

The RYS Daily 7/25/06 - Long Before Artscroll

From The Mussar Movement, Volume 1, Part 1 pages 304 - 305.

Later he conceived of a more sophisticated scheme, but much more difficult to achieve, to translate the entire Talmud into clean and easy Hebrew, and to append a simple commentary to clear up difficult points. The student could then tackle the subject matter without the aid of an instructor. He proposed that 100 rabbis undertake the task, each having to translate some thirty folios. For some reason or other, this ambitious scheme was not carried out. At the same time, he also tried to find a publisher who would print the Talmud in a single volume, cheap edition which could find its way into every Jewish home. Years later, this plan, at least, was implemented, and the "Shass in One Volume" made its appearance in the Jewish book market."

In addition, R. Israel also held it necessary to present the beauty of the Talmud to the world at large. He felt that the Talmud should be translated into a European language, and he endeavored to persuade government and academic circles to introduce Talmud as a subject in the curriculum of gymnasium schools and universities. That such a scheme would evoke the opposition among rabbis, that they would adduce proof from the Talmud itself that it was forbidden to turn the Talmud, "the inheritance of the House of Jacob", into the common property of the nations, was certainly known full well by R. Israel. Nevertheless, he said, he had his answer ready. He was also interested in compiling a prospectus which would portray the educational and content value of the Talmud as a classical subject for Christians as well, and the desirability of incorporating its study in their school curricula. It was, after all, no less important and beneficial than the study of ancient languages, such as Greek, Latin, etc. [9]

Apparently, it was not only in order to influence the gentile world, that R. Israel became involved in this project. Talmud study by gentiles would constitute a most effective weapon against the Maskilim as well. Once its prestige had been raised among gentiles, the Maskilim would come to change their attitude. Jewish students, too, would become influenced to adopt a more positive attitude to Torah and mitzvot. However, the classic anti-Semitism so rife in

Germany prevented this plan ever being implemented. [10]

9. Emil Benjamin, *ibid.* The information was gleaned from his private conversations with R. Israel.

10. Jacob Mark, *op. cit.*, p. 24. His aspiration was partially fulfilled some years later. The noted German scholar, Prof. Hermann L. Strack, published annotated translations of several tractates of the Mishnah for study in higher institutions of learning, and also compiled his Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash.