

Rav S. R. Hirsch— The Leader and Fighter

by

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I am grateful for the opportunity to speak about the life work of Moreinu V'Rabbeinu Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch, זצ"ל, especially in view of his forthcoming 97th Yahrzeit on the 27th of Teves. We consider it a special זכות for the saintly נשמה of our late, great Rav, Moreinu V'Rabbeinu Rav Yosef Breuer, זצ"ל, that this lecture in honor of his grandfather takes place in the Shul he founded and under the auspices of the Foundation which bears his name.

When evaluating Rav Hirsch's awesome achievements, one is reminded of the well-known פסוק in Malachi 3,18, ושבתם וראיתם בין צדיק לרשע, "Then you will return, and see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between him who serves Hashem and him who does not serve Him." The מס' חגיגה in גמרא adds an intriguing comment: אינו דומה מי ששונה פרקו מאה פעמים למי ששונה פרקו מאה פעמים ואחת— "There is no comparison between one who learns his פרק a hundred times and one who learns it a hundred and one times." The latter is significantly superior, for he has exhibited a diligence beyond the norm. As a result, his is the achievement that will survive the test of time.

Yet, there is also the type of person who will surpass even this exalted level of effort. For him, numbers are meaningless when it comes to Torah study. He will review a passage for the hundred and first time, and keep right on reviewing it. He is driven relentlessly by an indefatigable desire to serve Hashem, and he never feels that he has accomplished enough. Therefore, he strives without a stop to fulfill his purpose in life, until his Creator eventually puts him to sleep and lets his נשמה rest in the arms of

the שכונה. This is the true עובד אלקים, and of him שלמה המלך says, in Koheles 5,11 מתוקה שנת העבד ה—“The sleep of an עבד is sweet: ואם הרבה יאכל—Whether he eats a little or a lot.” Such a person is not concerned over whether or not he has reaped many benefits in this world for his efforts. Rather, he exerts himself because he knows that he has a mandate from Hashem to accomplish all he can while he is alive. This is the true עבד ה'.

It is in light of this description that we can call Rabbiner Hirsch the עבד ה' par excellence. Anyone who surveys his life's work cannot but be amazed at how one individual was able to accomplish so much during a single lifetime. Where did he possibly find the time and the energy to write so much, to publish so much, to show such vital leadership? Tens of thousands of pages of his writings exist, done in longhand, with nary a correction. He was responsible for publishing a monthly journal, the *Jeschurun*; and, of course, there were his classic works on the חומש, on ההלים, and on far-ranging philosophical issues, all of which are now fortunately available to the English-speaking reader. This prolific output is all the more astounding in light of the fact that many of the printing aids that we have today were not available in his time. He had no ghost writers, no dictaphones: whatever he wrote was done entirely by himself, in longhand. Clearly we have here a demonstration of what we call סייעתא דשמיא, for without Hashem's help he could not have done all this.

To many of our contemporaries, Rabbiner Hirsch is known chiefly as the propagator of the philosophy of דרך ארץ. However, this is a concept which has been grossly misinterpreted as a compromise between Orthodoxy and worldliness. Too often, it is used as a convenient code-word that can legitimize whatever type of pale Judaism one seeks to follow. Frequently, some beautiful phrases and thoughts from Hirsch's writings are plucked out of context from his literary heritage like so many raisins out of a cake by naughty children. Those who mangle the Hirschian message in this manner ignore the essence of Rabbiner Hirsch's writings, and what he stood for.

In reality, Rabbiner Hirsch rejected out of hand any diluting of the Torah's purity, or any attempt to redefine it in terms of today's whims and fancies. The totality of his writings clearly adopts the sentiment expressed by דוד המלך in Tehillim 119,163: “שקר שנאתי ואתעבה”—I hated the lie; I detested it—תורתך אהבתי—for I love Your Torah.” ה's Torah must be preserved in its true, pristine form. This principle underlined Rabbiner Hirsch's entire philosophy.

I had the privilege many years ago of meeting the old Gerer Rebbe, זצ"ל. He told me that Rabbiner Hirsch—"the צדיק of Frankfurt"—was a "lebedige ספר מוסר" a living morality text. As the Gerer Rebbe intimated, Rabbiner Hirsch was one of the most relentless warriors in the battle against destructive forces both within and outside of Judaism. He was a valiant captain in Hashem's army who accepted upon himself the mandate given to לנחוש וּלְנוֹטוּעַ—ירמי' to build and to plant; as well as לְנוֹחוֹץ וְלְהַאֲבִיד וְלְהַרְסָהּ—the enemies of הוּא בְרוּךְ הוּא. As was true of those who built the walls of ירושלים in the time of נחמי', he used one hand to construct an edifice to preserve and protect his people, and the other to wield his weapons.

Yet, this great warrior was no seeker of strife, no fanatic bent on conflict. In fact, he hated the disputes he was forced to enter. In his commentary to תהלים, Rabbiner Hirsch explained that דוד's cry הַפּוֹצֵה הַיָּמִין—מַחֲרֵב רֶגֶל—"Save me from the evil sword," refers to the sword he was forced to use against his enemies. דוד was asking ה' to spare him the necessity of waging war. However, when he had no choice but to do so, דוד fought not for personal glory, but solely לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם. The same can certainly be said of Rabbiner Hirsch.

When one reads Hirsch's passionate diatribes against the fathers of Reform, such as Geiger and Holdheim—those who sought to dig the grave of authentic Judaism—one senses his righteous indignation and his holy anger. He unleashed his attacks not to pursue a personal vendetta, but to be לְיוֹם מִלְחַמַת ה'. By way of contrast, when one studies Hirsch's commentary on the חומש, one finds the relaxed scholar examining the intricacies of the פסוקים and expounding on the roots and etymological implications of the words. Here is the dispassionate wisdom of a תלמיד חכם of the old school. One who beholds the "Gedankengebäude"—the architectural structure of his thoughts—might, if he did not know better, conclude that this was the work of a scholar secluded in his study, paying no heed to the worries of the world. Amazingly, both works flowed from the same pen. Clearly, this was part of Rabbiner Hirsch's goal, to "build the walls of ירושלים with one hand, and to hold the weapon in the other."

Rabbiner Hirsch's role as a warrior against those who profane Judaism is too frequently ignored. As was true of others who battled against the enemies of the true tradition—such as Rav Saadia Gaon, who fought the Karaim, and the Rambam, who challenged those misled by Greek philosophy—Hirsch was aided by ה' in finding new insights into

the Torah. The result was his commentary on the תומש, which placed him on the level of the foremost מפרשי התורה of all time.

Hirsch was a mere 22 years old when he started his so-called rabbinical career. By the time he was 26, and serving as Rav in Oldenburg, he had already formulated the entire basis of his philosophy, which he later elaborated upon in the *Nineteen Letters* and the *Chovev*. He came to Emden when he was 33, and there he began the battle against the forces of the Reform movement. At this time there appeared two relatively unknown booklets titled "Die erste und zweite Mitteilung ueber Naftali's Briefwechsel" ("The First and Second Reports of the Correspondence of Naftali"). The texts use the format of having a certain Naftali writing to his friend about the speeches of the Reform rabbis at the rabbinical conventions. They take these speeches apart, phrase by phrase and word by word, showing how absurd Reform thinking really is. These pungent, devastating attacks on Reform leaders like Geiger and Holdheim bore no authorship, but those in the know were aware that "Naftali" was Hirsch. His spirited defense of Orthodoxy—written in the enemies' own language—had begun.

Hirsch then moved on to Nikolsburg, and there his battles took on a new dimension. He now took a strong stance not against a corrupting influence, but in favor of a better life for his Jewish brethren. As the Chief Rav of the entire area of Moravia, with its many Kehillos, he became the leading spokesman of his people in fighting for complete equal rights for Jews. Thus, during his four years in Nikolsburg, he was respected by all Jews as a distinguished statesman who could eloquently plead their case for total emancipation from inhuman civil restrictions.

Then the focus of Hirsch's life switched to far-off Frankfurt am Main. Frankfurt was an ancient Jewish community in which a direct line of Jewish life could be traced back for over a thousand years. It could boast of many native sons who emerged as great Gedolim: the Yalkut Shimoni was, according to tradition, the first of the Darshanei Frankfurt. However, the Jewish community was recognized officially as such by the government, and every Jewish resident was registered as a member of the community, whether he wanted this or not. If someone wished to avoid official association with the community, he would automatically lose his status as a Jew in the eyes of the government. Thus, a religious Jew had no choice but to be under the jurisdiction of the Jewish community, no matter how irreligious its leaders might be.

Although Frankfurt had in 1800 the leadership of such a Torah giant as the Haflo'oh, by the 1840's it had turned into a community that, for the most part, embraced the radical Reform movement. Abraham Geiger became the spiritual leader of the community, and his heinous influence was highly pronounced. The local Mikveh, for instance, no longer existed. In a new shul—dedicated to the anti-religious “ideals” of the Reform philosophy—the Almemar was erected above the shuttered Mikveh; the Mikveh was, so to speak, “buried” ignominiously below it.

There were still a few “frum” Jews in Frankfurt, including some great Talmidei Chachomim. They had established private minyonim which were allowed to meet undisturbed. However, they wanted the right to establish their own Jewish community—the “frum” Jewish community, which was the original Frankfurt Kehilla. Consequently, they sent a petition asking for this right to the Senate of Frankfurt; Frankfurt was a free city at that time, governed by its own Senate. The petition was denied on the grounds that there was only one community to which every Jew had to belong. Finally, after much effort, the petitioners were given the right to form a separate religious society, a “Religionsgesellschaft.” As long as they remained members of the official Jewish community and paid their taxes, their society had the right to establish a separate synagogue with its own Rabbi and a separate school. Eleven valiant men, whose names are inscribed in the honor book of Jewish history, had the courage to establish this “Religionsgesellschaft,” which they called K'hal Adath Jeshurun, as the successor to the old Frankfurt Kehilla.

All this occurred while Rabbiner Hirsch was in Moravia. Two years later, in 1851, Hirsch accepted the summons to come to Frankfurt as Rav of the small “frum” community, which by this time had attracted about 100 *baalei battim*. He was then 43 years old, and he remained in Frankfurt for the next 37 years, until the end of this life. During this entire time he fought unceasingly for the well-being of K'hal Adath Jeshurun, and for the right of this original Kehilla Kedosha to be independent of the Reform community. His first step in this ongoing struggle was to establish a school, which was followed in 1853 by the construction of a *shul*, one of whose patrons was Baron Wilhelm von Rothschild.

The school was founded on the basis of the leitmotif of תורה עם דרך ארץ. To a few residents of the community such a concept was too “modern.” To others it seemed too fanatical. As a result, the attempt to begin such a school proved to be an uphill battle. Very few students were enrolled at

first. Furthermore, on the very day set for the school's opening, an anonymous article appeared in one of the local newspapers, the *Frankfurter Intelligenzblatt*, attacking the school's educational policy. The article accused the school of representing a regression to the closed-mindedness of the Middle Ages, of promoting the observance of irrelevant, outdated laws, and of steering its students away from the modern, progressive world.

Such charges could not go unanswered. Given the opportunity to respond in the same issue, Rabbiner Hirsch hurriedly wrote an essay entitled "Das religioese Judentum in Verbindung mit sozialer Bildung" ("Religious Judaism and Social Education"). In it, he reiterated the idea that adherence to the Torah makes one a better member of society because the laws of Hashem spur the faithful Jew to seek the justice and honesty of the model citizen. Consequently, wrote Rabbiner Hirsch, the new school will not cause children to regress. On the contrary, it will produce youngsters who will have learned to serve their G-d and their fellow man, and who will therefore emerge as exemplary citizens.

Soon, the identity of the author of the article attacking the school became known. He was Dr. Hess, the director/principal of the Jewish school in Frankfurt called the Philanthropin, a hotbed of אפיקורסות and מינות. Its curriculum ignored Torah and Mitzvos in favor of a pareve serving of what was called philanthropy, and its belief was that if one behaves as a good citizen, he has fulfilled his religious commitments. In short, it was the type of school which produced good Germans and bad Jews. When Dr. Hess pressed his attack against the new school, Rabbiner Hirsch countered with another essay, "Religious Judaism and Dr. Hess" in which he challenged Dr. Hess to emerge from his anonymity and identify himself: what was he afraid of? It is a fighting essay, and an electrifying call for Torah adherence by a true לוחם מלחמה ה'.

As if this was not enough, a year later Hirsch started publishing his *ישורון*, a monthly magazine, which he wrote and edited entirely on his own, and which enjoyed wide distribution. This monthly journal appeared until 1870, and it became his personal vehicle for not only a chance לנטוע ולבנות—to plant and disseminate his Torah השקפות—but also to fight against the Torah's enemies. Most of the material found in his *Collected Writings* is culled from the essays in the *ישורון*, enabling our own generation to benefit from and marvel at his remarkable insights into our holy tradition. Simultaneously, Rabbiner Hirsch conducted wide-

ranging correspondence with individuals throughout the world; all his replies were personal ones, written in longhand.

Still during this period there appeared in the public journals an essay by Hirsch entitled "Von einem Schwarzen". He realized that the non-Jewish world was probably enthralled by the in-fighting within the Jüdische Gemeinde. To counter this, he wrote of the contributions the traditional Jew—called "the black man," as opposed to the so-called "progressive" white man, which is how the gentiles viewed the irreligious Jew—had made to society. In his essay, Hirsch explained that what the gentiles consider progress emanates from the Torah: לציון יאמר איש איש יולד שם. Whatever beautiful thoughts and expressions one can find in German poets like Schiller have their origins in the Torah. It eventually took centuries before some of these heaven-sent sparks entered into the consciousness of mankind at large. Yet it should be remembered that they were transmitted by the "black man," the Torah-true Jew.

The fight against Reform marked one battlefield for Rabbiner Hirsch. Soon a second one opened, involving what we would today call the Conservative movement. Its center in Germany was the "Rabbinerseminar" (Rabbinical Seminary) in the city of Breslau. The head of this seminary was Zecharia Frankel, a man with beard and peyes, someone who apparently observed all the Torah laws—but who was still an אפיקורס. His heresy was due to his belief that whereas the תורה שבכתב is מן השמים, the תורה שבעל פה was a creation of the רבן.

Among the members of Frankel's staff was the infamous Heinrich Graetz, who was a history professor in the seminary. By that time Graetz had published a *History of the Jews*, which offered the notion that the development of the הלכה had been dependent on the different temperament of the various Sages. By way of example, he cited רבן גמליאל, who was known to be strict; רב אליעזר בן הורקנוס, who was known to be rigid in his opinions; and רבי יהושע בן חנניה, whom Graetz called a moderating force. According to Graetz, the personalities of the Rabbonim was the factor that determined whether the views of הלל or שמאי were accepted. Thus, in Graetz's view, the entire Mishnah is nothing but a listing of political debates between warring factions, each of which had its own ax to grind.

When Hirsch read the *History of the Jews*, he knew he could not let it pass without a response. In fact, Hirsch knew Graetz; he had been one of Hirsch's earliest students. When Hirsch wrote the *Nineteen Letters* in

Oldenburg, Graetz had been in his house, as a student. However, this one-time disciple had turned sour, and now Hirsch considered it his sacred duty to present the response of the מאמינים to Graetz's sacrilege. In a very systematic way, Hirsch took each section of Graetz's book and shredded it to bits, using logic and traditional sources as his weapons. He revealed Graetz's methodology as being astoundingly unscientific, showing how Graetz had taken Talmudic quotes totally out of context and had built misleading theses on this basis. In the process of demolishing Graetz's positions, Hirsch revealed his own phenomenal בקיאות. In one instance, while disproving one statement Graetz had made about רבי אלעזר בן הורקנוס, Hirsch cited no fewer than 60 different proofs, all based on texts from throughout ש"ס. The wide range of his knowledge is remarkable. Today, with our rich supply of source material, one can gather a wealth of information without being a Gaon. In Hirsch's time, though, such information was not readily available. Someone who could quote so extensively from the Mishnah, Gemorrah, Tosefta, and Beraisah had to be, without a doubt, a certifiable sage. Hirsch used his brilliance to defend the forces of tradition against the attacks of Graetz and his ilk; this, indeed, was Hirsch the warrior.

Five years later, in 1861, Zecharia Frankel composed a sefer in Hebrew entitled דרכי המשנה, which purported to discuss the development of the Mishna. As could be expected, Frankel rejected the notion that a הלכה למשה מסיני was a law transmitted by משה to ה'. Rather, he defined it as an expression referring to an ancient הלכה. Naturally, this approach implies that חזרה מן השמים is a fallacy, though Frankel was careful not to say so explicitly. Certainly the book presented a clear-cut challenge to the views of authentic Judaism.

The challenge was taken up by a תלמיד חכם named R. Gottlieb Fischer, a simple man from Stuhlweissenburg, a small town not known to many. Fischer wrote a refutation of Frankel's book in Hebrew, and Hirsch proceeded to translate it into German and to add his own comments. This lengthy work provoked a flurry of scathing published responses from Frankel's students, some carrying fictitious names, and others appearing anonymously. These articles did not center on the work itself but were instead vicious attacks on Rabbiner Hirsch's character. They contained vituperative insinuations about Rabbiner Hirsch's private life and intimated that he was unethical.

Hirsch could not, of course, let these charges go unanswered. He had

never before had to reply to slurs made against him, and he did not personally care what was being said about him in irreligious circles. However, he saw that silence on his part would be interpreted as an admission, and that this might cause a חלול השם. Therefore, he wrote a response in which he declared before ה' and before the eyes of the entire world that there was not a single word of truth in the charges made against him. He proceeded to state that, in all his writings, he had never stooped to leveling personal attacks at others, since his only goal was to clarify the ideas of the Torah. What mattered was a person's principles and ideology, and therefore Hirsch would continue to challenge his enemies' ideas, not their characters.

At this point, Frankel found an unlikely ally in Rabbi Rappaport, the Chief Rabbi of Prague. In his Shabbos Hagodol Droshe, Rabbi Rappaport defended his friend Frankel—not mentioning Frankel's questioning of the principle of חזרה מן השמים—and asked what right Hirsch had to challenge him. Rabbi Rappaport claimed that Hirsch had caused a חלול ה', and Hirsch responded in a famous series of articles. He took Rappaport's Shabbos Hagodol Droshe apart piece by piece, and showed that Rappaport's support of Frankel was baseless. Then, in answer to the question of why he had translated Gottlieb Fischer's work from Hebrew into German, he replied that he was simply fighting fire with fire. Frankel had been attracting unsuspecting, innocent Jewish youngsters to his seminary because their parents were not really aware of what was being taught there. It was his task, Hirsch said, to warn parents in a language they could understand, "Let your children become shoemakers and tailors rather than rabbis of Frankel's seminary. And even if they don't know their trade, and turn out bad shoes and inferior garments, it is still better than turning into bad Jews with destroyed *neshomos*." It was to disseminate this message to the widest possible audience that Hirsch wrote in German.

There were other challenges to authentic Judaism at this time that also spurred Hirsch to take up his pen. There was his denunciation of the actions of the French rabbis of the Consistoire who altered the דינים and מנהגים, and assumed the philosophy of the Reform. And there was his essay on the "Hamburger Attentat," (Hamburg Compromise) which involved a Rabbi in Hamburg who had allowed a woman without a גט to marry a Jewish man. "Why did not the members of the Jewish community there speak up about it?" Hirsch wanted to know. "How could you

permit such a breach of Jewish law to happen?" All this was in addition to his numerous letters giving advice and delivering פסקי דין. Parents of a certain community asked what to do about their children, who, because there was no Jewish school in the area, were forced to attend public school. As a result, the youngsters were finding it necessary to attend classes and write on Shabbos and Yom Tov. The parents had considered keeping their children out of school on these days, but had been told that this would lead to their arrest. What could they do?

"Let yourself be arrested!" answered Rabbiner Hirsch. "Gain wide publicity for your plight. Tell the newspapers that, because you followed your religious conscience, you were arrested by the authorities. That way you can get the law rescinded." They took his advice and the battle was eventually won, as Hirsch had predicted.

Then a third battlefield attracted Hirsch's attention, the struggle for "Austritt." This was the fight to gain independence for the Torah-true Jews, by way of a secession from the official Jewish community. As mentioned earlier, up until this point a religious Jew had no choice but to be included in the government-recognized Jewish community (controlled by the Reform) if he wanted to be identified as a Jew. For 25 years Hirsch fought to change this policy. He wrote numerous articles about the freedom of conscience and the need for total religious independence. Then he went to Berlin, to lobby lawmakers for concessions. Eventually, in 1876, his mission bore fruit, and the Parliament of Prussia, located in Berlin, passed the Law of Secession from Jewish Communities. It was now permitted for a group of Jews to dissociate themselves from the main, irreligious community and to form their own recognized Jewish community, based on unaltered Torah principles.

Although Hirsch was successful in his battle to gain Austritt, this campaign led to a rift in the Orthodox community. A number of his erstwhile followers felt uncomfortable about breaking away from fellow Jews they had known for decades. They did not consider them to be the clear-cut danger to authentic Judaism that Hirsch's previous antagonists had been. Hirsch and those who accepted his line of reasoning remained firm, but others who had previously supported him now found themselves in opposition.

These opponents included the famous Reb Moshe Mainz, who, with his friends, came out publicly against the concept of Austritt, which they felt was going too far. They were of the opinion that as long as the

religious Jews had their own Kehilla which could function unhindered within the main community, there was no need to secede from the community. In an effort to help convince Reb Moshe Mainz that he should change his position, the renowned Würzburger Rav, Rav Seligmann Baer Bamberger, was invited to Frankfurt to examine the situation. It was expected that he would urge Reb Mainz to adopt Rabbiner Hirsch's approach.

What exactly happened is not clear. When Rav Bamberger arrived, he learned that the official Jewish community, afraid of a mass exodus by the Orthodox, had made a concession. If the religious Jews would remain within the community, they would be allowed their own Kehilla, with their own Rav, their own shul, and their own school. The Würzburger Rav felt that these concessions removed the need for Austritt. He published his views in a Frankfurt newspaper, and indicated that, under the altered situation, it was no longer necessary for religious Jews to separate legally from the Jewish community at large.

This article came as a major shock to Rabbiner Hirsch. He had been unaware of Rav Bamberger's position until he read it in the newspaper along with everyone else. Here was this great צדיק וחכם publicly opposing his stance on Austritt, and he had not come to discuss the matter with Hirsch personally.

In response, Rabbiner Hirsch published an open letter in the form of a pamphlet against the Würzburger Rav's statements. In it, he voiced his pained regret that he found it necessary to disagree with the worthy and righteous Rav Bamberger, but he could not allow Rav Bamberger to challenge his authority as Rav of Frankfurt. Because Rabbiner Hirsch was Rav of the city, it was up to him and not an outsider to decide the פסק דין regarding this matter. And it was Hirsch's conclusion that the philosophy guiding the mainstream of Frankfurt's Jewish community was based on מינות. The Reform leaders of the city had caused the elimination of all references to משיח from the Siddur, and they had established a school where אפיקורסות was taught. Certainly, concluded Hirsch, the religious Jews are obligated to withdraw from such a community. In fact, if the Orthodox were to establish their own branch within this community, it would be worse, for it would leave outsiders with the impression that becoming a part of a Reform community is acceptable. It would seem to sanction affiliation with Reform, and this is totally unacceptable. Rather, one must follow the directive of the פסוק: משכו וקחו לכם משכו ידיכם: פסוק

מִן הַעֲבוּדָה זֹרָה—“Draw away from the heresy, and sever your ties to those who preach Reform.”

Of the hundreds who were members in Rabbiner Hirsch's congregation, only 80 stood by him in this matter. Only 80 accepted his decision about Austritt as being binding. The others felt that the Würzburger Rav was also a great Torah luminary, and that they could rely on his more lenient approach. This is one of the developments that one can call *מעשה שטן*, and it was a sad period in our history.

Parenthetically, one can note with amazement that it was during the struggle over Austritt, between 1867 and 1878, that Rabbiner Hirsch found time to publish the five volumes of his commentary on the *חומש*. Only a true Torah master could have accomplished this awesome feat under such difficult conditions.

The dispute between the two Gedolim was not an extended one, because the Würzburger Rav passed away shortly after the controversy arose. In the year of his death, 1879, an anonymous sefer appeared bearing the title *דברי אמת*. Although the author was unknown, it was clear from the depth of his writings that he was a veritable *תלמיד חכם* and that the book was written for the sake of truth. The sefer contains many expressions of appreciation for the late Würzburger Rav, and includes these sentiments: *חובה על כל—נמס כל לב—*All hearts are melting—*ישראל לקרוע בקריעה שאינה על האדם הגדול כי נפלה עטרת ראשנו חסיד,*—Everyone in Klal Yisroel is bound to rend his garments at the death of such a sage—*עניו, צדיק הגאון שר התורה*—For the crown of our head has fallen off, and we are bereft of a righteous, humble Gaon and master of the Torah.”

The sefer cannot say enough about the greatness of the Würzburger Rav—and yet its central theme is the refutation of his arguments regarding Austritt. It contains arguments that support the Hirschian view, and the author writes that by correcting Rav Bamberger's statements, he was redeeming the Würzburger Rav's reputation.

Who could have written such a sefer? There is one clue: It contains the letters *ה"כ"מ*, which stand for *הריני כפרת משכבו*—“I am the atonement for his bedstead.” This is what a son should pronounce during the first year after his father's passing: “I will atone for any sins my father has done.” This indicates that the sefer was put out by one of the Würzburger Rav's sons, all of whom were renowned *תלמידי חכמים*. This son apparently felt that, although his father was indeed a great Godol, he had made one error during his life. He had gone against the *פסק דין* of the Rav of a

community, and had not urged a dissociation from a group of heretics. Thus, Rabbiner Hirsch's views were apparently shared by one of Rav Bamberger's own progeny.

Two other articles in his *Collected Writings* give added insight into Rabbiner Hirsch's vision of his life's goals. One was based on a **הספד** that Rabbiner Hirsch delivered in memory of Rav Salomon Klein, the Rav of Colmar, Alsace. The reader can sense Hirsch weeping as he laments the loss of a fighter against those who would alter the sacred tenets of Judaism. Rav Klein had battled the French Rabbis in the Consistoire who had destroyed his Yeshiva because it was run by observant Jews. No one had aided Rav Klein; he had been left to fight all by himself. Learn from the Colmar Rav how to be a warrior, said Rabbiner Hirsch. Learn how to withstand animosity and to weather unpopularity, and carry on the struggle to uphold ה' 's ideals.

In the second article, he notes that some modern Rabbis are fond of telling the story of **הר הכרמל** **על אליהו הנביא** as part of their installation address—how there was first an earthquake and a thunderstorm, followed by a fire, and finally by **קול דממה דקה**, the sweet quiet voice representing ה'. Modern Rabbis, says Hirsch, like this story because it calms the congregation, who are assured that their new Rabbi will bring them peace and calm, not fire and brimstone. However, it was Hirsch's own position that fire and thunder must sometimes precede the **קול דממה דקה**, so that the polluted air of false ideas will be dispersed before the message of ה' can be clearly heard. This can, in effect, be called a summary of Hirsch's own life's work: a description of his own role as a warrior in defense of ה'.

There is no doubt that, in the controversy over Austritt, both Rabbiner Hirsch and Rav Bamberger were convinced that the other took his position **לשם שמים**. There is also no doubt that the two of them made their peace in the **עולם האמת**. One thing remains clear: There can be no compromise with **מינות**. Rather, one must seek a complete separation from those who deny the authenticity of the Torah. Certainly this principle applies today, not so much on the local scene as on the national and international scenes. One must therefore separate himself from such movements as secular Zionism, which promotes the concept that the Jews can be like any other nation. One must secede from any organization that includes such movements.

I now would like to add some personal observations. I was born 20

years after Rabbiner Hirsch's passing. Yet I remember that in my parents' household Hirsch's presence and influence were still strongly felt. There was a big picture of Rabbiner Hirsch on the mantelpiece, and my grandfather had written under it, *האמת והשלום אהבו*. After all, this was the leitmotif of Hirsch's philosophy. When my grandfather was young, he learned the then new practice of taking shorthand, to be able to write down Hirsch's lectures on *חומש*. We still have these notes at home. These lectures eventually led to the famous Hirsch commentary on the *חומש*. These were among my earliest memories.

The period of my adolescence still reverberates with the thunderous speeches of Rav Shlomo Breuer, *zt'l*, who continued to uphold the principle of *אין שלום אמר ה' לרשעים*. As a young man, I read all the pages of the *ישורון*, and the essays of Hirsch have become part of my consciousness.

However, what is happening today makes me weep, literally. Of late, Hirsch has become the property of the left-of-center "Modern Orthodox" movement, consisting of those who are Mizrachi-oriented. They have changed the image of Hirsch from that of a vigorous fighter for *תורה אמת* into that of a docile, dove-like apologizer for a watered-down version of convenient Judaism. If the Austritt philosophy is separated from the concept of *עם דרך ארץ*, the latter becomes merely a key to a convenient life. It is no longer the battle cry that Hirsch meant it to be, no longer a principle upon which a *קידוש ה'* is based. And if Hirsch becomes the name of a chair in a university which also disseminates teachings which are contrary to the positions of Hirsch, and if a spokesman for the Board of Rabbis suddenly becomes an enthusiastic spokesman for Hirsch, then our age has made a ridiculous mockery of the Hirschian ideal.

One final thought. We should learn from Rabbiner Hirsch how to fight *לשם שמים*—with dignity and humility, and without arrogance or ulterior motives. We must never denigrate an individual, but only point out flaws in his mistaken ideas. Not everyone is capable of being a fighter; it is a matter of temperament. However, all of us are capable of standing up and supporting the independence of Torah-Judaism from corrupting influences. We must never allow Torah life to be made part of the superstructure of an unfaithful Jewish conglomerate. We must stand on our own, and the motto of *עם דרך ארץ* can be a most powerful tool in our efforts to succeed. We need Bnei Torah who are doctors, physicists, lawyers, economists, politicians, and public spokesmen for

Torah Yiddishkeit. We must publish our own books and magazines and gain our own publicity, as we lobby for the victory of the Torah in the struggle against מינות. We can no longer afford to be dependent on the skill and know-how of the agnostic Jewish spokesmen. We must channel our worldly abilities to further the Torah cause.

מקנא ה' צבאו פנחס. For this he was blessed with ה' s gift of peace: הגני נותן לו את בריתי שלום. Our fight to preserve authentic Judaism should not be considered an everlasting battle. Rather, our goal is the attainment of שלום, peace. May the זכות of the great warrior who laid the foundation for our institutions bring about this achievement: a true lasting peace, based on בריית שלום.