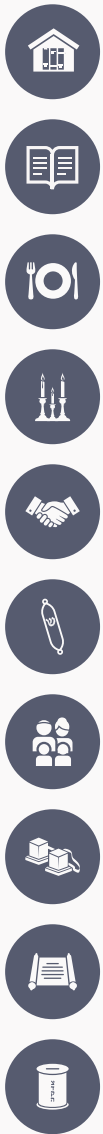


BY: RABBI MENDEL JACOBS

MIVTZA TEFILLIN



TAKING ACTION

THE TEN
MIVTZOIM
REVISITED



לע"נ
ר' אברהם שמואל בן ר' משה ע"ה שפאלטר
נלב"ע כ"ד ניסן ה'תשפ"ה

ולע"נ
ר' משה חיים בן ר' מאיר הערץ ע"ה
נפ' ר"ח תמוז ה'תשפ"ד
ת'נצ'ב'ה'

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ולזכות הורינו
מרת רבקה מירל שיחיו שפאלטר
מרת שרה תחיל' גיפער
לאריכות ימים ושנים טובות מתוך בריאות הנכונה
נדפס ע"י הרה"ת ר' יצחק מאיר וזוגתו
מרת לאה ומשפחתם שיחיו
שפאלטר

As the first of the Rebbe's Ten Mivtzoim, and the one that has probably become the most widely associated with Lubavitch activity, Mivtza Tefillin holds a special place in every Chossid's heart.

Whether on an Israeli army base or on an airplane 30,000 feet over the Atlantic Ocean, the iconic image of Chabad Chassidim assisting their fellow Jews with this precious mitzvah is ever present.

The full story of Mivtza Tefillin has been covered in previous Derher magazines.¹ Today, we revisit some of its background story, with additional facts and vignettes, with the goal of inspiring even greater action—in Mivtza Tefillin, and all the *mivtzoim*.

In the days before the outbreak of the Six-Day War, amidst the chaotic and frightening prognosis cast upon the population of Eretz Yisroel, the Rebbe called on everyone to do away with fear; trusting that Hashem would protect His people.

"I am extremely unhappy about the panic and exaggerated [fear being sown]," the Rebbe wrote to a concerned Yid in Eretz Yisroel. "Hashem will watch over all those you mentioned, together with all the Jewish people *shlita*, wherever they are; especially in the location upon which His eyes always are [Eretz Yisroel]..."²

In private responses and in public, the Rebbe reassured all his listeners that there was no reason to be afraid; Hashem would watch over His people, and a miraculous deliverance was at hand.

The Launch

On Shabbos Parshas Bamidbar, two days before the war began, the Rebbe spoke on the theme of war at the farbrengen.

There are two types of war, the Rebbe explained. One way is for us mortals here on earth to fight, as the Torah says, "[Count] all those who go out to fight in battle." A better way is when Hashem fights our battles for us, as it says, "Hashem is the Master of war."

Nevertheless, even as we hope for the second option to materialize when Hashem fights our battles for us, we must take some action on our part to make that a reality. Although we are not supposed to measure the importance of one mitzvah over the other, there are *mitzvos* about which the Torah reveals unique spiritual powers more than all others. For example, the mitzvah of tefillin, we are told, grants a person long life and casts



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fear into the hearts of our enemies.

After a lengthy discussion on this subject based on many Torah sources, the Rebbe concluded:

“I’m not here to give *drashos*. I mean practically: Given the current situation in Eretz Yisroel, we must make every effort to put kosher tefillin on the maximum number of Jewish people possible...”³

Now More Than Ever

After the war was over and the entire world had recognized the great miracle that had occurred, the Rebbe said that now was the time to double down on the efforts of this *mitvza*:

Firstly, the main impetus behind the *mitvza* still applies. The mitzvah of “*Hocheach tochiach*” (influencing one’s fellow Jew in the ways of Torah), “*Ve’ahavta l’reiacha kamocho*” (love your fellow as yourself), “*Kol Yisroel areivim*” (all Jews are responsible for one another) apply at all times equally.

Furthermore, the entire Jewish world is currently on a spiritual high due to the great miracles we just witnessed. We therefore have an even greater responsibility than usual to help bring this inspiration to action.

Then the Rebbe quoted an interesting *halacha* in this context:

The Gemara states (and the Shulchan Aruch cites this as a practical ruling) that if tragedy strikes and the Jewish community is unable to fast, they should accept upon themselves the obligation to fast later on. The Shulchan Aruch explains:

“If a city is under siege by non-Jews, the inhabitants should not fast right away, so as not to diminish their physical strength [in case they need to fight a battle]. Instead, they should accept upon themselves to fast after they are saved.”

The Rebbe explained that Hashem, of course, transcends time, and He therefore *retroactively* applies the *teshuva* that they will do after the battle is over.

Similarly, the miracles that Hashem showed us during the Six-Day War were due to the *mitzvos* that would be done even *after* the war was over! We must therefore utilize every opportunity we have to continue with this *mitvza*, laying tefillin on as many Jewish men as possible.⁴



The Scene at a Tel Aviv Bus Station

Following the Rebbe’s encouragement, Chassidim worldwide threw themselves into the *mitvza*. In Eretz Yisroel, 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, have become accustomed to being offered the opportunity to lay tefillin during their journey. 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 *mitvzoim* stand, written by an Israeli journalist:

“Friday afternoon, the main bus station in Tel Aviv. The sun is burning in full force; tens of individuals pass you every minute, hurrying on their way. But when you



RABBI SHMUEL DOVID RAICHIK
LAYING TEFILLIN ON A FELLOW
PASSENGER ABOARD AN AIRPLANE.

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; he 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 Jew from Dimona, who apologizes that in the army, he ‘cooled off’ a bit, but will now begin to put on tefillin every day. The fourth, a *kibbutznik*, a native Israeli from Givat Berner, is 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.”

The Power of One Deed

As expected, the Rebbe’s innovative approach sparked much controversy, even, and especially, in the Torah world. Many people posed questions about whether it was advisable or even permissible to lay tefillin with people who are not yet frum and may not know what the mitzvah is all about.

The Rebbe responded to these questions at length.⁵

One of the most interesting proofs the Rebbe offered for his approach was from the Smag (*Sefer Mitzvos Gadol*, written by one of the Balei HaTosfos). He writes that “There is not a *rasha* [among the Jewish people] who is not worthy of putting on tefillin.” The Smag continues that “I preached in all the Jewish diaspora [in Spain and in other lands] that everyone must observe the mitzvah of tefillin and mezuzos...”

The Rebbe then divulged that “when I launched the campaign, I didn’t want to cite the above words of the Smag,” or the other statement by the Smag that “Hashem desires more for a *rasha* to wear tefillin than a *tzaddik*. For the whole premise of tefillin is to serve as a reminder for the wicked, to get them back on the straight path...”

The Rebbe said that these words don’t really apply in our time, since today, most people who don’t keep *mitzvos* are not at fault, assuming the halachic status of “*tinokos shenishbu*.”

Another question that the Rebbe addressed was: What is the benefit of persuading a person to do just



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MIVTZA TEFFILIN AT THE KOSEL HAMAARAVI.

one single mitzvah with no apparent follow-up?

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 the opposite and the world as equally balanced between merit and the opposite... 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.⁶

Furthermore, the Rebbe explained: That single action, though it may seem meaningless and empty, *that* is what will cause them to do more *mitzvos*, since *mitzvah goreres mitzvah*, one mitzvah 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...”⁷

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!⁸

Tefillin and Moshiach

Ultimately, the goal of Mivtza Tefillin and all of the *mitvzoim* is to bring Moshiach.

Specifically Mivtza Tefillin: The Rebbe cited the Gemara stating that before Moshiach comes, the nations of the world will rebel against Hashem saying, “וְנִתְקָה אֶת מוֹסְרוֹתֵינוּ וְנִשְׁלִיכָהּ מִמֶּנּוּ עִבְתֵּינוּ” —Let us break their bands and cast off their cords from us.” The Midrash explains that these words refer to the mitzvah of Tefillin: “their bands” refers to *tefillin shel yad*, and “their cords” refers to *tefillin shel rosh*.

This indicates, said the Rebbe, that before Moshiach comes, we must strengthen our commitment to the mitzvah of tefillin, and this will hasten his coming; may it be *bekarov mamash!*⁹

HE'S WAITING!



Interview with Rabbi Moishe New

By: Rabbi Bentzion Pearson

Although I've been on shlichus for over 40 years now B"H, my "koch" in Mivtza Tefillin is fairly recent. It was around 5766 when I was in Eretz Yisroel to speak in honor of Yud Shevat. While there, I was in a shopping mall with two of my sons who were in *yeshivos* in Eretz Yisroel, when we were approached by a group of soldiers. One of them turned to us and said: "*Atem Chabad! Anachnu rotzim l'haniach tefillin*—You're Chabad! We want to put on Tefillin!"

My heart sank. *Gevald!* I didn't have Tefillin. Right then and there I resolved that with Hashem's help, such would never happen again.

Back in Montreal at one of our weekly lunch-and-learns, I shared the story. I told the participants that I want to buy a new pair of tefillin dedicated specifically for *mivtzoim*, and offered them the opportunity to take part in the mitzvah.

Now, there's a common misconception that *mivtzoim* tefillin don't have to be as *mehudar* as our own personal ones. I believe this is a mistake. When you put on tefillin with a fellow Yid, this might be one of the few times in his life that he's going to do this mitzvah. It may even be the only time. Even if

he had a Bar Mitzvah or has tefillin of his own, who knows if they are kosher? So if you have the opportunity to put tefillin on him they need to be the most *mehudar* pair possible!

So I told the *baale-batim* at the shiur that I wanted to buy a beautiful pair of tefillin—the Alter Rebbe's *ksav*. B"H one of them volunteered right there to cover the whole expense.

I commissioned a local sofer, Reb Zev Teitelbaum, to write a top-of-the-line pair, in the interim using my own pair for *Mivtzoim*. Since that time, the new tefillin have gone almost everywhere with me. I haven't kept tally but many, many hundreds of Yidden have donned that pair of tefillin.

And it's all *b'zechus* those soldiers who approached me at the mall. True, I failed



MONTREAL TORAH CENTRE.



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them, but thanks to them hundreds of their fellow Jews have put on tefillin, and counting!

I'd like to share two points about putting on tefillin with others:

Firstly, it's not always easy. Often it's much easier to be Mr. Nice Guy and not make demands on people. However, we need to think for a moment: this *neshama* is waiting for me to help him put on tefillin. All the discomfort, indeed all the money in the world doesn't come to the value of this single mitzvah—connecting a Yid with *Atzmus u'Mehus!*

Our Chabad house in Montreal—the Montreal Torah Centre—is, *Baruch Hashem*, a bustling community center and *simchos* are frequent. Of course many of these *simchos* take place on a Sunday or weekday. To be honest, there's a part of me that wishes they would be on Shabbos. Why? Because then I don't have to go around approaching every guest to put on tefillin! (I'm not the only one doing

so of course. All the Shluchim in the *moisad* are doing likewise.) It's so much easier to welcome everyone with a warm hug, and to just make an announcement inviting anybody who wants to put on tefillin to do so. But I know I can't do that. These are *neshamos* that have come through our doors, and it's my responsibility to approach each and every one personally, whether I'm comfortable or not!

When I'm *mesader kiddushin* and there's time till *shkiah*, I bring my tefillin, not just for the *chosson*, but the families and friends. What better way is there to go to the *chupah!* Likewise when going to a wedding as a guest, or to a bar mitzvah or *bris*, I always try to help others put on tefillin.

The same is true when going to be *menachem avel*, *r"l*—whether it's for davening or any other time. It's an opportunity to put on Tefillin not merely with the *aveilim* but with everyone present. There have been times when scores of Yidden put on tefillin then and there.

The point is: we need to take out tefillin wherever we go. Shopping. Vacation. Or visiting a doctor or dentist. I say to the doctor afterwards with a smile, "Doctor, I need 35 more seconds of your time. I want to do a mitzvah together. Which hand do you write with?" Rarely does the doctor resist.

Which brings me to a second point: Don't ask the person if he'd like to put on tefillin. If he'd like to, he would have done so without you!

Instead, approach the Yid with a smile, and introduce yourself and ask him his name. After a pleasantry or two say, "Let's do a *mitzvah* together. It'll only take a few seconds."

It's much harder to refuse that. When you do it with a smile and with love, you're much more likely to have success. And then, even if the Yid doesn't want to put on tefillin for whatever reason, the love doesn't change. You've created a moment of genuine *ahavas Yisroel*. Sometimes I'll say to him (still with a smile), "You know, I hope that the next time you're approached with this opportunity, you'll agree to put them on." Often, individuals who were resistant become emotional when they actually



CELEBRATING HOWARD'S PUTTING ON TEFILLIN FOR THE FIRST TIME.

put on tefillin. I've seen that over and over again. And then they thank you, because the *neshama* opens up.

One more critical point:

We often see photos that people share from *mitzvoim*, and unfortunately, because they're doing it in a hurry, the tefillin are not always placed correctly.

This is so important, it cannot be overstated: Take the time to ensure that the tefillin are placed exactly as they should be. Who knows if this Yid is going to put on tefillin again? This is a G-d given moment. The *Aibishter* wants to connect to this Yid! Take the time and care—attention to every detail—and do it right!

I carry around, together with the tefillin, a small jeweler's plier. It's the perfect tool to easily adjust the straps of the Tefillin—particularly the Shel Rosh, ensuring it's the right size—without cutting into the leather. (Just be sure not to carry it with you in your hand luggage when traveling, airport security will confiscate it.)

Let me conclude with a little story:

Last year on Gimmel Tammuz I was not able to go to the Ohel; I had to be in Los Angeles.

So it's Gimmel Tammuz in the morning, and we went out to eat on Pico Boulevard. Of course, I took my tefillin. My first encounter was a table of young guys sitting and eating. It was outside a kosher pizza store, but none of them were wearing *yarmulkas*. I approached the table and said, "Boys, do you know what today is?" They all knew it was Gimmel Tammuz! Those that hadn't put on tefillin did so happily. Then I went into the next restaurant and moved from table to table. Almost everyone knew it was Gimmel Tammuz, and many put on tefillin in the Rebbe's honor.

If we approach with confidence, and the other Yid feels that we mean it for his own good, *bgashmiyus uv'ruchniyus*, rarely will a

Jew refuse. In our approach, we need to convey the *emes* that our asking him to put on tefillin is not about him becoming anything. It's about revealing who he truly is!

The heart of the Jewish people is awake. Especially now after October 7th. Every every single chossid without exception; whether a *bochur* or a *yungerman*, whether officially a shliach or not—the *emes* is that the Rebbe declared that each and every one of us is a personal shliach of *nessi doreinu!*—each and every one of us has the responsibility and *zechus* to put on tefillin with every Jew we encounter. Especially now, before Moshiach comes, there's a sense of urgency. *Neshamos* are on fire! The only obstacle is us. Go out there with your tefillin and you will see that Yidden respond!

After the miracles of the Six-Day War, the Rebbe said that the "*shofar gadol*," the call before the coming of Moshiach, had been sounded. The Jewish world was in a state of euphoria. It was the beginning of the great Jewish renaissance and marked the birth of the Teshuva movement.

That was just the beginning. Today, all the more so! The Jewish world is so open, our fellow Jews are searching for connection.

All we need to do is be the conduit and allow the Rebbe to awaken the *neshama* of our fellow Yid.

Hatzlacha Rabba!

1. See "Reconnecting," Derher, Iyar 5777.
2. Igros Kodesh vol. 24, p. 333.
3. Toras Menachem vol. 49, pp. 427–434.
4. Shavuos 5727; Toras Menachem vol. 50, p. 91.
5. See Likkutei Sichos vol. 6, p. 271.
6. Shabbos Parshas Bereishis 5728; Toras Menachem vol. 51, p. 224.
7. Shabbos Parshas Vayishlach 5728; Toras Menachem vol. 51, p. 289.
8. See Shabbos Parshas Bereishis; Toras Menachem vol. 51, p. 224; 11 Nissan 5743.
9. Shabbos Parshas Vayishlach 5728; Toras Menachem vol. 51, p. 298.

