

## GIANTS OF TRADITION

Zvi E. Kurzweil

The late Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, whose one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of birth was recently celebrated, had a profound influence on modern Jewish thinking, most apparent in large segments of Orthodoxy. His influence spread, however, beyond the confines of Frankfurt Jewry. Prof. Zvi E. Kurzweil, who is senior lecturer in education at the Haifa Technion in Israel, here discusses Hirsch as a thinker, and particularly as an educator. The present essay was adapted by the author from a larger work which appeared in a recent issue of the scholarly Israeli journal, *Sinai*.

### SAMSON RAPHAEL HIRSCH:

#### *Educationist and Thinker*

#### I

Last year marked the 150th anniversary of the birth of Samson Raphael Hirsch. Though famous in name, he is now largely unread. His personality and work are insufficiently known in Israel. In the Diaspora, the publication of an English edition of some of his writings in London<sup>1</sup> and the recent splendid edition of the Hirsch *Chumash* in English, (translated by Hirsch's grandson, Dr. Isaac Levy, and containing a massive introduction by Rabbi I. Grunfeld) are likely to mark a definite turning point in the interest of English-speaking Jewry in S. R. Hirsch. It may safely be assumed that this *magnum opus* of Hirsch will exercise a deep influence on the Jewish religious scene in the Anglo-Saxon countries.

In Israel, the situation is different. There, his influence, if ever felt, is actually now on a decline. That is not to say that he is not appreciated as an important historical figure who worked devotedly for the continued existence of traditional Judaism and for the elaboration of a philosophic basis of Orthodoxy. A certain appreciation of Hirsch is shown by the fact that he is given an honorable

place in text-books of Jewish history used in all Israeli schools. A number of his articles in Hebrew translations are included in anthologies of Jewish thought used in religious high schools and secondary Yeshivot in Israel. Nevertheless, religious circles tend to ignore Hirsch's conception of Judaism, because, in their spiritual isolation, they look askance at the work of a thinker whose writings display a marked "extrovert" tendency, a tendency which to them appears suspect.

There are three reasons for the lack of interest in Hirsch's writings. First, his involved and flowery style acts as a deterrent to easy reading. Secondly, one who reads his work in German, or, for that matter, in English or Hebrew translation, cannot but be aware of how much his ideas, in spite of his essential and complete Judaism, were steeped in contemporary German thought. No wonder that some Jewish historians, notably Weiner and Elbogen, saw him as a typical 19th century German-Jewish intellectual, not unlike his most outspoken opponents of Liberal persuasion. It is no easy task to extract the pure Jewish content of his thinking from the trappings and intricate convolutions of mid-nineteenth-century German thought in which it is wrapped.

The third reason lies in Hirsch's apparent lack of nationalistic feeling. He believed in the universal mission of the religion of Israel which was to be fulfilled through the dispersal of the people of Israel. His highest ideal was that the nations of the world should recognize the truth of the Jewish faith through admiration of the exemplary way of Jewish life and through a longing to attain it. His belief in the universal mission of the Jewish people in the Diaspora and in the passive hope of bringing the Redeemer through righteous conduct (rather than by active participation in the attainment of political independence of the nation) is expressed in the sixteenth of his *Nineteen Letters*.<sup>2</sup> There he says:

Land and soil were never Israel's bond of union, but only the common task of the Torah; therefore, (Israel) still forms a united body, though separated from a national soil; nor does this unity lose its reality, though Israel accept everywhere the citizenship of the nations amongst which it is dispersed. This coherence of sympathy, this spiritual union, which may be designated by the Hebrew terms *am* and *goy*, but not by the expression "nation"—unless we are able to separate from the term the concept of common territory and political power—is the only communal band we possess,

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or ever expect to possess, until the great day shall arrive when the Almighty shall see fit, in His inscrutable wisdom, to unite again His scattered servants in one land, and the Torah shall be the guiding principle of a state, and exemplar of the meaning of divine revelation and the mission of humanity.

For this future, which is promised us in the glorious predictions of the inspired prophets, whom God raised up for our ancestors, we hope and pray; but actively to accelerate its coming is a sin, and is prohibited to us, while the entire purpose of the Messianic age is that we may, in prosperity, exhibit to mankind a better example of "Israel" than did our ancestors the first time, while, hand in hand with us, mankind will be joined in universal brotherhood through the recognition of God, the ALL-ONE.

Undoubtedly, Hirsch cannot be numbered amongst the supporters of the national ideal in its politico-secular meaning, or amongst the *Chovevei Zion*, whose ideas were cradled in the spiritual climate of Eastern European Jewry. His leadership stemmed from a different kind of spiritual idealism. Hirsch exalted the Jewish faith above other faiths and thought of it as the "religion of religions" and, like the author of the *Kuzari*, considered the people of Israel as endowed with a religious capacity fundamentally different from that of other peoples. This point is clearly brought out in Rabbi Y. Y. Weinberg's article on Hirsch, in which he says: "Rabbi Hirsch, whose essential thought was to regard the Jewish people as the axis around which all world history revolves, must be deemed as an extreme nationalist in heart and spirit, a religio-ethical rather than a secular nationalist."<sup>3</sup> Certainly there is room and time today to study the contributions of such a thinker.

## II

Hirsch's thought has many facets, reflected in a literary production that is vast and many-sided. He excelled as an original commentator on the Pentateuch, Psalms, and the Prayer Book. He added greatly to our understanding of the meaning of the divine commandments. His observations on symbolism in Judaism are embodied in two substantial essays as well as in his commentary to the Pentateuch (but have not yet received their rightful evaluation and appreciation). Moreover, he was also a man of action and while he

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was Rabbi of Nikolsburg, Moravia, from 1848-51, he helped to further the cause of equality of rights for the Jews. He worked for the unification of all Jewish communities of Moravia and the creation of a single organization to which they were to belong. Later, when he was Rabbi in Frankfurt, he was successful in his fight for an independent organization of the Orthodox Jewish communities in Germany. But his greatest contribution was in the field of education. He was a noted educational philosopher as well as practising pedagogue, working as headmaster of what was then a unique school. It was here that his influence was best felt, and that influence has, to some extent, continued till the present.

The greatest problem he had to face was how to integrate Jewish and European cultures, how to effect a relationship between sacred and secular studies in the school. This problem can be seen clearly only when the historical position of post-Emancipation European Jewry is known.

This Emancipation came suddenly and found Jewry unprepared. Whereas Christian society had been submitted to a long process of secularization and the change from a religious to a secular culture had taken hundreds of years to develop, the Jews had to make the change in a very few years. When the gates of the ghetto were opened, they found it difficult to accustom themselves to the cultural, social, free-thinking life of the countries in which they lived. They failed to grasp the character of such a culture, for it was alien to them, and acclimatization to the new way of life was tortuous. How was the continued existence of Judaism to be assured, in this new environment? The greatest stumbling-block to integration with the strange community was the Jewish religion itself which "ordained a different speech, a different dress, different food, different ways of rejoicing and mourning, and a different mode of thought. The Jew was far more Jewish than the Christian [was] Christian."

A continuation of Judaism as it had existed in the ghettos was now impossible and so there remained the question of how to adapt Judaism, if it was to continue to exist at all, to the new conditions. Reform circles tried to establish what they thought to be the essential Judaism, and chose the historical method as a means of distinguishing between what they declared was the "spiritual content" of Judaism and what had become sacred over the years merely through historical circumstance. They regarded as a disturbing element not

only the dress and language of the Jews, but also those positive statutes which became difficult of fulfillment in an alien environment and whose very right to existence seemed to them dubious. From here sprang their opposition to Jewish laws dealing with man's relationship to God, and their antagonism to the Talmud and the rabbinic interpretation of Judaism.

Hirsch chose a completely different solution. Like Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, he accepted the Torah as a fact as "real as heaven and earth," a creation analogous to the very creation of nature itself. This analogy of Torah and Nature was developed in Letter 18:

A word here concerning the true method of Torah-investigation. Two revelations are open before us, Nature—and Torah. In Nature all phenomena stand before us as indisputable facts, and we can only endeavor *a posteriori* to ascertain the law of each and the connection of all. Abstract demonstration of the truth or, rather, the probability of theoretic explanations of the facts of Nature, is an unnatural proceeding. The right method is to verify our assumptions by the known facts, and the highest attainable degree of certainty, is to say, "the facts agree with our assumption"—that is, all observed phenomena can be explained according to our theory. A single contradictory phenomenon will make our theory untenable. We must, therefore, acquire all possible knowledge concerning the object of our investigation, and know it, if possible, in its totality. If, however, all efforts should fail in disclosing the inner law and connection of phenomena revealed to us as facts of Nature, the facts remain nevertheless undeniable, and cannot be reasoned away. The same principles must be applied to the investigation of the Torah. In the Torah, as in Nature, God is the ultimate cause; in the Torah, as in Nature, no fact may be denied, even though the reason and the connection may not be comprehended; as in Nature, so in the Torah, the traces of divine wisdom must ever be sought for. Its ordinances must be accepted in their entirety as undeniable phenomena, and must be studied in accordance with their connection with each other, and the subject to which they relate. Our conjectures must be tested by their precepts, and our highest certainty here also can only be that everything stands in harmony with our theory. But as in Nature, the phenomena are recognized as facts, though their cause and relation to each other may not be understood, are independent of our investigation, and, rather, seem to be contrary to our understanding; in the same way the ordinances of the Torah must be law for us, even if we do not comprehend the reason and the purpose of a single one. Our fulfillment of the commandments must not depend upon our investigations.

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To this analogy of Nature and Torah must be added a second point essential to our understanding of the fundamentals of Hirsch's outlook: the relationship, as he saw it, between Judaism and History. We have mentioned that the Reformists of his time, such as Geiger, Frankel, and Holdheim, used the historical method as their means of adapting the Jewish faith to the post-Emancipation conditions of life. Hirsch opposed this historicization of Judaism, because he declined to see the essence of Judaism as subject to the historical process. Nathan Rottenstreich explains this position:

Hirsch thought it possible to save the (Judaic) legal order which is innately static and not easily altered, from the corrosive action of the historical process. The legal sphere is one where permanent features are more prominent than transient ones, where the enduring has sway over the mutable. The preference for law over doctrine and faith reflects a certain conception of the essence of Judaism . . . preference for Jewish Law reflects a tendency to withdraw the true essence of Judaism from the historical process, posing it incontrovertibly as divinely revealed and an eternal statute.<sup>4</sup>

In his critical survey of Samson Raphael Hirsch's *Nineteen Letters*, Geiger vehemently rejects the analogy of Torah and Nature. Hirsch surely cannot seriously believe, writes Geiger, that his apodictic statement that Torah is as factually real as heaven and earth, expresses an alternative theory to the historical proof. In this way, all religions could attribute absolute authority to the books on which they base their ideas, such as the Koran and the Gospels. How can one compare Torah to Nature when the latter is a lofty and incomprehensible creation which cannot be examined exhaustively, whose beginning and end are difficult to grasp, and which stands above the powers of man? On the other hand, Torah is a book intended solely for us and is subjected to the historical process; its age can be estimated accurately. Geiger concludes this paragraph of criticism with the words: "For goodness sake, what an error have we here! May God save Israel from such a spirit!"

In view of such a profound difference of opinion over so basic a matter, any further discussion between Hirsch and Geiger would have been fruitless and a compromise between the two views unlikely. In Hirsch's opinion, it was impossible to adjust Judaism to the spirit of the time; quite to the contrary, Torah was a criterion

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which helped to assess the spirit of the time and to reject that which failed to measure up to its divine spirit.

In order to develop more clearly his religious attitude and give it a firm theological basis, Hirsch considered it necessary to evaluate critically Mendelssohn's philosophy of Judaism. This was essential, since Mendelssohn's philosophy, accepted by many Western European Jews, appeared dangerous to Hirsch, and this danger became even more serious when Mendelssohn's ideas passed to his pupils and to those who continued his work. Hirsch's criticism of Mendelssohn was expressed in Letter 18 (pp. 189-190) in these words:

This commanding individual—who had not drawn his mental development from Judaism, who was great chiefly in philosophical disciplines, in metaphysics, and aesthetics, who treated the Bible only philologically and aesthetically, and did not build up Judaism as a science from itself, but merely defended it against political stupidity and pietistic Christian audacity, and who was personally an observant Jew—accomplished this much, that he showed the world and his brethren that it was possible to be a strictly religious Jew *and yet* to shine distinguished as the German Plato.

This "and yet" was decisive. His followers contented themselves with developing Bible study in the philologic-aesthetic sense, with studying the *Guide*, and with pursuing and spreading humanistic letters; but Judaism, Bible, and Talmud as Jewish science, were neglected. Even the most zealous study of the Bible was of no avail for the comprehension of Judaism, because it was not treated as the authoritative source of doctrine and instruction, but only as a beautiful poetic storehouse from which to draw rich supplies for the fancy and the imagination. The Talmud thus neglected, practical Judaism thus completely uncomprehended, it was but natural that the . . . abstract interpretation of Judaism, which had for a time been interrupted, again became prevalent and was carried to an extreme which threatened to destroy all Judaism.

Three things, then, are clear: 1) Hirsch found fault with Mendelssohn's main preoccupation with the general philosophies and his neglect of specific Jewish thought; 2) according to Hirsch, Mendelssohn developed Judaism not in an immanent spirit, but from an external viewpoint, from that of the general rationalist philosophies; 3) what really aroused Hirsch was Mendelssohn's excessive desire to excel as an eminent German philosopher, though also remaining a practising Jew.

Mendelssohn was one of the last philosophers to believe that it

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was possible to prove theological and metaphysical truths as rationally as mathematical ones—the difference being simply that metaphysical truth is more complicated and harder to grasp than the laws and theorems of mathematics. But metaphysical truth is equally universal and immutable. Therefore, he negated the existence of a specific faith for the Jewish religion, because faith, according to Mendelssohn, is based on intellect, and intellect is universal and common to all men. Thus, Hirsch's criticism of Mendelssohn for, as it were, ignoring Judaism and taking for his main task his work as a universal philosopher, becomes clear and understandable.

Whereas Mendelssohn preserved, as an historical legacy of Sinai, the validity of the practical commandments, which he regarded as the essence of Judaism, we cannot deny that he reduced the scope of Judaism by his insistence on them alone and by his neglect of its particular faith. This caused a dichotomy in his Jewish outlook, a split which became a danger for those who followed him. He was a Jew in that he complied with the commandments of the Torah, but he failed to be so as a philosopher, seeing himself as one with those philosophers who developed the outlook of the Enlightenment (*Haskalah*).

When speaking of Hirsch's attitude to the relationship of Jewish Torah to non-Jewish culture and of the contradictions revealed in such a comparison, we must also note Hirsch's biting criticism of Maimonides' attitude to this same problem as expressed in Letter 18 (pp. 181-3):

This great man, to whom and to whom alone we owe the preservation of practical Judaism to our time, is responsible—because he sought to reconcile Judaism with the difficulties which confronted it from without, instead of developing it creatively from within—for all the good and the evil which bless and afflict the heritage of the fathers. His peculiar mental tendency was Arabic-Greek, and his conception of the purpose of life the same. He entered into Judaism from without, bringing with him opinions of whose truth he had convinced himself from extraneous sources and—he reconciled. For him, too, self-perfection through the knowledge of truth was the highest aim; the practical he deemed subordinate. For him knowledge of God was the end, not the means; hence he devoted his intellectual powers to speculations upon the essence of Deity, and sought to bind Judaism to the results of his speculative investigations as to postulates of science or faith. The *mitzvot* became

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for him merely ladders, necessary only to conduct to knowledge or to protect against error, this latter often only the temporary and limited error of polytheism. *Mishpatim* became only rules of prudence, *mitzvot* as well; *Chukkim* rules of health, teaching right feeling, defending against the transitory errors of the time; *Edot* ordinances, designed to promote philosophical or other concepts; all this having no foundation in the eternal essence of things, not resulting from their eternal demand on me, or from my eternal purpose and task, no eternal symbolizing of an unchangeable idea, and not inclusive enough to form a basis for the totality of the commandments.

Two points in this criticism of Maimonides' *Guide* need special attention: 1) The argument that Maimonides did not creatively develop Judaism from its intrinsic qualities, but rather entered into it from without and superimposed upon it alien attitudes—in this case, the Aristotelian ideal of a contemplative life and perfection of man through meditation upon the concept of an abstract Godhead. 2) The second point springs from the first: if the contemplative life expresses the highest value, it is clear that the positive, practical side of Judaism, that is, fulfilling the commandments, is of secondary and subordinate importance. In other words, in Hirsch's opinion, there appears in the *Guide to the Perplexed* a kind of relativization of the commandments, whereas in Hirsch's view they have a supreme value and a validity which is eternal. This is the source of Hirsch's constant demand for developing Judaism immanently, from within itself (*sich selbst begreifendes Judentum*).

Hirsch, himself an admirer of his times' secular intellectual environment, did not object to Maimonides' and Mendelssohn's interest in external philosophies, but in the way they used them. The synthesis cannot be imposed from without, but, like a flower opening to the sun, can only be reached from within.

### III

But was Orthodox European Jewry ready, in the middle of the 19th century, to consider the possibility of a synthesis of any kind?

Heineman, in his introduction to the *Nineteen Letters*, sums up the antagonistic attitude of traditional Jewry to European culture in the pithy and well-aimed talmudic proverb, "I want neither your stings nor your honey." This saying epitomizes the rabbinical view-

point from the Middle Ages down to the time of S. R. Hirsch. The following are two typical facts that exemplify this approach. 1) In the last years of Rabbi Pinhas Hurwitz, author of *Hafla'ah* (died 1805), a group of Maskilim in Frankfurt began to draw up a scheme for a school of secular studies which would complement the traditional education received by the Jewish children of Frankfurt at the "Cheder" and "Talmud Torah." According to this scheme, the children would have lessons in German reading and writing, in arithmetic and in French; in all, two or three hours a day. Hurwitz and his followers were bitterly opposed to this scheme and as a final means of invalidating it placed a ban (excommunication) on the school. The local authorities intervened on behalf of the school which was to give a general education to Jewish children, and declared the ban of excommunication illegal, wishing thereby to force Rabbi Hurwitz into annulling it. The rabbi fought obstinately against this decision and complained to higher authorities about the interference of the Frankfurt Senate in internal Jewish affairs.<sup>5</sup> 2) Abraham Geiger relates an interesting episode from his childhood. On his becoming Bar Mitzvah in 1823, he delivered a discourse whose content was of a general ethical nature. It is typical of the spirit of his time that before speaking in German he had to preface his address with an introduction in Yiddish, and that when he began to speak German, many of the people present covered their faces in shame.<sup>6</sup>

This was the trend when Hirsch began his activities as a rabbi and writer. However, during the following decades the process of assimilation amongst German Jewry was developing rapidly, till by 1851, when Hirsch came to Frankfurt, only a small remnant of the old Orthodoxy still existed. Nonetheless, Hirsch, in spite of his zeal for European culture and his hope of attaining a synthesis of Jewish and European education in the meaning of *Torah im Derekh Eretz*, did not regard this ideal as a concession to the new liberalism. He advanced his ideas as an integral part of his general outlook on Judaism. His views on this point may be summarized as follows:

Unlike other religions, Judaism does not only aim at raising man's spirit, and directing it towards God at certain times and on certain occasions in life. Judaism is a way of life which aims at imprinting itself on every aspect of a man's life, deeds, and thought. In the new reality of the post-Emancipation era, Jews could isolate or disas-

sociate themselves from the prevailing intellectual climate, but had to recognize the new spiritual environment and face up to and evaluate it in accordance with the standards of the Torah. This evaluation demanded a profound understanding of what was going on in the world of thought around them. From this springs Hirsch's insistence on taking a part in the spiritual activity of the gentiles, and assessing their attainments according to the eternal criterion of the Torah. Moreover, divinity is revealed not only in the Torah, but also in nature and in history and so it becomes essential to know nature and through it the wonderful deeds of God, in the sense of "the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork." To understand the influence of God in the historical process, one must look for divine providence which is revealed in nature and in the history of mankind.

Still, we must admit that occasionally we find Hirsch weakens his position. He tended to explain his famous principle of *Torah Im Derekh Eretz* as making the sciences compulsory only as auxiliary studies for developing a clearer understanding of the Torah and Halakhah (*Hilfswissenschaft*). For example, in his commentary on the verse in Leviticus, Chap. 18, "Mine ordinances shall ye do, and My statutes shall ye keep, to walk therein, I am the Lord your God," Hirsch recalls the comment in *Torat Kohanim* that the words "to walk therein" are seemingly superfluous and so point to a special emphasis—"to walk therein": to make them the main aim, and not the subordinate one; that your preoccupation should be only in them; that you do not confuse other things with them; that you do not say, 'I have learned the wisdom of Israel, now I shall learn the wisdom of the world.' Therefore, it says 'to walk therein'—you are not permitted to release yourself from them at all." It seems as if this statement completely negates the study of worldly wisdom and so would refute Hirsch's attitude. But his ingenious exegesis to eliminate the apparent contradiction itself emphasizes Hirsch's perspective: if it says "that to do them is the main and not the subordinate aim," it follows that it was not the studying of foreign wisdom that was forbidden, only the making of them one's complete occupation. From this springs therefore, the desire to regard it as subsidiary, that is—as an aid to a profounder understanding of the Torah.

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This passage represents a rather narrow conception of the relationship between Torah and world culture, a conception that hardly appears representative of the man when we study the rest of his writings on this subject. Looking at his work as a whole, one can hardly doubt that it reflects a new emphasis on general culture as a vital complement to Judaism. His articles on this subject express a certain enthusiasm for the achievements of Western literature and culture in general, in a way not to be found amongst other traditional Jewish thinkers. Examples showing such a feeling can be taken from very many articles. One especially impressive is his speech given at the Hirsch School on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Schiller's birth.

Schiller's poetry, he said, is permeated with true idealism. His belief in liberty, fraternity, and the rule of justice springs from a definitely religious outlook. Hirsch wondered greatly at this and blessed Schiller in the traditional formula: "Blessed be He who allows other men to partake of His wisdom." He saw an echo of Judaism in Schiller's poetic work and rejoiced in him. It is very possible that his optimistic attitude to contemporary German idealism sprang from his appreciation of the post-Emancipation era, which he regarded as the "Beginning of Redemption" not only for Israel but also for all the peoples of the world.

There are interpreters of Hirsch who see him as a thinker whose main achievement was the rehabilitation of ancient Judaism rather than a novel and revolutionary interpretation of it. It all depends whether he is viewed against the background of medieval Judaism or more ancient periods of Jewish history. This is what Rabbi Grunfeld has to say on this point:

"If anything had been forced on the Jew, it was not his adherence to, but his exclusion from general culture and education. When at the beginning of the nineteenth century the Jews again found their way into the world of science and general education, they came in reality back to their own. For the estrangement was not organic but superimposed. It had by no means arisen from the essential character of Judaism. Just the contrary was true, as the golden eras of Jewish history in Babylonia and Spain had shown. In those eras, the highest talmudic and general scientific efficiency were combined. Apart from the enormous support which the study of Torah, Mish-

nah, and Talmud receives from secular knowledge, the whole task of the Jew as a servant of God in this world depends on his insight into the natural historical and social conditions around him.”<sup>7</sup>

This same point is made by Rabbi Weinberg in the article mentioned previously. In his opinion, at the time of the Tannaim, the Amoraim, the Gaonim of Babylon, and the Golden Age of Spain, Judaism embraced every facet of life including the free life of the intellect and spirit. The change came at the time of the Crusades. Only as a result of persecution, atrocities, and the restriction of liberty of movement did there appear spiritual isolation and segregation. So that Weinberg too does not regard Hirsch as a revolutionary innovator but as one who continued the tradition of Judaism from before the medieval period.

He also worked in the field of practical education, creating the archetype of the Modern Orthodox Jewish school. The founding of a Jewish school in Frankfurt was, in his eyes, his foremost task, and so he even postponed the building of a central synagogue till this school was built. The school was erected in 1853, and destroyed at the time of Hitler before the Second World War. It was of the “Realschule” type, with preparatory classes and a High School for girls. Statistics of the years 1903-1925 show little variation in the number of pupils, which was from 500 to 600.

Hirsch at first found it a heart-breaking task to persuade parents to send their children to him and the problem of the upkeep of the school worried him as much as the search for pupils. The aim of the school was to make an organic integration of Jewish religious studies with subjects that constituted the normal curriculum of “realistic” High Schools in Germany. Many people found this aim strange and so placed no faith in the possibility of success. The old-type Orthodox looked askance at the secular studies, whereas the assimilated Jews feared that too much emphasis on religious studies would weaken the secular studies. Hirsch literally had to go from house to house and beg the parents to send him their children. In the first year, only the less talented children were sent, for the parents did not want to risk their more able children at an experiment of which they had their doubts. In 1881, the school moved into its fine building donated by Karl von Rothschild. This building did not fall below the standard of other high schools of that time, and its furniture and equipment were of a high level. The Hebrew studies took two to

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three hours of the school day and the rest of the time was devoted to secular work. It was characteristic that the secular studies were also imbued with a Jewish spirit in the sense that there was an attempt to teach general subjects from a Jewish point of view. For instance, in German lessons, literature showing a biblical influence was chosen for study, such as the works of Schiller, and plays of Goethe like "Iphigenia" and "Faust," which were influenced by the Bible. Lessing's dramas reflecting his tolerant and broad outlook on matters of religion were also chosen for study. The integration of national consciousness and humanism in the works of Herder was especially valued. In non-German literature, too, preference was given to those works which portrayed Jewish characters, and the historical and social background that brought about this portrayal in various literatures was clearly demonstrated. The question of what was "the attitude of the Torah" towards various problems that arose in literature was frequently posed. This might seem to be of doubtful value aesthetically, but educationally it was of great importance to emphasize that the approach to such literary creations was Jewish and it was as Jews that the students read and evaluated them. History and science were taught from a religious point of view and divergences between science and the Orthodox Jewish attitude to the world were considered and became subjects for debates. The aim was not to teach the Jewish and secular subjects separately, but to show their inter-relationship. Thus the teacher tried to foster in his pupils a fine Jewish outlook based on a profound grasp of Judaism. This explains the fact that so many pupils remained Orthodox after leaving the school.

Pupils provide eye-witness accounts, published in various publications commemorating the Jubilees of the school, of Hirsch's work as headmaster. His lessons on Jewish subjects greatly impressed his pupils. They listened to his lessons on Torah with intense concentration and even awe. He was not content with explaining the written word but used chosen passages to illustrate the development of the spiritual world of Judaism. One of his pupils writes that, for a whole term, Hirsch taught no more than Chapter 12 of Exodus. The emphasis lay on quality and not quantity. The article of another pupil throws light on Hirsch's relations with his students. The pupil tells of visiting the headmaster as a representative of his class on a somewhat daring adventure. The pupils wanted to be freed from lessons

in the afternoon in order to go skating in the winter. The permission was indeed granted, but in order not to favor one class above another, Hirsch freed the whole school! In summer when the pupils went swimming in the river Main, they would visit him at his home beside the river for friendly chats, which shows his generous nature and his popularity with his pupils.

The teaching of Hebrew as a literary, not a spoken language, held an honored place in Hirsch's plans. He thought of Hebrew as *the* language for its innate value as a means of developing intelligence and exact thinking. Whereas the words of other languages give only an accidental connotation for the designated objects, Hebrew words, being derived from a relatively limited number of roots, reveal the creative spirit in which Hebrew apprehends the objects. Hebrew etymology, in his opinion, is the essence of ideas on man and nature. He held that Hebrew words are not the result of accidental, or biased impressions, aided by the senses. They are stamped with the lucid ideas incorporate in the words. Every Hebrew word, he believed, emits an explicit idea or conception of its object. He regarded the Hebrew language as an educational means more valuable than any other language. He thus gives many examples of Hebrew words derived from the same root or with similar sound which show their inner connection.

I have doubts as to whether this evaluation of the superiority of the Hebrew language as a means for thought-expression can stand up to criticism. There is no contemporary Jewish educationalist who claims that the study of Hebrew as a language has educational and intellectual values not to be obtained from the study of other languages. It is more reasonable to suppose that Hirsch attributed to the Hebrew language a mystical quality such as our sages believed in, that is, that "the Hebrew letters enlighten and give wisdom." This is only additional proof of Rabbi Weinberg's estimation of Hirsch as an extreme religious nationalist.

At Hirsch's school, Talmud was studied in the original, without abridgements or omissions, *Gemara* and Rashi were taught without *Tosafot*. I have a personal recollection, from the time when I was a pupil at the school, of Talmud being taught in one special place—the headmaster's library, where we sat around the table instead of at individual desks. Perhaps the idea was to raise the importance of this subject in the eyes of the students. The simplicity of the

