

“THE TORAH PROHIBITED CREATIVE *MELAKHAH* (WORK)”:
DEFINING THE PROHIBITION OF *MELAKHAH* ON THE SABBATH
IN CLASSIC RABBINIC LITERATURE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR
THE MODERN TECHNOLOGICAL WORLD

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Abstract

Modern technology continues to change our daily lives. These innovations have also brought with them certain challenges concerning traditional observance of the Sabbath. This article will clarify the conception of *melakhah*, commonly translated as work, on the Sabbath in classic rabbinic literature, expand on the ideational understandings that emerge from these sources, and discuss in what manner the rabbinic sages defined the prohibition. An analysis of this literature allows one to understand the basic principles of the Jewish rabbinic tradition—principles that may be actualized in a meaningful manner in this modern technological reality that we live in. The goal of this article is to create a logical and meaningful continuum between Aggadah and Halakhah; between the spiritual principles and values of the Sabbath and the normative behavior that implements these ideas.

This article is not solely interested in understanding the sources in their original context; rather, it is interested in confronting the questions of the present by contemplating the past. It conceives of the storied Jewish tradition as a source of inspiration that must be engaged with the everchanging present and, thereby, create a relevant understanding of contemporary Jewish law.