

SAMSON RAPHAEL HIRSCH AND THE REVOLUTION OF 1848

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Thirty-two rabbis sit in the [Austrian] Reichstag, among whom the Nikolsburg Chief Rabbi is the most significant. He stands out in his cleverness and intellect. With his oratory skills he could soften the hearts of all the non-Jewish delegates and attain this undesired Jewish emancipation, which fills all the common people with anger.

- Petition from the town of Prerau and its environs to the Austrian Reichstag, 16 February 1849.¹

Though the Prerau (Přerov) petition wildly exaggerated – there were only two rabbis in the Austrian Reichstag and Samson Raphael Hirsch (‘the Nikolsburg Chief Rabbi’) was not among them – it reflected the widespread perception among many of Moravia’s non-Jews that the Revolution of 1848 was a ‘Jewish revolution’ (*Judenrevolution*) in which Hirsch played a prominent and pivotal role in Habsburg Jewry’s efforts to attain civil and political equality. While the inhabitants of Prerau emphasised the centrality of Hirsch in the struggle for Jewish emancipation, the scant scholarship on his four-year tenure in Moravia (1847–1851) has not been so kind. Noah H. Rosenbloom, for example, claims that the ‘data about the extent of Hirsch’s involvement in the events of those turbulent years in Moravia are sketchy and dubious’.² In fact, Samson Raphael Hirsch, in his capacity as Moravian Chief Rabbi, was actively involved in nearly every stage of the struggle for Jewish emancipation – from the outbreak of the revolution in March 1848 until the attainment of emancipation in March 1849. Indeed, with the possible exception of Isaac Noah Mannheimer of Vienna – one of the two rabbis in the Austrian Reichstag – no other rabbi in the Habsburg Empire was as politically active as Hirsch on behalf of Jewish emancipation.³

Hirsch’s activities can be explained by a number of factors. First, when the Austrian Reichstag moved to Kremsier (Kroměříž), Moravia, in November 1848, Hirsch unexpectedly found himself in close proximity to the seat of government; as Salo W. Baron has pointed out, the debates on Jewish emancipation took place in ‘Hirsch’s own bailiwick’.⁴ Second, as Moravian Chief Rabbi – the only chief rabbinical post in the entire Habsburg Empire – Hirsch was expected to oversee not only the religious and educational needs of his Moravian Jewish flock, but also their political needs. His official standing and his fortuitous proximity to local authorities and parliamentary deputies enabled him to intercede on behalf of the Jews and influence decisions and debates bearing on Jewish emancipation.

Hirsch’s political engagement represented a departure from the traditional Ashkenazi rabbi, who ‘functioned primarily in a juridical capacity as an expositor of Jewish civil and religious law’.⁵ Ismar Schorsch, in his study of the emerging ‘modern rabbinate’ in the Germany of the 1830s, argues that ‘a new type of rabbinic leadership had begun to emerge which distinctly differed from its late medieval counterpart in terms of function, education and authority’.⁶ The ‘modern’ rabbi became the central figure in the Jewish community, and his authority derived not only from talmudic erudition, but also from his university education and his ability to provide spiritual and religious leadership. The ‘modern’ rabbi, as leader of his community, was increasingly expected to fight for Jewish rights as well.

While the ‘modern rabbinate’ had emerged in Germany by the late 1840s, Moravia was nearly a generation behind. On the eve of the revolution of 1848, Moravia could boast only a handful of modern rabbis – Hirsch Fassel, Abraham Schmiedl, Moritz Duschak, and Abraham Neuda – none of whom had acquired the renown of Samson Raphael Hirsch. When the Nikolsburg (Mikulov) Jewish community spearheaded the search for a new Moravian chief rabbi after the death of Rabbi Nehemias Trebitsch in 1842, it set its sights on someone who possessed not only talmudic erudition, but also a ‘thorough scientific education’ and ‘true piety’, so that he could lead Moravian Jewry in accordance with the spirit of the age and the demands of the government.⁷ Such a rabbi, argued the Nikolsburg Jewish community, could not be found in the Habsburg Empire, let alone in the tiny province of Moravia. They turned to Germany, where Samson Raphael Hirsch had officiated since 1831.

Samson Raphael Hirsch was invited to Moravia in order to fight for, inter alia, the political rights of Moravian Jewry. At his election to the Moravian Chief Rabbinate on 30 December 1846, one of the rabbinic electors emphasised this particular qualification. ‘[H]e will certainly not only regulate the

inner religious conditions of our co-religionists', declared Rabbi Joachim Pollak, 'but he will also know how to champion the political interests of Moravian Jewry . . . with all legally permitted means [and] with sufficient energy – to the satisfaction of the government authorities'.⁸ His previous rabbinic posts in Germany provided him with political experience that would presumably benefit him in Moravia. In both Oldenburg (1831–1841) and Emden (1841–1847), Hirsch had served as a political intermediary between the government and the small German Jewish communities he oversaw.

In Oldenburg and Emden in the 1830s and 1840s, Hirsch had argued for emancipation as a religious duty for nations and their governments.⁹ 'This act, when weighed on the scales of divine justice', he wrote in 1843, 'will appear as an emancipation of the Christians rather than of the Jews. The Jew will be freed from the shackles of oppression, but the Christian will attain redemption from his shameful sin.'¹⁰ Furthermore, he viewed emancipation as a means to elevate Judaism, to remove the bonds that had constrained its natural development. As long as emancipation was not an end in and of itself, Hirsch argued in *The Nineteen Letters of Ben Uziel* (1836), emancipation would create 'a new condition of [Israel's] mission' and 'a new trial, much severer than the trial of oppression'.¹¹ In light of his writings and previous experience, Hirsch combined the very traits that Rabbi Joachim Pollak, among others, sought in the Moravian chief rabbi – namely rabbinic erudition, cultivated manners, and political savvy.

When Hirsch arrived in Nikolsburg in 1847, Moravian Jews faced restrictions on residence, marriage, emigration, property ownership, and occupation. In addition, they were burdened with special Jewish taxes (*Judensteuer*) on everything from meat to candles. By far the most onerous restriction was the 'pharaonic' Familiant Laws of 1726, which in the interest of limiting Jewish population increase permitted only the eldest son to marry – and then only after his father had died. It was hoped that Hirsch would not only invigorate the religious life of Moravian Jewry, but also fight for the abolition of these restrictions. Many hoped he would usher in a 'new age' in the political as well as the religious sphere.

Hirsch's efforts to introduce religious changes during his first months in Moravia met with opposition, due in large part to his heavy-handed approach and centralising tendencies. His attempts to regulate the communal, educational, and religious life in Moravia's fifty-two autonomous Jewish communities riled progressive and traditionalist Jews alike. For example, his efforts to impose his own rules of synagogue decorum on Moravia's Jewish communities were seen as an 'autocratic' and 'hierarchical' violation of local autonomy in communities that had traditionally prided themselves on their relative independence from centralised rabbinic authority. By early 1848, Hirsch had faced repeated setbacks in Moravia.

Faltering in his first nine months in Moravia, Samson Raphael Hirsch found in the Revolution of 1848 an especially propitious moment. It provided him with an opportunity born of crisis, a chance to unify Moravian Jewry temporarily under his aegis. Though Hirsch's centralising approach to internal Jewish affairs had alienated many, it served him well in the struggle for emancipation. From the outbreak of revolution in mid-March, Hirsch used his position and stature to pursue predominantly political goals. He preached to Christians and Jews, represented the Jews vis-à-vis government authorities, and created a lobbying organisation for Jewish political interests.

Through a flurry of broadsides, Hirsch conveyed his exhortations and admonitions to Jews and Christians alike. On 20 March 1848, in a broadside addressed to 'our Christian brethren', Hirsch adumbrated the basic political philosophy that would guide him through the revolution: the Jews must be emancipated with the Christians as equal citizens, not separately as Jews. He viewed emancipation as a necessity of enlightened times, citing the neighbouring German principalities as examples to be emulated. 'A new age has arrived', he wrote.

With [an] omnipotent step the divine light strides towards its final victory in the bosom of man. The German peoples themselves have already ennobled their victory of justice by also granting untrammelled rights to their Jewish brethren. German rulers have already sealed their justice by also granting the Jewish children of their empire equal rights. Will Austria's noble sons be the last?¹²

Hirsch did not view emancipation as a *quid pro quo* arrangement, but rather as an organic and necessary consequence of the dawning era. He called on the 'Christians in the common fatherland' to speak out on behalf of Jewish rights, to initiate and facilitate a reconciliation between Jews and Christians, to view Jewish emancipation as an integral component of the general struggle for civil rights. 'Do not let us go alone to the throne of our common father!', he wrote.

Speak with us, for us and on behalf of us! Show that justice has become a reality in your bosom; show that you want to blot out the indignity of centuries, not just the indignity that you have suffered; no, also the indignity – forgive [me] – that you have inflicted! Show that you recognise us as brothers just as we recognise you as brothers, and that you are not capable of enjoying your own rights as long as just one fellow brother still has to complain before God’s throne that his right to be a human among humans, a citizen among citizens has been denied and trampled on God’s earth.¹³

Having called on ‘our Christian brethren’ to take an active role in the struggle for emancipation, Hirsch appealed to the Jews to pursue a more quietistic path. ‘Only through self-restraint and calm can you be helped’, he wrote on 23 March 1848 in his first broadside to the Jews of Moravia. In many respects, this was the ‘Jewish’ counterpart to his earlier ‘Christian’ broadside. Hirsch preached against separate ‘Jewish’ emancipation, explaining that ‘no special fruit will ripen for us, since we shall find our own welfare in the welfare of the whole’. He expressed unqualified faith in God and ‘our beloved Emperor’, and reiterated his conviction that the ‘Christian brethren’ would include the Jews in all of their demands. ‘And certainly your Christian brethren will be united with you’, he wrote, ‘and bring your entreaties before the sublime throne of your common sovereign; their sense of justice and their enlightened love of man will [surely] make them recognise in you equal brothers in a shared fatherland’.¹⁴

Although Hirsch sensed the dawning of a new age of brotherly love, he still recognised that the passions and prejudices of the past were alive and strong. He realised that the individual freedoms promised by the imminent constitutional age would be tempered by the legacies of a fading corporate society, especially with regard to the Jews’ collective identity and collective responsibility. In light of this, Hirsch exhorted his Jewish flock to be on their best behaviour. ‘It is possible’, he wrote,

that the careless ones, first and foremost the youth . . . will be led to words and deeds . . . that will be highly ruinous in their result. You might incite the animosity of your land-brethren through impertinent and injudicious remarks, through impudent, cheeky behaviour; you might draw the displeasure of the high officials upon yourselves through impropriety and the instigation of disorderly acts – and you know how easily the blameworthiness of one Jew is transferred to all, and how all must atone for the displeasure earned by one.¹⁵

Hirsch looked towards the future with bounded optimism, understanding full well that the Jews’ yearnings could be sabotaged by their own indiscretions.

Hirsch’s admonitions must have been influenced by the flood of anti-Jewish pamphlets – some of which threatened violence – emanating from Vienna in the first weeks of the revolution. Isaac Noah Mannheimer viewed this sudden upsurge of anti-Jewish sentiment as a backlash against the rash behaviour of Viennese students who circulated a petition for Jewish emancipation among coffee-house patrons. Like Hirsch, Mannheimer steadfastly believed that the Jews’ best interests lay in fighting for common human rights, not separate Jewish ones. As Mannheimer declared at the 17 March funeral for the first victims – Jewish and Christian – of the revolution: “What is there to do for *us*? For *us*? Nothing! Everything for the nation and fatherland . . .”¹⁶ Hirsch and Mannheimer had both hoped to deflect discussion of Jewish emancipation *per se* from the public sphere, preferring to include it in the general struggle for freedom and human rights.

Hirsch and Mannheimer’s hopes were dashed by a wave of anti-Jewish violence that swept Hungary, Bohemia, and Moravia in the month of April, bringing the ‘Jewish Question’ to the fore. As revolution spread from France eastward, it perpetually brought anti-Jewish violence in its wake, and the Habsburg Empire was no exception. In the Kingdom of Hungary (including Transylvania and Slovakia) anti-Jewish violence was reported in over twenty locations, the worst erupting in Pressburg (for a second time) right before Easter and Passover. In Bohemia, anti-Jewish violence was reported in Prague, where Jewish factories and shops had been attacked regularly since 1844.¹⁷ In Moravia, anti-Jewish violence broke out in Olmütz (Olomouc) and Gross-Meseritsch (Velké Mezeržiči) in April, and along the Hungarian (i.e. Slovak) border in early May.¹⁸

Immediately after the violence in Gross-Meseritsch (23 April) Samson Raphael Hirsch sought an audience with Moravian Governor Leopold Graf Lazansky, the highest imperial official in the province. Lazansky assured Hirsch that ‘every right will have the full and strongest protection, and every injustice will receive the most vigorous punishment’ – a message Hirsch, in turn, conveyed to the Jews.¹⁹ Soon thereafter, Lazansky publicly excoriated – in both German and Czech – the ‘outbreak of fanatical intolerance against the Jewish population’. He praised the efforts by the national guard, military and government officials to ‘nip the disturbances of the peace in the bud’.²⁰

In seeking an audience with Lazansky, Hirsch engaged in a traditional form of Jewish diplomacy. Jewish communities tended to view the highest government authorities as their protectors, often forging 'vertical alliances' with government officials at the expense of 'horizontal alliances' with the surrounding population. For centuries, European Jewish communities sought charters and privileges from the highest authorities, be they kings, emperors, popes, or bishops, in order to provide protection from the wrath of the surrounding peasants or burghers.²¹

However, during the revolution of 1848 Samson Raphael Hirsch encouraged the Jews of Moravia to strengthen the 'horizontal alliance' with the Christian burghers, viewing the 'vertical alliance' with imperial government officials as a measure of last resort. Why did Hirsch place such emphasis on relations with the Christian burghers? In Hirsch's view, the burghers – in contrast to the peasants – were imbued with a 'sense of justice' and 'enlightened love of man' that would eventually prevail over any atavistic animosity towards the Jews. Furthermore, Hirsch presumably recognised that the Jews, who tended to live amongst the German-speaking Christian burghers, shared linguistic and cultural affinities that could serve as the basis for a new Christian–Jewish rapport. In a broadside from 2 May to the Jews of Moravia, Hirsch counselled his flock to turn to the burghers (and their institutions) should anti-Jewish violence arise. 'Should, God forefend, violence occur to you', he wrote,

summon the government and the burghers, who are called upon to protect justice, to protect you. Should they not protect [you], let them know firmly and calmly that you will hold them responsible for all damage and all injury they were called upon to prevent. . . . In such a case where the nearest government does not find itself ready to protect you, turn immediately to their supervisors, and in really urgent cases – but only in such [cases] – turn directly to [Governor Lazansky].²²

At the same time, Hirsch admonished his co-religionists to avoid any behaviour that might antagonise their Christian neighbours and serve as a pretext for anti-Jewish violence.

Several pamphlets had predicted such anti-Jewish violence in response to the 'premature' emancipation of the Jews. In a widely-circulated pamphlet, *Anything But Jewish Emancipation!* ('Nur Keine Juden-Emanzipation'), Hubert Müller warned that the persecutions following the outbreak of revolution in France and Hungary should serve as a 'cautionary example' for the Jews of the whole Habsburg Empire.²³ Müller emphasised the economically immoral and socially reprehensible behaviour of the Jews, arguing that such behaviour had to be changed *before* full civil and legal emancipation could be considered. '[J]ews as they are *now*', he wrote, 'are still *not* suited for civil equality and still have not earned it'. In Müller's view, the pushy and insolent Jews continued to oppress the Christians through profiteering, currency speculation, and other unconscionable business practices. He stressed that self-protection, not 'fanatical religious hatred' fuelled his opposition to Jewish emancipation. 'We do not deny the Jews human rights', he asserted, 'but we must protect ourselves so that the Jews do not in the end violate our human rights'.

In the wake of the anti-Jewish violence – and perhaps as a direct result of it – the question of Jewish emancipation was temporarily deferred by Minister of the Interior Franz von Pillersdorf, who was charged with framing a constitution for the Habsburg Lands. Although an earlier draft of the constitution had guaranteed freedom of religion and full equality under the law to all citizens, the final version of the Pillersdorf Constitution of 25 April 1848 stopped short of emancipating the Jews. It did grant Jews and non-Jews the right to take part in elections to the provincial diets (*Landtäge*) and Imperial Diet (*Reichstag*), thereby clearing the way for full-fledged Jewish participation in the political life of the Habsburg Empire; but it granted complete religious freedom and equality solely to the 'recognised Christian confessions'. Much of the existing Jewish legislation was left intact, since the question of rescinding existing inter-confessional inequalities was to be decided at a later date by the soon-to-be-elected Imperial Diet.

Not only did the Pillersdorf Constitution affirm the causal link between Jewish emancipation and anti-Jewish violence, but it also threatened to separate the struggle for Jewish emancipation from the struggle for universal civil rights in the Habsburg Empire. In response to this double setback, Samson Raphael Hirsch and the newly-formed Committee for Moravian Jewry drafted a petition to the Moravian Diet reiterating the wish for 'full, undiminished equality of rights' for all citizens rather than a partial amelioration of the Jews' legal status. In the petition submitted on 28 April, Hirsch recognised that the Jews could not attain equal rights by relying on the burghers' good graces alone. In this sense, the petition represented a departure from Hirsch's earlier broadsides.

Hirsch called for the creation of the Committee for Moravian Jewry in mid-April as a kind of lobbying organisation for Moravian Jewish interests. Its twelve elected members from the 'elite of

Moravian Jewry' drafted their petition to the Moravian Diet as the first order of business. Hirsch's committee underscored the shattered expectations in the wake of the recent constitution.²⁴ 'The [Pillersdorf] Constitution is now in everyone's hands', it observed.

All members of the state can lose themselves in merry jubilation over this achievement; as an unambiguous citizenry, they can welcome an unclouded future with thankful hearts; we alone, the Jewish sons of the common fatherland, are still told to wait for a further outcome; we alone must still defer our ardent wishes, our yearning . . . to additional gentlemen [i.e. the Imperial Diet]

In failing to grant the Jews full civil and political equality, the Pillersdorf Constitution perpetuated different laws – and different standards – for Jews and Christians. According to the Committee, the granting of 'partial' rights served to dehumanise the Jews, at least in the popular imagination. 'As soon as the state denies the Jew a single right, even a fragment of a right', the Committee declared,

it renders the Jew in the eyes of the people as a person who does not merit rights, who can be denied his due rights; and it thereby legalises the very injustice and hostility towards Jews that we want to fight.

With this line of reasoning, Hirsch and his committee sought to invert the causal relationship between Jewish emancipation and anti-Jewish violence. The absence of emancipation, it argued, and not the prospect of emancipation, increased the vulnerability of the Jews.

The petition submitted by the Committee for Moravian Jewry marked the first proactive step the Jews of Moravia took in their struggle for emancipation. Throughout April, much criticism had been levelled at Samson Raphael Hirsch and Moravia's 'modern' rabbis – Hirsch Fassel, Abraham Schmiedl, Moritz Duschak, and Abraham Neuda – for their relative inactivity in the political sphere. As chief rabbi and presumptive leader of Moravian Jewry, Samson Raphael Hirsch received the brunt of the criticism – especially after a Sabbath sermon delivered in Nikolsburg in mid-April. As reported in several Jewish newspapers, Hirsch preached that only strict observance of religious rituals would save the Jews from the 'swelling torrent' of the times. In a traditional formulation correlating religious laxity with divine punishment, Hirsch called on Jewish women to cover their hair, reprimanded Jewish men for shaving with razors, and warned both sexes against drinking Christian wine. In one sarcastic response directed against religious exhortations, a Moravian Jew noted that Hirsch evidently had 'more important things' to deal with than Jewish emancipation. He even questioned Hirsch's dedication to the cause. 'What does a foreigner', he asked, 'who has been with us for only a few months, have to do with our political interests?'²⁵

In May 1848 Samson Raphael Hirsch seized an opportunity to represent Moravian Jewry's political interests in the newly-elected Moravian Diet. The Moravian Diet dissolved itself in early May, preparing the way for new elections – with an expanded electoral base – at the end of May.²⁶ Called the 'Peasants' Diet' (*Bauernlandtag*) because 103 of the 261 deputies came from rural communities, the new diet also presented unprecedented political opportunities to Moravia's Jews. The new electoral law conferred the right to vote on all male adults who were 'independent' or paid a direct tax. As such, Jews who fit these criteria were not only entitled to vote in the May elections, but could also be elected as deputies in the Moravian Diet. The election of Hirsch by the burghers of Nikolsburg seemed to signal the dawning of a new era in Christian–Jewish relations. (In Prossnitz [Prostějov], however, where leaders of the Christian town prevented Jews from voting, the election to the Moravian Diet served as a stark reminder of the continued tensions between Christian and Jew.)²⁷

Samson Raphael Hirsch's election as the 'Jewish deputy' to the Moravian Diet was fraught with symbolism for both Christians and Jews. Though Hirsch's election can be seen as a sign of Christian–Jewish reconciliation, it also served as a catalyst for further anti-Jewish sentiment. In July, several burgher deputies tried unsuccessfully to eject Hirsch from the Diet on the grounds that he did not enjoy full 'citizen's rights';²⁸ in August, the same deputies tried to exclude him from a committee on Jewish affairs.²⁹

As a deputy in the Moravian Diet, and a polished orator to boot, the chief rabbi was expected to be 'a nimble protector of his nation's rights'.³⁰ However, as a deputy in the Diet, Hirsch failed to live up to such high expectations. On one occasion, he was criticised in the Jewish press for his unexpected silence and inactivity in the Moravian Diet. In fact, the protocols of the Diet record only two utterances by Hirsch in its eight months of deliberation.³¹ The Leipzig-based *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* did not hesitate to contrast Hirsch's perorations in the religious sphere with his regrettable inaction in the political sphere.³² It apparently expected the Moravian Chief Rabbi, as the visible Jewish deputy in a popularly-elected diet, to become a new kind of Jewish leader. Perhaps it was looking for a rabbinic

version of Gabriel Riesser, the respectable and outspoken champion of emancipation in Germany. Hirsch, for his part, may have preferred to work behind the scenes.

Though Hirsch delivered no dramatic speeches on the floor of the Diet, he proved himself to be an impassioned advocate of Jewish rights in his behind-the-scenes interactions with Moravian Governor Leopold Graf Lazansky. In this respect, Hirsch functioned as a traditional *shtadlan* [intercessor] – a communal or supra-communal functionary who represented Jewish interests before secular and other authorities, usually relying on personal contacts and political savvy.³³ Hirsch personally interceded on behalf of Moravia's Jews at least four times between March 1848 and March 1849 – twice with Governor Lazansky. As mentioned above, Hirsch met with Lazansky in April 1848 after the outbreak of anti-Jewish violence. They met again in July 1848, when Hirsch submitted a fervent and effusive personal letter on behalf of Moravia's Jews.

Lazansky, who took great interest in the Jewish Question during the summer of 1848, had asked Hirsch to submit a 'brief overview of the onerous grievances that still afflict Moravian Jewry'. Hirsch responded on 14 July with a sixteen-page letter.³⁴ When the question of Jewish emancipation was deliberated in the Imperial Diet in February 1849, Hirsch's letter – in a modified form – was distributed as a last appeal to the wavering deputies. As a result, previous scholars have erroneously dated this impassioned epistle to the eve of emancipation. My discovery of Hirsch's letter to Lazansky shows that Hirsch's appeal antedates the debate in the Imperial Diet by nearly seven months.

Although Hirsch had been in Moravia for only a year, his letter to Lazansky exhibits a profound understanding of Moravian Jewry's general self-perception as the most oppressed Jewry in the Habsburg realm. Hirsch detailed the grievances of Moravian Jewry from cradle to grave, enumerating restrictions on residence, marriage, emigration, property ownership, and occupation, lamenting their deleterious effect on the social and familial structure of Moravian Jewry. He reiterated the common argument that the Jewish laws served only to 'thwart the uprightness and morality of Moravia's Jews'.

Hirsch's letter reached its climax with an appeal for full emancipation of the Jews. 'With the complete determination of my soul', he wrote, 'as man, as deputy, as Jew . . . there is only one answer . . . full emancipation, complete unrestricted equality of rights.' In accordance with the petition from 28 April, Hirsch argued for emancipation on moral, humanistic, and constitutional grounds. 'May one man enslave another?', he asked.

May one man drive his fellow man into the corner in order to guarantee more elbowroom for himself? May one man use his fellow man as a footstool in order to hold himself up high? May one man deny and rob his fellow man of even one of the holiest inalienable rights and possessions, the very ones that he himself deems his inalienable human rights that are to be respected by all?

After answering these questions with an emphatic 'no, no and evermore no', Hirsch insisted that the 'people that still enslaves its Jews is itself not ripe for freedom . . .'. In this formulation, Hirsch rebutted the widespread claim that the Jews themselves were 'unripe' for emancipation.

Hirsch's letter to Lazansky presented Jewish emancipation first and foremost as a necessity of the constitutional state. If the recognition of individual rights is fundamental to constitutional life, he argued, then the Jews can no longer be viewed as a separate, corporate identity. This ideology was reflected in a new locution employed by Hirsch: 'Jewish Moravians'. By referring to the Jews as 'Moravians', Hirsch emphasised the confessional nature of Judaism and underscored the Jews' identification with the other, Christian inhabitants of the province. Hirsch further developed this theme by emphatically denying a request by several Jewish communities to lead a separate delegation to Franz Joseph after his coronation as Austrian Emperor in Olmütz in December 1848. 'We want no special [status] in the state', he wrote. 'We want to be absorbed into the collectivity (*Gesamtheit*) of members of the state, and as such, [we] require no separate representation.' Hirsch explained that the Jews constitute a separate association (*Genossenschaft*), but they must not be viewed in the political sense as a separate corporation. 'Only where the other different confessions of the fatherland act as distinct religious associations', he declared, 'can we also appear as such; but we may never and shall never separate ourselves from citizens of the state, from sons of the province'.³⁵

Hirsch furthermore set out to eliminate one of the most onerous reminders of the Jews' sojourner status in the Habsburg Empire – the so-called Jewish tax (*Judensteuer*). Stemming from the 'tolerance tax' imposed by Maria Theresa in the eighteenth century, the Jewish tax treated the Jews not as a native population, but rather as a foreign population enjoying – and paying for – local protection and hospitality. Although the abolition of the Jewish tax seemed a foregone conclusion by the summer of 1848, there was a sudden setback in Moravia, where the Moravian Tax Administration solicited bids

from tax-farmers for the following year (1849).³⁶ In response, Samson Raphael Hirsch, in conjunction with the Committee for Moravian Jewry, sent a petition to Vienna requesting that the bidding be stopped. In July 1848, Hirsch sent the petition to Isaac Noah Mannheimer, who, in turn, attached his own memorandum stressing the 'highly urgent' nature of the request. Mannheimer, as a deputy to the Austrian Reichstag, submitted the petition to the Finance Ministry and discussed the matter personally with Ministers Doblhoff, Kraus, and Bach. While Mannheimer was working the official channels in Vienna, Hirsch tried to ensure that no Jew would submit a bid for the tax-farming concession in Moravia. In a circular to the leaders of Moravia's Jewish communities, Hirsch urged the communal leaders and rabbis to discourage such bidding. In August Mannheimer's activity in Vienna yielded its first fruit. The Jewish tax in Moravia for 1849 was provisionally cancelled, and soon thereafter the Jewish tax in Galicia as well. However, the definitive abolition of the Jewish tax had to wait until 20 October, following a heated debate in the Reichstag.³⁷

Hirsch and Mannheimer continued to work in tandem for the emancipation of Habsburg Jewry, with Mannheimer – a deputy in the Austrian Reichstag – remaining much more visible. It may come as a surprise to some scholars that Hirsch and Mannheimer kept a regular correspondence from September 1848 until March 1849, keeping each other apprised of progress and tactics in the struggle for Jewish rights.³⁸ Because Hirsch became known for his intransigent opposition to Reform during his subsequent years in Frankfurt-am-Main (1851–1888), many scholars assume that his relationship with Mannheimer, a moderate religious reformer, must have been strained at best. On the contrary, Mannheimer's letters to Hirsch reveal a warm and friendly rapport. (Unfortunately, Hirsch's letters to Mannheimer have not been located.)

As the Reichstag debate on the abolition of the Jewish tax approached, Mannheimer shared his concerns with his colleague in Nikolsburg. In a letter to Hirsch, he expressed consternation over the imminent debate. Mannheimer had hoped that the Jewish tax would not be treated in isolation, but rather in the context of comprehensive tax reforms. He wanted the abolition of the Jewish tax to be 'the result of *essential* reforms in the tax system', not the outcome of a specific debate on this issue. He found it particularly 'unpleasant' that the 'Jewish Question' (*Judenfrage*) would be first discussed in the Reichstag as a 'pecuniary question' (*Geldfrage*). When the issue was debated on 26 September, Mannheimer gave his inaugural speech, stressing both constitutional and humanitarian grounds for the abolition of the Jewish tax. In order to illustrate the devastating burden of special Jewish taxes, Mannheimer detailed the tax obligations of a single Moravian Jewish community. It is likely that Samson Raphael Hirsch provided Mannheimer with this specific example.

While Hirsch remained in Mannheimer's shadow during autumn 1848, a sudden turn of events unexpectedly made Hirsch the most prominent spokesman for Jewish emancipation. With Vienna under siege in late October 1848, Emperor Ferdinand fled to Olmütz and the Austrian Parliament reconvened in Kremsier, temporarily making these two Moravian towns the centres of political life in the Habsburg Empire. As periphery became centre, Samson Raphael Hirsch found himself in close proximity to Olmütz and particularly Kremsier.

As Moravian chief rabbi and chairman of the Committee for Moravian Jewry, Hirsch vigorously lobbied for Jewish emancipation among the Reichstag deputies in Kremsier. During Reichstag deliberations in January and February 1849, the issue of Jewish emancipation loomed on the horizon as the debate over Paragraph 16 of the Fundamental Laws (*Grundrechte*) approached. Paragraph 16, as formulated in a draft of the Fundamental Laws, granted civil and political rights to all citizens *regardless of religious confession*. Just as Hirsch and Mannheimer had hoped, the Jews seemed poised to attain equal rights as equal citizens, and not as Jews *per se*. However, by early 1849, Paragraph 16 was commonly equated with Jewish emancipation. Since the emancipation of the peasants in September 1848 had already granted civil and political rights to most of the Christian population, Paragraph 16 appeared to pertain first and foremost to the Jews.

The vociferous opposition to Paragraph 16 – and its implicit promise of Jewish emancipation – can be measured by the barrage of anti-emancipation petitions sent to the Reichstag beginning in September 1848. Predominantly from Moravia and Bohemia, these petitions tended to repeat the arguments presented in Hubert Müller's above-mentioned *Anything But Jewish Emancipation!* – but often in a more violent fashion. 'If the Reichstag should decide in favour of [emancipation]', warned the 641 burghers from the Moravian town of Sternberg, 'entire provinces will . . . brandish weapons for the expulsion, and possibly extermination [of the Jews]'.³⁹

In the wake of such opposition, Jewish emancipation – which had seemed imminent in the early days of the revolution – remained suspended in uncertainty at the end of 1848. As Samson Raphael Hirsch's eldest son, Mendel, recalled,

dark rumours had spread that this Paragraph [16] would not pass. At first, the Jews received these rumours with incredulous laughter. . . . However, these rumours assumed an ever clearer form [and] came forth with ever greater certainty.⁴⁰

As the prospect of emancipation seemed to grow more distant, some Jews prepared to emigrate. Others, with Samson Raphael Hirsch at the helm, took the struggle to Kremsier.

In February 1849, Hirsch spearheaded the campaign for Jewish emancipation, mobilising the leaders of Austrian Jewry in their common struggle. Using the existing organisational structure, he transformed the Committee for Moravian Jewry into the United Committee, a lobbying organisation for Austrian Jewry as a whole. After meeting in the home of a local Kremsier Jew, the twenty-four members of the United Committee circulated a memorandum to the Reichstag deputies on 9 February.⁴¹ Hirsch's influence on the Committee can be gauged by this memorandum itself. It was almost a verbatim copy of the personal letter he had sent to Moravian Governor Lazansky in mid-July 1848. Like the letter from seven months before, Hirsch's February memorandum emphasised the constitutional necessity of emancipation. 'You will commit treason, treason on the people, on your mission and on our state's entire future', he wrote, 'if you fail to adhere to the basic principle of the equality of rights of all citizens. . . . Only complete equality can be profitable and wholesome for the state.'⁴²

Hirsch's activity in Kremsier was not limited to the memorandum. He met with deputies, particularly from the Czech delegation, who had expressed opposition to Jewish emancipation. Mendel Hirsch described his father's meeting with František Palacký, the leader of the Czech delegation, as an exercise in futility. After Hirsch explained that the Czechs could not insist on national and confessional equality for themselves without granting the Jews the same rights, Palacký reportedly responded: 'We evaluate each [constitutional] article from the standpoint of our party.'⁴³ Presumably Palacký viewed the Jews' overwhelming identification with German language and culture as inimical to Czech political aims.

It is impossible to know whether Hirsch's personal intervention would have eventually yielded the necessary votes in favour of Jewish emancipation, since Emperor Franz Joseph dissolved the Kremsier Reichstag right before the scheduled deliberations on Paragraph 16. On 7 March 1849 the emperor promulgated his own 'octroyd' constitution, which granted civil and political rights to all citizens, regardless of religious confession. As a result, the Jews were emancipated by imperial fiat, not by the popularly-elected Reichstag. In fact, because the Jews owed their emancipation to the emperor – and not the Reichstag – some scholars have downplayed Hirsch's role in the entire struggle for emancipation.⁴⁴

Many contemporaries, however, viewed Samson Raphael Hirsch as the central figure in the Jews' struggle for civil and political rights. The aforementioned inhabitants of Prerau viewed him as the linchpin in the Jews' efforts to attain civil and political equality in the Habsburg Empire. Moritz Jellinek, a Moravian Jew reporting from Kremsier, viewed Hirsch – not Mannheimer – as the foremost champion of Jewish emancipation. After dismissing Mannheimer as 'weak and insipid in asserting his views and vacillating on political issues', Jellinek sang Hirsch's praises. '[Hirsch] is a man full of energy and vigour', he wrote, 'and he stands up for the Jews with heart and soul. His memorandum [to the Reichstag] has caused such a sensation here and the narrow-minded Tyroleans are somewhat startled by the manly words a Jew is capable of uttering.'⁴⁵ A German liberal paper expressed similar sentiments, drawing particular attention to the proud and fervent tone of Hirsch's memorandum. 'Ordinarily', it observed, 'the contents of such petitions are familiar, particularly the meek, doleful tone which usually predominates in them. But nothing of the kind can be said of this particular memorandum.'⁴⁶ It seems that Hirsch's towering presence and unwavering spirit at Kremsier were felt to such an extent that contemporaries and biographers alike often mistook him for a full-fledged Reichstag deputy.⁴⁷

Samson Raphael Hirsch became one of the most important figures in the struggle for Jewish emancipation in the Habsburg Empire, due in large part to a fortuitous confluence of time, place, and personality. Nonetheless, his contributions have been underestimated for a number of reasons. First, because Hirsch did not serve as a deputy in the Reichstag, scholarly attention has been deflected to the more visible Isaac Noah Mannheimer. Secondly, because Hirsch distinguished himself in his Frankfurt period as a religious leader, less attention has been focused on his political leadership during his four-year sojourn in Moravia. Indeed, much of Hirsch's political activity in Moravia was hidden from the

public eye. Like the traditional *shtadlan*, Hirsch used informal channels – such as his connections with Governor Lazansky – to speak out on behalf of Jewish rights.

Hirsch's political activity, however, was clearly not limited to *shtadlanut*. Hirsch circulated broadsides to Jews and non-Jews in order to sway public opinion in favour of Jewish emancipation. He created a lobbying organisation for Moravian Jewish interests, which he later transformed into a lobbying organisation for Austrian Jewry as a whole. In Kremsier, he met personally with a number of Reichstag deputies and circulated his memorandum (originally a personal letter to Lazansky) far and wide. The Prerau petition serves as a testimony not only to the impact of Hirsch's memorandum, but also to the changing role of the rabbinate in Moravia and the rest of the Habsburg Empire. As one of Moravia's first 'modern' rabbis, Hirsch distinguished himself more as a champion of Jewish rights than as an expositor of Jewish law.

Notes

1. Haus- Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Oesterreichischer Reichstag 1848/49, Fasz. 125.IX.24 ('Petitionen von Juden um Emancipation, dann Petitionen dagegen'), No. 34/13.
2. Noah H. Rosenbloom, *Tradition in an Age of Reform: The Religious Philosophy of Samson Raphael Hirsch* (Philadelphia, 1976), p. 85.
3. For the most recent scholarship on Hirsch's political activity in Moravia, see Gertrude Hirschler, 'Rabbi and Statesman: Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Landesrabbiner* of Moravia (1847–1851)', *Review of the Society for the History of Czechoslovak Jews* 1 (1987), pp. 121–48.
4. Salo W. Baron, 'The Revolution of 1848 and Jewish Scholarship', *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 18 (1949), pp. 1–66.
5. Ismar Schorsch, 'Emancipation and the Crisis of Religious Authority: The Emergence of the Modern Rabbinate', in Ismar Schorsch, *From Text to Context* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1994), pp. 10ff.
6. Ismar Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, p. 15.
7. Statné Židovské Muzeum (Prague). Sitzungsprotocolle des Nikolsburger Gemeindevorstandes, 26 December 1843. (Microfilm HM2/7806 at Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem).
8. *Der Orient*, 15 January 1846, p. 20.
9. For a treatment of Hirsch's attitude towards emancipation, see Mordechai Breuer, 'Emancipation and the Rabbis', *Niv Hamidrashin*, Vol. 13–14 (5738/9–1978/9), pp. 26–51.
10. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Protest eines Juden gegen das Votum eines Christen fuer die Emanzipation der Juden* (1843). Quoted from Breuer, 'Emancipation and the Rabbis', p. 48.
11. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Nineteen Letters of Ben Uzziel* (New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls, 1899), p. 167. Adapted translation.
12. Samson Raphael Hirsch, 'Ein Wort zur Zeit an unsere christlichen Brüder', *Oesterreichisches Central-Organ für Glaubensfreiheit, Cultur, Geschichte und Literatur der Juden [=OCO]*, 24 March 1848, p. 17.
13. Hirsch, 'Ein Wort zur Zeit an unsere christlichen Brüder', p. 17.
14. In Adolf Frankl-Grün, *Geschichte der Juden in Kremsier, mit Rücksicht auf die Nachbargemeinden nach Original-Urkunden* (Breslau, 1896–1901), Vol. 2, Appendix 1.
15. Frankl-Grün, *Geschichte der Juden in Kremsier*, Vol. 2, Appendix 1.
16. I. N. Mannheimer, 'Erklärung bezüglich der Judenfrage', *OCO* (24 March 1848), p. 1.
17. For an extensive study of anti-Jewish violence in 1848–1849 see Jacob Toury, *Turmoil and Confusion in the Revolution of 1848* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv, 1968).
18. *OCO*, 22 April 1848; *Treue-Zions-Wächter [=TZW]*, 6 June 1848, p. 181; *Der Orient*, 17 June 1848.
19. Frankl-Grün, *Geschichte der Juden in Kremsier*, Vol. 2, Appendix 3.
20. *Brünner Zeitung*, 12 May 1848.
21. For a discussion of the 'vertical alliance' as a Jewish political strategy, see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Diener von Königen und nicht Diener von Dienern. Einige Aspekte der politischen Geschichte der Juden* (Munich: Carl Friedrich von Siemens Stiftung, 1995); David Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986).
22. Frankl-Grün, *Geschichte der Juden in Kremsier*, Vol. 2, Appendix 3.
23. Hans Tietze, *Die Juden Wiens. Geschichte, Wirtschaft, Kultur* (Vienna, 1930), p. 187. According to Tietze, Müller sold more than 25,000 copies of his pamphlet 'Nur keine Juden-Emancipation'. Four thousand copies were reprinted in Prague for distribution in Bohemia. Segments of this pamphlet were quoted verbatim in three Moravian petitions against Jewish emancipation (Mährisch-Schönberg, Znaim, Trebitsch) and paraphrased in several others. (See *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv*, Vienna, Oesterr. Reichstag 1848/1849, Fasz. 125.IX, nos. 3821, 4724, 4960).
24. A copy of the petition can be found in Jiří Radminský and Milada Wurmová, *Petice moravského lidu k sněmu z roku 1848* (Prague, 1955), No. 42, p. 79.
25. *Der Orient*, 6 May 1848, p. 149.
26. See Karl Bosl, *Handbuch der Geschichte der böhmischen Länder*, Vol. 3 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1968), p. 38; Otto Urban, *Die tschechische Gesellschaft, 1848 bis 1918*, Vol. 1 (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1994), p. 90; Stanley Z. Pech, *The Czech Revolution of 1848* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1969), pp. 105–17.
27. *OCO*, 19 October 1848, pp. 408ff. The Prossnitz Christian town ignored the voting statutes and excluded the Jewish voters from the elections. Despite efforts by Prossnitz deputy Trawniczek to justify the exclusion of Jews, the Moravian Diet annulled the Prossnitz elections in October.
28. *Der Orient*, No. 33, p. 624; *OCO*, 11 July 1848, p. 209.
29. *Mährisches Landtagsblatt*, No. 28, 18 August 1848, p. 124. Trawniczek (see footnote 17) was among the five anti-Hirsch delegates in the Moravian Diet.
30. *TZW*, 20 June 1848, p. 199.
31. See *Mährisches Landtagsblatt*, No. 28, 16 September 1848 and No. 69, 19 December 1848.
32. *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, 7 August 1848. 'He remains silent where speaking is an obligation, his only reason for being there', wrote one correspondent, 'while on other occasions he should have remained silent'. The correspondent was referring specifically to Hirsch's silence when the Jewish question was broached in the Moravian Diet. 'Hirsch', he noted, 'who so bravely – so terribly bravely – fought, rose up and thundered against shaving on the intermediate days [of Jewish festivals], did not say the least thing; he remained silent'.
33. For a discussion of the *shtadlan*, see Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), pp. 71–72.
34. I will publish the letter from Hirsch to Lazansky in its entirety in a forthcoming work.
35. Frankl-Grün, *Geschichte der Juden in Kremsier*, Vol. 2, Appendix 4.
36. *OCO*, 22 July 1848, p. 228.
37. *Verhandlungen des oesterreichischen Reichstages nach der stenographischen Aufnahme* (Vienna, 1848–1849). The debate on the abolition of the Jewish tax took place on 5 October 1848.

38. The letters from Isaac Noah Mannheimer to Samson Raphael Hirsch are being prepared for publication by Dr. Michael Silber of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.
39. Petition from burghers of Sternberg to the Reichstag, *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv*, Vienna, Oesterr. Reichstag 1848–1849, Fasz. 125.IX, No. 34/5.
40. M[endel] Hirsch, 'Villafranca und Kremsier. Ein Beitrag zur jüdischen Zeitgeschichte', *Jeschurun*, Vol. 5 (1858–59), pp. 598–99.
41. For details on the meeting, see Adolf Frankl-Grün, *Jüdische Zeitgeschichte und Zeitgenossen* (Vienna, 1903), pp. 14ff; Frankl-Grün, *Geschichte der Juden in Kremsier*, Vol. 2, pp. 128ff. For details on members of the United Committee, see appendix to *Denkschrift von Februar 1849 an den constituirenden Reichstag in Kremsier* (Vienna, 1896).
42. Quoted in Salo W. Baron, 'The Revolution of 1848 and Jewish Scholarship', *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 20 (1951), pp. 39–40.
43. Mendel Hirsch, 'Villafranca und Kremsier', pp. 598–99
44. Rosenbloom, *Tradition in an Age of Reform*, p. 86.
45. *Der Orient*, 3 March 1849, p. 43. [Translation adapted from Gertrude Hirschler, 'Rabbi and Statesman', p. 133].
46. *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (quoted in *Der Orient*, 17 February 1849) [Translation adapted from Gertrude Hirschler, 'Rabbi and Statesman', p. 134].
47. In addition to the aforementioned inhabitants of Prerau, others also mistakenly placed Hirsch in the Reichstag. For example, see Tobias Tal, 'Samson Raphael Hirsch', *Bibliothek des Jüdischen Volksfreunden* (Amsterdam, 1891). Of course, the fact that Hirsch served as a deputy to the Moravian Diet may have also contributed to the confusion.