

**Jewish Life From the Enlightenment:  
The 200 years that brought us where we are  
Hirsch: Seventeenth Letter: Reform**

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**REFORM**

YOU ARE RIGHT. The whole question of emancipation, affecting, as it does, only our material state of affairs, possesses only a subordinate interest for Judaism. Sooner or later the nations will decide what attitude they should take in the issue between right and wrong, between humanity and inhumanity. The first awakening of a sentiment nobler than the mere lust for gain and thrills will speedily take effect in the emancipation of the oppressed everywhere and, therefore, also in that of the Jews.

There is another goal before us, the attainment of which depends entirely upon our own efforts; it is the refinement and ennoblement of ourselves, the fulfillment of Judaism by Jews.

This leads to a consideration of the topic which you designate by the term "Reform."

Certainly, dear Benjamin, we are still far from being what we should be. If you compare the ideal of life which the Torah desires us to realize, even according to the scanty outlines which I have drawn for you in these letters, with our actual life as individuals and as a community, you will at once discern how numerous are the steps which we must still take, and how great the distance yet to be climbed before we can reach the glorious summit of our aspiration and our hope. Therefore, let us truly "reform." Yes, let us strive with all our power, with all the good and noble qualities of our character to reach this height of ideal perfection. Reform!