

The RYS Daily 12/6/06 Vilna I

From The Mussar Movement, Volume 1, Part 1, pages 197 - 198.

CHAPTER 10

FIRST STEPS — VILNA

No sooner had R. Israel begun to deliver his discourses in the Vilna Yeshivah, than he created a stir among the learned by the extreme keenness of his intellect and his mighty mental constructions. The most prominent scholars, renowned Torah authorities in their own right, would gather to hear the novel ideas issuing from his mind day after day. A short description of R. Israel's impression on Vilna is given by R. Samuel Zybartinsky of Lubcz (Lyubcha) in his Olat Shemuel: "In the year 5600 (1840 C.E.) a new star shone forth in the Talmudic heavens of Vilna, with the appearance of the great and marvelous Gaon, our Master R. Israel Salanter (the memory of the righteous is a blessing), whose light illuminated the ways of the Talmud in that city. This Gaon worked wonders with his brilliant keenness and dialectic, in which he would combine together topics as far removed from one another as east from west. With his mighty spirit and with the power of his wonderful intellect he would bring them together and unite them in brilliant delightful wholes, which astounded all who heard him. The whole city was agog with the coming here of such a brilliant rabbi and Gaon. Outstanding young Halachic scholars became envious and strained all their efforts to emulate him and to compile pilpul constructions after his manner.

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