

The RYS Daily 1/4/07 Leaving Vilna V

From The Mussar Movement, Volume 1, Part 1, pages 220 - 221.

On another occasion, Dr. Apteker-Shafir of Kovno addressed the same question to him, and R. Israel replied: "We know from experience from everyday occurrences, that if a poor man asks the rabbi a question, the latter will hurry to give his ruling. Even if he is in the middle of eating, he will take the trouble closely to consult the remarks of the codifiers, and will strive to find some ground for giving a lenient ruling. In respect of medical practitioners, experience teaches the reverse. A doctor called to the bedside of a rich man hastens to rush to him, to attend him conscientiously and with alacrity; called to the poor, the doctor does not hurry quite so much, and tries to evade visiting him altogether. The reason lies here: From his very youth, the rabbi has been studying for its own sake — to acquire Torah knowledge. Torah and Torah study become his personal, permanent spiritual possession. Torah conduct becomes his nature, all its ethics and virtues being absorbed into all of his 248 organs. If, in the course of time, circumstances force this lamdan to accept a rabbinic post, he will conduct himself, in his rabbinate, in accordance with his nature, in conformity with the spirit and approach of the Torah, which consists altogether of righteousness, kindness and compassion. The distress of the poor means more to him than his own. Not so the doctor. He enters the university not out of love for man kind and for the welfare of the community, to heal human ills and ease suffering. He strives to complete his course because this offers him an easy and clean occupation, because it grants wealth and dignity to the members of the profession. Attracted by and striving for his diploma and career — he will rush to the rich and will withdraw from the poor. The same applies to Rabbinical Seminaries. They confer the same diploma and have the same goal as universities, and students will enroll there for professional purposes to attain wealth and honor. Will we then not cause a twofold evil : that even rabbis will love the rich alone and avoid the poor? This will be a new evil decree. Hence I washed my hands of it."

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