

# Rav Hirsch Controversy

I was deeply saddened to learn of the controversy that erupted in the KAJ *kehilla* last week (“Controversial Moments at Rav S.R. Hirsch Memorial Celebration,” news story, June 20). While no longer a resident of Washington Heights, I have always looked to KAJ as my spiritual center for the Hirschian *hashkafa*, and I fear this center has ceased to exist. The *kehilla* seems to be adrift, without vision or purpose. The institutions are slowly declining and in the ones that are left there is no instruction in the *Torah Im Derech Eretz* (TIDE) *hashkafa*.

In reality, what happened last week is not really new; it merely picked away at a scab that has been developing for a very long time. What does it mean to be a Hirschian today? If someone were to ask me what it means to be a “Lakewooder” or a “Satmarer,” I would readily have the answer. But what does it mean to be a “Hirschian”?

I think this requires an answer from our leadership and our *gedolim*. To some it means a college education, to others it means limited or no *kollel*, and to still others it’s all about the *minhagim* (customs).

If TIDE is to have any meaning to us today it needs to be redefined and adapted to the new reality of the *derech eretz* that exists in America (or elsewhere) in 2008 and not the *derech eretz* of Frankfurt in 1808. It needs vision, it needs unapologetic promotion, it needs to be taught and it needs proud followers. Most of all, it needs proud leadership developed from within.

The reason Rav Hirsch and Rav Breuer were successful in building vibrant *kehillos* was not their *gadlus* per se. It was because they were on fire. They didn’t just preach TIDE – they *lived* TIDE. They were not mere caretakers of a philosophy; they *embodied* the philosophy.

How successful would Lakewood be if it recruited its *roshei yeshiva* from non-Torah-only yeshivas? I am sure fine *talmidei chachamim* would be found, but how could they be expected to promote and inspire the spirit of Reb Ahron’s *hashkafa*? Could Belz have succeeded if it recruited its rebbe from Brisk? Someone from outside the community can learn to make a beautiful *tish*, but would he be adept at instilling the depth and *hashkafa* of the rich Belzer dynasty?

And yet our *kehilla* often looks outside for its leadership. With *siata d’Shmaya* it has always found dedicated, talented and outstanding *gedolei Yisrael*, and I am certain today is no exception. But it is not enough to have dedicated, talented and outstanding *gedolei Yisrael*. We need leadership that is infused with the spirit of Rav Hirsch. Leadership that views TIDE as the timeless *Derech HaEmes* and not a *horaa sha’ah*, as Rav Hirsch and Rav Breuer clearly state. Leaders who do not look for validation from outside *gedolim* but have the self-confidence and conviction of their calling.

We must ask ourselves why our institutions haven’t created these home-grown *gedolim*. We have created some but not enough, and those who exist have been largely overlooked. Some have become great *talmidei chachamim* but have shed their TIDE heritage, while others have become great *derech eretz* personalities but have curtailed their Torah.

TIDE in my opinion is not only relevant today, but the lack of adherence to it is the cause of many of the problems afflicting our Torah community. TIDE is just as relevant to the *kollel* member as it is to the physics student. We should keep in mind that while the *hashkafa* itself is timeless, the *derech erez* that the *hashkafa* operates in is not, and therefore adjustments must be made to its application, but only within the confines of the TIDE structure.

I end with the words of Rav Breuer: “Times may have changed. But the problems have remained essentially the same.... Only an un-wavering, straightforward course will lead to success. We neither look for nor require the agreement or approval of those who prefer a different course. Their criticism does not touch us.... As for us, let us do our best to promote and fulfill the TIDE ideal in its true spirit and let us protect it from regrettable misuse and misinterpretation.

“A personal footnote: on the day before he passed away my father, *zt”l*, told me: ‘I am firmly convinced that the way shown by Rav Hirsch will be *mekarev hageulah*.’”

**Abraham E. Danziger**  
*Lakewood, NJ*

## ***RAV MANTEL'S SERMON ON SHABBOS PARSHAS KORACH***

Last week our Kehilla celebrated the birth of Rav Hirsch זצ"ל. His actual birth was on כ"ה סיון תקס"ח, which means today.

Allow me to paraphrase last Shabbos' celebration and today's actual birthday with the פסוקים in י"ט - מלכים א': A lot of words were said last Shabbos, "דוה ממללא" after the words came a lot of noise. ואחר הרעש אש: and after the noise, fire ח"ו: a smell of פידוד, an odor of dissonance.

To have separation caused by Rav Hirsch's ideology, is definitely in opposition to all his teachings. Didn't he mention on the cover page of his Nineteen Letters the גמרא in מגילה ג:

גלוי וידוע שלא לכבודי ולא לכבוד בית אבא עשיתי זאת אלא שלא ירבו מחלקת בישראל.  
"It is revealed and known before You that I did it not for my own glory or for the glory of my father's house, rather I did it for Your glory that dissension may not spread in Israel."

That was the work of his lifetime: שלא ירבו מחלקת בישראל.

גלוי וידוע שלא לכבודי ולא לכבוד בית אבא עשיתי זאת אלא שלא ירבו מחלקת בישראל. לא מצא הקב"ה כלי מחזיק בשכינה וישראל אלא השלוי: say חז"ל a vessel which contains ברכה for ישראל other than peace. We have to be united; the only blessing for the קהל and for every individual can only be through שלוי.

This Shabbos will be the אחר האש קול דממה דקה: after the fire, a still and thin sound celebrating in a quiet way the birth of Rav Hirsch זצ"ל.

In all his writings, when Rav Hirsch זצ"ל speaks about a יהודי and what is expected of him, he uses his own terminology and calls him "Mensch-Yisroel". The term "Mensch-Yisroel" contains the entire approach of a יהודי to Torah and Yiddishkeit. Judaism is not a religion, where one has to accomplish some rituals in order to please the Creator. Yiddishkeit is a way of life, a way which shapes the personality, brings out all the potential which Hashem has implanted in a יהודי, uses all the potential, makes him grow to have a personal relationship to Hashem. The Torah penetrates in all aspects of life and deals with all aspects of life. Judaism is not restricted to synagogue and school, it is a life according to the guidance of Torah all over in Hashem's world, in general knowledge, in the office, in business, everywhere the "Mensch-Yisroel" will be recognized. You start by approaching it as a person and you end up being a personality! That is "Mensch-Yisroel," not merely Yisroel.

That is the definition of תורה עם דרך ארץ.

Our Kehilla can be proud of being based on these teachings and can be proud to carry on the teachings of the great master זצ"ל.

Unfortunately, so many completely different directions in השקפת חיים, so many different institutions claim to go the way of ארץ עם דרך תורה and when one would bring them close to one another they would not even be similar!

In this week's פרשה we learn that even a טלית שכולה תכלת, a טלית that is entirely made of תכלת, needs ציצית, that a בית שכולה ספרים, a house that is full of Seforim, also needs a מזוזה. This teaches us that the holiest and most honorable דרך needs guidance and a reminder, the most respectable שיטה needs a מורה דרך who shows the way, who draws the lines. The Rabbonim of this Kehilla have acted in the past and will - בע"ה - act in the future in this manner as the heirs of this legacy. To approach ארץ עם דרך תורה to sanctify life, to let Torah penetrate in all aspects and all occupations of daily life, yes! But ח"ו not to use a שיטה to look down on חכמים תלמידי and to offend תורה לימודי. Rav Hirsch's love for Torah and his שמים יראת were too strong to misuse this way.

I have already mentioned the מדרש in פרשת עקב which tells us about ר' שמעון בן שטח who bought a donkey from an Arab and his students found a precious stone hanging on its neck. The students said to ר' שמעון בן שטח, רבי, ברכת ה' היא תעשיר, you received a ברכה from Hashem, you are entitled to it. R. Shimon ben Shetach answered them, חמור לקחתי אבן טובה לא לקחתי, "I purchased a donkey, not a precious stone" and gave it back to the Arab merchant. The Arab merchant called out ברוך אלקי שמעון בן שטח. From ר' שמעון בן שטח's behavior, the Arab recognized ר' שמעון בן שטח's G-d. That is the highest achievement of Mensch-Yisroel!

The Mishne in Pirkei Avos says: יפה תלמוד תורה עם ד"א שיגיעת שניהם. Talmud Torah and Derech Eretz is good since the involvement in both of them makes one forget sin. He is so busy, his day is so filled with תורה and ד"א that he has no opportunity to sin. Years ago I heard another explanation from an אדם גדול: The word משכח can also mean to find. חז"ל often use the expression, משכח לה, etc. According to this understanding, we have another explanation in this משנה: the involvement with ת"ת and ד"א makes one find one's own failures and weaknesses, and in this way to correct them and to grow as a "Mensch-Yisroel."

That is the ארץ עם דרך תורה our Kehilla is built on and that is the way we will follow with Hashem's help.