



הלכה
halakhah

Dear Mishpochah (Family in Messiah),

Halakhah: "How to Walk"

The Lord has impressed upon us this month to share a topic with you which is central to traditional rabbinic Judaism, but may be unfamiliar to many of you. *Halakhah*, pronounced with the guttural kh or ch sound in the middle, is a Hebrew word meaning "to walk" or "to go." It comes from the root *halakh* which can mean to walk, literally and figuratively, to behave, to follow, lead, march and go.

Halakhah is a generic term for the entire legal system of Judaism, embracing a myriad of detailed laws and observances. For example, when the Torah says, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8), there is an extensive body of *halakhah* in traditional Judaism (massive volumes of rabbinic law) that explains how a Jewish person is to live in order to keep the Sabbath holy. This would include defining "work" and "holy." If you go to Israel, you will see Sabbath wires defining the boundaries of permissible walking on the Sabbath. A sampling of the Sabbath laws on squeezing fruit as stated in Dr. Michael Brown's book, **Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus, Volume 4**, is as follows: "A. No fruit may be squeezed either 1) into an empty vessel or 2) into a liquid. B. This prohibition applies regardless of whether the fruit is squeezed 1) by means of an instrument or 2) by hand. C. Common examples are 1) squeezing lemons, 2) squeezing oranges, 3) squeezing the juice out of shredded carrots and 4) chopping up fruit to such an extent that it becomes liquefied. D. On the other hand, lemon may be sliced and put into a drink, such as tea or cold water, even though some of the juice will come out by itself, but it is forbidden to squeeze the lemon with one's hand or with a spoon even while it is in the drink."

It is important to understand how people think, to "walk in their shoes," to see how they have been taught, in order to be effective witnesses for Yeshua. Traditional Jews govern their lives by *halakhah*. Rabbi Hayim Donin in **To Be a Jew** explains *halakhah* as follows: "As the Jewish judicial system, halakha covers every aspect and relationship of life, whether it be between man and man or between man and God...a person's eating habits, his sex life, his business ethics, his social activities, his entertainment, his artistic expression are all under the umbrella of religious law, of the religious values and the spiritual guidelines of Judaism... . The halakha is the means by which the concepts and values are applied to everyday living. Halakha prescribes the ways for the concretization of theory, of principles, of creed."

Where did *halakhah* come from? This is an important question. Traditional Jews believe that it came directly from God, and is therefore binding. It is generally assumed that the *halakhah* in its entirety goes back to Moses, who received it from God. We **do not** believe this to be the case!

Five Sources of Traditional Halakhic Authority

According to the Encyclopaedia Judaica, there are five sources of authority of *halakhah*. The first is the Written Law or the Torah given to Moses at Mt. Sinai. The second source are the words of the Prophets. The third is the Oral Law which includes the interpretation of the Written Law transmitted, according to the sages, in its entirety at Mt. Sinai. This would include such documents today as

the Talmud, the Mishneh Torah and the Shulchan Arukh. The fourth is the authority of the sages themselves. The official title for sage after 70 A.D. was "rabbi." When the Temple was destroyed, there was a power shift in Judaism from the priests to the rabbis. Their decisions became as authoritative as the commandments found in the Torah. The rabbis even had the power to abolish a biblical injunction in certain circumstances (for example, forbidding the shofar to be used on the Sabbath). The fifth source of authority for *halakhah* is custom. If any given *halakhah* is unclear, the way a community conducts itself is considered as acceptable since, "...the people as a whole do not err."

It is obvious from the above that the Bible is not the ultimate authority in today's Judaism. The rabbis have the final say in all matters of Jewish life. Dr. Michael Brown, a Messianic Jewish scholar, has done extensive research on the subject of the Oral Law called "*torah she-be-al peh*," torah of the mouth. He convincingly proves that there is **no evidence of an authoritative Oral Torah** passed down from Moses. Dr. Brown explains that the traditional Jewish position would state, "We have an unbroken, authoritative chain of oral tradition given by God going back to Moses. Who are you to teach us what our Bible says?" The idea of studying the Bible on one's own is almost arrogant in Orthodox Jewish eyes! Nevertheless, the truth is that our Jewish people need to get back to the WRITTEN WORD OF GOD. There is no divinely given Oral Law. The Holy Scriptures indicate that God's covenant with Israel is based on the **written word** alone. (Exodus 24:4, 12, Exodus 34:27, Deuteronomy 27:3, Deuteronomy 31:9, 24, among others) Note the constant reference to the "written Law." In fact, according to Dr. Brown, every single time the Hebrew Bible refers to the Law/Teaching of Moses, it is "*Torat Mosheh*," the written Torah.

Pray that God's People Israel return to embrace the authority of the Torah, and come out from under the authority of the rabbis. A new *halakhah* is desperately needed: Messiah's *halakhah*!

Messianic Halakhah

How is a true biblical Jew (Romans 2:28-29) to walk out his or her faith? In **The Book of Jewish Knowledge**, Rabbi David E. Cahn-Lipman states: "Halachah actually means **way**. It encompasses the entire process of determining the limits and requirements set upon a Jew, and it includes all legal decisions spanning the past two thousand years."

When we consider that "*Halakhah* means WAY," Yeshua's proclamation in John 14:6 helps define what Messianic *halakhah* is: "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*" Yeshua is our *halakhah*. He is the Torah "fleshed out," the Word that became flesh! If we look at Yeshua, His person and His life, we will see how we are to walk. If we follow Him, we will be submitting ourselves to the authority of the Word of God, and the teachings of only ONE RABBI, God's final authority, Rabbi Yeshua, who also returns the authority to the Priesthood!—a new, better and eternal priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 7:17)

At a meeting of Messianic rabbis last month, Jamie sought the input of a few Messianic rabbis concerning "Messianic *halakhah*." Rabbi Frank Lowinger of Messianic Congregation Brith Hadosah in Buffalo, New York, gave some interesting background on traditional *halakhah*. He remarked that modern rabbinics (70 C.E. to the present) is a replacement of biblical Messianic Judaism. Rabbi Lowinger shared the following quotes from the Talmud: "When a man departs from the Halacha to study the Scriptures, he no longer has peace of mind." (Hagigah 10) "To occupy oneself exclusively with the study of Scriptures is a way, but not the true way." (Shabbat 15c) "Two Torahs were given to Israel—one written and one in oral form. It is believed the Holy One, Blessed be He, entered into a covenant with Israel **only** by virtue of the Oral tradition." Rabbi Lowinger reminded us of Yeshua's words in Mark 7:7-13, " '*And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men—the washing of*

pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do'." He said to them, 'all too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.' For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' 'But you say, if a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban"—(that is, a gift to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do'."

We see Yeshua's *halakhah* on mothers and fathers by watching His life. He was "subject" to His father and mother (Luke 2:51), obeyed His mother (John 2:4-7), and provided for her welfare even as He was dying on the tree (John 19:26-27).

Rabbi Lowinger also pointed out that when Yeshua tells believers in Matthew 18:18-20 that whatever we bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever we loose on earth will be loosed in heaven, and that if two of us agree on earth concerning anything it will be done for us by our Father in heaven, He was establishing a different system of authority. "The rabbinical community is not our authority on matters of *halachah*. Yeshua here is speaking to people who have authority to regulate Messianic communal life. They are given the right, the authority to "bind" and "loose", to either "prohibit" or "permit" certain rulings and judgments. In other words, Yeshua is teaching that when an issue is brought formally to a panel of two or three Messianic community leaders and they render a halakhic decision here on earth, they can be assured that the authority of God stands behind them."

Rabbi David Rosenberg of Messianic Congregation Shuvah Yisrael in Long Island, New York, shared with us his view of following "Messiah's Judaism." Rabbi Rosenberg reminded us that Yeshua defined our *halakhah* by His life, practice and teaching. He fulfilled the Messianic expectation that when Messiah would come, He would reform Torah, fill in all things that have not been revealed, and clarify everything. That is what Yeshua did. The basis of our *halakhah* boils down to: WWYD? "What would Yeshua do?" Everything Yeshua says and does is *halakhah*. He fulfilled the Torah. Rabbi Rosenberg also pointed out that the *Brit Hadasha*, or New Covenant, does **not** contradict the Torah. If someone thinks it does, they have incomplete understanding.

A clear example of Messiah's Judaism, His *halakhah*, is Matthew chapters 5-7, which includes His Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5:17, Yeshua makes it clear that He did not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfill. He came to show us how to walk them out! Yeshua's *halakhah* is actually spiritually deeper and more challenging than that of the rabbis. He demands a righteousness that **exceeds** that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20). For example, the Lord says in Exodus 20:14 that "*You shall not commit adultery.*" But Yeshua said in Matthew 5:28 that "*...whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*" The Messiah's *halakhah* includes 1,050 New Covenant commands!!!

Rabbi Jeffrey Forman of Messianic Congregation City of David in Thornhill, ON Canada, focused on the freedom given to us by the *Ruach HaKodesh*, the Holy Spirit. Spirit-led *halakhah* would mean that different Messianic congregations or communities would follow the leading of the *Ruach* in living out their faith. Rabbi Forman called our attention to John 16:13-14: "*However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.*" Certainly, the *Ruach HaKodesh*, Messiah's New Covenant bridal gift to us, has been given to empower us and show us the way we should go.

The New Covenant "Walk"

Since Yeshua, the Messiah, is the goal of the Torah, and since the entire Tanach points forward to Him, He is the sole authoritative interpreter. (quoted from Dr. Michael Brown) His "Messianic Way" is expounded throughout the pages of the New Covenant, a "better way" according to Hebrews 8:6.

Messianic *halakhah* begins in Matthew, pulsates throughout the Book of Acts, and grips the heart on almost every page of I John. However, in the Book of Ephesians, our walk as Messianic believers, our Messianic *halakhah* is articulated in clear, precise parallel statements—critical for us in 2008!

Eph. 2:10—WALK out your destiny: *"For we are His workmanship, created in Messiah Yeshua for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should WALK IN THEM."* How do we discover these good works? Abide in Yeshua, in His Word. Obey Him. Seek His face. Listen to the still small voice of the *Ruach HaKodesh*.

Eph. 4:1-3—WALK worthy: *"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a WALK WORTHY OF THE CALLING with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of Spirit in the bond of peace."* This is Neil's life verse. Humility is a key aspect of Messiah's *halakhah*.

Eph. 4:17—WALK not as the Gentiles: *"This, I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind..."* It's all about heart, and the new heart made possible through Messiah and the new birth. Cling to Yeshua; He is the truth.

Eph. 5:1-2—WALK in love: *"Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. AND WALK IN LOVE, as Messiah also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."* This includes fleeing fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, foolish talking, coarse jesting and unfruitful works of darkness. It also includes sacrifice.

Eph. 5:8—WALK as children of light: *"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light."* Follow Yeshua—the Light of the World—who walks in goodness, righteousness and truth.

Eph. 5:15-16—WALK circumspectly: *"See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."* Ask for wisdom (James 1:5). We will need it daily in 2008.

Praying for each one of you to be filled with the Spirit, with a new song in your heart, giving thanks always, submitting to one another in the fear of God, appreciating the depth of His love for you—in Messiah.

Walking in The Way,

Neil & Jamie

Jewish Jewels Television Airtime Schedule - February 2008

LOCAL TV STATIONS

STATE:	CITY:	STATIONS:	AIRTIME:
AK	North Pole	KJNP TV 4	TUE 6:00 PM
CA	Sonora	PUBLIC ACCESS 8	MON 8:30 PM
FL	Tampa/St. Pete.	WCLF TV22	SUN 2:30 PM
FL	Orlando/Cocoa	WTGL TV 45	SUN 1:30 PM
FL	Miami/Ft. Laud.	WHFT TV 45	THU 11:30 AM
FL	West Palm Beach	WFGC TV 61	SAT 10:30 PM
IL	Peoria	FAITH ALIVE CH 20	FRI 6:00 PM
NJ/NY	NJ/New York	WMBC TV 63	SUN 4:00 PM
OH	Columbus	WSFJ TV 51	SUN 3:30 PM
OR	Portland	K26GJ TV 26	SUN 12:00 PM
OR	Salem	K21GX TV 21	SUN 12:00 PM
PA	Philadelphia	WFMZ TV 69	SUN 9:30 AM
SC	Greenville	WGGS TV 16	FRI 10:30 AM

INTERNATIONAL Philippines - Shalom TV THU 6:00 PM

SATELLITE NETWORKS

SKY ANGEL

Angel Two - SUN 2:30 PM (EST) [Ch. 9702]
GTN - SUN 3:30 PM (EST) [Ch. 9707]

DirecTV

World Harvest TV (WHT) - SUN 3:00 PM (EST) [Ch. 321]

God TV - The GOD Channel

WED 4:30 AM (GMT) & 6:30 AM (Jerusalem)

Australian Christian Channel (ACC)

THU 8:00 AM (AEST)

Galaxy 16

World Harvest TV (WHT) - SUN 5:00 PM (EST) [Ch. 121]

Satellite Receiver

WHT- Galaxy 16- Transpondent 15 - SUN 3:00 PM (EST)



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