

# To Restore a Historic Balance: Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and *Torah Im Derech Eretz*



## Suggestions for Further Study:

Blau, Rabbi Yitzchak. "Rav Shimshon ben Rephael Hirsch – Modern Rabbinic Thought." VBM – Virtual Beit Midrash of Yeshivat Har Etzion (Gush).  
<https://www.etzion.org.il/en/rav-shimshon-ben-raphael-hirsch>

Drachman, Bernard. "The Nineteen Letters of Ben Uziel." 1899.  
Complete PDF of original 1899 printing with biography of Hirsch.  
[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/03/Samson Raphael Hirsch. Bernard Drachman. The Nineteen Letters of Ben Uziel. 1899.pdf](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/03/Samson_Raphael_Hirsch._Bernard_Drachman._The_Nineteen_Letters_of_Ben_Uziel._1899.pdf).

Grunfeld, Isidor. "Judaism Eternal," 1959. xiii-xlvi. Two volumes of Hirsch's essays in English. Includes biography at beginning of Vol. 1.

Katzenelenbogen, Rav Raphael. "הרב שמעון רפאל הירש זצ"ל, משנתו ושיטתו" (Hebrew).  
המעין, גליון ב', תמוז תשי"ב. <http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/mahshevt/hirsh-2.htm>. Far-ranging analysis of Hirsch's philosophical outlook as gleaned from his writings.

Wein, Rabbi Berel. "Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch: The Challenge of Secularism."  
Audio class from "The Biography Series." Download (\$5) at  
<https://www.rabbiwein.com/The-Challenge-of-Secularism-brFrom-the-Biography-Seriesbr4-Lectures-P1091.html>

# Biography



## ■ Early Life and Learning

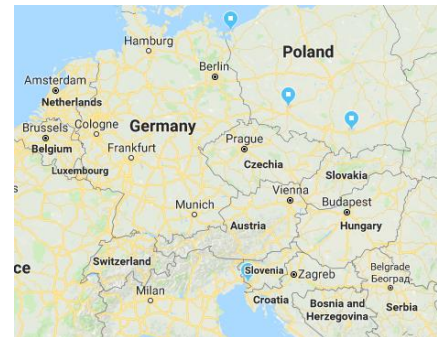
24 Sivan (June 20) 1808 – Born in Hamburg

- Mercantile family – Father learned merchant; grandfather founder of Talmud Torah
- Granduncle – Rabbi Loeb (Yehuda Leib) Frankfurter (Hirsch) (1743-1836), author of הרבסים לבקעה, a largely philological commentary on Chumash
- Family disappointed he didn't go into mercantile business
- First Reform Temple was in Hamburg – seat of Reform movement until Berlin later
- After Napoleonic Wars, pressure for Reform increased, for three reasons –
  - 1) Modern, new world supposedly cannot support Orthodoxy – doomed to die;
  - 2) Reform would solve antisemitism, which was supposedly because of separatism of the Orthodox (victim as oppressor – Jews should be nicer to the non-Jews);
  - 3) Secularism generally was improving the world, and Jews should get with the program.
- Renaissance – Man in driver's seat – age of discovery, at expense of G-d-centered life
- Diligent student – studied with his father – excelled, got good basic secular education
- “Enlightened,” observant parents sent him to Hamburg Grammar School, rare in those days
- As young child, witnessed anti-Reform meeting in parents' home, pivotal moment for him
- 1822 – Chacham Isaac Bernays becomes Rabbi (or Chacham) of Hamburg congregation
  - Remarkable, charismatic, joyous Halachic genius – primary teacher and role model
  - From early age, wanted to save Jews from Reform – “chosen amongst the chosen”
- 1823-1829 – Mannheim – Yaakov Etlinger (author of Aruch LaNer) – Talmud, love of language
  - Bernays and Etlinger encouraged Hirsch to study philosophy, secular studies, language
- 1825? – Married Johanna Channa Hirsch (Juedel) (1805-1882) – would have 13 kids together
- 1829 – Semicha from Etlinger
- 1829 – U. of Bonn – classmate – Abraham Geiger; debate society, Hirsch recognized as genius
- No insecurity, even among Reform Jews and non-Jews at university

## ■ First Rabbinic Positions and Writings

- 1830 – First Rabbinic position – Oldenburg, small town – learned, wrote
- 1836 – First book – “19 Letters of Ben Uziel” – to mythical college student – ideas of Torah and traditional Judaism – nothing good in modern life is incompatible with Torah life
- 1838 – “Horeb” – for Jews who knew about civilization but not Judaism – Orthodoxy for non-religious audience; each Mitzvah explained as it furthers mission of Judaism as a whole
- 1839 – “First Communications from Naphtali's Correspondence” – Clever diatribe vs. Reform

- 1841 – Chief Rabbi of Hanover, with residence in Emden
- Reorganized Jewish community; started school for girls
  - Not a broadside against Haskalah – extract what is positive and show how it is derived from Torah itself (“Torah Im Derech Eretz”)
  - Isaac Breuer – “Derech Eretz” = civilization, Torah as relates to your civilization
  - “Fearless, uncompromising defense of Orthodox Judaism” – “Brooked no compromise”
  - Not because our fathers did it, but because it’s the best for us
  - Involvement with society not as compromise but as Jewish ideal, return to our roots
  - “Neo-Orthodoxy” movement
  - Wein: “Hirsch was what Mendelssohn could’ve been” – German Chumash translation
  - Reform – “יהא אדם ירא שמים **בסתור** ויהא אדם בבייתך ואדם בצאתך” (Although Hirsch said **בסתור**)
- 1843 – In final four candidates for Chief Rabbi of British Empire, lost to Nathan Adler
- 1844 – “Second Communications from a Correspondence Concerning the Most Recent Jewish Literature” – another polemic against Reform
- 1846 – Rabbi of Moravia and Austria, with residence in Nikolsburg (today Mikulov), today S. Germany/Czech Republic – distinguished position – plus member of Legislature
- Critical in Jewish emancipation in Moravia/Austria, but paid price for outspokenness
  - Reorganized community internally – day schools, girls’ schools
  - Opposition from Jews on both sides (fealty to SA/modern Rabbinical school)



### ■ Frankfurt and Final Battles Against Reform

1851 – Frankfurt am Main – became Reform in 1840’s after 850 yrs. of Orthodox scholars (inc. פני יהושע, בעל ההפלאה)

- Orthodox “community” (really *society*) of 11 families in Frankfurt – but very loyal
- Built *realshulle*, like day school – Jewish studies and secular studies (in German)
- Primary school, secondary school, girls’ high school – grew to 600 students altogether
- Not met with as much criticism as would have been in Eastern Europe

1854 – Started Jeshurun (-1871), monthly journal “for the inculcation of the spirit of Judaism and of Jewish life in home, community and school”

1868-1878 – Published “Translation and Commentary on Chumash”

- Unity of historical and modern-day Judaism – what we do today follows from Sinai
- Philology as means for better understanding of Chumash
- Hundreds of articles in his “Jeshurun” journal
- Kehillah model – collected taxes – Kehillah was Reform, but Orthodox were given some autonomous control over Shechitah, Kashrut, etc.

- R’ Nathan Bamberger of Wertzburg – Orthodox should be part of larger fold; Hirsch disagreed (Austritt)

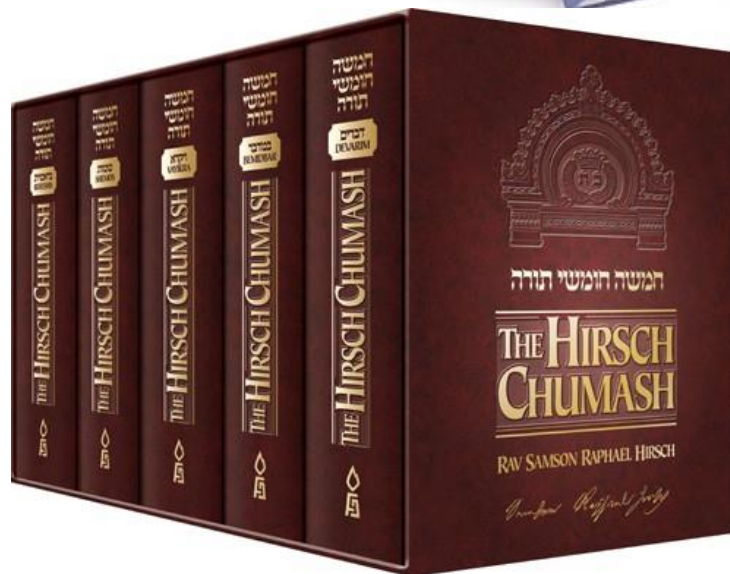
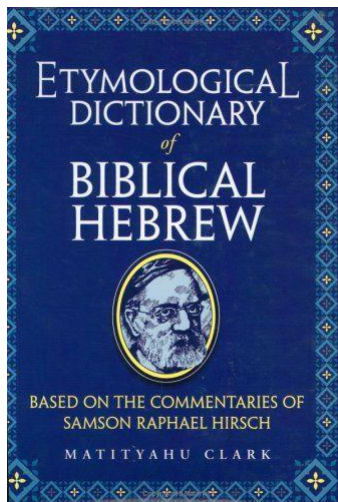
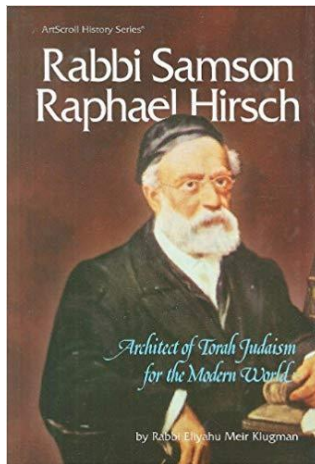
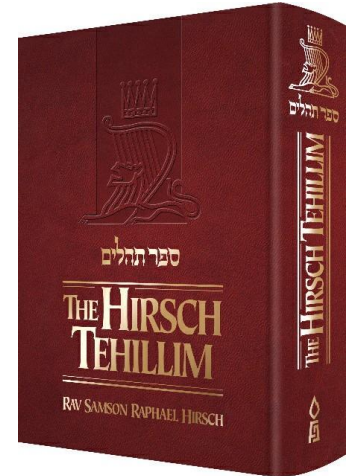
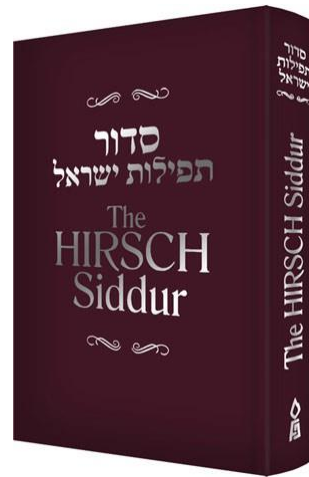
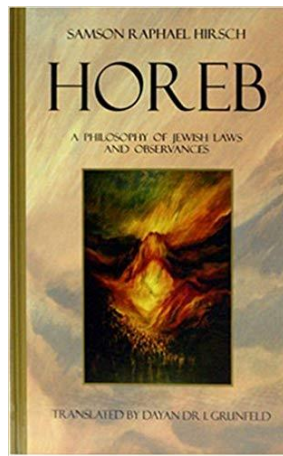
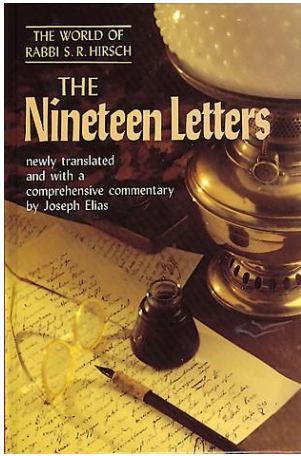
By 1870 – Orthodox are fully-functioning – independent infrastructure – self-sufficient  
 1873 – Prussian gov't passes law allowing Christians to leave Church but still be Christian  
 1874 – “The Principle of Religious Liberty” (essay) – Hirsch advocates same as above for Jews  
 1876 – “On Leaving the Congregation” (essay)  
 1876 – Prussian “Law of Secession” allows Orthodox Jews to leave Kehillah but remain Jews  
     - Many Orthodox members of his community disagree, supported by Seligman Bae  
     - Bamberger, Werzburger Rav – open letters b/w the two, rift in German Orthodoxy  
 1882 – Translation and Commentary on Tehillim (2 vols.)  
 1883-1887 – Hirsch’s commentary on Mishlei and Pirkei Avot, published by his son  
 1884 – “The Talmud and Its Attitude to Social Justice and Commercial Integrity” – response to  
 anti-Semites smearing Talmud and new prohibitions on its publication in Vilna  
 1886 – Founds Free Union for the Interests of Orthodox Judaism (=OU)  
 By 1888 – Close to 600 families in his Kehillah, and very influential  
 1888 – Dies in Frankfurt  
 1906 – Translation and commentary to Siddur  
     - Son-in-law Isaac Breuer, grandson Joseph Breuer – moved Kehillah to US – well-  
 versed in worldly culture and unbending to ancient Jewish tradition (umbrella story)



<https://www.geni.com/people/Johanna-Hirsch-Juedel/6000000002081121637>

Gella (marked) – Gella (Julie) Hirsch-Plato – b. 1838  
 Boy standing on right – Mendel, b. 1833, or Isaac, b. 1836  
 Obscured on left – probably Sara, b. 1834  
 Young children – could be Therese (b. 1849), Gluttchen (b. 1852), Sophie (b. 1852)

## Some of Hirsch's Works Available in English Today



## **Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch On ...**

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### **A) The Value, Use, and Peril of Worldly Wisdom**

**From The Nineteen Letters of Ben Uziel (אגרת צפון), Letter #15 (trans. based on Drachman)**

... Judaism enjoins 613 duties, but knows no dogmas. The sublime truths which lie at its basis, it reveals as axioms, clearly intelligible to all who have ears to hear and minds to comprehend, and in this way opens a field for the broadest investigation and profoundest research into the essence and relations of all things to each other. It rouses us to the endeavor to understand the world, man, human history, and God's plan operating within them. In this effort personal study and thought, universal human experience and the Torah are all to be utilized, for the latter is as real and actual a source of instruction as the two former. True speculation does not consist, as many would-be thinkers suppose, in closing the eye and the ear to the world around us and in constructing out of our inner ego a world to suit ourselves; true speculation takes nature, man, and history as facts, as the true basis of knowledge, and seeks in them instruction and wisdom. To these Judaism adds the Torah, as genuine a reality as Heaven or Earth. But it regards no speculation which does not lead to active, productive life as its ultimate goal; it points out the limits of our understanding and warns us against baseless reasoning, transcending the legitimate bounds of our intellectual capacity, however brilliantly put together and glitteringly logical it may appear to be, for all such intellectual pyrotechnics are, after all, but puerile sport, useful chiefly to still the conscientious scruples of a sensual nature, oblivious alike to the limitations and the ideals of humanity. To be sure, the Jewish spirit, in its most recent form, was chiefly devoted to abstract and abstruse speculation; a vivid consciousness of the real world was lacking, and therefore the object of study was not what it should chiefly have been, the attainment of knowledge of duty, for use in the world and in life. Study became the end instead of the means, the subject of investigation became a matter of indifference, the dialectic subtleties thereof the chief concern; people studied Judaism but forgot to search for its principles in the pages of Scripture. That method is, however, not truly Jewish; our great masters have always protested against it; many pages of the classic works of Jewish literature are filled with the objections of their authors to this false and perverted method. Bible and Talmud are to be studied with the sole object in view, to ascertain the life-duties which they inculcate, לשמור ולעשות, "to learn and to teach, to observe and to do," and every topic treated of in the Law should be viewed objectively or as a comprehension thereof obtained from science. There is no science which trains the mind to a broader and more practical view of things than does the Torah, pursued in this manner. That the Law, which lays down reverence, love and faithfulness as its three foundation stones, does not cripple the heart, but that, when comprehended and assimilated to the mind, its fulfillment becomes a new power, a life from within, not a mere barren and external dwarf of existence, stimulating all the faculties of a freer development and a more intense use – you have already demonstrated by your devotion to it.

### **B) Israel in Relation to the Other Nations**

**From The Nineteen Letters of Ben Uziel (אגרת צפון), Letter #15 (trans. based on Drachman)**

Has Israel any other task than to teach all the races of man to recognize and worship the One God as their God? Is it not Israel's unceasing duty to proclaim through the examples of its life and history Him as the Universal Lord and Sovereign? The Bible refers to the Jews as

*segulah*, “a treasure,” but this designation does not imply, as some have falsely interpreted, that Israel has a monopoly of the Divine love and favor, but, on the contrary, that God has the sole and exclusive claim to Israel’s devotions and service: that Israel may not render Divine homage to any other being. Israel’s most cherished ideal is that of the universal brotherhood of mankind. Almost every page of the prayers we utter contains supplication for the hastening of this consummation. We are all helping to rear a great edifice, Divinely ordained for the well-being of man; all nations that were or are anywhere upon the surface of the earth, whether in the east or the west, the north or the south, each with its life and its disappearance from the stage of history, with its successes and its failures, with its virtues and its vices, its wisdom and its folly, its rise and its fall, in a word, with whatsoever it leaves to posterity as the sum total of the results and products of its existence. All of these efforts and actions are bricks contributed to the edifice of human history; all tend to the carrying out of the plan of the one, same God.

This is the lesson of the life of all the good and virtuous of all nations, of whoever gave the example of unselfish righteousness and the true dignity of humanity; this is what has been striven for by all whose souls have been illuminated by light from on high and who, by word or deed, have helped to lift their brethren up to God, to promote respect for justice and to elevate man above the beast; the same result is attained by the art of the Greeks when morally pure and devoted to the refinement of the mind, and of their science, when sharpening the intellect to the better apprehension of truth; even the sword of the Roman and the peaceful commerce of the Europeans have united nations in brotherhood for the working out of the same ideals – and Israel has done and will do its share of the glorious task.

#### **From Letter #8 (Translation mine)**

But also within the essence of “nationhood,” it is incumbent on it to come and to stand among the nations, with the quality of reverence for the other nations, because Hashem is The Good and the One Who Makes Good, the Source of all blessings; because if we sanctify our souls to do His will, we will receive from the hand of Hashem in abundance of means also the precious blessing that is awaiting all of mankind, because there is in this sanctification enough for the basis of life. Therefore, there was given to this nation as an inheritance a Land and its blessings, there was given to it a national system, but not as their own purpose and goal, but rather as means by which to fulfill the words of the Torah.

### **C) The Land of Israel**

#### **From Letter #16 (Translation mine)**

Those days of independent national Jewish life of olden times were not the essence and purpose of the Jewish people; rather they served as a means to accomplish our spiritual goal. From the beginning, land and earth did not serve as a tie to this unity, rather the unifying mission of the Torah is what placed on it this tie. And because of this, this unity remained in a pristine state even when the Jews were far from their Land.

#### **From “Horeb” (Vol. 2, p. 608)**

The acquisition and inheritance of the Land and the setting up of the State which were connected to it were not a *purpose* for the Jews but rather a *means*, through which we would be able to fulfill more fully and more strongly our Jewish obligations. The Torah was not given for the purpose of the State; rather the State was given for the purpose of the Torah.

## **D) The Idea of Jewish Education**

### **From “Judaism Eternal,” Vol. 1, Chapter XIII; originally published in “Jeshurun” in 1854**

... What would be the use of our elders still clinging loyally to the religion of our fathers with every fiber of our being, with every drop of our blood, if we leave the direction of our children to chance; if we do not from the first equip them with the clear outlook and strength of will which will keep them loyal to God and to the task which He has assigned to them, and so enable them to stand firm and undismayed among the bewildering cross-currents of the age?

What is our trouble? First and foremost – ignorance, the Jewish ignorance in which the younger generation is growing up and which the enemies of Orthodox Judaism have known how to foster for their own purposes and to exploit with great skill. By keeping our youth in ignorance of the sources of our creed in the Biblical and Rabbinical writings, they have robbed them of all idea of the content and significance of their Jewish mission and of the appeal made by all Jewish institutions both to the head and to the heart ...

What is our further trouble? It is that ignorance which on the other hand consists in the lack of general culture and education. This is the natural consequence of the defection of most of the “cultured” members of so many Orthodox Jewish circles. It affects adversely the proper presentation of traditional Judaism in educated circles, and makes it easy for the priests of the school of Yeravam to identify Judaism with lack of culture in the eyes of the superficially educated.

The one thing that can save us is the close combination of religious knowledge and conduct with genuine general culture, the intimate union of *Torah Im Derech Eretz* which was taught and transmitted by our great progenitors.

For this we require schools, Jewish schools, in which equal attention shall be paid to the old sacred inheritance of the community of Jacob, Biblical and Rabbinical knowledge, and to all that is true, noble and good in European culture, and both shall be cultivated hand in hand from the Aleph Bet and the ABC through all stages of knowledge and progress. In this way the minds of boys and girls will be trained from the first in such a way that when they grow up they will be able to conduct themselves as truly educated Jews and truly educated men and citizens.

## **E) Oneness in Science and in Judaism**

### **From “Collected Writings of Rav S. R. Hirsch,” v. 7 (p. 257)**

Present-day natural science, in whose genuine advances our generation may justly take pride, has suggested the possibility that all the variegated forms of nature may be reduced to basic atomic elements, that the multitude of forces at work in nature may have originated from one primal force, and that all the laws of nature may, in fact, derive from one single law. This unification of the natural sciences is occurring despite the fact that the study of natural sciences is becoming increasingly sophisticated, the subject matter to be mastered requiring an increasingly complex division of labor among scientists. Now suppose that (please forgive an outsider’s comment) the proponents of this unification theory, overly excited by a few startling initial results that would seem to support their hypothesis, will proclaim this mere possibility – which may never be substantiated as fact – to be incontrovertible certainty and will use it as the basis for some hasty conclusions. Is Judaism not justified in welcoming the mere chance that the hunch pursued by these scientists will prove to be correct? Do the findings of all the natural sciences to date not show similarities that would suggest the existence of the very Oneness that is



the foundation of Judaism? Is it not possible that the astronomer in his observatory, the mineralogist in the pit, the physiologist with his microscope, the anatomist with his scalpel and the chemist with his flask will be forced to conclude that all their studies actually center on one and the same work of creation in the heavens and on earth? Is it not possible that, with all their investigations, they find themselves on the track of one single thought that inspires the creation of matter and energy, laws and forms, that even in the midst of the infinite variety presented by the universe there is an obvious single harmonious unity?

In light of the foregoing, would Judaism not be justified in viewing this idea of a universal unity, which inquiring minds have already pieced together from the textbook of the universe and which man's consciousness took years to express, as nothing less than the long-awaited triumph of the truth of Judaism? This is the truth with which, thousands of years ago, Judaism first appeared in the midst of a chaotic multitude of gods, proclaiming that there is only one, sole God in Heaven and on Earth, and that all the phenomena of the universe are founded upon His Law. This idea, the concept of the Unity of God, is the truth for which Judaism has endured a course of martyrdom without parallel in world history.

It is true, of course, that most natural scientists today are satisfied to stop at the point where they have surmised some sort of unity at the foundation of all nature. They do not attempt to proceed upward from there to one, sole Creator and Composer of that unity. They do not even suspect that, with every step they take toward the discovery of unity in nature, they add another step to the universal throne of the one, sole God. Without knowing it, and perhaps even against their will, they confirm the sole sovereignty of the One to Whom, as Judaism firmly believes, all mankind will ultimately pay homage, even though at present these scientists narrow-mindedly seek to eliminate this from the minds of their own generation and from those of generations to come.

## Rav Hirsch Online – For Free!

[www.AlHatorah.org](http://www.AlHatorah.org)

The screenshot shows a web browser window with a search filter menu open. The menu is titled "פרשנים" (Commentators) and contains a grid of checkboxes for various authors. The checkbox for "השניר הירוש" (Hirsch) is checked and circled in red. Other authors listed include Maimonides, Rashi, and others. Below the grid are buttons for "English", "הסר הכל", and "בחר הכל". At the bottom, there are additional filter options under the heading "הערות" (Comments).

# Hallmarks of Rav S. R. Hirsch's Commentary on Chumash

## A. Heavy Use of Philology as a Gateway to Deeper Understanding

### ספר בראשית פרק יט

(א) וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׁנֵי הַמַּלְאָכִים סָלְמָה בְּעֶרְבַּי וְלוֹט יָשָׁב בְּשַׁעַר סְדֹם וַיֵּרָא לוֹט וַיָּקָם לִקְרֹאתָם וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אַפֵּימָא אֲרָצָה:

The two messengers came to Sedom in the evening, and Lot was sitting at the gate of Sedom, and Lot saw, and he got up to greet them, and he bowed his face to the ground.

**He was sitting at the gate of Sedom** – “Sitting at the gate” is not for the ordinary people; only kings would “sit at the gate” (Shmuel II 19:9; Yirmiyahu 35:7), or people like Boaz (Rut 4:1) who were involved in official public matters. The intention of the Pasuk also is not that Lot was *living* at the gate, because if so it would have said that he was in the wall (*chomah*), just like with Rachav (Yehoshua 2:15). “Sitting at the gate” refers, if so – as is said by our Rabbis in Medrash Bereishit Rabbah 50:3 – to high public leadership which Lot exercised in his city.

A “gate” (*sha'ar*) is like the Jewish version of a *purum*, the town square in Rome where the town's public affairs were administered.

The word gate (*sha'ar* – שַׁעַר) is close to remainder (*she'er* – שאר) and dark (*shachar* – שַׁחַר). *She'er* (שאר) means the thing that remains; a close relative; and food, but especially meat. The thing these have in common seems to be they are things that give completion. Thus, “*she'arit*” (שארית) is the piece that is left over, such that after something has gone back and become united with the main part, it completes it. The same is true with food. Also, perhaps, it is with blood-relatives and a spouse – the woman completes the man. Blood-relatives are like a small community, which by joining together gives expression to the ideas of a man; the individual is merely a part of that community – a broken piece.

We find that a gate (שַׁעַר) relates to community as a relative (שַׁאֲרָ) relates to family. At a gate, the individual finds the completion of his needs. The “gate” is the father of the orphan, the brother of the lonely, the eyes of the blind, help for the stumbling, and so on. Goals which are beyond the reach of the individual can be achieved with the help of the united public.

**ישב בשער סדם** – “ישיבה בשער” לא הייתה לפשוטי עם; רק מלכים היו “יושבים בשער” (שמואל ב פרק יט פסוק ט; ירמיהו פרק לח פסוק ז) או אנשים כבועז (רות פרק ד פסוק א) העוסקים בעניינים ציבוריים רשמיים. כוונת הפסוק גם אינה שְׁלוֹט “היה גר בשער”, שאם כן היה לו לומר “בחומה”, כמו אצל רחב (יהושע פרק ב פסוק טו). “ישב בשער” מציין אם כן – כמאמר רבותינו בראשית רבה נ, ג – שררה ציבורית גבוהה שְׁלוֹט שימש בה בעירו.

“שער” הוא ה“פורום” [כיכר העיר ברומא שבה התנהלו עסקי הציבור] היהודי. בעוד ש“פתח” יכול לציין גם את הפתח הקטן ביותר, “שער” מציין תמיד כניסה ציבורית להמוני אנשים. “שער” קרוב ל“שאר” ו“שחר”. “שאר” פירושו: שארית; קרבת דם; מזון, ובמיוחד בשר. הצד השווה שבכל אלה הוא כנראה: הדבר המשלים. כך: “שארית” – החלק הנשאר, שלאחר ששב ומתאחד עם החלק העיקרי, הוא משלים אותו. כך הוא המזון. כך גם אולי, הקרובים בקרבת דם ובת הזוג: האשה משלימה את האיש. הקרובים בקרבת דם גם הם מעין ציבור קטן, אשר מביא לידי ביטוי במשותף את רעיון האדם; הפרט היחיד אינו אלא חלק מהציבור – שבר. נמצא ש“שער” לגבי הציבור הוא כ“שאר” לגבי המשפחה. ב“שער” מוצא היחיד את השלמת צרכיו. ה“שער” הוא אב ליתום, אח לבודד, עיניים לעיוור, עזרה לכושל, וכן הלאה. מטרות שהן מעבר להישג ידו של היחיד ניתן להשיגן בעזרת הציבור המאוחד.

The function of the community is not to oppress the individual. Just the opposite; with its eternal power and limitlessness – “No community dies and no community is poor” (Gemara Temurah 15b; see also Talmud Yerushalmi Gittin) – it is the responsibility of the community to complete the individual.

So we find that the “gate” (*sha'ar* – שער) in the abstract sense denotes the foundation which gives completion to the individual; and the place where people really complete each other is the “gate.”

## **B. Character Evaluation**

### **C. Deviation from Earlier Commentators**

(ב) וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה נָא אֶדְנִי סוּרוּ נָא אֶל בַּיִת עַבְדְּכֶם וְלִינּוּ וְרַחְצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁפַּמְתֶּם וְהִלַּכְתֶּם לְדַרְכְּכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא פִי בְרַחֲבוֹת קָלִיין:

He said, “Behold, please, my masters! Turn to the house of your servant, and rest and wash your feet, and wake up early, and go on your way.” They said, “No! For in the street we will sleep.”

“**Turn, please, to**” – Turn away from the direction that you had been going, and come to the house of your servants. Because not in the way that Avraham turned to strangers did Lot begin in turning with the words, “Behold, please (“הִנֵּה נָא”), which is emphasized specifically through an unusual *segol* and *dagesh*. “Behold, please” expresses a situation which is unexpected. Someone who needed to pass by way of Sodom knew well that he would not be welcomed there as a guest, and that he should be prepared to remain in the street for the night. Lot could have accepted as a mutually-understood prospect that strangers understood this, but he approached them with a surprising offer: “See, please, my masters, that even here you are able to find one of the family of Avraham.”

The actions of Lot prove that the education and the practices that he received from Avraham were not for naught, even if we have already seen that he deviated – in his search for materialism – more than a little from the way of life of Avraham.

“*Lon*” (“*Lon*”) means *to stay for the remainder of the night*. “*Hilon*” (“*Hilon*”), in the *nif'al* form, means *to complain*. The common denominator, it seems, is to seek protection from the uncomfortable or the unpleasant. From here, “*הִלּוֹן עַל*” means to seek assistance at a time of difficulty from someone who is mistakenly thought to have caused one pain; or to seek help at a time of difficulty by means of accusing someone else.

תפקידו של הציבור אינו ללחוץ על היחיד. אדרבה, בכחו הנצחי והבלתי מוגבל, “אין ציבור מת ואין ציבור עני” (תמורה טו; עיין גם ירושלמי גיטין פרק ג הלכה ז) – אחריות הציבור היא להשלים את היחיד.

נמצא ש“שער” כמושג מופשט [אבסטרקטי] מציין את היסוד הנותן השלמה ליחיד; והמקום בו בפועל אנשים משלימים זה את זה, הוא ה“שער”.

סורו נא אל – תסורו מהכיוון אליו הלכתם, ופנו אל בית עבדכם. שלא כבפניית אברהם אל הזרים, פותחת פניית לוט במילים “הִנֵּה נָא”, המודגשות במיוחד על ידי הסגול היוצא מן הכלל והדגש. “הנה נא” מביע מצב בלתי צפוי. מי שצריך לעבור דרך סדום, יודע היטב שלא ימצא שם הכנסת אורחים, ושעליו להיות מוכן לשהות בלילה ברחוב. לוט יכול לקבל כדבר המובן מאליו שהזרים מודעים לזה, אך הוא ניגש אליהם בהצעה מפתיעה: “ראו נא, רבותי, אף כאן תוכלו למצוא אחד ממשפחת אברהם.”

התנהגותו של לוט מוכיחה שהחינוך וההרגלים שקיבל מאברהם לא היו לשווא, גם אם כפי שכבר ראינו הוא סטה – בהשקפתו החמרנית – לא מעט מדרך החיים של אברהם. “לון” פירושו: לשהות למשך הלילה. “הִלּוֹן”, בנפעל, פירושו: להתלונן. הצד השווה שבהם, כנראה: לבקש מחסה מפני אי-נוחות או אי-נעימות. מכאן, “הִלּוֹן עַל” פירושו: לתבוע סיוע בזמן מצוקה ממי שנחשב בטעות לאשם בדבר; לבקש סעד בעת צרה באמצעות האשמת האחר.

## D. Reverence for Midrash Halacha and Chazal (Gemara)

### ספר דברים פרק יז

(טו) שׁוֹם תְּשִׂים עָלֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בּוֹ מִקִּרְבֵּי אֲחֵיךָ תְּשִׂים עָלֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ לֹא תוּכַל לִתֵּת עָלֶיךָ אִישׁ נָכְרִי אֲשֶׁר לֹא אֲחִיךָ הוּא:

You shall surely put upon yourselves a King, whom Hashem, your God, has chosen. From among your brothers you should put on yourself a King; you are not able to put on yourself a foreign man who is not your brother.

**Whom Hashem, your God, has chosen** – “Through a prophet” (Sifrei). The man whom Hashem chooses through a prophet – it is he who you should appoint as a King; adorn him with all of the rights of the King, and humble yourself to him as one acts toward a King.

Nevertheless, it says immediately after this: “From among your brothers [*you should put on yourself a King*], you are not able *to put on yourself*” etc. The Pasuk establishes the conditions which prepare a man to be a King, and the nation is obligated to give its attention to these conditions at the time of choosing a King. We find that the Torah allows for the possibility that the King will not be chosen directly by Hashem though the medium of a prophet, but rather he will be appointed by the free and open choice of the nation or its leaders – but not by a prophet.

One of the foundations of prophecy (see our commentary to 18:15 ff.) is that the man whom Hashem chooses to be a prophet, to give over by his mouth His (Hashem’s) words to the nation, must first prove himself to be worthy, and he needs to be fitting for prophecy through the level of his completeness and spiritual perfection. According to the Gemara in Sanhedrin (11a), not only the personality of the prophet, but also of his generation, needs to be worthy of the mission of the prophet: “His generation is deserving of this.” In this way we can understand that the Pasuk here is dealing with two different possibilities: In the regular situation, “You shall surely put upon yourselves a King, whom Hashem, your God, has chosen.” However, when the involvement of the prophet is missing, then – “From among your brothers you should put on yourself a King” etc.

**אשר יבחר ה' אלקיך בו** – “על פי נביא” (ספרי). האיש שה' יבחר בו על ידי נביא – אותו תשים עליך למלך; תעטר אותו בכל זכויות המלך, ותכניע עצמך אליו כפי שנוהגים כלפי מלך. אף על פי כן, נאמר מיד לאחר מכן: “מקרב אחיך וגו' לא תוכל לתת עליך” וגו'; הכתוב קובע את התנאים המכשירים אדם להיות מלך, והאומה חייבת לתת דעתה לתנאים אלה בעת בחירת המלך. נמצא שהתורה נותנת מקום לאפשרות שהמלך לא ייבחר באופן ישיר על ידי ה' באמצעות נביא, אלא יתמנה על ידי בחירתה החופשית של האומה או נציגיה – שלא באמצעות נביא.

אחד מעקרונות הנבואה הוא (עיין פירוש, להלן יח, טו והלאה), שהאדם שה' בוחר בו להיות נביא, למסור דרך פיו את דברו לאומה, חייב קודם לכן להראות את עצמו כ"איש", והוא צריך להיות ראוי לנבואה בדרגת שלמותו המוסרית והרוחנית. לפי הגמרא בסנהדרין (יא). לא רק אישיותו של הנביא, אלא גם בני דורו, צריכים להיות ראויים לשליחות הנבואית: “דורו זכאי לכך.” על פי זה נוכל להבין שהכתוב כאן עוסק בשתי אפשרויות: בדרך הרגילה, “שום תשים עליך מלך אשר יבחר ה' אלקיך בו;” אך, כאשר חסרה התערבותו של נביא, אזי – “מקרב אחיך תשים” וגו'.

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