

## The RYS Daily 3/16/07 RYS Studies to Become an Ink Maker

The following fascinating piece is from pages 57 - 58 of Two Giants Speak.

"IN HIS LIFETIME, Rabbi Yisroel Lipkin of Salant was considered an authority within Russian Jewry. Today, 23 years after his death (in 1883), he is valued even more highly: "Tzadikim are greater in death than in life."

Rav Yisroel Salanter never occupied any public office. He was neither a businessman nor an artisan. He belonged to none of the categories that the Russian government considered eligible to obtain a passport legally. In order to travel he used the passport of a merchant friend.

### The Inkmaker

Rav Yisroel's pure character did not allow him to keep up this unlawfulness for long. When he visited Berlin in the early 1870's to seek a cure for his ailing health, this aging man of 63 or so decided that he would not travel home until he had learned a skill that would enable him — on his return to Russia — to obtain a legal passport. It seemed to him that the easiest and most promising skill to learn was ink-making, and he took lessons from a chemist.

A friend gave him a whole floor in his house to use as a laboratory. For weeks, Rav Yisroel occupied a good part of his day and his nights with intensive theoretical and practical study of chemistry.

This was not as easy as it sounds. He and his chemistry teacher could at first only communicate with each other through an interpreter. But Rav Yisroel learned to read and write German, and soon progressed so far that he could read the daily paper. With some help for the more difficult words and the chemical terms, he was soon able to study chemistry books. A few weeks later, Rav Yisroel understood the composition of all types of ink, including gold and silver ink. He had accomplished his goal so rapidly and so thoroughly that his chemistry teacher declared that his elderly chemistry student had nothing more to learn from him."

Earlier issues of The RYS Daily are at <http://www.stevens.edu/golem/llevine/salanter/>