

The RYS Daily 6/11/07 Mussar Doctrine X

From The Mussar Movement, Volume 1, Part 2, page 22 - 23.

To illustrate his point, R. Israel used a striking example: "Suppose someone had a pupil, whom he loved, who was as dear to him as the apple of his eye, whom he always favored. He also had a son. But he hated that son very much, and openly displayed his hatred. Once, the person fell asleep, and both the house of his son and the house of his pupil caught fire. The lives of the two were in danger. Were we to wake that person and urge him to hurry and save the lives of the son and the pupil, he would almost certainly rush to rescue his son first. Why? Because the love for the son he outwardly hates has been more deeply ingrained within the recesses of his nature than the acquired love for his pupil, infused by outward forces. So, when we wake him from his sleep, when his external drives are asleep as well, the inner drives immediately assert themselves, become conscious, and overpower the external. And so the father will hurry to save his son first."

Here, according to R. Israel, lies the reason why one's knowledge and consciousness fail to influence one's actions. Intellectual cognition stems from man's conscious and apprehended faculties, which are not ingrained within his inner self. Its power is insufficient to resist the obscure forces within his inner nature, beneath the threshold of his consciousness. To ensure that his conscious mind controls his conduct and not his natural tendencies — his conscious conceptions and his fear of G-d must be made to penetrate into his spirit's very existence, that is to say: to enter beneath the threshold of his conscious mind - to transform his conscious into subconscious drives, and to reinforce the latter to such extent that they will rise up against his natural, inner drives and overcome them.

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