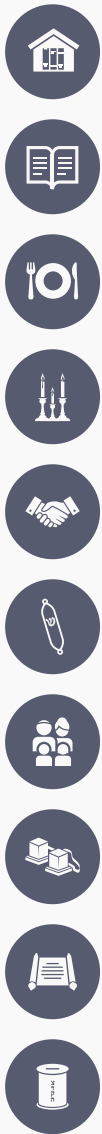


BY: RABBI MENDEL JACOBS

# MIVTZA MEZUZAH



# TALKING ACTION

THE TEN  
MIVTZOIM  
REVISITED

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

ולע"נ  
ר' משה חיים בן ר' ר' מאיר הערץ ע"ה  
נפ' ר"ח תמוז ה'תשפ"ד  
תנ"צ'בה'

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

“The world has become much darker in recent years,” the Rebbe said when launching Mivtza Mezuzah, “in both the spiritual and the material sense. We need to counter this darkness with the one true light of goodness and holiness. Not that we should counter the darkness with an equal measure of light; what would be the point in that? The whole reason for the darkness to begin with is to awaken the Jewish people to illuminate the world many times over.”

At this point, the Rebbe reiterated his previous call that every Jewish home should have a Chumash, Siddur, Tehillim, and Tzedakah box. Then the Rebbe added:

One of the main reasons for the *neshama's* descent into this world is not only for its own benefit, but to transform the world around as well. It's not enough, then, for the Jewish home to be illuminated with Torah and *mitzvos*; we must take this campaign even further, to the outside street.

This can be accomplished through the mitzvah of mezuzah:

A mezuzah, like a Chanukah menorah, is placed outside the home, attesting to the Jewishness of the home and showing everyone in the outside world that this household follows the words found inside the mezuzah: Belief in Hashem, studying His Torah, and performing His *mitzvos*.

The Rebbe concluded with a call to action:

It is our responsibility to ensure that every Jewish home, and every room within it, has a kosher mezuzah.

Given that *mezuzos* can be very expensive, some individuals have undertaken to help offset the costs of purchasing *mezuzos* or checking old ones, easing the burden.

Best would be if they purchase the *mezuzos*, but if, for whatever reason, they are unable or unwilling to pay, they should be given a mezuzah free of charge, aside from a small symbolic amount.<sup>1</sup>

Later in the year, the Rebbe intensified the push to bring the *mivtza* even further, due to a tragic incident where a group of twenty school children in Eretz Yisroel were killed in a horrifying terror attack.

The following Shabbos, the Rebbe revealed that a chossid in Tzfas had called, and reported that he had checked the *mezuzos* of the school in which the children studied, and found that all 17 were *possul*, a number which corresponded to the official number of victims that was announced. When the newspapers publicized the next day that the number of casualties was greater, the Rebbe asked to “inquire once again regarding the number of *mezuzos*.” Upon further investigation, it was discovered that there were more rooms with four additional *mezuzos*. Two of them were definitely *possul*, and the other two were questionably *possul*!

“This doesn't mean that the tragedy struck due to a deficiency in observing *mitzvos*, *chas v'shalom*,” the Rebbe explained. “Rather, this can be understood by the example of a soldier who goes out to battle and takes off his helmet. If the soldier gets injured from enemy fire, the enemy is obviously to blame for the tragedy. However, if the soldier had been wearing his helmet properly, he certainly would have been better protected against injury.”<sup>2</sup>

After this story, the Rebbe continued and increased his call for more engagement with the *mivtzoim*, especially Mivtza Mezuzah, throughout the summer. (See *ksav yad kodesh* in sidebar).



## “MY HEARTFELT PLEA”

In the summer of 5734, the Rebbe drafted this letter in his holy handwriting, with a heartfelt plea to all Jews to further spread the *mitvzoim*, especially *Mivtza Mezuzah*:

ב"ה, חמשה עשר בתמוז, חודש הגאולה ה'תשל"ד, שנת הקהל -  
ברוקלין, נ. י.

בלשון הרב - לכל מחבבי תורתנו הק', שומרי מצוה, וגם את  
אשר בשם ישראל יכונה

ה' עליהם יחיו  
שלום וברכה!

בבקשה נפשית להגביר חיל ולהוסיף בכל המבצעים, מתחיל  
במבצע מזוזה,

ולתחיל בהוספה זו עוד לפני בין המיצרים, וגם בשבת  
מפקחין על עסקי רבים ופוסקים צדקה - כפשוטה וברוחניות.  
ויהי רצון שיהפכו ימים אלה לששון ולשמחה בקרוב ממש,  
בגאולה האמיתית והשלימה ע"י משיח צדקנו, וישראל עושה  
חיל.

כבוד וברכת הצלחה בכהנ"ל.

מ. ש.

B"H. 15 Tammuz, month of redemption, 5734, Year  
of Hakhel —

Brooklyn, NY

[To quote] the term used by the [Friediker]  
Rebbe—To all those who hold our holy Torah dear,  
who observe the *mitzvot*, and even to those who are  
[merely] referred to as Jewish,

May Hashem bless you

Greetings and Blessings!

It is my heartfelt plea that you intensify your efforts,  
increasing in all of the *mitvzoim*, starting with *Mivtza*  
*Mezuzah*.

Begin this increase even before the Three Weeks—  
including on Shabbos, when we are permitted to  
orchestrate the needs of the public, [including] allocat-  
ing *tzedakah*—whether material or spiritual [tzedakah.  
I.e., assisting fellow Jews with *mitzvah* observance].

May these days [of mourning] transform into glad-  
ness and joy very soon, with the true and complete  
redemption through our righteous Moshiach, and the  
Jewish people shall triumph.

With esteem and blessing for success in all of the  
above,

M. S.

## Check Your Mezuzos

Chassidim immediately sprang into action. In addition to providing every Jewish home with a *mezuzah*, the Rebbe specifically instructed that even those homes that already have *mezuzos* should have them checked to ensure that they were kosher.

On the audio recording of the *Farbrengen* of *Yud-Gimmel Tammuz 5736*, a conversation between the Rebbe and a visiting *rav* can be heard between *sichos*:

The Rebbe said that he was asked a question:

Why was he insisting that all *mezuzos* should be checked, if according to halacha one must only check them once in seven years?

“I answered them,” the Rebbe explained, “that this halacha only applies if the *mezuzah* has a *chezkas kashrus*—if you could safely assume that it was kosher to begin with. However, nowadays, not only are we unsure whether the *mezuzah* is kosher or not, we can't even be sure that there's an actual *mezuzah* inside the case!

“I received a letter from a *Yid* who told me that he checked his *mezuzah* and found that one of them contained a scroll with the *pesukim* of *Birkas Kohanim!* Whoever wrote it obviously knew how to write, but he didn't know that writing *Birkas Kohanim* does not make a *mezuzah!*”<sup>3</sup>

## “It Would Be My Honor!”

An interesting moment took place a few weeks later, when the Rebbe was visited by the “Exceptional Soldiers” of the IDF, who were injured in battle. Towards the end of the *sicha*, the Rebbe told them:

“I would like to conclude, as Jews tend to do, with a request, and I'm certain you will accept it graciously:

“Given the recent terror incidents in Uganda and Istanbul, we must increase all measures of security in the physical sense, which is also connected with the spiritual means of security. My request therefore, is that when you get back to *Eretz Yisroel*, please ensure to check the *mezuzos* of your homes to see that they're kosher.

“It would be my great honor if you would also accept a gift from my representatives in *Eretz Yisroel* on my behalf: If you leave your addresses here, you will be visited by my representatives in *Eretz Yisroel* upon



THE REBBE ADDRESSES THE “EXCEPTIONAL SOLDIERS” OF THE IDF, 23 AV 5736

© 2015 JEM, YOSHI MELAMED #14027

your return, and they will assist you with checking and affixing *mezuzos* on your homes...”<sup>4</sup>

## Mezuzah and Moshiach

A mezuzah has the power to transform a house into a Jewish home, hearkening back to the words of the

*posuk* said about the Jewish midwives in Mitzrayim: “*Vayaas lahem batim...*”—and Hashem established houses for them. Rashi explains that the houses He established for them were “Houses of Kohanim, Levi’im, and kings”—ultimately resulting in the progeny of King Moshiach.

May he come speedily—*teikef umiyad mamash!*<sup>5</sup>

### ALTRUISM ONLY?

*In the following excerpts of an English letter dated 15 Sivan 5737, the Rebbe addresses someone who had asked if it was appropriate to emphasize the material benefits of fulfilling the mitzvah of mezuzah, as the Rebbe had done, in public and in private:*

Referring to your remarks in regard to the presentation of the Mezuzah Campaign and similar activities, I must say, with all due respect, that I am surprised at your objections to pointing out the reward associated with the mezuzah in terms of protection, particularly the simile of a helmet, etc. For, precisely in the case of the mezuzah the reward in this world is emphasized many times in our sacred sources, and it has, moreover, the distinction of having its reward expressly formulated in the Shulchan

Aruch to wit:

וכל הזהיר בה יאריכו ימיו וימי בניו, ואם אינו זהיר כו' (יוד רפ"ה, סס"א).

It is clear that the Shulchan Aruch speaks here of reward in this world, in the plain sense...

...I should like to add that this is the position of not only a believing Jew, but—subconsciously, and perhaps even consciously—it is the basic approach of every educator worthy of his vocation who teaches children (in age or knowledge) to develop moral attitudes and behavior—not on the merit of pure idealism alone, but also and largely on the basis of their pragmatic value. Most educators will not hesitate to advocate the virtues of honesty, justice, etc. for their immediate reward in terms of personal contentment and peace of mind, as well as for the good of the society in which to live...



**TAKING ACTION**

THE TEN MITVZOIM REVISITED

# EVERY JEWISH HOME



## Interview with **Interview with Rabbi Chaim Shaul Bruk**

By: **Rabbi Bentzion Pearson**

The story of how I started our mezuzah campaign here in Montana begins with the passing of my paternal grandmother, Mrs. Chana Brook, in 5773.

At the time, we were the only shluchim in the whole state, so we were covering the length and breadth of the entire state. It was around that time that we recognized the importance of Mitzva Mezuzah and its special qualities over many of the other *mitvtzoim*:

Firstly, it was one of the Rebbe's go-to answers on so many occasions. How many times did the Rebbe tell people asking for his brachos to check their tefillin and *mezuzos*? It's countless!

Secondly, in our state, the Jews are scattered over a vast area of land. We needed to find an easy mitzvah that could be implemented at scale, and mezuzah really fit the bill. It's fairly simple: You make a *bracha* and you put it on. You're not asking them for a major commitment like *taharas hamishpacha*, to send their kids to a Jewish day school, or even to fill their homes with *seforim*. It's a small, simple task with a great impact: They put a mezuzah on their door, and it brings

Hashem's blessings to their home, Divine protection, and much more.

The third point is something which I believe mezuzah is unique among all the Rebbe's *mitvtzoim*: A mezuzah forces the Jew living in the home to be comfortable enough to identify with their Yiddishkeit, even outside their home. There's no better display of *Ga'on Yaakov* than a beautiful mezuzah hanging proudly outside the front door.

Some of these people are living in a town where they're literally the only Jew. This is a reality for many, many towns in Montana, as far as we know.

As mentioned, this program started around the time that my grandmother passed away, so I approached a relative of ours and I asked him if he'd be the first sponsor of this project with a gift of \$5,000, allowing us to ensure that every Jewish home in Montana has a mezuzah on the front door.

We called this project the "Chana Brook Mezuzah Campaign," and we got to work. In those days we would regularly bring *bochurim*, five to six times a year, to visit the very remote areas of the state.



The results were incredible. The guys would go out, meet Jewish residents in their homes, and the one thing you could almost guarantee was that they would leave them with a mezuzah on their door. It created a connection to their Yiddishkeit and it often was the catalyst for more to follow.

In addition to the campaign itself, putting up hundreds and hundreds of *mezuzos*, we also ran the story in the local press in Montana. This was no simple feat. With a mezuzah campaign, there's a lot of explaining to do. It's not a program that every person easily connects with, like feeding the homeless.

Our state is 98% caucasian non-Jews who've had almost zero exposure to anything Jewish ever in their lifetimes. To explain to them that we're hanging a scroll over our doorposts took some work. But it was a great opportunity as well; a very educational

moment for the general population. And it made it not only into our state's newspapers, but it made it into the centerfold of USA Today, with a picture of us putting up a mezuzah in Helena, Montana.

The feedback we got from around the country was non-stop. From the northern peninsula of Michigan to parts of rural Georgia, we were sending *mezuzos* to Jews who wanted them. Obviously, if there were shluchim there, we connected them with their local shluchim. But if not, we sent them the *mezuzos* with instructions on how to put it up. We also made good use of a brochure published by The Shluchim Office about mezuzah.

We've been doing this now, with Hashem's help, more than a decade, and we're keeping at it. If a Jewish home does not have a mezuzah on the front door, we gift one to them



MIVTZA MEZUZAH

TAKING  
ACTION

THE TEN  
MIVTZOIM  
REVISITED

free of charge. If they want to donate, they're welcome to donate separately.

We now have another shliach in Bozeman whom we hired for the year, his name is Rabbi Mendel Backman. One of his main jobs is to visit homes, and the first thing he does is check if they have a mezuzah. If they don't, that's task number one.

Sometimes it takes time. You need to get them to be comfortable with the idea. There's a Jewish woman we know here in Montana who grew up in S. Diego as a daughter of Holocaust survivors. It took my wife and I eight years of conversations with her before she was comfortable putting up a mezuzah. For years, she was afraid of identifying herself as a Jew, having grown up with Holocaust survivors, potentially outing herself to a world that hates Jews. But eventually she put up a mezuzah. It was a beautiful milestone for her!

I've come to see the mezuzah as a unifying force for all Jews. We have far left anti-Israel Jews, formerly Orthodox Jews, and everything in between. A mezuzah on their door often turns out to be a great starting point for much more involvement in Yiddishkeit. Once their *ga'on Yaakov* is ignited, it has a trickle effect. And it's true from the other side as well: when a Jew is uncomfortable with who they are and afraid to publicly identify as a Jew, it can *chas v'shalom* go downhill from there.

One thing I'd like to add is that if they are indeed too afraid to place a mezuzah on their front door, especially today with the rise in antisemitism and all that, then start with one of the doors inside the home. Start with something. We can always keep building out from there. A word on funding:

Naturally, with all this media coverage, many shluchim reached out trying to understand how they could emulate the program in their places. Many asked me about how to fund this program, after all, a mezuzah



nowadays costs a minimum of \$65 to \$70 each.

However, the truth is that we received a lot of support from people who appreciated what we were doing. Frum, non-frum, and even non-Jewish friends wanted to participate in this spiritual revolution in our state. And when something is important, we always figure out how to fund it.

We're not talking here about millions of dollars. Yet, when it comes to millions of dollars of campaigns for buildings and other things, we manage to get it done. Yet when it comes to an actual mitzvah, one that could bring protection and *bracha*, Jewish identity and pride to homes, it should be a no-brainer.

Over the years, we've had more people step in to help sponsor this project. Every once in a while a Yid who lives in the S. Fernando Valley in California who sends us boxes of *mezuzos*. There's another Yid in Lakewood

who sends us *mezuzos*, and occasionally tefillin, to give out. And when there's no sponsor, we buy it on our own.

We've seen tremendous hatzlacha with this campaign, and the results are staggering. I don't profess to know why the Rebbe chose to focus on certain *mitzvos* over others, but the mitzvah of mezuzah is so basic and effective, it seems clear to me why it's so important for every Jewish home. It's an easy mitzvah, which connects the home and everyone living in it with Hashem, bringing his blessings, protection, and security, and it implants that sense of *ga'on Yaakov*.

People often ask me: What about putting up another Jewish symbol? Doesn't that also identify our house as a Jewish home?

I tell them that all these random symbols don't actually represent true Judaism. When it's an actual mitzvah from Hashem, you're really showing that you're a proud Jew who follows G-d's commandments. That's actually what it means to be a Jew!

I'd like to conclude with one more very important point. People ask me if this work is only applicable to shluchim or if other people can join as well.

Let me tell you: I grew up in a home where my father was in the jewelry business. Every time I'd come to my father's office, he was either putting on tefillin with the UPS driver or helping another Yid with a mitzvah.

As a matter of fact, that Jewish UPS driver was a descendant of the Schneerson family, and he had inherited a *yarmulke* that had belonged to the Tzemach Tzedek. We had the *zechus* that in 5749, my father bought that *yarmulke* from him, we all brought it to the Rebbe as a family.

I remember how every year around Pesach time, my father would send out packages of *shmurah matzah* along with Pesach guides published by Tzach to dozens of his business associates, whether customers, providers or

anyone else he knew, all over the country. He would mail out normally anywhere from 75 to 150 boxes of matzah.

I saw the same thing with my mother *a"h*. When she went to Lenox Hill Hospital for cancer treatment, she always brought Shabbos candles with her for the Jewish nurses and the Jewish women doctors. She always far-bredged with them and tried to inspire them to increase their commitment to Yiddishkeit. This is ingrained in me since I was a child that as Lubavitchers, it's in our DNA; that's what we do.

It makes no difference if your primary occupation is in the capacity of an official shliach or not. Helping a fellow Yid have a mezuzah on their door is a no-brainer. And by the way, as the Rebbe said many times, this is not just for Chassidim, not just Lubavitchers. Every single Yid knows fellow Jews who could use this assistance. It's our responsibility to be there for one another.

I have a friend in Monsey, for example, who is not a Lubavitcher by any stretch. But he calls me all the time asking for my advice about how to help all the secular Jewish colleagues in the company he works at. He made a Chanukah party for them and always tries to help them advance in their Yiddishkeit.

There are opportunities every day and we need to learn to capitalize on them. Every Jewish home in the world should have a kosher mezuzah. It's our job to help our fellow Yidden and start them on this journey. **T**

1. Motzei Shabbos Parshas Beshalach, 10 Shevat 5734; Toras Menachem vol. 75, p. 142.
2. Likkutei Sichos vol. 13, p. 211.
3. Ashreinu.app, 13 Tammuz 5736 *sicha* 5.
4. Sichos Kodesh 5736 vol. 2, p. 636.
5. Toras Menachem *ibid.*, p. 148.



TAKING  
ACTION

THE TEN  
MITZVOIM  
REVISITED