

The RYS Daily 11/20/06 Early Life of RYS II

From the Mussar Movement, Volume 1, Part 1, pages 183 - 184.

Apparently, the father looked with disfavor upon his son's pilpulistic propensities, and so sent him at the age of twelve, to Salant, to study under the tutelage of R. Zvi Braude, the local rabbi. The last-named was renowned as one of the outstanding Torah scholars of his day, famous for his disciplined logic, his profundity and his straightforward approach to Torah learning. He delved deeply into the words of the Tosafot, and derived all his halachic decisions from their remarks.' He was accordingly given the by-name of "Reb Hirschel Tosfos." His fame became so widespread among the learned, that R. Akiva Eger would refer to him as "the great rabbi, R. Hirsch." He studied, standing with the most unusually assiduous application, for over thirty years, till his legs became affected, and he remained lame for the rest of his life. He remained humble all his days. He wore a simple, sheepskin coat, and appeared no different to the rest of the common folk. Only at rare intervals was his sharp, fiery intellect exposed to view. The nobility and refinement of his character were acclaimed by those who knew him.

One incident will throw light upon his remarkable temperament. His rebbetzin suspected their maid, and kept accusing her, of having stolen some article from the household. Distressed by the constant quarrelling, the rabbi told his wife that, if she indeed had any claim against the maid, she should take her to court, to the Bet Din. His wife agreed and ordered the maid to accompany her to the local rabbi. As the two made ready to go, R. Hirsch, too, began putting on his coat. The rebbetzin asked the rabbi where he was going. He answered : "The girl, after all, is an orphan. She needs someone to represent her. So I am going to argue her case for her."

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