

The RYS Daily 9/27/06 Acme of Modesty II

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One example should suffice as evidence of his modesty.

A grandson of the author of the Tosafot Yom Toy spent a holiday in one of the resort towns of Lithuania. One day, he received a letter from a relative, asking that he send a description of R. Israel of Salant, who was staying in the same resort. The recipient of the letter was taken by complete surprise. Was it possible that R. Israel was there without him being aware of it? His mind began reviewing in turn all the guests he had met, and all of whom he had come to know. Which one of them could possibly be R. Israel? Indeed he had met someone by the name of Israel and had spoken to him every day for the past five weeks, since they shared a common interest. Both would take their poultry to a shochet who lived some distance away. To save effort, they had agreed between them that he would take along R. Israel's poultry when he went to the shochet, and R. Israel would do the same for him. Yet it was impossible that this individual should be the famous gaon and tzaddik. After all he dressed like a layman and behaved no differently to anyone else...

Having failed to discover any other person from out-of-town by the name of Israel, he decided to investigate. When they met the next time, he asked R. Israel whether he was not from Salant. R. Israel admitted that he was originally from Salant, and so the person discovered his identity.

Replying to his relative, that person wrote that it was impossible for him to describe the character and conduct of R. Israel, since he was unworthy to do so. He could state one fact, however. Although he had met R. Israel every day for five consecutive weeks, he had not had the slightest inkling, prior to receiving the letter, that the gaon and tzaddik was indeed in the vicinity. This fact — he concluded — would be sufficient for the relative to form some conception of who R. Israel was.'

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