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לזכר נשמת
שיינא גאלדא ע"ה
בת יבלחט"א ר' מיכאל הלוי גוטלייזער
נדפס ע"י זקיניה
הרה"ת ר' יצחק מאיר
וזוגתו מרת לאה ומשפחתם שיחיו
שפאלטר



reconnecting

The Rebbe's Launch of Mivtza Tefillin



Fifty years ago this month, the Rebbe launched what became perhaps one of the most famous components of Lubavitch outreach—the effort to put tefillin on every Jewish male above the age of 13. Ever since, Chassidim have been on a never-ending mission to help other Yidden fulfill this special mitzvah; at home, at work, at the mall or on a busy street corner.

To adequately appreciate the story of mitvza tefillin in context, we'll begin with the backdrop of events in Eretz Yisrael, Iyar 5727.

REB AHARON LEIZER CEITLIN HELPS AN ISRAELI SOLDIER LAY TEFILLIN, 5736.

Mortal Danger

Since Jews began to resettle in Eretz Yisrael, the surrounding Arabs never accepted the Jewish presence. Over many years, in their attempt to “demand vengeance...[through] Israel’s death”¹ the Arab countries continuously murdered, robbed and pillaged from Eretz Yisrael, employing both military units and *fedayeen*, terrorists.

By the mid-5720s (1960s), the situation was rapidly deteriorating. From the north, Syria was using the Golan Heights, which soar 3,000 feet over the Galilee, to bomb Israeli villages and *kibbutzim*, forcing families to sleep in bomb shelters. The PLO, which had recently been founded by the Arab League to fight Eretz Yisrael, was conducting increasingly frequent terrorist raids. Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser—who was the leader of the largest country near Eretz Yisrael and was leading the efforts against it—announced, “We shall not enter Palestine with its soil covered in sand; we shall enter it with its soil saturated in blood.”

On 12 Iyar 5727 (May 22, 1967), the Egyptians closed the Suez Canal to Israeli ships and cargo, a legal act of war. The countdown to war had begun.

Two days later, in a telegram to the *vaad* of Kfar Chabad, the Rebbe sent a powerful message of reassurance to the Yidden in Eretz Yisrael: “You have the *zechus* to be among thousands of Yidden in Eretz Hakodesh, which “Hashem’s eyes are constantly upon.” Surely the Guardian of Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. May Hashem be at your right hand side, and may [He] watch you, and all *b’nei Yisrael shlita*, now and forever. I am anticipating good news, in a clear and revealed manner, and soon.”

Meanwhile, the situation continued to worsen. Egypt, which had already agreed to join arms with Syria, signed a military agreement with Jordan, effectively tying a noose around Israel’s neck; the Jews in the Holy Land were surrounded by almost half a million soldiers and thousands of tanks and planes. Whereas a larger sized country might retreat and hunker down closer in to the mainland, Eretz Yisrael, especially at the time, was tiny; if its defenses



**May Hashem be at your
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were broken, the entire country would be overrun within a matter of hours, *r”l*.

All army reservists were called up for duty, while bomb shelters and bunkers were prepared. With the possibility of tremendous losses looming in the horizon, rabbis inspected public parks to be converted into giant cemeteries, with space for twenty five thousand bodies or more. “Our goal is clear—to wipe Israel off the map,” President Abdur Rahman Aref of Iraq announced. To a nation made up largely of

“You have the great obligation and merit to assist them. When you learn one more *possuk* in Torah, fulfil one more mitzvah...This will save every Jewish person wherever he is from his hardships...”

Holocaust survivors—which was still a very fresh memory—these words sounded eerily familiar.

As the specter of war came closer, and even more so after it began, Jews around the world began to realize that, come what may, the Jewish people were, once again, alone. Whereas the Arab countries were receiving arms and political support from the Soviet Union, as well as from many other Arab governments including Pakistan and Saudi Arabia—the American government announced that “our position is neutral in thought, word and deed.” Even the French government, which at the time was Israel’s closest ally, enforced an embargo on Israel.

The Israeli government was in urgent need of economic relief, and staggering amounts of money started pouring in from Jews in the diaspora. The speed and magnitude of the response was reported to have been “unparalleled in American Jewish history.” Beyond borrowing in order to make such gifts, some had reduced their estates and inheritances, so that their children in effect are also sharing their contributions, one newspaper reported.²

Foreign embassies called on their citizens to leave for safer areas, and many Jews followed their advice. But the Rebbe was absolute in his reassurance, sending a flurry of telegrams and letters to Eretz Yisrael urging confidence. The Rebbe instructed everyone to stay put, and even told a family who had planned on holding their son’s wedding in Eretz Yisrael to go ahead with their plans. In this atmosphere of isolation and fear, at least six Israeli newspapers, from across the ideological spectrum, featured the Rebbe’s encouraging words, many carrying the same headline: The Lubavitcher Rebbe sends Letter of Encouragement.



On Lag B'omer, the drums of war were beating ever closer. In front of 770, the Rebbe was addressing over twenty thousand children and adults at the parade, where he spoke forcefully about the situation in Eretz Yisrael: "Hashem is guarding them and sending them His *brachos* and salvation in extraordinary measure, so that they emerge from the current situation with success."

And, the Rebbe said, they needed help. "You have the great obligation and merit to assist them. When you learn one more *possuk* in Torah, fulfil one more mitzvah...and...influence your relatives, friends and family to do the same... This will save every Jewish person wherever he is from his hardships, and will bring Hashem's *brachos* in extraordinary measure, salvation and success."³

A recording of the *sicha* was broadcast on the WEVD radio station in New York; the first time the Rebbe's voice was heard on radio. The *sicha* was also broadcast on Israeli radio with simultaneous Hebrew translation, and the largest newspapers in Israel splashed the Rebbe's assurances on their front pages.

Then, on Shabbos Parshas Bamidbar, 24 Iyar (June 3)—two days before the war—the Rebbe gave more specific instructions. After reiterating that fulfilling mitzvos would elicit the *brachos* of Hashem, the Rebbe added that, furthermore, this would cause Hashem Himself to fight our wars, and that there was a specific mitzvah uniquely relevant to this endeavor: tefillin.

The Rebbe quoted two sources for this. The Gemara in Menachos states that all who lay tefillin will merit long life, as it says in the *possuk*, "השם עליהם יחיו"—those who have Hashem on them; meaning those who wear tefillin, "will have long life." Thus, tefillin ensures the safety of the soldiers and helps avoid casualties.

Furthermore: in Maseches Brachos the Gemara quotes the *possuk* "וראו כל עמי הארץ כי" שם ה' נקרא עליך ויראו ממך—All the nations of the world will see that the name of Hashem is upon you, and they will fear you," and explains that this refers to the head tefillin. Thus, tefillin assists in the war effort itself, in conquering the enemy.

Just as war is a team effort, the tefillin worn by a single soldier has a collective effect on the entire army, and the tefillin donned by any Yid throughout the world helps the Yidden in Eretz Yisrael.

The Rebbe concluded: "My point is not to simply lecture, rather—as in all areas of Torah—this must be brought into action. In connection with the current situation in our holy land, you should endeavor, intensively, that as many Jews as possible should put on tefillin that are checked, kosher, and even *mehudar*."⁴

Right after Shabbos, a very terse telegram was sent to Tzach in Eretz Yisrael: *At today's farbrengen (Shabbos Mivorchim Sivan), the Rebbe emphasized Menachos 35b that tefillin causes terror, "the chieftains of Edom were startled" etc. Working in mivtza tefillin is relevant to every Jew, each person can help another.*

The Rebbe's words that tefillin would bring about a quick victory with minimal casualties, made waves throughout the nation. A letter from Tzach telling the Israeli soldiers about the *mivtza* was printed, and with the help of the Chief Rabbinate, a hundred thousand copies were distributed among the soldiers within a day. Various newspapers carried the message as well.

In Eretz Yisrael, groups of Tze'irei Chabad immediately made their way to numerous military installations and helped thousands of soldiers lay tefillin. Many Lubavitcher Chassidim who had been drafted to serve on the various fronts used every opportunity to offer their fellow comrades a chance to do the mitzvah. And in cities and counties throughout the world, Yidden who had never seen tefillin in their lives were introduced to the concept and

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LETTER FROM TZACH TO VARIOUS RABBINIM IN ERETZ YISROEL RELAYING THE REBBE'S SICHA FROM LAG B'OMER, DATED 21 IYAR 5727.



ISRAEL DESTROYS THE EGYPTIAN AIR-FORCE.

also encouraged to roll up their sleeves for their brethren in the Holy Land.

Miraculous Salvation

On 26 Iyar (June 5), Israeli fighter jets flew over the Sinai to commence a very risky pre-emptive strike against the Egyptian Air Force. They were successful beyond belief, destroying

most of the Egyptian Air Force while suffering minimal losses.

The Israelis continued winning miraculous victories. "Israeli Forces Destroy Arab Air Might, Rout Their Armies, Liberate Old City, Gaza Strip, Dominate Sinai," the headlines declared. On 2 Sivan (June 10), the war was over. Within a single exhilarating week, Eretz Yisrael had defeated armies on three fronts and tripled in land size. Even the most ardent sceptics—and even the newspapers—celebrated the open miracles that had been witnessed.

The Jewish nation worldwide was in a state of euphoria. A major *his'oirerus* of Yiddishkeit swept over the land. Upon reaching the *Kosel haMa'aravi*, defense minister Moshe Dayan (not known for being particularly religious) announced, "We have returned to all that is holy in our land. We have returned never to be parted from it again."

On the Shabbos following the war, Shabbos parshas Behaaloscha, the Rebbe urged that *mitvza tefillin* be continued in an even stronger fashion than before, in order to channel the unprecedented spiritual awakening.

Hundreds of thousands of Yidden had begun traveling from all corners of the globe to visit the remnant of the *Beis Hamikdash*, and this became the focal point of the *mitvza*. On the first day that the Kosel was opened to the public, over 200,000 people came, spanning the religious spectrum. The Lubavitchers who were there spontaneously began offering people to put on tefillin, and the response was tremendous.

They stayed every single day from then on. A few weeks later, Rabbi Hodakov sent a telegram saying that the Rebbe had suggested that a tefillin booth be set up near the Kosel, and had given specific instructions, including: that Shema cards should be distributed for free; pairs of kosher tefillin be on sale for a minimum cost; and more.

(A meeting was held in Kfar Chabad, and it was decided that every single Lubavitcher would give up one work day each to man the booth, and those who did not wish to take part on their own were welcome to 'redeem' their obligation by donating twenty *lirot* towards the cause.)

With literally millions of Jews flocking to the Kosel from the entire Eretz Yisrael and around the world, by the beginning of the next year, 5728, hundreds of thousands of people had donned tefillin at the Kosel alone. By the middle of 5728, these numbers had reached over a million(!). Some of the most prominent politicians and military men in Israel were photographed wearing tefillin at the Kosel, including: Moshe Dayan, the defense minister and architect of the Israeli war strategy; Ezer Weizman, who as deputy chief of staff, directed the surprise attack on the Egyptian air fields at the start of the war; Ariel Sharon, general of the southern command; and many others.

A Wake-Up Call

In the farbrengens over the following months, the Rebbe explained why he was continuing to encourage the *mitvza*, even though the war had long concluded. First of all, although the formal hostilities had ended, Eretz Yisrael's dangerous enemies still surrounded her from all sides, their hatred unabated; and the threat from Syria had in fact grown. Following their exhilarating victory, Israelis as a whole hardly registered the continued danger, and the Rebbe wasn't about to sound the alarm—"There is no reason to frighten *b'nei Yisroel Shlita*,"⁵ he explained. But it was critical, the Rebbe said, that the Jewish people keep up their efforts of defense by strengthening Torah and mitzvos in general, and specifically with *mitvza tefillin*. (As it turned out, the Yom Kippur War followed only a few years later).⁶

But beyond the safety aspect of *mitvza tefillin*, the Rebbe said that another factor was at play here. In the leadup and duration of the war, world Jewry had deeply felt the plight of their Israeli brethren. There was the horrifying fear that had gripped them in the leadup to the war, and the tremendous relief upon witnessing Hashem's miracles. Although, in retrospect, this seems quite natural—after all, it could have been a repeat of the Holocaust—that explanation fails under scrutiny, the Rebbe said. When the Holocaust was *actually* happening, when millions of Yidden were *actually* being murdered *hyl*'s, world Jewry hadn't really reacted. The



THE REBBE'S HANDWRITTEN HAGAOS ON A KOL-KOREH FROM TZACH ABOUT THE REBBE'S NEWLY ANNOUNCED MITVZA.

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Jewish awakening at the time of the Six Day War cannot be taken for granted.

The Rebbe said that the explanation for this could be found in a *maamar* of the Frierdiker Rebbe, delivered in 5703. The *maamar* explains that being that we are in the final days before Moshiach, who will effect radical change around the entire globe, the world is being prepared by events that overturn the natural order of things. This is signified by the idea of a shofar, which refers to a powerful tremor that is beyond intellect.

There are two stages in this process, alluded to in two *nevuos* about Moshiach.

ואדנ' ה' בשופר יתקע והלך בסערות תימן:

And *A-dnai Havayah* shall sound the shofar, and He shall go with the whirlwinds of the South.⁷

This occurred during the two world wars, when the entire world was overturned by terrible

wars caused by irrational causes (in World War II, a 'nobody' dominated an entire country and tried to swallow all of civilization), bringing horrifying suffering upon the Jewish people. This is what the *novi* meant when he prophesied that Hashem would blow a shofar—i.e. cause an irrational tremor—"in the whirlwinds of the South," which refers to the nations of the world, and this served as a type of preparation for Moshiach.

2) וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִתְקַע בְּשׁוֹפָר גָּדוֹל וּבְאֵב הָאֲבָדִים
בְּאַרְץ אַשּׁוּר וְהַגְדִּיחִים בְּאַרְץ מִצְרַיִם וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לֵה' בְּהַר
הַקֹּדֶשׁ בִּירוּשָׁלַם:

And it shall come to pass on that day, that a great shofar shall be sounded, and those lost in the land of Ashur and those exiled in the land of Mitzrayim shall come and they shall prostrate themselves before Hashem on the holy mount in Jerusalem.⁸

The fulfillment of this second *nevua*, which speaks about a wake-up call directed specifically at the Yidden ("those lost in the land of Ashur and those exiled in the land of Egypt"), began during the Six Day War, when specifically the Yidden had been targeted. "We have now entered a new era," the Rebbe announced. "Hashem himself is calling out to the Yidden, even "those lost" and "those exiled," and He has succeeded in shaking them up with "the great shofar." Now Hashem is waiting for the Yidden to answer His call, through utilizing this *hisorerus* to dedicate themselves to Hashem and to strengthen their fulfillment of Torah and mitzvos."

Our job, the Rebbe said, is to approach the Yidden and explain to them what they are feeling—a *hisorerus teshuva* from on high.⁹

Across the Spectrum

Following the Rebbe's encouragement, Chassidim worldwide threw themselves into the *mitvza*. In Eretz Yisrael, tefillin stands were set up throughout the country, in train and bus stations, airports, malls and central squares in the main cities. Army bases, hospitals, police stations, and homes for the elderly all became regular targets for the *mitvza*.

Soldiers in the IDF, as well as regular travelers, became accustomed to being offered a chance to lay tefillin during their journey.



Women in Mivtza Tefillin

In a *sicha* on Vov Tishrei 5728, a few months after the *mivtza* was launched, the Rebbe said that he had been approached with the following “question, demand and complaint”: Being that *mivtza tefillin* was being done for safety, which women need just as much as men, what role can women play in the *mivtza*?

The Rebbe said that an idea had not come to him until that very day, Vov Tishrei, when he had been learning Mishnayos for his mother according to the letters of her name. From one of the Mishnayos (in the second *perek* of Sanhedrin, which begins with the letter *nun* from CHaNaH), one can deduce that the mitzvah of tefillin applies equally to men and women. The Mishna says that when any Yid does any *aveira*, the *Shechina* cries out, “I am ashamed from my head, I am ashamed from my arm.” This refers to the tefillin that Hashem wears, which proclaim the praise of the Jews, and thus there is pain when a Yid sins. This applies to men and women equally (as is evident from the Mishnayos there), which means that women, too, are connected with Hashem’s tefillin. And if this is true for a negative aspect how much more so does it apply in the positive. The reason for this, the Rebbe said, is that the men fulfill this mitzvah (as with other *mitzvos aseh shehazman grama*) for the women as well, as is explained in Kisvei Ha’Arizal. But tefillin is unique in that this is specifically emphasized.

On a practical level, the Rebbe proposed that each woman should donate a pair of tefillin (or the equivalent sum), and this would increase their merit of tefillin. In a certain way, this was in an even greater way than the men.¹⁰

Chassidim began carrying a pair of tefillin in their bags, and others began to utilize breaks in their workday to offer fellow workers the merit to say the quick and simple prayer.

The following is a description of a *mivtzoim* stand, written by an Israeli journalist:

“Friday afternoon, the main bus station in Tel Aviv. The sun is burning in its full force; tens of individuals pass you every minute hurrying on their way. But when you come close to the ‘station’ of Tze’irei Chabad, it feels as if you have entered a different world; perhaps you have bumped into the Kosel, or perhaps a makeshift synagogue.

“A soldier armed with an Uzi stands crowned with tefillin and reads Shema from a special card. Next to him is a tall Mexican tourist, who has not worn tefillin for the past thirty five years or so, but when arriving in the Holy Land he was ‘caught’ by one of the ‘units’ of yeshiva students. The third is a young Moroccan from Dimona, who apologizes that in the army he ‘cooled off’ a bit, but will from now on begin to put on tefillin every day. The fourth, a *kibbutznik*, a native Israeli from Givat Berner, is now wearing tefillin for the first time in his life.

“The yeshiva students tell us that even in cold and stormy weather, they manage to find a dry corner, and there are always hundreds of Jews willing to roll up their left sleeves and wrap

themselves with tefillin. Even in the burning summer days, they travel to do their holy work and no obstacle manages to deter them.

“They maintain that the power and energy for the work comes from the letters of their Rebbe *shlita*, who constantly wants to know about everything being done in detail, and every so often sends a message to stimulate and encourage the tremendous momentum. The Rebbe once told a visitor ‘two and a half million people were saved from annihilation; two and a half million people should be added to the number of tefillin wearers.’”

Regardless of their status or schedule, everyone got involved. “All of the Chabad activists, who busy themselves an entire year with spreading Judaism in different capacities, whether in education, authorship of Jewish-related articles, or in an organizational capacity, were required to set aside specific times when they participate in *mivtza tefillin* with their actual bodies,” one newspaper reported.

Indeed, telegrams and letters were flying back and forth across the Atlantic from 770 to Eretz Yisrael, with Chassidim reporting on their activities, and the Rebbe guiding and urging, sometimes quite sharply, for them to continuously increase. In letters to *anash*, even those that dealt with personal issues, the Rebbe constantly wrote, “Surely you take part (and

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MITZVA TEFILLIN OUTSIDE 770.

will take part with even more enthusiasm in the future) in *mitvza tefillin*.”

The *mitvza* crossed all political and ideological lines. *Bochurim* from non-Chabad yeshivos, and even their teachers and rabbonim, were involved as well. Rabbi Shmuel Huminer, *mashgiach ruchni* of Yeshivas Eitz Hachayim, one of the distinguished *mussar* leaders of Eretz Yisrael, related the following vignette about his experiences with *mitvza tefillin*: One person he met simply refused to don tefillin, and only relented after a great deal of convincing. This young man, whom his friends knew as someone that had no compunction eating *neveilos utreifos r*”l, suddenly stopped eating non-kosher. The only explanation he could offer his shocked friends and family was that his heart didn’t allow him anymore...¹¹

The most prominent leaders of the *frumme* world, both Chassidic rebbes and *oilomische roshei yeshivos*, joined the Rebbe’s call. One newspaper announcement, signed by dozens of rabbonim and rebbes, stated: “We are hereby joining the great call of the Lubavitcher Rebbe *shlita*, and we turn to all those who are *charedim l’dvar Hashem* to gird themselves and participate in these *mitvzoim*.” The Agudas Harabbonim of America came out urging its members to support the *mitvza* as well, and the ‘Hapardes’ journal reported that “the Gerrer Rebbe *shlita* is encouraging the *mitvza tefillin* at every opportunity, and even donated a pair of tefillin for the *mitvza* near the Kosel Hamaaravi...”¹²

In addition to the general *hora’a* to put on tefillin with as many people as possible, the Rebbe gave specific directives. These included: every person should check his tefillin, and if possible check them once a year; to offer tefillin for sale at low prices, specifically at tefillin stands; to offer services to check people’s tefillin; that tefillin stands should have a brochure about *hilchos tefillin* and a picture showing where the tefillin should be worn on the arm and head.¹³

A Global Phenomena

The *mitvza* wasn’t limited to Eretz Yisrael. Throughout the world, tefillin stands began springing up, and cities worldwide heard microphones from atop vehicles calling out



LETTER FROM AGUDAS HARABONIM SUPPORTING THE REBBE’S MITVZA TEFFILIN.

to passersby and encouraging them to stop by and contribute towards the security of the people in the Holy Land. Chabad Houses placed advertisements in their local newspapers encouraging people to strengthen their observance of the *mitvza*. The following are some highlights:

New York

From when the *mitvza* began, Chassidim started going out on Sundays (when they were free from work) for *mitvza tefillin*, and the *gabbai* in 770 would make an announcement about it every Shabbos. (In 5740, almost thirteen years later, the Rebbe commented on the fact that the announcement had remained identical over all these years, and that it should be updated once in a while based on the situation...)

The New York Times reported on the *mitvza* in Manhattan:

“The signs were plastered on a big, yellow truck called the Tefillin-mobile that was parked yesterday afternoon in the shadow of

Washington Square Arch-amid the hippies, the peace marchers, the Good Humor men and the hundreds of Sunday wanderers in the warm sun...The sight of a dozen men in long beards and black coats and hats brought flocks of people into the range of the Hasidic missionaries. Lively Hasidic songs and marches blaring from the loudspeaker kept people listening long enough to be approached. 'Are you Jewish?' one of the Hasidim would ask a bystander. The answer would be yes much of the time.

Every Single Jew

In an article describing the trip he took to visit Eretz Yisrael and the newly liberated Kosel, Rabbi Simcha Elberg, the chairman of Agudas Horabbonim of America, described what he found: "What a unique awakening seized our people. Profound religious feeling bubbled up in the hearts of the free-spirited Israel youth. The name of Hashem is carried on the lips of those who in the past avoided even mentioning Him..."

"The truth must be told, and with the strongest emphasis: the expression of this great excitement into action; the manifestation of this *neshama-hisorerus* into physical acts—in this area, the Lubavitcher Rebbe was the first..."

"For about three hours—on 17 Tammuz—I stood by the Kosel and watched the *mivtza tefillin*. How thrilling it was to watch the faces of people saying the *brachos* on tefillin for the first time in their lives, mostly youngsters who are "*tinokos shenishbu*" and who greeted this *mivtza* with joy. With pleasure and excitement they stretched out their arms, their faces full of emotion from their inner spiritual tremor. After they put on tefillin, some of them asked how to acquire their own sets so that they could put them on tomorrow as well. I also saw parents coming with their children; the parents were intellectuals, *apikursim*, and their children were begging them to put on tefillin. Many of them even conceded and put on tefillin, and who knows if this concession might just guide them to true *teshuva*."

"These Chassidim are due great praise; they have the patience of steel, standing there day after day under the burning rays of the sun, trying to convince the passerby with friendly words to do them the favor and put on tefillin and daven near the Kosel. Like soldiers with iron discipline, the Rebbe's Chassidim stand to fulfill the *mivtza*. They are standing at the front; neither heat nor frost will move them from their place. The Rebbe's command is strong and their joy is immense."¹⁴

"Harold Mosmer, a 29 year old copy editor for Eye magazine was attracted by the trucks sings. 'They're just great', he said, and for the first time in 15 years he put on tefillin...In the first two hours, about 50 people did their mitzvah. "[But] we haven't really gotten too many hippies today,' one of the Rabbis said. 'But we will.'"

"Across the park, a hippie sang: 'Shout, shout, shout/Let's drop out.'"

"Let them drop into the Old world', Rabbi Schrage said."¹⁵

England

In an interview with A Chassidisher Derher, Rabbi Aharon Cousin relates: "The day after the farbrengen when the Rebbe first announced *mivtza tefillin*, we held a major meeting of *anash* in England. We came up with different ideas of what to do, and I volunteered to coordinate the campaign. First of all, we contacted all rabbonim throughout England and asked them to speak about the *mivtza* on the following Shabbos. We received an amazing response."

"We also decided that everyone in *anash* would go out to different areas of England, and go from door to door talking to people. We divided up all the streets, two people to every street; some people did it on Sundays, while others did it in the evenings after work. (It gets dark very late in England in the summer, so they had an hour or two after they arrived home.)"

"We sold so many pairs of tefilin that the *sofrim* ran out! We began contacting many old shuls around London, who had loads and loads of tefillin from members who had left this world. We found thousands of pairs, some of which must have been over a hundred years old. The *sofer* was very busy working with the tefillin, fixing them, and thus we were able to provide them for people."

"We also arranged a national week of *mivtza tefillin*, and we contacted all the rabbonim and Jewish organizations that they should speak about the *mivtza*."

"I got a personal letter from the Rebbe where he thanked me for my activities. In fact, the Rebbe called me '*rav pa'alim b'mivtza tefillin*'."

"The activities carried on ever since."



Hasidic Jews Confront Hippies To Press a Joyous Mysticism



These dancing street scenes depict the Hasidic Jews of the South Bronx, New York City, who are trying to spread their joyous mysticism to the hippies who live in the same area.

MITZVA TEFILLIN IN A NEW YORK MITZVAH TANK, TISHREI 5736.

By David S. Brothman
The Hasidic Jews of the South Bronx, New York City, are trying to spread their joyous mysticism to the hippies who live in the same area. The Hasidic Jews are a small group of people who live in the South Bronx, New York City. They are known for their traditional Jewish clothing and their joyous mysticism. They are trying to spread their joyous mysticism to the hippies who live in the same area. The hippies are a group of people who live in the South Bronx, New York City. They are known for their long hair and their love of music. They are trying to spread their love of music to the Hasidic Jews who live in the same area.

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LEVIFREDIN via JEM, 141904



MIVTZA TEFFILIN IN ERETZ YISROEL SHORTLY AFTER THE SIX DAY WAR.

Montreal

The Rabbonim of Montreal (only a few of which were Lubavitchers) held a conference to discuss what they could do, and they came up with some wide-ranging ideas:

“Rabbis Halperin, Zambrovski and Teicher said that when boys are prepared for bar mitzvah celebrations it should be mandatory that they learn how to put on tefillin...Rabbi Denberg proposed that they should approach the “Protestant school board” and request permission to don tefillin at the majority-Jewish high school...Rabbi Hendel proposed that they should go on the radio to speak about it...Rabbis Levitas and Rozner added that they should put out a press release for the Montreal newspapers, and Rabbis Baron and Hirschsprung added that it was important to be publicized in New York newspapers as well...

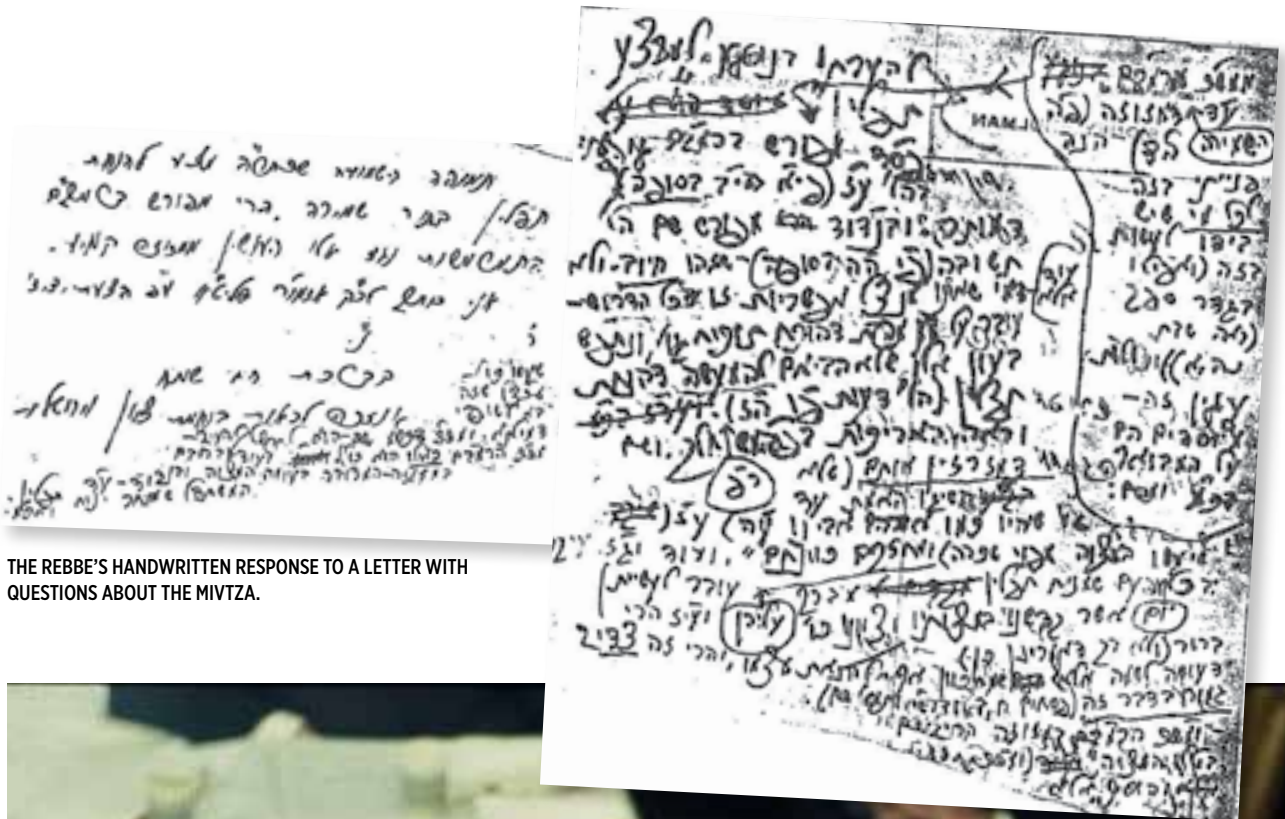
“Rabbis Zambrovski and Kramer proposed that the week of Shabbos Mishpatim should be announced as a week dedicated to activities in [*mivtza tefillin*]...Rabbi Hechtman said that the Vaad Ha’ir’ would assist with [the expenses of buying new tefillin for those who need]...”¹⁶

Dealing with Opposition

The response to *mivtza tefillin* was fast and frenzied. On one side, there were hundreds of rabbonim and public figures who supported the *mivtza* at every opportunity, and, even more importantly, the hundreds of thousands of Yidden who put on tefillin. But there were, of course, those who came up with all types of questions, complaints, and problems; ranging from halachic style questions like, ‘How can a person put on tefillin without a *guf noki* (clean body)?’ to belligerent complaints such as, ‘Lubavitch is only doing it for the publicity!’ Some, who were more friendly, wrote these questions into the Rebbe privately. Others spoke against the *mivtza* in public arenas and wrote against it in newspapers. The Rebbe’s *sichos* from that period deal with this subject quite extensively, and his basic approach would be repeated in the ensuing years on various issues, and is something every Chossid should be familiar with.

On the one hand, the Rebbe was very clear on the fact that when dealing with those who were

“If it truly bothers you that someone is doing it for ulterior motives, then, as a person who does everything *lishmo ulishma*, pack your bags, purchase a plane ticket, travel to the *Kosel HaMa’aravi*, and put on tefillin with Yidden...”



THE REBBE'S HANDWRITTEN RESPONSE TO A LETTER WITH QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MITVZA.



complaining for the sake of agitating, he knew exactly who he was dealing with. In one *sicha* regarding the complaint that the Lubavitchers were only doing *mitvza tefillin* for the publicity, the Rebbe had this to say:

“If it truly bothers you that someone is doing it for ulterior motives, then, as a person who does everything *lishmo ulishma*, pack your bags, purchase a plane ticket, travel to the *Kosel HaMa’aravi*, put on tefillin with Yidden, and let everyone know that you are from “the group of humble people”—as in the famous story told by the Friediker Rebbe¹⁷—that you don’t want any pictures, you don’t want to be featured in the newspapers, and you don’t want to be ‘an honorary chairman,’ you simply wish to put on tefillin with Yidden!

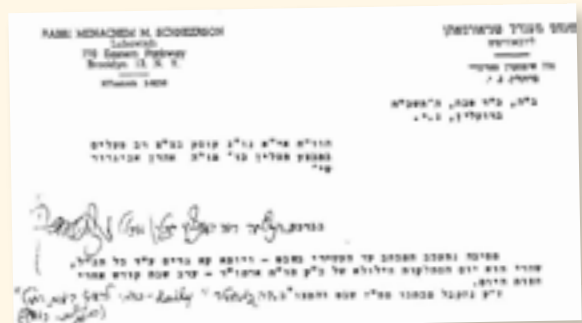
“You don’t like tefillin? Then choose some other mitzvah (out of the other 612) and work on it; but do something!

“Instead, you are sitting in America and discouraging people from putting on tefillin. And when you have a doubt—perhaps you will be able to influence one more Yid not to put on tefillin—you make sure to go *lechumra*!

“There is a *yungerman* who, with *mesiras nefesh*, travels “מארצך וממולדתך ומביתך אביר” to the *Kosel HaMa’aravi* and stands for many hours under the burning sun, hoping that he will be able to affect one more Jew to put on tefillin.

“He does not receive a medal nor any honor; he is not appointed to be the ‘honorary president,’ he has *mesiras nefesh* to travel from his house to the Kosel where he stands for many hours, and when he returns home his wife complains, ‘Why do you have to travel? In Yerushalayim, not far from the Kosel, there are rabbonim, *roshei yeshivos*, *shochtim*, *mohelim* and yeshiva *bochurim*. Why must you travel from the other end of Eretz Yisrael? It would be better for

Below are excerpts from two letters sent to Reb Aaron Avigdor Cousin of Manchester England, regarding his efforts in Mivtza Tefillin.



ות"ח על הדו"ח והבשור"ט ממבצע התפלין.
המצו"ב - השתתפותי סמלית בהוצאות מבצע הכי נעלה הנ"ל.
בברכת הצלחה רבה לכל משתתפי מבצע התפלין.

...AND MANY THANKS FOR THE REPORT AND THE GOOD NEWS REGARDING THE MIVTZA TEFFILIN.

THE ATTACHED [CHECK] IS MY SYMBOLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE EXPENSES OF THIS THE ABOVEMENTIONED GREATEST MIVTZA. WITH BLESSINGS FOR MUCH SUCCESS TO ALL INVOLVED IN THE MIVTZA TEFFILIN.

בברכת הצלחה רבה במבצע תפלין ובכלל.
בה"פאוסטר" DAILY - כדאי להוסיף "בימות החול" (באנגלית כמובן).

WITH BLESSINGS FOR MUCH SUCCESS IN MIVTZA TEFFILIN AND IN GENERAL.

IN THE POSTER [ABOUT MIVTZA TEFFILIN, WHERE IT SAYS TO DON THE TEFFILIN] DAILY - YOU SHOULD ADD "ON WEEKDAYS" (IN ENGLISH, OF COURSE).

you to stay at home, educate your children, and learn Torah!’

“Yet he does not pay attention to all of these arguments, and leaves his home with genuine self-sacrifice. How do you have the audacity to come and cool him off?”

Nevertheless, the Rebbe answered every single one of the complaints, as irrelevant as some of them were, explaining on at least one occasion that he was addressing this only because otherwise there is a slight chance it will cause weakness in the *mivtzoim*.

The Rebbe’s first and primary answer to all questions was that every Yid has the constant obligation to bring people closer to Torah and mitzvot, an obligation derived from several sources: the mitzvah of *hoche’ach tochi’ach es amisecha*—to influence other people to fulfill Torah and mitzvot; *ve’ahavta lereiacha kamocha*, loving a fellow Yid as oneself; and the concept that *kol Yisroel areivim ze lazeh*, that all Yidden are responsible for each other. *Mivtza tefillin* is only one method of fulfilling these overarching obligations.

The Rebbe answered each complaint separately as well, providing fascinating insight into the preciseness with which he had introduced the *mivtza*, but that is beyond the scope of this article.¹⁸

The Effect of One Tefillin

The period of the Six Day War marks one of the most significant times in modern Jewish history. The terrible danger and miraculous victory caused a shift in the general Jewish psyche. Many people who grew up then remember it as the time when they began taking interest and pride in their Judaism.

The Rebbe seized on this *hisorerus* and channeled it to Torah and mitzvot; indeed, many historians view this period as the beginning of the *baal teshuva* movement. On Yud-Tes Kislev 5728, a few months after the Six Day War, the Rebbe delivered a landmark address on the state of the youth in America, laying out the roots of the issues plaguing them and the methods that would be effective in bringing them back, and used the symbolism and meaning of tefillin as a centerpiece of the *farbrengen*. *Mivtza tefillin*

quickly shifted from being an initiative mostly focused on Eretz Yisrael to one of the principal methods of *dor hashvi’i* outreach. Indeed, it turned into the one of the most visible symbols of Lubavitch; it marked the beginning of an entirely new era in Jewish activism.

But the method of *mivtza tefillin*, the first of the *mivtzoim*, was starkly different than any type of outreach that had been done before. This *mivtza* isn’t about *educating* the person, it isn’t about *teaching* him about the importance of Torah and mitzvot, it’s about offering him to do one single mitzvah—with no immediately clear long term effect. This idea was revolutionary and many people couldn’t wrap their heads around it. (Interesting to note is that even today, when the Rebbe’s approach to *kiruv* has been almost universally adopted by the *frumme* world, with many hundreds of non-Lubavitch couples going out to be *mekarev* people, the idea of *mivtzoim* as an ends to itself is still beyond them, as of yet.)

In explaining this, first and foremost the Rebbe always quoted the *psak din* of the Rambam: A person must always look at himself as equally balanced between merit and sin and



THE FAMED GABBAI AT 770, REB MOSHE PINCHAS KATZ PARTICIPATES IN MIVTZA TEFILLIN IN ERETZ YISROEL SHORTLY AFTER THE SIX-DAY WAR.

the world as equally balanced between merit and sin...If he performs one mitzvah, he tips his balance and that of the entire world to the side of merit and brings deliverance and salvation to himself and others. Thus, every mitzvah a person does has infinite significance.¹⁹

Furthermore, the Rebbe explained: That single action, though it may seem meaningless and empty—that is what will bring them to do more mitzvos, since *mitzvah goreres mitzvah*, one mitzva drags another along with it. He may have started with a relatively easy mitzvah, but *hamaase hu ha'ikar*, and this action will eventually lead to many other mitzvos.

To illustrate this, the Rebbe related the following story:

“There was a Jew who was accustomed to publicly consuming non-kosher food. They tried to convince him to put on tefillin, but he refused to give in; they spoke to him again and again, until he finally agreed. Afterwards, when dinner time arrived, he announced that they should not give him any non-kosher food...”²⁰

The Rebbe added another reason as well, which is specific to tefillin: Through donning tefillin even once in his lifetime, a Yid is taken out of the category of a *karkafta d'lo manach tefillin*—a skull (head) that never donned tefillin, thus enabling the Yid to enter *olam haba* (as the Gemara says). By helping someone put on tefillin even once, you are giving him eternal life!²¹



As a result of the Rebbe's call, *yeshiva bochurim* have been on the streets every Friday afternoon, while *ballebatim* go out on Sundays, assisting their fellow Jews to fulfill the mitzvah. Millions of Yidden have reconnected with Yiddishkeit and taken the moment to submit their hearts and minds to their Creator, as a result of the Rebbe's call.

The Rebbe himself attested to the great successes of *mitvza tefillin*, stating that “this campaign has seen *bracha v'hatzalcha* right from its inception, and it has only grown ever since, bearing fruit and setting off a chain reaction (פירות ופירי פירות)...” **ד**

1. Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, August 31, 1955
2. JTA June 11 1967
3. Toras Menachem vol. 49 p. 414
4. Toras Menachem vol. 50 p. 427-434
5. Igros Kodesh vol. 25 no. 9,435
6. See sichas Shabbos Korach, Toras Menachem vol. 50 p. 118.
7. Zecharya 9, 14
8. Yeshaya 27,13
9. Shabbos Bereishis, Toras Menachem vol 51 p. 211; Yud Tes Kislev 5728 Toras Menachem vol. 51 p. 386
10. 6 Tishrei 5728, Toras Menachem vol. 51 p. 84
11. Hapardes issue 4 year 42



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12. Hapardes issue 4 year 42
13. See e.g. letter to Rabbi Binyomin Gorodetzky, 28 Teves 5728; telegram from mazkirus 21 Sivan 5727.
14. Hapardes, Tishrei 5728
15. New York Times, May 27 1968
16. Hapardes issue 7 year 42
17. Sefer Hazichronos vol. 1 end of chapter 56
18. One famous compilation of answers was edited by the Rebbe and published in Lekutei Sichos vol. 6 p. 271.
19. Shabbos Parshas Bereishis, Toras Menachem vol. 51 p. 224
20. Shabbos Vayishlach 5728, Toras Menachem 51 p. 289
21. See Shabbos Parshas Bereishis, Toras Menachem vol. 51 p. 224; 11 Nissan 5743, Hisvaaduyos 5743 vol. 3 p. 1210

It's in the Deed

In *yechidus* with the Rebbe, an Israeli general asked a question: "Why isn't it enough to recite Shema without putting on tefillin?"

The Rebbe smiled, and said, "I'm surprised that you, a military general, would have such a question. As Jews do, I will answer your question with a question. Why is it that soldiers go through training regimens and practice?"

"The answer is simple," he replied. "If they don't go through training, they won't know what to do at the moment of truth on the battlefield."

"But why," the Rebbe pressed, "isn't it enough to study the rules of war? Why must they physically train?"

"You cannot compare theories to actual training; it's an entirely different thing!"

"The same is true spiritually," the Rebbe said. "Reciting Shema without putting on tefillin is like studying without training. True, "*Shema Yisrael*" is an expression of *emunah*, but the true expression of *emunah* is in actual deed."

(Hiskashrus issue 215)

