Dear Name@Withheld,

Yes, you have time: Before you move in you have no obligation at all to put up mezuzot, and you don’t need to comply with the request of the current occupants. But you are a nice person and you want something tactful and you comply with the request of the current occupants.

My question is this: There will be a few weeks between the time they leave and I move in when the painters will be painting. I would prefer not putting up my mezuzot until after they have painted and I can buy nice mezuzah covers. The wife prefers that my mezuzot be up when she takes hers down. Do I have time or must I do as she says? Can the mezuzot be wrapped in plastic and put up with tape rather than with a proper cover and nails until I move in? And what if I said I couldn’t pay for her mezuzot, can she still take them?

Furthermore, you said the house is going to be painted. Before painting, it’s recommended that the mezuzot be removed so they don’t get damaged. Once the current occupants remove the mezuzot for a permitted reason – i.e., painting – the unoccupied home may remain ‘mezuzah-less’ until you move in.

If for some reason you decide to put up the mezuzot before you move in, don’t say the blessing since the mitzvah doesn’t apply yet. Later, when you move in, remove the mezuzah, say the blessing, and put it back up. Tape or glue may be used to affix the mezuzot.

People experiencing difficulties often check that their mezuzot are Kosher and properly affixed on all their doorposts. I remember when my neighbor Harry (the Heretic) noticed that his kids were all becoming very religious — he didn’t know what to do. A local rabbi heard of the problem and suggested “Check your mezuzot. Maybe they’re Kosher!”

Sources:
• Tractate Bava Metzia 102a
• Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De’ah 291:2
• Yesodei Yeshun, M’aarechet Beit Haknesset 2, citing the Atzei Zayit

Yiddle Riddle:

Question? Which Tractate of the Talmud fits the following description: The Aramaic translation of the name of this Tractate is the name of a different Tractate?

Answer! Tractate Kelayim — which teaches forbidden mixtures of plants. The verse says: “Don’t plant kelayim in your field…” (Leviticus 19:19). Targum Onkelos translates the word ‘kelayim’ into Aramaic as ‘eruv’ (mixtures).

Eruvin is the name of a different Tractate that teaches the laws of carrying items on Shabbat from one halachic domain to another. An Eruv ‘mixes’ two domains into one, thereby permitting ‘carrying’ inside the Eruv.

(first sent in by Mordechai Perlman <aw004@freenet.toronto.on.ca>)