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Affixing a Mezuzah Part 2

In the last issue on *mezuzah* we discussed the various *halachos* that have to do with putting up a *mezuzah*. In this issue we will discuss the *halachos* of how and where to put up the *mezuzah*, and the *halachos* of checking the *kosher* status of a *mezuzah*.

Sitting or Standing

One should stand when affixing a *mezuzah*.¹ This is true for the *beracha* as well.²

Where on the Doorpost?

The *mezuzah* has to be placed on the right side of the door.³ This applies to a left handed person as well.⁴ If it was placed on the left side it is *posul*.⁵ It is beyond the scope of this issue to discuss what is considered the main way to walk into the room, which would determine which side the *mezuzah* goes on. The *mezuzah*

should be placed on the outer *tefach* of the doorpost towards the street.⁶ The reason is so one will meet the *mezuzah* first,⁷ and will be watched.⁸ *B'dieved*, the *mezuzah* is *kosher* even if it was not placed on the outer *tefach*.⁹

How High?

The *mezuzah* should be placed at the beginning of the top third of the doorpost (the bottom of the *mezuzah* should touch the beginning of the top third).¹⁰ This is learnt from *tefillin*, since the *tefillin shel yad* is put near the heart which is the top third of the body, one should place the *mezuzah* starting at the top third of the doorpost.¹¹ A *mezuzah* placed under the top third mark is *posul* since it is too low.¹² Placing

¹ Tehila L'Dovid Y.D. 109, Me'am Loez Eikev page 582. Refer to Yisroel B'mamadam 47:48 on this *inyun*.

² Rivevos Ephraim 2:29:6.

³ Mesechtas Menochos 34a, Taz 3, Levush 2, Aruch Ha'shulchan 5,

⁴ Mordechai Halachos Ketanos 962, Bach, Shach 5, Levush 2, Chai Adom 15:17, Aruch Ha'shulchan 5, Kuntres Hamezuzah page 102:footnote 22.

⁵ Rambam Hilchos Mezuzah 6:12, Shulchan Aruch 2, Aruch Ha'shulchan 5.

⁶ Mesechtas Menochos 32b-33a, Rosh Hilchos Mezuzah page 116, Tur 289, Shulchan Aruch 2, Levush 2, Chai Adom 15:17, Aruch Ha'shulchan 9.

⁷ Mesechtas Menochos 33b, Shach 2, Taz 2, Levush 2.

⁸ Taz 2, Levush 2.

⁹ Taz 3.

¹⁰ Rashi Mesechtas Menochos 33a "b'techila," Rambam Hilchos Mezuzah 6:12, Chinuch mitzvah 423, Tur 289, Prisha 6, Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 289:2, Levush 2, Yaavetz 2:page 588:25, Chai Adom 15:17, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 11:5, Chai Ha'Levi 2:70:9-12, 5:121:5, Pischei Mezuzahs 289:24, Soveh Smochos 1:pages 353-354.

¹¹ Mesechtas Menochos 33a, see Mezuzahs Baisecha 289:footnote 23.

¹² Bais Yosef, Shach 4, Taz 3.

it higher than this is *kosher*,¹³ but it must be a *tefach* away from the top of the doorpost.¹⁴ Although the *minhag* of many people is that the *mezuzah* is placed in middle of the top third and not at the beginning of the top third,¹⁵ *l'chatchilah* it should be placed at the beginning of the top third.¹⁶ Some even say if it was not placed at the beginning of the top third one should take the *mezuzah* off and replace it there without a *beracha*.¹⁷ However, it seems that this is only a *chumra*.¹⁸

The *Yerushalmi* is of the opinion that if the door is very high one should place the *mezuzah* at his shoulder height.¹⁹ This is brought in the *poskim* as well.²⁰ Others say it should always be placed from the beginning of the top third of the doorpost,²¹ however, the *minhag* is like the *Yerushalmi*.²²

Shoulder height means that the end of the *mezuzah* should reach the shoulder.²³

Shoulder Height.²⁴

Many times a child cannot reach the *mezuzah* and wants to train the child to kiss the *mezuzah*. One is not allowed to lower the height of the *mezuzah* in order to make it easier for the child to kiss or touch the *mezuzah*. The child should be picked up in order to kiss or touch the *mezuzah*.²⁵

Some say the shoulder height referred to above is calculated according to an average person's height.²⁶ Others say it is determined by the height of the shoulder of the person who lives there (owner of the house).²⁷

Affixing the Mezuzah

One should attach the *mezuzah* with nails. If the *mezuzah* is placed inside the doorpost itself one should not put it more than a *tefach* into the doorpost.²⁸ The reason why it is *posul* is because it has to be put on "your gate" and if it is put in the doorframe it is not "your gate."²⁹

The affixing has to be a tight one so that the *mezuzah* will hold in place.³⁰ The custom is to

¹³ Rambam Hilchos Mezuzah 6:12, Tur 289, Bais Yosef, Bach, Shulchan Aruch ibid, Levush 2, Chai Adom 15:17, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 11:5, Aruch Ha'shulchan 11, Chovas Hador 8:2:4.

¹⁴ Tur, Shulchan Aruch ibid, Levush 2.

¹⁵ Nekudas Hakesef 289:2, see Shlah Mesechtas Chullin page 15:37 (new), Birchei Yosef 289:3, Chai Adom 15:17, Seichel Tov pages 298-299, Chai Ha'Levi 2:70:9-12, Rivevos Ephraim 8:477:5.

¹⁶ Horav Yisroel Belsky Shlita, Pischei Mezuzah page 99:17, Teshuvos V'hanhugos 2:539.

¹⁷ Horav Yisroel Belsky Shlita, see Ben Ish Chai Ki Sovo 2:7, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 11:5, Mezuzahs Melachim footnote 56, Avnei Yushfei 4:110:4. Refer to Yabea Omer Y.D.2:21 who argues.

¹⁸ Yabea Omer Y.D. 2:21.

¹⁹ Refer to Tosfas Mesechtas Menochos 33b "u'maei." See Sdei Chemed mareches mem 130:pages 248-249.

²⁰ Shach 4, Levush 2, Chai Adom 15:17, Aruch Ha'shulchan 10, Kuntres Hamezuzah page 100:19.

²¹ Da'as Kedoshim 289:10, Divrei Malkiel 3:79, Maharsham 3:219, Lechem Haponim on Kitzur Shulchan Aruch ibid:11:page 27, Yabea Omer Y.D. 2:21, see Pischei Shearim 289:23.

²² Horav Yisroel Belsky Shlita, see Mezuzahs Melachim page 41:footnote 23, Teshuvos V'hanhugos 2:538, Chovas Hador 8:2:1, Avnei Yushfei 4:110. Refer to Orchos Rabbeinu 3:page 176:35.

²³ Kuntres Hamezuzah page 101. Some say a high door is only one which is ninety three inches or higher (Horav Yisroel Belsky Shlita).

²⁴ Refer to Kuntres Hamezuzah page 101.

²⁵ Refer to Divrei Chachumim page 218:100 quoting the opinion of Horav Yaakov Kamenetsky zt"l, Pischei Shearim page 318:54, Chinuch L'Yisroel 1:page 268 (new).

²⁶ Refer to Avnei Yushfei ibid:2.

²⁷ Horav Yisroel Belsky Shlita, see Mezuzahs Melachim 11:footnote 23.

²⁸ Mesechtas Menochos 32b-33a, Rambam Hilchos Mezuzah 5:8, Shulchan Aruch 289:4, Levush 4, Chai Adom 15:19, Aruch Ha'shulchan 15, see Pischei Teshuva 5.

²⁹ Bach 289, see Kuntres Hamezuzah 289:35.

³⁰ Mesechtas Menochos 32b, see Chai Adom 15:19, Pischei Teshuva 289:6, Yaskil Avdi Y.D. 8:14:2:4, Shevet Ha'Levi 4:143.

use two nails one on top and one on bottom.³¹ If the *mezuzah* is in the doorpost itself (not a *tefach*) then no nails are needed.³²

The custom of many people is that if one uses a strong glue to affix the *mezuzah* it is a good attachment.³³ Today, many *sofrim* give out adhesive tape which is very strong and this is a sufficient attachment.³⁴ Scotch tape or masking tape is not considered a strong hold.³⁵

A *mezuzah* which is placed in a plastic tube where there is a separation between the wall and the *mezuzah* it is still *kosher*.³⁶

Straight or Slanted

The opinion of some *poskim* is that the *mezuzah* should be straight,³⁷ while others say it should be lying sideways.³⁸ The custom of the *Ashkenazim* is to put the *mezuzah* on a slant.³⁹ The *shema* side of the *mezuzah* should be facing toward the house and the last line towards the

outside of the house.⁴⁰ The custom of the *Sefardim* is to put the *mezuzah* straight.⁴¹ The reason why we put it on a slant is because if it is straight it is *posul* according to the *Rabbeinu Tam* and if it is lying down it is *posul* according to *Rashi*, so we put it slanted so that we can be *yotzei* the *mitzvah* according to both opinions.⁴² Some explain that we put it on a slant in order to show that one has to compromise in life and give in a little.⁴³ However, this is not the correct reason why we *Ashkenazim* have the custom to place the *mezuzah* on a slant. The *Chazzon Ish* *zt"l* put the *mezuzah* straight with a slight slant.⁴⁴ The *G'ra* put his *mezuzah* straight.⁴⁵ If one has a door where it is not possible to put it slanted then one may place it straight.⁴⁶

Checking Mezuzahs

One is supposed to check his *mezuzahs* twice in every seven years,⁴⁷ and one should be careful to do so.⁴⁸ This *mitzvah* is *d'rabbanan* in nature.⁴⁹ The reason for checking *mezuzahs* is

³¹ Refer to Ben Ish Chai Ki Sovo 2:4, Yaavetz (Siddur) 2:page 588:30, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 11:6, Mezuzahs Melachim 11:64, Rivevos Ephraim 3:page 304, Chovas Hador 9:footnote 26, Kuntres Hamezuzah 289:33-34, Avnei Yushfei 1:210:3, see Da'as Kedoshim 289:16 who seems to say one screw is enough.

³² Aruch Ha'shulchan 16, Shevet Ha'kehusi 1:279:6.

³³ Aruch Ha'shulchan 15, Yaskil Avdi *ibid*, Yechaveh Da'as 6:58, Oz Nedberu 3:60:1.

³⁴ Chelkes Yaakov 2:60:1, Minchas Yitzchok 7:72:3, Rivevos Ephraim 5:543, Teshuvos V'hanhugos 1:646, Oz Nedberu 3:60:1, Avnei Yushfei 1:210:4.

³⁵ Avnei Yushfei 1:201:4, Pischei Shearim page 335:88.

³⁶ Refer to Pischei Shearim page 335:89. See *ibid*:49 quoting the opinion of Horav Yaakov Kamenetsky *zt"l*. See Shevet Ha'Levi 10:182.

³⁷ Opinion of Rashi quoted in Mesechtas Menochos 33a "pesula." Refer to Rosh, Tur 289, Shulchan Aruch 289:6, Gr'a 14, Pischei Teshuva 8, Ben Ish Chai Ki Sovo 2:7, Aruch Ha'shulchan 17-18.

³⁸ Opinion of the *Rabbeinu Tam* quoted in Mesechtas Menochos *ibid* "hu." Refer to Tur 289, Prisha 289:12, Yaavetz 2:page 588:30, see Shevet Ha'Levi 2:158 on the dispute.

³⁹ Rama 289:6, Levush 6, Minchas Elazar 1:36:1.

⁴⁰ Rama 289:6, Chai Adom 15:19.

⁴¹ Shulchan Aruch 289:6, Seichel Tov page 343.

⁴² Otzer Kol Minhagei Yeshurin page 87:37:1, Pischei Mezuzahs 289:57, Chovas Hador 9:footnote 20. Refer to Lehoros Nosson 3:2:6 why we don't put on two *mezuzahs* to be *yotzei* both opinions, see Lehoros Nosson 10:38:6.

⁴³ Metzuvai Veosa pages 224-225. Refer to Taamei Haminhagim *lekutim* 53:page 510.

⁴⁴ Dinim V'hanhugos of the *Chazzon Ish* Y.D. 3:5, Mezuzahs Baisecha 289:footnote 62, Kuntres Hamezuzah 289:41, Orchos *Rabbeinu* 1:page 378:27, 3:page 176:37, see Toras Chaim page 147:4.

⁴⁵ Biurei Ha'Gra 289:14, Orchos *Rabbeinu* 1:page 378:27.

⁴⁶ Pischei Teshuva 289:9, Mikdash Me'at 289:30, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 11:6, Kuntres Hamezuzah 289:40:page 110.

⁴⁷ Mesechtas Yoma 11a, Rosh Hilchos Tefillin 31:page 33, Chinuch *mitzvah* 423, Yur Y.D. 291, Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 291:1, Levush 1, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 11:25, Yechaveh Da'as 1:49, see Pischei Shearim 291:7.

⁴⁸ Meam Loez Eikev page 583, Yugel Yaakov page 30, Metzuvai Veosa page 255.

⁴⁹ Mezuzahs Baisecha 291:3.

that they may get ruined over time.⁵⁰ A public *mezuzah* needs to be checked twice in fifty years.⁵¹ The reason why there is no obligation to check them more often is to avoid a burden for the *tzibur*.⁵² Some say if the *mezuzah* is placed in a part of the house where there is a chance of mold, one should check it once a year.⁵³ One who knows that there is chance that the *mezuzah* may have gotten ruined because of painting etc,⁵⁴ or by placing it in the sunlight,⁵⁵ should also check his *mezuzahs* more often. Some say there is no need to check *mezuzahs* today if the *mezuzah* is in a case which is not touching the wall.⁵⁶ However, this is not the accepted custom.⁵⁷

When the *poskim* say that a personal *mezuzah* should be checked twice in seven years it does not mean exactly at the three and half year mark, and if one checked it before that time he should count three and half years from then.⁵⁸

The custom in all of *klal yisroel* is if something goes wrong in one's family whether it be a sickness *r"l*⁵⁹ or anything else, one checks his

mezuzahs.⁶⁰ This is since many times something was found to be wrong with the *mezuzah* and when the *mezuzah* was fixed the person was healed. There is a beautiful *kuntres* written by *Horav Eli Teitelbaum Shlita* which documents stories of occurrences which happened when checking *mezuzahs*.⁶¹

It is important to point out that when one removes his *mezuzah* to be checked one should be careful not to make the *mezuzah posul* when handling it.⁶² When a *mezuzah* falls from its correct place one should take that as a sign to check the *mezuzah*.⁶³

Rewards

One who checks his *mezuzahs* and makes sure that they are *kosher* merits long life,⁶⁴ is saved from demons, and will have good children.⁶⁵

Who Can Check

Any person is able to check *mezuzahs* if he knows what to look for.⁶⁶ One should check if any of the letters are erased.⁶⁷ However, practically speaking one should give it to a *sofer* to check. There is a discussion in the *poskim* if a computer should be used to check *mezuzahs*.⁶⁸ It would be advisable for a *mezuzah* to also be checked by computer because we are only human and we may miss a mistake etc.

not careful in the *mitzvah* of *mezuzahs* causes sickness etc to his children. Refer to *Dinim V'hanhugos* of the *Chazon Ish* page 45:22.

⁶⁰ Rivevos Ephraim 5:542:page 383, *Metzukei Veosa* ibid, see *Teshuvos V'hanhugos* 4:203.

⁶¹ Refer to *B'sharei Mezuzah* pages 43-129 on different stories about the wonderful strength of the *mitzvah* of *mezuzah*.

⁶² *Pischei Teshuva* 291:2.

⁶³ *Shevet Ha'kehusi* 1:275.

⁶⁴ Refer to *K'rayna D'igrisa* 1:169.

⁶⁵ *Yehoshuas Chuchma* 11:21.

⁶⁶ *Chasam Sofer* Y.D. 283, *Pischei Teshuva* 3, *Mezuzahs Melachim* 216, *Mezuzahs Baisecha* 291:2, *Ve'aleihu Lo Yeibol* 2:pages 124-125:130.

⁶⁷ *Mezuzahs Melachim* 216.

⁶⁸ *Lehoros Nossan* 6:1-3.

⁵⁰ Rashi *Mesechtas Yoma* 11a "nidbekes," *Bais Yosef*, *Prisha* 291:1, *Shach* 1, *Misgeres Ha'shulchan* 11:20, see *Rambam Hilchos Mezuzah* 5:9.

⁵¹ *Mesechtas Yoma* 11a, *Tur Y.D.* 291, *Shulchan Aruch Y.D.* 291:1, *Levush* 1, *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 11:25. A *Shul* or *Bais Medrash* is considered one's personal *mezuzah* and not the *mezuzah* of the public (*Rivevos Ephraim* 2:199, *Birur Halacha Y.D.* page 402, see *Chovas Hador* 1:footnote 36).

⁵² Rashi ibid "p'umayim." Refer to *Birur Halacha Y.D.* page 403.

⁵³ *Mezuzahs Melachim* 217, see *Aruch Ha'shulchan* 291:1.

⁵⁴ *Igros Moshe Y.D.* 1:183.

⁵⁵ *Mezuzahs Melachim (hosofos)* page 14, *Shevet Ha'kehusi* 1:279.

⁵⁶ *Halichos Shlomo Tefilla* 4:footnote 52.

⁵⁷ *Kuntres Hamezuzah* 291:5, *Siechel Tov* 291:1, *Birur Halacha Y.D.* page 399.

⁵⁸ *Kuntres Hamezuzah* 291:2, *Ve'aleihu Lo Yeibol* 2:pages 124-125:130.

⁵⁹ The *Sefer Matamim* (page 116:9) says the reason why bad things happen to some people is because one who is

One only needs to check the *mezuzah* with a computer once in the lifetime of the *mezuzah*, because the computer is only used for textual errors, like a wrong word or letter. Once it is free of textual errors it is impossible for one to develop even fifty years later.⁶⁹

Other Times to Check

People who are more scrupulous in their *mitzvah* observance check their *mezuzahs* every *Rosh Chodesh Elul*,⁷⁰ or any time during the entire month of *Elul*.⁷¹

Removing all *Mezuzahs* to be Checked

Many people when they check their *mezuzahs* will remove all the *mezuzahs* in their house. However, some *poskim* say that this should not be done because then one's house will be left without any *mezuzahs* and that is not advisable.⁷² Others say this does not seem to be a concern.⁷³ Nonetheless, there are *gemachs* which loan *mezuzahs* for this purpose and one should contact them if this situation arises. Alternatively, one should check only a portion of his *mezuzahs* at one time.

Other Concerns

When one removes a *mezuzah* to be checked one should make sure not to take a *mezuzah* from a doorpost which was obligated *m'doraisa*

and put it on a doorpost which is only obligated *m'drabbanan*.⁷⁴

Shaimos Concerns

The screws or the glue used to hold the *mezuzah* in place may be thrown directly into the garbage.⁷⁵ Others say to put such items into *shaimos*.⁷⁶ The wrapper which is used to cover the *mezuzah* before placing it in the case is required to be put into *shaimos*.⁷⁷

Fasting

If a *mezuzah* falls to the ground even without the covering one is not required to fast.⁷⁸ Some say one should give *tzedakah* instead of fasting.⁷⁹

Endnote

The *mitzvah* of *mezuzah* guarantees great reward and if one does not act with a *mezuzah* in the proper way it can bring danger. Therefore, it is very proper and befitting that one spends a lot of money on *mezuzahs* to make sure they are very *kosher*.⁸⁰ One should not buy a *mezuzah* from just anyone, but he should inquire to see if a specific *sofer* is trustworthy.⁸¹

⁶⁹ Sicho B'chol Niflosov page 8.

⁷⁰ Matei Ephraim 581:10, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 128:3, Mezuzahs Melachim 218, Soveh Smochos 1:page 364, M'Bais Levi 4:page 137.

⁷¹ Kuntres Hamezuzah 291:4, Yechaveh Da'as 1:49.

⁷² Horav Yisroel Belsky Shlita, see Yalkut Shemonei Rus 601, Emes L'Yaakov 291:footnote 208, Teshuvos V'hanhugos 1:643, Soveh Smochos 1:page 317:10:footnote 10 in depth, Mezuzah a Comprehensive Guide (Hoffman) page 174, see Emek Beracha page 33:11. The Rivevos Ephraim 5:548 says Horav Moshe Feinstein zt"l had the custom to remove all the *mezuzahs* when checking them.

⁷³ Shevet Ha'kehusi 1:273.

⁷⁴ Horav Yisroel Belsky Shlita, see Kinyan Torah 2:55:2, Be'er Moshe 5:3:2, Teshuvos V'hanhugos 1:649, Pischei Mezuzahs 289:7 in depth.

⁷⁵ Opinion of Horav Korelitz Shlita quoted in Ginzei Hakodesh 6:footnote 38. See *ibid*:page 265:66 who brings a stringent opinion, Pischei Shearim pages 336-337.

⁷⁶ Mezuzahs Baisecha 291:5.

⁷⁷ Ginzei Hakodesh 6:22, Avnei Yushfei 5:25:1.

⁷⁸ Refer to Mezuzahs Melachim page 75, Be'er Moshe 3:9:8, Shraga Hameir 3:12, Shevet Ha'Levi 4:143, Soveh Smochos 1:page 379:footnote 91, Bais Boruch 1:14:229:page 377. See Pischei Shearim page 110.

⁷⁹ Be'er Moshe 3:9:8.

⁸⁰ Teshuvos V'hanhugos 1:652, see Rivevos Ephraim 8:589, B'sharei Mezuzah page 12.

⁸¹ B'sharei Mezuzah pages 28-29.

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פסוק

Halachically Speaking

► Halachically Speaking is a bi-weekly publication compiled by Rabbi Moishe Dovid Lebovits, a former *chaver kollel* of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath and a *musmach* of Horav Yisroel Belsky Shlita. Rabbi Lebovits currently works as the Rabbinical Administrator for the KOF-K Kosher Supervision.

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