

Lesson Five **The Difference of Halakhah**

1) One fundamental aspect of the Biblical faith is the issue of “halakhah.” The true faith is not just a set of beliefs but a way of life, filled with various guidelines. This set of rules is known as “halakhah.” Halakhah is a Hebrew word that literally means the “way to walk.” YHWH has a set way of halakhah for His people. To the observant Jew, halakhah is “Jewish laws.” To the Christian, halakhah is often mistaken for “doctrine.” Biblical halakhah is neither. True halakhah is the path a believer follows through life. This is more than just rules or doctrine. Instead – true halakhah is THE way to live.

James 1:27

Religion that YHWH our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

James 2:8

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right.

James 1:16

Do not be deceived

2) The word “halakhah” is derived from the Hebrew root “halek,” which means to walk. The true faith should be walked out before the world. We have been called to be a light to the nations through our actions. Halakhah is different than doctrine as doctrine is mostly concerned with a belief system in agreement with various tenets. Halakhah is the outward expression of faith.

Proverbs 4:2

For I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my Torah.

Tehillm 16:8

I have set YHWH always before me. Because of his right hand, I will not be shaken.

1 Timothy 2:15

Study to show thyself approved unto Elohim, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth

3) Many local assemblies establish their own “halakhah” or “way to do the Torah.” The Torah is eternal and binding upon all believers. However, how the Torah is kept may vary from group to group. This is the difference of halakhah. Torah is the doctrine while halakhah is the way to walk.

There is much freedom in halakhah.

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Theology leads to walls of separation that shout, “If you don’t believe exactly as I do, then, you are not welcome or you are not going to heaven.” Halakhah provides freedom and room for growth.

Halakhah says, “We do it this way, yet you may do it another way. The important thing is that we are doing YHWH’s Will of the Torah.”

The Scriptures allow congregations, Rabbis, and families to fulfill the mitzvot in different yet meaningful ways. Theology on the other hand, leaves no room for differences. Such thinking is often sadly exalted by people who push their personal convictions upon others.

James 1:25

But the one who looks at the perfect law of freedom and remains committed to it—thereby demonstrating that he is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of what that law requires—will be blessed in what he does.

2 Corinthians 3:17

Now YHWH is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of YHWH is, there is liberty

Galatians 5:13

For you, brothers, were called to freedom. Only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity to gratify your flesh, but through love make it your habit to serve one another.

Galatians 5:1

The Messiah has set us free so that we may enjoy the benefits of freedom. So keep on standing firm in it, and stop putting yourselves under the yoke of slavery again.

4) The earliest followers of Y’shua kept the halakhah of the Hebrew Apostles.

Acts 2:42

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of Elohim's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to Elohim -- this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what Elohim's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

John 5:46,47

For had you believed Moshe, you would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me. But if you believe not his Ketuvim / writings, how shall you believe My words?

5) The correct halakhah leads to eternal life for you and others. True halakhah can be determined through the fruit of the actions. Does this way of keeping Torah

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produce love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self control?

Galatians 5:22-25

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Messiah's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Titus 2:7-8

In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.

Deuteronomy 32:2

Let my teaching drop as the rain, My speech distill as the dew, As the droplets on the fresh grass And as the showers on the herb.

1 Timothy 4:15-16

Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

Titus 1:9

Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

Matthew 23:27

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness

Matthew 15:19

But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies

James 2:14

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?

6) Halakhah is a special concept that is found throughout the scriptures. Halakhah is based on a verse from Exodus / Shemot. "And thou shalt show them the way wherein they are to go and the work that they must do," Shemot (Exodus) 18:20.

When a teacher/Rabbi sets halakhah that teacher is saying, "we're going to obey this command in this manner." It's root is in the word 'haw-lak,' defined as to 'walk, prosper, grow, and carry.' Halakhah is interpretation of scripture with ideas

and descriptions on how to live out the commandments. It is a way of application of Torah to everyday life.

Halakhah may differ from teacher to teacher and from family to family. Some halakhah is strict, with boundaries of protection fenced around the Torah. Some halakhah is loose and liberal. Even other groups have 'minhag' or local customs on halakhah of certain issues. It can be wide, but it must not break Torah and Torah's literal interpretation.

Just like walking, halakhah takes effort. It is easy to receive theological rhetoric from a priest or professor. It is hard to "study to show thyself approved unto Elohim, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," 1 Timothy 2:15 KJV.

Again, "halakhah" means the "way to walk." Many times believers are just like that baby that his learning to walk. As halakhah is learned and established you may fall. Don't give up! Keep searching for the best way to fulfill the commandments.

Proverbs 24:16

For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again, But the wicked stumble in time of calamity.

7) The doctrine of the devil says, "it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere." Cain was sincere BUT offered the wrong sacrifice. He was rejected even through his motives where good. Right motives MUST lead to right actions. A person can be sincere and be sincerely wrong.

1 Timothy 4:13

Give attendance to the public reading of scripture, to teaching, and to exhortation

Matthew 15:8

This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me

Mark 7:6

He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me

Genesis 4:3-7

And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to YHWH. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And YHWH respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. So YHWH said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it."

8) We should study and examine the doctrines of religion. Before you accept something as truth, you should compare the teaching to the Torah.

False prophets will lead you to disobey the Torah of YHWH. The problem is that most of man's theologies are just that – man's theologies or man's theories.

According to the Online Etymological Dictionary the word 'theology' is from the Greek language and literally means the "account or treating of the gods." The Baptists, Catholics, and Lutherans all have their theology figured out and have placed their 'g/d' in a tightly made box of ideals. The dilemma is that YHWH is 'Ayn Sof' or 'incomprehensible and beyond knowledge'. YHWH is so great we really cannot understand Him. This doesn't settle well with our mind because we have always been taught various ideas that box Him in, various boxes into which He fits. YHWH is bigger and better than any 'box' of understanding we might think we have.

Deuteronomy 13:1-4

If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'--which you have not known--'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for YHWH your Elohim is testing you to know whether you love YHWH your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after YHWH your Elohim and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.

Jeremiah 16:19

From the ends of the earth and say, "Our fathers have inherited nothing but falsehood, Futility and things of no profit."

2 Thessalonians 2:10-12

And with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason YHWH will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,

Colossians 3:16-20

Let the word of the Moshiach dwell in you richly in all chochmah; teaching and admonishing one another in the Tehillim / psalms and with Ruach-filled shirim / songs, singing with unmerited yourselves to your own husbands, as it is fit in the Master. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing to YHWH.

Ephisiyah 5:18-22

And be not drunk with wine, in which there is excess; but be filled with the Ruach; Speaking to yourselves with the Tehillim / psalms and shirim / songs of tehilla / praise and spiritual shirim, singing and making melody in your lev / heart to the Master YHWH; Giving hodu / thanks always for all things to Abba YHWH in the Name of our Master Y'shua ha Moshiach; Submit yourselves one to another in the fear of YHWH. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as you would to YHWH.

9) We are to know and keep the halakhah of our spiritual leaders. It is the responsibility of each believer to know the Torah of YHWH and practice the halakhah of their spiritual leadership. Throughout the world, Rabbi's halakhah differ on how to do certain things, say Hebrew words, and obey the various commands. Haven't you ever struggled with the "correct" way to keep a command? Halakhah conquers that struggle with a scriptural answer. Sometimes halakhah includes several different scriptural answers. This is why two groups can perform a mitzvah differently, yet both are in their own eyes "right." Theology leads to judgmental attitudes and rejection, while halakhah will usher in acceptance and deeper devotion.

A proper acceptance of halakhah will further our mind's renewal and it will allow us to engage our focus upon YHWH, to reject putting Him in the box of theology, and to accept the freedom found in the way to walk Torah.

2 Timothy 4:2-4

Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

Romans 3:1-2

Then what advantage does the Yehudi / Jew have? Or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Because first of all, they were entrusted with the very words of YHWH.

10) Halakhah or the "way to walk" Torah is often determined by examining traditional Jewish teachings. Even these Jewish teachings must be questioned in regard to their respect to the whole of Scripture. When we look to Judaism for answers, we must deal with the issue of tradition.

When should we keep certain traditions and when should we reject tradition? Is the traditional Jewish way, the best way?

The Hebrew word for tradition is "masoret." The Encyclopedia Judaica says, "Masoret is the general name for tradition. It is found in Ezekiel 20:37 and means originally 'bond' or 'fetter.'" Tradition is the discipline that establishes the correct practice and interpretation of the Torah and was therefore regarded as a hedge or fetter about the Law (Avot 3:14). Since this knowledge was handed down by successive generations, it was also associated with the Hebrew word masor, denoting "to give over." In the Talmudic literature, the term masoret is used to include all forms of tradition, both those which relate to the Bible and those which concern custom, law, historical events, folkways, and other subjects." Many masoret / traditions help with halakhah as they have remained virtually unchanged over long periods of time to provide examples and uniformity of the faith.

For example, the Scriptures say to write the words of the Torah "on the door frames of your house and on your gates." You could do this with a black permanent marker. Or

you could wood carve the scriptures into the wooden door frame of your house. There is nothing wrong with obeying the commandment in these manners. The traditional way to observe this command is to simply place “mezuzah” on your doorpost. A “mezuzah” is a case which holds a scroll of Torah. These casings have been found on the homes of Jewish people for hundreds to thousands of years. Using a mezuzah is a very practical way of fulfilling this command AND identifies your faith with that of the Jewish people.

Obedience to the Torah requires a different lifestyle than that of the world. Believers in the Bible must make a decision about the Torah. Either we will dismiss the Torah or we will accept the Torah. Either we will follow the Messiah’s example and keep the commands of Moshe or we will follow the preachers’ example and pig out on pork. Either we will agree to the traditional way of obeying a command or we will make it up as we go.

We can dismiss the Torah and traditions as being “too Jewish” or we can accept the Torah and strive to obey it, the choice is ours. Yet when we choose to obey the Torah we will soon be confronted with another big problem. This is the problem of “how.”

The Jewish people have kept the Torah for thousands of years. They have hashed out the difficult verses and set standards on the way to live.

The majority of Jewish observances concerning the Torah are of benefit. By following the traditional adherence to the Torah, our actions can model that of the first believers in Messiah. The early Believers were “just like the Torah keeping Jews” and their accepted practices differed in no way, teaches the church historian Eusebius.

When Y’shua spoke about masoret / traditions, He was rebuking a group of Torah teachers who were exalting their traditionalism over the Torah. “You have let go of the commands of Elohim and are holding on to the traditions of men. You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of Elohim in order to set up your own traditions!” said Y’shua in Mark 7:8-93. Notice that he did not tell them to get rid of their traditions. What the Messiah did do, though, is rebuke the teachers who valued, upheld, and created traditions that replaced obedience to the Torah.

If any tradition takes the place of Torah, negates Torah, or hinders our walk of Torah then this is a tradition that needs to be dropped and replaced.

Good or “tov” traditions will lead us towards intimacy with YHWH. But with so many customs, web sites, articles, books, teachers, and ways to do things how do we know what to do? What should we do about how to exactly obey the various mitzvot? In looking to Judaism for information on Torah - what should we accept and what should we reject? Jewish obedience to the Torah is not just mindless or faithless work. No, their practice of Torah has over time developed into a culture of events that express a lifestyle. It is not just about a religion. “Tradition has given Judaism a continuity

with its past and preserved its character as a unique faith with a distinct way of life,” says one source.

Here’s some help! Consider using this short “truth test” when deciding what traditions to use and what traditions to avoid. When your family or ministry is making a decision of halakhah on how to keep the commandments, you can use this three-part litmus test to assess the situation. The truth will set us free, while pagan rituals, false worship days, and legalistic religious actions will bind us. We have a rich culture and heritage of Biblical customs and traditions awaiting us that will aid in our desire to know YHWH’s will for our life.

To examine our actions and to help us decide which traditions we should receive with open arms, let us answer these three questions. If the answer is negative then we should look for another way to express our faith:

- 1. Is it Biblical? Does this custom or action go against verses or principles found in the Scriptures? (example: Christmas trees – go against Jeremiah 10:1-5)**
- 2. Is it pagan? Does this custom or action have pagan roots / affiliation / connotations to it? (example: Christmas evergreen trees have long been brought indoors to be worshipped or aide in pagan rituals)**
- 3. Does it grieve the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit)? Do we have peace with doing this? Does it promote unity, love, and shalom? Do we feel the Spirit’s tug when we do or don’t do it, this way? (example: Christmas trees are part of the spiritual deception of Christmas that places a black cloud over people’s lives. More people commit suicide at Christmas than any other time of the year. Yes, the Spirit is grieved.)**

Lesson Five
The Letter Hei



This is the Hebrew letter “Hei.” It was once a picture of a man with his hands up.



This letter has the “h” sound as in “hah.”



This is the fifth Hebrew letter and the number “five.”



This letter acts as article like the word “the.” The word “ha” can be found in Hebrew writings meaning “the.” For example “ha shem” means “the name”



Some Hebrew words that begin with a hei are:

Ha Moshiach - The Messiah

Haftarah - Weekly Portion From The Prophets Read In The Shabbat Service

Halachah - Way, Or Way To Walk, Or Conduct One’s Life

Hallel - Praise

HaNavi - The Prophet; Speaking Only Of Yahshua

Har - Mountain, Mount, Or Hill

Hekal - Temple, Or Set-Apart Place In Front Of The Holy Of Holies

Higayon - Meditation, Or To Meditate

Hinayni - Here Am I, Or Here I Am

Hodu - Give Thanks

Hoshiana - Hosanna, Or Save Now