

The RYS Daily 10/5/06 Punctilious Mitzvah Observance

From The Mussar Movement Volume 1, Part 2, pages 189 - 190

R. Israel's sublime virtues did not in any way interfere with his punctilious observance of mitzvot and prohibitions. Indeed, with himself he exercised the most extreme stringency, complying with all views and opinions, and taking account of every single detail. He discovered many new stringencies, stemming from far-fetched opinions as well as various types of enhancements of the mitzvot, all of which he adopted in practice.

Wondrous tales are told of his exacting preparation of the matzah to be eaten on the Seder night. On its procurement and preparation he expended enormous effort and large sums of money. He would specially delegate an acquaintance to reap some ears of grain by hand and dry and thresh the stalks. R. Israel would then deposit the kernels in a box for safekeeping till Pesach. With the approach of the Festival he would grind them in a small hand-mill, prepare a small quantity of flour and bake his matzos for the mitzvah. If he found himself forced to remain in distant regions and unable to make the preparations himself to his own taste, he would approach his acquaintances in Lithuania to perform the service for him. In a letter sent from Paris to his nephew, R. Aryeh Lipkin, the rabbi of Kretinga, he requested that all his stringencies be observed, and that the person delegated was to bear in mind that even the watching of the grain was for the sake of the mitzvah. In his conclusion, he admonished his nephew not to spare any expense, "since to me this is similar to an etrog, for which one is not to economize." On another occasion, he wrote: "Do not worry about expense, even several roubles. The positive commandment to eat matzah is not subordinate in importance to the positive commandment of the four species."

Earlier issues of The Daily Salanter are at
<http://www.stevens.edu/golem/llevine/salanter/>