

# Honey in Exchange for a Sting

Reb Sender ben Hirsh was the great grandfather of Rebbetzin Rivka, wife of the Rebbe Maharash, and a chossid of the Alter Rebbe.

Reb Hirsh had been one of the town dignitaries of Shklov, in the early days of the Alter Rebbe's leadership. When the Alter Rebbe visited Shklov for the first time on a matter of public affairs, being a very wealthy businessman, he gave the Alter Rebbe an enormous sum of money to use for the public benefit.

When the Alter Rebbe visited Shklov a second time, Reb Hirsh put his son, Reb Sender, at his disposal with the express stipulation that he would teach him an approach to studying Gemara in depth.

## REB SENDER BECOMES A CHOSSID

He was good by his inborn nature, but once he became one of the Alter Rebbe's followers and he attached himself to the great chassidim, he held the time very precious, studying Torah by night as well as by day. His davening too was very pleasing, and he would pray at length. His middos now became very different. Hashem's blessing was also manifest in his business dealings, and he earned huge profits.

Reb Sender was a zealous chossid; i.e., he would frequently debate with the giants among the Misnagdim. No one could keep up with him in these debates, for he possessed an outstanding intellect and presented wondrous logical arguments and explanations.

Most of all, he was completely dedicated to the true essence of unadulterated Chassidus. Thus, his personality traits were free of any sort of blemish.

## NO REASON FOR SORROW

Reb Sender died while he was still a young man. During the mourning period, the Alter Rebbe arrived in Shklov. He told Reb Hirsh that although he was mourning his son because of his great love for him, in truth there was no reason for it. The Alter Rebbe then explained:

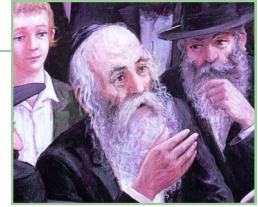
"Consider a person who has an only son who is very dear to him, and for some reason it becomes imperative for the son to travel to a very distant country. Suppose that the father knows in his heart that the son's situation there is very good, and the only problem is that he (the father) is unable to see him.

"Since the father loves the son so much, he need not worry about his son. On the contrary - he ought to have great pleasure from the good situation in which the son now finds himself.

The same thing now applies to you: you should know that your son is in a very good situation. Seeing him in such levushim is something I never imagined!"

[The Alter Rebbe had seen Reb Sender's Neshoma in Gan Eden, attired in the spiritual garments derived from his avodah in this world. The glory of this sight amazed him, for he had not anticipated that Reb Sender was worthy of such levushim. Thus, he now reassured Reb Hirsh that he need not mourn his son, who was now in an excellent situation.]

Reb Hirsh requested that those present tell him something about Reb Sender's conduct. They told him a few stories. He then begged to be told more, until finally they told him the story about the informer.



### THE TEA BUSINESS

At first, Reb Sender had been in the same business as his father Reb Hirsh, and they both traveled abroad together to the city of Leipzig, which was a common thing to do in those days. While they were there, it was suggested to Reb Sender that they expand their business by dealing in an additional line of goods. He purchased a consignment of tea, with the stipulation that the seller (who was in the city of Minsk or Shklov) would bear liability for the tea. The seller supplied the goods under the agreed conditions, but he neglected to pay the local taxes.

Under the agreement, the buyer, Reb Sender, would have to pay the seller a substantial sum of money, i.e. a large percentage of the sale price, at the time that the transaction was made, while still at the market in Leipzig. And so it was done; being very wealthy, he paid him the money as agreed. The seller carried out his part of the sale and delivered the goods at the specified time. Reb Sender earned a huge profit from this transaction and he distributed much charity. He continued doing business in this manner for several years.

### THE PLOT

At that time, one of the wealthy Misnagdim who lived in Shklov also went into the same business, and thus encroached upon Reb Sender's rights. But Reb Sender paid no attention to this and he rebuked those who wished to fan the flames of controversy and make it a public affair. Their rationale was that the Misnagdim were constantly spreading out into businesses that the Chassidim had formerly engaged in and profited from, and thus they were encroaching upon all the Chassidim.

He (Reb Sender) opposed such plans, saying that it was within Hashem's power to help them all. Thus, when the Misnaged also went into the tea business, there were some who complained aloud about it, wishing to promote hatred against him. But Reb Sender admonished them, and the affair was forgotten. Nevertheless, Hashem's salvation and blessing in Reb Sender's business affairs grew steadily, in wondrous fashion.

One of the aforementioned Misnagdim was very wealthy and he hated Chassidim in general, and Reb Sender and family in particular. He envied Reb Sender's

success. Now certain rabbonim among the Misnagdim had issued a decree some time earlier that the property (and the blood) of the Chassidim was free for the taking. Based on this, the Misnaged felt free to denounce Reb Sender and the goods that were to be delivered to him.

This man laid plans to carry out his evil designs. He was an esteemed citizen of Shklov, but a Misnaged, and

---

## WHEN HE WAS INFORMED THAT REB SENDER WAS COMING TO VISIT HIM HE COULD FIND NO COMFORT, AND HIS FACIAL FEATURES VISIBLY CHANGED

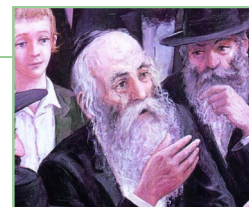
---

he was among those who outwardly honored Reb Sender but maintained hatred in his heart. Nevertheless, he could not find the daring to denounce Reb Sender.

Furthermore, though it was Reb Sender whom the scoundrel wished to harm, Reb Sender had bought the merchandise with the stipulation that the seller would bear all liability until the goods were delivered. Therefore, the Misnaged devised the scheme of denouncing the seller just as he was transporting the goods across the border to Reb Sender. Thus, without denouncing Reb Sender himself, he would cause Reb Sender to bear the loss, for the goods would now be Reb Sender's property.

### THE TRAP IS LAID

And so it came to pass. Naively, Reb Sender traveled to Leipzig that year too, and purchased a consignment of tea as was his custom. Knowing nothing of what was about to happen, he paid a large sum in advance, as he had been doing from the very start of that business. Meanwhile, the rumor spread that a complaint had been



lodged against Reb Sender's goods, that all his money was lost, and that he himself might be indicted and found guilty. He was greatly distressed and fearful because of this.

Two or three days later the seller's agents transported the merchandise to Reb Sender. These were the same people who delivered the goods every year. Being completely unaware of the plan, they transported the goods as usual. Reb Sender and his father Reb Hirsh agreed to keep the delivery a secret, and they requested the carriers also to refrain from making it public knowledge.

Reb Hirsh and Reb Sender paid the men the balance due, as they always did, but the whole matter was kept secret. A few days later it became known that the rumor was true, and that a complaint had indeed been lodged at the border against a large consignment of tea.

The local residents then began to question Reb Sender and his father Reb Hirsh to find out whether they had suffered any loss. They denied having purchased or received any goods. In fact, they sold none of the merchandise until much later, long after the regular season for trading such goods. Having been stored in a hidden place, the tea became stale and could only be sold for a very low price. That year, they lost all the profits from that business. But not a single person was aware of it besides Reb Sender and his father Reb Hirsh.

#### THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE

Meanwhile, the informer lost his entire fortune and became a pauper (may G-d preserve us). The wealthy citizens of Shklov - Reb Sender and Reb Hirsh among them - now had to aid and support him by collecting among themselves a sum sufficient to enable him to carry out some business and trade. From that time on, his situation steadily deteriorated (may G-d have mercy) and everything went badly for him. Success had become a stranger to him and he lacked even the necessities of life.

In the end he became sick and was confined to bed. People took great pity on him and his family, and the townsfolk donated whatever they needed. But only a few

special individuals were aware that he was the informer who had wished to harm Reb Sender. In truth, he had succeeded, for after that Reb Sender never again engaged in that business. Nevertheless, because of their good natures and the good character traits that controlled all the deeds of these precious individuals, they made every effort to keep this fact a secret.

During that period - while the informer was sick in bed - the time came to arrange a match for his daughter. But because of their great poverty, they could not even think of such a thing. One day, Reb Sender came to visit him. This was the custom among the Chassidim and Misnagdim: they tried to achieve some sort of reconciliation on both sides. Now Reb Sender, because of his good nature and kind heart, used to visit the sick (may G-d have mercy), and do other personal charitable acts. And so, he also visited this patient.

#### THE MYSTERIOUS PACKAGE

When he was informed that Reb Sender was coming to visit him he could find no comfort, and his facial features visibly changed. When Reb Sender entered, it was evident that the patient was trying to begin speaking with him. But Reb Sender in his wisdom began to comfort him, saying that Hashem's salvation comes in the blink of an eye, and that he would yet see much joy from his children. His gentle speech and great wisdom and the words of comfort that came from his refined heart made their way into the patient's heart and comforted him. He repented his deeds, and so they became reconciled.

After Reb Sender left the patient's home, a packet of money was discovered under the cushion upon which the patient lay. The sum was five hundred rubles for the dowry of the patient's daughter. But only a few select individuals were aware of this.

Upon hearing this story the Alter Rebbe exclaimed, "Now I understand it. Such levushim I never expected to see...!" ■

*From Toldos Admur Maharash. By Sichos in English.*