



Who Has Questions?

There was once a Chossid who was a lumber merchant and owned a forest near Polotzk. The lumber business was particularly active during the winter. When the forest floor was blanketed with snow forming a sheet of ice, it was easy to haul the long logs to the river. Then, at the riverbanks, they would wait until the weather warmed up and the river flowed again. The logs would then be turned into rafts and floated downstream until they reached the desired destination for sale.

This particular Chossid had a daily schedule: he worked hard during the day, and in the evening, following *Maariv*, he would spend time learning Torah in the shul. He wasn't alone during his studies as many people made time to devote themselves to Torah, usually in partners. There was one elderly man, however, who always studied alone. He figured the others were not as advanced as him and he therefore learned alone.

This particular Chossid, the lumber merchant, also learned alone. The elderly man noticed this and assumed he was too embarrassed to learn with a partner because he was probably not very well versed. The elder decided to approach the Chossid and feel him out. After a few moments of discussion he realized that, in fact, he was very knowledgeable and after a bit of convincing the Chossid agreed to learn with the older man.

One day, the Chossid noticed the elderly man hesitating to say something. He could see the man having an inner struggle whether to reveal what was on his mind or not. "Ask what you would like to ask and stop mumbling!" said the Chossid.

He replied, "I will reveal to you the truth and what is in the inner recesses of my heart. I have been learning *seforim* of *chakira* (philosophy) and I have many questions in *emuna*. The problem is that I have

no one to ask my questions. Please answer them for me!"

The Chossid replied, "Go ahead and ask. Maybe I will be able to answer the questions and you will be satisfied."

And so it was each day. The elderly man would ask questions and the Chossid would provide answers that he found satisfactory.

As Pesach approached and the work of the lumber merchant had come to an end, he informed his newly found friend and colleague that he would be heading home. The old man began crying when he heard this news and exclaimed, "This is very painful for me. Your departure is hard on me. You were a good friend when it came to learning *nigleh* and you answered my questions on *chakira*. What should I do now?"

The Chossid replied, "Listen to me. Here is my advice. Go to the Tzemach Tzedek and he will answer all your questions."

With that they parted and each man went on his way.

Being a devoted Chossid, the lumber merchant traveled to Lubavitch to spend Tishrei in the presence of the Tzemach Tzedek. As he was crossing one of the streets, he felt a hand tap him on the back and a man said, "Guess who I am?" The Chossid gave one look and immediately recognized him as the elderly Jew from Polotzk.

The man continued, "I heeded your advice. After Pesach I came to Lubavitch and went into the Rebbe for *yechidus*. When I entered the room, I began saying that I have many questions in *chakira*. The Rebbe said to me, 'Look: Abaye and Rava never had questions in *chakira*, why do you have these questions?'

"As the Rebbe said this, all my questions disappeared and now I spend my time learning Chassidus." ¹

(*Otzar Sippurei Chabad*
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