Work (Melakhah) in The Tanakh, Part 1

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Work is something we do 6 days a week and on the seventh day we do not work. We see this in the Ten Commandments. Shemot/Exodus 20:9-10

9Six days you shall labor (ta'avod אַבְיבּיבְּה) and do (va'asiyta אַרִיבְיבִּי) all your work (kal-mela'kh'tekha אַבְיבִיבְיבִּיבִי), 10but the seventh day is a sabbath of Yehovah Eloheykha: you shall not do (ta'aseh אַבְיבִיבַּי) any work (kal mela'khah אַבְיבִיבִּיבִיי)—you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, or your cattle, or the stranger (ger'kha אַבִּיבִיבָּג) who is within your settlements.

We see from here that we are to labor (service) and do (make) our work for six days. The seventh day is for us to cease on and not to do (make) our mala'khah (work).

So lets look at some of the Hebrew words we will be looking at for this study.

Mela'khah (Work) whose root is (lamed-aleph-kaf-sofit) and related to Mal'akh. It is a Noun Feminine found by reference number 4399 pg. 521 BDB, and NEHC pgs. 705-706

Mal'akh (Messenger – Divine or Human) whose root is (lamed-aleph-kaf-sofit) is a Noun Masculine from reference number 4397 on pg. 521 BDB, and pgs. NEHC 704-705

Lamed-Aleph Kaf-Sofit is messenger/send, be sent, wait on, minister as found in other Semitic languages.

Avad (serve/to serve/served) is (ayin-bet-dalet) and is the Verb and root for this word referenced as 5647 on pg. 712 of the BDB, and pgs. 887-889 in the NEHC

Avodah (Labor/Service) is from the root Avad and is a Noun Feminine and reference number 5656 pg. 715 BDB, pgs. 894-895 NEHC

Eved (slave/servant)) is from the root Avad and is a Masculine Noun and reference number 5650 pgs. 713 BDB, pgs 889-894 NEHC

First let look at Mela'khah.

Even before the commandments we are commanded to not do work on the 1st and 7th days of Chag hamatzot (Feast of unleavened bread).

Shemot (Exodus) 12:16

16 You shall celebrate a sacred occasion on the first day, and a sacred occasion on the seventh day; no work at all shall be done (kal mela'khah lo ye'aseh
הַּבְּיבִּי בְּיבִּי בְּיבִּי בְּיבִּי בְּיבִּי בְּיבִי בְּיבִי בְּיבִי בְּיבִי בְּיבִי בְּיבִי בְּיבִי בְיבִי בְּיבִי בְיבִי בּיבּי בּיבּיי בּיבּי בּיבּיבּי בּיבּיי בּיבּי בּיבּי בּיבּיי בּיבּי בּיבּי בּיבּיי בּיבּיי

Here we see that one should not make work on these days.

We read Shemot (Exodus) 20:9-10 already so we won't read it again.

Shemot (Exodus) 31:14,15

14You shall keep the sabbath, for it is holy for you. He who **profanes** (**mechal'leyha** רְּלִילִי בְּילִי בְילִי בְּילִי בְּילִי בְּילִי בְּילִי בְּילִי בְּילִי בְּילִי בְילִי בְילִיי בְילִי בְּילִי בְילִי בְּילִי בְילִי בְּילִי בְילִי בְּילִי בְּיל בְּילִי בְּילִי בְּילִי בְּילִי בְּילִי בְּילְים בְּילְים בְּילִי בְּילִי בְּילְים בְּילִי בְּילְים בְּילִי בְּילִי בְּילִי בְּילְים בְּ

Again we make our work. The way we make the Shabbat common is that we work in it.

Shemot (Exodus) 35:2

²On six days **work may be done (te'aseh mela'khah מְלְאֶלֶהְ** מְלֶאֶלֶהְ,), but on the seventh day you shall have a sabbath of complete ceasing (Shabbat Shabbaton), holy to Yehovah; whoever does any **work (mela'khah מְלְאֶלְהְ**) on it shall be put to death. Again repeating how it is the work we make.

Vayikra (Leviticus) 16:29-31

Yom Kippurim (Day of Atonements) is referred to as a Shabbat Shabbaton as is the weekly shabbat. Both we are not to do mela'khah (work).

Vayikra (Leviticus) 23:3

³On six days work (mela'khah מְלֵאלְאָרֶה) may be done, but on the seventh day there shall be a sabbath of complete ceasing (Shabbat Shabbaton מְלֵאלֵה מִלְאָלֵא בָּר לֹאַ מִלְאַלֵּי), a sacred occasion. You shall do no work (kal mela'khah lo ta'asu בְּלִיבְּהְלֹאבְהָר לֹאַ תַּעְעֵׁלֵי); it shall be a sabbath of Yehovah throughout your settlements.

Here we see again that one should not make their work. This was specific for Shabbat.

Vayikra (Leviticus) 23:26-32

So for the weekly Shabbat and Yom Kippurim we are not to any work. What about the other Chagim (Feasts)?

Vayikra (Leviticus) 23:3-8

Here we see a qualification of a type of work. These Mikra kodesh are not shabbat shabbaton, or just shabbaton, or just shabbat. Is it possible, the only work, which could not be done, was a work of Avodah (service). If you refer back to Exodus 12 we see that

the only work that was allowed was cooking on these two days. Therefore it tells us that this was not just occupation forbidden but all forms of work save cooking and all work related to that.

Shemot (Exodus) 12:16

16 You shall celebrate a sacred occasion on the first day, and a sacred occasion on the seventh day; no work at all shall be done (kal mela'khah lo ye'aseh

תֹבְלי בְּהָלְ בְּהָרְ לֹאֵבְיהָ) on them; only what every person is to eat, that alone may be prepared (done) for you.

Lets continue.

Vayikra (Leviticus) 23:15-21

Vayikra (Leviticus) 23:23-25

²³Yehovah spoke to Moses, saying: ²⁴Speak to the Israelite people thus: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe complete ceasing (shabbaton), a sacred occasion (Mikra qodesh) commemorated with loud blasts. ²⁵You shall not **work at your occupations (kol mela'khet 'avodah)** [all work of service]; and you shall bring an offering by fire to Yehovah.

Here we see the Chag Teru'ah is a shabbaton. Though a rest day it has the same restriction as the spring and summer Chagim.

Vayikra (Leviticus) 23:34-36, 39

³⁹Mark, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the yield of your land, you shall observe the festival of Yehovah [to last] seven days: a complete ceasing (shabbaton) on the first day, and a complete ceasing (Shabbaton) on the eighth day.

Thus, like the spring Chag the restriction is work. While the term dealing with service also seems to be applied we don't have a reason, which shows us that this was different, then other places which refer to simply all work. The one kind of work, which may be done on the spring feast days, is meal preparation. Some would use haqqesh (analogy) to apply that one may do meal preparation on this other chagim also.

So what is the service work? As we have shown earlier that Avodah is the feminine noun form deriving its meaning from the verb Avad. Let look at this word for its meaning.

Bereshit (Genesis) 15:13

13And He said to Abram, "Know well that your offspring shall be strangers in a land not theirs, and they shall be enslaved (va avadum \[\frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{2} \]) and oppressed four hundred years;

As a servant or slave they served.

Bereshit (Genesis) 29:14-15, 25

14 and Laban said to him, "You are truly my bone and flesh." When he had stayed with him a month's time, 15 Laban said to Jacob, "Just because you are a kinsman, [and] should you serve me (va avad'taniy בַּרַדְתַּלִיבָּיִ) for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?"

25 When morning came, there was Leah! So he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? I was in your service (avad'tiy בְּדַרָּת') for Rachel! Why did you deceive me?"

As a contracted laborer.

So Avad can be the service/labor done freely or by force. So service work is work which one does to serve another. What we do everyday at our jobs is a form of Avad if we serve someone and earn pay. This why we see that for even our servants and animals are to rest on shabbat, shabbaton, and Chag.

Shemot (Exodus) 20: 8-10

*Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. ⁹Six days **you shall labor (ta'avod** מֹבְיבָּבְּה) and do all **your work (mela'kh'tekha מְבִּבְּבְּרִבְּ**), ¹⁰but the seventh day is a sabbath of Yehovah Eloheykha: you shall not do any **work(mela'khah מְבְּבְּרְבְּר**)— you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, or your cattle, or the stranger who is within your settlements.

We have established that while there are requirements for shabbat, shabbaton, and Chag about work we see that on shabbaton or Chagim it is restricted to not doing service work. In most places but in others it states no work at all. What I believe we see here is that your Melakhah is the same as your Avod. Thus, one way of referring to Avodah is to also refer to it in conjunction with Melakhah.

So what kinds of things are work or service

Avad (service)

Let look at the avad of Yakkov.

In Bereshit/Genesis 30 we see that Yakkov was a shepherd and breeder.

29But he said, "You know well how I have served you (avad'tiykha T'T) and how your livestock has fared with me. 30For the little you had before I came has grown to much, since Yehovah has blessed you wherever I turned. And now, when shall I make provision for my own household?" 31He said, "What shall I pay you?" And Jacob said, "Pay me nothing! If you will do this thing for me, I will again pasture and keep your flocks: 32let me pass through your whole flock today, removing from there every speckled and spotted animal—every dark-colored sheep and every spotted and speckled goat. Such shall be my wages. 33In the future when you go over my wages, let my honesty toward you testify for me: if there are among my goats any that are not speckled or spotted or any sheep that are not dark-colored, they got there by theft." 34And Laban said, "Very well, let it be as you say."

At first he served Laban for his wives caring for Laban's flock. Afterwards the flocks became his wage. Shepherding is an avad.

The Avad of B'nei Yisrael in Mitzrayim

Shemot 1:13-14

13The Egyptians ruthlessly **imposed (vaya'avidu אָרַבְּיבְי**) upon the Israelites ¹⁴the various **labors (ba'avodah רְבִּיבְיב**) that they made them perform. Ruthlessly they made life bitter for them with harsh **labor (avodah רְבִיבְיב**) at mortar and bricks and with all sorts of **tasks (avodatam בּרְבִיב**) in the field.

Making building material, assembling building materials, and tasks of the field (plowing, seeding, and harvesting)

The Avad of Pesach

Shemot (Exodus) 13:5-8

5 So, when Yehovah has brought you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall observe (and serve you – ve'avad'ta בְּבִיבְיבִין) in this month the following practice (the service - et ha avodah

6 "Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a festival of Yehovah. 7 Throughout the seven days unleavened bread shall be eaten; no leavened bread shall be found with you, and no leaven shall be found in all your territory. 8 And you shall explain to your son on that day, 'It is because of what Yehovah did for me when I went free from Egypt.'

Keeping the days of unleavened bread is a service as well as removing the leaven from our homes. What we read in verses 6-7 is the service therefore the we see that this was a service but not considered work.

The Avad of serving Yehovah

Shemot 23:25

25**You shall serve (va'avad'tem בְּבְרַבְי**) Yehovah Eloheykha, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will remove sickness from your midst.

When we serve him we are we are doing things (service).

The Avad of the Levites

Bamidbar (Numbers) 4:24-26

24These are the **duties** (**service – adodat אַבְּבּוֹב**) of the Gershonite clans as **to labor** (**la'avod לְבִּבְּבִּ**) and porterage (ulemassah/and to burden 4853 אַבְּבְּלַבְּלּ): ²⁵they shall carry the cloths of the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting with its covering, the covering of dolphin skin that is on top of it, and the screen for the entrance of the Tent of Meeting; ²⁶the hangings of the enclosure, the screen at the entrance of the gate of the enclosure that surrounds the Tabernacle, the cords thereof, and the altar, and all their service equipment and all their accessories; and they shall perform the service

Here the carrying the burden of the tent of meeting and parts was a service (avad).

The avad of keeping a vineyard

Devarim 28:39

Though you plant vineyards and till (and service – ve'avad'ta $\prod_{\tau} \prod_{\tau} \prod_$

The servicing of the vineyard is a work of service.

The avad of the ground

Bereshit (Genesis) 2:4-5

When Yehovah Elohim **made** (**asot** – 6213 \square earth and heaven—⁵when no shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted, because Yehovah Elohim had not sent rain upon the earth and there was no man **to till** (**to service** –**la'avod** \square) the soil,

Man was not there yet to service the ground. Make it productive.

Eved (a servant or one who serves)

Bereshit (Genesis) 24:2

²And Abraham said to the **senior servant (av'do zeqan בְּרֵוֹ וְיִבְּרֵוֹ**) of his household, who had charge of all that he owned,

Avraham's eldest (zeqan) servant (av'do) completed the errand that he swore to finish. Thus, he served him. Which was getting a wife for his son.

Bereshit (Genesis) 26:25

²⁵So he built an altar there and invoked Yehovah by name. Yitzchaq pitched his tent there and his **servants** (av'dey בוּב"ל) started digging a well.

One who serves Yitzchaq was the one who dug the well.

Bamidbar (Numbers) 12:7

⁷Not so with **My servant (av'diy בְּרֵי**) Moses; he is trusted throughout My household. Moshe was Yehovah's servant. The one who served him.

Bamidbar (Numbers)14:24

²⁴But **My servant (ve'av'diy וְעַבְּוּ**) Caleb, because he was imbued with a different spirit and remained loyal to Me—him will I bring into the land that he entered, and his offspring shall hold it as a possession.

He we see that Yehovah refers to Caley as his servant. Or one who serves him.

Shofetim (Judges) 2:8

⁸Joshua son of Nun, the **servant (eved الْكِلْبُا**) of Yehovah, died at the age of one hundred and ten years.

Yehoshua was the servant of Yehovah

Next let us look at Avodah.

The hard labor (service) of slavery

Shemot (Exodus) 1:13-14

¹³The Egyptians ruthlessly imposed upon the Israelites [vaya'avidu mitz'rayim etbeney Yisrael bafarek דְיַּעֲבִדוּ מִאָרִיִם אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׁרָאֵל בְּבְּרֶן

– And served them Egypt sons of Yisrael with harshness] ¹⁴the various labors that they made them perform. Ruthlessly they made life bitter for them **with** harsh **labor**

(ba'avodah אַבְּעְבֹּיְב) at mortar and bricks and with all sorts of tasks ('avodatam בּעְבֹּדְרָתָּט) in the field.

Tools made for the Service of the Tabernacle (Tent of Meeting)

Shemot (Exodus) 27:19

¹⁹all the utensils of the Tabernacle, for all **its service** (**avodato וֹבְּבֹב**יִּ), as well as all its pegs and all the pegs of the court, shall be of copper.

We can see now that avad, eved, and avodah are all forms of service. In which we serve someone by working for them. So the work of service in Vayikra 23 in reference to the Chagim is referring to these types of actions (serving) or positions (servants). We also see in the commandment on shabbat in Exodus 20 that we are to do all our avod (service) at our melakhah for seven days. Therefore the distinction I believe is reminding of the commandment that avodah is the service we work at which we see includes many things than just serving another. Thus, when reading Exodus 12 we see that there is no distinction made to avodah and simply melakhah and so when reading the same rules in Leviticus 23 we see that avodah is simply what we do when we work.

So what kinds of activities are works? We saw previously that building, farming and shepherding livestock. Next week we will see what is work in the Tanakh as defined by itself.