

A LESSON OF A PICTURE LEARNING TO LIVE

It was Yud Alef Nissan 5737, and crowds of Chassidim had come to celebrate the Rebbe's 75th birthday with him. Amongst those assembled were some Russians Jews.

As the third Sich'a came to a close, a string of Freiliche niggunim began. "V'chol Karnei Reshoim..." the singing grew stronger and stronger as the Chassidim joyfully sang the new niggun for the Rebbe's Kappitul.

Right then, there was a large commotion on the Farbrengen Bima as all heads strained to see what was going on.

Russian artists Vladimir Dashevsky and his son Gregory, made their way over to the Rebbe's place with a special gift they had painted and framed; a beautiful drawing of the Rebbe receiving an Aliyah by the Torah.

Standing right next to the Rebbe, Vladimir placed the framed picture on the table, putting it in full view for the Rebbe. The smile that formed on the Rebbe's face confirmed the pleasure he had from it. [picture #1]

Vladimir then made his official presentation, and he said in Russian (Transcription of conversation courtesy of JEM¹):

"Dear Rebbe, in the name of the Russian Jews who came here and are happy to be here with you I am an artist, and I have the honor to present this to you..."

We want to give you this as our heartfelt gift."

He then took hold of the Rebbe's hand and while enthusiastically shaking it he continued:

"We believe you will have many healthy years for all the Jews."

The Rebbe: **Amen**

Rabbi Groner then poured Vladimir a L'chayim [picture #2] and he said:

"So that everyone should be happy, I drink for you."

Throughout that time Gregory had been standing to the side, the Rebbe turned to his father and asked:

"Is this your son?"

Vladimir: **Yes my son does too... "To life," Rebbe...**

Rebbe: **The same to you.**

At that point Gregory approached the Rebbe and shook his hand. Making a L'chayim he said:

I wish you strong health.

Rebbe: **The same to you.**





While the Rebbe was talking to his son, Vladimir raised the picture high into the air [picture #3]. He delightfully turned from one direction to another giving the throngs of Chassidim an opportunity to view his treasure. As the crowd gazed on, each person present saw a most humbling scene. Here were two men who sincerely wanted to thank the Rebbe for what he had done for them and their extended community. They painstakingly prepared this handcrafted piece of art, as their way of saying thank you. Truly inspiring and awing!

The Rebbe leaned over to Vladimir and said with a smile:

They already see the original!

Vladimir: **Yes, the original. Thank you for accepting this from us.**

Once again one can see the pure sincerity with which they presented this gift and how lucky they felt that the Rebbe liked it.

Rebbe: **Thank you and be well. The main thing is, strive that it be obvious upon you - that you follow in the footsteps of this picture: Torah.**

Vladimir: **We will. We are well-bred, but there's a lot we don't understand...**

Rebbe: **When you were born, you could not paint such a picture either...**

Vladimir: **No, I could not.**

Rebbe: **So you have already trained for something once before...**

Vladimir: **Thank you.**

Rebbe: **A Kosher and happy Passover.**

Vladimir: **Thank you.**

haps Torah...

"Now is the time to make clear, first and foremost the emphasis should be on Inyanim of Torah. And not by giving away money, Tzedaka, for those learning Torah and Torah institutions, although Tzedaka is also commendable and brings down many great brochos, rather by actually learning Torah.

"In other words, plain and simply said, those who wish to give presents, and no-one is required to do so, should add in Torah.

"Although in general one cannot make conditions on a gift, the whole point is to give Nachas-Ruach, [so I am making clear what I prefer]. Whatever it might be, Tzedaka in this way, more activities, good actions, its nachon, and tov, and yashar, and na'im, (with all the 15 expressions stated in "Vaytziv V'nachon") everyone should add in some way in Torah study."

On 12 Nissan 5741 the Rebbe wrote to Mr. David Chase:

...Although it is not customary nor proper to ask for a birthday gift, but considering our special relationship, I venture to do so, being confident that you will treat it in the proper spirit.

The birthday gift that I have in mind, which I would consider an honor, as well as a great pleasure, is that you devote a quarter of an hour of your time every weekday morning and dedicate it for the sacred purpose of putting on Tefillin, with the appropriate prayer that goes with it, such as the Shma and the like... ■

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The Rebbe did not shun birthday gifts, in fact he requested them. The Rebbe saw them as an opportunity for people to increase in Torah and Mitzvos as the Rebbe said to the artist; use this painting as lesson in life.

Perhaps the most amazing example of this was during the Farbrengen of Purim, 5732, a month before the Rebbe's seventieth birthday.

"Now is the time to add: Because there are those who are preparing for [my] birthday, and they are thinking, what should the preparation consist of, Tzedaka (which is also connected to Purim) or per-

