

Introduction

The story of this book's origins deserves to be told. Over thirty years ago, I began my communal life as Assistant Rabbi in Brith Shalom Beth Israel Congregation in Charleston, South Carolina. You may be surprised to find out that BSBI, founded in 1854, is the oldest continuously active Ashkenazic shul in the United States. Since I was a rabbi, the community assumed that I was a thorough expert in the laws of mezuzah, and I soon found myself doing "house calls" around the neighborhood. However, though I had learned through the laws of mezuzah, I very quickly discovered that I was totally unprepared to handle the practical application of these principles arising from the weird and wonderful world of modern architecture.

From that time onwards, I have been perplexed by open plan living areas, staircases without walls, sliding glass patio doors and many more puzzling dilemmas. Thankfully, with the help of several excellent *sefarim* and the guidance of many rabbis, I have been able to find solutions for many of these halachic problems.

Recently, I decided that I was long overdue for a comprehensive review of these important halachos. As I began my research, it occurred to me that I should record the halachic solutions to these common conundrums and put a small illustration next to each one. The only obstacle to accomplishing this cunning plan was my inability to draw!

That's when I made a call to R' Gil Meir "Gareth" Jankelow, presently of Yerushalayim, whom I knew as an accomplished architect here in South Africa. Gil Meir and his family have been members of my Ohr Somayach Sandton community from its inception, and we had worked together on various projects over the years.

After he expressed his excitement to work with me on this endeavor, I proposed that we do it properly and produce a book. I realized that I was not the only rabbi that faced these halachic issues almost daily, and that therefore we would be providing a welcome and necessary service. Moreover, as R' Chaim Kanievsky points out, Jews are often in situations where they must solve these problems on their own.¹

From the outset, let me clarify that the scope of this work is very limited. It is not a comprehensive digest of the many areas of halachic discourse concerning the laws of mezuzah. It serves only as a general guide to the placement of mezuzot in common situations, according to my understanding. Though I was guided by several competent halachic authorities and by the published opinions of great rabbis, I cannot emphasize enough that my suggestions should not be taken as final halachic judgments. Rather, these general guidelines and the accompanying illustrations can aid in posing accurate queries to halachic authorities in each local setting.

Indeed, R. Moshe Feinstein has cautioned against considering any ruling found in a printed digest as a *psak* halachah.² Until a *posek* renders a decision on a specific case, one must assume that perhaps its details may not be analogous to the model found in the book. Especially, in questions of mezuzah

¹ R' Chaim Kanievsky, *Mezuzot Beitecha* (Bnei Brak: Private, 1963), Introduction.

² Introduction to *Igros Moshe*, Vol. 1.

placement, a slight variation of circumstances will produce a radically different halachic outcome. In many instances, this could invalidate the mitzvah on a Torah level.

Nevertheless, I feel there is benefit in offering my own halachic suggestions instead of merely copying out all the relevant opinions found in the *poskim*. I have noted that the bewildering task of placing mezuzot commonly rests on the shoulders of Jews, often women, who do not have easy access to rabbis who could come to their homes and instruct them. Providing them with a confusing kaleidoscope of mutually-exclusive options would be of little benefit. I have heard this complaint many times about other halachic works in English that perplex the layman with a virtual smorgasbord of opinions.

Therefore, I have chosen, in most cases, to offer a single solution to the model cases in the book, for those who want to rely on my book, for whatever reason. I have also carefully referenced the sources of my ruling and, in many cases, referred to conflicting rulings as well.

My footnotes and bibliography will reveal that I have consulted many excellent halachic works in my research. I have also discussed many issues with several rabbis. I am particularly grateful to Rabbi Eliyahu Feldman, author of *Agur B'ohalecha*, a thorough and deeply researched work on the laws of mezuzah. In many cases, I have relied on the rulings recorded in his magnificent compendium. In addition, Rabbi Feldman has generously given me of his time to elucidate many complex areas.

I would appreciate greatly any corrections or comments regarding this handbook as well as suggestions for the future.

Rabbi Ze'ev Kraines
Sandton, South Africa

Approbations (in alphabetical order)

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ישיבת נר ישראל

בס"ד אב תשע"ז

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Mezuzah is a mitzvah basic to the acceptance of the yoke of Heaven—which is why, says Rabbeynu Yonah, it was included in the Torah in the same Parasha as *Shema Yisrael*, the Jew's acceptance of the yoke of Heaven.

There has long been a need for an authoritative book in English elucidating the laws of Mezuzah. Its laws are intricate and especially with new innovations in architecture, there are many doorways whose rulings are unclear even to the learned.

Rabbi Ze'ev Kraines, Rabbi in Johannesburg, South Africa, should therefore be commended for his masterful, carefully researched work in which he clarifies the details of the laws of Mezuzah and presents them clearly, articulately and with illustrations, so that people from all walks of life will now be able to perform this mitzvah properly.

With deep respect,

Rabbi Aharon Feldman

LETTER FROM R' WARREN GOLDSTEIN SHLITA, CHIEF RABBI OF SOUTH AFRICA

One of the things that inspired me so much about my dear friend, whom I miss so much, Rabbi Ze'ev Kraines, of blessed memory, was the breadth of his sparkling intellect, personality and vision. He was multi-talented, combining so many different facets into one integrated whole. He was both a compassionate and devoted rabbi to his congregants, whom he loved so dearly, and at the same time an intellectually brilliant and profound talmid chacham.

This book, *The Mezuzah Maven*, beautifully captures these two sides of Rabbi Kraines. The mitzvah of mezuzah represents the Jewish home and family, which was the focus of his devoted work as a congregational rabbi. Many of the questions dealt with in this book, I'm sure, were brought to him over many years of putting mezuzahs on the doors of his congregants. This book emerged out of his loving work as a pastoral rabbi, as he tended to the needs of every member of his community, and the mitzvahs of their homes. And at the same time, it is a work that displays tremendous halachic excellence, clarity and depth of learning.

The Alter of Slabodka teaches how the mitzvah of mezuzah encapsulates Hashem's love and individual care for us. It reminds us of His constant presence in our lives, and what that means to us. The parchments contain the first two paragraphs of the Shema, which call on us to reciprocate Hashem's love for us with our love for Him and our dedication to His mitzvahs. It is so significant that Rabbi Kraines was drawn to write on this special mitzvah, which in turn so appropriately encapsulates his life's mission of connecting Jews with Hashem through the Torah.

It is a work which makes the mitzvah of mezuzah accessible to all. In this book, Rabbi Kraines has beautifully combined absolute practical clarity, including diagrams and crystallized detailed halachic instructions, together with the majesty of the depth of the sources and the learning that lies behind it, which are reflected in the learned footnotes.

Rabbi Kraines was deeply immersed in his learning, and at the same time had the unique gift of being able to distill Torah wisdom and explain it in a way that was immediately practical and relevant to people. He brought Torah to his people, while at the same time ensuring that his teachings were deeply rooted in the ancient, authentic sources that take us all the way back to Mount Sinai, to when Hashem first gave it to us.

This publication is a service to people and brings great merit to Rabbi Kraines zt'l. We wish Rebbetzin Kraines and her illustrious, thriving family, who are themselves so devoted to Torah and the Jewish People, much nachas on this publication, which is an eternal legacy to the genius, insight, scholarship and compassion of Rabbi Ze'ev Kraines, whose memory, we all cherish.

With blessings,

Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein

בראשות מורנו הרה"ג ר' שרגא קאלוס שליט"א
ומורנו הרה"ג ר' בנימין ב. הולנדר שליט"א



3"02

י"ג תמוז תשע"ו

I was delighted to have received a copy of **The Mezuzah Handbook** authored by **Harav Ze'ev Kraines** שליט"א.

It is written with clarity, depth and is extremely user friendly.

The need for such a guide cannot be overstated, for many people have little knowledge in this extremely common area. The author has done Klal Yisroel a tremendous service and I'm sure it will enhance any Jewish Home.

המברכו בכל הברכות המובטחות
למקימי התורה ומזכים את הרבים

ידיד נפשך
שרגא קאלוס



Rabbi Zev Leff

הרב זאב לף

כ"ט

*Rabbi of Moshav Matityahu
Rosh HaYeshiva—Yeshiva Gedola Matityahu*

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Dear Friends,

I have read portions of "The Mezuzah Handbook" by my friend and colleague, Rabbi Ze'ev Kraines Shlit"z.


Rabbi Kraines presents the laws of Mezuzah in a very effective manner. He begins with the translation of the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch and adds to it a running commentary that is culled from contemporary Torah sources. The commentary relates the foundations of true Halacha to cases of the modern day realities of architecture. The presentation is in the form of answers to actual Halachic queries and as such captures the interest of the reader. Pictures and diagrams of these cases in Halacha superbly accompany the presentation.

I found this work informative, instructive, interesting and easily understood.

This work will definitely enhance one's understanding of the Halachos of Mezuzah and be an effective guide to the fulfillment of these Halachos.

May Hashem bless the author and his family with life and health and the wherewithal to continue to merit the community in His many and varied ways.

Sincerely,
With Torah blessings


Rabbi Zev Leff

אשר זעליג וויס
כק 8
פעיה"ק ירושלים ת"ו

בס"ד

כ"א מרחשון תש"פ

הן ראיתי את ספרו הנפלא של ידי"ג הרה"ג ר' זאב שלמה קריינס שליט"א
על הלכות מזוזה, וברכתי ברכת התורה וברכת הנהגין.

זה שנים שמכיר אנוכי את הרה"ג שליט"א כאחד מחשובי הרבנים
ביוהנטבורג דר"א, מרביץ תורה ומזכה רבים ומחבר ספרים נפלאים. בטור זה
השכיל לבאר את עיקרי ההלכות בשפה ברורה ונעימה השווה לכל נפש, בשפת
האנגלית לתועלת הרבים.

דואה אני תועלת גדול בטור חשוב זה, כי הלכות אלה מורכבות הן
ומעטים בקיאים בהן, ועל ידי טור זה תרבה הישגת הלכות אלה יד רבים
ימשמשו בהן.

ברכתי לידי"ג הרה"ג שליט"א שתזכה עוד רבות להגדיל תורה ולהאדירה
בבריאות שלום ונחת.

באהבת עולם

אשר וויס

