

Door Jam

August 4, 2022

Q We're moving into our new home on a Friday. While affixing the mezuzos, I discovered I'm short one, but I won't be able to obtain it until after Shabbos. Should I postpone the move?

A The moment one begins to reside in a house that he owns, he becomes obligated in the mitzvah of mezuzah, so he must prepare the mezuzos prior to the move. (A renter has thirty days.) Although the Torah doesn't directly forbid living in a house without a mezuzah, it commands us to affix mezuzos, so one may not begin residing in the house without them. By moving in, the homeowner is in default on his obligation every moment. The Aruch Hashulchan (Y.D. 285:5) writes, "One who is aware that his doorway is missing a mezuzah is forbidden to wait even one minute and must immediately go and obtain one."

The Minchas Chinuch (423) proposes that the mitzvah of mezuzah be treated as stringently as a mitzvas *lo sa'aseh*, because it is a constant transgression. Certain exemptions that normally apply to mitzvos *asei*—like not having to pay a price beyond what one can afford—don't apply to mezuzah. This means that one must postpone his move, even if that causes great inconvenience and financial loss.

But the Mordechai rules (*Hilchos Tzitzis* 944, cited in Shulchan Aruch O.C. 13:3; see Magein Avraham *ibid.*) that your case is different. The halacha is that if someone realizes on Shabbos that his four-cornered garment is missing tzitzis, he may continue to wear it, because it is forbidden to attach tzitzis on Shabbos. Because affixing mezuzos is also a *melacha*, the Mordechai equates mezuzah to tzitzis.

Still, this should not be relied upon *lechat'chilah*, as Chazal only granted this leniency in case of need. If you have nowhere to go for Shabbos on short notice, you may stay in the home (Teshuvos Vehanhagos 6:212 in a similar case).

