

The RYS Daily 4/01/07 Public and Political Action XV

From The Mussar Movement, Volume 1, Part 1, pages 289 - 290.

When Micah Leib Levinsohn attacked the Talmud in his notorious article, "Additions to the `Paths of the Talmud'" which appeared in Hamaggid, R. Israel turned to R. Isaac Margolioth of Kovno and had him publish a reply. It was in the form of a brochure, "In Defence of the Talmud" (lit. "A Fortress for the Talmud"). R. Israel published it at his own expense and distributed it far and wide." So he stood guard unflinching against all who would attack and besmirch the sacred heritage of Israel, and made sure that they received the replies they deserved.

Surprisingly, the Maskilim knew only too well that R. Israel stood behind all the counter-measures hurled against them. Yet they never dared refer to him in any derogatory terms. At the very time that Maskilim dragged the names of other rabbis into the mire, and wrote books with the sole purpose of heaping scorn and ridicule upon them — the name of R. Israel was never mentioned and no one would detract from his dignity. It was as if the Maskilim feared the dazzling brightness of a totally unblemished sunlight. Abraham Mapu modelled one of the characters in his Ayit Tzavu'a ("Hypocritical Vulture") on R. Israel, and was roundly denounced by his own Maskilim associates, who sternly rebuked him for his impertinence.¹⁹ They held R. Israel's name aloft as a glorious emblem, as "the emissary, suited to time and place, sent to propagate correct opinions and noble character traits."²⁰ One of their greatest literati, Kalman Schulman, declared that if there had been one more R. Israel, the two would have created a revolution in Jewry? Another, through the medium of Hamaggid, recommended that a rabbinical conference presided over by R. Israel be convened, and the delegates deliberate on how to "adjust the people to the spirit of the times." So great a veneration for, and trust in R. Israel did these circles evince.

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