

Article

Ontological Theology in Religious Zionism—Rabbi Y.M. Harlap as a Case Study

Amir Mashiach 

Department of Israel Heritage and the School of Education, Ariel University, Ariel 4077625, Israel;
amirma@ariel.ac.il

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Abstract: The present study sets out to shed light on R. Yaakov Moshe Harlap (1882–1951), Kabbalist, head of the Merkaz Ha-Rav yeshivah, in his understanding of ontological theology—material labor, meaning the basic life pattern, in which one gets up daily in the morning and goes to “work.” Did R. Harlap see labor as no more than a need and an obligation incumbent upon man to provide for his family? Or did he, perhaps, see labor as a religious value, an outgrowth of the theology he upheld? The conclusion is that work in the teaching of R. Harlap is not only needed to earn a living, but part of the multidimensional theology of Torah, textual–spiritual study and practical work effort. All this is part of the perfecting of the Land of Israel, which became central in the messianic age. Labor is a precondition and an indication of redemption—national, human and Divine.

Keywords: Rabbi Harlap; religious Zionism; Rabbi Kook; messianic era; Mizrahi; labor; Torah; Land of Israel

1. Introduction

Jewish religious texts encompass a number of different approaches toward labor.¹ Some opinions confer upon it the status of a religious value, as in: “Great is skilled labor, for just as the Jewish People have been commanded about the Sabbath, so have they been commanded about labor, as it is said, ‘Six days shall you work and accomplish all your labor concerns’ (Exodus 20:8).”² It follows that just as there is a commandment to abstain from labor on the Sabbath, so is there a commandment to work during the week. There are some approaches that would claim that labor is an existential need and nothing but, so that no religious value can be associated with it. Such is the view voiced in the statement about a father’s obligation to teach his son a trade: “Anyone who does not teach his son a craft teaches him [thereby] to be a robber.” This is so insofar as “Having no craft and lacking [a means of earning his] bread, he will head for the crossroads, [whence] he will ambush and plunder simple folk.”³ In itself, labor is thus of no religious significance. It was evident to all sides that Torah study tops the hierarchy of Jewish values: “Torah study is of equal stature to them all.”⁴ That is, considered alone against all other Jewish values, the study of Torah carries the day.⁵ Hence the recommendation, “Limit your involvement in business and involve yourself in Torah,”⁶ insofar as Torah is the principal focus; all other concerns are subordinate to it. Accordingly, this was the approach most clearly discernible throughout Jewish history: the notion of labor as a prerequisite that must be satisfied in order for the

¹ For labor in Jewish religious texts, see (Noybert 2015).

² Avot de-Rabbi Nathan, version B, 21.

³ Kiddushin 29b and Rashi’s commentary ad loc.

⁴ Mishnah Peah 1:1.

⁵ The Mishnah enumerates a list of values, but labor is not included among the items listed.

⁶ Mishnah, *Pirke Avot [Ethics of the Fathers]*, 4:10.

real essentials of life to be addressed; this approach became dominant, almost to the exclusion of any other. Thus, R. Joseph Caro, a giant among Halakhic arbitrators, ruled that one must work, the reason being that poverty is capable of leading to apostasy.⁷ Nota bene: labor is a must, but not a religious value, per se.

The argument of whether labor holds religious significance also exists in Christianity. In brief: the Christian Middle Ages did not typically regard manual labor as having religious value. On the contrary, Catholicism saw work as part of involvement with the physical, part of the “flesh,” which stood in opposition to the “spirit.” Martin Luther—the founder of Protestantism—argued against this approach.⁸ 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 Heaven, 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.⁹ 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.

In 1902 the Mizrahi religious Zionist movement was founded by R. Yitzhak Yaakov Reines (1839–1915), one of the greatest Torah scholars of Lithuania.¹⁰ The movement upheld the notion of labor as a religious value, not only an existential need.¹¹ Yet the ideas propounded by R. Reines are rarely found among religious Zionists today. With time, the theological approach of R. Kook the Elder (ReAYah)¹² and of R. Kook the Younger (RTziYah)¹³ became dominant in religious Zionism. R. Kook the Elder founded the Merkaz Ha-Rav yeshiva in Jerusalem, which he headed; his son eventually succeeded him. The yeshiva commenced to produce a long list of students and rabbis who have made the teaching of the two Rabbis Kook the legacy of the religious Zionist community as a whole.

R. Yaakov Moshe Harlap (1882–1951),¹⁴ student-companion of R. Kook,¹⁵ Kabbalist, head of the Merkaz Ha-Rav yeshivah and Rabbi of the Sha’arei Hesed quarter in Jerusalem, authored a large number of works, including a sixteen-volume series on philosophical topics, titled *Waters from the Heavens [Mei Marom]* and six volumes on Halakhah and traditional learning published under the title *House of Dwelling [Beit Zevul]*.

The term ontological theology—in the context of the current study—is aimed at understanding the religious ideological thought of R. Harlap with regard to the material world, and explicitly the Land of Israel and physical labor within it, i.e., work in general and agricultural work in particular.

The present study sets out to shed light on R. Harlap’s understanding of material labor, meaning the basic life pattern whereby one gets up daily in the morning and goes to “work.” Did R. Harlap see labor as no more than a need and the obligation incumbent upon man to provide for his family; did he ascribe an ideological value to labor, as part of a worldview integrating religious values with

⁷ Shulchan ‘Arukh, Orach Chaim 156:1.

⁸ See (Weber 1930; Anthony 1977).

⁹ For work in Protestant sects, especially among the Calvinists, see Weber, pp. 102–25.

¹⁰ On R. Reines, see: Yosef Shapira, *Thought, Halakhah, and Zionism: On the Spiritual World of R. Yitzhak Yaakov Reines* (Tel Aviv, 2002) [Heb.].

¹¹ On Rabbi Reines’ approach toward work, see (Mashiach 2018a).

¹² R. Avraham Yitzhak ha-Kohen Kook (ReAYah, 1865–1935), a leading Jewish thinker of the modern period and author of numerous works on Torah subjects, founded the Chief Rabbinate in the Land of Israel, which he headed during 1921–1935. See (Mirsky 2014).

¹³ R. Tzvi Yehudah HaKohen Kook (RTziYah, 1891–1982), head of the yeshiva “Merkaz HaRav” in Jerusalem, was one of the most prominent religious Zionist leaders of the 20th century. See (Shtemler 2014).

¹⁴ On R. Harlap, see: Dov Schwartz, *Faith at a Crossroads* (Tel Aviv, 1996) [Heb.], using the index; idem, *Land of Reality and Imagination* (Tel Aviv, 1997) [Heb.], pp. 82–100; idem, *Challenge and Crisis in the Circle of R. Kook* (Tel Aviv, 2001) [Heb.], using the index.

¹⁵ On the relationship between R. Harlap and R. Kook, see (Barak 2009).

extrareligious ones? Or did he, perhaps, see labor as a religious value, an outgrowth of the theology he upheld?¹⁶

We turn to a number of junctures in R. Harlap's thought in order to appreciate his stance.

2. The Value of Labor

While on the "Settlements Journey", R. Harlap took part in together with a number of other leading rabbis of the Land of Israel in 1913. In a letter to one of his students R. Harlap wrote about the profound impression that workers and manual labor had made upon him: "My feelings of love for the sacred multiply with the sanctity of manual labor ... they arouse my feelings for Jerusalem, for the Holy Temple, the abode of our lives."¹⁷

The link between the Temple and the "sanctity of manual labor" is pursuant upon the labor being performed for the purpose of fulfilling the commandment of sustaining the universe. From his point of view, "simple labor in the service of God has greatness about it." Yet if "while performing the labor, one does not have the intention of sustaining the universe, there is no value in one's actions." But if the labor be done for the sake of Heaven, it rises "to the level of being a commandment."¹⁸

Concerning intentionality in connection with working, R. Harlap expatiates on the meaning of the dictum, "You should love labor."¹⁹ As per his view, "any skilled labor in essence comes ... to enable the human being to perfect the handiwork of the Holy One Blessed Is He." These words are a reference to the Midrash which presents God as creating the universe in a pristine and inchoate way, leaving it up to human beings to perfect divine creation through the power of their work in practice. "Everything created in the six days of creation is in need of being made."²⁰ Labor thus enables man to perfect what was brought into existence by God, thus becoming God's partner in creation. However, according to R. Harlap, as an outcome of the sin committed through the Tree of Knowledge, man became unable to sense the sanctity of labor and "love was taken away from skilled labor."²¹ Ever since, labor has been a means "so that we love the benefit deriving therefrom," such as livelihood earned, but not "the completing of His will, Blessed Is He."

R. Harlap called for a return to the original design: "'You should love labor,' strive to rise higher until you reach the highest level of loving labor—the perfection of the handiwork of the Holy One Blessed Is He, for what it is in itself." Moreover, then, "if he should benefit from the toil of his hands, he has the privilege of rising to the lofty height of what preceded the descent and the corruption ... in this manner do both worlds, the world to come and this world, become a single bloc."²² Thus, labor—when performed intentionally for the sake of Heaven—restores reality to what it was prior to the sin of Adam, making it again ideal, as well as connecting between this world, the world of matter and the next world, the world of the spirit. In a word: labor performed for the sake of Heaven, for a purely spiritual religious purpose, connects this world and the world to come, the afterlife, making humanity the agent that perfects and enhances divine creation.

¹⁶ R. Harlap did not mention other religious Zionists thinkers or any other. However, he was part of the religious Zionist theology. On the attitude of other religious Zionists thinkers toward labor, see (Mashiach 2017, 2018a, 2018b).

¹⁷ R. Harlap, *Mountains' Echo* (Elon Moreh, 1997) [Heb.], p. 105.

¹⁸ *Waters from the Heavens XI: Talks on the Book of Numbers* (Jerusalem, 1998) [Heb.], pp. 17–18.

¹⁹ Mishnah, *Ethics of the Fathers* 1:10.

²⁰ *Genesis Rabbah* 11:6.

²¹ The sin of the Tree of Knowledge is seen as a momentous breakage by the Kabbalah; see Gershom Scholem, *Chapters in Understanding the Kabbalah and Its Symbols* (Jerusalem, 1976) [Heb.], pp. 68–69.

²² *Waters from the Heavens II: Circling about Ethics of the Fathers* (Jerusalem, 5734) [Heb.], pp. 75–76. See also: R. Harlap, *Utterances of Purity* (Jerusalem, 5762) [Heb.], pp. 127–28.

3. Labor, the People of Israel and the Land of Israel

A sound grasp of his way of conceptualizing the Land of Israel is in order if we are to appreciate R. Harlap's understanding of labor.²³ Schwartz has shown that R. Harlap had a panentheistic view of the real world as a manifestation—a visible tip—of the ideal universe.²⁴ “Everything visible to the eye is not, but the last tip of what is above.”²⁵ This double status of the Land, connecting between the supernal and the lower worlds, led R. Harlap to be highly critical of secular Zionism and its disregard of the higher spiritual stratum,²⁶ as well as of the ultra-Orthodox and their disdain for the earthly physical dimension of the Land. Both these deflated ways of understanding the Land, while coming from opposite points of origin, brought about, in his view, “all the spiritual disasters unfolding in the time of the approach of the Messiah.”²⁷

R. Harlap argued that the Land of Israel is the only place which did not lose its elevated spiritual condition as a result of the sinful downfall of Adam—even though “the transgression caused this perspective to become concealed and unavailable.” Even though “it would appear to the eye that the Land of Israel is a land like all other lands, this is not in actuality so, for even now it retains its wondrous value just as it did before the Fall.”²⁸ Part of what this means is that the malediction of labor, “Accursed is the soil on your account,”²⁹ does not pertain to the Land of Israel. If so, then “the wondrous ability that the Land has manifests itself precisely in that it is completed in all its completeness physical and material.”³⁰

The party responsible—in his view—for perfecting the Land in material terms is the People of Israel, insofar as “the reality of the Land and the reality of the People of Israel are one reality,”³¹ i.e., each one of the two can achieve completeness only through the completeness of the other. “The Land of Israel is the body of the People of Israel, and without a body, there is no soul.”³² He also connects the recognition of this mutuality to Redemption itself: “and this is of the element of Redemption, to reveal the sanctity of Israel and the sanctity of the Land of Israel . . . and when all Israel dwell upon their soil in the Land of Israel, these two sanctities unite in an utter unity.”³³ Labor, then, is an essential precondition for the completeness of the people and the land, the “body” and the “soul.”

R. Harlap was of the opinion that the return of the Jewish People to its Land is part of the process of Redemption.³⁴ He therefore called for a return to a complete Judaism, one that does not neglect the body, earthliness or labor, as was the case in exile:

With Israel exiled from their soil . . . they were not that much in need of the body . . . and accordingly the righteous would distance themselves greatly from any bodily concerns . . . ,

²³ See Schwartz, *Land of Reality and Imagination*, pp. 82–100.

²⁴ According to the panentheistic conception the world is part of God, but God is not only the world rather also beyond it. It is a similar conception to that of Pantheism, but not identical. Both approaches advocate immanent divinity, i.e., the world is not separate from God, but rather identified with Him. Unlike pantheism, however, which does not recognize anything beyond human consciousness and hence identifies God only with nature (Deus Sive Natura), panentheism believes in the existence of things beyond human consciousness and therefore according to panentheism God is not reduced to nature and the world rather includes that which is beyond. Hence, nature and materialism are part of Divinity and this enables man to engage in materialism, which is in fact Divinity, no less than engaging in spirituality. For an explanation of these concepts see Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pantheism/>; <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/panentheism/>.

²⁵ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VI: From the Springs of Salvation*, (Jerusalem, 1977) [Heb.], p. 255.

²⁶ For his attitude to Zionism, see Yaakov Hadani, “Zionism in the Teaching of R. Harlap,” in Tziyon Okashi et al. eds., *In the Pathways of the Jewish Past* (Jerusalem, 2006) [Heb.], pp. 321–34.

²⁷ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VI: From the Springs of Salvation*, pp. 235–36; for further criticism, see idem, *Waters from the Heavens XIII: On the Order of Prayer* (Jerusalem, 1979) [Heb.], pp. 239–41.

²⁸ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VI: From the Springs of Salvation*, p. 234.

²⁹ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VIII: Talks on the Weekly Portions—The Book of Genesis*, (Jerusalem, 1945) [Heb.], p. 23.

³⁰ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VI: From the Springs of Salvation*, p. 259.

³¹ Ibid., p. 278. For the People of Israel in his thought, see Hadani, “The People of Israel and Its Special Power in the Thought of R. Kook and R. Harlap,” *Shema’atin* 88–89 (1987) [Heb.], pp. 95–103.

³² R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VI: From the Springs of Salvation*, p. 265.

³³ Ibid., p. 314.

³⁴ See (Cherlow 2007).

but in a time which is “the instance to pardon her graciously, for the appointed time has come” and the People of Israel are returning to their sacred soil . . . the demand for a healthy and complete body is restored, as well . . . to rejoice in every bodily and earthly improvement.³⁵

Given that material labor is the procedural requirement for completeness, R. Harlap accordingly saw settlement by the nonobservant, involved as they were in manual labor, in an essentially positive light. “The Land of Israel, Land of the sacred, is such that nonobservant settlement in it is also a contribution to the Commandment, and so are even plowing and sowing, and many Commandments are involved in it.”³⁶ The worker settlers may not be “religious,” but they are certainly fulfilling many Commandments, if none other than by means of their material labor in the Land of Israel.

As noted, the Commandment of settling the Land is fulfilled by means of material labor; this must be experienced in feeling, without which the Commandment is lacking.

The Commandment of settling the Land is different from all Commandments, for in this Commandment one must feel the goodness and the physical benefit deriving from it . . . should the feeling of the advantage—even in matters physical—of the land be lacking, the completeness of this Commandment will be lacking, as well.³⁷

In his view, even if the People of Israel should have no merit in order to attain Redemption, the very fact of their working in the Land of Israel and settlement in it will make them worthy.

And even . . . if this merit only should obtain for them [the People of Israel], that they are returning to the Land to revive its desolate areas and to build up its ruins . . . for this alone will the Holy One Blessed Is He spare and be gracious onto them, to redeem them.³⁸

R. Harlap held the precept of settling the Land in great esteem, since “in every time period there is a unique point through which all the goodness shines forth . . . and in the time leading to the arrival of the Messiah, the main point is the Land of Israel . . . and without maintaining holdings in it, there is no impact of holiness in the universe.” It was clear to him that it follows that “no wonder if all the nations want to prevent the arrival of the People of Israel in the Holy Land and their bonding with it.”³⁹ Labor in the Land and making the desolate stretches in it bloom are an essential precondition of Redemption; this is why the nations of the world attack the idea of Jewish settlement and labor in the Land of Israel:

This is the secret, that whenever the People of Israel revives, and especially when it returns to its soil, to plant vineyards and to build up the land, the Refaim⁴⁰ erupt and extol themselves, taking pride in preventing the revival of Israel . . . and primarily will this be the claim put forth by the sons of Ishmael at the end of days.⁴¹

The words are a reference to the agricultural labor taken up with the renewal of Jewish settlement and the claims put forth by the “sons of Ishmael,” the Arabs, as was the case in the riots of 1920, 1921, 1936–1939 and during Israel’s War of Independence in 1948–1949.

This Jewish completeness, of which labor is an indelible part, as per R. Harlap’s approach, will impact both the supernal and the lower worlds.⁴² “When Israel take possession of the Holy Land, through working the soil, plowing, sowing, and planting trees, they thus elevate the entire universe

³⁵ Ibid., p. 265.

³⁶ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens XI: Talks on the Book of Numbers*, p. 83.

³⁷ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens XIII: On the Order of Prayer*, p. 168.

³⁸ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VI: From the Springs of Salvation*, p. 71; Ibid. V: *The Grounding of Biblical Verses* (Jerusalem, 1945) [Heb.], p. 269.

³⁹ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VI: From the Springs of Salvation*, p. 196.

⁴⁰ Refaim are giants; see Deuteronomy 2:11.

⁴¹ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VI: From the Springs of Salvation*, p. 201.

⁴² For theurgy in his teaching, see: Schwartz, *Challenge and Crisis in the Circle of R. Kook*, pp. 152–54.

and all the nations of the world to a more cultured status”; overall, “the Land of Israel, the Land of prophecy and holiness of the land, manifests itself specifically by means of expanding it, redeeming it, and building it up.”⁴³ Material labor is endowed with a particular, universal and theurgical significance all at once.

The view being voiced here by R. Harlap is a gesture toward the Kabbalistic notion of “*it’aruta de-le-tata*,” awakening from below.⁴⁴ That is, a human being needs to elevate himself in both spirit and matter, through Torah and labor. The objective is to influence higher worlds to join forces with the lower so as to cause an “awakening from above.” Together, the lower and the higher elements will achieve Redemption.

Such an activist approach can be traced among those students of the Gaon of Vilna who transferred to the Land of Israel.⁴⁵ The approach is based on the understanding that the “awakening from below” is not only a spiritual element of Redemption, but also involves practical activeness which requires going up to the Land of Israel despite the apparent prohibition against “scaling the [fortified] wall.”⁴⁶ True enough, the Gaon’s students only went so far as to make the transition to the Land of Israel; they had no practical plans for increasing productivity or economic development. The move to the Land of Israel would in itself constitute the factor speeding up the coming of Redemption. In the RaAYaH’s circle, to which R. Harlap belonged, the notion was expanded to include earthly material activism, that is, building up the land through labor. This meant activeness both spiritual⁴⁷ and material.⁴⁸

We can now better understand the positive stance R. Harlap assumed vis-à-vis the workers and the working settlers in the Land of Israel, even when they were not Torah-observant Jews; this joined R. Harlap’s criticism and expressions of disappointment towards the ultra-Orthodox, who would not join in the efforts when it came to labor:

I am ashamed to see self-sacrifice and commitment to the ideal of the Land among the pioneers, but not among our Torah-steeped youth . . . There is no way to achieve true cleaving [to the Divine] other than through love of Israel and the Land of Israel in the full sense of the word.⁴⁹

Material labor is in his view a pre-condition for the realization of spiritual cleaving. There were those of the opinion that pointedly restricting contact with the world of matter and with society would bring about the yearned-for cleaving,⁵⁰ whereas here R. Harlap makes cleaving dependent on labor as well. Elsewhere he writes of workers:

What shall I tell you, faithful friends! I will not speak untruths before you: I find no defect in our brothers of the newly established Jewish villages (settlements). In every action undertaken by them I feel only the hand of the sacred doing its work . . . I only sense the scent of the field of sacred apples.⁵¹

⁴³ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VI: From the Springs of Salvation*, pp. 307–8.

⁴⁴ *Sefer ha-zohar [The Book of Splendor]* II, 47b. The difference may be expressed in two Kabbalistic terms: *it’aruta di-le-tata* (impulse or initiative from below) and *it’aruta di-le-eila* (initiative from above). Both these terms refer to the dialog or relationship between God and man. The first term, the impulse from below, implies the relationship that is initiated by man, when man first calls upon God and then God answers him. The second term refers to the initiation of the relationship by God.

⁴⁵ See; R. Hillel of Kovno, *Helal Son of Dawn* (Warsaw, 2004) [Heb.], 17b; (Morgenstern 1982); for the doctrine of Redemption in the teaching of the Gaon of Vilna, see: Refael Shochat, *A World Concealed in the Dimensions of Time* (Ramat Gan, 2008) [Heb.].

⁴⁶ Talmud Bavli, tr. Ketubbot 110b.

⁴⁷ For the influence of the Vilna Gaon’s teaching on R. Kook, see Shochat, pp. 295–315.

⁴⁸ Building up the land as a means of bringing Divine plenty down upon the earth, as a part of the process of Redemption, appears in Kabbalists’ writings, such as: R. Natan Shapira (the Jerusalemite), *Best Produce of the Land* (Jerusalem, 1891) [Heb.].

⁴⁹ From a 1925 letter to his son, *Blessing from the Heavens* (Jerusalem, 1995) [Heb.], pp. 155–56.

⁵⁰ E.g., Maimonides, *Laws of the Fundamentals of the Torah* 7:1; *Guide of the Perplexed* I, Chapter 89.

⁵¹ R. Harlap, *May He Send from the Heavens* (Jerusalem, 2003), p. 43.

The labor performed by the people living in the newly established Jewish villages (settlements), according to R. Harlap, is tantamount to the sacred, to the point where he sees no defect in them, even though they were nonobservant and some of them even antireligious. Moreover, in the concluding words of the passage he offers a daring proposition, considering that the “field of sacred apples” is a Kabbalistic metaphor referring to the *Shekhinah* [the Presence of God].⁵² R. Harlap saw in labor and those performing labor a genuine manifestation of the Divine.

4. Body and Soul

As a panentheistic thinker, R. Harlap understood material nature as a manifestation of the Godhead. Hence, involvement in it, that is, labor, is a religious type of activity. “Returning to nature is returning to God.”⁵³ Therefore, “we already know that this practical world, too, in its physical and bordered form, is a goal in itself.”⁵⁴

The human being, as per his approach, is a dual creature composed of body and soul, “the wondrous joining together of the luminosity of the soul with the impenetrability of the body, fashioned from Him, Blessed Be He.” It is therefore a must to elevate to “the complete reality” even the “physical itself.” Following from this, he argued, “We will never cease to improve the physical, as well, and to enhance it” through labor. Albeit a hierarchical relationship obtains between them, “that the spiritual is always on a level incomparably superior to the physical,”⁵⁵ a single entity is at stake, nevertheless. “To the question of which of the two is more requisite, there is nothing whatsoever to answer to this, for both are requisite, as the candle is to the wick.”⁵⁶ That is, a conjoining not to be sundered, with either one unable to perform its function without the other.

From R. Harlap’s point of view as a panentheist, the hierarchical relationship appears only from our perspective:

Behold, there is an appendage and there is a principal element, but this is only from our angle, whereas from His side, May His Name Be Blessed, all is principal. For just as His power is revealed in the being of the principal element, so does His power reveal itself in the being of the appendage.

He goes so far as to say that it is commonplace to think that “the soul is apparently the principal element and the body an appendage,” yet his own conclusion is that “the body turns out to be the principal element like the soul.”⁵⁷ It is then clear that labor and involvement in materiality are a religious type of activity in all respects.

As per his approach, God created the universe with the intention that the human being work in it. “After genesis [creation], its persistence and continuation, labor done by human beings is specifically called for.” Accordingly, “even before his sinful downfall, Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden ‘to work it and to guard it.’”⁵⁸ At the same time, R. Harlap also calls for not resting content with being “a worker of the soil” like Cain, who turned away from the spiritual, but also to seek the spiritual, as did Abel.⁵⁹ Human beings should not, in his view, grasp one of the polar ends, either spirit or matter. The integration of the sacred with the mundane and of Torah with labor is the ideal, certainly in the days of Redemption, which, as he would have it, are his days. “Those who are in the condition of the body of Israel will rise and revive the Land in all its material possessions, and those who are in the

⁵² See: *Zohar* I, 151b; R. Isaac Luria [as transcribed by R. Chaim Vital], *Fruit of the Tree of Life*, Section of the Sabbath, Chapter 11.

⁵³ R. Harlap, *Mountains’ Echo*, p. 49.

⁵⁴ R. Harlap, *Utterances of Purity*, p. 116.

⁵⁵ R. Harlap, *May He Send from the Heavens*, p. 20.

⁵⁶ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VII: My Light and My Salvation* (Jerusalem, 1969) [Heb.], pp. 50–51.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

⁵⁸ Genesis 2:15; R. Harlap, *Ibid.*, p. 250.

⁵⁹ *Waters from the Heavens V: The Grounding of Biblical Verses*, p. 22. Abel was a shepherd, with the Talmudic Sages drawing a connection between shepherding and involvement in spirituality.

condition of the spirit of Israel will rise and breathe the spirit of sanctity and purity.” Thus, “all will come to its rightful place.”⁶⁰

With this statement, R. Harlap is referencing the Chassidic idea of “work in the physical” [*avodah be-gashmiyut*],⁶¹ which was also powerfully present in the teaching of R. Kook and his circle.⁶² That is, involvement in the world of matter is worshipping God, just like involvement in the world of spirit. However, in Chassidic thought serving God through the physical or the spiritual pertains to the individual alone, while in the thought of R. Kook and R. Harlap it refers to the social whole, as well, with the addition of the idea of general Redemption.⁶³ The people as a whole can and must serve God in the physical, too, through material labor, in order to hasten the arrival of Redemption overall. Here “work” means the service of God, but this can and needs to become actualized through involvement in the physical, as well: through labor.⁶⁴

5. Labor as a Mending of the World and Partnership with God in Creation

We have mentioned the idea of the human being’s partnership with God in creation. Let us examine this further. According to R. Harlap,

Skilled labor centers upon involvement in making the world a habitable place, in accordance with the will of the Holy One Blessed Is He at the time of fashioning the universe, “not chaotic did He create it, for dwelling upon did He fashion it” (Isaiah 45:18) ... for skilled labor which sustains creation is itself also an awe-inspiring matter.⁶⁵

God wanted the world to be amended and made habitable, and labor is the way to do this. Moreover, God made the “completeness of creation” contingent upon “human labor.”⁶⁶ The intended meaning is labor performed by the People of Israel in particular:

The ultimate purpose of His aim, May His Name Be Blessed, in creating the universe which is for the sake of Israel, was so that Israel would themselves be partners in the order of creation ... all of creation continues in existence in accord with what Israel make it be, and from their lips will the being of all be blessed.⁶⁷

No less.

This is surprising, considering that normally rabbis would make the existence of the universe dependent on the study of Torah and observance of the Commandments,⁶⁸ whereas R. Harlap makes the existence of the universe contingent upon labor as such, as well, lining labor up alongside Torah and prayer: “Behold, three things are required for the mending of the universe: revelations of the Torah, elevation of the values of prayer, and values of skilled labor, as well.”⁶⁹

Elsewhere he argues that labor is an outgrowth of the obligation to build up the world, and anyone not working or enhancing Divine creation is thereby destroying it:

The human being has been endowed with the power to introduce innovation in what is, and is also required to exercise this potential so as to actualize it, and conclude what God, May He

⁶⁰ *Waters from the Heavens III: Bread of Nobles*, pp. 84–86.

⁶¹ For “work in the physical,” see Tzippi Koyfman, *In All Your Ways Should You Know Him: The Concept of the Divine and Work in the Physical in Early Hasidism* (Ramat Gan, 2009) [Heb.].

⁶² See R. Kook, *Epistles of the RaAYaH* (Jerusalem, 1961) [Heb.] I, pp. 141–43.

⁶³ See Hillel Tzeitlin, *Book of the Few* (Jerusalem, 1979) [Heb.], pp. 235–36.

⁶⁴ R. Harlap was exposed to Chassidic notions, along with the precepts of the Gaon from Vilna, as to foundational ideas, at the very least, at the Old Yishuv in Jerusalem, where he grew up, lived and worked. He was receptive to the development of these ideas from R. Kook or else developed them on his own. Also see (Nevo 2018).

⁶⁵ *Waters from the Heavens XI: Talks on the Book of Numbers*, p. 19.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁶⁷ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VIII: Talks on the Weekly Portions—The Book of Genesis*, pp. 58–59.

⁶⁸ Talmud Bavli, tr. Nedarim 32a.

⁶⁹ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens XI*, p. 36.

Be Blessed, has initiated. For such is His will, that creation in its entirety be associated with the one completing it—and that is Israel, His sacred people . . . for after God had finished creating, it became incumbent upon Israel to act and to complete creation . . . if the human being does not make use of his powers in order to fortify nature . . . he does not fulfill his task in a worthy manner; through this, he comes to destruction and ruin. For if he builds not, he thereby destroys! ⁷⁰

So outstandingly significant is labor, as per his approach.

In sum: labor is essential for the perfection of the universe; it is part of Divine will. The duty is incumbent primarily upon the People of Israel. There is no remaining neutral vis-à-vis the issue of labor, for those who work are builders, and those who do not are wreckers. Labor, according to R. Harlap, is a religious obligation, alongside Torah and prayer.

6. Labor as a Precondition and Sign of Redemption

Labor—and specifically labor in the Land of Israel—according to R. Harlap, is essential for the redemption of Israel. R. Harlap relies on the Talmudic passage describing the “revealed end,” the most express indication of the imminence of Redemption: “There is no end more clearly revealed than this, as it is said, ‘And you, o mountains of Israel, will give your branches and bear your fruit for my people Israel [for they are near to come]’” (Ezekiel 30:8; Talmud Bavli, tr. Sanhedrin 98a). R. Harlap adds that “this is the order of the end which will come about by way of nature: that the People of Israel will come to the Land of Israel and settle in it and plant vineyards.”⁷¹ Labor—agricultural labor in this context—in the Land of Israel, is a stage in the process of Redemption.

This is a remarkable position to assume, considering that the passage cited here from the Talmud is normally explained as meaning that when the land yields its fruit, this will constitute the most outstanding sign of the approach of Redemption. Yet R. Harlap explains this not as a sign, but rather as a stage and precondition of Redemption. Without labor there will be no Redemption. “We must therefore be confident of the remainder of the People of Israel, that as soon as the Holy Land develops and advances . . . immediately will the inspiration with holiness occur.”⁷²

Even so, according to R. Harlap not only agricultural labor is meant, but labor of any kind. “The higher will is such that the Children of Israel . . . may be laboring to perfect the thresholds of Redemption, to return to the Land and to build it up . . . with the talents, the various types of wisdom and species of labor in all their gamut and extent.”⁷³ It was evident to him that his days were the “beginning of Redemption.” God reveals Himself through time, and a difficult period is “harsh pangs of birthing labor”; even so, “the tread of His anointed and his steps do we already hear.”⁷⁴ This is because when the Land of Israel gives its fruit, this is not only a sign of Redemption, but also a precondition of its arrival.⁷⁵ The People of Israel which has moved to its Land and worked its soil has fulfilled the requirement and been given the sign of “the revealed end”: the land bearing its fruit.

Based on this viewpoint, R. Harlap levels renewed criticism—both at the nonobservant settlers, who abandoned the striving for sanctity, while “the Land of Israel without sanctity . . . is nothing,” and at the ultra-Orthodox, who abandoned skilled labor, “and given up on the body, which is the building up of the Land of Israel.” In his view, “Both of them are equally wrong,”⁷⁶ for only integrating Torah with labor is the way of Torah.

⁷⁰ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VIII*, pp. 43–44.

⁷¹ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens XVI: Talks for Chanukah and Purim* (Jerusalem, 2004) [Heb.], p. 17.

⁷² Ibid., p. 23.

⁷³ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VI: From the Springs of Salvation*, p. 58.

⁷⁴ R. Harlap, *Letters from the Heavens* (Jerusalem, 1988) [Heb.], pp. 100–1.

⁷⁵ See: R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VI: From the Springs of Salvation*, p. 246.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 42–43.

7. Summary and Discussion

R. Harlap, a panentheist,⁷⁷ saw labor as involvement in Divine material revelation, just as he saw the study of Torah as involvement in spiritual Divine revelation.⁷⁸ However, many would hold that Divine revelation contains “a principal element and a secondary one,” that is, Torah-spiritual revelation as opposed to the material, in his view, “this is only from our angle, while from His side, may His Name be Blessed, everything is principal.”⁷⁹ Labor, therefore, has religious significance in all respects.

In R. Harlap’s mind, labor perfects creation, which was from the outset made lacking. The People of Israel thus becomes a partner with God in creation. Moreover, since labor and perfecting the universe are a religious obligation, anyone shirking them is not only “not fulfilling his task,” but actually destroying the world. “For if he does not build, he is destroying!”⁸⁰ R. Harlap even argues that “all of creation continues in existence in accord with what the People of Israel makes it be, and from their lips will the being of all be blessed.”⁸¹ Labor of every particularized kind is to impact the universality of being.

In terms of his approach, labor has Halakhic significance as well. A person working in the Land of Israel fulfills the Commandment of settling and inhabiting the Land of Israel and the world, as per the words of the ChaTaM Sofer.⁸² In addition, by working, one obeys the principle of “Walking in His ways”: “Just as He fashions existents *ex nihilo*, so too the People of Israel . . . fashioning existents *ex nihilo*. Moreover, just as He during six days of occasioning action, so, too, the People of Israel.”⁸³

The notion of labor in R. Harlap’s perception is ab origine connected to the Land of Israel. R. Harlap held the precept of inhabiting the Land of Israel in great esteem, for “in every time period there is a unique point through which all the goodness shines forth . . . and in the time leading to the arrival of the Messiah, this main point is the Land of Israel.”⁸⁴ Working in the Land and making it bloom are an essential precondition of Redemption, which carries universal meaning, as noted earlier. “When the People of Israel take possession of the Holy Land through working the soil, plowing, sowing, and planting trees, they thus elevate the entire universe and all the nations of the world to a more cultured status.”⁸⁵

Let us detail further the connection between working the soil of the Land of Israel and Redemption, where each of these two is intertwined with the other, as we have already observed. R. Harlap quotes the Talmudic passage describing the “revealed end,” which consists of the Land giving its fruit.⁸⁶ Yet, as per his approach, more than a sign of the imminent arrival of the Messiah is meant: what is at stake is a precondition for the Redeemer’s arrival. “And this is the order of the end which will come about by way of nature: that the People of Israel will come to the Land of Israel and settle in it and plant vineyards.”⁸⁷ When the People of Israel work in the Land of Israel and till its soil, with the fulfillment of the precondition, Redemption will come.

⁷⁷ See, for instance, R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VII: My Light and My Salvation*, pp. 115, 270; *Ibid.* III: *Bread of Nobles II*, p. 55.

⁷⁸ Even though he warned against blurring the line between the sacred and the profane, see his *Waters from the Heavens IV: The Passover Haggadah* (Jerusalem, 1989) [Heb.], p. 23.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* VII: *My Light and My Salvation*, p. 252.

⁸⁰ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VIII: Talks on the Weekly Portions—The Book of Genesis*, pp. 43–44.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 58–59.

⁸² ChaTaM Sofer (1762–1839, Hungary, a leading rabbinic authority) on Talmud Bavli, tr. Sukkah 36a; The impact of the ChaTaM Sofer’s stance is clearly evident in the writings of the Rabbis Kook, both father and son. See, for instance: RaAYaH Kook, *Lights* (Jerusalem, 1990) [Heb.], p. 77 and the comment made by his son, RTziYaH, on p. 178; R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VI: From the Springs of Salvation*, p. 314.

⁸³ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens XII: Talks on the Book of Exodus*, p. 339.

⁸⁴ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VI: From the Springs of Salvation*, p. 196.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 307–8.

⁸⁶ Talmud Bavli, tr. Sanhedrin 98b.

⁸⁷ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens XVI: Talks on Chanukah and Purim*, p. 17.

The Land of Israel must achieve “physical and material. completeness”⁸⁸ This completeness is also a precondition for the completeness of the People of Israel, for “the reality of the Land and the reality of the People of Israel are one reality.”⁸⁹ The People and the land, essentially connected to each other, will each achieve completeness only through the completeness of the other. “The Land of Israel is the body of the People of Israel, and without a body, there is no soul.”⁹⁰ “And this too is of the basic element of Redemption, to reveal the sanctity of the People of Israel and the sanctity of the Land of Israel.”⁹¹ Labor is an essential part of the achievement of completeness of the people and the land, and Redemption depends upon it.

R. Harlap lived in a time when the people of the Second and Third Aliya were in the country. They regarded work religiously and were therefore called the people of the “religion of labor”. R. Harlap contended with their socialist ideology, although he does not explicitly mention them. The main significant ideologue of the “religion of labor” group was Aaron David (A.D.) Gordon. Gordon saw himself as an Orthodox Jew upon his immigration, but over the years he replaced the life of religious observance with that of physical labor, particularly agricultural, which he saw as his way of worshipping God and the main route to the redemption of the individual, the people, and the land.⁹² Labor was the main axis of Gordon’s thought and it can be summarized in three foundations:⁹³ First, work is a purpose in itself and not only a means of subsistence.⁹⁴ By working the land, man renews his affiliation with existence and with a life of broadness,⁹⁵ and this is true both of the Jewish people in general and of the individuals within it. “We will be able to create the people only when each one of us will recreate himself through work and through natural life”.⁹⁶ The second relates to the relationship between labor and religion, but not in the traditional respect. As Gordon see it, the religious value of labor is that it may enable man to reunite with nature. Gordon criticized the historical faiths, including Judaism. He contended that when man does actual work he is participating in the creation of life itself and “he is engaged in more religious labor than one who observes all the precepts of the given and customary faith with awe and reverence”.⁹⁷ Hence, it is no surprise that his doctrine is called the “religion of labor”. The third is the relationship between labor and the nation. As he sees it, labor has first-rate universal collective, national and human value, as it facilitates realization of the organic relationship that connects the various individuals as cells in one body.⁹⁸

Gordon often used phrases from Jewish sources and particularly from Kabbalah and Hassidism. His writings often voice the ideas of “In all your ways know God”, “The whole earth is full of His glory”, “No place is bereft of him”, and also the idea of “materialistic work”. Gordon even speaks of *dveikut* (devotion). Indeed, not in the chassidic meaning of man’s devotion to the Creator of the Universe, rather devotion to nature and to worldly life that will be achieved by realistic work, first and foremost work of the land. Furthermore, this does not refer to devotion as a mystical experience, cancellation of the self or theurgy, on the contrary, according to Gordon the self realizes itself here fully and at the same time by completing and upgrading nature, by its creative and practical participation.⁹⁹

According to Gordon, when the people of Israel are in exile they are in an abnormal situation. The people will find respite when they leave the ghettos in the Diaspora and return to nature, by working

⁸⁸ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VI: From the Springs of Salvation*, p. 259.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Strassberg-Cohen, Sarah, *Individual, Nation, Humanity* (Tel Aviv, Hakibutz Hameukhad, 1995) [Heb.], p. 8; Schweid, Eliezer, *The Individual: The World of A.D. Gordon* (Tel Aviv, Am Oved, 1970) [Heb.], pp. 172–85.

⁹³ See: Strassberg-Cohen, *Individual, Nation, Humanity*, pp. 148–53.

⁹⁴ (Bergman and Shohat 1952).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁹⁷ *The Works of A.D. Gordon*, vol. II, p. 123.

⁹⁸ See (Ratzabi 2008).

⁹⁹ See: Schweid, *The Individual*, p. 137, 181.

the land in the Land of Israel. Only labor, he believed, will recreate the Jewish people, who were separated from a life of nature, lived in exile, and were learned in idleness.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, from that physical labor, Gordon contended, will come the revival and the redemption: “The revival of the people, its renewal as a working and creative people, can only come through labor, labor in all its forms, but mainly physical labor . . . Also the redemption of the land can only come through labor”.¹⁰¹

Although Gordon’s concept of redemption is naturally different than that of R. Harlap, it is easy to see the many similarities between them, where both Gordon and R. Harlap see, in the context of this study, physical work and production, labor in general and working the land in particular, as the key to improvement of man, the people and the world. However, they are also very different. With regard to the point of origin, Gordon’s was the secular socialist ideology, although he derived phrases from Jewish tradition, and R. Harlap’s sources were the Jewish Torah and Kabbalah. The targets too are different. Gordon speaks of redemption of the land, of man and of the people, and although the phrases are similar they differ, as R. Harlap aims for the coming of the Messiah and the universal improvement of the world, as God’s kingdom.

R. Harlap was a student of R. Kook, a factor which had a tremendous impact on his own thought.¹⁰² He joined R. Kook on the “Journey of the Settlements,” both in 1913 and in 1923. He defended R. Kook against the satirical *Sound of the Ram’s Horn*, which had lampooned RaAYaH, primarily due to his writing in *The Lights of Revival*¹⁰³ about the laudable impact of bodily exercise taken up by the young people of Israel. R. Harlap responded with the publication of his own book, *Goodly are the Luminaries*.¹⁰⁴ He was also the object of harsh criticism by members of the Old Yishuv as a result of his ties to R. Kook.¹⁰⁵

His closeness with R. Kook included him in the latter’s ideational circle.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, taking a close look at the stance espoused by R. Kook toward labor shows many a parallel between the two thinkers. R. Kook, too, maintained some panentheistic views,¹⁰⁷ holding everything to be sacred, “the physical and the spiritual.”¹⁰⁸ Accordingly, the human being active in spirit or in matter, in the study of Torah or in material labor, is endowed with religious significance.

R. Kook also argued that labor is a required part of the process of Redemption. However, the gist of his teachings on this issue derived from the Hegelian dialectic: thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. As he saw it, the thesis is “the sacred within the sacred”, i.e., the classical religious world; the anti-thesis is “the sacred within the secular”, i.e., nature and the secular, and the synthesis is “the supreme sacred”, which includes both the secular and the sacred, as the realization of the complete Divine ideal.¹⁰⁹

Therefore, a human being must not deal with either spirit *or* matter, either Torah *or* labor, but rather with Torah *and* labor. This, according to R. Kook, is “the complete awareness,”¹¹⁰ lacking which multidimensional thinking, Redemption will not be. “Our people cannot arrive at its lofty destiny . . . except by perfecting itself at the extreme limit of ability in both its parts.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 194.

¹⁰¹ (Schweid 1983).

¹⁰² For the relationship between the two, see: R. Harlap, *Mountains’ Echo*, p. 17; *Letters from the Heavens*, pp. 83–84; Schwartz, *Faith at a Crossroads*, pp. 88–93; Barak, note 2 above.

¹⁰³ R. Kook, *Lights* (Jerusalem, 1920) [Heb.], Section 34.

¹⁰⁴ Jerusalem, 1920.

¹⁰⁵ See (Barak 2015).

¹⁰⁶ For RaAYaH’s circle, see Schwartz, note 1 above; Barak, note 2 above.

¹⁰⁷ See: Schwartz, *Faith at a Crossroads*, pp. 83–87. For clarification, see Koyfman, pp. 27–43.

¹⁰⁸ R. Kook, *Eight Collections II* [Heb.], Section 187.

¹⁰⁹ R. Kook, *Lights* (Jerusalem, 1993) [Heb.], p. 78. On the Hegelian dialectic in the works of R. Kook see: Benjamin Ish-Shalom, *Rav Kook: Between Rationalism and Mysticism* (Tel Aviv, 1990) [Heb.], pp. 280–81; Rosenak, Avinoam, “Halakha, Aggadah and Prophecy in the Doctrine of Eretz Israel in Light of ‘the Unity of the Opposites’ in the Teachings of the ReAYaH Kook”, in Avi Sagi and Dov Schwarz (eds.), *A Hundred Years of Religious Zionism* (Ramat Gan, 2003) [Heb.], pp. 261–85.

¹¹⁰ R. Kook, *Essays by RAaYaH* (Jerusalem, 1984) [Heb.], p. 43.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 96. On R. Kook’s attitude toward labor, see (Mashiach 2020).

R. Harlap's multidimensional approach led him to level harsh criticism at the nonobservant world, which had abandoned the way of the spirit and of Torah, and at the ultra-Orthodox, who had abandoned the way of matter and of labor. "Both of them were equally wrong."¹¹² As per his claim, the error of unidimensionality is what brought about "all the spiritual disasters unfolding in the days preceding the arrival of the Messiah."¹¹³ It will be Elijah the Prophet, the one who "will return the heart of fathers upon sons and the heart of sons upon their fathers,"¹¹⁴ who will bring about unity among the errant unidimensional streams, between the ultra-Orthodox "fathers" and the nonobservant "sons," and show the way to integrate Torah with labor, which is the way of complete Torah, certainly in the age of Redemption.¹¹⁵

Elijah will come, whose purpose it is to unite hearts and to bring them to the awareness that all the opposition of the fathers [the ultra-Orthodox] to the construction of a home for the sake of Redemption in the Land of Israel is because they felt that the sons [the nonobservant pioneers] ... are giving up "Your sacred mountain," and the Land of Israel without sanctity and without the Temple is nothing. Yet the demand of the fathers for construction of the soul without body—that is, that they give up on building up the Land of Israel—is also an error ...¹¹⁶

As already noted, his thought centers on the Land of Israel;¹¹⁷ hence, his response to the partition plans proposed to the Jewish population, such as the one based on the work of the Peel Commission of 1937 or that of the Woodhead Commission [officially referred to as the Palestine Partition Commission] of 1938. The plans proposed small pieces of territory in the Land of Israel for the purpose of establishing a Jewish state. Opinion about the proposals among the Jewish population was divided.¹¹⁸ R. Harlap spoke out harshly against the proposals, especially against the Peel Commission, insofar as in his view the Land of Israel and its improvement through labor is a substantial issue bound up with both particular and universal Redemption.

Just as saying that the Torah in its entirety is from Heaven all except for a single letter, reneges on the essentials of Jewish faith, so saying that all of the Land of Israel is for Israel all except for a single alleyway, takes away from the sanctity of Israel; it is the soul of Israel that a person saying such a thing is denying. Therefore, "If things should come to the point of needing to sign an international agreement, the purport of which will be any giving up of any kind of our right to the Land of Israel, then it will be more appropriate for the signers to amputate the thumbs of their own hands."¹¹⁹

To appreciate the fervor provoked by the question of the Land of Israel and Redemption, let us point out that exile and Redemption in the teaching of R. Harlap have significance reaching beyond the national. As a Kabbalist, he believed that the *Shekhinah* [the Presence of God] is in exile; it is up to human beings to redeem it.¹²⁰ The idea of the exile of the *Shekhinah* is to be found as far back as in the Sages of the Talmud: "Beloved are Israel before the Holy One Blessed Is He, for everywhere that they were exiled, the *Shekhinah* is with them."¹²¹ The Kabbalah associated far-reaching significance with this view.¹²² Inter alia, the concept of "work as a higher need" [*avodah tzorekh gavoha*] developed

¹¹² R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VI: From the Springs of Salvation*, pp. 42–43.

¹¹³ Ibid., pp. 235–36; see also: *Waters from the Heavens XIII: On the Order of Prayer*, pp. 239–41.

¹¹⁴ Malachi 3:24.

¹¹⁵ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens XVI: Talks on Chanukah and Purim*, p. 19.

¹¹⁶ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens XIII*, Ibid.; see also *Waters from the Heavens III: Bread of Nobles*, pp. 84–86.

¹¹⁷ As per his approach, the completeness of Torah can only be in the Land of Israel; see: R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VI: From the Springs of Salvation*, p.252.

¹¹⁸ See (Gal Nur 2001).

¹¹⁹ R. Harlap, *Waters from the Heavens VI: From the Springs of Salvation*, p. 315.

¹²⁰ For the notion of the *Shekhinah* [Divine Presence], see Scholem, 259–307; for the exile of the *Shekhinah* and the Kabbalist's efforts to achieve its Redemption, such as Midnight Tikkun or fasting on the eve of the new month, see Ibid., pp. 103–4, pp. 140–48.

¹²¹ Talmud Bavli, tr. Megillah 29a.

¹²² See *Zohar* III, Portion "After the Death [of the Two Sons of Aharon]" 182; IV, Portion "Balak" 235.

as an extension of this idea; it can be traced in the teaching of R. Kook as well.¹²³ Usually the notion of “labor” pertains to the labor of the spirit, Torah and the Commandments, yet in the teaching of R. Kook and R. Harlap it is also a reference to material labor. Thus, the world will be mended and the Shekhinah will depart from its exile. “Labor,” therefore, any kind of work, including the material, is “a higher need,” for the need of the Shekhinah. For R. Harlap as a Kabbalist this is a topmost undertaking, for the People of Israel, for the entire universe and for the Shekhinah itself.

To sum up: labor in the teaching of R. Harlap is not only needed to earn a living, but a part of the multidimensional theology of Torah—textual—spiritual study and practical work effort. All this is part of the perfecting of the Land of Israel, which becomes central in the Messianic age. Labor is a precondition and an indication of the national, human and Divine redemption.

The concept of labor as a general value and as a religious value had a crucial impact on the Jewish settlement in Eretz Israel, even prior to establishment of the State of Israel. The socialist Zionist movement, those affiliated with the “religion of labor” and with the concept of “Torah and labor” embraced by religious Zionism and particularly Hapoel Hamizrachi, established many kibbutz (collective settlement) and moshav (cooperative settlement)-type settlements. To date, (2020) there are 265 kibbutz and 451 moshav-type settlements in Israel. In addition, the Labor movement controlled the formal Zionist institutions for decades even before the establishment of Israel. After the establishment of state of Israel as well, the Labor party was the ruling political party for three decades, until the political turnaround in 1977. Members of this ideology and the many towns that they established and that exist to this day had a crucial impact on the state and its institutions, particularly with regard to social, security and economic matters.

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¹²³ See: R. Meir Gabai, *Service of the Sacred* (Jerusalem, 2010) [Heb.], Section of “Work”; R. Chaim of Volozhin, *Soul of Life* [Heb.], Section II, Chapters 10–12; R. Kook, *Your Father's Instruction* (Jerusalem, 1946) [Heb.], Chapter 2:4.

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