

מורשת צבי

THE LIVING HIRSCHIAN LEGACY

**Essays on “Torah im Derech Eretz”
and the Contemporary Hirschian Kehilla**

*Published for
K'hal Adath Jeshurun
New York*

**Philipp Feldheim, Inc.
New York — Jerusalem**

The historic meaning of Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch is a jewel of many facets, many dimensions. But its main elements, as the chairman just mentioned a few moments ago, are really three: his impact on the people of his day and their posterity: his impact on תורה scholarship, and thirdly the philosophy of Torah im Derech Eretz. This was the ideological panorama that enabled Hirsch ליושנה תורה ליושנה, to bring the people and their תורה together again and thus return the crown of German Jewry to its rightful place.

The meaning of Torah im Derech Eretz and the historical chapter of Hirsch and his times are of course the subjects of two subsequent talks. Tonight I hope to confine myself בע"ה to the Torah scholarship of Rav Hirsch: Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch the great expositor of תורה שבכתב, and Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch the גאון בהלכה, the great teacher also of תורה שבעל פה. In his mind, and in his day I should add, the written word of Hirsch was surely only a means to an end, a message of light that communicated the דבר ה' to a needy generation in its own particular language. He opened to German Jews the treasure of תורה. He taught the people מה ה' אלקיך שואל מעמך, what is it that ה' asks of you, but it is a century later now, and the דברי תורה that he wrote reach far beyond the carriers of the German tradition. His scholarship, his תורה, his teachings, his גדלות are as relevant for us today as they were to the people of his day. They are the נחלה, the heritage, of an entire ישראל כולל. For such is the nature of true דברי תורה, they suffer no boundaries, they are studied by all Jews. They became an intrinsic part of the sacred Torah library of our people. The Torah writings of Hirsch are primarily on the ספרים of תורה שבכתב; on the תמשה חומשי תורה and the תהלים. We have משלי חלקים that he interpreted, and of course large parts of the סדור. But a major purpose of his פירוש חומש, aside from the חורב, was to teach and explain the תורה שבעל פה, תרי"ג מצות and הלכות and דינים of all of מצות, and weave them into the understanding of תורה שבכתב. One does not have to turn too many pages to discover Hirsch as the master of ש"ס, the man thoroughly at home in קדשים and טהרות, in סדר ודעים, as well as in the more familiar סדר מועד or סדר נויקין. In teaching the השקפה of מצות, he derives them from the דינים the details of each separate מצוה, true to his early basic premises in the *Nineteen Letters* that תורה can only be understood from within itself, that we need not or may not borrow ideas from other cultures and apply them to the Torah. The Torah is self revealing. Probe its depths. Analyze its teachings. And you will understand its meaning and its message.

As a חכם, Rav Hirsch was a true גדול בתורה, an אדם גדול as we think of one. As רב of a קהילה, he was, as he signed himself later in Frankfurt, a שומר משמרת הקודש, a keeper of the קדושה heritage. As a thinker, he was deep and original. As a writer he was a gifted artist of language. But the greatest, the most historic aspect of his personality, I believe, was that of a teacher. He was a רבי. Not to individuals, but to many thousands, to generations of Jews and their descendants. The express purpose of the חורב and the פירוש חומש was simply to teach Torah לשמור וללמד וללמד וללמד תורה ובעל תורה שבכתב and ולעשות פה; to remove the dust of כפירה from people's minds; to bring them שמעתיא ואגדתא, as he calls it in the הקדמה to the חורב, and blend the שמעתיא ואגדתא together as one unified system true to the authentic מסורה. It is this scholarship of Hirsch, the Torah edifice that he built, wherein lies probably his greatest חידוש, his greatest contribution to history. Thus in the פירוש החומש and the חורב, Hirsch built the blocks of כל התורה כולה. He leaves no stone unturned, no הלכה unexplained, no השקפה unelaborated. Study for example פ' משפטים with Hirsch's פירוש and you'll learn גמרא and בבא קמא, בבא מציעא, סנהדרין, הלכות עבד עברי, דיני בשר בחלב וראשונים and, as we all know, much, much more. But beyond the knowledge of the הלכה Hirsch penetrates the טעם and the meaning of the הלכה. In the פסוקים, for example, dealing with מדה במקצת and שבועת השומרים he conveys the awesome meaning of a שבועה. What it means to take an oath before ה'. And why פרשה ה' יחברך in פרשה ה' is called by one of the names of ונקרב ה' יחברך. That by taking the oath, he explains, one places the whole of his existence before the judgement of G-d. It is very interesting, and here again you see the גאונות, the בקיאות of גדלות of the master teacher that he was. After the long discussion about שבועה and מדה במקצת Hirsch ends the paragraph וכן פירש הריטב"א—that his discussion is based on one of the ראשונים on בבא מציעא. This is typical of him. His exposition of הלכה is fully substantiated, not only from משנה and גמרא, but from שולחן ערוך and רמב"ם, from משנה למלך whom he quotes often, from the Vilna Gaon and from ר' עקיבא איגר. His mastery of ש"ס, ופוסקים ראשונים ואחרונים, is complete, as is naturally to be expected from a גדול בתורה.

We usually think of Hirsch as unique and different from the גרולים who preceded him, because of the new trails that he blazed in Jewish life, because of his historical and philosophical impact. This view, and this is very important for us to keep in mind, the view that Rav S. R. Hirsch was something new, this must not detract from his image as a גאון

עצום from the old school. The סופר כתב met him for the first time in 1848 in Vienna, when Rav Hirsch was the newly appointed Rav in Nikolsburg and the Landesrabbiner of all Moravia. The סופר כתב later wrote, שוחחנו עם ראש המדינה החדש בדברי תורה, מה שרק דברנו אתו בכל ש"ס ופוסקים היה בקי. יש לנו מול. הוא חושב אותנו ללמדנים יותר גדולים ממנו. אילו ידע איזה למדן הוא בעצמו לא היחה לנו מנוחה ממנו. To translate, "We talked in learning with the new Chief Rabbi. He is בקי in all of ש"ס ופוסקים. We are lucky that he thinks of us (presumably the Hungarian Rabbonim), as greater למדנים than he. Would he only know his own greatness he would give us no rest."

Undoubtedly, Hirsch must have been a great מחמיר in addition to his natural brilliance. He studied only 2½ years at the yeshiva of the לנר ערוך from whom he received סמיכה. And at age 22 he assumed his first רבנות in Oldenburg. Before the age of 30 he had already finished writing the חורב, which required a complete mastery of the literature of הלכה and אגדה. How did all this happen? The key to the גדלות of Rabbiner Hirsch, to his תורה גדלה is conveyed in a גמרא and a רש"י in יצחק; סנהדרין צ"ט in רש"י and a גמרא and the נפש עמל עמלה לו כי אכף עליו פיהו: משלי in פסוק הוא עמל במקום גמרא and זה ותורתו עומלת לו במקום אחר שמחזרת עליו רש"י adds ומבקשת מאת קונה למסור לו טעמי תורה וסדריה, וכל כך למה? מפני שאכף שכפף פיהו על תורה. The תורה itself pleads with הקב"ה that its devoted student be granted the meaning of תורה and its order, its סדרים.

טעמי תורה וסדריה is the sacred לשון of רש"י; the meaning of תורה and its system. Why? Because he bent and forced his mouth over דברי תורה שאכף. פסוק says עליו פיהו Rav Hirsch in performing חלכו בחוקתי חלכו through and working through the תורה statutes in all his writings, he covered, he taught, he explained all of מצוות חרי"ג. But he was also מקיים endless toil and hard work and thus חלכו בחוקתי חלכו on מאמר חז"ל the תורה itself opened itself up before him. The תורה toiled for him at its source in the מעלה של פמלי' or, as רש"י tells us, to reveal to him טעמי תורה וסדריה. Without this kind of סיעצא דשמיא it is impossible to imagine the scope of תורה knowledge that a busy involved young Rav in Germany should have been able to possess.

As is true of the גדולי ישראל of all the ages, we see only the fruits of their labor, their חידושים, their תלמידים. But the unending יגיעה and arduous devotion invested by them which brought about their גדלות and הצלחה, this can only be left to our imagination.

And there is another important point which must be mentioned. The