

HASHKAFIC DIVERGENCE IN CONTEMPORARY ORTHODOXY: NEKUDAT HA-MAHLOKET

In the closing chapters of *Selected Essays*, R. Shimon Schwab attempted to provide spiritual clarity for “serious Torah students” by describing and contrasting two conflicting viewpoints within present-day Orthodoxy.¹ The first ideology, termed the “Torah only principle,” was described as follows:

Ideologically, this way of life is grounded in the conviction that we were chosen to function as a “Kingdom of Priests.” Like the *Kohanim* of old, we should justifiably refrain from taking part in most worldly pursuits in order to be totally engaged in spiritual interests. While this is not possible in practice, worldly activities, necessary evils, are to be relegated to the background to play a secondary role in favor of the true essentials.²

The second school of thought, referred to by the familiar title of “Torah *im derech erets*,” was described as follows:

The Divine task given to Adam that mandated controlling the earth according to the will of the Creator applies to all men in general, but first and foremost to Yisrael. It becomes mandatory for the Torah conscious educator – not to inspire fear of the world and hesitancy to meet its challenge, but rather, to fortify the vast majority of our youth to meet head on ... The divine purpose for which Yisrael was created can be served in every capacity, in every profession, in all human endeavors, as long as they are not excluded by the *halachah*.³

¹ R. Shimon Schwab, *Selected Essays: A Collection of Addresses and Essays on Hashkafah, Jewish History and Contemporary Issues* (New York, C.I.S. Publishers, 2002), p.121-122.

² *Ibid.* p.125.

³ *Ibid.* p.127-129.

