

The Daily RYS – 6/29/06 Saving a Woman from Committing Suicide

From "The Mussar Movement, Volume 1, Part 2, pages 247- 248.

A similar instance involving a more serious episode occurred in Vilna during the period that he headed the Zarece yeshivah. He [RYS] took particular pains always to be on time for his lectures. Yet once it had become very late and he had still not made his appearance. Concerned, his students went outside to look for him. When they reached the bridge leading to the city, they noticed him standing deep in conversation with a young woman. They understood that he was occupied with some grave matter and withdrew. When he finally entered the Yeshivah, R. Israel apologized for being so late, but explained that a matter of life and death had detained him. The students subsequently investigated and finally the details of the incident were pieced together:

On his way to the Bet Midrash, he was about to cross the bridge when he suddenly noticed an excited woman rushing towards the river. He stood in her way, stopped her and asked her why she was running. She tried to pass by him and told him to leave her alone. R. Israel grasped her by the sleeve and repeated his request that she tell him what was the matter. Forced to remain where she was, she unfolded her tale of woe. A short while ago her two children were taken ill, and *had died a few days later. So overcome with grief was her husband that he had been unable to work for the past several weeks. They had been forced to hire someone else to drive their wagon, and in this way managed to subsist and cover the costs of the husband's illness. Suddenly the horse died. Their sole means of support was gone. In despair she had decided to throw herself into the river.

R. Israel talked to her at length. Tenderly and softly he explained to her that G-d could easily make good her deficiencies. She was still young. A year from now she could bear another child, and so on. Her husband would recover and resume his occupation. As for the loss of the horse, he would send her the money for another

the next day. Slowly the woman became pacified and regained her composure. She thanked R. Israel for the goodness of his heart and returned home. A year later R. Israel was invited to attend the Brit Milah of her newly born son. [27]

[27] Told by R. Yechiel Israeli of Vilna, in the name of his father, one of R. Israel's students in Zarece.