

The Daily RYS 4/12/07 Public Problems V

From The Mussar Movement, Volume 1, Part 1, pages 298 - 299.

As a result of his directives and influence, his lay-leader group adopted the same attitude in their endeavors. The Maskilim in the meantime went ahead with their scheme for mass migration to distant countries. Some even went so far as to propose to Ministers of State that emigration be facilitated and Jews be allowed to leave unhindered.

The Ministers gleefully approved the proposal. They were happy at the prospect of being rid of "the undesirable element" in their land.

To the observant Jewish lay-leaders the scheme was a catastrophe. There was no practical possibility of successfully transporting Jews by the ten-thousands (the Russian Jewish population numbered 6,000,000 at the time). Furthermore, the scheme was a double-edged sword. Antisemites could now well argue that Jews were aliens, and had no grounds on which to demand civil rights and equality before the law. R. Israel's lay-workers — R. Elijah Levinsohn and R. Zeev Cohen and others — met in St. Petersburg together with the great rabbis and communal leaders of the time. At their head were R. Isaac Elchanan and Baron Gunzburg. They categorically dissociated themselves from the scheme, and dispatched several delegations for interviews with Ministers of State to bring assurances of the loyalty of Russian Jewry, and express their rejection of the mass migration scheme. They succeeded in considerably ameliorating the plight of the Jews .

So R. Israel broadened the scope of his activities to cover all Jewish problems. He was always immediately ready with his sage, logical counsel, and gave his aid to Jewish leadership in all the lands of the Dispersion.

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