

The RYS Daily 4/22/07 Boldly Conceived, Revolutionary Plans II

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Apparently, Medicine and Jurisprudence, as well, came within the purview of his interests. Writing from Memel to Rabbi Dr. Ehrmann in Berlin, in 1873, R. Israel made this request: "I have heard that antiquities are very cheap in Berlin. Now I am interested in acquiring several books on logic which deal with the subject in detail. Perhaps also diverse and detailed information on, for instance, Jurisprudence, etc., etc., Medicine, etc.,"

These disciplines afforded him the means to clarify certain points of Halachah or of human psychology, which to him were the main purpose in human life. His letter therefore continued in this vein: "Although I possess an extremely limited knowledge of German, yet by a cursory review of various authors and perhaps diverse subjects, I will find it easier to attain what I seek, to discard one view and to adopt another necessary for me in the study of the wisdom of our Talmud." **Here, presumably he was following the example set by the Vilna Gaon, who had asserted that the knowledge of other disciplines was essential for a proper understanding of Torah, and "to the extent that one is deficient in his knowledge of other sciences, he will lack a hundred measures in the science of Torah, for Torah and science go hand in hand."** [4]

[4] In his introduction to his Hebrew translation of Euclid's geometry, R. Baruch of Shklov gives this as the view of his rabbi, the Vilna Gaon. He relates that the Gaon instructed him to translate as much scientific literature as possible into Hebrew "so that many can browse, and knowledge increase."

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