

The RYS Daily 4/30/07 Science and Religion

From The Mussar Movement Volume 1, Part 1, pages 309 - 310.

Apparently, R. Israel was groping for some avenue leading towards the solution of the conflict between science and religion. Gifted with extreme foresight, he realized that the present circumstances made proficiency in the official language of the country and some elementary practical knowledge imperative. Furthermore, insofar as the masses were concerned the need was becoming greater and more urgent and could not simply be brushed aside. Hence he was anxious to prescribe the remedy beforehand, to find the conditions favorable to a reconciliation, before it would be too late. The way was not clear to him. Apparently, he did initiate efforts in various directions. While in Germany he upheld the "Torah-im-Derech-Eretz" approach.¹⁸ So, too, he inspired his disciple, R. Simchah Zisel Ziv to open in Kelm and Grobin a Yeshivah with a comprehensive curriculum that included the study of languages and general knowledge, under state supervision, so as to attract the sons of the rich and to make Torah penetrate into all strata of society. He did, however, realize that one had to exercise the most delicate circumspection to take such steps in Russia, and that the innovation was fraught with danger in the spiritual sense. Only a gifted individual like R. Simchah Zisel — a Gaon in Torah learning, highly intelligent and talented, and an outstanding educator — was suited for such an assignment. Once, R. Israel questioned R. Simchah Zisel as to whether he was aware that all his labors might bring forth "a golden calf". Having received a positive reply, R. Israel decided that he could confidently rely upon R. Simchah Zisel. Alert to the danger inherent in such an experiment, he would be on guard to avert any mishap. Here is the reason, too, why R. Israel studiously avoided visiting the institution in Grobin. He did not wish his presence there to be construed as a sign of his approval of the curriculum and its applicability on a broad scale, as R. Simchah Zisel attested in one of his letters?"

Earlier issues of The RYS Daily are at <http://www.stevens.edu/golem/llevine/salanter/>