

The RYS Daily 6/15/07 Mussar Doctrine XIV

From The Mussar Movement, Volume 1, Part 2, page 26 - 27.

Upon these foundation, R. Israel built his whole methodology. He devised a special exercise designed to influence the subconscious drives of the personality. This led him to his innovation in the study of Musar. Not only were works dealing with Musar and the Fear of Heaven to be studied so as to clarify and master the subject matter, as has been stated above, but the material had to be studied in some distinct manner so as to exert an influence and leave an impression. For this purpose, it was not sufficient merely to read the material. The text had to be read over and over again, until it penetrated one's heart. Special affective Scriptural or Rabbinic passages were to be chosen and constantly repeated to oneself? Such continuous reiteration would strike root in the human personality and influence it. As these impressions multiplied and became reinforced, they would in time become ingrained in subconscious sources of the person's perceptions, and be capable of resisting one's instinctive inclinations.

R. Israel noticed that Torah study of itself possessed the special faculty of influencing human beings. It refines and purifies human nature. "If one occupies himself with the study of `An ox that gored a cow' and similar subjects, this will save him from evil gossip etc., even though the two have no connection whatsoever, since "at the time when one engages in Torah (study) it rescues him." This influence, however, is "spiritual in nature, and the human mind and senses are unable to discover its source." It is governed by certain known principles and conditions pertaining to the mitzvah of Torah study and works as some type of "incidental cure which comes of itself," Yet one cannot rely or be content with Torah study alone. Musar repetition, by contrast, is a natural remedy, material in nature, and it is applied directly to the sickness of the soul -- "after the manner in which physical illness is healed in accordance with the intensity and nature of the illness."

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