

And They Shall Judge the People with True Judgment:

A Review of *Dan Shall Judge His People*

Introduction

Recently a booklet titled *Dan Shall Judge His People: 5 Essays on Torah im Derech Eretz and the Breuer Community Today*, written by George D. Frankel, has created much controversy in K'hal Adath Jeshurun circles and among all those who sympathize in whole or, in part, with the *shitah* of Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch.

In my view, this work is a most important one. Its central theme, that the Hirschian legacy is being abandoned by those historically and culturally attached to it, is of grave significance for *klal Yisroel*. And, if one believes, as does the present writer, that Rav Hirsch's philosophy is a unique acknowledgment of the universality of *Malchus Shomayim* and particularly relevant to our, post emancipation, post Enlightenment time, then it is a theme for much concern.

Nonetheless, the booklet is, unfortunately, not free of overstatement and outright error. The author brings considerable passion to his pen. This is understandable, as he is part of this venerable, Hirschian *kehillah* (K'hal Adath Jeshurun) and views its ideological wanderings with sadness. Yet, the price he pays for his eloquent passion is that, at times, more heat is generated than light. Hyperbole and a biting cynicism are occasionally his tools of choice. These are, of course, often employed by social critics but, I fear, they may be off -- putting to non -- initiates, weakening, in their eyes, the otherwise splendid points being made. At the end of the day, Hirschianism, as with any philosophy that makes claims to lasting value, is best presented with dignity, graciousness and the serenity of the Eternal.

Thus, I offer the following pages, first, as a commentary and analysis of what is, all in all, a very important work.

However, my goal in what follows goes far beyond excursus on *Dan Shall Judge His People*.

My personal stake in this reflective enterprise should be made clear at the outset. Between 1965 and 1967 I attended the Mesivta of Yeshiva Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch. At the time, buoyed by the exuberant arrogances and simplistic categorizations of youth, I appreciated little, while unconsciously absorbing much, in the environment. It was only in later years, when I found some of my earlier loyalties to be insufficient tools when applied to the totality of existence, that I was forced to return to the wisdom of Torah im Derech Eretz and its particular incarnation in the person and philosophy of Rabbiner Hirsch.

There is a crying need for an Orthodoxy, non – compromised by trendiness, firm in its condemnation of heresy and decadence but open to the beauty and bounty of creation. This Orthodoxy would be capable of sanctifying the L-rd's Name in its interactions with all Jews and all mankind. It is an Orthodoxy that many yearn for but today simply cannot find.

Our ranks are split between those who are deeply attached to modernity in thought and deed and those who are determined to disdain *Hashem's* universe as well as His great Love.

Over the years I have found that which I seek, not only in the writings of Rav Hirsch and his disciples. Able *talmidei chachomim* and *ovdei Hashem*, who follow paths essentially akin to Rav Hirsch may be found in various camps in *klal Yisroel*. They are to be found in yeshiva and even Hasidic environs where one would least expect to find them. Today many of them learn and teach in the Yeshiva University orbit.

This last observation will probably upset many who see themselves as part of the K'hal Adath Jeshurun world. Nonetheless, it is imperative that we examine ideas without the limitations of long standing prejudices, cliches and feuds. The very survival of this *derech* demands no less.

Just as in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Eastern European Jewry saw models and *shitos* that embodied an acceptance of the significance of G-d's creation, without calling them Torah im Derech Eretz – in the Alter of Kelem's *Talmud Torah* or

Rav Yitzchok Yaakov Reines's *Torah Vo-Daas* – so too must Hirschians today admit the presence of the essential *shitah* of Rav Hirsch wherever it be found.

At day's end, the ultimate truths of existence must, *ipso facto*, embrace not only *Hashem's* revelation but creation as well. For this reason alone, Torah im Derech Eretz must survive. But there were and are so many other reasons as well – dealing with the sacred imperatives of *kiddush Hashem* and our concomitant calling to be a “kingdom of Priests” and a “light unto the nations.”

The Torah im Derech Eretz *shitah* is particularly well suited to achieve its goals at present. For the past half century, Hirschians have been exposed to and benefited from the yeshiva and Hasidic worlds. Current standards of Torah study, knowledge and observance are far higher now than in the Frankfurt of the pre - war eras. Thus, a contemporary Torah im Derech Eretz, if implemented, would, adding the strengths of these other worlds, be that much closer to Rav Hirsch's ideals.

Furthermore, as Rav Hirsch frequently noted, the emancipation has thrust us unto the world stage. As he wrote, “Jews pervaded by a sense of the Torah, will gladly welcome emancipation as affording greater opportunities for accomplishing our task and realizing our ideal.”¹ We may no longer stand, terrified in a corner, yearning with Snagalpuss, to “exit, (either ‘stage left’ or ‘stage right’) running all the way.” Thus, the sacred duties imposed on our people by Torah im Derech Eretz are ripe for realization in a civilization that regards Jews as equal participants.

This brings us to my second motivation for writing this booklet. Despite the historic, nostalgic and cultural interweaving of Rav Hirsch and the K'hal Adath Jeshurun, the essential drama of Torah im Derech Eretz in our time is that of a particular *derech* in *avodas Hashem* and its accessibility to Torah Jewry today.

This is the lasting question. The deepest truths of Torah and the world and the various means of our Creator's service, are matters that will be part of our national agenda long after the specific forms and environments that cloaked them will have vanished from the earth.

¹ Rabbi S. R. Hirsch, *The Nineteen Letters*, translated by Karin Paritsky, revised with a comprehensive commentary by Joseph Elias (Jerusalem/New York: Feldheim, 1995) p. 227

Our loyalties are to essences. Forms are of importance for so long as they are suitable means to recalling and clarifying these essences to finite man.

The discussion of Mr. Frankel's booklet and related subjects to follow is interested in far more than the state of Hirschianism in K'hal Adath Jeshurun. It seeks to evaluate the state of Torah im Derech Eretz (even if it be called Torah Umadda!) in general, in all segments of Torah Jewry.

Many of the views expressed herein and their particular combination will not be easily fit into the current categories available amongst Torah Jews.. Some readers may find the assaults on their sacred cows to follow to be so painful that they will be tempted to disregard the core messages of this work. That would be most unfortunate.

It is my hope and prayer that future generations will still find a Torah im Derech Eretz worthy of the name. Primarily, it is to further this possibility that the following pages are presented.

(The original Frankel booklet is divided into five parts. Their arguments are not necessarily linked. We will, therefore, examine each individually.

I have chosen to follow the booklet's author in using common "ashkenaz" transliteration. It preserves the original informal style and maintains a conversational sense, both, hopefully, conducive to communication.

Footnotes have been kept to a minimum.

The section immediately following deals with sociological analysis and may stretch a bit too far afield. Nevertheless, it does touch on some of the practical difficulties inherent in implementing Torah im Derech Eretz and may be viewed from that perspective.)

Torah im Derech Eretz – A Solution for What Ails Us?

The first section of *Dan Shall Judge His People* deals with the much spoken about subject of "children at risk." This phrase refers to the fact, now admitted (however belatedly – we are not easily given to honest introspection as a community!) in all yeshiva/Hasidic circles, of many boys (and some girls) that have, of late, responded negatively to the standard, "Torah only" yeshiva system. These youngsters either reject

Torah altogether or, inhabit a twilight realm of decadence, sadness, confusion and estrangement.

(I have chosen to deal with yeshiva and Hasidic worlds as one. It is true that they may differ as to what extent they allow study of and participation in the world. However, philosophically they view these studies and participations as *b'deved* concessions. Their common ideal, economics permitting, is absolute immersion in explicit Torah all of one's days.)

The author contends that, despite much analysis of this tragic development in "right wing" Orthodox circles, there has been a failure to note one of its major reasons. "... (T)he souls of these youth cry out for *Torah im Derech Eretz*, but because they have not been presented with the options -- intellectual or occupational -- that *Torah im Derech Eretz* affords, they act out in a socially unacceptable manner." (p. 2)

Further, the author tells us that all attempts, thus far, to remedy this situation by creating yeshivas whose days are shorter or whose subject matter is less demanding, perhaps with a larger vocational focus, exhibit a "fatal flaw" by viewing the non -- fulltime learner as a weaker or *b'deved talmid*. (p. 3)

Torah im Derech Eretz , by postulating the exalted nature of the working man and other human endeavors in G-d's plan for individual and communal perfection, could serve to remove all stigma from the student not suited to long hours of Torah *b'iyun*. This would allow all *talmidim* to experience their own unique *chashivus* in Hashem's eyes and find joy and dignity in His service.

We can all readily grant that the standard yeshiva day, be it Misnagdic or Hasidic, is not for everyone. The hours are long and unless one is an adept or, at least, capable Talmudist, are sure to be painful.

In all mainstream yeshivas of the charedi world, non -- Talmudic areas of Torah are de-emphasized, while academic Judaica (Jewish history, Hebrew or Yiddish language and literature etc.) is almost non – existent.

In addition, it is true, as the author writes, "secular studies are gone about in a limited and perfunctory manner."

And, there is almost no room made for arts, sports and other forms of creativity.

Although, we may bemoan this situation for many reasons, the question before us now is a limited one -- Has this “closed” curriculum and approach created the “at risk” student of recent decades?

It is unclear whether the author sees Modern Orthodoxy as offering a Hirschian educational system. It would seem, at first glance, that the MO high school system is identical with the author’s ideal of “expos(ing)” the *talmid* “to the widest range of disciplines” in order that he “discover where his natural interests lie.” (p. 2)

If my reading of our author is correct, then it would be beneficial to compare the incidence of “drop out” and “at risk” boys in the MO world to that of the *charedi* world.

Are there, in fact, more “at riskers” in the “right wing” yeshivas than in their more “modern” counterparts?

In the lack of a formal comparison study we have nothing to guide us here except observations. Nonetheless, I have taught Talmud in several Modern Orthodox High Schools (and visited all of them in the New York area) for over a quarter of a century (while living in the *charedi* world) and will use my personal experience as the bases for the following observations.

1 – Let us grant for argument’s sake, that there are more boys from the traditional yeshiva world who are involved in decadent behavior in an *openly rebellious* fashion. However, this may be due to the fact that Modern Orthodox adolescents, in addition to having more expanded secular departments, sports and (in some limited venues) cultural opportunities, are also allowed far greater freedom in their recreation time activities and summer camps to pursue sexual mingling, television, movies, sports, popular music (not to equate morally all the foregoing!) without any stigma attached to his actions. In other words, many more activities put one outside the pale in the Yeshiva and Hasidic worlds. (For the moment it is irrelevant whether these standards are appropriate.) Hence, there may be more *overt* “drop outs” and failures in the latter worlds.

2 – Nonetheless, I am far from convinced that this is true. In fact, whole schools and programs are today dedicated to “drop outs” and “at riskers” from the MO world. Are they a greater or lesser percentage of the total population?

3 – Of greatest significance, though, is the fact that normative behavior in the “open” and closed worlds is also totally different. The average lad in Yeshiva/Hasidic worlds is clearly committed to *halachah* and reasonably knowledgeable in Torah. The average MO boy is not. There is simply no comparison between the two worlds when measured by any objective standard of Torah and *mitzvos*.

This is a painful truth, I know. Personally, I wish it were not so, as it argues strongly against the feasibility of Torah im Derech Eretz and, the similar *shitah* of Torah Umadda. I have struggled against drawing these conclusions. They are, sadly, unavoidable.

(After high school, in Israel, many MO youth experience a flowering of Torah and *mitzvos*. This is due to the influence of the Israeli, essentially *chardal*, yeshivas and the boys exposure to their vibrant Torah lifestyles. It has little to do with their experience in American high schools.)

This is not to say that there aren't “*masmidim* tracks” in places like MTA or HALB that will have a handful (and only a handful) of boys that can compete with those in Mir/Chaim Berlin or Belz/Skver. We are describing the norm. As far as the norm goes there is no comparison whatsoever. The “open schools” are inferior in learning, davening, *shmiras ha – mitzvos* and loyalty to *ikrei emunah*.²

4 – The frustrations of non - analytical and/or academic types in any 8/10 hour - a - day educational system, be it MO, Yeshiva or Hasidic is obvious and demands a solution. However, it is the same problem whether one switches to secular studies at 1 o'clock or 3 or 4 or never. We desperately need vocationally based *mosdos* with shorter and less complex learning for a significant (I'd say about 15 %) of the population. But, no one provides this, whether HAFTR or Kasho.

² This is the most powerful argument against these shitas of Torah im Derech Eretz and Torah Umadda. Do they really work? Can they really work? Is it possible to have a student body, open to the depths of knowledge, beauty and human experience while simultaneously keeping out the heretical and the decadent and achieving levels of Torah proficiency and G-d centered piety to equal that of the Eastern European oriented mosdos? Until this is achieved all ideological debates will ring hollow. When seeking reasons for those who raised in the KAJ but today would shun its basic beliefs it is this experiential argument that is certainly an important factor.

In sum, there may be more boys on the “right” who “bottom out” (or are “at risk”) in adolescence, than in the “open world.” However, this itself is far from certain. What is certain is that the normative behavior and knowledge of the *charedim* is vastly superior. Lastly, the source of most “at risk” boys’ problems – that they are placed in academically based institutions -- is not addressed in so – called “open” yeshivas.

Yet, having said all the above and, therefore, dissenting from the major thrust of Mr. Frankel’s argument regards the “at risk” problem, I feel that at some deeper level he has touched on a truth. Believing, as I do, that G-d is the Creator of the world and of all humanity, I cannot escape the sense that a *shitah*, which assents to and embraces all of G-d’s creation will produce a better *talmid* of greater *shlaimus* in his service of *Hashem*.

This will be difficult to know, of course, until the day when we will be worthy of seeing Torah im Derech Eretz *mosdos* in operation. However, the ignorance of *Hashem*’s worlds and its peoples in the “Torah only” worlds seem to be at variance with the Glory of G-d and the true extent of His Divine Love. On the other hand, given the low standards of Torah, prayer, halachic commitment and Torah beliefs in the “open” world, we must, I fear, wait a bit to see this ideal realized.

Lastly, it is possible that I have completely misread the author and that he never meant to compare the MO high school system to the more right yeshivas. Maybe he meant to compare the “closed yeshivas” to a Hirschian yeshiva, not yet born. If that is the case then I have no argument with his analysis. What a true Hirschian yeshiva would provide is the philosophical underpinning needed for the non – Talmudic boy to see himself as equal in *Hashem*’s eyes to his *beis medrash* counterpart., thus eliminating the negative self image of “at riskers.”

(The difference between this hypothetical yeshiva – which the noted Hirschian, Rabbi Shelomoh Danziger described in 1965, as a “goal which has not been achieved to date”³ -and even the most praiseworthy products of Modern Orthodoxy would be the decided lack of passion, reverence and warmth towards Torah and *mitzvos* in the latter *mosdos*. There are many reasons for this, including the lack of communal support system

³ Shelomoh Eliezer Danziger, “The Relevance of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch In Our Time,” in *Jewish Observer*, (June, 1965) p. 20

of *ernskeit* and reverence, a near vacuum of the study of *sifrei yirah* and easy involvement in the surrounding popular culture. However, this is a subject for another day.)

TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ and TORAH UMADDA

The second chapter of DSJHP is, to my mind, one of its most obvious and important. Titled “Time to End the Feud” it calls upon the Breuer’s *kehilah*, as well as Hirschians everywhere, to view Yeshiva University as their ideological brother and the Rabbonim and Rebbeim produced therein as ideal to staff Hirschian *mosdos*. (p. 6)

This, to me, is, by and large, obvious. There is no difference between the notions of TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ and Torah Umadda. The real Hirschian will find in the ideas expressed by the likes of Rav Soloveichik and (*lb’l*) Rabbi Norman Lamm, Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, as well as those of the lesser known luminaries such as Rabbi Shalom Carmy, Rabbi David Shatz and so on, deep thinkers, profound students of Torah, all of whom have contributed much to the deeper understanding of the sources, meaning and implementation of TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ or TORAH UMADDA or whatever name one chooses.

And, granted that the masses of YUers may have once lacked fealty to the totality of *halachah*, this is no longer true today, as anyone familiar with the institution can well testify. YU is currently comprised of hundreds of *talmidim*, who put long hours into learning *b’iyun* and whose halachic loyalty is unquestionable. There are some exceptions to this, of course. They remain exceptions.

Does this mean that YU has not made tragic errors? Of course not. I remain convinced that the reluctance to fight, in the least, over the issue of sexual perversion clubs was an inexcusable *chillul Hashem*. And, publicly honoring Jews disloyal to Torah may, also, well be questioned. (Keep in mind, though, that this is common practice at many Yeshiva/Hasidic dinners as well. And keep in mind that those communities have

also dishonored the Creator's Name due to illegal practices generated by their economic irresponsibility.⁴)

Mr. Frankel cites Rav Schwab z'l as having believed that YU was inherently flawed due to its "compartmentalization" and its accepting some parts of Rav Hirsch's *shitah* while rejecting others.

The first point is true. Little or no effort is made at YU to instruct the students as to how to pursue *madda* in a *l'shem Shamiyim* fashion. This is very sad and would seem to indicate that, to a large extent, the enterprise is far from really serious.

However, no other yeshiva in America has done this, including YRSRH!

Mr. Frankel also quotes Rav Schwab as having argued that YU is guilty of having "performed a palginon diburon" on Rav Hirsch, in that they accepted his philosophy of *Torah im Derech Eretz* but rejected that other pillar of Hirschian thought, *Austritt*. (p. 8)

To which Mr. Frankel powerfully replies, by pointing out that the contemporary Breuer community reject *TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ* while accepting *Austritt*! (p. 9)

One might add, although given his own tastes we will probably not hear this from Mr. Frankel, the Breuer's community has likewise rejected Rav Hirsch's clearly held opposition to Zionism. There is no discussion anywhere today in KAJ circles that Rav Hirsch was opposed to the very idea of Zionism, namely, the attempt to pursue pre-Messianic, Jewish sovereignty over the Holy Land by this worldly means, military, political and the like. Basically, the self evident truth is that KAJ is subservient to the world view of the Agudah, even when that view strays from its own tradition, either to the left or the right.

There are, however, some lingering problems with *TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ* adherents embracing YU. One, are the increasingly distressing signs being sent out by the MO left that their infatuation with trendy terms such as "pluralism" and "tolerance" has led them to reject truth altogether. Indeed, one leading MO theorist of the far left has for decades offered a theology that explicitly rejects the binding nature of Torah. Sadly, the

⁴ Of course, given their prior assumptions about no secular education, early marriage and no contraception, they are forced into this corner. Could they relinquish these assumptions and still be who they are? Could they live in the real poverty that these assumptions should condemn them to? All intriguing questions for a different time and place.

incoming president of YU has been quoted as embracing, in different formats, the “three branches of Judaism are all true” model.

Perhaps, though, the most distressing aspect of TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ and YU rapprochement (although this would not argue against it, it would simply limit our happiness over its happening) of is that YU is, in truth, not a TORAH UMADDA institution. Despite lip service paid to this credo in the institution’s literature and Rabbi Lamm’s very real attempts to articulate its beliefs, the rebbeim and student body, generally, do not believe in it or, at best, are apathetic to it.

If we define TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ/TORAH UMADDA as a belief in pursuing higher education because society requires it in order to earn a living and support a family in a dignified manner then YU is clearly pursuing TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ -- as are many yeshiva boys in Baltimore and elsewhere.

However, if we define TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ/TORAH UMADDA as a belief that creation has significance; that, therefore, pursuit of beauty, knowledge and experience is worthwhile in the *Ribbono shel Olam*’s eyes and, further, our efforts towards the Good both spiritually and materially be directed towards all mankind, then there are very few YU *rabbeim* and talmidim that are aligned with TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ/TORAH UMADDA. (Of course, those influenced by Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein decidedly are. Sadly, tough, there are not many others.)

In conclusion (leaving aside the “pluralism” problem – which is still only the province of a distinct minority) there is nothing in YU that is anti - basic *frumkeit* (*chas v’sholem!*) or, anti - TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ (as there is in Lakewood, for example) and therefore TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ animosity towards YU is misplaced.

However, if we think that YU embodies TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ, we are sadly mistaken. As one of the most devoted Hirschians of our time, Rabbi Danziger once wrote, “A curriculum of Torah study and halachic observance, plus the pursuit of general knowledge and esthetic values, does not necessarily a Hirschian make, not even de facto. This is merely the Hirschian curriculum. It is only when the curriculum is motivated and inspired by the unifying philisophico-religious idealism, the soaring spirit and the yiras Shamayim that radiate from Rav Hirsch’s writings that one becomes a Hirschian.”⁵

⁵ Rabbi Danziger, Letters, (Winter 5760/ 1999) p.81

YU has never devoted much energy to this agenda. I fear that one of the reasons is (similar to the situation that exists and has existed in Breuers) that there are few qualified *maggidei shiur*, *menahlim* and/or *mashgichim* that are devoted to it. Thus, the tragedy of YSRSRH is strikingly similar to that of YU. As opposed to the Hirschian ideal where even the secular faculty is to be imbued with TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ, the reality is that even the *maggidei shiur* have little, if any, connection to it.

YU, in some circles, is aware of this fact. Those who bemoan YU's "turn to the right" are dimly acknowledging that the *talmidim's* spiritual guides are, in essence, Torah-only-ites who believe in Zionism or dress "*modernish*" or allow secular studies for *parnosah* needs. However, these leftist critics of YU carry much other baggage – about which more later.

TORAH IM DERECH ERETZrs, Organized Heresy and the Not – Yet - *Frum*

The longest chapter in Mr. Frankel's work deals with the subject of *Austritt*. He admits that this was a major element of Rav Hirsch's world view. Yet, he feels that the time has come to abandon it.

What is *Austritt* and why is our author so passionately opposed to it?

In its limited sense, *Austritt* refers to Rav Hirsch's lifelong devotion to separating (legally, financially and in the eyes of the public) Orthodox communities from those of non – Orthodox streams. In 19th century Germany all "members of a faith" belonged legally to that faith and were forced, via taxation, to contribute to it. Thus, Orthodox Jews were compelled to support non – Orthodox religious and communal institutions. Rav Hirsch claimed that this type of communal participation was an implicit recognition of the legitimacy of heretical beliefs. In 1876 the Prussian Parliament passed the Law of Secession that allowed groups of Jews to form their own communities based on Torah beliefs.

In contemporary America this approach has been translated into institutional separation of Orthodoxy from “umbrella organizations” that include the Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist movements.

Today, the leading umbrella organization, the Synagogue Council of America, no longer exists. The few remaining institutional “*Austritt* type questions” deal with communal relations with the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, campus Hillel and the like, that recognize multiple “renderings” of Judaism.

The question, though, is often raised in other contexts, such as teaching Torah in non - Orthodox settings, allowing non - Orthodox to address Orthodox groups, what relation Orthodoxy should have to non - Orthodox Jewish educational efforts such as Camp Ramah and Solomon Schechter schools.

And, if I read Mr. Frankel correctly, he extends this question to one’s general openness or receptivity towards non - Orthodox Jews in general.

This is a long list of issues, going far beyond the usual “Does participation in the *gemeinde* imply recognition of heretical beliefs?” question of the 1870s

Let us examine, first, the author’s arguments against *Austritt*.

Mr. Frankel’s first argument against *Austritt* is difficult to understand. It is also very dangerous, if meant literally, which I cannot believe that it is!

He argues, following a quote from “My Rebbe Avi Weiss shlito” that “after the Holocaust” non - believing Jews are “also holy.” (p. 15)

Our author posits that, after the Holocaust, we (the Orthodox) have no right to tell a non -Orthodox Jew that “you are not legitimate because your level of observance does not live up to our standards, or your view of halachah is more elastic than ours, or your understanding of revelation more metaphorical.” (p. 15)

It was this type of rhetoric that I was referring to earlier regarding the grave dangers posed by the radical “Orthodox” left’s embrace of trendy, modernist clichés.

What is completely missing in this analysis is the difference between the subjective nature of G-d’s judgment of individual Jews due to mitigating circumstances, acting in concert with His great charity and the objective truths of existence.

Re the first point -- Who has ever suggested that “a Jew is not legitimate”? What does the phrase mean?

A Jew is a Jew, forever. No one asserts that a Jew can stop being a Jew.

And, all Jews are holy and were holy, even before the Holocaust.

However, there are presentations of Judaism, namely Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist which are illegitimate.

This does not mean there are no positive results from these movements or that many well meaning people do not come closer to G-d through them. These are, however, *b'deved* considerations and in no way relate to the objective falsity of their doctrines. In the words of Rabbi Norman Lamm regards non – Orthodox groups, “spiritual dignity” (is not) “identical with Jewish *legitimacy*.”⁶

Re the second point -- G-d's revelation is forever. It establishes objective standards of conduct. Therefore a “level of observance” may very well be illegitimate, if it falls below minimum halachic standards. It is legitimate if it is subject to the halachic process. Reform and Conservative leaders will be the first to admit that they are not bound by halachah. Thus, their “level of observance” is frequently illegitimate.

Circumstances and suffering may cause G-d and (should cause us) to view the subjective error of a Jew, who has fallen below minimum standards of halachah, in a merciful fashion. That does not in ANY WAY lessen the objective error of those who deny or defy Torah.

What are “elastic standards of halachah”? Are they part of the halachic process? If not, they are not legitimate. Do they assent to its binding nature? If not, they are based on the heresy of denying the Oral Law.

Re point three -- May a Jew believe that “revelation is “more metaphorical”? What does that mean? We are in the area of *ikkrei emunah*. Sloppiness of thought and expression simply will not do. Our boundaries and thoughts must be as clear as the Torah demands of us.

⁶ Norman Lamm, “Seventy Faces,” *Moment*, June 1986, p 24 [italics in original]

G-d spoke at Sinai. His words were understood by *klal Yisroel* and Moshe. The words were clear and are those of our Torah. This is the absolutely Divine Torah that binds every Jew for eternity.

Where is the “metaphor”? Isn’t the position of the Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist movements that this revelation did not take place, either in whole or in part? We cannot waltz around the fact that their belief system is heretical. It rejects the core belief of Judaism – Torah from Heaven.

Actually, this was the rationale of *Austritt*. It forbid institutional, that is, symbolic recognition. It in no way shunned the Jew ensnared by errant doctrines as an individual.⁷

I am sure that Mr. Frankel’s *ahavas Yisroel* led to a certain looseness of expression here.

In any event, this argument of *limud zechus*, even if properly expressed, does not defeat *Austritt*. It simply calls upon *Austritt*’s advocates to distinguish between blameless Jews and their, however innocently held, heretical beliefs.

As a second argument, the author claims that Reform today is heading towards more Jewish practice, not less.

This plunges us into a knotty halachic and hashkafic problem. What is the value of *mitzvos*, performed by those who have been taught to deny their Divine authorship?

Let us assume that G-d’s great mercy view these deeds favorably.

Further, it seems safe to say that most Americans and American Jews are capable of much superficiality of thought. Thus, to many Reform and Conservative Jews and even their leaders, the question of Divine Authorship is glossed over. Thus, when they turn to Torah and *mitzvos* the natural spiritual yearnings of the Jewish soul surface and they find the Divine in their practices.

Whether or not, in the long run, *klal Yisroel* will benefit from increased *mitzvah* observance amongst these groups is a complex question. Will it lead them further? Will it take them as far as they could go? Would more Jews turn to Torah Judaism if these options didn’t exist? The questions go on and on. Easy answers are not simply arrived at.

⁷ See in this regard, Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Collected Writings, Volume VI, Jewish Communal Life and Independent Orthodoxy* (New York/Jerusalem; Feldheim: 1990) pp.206 - 7

All *Austritt* would maintain, however, is that we remain institutionally distinct from those who deny Torah. To what extent we may regard these heretical movements as helpful half houses is another matter altogether.

Lastly, our author claims that at a time when the Jewish people are experiencing external threats, we “must pull together.”

Of course, we should, via charity, care, concern and political/social activism reach out to and protect our fellow Jews and, indeed, all humanity from harm. BUT – Does this mean we should recognize heretical movements, beliefs or practices?

Mr. Frankel is not done, though, with *Austritt*. He sees it as “positively deleterious to the fortunes of our kehillah.”

Why?

“Austritt puts us on the wrong side of the Israel question.”

This is a very strange assertion. The author favors pro - Zionism because, “Torah im Derech Eretz views favorably man’s efforts to create a better world.” (p. 20) That assertion is, doubtless, true. What is far from clear is whether Zionism has helped create a better world? What it has clearly done is forced the Jewish people, world wide, into conflict with not only the Islamic world, not only the Third World but, as times goes on, and the denial to the Palestinians of self determination drags on, it has brought us into conflict with almost the entirety of mankind.

It has yielded over three quarters of a century of war and suffering for the Jewish people.

On a deeper level, the dubious morality of Zionism’s conquests and methods has stripped us of the role of moral paragon, so essential to fulfilling our proper role of *kiddush Hashem* and being a “light unto the nations” which figures so prominently in the Hirschian understanding of our role in *golus*.

Pressing yet further, Zionism (and certainly its militant brands so in vogue in Modern Orthodox circles) yields the very ghettoization that Mr. Frankel so correctly laments. It plunges our youth into a stance of eternal victimhood and relentlessly demonizes all Gentiles. It makes Modern Orthodoxy, which has (or had) the potential to break free of the anti - Gentilism that pervades the *charedi* world, into the same purveyors of disdain and fear.

This is a far cry from the Hirschian ideal of Jewry, emancipated from the ghetto, inspiring mankind, with morality and kindness as its trademarks.

L'havdil, there are Mennonites today who have left their own particular ghetto without weakening their faith. They serve mankind as peacemakers and bringers of kindness throughout the world. They may be found in the hills of the Balkans and the streets of Belfast and, yes, the impoverished hovels of Gaza City and Hebron striving to bring peace and love to all. Is that not a more noble image than that of bulldozing homes in Jenin?

The lack of a formal political power structure, which Rav Hirsch saw as an essential part of the *golus* process, frees us of the myriad cruelties and moral compromises that nationalist constructs bring. Is it, in essence, a test to see how well we spread G-d's Law and Love throughout the globe.

This is by no means a retreating from the world. The sufferings of mankind become ours. The decadences unleashed upon the world over recent centuries are to be combated by us. We are to filter, for ourselves and others, the good from the bad in the humanistic endeavors of the past two hundred years.

Had we followed this traditional Jewish agenda, who knows where *klal Yisroel* and the Hirschian *shitah* would be today? Instead, our self appointed representatives are locked in a mortal struggle with the Palestinian people and most of the world's nations..

(I grant that it is open to debate what Rav Hirsch would have held regarding our approach to the state once it had been created in defiance of the *gzeiras golus*, as he understood it. Would he have called for a dismantling of the state? Agreed to a two state solution as a fall back position? Or perhaps he would have had some other view? My

suspicion is that, given his humanism, he would have found it difficult to accept a Jewish state that remained deaf to a large indigenous population's pleas for self determination.)

The Zionism of the old Brit Shalom and Ichud movements was, of course, a vastly different matter. It recognized that the land was not "without a people" and tried to deal morally with the overwhelmingly, majority population that was experiencing nationalist birth pangs at the same time.

Conceivably, these forms of Zionism – given their willingness to limit immigration and shunning of military means -- might even be in keeping with the straightforward reading of the "three oaths" that Rav Hirsch adopts in many places in his writings.

But, who amongst the Modern Orthodox, except for tiny factions in groups such as Oz Veshalom has even heard of, let alone considered, these alternative, humanistic forms of Zionism?

In sum, which side of the Zionist question, is more in keeping with Hirschianism, in its all embracing humanism and acceptance of the *gzeirah* and tasks of *golus*?

Why else is *Austritt* wrong?

"It separates us from our natural allies the Modern Orthodox."

As I have written earlier, I agree that the KAJ ostracization of YU is mistaken. It is as wrong to place YU beyond the pale today as it would have been to place the Wuerzburger Rov or Rabbi Moshe Mainz in the aftermath of 1876.

Yet, a note of caution is here required. Modern Orthodoxy is far from a monolith. There are thousands of YU *talmidim*, past and present whose *frumkeit* credentials are impeccable. There are others – even today when YU is so vastly improved as to be unrecognizable to those who knew it in earlier times – whose behavior leaves much to be desired. Whether these *talmidim* should be in Yeshiva is a pragmatic question of *kiruv* versus "bad influence" considerations. The ranks of Modern Orthodoxy harbors many Jews whose allegiances are vague and one must exercise caution in allowing too much mingling with them, especially among the young and impressionable.

In addition, the left of Modern Orthodox ideologues tread, at times close to borders that separate faith from heresy. This, too, must be borne in mind when the

legitimate leaders and adherents of YU and TORAH UMADDA are accepted into the Hirschian world view.

This brings us to Mr. Frankel's final assault on Austritt.

"Torah im Derech Eretz asks of a man that he be open to and receptive to the positive aspects of secular life." (p. 21)

So far, so good.

"Austritt asks of a man that he be closed to all forms of Judaism not consistent with orthodoxy." (p. 21)

Yes. Hopefully!

The "positive aspects of secular life" that Rav Hirsch welcomed and would have us welcome ARE consistent with Orthodoxy. Isn't that precisely the point? We are to filter out those elements that are in conflict with Torah and welcome those that complement it.

Once again I fear that our author is suffering from a blurring of the lines between *emunas Yisroel* and its rejection.

We should graciously grant that one might reject, *l'shem Shamayim*, *Austritt*, as did the Wuerzburger Rov in the 19th century and Rav Soloveichik in the 50s, in order to keep our ties with our fellow Jews. But, neither of them would have defended it because we should be open to "forms of Judaism not consistent with Orthodoxy."

The Dignity of Work

In an essay titled "Yeshiva Boys and the Work Ethic" Mr. Frankel explores the, now prevalent, belief in many circles that the ideal for all Orthodox married men is to spend as many years as possible in *kollel*. This notion has now become accepted in almost all *charedi* communities in *klal Yisroel*.

Its effects are far reaching. In the Hasidic world where it combines with no secular training at all, early marriage and very stringent *shitos* on contraception, it creates

a difficult, economic situation, whose potentially devastating effects are mitigated by the astonishing largess of the American taxpayer (or the moral cowardice of Gentile politicians!) as well as working segments of *klal Yisroel*. The yeshiva world with a bit more in the way of skills, lives in the same situation – except to the degree that they defy the official position of their leaders and go to college, graduate school and the like.

Our author maps out the assorted rationals for what is clearly an unworkable and morally dubious system. They all center on a propaganda line that sees the *kollel* life as superior in the eyes of *Hashem* to that of a working man. Indeed, in some circles it is seen as superior even to that of a Torah educator.

There is no denying that years spent in depth - study of Torah is an extraordinary *z'chus*. However, it is not the only mode of *Hashem's* service that fulfills the Creator's Will. And, it was never the province of anything other than a tiny segment of *klal Yisroel*.

Of course, the future Torah educators of our people must be steeped in traditional study of *shas* and *poskim* in depth. And, obviously, future *Rabbonim* must have a similar deep and broad grounding.

However, even in the training of this elite there is, in the Hirschian view, a need for familiarity with the Creator's handiwork, the world with its beauty and bounty and detail and the family of men that inhabit it.

This need not mean a formal university training but it would seem to imply, at very least, a thorough and inspired high school education and a natural curiosity towards further explorations.

Thus, even as our prospective Hirschian *maggid shiur* spends a certain number of years in *kollel* (a fixed and limited number, whereafter, he is obligated to seek a *melech hakodesh*) he will remain conversant with world and communal affairs.

Hopefully, he will have developed by that time more than a passing interest in some aspect of creation or of man made beauty. Thus, his home will find alongside the basic works of “*Gemarah Peirush-rashi Tosafos*” well-worn works on astronomy, geography, history and the like. He will be uplifted by great works of music and poetry as were Rav Hirsch and Rav Hildesheimer themselves. This is the *mensh Yisroel* of the Hirschian vision – as *kollel* fellow, *maggid shiur* and *posek*.

But, and this is crucial, he is by no means, per se, superior in the eyes of G-d to the working man who uplifts the world and himself by contributing to the sustenance of humanity (and his family) as he finds his vocation outside the *beis medrash*.

The nature of G-d's judgment is such that the crucial factor in our spiritual life is the degree to which we are devoted and subservient to Him. Of course, this subservience is unthinkable without a sound grounding in Torah, in *ikkrei emunah*, in Chumash, Talmud, Shulchan Aruch and so on. This is a life long task for which the groundwork is laid in one's formative years and continues via *shiurim* till the end of one's days.

The fruition of this Torah personality is when the *mensh Yisroel* steps into G-d's world and there, by his words and deeds, sanctifies His Name and spreads His teachings. And, it is a difficult and by no means a *b'deved* image.

Our author offers a two part plan to re – orient the Breuer's community towards this Hirschian vision.

Mr. Frankel wants a) to “close down our kollel” and b) “change the entire culture of the yeshiva, pruning off the benighted teachers and rebbeim.”

I have almost no first hand knowledge of the KAJ *kollel* and yeshiva. It does seem clear though, that if the yeshiva is staffed by those of a Torah - only orientation, then something is wrong. In fact, as far as I know, it was largely ever so. YRSRH has always been forced to take most of its educators from those who rejected TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ as anything more than a means to *parnosah*..

This situation is similar to that of YU in this regard. It seems that the subtlety and nuances of TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ and TORAH UMADDA do not play well with the *mesiras nefesh* needed to live off the abysmal salaries and benefits offered by yeshivas, including YU/MTA and YRSRH. It requires a fullback's mentality to plunge ever forward earning a mere three yards and cloud of dust.

It is well remembering, in this context, Rabbi Danziger's cautionary note that a Hirschian curriculum does not a Hirschian make, unless it is accompanied by a passion for the Divine, as manifested in Revelation and creation.

Thus, what emerges is the crying need to create a cadre of dedicated *talmidei chachomim* committed to TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ or TORAH UMADDA.

If this is not to come from the, already largely “Torah only” overtaken, environs of YRSRH or YU, where will it come from?

There has been some sensitivity to this problem in YU circles of late. However, by and large, those bemoaning a lack of attachment to TORAH UMADDA in YU circles almost always are part of that movement’s ultra - leftist ideologues, who attach to their TORAH UMADDAism bizarre and quasi - heretical talk of a pluralism shared with *apikorsim*, tolerance towards heresy, receptivity to social trendiness as manifested in feminism, modified acceptance of sexual perversion and visceral disdain for the yeshiva and Hasidic worlds. They might want *maggidei shiur* who are TORAH UMADDAers but they also want to prostrate themselves before whatever fad the decadent forces of a dying European civilization command them to serve. This is not TORAH UMADDA or TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ. It is Judaism that is far more loyal to the zeitgeist than to Sinai.

Unfortunately, in an otherwise excellent chapter, our author falls prey to this very confusion. He slips all too easily into egalitarian clichés regards women and Talmud Torah. “These new teachers will teach that women are at least as intelligent as men and as capable of and interested in learning Torah.” (p. 32)

Perhaps, they are as intelligent. But, the question is, should they therefore study all Torah subjects, or secular subjects for that matter? Women are capable of being boxers and longshoremen, should they pursue these fields? At root the question is, are men and women the same? Trendy leftism has, for the last three decades (only in Western Europe and North America, the rest of mankind abides by the thousands years old understandings of sexual distinctions!) said, yes. Clearly the Torah says, no.

Then follows a sentence that I am sure I have misunderstood. “They (the new teachers) will teach that it is foolish to say that women are not ‘commanded’ in limud Torah as it is to say that women are not commanded in p’ru u’rvu. What would happen if they stopped?” (p.32)

Again? If women stopped having children the world would end. Therefore, what? Therefore, they are somehow Biblically commanded in *pru u’rvu*!?

What is afoot here? Women are not commanded on either of these items. These are basic *halachos*. We are not free to reject these matters because of their degree of contradiction with university taught dogmas, court decrees or talk show values.

But, clearly I have misunderstood something. A Hirschian does not subject halachah to his own judgment, rejecting it at will.

Close the *Kollel*?

Why not open it to those knowledgeable in and loyal to TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ with the clear understanding that after *smicha* (or a certain amount of years) they will enter the field of *chinuch*?

We must be careful, as we assert the holiness of TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ and TORAH UMADDA, that we do not denigrate those who seek honestly to acquire Torah knowledge and pass on our *mesorah* to future generations. The idealism of most *bnei kollel* is commendable. Believers in TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ may believe that the number of *bnei kollel* should be limited, that their curriculum should include knowledge and awareness of the world and that eventually they use their Torah knowledge for the good of the community. We should be wary though of denying the deep commitment that opting for kollelism evidences and the plusses that this institution, when not abused, may bring.

TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ Forever

The final chapter of Mr. Frankel's work contains the booklet's most moving passages and sets its essential case in crystal clarity.

The chapter is an answer to the question of "what is our legacy?"

Correctly the author asserts that the essence of the Hirschian legacy is not its *minhagim*, its pronunciations of Hebrew or its foods.

So far, so good.

Yet, before the author arrives at his description of a TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ personality he takes us on one last detour through the environs of Orthodoxy's radical left. We are told that Yeshivat Chovevei Torah is a TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ yeshiva. It is "not an ir miklot from the world." It gives its *semichah* students "intellectual preparation for grappling with (the) world and the issues it raises."

This, of course, is what Rav Hirsch advocated. He asked us to view the world from a Torah perspective. He emphasized that there was both positive and negative in many realms outside of explicit Torah.

Is that, however, the Chovevei agenda? Here again I speak of a general impression. Consider, however, the following -- Does Chovevei view the world through the lens of Torah or, the Torah through the lens of the world? Does anyone really believe that, with the exception of support for Israel, that Chovevei will ever reject whatever trendy leftist/egalitarian movement emerges triumphant on the scene?

One has only sympathy for Mr. Frankel cast adrift philosophically, with no community to call home. There are many of us who find the Rabbiner's vision compelling and are similarly orphaned. However, KAJ's abdication is no reason to set up shop in distinctly inhospitable territory.

In the booklet's concluding pages we are offered a positive portrait of "*The Torah im Derech Eretz Personality*."

This is a section of great beauty.

Let us examine at some length the author's view of the ultimate Hirschian. My comments are in italics inserted in the text.

"Peter Gay (born Froelich), the pre – eminent historian of German Jewry, has written that the distinguishing characteristic of the German Jew was his ability to bridge two worlds, the religious and the secular." (p. 47)

Yes. But we must push beyond this sociological formulation. Let us better say, that in the Hirschian ideal, the two worlds were bridged by positing and pursuing the Divine Authorship of both. Thus the world was and is sacralized, not via a vague, mystical pantheism but by "placing Hashem constantly before us."

“(The German Jew) showed the world that one could remain steadfast as a Jew while participating intellectually and culturally (not just commercially) in modern society.” (p. 47)

This participation is always limited by halachah, both its letter and spirit. The steadfastness requires, at times, a clear and firm condemnation of many assumptions and practices of the contemporary, desacralized West. And, especially today, a realization that G-d centeredness may be found in other civilizations as well.

“ . . . this sublime synergy of Judaism and western civilization, produced German Jewry’s greatest treasure: the Torah im Derech Eretz personality.” (p. 47)

Let us grant, though, that this personality was not nearly as Torah knowledgeable as its counterparts in Eastern Europe. This was a fault and its rectification in the post war KAJ was a positive development. Matters got out of hand, though, and TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ itself came to be misunderstood and rejected.

“For the German Jew, Torah im Drech Eretz was more than a way of life. It was the redemption of his character. Exposure to western culture broadened his outlook.” (p. 48)

Agreed. 100%. Let us add, it deepened his view of G-d’s creation. It made his understanding of the world and of humanity that much truer to the Creator’s design.

“It made him tolerant and wise.” (p. 48)

Hopefully the latter. Let us be wary of the cliché of “tolerance.” Error remains error. Truth remains truth. Good and evil are realities. Wisdom deepens our sense of why men believe as they do and allows us to appreciate the goodness in their belief systems and approach them with proper empathy. However, this discerning empathy this search for wisdom must be limited by our allegiance to truth.

“(The German Jew) saw in the Enlightenment the realization of the Torah’s ideals of justice and equality.”

“Equality” as a Torah value? It seems just the reverse, does it not? Torah is a deeply hierarchical document and no matter of wishful thinking, can change that.

“He loved to learn Torah . . . “

But, from the time of the Hirschian revival until the 1920s “he” resisted the notion of a yeshiva gedolah. He had precious little Talmud in his Realschule curriculum. This was way below the norm of Eastern Europe where depth learning was fairly common, especially in Lithuania, Poland and Hungary, albeit with different darchei ha – limud.

“ . . . in a quiet dignified solitary fashion . . . ”

This should depend on each individual’s proclivities but the pilpul chaverim of a beis medrash is frequently helpful.

“(Often with Mozart playing in the background).”

At times, this may be beneficial. In the long run it doesn’t do justice to either Wolfgang or Abayye v’Rova -- both deserve concentration!

“... but his education made him aware that Torah was not the only source of wisdom.”

Yes, absolutely, and each of us must continue this process.

“His intellect spurred him to read widely and impartially, and aroused in him an insatiable curiosity about the world and its inhabitants.” (p. 48)

May G-d grant that it be so today!

“His soul was receptive to the finest art, literature, theater and music.” (p.48)

With appropriate halachic and moral safeguards and proper intention l’shem Shamayim ,then, kayn y’hi ratzon!

“Walking was a passion for him; he was always acutely aware of the aesthetic quality of his surroundings.” (p. 49)

And, in the Hirschian ideal, he was always aware of the Divine Artist of creation.

“Ultimately, Judaism’s deepest appeal to him was aesthetic.” (p. 49)

Strange sentence, indeed. Shouldn’t it better read something like “Frequently he apprehended the Divine through the aesthetic power of Divine Torah and mitzvos.”

“To the Eastern European Jew’s lament of “Schwer zu zein a Yid”, the German Jew responded, “Aber schoen zu sein a Yid!” (p. 49)

I’m afraid this is terrible misreading of an Eastern European saying. It refers to the external difficulties that their often persecuted communities experienced. The theme of joy in G-d’s service was and is very much a part of the great Torah communities of the east.

“(The German Jew valued precision, order, balance, courtesy, decorum.” (p. 49)

All good things, some as means to good ends, others as ends themselves. The dignity of German Jewry would be a very positive addition in today’s klal Yisroel. Let us not forget, though, that alongside the austere model of God’s House of the German Jew there is the alternative of the holy disorder of the Hasidic shteibel or the book strewn beis medrash of Lita. All are holy.

“Rigorously upright in his dealings with all men, scrupulously pious in his dealings with God, he cultivated a reserve that masked a real concern for his fellow man.” (p. 49)

This is a beautiful depiction of the spiritual grandeur of German Jewry’s hatzne leches. Of course, this picture had much to do with the nature of German Jews and, indeed, of Germans in general. Was this TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ or simply the Torah shaping certain Teutonic traits? Nonetheless, it is special and deserving of preservation.

“To those less fortunate, his reflex was organizational rather than personal. He built hospitals, organized aid societies, arranged for free loans.” (p. 49)

All positives, of course. On the other hand, it is lacking, a bit, the very personal, welcoming and warm, chesed of the east.

“His outlook was humanistic, universalistic . . . ” (p. 49)

This is one of the greatest losses that the eclipse of TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ has brought about. We have come to limit our chesed, our empathy, our social concern (be it physical, moral or spiritual) to Jewry. This bifurcation of kindness seems impossible to achieve (Can we turn on and off kindness?) as well as ugly. (We must harden our hearts against the Gentile to achieve it.)

We are called upon to emulate the Creator who made the world as an act of chesed and “whose mercies are upon all His creatures.”

The current posture of insular chesed ruins our souls, destroys our credibility as a people and ends any hope that our exile will favorably influence mankind. This parochial morality must be anathema to a Hirschian.

“He detested vulgarity and would rather do without than be seen as grasping. Ostentation offended him, and he often lived more modestly than his means allowed.” (p. 49)

I confess to a distinct affection for this orientation. And, as we all know, Orthodoxy could do well with absorbing quite a bit of it today. Sadly, at present, many live way beyond their means, driven there by a conformity that easily embraces heavy debt before abandoning any socially demanded ostentation, even when clearly unaffordable.

Once again, though, I am forced to ask whether these are specifically TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ traits or are they not those of the reserved and frugal Northern European. Is this not the way of the German Lutherans of our own Midwest or of assorted Anabaptists of Pennsylvania and Ohio?

“He carried himself with great dignity at all times and was moderate in all things.” (p. 49)

May Hashem grant that we do so as well.

Mr. Frankel goes on to note that America in the post war period provided TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ adherents with a unique chance to emerge on the national and international stage.

“We could have been the leaders on the road to Torah im Derech Eretz in America – we, who first showed the world that Torah im Derech Eretz was possible! – instead of being left behind at the side of the road, led astray by alien philosophies, mired in a swamp of our own making.” (p. 50)

Having attended the Hirschian mesivta between 1965 and 1967 I find it difficult to believe that those educated together with me, most of whom lived in Washington Heights and were part of KAJ, would abandon the teachings of Rav Hirsch. What I think happened in the case of many is that they became enamored of the greater Torah knowledge and devotion to *limud ha – Torah* in - depth of the yeshiva world. They looked at their own KAJ and saw it lacking these fundamental virtues. In their minds emerged a linkage between the *hashkofa* of *Lita* in its rejection of non - explicitly sacred aspects of creation and the yeshiva world’s superiority to German Orthodoxy in Torah study.

Thus, Mr. Frankel’s lament needs to be expanded a bit.

America provided the KAJ with a chance to absorb the positives of the *charedi* world while not abandoning its own traditions. The resulting symbiosis would have given the *kehillah* the abilities and passion to speak and behave in the public forum as learned and inspiring *m’kadshei Hashem*. It was not simply the Frankfort model that was lost. It was Frankfort as it could have been perfected via contact with the Eastern European *derochim* – again, in Rabbi Danziger’s words – “Thus those who could have brought the *Torah im Derech Eretz* of Rav Hirsch to its highest fulfillment, tragically – *and needlessly* – abandoned their great Rav and his concept.” (italics as in original)⁸

⁸ Danziger, *ibid.* p. 20

In his parting words the author calls upon us to step beyond time and place bound commitments to the externals of German Jewry. He argues that they will “diminish in importance in the 21st century as time and distance erode the relevance of where in Europe one’s ancestors stemmed from long ago.” (p.51)

This is a far from convincing argument. The Hasidic and yeshiva worlds both place emphasis upon the *minhogim* and halachic standards of their ancestors and predecessors. These forms then become symbolic means to incarnate their identities.

However, the author’s general point that it is the teaching of Torah im Derech Eretz which is the “eternally correct path for Jews to travel . . . and will ultimately lead, as Rav Breuer said, “to the geula” is well taken. (p. 51)

This is the hope of many Torah Jews. What must be emphasized by those who see TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ as an understanding of Torah that is loyal to G-d as the author of Revelation and Creation is that it is not a *b’deved*. It sees *Hashem* as the King of the Universe and *klal Yisroel* as His universal ambassadors to mankind.

Yet, having said that, we must not fall prey to accepting the moral consciousness of mankind in our specific time and place as ultimately true. Hence, the need for *Austritt*, if not of our synagogues and organizations then, at least, in our minds and hearts.

We must constantly nurture our spiritual and moral sense from the eternal wellsprings of *iyun* in Torah, passionate, yet, reflective prayer and thoughts and deeds of kindness and love.

We must unite our life’s actions and interests under one rubric, as Rav Hirsch wrote, “Everything that you think and feel, everything that you strive for and desire, and everything that you possess, shall be unto you only the means, only have value to you, for getting near to G-d, for bringing G-d near to you.”

The other approaches that view creation and humanity with disdain may, as Rabbi Danziger has said, have had “usefulness” and “hidden blessing” as a “hora-as shah.” (Hebrew letters in original text) We should be ever mindful of their plusses.

And, *klal Yisroel* has reaped the benefit of those plusses. We all realize today the centrality of long hours immersed in Torah. But, ever mindful of the beauty and bounty of the L-rd, we dare not limit our pursuit and apprehension of the Loving G-d to those hours.

May Hashem grant that we be worthy as individuals and, to whatever degree possible, communities, to serve Him according to this holy derech. May He further grant that this devotion protect us from the temptation to step outside the Torah saturated vineyards of ovdei Hashem b'emes.