



BEHIND THE PICTURE

Special thanks to Mrs. Brocha Friedman
and Mrs. Feigel Jacobson.

THE THEME OF IT ALL

N'shei Chabad Centerpieces

Much as the Rebbe spoke innumerable *sichos* before a shul filled with men and boys, special gatherings were also held in honor of women and girls, whereupon the Rebbe would address them, with concepts that are relevant to them in particular.

The central Lubavitch organization for women—N'shei Ub'nos Chabad—always held its annual gathering sometime in the end of the month of Iyar. The gathering focused on a specific theme, each year a different one; the choice of the year's theme was hardly random. The organizers always ensured to pick a topic or *hora'ah* that the Rebbe was passionately calling for at the time, and they made that their theme.

The gathering took place in New York, with a rich program, culminating with a banquet where the theme of the year's convention was addressed, as well as illustrated with a handsome centerpiece.

Following the banquet, the women would gather in 770 to hear a *sicha* from the Rebbe in honor of the occasion, and

they would bring along the centerpiece, which was placed on the Rebbe's dais. The Rebbe often paid close attention to it, examining it on his way in or out of the *beis hamidrash*.

From the many conventions, two stand out in particular, 5747 and 5751, when the Rebbe paid singular attention to

the centerpiece, showing discernible satisfaction with it.

To understand the centerpiece let us backtrack to theme of those years' conventions, which itself is contingent upon a topic the Rebbe focused on at the time.





25 Iyar 5747

In 5747, the Rebbe spoke time and again about the need to establish Chabad Houses, both in the conventional sense of the word, as beacons of Yiddishkeit for others, but also in the sense of transforming our own homes and living quarters into *Botei Chabad*, homes of Torah, *tefillah* and *tzedakka*.¹

The organizers of the women's convention thus decided to have "ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בו" as the year's theme, and illustrated this concept by means of a little house erected on three pillars, referring to תורה, עבודה, וגמ"ח.

The little centerpiece stood prominently on a table near the Rebbe's, and when the Rebbe walked in he stopped to study the item. Upon his departure from the room too, the Rebbe stopped, pointed at it, exchanging some words with Rabbi

Groner, and then lifted the object. The crowd erupted in joyous applause, which the Rebbe joined and maintained throughout his walk to the back door of the *beis hamidrash!*

28 Iyar 5751

During that year, the Rebbe made mention of the fact that the year's numerical combination (תש"א), lent itself as a *roshei teivos* for the words תהא "שנת אראנו נפלאות". The Rebbe drew upon this, explaining that the year promised to be filled with miracles²—miracles heralding the arrival of Moshiach, in comparison to which even the wonders that occurred at the time of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, would pale, as the *navi* says כימי צאתך מארץ מצרים אראנו נפלאות.³

Naturally, the theme of that year's convention revolved around Moshiach.

The organizers decided that as a centerpiece they would craft what looks like a flowerpot with fruit-bearing branches sprouting from it, and a bird eating from the fruit. On the bird's wing, the words "Moshiach is on his way" could be read, and a tambourine was nearby as well.

All these items reference to *krias yam suf*, when the birds sang *shira*, and fruit trees grew alongside the Yidden, from which the children fed the birds⁴, after which Miriam went out in song with tambourines, followed by all the women.

This entire contraption stood on a table not far from the Rebbe's seat. Upon his exit from *shul*, the Rebbe examined the item, exchanged a few words with Rabbi Groner about it, and then, very much to everyone's surprise the Rebbe picked it up, and carried it himself! This notwithstanding, that the Rebbe was



already holding a folder containing the convention's program, and an apparently loaded box containing *tzetlach* from the ladies. Along the way, some *mazkirim* offered to carry the centerpiece for the Rebbe, but the Rebbe refused, holding on to it all the way out of shul! **D**

1. On Shabbos 15 Shevat 5747, the Rebbe even demanded that this become the central focus of the year to come. See *Hisvaaduyos* 5747 Vol. 2 p. 447.

2. And miracles it was. See "A Chassidisher Derher" Issue 16 (93) pp. 10 for a detailed account of the Rebbe's sichos and the events that followed.

3. This concept is brought down in chassidus, drawing upon the wording of the possuk, which can indicate that the *niflaos* of *Yemos Hamoshiach* will indeed be akin to those of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, albeit far greater. See *Maamor Kimei Tzeischa* 5742, et al.

4. *Sefer Hasichos* 5702 p. 73, see also *Shmos Rabo Perek* 21,10.

