

## The RYS Daily 1/2/07 Leaving Vilna III

From The Mussar Movement, Volume 1, Part 1, pages 218 - 219.

At the time that the Seminary had been opened (1848), the senior Lebensohn had been appointed as dean of the Jewish studies' program. The Maskilim realized full well, however, that if the institution were to carry any weight a recognized Torah scholar would have to be its head. R. Israel at all, in their opinion, would have been admirably suited for such a post. They offered him a salary of 800 roubles a year — an enormous sum for those days. R. Israel, however, concurred with the view of the rabbis that the Seminary was a detriment, liable to bring catastrophe to Jewry and to undermine the position of Torah in Jewish life. He rejected the offer as out of hand." The Maskilim threatened that they would invoke government interference. One fine morning, R. Israel was delivering his discourse in his Bet Midrash, when in walked the Russian Minister of Public Instruction, Ouvarov, accompanied by R. Zvi Katzenelbogen, a scholar and communal leader, and proposed to R. Israel that he "be elevated to become the Dean of The Rabbinical Seminary and be richly rewarded." R. Israel avoided giving any answer. He did not even discuss the pros and cons of the proposal. Ouvarov turned to R. Isaac of Volozhin to persuade R. Israel to accept. R. Isaac thought, apparently, that the proposition was worth the try, and tried to influence R. Israel by citing the ruling that "the law of the government is binding." R. Israel countered that here was no "law"; this was an evil decree." The government kept up its pressure, and so R. Israel left the city.

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