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RESCUE EFFORTS FOR GERMAN JEWRY DIRECTIVES TO DISCIPLES

R. Israel remained in Kovno for some nine years, continuing with his efforts to disseminate his Musar doctrine. His efforts were successful and the Musar Movement encompassed ever widening circles of adherents.

Yet he entertained much broader aspirations. He was not content with his activities in Russia only. He looked beyond the borders to wherever Jews happened to reside upon earth, there to introduce the spirit of Musar, which alone, in his mind, was capable of assuring the survival of Judaism.

His eyes fell first upon Germany. There the Reform Movement had gained undisputed sway and had swept away-the last vestiges of authentic Judaism. Assimilation was striding forward with giant steps, and threatened to obliterate all remnants of Jewry. Consequently R. Israel moved to Germany, taking upon himself to revive its Jewry and stem the tide of disintegration.

Apparently, he must have envisaged far-reaching objectives for his efforts in that country, then the center of Haskalah and assimilation. The evil influence it had generated had penetrated to the adjacent countries, and threatened to overthrow the fortresses of Torah Judaism in Eastern Europe. R. Israel regarded it imperative to fight these forces on their home ground, "to grasp the bull by its horns and kill the adversary in its lair." He thought it possible to produce in Germany men of worldly knowledge who would be G-d-fearing at the same time. This was his dream of old — to demonstrate that there was no contradiction between. the Jewish faith and the Western enlightenment, and thereby to cut the specious Maskilim down to size.

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