

THE GREATEST PLEASURE

Gifts Presented to the Rebbe

From the early years of the Yom Tov of Yud-Aleph Nissan, Chassidim naturally wished to present the Rebbe with a gift. In 5722*, ahead of the Rebbe's sixtieth birthday, Chassidim gave gifts of Torah and tzedakah. Already then, it was clear that the Rebbe had tremendous *nachas* from this gesture. In fact, Chassidim felt that their preparation of *matanos* for Yud-Aleph Nissan, is what ultimately caused the Rebbe to farbeng⁴.

However, leading up to Yud-Aleph Nissan 5732* this idea took on a whole new excitement. The early preparations of Chassidim were referred to by the Rebbe at the Purim farbrengen of 5732*, one month before Yud-Aleph Nissan. It was then that the Rebbe expressed that the main focus of the gifts he would like to receive should be in Torah; both in *nigleh* and Chassidus.

A similar sentiment is expressed in a letter to Mr. David Chase dated 12 Nissan 5741*: "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 Shema and the like."

One area to which the Rebbe paid unique attention was the *matanos* of the *bochurim*. Among the big projects the *bochurim* launched for Yud-Aleph Nissan that year are the now-ubiquitous *kovtzim* of *haaros* and *biurim*. These *kovtzim* were initiated in the months leading up to Yud-Aleph Nissan 5732*, the Rebbe's seventieth birthday, when the *bochurim* took upon themselves to add a special *seder* in the Rebbe's Likkutei Sichos. As a result of the in-depth study of the Rebbe's Torah, they published a few booklets with some *iyunim* and *haaros*.

In the summer months a *maareches* of *bochurim* decided to collect the *haaros* and compile them into a proper *kovetz*, to benefit the greater public. Not only did the Rebbe approve, but he gave detailed instructions on the publishing of the *kovetz*. Most surprisingly, the Rebbe instructed that 10% of the *kovetz* be paid for by *mazkirus* from the "Keren Hashivim," a fund in support of the new institutions founded in the Rebbe's 70th year. This indicated that the Rebbe viewed this publication as a new *mosad*, just like the other 71 institutions!

In addition to the many *matanos* in areas of Torah, Chassidim gifted the Rebbe with an array of different things. Here are a few examples:

The annual Yud-Aleph Nissan *niggunim* are definitely amongst the most famous gifts presented to the Rebbe by talented composers throughout the years. In honor of the Rebbe's eightieth birthday in 5742*, a Chossid in Eretz Yisroel composed a *niggun* with an original tune; a novelty that continues until today. After he composed the *niggun*, already in the month of Teves, the Rebbe wrote to him in a post-script: "ות"ח על הניגון וכו' ויעבוד ה' בשמחה" וט"ל—Thank you for the *niggun* etc. and may you serve Hashem with joy and gladness of the heart."

Many heads of government would present the Rebbe with a key to their country or city, and medallions from their respective governments.

Throughout the years we find many incredible expressions from the Rebbe about these Yud-Aleph Nissan *matanos*: To a child who told the Rebbe in *yechidus* about the Tanya and Mishnayos he learnt by-heart, the Rebbe asked: "Can you influence your friends to also give such gifts?"

In response to a notification from Tzach in Eretz Yisroel about a Tanya study session on the radio in honor of Yud-Aleph Nissan, the Rebbe wrote: "נת"ח ות"ח ת"ח (כולל גם על הנח"ר)"—The letter was



REB CHAIM LAPIDUS PRESENTS THE REBBE WITH A NEW VOLUME OF LIKKUTEI SICHS.

THE REBBE IS PRESENTED WITH A KEY TO THE CHABAD HOUSE OF TULSA, OKLAHOMA.

A REPRESENTATIVE OF TOMCHEI TEMIMIM OF KIRYAT GAT PRESENTS THE REBBE WITH A SEFER PILPULIM PUBLISHED IN HONOR OF YUD-ALEPH NISSAN.

MR. RAPHAEL NOURIL, AN ACCLAIMED JEWISH ARTIST, PRESENTS THE REBBE WITH A PAINTING BEFORE YUD-ALEPH NISSAN 5751*.

received; many thanks (including also the great *nachas-ruach* they caused by connecting it with this specific date).

The Rebbe at times even reminded people to fulfill the *matanos* and *hachlatos* they had taken upon themselves.

In the months following Yud-Aleph Nissan 5732* and leading up to Yud-Aleph Nissan 5733*, the Rebbe encouraged the development of the 71 new institutions, asked for constant updates as to where things were holding, and even dedicated *sichos* reminding the Chassidim to complete what they began. Similarly, in Elul 5732* Rabbi Chadakov sent a letter—on the Rebbe’s instruction—to Rabbi Moshe Halperin following up on the *hachlatos* the students of the *yeshivas erev* in Kfar Chabad took upon themselves in honor of *shnas hashivim*. The letter even asked for a list of the students who did not learn what they had pledged to.

Another special gift was the publishing of *sefarim* in honor of Yud-Aleph Nissan. From *sifrei pilpulim* of *bochurim* and *rabbonim* to *sefarim* privately published by individuals, the Rebbe expressed deep *nachas-ruach* from these *sefarim*. The Rebbe once expressed to Reb Zalman Posner when he presented the Rebbe with a new edition of an old *sefer* of his: “Why did you not publish a new *sefer*? I want the new *sefer* to be brought to me as a gift for Yud-Aleph Nissan.”

Many similar expressions are found as the Rebbe encouraged people of all backgrounds to have a publishing project finished by Yud-Aleph Nissan.

Some noteworthy *matanos*:

On Erev Yud-Aleph Nissan 5731*, the group of *talmidim hashluchim* to Australia returned to New York after two years of *shlichus*. They brought with them a priceless gift from Reb Isser Kluwgant (shliach in Australia): the Baal Shem Tov’s

tefillin. When they notified the Rebbe, he instructed them to enter for *yechidus* the following day, Yud-Aleph Nissan. When they entered the Rebbe’s room (they went in the morning, before the Rebbe left for the Ohel), the Rebbe took the tefillin with both hands, saying “*a groisen yasher koach*.” The Rebbe continued holding the tefillin with both of his hands even after the group left the room.

In 5732* President Shazar sent the Rebbe the silver tefillin cases of the Mittlerer Rebbe. The Rebbe responded: “I confirm the receipt of your letter and of the honorable gift—both holy and a reminder of our forefathers and *nesi'im*—and many thanks from the depths of my heart.”

On Yud-Aleph Nissan 5734* after the *farbrengen*, Rabbi Shlomo Cunin brought a delegation of supporters into the Rebbe’s room where they presented the Rebbe with a wooden *aron kodesh* built especially for a Torah

* 5732-1972, 5742-1982, 5733-1973, 5751-1991, 5731-1971, 5732-1972, 5734-1974



that had been recently brought to the Rebbe from Morocco. The Rebbe gave each member of the delegation one dollar (as per the Rebbe's custom when people gave gifts), and sent them a letter (dated 12 Nissan) explaining the uniqueness of the *aron kodesh*; despite its physical characteristics, it holds the Torah, which is *ein sof*.

Following the group from

California, a delegation from Detroit presented the Rebbe with "A Thought for the Week" in English and other languages. The Rebbe responded: "It should be brought down from 'thought' to speech and to action. We should not suffice with what was done until now, as was spoken at the farbrengen."

In 5736*, the Rebbe received a

most unique present from Reb Aharon Klein. In honor of Yud-Aleph Nissan he gifted the Rebbe with a 24 inch menorah made of pure gold, with the *posuk* "Arachti ner l'mishichi, Yud-Aleph Nissan 5736, Nesie Yisroel" engraved on it's base. When he arrived at the Rebbe and Rebbetzin's home with his gift, the Rebbetzin exclaimed in surprise: "How much debt did you fall into now?" Mr. Klein answered that when buying the Rebbe a gift he tries to make sure to use "wholesome" money without falling into debt.

A most emotional and perhaps the most recent and final reference—*le'eis ata*—we were *zoche* to from the Rebbe was in Nissan 5752*. Rabbi Leibel Groner had read before the Rebbe several reports from *bochurim* regarding their *matanos* for Yud-Aleph Nissan, the Rebbe's 90th birthday. The Rebbe indicated to Rabbi Groner to read the reports over again, showing special attention and *nachas*.

THE UFARATZA BUS

An interesting story regarding a *peula bochurim* did in honor of Yud-Aleph Nissan took place in 5723*:

Rabbis Moshe Kagen, Shlomo Cunin and Simcha Piekarsky were *bochurim* in 770 at the time, and before Yud-Aleph Nissan, in light of the Rebbe's "ufaratza" campaign at the time, they decided to do something in that vein as a *matana* for the Rebbe.

They took an old bus, painted the words "Ufaratzta yama vakeidma..." on the top with large Merkos logos on the sides, and the "Ufaratza Bus" was born! Bookshelves were fastened inside the bus along its walls, making it a mobile Jewish library, to spread Jewish literature. In the back of the bus, behind a curtain, there was a small table with tefillin, so that they could offer passersby a chance to perform this mitzvah. The reason this half of the bus was separated from the rest, was in the case that someone was embarrassed to be seen while putting on tefillin, he could do so in private. [Note: this was before the Rebbe started Mitzvah tefillin, and long before the era of the Mitzvah Tanks!]

On Yud-Aleph Nissan morning, they parked the

bus outside 770, so that the Rebbe would see it as he walked down Eastern Parkway from home. When the Rebbe came down the street, Rabbi Cunin invited the Rebbe inside the bus to have a look! "The Rebbe took one leap" Rabbi Kagen related, "and was inside the bus". The Rebbe proceeded to walk down the length of the bus taking in all its contents. Upon reaching the curtain in the back, the Rebbe inquired as to what it was for. After hearing Rabbi Cunin's explanation that it was in case someone was shy and didn't want to be seen putting on tefillin, the Rebbe remarked that one must not be embarrassed about putting on tefillin.

The books were fastened on their shelves with several wires, each one with a different length and tone. On the Rebbe's way out, the Rebbe walked to the back of the bus, and with a smile on his face proceeded back towards the exit while flicking each of the wires listening to the different tones they emitted. The Rebbe looked noticeably pleased by the *bochurim's* initiative, and even spoke about the "new innovations people have invented to help further *hafatzas hamaayanos*" in a farbrengen later that year¹⁰.



PHOTO BY YOSHI MELAMED/11 NISSAN 5737

“A THREE-FOOT PILE OF GIFTS”

Yud-Aleph Nissan 5737-75 Years

The Yud-Aleph Nissan farbrengen of 5737*, the Rebbe’s 75th birthday, stands out for the multitude of *matanos* presented to the Rebbe. In between the *sichos*, dozens of dignitaries, rabbonim, and shluchim and their *baalei batim* approached the Rebbe, presenting gifts and well wishes. The Rebbe instructed them to say *l’chaim* and blessed them in response.

Rabbi Sholom Ber Hecht and members of the Queens Sephardic community gave the Rebbe *sefarim* and ancient handwritten notes from European *ge’onim*, which they had purchased as a present for the Rebbe. Among these, was a 500-year-old large handwritten siddur, used by the *chazzanim* in a shul in Tehran over the generations. In the period preceding Yud-Aleph Nissan, the Tzach Levi Yitzchok Library had collected the transcripts from all the Rebbe’s *maamarim* and *sichos* to date and bound them together in many volumes. These volumes would serve as a basis for the large set of *Sichos Kodesh*, published a number of years later. Rabbi Avraham Parshan, a supporter of the library, presented the Rebbe with three volumes from this collection, along with the *sefer Biurei Rashi*.

Reb Leibel Raskin, shliach in Morocco, gave the Rebbe a Tehillim Ohel Yosef Yitzchak printed in Morocco. As he gave it to the Rebbe, the Rebbe turned to him and said, “Where is the Tanya in Arabic?” Rabbi Raskin had printed a Tanya in Arabic a few months before and sent it to the Rebbe. But the Rebbe wanted it to be presented to him again on Yud-Aleph Nissan! Rabbi Raskin ran upstairs to the *hanhalah* office in 770,

where his brother, Reb Dovid Raskin, had this particular Tanya, and brought it back down for the Rebbe.

Two Russian artists, Vladimir and Gregory Dashevsky, brought a portrait they had painted of the Rebbe with a *sefer Torah* in a large frame: “Dear Rebbe, in the name of the Russian Jewry 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. We believe you will have many healthy years for all the Jews.” The artists raised the picture in the air to show it to the entire crowd. Motioning that they should put the picture down, the Rebbe told the artists with a large smile “They already see the original! Thank you and be well. The main thing is, strive that it be obvious about you that you follow in the footsteps of this picture: Torah.”

Mr. Yitzchak Berez, a photographer, uncovered a large print of a photo he had taken of the Rebbe. Following the Russian artists’ cue, he too picked up the photo and showed it to everyone. The Rebbe smiled and told him to say *l’chaim*.

As the Rebbe had specifically encouraged in previous years, many yeshivos prepared *kovtzim* of *pilpulim* and *chiddushei Torah* as gifts to the Rebbe.

In between visitors, the Rebbe nodded his head and clapped his hands to encourage the singing. Reb Zalmon Jaffe related: “[The pile of presentations and letters had grown so large] that there was a three-foot high pile of gifts on the table, in front of the Rebbe—who was barely visible. [Rabbi] Leibel [Groner] obtained some paper sacks and packed up all the gifts. It needed four sacks to clear the pile, and Leibel and [Rabbi] Yudel [Krinsky] carted them away [up to the Rebbe’s room].”