

SCHEM

Categories: Institutions

Szomraj Mezuzoth. S.M.¹ – these initials describe an association established in the ghetto on 1 May 1940. Its founder, religious “fantasist” Avrom Meshngiser, assumed that since the closed ghetto is populated exclusively by Jews, then time has come to fulfill religious duty and equip all its gates and doors with mezuzot².

Members of the association were not satisfied with putting kosher mezuzot on the doorposts of houses (primarily those that previously belonged to the Christians), but they also installed them at doorways and gates, which resulted

in a conflict with the administration and the police.

The founder of the association, Avrom Meshngiser, did not stop at such spectacular actions and, citing the relevant passages of the Tanakh³ and the Talmud⁴, began to preach in minyans and in the streets that patches on Jewish chests and back appeared because the Jews did not respect the obligation [of hanging] mezuzot and [wearing] tzitzes⁵.

After the death of its founder in the second half of 1942, the association fell apart.

I.B.A. [Jerachmil Bryman]

Footnotes

1 Shomrei Mezuzot (Hebrew) – Guardians of the mezuzot.

2 Mezuzah (Yiddish mezuze) – Lit. doorpost; a decorative rectangular case, made of metal or glass, or two pieces of cardboard with a roll of parchment placed inside, with handwritten

verses from the Book of Deuteronomy (6:4-9 and 11:13-21), which are also part of the daily prayer “Shema Israel.”

3 Tanakh – The Hebrew Bible; an acronym formed from the words: Torah (Law, or the Five Books of Moses), Nevi'im (Prophets), Ketuvim (Writings, or the Books of Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah, Chronicles, and the so-called Five Scrolls: Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther).

4 Talmud (Hebrew) – Lit. “instruction, learning”; a compendium of writings by Jewish scholars who lived from the third century BC until the fourth century in Babylonia (the Babylonian Talmud) and Palestine (the Palestinian or Jerusalem Talmud), which form the basis of rabbinic (contemporary) Judaism. The Talmud consists of commentaries on the Torah, elucidation of the laws, stories and the Midrashim; It is divided into two parts: the Mishnah and the Gemara.

5 Tallis (Yiddish) – A prayer shawl, usually white with blue or black stripes and fringes (Yiddish tzitzes, Hebrew tzitzit) attached to its corners, worn by men on the head and shoulders during the morning prayers. Orthodox Jews wear tallis koton (Hebrew tallit katan) at all times – a shirt with tassels on the four corners.

Resources

Encyclopedia, s. 196-197.

Tags

religious life

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