

The RYS Daily 2/22/07 The Movement Expands I

From The Mussar Movement, Volume 1, pages 259 - 260.

THE MOVEMENT EXPANDS

From the time that R. Israel had left for Germany, his great disciples had shouldered the task of continuing his activities and spreading his Musar system throughout Russia. As has already been noted, they maintained close contact with their Rebbe, both in writing and in person. They would journey to Memel at frequent intervals and would consult him on all matters. At his bidding, they dispersed to all regions of the country, and each strove in his particular area, as his abilities and fitness allowed. Some founded important Torah institutions and educated thousands of pupils in the Musar approach; others accepted rabbinic office in diverse localities and fostered the Musar spirit in their communities; still others served as expositors and preachers who traveled from place to place and infused a Musar spirit in their audience. Even such of his disciples as did not assume any official role in this endeavor created a Musar atmosphere wherever they happened to live. The characteristic common to all of them was their sustained effort to spread Musar, to train the Jewish population in the way of perfect faith, upright living, and in the cultivation of the habit of sober, reflective thinking and self-criticism.

So the Musar Movement expanded. It struck firm root in a variety of circles. It became ingrained in the hearts of adults and youth. Nor was R. Israel satisfied with exercising control from afar and through the medium of his disciples. He, himself, would pay frequent visits to Russia to increase the Musar influence. Ever since he had settled in Memel, hardly a year passed without him returning to Russia, where he would occasionally spend as much as months at a time in going about from one place to another as he deemed necessary. Wherever he came he evoked an enthusiastic response on the part of his disciples and followers, who would throng to listen to his Musar addresses and moral reproofs, and who would seek his advice and guidance in perfecting their G-d fearing propensities, as well as in all current private and communal problems. All gained fresh vitality and strength to carry on with their endeavors.

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