

The RYS Daily 1/11/07 Kovna I

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Having left Vilna in consequence of the Rabbinical Seminary experience, R. Israel settled in Kovno (1849). Yet he did not sever his connections with his friends and disciples in his former locality. He kept up a running correspondence with them in which he exhorted them to persevere eagerly with their Musar endeavors. Five of his letters to them have been published in Or Yisrael: In these R. Israel set down all the basic elements of his Musar system, and kept urging them to study and disseminate it by various means among broad circles. The Movement, however, seems not to have struck firm root, and in his absence it began declining. This weakening evoked R. Israel's sharp criticism, and he wrote to them: "My dear friends! I judged that my first words would be quite sufficient to arouse your hearts to intensify your study, the study of Musar ... But it has now come to my ears that you are lax in this." He reproved them at length, pointed out to them how to increase their efforts, and finally turned to them with this appeal: "You, my friends! At least be gracious to me to this extent. Notify me which of you are continuing wholeheartedly and who the slackers are." He also visited them upon occasion, and would spend some time with them to determine at first hand how they were faring, and in order to strengthen the weak. Still, in the course of time, the movement disintegrated, and Kovno and its environs became the center of its further development.

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