

from his eyes and his body swelled with the grace of his holy words. Totally free of personal vanity, he embodied the Jewish soul at the height of its glory and splendor.

When he touched on the history of the Jewish people, its prophets and poets, its scholars and teachers, on the ones who sacrificed their lives to sanctify Hashem's Name, and on the wars and triumphs of our people, his face shone with a radiant light. Before your eyes generations arose and flourished, and whole epochs of history passed before you. In tones of innocent reverence and awe, he evoked bold visions of the end of days, projecting in comforting terms the future, when humanity will eventually rise from the depths of exile, and prophetic justice and pristine faith in Hashem, which currently lies dormant in the inner recesses of the soul, will emerge glorious to everlasting triumph. Such powerful ideals always aroused profound awe in the hearts of the audience. . . .

His addresses were given without the aid of notes or sources and with no preparation at all. After each one I would go for a walk in the forest, away from the city, and try to retain in my soul as much of the fire I had just experienced as I could keep in my memory.⁷

Rabbi Hirsch's two teachers Chacham Bernays and Rabbi Yaakov Ettlinger were the first Orthodox rabbis of note to preach in the German vernacular. As time went on, the use of German was so common even among religious Jews, that its use in a sermon was no longer regarded as an indication of a tendency toward assimilation or reform.⁸

Rabbi Hirsch was once asked by his uncle Moshe Mendelsohn-Frankfurter, a renowned Hebraist, why he delivered his sermons in the German vernacular and not in Hebrew. Rabbi Hirsch replied that the law in East Friesland required him and all the other communal rabbis to preach in the synagogue every Sabbath in the German vernacular. But, he added, even "this evil had its beneficial side which might even be the stronger dimension." "Look around," he wrote to his uncle, "and see how *Krias HaTorah* and the *Haftarah* are virtually ignored because the masses are not proficient in the Holy Tongue. Would that every Shabbos there would be a person like the *meturgeman* (interpreter) of yore to explain to the assembled the meaning of the Torah reading. If we had that custom today, he wrote, it would be more beneficial than any sermon. Not for naught," he continued, "are the houses of worship known as '*shul*' (school