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B. H.
15th of Sivan, 5737
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Rabbi Dr. Dov Mandelbaum
920 Park Avenue
New York, N. Y. 10028

Sholom uBracha;

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of Rosh Chodesh Sivan, and the previous correspondence with enclosure.

Referring to your remarks in regard to the presentation of the Mezuzah Campaign and similar activities, I must say, with all due respect, that I am surprised at your objections to pointing out the reward associated with the Mezuzah in terms of protection, particularly the simile of a helmet, etc. For, precisely in the case of the Mezuzah the reward in this world is emphasized many times in our sacred sources, and it has, moreover, the distinction of having its reward expressly formulated in the Shulchan Aruch, to wit:

(י"ד י"ג, פ"ד, ס"א)

It is clear that the Shulchan Aruch speaks ~~here~~ of reward in this world, in the plain sense.

If this formulation raises questions, such as the holocaust, etc., as you mention, our Sages have already dealt with such questions in their characteristic laconic fashion; and, directly bearing on the subject at hand, they have told us that Moshe Rabbeinu (even before the Parshah of Mezuzah was written) questioned G-d:

(ברכות ז, א) . וצניק ורע לו (ברכות ז, א) . The same question has been asked through the ages, including the Book of Iyov, which you cite.

I should like to add that this is ~~not~~ the position of not only a believing Jew, but - subconsciously, and perhaps even consciously - it is the basic approach of every educator worthy of his vocation who teaches children (in age or knowledge) ~~to~~ to develop moral attitudes and behavior -- not on the merit of pure idealism alone, but also and largely on the basis of their pragmatic value. Most educators will not hesitate to advocate the virtues of honesty, justice, etc. for their immediate reward in terms of personal contentment and peace of mind, as well as for the good of the society in which to live.

Moreover, though many an educator or spiritual leader may be prepared to compromise in certain areas under social pressures or the sway of the so-called liberal democracy, everyone has certain ideals and principles where one will not conform to the rule of כל דאליס גבר in a society where crime has been steadily rising in recent years. And while propagating to his students adherence to these ideals at personal sacrifice for the sake of a better world, etc., it will be found, on closer scrutiny, that the motivation is not entirely that of pure altruism.

Even in the case of a none too observant Jew, it is useful for him to be reminded of the second portion of the Shema: "If you will hearken diligently to My commandments - I will give your rains in their due season. . . ." And though he has seen pogroms and the like when they were apparently least deserved, he will attribute them to some unknown causes, but will not let such questions deter him personally, expecting things to be different in his case.

There is surely no need to elaborate further on the above.

With esteem and blessing,