

The Daily RYS 8/27/06 Truth and Legend About Israel Salanter I

The next few RYS Dailies will come from the article "Truth and Legend About Israel Salanter" by Jacob Marks. This article is reprinted in the book **The Golden Tradition** by Lucy Dawidowicz, pages 171 to 179.

At the beginning of the article Ms Dawidowicz writes:

Israel Salanter, rabbi and preacher, was born in Zhagory in 1810 and died in Koenigsberg in 1883. His family name was Lipkin, but he took the name of Salanter after settling in the town of Salanty. Much of his life story is told in the following memoir [written by Jacob Mark].

Israel Salanter was one of the first among East European rabbis to try to conciliate Jewish orthodoxy with modernity, to bring to the modern urban Jew a Judaism relevant to his times and condition, and to halt the flight of young Jews from Judaism. He preached inwardness, self-awareness, ethical behavior and personal morality - known under the general term of *musar*. He established study centers, had moralistic works published, and went from city to city to bring his message to Jews in great urban centers.

In his emphasis on individual morality, Israel Salanter differed from his traditionalist contemporaries. He argued it was as important to abstain from dishonesty in business dealings as to abstain from prohibited food, and equally important to abhor both out of knowledge and self-knowledge. His teachings appear to have had much in common with those of Simha Bunam of Pshiskha in an earlier generation. In a sense, it may be said, Israel Salanter tried to synthesize the best of both Talmudic Judaism and hasidism, by combining learning and *mitsvot* with self-knowledge and saintliness.

Jacob Mark was born in Polangen in 1860 and died in New York about x 929. He was an observant Jew and a maskil. The following essay was taken from his memoirs of great men he knew.