

Chapter Seven

Disguised as a Purchase

Harav Aharon Rotter, author of *Shaarei Aharon al HaTorah*, related:

Every year before Sukkos, the *esrog* dealers would come to Reb Shmuel's house and bring him the most *mehudar esrogim*. They knew they would receive generous remuneration for the right *esrog*.

Once, it happened that there were three nice *esrogim* on the table. "Tell me which is the most *mehudar*," Reb Shmuel requested of me.

I examined the *esrogim* carefully and said, "Two of the *esrogim* are very *mehudar*, but the third one might be somewhat deficient."



Harav Aharon Rotter (standing) honoring Reb Shmuel with *sheva brachos*

As I was about to leave his house, I said, "Don't forget to return the imperfect *esrog* to the dealer."

"Return?" Reb Shmuel gasped. "I won't use it, of course, but I can't give back the *esrog*! If I have a chance to give *tzedakah* in a dignified way to another Yid, why should I not take advantage of the opportunity?"



Lofty Levels!

Reb Baruch Aber, who was a manager in Reb Shmuel's business for many years, related this story:

"Do you have work for me?" a diamond polisher once asked Reb Shmuel.

"Right now I do not need more polishers, but when I do have work for you, I'll be happy to contact you," Reb Shmuel replied.

"I feel bad seeing a Yid looking for work and not being successful," Reb Shmuel remarked to me as the man left his office. But from Above, it was orchestrated that Reb Shmuel would be able to help.

"Reb Shmuel," a Yid asked him the next day. "I need a lot of money to marry off my daughter. I have a raw diamond in my possession and I'm asking \$7,000 for it — a sum that will really make all the difference."

Reb Shmuel examined the stone, and as a professional, estimated that after the polishing and finishing, the stone would be worth \$5,000.



The Diamond Bourse in Ramat Gan

It should be noted that the value of a polished diamond is measured in four ways: size, cleanliness, color, and the shape into which it is polished. Any change in the stone, no matter how slight, can alter the value of the stone significantly, and therefore, only a professional can assess how much a raw stone will be worth after it's polished. However, even experienced professionals are liable to err, since it's difficult to predict what the exact size will be after it's polished, how clean it will be, and what color and shape it will be.

After examining the stone, I saw that he didn't know how to answer the man. Would he be frank about his opinion that the estimated value of the stone was just \$5,000?

After a short moment of deliberation, Reb Shmuel gave the seller the full \$7,000. The man was overjoyed, but we, the managers, could not comprehend what Reb Shmuel's motivations were. But then we realized that he'd thought it through well — he'd be able to do two *mitzvos* at once!

"Please call the polisher who was looking for work," Reb Shmuel requested of me. "I have a job for him."

A few minutes later the man appeared in the office.

"*Baruch Hashem*, I found work for you. Please polish this diamond for me; it's very large, and I'll give you \$500 for doing the work." The polisher took the stone, clearly very happy with the assignment. Five hundred dollars was an entire month's salary for the average worker in those days!

We were taken aback and asked Reb Shmuel, "Why would you pay so much for polishing this stone — and after you bought it for such a high price?"

"It's worth it. An unemployed Yid is looking for *parnassah* and I can help him out in a dignified way. Why should I miss out on this *mitzvah*?" he replied sincerely.

When the polisher finished, he received his payment of \$500 in cash. We saw how happy Reb Shmuel was — he had merited to give *tzedakah* in a dignified way to two people, and neither of them had any inkling that they were on the receiving end.

After the polisher left the office, Reb Shmuel took the stone and



checked if he had correctly estimated its value at \$5,000. He examined it quickly, and we saw his face light up.

“I was mistaken in my appraisal,” he called to me. “The diamond came out much better than I’d expected — in size, cleanliness, color, and shape. Now I estimate that it’s worth much more, at least \$12,000.”

A mere few minutes passed, and a buyer entered the office. “Reb Shmuel, I need a large stone for a very wealthy client. I’ve looked in several places, but haven’t yet found the right one.”

“How about this one?” Reb Shmuel asked, showing him the stone that had been finished just a few minutes earlier.

“It’s magnificent! This is exactly what I’m looking for,” the buyer replied happily. “And how much is it?”

“You decide,” Reb Shmuel replied.

“I would pay \$10,500 for it,” he replied.

“*Mazel u’brachah!*” Reb Shmuel exclaimed.

The buyer paid and left the office in good spirits, while we were left literally rubbing our eyes in disbelief. But that’s not the end of the story!

A few minutes later, Reb Shmuel called me over and said, “Look, I made \$5,000 more than I expected on this stone. I thought I’d be behind more than \$2,000 and already considered the money *tzedakah*. Then, *baruch Hashem* I earned \$3,000, to make a total of five. I don’t want to benefit from it, so please give the money to a poor *kallah*.”

This was Reb Shmuel’s way of thinking.

***Tzedakah* under the Guise of *Esrogim* and Eggs**

Reb Rachamim Arbel, a factory manager in Shikkun Hey, wrote an emotional letter:

Our family lived in the same home as my grandfather; nine children cramped into a tiny home. Our financial situation was dire. In the yard of his house, my grandfather cultivated *esrog* trees. Reb Shmuel would come to him each year, choose several *esrogim*, and pay about five times their worth.

My grandfather also raised chickens, and before Yom Tov, we would



wait with anticipation — Reb Shmuel would come to buy eggs, which meant we could buy clothing for Yom Tov! He would buy forty(!) trays of eggs and would pay my father five times what they were worth on the market, all in order to give us money in a way that we would not be embarrassed.

Free Toys with Dignity

Harav Yaakov Dovid Schreiber, Rosh Kollel in Vizhnitz in Ashdod, related:

When the Daskal family cleaned for Pesach, there was much joy in the Neve Achiezer neighborhood. All the neighborhood children gathered in their courtyard, since the Daskals had an interesting way of cleaning.

Each time he traveled abroad, Reb Shmuel purchased many gifts for his children, so his house was always full of expensive toys and games. Before Pesach, Mrs. Daskal would take many toys out to the yard, and they were free for the taking. The neighborhood children rejoiced with the bounty.

This was Reb Shmuel's way of bringing happiness to the local children in a dignified manner — in a way that they wouldn't feel that they were receiving a donation, but rather as though they were doing the Daskals a favor by clearing the yard of the old toys.

Debts Repaid with Groceries and *Sukkah* Decorations

The Daskal children's eyes widened in surprise at the sight of cases



of beer and boxes of other merchandise piled near the door to their home. “Have we opened a grocery?” they asked.

An explanation was quickly forthcoming. “The grocery store owner owes me a large sum of money. He can’t repay me but he wants to settle his debt. I told him he could pay off the debt with groceries,” Reb Shmuel related simply.

It was a remarkable idea, generated in the mind of a man who was a walking, talking *chessed* factory — not only did he give *tzedakah* with respect, he even found a dignified way out for borrowers who did not have the cash to repay what they owed him.

One day, a person who manufactured *sukkah* decorations brought over a huge stock of decorations to Reb Shmuel’s home. “What do we need so many decorations for?” his children asked. Then they realized — this was the man’s way of paying off his debt.

Brokerage Fees

Reb Leib Ber Shimonowitz of Kiryat Vizhnitz related:

Often, Reb Shmuel purchased packets of diamonds at the Bourse even when he didn’t need them, just to provide an agent with *parnasah* in an honorable way. He wanted to give to people with dignity, and enable the agent to earn a living through business dealings and not by being the apparent recipient of *chessed*.

Often, he sold a packet of diamonds through an agent so that the agent would make a profit from the sale, even though had he sold it himself, he would have earned more.

Selling Drawings for *Tzedakah*

Reb Shmuel’s friend and fellow diamond dealer, Reb Baruch Greenberger, related:

Reb Shmuel once came over to me and said, “Reb Baruch, I have a good deal for you. A widowed artist needs *parnassah*. She came to sell me some of her drawings and I told her that I’d sell the pictures at the Bourse. I figured that this way, she could earn *parnassah* in a dignified way.”

Indeed, every so often, Reb Shmuel brought the pictures to sell at the Bourse. It would have been easier for him to give her the money without having to sell the pictures, but this way, the widow felt that she was earning her keep, not being given a handout.