



Using Replacement Mezuzot When They Are Being Checked?

לעילוי נשמת
 יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

Question: I want to bring my *mezuzot* to a *sofer* for a periodic check. Should I try to get replacement *mezuzot* until they return?

Answer: The argument to have them – *Mezusa* is a Torah-level **obligatory** *mitzva* for one living in a standard house, applying as long as he lives there. Therefore, presumably one who is capable of fulfilling the *mitzva* without an interruption of hours or days (while it is at the *sofer*) should do so. There is even an opinion that if one's *mezusa* falls on Shabbat, if he can spend the rest of the day somewhere else, he should do so (see

discussion in Pitchei Teshuva, Yoreh Deah 285:1).

In practice – There is no need. One strong indication not to require replacement *mezuzot* is that since Halacha requires checking every few years (Yoma 11a) and classical *poskim* do not talk about replacements, it must not be necessary. This is bolstered by accounts of great rabbis who did not seek replacements (see Revevot Ephraim V:548 about Rav Moshe Feinstein, albeit apparently regarding a shorter check at home). One can suggest a proof by means of “reduction to absurdity.” If one may not be without *mezusa* for hours/days, then it should not be permitted even for seconds (where is the cutoff point!?), which would require you to put one up exactly as you remove the one to be checked, which does not seem plausible. One could deflect this by saying that the Torah requires it to be done close to right away, or perhaps that it is not prohibited to be without it, but one who can have *mezuzot* all the time is expected to do so in a normal amount of time.

There are a couple of explanations why one need not be concerned. Arguably, the *mitzva*

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is “for the life of living there,” so missing hours every few years for a good reason is considered a 100% fulfillment of the *mitzva*. After all, many understand that *tefillin* is a *mitzva* **all day** (see Be’ur Halacha to 37:1), and yet we suffice, for good reasons, with wearing them during *Shacharit*. We seem to be doing better than that for *mezuzot* even without replacements during checking.

Another possibility (see discussion in Shevet Hakehati I:273) is that there is a **special dispensation** made for the purpose of checking *mezuzot*, which is, after all, a halachic requirement (see Shulchan Aruch, YD 291:1). Perhaps we can explain that since it is not practical to expect everyone to have replacement *mezuzot*, the practice of checking includes a dispensation from *mezuzot* as long as is necessary for the checking. Some **possible** differences between approaches are: how fast one must act once the *sofer* has completed his work (see Rivevot Ephrayim *ibid.*, who thinks one should act promptly); order of action if the return of the *mezuzot* coincides with another *mitzva* (*ibid.*); whether it is a good thing to check the *mezuzot* more than Halacha requires (see Shevet Hakehati *ibid.*) or to do a check that takes longer.

Is there at least a voluntary preference to use replacement *mezuzot*? Although ostensibly “Why not?”, there are a few drawbacks. Shevet Hakehati (*ibid.*) references a precedent regarding the laws of checking *mezuzot* that when we make it difficult to check, people push it off (see Rashi, Yoma 11a). We can

add that it complicates the *berachot* situation. In Living the Halachic Process I:G-5, we discuss the *machloket* about whether to make a *beracha* upon returning the *mezuzot* after the check. If you put back different ones, or use replacements, it likely calls for *berachot* because *berachot* are impacted by the *mezuzot* used (see Chovat Hadar 11:14). However, if one is exempt from having *mezuzot* during the check, there is an additional question whether a *beracha* is called for when putting up replacements (see Sha’ar Hatziyun 475:39). There is always the general question about how good an idea it is to act stringently when it is clearly not required (beyond our present scope).

Therefore, our recommendation is just to do what almost everyone does – not use replacement *mezuzot*. Exceptions can be when there will be a delay of several days or if the house will be left with no *mezuzot*. ■

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