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In his last years, R. Israel undertook one more project, designed to effect a complete transformation of the Torah world. He saw all too clearly the decline in Halachic expertise. Hardly an authority had survived who had mastered Torah in its entirety after the pattern of the Geonim of former times: the Vilna Gaon, R. Akiva Eger and their like. He foresaw no remedy to this situation even in the future. True geniuses are exceedingly rare phenomena and Torah study was no longer pursued with the same assiduous application as before. Yet, if a single individual embodying the entire Torah within himself was not to be found, a few sages could by their combined efforts overcome the deficiency. They could not share their mental acuity with one another but could pool their knowledge. R. Israel accordingly propounded a bold program: To divide the Torah into sections — according to tractates or topics. Each great contemporary Torah authority would choose a particular field in which to specialize, as befitted his abilities and preparedness. He would perfect his knowledge of his field, mastering it in breadth and depth, till he would become completely expert. The specialists would then meet at frequent intervals to clarify questions involving more than one field. And so the rabbis working together would constitute a comprehensive authority and replace the single genius of former generations.

To carry his plan into action, R. Israel first began forming an appraisal of the abilities of the various living Torah authorities, to see how these could be best utilized. It is told that he once entered the room where R. Isaac Meir of Gur, author of Chiddushe HaRIM, was conducting his shiur. Remaining incognito, R. Israel took his seat at the back. In the course of the discourse, he posed a few questions which R. Isaac Meir, in turn, answered. After the class had ended, the latter went to look for the Lithuanian who had put such brilliant questions to him as almost to destroy his entire Halachic construction. R. Israel had already left. He had accomplished his purpose, to determine where R. Isaac Meir's talents might best be applied.

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