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Not only his students, but all the great scholars of the vicinity would congregate to listen to his Torah and Musar discourses. He infused his spirit in all of them, and imbued them with his fear of G-d. Many considered themselves his subordinates. They accepted him as their authority in whatever pertained to human conduct, and whoever sought the truth came to him for enlightenment.

Nevertheless, R. Israel did not relinquish his interest in the rank and file of the Kovno population. With his keen vision, he realized that it was imperative to raise a generation of G-d-fearing laymen as well. He remarked that he was quite sure that there would never be a dearth of G-d fearing rabbis in Israel, but that he was not so confident of there being G-d-fearing, Torah educated laymen. Hence he initiated a series of activities aimed at preserving the continuity of such types, and the spreading of Musar among them. At first he tried to attract laymen to his Bet Mid-rash. Later he saw that the two types could not fit together and only interfered with one another instead. He accordingly established a separate Musar "Shtibel" (House) in the upper story of the Sawmill Workers's Synagogue (Zegershe Kloiz). He sought to draw the most respected and prominent householders of the city to that Musar House since in his view, for Musar to spread, it had of necessity to become a matter of prestige. Then only would the rest of the population be attracted to it. "Done out of ulterior motives, it ends by being done for its own sake." He accordingly universally advised "to ponder carefully how to attract the quality — i.e. the prominent members of the community -- following whom the rest will rush to study Musar." R. Israel did indeed succeed in winning over the lay leaders and affluent of the city. His Musar House became a spiritual center, and many would enter its portals for contemplation and in order to pour out their hearts in prayer. R. Israel, too, would repair there and study Musar with stormy, emotional excitement. Periodically, he would address those who happened to be present with his usual, fiery eloquence. He exerted the most profound influence upon them, and a new type of layman emerged, distinguished from his contemporaries by his character and bearing, moving and speaking politely, conducting his business dealings calmly, and with gracious demeanor. These laymen later became known as Ba'ale Musar or "Musarniks."

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