaign.

Regarding the *pushkas* that were being distributed as part of the *mivtzoim*, the Rebbe said they should not have an address where to send the money, so that people shouldn't think that Lubavitch is trying to make money from this. Likewise, the *pushkas* should have pictures of



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tefillin, a mezuzah, and *seforim* on them as well, in order to remind people about them when giving tzedakah.

Tonight there was a *melava malka* for Tzach. *Mezonos* and wine from the Rebbe were distributed.

The attendees pledged money for the *mitvzoim*.

SUNDAY, 3 TAMMUZ

Today, seven trucks of *bochurim* went out to the streets of New York. On the trucks are illustrations of the five *mitvzoim*, as well as speakers playing music. At 9:15 PM the Rebbe returned from the Ohel, and the *bochurim* who had already come back from *mitvzoim* stood by their trucks and sang. The Rebbe encouraged the singing as he left the car.

Someone drew tefillin in the shape of a tank, and the Rebbe said to enlarge it and hang it on the side of the truck.

MONDAY, 4 TAMMUZ

Today we arranged that the tanks should depart as the Rebbe arrived at 770. We stood waiting by the trucks, and as soon as the Rebbe's car appeared we began singing. The Rebbe gave a big smile as he left his car, and encouraged the singing. At the top of the steps to 770, the Rebbe turned around and encouraged the singing until the trucks left (besides for one, which Reb Dovid Raskin told to stay).

WEDNESDAY, 6 TAMMUZ

I went on *mitvzoim* today in Manhattan, and members of our tank put tefillin on 102 people. Tzach received an answer from the Rebbe about the *mitvzoim*: "בכל תקופת תמוז צ"ל השמש (ומגן ה"א) בגבורתה — ת"ח ת"ח — In the month of Tammuz, the sun (שמש) (ומגן ה' אלקים) must be at its strongest. Many Thanks."

THURSDAY, 7 TAMMUZ

The seven tanks were waiting for the Rebbe this morning, just like on Monday. The Rebbe encouraged the singing again, and glanced behind him on his way up the stairs, but did not wait until the tanks left.

There was a big crowd this morning who came to watch the Rebbe see the tanks off, and many people took pictures and videos.

FRIDAY, 8 TAMMUZ

Today I went on *mitvzoim* in Manhattan. I heard that at 6 o'clock the Rebbe went home, just as a



RASKIN FAMILY ARCHIVES

A MITZVAH TANK ON THE STREETS OF NEW YORK CITY.

tank was returning with its music blasting, and the Rebbe encouraged the music.

SHABBOS PARSHAS CHUKAS, 9 TAMMUZ

At 9:55 AM the Rebbe arrived from his home. On the way, he looked at the tanks parked outside. We knew that there wouldn't be a *farbrengen* today, because last Shabbos the Rebbe said that he is *farbrengen* for this Shabbos as well. So Tzach arranged *tahalucha* to Flatbush and Brighton Beach to talk about the *mitvzoim*.

TUESDAY, YUD-BEIS TAMMUZ

We woke up early today to go on *mitvzoim*. The seven tanks drove together across the entire Manhattan to make a *shturem* with the music, and then we split to go to our designated *mitvzoim* places.

At the *farbrengen* tonight the Rebbe spoke about how all the five *mitvzoim* are connected to Yud-Beis Tammuz, and how the Friediker Rebbe accomplished all of them while in jail.

Mivtza Torah: While in jail the Friediker Rebbe wrote notes on the *maamar* of Shavuos.

Mivtza Bayis Malei Seforim: He took a bag of *sefarim* with him to jail (containing a siddur, Tehilim, Tanya, and Chumash). The *seforim* also

accompanied him through all the rooms he was taken to.

Mivtza Mezuzah: He told his interrogators that the room is not required to have a mezuzah. By this he accomplished *mivtza mezuzah* in two ways: 1. Stating that the room did not need a mezuzah, is also part of *hilchos mezuzah*. 2. When being unable to actually perform a certain mitzvah, talking about its *halachos* is tantamount to it being fulfilled (similar to studying the *halachos of korbanos* today).

Mivtza Tefillin: It is well known that the Frierdiker Rebbe staged a hunger strike until his tefillin were brought to him.

Mivtza Tzedakah: He provided encouragement to his cellmates, and even gave them his own food, the greatest form of tzedakah.

Afterwards, the Rebbe spoke about the tanks, that they are the tanks against assimilation. Not just to defend against it, but to go on the offensive, and conquer the world. The best use of the tanks is alluded to in the word ‘tank’ itself. ‘טנק’ is *roshei taivos: Taharos, Nezikin, Kodshim*. First the one going on *mivtzoim* must make sure he is pure—טהרות—of any motives, his only agenda being to help the other person. Then he can influence someone, starting first in טור מרע—refraining from doing bad—גזיקין, and then in עשה טוב—doing good—קדשים.

Later in the farbrengen, the Rebbe said that all the ‘*tankistin*’ should say *l’chaim*.

FRIDAY, 15 TAMMUZ

Today, the following letter from the Rebbe was publicized:

B”h

15th of Tammuz—month of *geula*, 5734—*shnas Hakhel*

Brooklyn, NY

Using the words of the Frierdiker Rebbe, [this letter is addressed] “to all who hold dear the holy Torah, observe mitzvos, and all Jewish people.”

May G-d be with you!

Shalom U’bracha!

I implore you to grow the momentum and add in all the *mivtzoim*, first and foremost in *mivtza mezuzah*. This addition should begin even before the onset of the Three Weeks [on Sunday, two days later]. Discussing matters of public interest and setting aside tzedakah—physical and spiritual—is even permitted on Shabbos. *Yehi ratzon* that these

days should be quickly transformed to days of joy with the coming of Moshiach, “and Yisroel will grow strong” [במדבר כד, יח]...

With respect and blessings for success in all the above,

One must be ‘pure’ of ulterior motives, and go on mivtzoim solely to help another Jew.

SHABBOS PARSHAS BALAK, 16 TAMMUZ

At 1:30 PM the Rebbe came down for the farbrengen. The Rebbe again spoke about tanks, that they can conquer wherever they go. They plow through obstacles, flatten hills, cross ditches, break walls. That is how we must conquer the world, to make it “ומלכותו בכל משלה”.

On Yud-Beis Tammuz the Rebbe said that the ‘ט’ in the word ‘טנק’, stands for ‘*Taharos*.’ Today the Rebbe clarified that one must be ‘pure’ of ulterior motives, and go on *mivtzoim* solely to help another Jew. But there is no reason to wait until you are completely pure and holy, rather you should work on yourself too while you are on *mivtzoim*.

THE SHTUREM CONTINUES

A few days later, on Thursday, the Rebbe told Rabbi Mendel Tenenbaum in *yechidus* that he is demanding now from *anash* to conquer the world.

A week later on Thursday, 28 Tammuz, the Rebbe held a surprise farbrengen. Many Crown Heights locals were in the country, and many *bochurim* were on *Merkos Shlichus*. Even the *bochurim* that were in town, some of them did not know about the farbrengen and were still out on the tanks. As a result the crowd was quite small.

The Rebbe said that the farbrengen is to strengthen the *mivtzoim*, and therefore a collection should be made specifically for the costs associated with *mivtzoim*. In the beginning of the farbrengen the Rebbe connected each of the five *mivtzoim* with ערי מקלט. At the end he said that in those places where it is already daytime people could go on *mivtzoim* now, and if it is still night, they could start preparing for tomorrow’s *mivtzoim*.

Throughout the summer, the Rebbe continued to encourage the *mitvzoim* at every Farbrengen, and the daily *mitvzoim* schedule continued.

At the farbrengen of Chai Elul, the Rebbe touched upon the discussion over whether it is permitted to give tzedakah at night. He said, that since it is a question, he will give out dollars to everyone present now, and they will give it to tzedakah the next day. He will distribute them through those

“who recently have been driving around to help Yidden fulfill the five *mitvzoim*.” The Rebbe then requested that the *tankistin* should come up and take stacks of dollars to distribute, and give one dollar—no more—to each person.

[Later on, this became a regular occurrence, and by virtually every weekday farbrengen in the 5740s, the Rebbe distributed dollars for tzedakah through the *tankistin*.] **T**



20 AV 5734, JEM via V SCHLICKRAUT 108308