

## The Daily RYS 9/1/06 Truth and Legend VI

Or consider this true story. Once, in Salanty, he could not be present to supervise the baking of his matza shemura (observance matza). His disciples who undertook the supervision asked him what they were to guard against. He replied that he asked of them only one thing: that in their zealously they were not to scold the woman kneading the dough for being slow: "Bear in mind," he said, "she is a widow and one ought not to grieve a widow."

Rabbi Israel's compassion for humankind seemed limitless. He wanted every Jew to have a great share in the world to come and to escape the pangs of hell, worse even than the sufferings of this world. To this end, he strove always to be among the people, to live in different cities and countries, though by nature he preferred seclusion. Wherever he went, he summoned to repentance and good deeds. Once Rabbi Israel was told about a recluse in Vilna, an ordinary carpenter who wore his phylacteries all day, his lips moving as if in constant prayer. People asked Rabbi Israel to see him and penetrate his extraordinary qualities. But Rabbi Israel was skeptical of this man's wisdom or reverence for God. Otherwise, he said, the man would not seclude himself from the world, especially nowadays, but he would want to help the Jews of today.