

The RYS Daily 6/18/07 Musar Enthusiasm I

From The Mussar Movement, Volume 1, Part 2, pages 31 -32.

MUSAR ENTHUSIASM, THE CURE FOR HARDNESS OF HEART.

Appraising the spirit of his contemporaries in depth, R. Israel concluded that mere repetition had become too banal to be an effective instrument. It was suitable for normal circumstances that require ordinary stimulation, but not in a situation where spiritual recession had set in. At the time when men had been "both inwardly and outwardly obsessed with serving G-d, may His Name be blessed," even a slight stimulation would influence them. The sound of the shofar in Elul was of itself sufficient cause "to awaken man from his slumber and the vanity of his preoccupation in order to examine his deeds... But what can be done at present when we are submerged both inwardly and outwardly in the vanities of worldly preoccupations, when the heart is stopped up and hard as rock. Can the weak stimulus before us make an impression on hard rock?"

Even the recalling of the day of death — the last resort for shaking up one's person as is attested to by Scripture, "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men and the living will lay it to his heart" — [even the day of death] is no deterrent in our time. We do not tremble at the day of death, even though we mention it by word of mouth. Even when our eyes behold the death of someone similar to ourselves, we do not muster the strength in our spirit to return wholeheartedly to our Creator... This is none else than the result of the multitude of our iniquities which have stopped up our hearts that have become like stone.

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