

The RYS Daily 5/31/07 Mussar Doctrine I

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OVERCOMING CONSCIOUS AND SUBCONSCIOUS DRIVES BY COGNITION AND REPETITIVE RECITATION

The resources of Judaism extend far and wide and reach to the uttermost depths. Its fountains have poured forth their teachings for hundreds of generations; yet the sources still remain untapped. The stores of fresh and novel ideas are as plentiful as ever, and each generation has left ample room for the next to add new knowledge and ideas, and to develop new and imposing constructions.

In his generation, too, R. Israel of Salant found broad scope for his activities, and the opportunity to reveal new luster in the light of Judaism. As has been stated before, the Musar Movement that he founded did not put forward any new doctrine, but concentrated instead on the plain, straightforward significance of the Torah. It provided the instruments with which Judaism could be viewed in its proper light; it brought out the authentic nature of Judaism and illuminated everything anew. Although the essential outlook of the movement contains nothing novel, it did, however, develop new methods of approach in achieving human perfection. As R. Israel himself had averred, Heaven had left him an open field in which to work.

He bequeathed no literary heritage to posterity, except for a single article published in the anthology, *Etz Peri*, a few essays in his monthly, *Hatevunah*, which were later collected together in a single volume entitled *Imre Binah*, his famous *Iggeret Hamusar* (Musar Epistle), twenty-two letters gathered together by his disciple, R. Isaac Blazer, and appended to the *Or Yisrael*, and a miscellany of discourses recorded by his disciples published in the *Even Yisrael* and *Or Yisrael*. Nevertheless this small quantity of material contains within itself a complete system of human psychology and a comprehensive account of what being G-d fearing entails, as well as a complete way of life. It is not our intention here to present an exhaustive treatment of his entire approach and thought system, since whatever he wrote is pregnant with strikingly new ideas. We shall, instead, merely set down the underlying principles and essentials of his program.

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