

The RYS Daily 1/5/07 Leaving Vilna VI

From The Mussar Movement, Volume 1, Part 1, pages 222 - 223.

These replies reflect R. Israel's views of the nature of the Jewish rabbinate. It is not sufficient for a rabbinical candidate to know the practical halachot from the works of the codifiers : Rambam, Shulchan Aruch, etc. He has to be a Talmudic scholar, expert in all aspects of Torah learning, in all its ramifications, divisions, sources. He must be imbued with the fear of Heaven, for beside the fact such a standard is proper for this title (lit. "cloak"),^Z it is impossible, unless one has a full measure of deep fear of G-d, a pure heart and refined character, to discover the true intent of the Torah and to deduce, from any topic of discussion, the valid halachic conclusions. It is forbidden to make a career or profession, an axe to grind, out of Torah. Indeed, R. Israel did advise his students to acquire the fitness to render halachic decisions, and preached to them that it was permissible to study for the rabbinate, and no aim in life is more sincere than that. His intention, however was that they should study to acquire expertise in discharging rabbinical functions — to become proficient in rendering all types of halachic decisions — so that, if they would ever be compelled to take such posts at one time or another, they would not lead their communities astray. If they would be motivated by honor or material reward, then they would only have their personal interests at heart — and this was liable to have harmful consequences.

To R. Israel, as to the other great rabbis of the time, these Seminaries, which R. Israel dubbed "Rabbis' Factories," represented a complete negation of the above-mentioned view, and from here stemmed his implacable opposition to all of them.

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