

The RYS Daily 5/2/07 Attitude Toward the Rabbiner Seminar

From The Mussar Movement Volume 1, Part 1, pages 311 - 312.

All the time, R. Israel was just as fully alive to the impossibility for students to become truly great Torah scholars if they were simultaneously to occupy themselves with secular disciplines. His stand against the Vilna Rabbinical Seminary, delineated previously, and his letter of 1882 concerning the proposed establishment of a similar institution in St. Petersburg" give clear enough evidence of his awareness of the incompatibility. He did not even lend any support to the Berlin Rabbinical Seminary founded by his faithful friend, R. Esriel Hildesheimer, and which was conducted in the spirit of true faith and fear of Heaven. One of his old friends in Memel, the aged R. Samuel Benjamin, approached him for a recommendation to the Seminary on behalf of a grandson. R. Israel sent him a curt reply, dated Sivan 28, 5642 (June 15, 1882): "Your honor has twice made a difficult request of me. I find myself unable to give any letter of recommendation to anyone to enter any seminary whatsoever, whatever the circumstances." R. Israel did not try to hide his feelings from R. Esriel Hildesheimer. In a private letter to R. Esriel, R. Israel expressed his gratification at the fact that Judaism was still firmly entrenched in Russia — the country abounded with scholars and sages, who had achieved greatness in Torah and in the fear of Heaven — and that there was accordingly no need there for such remedies as Rabbinical Seminaries and the like.

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