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WORK AS A RELIGIOUS VALUE IN RELIGIOUS ZIONISM – RABBI CHAIM HIRSCHENSOHN AS A CASE STUDY

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Abstract: Rabbi Chaim Hirschensohn (1857-1935) was a religious Zionist thinker and one of the founders of the “Mizrachi” movement. The present article aims to trace his approach towards work: did he see work as a need, an obligation imposed upon the human being to sustain his household, or did he, perhaps, associate work with a religious value as an integral part of the theology which he steered by? The conclusion is that R. Hirschensohn's approach towards work is both a must for a livelihood and part of Jewish and national identity, to the point where Redemption itself depends upon it. Work is also part of religious Zionist theology, one of whose proponents and founders Chaim Hirschensohn was.

Key words: Hirschensohn; Work; Redemption; Nationalism; Jewish identity; Productivity; Halakha; Theology; religious Zionism

Rabbi Chaim Hirschensohn (1857-1935) (Schweid 1997; Zohar 2003; Rotenberg 2008) was a religious Zionist thinker and one of the founders of the “Mizrachi” movement (Hirschensohn 1919-1928, 116). His ideas were put forth in numerous works spanning the fields of Halakhah, traditional hermeneutics and commentary, and Jewish thought. The present article aims to trace his approach to work: did he see work as a need, an obligation imposed upon the human being to sustain his household, or did he, perhaps, associate work with a religious value as an integral part of the theology which he steered by?

Chaim Hirschensohn was born in Safed, but due to a conflict which developed between him and the Old Yishuv, he was excommunicated in 1897, and subsequently left for Istanbul, Turkey. In 1903, he immigrated to the US, where he became community rabbi in Hoboken, New Jersey, a position he continued to occupy until his death. In the US, Chaim Hirschensohn found himself exposed to Western culture, including the doctrines of democracy and capitalism. This experience caused him to change his approach to a number of issues, including the question of work – the particular focus of the present study (Schweid 1997, 80).

We will arrive at an understanding of R. Hirschensohn’s approach based both on statements he himself explicitly made and on the total complex of his thought as a whole. Let us now turn to a number of issues taken up in his teaching.

1. Work as National Identity

Chaim Hirschensohn upheld a Biblical-Jewish identity, to which he generally exhorted his times to return following the years of exile, throughout which a Rabbinic-Jewish identity had been dominant (Mashiach 2014, 38). This comes to the fore in his treatment of the idea of Jewish nationhood, which was going through a revival at the time, and in his approach to productive labor (Hastings 1997, Chap. 1).

Two comments need to be made: first, the term “Biblical Jew” is an anachronism, considering that “Jew” is a later coinage which makes its initial appearance only at the end of the period reflected in the Bible. Even so, we will resort to this term, insofar as it is familiar and typically in standard use. The second note is that the term “Biblical Jewish identity” refers to the Biblical Jewish ethos as opposed to the Rabbinic Jewish one. That is, the Bible, *inter alia*, makes provisions for a specific role that work should fulfill, and the traditional Jewish festivals also clearly turn upon the agricultural axis. All this forms a contrast to the Rabbinic ethos, in which everything turns on the study of Torah: “and the study of Torah is equal to them all” (Mishnah Peah, 1:1). Albeit there is a role that work takes on in Rabbinic texts, this is negligible by comparison with the Torah and the Talmud. All this is not in the least to detract from the

commitment made by Chaim Hirschensohn to Rabbinic texts or the Halakhah.

Studying the endeavor of the Biblical-Jew, we go away with the image of a man of work, especially of agriculture, and a military man – a soldier in the battlefield. In short: the Biblical Jew was a common man like all the people and nations of his time; what typified him, singling him out as a Jew, was his belief in the One God – the element which defined him in terms of his religion, in terms of his national belonging, and in terms of his uniqueness.

The Biblical Jew celebrated his religious festivals in their agricultural context. Thus, Passover was the spring festival at the time of the barley harvest, Pentecost was the feast of the wheat harvest and the first fruits, and Tabernacles marked the harvest at the end of the summer season. This is in marked contrast to the character taken on by the festivals in Rabbinic sources, which had a decisive impact on Jewish identity in exile. For instance, Pentecost in Rabbinic sources and in the festival liturgy became “the holiday of the Giving of our Torah.” This is the more noteworthy, considering that the text of the Torah itself makes no mention of linking the festival of Pentecost to the granting of the Torah on Mt. Sinai. The Feast of Tabernacles is invoked in Rabbinic texts in memoriam of the booths in which the Children of Israel dwelled in the desert (Leviticus 23:43), with special reference to the debate as to whether these were booths in the literal physical sense or the clouds of Divine Glory (Bavli Sukkah 11b).

When describing the Jewish festivals, Chaim Hirschensohn reverts to the Biblical meanings of the holidays, often ignoring the significance associated with them by the Talmudic Sages. In his teaching, the Jewish holidays once again become agricultural festivals bound up with work, rather than festivals imbued with Torah spiritual meaning. Thus, for example, in connection with Passover, he describes the “joy of harvesting” and the joy of work in a mode filled with longing: “The rejoicing of the harvest was celebrated by Israel in the days of their serenity, at a time when they were masters of their land... the spring air was pleasant and healthful... the fathers harvested, the women sang, the children danced, while the poor gathered the gifts of *Leket* [“Collecting”], *Shichechah* [“Forgetting”], and *Peah* [“Edge of the Field”]; all three refer to quantities of grain traditionally left by the master of the field for the poor at the time of harvesting. *Translator’s note.*... There would be no limit to the joy at harvest time, to the point where it became a figure of speech among the people to say, “like joy at harvest time” (Hirschensohn 1935, 24.)

When describing the festival of Tabernacles, he renders it the holiday of the last of the harvest, as per its Biblical meaning: „When we used to dwell upon our soil, supporting ourselves by the work of our hands and the fruit of our land, then was this holiday the “holiday of our rejoicing.”

When every man would bring in the produce of the threshing floor, the fruit of summer, to the granary” (Hirschensohn 1935, 37).

But, according to R. Hirschensohn, work in the Land of Israel is more than a return to the days of the Bible. In his view, tilling the land is what has grounded Israelite nationhood: „Every people is born in its land, or else has acquired a land for itself... taking possession of it by right of inheritance and dwelling... That is to say, settlement in the land and its conquest by means of working the soil and the other branches of life which they have planted in it, and by means of finding in it the source of their sustenance, they have become naturalized in it, generation after generation, like the “*adone ha-sadeh*” [“lords of the field”. The *adone ha-sadeh* [“lords of the field”. is a type of creature mentioned in the Mishnah (Kilayim 8:5) and described as resembling a human being but connected by its belly to the ground, like a plant, such that should it be severed from the ground, it would die], the symbolic beast whose belly is tied to its land, so that by its very nature it cannot go away any further than the length of the cord” (Hirschensohn 1924, 188-189).

If so, then it becomes evident, from R. Hirschensohn’s point of view, that there is an obligation – a Torah Commandment – to till the soil in the Land of Israel, not merely as a nostalgic reversion to the days of the Bible, but as a manifestation of the desire to renew Jewish nationhood in the Land of Israel, in the present. He invokes the constructive impact of finding a means of sustenance, but in his opinion, the very connection to the soil by means of work creates a lifeline that cannot be severed between the people and its land. The connection is a source of life, just as it is for the humanlike *adone ha-sadeh* (Even though in his view land and labor do not on their own shape Jewish identity, but the link to the Torah and the Commandments has a share in this, as well) (*Sources of Water*, IV, 119-120).

Not for naught does Chaim Hirschensohn describe the Jewish festivals specifically in their Biblical context, as opposed to the Rabbinic tradition. This is bound up with that in his view, the Biblical Jewish identity must be returned to, because – among other reasons – work in the Land of Israel creates the nation; it founds peoplehood. So was it in days of old, and so – as per his view – must it be done at this time. In sum, work is endowed with religious and national significance.

2. Torah, Work, and Jewish Nationhood

Following up on this, it should be added that R. Hirschensohn’s attitude to work was an outgrowth of his notion of the religion and identity of the Jews. Initially, Chaim Hirschensohn saw Jewish identity as being only religious, but once he had moved to the US and come into contact with American Jewry, he became aware of other types of Jewish identity, as well (Zohar 2003, 143). He altered his position, arguing that

religious identity is only one expression among many of Jewish identity, with nationhood constituting an important stratum of Jewish identity, as well (*My King in Holiness*, VI, 116). This conclusion led him to argue that it is a religious obligation to be a nationalist, by which he meant espousing the principles of the “Mizrachi” movement: „I, too, am Mizrachi, but not because I think that Israel’s nationhood is its religion... The truth is that the religion of Israel is a national religion, but the nationhood of Israel is not only religious-national. Religion is only one of the conditions for the life of a people” (*My King in Holiness*, VI, 244).

Defining Jewish identity as religious and national led Chaim Hirschensohn to the idea of integration, according to which the complete Jew is “both,” involved in spirit as well as dealing with matter, occupied with Torah as well as with work, similar to the togetherness of body and soul (*My King in Holiness*, VI 116).

Chaim Hirschensohn made both the identity of the Jewish People and its world destiny as the bearer of a universal message about the mutual compatibility of spirit and matter, depend on and enable this integrated life. These ideas were being put forth at a time when Jewish religious identity was exclusively spiritual, while Chaim Hirschensohn argued that Judaism means involvement in both spirit and matter, “unlike what our predecessors thought, that the destined purpose of the priestly kingdom is to be ascetics and hermits... abandoning this world.” He goes on with vehemence: “The people which does not support the needs of physical life through strong traditions will stop being a people, and will never achieve its spiritual fulfillment.” (Hirschensohn 1889, 3). The two are mutually dependent; if there is no involvement with matter and work, the totality of the spiritual purpose will also not be accomplished.

This double activity, from his point of view, is what defines the People of Israel, spelling out its universal destiny. “In all these will it be considered a priestly kingdom and a holy people... from the one sitting on the throne to the farmer tilling the field” (Hirschensohn 1889, 3).

The Jewish exilic way of thinking empowered the life of the spirit, while neglecting – at least theologically – the life of matter and work. R. Hirschensohn, who maintained a double theology of Torah and work, attempted to explain the flat Jewish spiritual single-dimensionality. He saw that, for instance, “the Italians come here [to the US] and work in the sweat of their brow to make a profit, and once they achieve this, they are content and return to their land.” But “not so the Jew who comes to America... They and their children and their children’s children will not leave the land.” Chaim Hirschensohn explained that “only a spiritual bond” exists between a Jew and the Land of Israel, with no “physical life bond”; this is why the Jew does not return there (*Sources of Water*, IV, 193-194).

Why is this so? Chaim Hirschensohn appeals to a historical-theological approach to answer this question. In his view, the explanation

has its beginnings back in the days of King David, who warred and conquered lands. This is the reality behind the fact that “the people abandoned the spade and the plow on account of the travail of war,” so that in effect the disconnection between the people and its land, including the labor of tilling the soil, first set in. In other words, the disconnection between the People of Israel and the working life began at that time. King David, who wanted to strengthen the tie between the people and its land, thought to do this by building the Temple. The plan came true only in the days of King Solomon, but the result was that the bond between the people and its land has been spiritual ever since, without a fitting physical counterpart to provide for a balance (*Sources of Water*, IV, 191). From then on to this day, argues R. Hirschensohn, the Jewish religion became one-sided, spiritual only, rather than possessing both aspects in accord with his understanding of the original Torah, which integrates Torah and work.

As per R. Hirschensohn’s argument, the notion that the bond with the Land of Israel is spiritual only still remains in force; it is not restricted to the world of the ultra-Orthodox. It also impacts members of the secular Zionist movement in the diaspora. Both fail to see themselves as bound to the land with a tie of labor engaging with matter, but envision the connectedness in a spiritual way. “And all this for the sole reason that all the nationhood has ever since been built based only on the spiritual striving, and not on the physical (*Sources of Water*, IV, 193).”

R. Hirschensohn’s answer is religious Zionism, which integrates Torah with labor and the spiritual with the material. This forms the point of departure for the criticism that Chaim Hirschensohn levels at those who disrupt unities – that is, he goes out against the ultra-Orthodox, who reject labor and engaging in the material, and against secular Zionism, which engages with matter and abandons involvement with the Torah and the spiritual (Zohar 2005, 171): „One who studies the books of the great sages of our people, even those who knew what Jewish nationhood requires of them and what their purpose is in the world, will see... that the existence of our people and our purpose depend on maintaining two pillars: the Torah and the way of the land together! But to the divisions of Israel... those who insisted on storming the high heavens, saying that the purpose of Israel is only to contemplate matters of divine worship... to be a priestly kingdom and a holy people! And those who descended deep down in their spirit, thinking that the essence of our nationhood is maintaining the essentials of life alone... both of them have veered off course” (Hirschensohn 1889, Introduction).

To sum up: according to R. Hirschensohn, work is part of religious Jewish identity. From the days of King David and life in exile, the Torah of Israel has been defined as spiritual only, but according to him, we must return to the original, bi-faceted definition, when the People of Israel is returning to its Land and establishing settlements and a state in it, with

practical work constituting an important stratum of this (*My King in Holiness*, IV 246).

3. Work as Redemption and Colonizing the World

R. Hirschensohn's understanding of work can also be discerned from what he wrote about Rashi's commentary on the Bible (Hirschensohn 1929). In connection with the verse, "He placed him in the Garden of Eden to work and to guard it (Genesis 2:15)", he writes that "What he achieves with the toil of his hand, even in the Garden of Eden, that he should eat, happy is he and well off in this [world] and in the one to come (*Rashi's Reasons*, 15a)". Adam was put in the Garden of Eden so as to till the garden's soil. As per R. Hirschensohn, the issue here is not procuring a livelihood, considering that in the Garden of Eden man had no need of this, but insofar as work is a religious value we are instructed in by the Torah, even in the Garden of Eden, and the person who obeys this, "happy is he and well off" in this world and in the world to come. This is because work is mainly the realization of the Divine desire that the "world be settled" (*Rashi's Reasons*, 17a).

Chaim Hirschensohn argued that beyond world settlement, work and material condition in general are what will bring about Redemption and the manner of its realization. He elucidates this in connection with the "vision of the dry bones (Ezekiel 37)". As per his view, God "spoke to the spirit [also: breath; the same word, *ruah*, has both these meanings, as well as the meanings of "wind," "corner," and "direction." *Translator's note*], saying: from the four corners come, spirit, and blow into these dry bones!... Now this spirit is the spirit of nationhood... to make him stand, raising him from the dust." Only "through strengthening these two pillars with all our power will we raise the people to resurrection (Hirschensohn 1889, 3)." That is, only by means of the double integration of the Torah with work will the revival and Redemption come about. Elsewhere he elaborates upon the verse in Isaiah where the powers of the Messiah are described: "He will inspire him with the fear of the Lord; and not by the appearance of his eyes will he judge (Isaiah 11:3)". The Gemara interprets this as meaning that the Messiah will judge based on his sense of smell (Bavli, Sanhedrin 93b), rather than as is the common wont today, to judge based on sight and hearing. Chaim Hirschensohn explains that the Messiah will smell the dust, "that is, understand deeply the condition and their custom in their way of life, and will know where they will return to their land, and where they need effort to return (*Sources of Water*, 194-195)." I.e., the way the settlers work and develop their land is what will determine the timing of Redemption, its guise, and its location.

These things also come to the fore elsewhere in his thought, in his allegorical commentary on the aggadic tales of the Amora Rabbah bar bar Chana (Bavli, *Bava Batra*, 73b-74a). In one of these, the Amora recounts how

he placed his basket somewhere in the heavens, whereupon the basket was gone. He asked whether there are thieves in the heavens? The answer he was given was that he had placed his basket in the “window of the sky,” and since the heavens are in constant motion, the basket disappeared. If he should return at the same time the next day, he would find his basket; and so indeed did it come to pass (*Bavli, Bava Batra, 74a*). Chaim Hirschensohn saw this tale as a critical message addressed to his own days, in connection with work: „Perhaps in this story did Rabbah bar bar Chana want to demonstrate the error of many a yeshivah student. He, too, originally used to think like them, that one can do without plowing during the plowing season and without sowing during the sowing season, only relying on the One Who sustains life in loving kindness... while they engage only in Torah and prayer, while their best [their baskets, their livelihood] they leave in the window of the sky... but man must work and trust in God, Who will send blessing to the deed of his hands. All the more so a people and a nation needs to construct its condition upon an economic foundation and to pray to God that He may keep His eye and His heart on them constantly... for the world continues as per its wont, so that many did as R. Shimon bar Yochai had done, but to no avail... many did as R. Ishmael had done, and succeeded” (*Sources of Water, 237*).

Rabbah bar bar Chana’s message, according to R. Hirschensohn, is addressed to those who think that man need not work for a livelihood, but should focus on Torah, prayer, and the life of the spirit alone. They count on the heavens, hoping that God in His mercy will fulfill their needs. But according to R. Hirschensohn, man must work and toil, as per the conclusion in the Gemara about the debate between R. Ishmael and R. Shimon bar Yochai. The latter was of the opinion that man must be involved in the Torah alone, while God provides for his livelihood. R. Ishmael, by contrast, learned that man must integrate Torah with work. The Gemara sums up that “many did as R. Shimon bar Yochai had done, but to no avail... many did as R. Ishmael had done, and succeeded (*Bavli Berachot, 35b*).” Thus, too, in R. Hirschensohn’s opinion, both concerning the individual person and the nation as a whole.

But this is not the end of his commentary on the aggadic tale. He thought that not only a message about integrating Torah and work was to be found in it, but also a message of Redemption. This last depends on the material labor of the individual and the people: „And if... the last few generations have made their involvement with Torah incidental and their work permanent and for whom neither went well (*ibid*), that is because of their making their Torah incidental. For man should never in his life make anything incidental, only make his involvement with Torah permanent and his work permanent... Therefore ‘Prophesy unto the Land of Israel... your branches will you give and your fruit will you bear for my people Israel, for they have approached... you will be tilled and sowed... and a new spirit will I put into you...(Ezekiel 36:4-26)’” (*Hirschensohn, ibid*).

Chaim Hirschensohn argued that life should not be divided into “permanent” involvement with issues of Torah and the spirit as opposed to dealing with work and material concerns as “incidental.” Life should rather be lived as a “permanent” integration of Torah with work. If Israel should in fact live in this integrated manner, Redemption will come true, just as in the words of Ezekiel, who saw Redemption as dependent on work.

In addressing the vision of Redemption in Ezekiel, he mentions the “revealed end,” the obvious and unconcealed sign of Redemption: “You have no end more clearly revealed than this, as it is said, ‘and you, oh mountains of Israel, your branches will you give and your fruit will you bear for my people Israel for they have approached (Bavli, *Sanhedrin*, 98a).” Rashi’s commentary: “When the Land of Israel gives of its fruit generously, then will the end be near, and you have no end more clearly revealed than this.” Hence, concludes R. Hirschensohn, work and its successful achievement are the indication and the precondition of Redemption.

4. Discussion and Summary

Chaim Hirschensohn was in touch with many rabbis (Hirschensohn 1924-1934, Part III); two of them left a special mark on religious Zionism: R. Abraham Isaac Kook and R. Yaakov Reines. Even so, there is nothing to connect between their thought and his (Schweid 1997, 159). By the nature of things, as a religious Zionist, he reached some of the same theological conclusions as they, but the road leading him to these conclusions was different. One of the significant differences, for instance, between him and R. Abraham Isaac Kook consists in the fact that there is no metaphysics in his thought. Similarly, there is no conception of immanence in his writings, unlike the teaching of R. Abraham Isaac Kook or that of R. Yaakov Reines (Reines 1926, 232; Schwartz 1996, 67-75). However, it is still not impossible that they impacted his thought in some way.

Chaim Hirschensohn saw the Torah and life as twins who do not struggle against each other – unlike the notion espoused by the ultra-Orthodox, on the one hand, or the secular Zionists, on the other. “In truth, the religion of Israel and life are twins from birth... Contradictions between religion and life are seen only by those who have not understood either one – have not understood the Torah... and have not understood life (*My King in Holiness*, Part V, In Place of an Introduction).” Following ideas along these lines, Chaim Hirschensohn concluded that Zionism fits the Torah, making it a religious obligation to work together with it and join its ranks. Despite this, Jewish nationalism neglected the Torah; he criticizes it severely for this (Schweid 1997, 19-41; Zohar 2003, 90-162). He accordingly sees the Mizrachi as the right combination from the religious and national points of view, while objecting strenuously against ultra-Orthodox

Judaism: “the religious societies which oppose nationhood are not part of the Jewish religion at all... and it is to the religious who oppose Jewish nationhood that the Sages referred by way of comparison as ‘those worshipping idols in purity’” (*My King in Holiness*, IV, 123-124, 246).

The double definition of Jewish identity as religious and national brought Chaim Hirschensohn to the idea of integration, according to which the complete Jew need not choose one of two alternatives, steeping oneself in Torah or in work, for Judaism is “both together.” Chaim Hirschensohn saw as dependent on this integrated life both the identity of the Jewish People, on the one hand, and its purpose in the world as deliverer of a universal message that the life of the spirit need not be at odds with natural living embodied in matter. It should be borne in mind that all this was said at a time when Jewish religious identity was spiritual only. According to R. Hirschensohn, “The people who does not support the needs of physical life through strong traditions will stop being a people, and will never achieve its spiritual fulfillment (*Orders in Halakhah and Love of Work*, 3).” To his mind, this double action is what defines the Jewish People and its spiritual purpose. Work, then, is the source of a livelihood, and also the founder of the Jewish nation.

This concept of integration, according to R. Hirschensohn, is the guarantee of Jewish Redemption. This, in his view, is not taking advantage of a glorious past as a crutch, nor is it merely a means of procuring a livelihood in the present, but the redemptive future: “through strengthening these two pillars with all our power will we raise the people to resurrection (*Orders in Halakhah and Love of Work*, 3).”

As we have already noted, there is no clear influence of other thinkers on R. Hirschensohn, but there are some common denominators between him and the Second Aliyah with its proponents of the “religion of labor.” Albeit there is no mention of Second Aliyah thinkers in his texts and he was already living in the US at the time, there is still no ignoring the fact that he and they lived and worked during the same period.

We have already brought up the fact that Chaim Hirschensohn upheld a Biblical-Jewish identity, calling by and large for a return to this, following years of exile, during which Rabbinic Jewish identity had been dominant (Mashiach, 2014). This comes to the fore in his definition of Judaism as double-faceted, as well as in his explication of the Jewish festivals based on the way they are described in the Bible, as holidays connected with work, rather than in the way they appear in Rabbinic texts. This mode of presenting the Jewish festivals as agricultural holidays also appears in the thought of the Second Aliyah (Bartal, et al 1997). The Second Aliyah also wanted to return to the Biblical Jew, not in his religious guise of faith, but as a primeval Jew fighting in his land and tilling his soil (Shapira 1997 248-275; Mashiach 2014). Yitzhak Tabenkin wrote of the Bible as a reflection of the Jewish People as a “people conquering land, a laboring people, a people of ‘this-worldly living (Tabenkin 1972, 24).”

Even though Second Aliyah religiosity was not of the Halakhic religious type, they nonetheless treated some of their values with a special fervor, especially work. To their mind, it was “a lofty striving to restore the days of our people as of yore. All study of the Bible should be directed toward this educational goal (Epstein 1912 152).”

R. Hirschensohn's idea that work creates the people and national identity can also be traced in Menasheh Rabina, a poet associated with the Second Aliyah. The words in his poem, “We came to the Land to build and to be built in it,” remain a motto to this day. According to Rabina and the Second Aliyah, here, in the Land of Israel, by means of work and physical labor, construction and being constructed come true, both for the individual person and the people as a whole.

The Second Aliyah thinker A.D. Gordon propounded the same ideas (Schweid 1970, 172-185; Ratzabi 2008, 275-320). According to Gordon, by means of work, primarily agriculture, the individual and the people renew their bond with existence and with life (Bergmann and Shochet 1952, 216). “We can create the people only when each one of us creates himself anew by means of work and natural living (Bergmann and Shochet 1952,128).” Only work, he believed, would re-create the Jewish People, who had been isolated from natural life, lived in exile and had become accustomed to idleness (Bergmann and Shochet 1952, 194). From this manual labor, as Gordon thought largely along the same lines as R. Hirschensohn, would revival come, along with Redemption: “the revival of the People... will not be able to come except by means of work (Schweid 1983, 265).” Albeit, logically enough, Gordon's idea of Redemption is different from R. Hirschensohn's.

As has been noted, it is not clear whether any direct influence of the Second Aliyah upon Chaim Hirschensohn can be ascertained, but certain similarities between them are clearly in evidence. Perhaps it was the spirit of the times that brought these thinkers to argue for the creation of a new-old Jewish identity, one that would be bound up with manual labor.

It would appear that there is, nonetheless, a figure that influenced Chaim Hirschensohn in an unmistakable way: his father, R. Yaakov Mordechai Hirschensohn (1822-1889), a Rabbinic scholar and head of a yeshivah, as well as one of the leading rabbis of Safed and later of Jerusalem. In connection with the present study it should be noted that the father lent his support to two ideas, concerning which the son, R. Chaim, took up the same approach: endorsing the renewal of Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel and his notion of work and increasing labor productivity.

The principle of increasing labor productivity had a great impact on the Hovevei Zion movement, its members, thinkers and rabbinic leaders, with R. Shmuel Mohilever at their head (Goldstein 2015, 13-37). The idea, which had its beginnings in the European Enlightenment of the 1700s, left a deep impression on both European and Jewish thought in the 19th

century (Levin 1975, 170-256). There had been criticism of the Halukkah [organized collection of funds for the Jews living in the Land of Israel. *Translator's note*], along with exhortation in favor of earning a livelihood by means of manual labor, primarily agriculture. This was also a window of opportunity, with the Emancipation opening before the Jews the possibility of engaging in different areas which had previously not been accessible to them. The principle of increasing labor productivity led the First Aliyah to set up communities and to found new ways of earning a living (Ettinger and Bartal 1982, 1-24). This idea, which was part of both European and Jewish discourse of the times, left its mark on Chaim Hirschensohn the father and then the son, who valorized it, providing it with a grounding in Jewish learning.

Chaim Hirschensohn the Elder openly supported the settlements set up by the New Yishuv, beginning from the earliest days of the First Aliyah in 1882. His closeness and responsiveness to agricultural work led him to rule in favor of the permission to consider the land sold during the Shemitah [Fallow] year in 1889 (Hirschensohn, 1888). The reason for his ruling was the apprehension that discontinuing work in agriculture would destroy the Jewish settlements. Yet at the root of the daring ruling was the positive view of the value of work, both as a livelihood and as a religious concept. The idea of the father thrived on in the thought and the rulings of the son, who also supported the decision permitting the sale of the land and took part in the debates which the issue provoked (Morgenstern 2003; Zohar 2003, 18, 145). His support of the working settlers and for work in general was a direct continuation of the father's efforts to work, to create, and to bring up his children with these views, as a result of the influence of the notion of increasing labor productivity (Morgenstern, 2003, 122; Levin 1976, 43-45). Chaim Hirschensohn continued in his father's footsteps, while also going beyond him in Halakhic theory and practice, in Torah and in work.

We mentioned at the beginning of this article that Chaim Hirschensohn immigrated to the US. There he became exposed to capitalism, which had been sired, according to Max Weber, by Protestant theology (Weber 1930; Anthony 1977). In brief: the Christian Middle Ages did not typically regard manual labor as a religious value. On the contrary, Catholicism saw work as part of involvement with the physical, part of the "flesh," which stands in opposition to the "spirit." Martin Luther, the founder of Protestantism, argued against this approach (Weber 1930, 39-50). Luther maintained a deterministic outlook, and saw the calling according to which one works as a divine command imposed upon man, as a decree from the On High which must be obeyed. This would make it obvious that work has a religious significance.

Luther's concept was developed in different ways by later Protestant thinkers (Weber 1930, 102-125). Calvin, for instance, argued for predestination, but as per his view, man can know whether he is destined

for Paradise or Hell. Proof of this can be success in work in which one engages, where prosperity indicates God's satisfaction with one's deeds. Work and prosperity will show a person whether he is one of the "elect" – whether he is desired. Hence Weber's conclusion that work and effort in America, and capitalism along with them, were born of the Protestant ethic.

We can surmise that Chaim Hirschensohn was exposed to work of the Protestant-American kind, and that it was this that stimulated him to address the issue, finally giving it a Jewish-Torah kind of response.

In sum, according to Chaim Hirschensohn, work is both a must for a livelihood and part of Jewish and national identity, to the point where Redemption itself depends upon it. Work is also part of religious Zionist theology one of whose proponents and founders Rabbi Chaim Hirschensohn was.

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