



# חסידים הראשונים

## Stories of the Early Chassidim

### Reb Chanoch Hendel Kugel from Pleshnitz

*Reb Hendel, as he was known, was a real Chossid. Everything that he did was in the ways of Chassidus. He was a very "hartzike mentch" - everything he did was with his full heart. His davening, his doing Mitzvos and the way he acted with other people. This is although he did not have the greatest understanding in Chassidus. People used to leave their stores in the middle of the day, to come and listen to his davening.*

*He was an elder chassid when the Frieddiker Rebbe, was a child, and he had a profound influence on the Rebbe-to-be, and the Frieddiker Rebbe often speaks about him in his Sichos. When The Rebbe Rashab started the Yeshiva Tomchei Tmimim, he chose Reb Hendel to be the main Mashpiya and to farbreng with the Bochorim He brought many people close to Torah and Mitzvos, as can be seen from the fact that the Rebbe Rashab said to write on his matzeiva the words 'ורבים השיב מען' (He brought many people back from aveiros).*

*This Shabbos, ט"ט טבת, is Reb Hendel's Yortzeit.*



Reb Hendel himself did not need much physical things. He used to eat only bread and water. However, he understood what other people needed and took care of their needs. Here are a few stories about his great Ahavas Yisroel.

1) Once, Reb Shraga Feivish Zalmanov was sick, and he needed to have fresh milk. Reb Hendel heard this and took upon himself to make sure that Reb Shraga Feivish would have what he needed to get better. He would get up early every morning, before daylight, and walk a long distance with a little pot in his hand, to get the milk. Once he got the milk, he would walk all the way back, and when he got home, he cooked up the milk and gave it to Reb Shraga Feivish. All this he did with a great Chayus.

2) Reb Elchanan Marozov had to go to register for the Russian army. This was not a safe place for a frum Yid to be, but he was forced to go register. Boruch Hashem, he was freed and told that he does not have to serve in the army. When they heard this good news in Lubavitch, Reb Hendel got so excited that he started dancing in the Rebbe Rashab's yard with great happiness, singing "האניע איז ארויס" – Chonye (Reb Elchanan) is freed. He then went into the Rebbe Rashab's room, told him the good news and started dancing in the room. The Rebbe Rashab got up from his chair, put his *heilike* hand on Reb Hendel's shoulder, and went around with him three times. Then the Rebbe said "For this good news, I will now say Chassidus for you."

3) Once, there was a big fire in Lubavitch, and houses were burning up in flames. Reb Hendel stood outside, and was crying, saying, "Yiddishe money is burning." When his son was taken away from him, he accepted it בשמחה, and said "Probably this is the way things have to be," but when he saw that other Yidden were in trouble, and their possessions were burning up in flames, he could not handle it, and he was crying about it. This affected him so deeply, that he got very sick from this, They called two big doctors from Vitebsk, but they could not help him, and in fact he passed away from this illness. Such was the great Ahavas Yisroel of Reb Hendel.

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