

---

# AUSTRITT

---

*A Question of Separation Within Jewish Community*

The Weekly

# TORAH

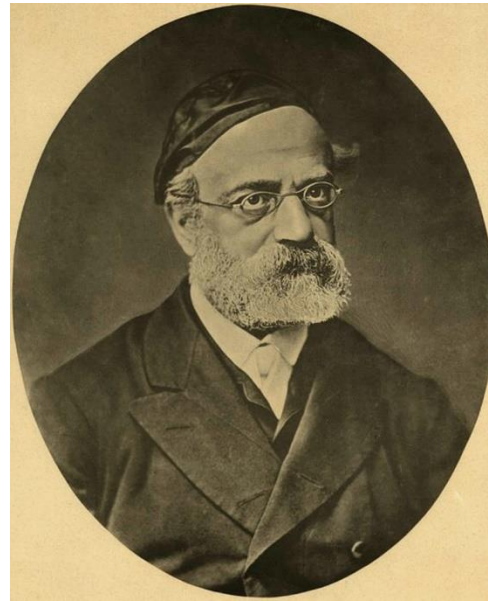
C?NTR?VERSITY



NOVEMBER 21, 2021  
YU TORAH MITZION KOLLEL

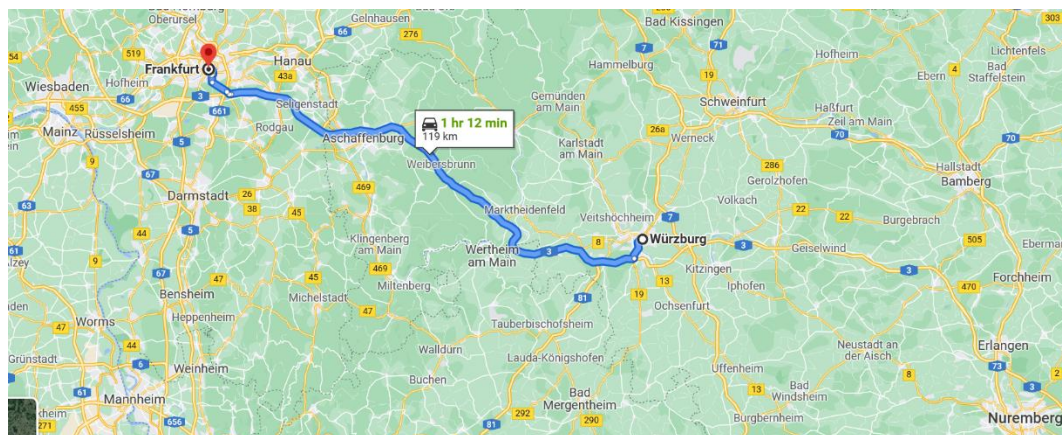
פי וישב תשפ"ב

## THE DISPUTE



### Timeline

- 1808, Rabbi Bamberger born in Wiesenbronn, Germany
- 1808, Rabbi Hirsch born in Hamburg, Germany
- 1851, Rabbi Hirsch becomes Rabbi in Frankfurt
- 1876 *Austrittsgesetz* passes
- 1878, Rabbi Bamberger dies
- 1888, Rabbi Hirsch dies



## (1) RABBI SAMSON RAPHAEL HIRSCH

### *The Relation of the Orthodox to Heterodox Organizations*

#### 1. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE SYSTEM AS IT RELATES TO SHUNNING MINUT.

Rabbi Hirsch's central point here is that immunity due to ignorance applies also to *minim*, and that we must, therefore, remain in friendship with Jews who were raised as *minim*; that it does not, however, apply to *minut*, the principle and the system, and that we must therefore shun *minut*-organizations, even if their members are not culpable.

[p. 339-340] "The issue is not at all the separation between individuals, a withdrawal from friendly intercourse with brethren of differing religious convictions. . . . The issue is secession from all ties with *minut*, from all ties with acknowledgment of opposition-in-principle to Torah and Mitzvah, — not the secession from social ties with *minim*, with individuals who acknowledge such opposition-in-principle. Thank God, there are in our days no more *minim* in the sense of our codices, concerning whom they teach us to avoid even mere contact. We are taught that gentiles outside *Eretz Yisrael* are not to be considered idolators and that there are no *minim* among the nations<sup>3</sup> and that, therefore, what we are commanded concerning the avoidance of contact with pagans does not apply to such gentiles because *minhag avoteyhem bi-y'deyhem* — their religious views and ways are habits acquired through parental influence. The same applies to our Jewish contemporaries who have adopted *minut* in attitude and practice. They too are already the second and third generation of those who first thought up the defection and then executed it by means of propaganda. To them applies perfectly what Maimonides teaches concerning the *apikorsim* and Karaites of his time:<sup>4</sup>

But the children of those who strayed, and their grandchildren who were misled by their parents, who were born among the Karaites and raised according to their opinions, he is like a small child who was captured among them and raised by them; and he is not eager to adopt the ways of the Mitzvot; he is as one coerced. And although he heard afterwards that he is a Jew and saw the Jews and their religion, he is as one coerced because they raised him in their error; similarly those that we mentioned who follow the paths of their Karaitic fathers. Therefore we should bring them back in repentance and draw them with words of peace until they return to the strength of the Torah.



97

"But, the more we must remain in peaceful and friendly intercourse with our contemporaries who grew up in the ideas and ways of *minut* — the more demanding for us the necessity to remain distant from the *minut*-system [i.e., *minut*-organizations] in whose confession they were raised. . . . Otherwise this intercourse could have exactly the opposite effect on us and our children. That *minut* is more seductive than idolatry, that *minut mashkha*, as our sages put it, we have, unfortunately been shown by the . . . experience of our time."

#### 2. THE REQUIREMENT TO SHUN MINUT

[pp. 336-337] "Our codices obligate us to far greater separation from *minut* than even from *avodah zarah*; from opposition-in-principle to Torah and Mitzvah, than from idolatrous heathenism. Of *minut* it is taught<sup>5</sup> 'Remove far from her your way,' and only of *minut*<sup>6</sup> 'Of those who come to her, none shall return.' I recall R. Tarphon's statement<sup>7</sup> 'Even if a man chases after him to kill him, a snake to bite him, he may enter a house of idolatry, but not the house [of *minim*], for they know and yet deny, while the former deny out of ignorance.' Or R. Yishma'el<sup>8</sup> who permitted his nephew to die rather than be cured by a *min*, although a cure by an idolator would have been permitted, the principle being here: '*Minut* is different, for it allures; he might be drawn after it.' Hence, beyond all doubt, anything forbidden concerning idolatry is forbidden to an even greater degree in connection with *minut*.

"Now, I must avoid all appearance of belonging to idolatry, as if I approved of it or praised it; even one who participates in the banquet of an idolator, even if he eats kosher food and is served by his own people, transgresses the prohibition<sup>9</sup> 'You shall not make a covenant . . . and he would call you and you would eat from his sacrifice.' Even to save my life I may not say I were an idolator and only to save my life may I give the impression I were an idolator<sup>10</sup>, etc. — and then an Orthodox Jew should be permitted to join, without coercion, a *minut*-community, remain a member of a *minut*-community — *minut* from which we must separate ourselves even more than from idolatry?"

Could there be a greater *Chillul Hashem* and 'strengthening of *minim*' than this?"

[pp. 338-339] "Concerning the Karaites it was found obligatory to introduce complete separation, lasting to this day, although the contrast between the 'Rabbanites' and the defection of the Karaites from Torah-Judaism was by far not as great and incisive as the contrast between today's Reform and Torah-Judaism. The Karaites deny only the Oral Torah. However, they confess truly and firmly the eternally binding obligation of the divine commandments, and disregard none of the other fundamentals of our faith. On the other hand, today's Reform denies altogether the eternally binding obligation of the divine commandments, and in its liturgy disassociates itself from truths carried by God's word in Bible and Prophets and belonging to the fundamental truths of Jewish conviction."

## (2) RABBI SHIMON SCHWAB

RAV S.R. HIRSCH—THE LEADER AND FIGHTER

71

מִן הַעֲבוּדָה זֶה—“Draw away from the heresy, and sever your ties to those who preach Reform.”

Of the hundreds who were members in Rabbiner Hirsch’s congregation, only 80 stood by him in this matter. Only 80 accepted his decision about Austritt as being binding. The others felt that the Würzburger Rav was also a great Torah luminary, and that they could rely on his more lenient approach. This is one of the developments that one can call *מעשה משן*, and it was a sad period in our history.

Parenthetically, one can note with amazement that it was during the struggle over Austritt, between 1867 and 1878, that Rabbiner Hirsch found time to publish the five volumes of his commentary on the *חומש*. Only a true Torah master could have accomplished this awesome feat under such difficult conditions.

The dispute between the two Gedolim was not an extended one, because the Würzburger Rav passed away shortly after the controversy arose. In the year of his death, 1879, an anonymous sefer appeared bearing the title *דברי אמת*. Although the author was unknown, it was clear from the depth of his writings that he was a veritable *חכם הלמיד* and that the book was written for the sake of truth. The sefer contains many expressions of appreciation for the late Würzburger Rav, and includes these sentiments: “*נמס כל לב*—All hearts are melting—*חובה על כל ישראל לקרוע בקריעה שאינה על האדם הגדול כי נפלה עטרת ראשנו חסיד*.—Everyone in Klal Yisroel is bound to rend his garments at the death of such a sage—*עניו, צדיק הגאון שר התורה*—For the crown of our head has fallen off, and we are bereft of a righteous, humble Gaon and master of the Torah.”

The sefer cannot say enough about the greatness of the Würzburger Rav—and yet its central theme is the refutation of his arguments regarding Austritt. It contains arguments that support the Hirschian view, and the author writes that by correcting Rav Bamberger’s statements, he was redeeming the Würzburger Rav’s reputation.

Who could have written such a sefer? There is one clue: It contains the letters *ה"כ"מ*, which stand for “*הריני כפרה משכבו*—I am the atonement for his bedstead.” This is what a son should pronounce during the first year after his father’s passing: “I will atone for any sins my father has done.” This indicates that the sefer was put out by one of the Würzburger Rav’s sons, all of whom were renowned *חכמי חכמים*. This son apparently felt that, although his father was indeed a great Godol, he had made one error during his life. He had gone against the *דין דין* of the Rav of a

community, and had not urged a dissociation from a group of heretics. Thus, Rabbiner Hirsch’s views were apparently shared by one of Rav Bamberger’s own progeny.