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Nevertheless, R. Israel did not derive complete satisfaction from his popular influence. He felt that proper fear of G-d could not be acquired merely by passive listening alone, but required concentration and systematic training. The Musar system was not for popular appeal but for individuals and select groups prepared to dedicate themselves to continual cultivation of the spirit and prolonged, sustained effort. Yet his influence over the masses is not to be dismissed. He did succeed in inspiring them with pure faith, fear of G-d and greater diligence in the performance of mitzvot. Only for him, this was not enough. He began organizing groups of laymen especially those already Torah-educated and pious, for the study of Musar works, such as the Path of the Just and the Duties of the Heart, with keen concentration and fervor. Somewhat later, when a number of these individuals had become fervent Musar adherents, he founded his first "Musar Shtibel (House) where his disciples and followers would repair from time to time, either singly or in groups, for contemplation and inspiration in deepening their fear of G-d.

The first such Musar House was established in the court of R. Zalman b. Uri. R. Israel himself would come there frequently and deliver discourses radically different in nature from his public addresses. These would take the form of a discussion or conversation, as it were, which consisted of an introspective accounting of the spirit, and would include guidance in Musar training and further character refinement. Here the Musar "Shmuess" or Talk came into being, later adopted by the leading Musar exponents as the vehicle for their ideas, and which achieved a permanent place in Musar exposition. The talks would cut deeply into the hearts of the listeners, inflame their spirit, and move them to such profound, emotional experience that all would spontaneously break into prayer and call out to G-d to mend their souls, purify their hearts and cleanse their spirit.

Here, too, R. Israel laid the foundation of the movement that was to spread to the outside world and encompass ever increasing circles.

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