

GUARDIANS OF OUR  
HERITAGE

(1724-1953)

EDITED BY  
LEO JUNG

NEW YORK  
BLOCH PUBLISHING COMPANY  
5719-1958

SAMSON RAPHAEL HIRSCH  
(1808-1888)

By MORDECAI BREUER

## SAMSON RAPHAEL HIRSCH

By MORDECAI BREUER

### I. HAMBURG

In 1690, Menahem Mendel Shapiro left the city of his birth, Frankfort-on-Main, and went to Hamburg. There he was given the surname of "Frankfurter."

His son and namesake was born in 1742 and studied at the academy of Rabbi Jonathan Eibschuetz. Ever anxious to spread knowledge of the Torah among his people, he published many Talmudic works. An intimate friend of Moses Mendelssohn, he was influenced by his ideas on the enlightenment of the Jews of Germany, for, in 1812, while serving as *Dayan* and Chief of the Rabbinical Court in Altona, he founded the Talmud Torah School, the first of its kind in Germany.

One son of the *Dayan*, Raphael, changed his name to Hirsch, after his grandfather, Tzevi-Hirsch. Throughout his life, he was singularly devoted to the study of the Bible. At the end of a business day, he would spend hours reading Sacred Script and pondering its commentators.

The second son, Moses, assumed the name Mendelssohn, after his father, and because of his admiration for the philosopher. He was engaged in literature and was a great lover of Hebrew.

Thus did the *Gaon* Jonathan Eibschuetz, on one side, and the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, on the other, stand by the cradle of Samson, the son of Raphael Hirsch, who was born on the 24th of Sivan, 5568 (June 19, 1808).

It was a period of revolution and war. The armies of Napoleon were bringing the ideas of the Great Revolution all over Europe. Hamburg itself was joined to France. With the defeat of Napoleon, his hosts left behind them a great ferment which made its mark also in the *Judengasse*, where, ever since the days of Moses Mendelssohn and the Berlin "Enlightenment," new winds had begun to blow. When Samson was ten years old, the first Reform Jewish temple was opened in Hamburg, and the grandson of the Altona *dayan* was "eye-and-ear witness to all activity connected with this thing and to the war of the Lord's faithful against it."

The year he became Bar Mitzvah, the Orthodox elements of Hamburg succeeded in installing in the rabbinate a man great in Torah and secular learning, who up to that time, had stubbornly refused to accept upon himself that burden: Rabbi Isaac Bernays. The directors of the community hoped that this scholar would succeed, by means of modern weapons, in mending the breach of Reform and in drawing the heart of youth to the Torah. Rabbi Bernays entered upon his role with full energy and enthusiasm. He changed the title "Rabbi" to "Hakham," not only to distinguish between the traditional, and the Reform, rabbi, but also to symbolize a new type of spiritual leader in Israel. He donned a modern rabbinic vestment and preached his renowned sermons in purest German. Through philosophic approach he conveyed to his spell-bound audience the light of true Judaism and paved an original way in Biblical exegesis.

Hakham Bernays had a decisive influence on young Samson, who pursued sacred lore with him while completing general studies in the *gymnasium* (the local high school). His parents had entered him as an apprentice in business before he had finished his studies at the institute. But, in less than a year, the young man left Hamburg, turned his back on trade, and set out in the direction of the *yeshivah*. He journeyed to Rabbi Jacob Ettlinger in Mannheim. In his old age, Hirsch remarked, "It was no external need that impelled me to choose the path of a rabbi in Israel, but an inner plan of life." This plan had matured in his heart at the time when he interrupted his studies to try himself in commerce. It had been a year of inner struggle. The "big world" opened before him. Which road should he choose? When the year ended, he traveled to the *yeshivah*.

## II. MANNHEIM

When Hirsch, in his twentieth year, journeyed to the academy of Rabbi Jacob Ettlinger, his life-plan was already clear and ordered in his heart. He was convinced that he had been designated "to fight the war of the Lord and to restore the crown to its pristine glory". He sat at the feet of Rabbi Ettlinger for but one year. Whence, then, did he derive his preeminence in Torah, in Talmud and Codes? Suffice the testimony of Rabbi Abraham Samuel Benjamin Sofer, author of *Ktab-Sofer*, who, in 1848, after his first meeting with Rabbi Hirsch, wrote: "We

conversed in a lengthy, learned Torah discussion with the new Chief Rabbi (Samson Raphael Hirsch). He was versed in whatever we touched upon, both in Talmud and Codes. We are, indeed, fortunate. He considers us more learned than himself. If he realized what a scholar he is, we could have no peace from him." Samson Raphael Hirsch acquired most of his knowledge in the manner characteristic of a genius: he was self-taught.

On his way to Mannheim, Hirsch stopped for a short while in Frankfort-on-Main, one of the centers of Reform in German Jewry; there he sought to study at close range the convulsive state of the community. He visited the linguist and famous liturgist, Wolf Heidenheim, in nearby Roedelheim; he met Baron Anselm of the house of Rothschild and was invited to dine with him.

Jacob Ettlinger was a renowned Torah scholar. He had studied at the school of Rabbi Abraham Bing in Wuerzburg, where Rabbi Isaac Bernays was his fellow-student and comrade. Together with him, he also attended lectures at the University of Wuerzburg, but it is told that when he was accepted as Chief Rabbi of Altona, he did not look with favor upon his students attending the philosophic lectures of Hakham Bernays in neighboring Hamburg. To summarize Ettlinger's stand on Reform and his influence over Hirsch's way of life, it is sufficient to quote his words (*Minhat Anvi*, on *Parashat Pinehas*): "Let not him who is engaged in the war of the Lord against the heretics, be held back by the false argument that great is peace, and that it is better to maintain the unity of all designated as Jews than to bring about disruption."

Among the other students at the academy, Rabbi Hirsch associated particularly with Gershon Jehoshaphat, who later became *dayan* in Halberstadt. A firm friendship developed between them, the mark of which we shall recognize at a decisive moment in Hirsch's life.

### III. BONN

In 1829, Rabbi Hirsch spent a year at the University of Bonn on the Rhine. Historians and writers err when they invest him with the doctorate; this man, who later served as the archetype of the new genus, "Rabbi-Doctor," did not acquire a Doctor's degree, nor did he even complete his academic studies. But a savoring

of the spiritual life of the Gentile sages was essential for him before implementing his "inner plan of life."

The only information available to us of his activity during this year touches upon the first lecture he gave before the Orators' Club he had founded among the Jewish students at Bonn (most of whom were preparing to be rabbis in Israel).

One of his fellow-students noted in his diary at the time: "Hirsch has great influence over me; he has made life very sweet for me here at Bonn. . . . I already knew him at Heidelberg. . . . One evening both of us bemoaned the loneliness of the Jewish students of theology and we decided to found an orators' club. This club has exercised a distinct influence over me and has led to the formation of the strongest ties of friendship between Hirsch and myself. After his first lecture, we talked at very great length, and I learned to admire his exceptional eloquence, the keenness of his intellect, and his quick and lucid grasp. This debate, however, did not draw us close to each other, since we touched at times upon the religious aspect as well. . . . That winter and the following summer we studied the tractate *Zabachim* together. Gradually, there resulted mutual love and esteem. I respected his lofty qualities of spirit, his rigorously moral deportment, and I loved the goodness of his heart. His comradeship brought me great benefit and pleasure."

But the author of this diary was one destined to become Hirsch's opponent and most bitter disparager: Abraham Geiger, the central pillar of extreme Reform.

#### IV. OLDENBURG

In 1830, Dr. Nathan Adler, Chief Rabbi of the German principality of Oldenburg, left his post to become Chief Rabbi of Hanover, and later of London. He recommended as his successor the twenty-two-year-old Samson Raphael Hirsch, whose fame had already spread among the Orthodox rabbis of Germany. The government of Oldenburg consulted also Baron Anselm Rothschild, with whom it had commercial relations, and he, too, spoke with favor about "that precocious young man." Rabbi Hirsch immediately accepted, for he saw in this proposal the initial implementation of his "inner plan of life."

The religious state of the Jews of Oldenburg was then a gloomy one. Reformist aspirations, ignorance, and assimilation prevailed in all the small communities of the province which were

headed not by rabbis but by teachers, cantors, and *Shohetim* (ritual slaughterers). In the city of Oldenburg itself, there were only fifteen Jewish families and in order to maintain a *minyán*, Doctor Adler had been compelled to impose fines on members of the community who did not appear at least on Sabbaths, festivals, and fast days.

Hirsch was not discouraged by these conditions. He viewed them as a first test in his struggle to restore the ancient glory of the Torah. He was convinced that it was only alienation from Jewish sources which had brought about the low level of Judaism among the people. Were they but to see the light that is in the Torah, they would return to the good way!

He therefore began to translate sections of the Mishnah, which he sent to the teachers of the communities, sheet by sheet, copied in his own hand.

In 1831, he married Hanne, of the house of Judel, an esteemed family from a small city in northern Germany, a noble woman versed in the Bible no less than in the works of Schiller. His wife was truly a "*helpmeet to him.*" She understood his aspirations and shared them, heart and soul.

His position in Oldenburg did not burden him too much. He found time to continue his studies and to build his home and family. (During the eleven years of his residence in that city they were blessed with five children.) At the time, Hirsch was investing all his energy in the preparation of a volume in which he addressed himself for the first time to the Jewish public of Germany. In his preface to this book, *Horeb*, on *The Commandments of Israel*, he underscores with great emphasis the duty of every Jew, first of all, to have a thorough knowledge of the *mitzvot* of the Torah for the purpose of fulfilling them, "for they are in the will of the Creator—and this fact is the sole and sufficient reason for every Jew to keep them." But the commandment to meditate on the Torah includes also the obligation to speculate on the reasons for the *mitzvot*, and if the *Halakhah* in all its ramifications—the Law, written and oral, the enactments and decrees of the Sages—is the word of God, directly and indirectly, then, pondering the rationale of the commands allows room for every thinker, loyal to the words of the rabbis, to express the thoughts of his heart. Hirsch's noteworthy contribution in the *Horeb* lies precisely in his theory of the commandments. By this he infers the rational basis of the commandment from consideration of the details of the

laws involved. This was in accord with the principle, preeminent in all his writings, "to understand Judaism out of its own sources."

Hirsch fully recognized that he was setting forth a fresh formulation of Judaism and the commands. He was certain that "the thinking youths and maidens of Israel" for whom he had written his book and who had ceased to understand the language of the older generation, would understand and once again reveal the truth of the Torah and the reason for its commandments. On the title-page he inscribed the words of the prophet: "*Because they have called thee an outcast: She is Zion, there is none that careth for her*" (Jeremiah XXX, 17). He dedicated his work, the first fruits of his thought, to his parents, "who watched over me in the days of my childhood, guided me in the days of my youth, my friends in the days of maturity." And to his friend Gershom Jehoshaphat he writes: "Only one thing can prevent my publication (of *Horeb*): If I became convinced that it will do more harm than good to the sacred theme for the sake of which it was written." In the opening of the book he sets forth the theme: "*Not thine is the work to finish; neither art thou free to neglect it*" (Abot, II). He emphasizes that it is not its purpose to make final pronouncements on Jewish Law. In his humility, the author never expected that three generations of the Orthodox laity of Germany would take *Horeb* out of the bookcase even when it was necessary to obtain a clarification of some point of *Halakhah*.

After Hirsch had completed his manuscript, he turned to a publisher. The latter, however, was reluctant to invest money in a large book which had a doubtful future. The author chose a characteristic way of proving to the publisher that there was a public to read and buy his book. He quickly wrote a brochure in which he raised all the burning questions which confronted the younger generation of German Jews. He offered his answers in a brilliant warm style. This brochure is well known as the *Nineteen Letters on Judaism*. When the publisher printed this modest pamphlet, its success was so great that, after a year, he brought out *Horeb* as well.

None of Rabbi Hirsch's works captivated the hearts of the readers or evoked at once so great an echo as this little book, which, in a few pages, contained in essence all his teachings, his system of Biblical exegesis, his views on contemporary events, and his method of polemic for the purpose of restoring the Torah to its former state of honor. To the *Nineteen Letters (or Epistles)* one may



apply the famous words: "This is the entire Torah of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and as for the remainder, go thou and study."

In the first epistle, dealing with the confusion of the new generation, he shows his understanding of the spiritual forces that led to youth's assimilatory ambition. Hirsch's attitude was utterly new: This young spokesman for ancient Judaism, waging the battle of the Torah in the public gate, seeks, first of all, to penetrate to the depths of the soul of the reader. He does not threaten him with excommunication or ostracism, but seeks to speak the "*word in due season*", "*the word that is heeded*", and to *train a child in the way he should go*." This approach, basically pedagogic, is characteristic of Hirsch in all his undertakings.

The *Nineteen Epistles* made a mighty impression upon the Jews of Germany of all shades of opinion. Previously there was only one man in the circle of Orthodox Judaism who knew how to lash back in their own tongue at the defamers of his religion: Hakham Bernays. It was no wonder, then, that at first he was considered the writer of the book, for Rabbi Hirsch had employed the pseudonym "Ben Uziel." When the real author was revealed, the loyal adherents of the Torah knew that a bold champion had arisen who would fight the battle of the Lord on their behalf. Thus, a new period began in the struggle for the future of Judaism.

An example of the powerful impression the book made on the troubled Jewish youth of the times is furnished by Heinrich Graetz, the historian, who, in his nineteenth year, after reading *Nineteen Epistles*, wrote to Rabbi Hirsch, asking him to be received as a student in his home. The latter agreed, and for three years Graetz served as disciple and assistant in the house of the Rabbi of Oldenburg, specializing in Jewish studies and general sciences. In his diary, Graetz draws a vivid picture of Samson Raphael Hirsch. His way of life later removed him far from his master. But, without doubt, it was Hirsch who saved the effervescent young man from assimilation.

Among his other literary labors in Oldenburg one must mention polemical articles against those leaders of Reform who had completely negated the hallowed things of Israel, especially all the commands of the Torah which served to set Israel apart from the nations. Their purpose was to make a pact with the new *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and to reform Judaism by means of a modern exegesis of its literary sources. Against this aim the pen of Rabbi Hirsch now entered to do battle. In 1838 he published

a brochure entitled *The Wrestlings of Naphtali*, the beginning of an enterprise which was to engage the fighting rabbi until his last day. In this work, which reveals his moral strength and scientific honesty, one may see at once the impassioned preacher who couples his expressions of grief and anger with words of kindness, hope, and faith. With exceeding rigor did Rabbi Hirsch guard "literary ethics". Anonymous polemic was alien to his purity of soul, and when he went out for the first time to assail the exponents of Reform on a particular matter, he explicitly signed his name to the preface.

In Oldenburg he achieved another deep satisfaction. In nearby Bremen, a pamphlet had been issued in which the Old Testament was attacked in a distinctly anti-Semitic tone. Rabbi Hirsch immediately published "annotations" to this pamphlet, disproving the charges. The Duke of Oldenburg is reported to have sent his captain to the rabbi's house to thank him for saving the honor of the Bible, sacred to Jews and Christians. This was "the public hallowing of the Sacred Name (*Kiddush ha-Shem be-rabbim*)".

But Hirsch did not derive much comfort from his small community in Oldenburg. This handful, a prayer-quorum of Jews, could not satisfy him. The epidemic of Reform had spread and when Rabbi Hirsch left his post, the Jews of Oldenburg elected a Reform rabbi to succeed him. There were also instances of moral recession in the commercial relationships of Jews and Gentiles. Rabbi Hirsch had delivered to the Duke a detailed and very original proposal on the "Statute of the Oath of the Jews" in order to remove the practice of perjury. If rumors and the diary of Graetz are to be credited, then Rabbi Hirsch at one time ruled that *Kol Nidre* was not to be recited in the synagogue of Oldenburg. Was this a compromise on the part of the stout-hearted fighter? Certainly not. When he saw that the members of his community, in their reliance upon the reciting of *Kol Nidre*, were not keeping their oaths, he did not hesitate, in a *hora'at sha'ah* (an emergency decree), to repair the breach to stop the violation of the Torah's law of honesty.

#### V. EMDEN

In 1841, he was offered the position of Chief Rabbi of the Districts of Aurich and Osnabrueck in the province of Hanover. He accepted and moved to his new place of residence, Emden.

The conditions and duties that awaited him there brought more contentment than his work in Oldenburg. He invested many fruitful efforts in the administration of the communities, in education, and in social work. He founded a free loan fund, the first in Germany, which was maintained for many years. He raised the Boys' Talmud Torah to a very high level and also opened corresponding classes for girls, in which effort he was greatly aided by his wife.

But the great work, begun in Oldenburg in his *Nineteen Epistles* and in *Horeb*, he could not now continue, for leisure time was lacking. His pen, however, did not rest. In 1844 he published a second brochure against Reform. On its title-page he used a slogan which again and again was to be his battle-cry: "Truth stands; falsehood does not stand!"

In that year, the Jewish periodical most widely disseminated in Germany wrote of him: "It is impossible not to mention the vigor and consistency Rabbi Hirsch demonstrates in all his writings. He is not a performer of mental sleight-of-hand. Seriously, stubbornly heedless of the uproar of the masses, he goes his way as an honored teacher of the people in Israel, and we know of no other rabbi in Germany who reaches the measure of his height." In that periodical he is awarded the designation "Leader of the Orthodox wing". It is no wonder, then, that rabbis and laymen from all over Germany and Western Europe had begun to turn to him when in need of an opinion or official proclamation.

Rabbi Solomon Trier, the venerable rabbi of Frankfort, included Hirsch's responsum on the fundamental meaning of circumcision in Judaism among other responsa of great authorities in a compilation issued in the wake of an episode of lawlessness in his city.

When the Reform rabbis convened their first assembly in Brunswick, the heads of the *Pekidim ve-Amarkalim* (Overseers and Stewards) in Amsterdam besought the opinion of the leading rabbis on the subject. Hirsch's manifesto denounced the assembly and its revolutionary objectives and recommended steps for the repair of the breach in the House of Israel. Turning to "the children of my people, whose assembly has caused all this", he wrote: "Would that you pay heed and open your eyes on your ways! Do you not know that they will bring us to a bitter end? Do you not understand that were your doings to bear fruit, the House of Israel would be rent asunder, for a derision among our

enemies, and the loss of our greatness? If your followers will heed your words to secede from the authority of the Talmud, what with forbidden foods and marriages made permissible for them, the covenant between us shall no longer stand and brokenheartedly we shall part, one from the other."

To Rabbi Hirsch it was clear already at that time that with the spread of Reform, those who revered the word of the Lord would have no choice but to set up a division between themselves and the "lawless ones". In another area, too, this manifesto pointed to the crystallization of his plans. Here, for the first time, he used the rallying-call he was destined to inscribe on his banner: *Torah im Derekh Eretz* (Torah together with the norms of society, social harmonization). Speaking of the sad state of Torah education for the youth, he says: "Let us, therefore, build anew houses for Torah and fear of God, so that true Jews learn to know the Torah for its own sake and become as full of *mitzvot* as a pomegranate (is of seeds). Be not afraid for the Torah because of modern science, when you see those wise in their own eyes who have become estranged from the Torah. For true science loves Torah and collaborates with it.

"We must build seminaries for teachers to instruct the children of Israel in Torah and *Derekh Eretz*, which, if acquired together, will bring healing to all our plagues. Above all, we need schools for Torah and *Derekh Eretz* for the education of our youth, for we know most assuredly that any city or settlement which is without such school, shall not be saved from the strife of the times."

Hirsch revealed himself as a fighter in the ceaseless conflict over the emancipation of the Jews, which at this time was raging throughout the German states. In 1843, reacting to the defamatory statements in a German daily, he publicly emerged for the first time in favor of the Emancipation. He showed that it was precisely the Jew faithful to the religion of his fathers who could not be suspected of lack of loyalty to the state (country) in which he lived. "The accomplishment of emancipation we can greet with blessing and joy as but a humane deed of justice welling forth from fear of God." Nevertheless, Hirsch saw the concrete danger of assimilation in the wake of the Emancipation.

In the same year, the heads of the community of Nikolsburg, in the province of Moravia (of the Austrian Empire), offered him the rabbinate of the city and province. Many obstacles and mis-

understandings on both sides had as yet to be overcome, technical and formal questions had to be settled, but in the end the stubborn efforts of the Moravian authorities were crowned with success and Rabbi Hirsch prepared to occupy the rabbinate which in the past had boasted of such incumbents as Maharal of Prague and Rabbi Mordecai Banet.

There was great sorrow in Emden, both among Jews and Christians, who sent him a delegation, urging him to remain in their city. In his six years of residence in Emden, Hirsch had endeared himself to all the people in every strata of society, in the city and in the province, in the main because of his efforts to organize the communities and their institutions. But he saw in Nikolsburg a larger field of activity, in which he could develop his energies to the full and so he set his face to the east.

## VI. NIKOLSBURG

The Jewish communities of the district of Moravia, old and well established, resembled in many aspects the "Council of the Four Lands" in Poland. The district rabbinate, the central governing body, exercised authoritative powers that influenced nomination and confirmation of rabbis, the supervision of communal activities, and the presentation of Jewry's problems before the secular authorities.

The appointment of the Chief Rabbi was subject to the confirmation of the central government in Vienna and his activities were under its jurisdiction.

During the period of Rabbi Nehemiah Trebitsch, his predecessor, the demands for "modernization" of Jewish life, with special emphasis on the introduction of the German language into the synagogue and house of study, had multiplied and became more insistent, both on the part of the government, as well as on the part of Jewish *maskilic* circles, close to Reform. Here the aims of Reform coincided with the aim of the government of the Empire, for the Germanization of all the lands under its protection. Rabbi Trebitsch was unwilling to agree to any compromise and died grief-stricken, while the tension between the "enlightened" and the steadfast, traditional Jews continued to grow.

The election of Samson Raphael Hirsch to this rabbinate took place against this chain of events. The Orthodox circles under-

stood that they would not succeed in obtaining the appointment of a Chief Rabbi of the "old school." They therefore hoped that the author of the *Nineteen Epistles* and *Horeb* would know how to stand firmly on the basis of traditional Judaism and perhaps even attract to the Torah the younger element, disillusioned by the current rivalry. The *maskilim* (the "enlightened") agreed to the designation of Samson Raphael Hirsch out of a feeling of assurance that his outlook approximated theirs more than that of the Orthodox. There is no doubt that Rabbi Hirsch was well aware of these pressures, and if, nevertheless, he accepted upon himself this difficult post, it was only out of his sense of mission: to open up a road for the Torah in the new state of things, as it were, and this precisely in an area where Torah and reverence for God still prevailed. All Jewish circles in Moravia received him as their rabbi with great expectation. All rabbis and persons of eminence of the state journeyed to meet him and brought him to Nikolsburg as one of their own. The *maskilim* sent the preacher, Dr. Mannheimer, and the cantor, Sulzer (both representing the "progressive" element of Vienna), to beautify the ceremony of the reception.

This was, indeed, a handsome, though superficial, proclamation of the unity of Israel. So far as Hirsch was concerned, neither will nor effort were lacking to save, together with Israel's Torah, also unity in the Jewish camp. His brief experience in Nikolsburg, however, convinced Rabbi Hirsch that in matters of Judaism, whenever truth and peace are wrestling with each other, truth always has the primacy. His way was strewn with handicaps! When, during the installation ceremony, he made an address in polished German and left out the customary *halakhic* and *agadic* adumbrations, the Orthodox were disappointed. When his first demand was the founding of a *yeshivah* in Nikolsburg, the *maskilim* were disappointed. When he ruled that the wedding canopy be set up within the walls of the synagogues, the *maskilim* rejoiced and his older colleagues were scandalized; but when he opposed any change in prayer services and the study of Torah, the Orthodox took heart and the *maskilim* became alarmed. No wonder, then, that on both sides the attitude towards him was: "*Kabdehu ve-hashdehu* (Esteem him and suspect him)."

In one respect, however, all who came in contact with him were in accord: in admiration of his ethical personality and his dedicated leadership, the charm of his conversation and the bril-

liance of his oratory. Before his purity of heart they all bowed their heads.

Concerning Rabbi Hirsch's organizational and educational work, we learn in his own writings: "In the province of Moravia the organization of Torah-study was most excellently developed. There each community was obliged to retain a rabbi, charged with the advancement of the Talmud Torah and with the material sustenance of students of a Torah academy (*yeshivah*), corresponding to the number of its members. If the number of members of the community was too small to support an academy, they were obliged to participate appropriately in the support of students of the nearby academy. At the head of this entire system stood the Chief Rabbi of the province, who not only instructed a large number of the students of his own academy but directed Torah studies in the entire province as well. Every year or semester, he had to fix the tractate that was to be studied by rabbis and students in each particular place, and provide an adequate number of copies of the German text, or, when the need arose, to have a tractate acquired or printed, through the general fund for the provincial communities."

In Nikolsburg itself, Rabbi Hirsch maintained a *yeshivah* to which students flowed from all parts of the province. He taught them according to the principles laid down in *Nineteen Epistles* and in *Horeb*: "To understand Judaism and the Torah 'out of themselves' and to utilize the general sciences as auxiliary studies for the understanding of the Torah."

The year 1848 brought waves of national and social revolutions to almost all the countries of Western and Central Europe. The peoples of the Austrian empire rose up and demanded their independence. The general unrest also penetrated to the *Juden-gasse*, and many Jews participated in these movements, for they envisioned the dawn of their liberation from discrimination and subjection.

Samson Raphael Hirsch was among the leaders of Moravian Jewry who would link the emancipation of the Jews to the other national and social demands. He was more active in connection with the parliament of Moravia which was established as part of the democratic movement in this part of the empire. In the preparatory assembly at Kremsier he spoke out vigorously for an end to the humiliation of his people. His endeavors bore fruit; upon his return to Nikolsburg he brought with him the tidings of the eman-

icipation of the Jews of Moravia. The fighter against Jewish assimilation to the Gentiles and their culture won a brilliant victory in the struggle for human and civic rights of his people.

This was his point of view: On the one hand, he viewed emancipation as the gift of Providence that should give the Jews inalienable human rights and a broader opportunity of observing the Torah. On the other hand, he saw it as a trial of his people in *Galut*. He revealed his attitude in two incisive announcements to the Jews of Moravia, in connection with the struggle for emancipation in 1848: He called for preparedness to meet eventualities calmly, with trust in the Lord, and abstention from rash words and actions. When the first success had been attained—the special taxes imposed upon the Jews were abolished—he called for unity of all the Jews in their communities, and summoned them to continue loyally and voluntarily the support of the Jewish institutions; “Our strength is in unity, division shall vanquish us!” He called for increased attachment to the dignity to Jewish tradition so “that we may emerge as Jews from this struggle! For what value will there be to our attainment if we shall be emancipated Jews, but no more Jews!”

When the political war ended, Hirsch issued another call which shows how well he discerned the damage which the long exile had inflicted upon Jewish society: In 1849 he called on all councils of the communities to establish a stipend-fund for the Jewish youth who should henceforth be directed more and more towards agriculture and physical labor.

Henceforth, Rabbi Hirsch was held universally in highest regard throughout the province. He returned with full vigor to the work of organizing and educating. But the difficulties which he had encountered in the first years of his life in Moravia did not decrease; and to them were added disquieting signs, in the wake of the political events, of the dissolution of the communities. All his political achievements notwithstanding, Rabbi Hirsch saw as his major role the strengthening of traditional Judaism within the communities. He knew that the future of the Eternal People depended not on its political status but on its spiritual power. He understood that the Torah could be firmly established only by means of far-reaching organizational changes and by his acquisition of larger authoritative powers. The establishment of a central seminary for rabbis and teachers who, in the midst of a changing world, would know how to imbue the youth and the masses



of the people with love of Torah and observance of the *mitzvot*, seemed to him vital if all his work as Chief Rabbi of the province were not to be in vain. But he encountered throughout the communities stubborn opposition to his plans. In these days of his crisis, the representatives of one hundred members of an Orthodox Jewish society in Frankfort-on-Main urged the spiritual head of 60,000 Jews in Moravia to become their rabbi.

## VII. FRANKFORT

The decline of Frankfort in the first half of the 19th Century is truly amazing. The city of two great luminaries, the sainted authors of *Sh'ne Luhot Hab'rit* and of *P'ne Y'hoshu'a* respectively, early in the century was still filled with Torah and piety.\* The Berlin "Enlightenment" and the French Revolution together broke down the walls of the Frankfort ghetto and with them the foundations of the ancient community. "Enlightened" circles, with the help of the civil government, erected a Jewish school, the "Philantropin", the reform aim of which was conspicuous from the outset. The opposition and the excommunications by the rabbis of the city were of no avail. The tendency of the Napoleonic order towards centralization of rule bore rather heavily upon the Torah-true leaders of the ancient community as they attempted to conserve its distinctive character and traditional rights even as it facilitated the destructive work of the men of Reform. The characteristic feature of this development in Frankfort was that, from the start, all steps taken to alter the face of the community and its religious life were effected under the protection of the civil government and through its power of coercion. In 1818, public instruction in Torah was forbidden and its abolition enforced by the municipal police. The students of Torah literally concealed themselves in underground tunnels; religious teachers were driven from the city and any one supporting a Talmud Torah was fined fifty gulden. Upon official orders a council was appointed for the community, composed mainly of representatives of Reform. This council abolished the religious burial society and intentionally neglected the making of repairs on the Orthodox synagogues. The Torah-true women of

---

\*Three witnesses of unimpeachable character attest to this fact: Rabbi Horovitz, the author of *Haflaah*, Rabbi Nathan Adler, and Rabbi Moses Sofer, author of *Hatam Sofer*.

Frankfort were compelled to visit ritualaria in the suburbs of the city, since the ritual pools of the city had been wrecked and sealed up.

The House of Rothschild, loyal to ancestral tradition, donated a large sum for the erection of an Orthodox synagogue on condition that the community appoint a second rabbi, to minister together with the aged Rabbi Solomon Trier, and with his consent. When the council designated a Reform rabbi and thus lost the donation of the Rothschilds, the old rabbi resigned, at the age of eighty-seven. That same year saw the uprisings of 1848, which brought redemption to the Orthodox elements of Frankfort, for now they began to find an attentive ear for their claim on the municipal authorities against both the tyranny of the directors of the community, who had never been chosen in a democratic manner, and the systematic coercion of conscience practised there.

After his arrival in Frankfort, Rabbi Hirsch summarized in these words the essence of their complaints: "They say we are the few. But by what law does the majority, which has turned its back on the faith of its fathers, have the right to force the minority, and even the last pauper among them, to join equally in this turning of the back?"

A small group of eleven loyalists, among them Emanuel Schwarzschild, who testified that in his time he was the only one of the Jewish boys of Frankfort who donned phylacteries every day, finally received permission from the heads of the city to organize a private religious society (*Religionsgesellschaft*) within the framework of the community. They rented rooms in a private dwelling for prayer services in accordance with the accepted traditional form. The number of affiliates of the society increased rapidly and by 1851 had reached one hundred. The Barons Wilhelm and Anselm Rothschild were also counted among its members, and a large sum of money for building an Orthodox synagogue was placed by the House of Rothschild in the possession of the society.

The Orthodox community in Frankfort was set up, then, by "heads of households." Early in 1850 they directed themselves to the governmental authorities and sought permission to select a rabbi with utmost freedom of choice. The letter of application of the founders to the head of the city in this matter, is interesting chiefly because its text has a simplicity and clarity of expression which is generally attributed to the pen of Samson Raphael Hirsch—and this, at a time when no one, and least of all Rabbi

Hirsch himself, could as yet foresee that Rabbi Hirsch, the rabbi of the principality in Nikolsburg, would be the rabbi of this dwarf-community. "The undersigned," so the letter opens, "believers in the Mosaic faith, have separated from the local Jewish community and have erected a new religious community." The municipal statute established that the rabbis of the community were to examine each new rabbi before his appointment. But, the founders of the new community emphasize, the Reform rabbi is not qualified to serve as an examiner, "since it is precisely his views and activity which lead to the separation (*'Austritt'*) of the undersigned."

After permission had been granted, the Frankfort group offered the post to Rabbi Michael Sachs in Berlin, but after protracted negotiation, the latter rejected the offer. Only then did they turn to Rabbi Hirsch in Nikolsburg, apparently on the recommendation of his loyal friend, Rabbi Gershon Jehoshaphat, who was then stopping in Frankfort. Rabbi Hirsch responded in the affirmative. What moved the Chief Rabbi of a province inhabited by a large Jewish population to accept the office of rabbi in a small, private society? In his letter of resignation to the Minister on Religious Matters in Austria, we read: "Nevertheless (in spite of his dissatisfaction with his work as Chief Rabbi, a position which in actuality had only nominal power), I should perhaps have remained in my post, had there not reached me this call from Frankfort: to come to the aid of a group, small indeed, but the very fact of whose founding constitutes for me the most gladdening event in Israel in decades. For now, for the first time, a Jewish community has been knit together about a sacred principle, openly and proudly, the very one to which I had determined to dictate my life, to spread it and firmly to establish it."

Here, once more, the sense of mission! The path of Rabbi Hirsch led him from Moravia, where light and darkness served in confusion, to benighted Frankfort, where he might be able to shape a "creatio ex nihilo." His resignation caused great commotion among all the Jews who had settled in Moravia. At once, delegations from all over the country appealed to him to stay, and the councils of the communities endorsed declarations assuring him the fulfillment of all his demands. Rabbi Hirsch struggled with himself and finally dispatched a long letter to Frankfort in which he requested that he be freed from his commitment in light of the promises now given him in Moravia. The men of Frankfort,

however, did not agree to free him from his previous commitment, and thereby decided his struggle. "On the way in which a man wishes to go, he is led," said the Sages.

Thus Samson Raphael Hirsch journeyed to Frankfort, the city of his father's father. His restless creative power, dormant in Nikolsburg, where he was occupied with thousands of petty little matters of administration and organization, now reasserted itself; he began once more to write, to preach, to encourage, and to defend. As soon as he entered into his new role, he initiated projects for matters pertaining to prayer, to the laws of *kashrut*, and especially to study of Torah. Within a year, the cornerstone for the building of the new synagogue was laid. On that occasion the rabbi called upon the members of his community to make every effort to put up, alongside of the synagogue, a school for their sons and daughters, which should imbue them with Torah and *Derekh Eretz*. The erection of the synagogue evoked a faint echo in Reform circles, but the establishment of the school, which opened its doors even before the building of the synagogue was completed, aroused their sharp opposition. In the speeches defending his school, we read words which reveal Hirsch's serious, deliberate, and clear approach in public debate: "From the first moment, when 'the small flock' summoned me to come here and poured out upon me an unstinting trust, I became aware of my single mission: to hold aloft the principles of the faith of our fathers, without the least reservation, in the midst of this small circle. It is these principles for the sake of which this circle joined together with earnestness so great and with self-sacrifice so strong. I had no intention to go out in offensive warfare against the opposing current and thereby to enlarge still further the grievous breach in the souls of men."

But the breach was large enough. The partisans of Reform thought that the old community of the Talmud Torah and the *Shulhan Arukh* had been definitively and finally interred. And behold, the "antiquated" Judaism rose up resurrected! This fact alone was not likely to irritate and disturb the men of the Reform very much. Had the rabbi of the small community been superior only in Torah and piety, and had his organization been modelled precisely after the plan of the Frankfort community at the beginning of the century, the "progressive" people could have calmly rested and looked forward with confidence to nipping in the bud of the new creation. But this was not to be. Rabbi Hirsch knew

well that a faithful implementation of the *Shulhan Arukh* and a genuine grasp of the principles of Judaism assured improvement in the religious life of both the community and the individual. Moreover, he emphasized, in accord with the rabbis' postulate: "*Beautify thyself before Him with commandments,*" the esthetic aspect of all the ways of the life of the community and introduced "*the beauty of Japhet (Greece) into the tents of Shem.*" The synagogue edifice was built on the highest level of modern architecture; its furnishings and lighting enchanted the eye. *Shehitah* and the slaughterhouses themselves were planned in accordance with hygienic principles; and this was also true for the ritualaria. In the synagogue services a men's choir took part, under the leadership of Mr. Japhet, whose musical works aroused the attention of renowned composers. With such a revival of the old community the partisans of Reform could not make peace, hence their seething anger and the bitterness of their battle against Rabbi Hirsch's accomplishments. For they appeared to them in the nature of a revolution; obviously it bore within itself, from the very beginning, the healing drug of life and growth.

Hirsch was not "merely another scholar of the Torah". That he was also learned in secular studies, a scientist, an artist of the German language, a divinely gifted orator, leader, and teacher—brought consternation to his opponents. But just as the opposition grew stronger, so did the adoration of the members of his community become more profound and intensified. His *Kehillah* grew larger from year to year. However, only few who joined the original one hundred members were natives of Frankfort. This period was one of economic expansion for Frankfort; it had developed into an important commercial mercantile center, and there was a great migration from towns near and far to the metropolis. In the course of time, the Jews who had settled in Frankfort constituted the majority of the members of the Orthodox community. In 1874, after twenty-five years of existence, it numbered 325 heads of families. The synagogue had been enlarged and now contained 1,000 seats. (When Rabbi Hirsch from the pulpit announced a campaign for a building fund, within three days 50,000 gulden were collected!) His community possessed a handsome ritualarium, three slaughterhouses, high schools (including technical curricula) for boys and girls, with 408 pupils; and various philanthropic funds. It is said that Rabbi Hirsch, whose home was on the bank of the River Main, would view with

deep satisfaction each year the ever-growing number of Orthodox Jews who went to fulfill the custom of *tashlikh* at the river.

It was natural that this brilliant development should awaken dormant forces in other cities. Autonomous Orthodox communities arose, mainly in those places which succeeded in drawing to them a rabbi of the type of Frankfort, for example, Mainz (Rabbi Lehmann), Darmstadt (Rabbi Marx), Berlin (Rabbi Ezriel Hildesheimer).

It was then that the designation "German-Jewish Orthodoxy" came into vogue.

#### VIII. AUTONOMY OF THE ORTHODOX COMMUNITY

Samson Raphael Hirsch was the leader of those who fought for the principle of autonomy of the Orthodox community and the separation of its members from the local Jewish community, which had ceased to conduct itself in accordance with the Torah and the Tradition. To this controversy, almost from the day of his arrival in Frankfort, he devoted an ever greater proportion of his energy, and it is fitting that we follow its progress closely.

But it is necessary, too, that we present Hirsch's concept of the Jewish community. He does not conceive it to be a sectarian religious organization. This is what he said: "Every Jewish resident in this city is obliged by law of the Torah . . . to be a member of the Assembly of Jeshurun (i.e., of the Orthodox community) as the sole Jewish community established in this city. He must fulfill only two conditions: he must have been circumcised and married according to Jewish law. Thus does it become possible for him to affiliate with the Jewish community. Disqualified from membership in the council is he who publicly violates the Sabbath and eats forbidden foods, but even he does not lose his right of membership in the community."

Hirsch's community is "religious" not because all its members are "religious", in the full sense of the word, but because the religion of Israel is the established common basis of his community. This "religious" basis does not stand in contra-distinction to any "nationalistic" basis but is identical with it and covers it, as long as the religion of Israel is the religion of the traditional Torah. A Jewish religion which is not the religion of the traditional Torah cannot constitute a Jewish community; neither the beliefs and opinions, nor the religious conduct of the individual, but the stabiliz-

ing base of the public is the sole determining factor. The Hirsch community is not a religious organization of conformist affiliates, but a national union of the entirety of Israel. Individual Jewish transgressors, "though they sin, they are still Israelites", but a Jewish community characterized by denial of the Torah no longer represents the entirety of Israel. For this reason Rabbi Hirsch begins his talk at the presentation of the constitution of his community with these trenchant words: "The assembly of Jeschurun which exists in this city under the name of Israelitish Religious Society is none other than the ancient Jewish community of Frankfort as it has existed for hundreds of years."

In the communities which Rabbi Hirsch had served before coming to Frankfort, there were members who had left the Orthodox camp and had followed Reform; in Oldenburg these even constituted a perceptible percentage in the community. However, in these communities leadership was in the hands of a rabbi of uncompromising loyalty to the Torah. This was not the case in Frankfort. There the leadership of the community was in the hands of Reform rabbis, who ruled with an iron hand and persecuted the adherents of the Torah, and this by virtue of the authority of the municipal government. The humiliation of the Torah in Frankfort was due to two factors: to the rule of the Reform religion, and to a community council that operated with the cooperation of the non-Jewish authority. Rabbi Hirsch saw in the rule of directors of a community supported by civil authorities and able to govern by the coercive force of the civil government a grave thrust at the democratic foundations of the Jewish community, as laid down by the Sages. So long as this coercive power were not removed, the danger of extermination continued to face his Orthodox community. Under the status quo, only full autonomy of the Orthodox community would guarantee its own permanence and that of its institutions. The state at that time made it obligatory for the Jewish citizen to belong to a recognized Jewish community. The struggle for independence of the Orthodox community, therefore, assumed the form of a struggle for the abolition of state-enforced affiliation and the granting of legal guarantees for religious living and for the maintenance of religious institutions, also outside the frame of the established community. This struggle was eventually successful because it had begun simultaneously with the historic process of separation of church and state which had then been initiated in Western Europe. The con-

flict of Bismark with the Catholic Church is what finally brought to Rabbi Hirsch and to his loyal adherents the "statute of redemption", abolishing compulsory affiliation with the recognized Jewish community.

Among the reasons for independence which Rabbi Hirsch claimed for his Orthodox community, two stand out prominently: the principle of partnership and self-rule of the members of the community, and the argument that the difference in religion and outlook between Orthodox and Reform Judaism is far greater than the difference between the Catholic and the Protestant Church.

It should be noted that after publication of the statute of separation, the heads of Rabbi Hirsch's community, with their rabbi's consent, informed the council of the established community that they were interested in continuing social ties (*Gemeinschaft*) with all the Jews in the city and prepared to do so, even if ties of membership in the community (*Gemeinde*) would be sundered. For this purpose they proposed that welfare institutions, such as the hospital and the cemetery, for example, be administered by both communities in common. The community council rejected the outstretched hand, but Rabbi Hirsch had never intended to sever the last ties uniting the entire House of Israel.

His triumph was complete. By the power of the state, in the period of reaction following the fall of Napoleon, the adherents of Reform had altered the face of the Jewish community; by the power of the state, in the period of the ascendancy of liberalism, Rabbi Hirsch broke the chains of the Reform community. Success was complete, however, only vis-à-vis the outside. Within the Orthodox community dissension broke out, and only a portion of its membership were in favor of this separation from the established community, Rabbi Hirsch's firm legal decision notwithstanding. When the statute of separation from the community had been attained, there were not available to the Orthodox community all the necessary community institutions. Particularly, the cemetery still belonged to the Reform community only, and one may understand the hesitation of old established families in the city to separate not only from the living but also from the dead.

The second matter was even more important. When it became apparent that the Prussian Government would grant the statute of separation to the Orthodox community, the council of the Reform community announced that it was henceforth prepared to give the Orthodox Jews services and definite religious institutions



as well, in accordance with their spirit. Rabbi Hirsch at once declared that this readiness on the part of the Reformists would change nothing in regard to the demand of the Orthodox community, but would give even stronger impetus to the demand. For precisely now the religious Jew belonging to the Reform community would be compelled to admit that there existed, so to speak, equality of rights between the Reform religion and the religion of the Torah. But now something tragic occurred, from an unexpected direction. Rabbi Isaac Dob (Seligman) Bamberger of Wuerzburg, one of the celebrated Orthodox rabbis in Germany, issued a statement to the effect that since the community council was ready to satisfy the demands of the Orthodox, and to the extent that it was prepared for such, an Orthodox Jew was no longer obliged to separate from the Reform community.

This statement was a grievous blow for Rabbi Hirsch. Bamberger did not find it necessary to discuss the matter with Hirsch before publishing his opinion, which was contradicted by the declaration of 389 rabbis, who, in 1872, under circumstances similar to those obtaining in Frankfort, made the secession of the Orthodox from the Reform community in Vienna mandatory.\* In the open letters of Rabbi Hirsch to Rabbi Bamberger, we hear echoes of the pain and grief of the fighting rabbi, the fruit of whose prolonged battle was plucked from him, virtually in the hour of the awaited victory, by a "stab in the back" from a man whose loyalty to the Torah was not subject to doubt. Nevertheless, most of the rabbis of the Orthodox communities remained loyal to him who had guided their way. It is fitting to quote from the letter of Ezriel Hildesheimer to Hirsch: "Yesterday I received the pamphlet (the reference is to the reply of Hirsch to Bamberger) which I had been anxiously awaiting. I cannot express in words how pleased I was with the exhaustive and irrefutable arguments, in spite of the deep pain over the distressing circumstances."

But an expression of fidelity and identification such as this offered but slight consolation. That which had been done could not be undone. It is true that even before Rabbi Bamberger's

---

\*This declaration had been signed by, besides Rabbis Hirsch and Bamberger, Rabbis S. Freund of Prague, the Hassidic Tzaddik of Czortkov, J. Gesundheit of Warsaw, A. Glasner of Klausenburg, A. Gutmacher of Graetz, the Hassidic Tzaddik of Vishnitz, Tzevi Hirsch Kalischer of Thorn, Ameisel of Lomza, B. Schreiber (the author of *K'tab Sofer*) of Pressburg, and A. Hildesheimer of Berlin.

utterance, all the Orthodox elements of Germany were not in entire agreement with Rabbi Hirsch. Among some of them, many of his practices, and his progressive system of education (of which more later) aroused wonderment. Rabbi Bamberger's view, however, deepened, sharpened, and perpetuated the rent among the Orthodox, a situation which Rabbi Hirsch saw in all its tragic implications. Rabbi Bamberger passed away a year after the incident, but in his name, the opponents of Rabbi Hirsch within the Orthodox group continued their battle. It is proper to emphasize that the former explicitly wrote that also for the future was it forbidden for the Torah-true members of the Reform community to look upon its council as the council of a Jewish community, and it was their duty to establish their own community council.

#### IX. "TORAH WITH DEREKH ERETZ"

Already in 1844 Hirsch proclaimed an educational system, the essence of which he summed up in the maxim of the Fathers: "*Torah with Derekh Eretz.*" The insistence upon the study of general sciences was no innovation among the Orthodox of Germany; Samson Raphael Hirsch's two most distinguished teachers, Rabbi Jacob Ettlinger and, particularly, Rabbi Isaac Bernays, had earlier affirmed it.

Samson Raphael Hirsch's innovation consisted in his establishment of the Orthodox school in Frankfort in which he concretized the system of education embodied in that dictum. In the achievement of this school he saw his life's accomplishment, no less than in his communal and literary achievements. To his qualities of leader and fighter which had been shown up to now, there was now added another one: that of the great teacher, adored and never forgotten by the thousands of his disciples, boys and girls. His community he served as rabbi and preacher, clear-purposed and inspiring enthusiasm, but to the school he was founder, teacher, principal, organizer, and supporter, all in one. From the day of its founding in 1853, to 1877, Hirsch himself directed the institution, together with all his other tasks and duties. He designed and implemented himself all educational and organizational tasks in the school, which has served as model to all others, combining Torah with *Derekh Eretz*. He had to do so much of the work himself because of a lack of teachers "who had a true under-

standing of Torah and secular studies", for there was no seminary to train such men.

The school project had to struggle at the outset not only against the wrath of the Reformists, but also against the lack of faith of the members of the Orthodox community, which prevented their sending their sons and daughters to his school. Hirsch had to gather the donations for the support of the institution, going from house to house; often was he obliged to plead with parents to entrust their children to him. He wrote expository and polemic articles, many writings on pedagogical subjects astonishingly in accord with the educational ideas of the Twentieth Century. He worked devotedly and ceaselessly to perfect the institution, eventually overcoming the lack of faith and frequent disparagement.

In his testament he wrote concerning his followers: "*which I took out of the hand of the seducers of the time with my sword and with my bow*"—this applies to thousands of his pupils, boys and girls.

One of them writes: "He conversed with us in our own language, took interest in every blow dealt us by pupils of the *Philantropin*, checked on the class of the stamps we exchanged, gave a rigorous examination to our footballs—in brief, he was our intimate." Another one relates: "He never raised his voice to a pupil. If he traveled to another city, he would say to him, 'Behave so that they will see you are a pupil of Rabbi Hirsch.' He influenced them by his personality; the look of his burning eyes was engraved deep in the memory of those he had educated."

His personal influence reached very far. A certain youth society that sent him its constitution, he urged to have its members participate in regular sessions of Torah-study as the main part of its program of activities; and to consult the local rabbi regarding any doubt that might arise. A certain rabbi he counseled to suffer imprisonment for the purpose of exerting an influence against violating the conscience of Jewish children in a Gentile school.

The meaning of the slogan "Torah with *Derekh Eretz*" in Hirsch's system was not confined to the "principle of enlightenment" alone. In his statement against Reform, he wrote in 1854: "Judaism is not a mere religion, the synagogue is not a church, and the rabbi is not a clergyman (priest). Judaism is not an appurtenance to life, and to be a Jew is not part of the mission of life. Judaism encompasses life in its entirety. To be a Jew is a sum of our life's mission—in synagogue and in kitchen; in field

and in counting-house; in the office and on the speaker's platform; like father, like mother, like son, like daughter; like servant, like master; as man, as citizen, in thought and in feeling, in word and in deed, in times of pleasure, in hours of abstinence; with needle as with chisel or with pen. To be a Jew—in a life which in its totality is borne on the word of the Lord and is perfected in harmony with the will of God—this is the scope and goal of Judaism. Since Judaism encompasses the whole of man and in keeping with its explicit mission, proclaims the happiness of the whole of mankind, it is improper to confine its teachings within the "four ells" of the house of study or of the home of the Jew. Insofar as the Jew is a Jew, his views and objectives become universal. He will not be a stranger to anything which is good, true and beautiful in art and in science, in civilization and in learning. He will greet with blessing and joy everything of truth, justice, peace, and the ennobling of man, wherever it be revealed. He will hold firmly to this breadth of view in order to fulfill his mission as a Jew and to live up to the function of his Judaism in areas never imagined by his father. He shall dedicate himself with joy to every true advance in civilization and enlightenment. But all this on condition that he be never obliged to sacrifice his Judaism at any new level but rather fulfill it with even greater perfection."

To this model of the Jewish man, God-fearing and punctilious in observing the *mitzvot*, who engages all his energies to deepen his religious consciousness, and to find the correct relationship between his Judaism and the universe and all that it contains, Hirsch applied the name "*Israel-Man*". The Torah is the fount of God's revelation, but also in nature, as in history, the will of God is revealed to the eyes of "*Israel-Man*". The "*Israel-Man*" must know God's Torah and dedicate himself to its study and observance. But he also must open his eyes and look at the wonders of the Lord in nature and the mighty deeds of the Lord in history. The study of nature and history, with all their ramifications, in the view of Samson Raphael Hirsch, is not a requirement of "enlightenment" alone but a requisite flowing from its concept of the "*Israel-Man*".

"Torah with *Derekh Eretz*" as a "principle of enlightenment" served him only in the category of a "temporary (emergency) ruling" (*horaat shaah*); "Torah with *Derekh Eretz*" as a system in the apprehension of Judaism, belonged, for him, to the category

of instruction throughout the generations. King David, peace be upon him, was not bound to the need for nature and history studies; a Jew of 19th Century Germany was so bound. In his letter to Rabbi Bamberger, Hirsch wrote: "‘Torah with *Derekh Eretz*’ is the sole true principle which will lead our generation from the sickness and confusion of the present to truth, peace, and cure."

His approach to nature is well illustrated by his famous remark after his visit to Switzerland: "I shall now be able to give the proper answer if they will ask me in the True World, ‘Have you seen my Switzerland?’" There was not a trace of dual values or double aim in his grasp of "Torah with *Derekh Eretz*".

Rabbi Hirsch quotes a saying of the Rabbis: "Any one who associates the Name of Heaven with the unseemly thing (idolatry) shall be uprooted from the world." "Torah with *Derekh Eretz*" is not "the Name of Heaven joined to the unseemly thing" but a unitary and all-inclusive concept of Judaism, all of which is devoted to the cause of Heaven. "Before heaven and earth we openly confess," he continues, "that were our Torah to demand that we abstain from everything going under the name of civilization and enlightenment, then, without vacillation should we honor this demand, since our Torah is our faith, the word of the living God, and besides His words there is neither counsel nor understanding."

He was not unaware that his conception of the principle "Torah with *Derekh Eretz*" carried, hidden within it, some dangers, and he admitted explicitly in his letter to Rabbi Bamberger that this aphorism of the Sages served as a subject for debate and dispute. When the close friend of his youth, Gershon Jehoshaphat, informed him that he had begun to study in the university, he wrote to him: ". . . I desire greatly to know what kind of university life you had, what was your main pursuit, and whether your scientific work became for you a supplement required by the time, a supplement which was only a burden. Or did it give you, as it should have given you, an illumination of the spirit in which your own wisdom should become united with that wisdom which is the heritage of the assembly of Jacob? Because of this it is highly important that you choose with caution the branches of science with which you will occupy yourself, and that you decide for what objective you will devote yourself to them."

The program of studies which Rabbi Hirsch marked out in *Horeb* many years before the founding of the school in Frankfort, shows clearly the nature of his conception :

1. The Hebrew language
2. The mother tongue (German)
3. Bible

and as fields auxiliary to Bible study

4. Science of nature and man
5. History
6. Science of living (*mitsvot* based on written and oral Law)
7. Writing and arithmetic

There is here no division between "sacred studies" and "secular studies" but all studies are directed to working out a unitary, Jewish personality: "*Israel-Man*".

An added characteristic feature in Hirsch's teaching should be underscored: Judaism as a message from all humanity. "*Israel-man*", who derives the recognition of his Creator from Torah, nature and history, looks forward to the acceptance of the Kingdom of Heaven by all the world and exemplifies this kingdom in his own life, private and public. The Torah was given to Israel, but it was destined to be universal, in the end of days, like nature and history. "*Israel-Man*" brings about not only the redemption of Israel but also the redemption of all mankind: "to set the world aright by the Kingdom of the Almighty."

In the eyes of superficial critics a contradiction seems revealed in Rabbi Hirsch's system: "On the one hand, an extremeness" in demanding autonomy for the Orthodox community, and on the other, a "spirit of compromise" on the question of enlightenment. The truth of the matter is that there is here neither extremeness nor readiness to compromise, but a consistency in grasping Judaism as the presentation of the Kingdom of God on earth and the likeness of the Jew as "*Israel-Man*". Hirsch viewed an Orthodox community, subservient to a Reformist community structure, as a forcible dethronement of God's Kingdom, just as he saw it in the restriction of the Torah-Jew to the walls of the synagogue or the house of study—both an unbearable limitation of the rule of Torah in life.

## X. RESEARCH AND POLEMIC

With his coming to Frankfort, Rabbi Hirsch continued his literary work which had been temporarily interrupted in Nikolsburg, in consequence of his being taken up with the small matters of the provincial rabbinate and the large issue of the emancipation. Now there was assured to him again a fixed circle of readers, a small but faithful group which avidly imbibed every word written by his hand. Another circle of readers, too, awaited his writings: the Reformists, who had knowledge of his sharp pen, from the time of *Nineteen Epistles* and *The Wrestlings of Naphtali*.

First, Rabbi Hirsch set up for himself a permanent literary platform: the monthly *Jeschurun* ("A monthly to advance the Spirit of Israel and the life of Israel at home, in the community, and in school"), which appeared under his editorship from the year 1854 to 1870. *Jeschurun* made an important contribution to the shaping of Orthodox Judaism in Germany. In this organ, Rabbi Hirsch published hundreds of articles, his ideas on Torah and Judaism, and continued therein what he had begun in *Horeb* and *Epistles of the Undisclosed*.

In Frankfort he wrote the most important among his literary creations: the commentary on the Pentateuch and its translation into German. While still in his youth, he had begun to note down novellae in explaining difficult verses in Scripture; many of these novel interpretations bear upon them the seal of the influence of his first teacher, Hakham Bernays. His system in Scriptural exegesis Hirsch defines in his preface to the first edition of his commentary on the Book of Genesis: "To explain the verses of the Torah out of their own content; to derive this explanation from the verbal expression in all its shades; to draw the meaning of the words out of the linguistic storehouse of the Sacred Scriptures; and to derive and describe by means of these linguistic investigations and out of *halakhic* and *agadic* traditions transmitted to us from our national past together with the text of the Bible, those truths upon which is based the Jewish outlook on the world and life, and which are the foundations of Israel's life for ever and ever." In these words three aims stand out. The first is to penetrate to an understanding of Scripture without leaning for support on alien text-books and auxiliary science. Word and passages reach their correct interpretation by means of comparing the content and meaning of various places of the Bible. For this purpose

the science of phonetic relationship (approximation) serves him as an immanent accessory. In this Hirsch saw a genuine "Jewish science", and he rejected the utilization of Semitic philology as a method antagonistic to his ambition "to explain the verses of the Torah out of their own content."

The second goal is to prove that the source of the Written Torah and Oral Torah is one, that the Written Torah cannot be understood without the Oral Torah, and that the Oral Torah is determining the Scriptural exegesis.

The third aim is to construct upon the content of Scripture, the foundations of Judaism, its dogmas and doctrines, so that they may serve as guideposts for an authoritative, Jewish evaluation of man, nature, and history, from generation to generation.

These purposes faithfully reflect the best part of Samson Raphael Hirsch's system. The primary axiom in this system is to grasp the unity in Judaism: unity between word and verse; between what was written down and oral tradition; between the sources of Judaism and its eternal world view. Well did Rabbi Isaac Elhanan Spector summarize these teachings in his written approbation (of the first Hebrew translation to a portion of the commentary to the Book of Genesis, issued in the year 1898 by Rabbi Moses Zalman Aaronson of Kovno): "Value cannot be set on the many novellae introduced by the *Gaon* and Sage, great in knowledge as in conveying understanding, lucid and conforming to reason, unifying Torah and tradition. Wondrously did he do also in this field, wherein there are contained all chief aspects and contents of the Torah; how deep his thoughts, revealing hidden wisdom from the Torah of the Lord, removing all doubts, and showing how the Torah of the Lord is perfect, the word of our God stands forever."

Samson Raphael Hirsch did not consider himself at liberty to deal with Biblical exegesis on the basis of "scientific freedom" but strove to perfect legitimate Jewish science "to understand Judaism out of its own content." Another guiding principle in his work reflected the Talmudic maxim: "Study is great, since it leads to action." One must occupy oneself with the Torah out of desire to observe it in deed and thought. This pedagogic approach found full expression in his system of explaining the rationale of the *mitzvot*. He projects everywhere their content and symbolic-educational value, herein following the lead of Rabbi Aaron Halevi in the *Hinnukh* (Book of Education); however,



Rabbi Hirsch went farther on this road to elucidate the minute details of the commands on the basis of the general ideas underlying them. Already in *Horeb* he laid down the bases of the system of his, and in the commentary on the Pentateuch he devoted himself precisely to explaining the details of disciplinary *mitzvot* such as sacrifices, the work of the tabernacle, forbidden foods, the laws touching Levitical purity and impurity.

Some people see in Hirsch's explanation of the motivation for the laws an exaggerated rationalism. The opposite is true. When he entered deeply into the minute details of the procedure of the sacrifices, it was done out of dread and awe before the word of God, Who speaks to the Jew out of each and every letter in the Torah. It is exactly in this aspect of his doctrine that Hirsch reveals a spiritual kinship to esoteric wisdom (mysticism, Kabbalah). In his annotations, in preparation of the exegesis, we come often across quotations from the *Zohar*, and in his annotations on the portion *Terumah*, we find these words in the sacred tongue: "Behold, the content of the truths, intimated in the form of the candlestick, its ornamentation, and the measure of all its parts, is very deep. Even the vain interpretations, due to bat-eyes, of the candlestick, breathe a whisper of the meaning! But His mighty deeds who can understand?"

Are these the words of a rationalist?

The commentary was published, book by book of the Pentateuch, between the years 5627 and 5638 (1867-1878), the first draft being taken by the audience at his weekly lecture in the community's *Bet ha-Midrash*. This monumental creation aroused great enthusiasm even among his opponents, but since Rabbi Hirsch was very sparing in quotation, he was also accused of lack of scientific attitude and even of plagiarism. He replied: "My commentary is related to what I studied under Bernays only in the sense that he served me as an encouraging example to enter the palace of the Torah to draw from it awareness and outlook. For every word of wisdom or folly which I discovered in this manner and hazarded to note down in my work, without indicating the name of its author, the responsibility rests before God and man upon myself alone."

Rabbi Hirsch completed in his old age two more exegetical works, one on the Book of Psalms, the other on the *Siddur* (Prayer Book). The first was published in the year 5642 (1882), the second posthumously. Among the many polemic works which

he wrote in Frankfort, one should include his dispute with "moderate Reform" in German Jewry. In the middle of the 19th Century the debate with the Reform had closed and there was almost nothing to add to what had already been said and written in Oldenburg and Emden. A new peril, however, lay in wait for Judaism. When Zacharias Frankel, in 5614 (1854) in Breslau, opened the Jewish Theological Seminary to prepare rabbis, Hirsch turned to him with a public request to clarify the principles of Judaism on which the institution was based, its position on dogmas and doctrines as Revelation, the divine origin of the Torah, faith in the Rabbis, the binding force of rabbinic legislation and the traditional practices of Israel. When Frankel and his associates would not condescend to reply to the "Prayer Book scholars (*Siddur lomdim*) from Frankfort", Rabbi Hirsch declared: "We now know where we stand. Hoary Israel has nothing to expect from you. Relief and deliverance will arise to us from another place."

When, in 5619 (1859), Frankel published his book, *Darke ha-Mishnah* (Ways of the Mishnah), and Hirsch demonstrated in *Jeschurun* that he had deviated from the fundamentals of the faith in a matter so basic as "*Halakhah* taught to Moses at Sinai," then many of those who at first had been astonished at the boldness of the great warrior in attacking a personality so renowned as Frankel, admitted that Hirsch was justified in erecting a partition between pure Judaism and Judaism that was "conservative" but was not firmly based on the faith of Israel, as sanctified from generations of yore.

After a number of years, when Heinrich Graetz, who meanwhile had become one of the central pillars of the Breslau seminary, published the first part of his "History of the Jews", there no longer remained any doubt about the skepticism and the undermining of the foundations of the faith by the spirit of that institution and its new goals in Judaism. Hirsch, through scholarly work unique in acumen and comprehensiveness, revealed this aim to the public view. The fact that Graetz had once been his disciple and enthusiastic adherent only added to the sorrow with which the aggressive words of the teacher were written.

But here again: Rarely, in his polemic articles, did Hirsch attack the personality of the disputant, but remained within the boundary of the thematic debate, as against his many opponents, who never tired of mocking at the "absence of his scientificity".

## XI. PUBLIC NEED

In the last decade of his life, upon his approaching the "age of strength" (four-score years), Rabbi Hirsch bestowed increasing attention upon the needs of the Jewish people beyond the borders of his community. Postal and other ties brought the scattered Jewish communities closer together; an ever stronger stream of migration began to change the map of Jewish demography on the face of the world, the rebuilding of Palestine was transformed from dream to reality, and the problem of organizing Jewry began to shift from the local community to national and world unions. These new directions found the venerable leader prepared to search for new solutions.

In ever increasing measure, rabbis, famous Torah-scholars, and laymen, from all Jewish settlements in the world, turned to him with questions, proposals, and petitions. Particularly, strong ties bound him to the greatest of the Russian rabbis, Rabbi Isaac Elhanan Spector of Kovno. In 1882, the year of the oppressive Czarist edicts, Hirsch, in cooperation with Rabbi Spector, achieved an immense amelioration of Russian Jewry's burdens and aided thousands of their immigrants. Especially did he labor to nullify the evil decree to prohibit the study of Torah, for which purpose he composed a special booklet, *On the Attitude of the Talmud towards Judaism and towards the Social Status of its Adherents*. A rabbi who brought him a letter from Rabbi Isaac Elhanan, related that he sought information on the condition of the Jews in Russia and Poland. "When I described their sufferings to him, tears flowed from his eyes."

When no one in Germany as yet dreamt of the possibility of the growing power of anti-Semitism, Rabbi Hirsch once remarked in a conversation: "Just as mischievous children are pulled by the ears, so will they deal with us. The Jews are the school-books of the nations, a disorderly pupil tears them. And they point to the high level of Gentile culture!"

In Hirsch's attitude to national and world Jewish organizations, which had developed during the second half of the 19th Century (such as *Alliance Israélite Universelle* and the order of B'nai B'rith), two fundamentals stand out: the guarding of the authority of the local rabbi and non-acceptance of "neutrality" of different organizations as respects questions on the nature of Judaism. Therein he out-distanced many of his colleagues, who

were in accord with him on the question of the Orthodox Jewish community, among them Ezriel Hildesheimer. Hirsch saw in the activity of the "neutral" Jewish organizations, with all their social achievements, a danger to the clear character of Judaism.

For this reason, in 5645 (1885), he founded a union that should accept upon itself the fulfillment of the religious and spiritual roles of Orthodox Jewry on a world level, and whose ultimate purpose should be to unite all Orthodox Jews of the world into one organization—The Free Union for the Interest of Orthodox Judaism (*Freie Vereinigung fuer die Interessen des Orthodoxen Judentums*). This union, his last organizational creation, in existence until the destruction of German Jewry by Hitler, supplied the religious needs of Orthodox Jewry in Germany and in other lands. The means, possibilities, and political influence of "The Free Union" were limited, but its main importance is to be seen precisely in that it paved the way for the organizing of the Orthodox in the generations after Hirsch. It is of great significance that the matter of the settlement of Palestine was one of the world problems which occupied Samson Raphael Hirsch in his last years. An intimate of the "Overseers and Stewards in Amsterdam", Rabbi Hirsch was always engaged in the gathering of monies for the needy Jews in the Holy Land. However, from a private letter of the year 5642 (1882), we learn that he had thought of the national, religious, and social significance of the migration to Palestine and its colonization, and he did not see therein any ideologic problem but only a practical question. From that time he published many open calls for the support of the Jewish colonies in the Land of Israel. A short time before his death there arose for the first time the question of the Sabbatical year in these colonies. Whilst joining those who took a rigorous view, he appealed for liberal donations on behalf of those who kept the seventh year. It was his life's last request to the public.

On the 27th day of Tebeth, 5649 (1888), Samson Raphael Hirsch died. Great masses swept on to Frankfort to participate in the funeral and stood about the rabbi's house, where his five sons and four daughters were mourning. All walked in the way of their father and remained believers and punctilious in observance of the *mitzvot* until the end of their days. The family life of Rabbi Hirsch was exemplary, and this, in no small measure, was due to his wife, who had died six years before him. In his

eulogy over her grave, he said: "What Sarah was to Abraham, this she was to me." If his mission was "*to call upon the name of the Lord,*" she helped him by training the children and by the care she took of their home. He dedicated to her the second part of his commentary on the Book of Psalms with these words: "Loyal companion of my life, faithful comrade in my aspirations, my staff and trusted counselor in my home and my labors, who educated, molded, and is the beloved and loyal friend, of her children and grandchildren."

This man, who in his public demands at times appeared to be "as severe as Shammai" in his consistency and in his non-compromising attitude, was possessed of a soft heart, as seen in his personal letters and in his home attitude. His wife was accustomed to scatter bread crumbs every morning among the birds on her window sill. After her death, it was discovered one morning that the rabbi continued with this duty and in his dying hour he even begged those standing about him not to forget to feed the birds! Rabbi Hirsch, as he was gathered to his people, could have said about himself that he had fulfilled the mission for which Providence had placed him on earth. The sense of this mission found expression in the pseudonym he assumed as rabbi of "Assembly" of the Congregation of Jeschurun: "Keeper of the Sacred Charge." As such he was remembered by his pupils and by the members of his community who listened to the flaming words of his sermons. A visitor of his synagogue, who did not understand German, said after he had heard the address: "I did not understand even a word, but I imagined that I was seeing before me the prophet Isaiah, and that I was hearing the voice of one of the prophets of Israel." And a student wrote in his memoirs: "No artist can picture the fire in his eyes, a blend of calm wisdom, burning energy, and strength which penetrates. I was compelled to look into his eyes. I felt that he was searching the chambers of my soul, and that he sees all that I have done and knows all my thoughts."

The organizational and literary creations of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch have left their imprint on Jewish history and Jewish thought, and as a "legitimate revolutionary," one who succeeded in shaping his generation so that it might conform with the eternal Torah of God, his people shall remember and venerate him to the end of days.