

## The RYS Daily 9/17/06 Concealing His Greatness IV

From the Mussar Movement, Volume 1, part 2 pages 166 - 168.

While he was on visit a number of localities, an incident occurred which brought this type of conflict into focus. Prior to his delivering any address, he would have a list posted of the sources in the Talmud and Rabbinic works to which he would refer in the course of his address, and on which he would base his novellae. The congregation would be afforded the opportunity to prepare in advance. In one locality - some claim that this was Vilna - he posted a long list of more than 100 references. He ascended the Bimah on the Saturday afternoon of the address, and asked the shamash kindly to hand him the list. He wanted to have it before him as he spoke and concentrate on the topics listed. To his consternation, he noticed that someone had posted a different notice with a completely different set of references. He paled. He stood immobile, confused and confounded. Some ten minutes passed. By then, he had regained his composure and delivered the most profound discourse based on the unseen references in the altered list. All were astonished by his remarkable genius. The next day, two young men came to him and confessed that they had been the culprits. They begged him for forgiveness. They had wanted to put him to the test and so had compiled the new list.

Recounting this incident, R. Naftali Amsterdam admonished his disciples not to believe that R. Israel had needed the ten minutes in which to prepare a new discourse. His abilities ranged far beyond all our conceptions. He could construct amazing novellae with the speed of lightning. At that moment, however, R. Israel was engaged in an inner struggle. For a moment he thought of announcing to the assembled congregation that he had forgotten his pilpul, and to descend from the pulpit as if filled with shame. He would thereby avoid demonstrating the power of his genius. At the same time, however he reflected that, should he allow himself to be degraded in the public estimation, his influence would be vitiated and his

labor be in vain. This conflict lasted for ten minutes and subjected him to a severe test. Finally he succeeded in convincing himself in the depths of his being that here he was not being influenced by his own honor. Consequently he delivered the discourse.

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