The RYS Daily 12/19/06 Vilna XI

From The Mussar Movement, Volume 1, Part 1, pages 206 - 207.

In the wake of his increased efforts to strengthen the influence of Musar, the first signs of opposition to his approach began to appear. No overt expression of antagonism had become evident as yet, but individual Torah scholars would express resentment against the novel approach instituted by R. Israel. They did not dare come out in the open immediately, so they first tried to detract from his preeminence in Torah scholarship.

At their instigation, a young, brilliant, an erudite genius, challenged R. Israel. Whenever he would deliver an halachic discourse, the young scholar would attempt to refute his conclusions by citing scattered references in the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud. R. Israel realized what was afoot. He did not, therefore, dismiss the remarks, but treated them with all due seriousness. He would turn to the questioner, pause a moment, and then declare that this observation seemed indeed to contradict what he had said. However, deeper reflection would cause the difficulty to disappear. And then and there he would construct a cogent, solid argument that would show the apparently contradictory reference to support his original view. Seeing that he could never succeed in refuting R. Israel, the young genius resorted to the opposite conclusions, thus belittling their striking novelty. Here again R. Israel would turn the tables. By joining together a long chain of reasoning he would demonstrate that the very reference really argued against his conclusions. So R. Israel cut the young man down to size, and the latter never dared challenge him again.

Other attempts were made, using different means, to undermine R. Israel Yet, instead of his prestige becoming diminished, his standing and fame became enhanced. One and all of his opponents were silenced. His name spread abroad and his influence and authority became ever greater.

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