

Torah im Derekh Eretz and Torah U-Madda: Roads that Diverge or Converge?

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Introduction

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888), rabbinic leader, writer, and educator, is considered the founder of neo-Orthodoxy. His philosophy, *Torah im Derekh Eretz*, posits that the ideal Jewish life combines the wisdom of Torah and the best of culture or worldly knowledge. Rabbi Dr. Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903–1993), Talmudist, philosopher, writer, and orator, believed that a Jew must be passionately devoted to Halakhah (Jewish law), and at the same time be engaged with the world. Although he never used the term, his worldview is referred to today as *Torah u-Madda*. Both leaders attended university, founded educational institutions that promoted Torah learning and secular studies, and inspired their followers to devote themselves to Torah and be conversant with Western thought. One would suppose that the institution Soloveitchik was affiliated with, Yeshiva University, whose motto is *Torah u-Madda* (literally: Torah and science) one of the first yeshivot in the U.S. that included secular studies in its curriculum, would see itself as following in the footsteps of Hirsch's educational system. Yet for some reason, many in the *Torah u-Madda* camp claim that their philosophy differs significantly from *Torah im Derekh Eretz* (more on this below). However, a close study of the actual works of Hirsch and Soloveitchik reveals that their views on the combination of Torah and *hokhmah* (worldly wisdom) are quite similar—as well as how they envisioned the interaction between the two disciplines.

Background

To better understand their respective viewpoints and how they were developed, a brief biography of each thinker would be helpful. Born in Hamburg in 1808, Hirsch grew up in a Germany already battling the Reform movement. His family was staunchly Orthodox, yet open-minded to change. His grandfather, Rabbi Mendel Frankfurter, established the Hamburg Talmud Torah, a school that included secular studies in its curriculum, and his parents, “enlightened religious” people, fought against the

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establishment of the Reform temple in their town.¹ They sent their son Samson to a gymnasium in his youth. In his twenties, Hirsch learned under two outstanding Torah scholars, Rabbi Isaac Bernays (1792–1849) and Rabbi Jacob Ettlinger (1798–1871). He then studied for one year at the University of Bonn, where he read history, philosophy, and classical languages. Although he left before earning his degree, in his brief time there, he acquired the literary and oratorical skills that he would use to present Torah-true Judaism powerfully and articulately in his future writings and addresses.² He spent the next two decades as a pulpit rabbi in various towns, including Oldenburg and Nikolsburg, and eventually achieved the post of chief rabbi of Moravia. However, he was unhappy in this position since on the one hand, the Reformers thought he was a religious fanatic, and on the other hand, the Orthodox disapproved of his college education and modern ways. It was only when he became the leader of the Israeliteische Religionsgesellschaft (IRG) in Frankfurt that he discovered his true calling. In this position, he was able to actualize his unique view of Judaism: *Torah im Derekh Eretz*. As Judith Bleich defines it, this meant “uncompromising Orthodoxy and diligent Torah study combined with a genuine appreciation for, and participation in, the best of cultural, intellectual, artistic, literary, and scientific ideas contributed by the secular world for the advancement of human welfare.”³

The community, beginning with one hundred families, grew to five hundred under Hirsch’s direction. He built a beautiful synagogue, improved ritual slaughter standards, and founded a successful day school for boys and girls. He also made the bold move of leaving the greater Jewish community, which included the Reform members, and forming a separatist *kehillah* (community). This way, the Orthodox would not have to pay both for its own institutions and the ones of the larger community, and more importantly, would not be in any way connected with those who denied its most important values.⁴ Unfortunately, this led to a rift between Hirsch and the renowned Rabbi Seligman Baer Bamberger (1807–1878), leading halakhic decisor in Southern Germany at the time, who believed

¹ Moshe Miller, “Rabbi Hirsch: Childhood and Education” (lecture, Life and Thought of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Touro Graduate School of Judaic Studies, July 2023). I am indebted to Dr. Miller for his course, which inspired this essay, and for his advice and encouragement in crafting it.

² Judith Bleich, “Neo-Orthodoxy: Samson Raphael Hirsch,” in *Ashkenaz: The German Jewish Heritage*, ed. Gertrude Hirschler ([New York]: Yeshiva University Museum, 1988), 119.

³ Bleich, “Neo-Orthodoxy,” 121.

⁴ Ibid., 121.

it was a mistake for the Orthodox to withdraw from the *gemeinde* (congregation), even if it meant being part of a community that included Reformers.⁵ Hirsch also battled the precursor of the Conservative movement, the Positive-Historical school, which was embodied by the Breslau seminary headed by Zecharias Frankel, and was not afraid to become embroiled in public controversies with Frankel and the historian Heinrich Graetz.⁶

Zionism was just beginning to become a movement in Hirsch's day, but Hirsch was not a proponent of its ideology. He believed that Eretz Yisrael was the promised land and that the Jews would eventually return to it, but he thought it was a misuse of energy to attempt to take the initiative and immigrate there. He preferred to write books about the Torah to inspire the Jewish youth in the Diaspora to appreciate their heritage. He disagreed with Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Kalischer (1795–1874), a proto-Zionist rabbi, who believed in the importance of returning to the land and reviving the practice of sacrifices. Hirsch claimed that the three oaths, written in Song of Songs and cited in the Talmud (*Ketubot* 111a), forbidding Jews to return to the land of Israel on their own initiative, were halakhically binding.⁷

Besides carrying out his rabbinic duties, Hirsch wrote prolifically. His first book, *The Nineteen Letters*,⁸ presented the fundamental concepts of Judaism, and the second, *Horeb*, expanded upon it by explaining the commandments and the rationale behind them. These books were aimed at Jewish intellectuals who struggled to reconcile Judaism with the rationalism of the day. He also penned a multi-volume commentary on the Torah, as well as commentaries on the Psalms and the *siddur* (prayer book). Even after he died in 1888, his ideas lived on. His son-in-law, Dr. Solomon Breuer, took over as Rabbi of the Frankfurt *kehillah*, and his grandson, Rabbi Dr. Joseph Breuer, led the congregation of Khal Adath Jeshurun in Washington Heights, which viewed itself as the continuation of the IRG and Rav Hirsch's community.⁹ Breuer's community, once vibrant, has

⁵ Ibid., 122.

⁶ Eliyahu M. Klugman, *Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch: Architect of Torah Judaism for the Modern World* (New York City: Mesorah Publications, 1996), 255–261.

⁷ Samson R. Hirsch, *Horeb: A Philosophy of Jewish Laws and Observations* (London: Soncino Press, 1972), 145.

⁸ Samson R. Hirsch, *The Nineteen Letters of Ben Uziel: Being a Spiritual Presentation of the Principles of Judaism*, trans. Bernard Drachman (Bloch, 1942).

⁹ Bleich, "Neo-Orthodoxy," 122. For more details on the development of the Hirschian community in Washington Heights, see David Kranzler and Dovid Landesman, *Rav Breuer: His Life and His Legacy: A Biography of Rav Dr. Joseph Breuer* (New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1998).

dwindled in recent years, but Rav Hirsch's works have been republished and are regaining popularity throughout the Jewish community.

Soloveitchik grew up in Khaslavich, a small Russian town. He had been born into the illustrious Soloveitchik dynasty. His father, Rabbi Moshe Soloveitchik (1879–1941), spent years teaching his precocious son Joseph Talmud, using the new methodology of *lomdus* invented by his father, Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik of Brisk (1855–1918).¹⁰ The Soloveitchiks were strong adherents of the “Torah only” philosophy, but Rav Moshe's wife Pesha, the daughter of Rabbi Elya Feinstein, was brought up in a household where both Torah and literature were discussed, and introduced her son to the classics.¹¹ The family fled from Russia to Poland during World War I, and in Warsaw, Soloveitchik attended the free Polish University, enrolling afterward in the University of Berlin, where he obtained a doctorate in philosophy.¹² Eventually, he emigrated to the United States, where he became the chief rabbi of Boston. After a rough beginning battling recalcitrant butchers and irate constituents, he was accepted by the Brookline community.¹³ He began the first Jewish day school in Boston, the Maimonides School, and gave weekly lectures which attracted hundreds of people.¹⁴ At the same time, he traveled to New York to give *shiurim* in Talmud at Yeshiva University, a post he kept for over forty years, ordaining two thousand rabbis.¹⁵ A charismatic and brilliant orator, his yearly *yahrtzeit shiur* for his father attracted thousands. Although born into a non-Zionist family, Soloveitchik had a change of heart beginning in the 1930s and crystallizing during the years of the Holocaust. He became a staunch supporter of the State of Israel and the Mizrachi movement, serving as the honorary president of the Religious Zionists of America from 1946 until his death.¹⁶

Soloveitchik did not publish much during his lifetime, but the essays that reached print were powerful works that expressed his philosophy.

¹⁰ Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Rav: The World of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1999) 21–22.

¹¹ Shulamit S. Meiselman, *The Soloveitchik Heritage: A Daughter's Memoir* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1995), 107.

¹² Rothkoff, *The Rav*, 25–26.

¹³ Ibid., 29–31.

¹⁴ Ibid., 33–34.

¹⁵ Ibid., 43–45.

¹⁶ Ibid., 53.

Three of the most famous are *Halakhic Man*,¹⁷ a defense of Torah scholars, *The Lonely Man of Faith*,¹⁸ an existentialist work describing the dilemma of religious man in the Western world, and *The Halakhic Mind*,¹⁹ which explores the dialectic of religion and science. Hirsch battled the Reformers, and Soloveitchik took on the Conservative movement, which seemed to be winning the battle against the Orthodox in America in the 1950s. His bold stance, which forbade attending a synagogue with mixed pews, even to hear the *shofar* blown, demonstrates how seriously he perceived their threat to Orthodoxy.²⁰ The rabbis Soloveitchik ordained were on the frontlines, serving as pulpit rabbis throughout the States, and did much to save Orthodoxy in the mid-twentieth century when everyone was predicting its demise. After his death, his legacy continues—in the Maimonides School, still thriving; in Yeshiva University, where his students and students of his students still teach his Torah; and in the Modern Orthodox community, where more and more of his manuscripts and recordings are being published and disseminated.

Zev Eleff analyzes why Yeshiva University never really viewed itself as being inspired by Hirsch's *Torah im Derekh Eretz* program, despite their similar approach to the Western world. He finds it especially ironic that the Yeshiva and Breuer's community established themselves just a few blocks apart from each other in Washington Heights.²¹ Eleff quotes Rabbi Norman Lamm (1927–2020), president of Yeshiva from 1976 to 2003. Lamm explained at a conference titled, “On the Impact of Samson Raphael Hirsch,” that Yeshiva College traced its philosophy to the Talmud scholars of Eastern Europe rather than Hirsch's Germany.²² In Hirsch's *realschule* (school), the students studied an hour or two of Talmud a day, while in Yeshiva, Talmud was studied from nine a.m. until three p.m. Another difference Lamm noted was that Hirsch was “decidedly anti-Zionist” while *Torah u-Madda* was “much more hospitable to Zionism.”²³ They

¹⁷ Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983).

¹⁸ Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith* (New York: Doubleday Books, 1992).

¹⁹ Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Halakhic Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998).

²⁰ Rothkoff, *The Rav*, 47–48.

²¹ Zev Eleff, “Between Bennett and Amsterdam Avenues: The Complex American Legacy of Samson Raphael Hirsch, 1939–2013,” *Tradition* 46, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 9.

²² Eleff, “Between Bennett and Amsterdam,” 8.

²³ Ibid., 8.

also disagreed about interaction with the non-Orthodox. R. Hirsch believed in “separatism,” and his grandson Joseph Breuer followed suit. Although he did not sign it, Breuer supported the 1956 ban on Orthodox participation in interdenominational dialogue.²⁴ Rabbi Soloveitchik, on the other hand, believed it was important to cooperate with non-Orthodox movements to combat problems they shared, such as poverty, hunger, and disease, as long as it did not involve religious debate.²⁵

It is true that Soloveitchik and Hirsch had divergent approaches toward Zionism and cooperating with the non-Orthodox, and that their institutions differed in their emphasis on intensive learning of Talmud. However, their respective philosophies of *Torah im Derekh Eretz* and *Torah u-Madda* reflect the same belief: combining Torah and secular studies is the ideal, not a concession to the times. In this study, I will show how their ideas complement each other in the following areas: combining Torah and *hokhmah* (worldly wisdom) as the ideal way of life, the importance of actualizing Torah in this world, the reconciliation of contradictions between religion and science, the academic study of the Bible, the interaction between Torah and Western thought in a Jew’s life, and the implementation of Jewish learning and secular studies in an educational setting.

Hirsch’s *Torah im Derekh Eretz*

Let us begin by comparing how the two thinkers defined and defended their respective ideologies. Scholars have pointed out that Hirsch did not systematically explain his philosophy of *Torah im Derekh Eretz*.²⁶ He had planned to compose a work to be titled *Moriah*, articulating his *weltanschauung* (worldview), but it was never written. Yet his ideas are scattered throughout his essays and commentaries, and if one examines them, one

²⁴ Ibid., 11.

²⁵ Rakeffet-Rothkoff, 47. It is also interesting to note that in an article tracing the development of *Torah u-Madda* at Yeshiva University, J. J. Schacter does not draw any parallels between it and *Torah im Derekh Eretz*. He mentions Hirsch only once, crediting him with institutionalizing the concept of combining Torah with secular studies. He points out that before Hirsch included both disciplines in his school curriculum, it was only practiced on an individual level. Schacter also emphasizes the idea of a “synthesis” between the two realms, which, as I will elaborate upon below, was not the way Soloveitchik viewed it. See Jacob J. Schacter, “Torah U-Madda Revisited: The Editor’s Introduction,” *The Torah U-Madda Journal* 1 (1989): 1–22.

²⁶ Mordechai Breuer, *Modernity Within Tradition: The Social History of Orthodox Jewry in Imperial Germany* (1992), 56.

can piece together his worldview, which has been termed “Jewish humanism.” It is noteworthy that Hirsch did not settle on the term *Torah im Derekh Eretz* right away. In his early writings, he used the terms *Torah ve-Derekh Eretz*, *Torah ve-Hokhmah*, and *Torah u-Madda* interchangeably. Only in his later works did he use the term *Torah im Derekh Eretz* in a systematic way.²⁷ The phrase does not appear in *The Nineteen Letters*, nor in *Horeb*. Rabbi Breuer contends: “*Torah im Derekh Eretz* is only a slogan inscribed on a flag... a road to practice and not an ideological foundation.”²⁸

While he may not have settled on the motto immediately, I believe that Hirsch used the words *Torah im Derekh Eretz* deliberately to refer to his unique understanding of Judaism. One can see this clearly in the Hirsch commentary on Mishnaic tractate *Avot*, where he takes the famous verse from the Mishnah, ‘*Yafeh talmud Torah im derekh eretz*’ (*Avot*, 2:2) and gives it a new meaning. In its original context, it meant, “It is good when Torah is combined with work.” Here is how Hirsch interprets *derekh eretz*: “The situations arising from and dependent on the circumstance that *the earth is the place where the individual must live, fulfill his destiny and dwell with others*”²⁹ (italics mine). He also defines it as “ways of earning a living,” “rules of courtesy arising from social living,” and “what is pertinent to good breeding and general education.”³⁰

In an analysis of the Biblical verse, “And He drove out the man and he settled at the east of the garden of Eden, the cherubim and the flame of sword which turns every way, to keep the way to the tree of life” (Genesis 3:24), which describes how Adam is chased out of Eden, Hirsch articulates his worldview in even greater detail. In this passage, he explains that God cut off direct contact with man but used the sword and the cherubim (Heavenly angels) to allow man back to the Tree of Life. He quotes the Sage Rabbi Yishmael’s words on this verse: “*Derekh Eretz* preceded the Torah by twenty-six generations, for it says, cherubim and the sword were established to keep the way to the tree of life, *but the way is*

²⁷ Lawrence Kaplan, “Torah U-Madda in the Thought of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch,” *Be-Khol Derakhekh Da’ehu*, Summer 1997, 8. Kaplan points out that the fact Hirsch used these terms interchangeably shows that differentiating between the ideologies of *Torah im Derekh Eretz* and *Torah u-Madda* based on their terminology is untenable.

²⁸ Norman Lamm, *Torah Umadda: The Encounter of Religious Learning and Worldly Knowledge in the Jewish Tradition* (Lanham: Jason Aronson, 1990), 98.

²⁹ Samson R. Hirsch, *Pirkei Avot: Chapters of the Fathers*, trans. Gertrude Hirschler (New York City: Feldheim Publishers, 1967), 22.

³⁰ Hirsch, *Pirkei Avot*, 23.

*culture, and only then can one reach to the tree of life, to the Torah.”*³¹ Here Hirsch deliberately translates *derekh eretz* as “culture.” He continues,

Culture starts the work of educating the generations of mankind, and Torah completes it; for the Torah is the most finished education of man... culture in the service of morality is the first stage of Man’s return to God. For us Jews, *derekh eretz* and Torah are one. The most perfect gentleman and the most perfect Jews, to the Jewish teaching, are identical. But in the general development of mankind, culture comes earlier.

According to Hirsch, not only is leading a cultured life essential, *it precedes Torah*. To be a good Jew, one must *first* be a good human being, a civilized gentleman, a cultured man of the world. “A Jew is only a *higher* stage of being a man.”³² This is why he called his ideal *Mensch-Jisroel* (Man-Israelite) and not *Jisroel-mensch* (Israelite-man).

Hirsch needed to defend the idea of Jewish humanism. His conception that Torah-true Jews not only can, but should, live comfortably with the culture of the day, was diametrically opposed to the Eastern European “Torah-only” approach. Most of the rabbis from the East believed that non-Torah wisdom was unnecessary and dangerous. They were respectful of Hirsch personally but felt that *Torah im Derekh Eretz* was a concession to the times, only appropriate for the German, Westernized Jews who needed it.³³ Hirsch justifies his approach by contending that *Torah im Derekh Eretz* is not a new idea; in fact, he states that Judaism had embraced the learning of “outside” wisdom since ancient times. In his commentary on the verse from Psalms, 119:99, *mi-kol melamda hiscalti* (I have learned from all my teachers), he asserts that the writings of the Talmudic Sages reveal their knowledge of many disciplines, including agriculture, animal husbandry, industry, and commerce. A true Torah scholar can learn from every man, regardless of occupation: farmer, shepherd, merchant. “Everyone I talk to can be my teacher.”³⁴

How, then, does Hirsch explain the notion developed in modern times that secular studies were not only irrelevant but detrimental? He writes that when Jews resided within the confining walls of the ghetto, they were cut off from the world and its wisdom. Upon their emergence

³¹ Samson R. Hirsch, *The Pentateuch on Genesis: Translation and Commentary*, trans. Isaac Levy (Gateshead: Judaica Press, 1982), 94.

³² Hirsch, *The Pentateuch on Genesis*, 94.

³³ Lamm, *Torah Umadda*, 101.

³⁴ Samson R. Hirsch, *The Psalms. Translation and Commentary by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch*, trans. Gertrude Hirschler (New York: Philip Feldheim, 1960), 354.

from the ghetto after hundreds of years, they resumed contact with secular studies but were thrown off balance when secular ideas conflicted with religion and Torah concepts.³⁵ Traditional Jews chose to distance themselves from all non-Torah sources of knowledge, misjudging the true spirit of genuine culture, while educated and cultured Jews ignored Jewish life and scholarship.³⁶ No wonder the young people are leaving Judaism, mourns Hirsch, since they believe one must choose either Torah or *Derekh Eretz*—it is impossible to combine both.³⁷ He also asserts that the Jewish leaders should have encouraged the people to accept everything good and true in general culture as compatible with Judaism.³⁸

He writes:

It is sad to think that the Jewish leaders of that period allowed themselves to lose their awareness of the character and intellectual depth and clarity of Judaism in both theory and practice, which certainly cannot be viewed as contrary to the essence of anything genuinely good and true produced by human civilization through the ages.³⁹

Soloveitchik's *Torah U-Madda*

Soloveitchik never directly addresses the issue of a Jew learning secular studies; he gives no rationale for why it was acceptable for a Torah scholar like himself to study philosophy. Nor does he attempt to bring historical proof that throughout the ages, Judaism had embraced secular learning. He never uses the phrase *Torah u-Madda*, or any terminology, for that matter, to describe his philosophy. Yet he personified a simultaneous commitment to the Torah and worldly wisdom. As mentioned above, after

³⁵ Samson R. Hirsch, “The Relevance of Secular Studies to Jewish Education,” in *The Collected Writings of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Volume VII: Jewish Education*, ed. Jacob Breuer, trans. Gertrude Hirschler, (New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1997), 85. Lamm proposes a similar defense of Torah Umadda: “Advocates of Torah Umadda do not accept that Torah is fundamentally at odds with the world, that Jewishness and Jewish faith on the one side, and the universal concerns and preoccupations of humanity, on the other, are fundamentally inapposite, and that Torah and Madda therefore require substantive ‘reconciliation.’ Rather, whereas it may be true that effectively Torah and culture have become estranged from each other, *in essence they are part of one continuum. Hence, the motivation mission of Torah Umadda must be to reunite and restore an original harmony*” (italics mine) (Lamm, *Torah Umadda*, 142–143).

³⁶ Hirsch, “Relevance,” 85.

³⁷ Ibid., 84.

³⁸ Ibid., 85.

³⁹ Ibid., 85.

many years of intense Torah study with his father, Soloveitchik attended the University of Berlin and acquired a doctorate in philosophy.

He maintained a rigorous routine of Torah study while enrolled at the university, as evidenced in the letters he sent during this period to his father in Warsaw, which are full of complex Talmudic discussions.⁴⁰ At Yeshiva University, he not only taught Talmud at the highest level but also lectured on philosophy at the Bernard Revel Graduate School.⁴¹ The very first essay he published on American soil, *Halakhic Man*, is replete with references to secular philosophers and non-Jewish theologians, as well as Torah luminaries. For example, on the second page, one encounters Heraclitus, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Karl Barth, and Rudolph Otto. To analyze Halakhic man's dialectical personality, Soloveitchik uses the philosophical concepts he learned in Berlin. He uses Hegel's dialectical principle, as adapted by Kierkegaard and Barth, to portray the two conflicting selves within Halakhic man's personality: *homo religiosus* and cognitive man, which lead to his complexity and creativity. His use of typologies, which he employs in many of his subsequent essays and eulogies, he credits to Edward Spranger, as he writes in his first note in *Halakhic Man*.⁴² Soloveitchik utilizes the philosophical concepts of "qualitative" vs. "quantitative" time to elucidate the Jewish view of time, *masorah* (the chain of tradition), and repentance.⁴³ Even though Halakhic man, as described in the eponymous book, does not study anything but Torah, Soloveitchik could never have painted such a unique portrait without using the "outside" knowledge of philosophy. David Shatz points out this irony: "An *ish ha-Halakhah*, as described in the essay, would have no motivation to explore science and philosophy as Rabbi Soloveitchik did. To put it most sharply, an *ish ha-Halakhah* would not have written the essay 'Ish Ha-Halakhah.'"⁴⁴

⁴⁰ See Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Igrot Ha-Grid Ha-Levi* (New York: Morasha Foundation, 2001), Hebrew.

⁴¹ Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Rav*, 45.

⁴² Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, note 1, 139.

⁴³ Ibid., 118–120. Soloveitchik derives the idea of qualitative time from the philosopher Henri Bergson. See Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "Sacred and Profane: Kodesh and Chol in World Perspective," *Gesher* 3, no. 1 (1966): 64–65.

⁴⁴ David Shatz, "A Framework for *Ish Ha-halakhah*," in *Turim: Studies in Jewish History and Literature: Presented to Dr. Bernard Lander*, ed. Michael A. Shmidman (2007), 197. *Halakhic Man* is but one example of how Soloveitchik used secular philosophy to elucidate his ideas. Many of his essays, directly and indirectly, reference philosophical concepts. He also uses his knowledge of science in his works, especially in *Halakhic Mind*, which displays his erudition in physics, both Newtonian and modern.

Literature was another source of material for Soloveitchik. Although his first love was philosophy, he would occasionally refer to a character in a classic novel,⁴⁵ quote a stanza of poetry,⁴⁶ or even retell an entire short story⁴⁷ if it would make his message more effective.

Dr. Isadore Twersky writes in his eulogy that Soloveitchik (who had been his father-in-law) never felt the need to preach or brainwash. Thus, he never explained why it was important to study philosophy; it was simply part of his “intellectual capital.”⁴⁸ He used no apologetics to defend Western culture or to prove that traditional Judaism is compatible with philosophy. Twersky argues that Soloveitchik used philosophy, science, and the humanities as tools to sharpen his categories, probe the depth of the *masorah*, and reveal its charm and majesty. This way he was able to command respect from those far from Torah and increase the sensitivity and the spirituality of those who were committed to it.⁴⁹ Dr. Twersky contrasts this approach with that of Hirsch, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865–1935), and Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Reines (1839–1915), who all tried to *explain* the importance of Western culture. “Synthesis was not the driving force of his [Soloveitchik’s] system.”⁵⁰

These examples demonstrate how Soloveitchik’s life and work testify to his positive stance toward secular studies.

Torah on This World

Another parallel between these thinkers is their belief that while the study of Torah takes precedence over worldly studies, man’s goal is to actualize the commandments in the real world. Hirsch states that Torah laws are not supernatural but deal with every aspect of a full life that can be lived on this earth. He claims one can read the word in the verse from Psalms 119:99, “*Ki edvotekha sibah li*,” as related to the word, *adi*, a crown, since they “crown” our affairs on Earth with human nobility. “The prerequisite for the true fulfillment of the laws of the Lord is knowledge, as thorough

⁴⁵ See Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Abraham’s Journey: Reflections on the Life of the Founding Patriarch* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 2008), 187, for a reference to Peter Pan.

⁴⁶ Soloveitchik quotes a stanza from Robert Louis Stevenson’s poem “Requiem” in Joseph B. Soloveitchik, “Majesty and Humility,” *Tradition* 17, no. 2 (Spring 1978): 30.

⁴⁷ See *Halakhic Man*, note 114, 157–158 where he retells a story by I.L. Peretz.

⁴⁸ Isadore Twersky, “The Rov,” in *Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik: Man of Halacha, Man of Faith*, ed. Menachem Genack (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1998), 29.

⁴⁹ Twersky, “The Rov,” 31.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 33.

as possible, of all the realities of human affairs on earth.”⁵¹ The way Hirsch interprets God creating man *be-tzelem Elokim* (in God’s image) reflects this idea as well. He states in his commentary on the Pentateuch, *Bereshit* 1:27:

...that the mortal frame of man is one which is worthy of God and commensurate with the Godly calling of man, shows what definite value the Torah lays on recognition of the godlike dignity of the human body. *And actually, the whole Torah rests primarily on making the body holy* (italics mine).⁵²

In *The Nineteen Letters*, Rav Hirsch delineates a *hasid*, a pious person, as devoting himself to God by doing acts of love for the world. He does not withdraw from its midst but lives “in it, with it, and for it.”⁵³ Hirsch quotes the Rabbinic dictum: *Talmud gadol she-mari li-day ma’aseh* (Great is study for it leads to the practical fulfillment of the law) and explains we should lead a life of activity, permeated by God’s spirit.⁵⁴ “A life of seclusion devoted only to meditation and prayer is not Judaism.”⁵⁵ In another essay, he declares: “Judaism is not a mere adjunct to life: it comprises all of life... To be a Jew in the synagogue and the kitchen, in the field and the warehouse, in the office and the pulpit ...as man and as citizen, with one’s thoughts, in word and in deed...that is what it means to be a Jew.”⁵⁶ In the educational realm, he writes that students will appreciate learning *Humash* (Bible) more if, before reading it, they understand science, which explains how the world works, and history, which demonstrates how nations developed. The purpose of the Bible is to help all human beings, and Jews, find their place in the world order ordained by God.⁵⁷

These statements support Hirsch’s stance toward *derekh eretz*—if one is to apply Torah to life, one must understand the world in which one lives.

Soloveitchik has a similarly positive view of this world. He declares that the Halakhah believes in the sanctification of the body. Halakhic man “wishes to sanctify the physical-biological concrete man as the hero and

⁵¹ Hirsch, *The Psalms*, 354.

⁵² Hirsch, *Pentateuch: Genesis*, 22.

⁵³ Hirsch, *The Nineteen Letters*, 149.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 150.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 150.

⁵⁶ Samson R. Hirsch, “Religion Allied to Progress,” [hayehudi.org](https://www.hayehudi.org), 3, accessed November 10, 2023, <https://www.hayehudi.org>.

⁵⁷ Hirsch, “Relevance,” 90.

protagonist of religious life.”⁵⁸ He also believes that the Halakhah is not meant to be relegated to an ivory tower; it must affect every aspect of life. The following quote echoes the above-quoted words of Hirsch: “The marketplace, the street, the factory, the house, the meeting place, the banquet hall, all constitute the backdrop for religious life. The synagogue does not occupy a central place in Judaism.”⁵⁹ The following passage from a letter to Dr. Moshe Unna, a member of the Mizrahi party, further illustrates Soloveitchik’s perspective on engaging with the world:

This (Mizrahi) movement holds within its hand the answer to a serious dilemma: How can we remain steadfast and strong in the very center of the modern society and sanctify the new and that which is occurring on a daily basis with utmost holiness? I cannot join up to any group or association that has emblazoned on its banner (the call to) separate from this vast world (and go) into dark caves and set yourselves apart from the world and the rest of the Jewish people.⁶⁰

The Relationship Between Torah and *Hokhma*

Thus far, we have demonstrated why Hirsch and Soloveitchik believe that it is essential for a Jew to engage with God’s world and be an expert in *hokhma* as well as in Torah. Now we will explore how they understood the relationship *between* Torah and general knowledge. Are they two different disciplines, or is there meant to be interaction between them? If they do interact, how does one enhance the other? The term “synthesis” is often used to describe both *Torah im Derekh Eretz* and *Torah u-Madda*. If synthesis connotes the mixture of different elements so that they become one entity, is this what Hirsch and Soloveitchik had in mind?

When detailing how to educate one’s children, Hirsch emphasizes that the main subject of learning should be Torah.⁶¹ He also points out that the Torah itself tells us that everything between heaven and earth is a creation of God. Therefore, one should learn the science behind how the world operates and be able to differentiate between its mundane and divine attributes. History, he says, is equally important, since via its study one discovers the entry of various nations on the world stage, and it leads one to not only admire the strength and dignity of man but also what

⁵⁸ Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 94.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 94.

⁶⁰ Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Community, Covenant, and Commitment: Selected Letters and Communications of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, ed. Nathaniel Helfgott (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 2005), 202.

⁶¹ Hirsch, *Horeb*, 551.

happens to those who defy God's law.⁶² Elsewhere, he states: "Any knowledge that serves to enrich the intellect in any manner will also enhance our insights into the philosophy of Judaism."⁶³ If one had to make a choice, Jewish studies would have to come first, "but thank God we do not have to make such a choice."⁶⁴ In his *realschule*, students did not have to give up the study of the arts and sciences to gain the "treasures of truth and wisdom" inherent in Judaism. "If both studies are nurtured hand in hand, there will be ample room for both; the one will reinforce the other and the result will be a Jewish education that will find favor in the eyes of God and man."⁶⁵ He went so far as to say providing a secular education for one's children was a religious duty.⁶⁶ One can derive from the above elucidation of his educational philosophy that Hirsch believed that ideally, Torah and general knowledge should be studied together and that one will enhance the knowledge of the other. "For us Jews, Torah and *derekh eretz* are one."⁶⁷ He also contends that although Torah and secular knowledge are usually considered antitheses of each other, their "unity produces a Jew with moral and spiritual training in the general culture of mankind, a man and a citizen with a moral and spiritual education in the values of Judaism." Instead of leading to tension, these elements will complement and support one another to form one harmonious whole.⁶⁸

These various statements demonstrate that Hirsch's ideal was a complementary relationship between the worlds of Torah and *Derekh Eretz*, with the two disciplines in dialogue with each other. Torah can help us appreciate science, and history can illuminate the truths of the Torah. This approach is *not* a synthesis, claims Mordechai Breuer, a descendant and important interpreter of Hirsch's work. Synthesis implies a blending of ideas to form one whole. Rather, the "*mensch-Jisroel*" lives in a concentric circle—in two worlds at once. He is a cultured, civilized human being *and* a staunch Torah Jew *at the same time*.⁶⁹ Hirsch does warn his readers that

⁶² Ibid., 551.

⁶³ Hirsch, "Relevance," 90.

⁶⁴ Samson R. Hirsch, "Religious Education," in *Collected Writings, Volume VII*, 21.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 20–22.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 87.

⁶⁷ Hirsch, *Commentary on Genesis* 3:24.

⁶⁸ Samson R. Hirsch, "The Role of Hebrew Study in General Education," in *Collected Writings, Volume VII*, 63.

⁶⁹ Breuer, *Modernity*, 70. It is interesting to note that Dr. Samuel Belkin, the second president of Yeshiva University, used the word "synthesis" to describe *Torah u-Madda* in his inaugural address, but his definition parallels Breuer's concentric circles: "We prefer to look upon science and religion as separate domains which

the values of European culture must be filtered by the standards of the Torah for any impure elements. Although he venerated the high German culture as expressed by Friedrich Schiller, his hero, Hirsch was well aware that a Jew must apply the wisdom of the Torah to separate the pure elements in culture from the false ones.⁷⁰

Soloveitchik presents his view of man's double obligation toward God and the world in his classic essay, *Lonely Man of Faith*. He begins by listing four discrepancies between the two portrayals of man's creation as depicted in the first two chapters of Genesis. He explains that each difference highlights the conflicting aspects of the two communities a Jew must live in: the natural majestic and the covenantal. The two chapters do not refer to two different men, but two aspects of the same person, whom he labels Adam I and Adam II.

Adam the first (who parallels Cognitive Man in *Halakhic Man*) represents the man who is involved in the physical world. He is curious and creative, wondering how the cosmos functions.⁷¹ His goal is to become dignified, which Soloveitchik defines as "glorious, majestic, and responsible."⁷² He takes control of nature by building hospitals, discovering cures for illnesses, and fighting famine.⁷³ In this way, he imitates God, who created him "in His Image." God wants us all to embody this aspect of the first man. This was God's first command to us: *milu ha-aretz ve-kirshuba*—man must fill the earth and dominate it.⁷⁴ In other words, Soloveitchik believes that man is obligated to actively improve this world, and for that, he must engage in a comprehensive study of how the world works. This condones the acquisition of general knowledge, not "just enough" to earn a living, but learning of the highest caliber.

At the same time, man must also follow the calling of what Soloveitchik calls "Adam II." He is not interested in creating, nor conquering. He studies nature, not to copy it or harness its powers, but to find God in "every beam of light, in every bud and blossom, in the morning breeze

need not be in serious conflict and, therefore, need no reconciliation. If we seek the blending of science and religion and the integration of secular knowledge with sacred wisdom, *then it is not in the subject matter of these fields but rather within the personality of the individual that we hope to achieve this synthesis*" (italics mine). See Samuel Belkin, *Essays in Traditional Jewish Thought* (New York, 1956), 16–17.

⁷⁰ Samson R. Hirsch, "The Joy of Learning," in *Collected Writings, Volume VII*, 455.

⁷¹ Soloveitchik, *Lonely Man of Faith*, 12–13.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 16.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

and the stillness of a starlit evening.”⁷⁵ He is meant to live a redemptive life, not a dignified one. Both Adams receive a partner, Eve, from God, but while she merely works alongside Adam the First in his endeavors, she is Adam the Second’s *existential* partner in his search for God. God joins their partnership to create what Soloveitchik terms “the covenantal community.”⁷⁶ The man of faith must oscillate between these two poles, between the natural or majestic community of Adam the First and the covenantal one of Adam the Second. Like Hirsch, Soloveitchik believes that a Jew must live in two worlds at once. When he received the Torah at Sinai, it did not absolve him of his duties to improve the world he lives in and retreat to the “four ells of Halakhah” only. His challenge is to combine his duties as a Jew and as a human being.

Soloveitchik expresses his view of culture even more explicitly in an address he gave at one of the Mizrahi conventions. He uses a verse in Genesis as his prooftext: “And Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. And Abraham rose up from before his dead and he spoke to the children of Heth, saying, ‘I am a stranger and a resident with you’” (Gen. 23:24). Soloveitchik poses this question: “What do we seek, what is our wish...both in Eretz Yisrael and in the Diaspora? What is our position vis-à-vis civilization in general, with respect to science, Western culture, towards the countries in which we live?”⁷⁷ He finds the answer in Abraham’s self-description. “Here is what Abraham means when he calls himself a stranger and a resident: on the one hand, I am one of you, I engage in business, I speak your language, I fully participate in your social and economic institutions. I even serve in the army. I work in the laboratory, try to cure illness... I am a true resident of the country. Yet at the same time, I am a stranger, a foreigner. I belong to a unique world, in which I am one with the Creator, full of characters you do not know, a tradition you cannot comprehend, with spiritual values that are impractical. A world of sacrifice and Torah learning, lovingkindness, of sanctity... in this sense we are totally different. We bury our dead differently, that is why I am asking for a separate burial place for my wife. I need a Jewish

⁷⁵ Ibid., 23.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 26–31.

⁷⁷ Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Rav Speaks: Five Addresses on Israel, History and the Jewish People* (New York: Ktav, 2002), 74.

grave.⁷⁸ In other words, the Jew must be a stranger—always apart, dedicated to holy ideals, and at the same time a resident—a citizen of the world, endeavoring to improve it along with the rest of humanity.⁷⁹

How does Soloveitchik view the relationship between the two, often contradictory, demands with which God had confronted the Jew? As opposed to Hirsch, who describes the life of a *Mensch-Jisroel* as “harmonious,” the Rav delineates man as “oscillating” between the two poles, constantly trying to find a balance between the two communities in which he must live—the majestic and the covenantal. Yet he does not think this is a negative thing. On the contrary, it is “a paradoxical yet magnificent dialectic,”⁸⁰ which adds depth to the Jew’s life and inspires him to be creative. It is telling that the Rav uses the metaphors of the banks of a river and a bridge across a chasm to illustrate how man steps from one world to the other. In the Mizrahi address, “Abraham the Hebrew,” Soloveitchik points out that the term *irri* (Hebrew) is more than a geographic designation. It is derived from the root *e-v-r*, which denotes that the first Jew came from “over” the river (see *Rashi*, Genesis 14:13). “A Jew does not live on one side,” declares Soloveitchik, “but on both sides of the river at the same time.”⁸¹ When Abraham crossed the river to Canaan, he became a faithful citizen. He participated in many areas—raising sheep, negotiating with kings, defending the country—but *simultaneously* lived on the other side of the river, in Ur Casdim, where he first met God. The Jews have crossed many rivers, lived in many lands, but always remained rooted in “over the river.”⁸²

Rav Soloveitchik uses similar imagery when interpreting a verse in the first book of Samuel: “There was a man from Ramatayim Tzofim, from the hill of Efrayim, and his name was Elkanah” (Chapter 1:1). He explains that Elkanah came from a place where two mountains faced one another—he had to build a bridge between them, so that he could travel from one to the other without falling into the deep.

The Jews have persisted in building this bridge from the days of Elkanah... it's hard and continuous work...we don't want to perch

⁷⁸ Soloveitchik, *The Rav Speaks*, 74.

⁷⁹ In a lecture regarding the Vatican council Soloveitchik elaborates upon the double confrontation of the Jew. See Joseph B. Soloveitchik, “Confrontation,” *Tradition* 6, no. 2 (Spring 1964): especially 27–28, where he uses the meeting of Jacob and Esau to make the same point.

⁸⁰ Soloveitchik, *Lonely Man of Faith*, 82.

⁸¹ Soloveitchik, *Five Addresses*, 116.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 116.

on one mountain only, *our ambition is that there should be a proper connection between the world of the holiness of the Jew and the world of science and knowledge of humanity.*⁸³

He warns that those who choose to use this bridge and live on both mountains risk falling into the ravine, but the rewards are great.

Pinchas Peli, in his insightful essay, “Hermeneutics in the Thought of Rav Soloveitchik,” analyzes how Soloveitchik uses *derush* (Biblical analysis) to elucidate his ideas and comes to the startling conclusion that *the Rav’s derush is the bridge between the two worlds*. The very verses he uses to illustrate his ideas—*ger ve-toshav, ha-ramatayim tzofim*—suddenly acquire new meaning as he explains the new reality the Jew finds himself in.⁸⁴ Here is how Peli describes this phenomenon:

In the new situation addressed by Rabbi Soloveitchik, we find ourselves equidistant from, or in equal measure within, two specific worlds, standing in mutual opposition, the holy and the profane...*the two worlds exist and persist in their own right, and we live and persist in both of them*. In the ladder of priorities, both of them together are preferred, with all of the paradoxes and contradictions this involves. (italics mine).⁸⁵

These examples demonstrate that Rav Soloveitchik does not compartmentalize the worlds of Torah and Madda; rather, he expects man to live boldly in both even if the “bridge” is precarious, since the reward makes it worthwhile.

Torah and Science

One of the dangers of exposing oneself to culture is grappling with modern science and its challenges to faith. How does each thinker deal with the contradictions between Torah and science, and the challenges of Biblical criticism? In a study of how Hirsch reconciles Torah with science, Lawrence Kaplan claims that Hirsch does not view the Torah as a source

⁸³ Joseph B. Soloveitchik, “Ramatayim Tzofim,” in *Ha-Adam ve-Olam*, ed. Shlomo Schmidt (Jerusalem: Sifryat Eliner, 1998), 82.

⁸⁴ Pinchas Peli, “Hermeneutics in the Thought of Rabbi Soloveitchik—Medium or Message?” *Tradition* 23, no. 3 (Spring 1988): 16.

⁸⁵ Peli, “Hermeneutics,” 17. In this essay, Peli contrasts this with Hirsch’s ideal of *Torah im Derekh Eretz*. He claims that in Hirsch’s conception, Torah and culture are two separate entities, without contact, except for the fact they are embodied in the same person at different times. See my comments above in “Hirsch’s *Torah im Derekh Eretz*” section for a refutation of this point.

of scientific knowledge. Instead, he believes its purpose is to improve man's ethical and social behavior through the observance of its laws. If any of its verses contradict modern science, it's only because "the Torah speaks in the language of man."⁸⁶ Kaplan quotes a little-known article by Hirsch, first written in 1873 but only published in 1937, titled "The Educational Value of Judaism." In the essay, Hirsch claims that Judaism does not fear scientific advances. For example, on the theory of evolution, which was only beginning to gain traction in his days, he states that if this theory becomes universally accepted, Judaism will view it as only further proof of God's greatness. If He can create an entire world from one cell, then, "even in the midst of the infinite variety presented by the universe, there is an obvious single harmonious unity."⁸⁷ Hirsch was also not afraid of the scientific theories of the age of the world, even if they were proven to be true. He points out that the rabbis already entertained the possibility that God created multiple worlds and destroyed them before He created our Earth. "They were willing to live with any theory that did not reject the basic truth that every beginning is from God."⁸⁸ On the other hand, Hirsch did not approve of the academic study of the written or oral Torah, even when practiced by Orthodox Jews to defend the Bible against its detractors. Hence, he was suspicious of Rabbi Hildesheimer's Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin, which employed such methods,⁸⁹ and attacked Zecharias Frankel and his academic analysis of the oral law, *Darchei Ha-Mishneh*.⁹⁰

Soloveitchik, characteristically, never addresses the Torah/science conundrum directly. Instead, he admits it has never disturbed him. As he states at the beginning of *Lonely Man of Faith*:

I have never been seriously troubled by the problem of the Biblical doctrine of creation vis-à-vis the scientific story of evolution at both the cosmic and organic levels, nor have I been perturbed by the confrontation of the mechanistic interpretation of the human mind with the Biblical spiritual concept of man...Moreover, I have not been troubled by the theories of Biblical criticism which contradict the very foundations upon which the sanctity and integrity of the Scriptures rest.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Kaplan, "Torah U-Madda," 11.

⁸⁷ Samson R. Hirsch, "The Educational Value of Judaism," in *Collected Writings, Volume VII*, 257–258.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 265.

⁸⁹ Lamm, *Torah Umadda*, 99.

⁹⁰ Breuer, *Modernity*, 131.

⁹¹ Soloveitchik, *Lonely Man of Faith*, 7.

Although he claims not to be “troubled” by Bible criticism, Soloveitchik’s explanation of the contradictions between the first and second chapters in Genesis regarding man’s creation is, in effect, an answer to the Bible critics who claim that the conflicting styles are proof that they were written by two authors.

Elsewhere, Soloveitchik invokes the Jewish belief in the *masorah* to counter those who claim Abraham never existed. He concedes that recent archeological finds have validated many Biblical accounts, but “To us, this problem is almost irrelevant. We need no evidence of the historical existence of our patriarch.”⁹² He asserts that Abraham has been so integrated into the Jews’ historical consciousness that “the whole paradoxical complex experience of our charisma would be impossible if we denied the reality of the Abraham personality.”⁹³ The Jews’ unique time experience allows Abraham to live on with his descendants, and even within them.⁹⁴

Another reason why Soloveitchik feels no need to integrate science and religion is that he believes they use different methodologies to interpret reality, and therefore view the world through different lenses. As he writes in *The Halakhic Mind*: “The object reveals itself in manifold ways to the subject... a certain *telos* corresponds to each of these ontological manifestations.”⁹⁵ The scientist and the man of faith operate under different categories and therefore do not need to agree.

Soloveitchik, like Hirsch, was wary of the academic study of the Bible. When asked by the Rabbinic Council of America if they should participate with the Jewish Publication Society in the new English translation of the Bible, he advised against it. He feared that the secular scholars would not listen to the Orthodox rabbis’ suggestions. “I am not ready to swallow the ideas of the modern expert and scholar on our Tanakh.”⁹⁶

Education

Thus far, we have analyzed the writings of Hirsch and Soloveitchik and compared their respective attitudes toward combining Torah and

⁹² Soloveitchik, *Abraham’s Journey*, 2.

⁹³ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁴ Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Emergence of Ethical Man* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 2005), 167. For an in-depth explanation of how Soloveitchik’s unique portrayal of the patriarchs depends upon his understanding of historical time, see Yocheved Friedman, “Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik’s Portrayal of the Patriarchs,” *Hakirah* 30 (Summer 2021) 69–89.

⁹⁵ Soloveitchik, *The Halakhic Mind*, 16.

⁹⁶ Soloveitchik, *Community, Covenant, and Commitment*, 110–111.

hokhmah. We will now examine the educational institutions they created to see how they put their ideas into practice. In 1853, Hirsch founded the school of Israelitische Religionsgesellschaft (IRG) in Frankfurt, and “the development of the modern Orthodox school entered a new phase.”⁹⁷ Its curriculum encompassed both Jewish and secular studies, and it was attended equally by boys and girls who were taught in separate classes but received almost identical instruction.⁹⁸ He was the first Orthodox leader to encourage the systematic education of girls.⁹⁹ In his magnum opus, *Horeb*, Hirsch details an ideal educational curriculum. The Hebrew language is first on the list, as the indispensable basis for learning the Torah. He believed that to start, learning the language should be the goal. Only after the child develops a strong knowledge of the Holy tongue will he be able to understand the content of Scripture. Concurrently with Hebrew, the vernacular should be taught to promote general knowledge and development of the mind. Third is Tanakh: Torah, *nevi’im* (Prophets), and *ketuvim* (Writings). Fourth is nature and man, which includes natural history, physics, geography, psychology, and anthropology. Fifth is history, by which he means general world history. Sixth is “Right Living” or Jewish law, using Rambam (Maimonides) and *Shulhan Arukh* as sources, and the Mishnah and Talmud when possible. As mentioned above, the curriculum in his school was the same for both sexes, except for Mishnah and Gemara, which were not taught to girls.¹⁰⁰ Instead, they were instructed in sewing and the like, as Rav Hirsch believed girls and boys had equal but different roles in Judaism.¹⁰¹ Inscribed on the foundation of his synagogue was the sentence: “May we merit to raise up together our sons and daughters to Torah and Derekh Eretz.”

Unfortunately, these goals were not accomplished the way Hirsch envisioned them. He had planned for the hours devoted to Torah, religion, and Hebrew language to amount to almost half the total weekly classes. He also wanted to integrate Hebrew and general subjects, since Judaism and Bildung (culture) were “in a most profoundly true sense, one.”¹⁰² But the hours spent on Jewish subjects were only $\frac{1}{3}$ of the number of teaching

⁹⁷ Breuer, *Modernity*, 104.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 104.

⁹⁹ Seth Farber, *An American Orthodox Dreamer: Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Boston’s Maimonides School* (Brandeis University Press, 2004), 72.

¹⁰⁰ Hirsch, *Horeb*, 411–412.

¹⁰¹ Farber, *Dreamer*, 72.

¹⁰² Breuer, *Modernity*, 110.

hours. Talmud was only taught in the upper grades, and the idea of “integration” was dropped.¹⁰³ This was due to pressure from the state supervisors who insisted on regulating the curriculum, and from parents who did not understand the importance of religious education. For twenty years, Hirsch battled the government authorities, via eloquently worded petitions and letters, but to no avail. He was allowed only six Bible classes and four Talmud classes.¹⁰⁴ Nonetheless, by 1900, six hundred students were enrolled. The Israelite School was an innovation in the world of Jewish education and became the template for modern Jewish day schools.¹⁰⁵

Soloveitchik is probably most famous for his role as instructor of Talmud at Yeshiva University. But there he was a teacher only, albeit one who wielded much influence. In 1937, he established his own school, Maimonides Day School, for the children in Boston, and spent the next forty years directing it. It began with six students learning in his living room and grew into a full elementary and high school system, which is still thriving today, boasting four hundred students. Its initial curriculum was very similar to Hirsch’s plan for his school. Maimonides’ original program included instruction in reading, writing, speaking Hebrew and Yiddish, translating the Bible together with Rashi and other commentators, and *Shulhan Arukh*.¹⁰⁶ In an unpublished letter from Soloveitchik to the charter members of the Maimonides school, he writes that the purpose of the institution was to provide Jewish children with an excellent secular education, combined with traditional Jewish training. This training was not limited to theoretical knowledge alone, but coordinated with it the religious mode of living, that is, religious attitudes and the practical observance of the commandments and laws.¹⁰⁷ In Maimonides, Jewish texts would be taught only from an Orthodox perspective, and secular subjects would complement, not simply supplement, the Judaic studies.¹⁰⁸ This echoes Hirsch’s dream of integrating religious and secular subjects. The

¹⁰³ Ibid., 110.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 111.

¹⁰⁵ Samson R. Hirsch, “Jewish Schooling,” in *Judaism Eternal: Selected Essays from the Writings of Samson Raphael Hirsch*, ed. Isador Grunfeld (London: Soncino Press, 1967), note 1, 155. The editor, Isador Grunfeld, claims that Hirsch’s school became the model for similar religious schools throughout Germany and Western Europe, and that the essays “Jewish Schooling” and “Religious Instruction” inspired Rabbi Dr. Avigdor Shonfeld to establish the Jewish day school movement in England.

¹⁰⁶ Farber, *American Orthodox Dreamer*, 55.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 53.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 54.

school was co-educational from the beginning, and in contrast with Hirsch's school, there were mixed classes of boys and girls. Rav Soloveitchik also advocated teaching girls Talmud, which they did throughout the grade levels, while at IRG only boys learned the Talmud. Rabbi Soloveitchik firmly believed that if girls were instructed separately from boys, they would not be taught on the same level.¹⁰⁹

The above comparison shows us that Hirsch and Soloveitchik had similar goals for their day schools: the curriculum was to be a combination of Torah and secular studies, each taught on the highest level, with equal (or almost equal) instruction for boys and girls. Indeed, Hirsch's teaching plan may have served as an inspiration for Soloveitchik, who was able to implement the dual curriculum without the fear of government restrictions. Interestingly, in a recorded speech, Soloveitchik compares himself to Hirsch and contends that their approaches are very different. This may not have been due to a deep schism between their philosophies, but because he was contrasting *Yeshiva University*, not Maimonides, with Hirsch's day school. Soloveitchik states that Hirsch struggled with the same problem educators faced in the United States: how was he to preserve Torah Judaism in a secular environment? Therefore, Hirsch developed an aesthetic and tasteful synagogue service, says Soloveitchik, and his goal was to train German Jews to be pious and have universal understanding. Yeshiva University, however, stresses the importance of Torah study. Hirsch's adherents followed the Halakhah, but they lacked knowledge of the Torah. The German rabbis knew only a small portion of *Shulhan Arukh* and the Bible. They could barely *pasken she'ilot* (answer questions on Halakhic matters). Soloveitchik avowed that YU's goal is to produce true rabbinic scholars. "Some claim we have not achieved a proper 'synthesis' between Torah study and secular endeavor... *Torah im derekh eretz*. I claim that the true greatness of the Yeshiva is that it does not have this synthesis."¹¹⁰ If there is a contradiction between Torah and secular endeavor, synthesis is not possible...the greatness of Yeshiva is that it is a real Yeshiva and on the second level a proper academic institution. Both divisions function without synthesis and compromise.¹¹¹

In this lecture, Soloveitchik asserted that Yeshiva University aimed to produce Talmud scholars who are also proficient in secular studies, but Hirsch was satisfied with educating Jews to be pious laymen. To a certain extent, this was true, since Hirsch's school only offered Talmud lessons to the select few who made it to that level. Yeshiva College, on the other

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 69.

¹¹⁰ Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Rav*, 228–229.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 230.

hand, based itself on the Eastern European model in which boys studied Talmud most of the day. However, this does not contradict the fact that both thinkers had very similar conceptions toward the combination of Torah and *hokhmah*, as we demonstrated above, and that the day schools they established had almost identical goals.

The question remains: if *Torah u-Madda* has so much in common with *Torah im Derekh Eretz*, why didn't the communities who followed these ideologies, the Modern Orthodox/YU community and the Hirschian enclave led by Dr. Breuer, join forces when they established themselves in the same neighborhood on American shores, or at least acknowledge their similarities? Why have so many thinkers tried to accentuate the differences between them? A comprehensive analysis of this "controversy" is beyond the scope of this paper and has already been attempted by several scholars.¹¹² These studies have focused on the differences between the communities, while in this paper, we examined the thinkers' ideologies. Our study has revealed some salient points: Hirsch's goal was to create a community safe from the ravages of the Reformers and to inspire a love of the Torah way of life among the youth. He put all his efforts into the day school he created. He was well versed in the Talmud but did not see the need to found a yeshivah for higher-level study in Frankfurt, although eventually his son-in-law would do so.¹¹³ Soloveitchik had a similar agenda for his Boston community, but he viewed his role at YU very differently. When he portrayed himself as "rosh yeshivah" of a school patterned after the yeshivot of Lithuania, where Talmud was the focus of the students' studies, he found little in common with Hirsch.

Soloveitchik's followers use the term *Torah u-Madda*—which, interestingly, Soloveitchik never used—to symbolize much more than the combination of Torah and science. Its adherents are ardent Zionists and do not hesitate to join forces with the non-Orthodox to support Israel and defend Jewish interests in general. The Breuer's community, following in the footsteps of Hirsch, continued his tradition of *austritt* (withdrawal of the Orthodox community from the larger non-observant community) and shunned any contact with Jews who are not "Torah true," including those involved in building the state of Israel. Thus, the two communities eyed each other askance; those in the *Torah u-Madda* camp rarely acknowledged their indebtedness to Hirsch, and those who waved the *Torah im Derekh*

¹¹² See Eleff, "Between Bennett and Amsterdam Avenues," and Chaim Waxman, "Dilemmas of Modern Orthodoxy: Sociological and Philosophical," *Judaism* 42, no. 1 (Winter 1993):69–70.

¹¹³ Klugman, *Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch*, 354.

Eretz banner viewed the YU world with suspicion. Ironically, neither side realized that much of the *weltanschauung* of their leaders ran on parallel tracks.

Conclusion

I have demonstrated in this essay that while Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik differed in their approaches toward participation with the non-Orthodox and Zionism, their respective ideologies, *Torah im Derekh Eretz* and *Torah u-Madda*, contain more similarities than differences. They both believe that Torah is central, but the ideal is to combine it with *hokhmah*. Secular studies, if done selectively, enhance one's service of God. They also agree that Torah is meant to be actualized in this world; therefore, retreating from it is wrong, and being involved in this world is an obligation. They developed a similar concept of Jewish humanism—a Jew is a human being with an extra dimension: his Judaism. Accepting the Torah does not absolve him from his duties to mankind. While Hirsch directly defends these ideas, Soloveitchik does so obliquely—through his life choices and his use of philosophy to elucidate his view of Judaism. The way the two scholars understand the relationship between Torah and secular knowledge is also similar—not as a synthesis of ideas but a simultaneous existence in both realms. Man must live in two worlds and excel in both of them to fulfill his destiny. Both thinkers are not troubled by the contradictions between Torah and science, and each developed his own “answers” to the Bible critics. I also showed that the schools they founded and ran embodied the principle that Torah and *hokhmah*, when studied together, complement and enhance each other.

There are other areas where the thinking of Hirsch and Soloveitchik overlaps and deserves further study. Some examples are: their view of a Judaism rooted in itself—a Jewish philosophy derived from the commandments; their use of *derush* to explicate their ideas; and their outlook on the universalist aspects of Judaism. Exploring these similarities would reveal a stronger connection between these two thinkers and afford us a deeper understanding of their worldviews. ☰