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THE THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF MATERIALITY IN RELIGIOUS ZIONISM – RABBI HAIM DAVID HALEVI AS A CASE STUDY

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Abstract: People of the Religious Zionist sector consist approximately 16% of the Jewish population in the state of Israel, as to 2018. Nevertheless, the measure of involvement of this sector in the Israeli society is far greater than its relative size. This sector views the Zionist ideology as part of its religious identity. This is one of the major origins of its high social involvement. This article would like to examine the theological significance of materiality in religious Zionism, and it will concentrate in Rabbi Haim David Halevi as a Case Study. The slogan of Bnei Akiva, the religious Zionist youth movement, is "Torah va'avoda" (Torah and work). Therefore, it is important to understand whether work is just a means or contains theological significance. R. Halevi (1924-1998) was a religious Zionist thinker and adjudicator, and the author of many books. He served for decades as the Chief Rabbi of the cities Rishon Lezion and Tel Aviv. The article shows that R. Halevi's attitude toward labor is ambivalent. On the one hand he thought that labor contains extremely important religious meanings, but on the other hand there are times that he declares that labor is just a means to provide ones physical needs. The article gives several explanations to understand these counteractions.

Key words: religious Zionism, work, Halakha, Rabbi Haim David Halevi, messianic era, redemption, Torah, strike

1. Introduction

People of the Religious Zionist sector identify themselves by wearing knitted skullcaps (*Kipa Seruga*). They consist approximately 16% of the Jewish population in the state of Israel, as to 2018 (Central Bureau of Statistics). Nevertheless, the measure of involvement of this sector in the Israeli society is far greater than its relative size. For instance, in the last few years, approximately 50% of the graduates of the officers course in the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) were Religious Zionists. The Religious Zionist sector view the Zionist ideology as part of its religious identity. This is one of the major origins of its high social involvement.

R. Haim David Halevi (1924-1998) (Zohar and Sagi 2007; Sagi and Schwartz 2018) was a religious Zionist thinker and adjudicator, the author of many books, first and foremost *Makor Haim Hashalem* (five volumes) and the *Aseh Lecha Rav* responsa (nine volumes). R. Halevi served as Chief Sephardic Rabbi of Rishon Lezion from 1951-1973 and as Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv from 1973-1998.

The purpose of this study is to clarify his view on worldly work. Did he perceive work as merely a means of subsistence or did he perhaps see the religious value within work, as stemming from his theology?

A short preface: In Jewish literature, we find several references to work (Assaf 1985; Neuwirth 2015, 4-28). The Bible has an ambivalent attitude to work. On one hand, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." (Genesis 2:15) Namely, Adam's job was also to work, and work bears the religious meaning of carrying out a Divine commandment. Then again, once Adam sinned he was punished. "Cursed is the ground because of you... by the sweat of your brow you will eat your food." (Genesis 3:17-19) Hence, work is a punishment rather than a religious value. In rabbinical literature, as well the attitude to work is ambivalent. Some views ascribe religious value to work, for instance: "Great is labor, as just as Israel were commanded to keep the Sabbath, thus they were commanded to perform labor." (Avot de Rabbi Nathan, Version B, 21) Therefore, just as it is a religious precept to cease from work on the Sabbath, it is also a religious precept to work on weekdays; then again, there are those who claim that work is only an existential need, for instance the father's obligation to teach his son a profession, stating that "Anyone who does not teach his son a trade teaches him banditry [robbery and thievery]", as "if he [the son] shall have no trade and he shall lack for bread, he will go to the crossroads and rob people." (Bavli, Qiddushin 29b, and Rashi on site) Namely, work is a means of subsistence and of preventing misconduct, but has no religious meaning per se. Notably, it was obvious to all that the Jewish scale of ethics is

headed by the study of Torah, "But the study of Torah is equal to them all." (Mishna, Pe'ah 1:1)

Over the years, the conception of work as a necessity attained dominance. R. Joseph Karo too, the greatest of all adjudicators, ruled that one should indeed work, but the explanation he gives is that "[otherwise] poverty would undermine his faith in God" (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Haim, 156 section a). Notably, work is a means of living a proper life but it has no independent religious value.

Current day ultra-Orthodox society sees Torah as a supreme and exclusive value, while work is merely a subsistence need (Friedman 1991; Brown 2017). It was the religious Zionist movements Hamizrahi (1902) (Schwartz 2003) and Hapoel Hamizrahi (1922) (Fishman 1979) that introduced the innovation of work as having religious value. The slogan of Bnei Akiva, the religious Zionist youth movement, is "Torah va'avoda" (Torah and work) (Mashiach 2018; Mashiach 2018 60-74).

In order to further clarify R. Halevi's view on work, we shall turn to several issues mentioned in his teachings.

2. A life combining spirit and matter

R. Halevi preached a life that combines spirit and matter. As he saw it: "Man was formed from the dust of the earth... but a supreme spirit of life was placed in him by his Creator, and by virtue of it he is capable of becoming elevated to the heavens". Therefore, while he criticizes a one-dimensional life, whether material or spiritual, one who engages only in the material, "is of course deplorable", and also one who engages only in the spiritual, "does not achieve his [optimal] level of perfection, if... he does not live a material life as well". In order to achieve perfection, one must live a life that combines spirit and matter, Torah and work. He bases his conclusion on the story of Jacob's ladder, (Genesis 28) which describes, "a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven". As he sees it, the ladder is the ideal person who connects the earth-matter with the heavens-spirit: „He himself is strongly rooted in the earth, he can live a perfect material life, marry... work hard to earn a living... but this ladder set on the earth, its top reaches the heavens, it is capable of becoming elevated and uplifted, pure and holy, until it becomes a chariot for the Divine spirit" (Halevi 1992, 80-82).

A life of integration can transform one into a "chariot for the Divine spirit". This is a kabbalistic expression that sees man as a holy entity, one who gives God presence and representation in the world (Bereshit Rabba, 47:6; Ibn Gabay 1857, 4: 18).

R. Halevi saw the fact that the people of Israel had returned to the Land of Israel and were managing to rejuvenate the land, as other nations

had not been capable of achieving, as realization of the biblical prophecy. He bases his words on the story of the dispute over the wells in the time of the forefathers: (Genesis 26: 19-22) „Because the well of live-giving water, which is a symbol of construction and creative work, in this land, was only realized by their descendants, as it is only them who shall rejuvenate and settle the land, while the non-Jews who came thence always left it desolate. And this is written explicitly: "I myself will lay waste the land, so that your enemies who live there will be appalled"... these are your enemies... they shall find no peace of mind in it" (Halevi 1992, 167).

Working in the Land of Israel is an instrument of Divine revelation and of realizing the prophecies. There is good reason for the demand to combine spirit and matter, Torah and work.

3. Work and redemption

R. Halevi was critical of the approach that saw the exile as something positive. "After arriving in the exile the work of our hands did not become accursed etc. and we are even benefiting from the Gentiles to whose country we were exiled". R. Halevi defines this approach as an "exilic ideology" and says decidedly: "We do not accept this interpretation". He says that "the designation of [the nation of] Israel is to be 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' in its land" and not while in exile. This was forced on the people of Israel "as a punishment for breaching God's covenant". Indeed, when Israel was exiled "it fulfilled the same designation in a state of affliction and denigration" (Halevi 1976, 4, 8) however the state of exile is certainly undesirable.

And now, once the people of Israel have returned to their land, R. Halevi saw it as a time of redemption. At first, he embraced the approach of R. Zvi Yehuda Kook and his circle of followers, but after the peace treaty with Egypt he abandoned this approach. The former saw the peace treaty as a step backwards in the Divine process of redemption, which resulted in a crisis of faith (Schwartz 2001, 92-103). R. Halevi, in contrast, managed to contain the peace process and saw it as part of the Messianic process. As he saw it, the complex and shifting reality is a reflection of the Divine will, which too is dynamic (Hamitovsky 2005, 73-94; Schwartz 2007, 331-35). Therefore, the Messianic process is capable of encompassing such fluctuations (Zohar 2001, 298-311; Sagi and Schwartz 2018, 113-141).

According to his outlook, the advent of the redemption will take a natural course. He was of the naturalist, rather than the apocalyptic, school (Schwartz 1997). Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to bring the redemption actively rather than to wait for it passively as advocated by the ultra-Orthodox (A statement influenced by Rabbis Alkalay and Uziel. Alkalay 1903 530-532) "It was clear to them [to the rabbis] that it is

necessary to anticipate a redemption that will come through nature and wars". He explained the development of the passive-exilic approach thus, "The torturous and anguished exile suffered by the people of Israel... removed from their thoughts any slim hope of being able to become released from the exile in a natural way". R. Halevi understood this way of thinking, "Could an anguished and pained nation, scattered in all corners of the earth... even think of a national revival, an ingathering of the exiles, and establishment of a state in a natural way?" Hence the apocalyptic approach evolved, whereby the redemption would come from heaven with no human efforts. "Therefore, their sages and scribes, preachers and teachers, were compelled to plant in them a faith in a Divine, miraculous redemption" (Halevi 1976, 1:3).

Despite this understanding he claimed that "on the other hand, this faith led to a complete enervation within the nation, which sat passively in wait of the future redemption". And now, when the redemption has arrived in his opinion, and it must be carried out naturally, "then that multi-generational faith in a miraculous-Divine redemption became an obstacle. It was precisely the most faithful who fought strongly against political Zionism which engaged, as desired by the Creator, in preparing the way for the redemption of Israel through natural means" (Halevi 1976, 1:3). In his opinion, this is the underlying ideological dispute between religious Zionism and the ultra-Orthodox.

As one who believed he was living in Messianic times, R. Halevi attempted to prove his arguments. As he saw it, the ingathering of the exiles and the rejuvenation of the Land of Israel, through worldly work and natural means, are "distinct signs of redemption". "Everything we are seeing is stages in the redemption of Israel. To this I have two true testimonies: the ingathering of the exiles and the rejuvenation of the land".

R. Halevi cited the gemara that sees the rejuvenation of the land as an "impending redemption" (*ketz meguleh*). "There is no greater impending redemption, as it is written, 'But you, mountains of Israel, will produce branches and fruit for my people Israel, for they will soon come home' (Bavli, Sanhedrin 98a; Ezekiel 36: 8). And Rashi commented there: "When the Land of Israel will give fruit abundantly then the end will be near, and there is no greater impending redemption". Namely, the most distinct indication that the Messiah is coming is when the Land of Israel responds favorably to agricultural work and produces fruit. This messianic reality is the end of an era when the land did not produce fruit for the nations of the world who tried to settle it with no success, as stated above. (Halevi 1976, 1:7-12) Hence, work is both a precursor of the redemption and a means of speeding up its arrival.

In this context R. Halevi further cited the Vilna Gaon, who said that worldly work is part of the redemption of Mashiach ben Yosef (Shochet 2008, 166-261). The Jewish tradition speaks of two messiahs, one

descended from Joseph and the other from David. (Toder) It is often said that the first will precede the second and will be responsible for corporeal aspects, while the second, Mashiach ben David, will be responsible for spiritual aspects (Rivlin 1969, 1:2; Kook 1984, 94-99). According to R. Halevi on behalf of the Vilna Gaon, worldly work and its success is a reflection of Mashiach ben Yosef: "According to the Vilna Gaon, all the work involving the ingathering of the exiles, the building of Jerusalem, and expanding the settlement of the Land of Israel to bring back the Divine spirit, all the fundamentals of the work (building and planting) and all its details down to the smallest, are associated with the designation and role of the *meshicha de'atkhalta*, the first mashiach, Mashiach ben Yosef... in a natural way... through practical action... the Vilna Gaon says: "By virtue of inheriting it you will inhabit it, and how will you inherit it, through gaining a hold, and a hold is building and planting" (*Kol Hator*, chapter 1 letter b). Hence, the ingathering of the exiles and the rejuvenation of the land are not external signs of the redemption, rather they are the very essence of *atkhalta de'geula*, i.e., Mashiach ben Yosef (Halevi 1976, 1, 7-12).

Consequently, R. Halevi criticized the ultra-Orthodox for not cooperating with the redemptive-messianic steps, and he even belittled them: "It is regretful that even among those faithful to Israel there are those who ridicule the signs of the redemption, of which the sages said 'there is no greater impending redemption than this' ". As he saw it, "Thus the Land of Israel was desolate of its sons and in a state of ruin throughout the exile of Israel, until its sons began to return... only then began its flourishing and its resettlement by its sons - its builders" (Halevi 1976, 4:6). Worldly work, and particularly agricultural work, is a manifestation and expression of the redemption, in his opinion.

4. His attitude to workers' strikes

His attitude to work is further understood when we observe his attitude to utilization of strikes as an economic weapon (Oshinsky 2003). R. Halevi began with a fundamental statement: "With regard to strikes by regular workers in all branches of manufacturing, industry, and services, it is obvious that they have the right to strike in order to improve their status" (Halevi 1976, 5:23). As he sees it, "it all depends on the local custom" (Halevi 1976, 6:79). Therefore, if there are regulations that allow strikes, it is certainly permissible to do so. Nevertheless, later on he strongly objected to strikes. But what happens if "an employer claims that he is fulfilling all his obligations to his workers, and the workers claim that this is not so... may the workers stop all work at the factory". His answer was: "It appears that they cannot" (Halevi 1976, 5:23, 179).

In a lengthy response, he wrote: „It is only right to examine whether the outlook of the Divine Torah indeed supports striking. The answer is

negative. In all the hidden layers of Jewish law there is not even the slightest hint of striking, and perhaps even the opposite... basically, laborers are not entitled to stop their work on behalf of their employer. And this is the halakhic ruling" (Halevi 1976, 2:64).

Indeed, if "the regulations state explicitly that the workers are entitled to strike if necessary" then it would be permissible, "but all this is still against the spirit of Jewish law". He further declares: „In the Jewish outlook, work is holy, building and creating, a partnership with God in the act of creation, etc. etc., and striking is completely incompatible with the way of the Torah. Therefore, according to Jewish law any dispute between an employer and his workers shall be brought before a prominent court of law, or before any other agency that is accepted and agreed by both sides in advance... in order to avoid strikes, which mean ruin and destruction for both the individual and the collective. And vice versa, continuing work regularly and with the proper devotion is a blessing for the workers, the employers, and society at large, as stated: so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.”

In his words, R. Halevi was referring to the midrash which says that God created the world in a raw and primary form and man must improve the Creation through his practical work. "Anything created in the first six days, needs further actions" (Bereshit Rabba 11:6). Through man's work he becomes God's partner in the act of creation. In this way also the workers, the employers, and society as a whole will receive God's blessing, but this is predicated upon action. "So that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands," i.e., it is necessary to work, not to strike.

5. Work as a means

In contrast to these sources that give work religious or messianic meaning, elsewhere in his writings R. Halevi claims that work is only a means of subsistence.

R. Halevi responded to a father who asked him: "How should one act with a son (15) who is studying in yeshiva, but you would like him to learn a profession in order to make an honorable living?" (Halevi 1976, 6:87). He began his answer with a question: „First, I shall ask you, what do those do who study in yeshivas and earnestly toil in the tent of Torah... and why do they not ask questions like yours. Rather, between the lines of your letter I understand that your son is not particularly skilled, and you are concerned that he will not manage, even after studying many years, to be a Rabbi and a teacher among Israel. However, you are not justified in this either, as many yeshiva students with medium capabilities have done well in the study of Torah and at the very least became instruments for holy purposes, such as ritual slaughterers and the like” (Halevi 1976, 6:87).

R. Halevi perceived the study of Torah as the foundation and

therefore was of the opinion that the boy should not be taken out of yeshiva in order to study a trade. Further on, he referred to a father's duty to teach his son a trade for purposes of subsistence: „A father is obligated with regard to his son... to teach him a trade... anyone who does not teach his son a trade teaches him banditry (Bavli, Kiddushin 29a)... As if he shall have no trade and he shall lack for bread, he will go to the crossroads and rob people... Hence, one of the obligations of the father is to teach his son a trade from which he will subsist honorably” (Bavli, Kiddushin 29a).

The gemara relates to work as a need, since if one lacks a source of subsistence he will rob people. However work has no religious value per se. R. Halevi claimed that this is the halakhic ruling, and he himself ruled: „One is obligated to learn and to teach his son a trade, and anyone who does not teach his son a trade, teaches him banditry... and one should not spend all his strength and time making a living, as the Holy One blessed be He who is the cause of all causes is the true provider... since if he shall have nothing to eat poverty will undermine his faith in God” (Halevi 1977, 2:52).

These statements join R. Halevi's general approach, whereby the only supreme foundation is the Torah and everything else, such as the government and the State of Israel per se, are means: „Only the Torah and the religious precepts, given by God from heaven, are the absolute truth, and everything else, with no exception, is inconsequential. I will also add, that everything else is proper and desirable means for applying oneself to Torah and to the religious precepts in order to achieve a life in the world to come... but [they are] only means, and this includes the Jewish state and kingdom... Accordingly, a homeland, political independence, national honor, and so on, which are primary national goals for all nations and peoples, are for the people of Israel only means of achieving the supreme purpose, [which is] the worship of God which makes one worthy of the ultimate value, a life in the world to come” (Halevi 1976, 6:92).

In another response he referred to a member of Knesset who said that "he perceives being a member of Knesset as wasting time that could be spent on Torah study". R. Halevi justified him completely: "That member of Knesset was not only completely right in his statement... rather even government ministers, who devote their strength and time to running the state and the nation, in my opinion this too is a waste of time that could be spent on Torah study" (Halevi 1976, 7:74). And in his summary he said: "There is no doubt that those who sit in the tent of Torah and in the halls of science are those who engage in the most fundamental, and those occupied with running matters of the state are only engaged in the means."

In a nutshell, the Torah is the heart of the matter and everything else, including work, is only a means.

6. Conclusion and discussion

A look at R. Halevi's entire philosophy and attitude to work reveals a type of incongruity. On one hand, he preached a life that combines spirit and matter, while criticizing those who live a one-dimensional life, be it either spiritual or materialistic. As he saw it, one who lives a life of integration can be transformed into a "chariot for the Divine spirit", a holy entity that provides a presence and representation of God in the world.

R. Halevi also saw the realization of Ezekiel's prophecy and the words of the gemara (Bavli, Sanhedrin 98a; Ezekiel 30:8) whereby work, and particularly agricultural work in the Land of Israel that gives "its fruit willingly", is a clear manifestation of the "imminent redemption". And in general, "all the fundamentals of the work (building and planting)" in the Land of Israel, according to the Vilna Gaon whose approach he embraced, are the very essence of "Mashiach ben Yosef" (Halevi 1976, 1:7-12).

However in contrast to statements that grant religious and messianic meaning to wordly work, elsewhere R. Halevi declares explicitly that "Only the Torah and the religious precepts... are the absolute truth, and everything else, with no exception, is inconsequential... proper means... but only means", (Halevi 1976, 6:92) and this includes worldly work, which is only necessary for purposes of subsistence.

R. Halevi was a student and secretary of R. Uziel, and even wrote a book about the latter. (Halevi 1979) He was also strongly influenced by the philosophy of R. Kook the father and was close to R. Zvi Yehuda Kook (Halevi 1996, 451-470). A short inspection of the attitudes of all the above to work clearly shows that the thoughts of R. Halevi on this issue were different and independent.

R. Uziel saw the religious value of wordly work, rather than perceiving it as merely a means of subsistence (Mashiach 2018, 197-215). "Work and labor are not optional, according to the Torah of Israel, rather they are a mandatory precept, and the Torah says: Six days you shall labor and do all your work" (Uziel 2009, 1: 456). And he also declared: „Mistaken are those who think that building the land and its settlement through work... will bring us to our ultimate goal. Taking possession of the land and its settlement are only half the job... and mistaken are those who think that by sitting in the study hall we fulfill our duty to God and to the nation. Those who do half a job don't attain even half the job. Our full revival is only possible through the harmonious joining of Torah and work" (Uziel 2009, 1: 475).

R. Uziel translated his statements into theory and practice by forbidding the use of strikes as a weapon. "Every day of striking and of not engaging in the work of creation is a day lost in one's life, and the Torah of Israel decreed an obligation to work and said: Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.

And the sages expounded: Just as there is a covenant involving the Torah (i.e., the precept of Sabbath in the Torah), so there is a covenant involving labor. Namely, work on the six weekdays" (Uziel 1995, 4: Hoshen Mishpat 42: 6)

R. Kook too gave work religious and messianic meaning. "Any physical work that a Jew performs in the Land of Israel, whether plowing, sowing, planting, building, or endeavors to expand manufacturing and industry in our land, is considered preparation for revealing the high rank of spirituality inherent in the redemption of Israel" (Kook 1984, 247). It was not for nothing that R. Kook the father encouraged work, "Work is always a fit occupation for man; this duty grows when one has before him unprocessed matter that proclaims and says: Come, work, and complete" (Kook 1987, 351; Bereshit Rabba, 11:6). Work as he sees it is an attempt to complete the divine creation.

R. Zvi Yehuda Kook too saw the major significance of worldly work. "Man is born to labor' (Job 5:7), to the 'labor of Torah' and to the 'labor of craft'" (Kook 1998, 386). Both. It was clear to him that "not all people of Israel can be scholars". There are also those "whose craft is in the field", "but both are parts of Israel, and together they construct the building of Israel as a whole" (Kook 1993, 267). Each fulfills his designation in one of the dimensions, Torah or work, and in this way, "Israel is resuming its full health, physical health and mental health, in the army and in the yeshiva, in agriculture and in scholarship" (Kook 1993, 413).

So how can R. Halevi's ambivalent attitude to work be explained?

To begin with, the very question is based on the premise that every thinker has a uniform and consistent method, but this not always the case. Indeed, Sagi and Schwartz claimed that R. Halevi had no set cohesive method (Sagi and Schwartz 2018, 139). Sometimes he presented conflicting approaches, as we have seen with regard to work. As they see it, R. Halevi approached reality with no prestructured patterns, displayed by those who are certain that they have uncovered the historiosophical "formula". Therefore, circumstances generate different, sometimes conflicting approaches. Another example is the shift in his approach to the process of the redemption after the peace treaty with Egypt.

Further, Stern's research has shown that when circumstances changed R. Halevi's world views changed as well (Stern 2007, 357-383). And this is true of social, economic, and political issues, as well as of his attitude to work (Halevi 1976, 4:1). In the context of the current study, the shift in circumstances was related to the change in the Israeli government in 1977. Until then the country had been governed by political movements that upheld values of labor and socialism and many of the country's citizens belonged to the working settlements. In the year of the political upheaval, the *Likud* party ascended to power. This party advocated capitalist values, and the status of work as a value and as an ideology gradually diminished, with the working settlements and particularly the

kibbutzim disappearing over time. This changed attitude of the government and of Israeli society to work led to a change in the conceptions upheld by R. Halevi as well, who lived and operated in these times of changing values, and hence his ambivalent attitude to work, either as a value or as merely a means.

Another explanation is offered in the study conducted by Rosenak, who investigated R. Halevi's view on the concept of holiness (Rosenak 2006, 171-200). He showed that in this respect as well R. Halevi's attitude is inconsistent, where at times he upheld an ontological conception and at others a normative conception of holiness. His conclusion was that R. Halevi's general perspective was educational, namely he was intent on persuading his interlocutors that his way is right and that they should embrace his values. For this purpose, R. Halevi saw the varied and sometimes conflicting schools of thought as a legitimate means for achieving his pedagogical goal. Where the normative school would achieve the goal, he utilized it, and where the ontological school was better suited, it was the tool of choice. In sum, R. Halevi had no distinct predefined course of action, rather everything was dependent on and guided by his educational purpose.

This appears to be true with regard to the issue of work as well. When R. Halevi discerned that his interlocutor needed strengthening on religious issues, as in his answer to the father whose son was studying in yeshiva, he stressed the Torah and defined work as a means; while when he realized that his interlocutor needed strengthening on the material dimension he gave work religious and even messianic meaning. In sum, R. Halevi's approach was dictated by the *Sitz im Leben* of his interlocutors, with pedagogy being the overarching value.

Another explanation of R. Halevi's ambivalent attitude is his Sephardic origins, which had the effect of enhancing both the study of Torah and the value of work and saw no contradiction between them. Therefore, in his view the varying statements convey no conflict.

A clarification is in order here. Zohar contends that rabbis of Ashkenazi descent have different approaches (Zohar 2001, 360-364). He cites Elazar (Daniel 1989, 30-39), who accepted Heschel's statements, (Heschel 1949) albeit with certain changes, regarding two main religious cultural traditions in Israel: the Eastern-Sephardic and the European-Ashkenazi. As he sees it, the Sephardic approach is a "classical" tradition, while the Ashkenazi approach is termed a "romantic" tradition. The classical-Sephardic tradition has four characteristics: aesthetics, simplicity, balance, and emotional restraint. Hence, any radicalism is perceived as negative and the attitude to life, the secular, the traditional, and work, is inclusive, leading to a strict attitude to Halakha, toward people, and religious conceptions in general.

R. Halevi is associated with the classical-Sephardic approach and

thus, as he sees things, there is no conflict between life and Torah, everything is treated naturally (Sagi and Schwartz 2018, 79-112; Halevi 1976, 7: 54). Therefore, it is obviously necessary to cooperate with the government and with Zionism and to integrate Torah and work. (ibid 12) Consequently, from a Sephardic, containing, and unitary conception, R. Halevi saw no contradiction between Torah and work, although sometimes he defined the latter as a value and sometimes as a need. There is no consistent ideology here, rather it is a natural attitude, and as such is variable.

The context in which the statements were made must also be noted. R. Halevi served for decades as the Chief Rabbi of the cities Rishon Lezion and Tel Aviv. In both cities, there was no need to reinforce the value of work among the general and religious Zionist public, as it was a normal and customary part of life. He did, however, think it necessary to stress the values of Torah and spirituality and therefore, as a pedagogue, although at times he emphasized the value of work sometimes he also focused on teaching the way of Torah, saying that work is a means of reaching the spiritual Torah-oriented foundation.

R. Halevi's books were written as an outcome of his interaction with the residents of the cities of which he was a rabbi. For instance, a series of classes given in Rishon Lezion generated *Makor Haim Hashalem* and a series of lessons given on the radio was the basis for some of the volumes of *Aseh Lecha Rav* (Amitai 2007, 385-395). To a large degree, the heated controversy on the issue of work as a value was no longer a vital issue in the time of R. Halevi, certainly not in Rishon Lezion and Tel Aviv. Heated discussions on work as a value took place in the first half of the twentieth century. R. Halevi, who operated in the second half of the century, saw no need to relate to this issue in a uniform manner. His answers were dependent on the context, as stated above.

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