

The RYS Daily 6/25/07 Musar Enthusiasm VII

From The Mussar Movement, Volume 1, Part 2, pages 36 -37.

R. Israel was not satisfied with half-measures. He proceeded to designate the means by which this stormy ferment was to be achieved: "To stir up the souls to attain purity in thought through these noble, lofty studies (i.e. Musar — D.K.), to study with lips aflame, with the correct approach, by picturing everything broadly, elaborating each particular and making it more intelligible by easily grasped imagery, till the heart becomes fired to a lesser or greater degree and capable of exerting its power to control the limbs and of performing every good deed for its own sake, whether willingly or by coercion.

Here he enumerates all the methods that stimulate enthusiasm. Chief among them is the repetition of Musar dicta, as has been stated before, not dryly, but to the accompaniment of emotional excitement. One should choose such ideas which, he feels, move him emotionally, "and repeat and reiterate them enthusiastically over and over again until they become engraved in his heart and in his mind" (lit. "frontlets between his eyes") . Then, even as he walks along the wayside or retires to bed, the dictum will keep resounding like a bell in his ears and not depart from his memory." These dicta are to be repeated with "lips aflame", aloud, and to a moving melody. It is human nature to be stirred to joy or sadness by song and instrumental music. As everyone knows from his own experience, he may listen to the most distressing news, and yet not be affected; but if the same report is delivered in a mournful and tearful voice, he will be moved to the point of weeping himself. Melody, accordingly, is a remedial stimulus and is to be exploited for this goal, to set the spirit astir. "Reading Rabbinic dicta and Musar works that inspire the heart to fear G-d, in a sorrowful voice and in a state of spiritual excitement, will cause one's heart to well up within him and arouse his spirit to fever pitch — all his senses becoming affected — till the words strike root in the innermost recesses of his heart and induce within him the fear of G-d. Certainly if Musar study moves one to weep, his eyes shedding copious tears, these becoming like dew of Hermon — then a new spirit will be engendered within him and the fear of G-d will flow into him like water and become like `oil in his bones.'

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