

CAN YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS?

1. Describe the tenure of Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch as Chief Rabbi of East Friesland.
2. Describe Rav Hirsch's efforts to obtaining equal rights for the Jews of the Austrian Empire.
3. Describe Rav Hirsch's general attitude towards the issue of Jews being granted equal rights.
4. Describe Rav Hirsch's position regarding secession from the general community.
5. How successful was Rav Hirsch in his efforts?

This and much more will be addressed in the ninth lecture of this series:

**"Austritt: Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch
and the Creation of Separate Orthodox Communities".**

To derive maximum benefit from this lecture, keep these questions in mind as you listen to the lecture and read through the outline. Go back to these questions once again at the end of the lecture and see how well you answer them.

PLEASE NOTE: This outline and source book were designed as a powerful tool to help you appreciate and understand the basis of Jewish History. Although the lectures can be listened to without the use of the outline, we advise you to read the outline to enhance your comprehension. Use it, as well, as a handy reference guide and for quick review.

This lecture is dedicated to the memory and *Li-ilui Nishmas*

וועלוויל בן ליב הלוי ע"ה

Mr. Walter Segaloff of blessed memory.

THE EPIC OF THE ETERNAL PEOPLE
Presented by Rabbi Shmuel Irons

Series XIX Lecture #9

AUSTRITT: RABBI SAMSON RAPHAEL HIRSCH AND THE CREATION
OF SEPARATE ORTHODOX COMMUNITIES

I. The Chief Rabbi of Moravia

A. Rabbi Hirsch mounted the steps leading up to the *Aron Kodesh* and began his remarks with the verse (Chronicles I 29:12), וְהָעֶשֶׂר וְהַכְּבוֹד מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱתָהּ מוֹשִׁל בְּכֹל, “Wealth and honor come from You, and You rule everything.” He continued, “True honor comes only from Hashem, and to whom does the King of the World wish to give honor and respect more than to *talmidei chachamim*, who learn Torah and keep its mitzvos and go in His ways.” In passionate tones he described how he was but dust under the feet of these Torah scholars and he promised the assembled rabbis that he would defer to them and stand by them at all times. In tears he said, “What am I, who am I, to sit in the place where such a distinguished succession of great men have sat before me?” Conspicuously absent from his remarks was the slightest mention of Mannheimer, whom normal protocol would have required that he thank. Mannheimer bore his humiliation in silence. After Rabbi Hirsch’s remarks, Rabbi Naphtali Banet of Schaffa, eldest of the *rabbonim* present and son of Rabbi Mordechai Banet, a predecessor as Chief Rabbi, ascended the podium and gave effusive thanks for the heartfelt words they had just heard. Addressing Rabbi Hirsch, he promised on his behalf and on behalf of the members of the elder generation of *rabbonim* present to assist him whenever he would request it. He apologized on their behalf for having assumed that their Chief Rabbi would turn out to be like many other German rabbis who did not fully sympathize with the older generation. Now they realized their mistake, he said, and in their name he asked forgiveness. It made a stirring sight: Rabbi Hirsch weeping because they had suspected him and the *rabbonim* weeping over their mistrust of him. **“Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch,” by Rabbi Eliyahu Meir Klugman, quoting Mr. Abraham Schischa of London who heard this account from Rabbi Yeshaya Furst, Rabbi of the Schiffshul in Vienna, who heard it from his father-in-law, Rabbi Shalom Kutna who was present at the time.**

B. When he (Rav Hirsch) spoke Shabbos morning, generally from nine o'clock until ten, both men and women came from all 12 synagogues in the city to hear him. Watching him stand on the pulpit as he spoke to the congregation, one could not help being captivated by his appearance, and in particular, by his striking facial expression. One could almost see the Divine Spirit hovering over his head, the fire burning in his heart and the sparks that sizzled and shot forth from his enormous eyes, revealing to everyone the intensity of feeling that lay cached in the depths of his soul. Every word aroused an insatiable desire in the listener's heart to elevate himself from the base material world and rise higher and higher to the loftiest spiritual planes. He stripped away the world's physical shell to reveal the sweet spiritual fruit concealed within. His words had the power of thunder and lightning, and against this backdrop he stood like a sentry at his post, battling for his faith. . . . Hearing him deride the world's vanity in tones of such animated fire, the listener could only shrink to an abject nonentity in his own eyes. Behold, the mighty hero with his giant axe smashing great boulders into puny pebbles. He showed no mercy to the cruel and heartless, who sought the pleasures of the material world without a thought to

the needs of others. Then, just as the listener's heart could no longer bear the anguish, the tone suddenly changed and he became a soothing poet gently feeling out a path to the delicate inner recesses of the listener's Jewish soul. His soft words were . . . full of tender love for every Jew, especially the poor and downtrodden, but more, for the whole of creation. At such moments, a sweet light shined from his eyes and his body swelled with the grace of his holy words. Totally free of personal vanity, he embodied the Jewish soul at the height of its glory and splendor.

When he touched on the history of the Jewish people, its prophets and poets, its scholars and teachers, on the ones who sacrificed their lives to sanctify Hashem's Name, and on the wars and triumphs of our people, his face shone with a radiant light. Before your eyes generations arose and flourished, and whole epochs of history passed before you. In tones of innocent reverence and awe, he evoked bold visions of the end of days, projecting in comforting terms the future, when humanity will eventually rise from the depths of exile, and prophetic justice and pristine faith in Hashem, which currently lies dormant in the inner recesses of the soul will emerge glorious to everlasting triumph. Such powerful ideals always aroused profound awe in the hearts of the audience. . . . His addresses were given without the aid of notes or sources and with no preparation at all. After each one I would go for a walk in the forest, away from the city, and try to retain in my soul as much of the fire I had just experienced as I could keep in my memory. **S.R.H. als Landsrabbiner von Nikolsburg, Israelit XLV (1904), p. 807 quoted in "Samson Raphael Hirsch," by Rabbi Eliyahu Meir Klugman, p. 324-325**

II. Emancipation

A. "You have sanctified the name of the L-rd, you have redeemed the glorious name of Israel from the disgrace attached to it by the world." Then R. Isaac Noah Mannheimer looked out at the throng, "You have wished these dead Jews should rest with you in your earth, in the same earth. Do not begrudge it that those who have fought the same battle with you, a hard battle, should *live* with you on the same earth, free and untroubled as yourselves. - Someday Christians and Jews will live with you on one soil, free and unhampered like yourselves." **Eulogy given by R. Isaac Noah Mannheimer, Preacher of the Kultusgemeinde of Vienna, at the funeral of the five martyrs who were killed by Austrian soldiers in a peaceful protest outside of Austria's parliament on March 13, 1848. Two of them were Jews. Quoted in Emancipation, Michael Goldfarb, p. 196**

B. But - for Yisrael - I bless emancipation only if, at the same time, the proper spirit awakens in Yisrael, a spirit that seeks to bring about the fulfillment of our mission quite independently of whether or not we are emancipated - ennobling us, implanting the spirit of Judaism in our minds and engendering a way of life that accords with this spirit. I bless emancipation only if Yisrael regards it not as the goal of its mission but merely as a new aspect of it, a new test, infinitely more difficult than the test of oppression. But I should grieve if Yisrael understood itself so little, had so little left of its own spirit, that it would welcome emancipation as the end of its *galus*, as the ultimate aim of its historic mission. I should grieve if Yisrael, by worshipping emancipation as just a means to a comfortable life and a greater opportunity to acquire wealth and pleasure, were to show that it had not understood the spirit of the Torah and had learned nothing from its *galus*. . . . We must become Jews, Jews in the true sense of the word, pervaded by the spirit of Torah, accepting Torah as the wellspring of our life. Then Judaism will gladly welcome emancipation as affording greater opportunities for accomplishing our task and realizing our ideal. **Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, The Nineteen Letters, Letter 16**

C. The spirit and fulfillment of the Torah, the only treasure it had rescued, supported it and enabled it to live amidst suffering and agony, ruin and the blows of unrestrained, savage fanaticism. . . . On every page of history, Yisrael has inscribed with its lifeblood that it venerates and loves only One G-d and that there are human values more sublime than possessions and the gratification of one's desires. . . . During the years of misery and contempt, our ideal could be attained only imperfectly; but when milder times beckon us to our goal - that every Jew and Jewess, through the example they provide in their own lives, should become priests of G-d and of genuine humanity - and this ideal and mission await us, can we still deplore our fate . . . ?

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III. Frankfurt am Main

A. . . . It is true that you presently hold a most important rabbinic post and stand at the pinnacle of the world; nonetheless, because you are a native of Germany, my acquaintance with you leads me to think that this post will be more suited and more agreeable to you than your present one. The people here are upright and peaceloving and I can assure you that they will respect you greatly and, more importantly, that you will be able to accomplish here a great deal. The material and the means exist here in ample measure, and all that is required is someone who can combine them together. My beloved Samson, you are that someone. **Letter to HaRav Hirsch from HaRav Gershon Josaphat, March 1851 (Adar II, 5611)**

B. . . . [I had received] an appeal from Frankfurt to go to the aid of a tiny group, whose very founding is, in my view, given the goals of my life, the most promising development that has occurred in Jewry within the last several decades. For now, for the first time, a Jewish community has been formed, which is openly and proudly dedicated to a most holy principle, in an area which had been successfully conquered by the forces of confusion. What can I do? This holy cause is the very one to which I have consecrated my life. . . . **Letter to the Minister of Religious Affairs of Moravia from HaRav Hirsch, May 14, 1851**

C. . . . My word to you is holy, but I gave them time, and they will ask you to release me from my pledge in the name of more than 50,000 souls. . . . **Letter of Rav Hirsch to the Israelitische Religionsgesellschaft, May 19, 1851**

IV. Austritt and the Jewish Community

A. Every Jewish community represents Israel within a limited geographical territory, and within this limited territory each Jewish community must discharge all the great tasks that have been set for Israel as a whole. For this purpose, but for this purpose only, the Jewish community is vested with the authority over the individual. **Collected Writings VI p. 40**

B. . . . Nevertheless, it is only through communal life that Judaism can attain the highest level of perfection. It is within the Jewish community as a collective unit that the Al-mighty wishes to be hallowed, וּנְקַדְשֵׁי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, and every Jewish child learns, in his very first profession of faith, that he has received the Torah from קהלת יעקב, the community of Jacob. **Collected Writings VI p. 13**

C. . . . It is true that even those Jewish sons who most openly deserted their calling and their irrevocable Jewish duty remain Jews nevertheless, just as, according to the basic principles of Judaism, even a baptized Jew remains a Jew. But a Jew can never form one religious community with baptized Jews, or regard as his own community or communal institutions [those that are] established and administrated by and for baptized Jews. By the same token he cannot accept as

his own a religious community or religious institutions that have been established and are managed by and for Reformers. The Orthodox and Reform do not belong together in spirit before G-d, and a tax penny paid under legal duress into a common treasury does not make a Jewish community. **Collected Writings VI p. 81**

D. Congregations . . . dominated by Reformists efforts are well advised to refrain from turning to civil authorities for assistance in coercing a religious minority into joining a quasi-secular body, which is fanatically opposed to its most sacred values. . . . Freedom of conscience is supposedly the greatest spiritual achievement of our age. Is there a more crass violation of the lofty concept of personal freedom than when someone is forced against his will to join a religious body that abuses every value he holds dear? . . . In many ways the modern Reform Movement seems to take its cue from the methods of the Spanish Inquisition, which trampled gleefully on every human right imaginable. A government that supports the Reform congregation in such coercion of the local Orthodox segment must be aware that its practice reduces the state to the demeaning role of a Torquemada, causing suffering of a similar, albeit spiritual, nature. **Collected Writings VIII p. 82**

E. From a psychological perspective, one can understand this unfortunate outcome. The majority saw secession, which was after all a public legal act, as personal and social estrangement from local Jewish society, to which they were bound by thousands of intricate social and functional ties. Some, among them, my father, *zatzal*, backed off because of the required declaration in a court of law, and asked themselves if they could honestly make an official declaration with the legal force of an oath, that they wished to withdraw for reasons of religious conscience, when, in fact, their only motive was to obey the ruling of their Rav. The factor that tipped the scales against withdrawal was the reaction of the small group of old Frankfurt residents led by Rabbi Moshe Mainz, a renowned *talmid chacham*, and his family. This group wanted to use the Law of Secession only as a means of bringing pressure to bear upon the Reform community to achieve concessions on various religious matters. In their mind, their association with the historical community (which in fact had ceased to exist as such) was stronger than their disgruntlement with the war the Reform community had been waging against Judaism for the previous 50 years. This group had no understanding of Rabbi Hirsch's ideals or his personality. To them he was a "hothead." In spite of his unimpeachable credentials as a *talmid chacham*, they could not forgive him (is not history full of small-minded people at every turn) if, in the course of his active life, his authoritative manner had offended some of them. **R. Yaakov Rosenheim, Zichronot, pp. 28-29**