



Shamor and Zakhor: Competing Frames for Shabbat in the Torah and Today

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Abstract

In the Torah, there are two divergent formulations of the Ten Commandments—one in Exodus and another in Deuteronomy. The difference between them regarding Shabbat is particularly striking: Exodus maintains that the goal of Shabbat is “זכור”/“be mindful of”, and links its observance to the Creation of the world in seven days, while Deuteronomy begins with the word “שמור”/“guard” and grounds Shabbat in being freed from oppression in Egypt. And yet our tradition insists that they were said “בדיבור אחד”/“in one utterance”. What could this assertion mean? And why was this synthesis so important to our Sages?

Deeper investigation reveals that these two formulations actually represent two strong, competing visions of what Shabbat is all about: שמור/Exodus and זכור/Creation.

For the שמור model, Shabbat is all about taking home the lessons of being a slave and making sure that the economically disadvantaged get a chance to rest. This rationale calls us away from the labors of the week so that we can enjoy rest and bodily rejuvenation.

For the זכור model, we are called instead to experience a Shabbat world that is fully created. By imitating God’s stopping and resting, we also acknowledge that we did not create the world and therefore do not have the right to dominate it without limits. It is our day to draw close to God, not to serve our ends or to tamper with God’s handiwork.

These two competing models vied for prominence throughout the Second Temple period, often taken up by different Jewish groups in dramatic and extreme ways. Against this backdrop, the rabbinic refusal to allow one of the Torah’s messages about Shabbat to trample the other is even more striking.

Throughout the history of *halakhab*, many religious authorities have grappled with this continuing tension, and many Jews today have instinctively developed only one of these frames and not the other. So many Shabbat observances seem extreme or inappropriate when viewed through the lens of one of these frames alone, but when looked at from the opposite perspective start to make sense. This piece explores the essence of the rabbinic Shabbat, which is an unfolding attempt to glean wisdom from the competing models of זכור and שמור, as well as from the corollary symphony of voices that make up this ever relevant area of *halakhab*.

I. Introduction

Every Friday night, Jews around the world welcome Shabbat in song with the following poetic line:

שמור וזכור בדיבור אחד

השמיענו אל המיוחד

“Guard”/Shamor and “Be mindful of”/Zakhor in one utterance

The Unique God caused us to hear.

This opening line of the poem *לכה דודי*/Lekhab Dodi, familiar to so many, was written by R. Shlomo HaLevi Alkabetz, the great kabbalistic poet of 16th century Tzfat.¹ What does it mean? It is clear that it refers to the two divergent formulations of the Ten Commandments in Exodus and Deuteronomy. The former begins with the word *זכור* / “Be mindful of” and the latter with *שמור* / “Guard.” As a child, I always learned this line as an attempt to harmonize two conflicting articulations of the same idea. The Torah presents the Ten Commandments as a historical utterance by God to the Jewish people: How can there be two different versions of this speech in the Torah? To this, the tradition answers: the two versions were spoken in stereo sound, with God simultaneously saying both. The “mono” formulations found in Exodus and Deuteronomy, respectively, are only half of the story. According to this reading, the terms *זכור* / “Be mindful of” and *שמור* / “Guard” are really synecdoche for the versions of the Ten Commandments found in the second and fifth books of the Torah, respectively. These prominent variations, along with many others, were all included in a single symphony of divine speech.

A deeper investigation, however, reveals that this line packs an even greater punch. The assertion that *זכור* and *שמור* were uttered at once is in fact a bold statement about the essence of Shabbat. This assertion of stereophonic divine speech attempted to resolve an internal tension around Shabbat in the Torah itself, lashed out at competing visions of Shabbat in the Second Temple and laid the groundwork for the rabbinic Shabbat practiced by so many observant Jews today. By more deeply understanding the background to this line, we can not only understand Shabbat better but perhaps even enable Jews who are too often divided by Shabbat to understand one another.

1. R. Alkabetz’ intentions in writing this famous poem were manifold, including a host of explicit and more esoteric messages. Here, I am merely using *Lekhab Dodi* as a familiar departure point for the scriptural dyad to which it refers. For more on the various meanings of the poem itself, see קימלמן, ‘לכה דודי’ וקבלת שבת: המשמעות המיסטית, ירושלים תשסג.

II. Origins in the Mekhilta

Like most lines in our prayers, the first line of לכה דודי has an intertext, another source on which it is based and from which it draws linguistic and conceptual inspiration. In this case, the intertext is found in the Mekhilta, a commentary on the book of Exodus drawing on traditions from the sages of the early first millennium of the common era, the same sages who feature prominently in the Mishnah. Here is the full passage:

מכילתא דרבי ישמעאל יתרו - מסכתא דבחדש פרשה ז
"זכור" ו"שמור", שניהם נאמרו בדיבור אחד.
"מחלליה מות יומת" ו"ביום השבת שני כבשים", שניהם בדיבור אחד נאמרו.
"ערות אשת אחיך" ו"יבמה יבא עליה", שניהם נאמרו בדיבור אחד.
"לא תלבש שעטנז" ו"גדילים תעשה לך" שניהם נאמרו בדיבור אחד.
מה שאי אפשר לאדם לומר כן, שנאמר "אחת דבר אלהים שתיים זו שמענו", ואומר "הלא כה דברי כאש נאם ה'":

Mekhilta of R. Yishmael, Yitro, BaHodesh #7

“Be mindful of” and “Guard”, both were said at once.

“Those who desecrate it shall be put to death” and “On the Shabbat day, sacrifice two lambs,” both were said at once.

“Do not be intimate with your brother’s wife” and “her levir shall be intimate with her”, both were said at once.

“Do not wear a mixture of wool and linen” and “Place tassels on your garment”, both were said at once.

A human being could not have said these things, as it says, “God spoke one thing and we heard two,” and it says, “Is not my word like fire? Says God.”

This passage in the Mekhilta features four examples of passages in the Torah that were “said at once”, the first of which refers to the simultaneous utterance of זכור and שמור at Mount Sinai. But a look at the complete list reveals that we are dealing here not with conflicting *articulations*, but with conflicting *ideas* and *laws*. Let’s look at the other three examples here:

1. Shabbat Observance and the Temple Service

The Mekhilta notes that Exodus 31:14 decrees the death penalty for any violation of Shabbat. The Torah explicitly denotes burning a fire on Shabbat as one such desecration (Exodus 35:3) and rabbinic tradition understands slaughtering animals to be another such core violation of the day's sanctity (see Mishnah Shabbat 7:2). And yet, Numbers 28:9 mandates the sacrifice of two lambs in the Temple each Shabbat, an act which involves both slaughter and the use of fire! The Mekhilta asserts: These two conflicting commands were nonetheless uttered at once.

2. Incest Laws and Levirate Marriage

In the Torah's listing of incest prohibitions, a man is forbidden from being intimate with his brother's wife. Leviticus 18:16 bans this act, and Leviticus 20:21 declares that those who violate the ban will die childless. The prohibition clearly applies even after the brother is divorced from or has pre-deceased his wife, since being intimate with any man's wife is a forbidden capital crime spelled out under its own rubric in Leviticus 18:20 and 20:10. And yet, Deuteronomy 25:5 commands a man whose brother has died childless to marry his widow in order to redeem his brother's line. The Mekhilta asserts: These two conflicting commands were nonetheless uttered at once.

3. Tzitzit and the ban on wool and linen mixtures

Deuteronomy 22:11 forbids the wearing of שַׁעֲטָנִי—explained as any cloth that combines wool and linen together. (This prohibition is also articulated in Vayikra 19:19.) And yet, Deuteronomy 22:12, the very next verse, commands placing tassels on the four corners of one's garments. From the version of this command in Numbers 16:38, we learn that the tassel is a cord dyed blue, clearly made of wool. This cord must be placed on the corners of all garments, many of which are made of linen, thus violating the prohibition on mixing the two. The Mekhilta asserts: these two conflicting commands were nonetheless uttered at once.

The Mekhilta concludes by noting that human beings are incapable of these sorts of simultaneous utterances. From the context, it is clear that we are not simply speaking about articulating two sounds at once. Rather, it is a reflection on the fact that when people command a thing and its opposite, they sound incoherent and are

ignored. By contrast, God and God's Torah have the unique gift of multivocality, such that one utterance from a single source sounds to our ears like a chorus. The heat of the divine fire emits tongues of flame all around it. To use a metaphor from elsewhere in rabbinic literature: The energy of a single strike of a hammer on a rock sends shards of many sizes in multiple directions. God's word is unlike human speech: It can contain multitudes.

In each of the cases the Mekhilta addresses, the conflicting categories must make room for one another, as one command is an exception to the other. The normal ban on slaughter on Shabbat is lifted to make room for the special sacrifice designated for that day. Incest laws are suspended in the case of a levirate bond. When woolen tassels must be placed on a linen garment, the prohibition on שעטנז gives way. This fuller context of the Mekhilta makes us realize that something similar is going on with זכור and שמור as well. What is the conflict here and how do these two commands coexist?

III. Shabbat's Split Personality in the Torah

We can uncover the deeper meaning of the Mekhilta by recognizing that the words זכור and שמור here signify much more than themselves. They are metonymic terms for the Torah's two very different presentations of Shabbat *and the reasons given for its observance*. In fact, they stand for dueling conceptions as to what Shabbat is all about.

1. שמור/Shamor

Let us begin with the שמור model as presented in Deuteronomy:

דברים ה:יא-יז

שמור את יום השבת לקדשו כאשר צוך יקוק אלקיך: ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל מלאכתך: ויום השביעי שבת ליקוק אלקיך לא תעשה כל מלאכה אתה ובנך ובתך ועבדך ואמתך ושורך וחמרך וכל בהמתך וגרך אשר בשעריך למען ינוח עבדך ואמתך כמוך: וזכרת כי עבד היית בארץ מצרים ויצאך יקוק אלקיך משם ביד חזקה ובזרע נטויה על כן צוך יקוק אלקיך לעשות את יום השבת:

Deuteronomy 5:11-14

Guard the sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days shall you labor and do all your *melakhab*²; but the seventh day is a sabbath for the Lord your God; do not do any manner of *melakhab* on it, not you, your son, your daughter, your male or female servant, your ox, your donkey, any of your animals nor the stranger within your gates; **so that your male and female servants can rest just like you. And so that you will be mindful that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God took you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to perform the sabbath day.**

Another passage uses similar language:

שמות כג:יב

ששת ימים תעשה מעשיך וביום השביעי תשבת למען ינוח שורך וחמרך וינפש בן אמתך והגר:

Exodus 23:12

Six days you shall do what you do, but on the seventh day you shall stop, so that your ox and your donkey may rest and so that your servant and the stranger may be refreshed.

The שמור model gives a very clear reason for observing Shabbat. Shabbat is about taking home the lessons of being a slave and making sure that the economically disadvantaged get a chance to rest. Shabbat here emerges from Jewish history. We have first-hand experience of a culture of incessant work; when God redeemed us from that state, we took on a corollary obligation: Never again to create a culture that economically enslaves people without a break. Shabbat is a policy response to that dystopia. During our time in Egypt, we experienced the reality of back-breaking work seven days a week. Today, a never-ending culture of work remains a constant threat to humanity's spiritual health.

This rationale calls us away from the labors of the week so that we can enjoy rest and bodily rejuvenation. Following the lead of the שמור model, we would be driven to maximize pleasure, engaging in activities that emphasize our freedom, such as eating, drinking, sleeping and otherwise experiencing the ענג/pleasure of Shabbat.

And how would we define the opaque term מלאכה/*melakhab*, which constitutes the core of what we must

2. I am deliberately delaying the translation of this central term, since its precise legal contours are shaped by how we understand the narrative in which it is embedded.

avoid on Shabbat? In the world of שמור, where we are focused on drawing lessons from our past slavery and granting rest to the weary, we would likely focus on servile work, the difficult and drudgery-filled tasks that define our week and that threaten to overtake our moments of freedom. For a contemporary Jew listening to the distinctive voice of שמור, going in to the office or demanding work from others would be the cardinal violations of the Torah's vision of a day free of מלאכה.

Finally, following שמור alone, we would not necessarily imagine that Shabbat must fall on a specific day of the week. Any single day out of seven could be set aside to accomplish the goal of avoiding incessant work, and while the day is described in Deuteronomy as something to be sanctified, its orientation seems directed towards human society and its needs. To the extent it is holy, it is because human beings, themselves holy, are in desperate need of a day that keeps them free.

2. זכור/Zakhor

Let us now turn to the other presentation of Shabbat, in Exodus:

שמות כ:ז-י

זכור את יום השבת לקדשו: ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל מלאכתך: ויום השביעי שבת ליקוק אלקיך לא תעשה כל מלאכה אתה ובנך ובתך עבדך ואמתך ובהמתך וגרך אשר בשעריך: כי ששת ימים עשה יקוק את השמים ואת הארץ את הים ואת כל אשר בהם וינח ביום השביעי על כן ברך יקוק את יום השבת ויקדשהו:

Exodus 20:7-10

Be mindful of the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor and do all your *melakhab*; but the seventh day is a sabbath for the Lord your God; do not do any manner of *melakhab* on it, not you, your son, your daughter, your male or female servant, your animals nor the stranger within your gates; **for in six days the Lord made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and sanctified it.**

Another passage uses similar language and gives a fuller account:

בראשית ב:א-ג

ויכלו השמים והארץ וכל צבאם: ויכל אלקים ביום השביעי מלאכתו אשר עשה וישבת ביום השביעי מכל מלאכתו אשר עשה: ויברך אלקים את יום השביעי ויקדש אתו כי בו שבת מכל מלאכתו אשר ברא אלקים לעשות:

Genesis 2:1-3

The heaven and the earth and all their hosts were completed. On the seventh day, God completed the *melakhab* which He had done. God stopped on the seventh day from doing all the *melakhab* that He had done. God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, for on it He stopped doing all the *melakhab* that God had created.

The זכור model offers a very different reason for observing Shabbat. Here, Shabbat is an act of imitating God's behavior on the seventh day of the Creation of the world. It does not emerge from Jewish, or even human, history; it predates it. Shabbat is an opportunity for human beings to be like God and to frame their relationship to the physical world of creation in which they live. By imitating God's stopping and resting, we also acknowledge that we did not create the world and therefore do not have the right to dominate it without limits. Creation is from God; it is perhaps, at least in part, for humans, but it is not simply the plaything of humans to do with what they will. Shabbat reminds us of our place in the divine world that graciously contains us.

This rationale calls us to draw close to God the creator, by imitating the divine as fully as possible on this day. As God refrained from manipulating the world on this day, so too do we. As God turned away from physical labor to the spiritual gifts of rest and blessing, so too do we. Following the lead of the זכור model, we would be driven to maximize our spiritual state, engaging in spiritual contemplation, learning and prayer. It is a day to be with God rather than with the world.

A זכור-influenced definition of מלאכה/*melakhab* would focus on the Torah's use of this term to describe everything that God did in the first six days. Refraining from מלאכה means stepping back from creation. Anything that transforms or meddles with the world in any significant way is banned as we try to emulate the Creator's cessation of all physical creativity on the seventh day. Even the performance of light tasks that are physically transformative is a threat to the vision of a grateful humanity living in a world completely at rest.

Finally, in the זכור model, the day itself is something sacred, sanctified by God prior to any social need that this day might serve. It is hardwired into creation itself and its observance on a specific day of the week is critical. Far from a human convention, the seventh day designated as Shabbat theoretically traces back in perfect seven-day cycles back to the beginning of the world. Its holiness is intrinsic, not extrinsic, and it must be guarded from desecration.

Outline of שמור and זכור frames

זכור / Be Mindful of	שמור / Observe
Creation	Exodus
Drawn to imitate God	Drawn towards pleasure and freedom
Refraining from any creation-like manipulation of the world	Refraining from activity that is enslaving
The observance of Shabbat is supreme with respect to human life	Human enjoyment and life is a supreme value that Shabbat aims to serve
Shabbat precedes human and Jewish history	Shabbat is a response to human and Jewish history

3. Balance and Conflict

In many ways, these two models, זכור and שמור, complement and complete one another. The rationales of Exodus and Creation draw out different dimensions of the day and point us at once to a quest for holiness and a concern for social justice. But it doesn't take a great deal of effort to understand the Mekhilta's perspective that these two models also compete and can easily be in conflict. Sometimes, maximizing enjoyment and a sense of freedom is dramatically advanced by dominating and manipulating the physical world. Sometimes, deep spiritual practices that connect us to God can be taxing and even stress inducing. זכור and שמור and the divergent rationales that they represent do not always point us in the same direction. They compete for our attention and our loyalty.

Not only is this tension present on a religious and philosophical level, but it was played out historically in the religious world inhabited by our Sages. By looking at other frameworks of Shabbat in the Second Temple period, we can see just what a distinctive choice our Sages made in their reading of the Torah, both in the Mekhilta and beyond.

IV. Second Temple Approaches to Shabbat Observance: Extremes

A number of Second Temple sources give us a window into pre- and non-rabbinic approaches to Shabbat observance. Specifically, they help us imagine what it might have looked like to listen primarily or exclusively to either the זכור or שמור formulations. How might we observe Shabbat if we read the Torah more selectively and monochromatically?

I. זכור—Honoring God and creation

We find several indications of a Shabbat practice that focuses almost exclusively on Shabbat as a day to connect to God and to honor God's creation. Indeed, the Bible itself assumes this dimension in various places. II Kings 4:23 presumes that Shabbat would normally have been a time to seek out holy men, presumably for some sort of spiritual guidance or elevation. The Bible also highlights Shabbat's function as a day for peak engagement with God through the Temple service. This connection was apparently so intense and so central to the essence of this day that Lamentations 2:6 describes the Temple's destruction as "God causing Shabbat to be forgotten in Zion."

Many Second Temple Jews followed the lead of these sources. Josephus (*Against Apion* 1:161) reports that Jews in Jerusalem used to "rest on every seventh day on which times they make no use of their arms, nor meddle with husbandry, nor take care of any affairs of life, but spread out their hands in their holy places, and pray till the evening." Similar to contemporary observances of Yom Kippur, this observance of Shabbat strongly channels the זכור model, where desisting from labor primarily sets the stage for connecting with God.

The זכור model also calls for a radical withdrawal from the world. This approach is perhaps no better illustrated than in the following passages the Dead Sea Scrolls:

Damascus Document XI, translation from G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, New York 1997

But should any man fall into water or (fire), let him not be pulled out with the aid of a ladder or rope or (some such) utensil.

4Q265

If a person falls into water on Shabbat, one should extend him his garment but not pick up any tool.

Assuming these passages address cases that include danger to life, they may not sign on to the rabbinic view that Shabbat is suspended in order to save lives. That itself would not be shocking; the rabbinic view on that matter is far from self-evident in the Torah itself. If Shabbat is a capital crime in the Torah, why would it be obvious that one would violate it in order to save another person's life? Indeed, while rabbinic sources are unanimous on the suspension of Shabbat restrictions in the face of danger to life, there is robust debate over how to ground this norm in the Torah and what its precise limits are. Dead Sea communities may well have thought differently about this.

But more significant, for our purposes, is the clear allergy in these texts to the use of tools. Even when the tool would be taken in order to lift someone out of a pit, it is completely and totally forbidden to use it. This prohibition flows from a fervent obedience to the זכור model: Tools—even ones like ladders that don't even transitively *do* anything—represent the essence of human domination and manipulation of the world. There is hardly a more meaningful way of abjuring control of the natural world than by withdrawing from tools, figuratively placing oneself back in pre-historic times.

Other pre-rabbinic sources spell out this naturalistic pietism in great detail. The following text from the book of Jubilees, while containing a mix of ideas and practices, features a few rules that are very much in keeping with the זכור model of Shabbat:

Jubilees 50, translation from R.H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, Oxford 1913

...whoever desecrates that day, whoever lies with (his) wife, or whoever says he will do something on it, that he will set out on a journey thereon in regard to any buying or selling: And whoever draws water thereon which he had not prepared for himself on the sixth day, and whoever takes up any burden to carry it out of his tent or out of his house shall die. Ye shall do no work whatever on the Sabbath day save what ye have prepared for yourselves on the sixth day, so as to eat, and drink, and rest, and keep Sabbath from all work on that day, and to bless the Lord your God, who has given you a day of festival and a holy day: And a day of the holy kingdom for all Israel is this day among their days for ever...

And every man who does any work thereon, or goes a journey, or tills (his) farm, whether in his house or any other place, and whoever lights a fire, or rides on any beast, or travels by ship on the sea, and whoever strikes or kills anything, or slaughters a beast or a bird, or whoever catches an animal or a bird

or a fish, or whoever fasts or makes war on the Sabbaths: The man who does any of these things on the Sabbath shall die...

This passage gives us a strong sense of a Shabbat world that is frozen in time, protected in an absolute sense from human creativity. Everything must be prepared in advance, including even the water that one wishes to drink on Shabbat. Objects must not be moved from the home into the larger world. Sexual intimacy—the act that contains within it the human power to create new life—is forbidden. This is a world at rest, supported by a community that follows the divine example.

There is a nod in Jubilees to the aspect of Shabbat that focuses on pleasure. When this text forbids fasting on Shabbat—on pain of death!—it reveals some degree of complexity in its conception of the day. But for some Jews, a זכור model of Shabbat warranted and even recommended fasting and ascetic deprivation.

Numerous Greek and Roman authors testify to the practices of Jews to fast on Shabbat. In an essay on this topic,³ Yitzhak D. Gilat cites Strabo (Greek, 1st c. CE), Petronius (Roman, 1st c. CE) and others as affirming that fasting on Shabbat was a widespread and common Jewish practice. He spells out the larger theory behind this practice, and how it competed with other approaches to Shabbat:

These Gentile authors were familiar with Jewish circles that sanctified and purified themselves for the Sabbath day, either fasting on it or limiting their eating and drinking. Instead, they busied themselves with learning and worship from morning until night... [Their testimonies] reflect an essential reality in certain Jewish circles: The picture of a spiritual Shabbat, a Shabbat entirely dedicated to God...

[This conception] saw Shabbat as a day entirely consecrated to God, a day dedicated to repentance to spiritual work, to Torah study and to intensive prayer, to religious introspection and lofty spirituality. This path was characterized by minimizing pleasure and eating, with asceticism and even fasting.

(Gilat, 9)

All of these זכור-influenced materials show us how an extreme version of this paradigm can lead to a profound absence of relaxation and enjoyment, even to a profound lack of freedom on Shabbat. The שמור approach feels largely drowned out in these sources, which focus almost exclusively on imitating the God who ceased creation on the seventh day and desperately trying to connect to the profound sense of proximity

3. י.ד. גילת, "תעניית בשבת", תרביץ נב (תשמג): 1-16.

to the divine that is uniquely possible on Shabbat.

2. שמור—*Preserving human freedom and social justice*

By contrast, other Jews read the Torah very differently, privileging the שמור voice almost exclusively. This approach draws support from prophetic and later sources on Shabbat that seem nearly entirely focused on the economic dimension of Shabbat. For these sources, Shabbat is designed to prevent oppression. Failure to observe it will have dire *social* consequences. Amos 8:5 excoriates those who wait for the end of Shabbat to cheat the poor, indicating the critical role Shabbat plays in at least the temporary cessation of economic oppression. Isaiah 58:13 describes the essence of Shabbat as being about refraining from one's normal affairs and making time for personal enjoyment. Nehemiah 10:32 and 13:15-21 describe, with great sorrow and anger, the violation of Shabbat through the conduct of regular commerce, placing a clear emphasis on the closing of businesses as essential for the sanctity of the day.

This approach was seized upon by a number of Second Temple Jews, including those who became the eventual ancestors of Christianity. A number of passages from the Christian Bible, though they lie outside the Jewish canon, give us a good sense of some of the competing visions of Shabbat in the Jewish community at that time. As alternate interpretive paths not followed by later rabbis, these sources help us understand just what was at stake for our tradition in defining the essence of Shabbat and its practices.

Let us look at two passages from the Christian Bible, in order to get a clear sense of what a robust שמור model would look like:

Gospel of Mark 2:23-28, 3:1-6

One sabbath he was going through the grainfields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. And the Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?" And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God, when Abi'athar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?" And he said to them, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath; so the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath." Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. And they watched him, to see whether he would heal him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man who had the withered

hand, “Come here.” And he said to them, “Is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out, and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

Gospel of John 5:5-11, 16-17, 7:21-24

One man was there, who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him and knew that he had been lying there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be healed?” The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is troubled, and while I am going another steps down before me.” Jesus said to him, “Rise, take up your pallet, and walk.” And at once the man was healed, and he took up his pallet and walked.

Now that day was the sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who was cured, “It is the sabbath, it is not lawful for you to carry your pallet.”... And this was why the Jews persecuted Jesus, because he did this on the sabbath. But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working still, and I am working.”

...Jesus answered them, “I did one deed, and you all marvel at it. Moses gave you circumcision... and you circumcise a man upon the sabbath. If on the sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the sabbath I made a man’s whole body well? Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.”

The “Pharisees” in Mark and the “Jews” in John assume that a number of activities are forbidden on Shabbat, including plucking ears of grain, healing, and transporting objects in the public domain. These prohibitions are all found in rabbinic sources as well and are core elements of Shabbat observance as described in the earliest layers of the rabbinic tradition. It is perhaps tempting to read these Christian sources as nothing more and nothing less than an antinomian attack on Jewish traditions. But this would be incorrect. In fact, what we see here is a competing *Jewish* interpretation of the Bible and what it does and does not demand of us on Shabbat. We cannot fully understand the rabbinic rejection of this approach without understanding this Jewish-Christian source on its own terms.

The close reader will note that Jesus, in these passages, makes internal arguments for the validity of his practice, appealing to Scripture throughout. In defending his tolerance of his disciples picking grain in Shabbat, Jesus first appeals to a case where David seems to have overridden a law in order to feed those with

him who were very hungry. But he then makes a broader point about Shabbat itself: It is intended to serve human beings, not to make them miserable by their service to it. This is no antinomian claim; this is an argument about the essence of Shabbat, an argument grounded in the שמור model presented in Deuteronomy's version of the Ten Commandments. If the purpose of Shabbat is to provide rest to the weary and to free the oppressed, Jesus seems to have reasoned, what possible good could come of making people go hungry on account of Shabbat restrictions? He would likely have considered the plowing and reaping of a full field to be a violation of the Torah's ban on מלאכה, or work. But the isolated picking of grain to satisfy temporary hunger, he would have argued, ought not to be classified as forbidden in the first place. And Jesus seems to be conscious of another way of reading the Bible, one that he rejects and one that would claim that "man was made for the Sabbath." Indeed, the זכור model presents Shabbat as prior to human history, with Jews being called to fit themselves into its paradigm of sanctity. Jesus channels the שמור model exclusively here, allowing for dramatic physical manipulation of the world—plucking grain from its source—in order that his students not be uncomfortable.

Both the passages in Mark and John detail how Jesus healed people on Shabbat. Healing is another area where the tension between זכור and שמור is particularly stark. There are few more blatant human interventions in the world than healing, which is an explicit attempt to reverse the natural course of events. A זכור conception would be starkly opposed to this sort of involvement in God's world, seeing such action as an inappropriate human arrogation of authority on God's day. By contrast, a שמור conception focused on freedom and pleasure would see healing on Shabbat as innocuous, perhaps even mandatory in order to relieve human suffering. Indeed, Jesus offers two internal claims for the validity of his actions. First, as if to counter the זכור paradigm explicitly, he states that God continues to work on Shabbat, thus justifying ongoing work by humans. The claim seems to be: If the world is completely at rest, then why do people's illnesses continue to progress on Shabbat and why do they continue to suffer? For that matter, why does nature continue to operate—often in dynamic ways—on Shabbat? Surely, he argued, this suggests that we are not meant to cease and desist from all activity, especially those activities that could alleviate suffering and more robustly fulfill Shabbat's purpose of freeing us from all forms of slavery. Second, he appeals to circumcision, which all Jews agreed supersedes the Sabbath. If this sort of dramatic physical activity is permitted on Shabbat, on account of its being a positive intervention on behalf of the human body, why would we not apply this paradigm to all kinds of physically creative activities that can advance bodily enjoyment and integrity?

In John, Jesus concludes his speech with an appeal to “right judgment,” a kind of common sense standard as to what is best for the welfare of the human being. This is in fact a perfectly coherent reading of the Bible, albeit one that interprets the זכור material entirely in light of the שמור model. The mirror image of the sources we saw earlier, these Christian passages show us another extreme in Second Temple times, one that valued human freedom and Deuteronomy’s call for social justice above all else.

V. The Rabbinic Shabbat: Rejecting the Extremes and Listening to the Entire Torah

The rabbinic approach to the tension between זכור and שמור is to embrace it. The Mekhilta we began with acknowledges the warring visions of Shabbat that can be inspired by Creation, on the one hand, and Exodus, on the other. We often rest and enjoy a feeling of freedom by dominating the physical world, whereas our pursuit of God and subordinating ourselves to creation can be not only difficult, but even painful at times. But the Mekhilta and the rest of rabbinic tradition insist on an unshakeable commitment to the coexistence of זכור and שמור, both of which were uttered, at once, by the same Living God. A number of aspects of the rabbinic Shabbat can only be fully understood through the lens of this attempted synthesis.

1. Pleasure and its Limits

Following the שמור model, many of our songs and prayers emphasize the centrality of rest and joy on this day. Whether it be the Shabbat table song מנוחה ושמחה / “Rest and Joy” or the liturgical phrase ישמחו במלכותך שומרי שבת / “May those who observe Shabbat rejoice in your kingdom”, the aspect of Shabbat as a day of enjoyment shines through rabbinic prayer and song.

The principle of עונג שבת, the pursuit of various kinds of pleasures on Shabbat, is central in rabbinic thinking and has real legal consequences. There are a number of examples of restrictions that are lifted in the name of עונג. Talmud Bavli Shabbat 113a records a series of traditions forbidding running on Shabbat, and yet, R. Yitzhak of Corbeil (France, 13th c.) rules:

ספר מצוות קטן מצוה רפא

ונראה לי כי בחורים המתענגים בריצתם ובקפיצתם מותר, שאינם רוצים להרויח, וכן לראות כל דבר שמתענגים בו לראותו

Sefer Mitzvot Katan #281

It seems to me that young men who get עונג/pleasure from running and jumping are allowed to do so, since they are not doing it out of motive for profit. Similarly, [it is permissible] to watch anything that one gets עונג/pleasure from watching.

As an extension of this point, R. Yisrael Isserlein (Germany, 15th c.) ruled that the normal ban on frivolous and excessive speech on Shabbat⁴ can be overridden in the name of עונג/pleasure. He therefore justified the practice of gathering on Shabbat to listen to secular accounts of battles and royal adventures, which was a popular pastime in the middle ages:

תרומת הדשן סימן סא

...דאסור להרבות דברים כמו בחול, וכש"כ יותר מבחול. אמנם אם אותם בני אדם מתענגים בכך, כשמדברים ומספרים שמועות מהמלכים ושרים ומלחמותיהם וכה"ג, כדרך הרבה בני אדם שמתאווים לכך, נראה דודאי שרי. דכה"ג כ' בסמ"ק דבחורים המתענגים במרוצתם ובקפיצתם, מותר; וכן לראות כל דבר שמתענגים בו לראות ע"כ. הא חזינן דאע"ג דדרשו חכמים וכבדתו מעשות דרכיך, שלא יהא הלוכך של שבת כהלוכך של חול, פ"י שלא ירוץ ויקפוץ, ואעפ"כ אם עושה להתענג ולאות נפשו שרי....

Terumat HaDeshen #61

...It is forbidden to speak as excessively as one does during the week, all the more so to do so more than one does during the week. Nonetheless, if people enjoy speaking and telling tales about kings and princes and their wars—as many people love to do—it seems it is certainly permissible. For [R. Yitzhak of Corbeil] wrote similarly that “young men who get pleasure from running and jumping are allowed to do so... similarly, [it is permissible] to watch anything that one gets pleasure from watching.” We see from here that even though the Sages derived from verses... that one should not run and jump, it is nonetheless permissible to do so if one does it for pleasure and fulfillment of desire.

Perhaps more dramatically, rabbinic law strongly embraces the notion that people should not have to die for Shabbat observance. In a passage eerily reminiscent of the passage from Mark we saw above, one Sage argues

4. See Talmud Yerushalmi Shabbat 15:3 and Talmud Bavli Shabbat 113a.

for desecrating Shabbat in order to save life as follows:

מכילתא דרבי ישמעאל כי תשא - מסכתא דשבתא פרשה א

ושמרתם את השבת. זה הוא שהיה ר' שמעון בן מנסיא אומר, לכם שבת מסורה, ואי אתם מסורין לשבת.

Mekhilta of R. Yishmael Ki Tissa, Massekhta DeShabbata Parashah 1

“You shall keep the Shabbat.” This refers to what R. Shimon b. Menasia used to say: “Shabbat is in your custody, whereas you are not in the custody of Shabbat.”

R. Shimon b. Menasia’s point is clear, and emerges from the שמור perspective: If Shabbat is triggered by our memory of slavery and is intended to save human beings from suffering and oppression, it cannot be that they are commanded to die rather than violate it. A זכור perspective of ultimate submission to creation might well lead to the sort of approach we saw in the Dead Sea documents. By contrast, rabbinic tradition rejects this and hears the שמור voice of the Torah loud and clear, setting clear limits on Shabbat’s ability to control us and our lives.⁵ Here, זכור yields to שמור, with rabbinic law insisting that considerations of pleasure and the preservation of human life can be overriding Shabbat values.

And yet, there is a dialectical insistence that the Torah’s זכור perspective is equally critical in observing this commandment of sanctifying Shabbat. עונג is never significant enough of a factor in rabbinic law to knock out a core Shabbat violation; only more peripheral, rabbinic restrictions can be so displaced. Rabbinic sources take for granted that Shabbat observance will sometimes be unpleasant and inconvenient and would unanimously treat Jesus’s permission to pick grain for mere hunger to be heretical. Though man’s life was not meant to be laid down for the Sabbath, man was indeed made to be subordinate one day a week to the creation that preceded him. This perspective flows from the perspective of זכור and its vision of a Shabbat that does not serve humans but makes them reach—sometimes in ways that deny pleasure—towards the Creator of heaven and earth.

Gilat, in his essay, fills out the picture on fasting on Shabbat with a fantastic example of rabbinic ambivalence that perfectly encapsulates the tension between the זכור and שמור paradigms in this realm. He cites a fundamental debate preserved in the Yerushalmi about the essence of the day:

5. For more on the relationship between early Christian and rabbinic views on the suspension of Shabbat to save lives, see, שמש, א. "פיקוח נפש ודברים אחרים שדוחים את השבת" תרביץ פ (תשעב): 481-505.

ירושלמי שבת טו:ג⁶

ר' חגי בשם ר' שמואל בר נחמן לא ניתנו ימים טובים ושבתות אלא לאכילה ולשתייה ועל ידי שהפה הזוה טריח התירו לו לעסוק בהן בדברי תורה. ר' ברכיה בשם ר' חיה בר בא לא ניתנו ימים טובים ושבתות אלא לעסוק בדברי תורה. בחול על ידי שהוא טורח ואין לו פניי לעסוק בדברי תורה ניתנו לו ימים טובים ושבתות לעסוק בהן בדברי תורה.

Talmud Yerushalmi Shabbat 15:3

R. Haggai in the name of R. Shmuel b. Nahman: “Yom Tov and Shabbat were given solely for the purpose of eating and drinking. Only because the mouth would find it cumbersome [not to speak] did they allow a person to study Torah on those days.” R. Berekhiah in the name of R. Hiyya b. Ba: “Yom Tov and Shabbat were given solely for the purpose of Torah study. During the week, a person is busy and has no free time to study Torah, therefore Yom Tov and Shabbat were given to study Torah.”

This debate sums up the tension we have seen so far: Is Shabbat a day to run away from slavery and towards the physical pleasures of life or is it a day to run towards God and the life of the spirit, even if that carries one away from various enjoyable activities? Gilat carefully analyzes Talmud Bavli Berakhot 31b and shows that R. Yose b. Zimra pronounced that those who fast on Shabbat annul a lifetime of evil decrees, seemingly praising this practice. A later sage, R. Nahman b. Yitzhak was uncomfortable with this ruling and added: “But such a person is punished for neglecting pursuing the pleasure of Shabbat (עונג שבת).” And yet, Gilat also points us to Pesahim 68b, where we are told that Mar, son of Ravina, used to fast “every day of the year except for Shavuot, Purim and the day before Yom Kippur.” The presence of Shavuot in this list of exceptions suggests that he fasted on the other festivals, and on Shabbat as well, presumably only eating on the evenings of those days. Fasting is eventually understood to be generally forbidden on Shabbat in rabbinic law, except in extreme situations.⁷ And even so, not all Jewish communities abandoned the practice entirely, particularly on the Shabbat between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur.⁸ This uneven legacy captures the split personality of Shabbat in the Torah itself, a day at once for pleasure and for imitating and drawing near to God, a split

6. The text here is based on a *genizah* fragment published by Y.N. Epstein in *Tarbiz* 3 and cited by Gilat in his article. The text in our printed editions of the Yerushalmi has a number of minor variants and corrections, some of which confuse the original meaning.

7. See Shulhan Arukh OH 248:1.

8. See Gilat, 13-15.

preserved and not fully resolved in rabbinic sources, culture and practice.

2. *Healing and Muktzeh: Hands off the world, within limits*

Many Jews are familiar with the principle that Shabbat is superseded by the imperative to preserve life and yet surprised to find that healing, more broadly, is forbidden. Indeed, under a שמור paradigm alone, alleviating human pain would seem to be obviously permitted in the context of a day that celebrates and enshrines our release from slavery. Nonetheless, the prohibition on healing—which we saw referenced in various Christian sources above—remains black letter law in the rabbinic tradition:

שולחן ערוך אורח חיים שכה:א

מי שיש לו מיחוש בעלמא והוא מתחזק והולך כבריא אסור לעשות לו שום רפואה...

Shulhan Arukh Orah Hayyim 328:1

It is forbidden to do any act of healing for someone who is merely in pain but who is otherwise walking around like a healthy person...

Even someone who is sick to the point of being bedridden but is in no danger of dying does not trigger a full-scale override of Shabbat prohibitions. Rabbinic restrictions can be lifted in certain circumstances, and the help of Gentiles can be enlisted, but Jews may not perform biblical מלאכה for such a person.⁹ If the influence of the שמור paradigm is responsible for the desecration of Shabbat to save lives, then the זכור paradigm is a powerful counterpoint, demanding that when life is not on the line, we humbly accept the natural state of affairs for the twenty-five hours of Shabbat. Healing is one of the ultimate acts of human intervention and Shabbat is a time when humans, like God, step back from intervening. The complex web of laws surrounding human well-being on Shabbat is yet another example of holding the conflicting paradigms of שמור and זכור together.

Similarly, a שמור-influenced observer will like find the rabbinic laws of Shabbat extreme in the context of מוקצה, the restrictions surrounding handling objects and tools on Shabbat. If Shabbat is essentially about forbidding the hard labor of slavery, then why would we forbid moving objects and tools even if no work is being done with them? Indeed, various formulations of מוקצה that try to anchor these laws in concern for

9. See Shulhan Arukh OH 328:17 and commentaries for the various views.

physical labor can seem forced.¹⁰ Instead, מוקצה is best understood as descending from earlier Shabbat practices—like those reflected in the Dead Sea text we saw above—that were object allergic, demanding a withdrawal from most forms of physical contact with the world. Rocks and other raw, natural objects may not be moved on Shabbat, and the earliest rabbinic sources forbid moving tools of any sort except in the context of eating. This sort of withdrawal certainly often makes life less pleasant and convenient, but it dramatically honors Shabbat as a day when we recoil from creation, spurning any manipulation of the natural worlds and any contact with the main means through which we dominate it.

Nonetheless, over time, many of the restrictions around the handling of objects were weakened, as the following passage makes clear:

תוספתא שבת יד הלכה א

בראשונה היו אומ' שלשה כלים ניטלין בשבת מקצוע של דבילה וזומא לסטרון של קדירה וסכין קטנה שעל גבי שלחן.
חזרו להיות מוסיפין והולכין עד שאמרו כל הכלים ניטלין בשבת חוץ מן המסר הגדול ויתד של מחרישה.

Tosefta Shabbat 14:1

At first, they used to say that only three tools could be moved on Shabbat: a knife to chop pressed dates, a soup ladle and a small table knife. They added more and more to this list until they said, “All tools may be moved on Shabbat, except for the large saw (used to cut wood) and the pin of the plow.”

As we saw above, one approach preserved in the Dead Sea Scrolls objected to using a tool to lift a person out of a pit, perhaps even if his life was in danger. Not only do rabbinic sources reject that practice, but they eventually permit using even the most objectionable sorts of tools, as long as they were used for acceptable purposes:

משנה שבת יז-א-ד

כל הכלים ניטלין בשבת... נוטל אדם קורנס לפצע בו את האגוזים וקורדום לחתוך את הדבלה מגירה לגרור בה את הגבינה מגריפה לגרוף בה את הגרוגרות את הרחת ואת המזלג לתת עליו לקטן את הכוש ואת הכרכר לתחוב בו מחט של יד ליטול בו את הקוץ ושל סקאים לפתוח בו את הדלת...

10. This seems to have been the primary motivation of Rambam in Hilkhot Shabbat 24:12-13 as he attempts to come up with a theory of מוקצה that is largely detached from direct concerns of doing מלאכה. See Ra'avad's attack on him there as well.

Mishnah Shabbat 17:1-4

All tools may be moved on Shabbat... One may take a hammer to crush nuts, a hatchet to cut dates, a saw to grate cheese, a rake to gather up figs, a winnowing shovel or a pitchfork to give food to a child, a spindle or a shuttle to pierce something, a sewing needle to remove a splinter, or a sackmaker's needle to open a door...

This transition reflects a broader shift in rabbinic sources on Shabbat towards the primacy of actions and intentions, away from a focus on objects. Eventually, מוקצה restrictions are often treated as mere rabbinic “fences around the law” that can be waived in the case of illness and other pressing circumstances.¹¹ But when we understand these laws as derivative—and eventually highly vestigial—details of an even more robust זכור model, they are important guardians of a humble posture towards creation and human creativity on Shabbat. In these instances, שמור yields to זכור, as we withdraw from any hint of intervention in God's world, whether through healing or tools, even at the cost of human comfort and convenience.

3. Is מלאכה best defined as “work”?

We can perhaps best see the synthetic approach of rabbinic sources by paying attention to how they define מלאכה. As we have seen, taking the זכור paradigm seriously greatly expands our conception of מלאכה and what is forbidden on Shabbat. Almost anything that is physically transformative and creative is forbidden, irrespective of how physically taxing or economically significant it may be. In other words, even those actions that don't evoke slavery—such as picking an individual fruit off a tree, or lighting a candle—still trample on the notion of the world as complete and created.

Nonetheless, the שמור model that is focused on work, real work, defines the entire substructure of the rabbinic laws of Shabbat. By the time of the Mishnah's redaction, the prohibition on מלאכה was understood to be represented by 39 categories, as laid out in the following famous Mishnah:

משנה שבת ז:ב

אבות מלאכות ארבעים חסר אחת:

הזורע והחורש והקוצר והמעמר הדש והזורח הבורר הטוחן והמרקד והלש והאופה
הגוזז את הצמר המלבנו והמנפצו והצובעו והטווה והמיסך והעושה שתי בתי גירין והאורג שני חוטין והפוצע ב' חוטין

11. See Mishnah Berurah 328:58 for one example.

הקושר והמתיר והתופר שתי תפירות הקורע ע"מ לתפור שתי תפירות
הצד צבי השוחטו והמפשיטו המולחו והמעבד את עורו והמוחקו והמחזכו הכותב שתי אותיות והמוחק על מנת לכתוב שתי
אותיות

הבונה והסותר

המכבה והמבעיר

המכה בפטיש

המוציא מרשות לרשות

הרי אלו אבות מלאכות ארבעים חסר אחת:

Mishnah Shabbat 7:2

There are 39 categories of *melakhah*:

Planting, plowing, harvesting, binding into sheaves, threshing, winnowing, sorting, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking.

Shearing wool, bleaching, combing, dyeing, spinning, warping, making two spindle-trees, weaving two threads, separating two threads, tying a knot, untying a knot, sewing two stitches, tearing in order to sew two stitches.

Hunting deer, slaughtering, skinning, salting, preparing the hide, scraping the hair off, cutting it, writing two letters, erasing in order to write two letters.

Building and demolishing.

Kindling and extinguishing.

Hammering.

Transferring from one place into another.

These are the 39 categories of *melakhah*.

At first blush, moderns may think of this as a very technical list, derived from all sorts of scriptural readings. In fact, it is essentially the to-do list of a person living in antiquity, focused on the activities of baking, making clothing, writing, construction, the use of fire and commerce (which requires the moving of goods from one place to another). That context is made clear by the following text, where Ben Zoma marvels at the consumer economy made possible through division of labor:

תוספתא ברכות ו:ב

בן זומא כשראה אוכלסין בהר הבית אומר ברוך מי שברא את אלו לשמשני כמה יגע אדם הראשון ולא טעם לוגמה אחת עד שזרע וחרש וקצר ועמר ודש וזרה וברר וטחן והרקיד ולש ואפה ואחר כך אכל ואני עומד בשחרית ומוצא אני את כל אילו לפני כמה יגע אדם הראשון ולא לבש חלוק עד שגזז ולבן ונפס וצבע וטווה וארג ואחר כך לבש ואני עומד בשחרית ומוצא את כל אילו לפני כמה אומניות שוקדות ומשכימות ואני עומד בשחרית ומוצא את כל אילו לפני.

Tosefta Berakhot 6:2

When Ben Zoma used to see masses of people on the Temple Mount, he used to say, “Blessed is the One who created these in order to serve me! Consider how hard the first human being had to work before even tasting a mouthful of food: planting, plowing, harvesting, binding into sheaves, threshing, winnowing, sorting, grinding, sifting, kneading and baking and only then eating. Whereas I get up in the morning and find everything ready! Consider how hard the first human being had to work before wearing a piece of clothing: shearing, bleaching, dyeing, spinning and weaving and only then wearing it. Whereas I get up in the morning and find everything ready! How many artisans must diligently get up early whereas I get up in the morning and find everything ready!

The list here is not religiously motivated, nor does it have to do with Shabbat. It is simply an enumeration of the daily tasks that those involved in the crafts of baking and clothing production must do. As such, they represent “work” and human toil in the ancient world. Placing these categories at the heart of the definition of Shabbat is a שמור-influenced move, ensuring that the desire to be humble before creation does not entirely obscure the need to avoid creating another Egypt through our economy. That has lenient ramifications—many of the core definitions of מלאכה are defined by whether something of human use as been accomplished¹²—as well as stringent ones: Even activities that may not be in this list of thirty-nine labors are often forbidden by later authorities when they seem too much like what is commonly experienced as “work”.

Indeed, even hundreds of years later, a remarkable little piece of *halakhab* demonstrates that the common sense distinction between the labors that are “true work” and those that are technically designated as מלאכה was not lost:

רבינו ירוחם - תולדות אדם וחווה נתיב יב חלק כ דף קב טור ד

לעשות מלאכה כבר כתבתי למעלה דאסור עד שיאמר סדר תפלה...וכל זה מיירי במלאכה כגון אורג או כותב כיוצא בו אבל להדליק נר או להוציא מרשות לרשות אינו צריך כל זה.

12. See Mishnah Shabbat chapters 7-13 for many examples of this.

Toledot Adam VeHava 12:20, 102d, R. Yeroḥam, Spain, 14th c.

I already wrote above that one may not perform any *melakhab* until one has prayed [Arvit at the end of Shabbat, with the passage about *havdalab*]... but this only applies to *melakhab* like weaving or writing or other similar tasks, as opposed to lighting fires or transferring things from one domain to another [which one may do as soon as it is dark, even if one has not yet said *havdalab*].

The meaning of R. Yeroḥam here is plain: Certain physical actions are classified as *melakhab* because of their physical and transformational significance, as in the case of lighting a candle or moving an object from inside one's house to outside of it. These are, if you will, זכור-inspired restrictions, posing no threat to social and economic health but constituting meaningful interventions into the created world. By contrast, weaving and writing are classified as *melakhab* of a different sort, one that can properly be called “work”, in keeping with the שמור paradigm. Though both are equally forbidden on Shabbat, R. Yeroḥam argues that only performing the latter category requires a verbal declaration of Shabbat's end. In this small detail, then, the distinction between the זכור and שמור definitions of *melakhab* is preserved. While later halakhic authorities rejected this practical ruling, R. Yeroḥam's insight is testimony to the ongoing echoes of the ancient tension in the nature of Shabbat itself.

VI. Shabbat: A day that unites?

This framework of שמור and זכור not only unpacks the meaning of the first line of לכה דודי. It can perhaps also help contemporary Jews be united by Shabbat rather than divided by it. I recall once seeing a young boy, raised in an observant home, talking with his grandmother, who did not really observe Shabbat, on a Saturday afternoon. It was a nice warm day, and the grandmother asked her grandson if he would go outside and pick a grapefruit off the tree in the back yard so she could serve it as a snack. The boy responded sheepishly that it was Shabbat and he could not pick the fruit off the tree. She responded with a puzzled look and a dismissive tone: “But that's not *work*!” The boy simply shrugged and they moved on to other things.

Viewed through the שמור and זכור paradigms, we might view this exchange differently. The grandmother was essentially instinctively deploying a שמור-model understanding of מלאכה. Though not observant herself, she clearly had an intuitive respect for a Shabbat observance grounded in the command to remember the Exodus. Refrain from “work”, in the sense of economic enslavement and participation in the office culture, were

transparent concepts to her. More opaque to her—and to the grandson who had no tools or vocabulary to explain it—were the restrictions around picking a single fruit off of a tree for pleasure and enjoyment. Indeed, the שמור paradigm would seem to allow for, if not recommend, such an action in the name of עונג שבת! What she needed to hear was a response that evoked the זכור model as another defining factor of traditional Shabbat observance. True, nothing of the mythic fabric of the Exodus-inspired command would have been torn by the picking of that grapefruit. But the act would have been a profound rupture in the spiritual practice of imitating the God who stopped creating on the seventh day. It would have been an act of מלאכה, not in the sense of “work” as defined in our contemporary culture, but in the sense of manipulating creation in significant physical ways. I suspect this sort of vocabulary would have helped the boy feel better about himself in that moment and would perhaps have engendered respect from his grandmother’s end as well. In any event, we should acknowledge that the tension in these types of interactions is nothing more than the channeling of an ancient balancing act intended to capture the Torah’s multivocality around Shabbat. That would go a long way to increasing both commitment and understanding.

This is true for so many Shabbat observances that seem extreme or inappropriate when viewed through the lens of one of these frames alone, but that come into sharp focus when viewed through the other. When a couple with a small child carries a baby stroller up twelve flights of steps, it is hard to see how they are properly honoring Shabbat as a day of rest. Yet refraining from the active use of electric technology to control our environment on Shabbat is one of the most powerful demonstrations of standing humbly before creation, even if those restraints sometimes make you break a sweat. As our world becomes more electrified, we will need to keep both the שמור and זכור paradigms clearly in front of us as we attempt to make wise decisions around the application of *halakhab* to our lives. Actions that may seem minor—the flipping of a switch, the release of stored electrons—may or may not threaten our spiritual goal of keeping Egypt at bay, but may run roughshod over our attempt to have humanity step back from its domination of the world once every seven days. In the context of the modern state of Israel, what may be good for religious pluralism and may seem minor from the perspective of leaving creation alone—such as the opening of malls on Shabbat—may be the grossest violation of the Torah’s dream of a society at rest, especially its most economically vulnerable. And when we fail to make any distinction between things that are truly “work” and those that are truly not, we can end up with unwarranted stringencies, as in the context of serious physical need and vulnerability. Highlighting the Torah’s own dual program of Shabbat—imitating God through restraint and translating the experience of Egypt into a commitment to a day of social rest—can go a long way to building

bridges and opening minds.

When we recite לכה דודי on Friday nights, we should redouble our commitment to listening to the *entire* Torah. Unlike various groups in Second Temple Judaism, *Hazal*, our Sages of blessed memory, refused to allow one of the Torah's messages about Shabbat to trample the other. May our conversations about Shabbat always to preserve this ethic of אחד נאמר /said in one utterance, gleaned wisdom from the competing models of זכור and שמור, as well as from the symphony of voices that make up this ever relevant area of *halakhab*.

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