

# Doorway Defense

Category: Holidays, Rosh Hashana

*Is there a special mitzvah that we could take on for the new year? What is G-d's message to us in the year post-October 7th?*

## Reflections

This past year, as I'm sure you can all remember, began on a very difficult note. In truth, nothing seemed to improve for a long while afterwards; in a sense, matters just deteriorated all year long. But just in the recent few weeks, the tide began to turn. Now, we're seeing amazing miracles.

Throughout this past year, people asked me—and honestly, I asked myself—what exactly are we supposed to do in times like these? Sure, we need to support Israel financially and stay united, but what can we specifically do in such difficult moments?

These days, we don't have prophets telling us, "So says the L-rd." However, I would argue that G-d still finds ways to communicate with us. The Baal Shem Tov taught that "Everything a Jew sees or hears is a message about how to serve G-d" (Likkutei Sichot, vol. 23, p. 512). It's not a message that needs to come from a spiritual leader or a rabbi; sometimes, that message can even come from a non-Jew.

## Pro-Israel in Hollywood

This week, I learned a new name: Patricia Heaton. She's a famous Hollywood actress, a two-time Emmy Award winner, and she even got a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame (what that is—I don't know, but I'm told by the experts that it's a pretty big deal). She's also a woman of faith, who openly attributes all her success to G-d.

She's always been a supporter of Israel. She grew up in Bay Village, Ohio, which is pretty close to Cleveland, and she always had a fondness for the Jewish people. She once saw an elderly woman at the gym with numbers tattooed on her arm,

and it made her realize how this history of anti-Semitism is still very much with us, and how important it is to stay vigilant.

But on October 7th, something changed. Like the rest of the world, she watched in horror as the terrible images from Israel appeared. She was certain people would flood the streets in protest, especially in Tennessee, where most people are big supporters of Israel. She expected to see posters of the hostages plastered everywhere and red flags being waved—something! She expected to see open outrage. But reality didn't match her expectations. As she describes it—fear of being accused of Islamophobia kept too many people silent.

Her Hollywood peers were a special disappointment. She tries to give them the benefit of the doubt; many actors are deeply emotional (which is exactly what makes them great at what they do), so they have a hard time separating the tragedy of war from the tough but necessary steps needed to deal with a radical terrorist group.

But that was a turning point for her. She realized she had to do something. She started a new organization called "Coalition 7 October," or C7O for short, with the goal of rallying support for Israel among non-Jews. Now, this has become her life's mission. She says she felt she couldn't just stand by and watch while Israel fights for its survival.

The organization focuses on three main areas: *Education*—she believes it's important to explain the full picture of the Jewish-Arab conflict to wide audiences and break the stereotypes about Israel; *Fundraising* for Israel; and *Media*—working to change the media narrative in the U.S., which often overlooks Israel's side of the story.

She's now a regular speaker at pro-Israel events. She is very confident in her assertion that the current situation isn't just about Israel—it's the same age-old anti-Semitism that has plagued us for generations. She wears a necklace in the shape of the Land of Israel and the hostage tag.

Her basic rule is that when Jews walk the streets and see symbols of hate, like keffiyehs or chants of "from the river to the sea," it's her duty to show them they're not alone. People have their differences of opinion when it comes to religion and politics, and not everyone has to agree with Israel, but right now, she argues to anyone who will listen, we have to put all those disagreements aside.

We need to be united in order to save Israel, which isn't just important for the Jewish people, but for the safety of the world as a whole.

## The Mitzvah Campaign

Why am I telling you all this? Well, just two weeks before Rosh Hashanah, Patricia Heaton kicked off a campaign called “#MyzuzahYourzuzah,” named after a Jewish non profit organization promoting Mezuzahs on every Jewish door.

She posted a video of herself putting up a mezuzah on her door, encouraging others to do the same to show solidarity with their Jewish friends and neighbors—and to push back against anti-Semitism.

Thanks to her campaign, the Myzuzah organization has been flooded with thousands of requests. Myzuzah helps Jewish families fulfill the mitzvah of putting up a kosher mezuzah, and they've set a goal that no Jewish home should be without one. Since the campaign took off, they've received an overwhelming number of requests, and unsurprisingly, most of them have come from non-Jews.

They decided that when a non-Jew reaches out, they will offer a plain mezuzah case as a symbol of support. But if someone insists on the full deal—the scroll itself—they can buy it, though the organization gently reminds them that the mitzvah is only a religious obligation for Jews.

So this well-known actress, who already wears a Greater Israel necklace, a tag for the hostages, and yellow ribbon pins at every public event, did not request people to wear any of the above, rather, chose to rally people around... a mezuzah!

If we're looking for a sign from above about what our role is today—what mitzvah we need to strengthen the protection of the Jewish people and Israel—maybe G-d has already sent the message, and thousands are already on board.

When a rabbi tells people to put up a mezuzah, people say, “Well, of course he's saying that—it's his job. He gets paid to promote Jewish stuff.” But when it comes from Hollywood and suddenly it's a celebrity trend, suddenly everyone's like, “Hey, if it's good enough for them, it's good enough for us!”

# A Mezuzah for Non-Jews?

Some people don't like the fact that non-Jews are buying mezuzahs. They say it's "cultural appropriation," arguing that the mitzvah of mezuzah was given only to the Jewish people.

Well, there's a story in the Talmud about that.

One fine day, a package arrived at the home of Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, the leader of the Jewish people nearly 2,000 years ago. It was a priceless pearl, sent by Artaban, King of Persia. Artaban wanted to develop a relationship with Rabbi Yehuda (some say because Rabbi Yehudah was already very close with Antoninus, the Roman emperor), so he had sent the most valuable item his country produced—pearls.

Rabbi Yehudah, who was himself fabulously wealthy, was expected to send something valuable in return. So, he asked the messenger to wait a few days, and called in his scribe and had him write a mezuzah which he sent back to the Persian king. When Artaban received it, he was insulted. He sent a message to Rabbi Yehudah saying, "I sent you a pearl of priceless value, and you sent me something worth only a penny!"

Rabbi Yehudah responded, "You sent me something I have to guard with my life. But I sent you something that will guard *you*—even while you sleep."

Not long after, Artaban's daughter fell ill, and none of the doctors could cure her. In his desperation, Artaban remembered the mezuzah Rabbi Yehudah had sent him. He placed the mezuzah on the entrance of his home, and his daughter was healed.

So, what do we learn from this? That even a non-Jew can have a mezuzah, as long as they respect its holiness and treat it properly. (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah, 291:3)

## In Conclusion

The Rebbe launched the Mezuzah Campaign fifty years ago, during a time when Israel was experiencing frequent terrorist attacks. He often emphasized that

putting up a mezuzah doesn't just protect the individual home—it has a ripple effect, offering protection to the entire Jewish people, no matter where they are (Toras Menachem vol. 86, p. 185).

Now, I know what some of you are probably thinking: “I already have mezuzahs—more than one, in fact!” But even if your home is covered, there may still be doors without one. And even if every door is taken care of, you can always buy one as a gift for a family member or friend, helping them fulfill this important mitzvah.

May G-d bless us through this mitzvah with peace of mind and body in the new year. May we all sleep soundly, free from worries, and may it be a year filled with joy, goodness, and sweetness for everyone.