

even greater yet.³ His gifts as a speaker do much to explain the great influence he had on his contemporaries.⁴

During Rabbi Hirsch's first years in Frankfurt, his weekly Shabbos address was the bond which unified the members of the *IRG*, and provided them with the strength to overcome the harassment they faced. His addresses left his listeners inspired to put the ideals of the Torah into practice.⁵ A visitor to the synagogue commented, "I did not understand one word that was said, but one had the impression that nothing less than the prophet Isaiah was standing up there." Opponents often came to hear him speak and left as ardent followers.⁶

A vivid eye-witness account of his addresses in Nikolsburg captures his power as a speaker:

When he spoke Shabbos morning, generally from nine o'clock until ten, both men and women came from all 12 synagogues in the city to hear him. Watching him stand on the pulpit as he spoke to the congregation, one could not help being captivated by his appearance, and in particular, by his striking facial expression. One could almost see the Divine Spirit hovering over his head, the fire burning in his heart and the sparks that sizzled and shot forth from his enormous eyes, revealing to everyone the intensity of feeling that lay cached in the depths of his soul. Every word aroused an insatiable desire in the listener's heart to elevate himself from the base material world and rise higher and higher to the loftiest spiritual planes. He stripped away the world's physical shell to reveal the sweet spiritual fruit concealed within. His words had the power of thunder and lightning, and against this backdrop he stood like a sentry at his post, battling for his faith. . . . Hearing him deride the world's vanity in tones of such animated fire, the listener could only shrink to an abject nonentity in his own eyes. Behold, the mighty hero with his giant axe smashing great boulders into puny pebbles. He showed no mercy to the cruel and heartless, who sought the pleasures of the material world without a thought to the needs of others.

Then, just as the listener's heart could no longer bear the anguish, the tone suddenly changed and he became a soothing poet, gently feeling out a path to the delicate inner recesses of the listener's Jewish soul. His soft words were. . . full of tender love for every Jew, especially the poor and downtrodden, but more, for the whole of creation. At such moments, a sweet light shined