

RABBI SHIMSHON RAPHAEL HIRSCH AND THE DOCTRINE OF
'TORAH IM DERECH ERETS' IN THE EYES OF THE HAREIDIM

by Emmanuel Bloch

This article examines how the founder and champion of German Neo-Orthodoxy, Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, and his philosophy of 'Torah Im Derech Erets', have been perceived by the leading rabbinic authorities in Eastern Europe over the last 150 years.

This perception was not limited, as was heretofore widely believed, to a begrudging post factum admission of the validity of the German approach, coupled with a strict limitation of its acceptability to the context of nineteenth century Germany. On the contrary, a close inspection of the relevant sources reveals a number of patterns and marked shifts in reaction over the period considered, as both Western and Eastern Jewries were variously affected by social evolution and historical events.

Beyond the question of the apprehension of German orthodoxy by Eastern European religious leaders, this article sheds light on the complex interactions between Western and Eastern Jewries and on the evolution of Orthodox Judaism.