

The RYS Daily 7/16/07 Philosophical Thoughts VI

From The Mussar Movement, Volume 1, Part 2, pages 140 - 141.

His main efforts, however, were directed to the acquisition of the fear of G-d, to him the goal of all of life. His disciples said of him: Anyone who did not see his exertions to acquire the fear of G-d, has never seen strenuous effort in his life. He was always deeply immersed in thought, devising all kinds of means to lead to the fear of G--d and concentrating all his powers to refining and enhancing this fear. While he was still young and living in Salant, he would become engrossed in thought for hours on end, oblivious of everything else, and it was impossible to arouse him from the subject of his thoughts. He remained the same all through his life. People would repeat numerous stories of his lengthy preoccupation with his thoughts. Some would discover him walking in fields, or along the wayside, or else sitting in the hills with his head resting on his palms, his whole being seized with trembling and turbulent thoughts 9 Traffic officers in Koenigsberg arrested him, complaining to the police about his strange behavior. Immediately recognizing his greatness, the police authorities inscribed in his passport: "Immer versunken in philosophischen Gedanken" ("always submerged in philosophic thoughts").

Even when engaged in conversation on mundane affairs, R. Israel would not divert his mind from Torah and the fear of G-d. He trained himself early in his life to be able to continue his train of thought, even while discussing other matters. At times people would notice him becoming excited, his face flushed, in the middle of an ordinary conversation. He would be compelled to stop talking and turn aside till he had calmed down and was able to resume the conversation once more."

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