

“The Automation Job AI: A World Without Work (3)

A World Without Work – Is this Ideal? What Will We Do?

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- Many have thought that there will be a world without work. They may be right. They may be wrong
- However, what will happen if they are right?
- What does this mean?
- Does Judaism have a vision for such a world?
- Is work an ideal?

1. “The Automation Jobless,” Time Magazine (February 24, 1961)

The number of jobs lost to more efficient machines is only part of the problem. What worries many job experts more is that automation may prevent the economy from creating enough new jobs. . . . Throughout industry, the trend has been to bigger production with a smaller work force. . . . Many of the losses in factory jobs have been countered by an increase in the service industries or in office jobs. But automation is beginning to move in and eliminate office jobs too. . . . In the past, new industries hired far more people than those they put out of business. But this is not true of many of today’s new industries. . . . Today’s new industries have comparatively few jobs for the unskilled or semiskilled, just the class of workers whose jobs are being eliminated by automation.

2. David H. Autor, “Why Are There Still So Many Jobs? The History and Future of Workplace Automation”¹

As a contemporary example, consider the surprising complementarities between information technology and employment in banking, specifically the experience with automated teller machines (ATMs) and bank tellers documented by Bessen (2015). ATMs were introduced in the 1970s, and their numbers in the US economy quadrupled from approximately 100,000 to 400,000 between 1995 and 2010. One might naturally assume that these machines had all but eliminated bank tellers in that interval. But US bank teller employment actually rose modestly from 500,000 to approximately 550,000 over the 30-year period from 1980 to 2010 (although given the growth in the labor force in this time interval, these numbers do imply that bank tellers declined as a share of overall US employment). With the growth of ATMs, what are all of these tellers doing? Bessen observes that two forces worked in opposite directions. First, by reducing the cost of operating a bank branch, ATMs indirectly increased the demand for tellers: the number of tellers per branch fell by more than a third between 1988 and 2004, but the number of urban bank branches (also encouraged by a wave of bank deregulation allowing more branches) rose by more than 40 percent. Second, as the routine cash-handling tasks of bank tellers receded, information technology also enabled a broader range of bank personnel to become involved in “relationship banking.” Increasingly, banks recognized the value of tellers

¹ Journal of Economic Perspectives—Volume 29, Number 3—Summer 2015—Pages 3–30, available <https://pubs.aeaweb.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1257/jep.29.3.3>

enabled by information technology, not primarily as checkout clerks, but as salespersons, forging relationships with customers and introducing them to additional bank services like credit cards, loans, and investment products

3. Ruth Schwartz Cowan, ¹ <https://www.americanheritage.com/less-work-mother>

For those who had not previously enjoyed the benefits of relief from washday drudgery, the electric washer meant something quite different but equally significant: an upgrading of household cleanliness. Men stopped wearing removable collars and cuffs, which meant that the whole of their shirts had to be washed and then ironed. Housewives began changing two sheets every week, instead of moving the top sheet to the bottom and adding only one that was fresh. Teenagers began changing their underwear every day instead of every weekend. In the early 1960s, when synthetic no-iron fabrics were introduced, the size of the household laundry load increased again; shirts and skirts, sheets and blouses that had once been sent out to the dry cleaner or the corner laundry were now being tossed into the household wash basket. By the 1980s the average American housewife, armed now with an automatic washing machine and an automatic dryer, was processing roughly ten times (by weight) the amount of laundry that her mother had been accustomed to. Drudgery had disappeared, but the laundry hadn't. The average time spent on this chore in 1925 had been 5.8 hours per week; in 1964 it was 6.2.

4. “Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren”, John Maynard Keynes, (1930)

For many ages to come the old Adam will be so strong in us that everybody will need to do some work if he is to be contented. We shall do more things for ourselves than is usual with the rich today, only too glad to have small duties and tasks and routines. But beyond this, we shall endeavour to spread the bread thin on the butter-to make what work there is still to be done to be as widely shared as possible. Three-hour shifts or a fifteen-hour week may put off the problem for a great while. For three hours a day is quite enough to satisfy the old Adam in most of us!²

5. 21 Lessons for the 21st Century: “Work: When you grow up, you might not have a job.” (Random House, 2018), Yuval Noah Harari

We have no idea what the job market will look like in 2050. It is generally agreed that machine learning and robotics will change almost every line of work – from producing yoghurt to teaching yoga. However, there are conflicting views about the nature of the change and its imminence. Some believe that within a mere decade or two, billions of people will become economically redundant. Others maintain that even in the long run automation will keep generating new jobs and greater prosperity for all.

So are we on a verge of a terrifying upheaval, or are such forecasts yet another example of ill-founded Luddite hysteria? It is hard to say. Fears that automation will create massive unemployment go back to the nineteenth century, and so far they have never materialised. Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, for every job lost to a machine at least one new job was created, and the average standard of living has increased dramatically. Yet there are good reasons to think that this time it is different, and that machine learning will be a real game changer.

² John Maynard Keynes, “Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren (1930),” in *Essays in Persuasion* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1932), 358-373

Humans have two types of abilities – physical and cognitive. In the past, machines competed with humans mainly in raw physical abilities, while humans retained an immense edge over machines in cognition. Hence as manual jobs in agriculture and industry were automated, new service jobs emerged that required the kind of cognitive skills only humans possessed: learning, analysing, communicating and above all understanding human emotions. However, AI is now beginning to outperform humans in more and more of these skills, including in the understanding of human emotions. We don't know of any third field of activity – beyond the physical and the cognitive – where humans will always retain a secure edge.

It is crucial to realise that the AI revolution is not just about computers getting faster and smarter. It is fuelled by breakthroughs in the life sciences and the social sciences as well. The better we understand the biochemical mechanisms that underpin human emotions, desires and choices, the better computers can become in analysing human behaviour, predicting human decisions, and replacing human drivers, bankers and lawyers.

6. Berachot 35b

תנו רבנן: "ואספת דגגה" מה תלמוד לומר? — לפי שגאמר: "לא ימוש ספר התורה הזה מפיה" — יכול דברים ככתבן, תלמוד לומר: "ואספת דגגה" — הנהג בהן מנהג דרך ארץ, דברי רבי ישמעאל. רבי שמעון בן יוחאי אומר: אפשר אדם חורש בשעת חרישה, וזורע בשעת זריעה, וקוצר בשעת קצירה, ונדש בשעת דישה, וזורע בשעת הרוח, תורה מה תהא עליה? אלא בזמן שישראל עושין רצונו של מקום — מלאכתן נעשית על ידי אחרים, שגאמר: "ועמדו זרים ורעו צאנכם וגו'", ובזמן שאין ישראל עושין רצונו של מקום — מלאכתן נעשית על ידי עצמן, שגאמר: "ואספת דגגה". ולא עוד אלא שמלאכת אחרים נעשית על ידן, שגאמר: "ועבדת את אויבך וגו'" אמר אביי: הרבה עשו כרבי ישמעאל, ועלתה בידן. כרבי שמעון בן יוחאי, ולא עלתה בידן.

The Sages taught: What is the meaning of that which the verse states: “And you shall gather your grain”? Because it is stated: **“This Torah shall not depart from your mouths, and you shall contemplate in it day and night”** (Joshua 1:8), **I might have thought that these matters are to be understood as they are written**; one is to literally spend his days immersed exclusively in Torah study. Therefore, **the verse states: “And you shall gather your grain, your wine and your oil,” assume in their regard, the way of the world**; set aside time not only for Torah, but also for work. This is **the statement of Rabbi Yishmael. Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai says: Is it possible that a person plows in the plowing season and sows in the sowing season and harvests in the harvest season and threshes in the threshing season and winnows in the windy season**, as grain is separated from the chaff by means of the wind, and is constantly busy; **what will become of Torah? Rather**, one must dedicate himself exclusively to Torah at the expense of other endeavors; as **when Israel performs God’s will, their work is performed by others**, as it is stated: **“And strangers will stand and feed your flocks, and foreigners will be your plowmen and your vinedressers”** (Isaiah 61:5). **When Israel does not perform God’s will, their work is performed by them** themselves, as it is stated: **“And you shall gather your grain.”** Moreover, if Israel fails to perform God’s will, **others’ work will be performed by them**, as it is stated: **“You shall serve your enemy** whom God shall send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness and in want of all things” (Deuteronomy 28:48). Summing up this dispute, **Abaye said: Although there is room for both opinions, many have acted in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yishmael**, and combined working for a living and learning Torah, **and although they engaged in activities other than the study of Torah, were successful in their Torah study. Many have acted in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi**

Shimon ben Yoḥai and were not successful in their Torah study. They were ultimately forced to abandon their Torah study altogether.

7. Shabbat 32b

אמר ריש לקיש: כל הזהיר בציצית זוכה ומשמשין לו שני אלפים ושמונה מאות עבדים, שנאמר כה אמר ה' [צבאות] בימים ההמה אשר יחזיקו עשרה אנשים מכל לשנות הגוים [והחזיקו] בכנף איש יהודי לאמר נלכה עמכם וגו'.

Since the Gemara discussed the importance of the mitzva of ritual fringes, it cites that which **Reish Lakish said: Anyone who is vigilant in performing the mitzva of ritual fringes merits that two thousand eight hundred servants will serve him** in the World-to-Come. **As it is stated: “Thus says the Lord of hosts: In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, shall even take hold of the corner of the garment of him that is a Jew, saying: We will go with you,** for we have heard that God is with you” ([Zechariah 8:23](#)). On each corner of a Jewish person’s garment with ritual fringes, ten people from each of the seventy nations will take hold. That totals seven hundred people on each corner; 2,800 people altogether.

8. Kiddushin 82a-b

רבי נהוראי אומר: מניח אני כל אומנות שבעולם ואיני מלמד את בני אלא תורה, שאדם אוכל משכרה בעולם הזה, וסקרו קנימת לו לעולם הבא, ושאר כל אומניות אינן כן. כשאדם בא לידי חולי או לידי זקנה או לידי יסורין, ואינו יכול לעסוק במלאכתו – הרי הוא מת ברעב. אבל התורה אינה כן, אלא משמרתו מכל רע בנערותו, ונותנת לו אחרית ותקנה בזקנותו....

תנא: רבי נהוראי אומר: מניח אני כל אומנות שבעולם ואיני מלמד את בני אלא תורה, שכל אומנות שבעולם אין עומדת לו אלא בימי ילדותו, אבל בימי זקנותו הרי הוא מושל ברעב. אבל תורה אינה כן – עומדת לו לאדם בעת ילדותו, ונותנת לו אחרית ותקנה בעת זקנותו. בעת ילדותו מהו אומר? “וקו? ה' נתלפו כח יצלו אבר פגשרים” בזקנותו מהו אומר? “עוד יגובון בשיבה דשנים ורעננים יהיו”

Rabbi Nehorai says: I set aside all the trades in the world, and I teach my son only Torah, as a person partakes of its reward in this world and the principal reward remains for him in the World-to-Come, which is not true of other professions, whose rewards are only in this world. Furthermore, if a person comes to be ill, or old, or undergoes suffering, and is unable to be involved in his trade, behold, he dies in hunger. But with regard to the Torah it is not so, since one can study it under all circumstances. Rather, it preserves him from all evil and sin in his youth, and provides him with a future and hope in his old age....

It is taught in the Tosefta (5:14): **Rabbi Nehorai says: I set aside all the trades in the world, and I teach my son only Torah, as all other trades serve one only in the days of his youth, when he has enough strength to work, but in the days of his old age, behold, he is left to lie in hunger. But Torah is not like this: It serves a person in the time of his youth and provides him with a future and hope in the time of his old age. With regard to the time of his youth, what does it say about a Torah scholar? “But they that wait for the Lord shall renew their strength” (Isaiah 40:31). With regard to the time of his old age, what does it say? “They shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be full of sap and richness” (Psalms 92:15).**

9. Possible Interpretations

- a. Primary vs Secondary Importance (Maharsha)
- b. Teaching (Iyun Yaaov)

- c. Only R. Nehorai and his son (Toldot Yaakov Yosef)
- d. For righteous who deserve not to work (Pnei Yehoshua)
 - i. Perhaps even R. Yishmael would agree (Griz, Kovetz Shiurim)

10. Kiddushin ibid

רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר: ראית מימיך סיה ועוף שיש להם אומנות? והן מתפרנסין שלא בצער! והלא לא נבראו אלא לשמשני, ואני נבראתי לשמש את קוני, אינו דין שאתפרנס שלא בצער? אלא שהורעתי מעשי, וקפחתי את פרנסתי.

Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says: Have you ever seen a beast or a bird that has a trade? And yet they earn their livelihood without anguish. But all these were created only to serve me, and I, a human being, was created to serve the One Who formed me. Is it not right that I should earn my livelihood without anguish? But I, i.e., humanity, have committed evil actions and have lost my livelihood. This is why people must work to earn a living.

11. Berachot 8a

ואמר רבי חייה בר אמי משמיה דעולא: גדול הנקנה מיגיעו יותר מירא שמים, דאילו גבי ירא שמים כתיב "אשרי איש ירא את ה'", ואילו גבי נקנה מיגיעו כתיב: "יגיע פפיה פי תאכל אשריה וטוב לך". "אשריה" — בעולם הזה, ו"טוב לך" — לעולם הבא, ולגבי ירא שמים, "וטוב לך" לא כתיב ביה.

And Rabbi Hiyya bar Ami said in the name of Ulla: One who benefits from his hard labor is greater than a God-fearing person, i.e., one who is so enthralled by his fear of God that he sits idly by and does not work. As with regard to a God-fearing person, it is written: "Happy is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly desires His mitzvot" (Psalms 112:1), while with regard to one who benefits from his hard work, it is written: "By the labor of your hands you will live; you are happy and it is good for you" (Psalms 128:2). The Gemara explains this verse to mean that you are happy in this world, and it is good for you in the World-to-Come. And regarding a God-fearing person, happy is the man, is written about him but and it is good for you, is not written about him.

12. Avot 2:2

רבן גמליאל בנו של רבי יהודה הנשיא אומר, יפה תלמוד תורה עם דרך ארץ, שגייעת שנייהם משפחת עון. וכל תורה שאין עמה מלאכה, סופה בטלה וגוררת עון.

Rabban Gamaliel the son of Rabbi Judah Hanasi said: great is the study of the Torah when combined with a worldly occupation, for toil in them makes sin forgotten; But [study of the] Torah which is not combined with a worldly occupation, in the end is nullified. and becomes the cause of sin.

13. Avot 1:10

שמעיה אומר, אהב את המלאכה, ושנא את הרבנות, ואל תתנדע לרשות.

Shemaya said, love work, despise positions of power, and do not become too close to the authorities.

14. Rambam Hilchot Talmud Torah 3:10-11, Touger translation

כל המשים על לבו שיעסק בתורה ולא יעשה מלאכה ויתפרנס מן הצדקה הרי זה חלל את השם ובזה את התורה וככה מאור הדת וגרם רעה לעצמו ונטל חיו מן העולם הבא. לפי שאסור להנות מדברי תורה בעולם הזה. אמרו חכמים (משנה אבות ד ה) "אל תעשם עטרה להתגדל בהן ולא קרדם לחפר בהן". ועוד צויו ואמרו (משנה אבות א י) "אהב את המלאכה ושנא את הרבנות", (משנה אבות ב ב) "וכל תורה שאין עמה מלאכה סופה בטלה וגוררת עון". וסוף אדם זה שיהא מלקטם את הבריות:

מעלה גדולה היא למי שהיא מתפרנס ממעשה ידיו. ומדת חסידים הראשונים היא. ובזה זוכה לכל פבד וטובה שבועולם הזה ולעולם הבא שנגאמר (תהילים קכח ב) "יגיע פפיה כי תאכל אשריה וטוב לה" (משנה אבות ו ד) "אשריה בעולם הזה וטוב לה לעולם הבא" שפלו טוב:

Anyone who comes to the conclusion that he should involve himself in Torah study without doing work and derive his livelihood from charity, desecrates [God's] name, dishonors the Torah, extinguishes the light of faith, brings evil upon himself, and forfeits the life of the world to come, for it is forbidden to derive benefit from the words of Torah in this world. Our Sages declared: "Whoever benefits from the words of Torah forfeits his life in the world." Also, they commanded and declared: "Do not make them a crown to magnify oneself, nor an axe to chop with." Also, they commanded and declared: "Love work and despise Rabbinic positions." All Torah that is not accompanied by work will eventually be negated and lead to sin. Ultimately, such a person will steal from others.

It is a tremendous advantage for a person to derive his livelihood from his own efforts. This attribute was possessed by the pious of the early generations. In this manner, one will merit all [types of] honor and benefit in this world and in the world to come, as [Psalms 128:2] states: "If you eat the toil of your hands, you will be happy and it will be good for you." "You will be happy" - in this world. "It will be good for you" - in the world to come, which is entirely good.

15. Bereishit 2:15, JPS

וַיִּקַּח ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם וַיְנַתְּהוּ בְּגַן-עֵדֶן לְעִבְדָהּ וּלְשִׁמְרָהּ:

And G-d, Elokim, took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work it and guard it. (Bereishit 2:15, JPS)

16. Interpretations of Avot 2:2

- a. Prevents Envy (Rashi, Rambam, Meiri)
- b. Not for leaders (Lechem Shamayim)
- c. Prevents Sin (R. Yonah)
- d. Could be about ethics (Meiri, Abarbanel)
- e. With intent to practice (Midrash Shmuel)
- f. Torah grounded in the world (Mishnat Eretz Yisrael)

17. Richard B. Freeman, "Why Do We Work More than Keynes Expected?"³

Evolution presumably imbued us with a work ethic for our survival and not for a Garden of Eden existence.

18. Is this true? Why was work originally part of Eden?

³ Freeman RB. "Why Do We Work More than Keynes Expected?". In: Revisiting Keynes: Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren. . Cambridge MA : MIT Press ; 2008. pp. 135-42.

- a. Collect Fruit, other mild work (Rasag, Bechor Shor, Chizkuni)
- b. Later fruits needed tending (Netziv)

19. Avot D'Rabbi Natan Recension 1, Chapter 11, Koren translation

שמעיה ואבטליון קבלו מהם שמעיה אומר אהוב את המלאכה ושנא את הרבנות ואל תתוודע לרשות. אהוב את המלאכה כיצד מלמד שיהא אדם אוהב את המלאכה ואל יהיה שונא את המלאכה כשם שהתורה נתנה בברית כך המלאכה נתנה בברית שנא' (שמות כ':ט"ו-י') ששת ימים תעבוד ועשית כל מלאכתך ויום השביעי שבת לה' אלהיך.... ר"ש בן אלעזר אומר אף אדם הראשון לא טעם כלום עד שעשה מלאכה שנא' (בראשית ב':ט"ו) ויניחהו בגן עדן לעבדה ולשמרה והדר מכל עץ הגן אכול תאכל. ר"ט אומר אף הקב"ה לא השרה שכינתו על ישראל עד שעשו מלאכה שנאמר (שמות כ"ה:ח') ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם רבי יהודה בן בתירא אומר מי שאין לו מלאכה לעשות מה יעשה אם יש לו חצר חרבה או שדה חרבה ילך ויתעסק בה שנאמר ששת ימים תעבוד ועשית כל מלאכתך ומה תלמוד לומר ועשית כל מלאכתך להביא את מי שיש לו חצרות או שדות חרבות ילך ויתעסק בהן ר' [טרפון] אומר (אין אדם מת) אלא מתוך הבטלה (שנאמר (בראשית מ"ט:ל"ג) ויגוע ויאסף אל עמיו [רבי יוסי הגלילי אומר] הרי שנכפה ונפל על אומן שלו ומת הא אינו מת אלא מתוך הבטלה) היה עומד על ראש הגג [ועל ראש הכירה ועל ראש הבניין] (ועל שפת הנהר) [ונפל ומת אינו מת אלא מתוך הבטלה. (שכן) שמענו לאנשים ולנשים מניין שנא' (שמות ל"ו:ו') איש ואשה אל יעשו עוד מלאכה לתרומת הקדש לטפלים מניין שנאמר (שם) ויכלא העם מהביא

Shemaya and Avatalyon received from them. Shemaya would say: Love work, hate power, and do not become too familiar with the authorities. Love work." How so? This teaches us that a person should love work, and not hate work. For just as the Torah was given in a covenant, so work was given in a covenant, as it says (Exodus 20:10), "For six days you shall labor and do all your work, and the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Eternal your God."... Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar would say: Even Adam did not taste anything until he worked, as it says (Genesis 2:15-16), "And God placed him in the garden, to work it and guard it"; and then [it says (verse 17)], "From every tree of the garden you may certainly eat."

Rabbi Tarfon would say: Even the Holy Blessed One did not rest His presence upon Israel until they had done work, as it says (Exodus 25:5), "Make Me a Sanctuary, and I will dwell among them."

Rabbi Yehudah ben Beteira would say: If someone who has no work to do, what should he do? If he has a dilapidated yard or field, he should go and work on them, as it says (Exodus 20:10), "Six days you shall labor and do all your work." What do we learn from the phrase, "do all your work"? That even someone who has dilapidated yards or fields should work on them.

Rabbi Yosei HaGalili would say: A person dies only because of idleness, as it says (Genesis 49:33), "And he expired [or: exhausted himself], and so was gathered to his people." And see, if someone is pushed and falls over on his own craftwork and dies, we know his death was because of idleness. And if he was standing on the top of the roof, the top of a palace, or the top of any building, or at the edge of the river, and he fell and died, we know his death was because of idleness.

All this we know to be true for men. And how do we know it is also true for women? For it says (Exodus 36:6), "Let no man or woman do any more work for the donations to the Sanctuary." And how do we know it is true also for children? For it says (there), "So the people stopped bringing."

20. Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein <https://etzion.org.il/en/philosophy/great-thinkers/harav-aharon-lichtenstein/cultivate-and-guard-universal-duties-mankind>

The first answer is that, indeed, the world was created perfect— but part of that perfection, and one of the components within that order, is human activity. Part of “And He found it very good” is man, not existing simply as a biological being enjoying the world, but rather as a functional being who contributes, creates and works. The need for man to work is not part of the curse subsequent to the sin; man was originally placed in the Garden in order to cultivate it. The curse was that man would have to battle with an unwilling earth: “Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you. . . . By the sweat of your brow shall you get bread to eat” (Bereishit 3:18-19). But the fact that one needs to work at all is part of the primeval, primordial order, irrespective of any element of sin. This had been intended from the beginning. Simply put, this is indeed a perfect order, provided that man does his part. If man does not, then one of the pieces of the picture has fallen out, and the world is no longer perfect...

What is important is the sense of human responsibility and the recognition of the importance of building the world and improving society. To us, work is indeed a central value...

[Three Aspects

Psychological, based on the reason that even wealthy women should not do nothing in the context of marriage]

Shi'amum can be understood either as insanity or as boredom, ennui, a sense of spiritual degradation. Even if she's as wealthy as Midas, she has to do some kind of work, lest idleness lead to psychological and spiritual problems.

[Social:]

There is also, of course, a social basis to our emphasis on work. The fact is that work needs to be done. A society in which people work is, in terms of its basic structure and values, very different from one in which they do not. The midrash at the beginning of Lekh Lekha asks: When God told Avraham, “Go forth from your native land . . . to the land which I will show you” (Bereishit 12:1), how did Avraham know when he had arrived at the right place? From a mystical point of view, one might assume that he was attracted by the kedusha (sanctity) inherent within the land. But the midrash gives a very non-mystical explanation:

Rabbi Levi said: When Avram walked through Aram Naharayim and Aram Nachor, he saw the people there eating, drinking and acting loosely. Avram said to himself, “I hope that I do not have a portion in this land.” When he arrived at the cliffs of Tyre (what is now called Rosh Hanikra, at the northern border of Israel), he saw people busying themselves with weeding during the season for weeding, hoeing during the time for hoeing, etc. He said to himself, “I hope that I will have a portion in this land.” (Bereishit Rabba 39:8)

When Avraham saw people lounging around, eating and drinking and having a good time, he knew that he had not yet arrived. But when he saw people performing agricultural tasks that needed to be done, he sensed that he had come to the promised land. That is what attracted him. This was not a land whose people were devoted to the quest for pleasure but rather to commitment, work and responsibility. These are the things that define a culture.

[Imitating God:]

There is a third basis as well to the emphasis on work, and this is more specifically religious in nature. A person who works is a partner to God in ma'aseh bereishit (creation). In this respect, he is imitating God. Usually we speak of imitating God by being merciful, or by performing acts of chesed (kindness), but the midrash also tells us:

Rabbi Yehuda ben Rabbi Simon said: [The verse states,] "After the Lord your God you shall walk" (Devarim 13:5) . . . [What does this mandate of imitatio Dei entail?] At the beginning of the world's creation, the Holy One occupied Himself first with planting, as it says, "And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden" (Bereishit 2:8); so too, when you enter the Land [of Israel], occupy yourselves first with planting—and thus it says (Vayikra 19:23), "When you enter the land and plant all fruitbearing trees. . ." (Vayikra Rabba 25:3)

Of course, the trees are symbolic of man's contribution to this world, to nature—something which is planted by human agency, rather than something which appears spontaneously. There are numerous other midrashim in this general vein.

The thrust of all this is that there is significance to work, quite apart from the need to pay your bills. There is, if you will, a certain redemptive quality to work, in psychological, social and religious terms.

21. Sifrei Devarim 41, Silverstein translation

ולעבדו - זה תלמוד. אתה אומר זה תלמוד, או אינו אלא עבודה ממש? - כשהוא אומר (בראשית ב טו) "ויקה ה' אלהים את האדם ויניחהו בגן עדן, לעבדה ולשמרה", וכי מה עבודה לשעבר, ומה שמירה לשעבר? - הא למדת: "לעבדה" - זה תלמוד, "ולשמרה" - אלו מצוות. וכשם שעבודת מזבח קרויה עבודה - כך תלמוד קרויה עבודה.

"and to serve Him": This is learning. — But perhaps it is service, literally. It is written (Bereshith 2:15) "And the L-rd G-d took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to serve it and to guard it." Now what "service" was there in the past, and what "guarding" was there in the past? We are hereby taught "serving" is learning, (in this instance, the "seven mitzvot of the sons of Noach) and "guarding" is (the doing of) mitzvot. And just as the (sacrificial) service of the altar is called "service," so, learning is called "service."

22. Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer 12, Friedlander translation

חבה יתירה חבב הקב"ה לאדם הראשון שבראו במקום טהור במקום בית המקדש והכניסו לאפדנו, שנאמר (בראשית ב, טו): "ויקה ה' אלהים את האדם ויניחהו בגן עדן", מאי זה מקום לקחו מבית המקדש והכניסו לפלטין שלו זה גן עדן, שנאמר "ויניחהו בגן עדן לעבדה ולשמרה", ושם תאמר כי יש מלאכה בגן עדן לפתח ולשדד את האדמה. ולא כל האלנות נצמחין מאליהן.

או שם תאמר יש מלאכה בגן עדן להשקות את הגן, והלא כבר נהר יוצא מעדן להשקות את הגן שנ' ונהר יוצא מעדן וכו'.

ומה הלשון הזה לעבדה ולשמרה, לא אמר לעבדה ולשמרה אלא לעסוק בדברי תורה ולשמור את כל מצותיה, שנ' לשמור את דרך עץ החיים, ואין עץ חיים אלא תורה, שנ' עץ עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה.

With love abounding did the Holy One, blessed be He, love the first man, inasmuch as He created him in a pure locality, in the place of the Temple, and He brought him into His palace, as it is said, "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" (Gen. 2:15). From which place did He take him? From the place of the Temple,

and He brought him into His palace, which is Eden, as it is said, "And he put him into the garden of Eden to dress it" (ibid.). Perhaps thou wilt say: To plough (the fields) and cast out the stones from the ground. But did not all the trees grow up of their own accord?

Perhaps thou wilt say: There was some other work (to be done) in the garden of Eden, (such as) to water the garden. But did not a river flow through and issue forth from Eden, and water the garden, as it is said, || "And a river went out of Eden to water the garden" (Gen. 2:10)?

What then is the meaning of this expression: "to dress it and to keep it"? (The text) does not say "to dress it and to keep it" except (in the sense) of being occupied with the words of the Torah and keeping all its commandments, as it is said, "to keep the way of the tree of life" (Gen. 3:24). But the "tree of life" signifies only the Torah, as it is said, "It is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon it" (Prov. 3:18)

23. Sanhedrin 99b

אמר רבי אלעזר כל אדם לעמל נברא שנאמר (איוב ה, ז) כי אדם לעמל יולד איני יודע אם לעמל פה נברא אם לעמל מלאכה נברא כשהוא אומר כי אכף עליו פיהו הוי אומר לעמל פה נברא ועדיין איני יודע אם לעמל תורה אם לעמל שיחה כשהוא אומר (יהושע א, ח) לא ימוש ספר התורה הזה מפוך הוי אומר לעמל תורה נברא והיינו דאמר רבא כולהו גופי דרופתקי נינהו טובי לדזכי דהוי דרופתקי דאורייתא

Rabbi Elazar says: Every man was created for labor, as it is stated: "Man is born for toil" (Job 5:7). Based on this verse, I do not know whether he was created for toil of the mouth, speech, or whether he was created for the toil of labor. When the verse states: "For his mouth presses upon him" (Proverbs 16:26), you must say that he was created for toil of the mouth. And still I do not know with regard to the toil of the mouth whether it is for the toil of Torah or for the toil of conversation. When the verse states: "This Torah scroll shall not depart from your mouth" (Joshua 1:8), you must say that he was created for the toil of Torah. And that is the meaning of what Rava said: All bodies are like receptacles to store items until use. Happy is one who is privileged, who is a receptacle for Torah.

24. See Pri Tzadik, Maamar Kedushat HaShabbat 1

25. Rambam Hilchot Gzeila 6:11

והמשחק בקוביא עם העכו"ם אין בו אסור גזל אכל גש בו אסור עוסק בדברים בטלים שאין ראוי לאדם שיצטק כל ימיו אלא בדברי חכמה ובשיבוש של עולם:

When a person plays dice with gentiles, he does not violate the prohibition against robbery. He does, however, violate the prohibition against occupying oneself with empty matters. It is not fitting for a person to spend any of his days occupied in anything other than words of wisdom or pursuits that lead to a stable world.

26. Yuval Noah Harari

To really achieve its goals, universal basic support will have to be supplemented by some meaningful pursuits, ranging from sports to religion.

Perhaps the most successful experiment so far in how to live a contented life in a post-work world has been conducted in Israel. There, about 50% of ultra-Orthodox Jewish men never work. They dedicate their lives to studying holy scriptures and performing religious rituals. They and their families don't starve partly because the wives often work, and partly because

the government provides them with generous subsidies and free services, making sure that they don't lack the basic necessities of life. That's universal basic support *avant la lettre*.

Although they are poor and unemployed, in survey after survey these ultra-Orthodox Jewish men report higher levels of life satisfaction than any other section of Israeli society. This is due to the strength of their community bonds, as well as to the deep meaning they find in studying scriptures and performing rituals. A small room full of Jewish men discussing the Talmud might well generate more joy, engagement and insight than a huge textile sweatshop full of hard-working factory hands. In global surveys of life satisfaction, Israel is usually somewhere near the top, thanks in part to the contribution of these jobless poor people.

Secular Israelis often complain bitterly that the ultra-Orthodox don't contribute enough to society, and live off other people's hard work. Secular Israelis also tend to argue that the ultra-Orthodox way of life is unsustainable, especially as ultra-Orthodox families have seven children on average. Sooner or later, the state will not be able to support so many unemployed people, and the ultra-Orthodox will have to go to work. Yet it might be just the reverse. As robots and AI push humans out of the job market, the ultra-Orthodox Jews may come to be seen as the model of the future rather than as a fossil from the past. Not that everyone will become Orthodox Jews and go to the yeshivas to study the Talmud. But in the lives of all people, the quest for meaning and for community might eclipse the quest for a job.