

“וכתבתם על מזוזות ביתך ובשעריך”

## The Mitzvah of Mezuzah Is Beneficial for Protection and Longevity It Is Associated with Yaakov Who Was Protected and Did Not Die

In this week's parsha, parshas Vaeschanan, we find the first passage of Krias Shema. In this passage, we learn about one of the most important of the “taryag mitzvos” given to us by HKB”H—the mitzvah of writing a mezuzah and affixing it to the doorpost of our homes. The passuk states (Devarim 6, 9): “וכתבתם על מזוזות ביתך ובשעריך”—**and write them on the doorposts of your house and upon your gates.** This mitzvah is repeated in precisely the same words in next week's parsha, parshas Eikev, where we find the second passage of Krias Shema (ibid. 11, 20): “וכתבתם על מזוזות ביתך ובשעריך”.

From the fact that the Torah mentions this mitzvah in both of the first two passages of Krias Shema, our blessed sages deduce that these two passages-- “שמע” and “והיה אם שמוע”—should be inscribed on the parchment of the mezuzah. For, it is as if the Torah is instructing us explicitly in each of these passages: “על מזוזות ביתך”—to write the passage down and place it: “וכתבתם”—on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

As to which side of the entrance one is to place the mezuzah, the Gemara teaches us that it is to be placed on the right side of the doorway as a person enters his home. This fact is derived from the words: “וכתבתם על מזוזות ביתך”; the word “ביתך” (**your house**) is elucidated as “ביאתך”—the direction in which you enter. In other words, it is considered as if a person enters his house on the right side, because he usually lifts his right foot first.

Hence, it is only fitting that we take a closer look at this sacred mitzvah, which we encounter several times daily—as we enter the house and as we leave it. We shall examine the deeper significance of this mitzvah, the purpose of the mitzvah and the good omens associated with it—such as being blessed with long, fruitful lives and the protection of the entire household. We shall introduce sources from the Talmud, the Midrash, the Zohar hakadosh, as well as from our holy Rishonim and Acharonim. We pray that the Almighty guides us on the path of truth!

### Inspirational Words from the Rambam regarding the Mitzvah of Mezuzah

We shall begin by introducing what the Rambam writes regarding the purpose of the mezuzah. It is worthwhile for every Jew to remember this message when encountering the mezuzah. Here is what he writes (Hilchos Mezuzah 6, 13):

“חייב אדם להיזהר במזוזה, מפני שהיא חובת הכל תמיד, וכל זמן שיכנס ויצא יפגע ביחוד השם שמו של הקב”ה, ויזכור אהבתו וייעור משנתו ושגיוותיו בהבלי הזמן, וידע שאין דבר העומד לעולם ולעולמי עולמים אלא ידיעת צור העולם, ומיד הוא חוזר לדעתו והולך בדרכי מישרים. אמרו חכמים הראשונים, כל מי שיש לו תפילין בראשו ובזרועו, וציצית בבגדו, ומזוזה בפתחו, מוחזק הוא שלא יחטא, שהרי יש לו מזכירין רבים, והן הם המלאכים שמצילין אותו מלחטוא, שנאמר (תהלים לד-ח) חונה מלאך ה' סביב ליראיו ויחלצם”.

A person must show great care in the observance of the mitzvah of mezuzah, because it is an obligation which is incumbent upon everyone at all times. Whenever a person enters or leaves the house, he will encounter the unity of the name of HKB”H, and will remember his love for Him. Thus, he will awake from his sleep and his obsession with the vanities of time, and recognize that there is nothing which lasts for eternity except the knowledge of the Creator of the world; he will immediately regain full awareness and follow the paths of the upright. Our early sages said: Whoever wears tefillin on his head and arm, wears tzitzit on his garment, and has a mezuzah on his entrance, can be assured that he will not sin, because he has many who will remind him. These are the angels, who will prevent him from sinning, as it states (Tehillim 34, 8): “The angel of God camps around those who fear Him and protects them.”

Let us elaborate on the first part of this passage from the Rambam based on what we have learned from the great author

of the Chiddushei HaRim, zy"u, (Bo). He addresses the practical significance of HKB"H's command to write the two passages of "שמע" and "והיה אם שמוע" in the mezuzah and to affix them to the doorpost of one's house. He refers to the following Mishnah (Berachos 13a):

אמר רבי יהושע בן קרחה, למה קדמה פרשת שמע לוהיה אם שמוע, כדי שיקבל עליו עול מלכות שמים תחילה ואחר כך מקבל עליו עול מצוות. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchah said: Why does the passage of "shema" precede the passage of "v'haya im shamo"? So that a person will accept upon himself the yoke of Heaven's sovereignty first, and then accept upon himself the yoke of mitzvos. In other words, in the first paragraph of Krias Shema, we accept upon ourselves "ol malchus shamayim"—the yoke of Heaven's sovereignty in general terms—and proclaim our emunah in the oneness of Hashem (Devarim 6, 4): "שמע ישראל" ה' אלקינו ה' אחד; then we are commanded to love Hashem (ibid. 5): "ואהבת את ה' אלקיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאודך". In the second paragraph of Krias Shema, we accept upon ourselves the yoke of mitzvos (ibid. 11, 13): "והיה אם שמוע תשמעו אל מצוותי אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם היום".

It is precisely for this reason that HKB"H commanded us to inscribe these two passages—"שמע" and "והיה אם שמוע"—in the mezuzah at the entrance to our homes. They serve as a constant reminder—as we enter and exit our homes—to accept upon ourselves "ol malchus shamayim" and "ol mitzvos," mentioned in these two passages. In this merit, HKB"H will not allow the force of destruction to enter our homes. This concludes his holy remarks.

This is the message being conveyed by the Rambam at the beginning of the passage cited above: **"Whenever a person enters or leaves the house, he will encounter the unity of the name of HKB"H (ה' אלקינו ה' אחד) and will remember his love for Him (ואהבת את ה' אלקיך). Thus, he will awake from his sleep and his obsession with the vanities of time (בשכבך), and recognize that there is nothing which lasts for eternity except the knowledge of the Creator of the world."** The last part of this sentence refers to the acceptance of the yoke of mitzvos in the passage of "v'haya im shamo"; for, by performing the mitzvos, we merit a degree of perception and knowledge of Hashem, as David HaMelech explains to his son, Shlomo (Divrei HaYamim 1 28, 9): **"ואתה שלמה בני דע את אלקי אביך—and you, Shlomo, my son, know the G-d of your father and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing soul."**

Now, let us address the second part of the passage from the Rambam. It is based on the following Gemara (Menachos 43b): **רבי אליעזר בן יעקב אומר, כל שיש לו תפילין בראשו ותפילין בזרועו, וציצית בבגדו, ומזוזה בפתחו, הכל בחיזוק שלא יחטא, שנאמר (קהלת ד-יב) והחוט המשוול לא במהרה ינתק, ואומר (תהלים לד-ח) חונה מלאך ה' סביב.** Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov says: Whoever has tefillin upon his head and upon his arm, tzitzit upon his garment and a mezuzah upon his doorway, there is a complete presumption that he will not sin—for it is stated: **"And a three-ply cord is not easily severed!"** And it states further: **"Hashem's malach encamps around his reverent ones and he rescues them."** Thus, we see that a person who fulfills these three mitzvos—tefillin, tzitzit and mezuzah—is safeguarded from sinning.

From the words of the Rambam, we learn the meaning of this statement in the Gemara. The malachim generated from the fulfillment of these three mitzvos protect that person from sinning. In the words of the Rambam: **"Because he has many who will remind him. These are the angels, who will prevent him from sinning, as it states (Tehillim 34, 8): "The angel of God camps around those who fear Him and protects them."** Thus, we learn that when a person fulfills the mitzvah of mezuzah, he should have in mind the fulfillment and completion of this trio of mitzvos: **tefillin, tzitzit and mezuzah.** In their merit, he will be safeguarded from sinning.

## The Mezuzah Is a Segulah for Protection and Long-life

Now, we stated above that Chazal teach us that the mitzvah of mezuzah is associated with several amazing segulot—benefits and rewards. Let us begin with the words of the author of the Shulchan Aruch (Y.D. 285, 1): **מצות עשה לכתוב פרשת שמע, והיה אם שמוע, ולקבעם על מזוזת הפתח, וצריך לזהר בה מאוד, וכל הזהיר בה יאריכו ימיו שמוע, ולקבעם על מזוזת הפתח, וצריך לזהר בה מאוד, ואם אינו זיהר בה יתקצרו—it is a mitzvat aseh to write down the passage of "shema" and "v'haya im shamo," and to affix them to the doorpost; one should pay careful attention to this mitzvah; all that are scrupulous in the performance of this mitzvah, they and their children will be granted long-life; if one is negligent in the performance of this mitzvah, their lives will be shortened.** The source for this statement is an elucidation in the Gemara (Shabbas 32b) regarding the juxtaposition of two pesukim. First it states (Devarim 11, 20): **"וכתבתם על מזוזות ביתך ובשעריך"**—the mitzvah of mezuzah, and immediately afterwards, it states (ibid. 21):





So, the reason we do not leave a hole opposite the name **שד** in the case housing the mezuzah is to avoid the possible prohibition against erasing a divine name. Yet, it is definitely worthwhile to insert a piece of glass or see-through material so that the name **שד** will be visible from the outside. For, as the Zohar hakadosh explains, a person should gaze upon the divine name as he enters and exits the house. Doing so constitutes an amazing segulah to ward off the external forces of evil, who will see this holy name on the doorway of the house. Even if we refrain from making this opening in the mezuzah casings inside the house, out of propriety, because sometimes small children are there who are unclean; nevertheless, it is certainly worthwhile to do so with the mezuzah on the doorpost at the entrance to one's home.

### The Mezuzah Is on the Right Corresponding to Yaakov Avinu

I was struck by a wonderful idea that I would like to present upon the royal table. We have learned of three good omens associated with the mitzvah of mezuzah: (1) it is a segulah for longevity, (2) it safeguards one's household from all evil and (3) the name **שד** is inscribed on the outside of the parchment for added protection. Let us refer to that which is written in parshas Bo (Shemos 12, 22): **“ולקחתם אגודת אזוב וטבלתם בדם אשר בסף והגעתם אל המשקוף ואל שתי המזוזות... ועבר ה' לנגוף את מצרים וראה את הדם על המשקוף ועל שתי המזוזות, ופסח ה' על הפתח ולא יתן המשחית לבוא אל בתיכם לנגוף”**—**you shall take a bundle of hyssop and dip it into the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts . . . Hashem will pass through to smite Mitzrayim, and He will see the blood that is on the lintel and the two doorposts; and Hashem will skip over the entrance and He will not permit the destroyer to enter our homes to smite.**

We find the following elucidation in the Midrash (S.R. 17, 3): **“והגעתם אל המשקוף, בזכות אברהם, ואל שתי המזוזות, בזכות יצחק ויעקב, and you shall touch the lintel” in the merit of Avraham; “and the two doorposts” in the merit of Yitzchak and Yaakov; in their merit, He will see the blood and He will not permit the destroyer . . . It is worthwhile investigating which of the two doorposts corresponds to Yitzchak and which corresponds to Yaakov. This knowledge will help us determine whether the placement of the mezuzah on the right doorpost is in the merit of Yitzchak Avinu or in the merit of Yaakov Avinu.**

After researching the matter, we find an answer to our inquiry in the sacred words of the Ma'aseh Rokeiach (Korach). He cites this Midrash and adds the following: **“ובודאי מזוזה של ימין שבו קובעין המזוזה הוא נגד יעקב, דידוע ליודעי חן דמדתו של יעקב—תפארת נוטה לימין, ויצחק נגד מזוזה שמאלית שהיא גבורה—certainly the fact that the mezuzah is affixed to the right side corresponds to Yaakov; for, it is known to those in the know that Yaakov's midah is “tiferes,” which tends to the right; whereas Yitzchak corresponds to the left doorpost, representing gevurah.** Thus, we have a definitive answer that the placement of the mezuzah on the right doorpost corresponds to Yaakov Avinu.

Now, based on what we have learned, we can illuminate the matter further. For, we find several fascinating associations between Yaakov Avinu and the mitzvah of mezuzah. Let us begin with the following. Several of our holy sources teach us that the numerical value of the name **יעקב** is equivalent to seven times the holy name **הוי** ( $7 \times 26 = 182$ ). The source for this is found in the Arizal's Likutei Torah (Vayeirah): **“ונבאר עתה יעקב כי הוא סוד ז' היות שעולים גימטריא יעקב, ב, וזהו (בראשית כח-י) ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע, סוד ז' היות אל”**—this numerical equivalence is alluded to in the passuk (Bereishis 28, 10): **“And Yaakov departed from Be'er Sheva”** (“sheva” is the Hebrew word for seven).

Now, if we examine the two passages contained in the mezuzah, we find that the name **הוי** appears exactly seven times. In the first passage--**“שמע ישראל”**--the name **הוי** appears three times; in the second passage--**“ויהי אם שמוע”**--it appears four times. Thus, we can suggest that they correspond to Yaakov, whose name equals seven times **הוי**, which corresponds to the seven midot: **חסד, גבורה, תפארת, נצח, הוד, יסוד, מלכות.**

Let us propose another allusion to the mitzvah of mezuzah associated with the name Yaakov, based on what the Rambam writes (Hilchos Mezuzah 6, 1):

**“עשרה תנאים יש בבית, ואחר כך יתחייב הדר בו לעשות לו מזוזה, ואם חסר תנאי אחד מהן פטור מן המזוזה, ואלו הן, שיהיה בן ארבע אמות על ארבע אמות או יתר, ושתי המזוזות, ויהיה לו משקוף, ותהיה לו תקרה, ויהיו לו דלתות, ויהיה השער גבוה עשרה טפחים או יותר, ויהיה הבית חול, ויהיה עשוי לדירת אדם, ועשוי לדירת כבוד, ועשוי לדירת קבע.”** **There are ten requirements that must be met by a house for the person who dwells within to be obligated to affix a mezuzah. If one of the requirements is lacking, there is no obligation for a mezuzah. They are:**

- 1) for the area [of the dwelling] to be four cubits by four cubits or more;
- 2) for it to have two doorposts;
- 3) for it to have a lintel;
- 4) for it to have a roof;
- 5) for it to have doors;
- 6) for the entrance to be at least ten handbreadths high;
- 7) for the dwelling not to be consecrated;
- 8) for it to be intended for human habitation;
- 9) for it to be intended to be used for a dignified dwelling;
- 10) for it to be a permanent dwelling.

We inscribe in the mezuzah the two passages “שמע” and “והיה” “אם שמוע” which contain 170 words. Now, we can suggest the following allusion contained in the mezuzah to the name “יעקב”. The letter “י”, equaling ten, represents the ten conditions a house must have according to the Rambam to qualify for the mitzvah of mezuzah. The letters עק equal 170, the number of words contained in the two passages in the mezuzah. The last letter of the name “יעקב”, the “ב”, which equals two, represents the two passages inscribed in the mezuzah. Thus, we have accounted for all four letters of the name “יעקב”, to whom HKB”H said: “והנה” “אנכי עמך ושמרתיך בכל אשר תלך”—Behold, I am with you; and I will guard you wherever you go.

### The Inscription on the Mezuzah Begins with the Passuk Shema Yisrael Instituted by Yaakov Avinu

This provides us with a wonderful explanation as to why HKB”H commanded us to begin the inscription on the mezuzah with the passuk: “שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד”. This passuk is the basis of the mitzvah of Krias Shema. The Midrash on our parsha (D.R. 2, 35) teaches us that Yaakov Avinu instituted the mitzvah of Krias Shema to be recited by all future generations of Yisrael:

“שמע ישראל, מהיכן זכו ישראל לקריאת שמע, משעה שנטה יעקב למיתא קרא לכל השבטים ואמר להן, שמא משאני נפטר מן העולם אתם משתחוים לאלוה אחר, מנין שכך כתיב (בראשית מט-כ) הקבצו ושמעו בני יעקב וגו', מהו ושמעו אל ישראל אביכם, אמר להן אל ישראל אביכם הוא, אמרו לו שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד, והוא אומר בלחישא ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד. אמר רבי לוי, ומה ישראל אומרים עכשיו, שמע אבינו ישראל, אותו הדבר שצויתנו נוהג בנו, ה' אלקינו ה' אחד.”

**How did Yisrael merit the mitzvah of Krias Shema? When Yaakov was about to depart from this world, he gathered the shevatim together and said to them: “Perhaps**

**when I pass from this world, you will worship another god.” . . . They replied: “שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד”. He replied in a whisper: “ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד.” Rabbi Levi said: And what do Yisrael recite now? “Hear O Yisrael, our father! We continue to practice that which you commanded us—‘Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One.’”**

For this reason, HKB”H commanded us to begin the inscription of the mezuzah, which we affix to the right doorpost, corresponding to Yaakov Avinu, with the passuk: “שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד”. With these words, we arouse our total emunah, inculcated in us by Yaakov Avinu, to believe in the oneness of Hashem. It is to him that we address these words: “שמע ישראל”—to our father Yaakov, who is called Yisrael. To him we declare that we still believe in the legacy he bequeathed to the original shevatim and to all Jews throughout the generations: “ה' אלקינו ה' אחד”—“Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One.”

We can now rejoice for this enlightens us as to why the mitzvah of mezuzah constitutes a segulah for protection. For, as we have seen, HKB”H protected Yaakov from being harmed by the malachim. Regarding Yaakov’s dream, it states (Bereishis 28, 12): “ויחלום והנה סולם מוצב ארצה וראשו מגיע השמימה והנה מלאכי אלקים עולים ויורדים בו, והנה ה' נצב עליו”—And he dreamt, and behold! A ladder was set earthward and its top reached heavenward; and behold! G-d’s malachim ascending and descending on it. And behold! Hashem was standing over him. Rashi comments: “נצב”—Hashem stood over him to protect him. Furthermore, HKB”H promised to protect him in all his future endeavors, as it is written (ibid. 15): “והנה אנכי עמך ושמרתיך בכל אשר תלך”—Behold, I am with you; and I will guard you wherever you go. Therefore, when we write a mezuzah containing the seven names of Havaya—sharing the very same numerical equivalent as the name “יעקב”—and we affix it to the right doorpost—corresponding to Yaakov Avinu—we have a proven segulah, affording us the protection HKB”H promised Yaakov.

We can suggest that HKB”H alluded to the protection afforded us by the mezuzah in his promise to Yaakov: “Behold, I am with you; and I will guard you wherever you go.” In other words: “Behold, I am with you”—I will always be with you, “יעקב”—via the seven mentions of the name Havaya, equaling “יעקב”, inscribed in the mezuzah; “and I will guard you wherever you go”—in every house you enter, surrounding yourself with the kedushah of the mezuzah, associated with Yaakov, I will protect you; I will prevent the harmful forces from entering that house, which has the kedushah of Yaakov imprinted on its doorway.

Similarly, we can now appreciate why the mitzvah of mezuzah represents a segulah for long-life and salvation from death. Recall that this fact was derived from the juxtaposition of the two pesukim **“and write them on the doorposts of your house and upon your gates”** and **“in order to prolong your days and the days of your children.”** We also pointed out above that the word **מזוזות** appears in the first passage of Krias Shema without its first “vav.” Spelled this way, it is an anagram for **ז”ז מו”ת**—the warding off of death. This can be tied in to the teaching in the Gemara (Ta’anis 5b): **“יעקב אבינו לא מת”**—that Yaakov Avinu never died. They derived this fact from that which is written (Yirmiyah 30, 10): **וְאַתָּה אֵל תִּירָא עַבְדִּי יַעֲקֹב נֹאמֹם ה' וְאֵל תַּחַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, כִּי הִנְנִי מוֹשִׁיעַךְ מִרְחֹק וְאֵת זֶרְעֶךָ מֵאֶרֶץ שָׁבִים, מִקִּישׁ הוּא “And you fear not, My servant Yaakov, says Hashem, and do not become broken, Yisrael, for behold I will deliver you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity.” This passuk draws a parallel between him (Yaakov) and his seed; just as his seed is alive, so, too, is he alive.** Hence, by fulfilling the mitzvah of mezuzah, corresponding to Yaakov, we awaken the power of Yaakov Avinu, who did not die; we his descendants are like him; just as he continues to live, so, too, we continue to live.

### The Shevatim Spoke with the Man at the Doorway to the House

Continuing onward and upward along this exalted path, let us proceed to explain why the name **ש”י** is inscribed on the mezuzah for protection. We learn in parshas Mikeitz that the shevatim went down to Mitzrayim a second time in order to bring Binyamin to Yosef. They requested to speak to the person in charge of Yosef’s household in order to apologize for the money that was found in their saddlebags. The passuk states (Bereishis 43, 19): **וַיִּגְשׁוּ אֶל הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר עַל בֵּית יוֹסֵף וַיֹּסֶף וַיִּדְבְּרוּ אֵלָיו “they approached the man who was in charge of Yosef’s house and spoke to him at the entrance of the house.”** It is worthwhile explaining why they spoke with him at the entrance to the house rather than inside the house.

We find an incredible explanation in the Siftei Kohen, authored by the divine kabbalist Rabbi Mordechai HaKohen of Tzfat, one of the young disciples of the Arizal. He posits that they requested to speak with him specifically **“at the entrance**

**of the house.”** For, that is the location of the mezuzah, which has the name **ש”י** inscribed on its outer surface. Thus, they intended to invoke the tefilah of their father Yaakov, who prayed on their behalf employing the name **ש”י**, as it is written (ibid. 14): **וְאֵל שְׂדֵי יִתֵּן לָכֶם רַחֲמִים לִפְנֵי הָאִישׁ—“and may Kel Shakkai (ש”י) grant you mercy before the man.”**

Based on our current discussion, we can add a spicy tidbit of our own to his incredible explanation. We have learned that there are numerous fascinating associations relating Yaakov Avinu with the mezuzah: (1) He is associated intimately with the passuk declaring the oneness of Hashem--**“שמע ישראל”**, (2) the mezuzah is affixed to the right doorpost, corresponding to Yaakov and (3) the seven mentions of the name Havaya correspond to his very name, **יעקב**. Now, seeing as Yaakov employed the name **ש”י** to pray on behalf of the shevatim, we write this divine name on the mezuzah, because we wish to extend this same protection and tefilah to all Jewish households.

We can now appreciate why the shevatim chose to speak with the man in charge of Yosef’s house specifically **“at the entrance of the house”**—the location of the mezuzah, on the right side, corresponding to Yaakov. There, inside the mezuzah, the name **הו”ה** is written seven times, corresponding to the numerical value of **יעקב**. Additionally, on the outer aspect of the mezuzah, the name **ש”י** is inscribed—the divine name Yaakov employed in his prayer. Thus, they intended to trigger the merit of Yaakov, who prayed on their behalf.

Therefore, let us follow in the footsteps of the shevatim, as we enter and exit our houses. Let us stand at the entrance to the house, next to the mezuzah and recall the invaluable words of the Rambam: **“Whenever a person enters or leaves the house, he will encounter the unity of the name of HKB”H, and will remember his love for Him. Thus, he will awake from his sleep and his obsession with the vanities of time, and recognize that there is nothing which lasts for eternity except the knowledge of the Creator of the world.”** Let us connect with the kedushah of Yaakov Avinu, who instilled in us the emunah in the uniqueness and singularity of Hashem, which is professed in the first passuk in the mezuzah: **“שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד”**. In this merit, we shall enjoy the protection HKB”H promised Yaakov Avinu: **“והנה אנכי עמך ושמרתך בכל אשר תלך”-- Behold, I am with you; and I will guard you wherever you go.**

Donated by Family Madeb for the Refuah Shelimah of Lea bat Virgini

To receive the mamarim by email: [mamarim@shvileipinchas.com](mailto:mamarim@shvileipinchas.com)