Shelomoh Eliezer Danziger

As expected, the critique of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's ideology that was presented by Rabbi Howard I. Levine in our Spring 1963 issue, stirred a great deal of controversy, especially among the numerous ardent followers of the Hirschian approach. Rabbi Danziger, the author of this rejoinder, is a graduate of Columbia University, was ordained at Yeshiva University, and presently teaches at the Mesivta Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch.

CLARIFICATION OF R. HIRSCH'S CONCEPTS — A REJOINDER

The Review Article entitled "Enduring and Transitory Elements in the Philosophy of Samson Raphael Hirsch" (*Tradition*, Spring 1963) is a long series of criticisms which, if correct, would in effect discredit R. Hirsch as the authoritative spokesman for traditional Judaism in modern times. What follows is a point by point rebuttal, condensed somewhat for reasons of editorial economy.

Torah and General Studies

The reviewer considered it significant that secular subjects comprise the major proportion of the curriculum which is formulated in R. Hirsch's *Horeb* (p. 411) to help us fulfill the *Mitzvah* of education. The implication is that R. Hirsch allotted more time to secular subjects than to Torah study.

But we should note that the ideal curriculum formulated in *Horeb* does not allot specific time to any subject. In some yeshivot one subject — *Chumash* — is studied most of the day, followed by a smattering of two subjects — Writing and Arithmetic. Do the secular subjects comprise the major proportion of this curriculum? Time allotment, not the number of subjects, is the criterion of importance.

In that same chapter on "Education" which introduces the table of subjects, R. Hirsch has clearly indicated what is more important:

> "Therefore place your child also between heaven and earth and acquaint it with the world. — But in everything — let it see — God. This is a useful companion study for the study of the Torah; it gives a knowledge of Nature and man. Note further how the Torah directs your attention to the beginning of human history ... This provides a second useful companion study for the study of the Torah — namely, a knowledge of history" (*Horeb*, pp. 408-9).

This presupposes no ordinary teaching of Nature and History, but, as the table of subjects states: "Nature and history — penetrated with the spirit of the Bible." They may be viewed as an extension of

Torah study. *Yet,* in the very next sentence R. Hirsch says:

"But all this must be only subsidiary to the child's proper subject — the Torah!"[1]

It is in this perspective that we must view the statements in the essay "Religious Instruction" which seem to stress the "equal thoroughness and earnestness" and the "equal care" with which Jewish and secular learning should be pursued. Whereas the *Horeb* was written for the objective religious guidance of Jewish youth, the essays on education are of the nature of public relations literature designed to win the support of reluctant parents, and to ward off the criticism of antagonistic Reform elements, as well as educational supervisors of the government.[2] These public statements were objectively justified on the ground that the general subjects were indeed to be taught, not carelessly, but seriously, capably and carefully. However, this in no way contradicts the basic Hirschian requirements that Torah be the main concern *(Torah ikkar)* as formulated in *Horeb* and the Torah *Commentary.*

It is often overlooked that R. Hirsch himself attended university for only a short time. His son-in-law and successor, Rabbi Dr. Salomon Breuer, who had completely absorbed the ideals of R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, received his doctorate from Heidelberg without having attended classes.

To say that R. Hirsch saw no conflict between study of the Torah and pursuit of human wisdom "because both represent sources of knowledge of God's Will" is to confuse "secular culture" (or "human wisdom") with "nature." R. Hirsch did not say that secular culture or human wisdom *as taught by the philosophers or scientists of any given age* — even his own — represent a source of revelation of God's truth. He did assert that the *objective* realities of nature are, of course, demonstrations or revelations of God's Will, since God is the Source of nature. But he asserted with equal force that the mortal, *subjective* scientists who represented the secular culture and human wisdom of *even his own* day (before Darwin, Freud and Marx) were blinded by their subjective theories of atheism.[3]

As R. Hirsch puts it in his classic comment to Lev. 18:4: "But as surely as *the Torah comes from God, and all other knowledge and wisdom* which have been found by Man *only consist of the results of Man's limited insight into the actual nature of things,* so sure is it to us, that for us there is only one teaching, knowledge and truth by which all else must be measured, and all others have *only conditional acceptance and can only have* value in conformance with it."

This is quite a different picture of R. Hirsch's view of the relation of Torah study to general study from the distorted one mistakenly attributed to him. It is a far cry from the "co-existence" which the reviewer urged as the only practical alternative to the ideal "synthesis" which is presently impossible. For R. Hirsch there is no opposing *secular* sphere of study requiring syn-

thesis with the *sacred* sphere of Torah. (The very term which Dayyan Grunfeld translates as *"secular* learning" appeared in the original as "general" [*allgemeine*] learning.") There is only general, relative knowledge which, after it is purified by the absolute standard of Torah truth, widens and deepens our conception of the world in which God has placed us to live according to His Torah.

The relation of Torah to *Derekh Eretz* (social and cultural conditions) is that of form to matter in the Aristotelian sense, as Rabbi Yechiel Weinberg of Montreux has so aptly expressed it. *Derekh Eretz* is the raw material which is to be fashioned and wrought, formed and transformed by the divine Torah. There must be a *Derekh Eretz* on which the Torah laws can operate and have their effect.

As for the quotation from *Horeb,* p. 219, from which the reviewer inferred that R. Hirsch believed in two equal sources of knowledge of God's Will — the revealed Torah and the revelation of truth and right in the mind of man — the meaning of that quotation is clear from its context. Immediately following the sentence quoted by the reviewer ("Thus truth and right are the first revelation of God in your mind") we read:

> *But* the internal voice of justice can respond only to the *general* principle. To know what justice requires in regard to every creature you would have to know yourself and the creatures about you as well as God knows you and them. If, moreover, your freedom, instead of leading you to justice, unleashes your selfishness, if you do not listen to the voice of truth and right within you . . . then you will rush towards depravity and spiritual suicide . . . The word of God which reveals your justice to you is His *Torah.* It is the warranty and message of *your inner voice* which demands justice—.

It is quite evident from the foregoing that R. Hirsch speaks here of *moral* truth and right, of man's moral conscience and general sense of right and wrong, which he takes as being implanted in our mind by God. He was not hailing "the mind of man in which God has implanted a knowledge of *(scientific* or *intellectual)* truth and right," and for which supposed reason "Hirsch saw no conflict between our study of Torah and the pursuit of human wisdom." This is a misreading of R. Hirsch by the reviewer.

R. Hirsch's Method of Torah Study

The reviewer claimed that R. Hirsch condemned the method of Torah study prevalent "from the early Middle Ages until his day" as "leading to an inadequate, external and improper comprehension of Judaism," and "ridicules [it] as a 'dull and prosaic dialectic.'" This is a serious misunderstanding.

The entire conceptual structure of *Horeb* and the *Torah Commentary* is based on the halakhic foundations provided by the dialectic method of Torah study of the *Rishonim* (early halakhic authorities) of the Middle Ages. Was R. Hirsch basing his concepts and legal details on the senseless, invalid dialectic subtleties and hair-splittings which he found so worthy of condemnation? Can any *Mitzvah* have a philosophically valid basis —

which according to R. Hirsch, unlike Rambam, must conform to the *minute details of the Halakhah* as worked out by the authoritative Commentators — if it is based on invalid, dialectic commentaries? And what of R. Hirsch's own use of the traditional method of Talmud study? For an impressive example of this see his *Commentary* to Deut. 19:19, where he offers a profound solution to a problem raised by the *Lechem Mishneh.* Such passages are scattered throughout his *Commentary.*[4]

Before continuing, let us give a more literal translation of the passages from the *Nineteen Letters* quoted by the reviewer than the often misleading paraphrases of Dr. Drachman.

Instead of: *"a dull and prosaic dialectic* had reduced to merest mummies laws full to overlflowing of life and spirit," (p. 99) read: "a spiritless spirit (ein geistloser Geist) had reduced —." The word "dialectic" does not appear in the original, and the passage has nothing to do with dialectics. It refers solely to the lack of consideration of the spiritual concepts behind the external laws.

On page 186, instead of: "dialectic subtleties and hair-splittings," the original has only one word: "Spitzfindigkeit," which suggests deceptive sophistry.

What R. Hirsch condemned was not the traditional method of dialectic study — which is indeed the method of the Talmud itself and not an invention of the early Middle Ages, as the reviewer implies — but distorted "pilpul," which was condemned before him by Shelah, Maharal, the Gaon of Vilna and others, and which had become increasingly popular in the century preceding R. Hirsch. In a letter to Z. H. May, dated 1835, R. Hirsch complains: "The weakest feature in Israel's present parlous condition is in respect of Jewish scholarship, the way in which Bible, Talmud and Midrash have been studied *for the last hundred years.* Because life has long since been banished from the study of the Torah, the Torah has been banished from life." *Distorted pilpul* in Talmud study and playfully ingenious *derush* in studying the Bible and Midrash had *in recent times* become the sole preoccupation of many to the exclusion of any clear study of the *basic concepts* of the Bible and Midrash or the *undistorted dialectics* of the Talmud and the spirit embodied in them.

Even from the passage of the *Nineteen Letters* (p. 186) quoted by the reviewer it is clear that R. Hirsch was criticizing a phenomenon — "Spitzfindigkeit" — which developed *after* "the Talmud had yielded nearly all the practical results for life of which it was capable" (ibid.). This must be taken to refer to the period *after* the classical commentaries to the *Shulchan Arukh* had been completed, for until that time the "practical results" were still being drawn from the Talmud in a most fundamental and decisive way.

Also in the passage on p. 99 quoted by the reviewer, in which R. Hirsch speaks of the failure to consider the spiritual concepts of the Torah's external laws, he

speaks of this as a phenomenon of the "most recent time" ("in letzter Zeit").

To suggest that R. Hirsch was at any time or in any manner "condemning" or "ridiculing" the classical, undistorted dialectic method of traditional Torah study "from the early Middle-Ages until his day," as the reviewer states, is a gross misunderstanding and a most serious distortion of R. Hirsch's views, as we have shown. R. Hirsch made two justified demands:

1) undistorted dialectic study of the texts to ascertain their true external intent;

2) careful conceptual study of the inner spiritual ideas that are inherent, after dialectic study has revealed the external intent.

When R. Hirsch's son-in-law and successor, R. Salomon Breuer, established the Frankfurt Yeshiva for deep dialectic study of the Talmud, this was no departure from R. Hirsch's viewpoint, but a fruition of that conception.

As for the need to reawaken what had become the dormant spirit of external Judaism, R. Hirsch's approach was paralleled in Lithuania by R. Yisrael Salanter's *Musar movement.* Both spiritual giants recognized this need, and, indeed, there was an affinity between the two leaders in some respects.

The Emphasis on Bible Study

The reviewer inferred from the *Nineteen Letters* (197-8) that R. Hirsch emphasized "the centrality of the Bible as the main core of Torah study," and that "the Talmud cannot be properly understood in terms of itself; the Bible determines the range of ideas to be gleaned from the Talmud." The reviewer finds these ideas exceedingly strange. He asks: "Do we understand the Written Law from the vantage point of the Oral Law? Or vice versa?" The following is the passage of the Nineteen Letters alluded to, but in context and in a more literal translation than that of Dr. Drachman:

> "There is one way to salvation — to take the sources of Judaism, *Tenakh, Shas, Midrash* — Begin with *Tenakh,* then read not for researches in language and antiquity, or theories of taste and amusement, but studied for the upbuilding ("Aufbau" — not "foundation") of a science, (this is merely the opposite of study "for researches in language and antiquity—"); with Davidic sense nature should be conceived, with Isaiahic ear history perceived; and then, with eye thus aroused, with ear thus opened, the teaching about God, world, man, Israel and Torah should be drawn from *Tenakh* (and) brought to conception, and then, with the spirit of such conception *Shas* is to be studied, (which is) naught else, in Halakhah, but a detailed application of this conception, but presupposing it from Tenakh, (and which is), in *Aggadah,* naught else but a figuratively-veiled expression of such a spirit."

There is nothing here about any "emphasis" upon the study of Bible more than upon the study of Talmud, or of the *"centrality* of the Bible as the *main* core of Torah study." All the sources of Judaism — *Tenakh, Shas, Midrash* — are mentioned as equally important, but different. The Bible presents the laws and concepts in more general terms. In the very nature of things the initial concept which

presents itself to our minds is more apparent in the general statements of the Written Torah. For example, the reason for the Sabbath is stated in the Written Torah as: "It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel for ever that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth." On the other hand, one can study in detail all the thirty-nine *melakhoth* (forbidden labors) of the *Mishnah* without finding a reason stated. R. Hirsch warns that the Talmud is not a different form of Judaism — legalism, with no relation to the spirit of the laws — but in reality "a detailed application of this conception" which is mentioned in *Tenakh,* "but [with the Talmud] *presupposing* it from *Tenakh.*" How this is really so is demonstrated by R. Hirsch in his *Nineteen Letters* (pp. 123-6). This presentation is one of the most impressive examples of R. Hirsch's view, that the concept of the *mitzvot* must be drawn, not only from its general statement in the Bible, but from the seemingly "legalistic" details of the Talmud (see *N. L.*, p. 193). Indeed, it is R. Hirsch's opinion that Rambam's "reasons of the *mitzvot*" (*taame ha-mitzvot*) failed to reflect the true spirit of the Written Torah precisely because he "overlooked those details which, in their totality, give the complete idea of the *mitzvot, and which form the main subjects of discussion in the Oral Torah*" (ibid.).

Now let us answer the reviewer's question: "Do we understand the Written Law from the vantage point of the Oral Law? Or vice versa?" With regard to the external Halakhah, every faithful Jew knows that the Oral Torah determines the meaning of the Written Torah. To this extent, the Talmud *can* be understood in terms of itself. Even more, R. Hirsch adds that the *details of the Oral Torah are the only valid corroboration of our conceptual theory* which we infer from the generality of the Written Torah.

However, the initial, general concept of the *Mitzvot* is often apparent only from the Written Torah. With regard to the initial concept, therefore, the "Talmud cannot be properly understood in terms of itself." However, once this general concept is drawn from the Written Torah, only the details of the Oral Torah can define the concept more specifically. Thus the Written Torah and the Oral Torah are an organic unity, *mutually* clarifying each other.

The only "emphasis" R. Hirsch put on Bible study was the "emphasis" on its *rightful* place which it no longer occupied because of gross neglect. He deplored "the suppression of Bible study," an error against which the Talmud had warned.[5]

However, apart from this complaint about the neglect of the Bible, R. Hirsch clearly follows the Talmudic dictum that one's time should be devoted one third to Bible, one third to Mishnah and one third to Gemara (*Horeb,* p. 371).

The reviewer charges that R. Hirsch assigns a completely new meaning to such items as Mishnah and Gemara.

But as a matter of fact, R. Hirsch is merely paraphrasing

Rambam and *Shulchan Arukh*, where it is stated:

> "One third should be devoted to Talmud (*Gemara*) — i.e., one should perceive and understand the final matter from its beginning, and deduce one matter from another, and draw analogies between one matter and another, and employ the methods by which the Torah is interpreted until he knows the nature of the root of the laws and how the matters which are prohibited and allowed are derived" (*Yoreh Deah* 246). (Rambam adds: "and this is what is called *Gemara*.").

To have departed from the plain, literal meaning of the words in order to attribute to R. Hirsch an objectionable, untraditional idea with regard to *Gemara* was, on the part of the reviewer, an unwarranted inference, a distortion.

Also the expression used by R. Hirsch, "according to your powers" is an obvious paraphrase of Rambam and *Shulchan Arukh* (ibid.) where it is said of the study of Talmud: "according to the breadth of his heart and reflection of his mind."

Rambam, the *Shulchan Arukh* and R. Hirsch are merely giving a definition of Gemara.

As for *Mishnah*, where is the "new meaning and nuance" that the reviewer accuses R. Hirsch of having invented? Perhaps the objection is to the words *"begin* to teach him — with instruction in the *rudiments* of the Oral Law," from which the reviewer perhaps infers a mere *rudimentary* beginning. However, *"begin* to teach" is used because the author is referring to a child who has *just reached* ten years of age, and who must now *"begin"* the study of Mishnah. R. Hirsch uses the same expression with regard to Bible study: *"begin* the reading of Scripture." As for "rudiments," the German *Grundzüge* should be translated not as "rudiments," but as "fundamental passages."

This leaves only "begin to teach him *his duties* —" as the reason for objection, because, in the reviewer's words: "In reality, 'Mishnah' is far from being a practical source for the knowledge of Jewish duties."

Of course, in our times, practical *Halakhot* are not deduced from the Mishnah, but from the Codes which authoritatively embody the final results of the *Gemara*. However, in Talmudic times the *Mishnah* represented the codified *Halakhot* which formed the basis of the *Gemara* (See *Kiddushin* 49a.).[6]

The reviewer assumes that R. Hirsch attached little value to the pure theoretical study of the Halakhah and that for him the study of such areas of Jewish law as are not operative today would hardly be warranted. As a matter of fact, R. Hirsch refers to more Talmudic sources in his especially lengthy and detailed *Commentary* to Leviticus than in his Commentary to any other book of the Torah. Sacrifices, ritual uncleanness, vessels of the Sanctuary, etc. — these are his main topics of discussion *with all the manifold references to Talmud and Halakhah.*

Naturally, the practical duties operative today have always been recognized as taking precedence in study (See Preface to *Mishnah Berurah*). For this reason *Alfasi, RoSH, Tur and Shulchan Arukh*

contain only the duties operative today. R. Hirsch's *Horeb,* patterned after the *Shulchan Arukh,* does the same. However, the Hirschian system certainly includes the non-operative laws as subjects for full Torah study — both in their legal and in their conceptual aspects.[7]

The Mitzvot and Israel's Humanist Mission

The reviewer asserts that, in the Hirschian scheme, the *Mitzvot* are merely a means to the fulfillment of Israel's mission, which has a completely this-wordly and humanistic goal. This is contrasted with the traditional view that holiness is the highest goal of religious life.

What is overlooked is that Israel's mission of service to humanity is not direct, but is achieved by being a model people, a people living in close, direct relationship to God, loving and fearing Him, and keeping His ways in holiness and purity. Since, however, as R. Hirsch points out, Israel is only the *first*-born son of God, not the *only* son, our model relationship to God and His Will — which is *our* highest perfection — automatically serves as an example to all mankind, who will ultimately emulate Israel. Thus, while appreciating the value of the *Mitzvot* to Israel itself in fostering our direct relationship and nearness to God[8] — even if all this would have no effect on mankind — R. Hirsch, nevertheless, points out that our perfection has significance beyond the Jewish scene. Our perfection is enhanced even further because its scope will be widened one day to include all the children of God.

However, R. Hirsch does not permit this passionate relationship to God to dissipate in personal emotion alone. Its energy must be converted into concrete acts for the furtherance of God's purposes here on earth. As our Sages say: " 'And thou shalt love the Lord thy God,' implies that you shall cause that love to spread to others."[9] This is an intensification of our direct personal relationship to God, not a diminution. Throughout his writings R. Hirsch proclaims that the sense of holiness must emanate from the *Mikdash* (the Sanctuary) and overflow thence to the homes and activities of ordinary living until even the most sensuous aspects of human life are sanctified, pervaded by the same sense of holiness and nearness of God that one experiences in the *Mikdash.* This is acomplished by living according to God's *Mitzvot* in all areas of life. It is indeed strange that this God-conscious man of pervasive holiness should have been criticized for failure to appreciate the "worth of the *Mitzvot* for their expression of the direct relationship of man to God."

Concerning the repeated use of the term "*mission* of humanity and Israel," the original speaks only of "mankind and Israel." The word "mission" was added by the translator, Dr. Drachman.

The reviewer complains that R. Hirsch interpreted the *Mitzvot* in terms of a positive, humanistic goal — the quest for justice. To demonstrate this, he quotes the following passage: "Thus justice is the sum total of your life, as it is the

sole concept which the Torah serves to interpret" (*Horeb*, p. 220). He would have us believe that R. Hirsch refers to social justice in the ordinary sense of the word. This is not the case. Indeed, "*Mishpatim* are — justice towards men" (p. 220), but "*Edot* [are] justice towards God — *Torot*, justice of your thoughts towards reality—" (p. 221).

"Justice" is used in that chapter, not only in the humanistic sense of social justice, but in the sense of the relationships of things as they really are, which God alone knows completely, and on which basis He has given the *Mitzvot*. This is the larger concept of justice, of which humanistic social justice (*Mishpatim*) is only a part. The chapter on "Justice," how all the *Mitzvot* can be brought under the heading of this *larger* "justice," is one of R. Hirsch's most brilliant conceptions.

R. Hirsch and the Kabbalah

The reviewer considered R. Hirsch's criticism of the Kabbalah harsh. The famous passages from the *Nineteen Letters*, pp. 99-100, 187 are quoted. These quotations undoubtedly imply that R. Hirsch had a qualified attitude towards the Kabbalah, or as Grunfeld puts it, R. Hirsch's attitude was "guarded." This is not new in Jewish history. In the Responsa of Ribash, we find that Ran was openly critical of Ramban for his "much too excessive belief in the Kabbalah" (Responsum 157). R. Hirsch's statements are certainly more moderate and reserved than those of R. Yechezkel Landau. They can hardly be described as "harsh." As a matter of fact, Dayan Grunfeld, in his detailed "Samson Raphael Hirsch and the Kabbalah" (Translator's Introduction to *Horeb*) has completely reconciled R. Hirsch's views with the kabbalistic school (p. cxxvii).

Perhaps Grunfeld goes too far. R. Hirsch did, after all, consider this "invaluable repository of the spirit of Bible and Talmud" as "eternal progressive development" rather than "a static mechanism," as "an internal phenomenon and conception" rather than "an external dream world." More probably, Jacob Rosenheim was closer to the truth when he wrote:

"It is obvious that Hirsch was inclined to interpret the Cabbalistic world of ideas as a system of symbols and to expect to find behind the illustrative way of expression of the Zohar, for instance, which appeals to the imagination, abstract thoughts about God, the World and the Torah."[10] It should be remembered that R. Hirsch characterized even the Aggadic parts of the Talmud as "as a *figuratively-veiled* expression of the spirit" [of the Bible]. How much more so might he similarly consider that which is, in his opinion, only "an invaluable repository of the spirit of the Bible and Talmud."

Rambam, Mendelssohn and R. Hirsch

The reviewer tries to give the impression that R. Hirsch, influenced by the *Haskalah*, is more intemperate in his criticism of Rambam than of Mendelssohn, "the father of the Haskalah movement." In order to make his point, the re-

viewer ignores the text proper of the *Nineteen Letters,* in which Mendelssohn is severely criticized for his approach in general (p. 189) and for the development of a condition "which threatened to destroy all Judaism" (190-91). Instead, the reviewer quotes a footnote: "His Jerusalem — emphasizes — in contradistinction to the Moreh, etc." But the opening sentence of this footnote, which puts the matter in proper perspective is omitted: "Do not misunderstand me. I speak here only of the total impression of his work for Judaism. His 'Jerusalem'—." That is to say, the total impression of Mendelssohn's work for Judaism was negative and ultimately destructive, as mentioned in the text proper. His *Jerusalem,* however, contains an undeveloped opinion concerning *Edot* which is praiseworthy.

R. Hirsch's criticism of Rambam in the *Nineteen Letters* — is indeed attributable to "the subsequent breaches of observance," which are traced in the *Nineteen Letters* with equal force in relation to Mendelssohn as well. As R. Hirsch wrote in an essay: "True that Maimonides' 'Guide' was burnt. He would have been the first to consign his book to the flames had he lived to see the manner in which it has been — and still is — *abused.*"

It is in this reverential spirit toward Rambam — "this great man, to whom, and to whom alone, we owe the preservation of practical Judaism until our time" (*N. L.* p. 181) — that R. Hirsch, reluctantly and with heavy heart, presents his criticism in order to save the practice of Judaism. One may disagree with his criticism of Rambam, but one should not imply that R. Hirsch was influenced by the Haskalah to revere Mendelssohn more than Rambam. This is distortion.

The Individual and The Group

To prove that in the Hirschian view the religious task of the individual is to work merely for his national group, the reviewer quotes:

"Everything that you have or will have is given to you only that you may fulfill the task of Israel in your life" (*Horeb,* p. 370).

Let us read this passage in context. R. Hirsch is answering the argument that Torah study was meant only for rabbinical scholars, not for laymen. To this he replies:

> But have you been born into the world to be a merchant, an artist, or to belong to any other station? — You have been born to be an Israelite. "Be an Israelite" was the summons with which God called you into being. Everything that you have or will have is given to you only that you may fulfill the task of Israel in your life; and you can fulfill this this task only — if your path in life and your duties are known to you through its (the Torah's) teaching.

There is nothing in this passage about the relationship of the individual to his national group. It speaks of the task of the individual Israelite who was born to live as a Jew.

The reviewer then quotes:

> The Torah teaches you, the individual, justice and love towards individuals. But the relationship between individuals is not the whole consummation of life; the individual is weak

> and transitory. And yet, not for the fleeting moment only, not with limited means should you try to preserve the nobility, the greatness, the God-given humanity to which the name Israel pledges you. [Precisely because the individual is not everlasting, because his strength is always limited] God has given the loftiest possessions and concerns of Israel into the safe keeping not of the individuals but of the collectivity. For the collectivity alone is strong, the totality alone is immortal even in this world (*ibid.*, p. 452).

The reviewer complains:

"This would seem to be a very dangerous doctrine. It smacks of statism and totalitarianism, and threatens the very foundation of religion as we view it today as the safeguard of the priceless absolute worth of the individual."

The basis of statism or totalitarianism is the idea that the individual exists for the state, and his rights must retreat before the state, which defines these rights. The state is elevated to an abstract concept which gives it an ideational existence higher than the concrete existence of the individuals who comprise it. A non-totalitarian system also combines individuals into a state, but the state exists in order to further the life-goals of the individuals, who control the state's decisions.

But on the regulation exempting a new husband from military duty in order to enable him to rejoice with his wife (Deut. 24:5), R. Hirsch comments:

> Clearly at the root of these laws lies the point of view that a state, the concept of a state as a whole, has reality only in the actual numbers of all its individual members, but apart from them, *or next to them, one cannot consider the existence of a state as a concept in itself*. So that the national welfare can be sought only in the well-being and happiness of all the *single individuals*.

Such courageous remarks aimed against the statism of his time and place — in the uncompromising spirit of the Torah — are widely scattered throughout R. Hirsch's writings. They flatly contradict the reviewer's prejudiced assertion that for R. Hirsch: "The relationship of the individual to collective Israel takes on the same quality of the relationship of the individual to the State familiar in German thinking (Fichte, Hegel)."

For the individual Jew, the law of life which gives it meaning and value is the law of God's Torah. To preserve this way of life for all the individual Israelites of the present and succeeding generations we are charged with forming communities. To explain the laws of the *Shulchan Arukh* governing community organization, R. Hirsch wrote Chapter 95 of *Horeb*, "Duties towards the Community," in which he points out — in passages omitted by the reviewer — how the short life-span and limited means of individuals make it desirable to organize communities which never die and which have greater means to further the goals of all individual Israelites. There can be no legal clash between the goals of the community and the individual, for the goals are the same, defined for us by God's Torah.

Of course, the Torah conceives of us as a nation. We pray in the plural, as a nation. But we are a nation of individuals. The goals of

the nation and of the individuals are the same — life in the presence of God and according to His Laws.[11]

It is noteworthy that it is precisely the Kehillah organization of R. Hirsch's followers that is the strongest single factor in the flourishing of Hirschian life in the United States. The failure of over-individualized American Jews to organize in Kehilloth is one of the main weaknesses of American Orthodoxy.

MENSCH-JISSROEL

The reviewer would make this Hirschian expression mean "Man-Israel," in the sense that the individual is important only as a representative of the group Israel. However, Grunfeld's interpretation as "man and Israelite" in the sense that the human element comes first is evidenced from *Horeb*, p. 222:

> Thus every man, as man, is born for justice. In the early history of mankind, however, — (man) had forgotten to respect man as man —. It was then that God created Israel as His people amidst the nations, so that Israel might be the standard-bearer of human justice and realize it by his example —. You, therefore, as *man* and *Israelite* ("Mensch-Jissroel") are *doubly* called upon to fulfill the image of justice, and to be just in all your ways. You cast aside man's and Israel's dignity if you are unjust to any creature about you—.

R. HIRSCH AND SEPARATION

The reviewer criticized R. Hirsch's "practical policy of separation from the larger Jewish Community which included non-observant elements," and then quoted his Foreword to demonstrate that he had no concern for any individual who did not totally and initially identify himself with the Torah.

Of course, there is nothing in the *Horeb* passage quoted by the reviewer that suggests such a negative attitude towards a non-observant individual Jew. R. Hirsch states in his Foreword merely that the faithful Jew must never leave the pale of Judaism even theoretically in order to persuade those whose theories and inclinations have already placed them outside the pale. But taking our stand within Judaism, by accepting the outstanding fact of Jewish history, the divine Revelation of the Torah, we should certainly point out the meaning and attraction of God's Torah to all Jews, especially to those who have already strayed. Indeed, this is precisely what R. Hirsch did in his *Nineteen Letters*. They are an answer to Benjamin, who in the First Letter has argued for the rejection of Judaism. No man in moden times has tried harder, or with more success, to win the hearts of the estranged sons and daughters of Israel than Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch.

It is simply untrue that his policy of communal separation was based on the fact that the larger community "included non-observant elements." The "By-Laws of K'hall Adath Jeshurun" of New York, patterned on those of R. Hirsch's Frankfurt Community, provide that: "Any Jewish person shall be eligible to apply for membership, unless, contrary to Religious Law, said person shall not have been circumcised, and/or shall not be

willing to have his or her son(s) circumcised, and further, unless said person is married contrary to the Jewish Law." It is only when speaking of offices of the Congregation that the By-Laws provide: "Any person who carries on a business on the Sabbath or Holy Days, or desecrates these days in any other way, any person who has been proved to keep a *trefah* household or to be *ochel trefah*, or who denies the fundamental principles of traditional Judaism shall be considered unfit for any office, including, but not limited to, that of trustee." But he *is* fit for membership in the Community.

It was only when the official policy of a Jewish community was one of non-observance or denial of the Torah that R. Hirsch demanded separation from such an un-Jewish community. R. Hirsch insisted that the more we engage in friendly relations with these persons, the more it behooves us to separate completely from the *communal system* which is an organizational expression of sectarianism and heresy.[12]

Israel As "Segulah"

The reviewer complains that "contrary to Onkelos, Mekhilta, Rashi, and Ibn Ezra, who interpret the verse, 'Then ye shall be my peculiar treasure from among all peoples' (Exodus 19:5) in the sense of a special quality in God's love for Israel, Hirsch interprets it not as love but as 'a property belonging exclusively to one owner — God has the sole and exclusive claim to Israel's devotions and service (*N. L.* p. 142)." The right of a commentator to give such differing explanations has been recognized by *Rishonim* and *Acharonim*. The point of the criticism seems to be that R. Hirsch avoided the usual interpretation in order that Israel should not be conceived as the object of a special love by God. However, the very fact that God chose Israel from among all the nations as mankind's standard-bearer, is *per se* a demonstration of special love. As R. Hirsch comments on Deut. 10:14-15,

> The whole universe, heaven, and the heaven of the heavens, the earth and everything on it is His, and still He has not come as near to any being as He has to you! Out of all men on earth He found your forefathers worthy of His special loving relationship. And you, (who) as their descendents following after them should show yourselves equally worthy of the special bond with God, you has He chosen from out of all the nations to serve His special purpose for mankind.

Special Divine love is inherent in the very choice of Israel to serve God's special purpose for mankind, as the Torah clearly states, and as R. Hirsch stresses in his *Commentary*.

It was not to avoid the idea of *special* love for Israel that R. Hirsch interprets "segulah" differently. To R. Hirsch the term "segulah" implies not only specialty but exclusiveness. To relate this exclusive quality to God's love for Israel would be to exclude the rest of the world from God's love, an impossible idea. Therefore, R. Hirsch interprets "segulah" as the exclusive claim of God to Israel, not the exclusive claim of Israel to God's love. The passage in the *Nineteen Letters*, p. 142, which Drachman

translated freely, literally reads as follows: "Indeed, 'Segulah' does not mean that God belongs to no other people, but rather that this people (Israel) belongs to no other God, should recognize no other being as its God." R. Hirsch then brings as evidence the meaning of "segulah" in *Bava Kamma* which indicates "exclusively-owned property to which no other has a right" (note to p. 142, *ibid.*).

When Onkelos, Mekhilta, Rashi and Ibn Ezra interpret "segulah" as an object of *special* love, they do not mean exclusive love. Seforno is very careful to avoid this notion when he comments:

> "Then ye shall be My peculiar treasure" although all mankind is precious to Me above all the lower creatures, for man alone is the intended goal, as the Sages say: "Beloved is *man* for he has been created in God's image."

However, if one takes the view that "segulah" linguistically implies exclusiveness — and R. Hirsch has a right to this linguistic opinion — then he must interpret this exclusiveness as R. Hirsch has done.[13]

Thus, as is so often the case in the Midrashic interpretations of *Mekhilta,* there are alternate explanations. Rashi followed one, R. Hirsch the other.

R. Hirsch and R. Yehudah Halevi

The reviewer asserts that notwithstanding R. Hirsch's espousal of R. Yehudah Halevi's philosophy, he allegedly repudiates the notion — so essential to that philosophy — that Israel is endowed with an hereditary special spiritual quality. This charge is a direct result of the erroneous assumption that R. Hirsch's interpretation of "Segulah" precludes *special* Divine love for Israel. Yet, the hereditary factor is stressed in the following comment.

> Minds can be improved, learning imparted, but what is difficult to accomplish is an ennobling change to refinement of character, that above all has its roots in the ancestral inwards —. The seed of Canaan can also have mind and intelligence, can be brought up and educated to a sense of duty. But the true Jewish humane feelings can not be inculcated by education; they must be inherited from the inwards of Abraham. It was just on this *innate* receptivity for all refinement and nobility and readiness to sacrifice joyfully that God built the foundation of His future nation.

R. Hirsch, Eretz Yisrael and Galut

The reviewer asserts that for R. Hirsch, Eretz Yisrael does not represent "an irreducible value."

Value, for the faithful Jew, is determined by the Torah. A certain value is placed on Sabbath observance, on saving life, on all the manifold aspects of life. Moreover, these Torah-determined values are taught to us in their proper relationship. In R. Hirsch's view Eretz Yisrael was to be conceived as the environs of the Sanctuary of the Torah. Exile from the land was to him a "sad disfigurement of the Torah [for which] Jewish tears are shed and Jewish hearts grieve" (*Judaism Eternal,* vol. I, p. 137).

To this extent, and to whatever extent *Halakhah* defines our relation to *Eretz Yisrael, Eretz Yisrael* is indeed "an irreducible value." In the above-mentioned essay R.

Hirsch quotes from R. Yehudah Halevi's "Ode to Zion," which bases all the virtues of *Eretz Yisrael* on the spiritual factors of the Torah.

It is true that R. Hirsch did not go so far as R. Yehudah Halevi and Ramban in demanding that we live in *Eretz Yisrael* even before the prophesied redemption. But neither did the majority of *Rishonim* and *Acharonim,* or the Babylonian Amoraim who studied in *Eretz Yisrael* only to return to Babylonia make this demand. Neither did R. Yehudah Halevi go to *Eretz Yisrael,* except in advanced age, nor Ramban except for his enforced exile from Spain. Various material and spiritual factors must be weighed. The matter is complex and relative; it is not simple and absolute. However, to the extent that the Torah places value on *Eretz Yisrael,* such value is irreducible for R. Hirsch, as it is for any faithful Jew. Thus R. Hirsch strongly urged the support of religious colonies in *Eretz Yisrael.*

Of a Torah State in *Eretz Yisrael,* R. Hirsch says: "This was the ideal" (*Judaism Eternal, ibid.*). But it is equally true that the Divine punishment of *Galut* does also afford an expanded opportunity. This is *not* "in radical departure from biblical and Talmudic teachings," as the reviewer maintains, but quite in harmony with them, as the Talmud states: "The Holy One, blessed be He, exiled Israel among the nations only so that *gerim* (proselytes) should be added to their number (*Pesachim* 87b). As MaHaRSHA comments: "Were exile a punishment only, Israel could have been punished in other ways. Therefore, it follows that exile was decreed for the purpose of adding *gerim,* that is, to publicize the true faith among the other nations."

Despite R. Hirsch's deep compassion for Jewish suffering in *Galut* (*Judaism Eternal,* Vol. I, pp. 85-87), he bids us not to wallow in self-pity, but to be encouraged by the ultimately positive goals set by God — our own spiritual improvement and our example to the world. And like Rambam (*Melakhim,* Chapter 11 in uncensored texts), R. Hirsch notes that Christianity, despite its many pagan elements, succeeded in "rendering intelligible to the world the objects and purposes of Israel's election."

Loyal Citizenship

The reviewer complains that the Hirschian view of patriotism "raises the need for compliance to brute force to a high and noble religious ideal."

In *Horeb,* R. Hirsch has shown that Jeremiah demanded: "Seek the welfare of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto the Lord for it—" even with regard to Babylon, which was "the country which had forcibly taken them to live in its midst." Babylon was certainly no less totalitarian than present-day communist states. The reviewer would have us "make the best of a bad situation" without the "inner feeling" of a "religious ideal." But certainly the word of God does not mean that we should pray for the welfare of the city hypocritically. How this divinely-commanded duty

of seeking the welfare of the state should be carried out in the extreme example of Nazi Germany or other unjust totalitarian states is an interesting halakhic question. But it is just that — a halakhic problem. The word of God to Jeremiah, not R. Hirsch, creates the problem.

The reviewer asks:
"Does the ideal of the mission of the Jew to teach justice really imply that Israel in *Galut* must not 'wrest its independence by its own efforts' (*Horeb,* p. 145)?"

The fact that Israel must not "wrest its independence by its own efforts" is not a result of the "mission of the Jew to teach justice," as the reviewer implies. It is an obligation imposed on us by God's word to the prophets as explained by the Talmud in *Ketuvot* 111a.*

Grunfeld's note (*Horeb,* p. 145) does not, as the reviewer implies, make a distinction between "Hirsch in real life" and the "doctrine he taught and wrote," and R. Hirsch did not "propound doctrines which are at — great variance with his role in life." R. Hirsch was "anything but a quietist" when it came to the moral persuasion of "fiery speeches" in Parliament against unjust treatment, and written pamphlets and letters demanding equal citizenship. These legal, non-violent methods of persuasion are certainly sanctioned. It is illegal violence, unsanctioned by the nations, which we are obliged to avoid according to the Talmud.

The reviewer accuses R. Hirsch of believing that "it is wrong for the Jew to leave his area of mission and to do anything to bring himself by his own effort to the Holy Land." It should be clear that only *bechomah,* mass-immigration to *Eretz Yisrael* in defiance of the nations, is wrong.** Individual immigration is, of course, praiseworthy.

R. Hirsch never lacked "faith in Israel's national character," as the reviewer states. He is the *most nationalistic of Jews.* But to him Jewish nationalism is infinitely more profound and more pervasive than the shallow concept which calls itself Jewish nationalism today.[15]

Foreign Influences on Hirsch's Thought

The reviewer points to foreign influences on R. Hirsch's thought. But should R. Hirsch have rejected the Talmudic statement, "Not study is the main thing, but deed," or "Great is the study of Torah because it leads to deeds" simply because Fichte stressed the same thought?

Do we need Fichte to tell us that freedom of choice was given to us only so that we should submit freely to God's Will?

As for Hegel and Noah Rosen-

*The "evidence" from the above mentioned Talmudic passage is far from conclusive, especially in the light of numerous conflicting statements in other Talmudic sources. Many religious authorities demonstrated the halakhic propriety of Israel's War of Liberation and of the so-called "illegal" *Aliyah* prior to the establishment of the state.—*Ed.*

** See, however, *Yoma* 9b, where immigration *bechomah* is extolled.—*Ed.*

bloom's contentions, Grunfeld has already replied in his Introduction to *Horeb* (p. XLI).

The reply is the same for all allegations of foreign influences. It is not enough to point to similarities. The acid test is not whether a Jewish thinker was familiar with the works of non-Jewish writers, or whether a Jewish exposition has points of similarity with non-Jewish sources. What matters is whether R. Hirsch's conceptions can be shown to correspond *in a natural way* to classical Jewish ideas. It then becomes unimportant whether or not non-Jews have sometimes expressed similar concepts.

We have demonstrated, we believe, that R. Hirsch was not a mere German modernist, but one of our *Acharonim* of the 19th century, a worthy disciple of R.Yaakob Ettlinger with all that is implied in this characterization. "The fact that, through an historical accident, Hirsch wrote in German, makes it too easy for his detractors to exclude him from the community and sanctuary of the *Rishonim* and *Acharonim* who have been throughout the millenia the bearers of the philosophical and halakhic traditions of Judaism."[16]

In this clarification of views we have directed our remarks to the critics of Hirsch. Some clarification should also be directed towards those for whom he is *R.* Hirsch (— *Rabbeinu* Hirsch). R. Hirsch was not great because he propounded a middle course between rightists and leftists. Compromise was alien to his system. What he did demand was a rejection of one-sidedness in Judaism. Authentic Jewish tradition requires that Torah advance on all sides. Careful study of Scripture, linguistically and conceptually, must take its rightful place. Deep dialectic study of the Talmud must do the same. The proper balance between Torah (*ikkar*) and general studies (*tafel*) must be guarded and maintained. A healthy interest in the general cultural scene of the society around us (*Derekh Eretz*) should not become a desire to identify ourselves with the life and modes of that society even within the limits set by the *Shulchan Arukh*. We take these only as the raw material to be transformed by the Torah into Jewish life and modes, in spirit as well as in letter. R. Hirsch was an *Acharon* who happened to live in the Germany of the 19th century. We are man-Israelites who happen to live in 20th century America. The raw material of the *Derekh Eretz* changes, but our task and starting-point remain ever the same — the Torah of God, in letter and in spirit.

There is a popular notion that, unlike Hasidism and Musar, which attempted to *deepen* the religious experience of the Jew, the Hirschian system aimed at merely preserving Judaism against the onslaught of Western culture. It is our conviction that this notion is erroneous. Study of R. Hirsch's writings and commentaries has been for many a most effective source of *Musar*, deeping our spiritual grasp of Judaism. At any rate, the *deepening of spiritual experience* is the very basis of R. Hirsch's conception, and the very result of the careful study of that conception.

This should be the goal, the task of all disciples of *Rabbeinu* Hirsch, who still are, with certain illustrious exceptions, far from the *spiritual depth,* in the study of Torah and in the observance of *Mitzvot,* which R. Hirsch demanded.

NOTES

1. *Samson Raphael Hirsch — Horeb,* Translated by Dayan Dr. I. Grunfeld (London: The Soncino Press, 1962), p. 411. cf. also R. Hirsch's commentary on Lev. 18:4.

2. Rav Joseph Breuer communicated this fact to me.

3. S. R. Hirsch, *Judaism Eternal,* Vol. II, pp. 12-13.

4. See also his *Responsum* in *Tel Talpiot,* Vol. X.

5. *Soferim,* 15:9. See also *Rosh.*

6. *Derishah* to *Yoreh Deah* 246, also quoted by *Taz* and *Shakh,* writes that the Talmudic statement: "Whoever studies *Halakhoth* every day etc." (*Niddah* 73a) refers in our time, not to the theoretical discussions of "*Gemara, Rashi* and *Tosaphot,*" but to the practical works of the *Posekim,* "which contain the root and basis of our Torah —, since as Rashi explained (*ibid.*) *Halakhoth* means what has been legally fixed for practice." *But,* as a matter of fact, Rashi (*ibid.*) merely comments that *Halakhoth* means: *Mishnah, Baraita* and *Halakhah Le-Mosheh Mi-Sinai.*" Clearly, then, while the codified Mishnah represented relatively fixed Halakhoth in older times, our Codes of today represent the same to us. Thus R. Hirsch speaks of the one third to be devoted to Mishnah as: "especially to the codes which instruct you concisely about your duties, such as Rambam and Shulchan Arukh" (*Horeb,* p. 371 and p. 412) and "where possible — the Mishnah" (p. 412) as well.

7. See *Nineteen Letters,* pp. 103, 128-29, 192-3. Also *Commentary* to Leviticus.

8. See R. Hirsch's comments on Deut. 6:5 and 11:13.

9. *Yoma* 86a.

10. Jacob Rosenheim, *S. R. Hirsch's Cultural Ideal and Our Times,* p. 65.

11. See also R. Hirsch's Commentary on Ex. 1:1 and 12:3-6, where the relationship of individual families to the nation is discussed. On the democratic rule of the community by majority vote, see *Horeb,* p, 458.

12. *Collected Writings,* Vol IV, pp. 339-40.

13. R. Jacob Mecklenburg in *Ha-Ketab Ve-ha-Kabbalah* interprets "Segulah" in a similar fashion, basing himself on another passage of Mekhilta.

14. Commentary on Genesis 15:4. See also Commentary on Deut. 7:8.

15. See R. Yechiel Weinberg's essay in *Ha-Rav S. R. Hirsch, Mishnato, We-Shittato.*

16. Jacob Rosenheim, *op. cit.*