

Seven Laws of Noah

The **Seven Laws of Noah** (Hebrew: **שבע מצוות בני נח** *Sheva Mitzvot B'nei Noach*), also referred to as the **Noahide Laws** or the **Noachide Laws** (from the English transliteration of the Hebrew pronunciation of "Noah"), are a set of imperatives which, according to the Talmud, were given by God^[1] as a binding set of laws for the "children of Noah" – that is, all of humanity^{[2][3]}

Accordingly, any non-Jew who adheres to these laws because they were given by Moses^[4] is regarded as a *righteous gentile*, and is assured of a place in the world to come (**עולם הבא** *Olam Haba*), the final reward of the righteous.^{[5][6]}

The seven Noahide laws as traditionally enumerated are the following.^{[7][8]}

- Not to worship idols.
- Not to curse God.
- To establish courts of justice.
- Not to commit murder
- Not to commit adultery or sexual immorality
- Not to steal.
- Not to eat flesh torn from a living animal.

According to the Talmud,^[7] the rabbis agree that the seven laws were given to the sons of Noah. However, they disagree on precisely which laws were given to Adam and Eve. Six of the seven laws are exegetically derived from passages in Genesis,^[9] with the seventh being the establishing of courts.



The rainbow is the unofficial symbol of Noahidism, recalling the rainbow that appeared to Noah after the Great Flood of the Bible.

Contents

Sources

- Torah
- Book of Jubilees
- Acts 15
- Tosefta

Halakha and the Seven Laws

- Talmud
- Punishment
- Subdividing the Seven Laws
- Ger toshav (resident alien)
- Contemporary status

Maimonides

Christianity and the Noahide Laws

Chabad movement

- Sefer Sheva Mitzvot Hashem
- Public recognition
 - United States
 - Israeli Druze

See also

References

Further reading

External links

Sources

Torah

According to the Genesis flood narrative a deluge covered the whole world, killing every surface-dwelling creature except Noah, his wife, his sons and their wives, and the animals taken aboard Noah's Ark. According to this, all modern humans are descendants of Noah, thus the name Noahide Laws in reference to laws that apply to all of humanity. After the flood, God sealed a covenant with Noah with the following admonitions (Genesis 9):

- Flesh of a living animal: "However flesh with its life-blood [in it], you shall not eat." (9:4)
- Murder and courts: "Furthermore, I will demand your blood, for [the taking of] your lives, I shall demand it [even] from any wild animal. From man too, I will demand of each person's brother the blood of man. He who spills the blood of man, by man his blood shall be spilt; for in the image of God He made man." (9:5–6)

Book of Jubilees

The Book of Jubilees, generally dated to the 2nd century BCE,^[10] may include an early reference to Noahide Law at verses 7:20–28:

And in the twenty-eighth jubilee Noah began to enjoin upon his sons' sons the ordinances and commandments, and all the judgments that he knew, and he exhorted his sons to observe righteousness, and to cover the shame of their flesh, and to bless their Creator, and honour father and mother, and love their neighbour, and guard their souls from fornication and uncleanness and all iniquity. For owing to these three things came the flood upon the earth ... For whoso sheddeth man's blood, and whoso eateth the blood of any flesh, shall all be destroyed from the earth.^{[11][12]}

Acts 15

The Jewish Encyclopedia article on Saul of Tarsus states:

According to Acts, Paul began working along the traditional Jewish line of proselytizing in the various synagogues where the proselytes of the gate [e.g., Exodus 20:9] and the Jews met; and only because he failed to win the Jews to his views, encountering strong opposition and persecution from them, did he turn to the Gentile world after he had agreed at a convention with the apostles at Jerusalem to admit the Gentiles into the Church only as proselytes of the gate, that is, after their acceptance of the Noachian laws Acts 15:1–31".^[13]

The article "New Testament" states:

For great as was the success of Barnabas and Paul in the heathen world, the authorities in Jerusalem insisted upon circumcision as the condition of admission of members into the church, until, on the initiative of Peter, and of James, the head of the Jerusalem church, it was agreed that acceptance of the Noachian Laws — namely, regarding avoidance of idolatry, fornication, and the eating of flesh cut from a living animal — should be demanded of the heathen desirous of entering the Church.^[14]

Tosefta

The earliest complete rabbinic version of the seven laws can be found in the Tosefta where they are listed as follows.^[15]

Seven commandments were commanded of the sons of Noah:

1. concerning adjudication (denim)
2. concerning idolatry (avodah zarah)
3. concerning blasphemy (qilelat ha-shem)
4. concerning sexual immorality (gilui arayot)
5. concerning blood-shed (shefikhut damim)
6. concerning robbery (ha-gezel)
7. concerning a limb torn from a living animal (eber min ha-hayy)

Halakha and the Seven Laws

Talmud

According to the Talmud, the Noahide Laws apply to all humanity. In Judaism, בני נח *B'nei Noah* (Hebrew, "Descendants of Noah", "Children of Noah") refers to all of humankind.^[16] The Talmud also states: "Righteous people of all nations have a share in the world to come".^[17] Any non-Jew who lives according to these laws is regarded as one of "the righteous among the gentiles".

The rabbis agree that the seven laws were given to the sons of Noah. However, they disagree on precisely which laws were given to Adam and Eve. Six of the seven laws are exegetically derived from passages in Genesis. The Talmud adds extra laws beyond the seven listed in the Tosefta which are attributed to different rabbis, such as the grafting of trees and sorcery among others.^{[18]: 30–31}^[19] Ulla going so far as to make a list of 30 laws.^[20] The Talmud expands the scope of the seven laws to cover about 100 of the 613 mitzvot.^{[21]: 18}

Punishment

In practice Jewish law makes it very difficult to apply the death penalty.^[22] No record exists of a gentile having been put to death for violating the seven laws.^[23] Some of the categories of capital punishment recorded in the Talmud are recorded as having never been carried out. It is thought that the rabbis included discussion of them in anticipation of the coming messianic age.^[22]

The Talmud lists the punishment for blaspheming the Ineffable Name of God as death. The sons of Noah are to be executed by decapitation for most crimes,^[24] considered one of the lightest capital punishments,^[25] by stoning if he has intercourse with a Jewish betrothed woman,^[26] or by strangulation if the Jewish woman has completed the marriage ceremonies, but had not yet consummated the marriage.^[26] In Jewish law the only form of blasphemy which is punishable by death is blaspheming the Ineffable Name (Leviticus 24:16).^[27] Some Talmudic rabbis held that only those offences for which a Jew would be executed, are forbidden to gentiles.^[28] The Talmudic rabbis discuss which offences and sub-offences are capital offences and which are merely forbidden.^[29]

Maimonides states that anyone who does not accept the seven laws is to be executed, as God compelled the world to follow these laws.^[30] However, for the other prohibitions such as the grafting of trees and bestiality he holds that the sons of Noah are not to be executed.^[31] Maimonides adds a universalism lacking from earlier Jewish sources.^{[21]: 18} The Talmud differs from Maimonides in that it handles the seven laws as enforceable by Jewish authorities on non-Jews living within a Jewish nation.^{[21]: 18} Nahmanides disagrees with Maimonides reasoning. He limits the obligation of enforcing the seven laws to non-Jewish authorities taking the matter out of Jewish hands. The Tosafot seems to agree with Nahmanides reasoning.^{[32]: 39} According to some opinions, punishment is the same whether the individual transgresses with knowledge of the law or is ignorant of the law.^[33]

Subdividing the Seven Laws

Various rabbinic sources have different positions on the way the seven laws are to be subdivided in categories. Maimonides', in his Mishneh Torah, included the grafting of trees.^[31] Like the Talmud, he interpreted the prohibition against homicide as including a prohibition against abortion.^{[34][35]} David ben Solomon ibn Abi Zimra, a commentator on Maimonides, expressed surprise that he left out castration and sorcery which were also listed in the Ālmud.^[36]

In Chullin 92a-b Ulla says that here are 30 laws which the sons of Noah took upon themselves. However he only lists three, namely the three that the Gentiles follow: not to create a Ketubah between males, not to sell carion or human flesh in the market and to respect the Torah. The rest of the laws are not listed.^[37] Talmud commentator Rashi remarks on this that he does not know the other Commandments that are referred to. Though the authorities seem to take it for granted that Ulla's thirty commandments included the original seven, an additional thirty laws is also possible from the reading. Two different lists of the 30 laws exist. Both lists include an additional twenty-three mitzvot which are subdivisions or extensions of the seven laws. One from the 16th-century work *Asarah Maamarot* by Rabbi Menahem Azariah da Fano and a second from the 10th century Samuel ben Hofni which was recently published from his Judeo-Arabic writings after having been found in the Cairo Geniza.^{[38][39]} Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Chajes suggests Menahem Azariah of Fano enumerated commandments are not related to the first seven, nor based on Scripture, but instead were passed down by oral tradition.^[40]

The 10th-century Rabbi Saadia Gaon added tithes and levirate marriage. The 11th-century Rav Nissim Gaon included "listening to God's Voice", "knowing God" and "serving God" besides going on to say that all religious acts which can be understood through human reasoning are obligatory upon Jew and Gentile alike. The 14th-century Rabbi Nissim ben Reuben Gerondi added the commandment of charity.

Ger toshav (resident alien)

In earlier times, a Gentile living in the Land of Israel who accepted the Seven Laws in front of a rabbinical court was known as a *ger toshav* (literally stranger/resident). The regulations regarding Jewish-Gentile relations are modified in the case of *ger toshav*.^[41]

Contemporary status

Historically, some rabbinic opinions consider non-Jews not only not obliged to adhere to all the remaining laws of the Torah, but actually forbidden to observe them.^{[42][43]}

Noahide law differs radically from Roman law for gentiles (*Jus Gentium*), if only because the latter was enforceable judicial policy. Rabbinic Judaism has never adjudicated any cases under Noahide law,^[23] Jewish scholars disagree about whether Noahide law is a functional part of Halakha ("Jewish law").^[44]

Some modern views hold that penalties are a detail of the Noahide Laws and that Noahides themselves must determine the details of their own laws for themselves. According to this school of thought – see N. Rakover, *Law and the Noahides* (1998); M. Dallen, *The Rainbow Covenant* (2003) – the Noahide Laws offer mankind a set of absolute values and a framework for righteousness and justice, while the detailed laws that are currently on the books of the world's states and nations are presumptively valid.

In recent years, the term "Noahide" has come to refer to non-Jews who strive to live in accord with the seven Noahide Laws; the terms "observant Noahide" or "Torah-centered Noahides" would be more precise but these are infrequently used. Support for the use of "Noahide" in this sense can be found with the Ritva, who uses the term *Son of Noah* to refer to a Gentile who keeps the seven laws, but is not a Ger Toshav.^[45] The rainbow, referring to the Noahide or First Covenant (Genesis 9), is the symbol of many organized Noahide groups, following Genesis 9:12–17.

To various modern theologians the Noahide laws represent the inclusive nature of Judaism because they affirm the equality of Jews and non-Jews. To other intellectuals these seven laws represent natural law which are accessible to all through intellect and do not require revelation. According to Robert Eison the second stream of thought ignores how a non-Jew could access these laws without the Jewish revelations. To Eison, these set of laws impose a Jewish understanding of morality upon non-Jews. To Eison the Noahide laws represent more of a barrier between Jews and non-Jews, because non-Jews are forbidden to observe Jewish laws.^[46]

Maimonides

The Jewish scholar Maimonides (12th century) held that Gentiles may have a part in the world to come just by observing Noahide law and accepts them as given by Moses. Such children of Noah become the status of *Chasidei Umot HaOlam* - Pious People of the World, and are different from children of Noah who only keep the seven laws out of moral/ethical reasoning alone. He writes in his book of laws:^[47]

Anyone who accepts upon himself and carefully observes the Seven Commandments is of the Righteous of the Nations of the World and has a portion in the World to Come. This is as long as he accepts and performs them because (he truly believes that) it was the Holy One, Blessed Be He, Who commanded them in the Torah, and that it was through Moses our Teacher we were informed that the Sons of Noah had already been commanded to observe them. But if he observes them because he convinced himself, then he is not considered a Resident Convert and is not of the Righteous of the Nations of the World, but merely one of their wise.^[48]

Some later editions of the Mishneh Torah differ by one letter and read "Nor one of their wise men." The later reading is narrower. Spinoza read Maimonides as using *nor* and accused him of being narrow and particularistic. Other philosophers such as Hermann Cohen and Moses Mendelssohn have used more inclusive interpretations of the passage by Maimonides.^[49] In either reading, Maimonides appears to exclude philosophical Noahides from being Righteous Gentiles. Thus Maimonides wants to emphasize that a truly Righteous Gentile follows the seven laws because they are divinely revealed and thus are followed out of obedience to God.^{[49][50]}

Christianity and the Noahide Laws

The Apostolic Decree recorded in Acts 15 is commonly seen as a parallel to Noahide Law;^[51] however, some modern scholars dispute the connection between Acts 15 and Noahide Law,^[52] the content of Noahide Law, the historical reliability of the Acts of the Apostles, and the nature of Biblical law in Christianity. The Apostolic Decree is still observed by Eastern Orthodoxy and includes some food restrictions.^[53]

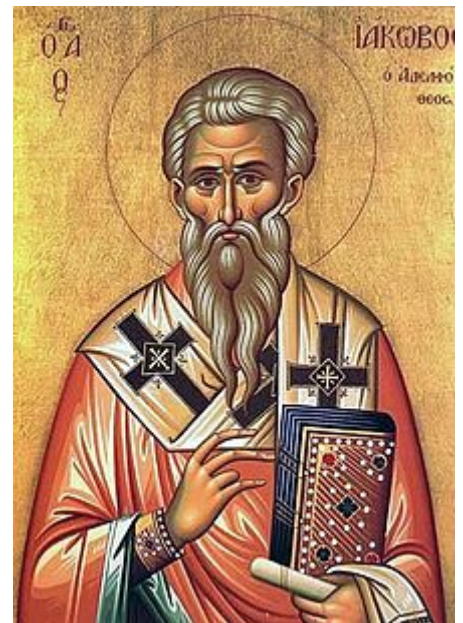
The 18th-century rabbi Jacob Emden proposed that Jesus, and Paul after him, intended to convert the gentiles to the Noahide laws while calling on the Jews to keep the full Law of Moses.^[54]

Chabad movement

Maimonides stated that God commanded Moses to compel the world to accept these seven commandments. In 1983 Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson urged his followers to actively engage in activities to inform non-Jews about these seven commandments, which had not been done in previous generations.

Sefer Sheva Mitzvot Hashem

After Rabbi Schneerson started his Noahide Campaign in the 1980s, a codification of the exact obligations of the Gentiles in the spirit of the classical Shulchan Aruch was needed. In 2005, Rabbi Moshe Weiner of Jerusalem accepted to produce an in-depth codification of the Noahide precepts.^[55] The work is called Sefer Sheva Mitzvot HaShem, (The Book of Seven Divine Commandments) published



James the Just whose judgment was adopted in the Apostolic Decree of Acts 15:20: "but we should write to them [Gentiles] to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood." (NRSV)

2008/2009. As it was approved by both of the then presiding chief rabbis of Israel (Rabbi Shlomo Moshe Amar and Rabbi Yonah Metzger) as well as by other Hasidic and non-Hasidic halachic authorities, it can claim an authoritative character and is referred as a *Shulchan Aruch*^[56] for Gentiles at many places.

Public recognition

United States

In 1987 President Ronald Reagan signed a proclamation speaking of "the historical tradition of ethical values and principles, which have been the bedrock of society from the dawn of civilization when they were known as the Seven Noahide Laws, transmitted through God to Moses on Mount Sinai",^[57] and in 1991, Congress stated in the preamble to the 1991 bill that established Education Day in honor of the birthday of Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the leader of the Chabad movement:

Whereas Congress recognizes the historical tradition of ethical values and principles which are the basis of civilized society and upon which our great Nation was founded; Whereas these ethical values and principles have been the bedrock of society from the dawn of civilization, when they were known as the Seven Noahide Laws [^[58]]

Israeli Druze

In January 2004, Sheikh Mowafak Tarif, the spiritual leader of Israeli Druze, signed a declaration, which called on non-Jews living in Israel to observe the Noahide Laws. He was joined by the mayor of Shefa-'Amr.^[59]

See also

- Code of Hammurabi
- List of ancient legal codes
- Natural law
- Shituf

References

1. According to Encyclopedia Talmudit (Hebrew edition, Israel, 5741/1981, Entry *Ben Noah*, page 349), most medieval authorities consider that all seven commandments were given to Adam, although Maimonides (Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot M'lakhim 9:1) considers the dietary law to have been given to Noah.
2. Encyclopedia Talmudit (Hebrew edition, Israel, 5741/1981, entry *Ben Noah*, introduction) states that after the giving of the Torah, the Jewish people were no longer in the category of the sons of Noah; however Maimonides (Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot M'lakhim 9:1) indicates that these seven laws are also part of the Torah, and the Talmud (Bavli, Sanhedrin 59a, see also Tosafot ad. loc.) states that Jews are obligated in all things that Gentiles are obligated in, albeit with some differences in the details.
3. Compare Genesis 9:4–6 (<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0109.htm#4>).
4. "Melachim uMilchamot 8:11" (http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid1188353/jewish/Melachim-uMilchamot-Chapter-8.htm). *www.chabad.org*. last two sentences of the three Retrieved 2015-06-24.
5. Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot M'lakhim 8:14
6. Encyclopedia Talmudit (Hebrew edition, Israel, 5741/1981, entry *Ben Noah*, end of article); note the variant reading of Maimonides and the references in the footnote
7. "Shared values: The Noahide Laws" (<http://jewsforjudaism.org/knowledge/articles/shared-values-noahide-laws/>) Retrieved 8 November 2014.
8. Josef Meri (23 June 2016). *The Routledge Handbook of Muslim-Jewish Relations* <https://books.google.com/books?id=OXF9DAAAQBAJ&pg=PT191> Taylor & Francis. pp. 191–. ISBN 978-1-317-38320-8

9. Rabbinical authorities disputed whether there was only one or several commandments given to Adam: see [56a/b \(http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_56.html\)](http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_56.html)
10. James C. VanderKam. *The Book of Jubilees* (Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha). Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001. ISBN 1-85075-767-4 ISBN 978-1-85075-767-2 pp. 17–21.
11. Jubilees at wesleyanu.edu (http://wesleyanu.edu/biblical_studies/noncanon/ot/pseudo/jubilee.htm) This is R. H. Charles' 1913 translation from the Koine Greek, but *Jubilees* is also extant in Geez and multiple texts found at Qumran which are still being examined.
12. "Jewish Encyclopedia: Jubilees, Book of: The Noachian Laws" (<http://jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=582&letter=J&search=jubilees#1948>) Jewishencyclopedia.com Retrieved 8 November 2014.
13. "Saul of Tarsus" (<http://jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=283&letter=S&search=Saul%20of%20Tarsus>). Jewishencyclopedia.com Retrieved 8 November 2014.
14. "Jewish Encyclopedia: New Testament — Spirit of Jewish Proselytism in Christianity" (<http://jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=245&letter=N&search=New%20Testament#717>) Jewishencyclopedia.com Retrieved 8 November 2014.
15. Lewis Ray Rambo, Charles E. Farhadian, eds. (2014) *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=UEzgAgAAQBAJ&pg=PA591&dq=Tosefta+Avodah+Zarah+noah&hl=en&sa=X&ei=np7zVKTPJ-3fsAShq4LwBQ&ved=0CCkQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=Tosefta%20Avodah%20Zarah%20noah&f=false>) Oxford University Press. p. 591.
16. Encyclopedia Talmudit, Hebrew edition, Israel, 5741/1981, entry Ben Noah, introduction
17. Sanhedrin 105a
18. Martin Goodman (2007). *Judaism in the Roman World: Collected Essays* (https://books.google.com/books?id=YVI2a9jc4pMC&pg=PA30&dq=Tosefta+Avodah+Zarah+9:4&hl=en&sa=X&ei=k3LuVPeUC_WIsQTQ0oBo&ved=0CD4Q6AEwBg#v=onepage&q=Tosefta%20Avodah%20Zarah%209%3A4&f=false) BRILL. Retrieved 17 January 2014.
19. Sanhedrin 56a/b (http://www.halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_56.html), quoting Tosefta Avodah Zarah 9:4; see also Rashi on Genesis 9:4
20. Chullin 92a-b
21. Joel Lurie Grishaver, Rabbi Stuart Kelman, eds. (1996). *Learn Torah With 1994-1995 Torah Annual: A Collection of the Year's Best Torah* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=8pxv3NpOLdEC&pg=PA18&dq=maimonides+seven+laws+differ+from+the++talmud&hl=en&sa=X&ei=4rzVJqTBqbasATRviGYDQ&ved=0CDQQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=maimonides%20seven%20laws%20differ%20from%20the%20%20talmud&f=false>) Torah Aura Productions.
22. Jewishvirtuallibrary.org (https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0004_0_03929.html)
23. per Novak, 1983:28f.
24. "Sanhedrin" (<http://halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Sanhedrin.pdf>) (PDF). Halakhah.com 56a Retrieved 25 February 2015.
25. Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Judges, Laws of Sanhedrin, chapter 14, law 4
26. "Melachim uMilchamot 9:7" (http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid1188354/jewish/Melachim-uMilchamot-Chapter-9.htm). *www.chabad.org*. Retrieved 2015-06-24.
27. Jewishencyclopedia.com ([http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/article\\$3354-blasphemy](http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/article$3354-blasphemy))
28. "Sanhedrin" (<http://halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Sanhedrin.pdf>) (PDF). Halakhah.com 56b Retrieved 25 February 2015.
29. "Sanhedrin" (<http://halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Sanhedrin.pdf>) (PDF). Halakhah.com 57a-b Retrieved 25 February 2015.
30. "Mishneh Torah Shoftim, Laws of Kings and their wars: 8:13" (<http://halakhah.com/rst/kingsandwars.pdf>) (PDF). Halakhah.com Retrieved 25 February 2015.
31. "Mishneh Torah Shoftim, Laws of Kings and their wars: 10:8" (<http://halakhah.com/rst/kingsandwars.pdf>) (PDF). Halakhah.com Retrieved 25 February 2015.
32. Lawrence H. Schiffman, Joel B. Wolowelsky, eds. (2007). *War and Peace in the Jewish Tradition* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=L4YpnaFUrYC&pg=PA39&dq=maimonides+seven+laws+talmud+compelled&hl=en&sa=X&ei=zYbzVPAqB4rLsATsmIKwCw&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=maimonides%20seven%20laws%20talmud%20compelled&f=false>) KTAV Publishing House, Inc.
33. Babylonian Talmud, Makkot 9a, commentary of Rashi
34. "Mishneh Torah Shoftim, Laws of Kings and their wars: 9:6" (<http://halakhah.com/rst/kingsandwars.pdf>) (PDF). Halakhah.com Retrieved 25 February 2015.
35. "Sanhedrin" (<http://halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Sanhedrin.pdf>) (PDF). Halakhah.com 57b Retrieved 25 February 2015.

36. Sanhedrin 56b.
37. "Chullin 92a-b" (<http://halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Chullin.pdf>) (PDF). Halakhah.com Retrieved 15 November 2014.
38. Mossad HaRav Kook edition of the Gaon's commentary to Genesis
39. "The Thirty Mitzvot of the Bnei Noach" (http://www.noachide.org.uk/html/30_commands.html). noachide.org.uk Retrieved 15 November 2014.
40. *Kol Hidushei Maharitz Chayessl*, end Ch. 10
41. Encyclopedia Talmudit, Hebrew edition, 5739/1979, entry Ger Toshav
42. "Gentiles May Not Be Taught the Torah." (<http://jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=142&letter=G#543>) Jewishencyclopedia.com Retrieved 8 November 2014.
43. "Sanhedrin" (<http://halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Sanhedrin.pdf>) (PDF). Halakhah.com 59a-b Retrieved 25 February 2015.
44. cf. Bleich
45. Encyclopedia Talmudit, Hebrew edition, 5741/1981, Appendix, entry Ben Noah, introduction
46. Josef Meri (23 June 2016). *The Routledge Handbook of Muslim-Jewish Relations* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=OXF9DAAAQBAJ&pg=PT191>) Taylor & Francis. pp. 191–. ISBN 978-1-317-38320-8
47. Mishneh Torah, *Shoftim*, *Laws of Kings and their wars* 8:14 or 8:11
48. Reuven Brauner (2012). "TRANSLATION OF THE FINAL CHAPTER OF THE RAMBAM'S MISHNEH TORAH" (<http://halakhah.com/rst/kingsandwars.pdf>) (PDF). Halakhah.com Retrieved 26 May 2014.
49. T. M. Rudavsky (2009). *Maimonides* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=8OISKHHuUlkC&pg=PA179&dq=nor+of+the+pious+among+the+gentiles,+nor+of+their+wise+men&hl=en&sa=X&ei=64aDU6arF7KrsQSWxIGIDQ&ved=0CD AQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=nor%20of%20the%20pious%20among%20the%20gentiles%20nor%20of%20their%20wise%20men&f=false>) John Wiley & Sons. pp. 178–179 Retrieved 26 May 2014.
50. Moshe Halbertal (2013). *Maimonides: Life and Thought* (https://books.google.com/books?id=UY2GAAAAQBAJ&pg=PA253&dq=Maimonides+laws+of+kings+wise+men&hl=en&sa=X&ei=D4aDU8fzJqK_sQTK6oH4Bw&ved=0CCsQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Maimonides%20laws%20of%20kings%20wise%20men&f=false) Princeton University Press. p. 253. Retrieved 26 May 2014.
51. *The Acts of the Apostles (The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries)*, Yale University Press (December 2, 1998) ISBN 0-300-13982-9, chapter V
52. Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles (The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries)*, Yale University Press (December 2, 1998), ISBN 0-300-13982-9, chapter V
53. Karl Josef von Hefele's commentary on canon II of Gangra (<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaf/npnf214.viii.viv.ii.html>) notes: "We further see that, at the time of the Synod of Gangra the rule of the Apostolic Synod with regard to blood and things strangled was still in force. With the Greeks, indeed, it continued always in force as their Euchologies still show. Balsamon also, the well-known commentator on the canons of the Middle Ages, in his commentary on the sixty-third Apostolic Canon expressly blames the Latins because they had ceased to observe this command. What the Latin Church, however, thought on this subject about the year 400, is shown by St. Augustine in his work Contra Faustum, where he states that the Apostles had given this command in order to unite the heathens and Jews in the one ark of Noah; but that then, when the barrier between Jewish and heathen converts had fallen, this command concerning things strangled and blood had lost its meaning, and was only observed by few. But still, as late as the eighth century, Pope Gregory the Third (731) forbade the eating of blood or things strangled under threat of a penance of forty days. No one will pretend that the disciplinary enactments of any council, even though it be one of the undisputed Ecumenical Synods can be of greater and more unchanging force than the decree of that first council, held by the Holy Apostles at Jerusalem, and the fact that its decree has been obsolete for centuries in the West is proof that even Ecumenical canons may be of only temporary utility and may be repealed by disuse, like other laws."
54. Jewish Encyclopedia: Gentile: Gentiles May Not Be Taught the Torah (<http://jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=142&letter=G#543>) "R. Emden (), in a remarkable apology for Christianity contained in his appendix to "Seder 'Olam" (pp. 32b–34b, Hamburg, 1752), gives it as his opinion that the original intention of Jesus, and especially of Paul, was to convert only the Gentiles to the seven moral laws of Noah and to let the Jews follow the Mosaic law, this explains the apparent contradictions in the New Testament regarding the laws of Moses and the Sabbath."
55. *The Divine Code*, Rabbi Moshe Weiner, Ed. Dr. Michael Schulman Ph.D., Vol. I., p. 21, 2008, publ. Ask Noah International
56. *Letter of Blessing* (for *Sefer Sheva Mitzvoth HaShen*), Rabbi Yonah Metzger, Chief Rabbi of Israel, p.1.

57. "The Rebbe and President Ronald Reagan"(<http://www.chabad.org/142535>) Chabad.org. Retrieved 8 November 2014.
58. Thomas.loc.gov(<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c102:h.j.res.104.enr:>)
59. "Druze Religious Leader Commits to Noahide "Seven Laws" (<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/56379>). 2004-01-18. Retrieved 2014-01-18.

Further reading

- Barre Elisheva. "Torah for Gentiles – the Messianic and Political Implications of the Bnei Noah Laws", 2008, ISBN 978-965-91329-0-4
- Bleich, J. David "Judaism and natural law" in *Jewish law annual*, vol. VII 5–42
- Bleich, J. David. "Tikkun Olam: Jewish Obligations to Non-Jewish Society" in: *Tikkun olam: social responsibility in Jewish thought and law* Edited by David Shatz, Chaim I. Waxman and Nathan J. Diament. Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1997. ISBN 0-7657-5951-9.
- Broyde, Michael J. "The Obligation of Jews to Seek Observance of Noahide Laws by Gentiles: A Theoretical Review" in *Tikkun olam: social responsibility in Jewish thought and law* Edited by David Shatz, Chaim I. Waxman and Nathan J. Diament. Northvale, N.J. : Jason Aronson, 1997 ISBN 0-7657-5951-9.
- Cecil, Alan W. "The Noahide Code: A Guide to the Perplexed Christian." (Aventura: Academy of Shem Press, 2006). ISBN 0-9779885-0-3
- Cohen, Yakov Dovid. "Divine Image " Insights into the Laws of Noah, published by The Institute of Noahide Code 2006 ISBN 1-4243-1000-8 online www.Noahide.org
- Cowen, Shimon Dovid. "Perspectives on the Noahide Laws – Universal ethics". The Institute of Judaism and Civilization (3rd edition) 2008 ISBN 0-9585933-8-8 www.ijc.com.au
- Clorfene C and Rogalsky Y *The Path of the Righteous Gentile: An Introduction to the Seven Laws of the Children of Noah*. Targum Press, 1987. ISBN 0-87306-433-X. Online version
- Dallen, Michael *The Rainbow Covenant: Torah and the Seven Universal Laws* ISBN 0-9719388-2-2 Library of Congress Control Number 2003102494 and online excerpts and comics
- Lichtenstein, Aaron. "The Seven Laws of Noah". New York: The Rabbi Jacob Joseph School Press and Z. Berman Books, 2d ed. 1986. Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 80-69121.
- Novak, David. *The image of the non-Jew in Judaism: an historical and constructive study of the Noahide Laws* New York : E. Mellen Press, 1983.
- Novak, David. *Natural law in Judaism* Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Rakover, Nahum. *Law and the Noahides: law as a universal value* Jerusalem: Library of Jewish Law 1998.

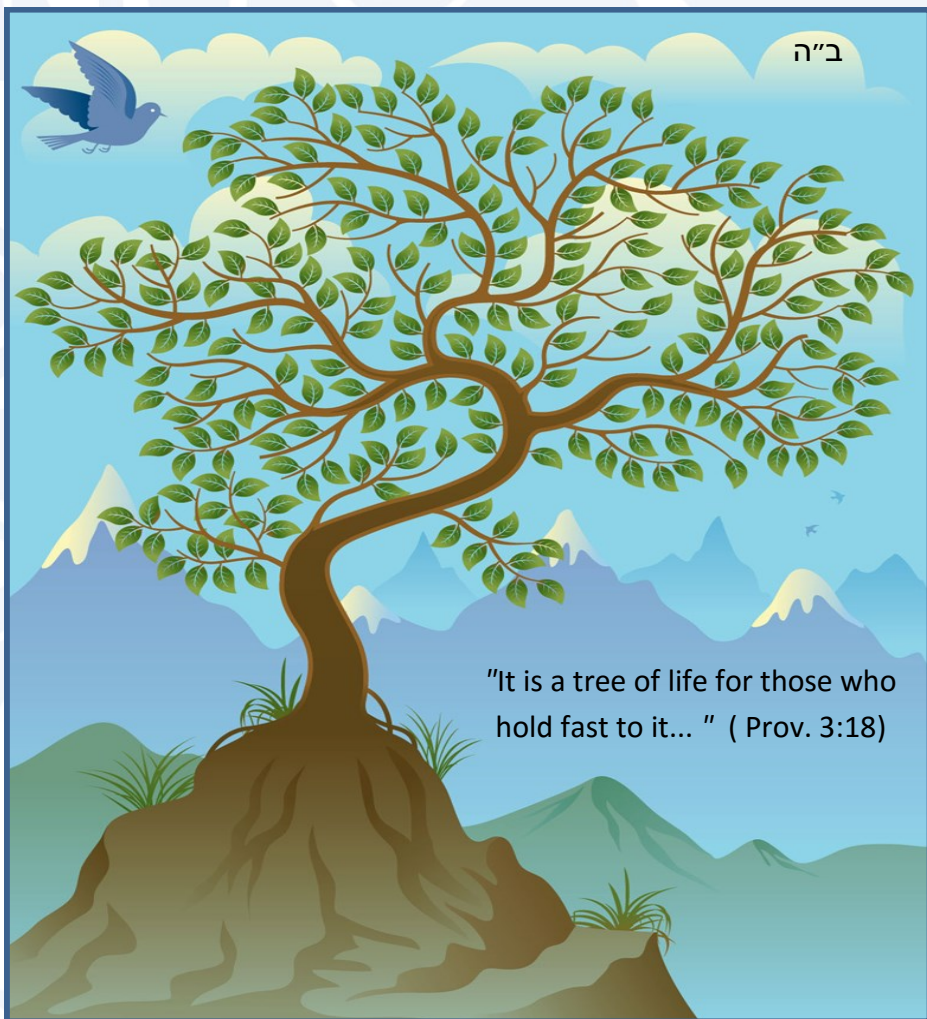
External links

- [What does God expect from non-Jews](#)
 - [Ask Noah International and "The Divine Code" – Shulchan Aruch \(Code of Torah Law\) for Gentiles](#)
 - [Institute of Noahide Code](#)
 - [Academy of Shem: Educational resources for Noahides](#)
 - [Jewish Encyclopedia: Laws, Noachian](#)
 - [Wikinoah: Online resource of history halacha, publications, and websites concerning Bnei Noah](#)
 - [Detailed explanations of the Noahide Laws for Beginners](#)
 - [Seven Laws of Noah](#) Animated video
-

Retrieved from 'https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Seven_Laws_of_Noah&oldid=838688500

This page was last edited on 28 April 2018, at 17:23 (UTC).

Text is available under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License](#); additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the [Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.](#), a non-profit organization.



Go(o)d for You:


The Divine Code of 7 Noahide Commandments



Starting from a Moral Code that Unites All Mankind

**“Message from the Rebbe,” reprinted from
Lubavitch International, vol. 2, no. 1, 1990**

We find ourselves now at a turning point in history. Changes have swept the world as dissolving repressive regimes have given way to a climate of increased moral consciousness. It is thus an appropriate time to reflect upon the dynamics of these changes and thereby draw encouragement and guidance to affect them fully. In explaining the purpose of Creation, our sages say that G-d, the Essence of all good, created the world as a result of His desire to do good. As it says in Psalms 145, “The L-rd is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works.” For as it is the nature of good to do good unto others, the creation of the universe was a Divine expression of goodness. In this way, the universe and all life are recipients and objects of Divine goodness.

A landscape photograph showing a vibrant rainbow arching across a blue sky, with dark, silhouetted hills in the foreground.

Hence, everything that occurs in the world, even the apparent bad, such as natural disasters, must ultimately have redeeming good. Similarly, the negative inclination within human beings, who essentially desire to do good, is but a “mechanism” by G-d’s design to establish free choice. For had G-d created a world that is totally and exclusively good, without any efforts on the part of mankind to achieve it, there would be no or little appreciation of goodness. In light of this, it is important to realize that in the individual’s struggle with evil, within the world at large or within one’s self, the approach should not be one of confrontation. *Rather, by emphasizing that which is good in people and in the world, and by bringing the positive to the fore, the evil is superseded by the good, until it eventually disappears.*

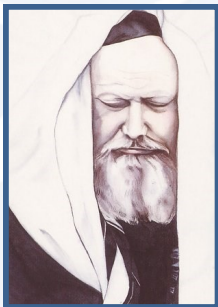
Although G-d created the world giving people free choice, He nevertheless has given us the tools and the guidance we need to encourage us to choose the good:

a Divine moral code, one that predates all human codes, and the only one that has timeless and universal application for a good, moral civilization. This Divine code, known as the Seven Laws of Noah, establishes an objective definition of “good” – one that applies to all people. For as recent history has proven, a morality that is based on human ideas of good is relative, subjective, and essentially not persuasive. Furthermore, as is abundantly clear to educators and law-enforcement agents, neither intimidation nor threat of punishment can foster a deep sense of moral obligation. This can only come from the knowledge – through education, that there is an “Eye that sees and an Ear that hears” to Whom we are all accountable.

The Noahide Code of seven basic Divine laws was given to Noah and his children after the Flood. These laws would assure Noah and his children, the forebears of the new human race, that humanity would not degenerate into a jungle again. *The laws, which command the establishment of courts of justice and prohibit idolatry, blasphemy, homicide, incest, robbery, and eating flesh of a live animal (cruelty to animals), are the foundation of all morality. And they extend, by laws derived from these, into all aspects of moral behavior.*

A particular task is to educate and to encourage the observance of the Seven Laws among all people. The religious tolerance of today and the trend towards greater freedom gives us the unique opportunity to enhance widespread observance of these laws. For it is by adherence to these laws, which are in and of themselves an expression of Divine goodness, that all humankind is united and bound by a common moral responsibility to our Creator. This unity promotes peace and harmony among all people, thereby achieving the ultimate good. As the Psalmist said: “How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity.”

From a 1990 address by



the Lubavitcher Rebbe,

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson



Seven Commandments: An Introduction

After the Flood, G-d established the Covenant of the Rainbow with Noah and all of the world's creatures. This covenant is not dependent on mankind's observance of the Seven Laws of Noah. Rather, the Noahide Code established the context *and the eventual goal* for a renewed world in which this covenant could be the open and enduring expression of G-d's love for His creation. It was G-d's promise to all living creatures that He would never again obliterate all land-life from the world, as stated in Genesis 9:11 – "never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth." *The Covenant of the Rainbow has an inner meaning as well: it was G-d's promise that He would always accept a person's sincere personal repentance if it was directed to Him.* From that point on, G-d endowed mankind with the ability to seek and gain His forgiveness, and with this He insured that a person's freedom to choose good includes the strength to prevail over animalistic and self-centered desires.

Still, the Seven Laws received by Noah could have been challenged at a later time by any charismatic misleader who also claimed to be a prophet, and how would a person know which course to follow? This points to the singular importance of the revelation at Mount Sinai to the Jewish people, 50 days after G-d brought them out from slavery in Egypt. At Mount Sinai, the Creator revealed Himself to a nation of at least three million people, making them all witnesses to testify to their future children and the world, so that no person in any generation could arise to seriously refute the prophecy and instruction which Moses received, which is called the Torah. Included in the Torah was the Noahide Code, to be preserved for the generations of mankind.

The entire Book of Genesis, and the Book of Exodus up to and including the arrival of the Israelites at Mount Sinai, were dictated by G-d to Moses when they arrived there. There was then a first covenant made between G-d and the Israelites on that first part of the Written Torah, which included their acceptance of the Noahide Code. Thus, the universal Divine moral code of seven commandments was renewed, after it had become neglected by the nations. That was four days before the Ten Commandments were spoken openly by G-d to all of the Israelites, at which point they became the Jewish people.

At Mount Sinai, G-d taught the essentials of the Torah's precepts through Moses, and this is called the Oral Torah. Included in this are the details of G-d's directive for all Gentiles to observe their Seven Noahide Commandments. These details, as G-d specified them to Moses, are the true foundation of the universal Noahide Code. A righteous Gentile merits to receive a place in the eternal future World to Come, in the Messianic Era, through observance of these commandments. That is a Gentile's part in the Torah of Moses, which is G-d's "Tree of Life" (Proverbs 3:18).

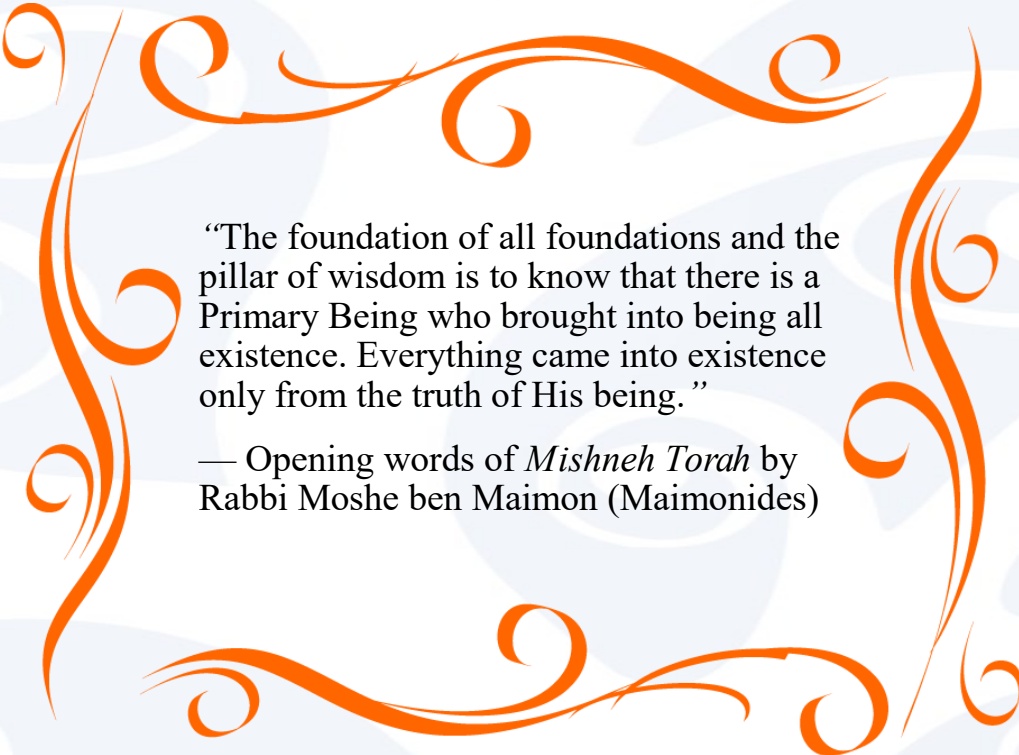
It all begins with recognizing the perfect Unity of the Creator.

1. The Prohibition of Idolatry

Directing our Spirituality to the Creator

The Meaning

The prohibition of idolatry, and its positive aspect of belief in G-d, are the foundation of the Noahide Code. It is the concept that every person is responsible to the One True G-d, regardless of the society's norms and one's own preferences. It is the knowledge that all people are under the One G-d as the Supreme Authority and the ultimate Source of all blessings, and that any other entity (real or imagined) which a person serves and worships as an independent power has become that person's idol.

A decorative border made of flowing orange lines with elegant curls and swirls, framing the central text.

“The foundation of all foundations and the pillar of wisdom is to know that there is a Primary Being who brought into being all existence. Everything came into existence only from the truth of His being.”

— Opening words of *Mishneh Torah* by
Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (Maimonides)

From the Introduction by Rabbi J. Immanuel Schochet to the section on the Prohibition of Idolatry, in “The Divine Code,” Part II:

The prohibition of idolatry includes any assumptions of there being self-contained beings or forces that are not totally dependent on G-d and His Providence. This will be understood with the following example: when driving in a nail with a hammer, the immediate agent of activity seems to be the hammer. In truth, however, it is not the hammer itself, but the hand that holds it and the energy used by the hand. So, too, everything in the physical universe and the spiritual realms is forever altogether subject to G-d and His will.

It is forbidden to put one's faith into a belief that planets or constellations *determine* human events or a person's fate. Likewise, soothsaying is a custom that comes from idolatry, and it is forbidden to pick natural occurrences or random lots as signs for how one should choose to act (for example, if a bird tapped on the window, or based on rolling dice, or dealing from a deck of cards). It is forbidden to engage in any form of sorcery (thinking that thereby one can manipulate future events), or to consult “spirits” (as people do in séances). Necromancy and other forms of divination are in the same category. All these practices imply a belief that there are various powers in existence which work on their own, independent of the continuous unified Divine Providence governing the totality of creation.

Human frailty is centered on self-interest, self-indulgence, and gratification: the egocentric as opposed to the theocentric. The powerful desire to control, direct, and manipulate the unknown future, to circumvent the Divine “system,” is extremely seductive. In effect however, it betrays a lack of trust in G-d and undermines true belief in G-d, Who alone is the Creator and Sustainer of all beings, and Who alone is in exclusive charge of all that happens to them. Idolatry is thus denial of pure monotheism, and it presupposes a polytheistic—or at least a dualistic—reality. Even if a person chooses to believe in only one idol, the person has set up for himself two deities—his idol, and himself as the appointer of the idol.

The Noahide Code was given by G-d at Mount Sinai, and it serves as the antidote to avoid idolatry's pitfalls, to guide a person in the path of authentic truth, and to help us live up to the fact that every person is created in the “image of G-d.”

Scriptural Sources

Genesis 2:16 states: “And the L-rd G-d (*E-lokim*) commanded the man, saying...” The singular Hebrew word *E-lokim* is one of the Divine Names for the One G-d. But the same word is used in the non-holy plural sense to refer to physical or conceptual idolatries (other “gods”), as in the verse, “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:3). Thus the statement in Genesis 2:16 implies that only the L-rd G-d – the One Who commands mankind – should be served and worshiped, but not an idol.

The Hebrew Bible is filled with statements from G-d to His prophets about His abhorrence of all types of idolatry, and His desire that all people shall repent from idolatry and accept Him as their G-d.

Some Details and Related Principles

- The obligation to recognize and believe in the One G-d.
- The obligation for a person to obey what he is commanded by G-d.
- The obligation for a person to pray to G-d. (At the very least, this applies in times of need.)
- The prohibition of serving idols, either instead of or in combination with G-d.
- The prohibition of making, owning, or selling an idol.
- One may not swear in a name of an idol.
- The prohibition of following the idolatrous customs of those who serve idols. Soothsaying, divination, sorcery and necromancy are included in this prohibition.

2. The Prohibition of Blasphemy

Respecting the Creator

The Meaning

At the most basic level, this means that one must not curse the Creator as He is known by His holy Names. Humans are graced with a unique faculty of speech, which is drawn down from the reflection of Divinity that is uniquely bestowed upon a human being. What greater misuse of this gift could there be than to acknowledge the existence of the Creator, while in the same breath expressing a base and vengeful desire that He should be harmed. It would show that the person does not merely lack faith and trust in the intrinsic good of Divine Providence (which may be hidden for a period of time), but he openly rebels against it.

The following is adapted from the Introduction by Rabbi J. Immanuel Schochet to the Prohibition of Blasphemy, in “The Divine Code,” Part III:

At the very center of this world are *homo sapiens*, humans Divinely endowed with intellect. This allows us analytical thought and examination of ourselves and the world around us. Without Divinely-endowed criteria for truth and moral values, however, our critical thinking is abstract and theoretical at best, and obviously susceptible to error.

Thus G-d revealed to mankind knowledge of His inscrutable Will by means of His prophets and the Torah, to know what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil.

The Divine revelation of the Torah at Mount Sinai, and the Divine designation of Moses as the foremost prophet for all time, set forth the ultimate test for the truth of future prophets, i.e., compatibility with the Torah and its eternal commandments. Even so, this legal and moral code is meaningful only when applying the other special gift endowed upon humans, namely freedom of choice to follow or reject proper conduct.



Open-minded and consistent reasoning readily leads to a realization that there must be a Supreme Cause for our most complex yet intricately precise world. Thus we arrive at the recognition and acknowledgment of G-d as Creator, Sovereign and Sustainer of the universe. This is not only an intellectual conclusion, but of itself has practical implications. Noting that life, health, and all human needs and blessings emanate unceasingly from the Creator, we must surely acknowledge this in thought, speech, and action. We ought to express gratitude for the Divine benevolence on which we are continuously dependent, and make ourselves into worthy recipients thereof. This is the concept of worshiping G-d that applies equally to all people alike.

The diametric opposite to this ideal of reverence for G-d is the crass and sinful conduct of deprecating G-d or His Sovereignty. This is referred to as blasphemy. In common usage, the word “blasphemy” is generally defined as any form of uttered impiety, irreverence, or sacrilege against G-d. These are acts of defiance seeking to impair the appropriate respect and reverence for G-d.

More specifically, the prohibition of blasphemy against the blessed Name of the Creator, and the obligation to respect and revere Him, derive from His absolute supremacy and sovereignty. It then follows that:

- Everyone is subject to the precept of awe and reverence before G-d, commonly referred to as the “fear of G-d.”
- One may not use G-d’s Name in vain. Using G-d’s Name in vain is closely connected with the principle of blasphemy, and it is clearly a form of disrespect. Included in this is a prohibition against swearing to a lie in G-d’s Name. Thus we find that from the earliest times, the concept of an oath was regarded as a sacred obligation. (See Genesis 21:22 and following, and Genesis 26:28 and following)

Scriptural Sources

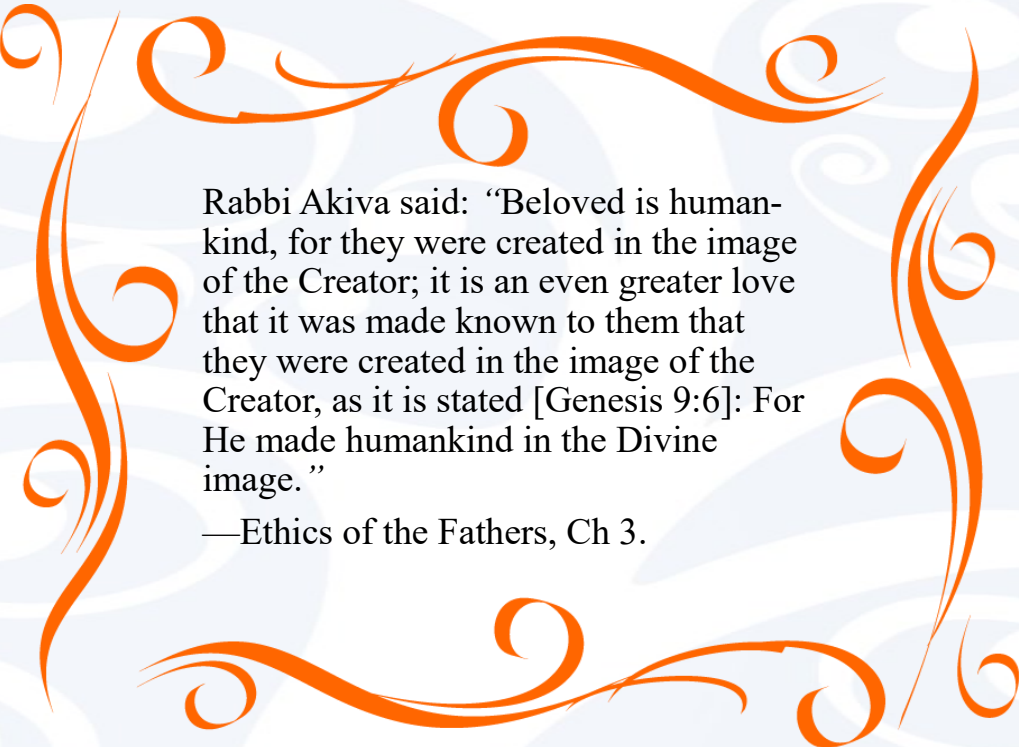
Leviticus 24:10-17 relates the incident of a Jew who violated the injunction of Exodus 22:27 and blasphemed in anger, and the Divine edict proclaiming this to be a capital offense. Moreover, it states in Leviticus 24:15, “*ish ish* (any man) who curses his G-d shall bear his sin.” Why the double expression of “*ish ish*” (literally: a man, a man)? To include all mankind.

Some Details and Related Principles

- The obligation to respect G-d’s Name.
- The obligation to fear G-d.
- The prohibition of cursing G-d (Heaven forbid).
- It is forbidden to swear in vain (as in taking a vain oath, or swearing to a false promise or statement).
- Which vows may be annulled, and the justifications and methods for doing so.

3. The Prohibition of Murder and Injury

Guarding the Sanctity of Human Life



Rabbi Akiva said: “Beloved is human-kind, for they were created in the image of the Creator; it is an even greater love that it was made known to them that they were created in the image of the Creator, as it is stated [Genesis 9:6]: For He made humankind in the Divine image.”

—Ethics of the Fathers, Ch 3.

The Meaning

The following is adapted from the Introduction by Dr. Michael Schulman to the section on the Prohibition of Murder and Injury, in “The Divine Code,” Part V:

Human life is an unalienable right of every person, and a gift from G-d that He expects us to guard and respect. Mankind was created “in the image of G-d,” and therefore possesses a dimension of holiness. Taking a human life diminishes a measure of the Divine image that is present in the world, and without G-d’s permission it is strictly forbidden. Furthermore, murder is an act of extreme rebellion against G-d Himself, Who blessed mankind “to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Genesis 1:28), and “He did not create it for emptiness; He fashioned it to be inhabited” (Isaiah 45:18).

In addition, a person who murders harms many others as well. The tragic loss of a person's life afflicts his loved ones, his friends, and his associates. The effects of murder also extend across time and space. A murderer also "kills" his victim's would-be descendants for all generations to come. All that potential for good throughout the future has been lost because of the violent act. Even if the victim would not have subsequently had any children, all of a person's great or small good deeds are the spiritual fruits that he adds to the world. Therefore, the Jewish Sages taught that someone who causes the destruction of one person's life from the world is considered as if he destroyed an entire world, and conversely, someone who saves or sustains one person's life in the world is considered as if he saved an entire world.

Yet what acts constitute the sin of murder? Are there times when killing is permitted by the Torah? Does a person ever have the "right" to end his or her own life? What about engaging in activities that are inherently life threatening, or accepting donor organs from living persons who will not regain consciousness? In the Noahide Code, G-d provided ample instructions for how the commandment applies in any circumstance.

Furthermore, the respect one must have for the "image of G-d" extends beyond taking or saving a human life. Are there acts that don't involve physical harm, but which are spiritually equivalent to murder? For example, can one be guilty in the eyes of G-d for destroying another's reputation, or subjecting him to humiliation? What if the publicized damaging information is true? These questions, as well as many more, are addressed in the Noahide Code. Specifically, "Murder and Injury" covers obvious issues such as homicide (whether premeditated murder or accidental manslaughter), suicide, euthanasia, and causing serious physical injury. It covers issues such as the Torah Laws regarding permissible acts of self-defense, endangering one's life to save another, and death caused through criminal or unavoidable negligence. The prohibition of injury also extends to non-physical attacks such as slander, embarrassment, and causing emotional harm. Even though many of the precepts relating to murder and injury are complex, an underlying theme can be summarized in one sentence. It is known as Hillel's "Golden Rule" of the Torah, and it simply states, "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. The rest is the explanation; go and learn."

By extension, a person should also refrain from speaking evil about others, as well as against the Creator, for respect is due to every person by virtue of being created with a rational human soul, which is the “Divine image” within a person. If one speaks words that destroy a favorable image of a person in another’s mind, then one has done actual harm, both to the person who was spoken about and to the listener. And how much more so if the destructive words are true! Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Hassidic movement, explained: “Evil gossip kills all three – the inventor of the slander, the one who relates it, and the listener. This is all in spiritual terms...”

Scriptural Sources

This prohibition is stated in Genesis 9:6 – “Whoever sheds the blood of man, among man, his blood shall be shed; for in the image of G-d He made man.”

Some Details and Related Principles

List of topics in the Table of Contents under the Prohibition of Murder and Injury, in “The Divine Code,” Part V:

- The prohibition of murder; abortion; euthanasia; causing mortal injury, and partners in murder.
- The prohibition of suicide.
- When it is permitted to sacrifice one’s life for one of the Seven Noahide Commandments.
- The laws of a pursuer and self defense.
- The laws of intentional and unintentional killing, and killing through negligence or under duress.
- The prohibition of causing personal injury or damage.
- The prohibition of endangering oneself or another.
- The obligation to save a person’s life.
- The prohibitions of embarrassing another person; evil gossip, and tale-bearing.
- The laws of reproductive sterilization and contraception.

Selected rules related to the Noahide prohibition of murder and injury, from the text of “The Divine Code,” Part V:

- One who injured or embarrassed another does not receive full atonement for the distress he caused just through monetary restitution alone. He should also ask forgiveness, and the person who was harmed should not be unforgiving. Rather, when he sees that the person who harmed him truly wishes to seek his forgiveness, he should pardon him.
- It is forbidden to cause another person suffering through one’s speech. This is morally and logically binding, as the sage Hillel said as a summary of the *entire* Torah, “What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow.”
- One who truly repents for the sin of murder should make a complete repentance, including increasing his acts of loving kindness and his charitable giving, and providing sustenance to those who are poor and living in pitiful conditions. It is also good for him to exile himself from his place of residence and his station in life, for exile atones for the sin of murder.



4. The Prohibition of Eating Meat that was Removed from a Living Animal

The Responsibility of Human Dominion Over the Animal Kingdom

The Meaning

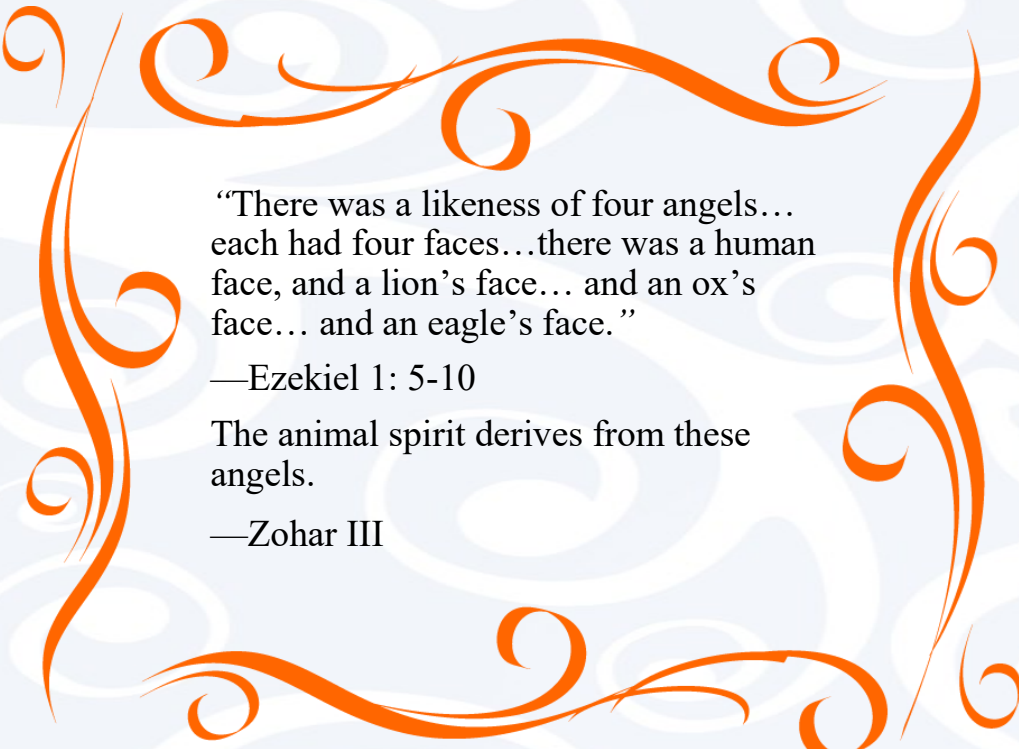
If meat from certain types of animals is taken for human consumption, G-d has commanded that in the process of slaughtering, it is required to wait until the animal's life has departed. Thus we see that the



Creator requires us to give recognition to the animal's connection with its spiritual dimension, which is its enlivening soul. This connection departs when the heart has permanently stopped pumping blood. Torah-law teaches that this commandment applies to land mammals and birds, and by extension, that we must respect the life of all creatures by distancing ourselves from treating

them cruelly. Kindness requires that we are not permitted to cause unnecessary suffering to any creature.

But we can also look deeper. This connection between the spiritual and the physical is reflected in the class of angels that have “the face of the human, the face of the lion, the face of the ox, and the face of the eagle” (Ezekiel 1:5-10). Can it be a coincidence that we are commanded to take more care when we partake of the flesh of domesticated mammals (represented by the ox), wild mammals (represented by the lion) and birds (represented by the eagle), while consumption of human flesh is always forbidden?



“There was a likeness of four angels...
each had four faces...there was a human
face, and a lion’s face... and an ox’s
face... and an eagle’s face.”

—Ezekiel 1: 5-10

The animal spirit derives from these
angels.

—Zohar III

From the Introduction by Dr. Joe M. Regenstein, Ph.D. (Prof. of Food Science, Cornell Univ.) to the section on the Prohibition of Meat from a Living Animal, in “The Divine Code,” Part IV:

One of the Noahide Commandments is referred to in Hebrew as “*Eiver Min Ha’hai*” (“Limb from a Living Animal”), which prohibits eating flesh that was severed from a living animal. It is an important statement of the limitations imposed on each individual, in light of the broader scriptural permission for humanity to have “dominion” over the animals. It is also a statement of G-d’s concern for the welfare of animals. Humanity’s responsibility for animal welfare is further developed in the Hebrew Scriptures to encompass the broader concept of avoiding the infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering upon living creatures, which is the concept of not doing any harm to animals unless there is a good reason to do otherwise. It is thus made clear that in G-d’s judgment, to treat an animal cruelly is wrong. Therefore, Hebrew Scripture, by showing this caring for animals, also teaches by implication how much worse it is to treat people poorly.

Many of the modern public issues being discussed in the realm of animal welfare with respect to slaughter, pre-slaughter handling, and post-slaughter waiting for the animal to expire, are covered by the Divine Noahide Code. It is therefore a source for providing guidance to all consumers, along with the regulators and overseers of the modern meat industry, and it challenges us all to be concerned with improving the handling of animals—both on the farm and in our communities, and most importantly in the arena of the compassionate use of animals for human food. The study of the Noahide Laws can help one approach the above concerns in keeping with modern industry guidelines for animal welfare, while also meeting the ancient but continuously relevant rules of “*Eiver Min Ha’hai*.”

Scriptural Sources

G-d permitted the eating of meat for the first time to Noah and his family after they left the Ark, which is why G-d at that time added the seventh commandment, which prohibits the eating of meat that was severed from a living animal (even if it was stunned and insensitive). This commandment given to Noah is recorded in Genesis 9:4. – “But flesh with its soul, [which is] its blood, you shall not eat.”

Some Details and Related Principles

Adapted from the Table of Contents under the Prohibition of Meat from a Living Animal, in “The Divine Code,” Part IV:

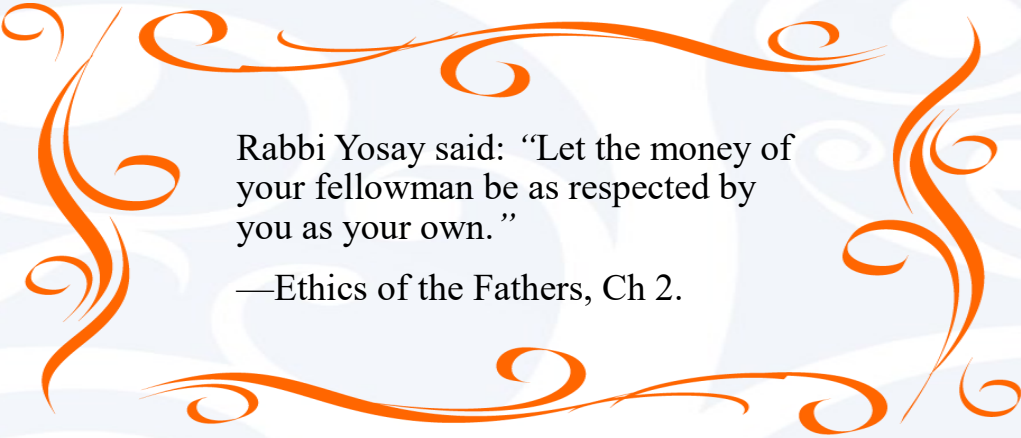
- The prohibition applies to land mammals and birds.
- The prohibition of separating meat from an animal that is living or in the process of dying.
- Consuming such meat before or after the animal’s death.
- Deriving benefit from meat separated from a living animal.
- Restrictions on causing suffering to a living creature.
- The prohibition of mating different species of animals.
- The prohibition of grafting different species of fruit trees.

Selected general rules of the Noahide prohibition of meat removed from a living animal, from “The Divine Code,” Part IV:

- In Genesis 9:2-3, Noah and his descendants were granted permission to kill any type of animal in any way they desired, for the purpose of food. Still, it is fitting for a person to have compassion toward animals and to kill them in the most painless manner possible. For mankind was not granted unrestricted permission to cause suffering to a living creature. Moreover, it is fitting for a person to distance himself from cruelty to the fullest extent possible.
- Noah was, however, forbidden to eat meat that was removed from certain animals while they were still living. This commandment in Genesis 9:4 refers to flesh separated from these live animals while their soul is still in their blood; i.e., while the heart is still pumping life-blood within the animal. This prohibition applies only to land mammals and to birds. These are all the animals for which there is a Torah-law distinction between their flesh and their blood.
- There are various outstanding logical explanations which can be put forth for this prohibition. For example, the obtaining of such flesh is likely to be done in a way that would result in great pain to the animal. Furthermore, it is a cruel behavior, which is a trait that people should strive to avoid. Nevertheless, it is from G-d's statement, “But flesh with its soul, [which is] its blood, you shall not eat,” that we learn that any flesh that is separated in any manner from the animals that are covered by this prohibition, during the time they are alive, is forbidden to be eaten.
- After Noah left the ark, humans were granted permission to kill any animals for food, or for the use of their body parts for beneficial purposes. However, they were not granted permission to injure, kill, or cause suffering to an animal for no useful purpose, and one who does so violates the prohibition of causing unnecessary pain to a living creature. For this reason, it is forbidden to skin an animal or cut out one of its organs during its lifetime, even if one does not intend to eat from the part removed. Instead, if one requires the hide or organ, one should kill the animal first and then take the parts of its body that one needs.

5. The Prohibition of Theft

Responsibility and Respect for Ownership of Personal Property



Rabbi Yosay said: “Let the money of your fellowman be as respected by you as your own.”

—Ethics of the Fathers, Ch 2.

The Meaning

From the Introduction by Rabbi Moshe Weiner to the section on the Prohibition of Theft, in “The Divine Code,” Part VII:

The Prohibition of Theft and its laws are unique in that they connect to almost every aspect of life, since societal people must deal with others continuously: buying, selling, and exchanging items. The focus of this command is to accept and honor another person’s needs and money. Theft in its different forms causes corruption, which can bring society to the brink of destruction. This lesson has been historically documented in the decline of many societies.

A unique point borne out from this command is that one must justly accept others as equal to oneself, honoring them and their property. This feeling can only come from the recognition that all people are equally created by the One G-d, who creates all and provides for all. As each person is allotted an exact and appropriate portion from G-d, there is no reason to desire or take that which belongs to another. Another lesson is the importance of being truthful. One must contemplate that being truthful and just is not only necessary for the upkeep of society, but is also for one’s own sake and benefit. Truth is being correct with oneself, to recognize one’s true virtues, capacities, needs, and duties.

No one knows each individual person's needs better than mankind's Creator Himself, Who gave us commands and a pattern of life to be successful and maximize our potential. However, a person needs a vessel to receive this pattern of life, to accept it and manage to live with it accordingly. This vessel is truth.

One must be extremely careful about theft, since there are many details. A person naturally covets the money of others, and one's evil inclination tricks him with various excuses for why it would be permissible. This law helps a person remain focused on G-d and His truth, and to remain truthful with oneself. One should also exert extra effort to learn and understand this law and its details in order not to transgress the prohibition even by mistake. It is also an obligation to guard one's actions, since one is more likely to mistakenly steal when one is not taking careful notice of his actions.

Scriptural Sources

The prohibition of theft is contained within the permission which G-d granted to Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:16 to eat from the trees of the garden. This implies that if permission had not been granted, they would have been forbidden to do so, since the property did not belong to them. This Noahide commandment is cited explicitly by Abraham in Genesis 21:25.



Some Details and Related Principles

Adapted from the Table of Contents under the Prohibition of Theft, in “The Divine Code,” Part VII:


- The prohibition of (secretive) theft and (open) robbery.
- The obligation to return a stolen object, and restitution for theft.
- The prohibitions of assisting a thief or benefiting from stolen items.
- Saving a life overrides the prohibition of theft, but the amount taken should be paid back if possible; retrieving a stolen object.
- Theft through false measurements; the prohibition of cheating or misinforming another person.
- The prohibition of extortion, and forcing a purchase.
- Laws of borrowing, renting, and safeguarding an entrusted object.
- Stealing or encroaching upon real estate property.
- The prohibition of kidnapping.
- Bodily injury and damaging another person’s property.
- Delinquent debts, and withholding a worker’s wages.
- The laws pertaining to an ownerless object.
- Gambling and other activities that are similar to theft.

Selected rules related to the Noahide prohibition of theft, from the text of “The Divine Code,” Part VII:

- In the Noahide Commandments, there is no difference between theft (stealing secretly) and robbery (stealing openly).
- Extortion occurs when one forces his victim to sell him an object, even at its correct value. This is also forbidden.
- If the item taken is so small that no one would be concerned about it (for example, a wood sliver taken from a fence for a toothpick) it is permissible. But if many people are involved and each one takes a small amount, the owner would mind, and it is forbidden.

6. The Prohibition of Forbidden Sexual Relations

Defining the Boundaries of Intimacy



“A man shall cling to his wife and they shall become one flesh.”

—Genesis 2:24

“One flesh: the child is formed through the two of them, and in this way their flesh becomes one.”

—Explanation by Rashi

The Meaning

One of the most powerful human desires is the desire for sexual fulfillment, which is necessary for procreation and thus the continuation of humanity. But when used destructively, it has not only destroyed the morals of individuals, but it has also been proven to lead to the disintegration of whole societies.

The Hebrew words for man (*ish*) and woman (*ishah*) both contain the Hebrew root word *aish*, fire. The Talmudic Sages drew a correlation between the words: just as fire can be harnessed to produce energy and provide great benefit, but when unleashed it can also bring destruction and ruin, so too, human sexual desire must be kept within the boundaries of a productive and G-dly marriage.

From the Introduction by Arthur Goldberg, author of “Light in the Closet,” to the section on the Prohibition of Forbidden Relations, in “The Divine Code,” Part VI:

The Torah places much emphasis on the value of the family and the furtherance of societies. Wholesome families are the foundation upon which healthy communities, nations, and societies are built. Without a foundation, the mightiest building is bound to crumble. As explained in the Written Torah and Talmud, a main accomplishment of the sexual prohibitions is rejection of unbridled licentiousness that leads to the disintegration of society. The modern vision of morality (which mirrors much of ancient paganism) is often rationalized as a virtually all-permissive, “anything goes” social system founded on a concept of universal “tolerance.” Unfortunately, this concept of tolerance is, in actuality, a facade used to mask an agenda of sexual licentiousness.

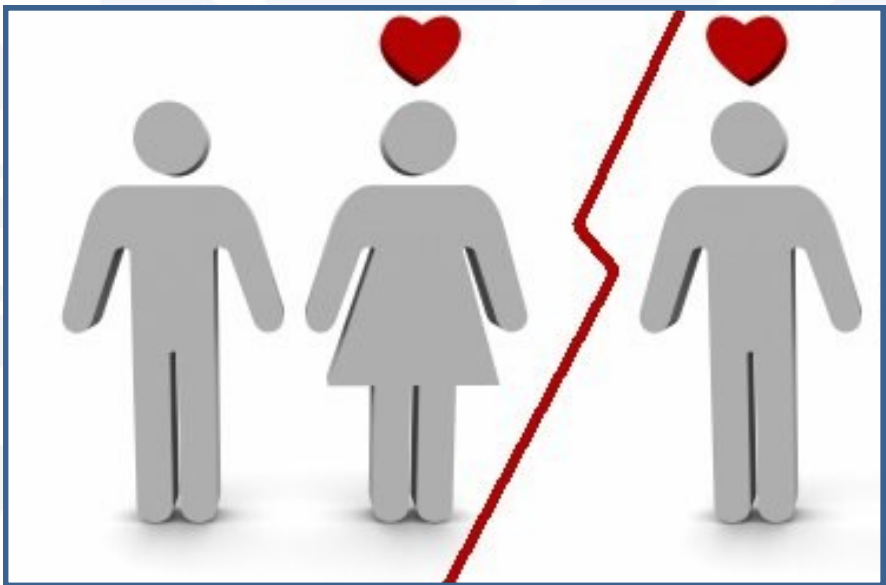
History confirms the importance of these Torah lessons. The British anthropologist J. D. Unwin’s comprehensive and classic study of 5,000 years of history chronicles the historical decline of 86 primitive and civilized societies. He found that “the regulations of the relationship between the sexes” are the very foundation of civilized society.^[1] Unwin discovered (contrary to his personal philosophy and inclination as a social liberal) a distinct correlation between increasing sexual freedom and social decline.

If the authentic Torah teachings on true sexual morality are followed, humankind hopefully will not *self-destruct*. G-d provided a rainbow as evidence of His covenant that He will not destroy the world again. The seven colors of the rainbow correspond to the Seven Noahide Laws – the foundations of a G-dly and ordered society. But because G-d endowed mankind with free choice, there is the ever-present question concerning whether a society will heed them – particularly the admonitions of sexual boundaries and proscriptions. These are set forth as a code of laws involving sexuality. If Gentiles live their lives consistent with this Biblical framework of morality, then the rainbow can also represent a multi-level system of spiritual wholeness that enables them to live righteous lives and have a share in the World to Come. This then becomes the opportunity for a covenant between humans, and a basis upon which we can create a world of wholeness and holiness.

[1] J. D. Unwin, *Sex and Culture*, Oxford Univ. Press, 1934.

Scriptural Sources

Five of the six types of relations that are forbidden by G-d to Gentiles are covered in Genesis 2:24: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and cling to his wife and they shall become one flesh.” This verse explicitly forbids relations with one’s mother, one’s father’s wife, a wife of another man, another male, and an animal. A Gentile is also forbidden to have relations with his maternal sister, which is learned from Genesis 20:13: “Moreover, she is indeed my sister, my father’s daughter, though not my mother’s daughter; and she became my wife.” (Note that Abraham said this to appease Abimelech. It was actually only figuratively true in his case, since Sarah was the daughter of Abraham’s brother. They had the same paternal grandfather, whom people often referred to as “father”.) It was also universally accepted that father-daughter relations would be prohibited, as evidenced by the disgrace of Lot after he had relations with his two daughters, following G-d’s destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:29-36, and Rashi on Genesis 20:1). Relations between females are likewise an abomination to G-d. It is one of the subjects of Leviticus 18:3, which speaks against the immoral practices of the ancient Egyptians and Canaanites, and which Leviticus 18:30 refers to as “abominable traditions.” About this the Midrash specifies: “A man would marry a man, a woman would marry a woman, and a woman would be married to two men.”



Some Details and Related Principles

Adapted from the Table of Contents of the Prohibition of Forbidden Relations, in “The Divine Code,” Part VI:

- Categories of forbidden sexual partners and sexual acts.
- The prohibitions of homosexual and bestial relations.
- The prohibition of relations with other men’s wives.
- Partners with whom there can be no status of marriage.
- Precepts related to marriage, fornication, and divorce.
- Precepts related to spilling semen and contraception.
- Guarding against forbidden relations, and following ways of modesty.
- Prohibitions related to being alone with a forbidden partner.

Selected rules related to the Noahide prohibition of forbidden relations, from “The Divine Code,” Part VI:

- A few other sexual relations that are not capital sins are also forbidden. For example, a full sister or maternal half-sister of a man’s mother is forbidden to him.
- If Gentile societies see a need to impose upon themselves extra restrictions, and enforcedly prohibit relations between other categories of relatives, they are permitted to do so. (For example, almost all societies have prohibited marriage between an uncle and his niece.)
- There is no status of true marriage for those who are minors according to Torah Law, since they do not have the maturity of mind to accept a marital bond. An even higher minimum age at which to allow and recognize marriages should be set by some communities. This should be the age when most people in that community are considered to be mature and responsible for their actions. Nowadays, this is usually in the late teens.
- G-d’s words (Genesis 2:24), “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and cling to his *wife*, and they shall become one flesh,” reveal that it is natural and appropriate for a man to marry a woman and establish a family. One who deviates from this path acts contrary to what G-d intended for mankind.

7. The Obligation for Laws and Courts

The Foundation of a Peaceful and Just Society

The Meaning

If society is to function successfully, it must impose upon itself a legal structure to ensure adherence to core values. Peace and success among the members of a society can only be fostered if a righteous moral code is used to establish enforceable boundaries of behavior. Every nation, state or province, and municipality is obligated to have a system of courts to uphold the Noahide Commandments. Beyond this, all societies must also establish civil laws according to righteous principles, with civil courts ruling on civil matters, since these inevitably arise in daily life.

For the good of the society, courts or governments may place necessary legal limits on activities that G-d's Torah leaves up to personal choice, as long as the restrictions are acceptable to the population in general. Then by the Noahide "Law of Courts," citizens are required to observe the secular law, and the courts can apply any non-capital punishment that the public in general accepts, as long as it is not cruel or unusual. This is called "going beyond the letter" of the Torah Law. For example, a court system has the right to limit male citizens to only one legally contracted wife at a time (including both formally registered marriages and common-law marriages), if this is judged to be a benefit for the society.

Furthermore, G-d's known standards for moral human behavior are part of His desire for "*yishuv olom*" (literally, "settling the world," which is a Biblical term that refers to people making societies that are peaceful and proper in G-d's eyes). Therefore, establishing righteous laws and courts also falls under the Noahide obligation to promote "*yishuv olom*" – people should be encouraged to act in ways that are morally proper according to G-d, or at least refrain from acting in ways that are known from the Hebrew Scriptures (which are authentic Divine revelation) to be abhorrent to G-d. This applies whether or not the undesirable actions are actually liable to punishment according to the Torah's Noahide Code.



Scriptural Sources

G-d commanded Noah regarding the trial and punishment of a murderer, as it says in Genesis 9:6, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, among man, his blood shall be shed...” This refers to a Noahide commandment to judge and penalize a murderer.

This is explained as follows by the Talmudic Sages: “Whoever sheds the blood of man” (referring to the murderer), “among man” (i.e., he is to be prosecuted in a court by a man who is qualified to testify as a witness), “his blood shall be shed” (if convicted, he is liable to capital punishment by the court). The Noahide Code commanded through Moses at Mount Sinai specifies that Gentiles are similarly obligated to bring transgressors of the other Noahide commandments to justice in a court of law.

Some Details and Related Principles

- The ruling power must institute oversight over the courts to be sure that only proper and expert judges are appointed, and that the judges do not act corruptly or unrighteously. The ruling power also has the authority to institute a structure of “appeals” or “referral” courts.
- Every individual must abide by a properly rendered legal decision he has received. It is forbidden for an individual to carry out judgments and punishments against others (vigilante justice). One must pursue a legal case within the legal system that has jurisdiction over the matter.
- Standard types of evidence are admissible in Noahide courts.
- Anyone who is known to transgress any of the Noahide Commandments is not to be considered as a reliable witness in capital cases.
- All judges must deliver righteous judgments, and opposing claimants must be treated equally in all ways.
- Bribing a judge is forbidden, and judges may not take bribes.
- In civil cases, one should seek arbitration, mediation or other means of finding an amicable settlement or compromise.
- If the majority of the society is not G-d fearing and does not observe all of the Seven Noahide Commandments, a court may only use capital punishment as a decree of the government to protect the society from very dangerous criminals, such as murderers.

What other righteous traditions were accepted by mankind after the Flood?

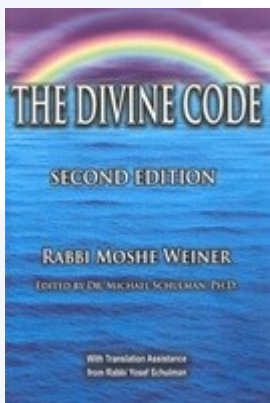
In addition to the Seven Noahide Commandments, the nations of antiquity voluntarily accepted several rules of moral behavior. Six of these meritorious activities are described in Chapter 4, “The Seven Universal Laws of Noah,” in the book by David Sears, *Compassion for Humanity in the Jewish Tradition* (Pub. by Jason Aronson, 1998). The following list of these righteous practices is taken from this book with the gracious permission of the author, in synopsis.

- **Contemplation of G-d:** Abraham discovered G-d by contemplating the origin of the universe. Following his example, contemplating nature and searching out its mysteries can be a path to G-d. Contemplating the omnipresence of the Creator, Who is the Source of existence and the only True Existence, is another spiritual practice discussed in Kabbalistic and Hassidic works. However, for most people, it is very difficult to progress on the proper path without being guided by a Torah teacher. Unlike Abraham, we live after the Torah was given, so it is the mission of each individual to learn and observe the Divine commandments that apply to him personally.

Synopsis of excerpts from a talk by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, on 11 Nisan 5743 (25 March 19'83):

“In truth, thinking about G-d is itself a prayer. This is a *mitzvah* [in the sense of a righteous activity] that precludes idol worship, which is a prohibition contained in the seven universal Noahide Commandments. Since every *mitzvah* has the nature of leading to another *mitzvah* [Ethics of the Fathers, Chapter 4], surely this good deed will have a continuing good effect on the person. There is no doubt that if you inquire of the person about the events in his life in the following days and weeks [after he spends time thinking about G-d] you will recognize Divine Providence. When one thinks about G-d, the result is that later, when he considers doing something which is perhaps not proper and just, he will remember the ‘Eye that Sees,’ and this will stop him!”

- **Noahide Torah Study:** In order to live by the Universal Code, one must study its precepts. An outline is really just a starting point. The various ramifications of the Seven Noahide Commandments are discussed at length. The Sages of Israel taught that study of the Torah's precepts (including the Universal Code) should be in a spirit of humility and faith. Therefore, Gentiles who believe in the One True G-d and strive to live by the Universal Code should study the details of their seven commandments, as well as other parts of Torah literature relevant to their spiritual needs and responsibilities.



From “The Divine Code,” p. 91, by Rabbi Moshe Weiner:

“Learning Torah ... [is] an obligation that is included in the Seven Commandments themselves ... the one who is commanded should know and be involved in learning how to keep that commandment. Therefore, when a Gentile learns a part of Torah for the purpose of observing a Noahide Commandment, he receives a reward, in addition to the reward for observing the Seven Noahide Commandments themselves. And even more so, since his learning Torah about the Seven Commandments is connected to the particular commandment that it relates to, the learning is a fulfillment of a directive from G-d. Therefore, learning about the Seven Noahide Commandments is called a permissible ‘involvement’ in Torah study, and the reward for this learning and involvement in Torah is great.”

● **Prayer:** Every person can establish a relationship with G-d through prayer. One should pray to the Creator for all of his or her needs, and pray for the welfare of others. G-d receives the prayers of all who sincerely call upon Him. Thus, the Holy Temple in Jerusalem is called “a House of Prayer for all nations.” (Isaiah 56:7)

Through devotional prayer one can come to experience transcendence of self and attachment to G-d. Rabbi Nachman of Breslov especially recommended going into the forests or fields in order to achieve this. (In one’s home, it is beneficial to pray in a quiet, private room.) This practice is associated with Isaac, the second Patriarch, who is described as praying alone in the fields (Genesis 24:63). Isaac also prayed at home with his wife, she on one side of the room, and he on the other (Genesis 25:21).

From the book “Vedibarta Bam” (And You Shall Speak of Them), by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky, copyright © by Sichos In English:

What practical lesson can we learn from G-d’s command to Noah to enter into the ark?... The Hebrew word *teivah* used for “ark” also means “word.” G-d is telling us as well to “enter” into the words of Torah and prayer... Just as Noah was commanded to enter with his entire being into the ark (*teivah*), so are we told to “enter” with all our heart and soul into the words (*teivot*) of Torah and prayer, reading the words carefully [from a properly translated Hebrew Bible or Psalms, etc.], saying each word with feeling. In this way we will fulfill, in the spiritual sense, a previous command G-d gave to Noah: “A light shall you make for the ark (*teivah*)” (Genesis 6:16) – you shall illuminate the words (“*teivot*”) of Torah and prayer with deeper feeling.

- **Good Deeds and Proper Charity:** We are all merely custodians of the wealth we possess, the purpose of which is to improve the world as much as possible. In addition to benefiting others through giving charity and other kind acts, one overcomes the ego, ceases to be a taker, and becomes a giver. Even without completely pure motives, the one who gives is meritorious, for the receiver benefits in any case... People of all nations elicit Divine mercy and protection through their acts of charity and good deeds.



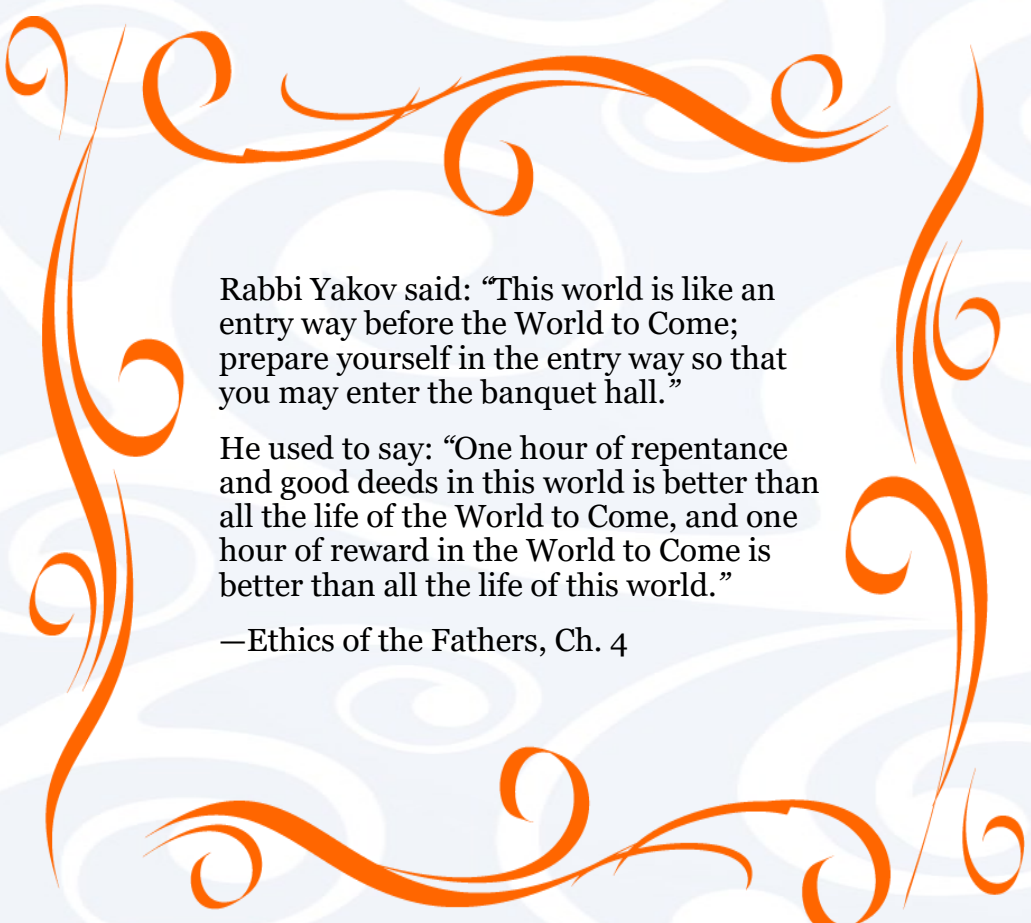
- **Return to G-d:** Anyone can turn away from evil and come back to G-d at any moment, no matter what they may have done (Jonah 3:10). As the sages taught, nothing can stand in the way of repentance. The state of spiritual accord that one regains is the original unblemished condition of the soul. The prophets of Israel taught that G-d seeks the repentance of Jews and Gentiles alike (Jonah 4:11; Jeremiah 18:8). This is fundamental to the entire purpose of creation.

- **Joy:** Despair is the antithesis of faith. When one truly considers that everything is in G-d's hands and that everything is for the ultimate good, it is possible to be happy in all circumstances. Thus, the Talmud relates that a certain sage would habitually remark, "This, too, is for the good" (*"Gam zu le'tovah"*). The prophets of Israel declared that all of history is leading to a time when evil, suffering, and strife will cease. Then, all the good that mankind has accomplished will be gathered together, and G-dliness will be revealed to all. This will be in the Messianic era.

When a person realizes that by following G-d's precepts he is helping to bring the world to this state of perfection, he should be especially joyous. There is a Hassidic story that illustrates this point. Once there was a poor person who was known for his great joy. Some of his neighbors, who were having a hard time themselves, found this a bit annoying. "You're the poorest man in town," they said. "Why are you so full of joy?" "I borrowed it," he admitted, "from the better days ahead!" May we soon see the days of true joy, when at last there will be peace between nations, and "the knowledge of G-d will fill the earth like the water that covers the sea" (Isaiah 11:9).

Here are two more principles that are righteous traditions from Biblical times:

- **Honoring One's Father and Mother:** Although Gentiles were not specifically commanded about honoring parents, from the beginning of mankind's creation they distinguished themselves by accepting this as a righteous obligation.
- **Not To Deceive Others:** This is evidenced by Jacob's accusation against Laban (Genesis 29:25), "Why have you deceived me?" against which Laban took pains to *justify* himself (thus showing that he agreed that deception was considered a sin). This rule also obligated Jacob to marry Rachel, as he had originally promised her before Laban switched her for Leah, even though Jacob personally wished to restrict himself to only one wife.

A decorative border made of flowing orange lines with elegant curls and swirls, framing the central text.

Rabbi Yakov said: "This world is like an entry way before the World to Come; prepare yourself in the entry way so that you may enter the banquet hall."

He used to say: "One hour of repentance and good deeds in this world is better than all the life of the World to Come, and one hour of reward in the World to Come is better than all the life of this world."

—Ethics of the Fathers, Ch. 4

Our opportunity to all be on the same page

1. There is a single Creator of the physical and spiritual realms, Who cares about what we choose to do, and Who wants our worship to be directed to Him alone. Do not worship any other entity, whether it exists in reality or in peoples' imagination.
2. Do not curse the Creator, Whose holy Name we must revere. Let your soul feel its natural awe of Him.
3. Do not murder, for it is an attack on the image of G-d that He invested in every human being.
4. Do not eat flesh that was severed from a mammal or bird before it died. From this we learn the importance of respecting the life of all creatures, by treating them humanely.
5. Do not steal. A person who steals denies G-d's authority to allocate from His Creation to whomever He chooses. Respect the property of others.
6. Accept G-d's boundaries on human desires. Incest, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, and other society-destroying sexual practices are forbidden.
7. Establish courts of law. A fair, effective, and consistent legal system creates a society that can receive G-d's blessings.

To learn more, ask questions, send an email, or find out how *you* can get involved, visit asknoah.org.



The Noahide Code is a living heritage for people of all nations. When we fulfill our potential by living within this covenant, the creation is spiritually elevated to realize its intended goal. This makes the world into a beautiful gem. – a place where G-d can dwell!

ISBN 978-0-9895673-1-2 (2nd Edition)

Graphic design by Brandyn Ashing

Copyright © 2015 by Ask Noah International

All rights reserved. For information contact:

Ask Noah International

Internet: asknoah.org and asknoah.com

Please preserve the sanctity of this booklet.

The 7 Laws of the Children of Noah

- 1. With respect to God's commandments, all of humanity is divided into two general classifications: the Children of Israel and the Children of Noah.**
- 2. The Children of Israel are the Jews, the descendants of the Patriarch Jacob. They are commanded to fulfill the 613 Commandments of the Torah.**
- 3. The Children of Noah comprise the seventy original nations of the world and their branches. They are commanded concerning the Seven Universal Laws, also known as the Seven Laws of the Children of Noah or the Seven Noahide Laws.[\[1\]](#) These Seven Universal Laws pertain to idolatry, blasphemy, murder, theft, sexual relations, eating the limb of a living animal, and establishing courts of law.**
- 4. All Seven Universal Laws are prohibitions. Do not wonder at this. Negative commandments are of a higher order than positive commandments, and their fulfillment, which takes more effort than positive commandments, earns a greater reward.**
- 5. Men and women are equal in their responsibility to observe the seven commandments.[\[2\]](#)**
- 6. It is a matter of dispute as to when a person becomes responsible for his or her actions under these laws. One**

opinion holds that it depends on the intellectual development of the individual.[\[3\]](#) According to this opinion, as soon as a child has attained the maturity to understand the meaning and significance of the Seven Universal Laws, he is obligated to the fullest extent of the law. The other opinion is that a boy reaches the age of legal responsibility at his thirteenth birthday and a girl at her twelfth birthday.[\[4\]](#)

7. The Children of Noah are permanently warned concerning the Seven Universal Laws. This means that ignorance of the law is not a valid defense. One cannot claim, for example, that he did not know that idolatry was one of the seven commandments. Nor can he claim that he did not know that bowing down to an idol constitutes idolatry. (He can, however, claim that he did not know that such-and-such was an idol, for this is not ignorance of the law.) Therefore, one is duty bound to study the Seven Universal Laws to the best of one's ability and to teach the knowledge of them to one's children.

8. When one of the Children of Noah resolves to fulfill the Seven Universal Commandments, his or her soul is elevated. This person becomes one of the *Chasidei Umot ha-Olam*, the Pious Ones of the Nations, and receives a share of the Eternal World.[\[5\]](#) The Holy Scriptures call one who accepts the yoke of fulfilling the Seven Universal Laws a *ger toshav*, a proselyte of the gate. This person is permitted to live in the Land of Israel and to enter the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and to offer sacrifices to the God of Israel.[\[6\]](#)

9. Although the Children of Noah are commanded only concerning the Seven Universal Commandments, they are

permitted to observe any of the 613 Commandments of the Torah for the sake of receiving divine reward.^[7] The exceptions to this are:^[8]

- a. Observing the Sabbath in the manner of the Jews (resting from the actions that were needed for the building of the Tabernacle during the Exodus from Egypt)
- b. Observing the Jewish holy days in the manner of the Jews (resting in a similar manner to the Sabbath)
- c. Studying those parts of the Torah that do not apply to the Noahides' service of God
- d. Writing a Torah scroll (the Five Books of Moses) or receiving an *aliyah* to the Torah (reading a portion of the Torah at a public gathering)
- e. Making, writing, or wearing *tefilin*, the phylacteries worn during prayer that contain portions of the Torah
- f. Writing or affixing a *mezuzah*, the parchment containing portions of the Torah, to one's doorposts or gateposts

(Note: A prime purpose of the Seven Universal Laws is to teach the Children of Noah about the Oneness of God, and therefore those parts of Torah that pertain to this knowledge are permissible for him to study. This includes the entirety of the twenty-four books of the Hebrew Scriptures. Also, the study of any part of the Torah that brings one to greater knowledge concerning the performance of the Seven Noahide Commandments is permissible. But Talmudic or Halakhic study of subjects that pertain exclusively to the

Jew's service of God is forbidden. The Noahide who studies portions of the Torah that do not pertain to him damages his soul.[\[9\]](#))

10. If a Noahide is striving in the learning of Torah or keeping the Sabbath in the manner of Jews or reveals new aspects of Torah, he may be physically restrained and informed that he is liable for capital punishment, but is not put to death.

(Note: The action taken against him is only meant to dissuade him from doing forbidden acts. If the court that is established in consonance with the Seven Universal Laws gives the death penalty to a Noahide, the execution is an atonement for this person's transgression, and consequently one who transgresses and is punished by the court can merit a portion in the World to Come.[\[10\]](#) Furthermore, the Noahide must experience reincarnation to be able to atone for transgressions he had done.)

11. The responsibility of The Seven Noahide Laws is a yoke of faith in God. This means that the laws must be observed solely because God commanded them. If the Children of Noah observe these Seven Universal Laws for any reason or intention other than to fulfill God's will, the performance is invalid and no divine reward is received. This means that if one of the Children of Noah says, "These laws seem sensible and beneficial, therefore I will observe them," his actions accomplish nothing and he receives no reward.[\[11\]](#)

12. When one of the Children of Noah engages in the study of the Seven Universal Laws, he is able to attain a spiritual

level higher than the High Priest of the Jews, who alone has the sanctity to enter the Holy of Holies in the Temple in Jerusalem. [\[12\]](#)

13. If one of the Children of Noah wishes to accept the full responsibility of the Torah and the 613 Commandments, he or she can convert and become a Jew in every respect. One who elects to do this is called a *ger tzedek*, a righteous proselyte. [\[13\]](#) It is a principle of Judaism, however, not to seek converts, and one who requests conversion is generally discouraged. Should the person persist in the desire to convert, counsel should be taken only with an Orthodox rabbi or scholar, for conversion not in accord with *Halakha*, Torah Law, is no conversion at all, and conversion supervised and bestowed by rabbis who themselves do not follow the laws of the Torah are null and void, neither recognized in heaven nor by any God-fearing Jew.

14. It is incorrect to think that since the Children of Israel have 613 Commandments and the Children of Noah have seven commandments, the ratio of spiritual worth is proportionally 613 to seven. The truth is that the Seven Universal Laws are general commandments, each containing many parts and details, whereas the 613 Commandments of the Torah are specific, each relating to one basic detail of the Divine Law. Therefore, the numerical disparity in no way reflects the relative spiritual worth of the two systems of commandments. [\[14\]](#) The prime difference in the service of the Israelite and that of the Noahide is that the Noahide sees the existence of existence, that is, he refines the world, whereas the Israelite sees the non-existence of existence, that

is, he reveals the Godliness in the world. Of course, refining the world reveals its inherent Godliness and revealing Godliness automatically refines the world.

15. The statutory punishment for transgressing any one of the Seven Laws of Noah is capital punishment. [\[15\]](#)

According to some, punishment is the same whether one transgresses with knowledge of the law or is ignorant of the law. [\[16\]](#) According to others, a transgressor of the Noahide Law who is ignorant of the law receives the death penalty only in the case of murder. [\[17\]](#)

16. If the courts cannot punish an individual for lack of witnesses or any other reason (see the chapter on Courts of Law), the transgressor will be punished by Divine Decree. [\[18\]](#)

17. Besides the Seven Universal Commandments, the Children of Noah have traditionally taken it upon themselves to fulfill the commandment of honoring father and mother. [\[19\]](#) (see the chapter on Honoring Father and Mother).

18. Some authorities are of the opinion that the Children of Noah are obligated to fulfill the commandment of giving charity. [\[20\]](#) Others state that it is proper and meritorious for the Children of Noah to give charity but that it is not actually commanded of them. [\[21\]](#)

19. If a Noahide who follows the Seven Universal Laws gives charity, the Israelites accept it from him and give it to the poor of Israel, since through the merit of giving charity to

the poor among the Jewish people one is given life by God and saved from death. But a Noahide who does not accept the yoke of the Seven Noahide Laws and gives charity is not permitted to give it to the needy of Israel. His charity may be given to poor Noahides only.

20. If one of the Children of Noah arises and performs a miracle and says that God sent him, then instructs others to add to or subtract from any of the Seven Universal Laws or explains them in a way not heard at Mount Sinai, or claims that the 613 Commandments given to the Jews are not eternal, but limited to a fixed period of time, this person is deemed a false prophet and incurs the death penalty.[\[22\]](#)

21. There is an oral tradition that the Children of Noah are forbidden to interbreed animals of different species or to graft trees of different kinds,[\[23\]](#) although some authorities hold that they are permitted to do either.[\[24\]](#) However, they may wear *shaatnez* (clothing containing both wool and linen) and they may plant different seeds such as grape and wheat in the same field, which are acts forbidden to Jews. [\[25\]](#) Forbidden interbreeding and grafting are not punishable in courts of law.

22. The Sages of Israel state that Children of Ketura (the sons of Abraham's concubine, Hagar) who were born after Ishmael and Isaac must by law be circumcised. Since today the descendants of Ishmael are intermixed with the descendants of the other sons of Hagar, all are obligated to be circumcised on the eighth day after they are born. Those transgressing this are not liable for the death penalty.[\[26\]](#)

This law applies only to Semitic peoples, although all other nations are allowed to circumcise if they desire.

23. One opinion holds that only the six sons of Hagar and not their descendants were obligated to be circumcised.[\[27\]](#)

24. In accord with the Seven Universal Commandments, man is enjoined against creating any religion based on his own intellect. He either develops religion based on these Divine Laws or becomes a righteous proselyte, a Jew, and accepts all 613 commandments of the Torah.[\[28\]](#)

(Note: Concerning making holidays for themselves, Noahides may participate in the celebration of certain Jewish holidays, such as Shavuot, celebrating the Giving of the Torah, since the Children of Noah received their commandments at the same time, or Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year and Day of Judgment, since all mankind is judged by God on that day, so it should therefore be important to the Noahide as well as the Israelite. Rosh Hashanah is also the day that Adam, the First Man, was created by God, and all mankind is descended from Adam just as it is from Noah.[\[29\]](#) Even these, however, the Noahide celebrates only in order to bring additional merit and reward to himself, and he may not rest in the manner of the Jews. Moreover, the Noahide is strictly forbidden to create a new holiday that has religious significance and claim that it is part of his own religion, even if the religion is the observance of the Seven Noahide Laws. For example, it would be forbidden to make a holiday celebrating the subsiding of the waters of the Flood of Noah or anything of the like. And, all the more so, it would be forbidden to

institute holidays that ascribe religious significance to events outside the purview of the Seven Noahide Commandments. Celebrating secular activities and commemorating historical events, even if they involve a festive meal, are permissible.)

25. The nations of the world acknowledge the existence of God and they do not transgress the will of God. Their failing is an inability to be nullified to God, and they deny His Oneness by thinking that they themselves are separate entities, calling Him the God of gods. Therefore, we find that when they transgress the Seven Noahide Commandments, it is only because the spirit of folly enters them and covers the truth, concealing it from them.[\[30\]](#) But from their essential being, they are not able to transgress the Will of God. Therefore, even Balaam, the wicked prophet who had sexual relations with an animal, his ass, which is a clear transgression of the Seven Noahide Laws, said, "I am not able to transgress the word of God" (Num. 22:18).

26. The commandment to be fruitful and multiply was given to Noah, but inasmuch as it was not repeated at Mount Sinai, this commandment is not considered part of the Seven Universal Laws.[\[31\]](#) However, the Children of Noah have the obligation to make the whole earth a dwelling place for mankind.[\[32\]](#) This is minimally achieved by every couple giving birth to a male and a female child who are in turn capable of reproduction.[\[33\]](#) Moreover, the couple that bears more children is credited with bringing more spiritual goodness into the world, assuming that these children are reared in an environment of morality by fulfilling the Seven Universal Laws.

27. A Noahide who strikes an Israelite causing even a slight wound, though he is theoretically condemned for this, does not receive the death penalty.[\[34\]](#)

28. When a Noahide dies, he is to be buried in the earth, "for out of it were you taken; for you are dust and unto dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:19). This does not mean that the Children of Noah transgress one of the Seven Commandments by utilizing another process such as cremation or cryogenic preservation, but they will lack the atonement that burial in the earth accomplishes.[\[35\]](#)

29. By observing the Seven Universal Laws, mankind is given the means by which it can perfect itself. The individual, through these laws, has the power to refine his essential being, and can reach higher and higher without limit. For it is written, "I call heaven and earth to bear witness, that any individual, man or woman, Jew or Gentile, freeman or slave, can have the Holy Spirit bestowed upon him. It all depends on his deeds."[\[36\]](#) And it is also written, "Ultimately, all is understood: fear God and observe His commandments, for this is the completion of man" (Eccles. 12:13).

[\[1\]](#) *Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 56a*

[\[2\]](#) *Encyclopedia Talmudica, The Children of Noah, volume 3, page 348*

[\[3\]](#) The Rosh (Rabbeinu Asher), responsa number 16

- [4]** *Babylonian Talmud, Nazir 29b*, commentary of Rashi, "And Rabbi Yose..."; *Likutei Sichot* of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, volume 5, page 421
- [5]** *Mishneh Torah, Laws of Kings*, chapter 8, law 11
- [6]** *Mishneh Torah, Laws of Forbidden Relationships*, chapter 14, law 7
- [7]** *Ibid.*, *Laws of Kings*, chapter 10, law 10
- [8]** *Ibid.*, chapter 10, law 9 and the commentary of Radvaz on chapter 10, law 10
- [9]** *Yud-Tess Kislev Farbrengen* with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, 5745 (1984)
- [10]** *Tanya, Iggeret HaTshuvah*, chapter 1, page 90b
- [11]** *Mishneh Torah, Laws of Kings*, chapter 8, law 11
- [12]** *Babylonian Talmud, Baba Kamma 38a*
- [13]** *Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh Deah, Laws of Conversion*, chapter 268, law 2
- [14]** *The Seven Laws of Noah*, Lichtenstein, chapter 9, page 89
- [15]** *Mishneh Torah, Laws of Kings*, chapter 10, law 14
- [16]** *Babylonian Talmud, Makkot 9a*, commentary of Rashi, "Therefore..."
- [17]** *Mishneh Torah, Laws of Kings*, chapter 10, law 1

[18] Commentary of Rashi on Exod. 23:7 and 21:13;
Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 37b

[19] *Nahal Eshkol*, Laws of Circumcision, chapter 39,
number 6

[20] *Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 56b*, commentary of
Rabbeinu Nissim, "And He commanded him - these are the
judges"

[21] *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Kings, chapter 10, law 10

[22] *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of the Foundation of Torah,
chapter 9, law 1

[23] *Ibid.*, Laws of Kings, chapter 10, law 6

[24] *Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh Deah*, chapter 297, note 3,
commentary of the *Shach*

[25] *Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 56b*

[26] *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Kings, chapter 10, law 7, 8

[27] *Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 59b*, commentary of
Rashi, "And if you want to say circumcision..."

[28] *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Kings, chapter 10, law 9

[29] *Me'am Loez*, Genesis, chapter 13, page 194

[30] *Sefer HaArchin Chabad*, volume 2, The Nations of the
World, chapter 1, section 3, page 269

[31] *Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 59b*

[\[32\]](#) *Sefer Hahinnukh*, First Commandment

[\[33\]](#) *Shulchan Arukh, Even HaEzer*, chapter 1, law 5

[\[34\]](#) *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Kings, chapter 10, law 6

[\[35\]](#) *Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin* 46b

[\[36\]](#) *Tanna D'bei Eliyahu*, beginning of chapter 9

Noahide Commandments

From the book “V’atem Eydai” (You are my witnesses) by Rabbi Yoel Schwartz of Yeshivat D’var Yerushalayim. Translated by Yitzhak A. Oked Sechter. Reviewed and corrected by Yechiel Sitzman in consultation with Rabbi Yoel Schwartz in 2006.

Contents

Introduction

Forward - On The Importance Of Doing (Fulfilling and Carrying Out)

Section 1 - Commandments Dealing With Matters Between Man and G-d

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Walking in the Halacha
- 3) The Laws of Belief
- 4) The Prohibition Against Doing Anything that Contradicts the Belief in One God
- 5) The Prohibition Against Insulting or Offending the Honor of G-d
- 6) Explanations

Section 2 - Commandments Concerning Honoring G-d

- 1) Prayers
- 2) Prohibition Against Influencing Others to Sin
- 3) Holidays
 - Sabbath
 - Rosh Hashanah
 - Yom Kippur
 - Succot (Feast of Tabernacles)
 - Hanukah
 - Passover
 - Shavuot

Section 3 - Commandments Dealing with Personal Matters

- 1) Concerning Food
- 2) Flesh from the living
- 3) Naturalist
- 4) Vegetarianism
- 5) Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages
- 6) Keeping Healthy
- 7) Ethical Behavior and Moral Values
- 8) Arts
- 9) Pastime and Recreation
- 10) Working For A Living
- 11) Studying Science
- 12) Patriotism
- 13) Vows, Oaths and Pledges

Section 4 - Commandments Dealing with Matters Between Man and His Fellow

- 1) The Prohibition Against Murder
- 2) Prohibition Against Spoil, Plunder, and Harming the Rights of Others
- 3) Eight Degrees of Charity
- 4) Courts of Justice
- 5) Marriage and Sex

Introduction

This book deals mainly with the effort of defining the commandments that the non-Jewish nations should fulfill or make an effort to do so. In addition to the seven basic commandments, there are several other active commandments that have not been

clarified and explained in depth in the scriptures and subsequent Torah literature. Just the same, according to what is written in the Torah the Talmud and the Midrash, we are able to learn something from the actions of those that existed before the Torah was given to Israel. According to the Talmud (Yomah 28b), the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob upheld more commandments than what the children of Noah were called upon to do. Even commandments that the sages turned into laws many generations later were kept by the Patriarchs.

According to these same sources, Jacob already upheld all of the 613 commandments of Judaism. This is why Jacob's children are no longer called children of Noah but children of Israel. Just the same, we can learn from some of their actions and from their expectations from those that lived during their generation regarding the ways that any person who wants to come closer to G-d and attain spiritual fulfillment, should act.

The matters that we are trying to explain in this book are not in any way an effort to try and establish a new religion. It is rather an attempt to look at the Scriptures and other Torah literature and reach conclusions concerning what a person should do or try to do. Our prayers are that this modest beginning will bring others to write a more complete book and that it should cover a greater scope. In order to help all those among the nations who are looking for ways to come closer to G-d.

Judaism forbids establishing a new religion, as explained by the Rambam (II Kings 10, 5:6-9): "The principle of the matter: You cannot allow them to establish a new religion or to carry out commandments from this knowledge..." Anyway, what we are doing here in connection with the Children of Noah is not the establishment of a new religion. Since a foreigner (Gentile) is not ordered in writing to fulfill them, but only, if by his own free will, he wishes to carry out such commandments as the Rambam wrote: "We are not allowed to stop a child of Noah that seeks to be compensated by fulfilling the (some of those) laws of the Torah (that were only commanded to the Jews)." So it seems that the establishment of a new religion occurs only when a person comes and says that he has been ordered by G-d to fulfill such and such a law and not when he is trying to reach a degree of spiritual perfection by fulfilling the commandments that the children of Israel have been ordered to carry out.

Foreword

On The Importance Of Doing (Fulfilling and Carrying Out)

"We will fulfill and we will hear" (Shabbat 88a).

Here we will try to explain the importance of spiritual fulfillment and its effect on the personality of the person. We will also see why it is not enough to feel this spiritual fulfillment in the heart, but that it must be accompanied by concrete actions. All this has been explained in the Torah and was understood as something quite simple by many intellectuals of the world like Soren Kirkegaard (In "A Jew, Who Is He, What Is He?" page 22) who said, *"A belief that does not bring in its wake a fulfillment and a change, is a false one. The greatest believer, who carries out his belief with great*

enthusiasm, but shows no sign of a complete change in his life, proves that his belief is simply part of his own imagination only. The influence and recognition of a belief in a human being depends on the way he carries out his day-to-day life and manages to control and suppress his desires, stops doing evil and the actions he takes to carry this out."

The Greek philosophers, who did not believe in a practical religion, but believed that human perfection comes from recognizing and studying the truth, believed just the same, that a person must carry out and fulfill deeds that will teach him spiritual perfection: In his Kuzari, Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi thus wrote (Article A, Part A), *"Question the truth on the things that you want to know, in order that your brain will act and not be acted upon. Talk to the point and in truthful ways. This will help you seek and recognize the truth. Then you will demand less, be more humble and accumulate good measures."*

The Philosophers did not recognize G-d or the need to act accordingly to His commandments. This is why they believed that human beings can act in any way suitable that will bring them to fulfillment of their goals. Just the same, these intellectuals understood that it was not enough for a person to acquire education and knowledge but that he also needed to carry out and act in order that his internal thinking could turn into a reality. Which is exactly what the Torah tells us to do, and we will bring several examples here.

A) The Precepts (Mitzvot) connected to prayers: These precepts connected to prayers are done through the heart as it is stated in Ta'anit 2, "and to labor for him with all your heart - what is the service of the heart - it is prayer." Anyway it is not enough to pray from the heart. If a person has some thoughts that stem from his heart but does not utter them out with his lips, then he has not fulfilled the commandment as it is stated in Berachot 20, "Thoughts are not the same as an utterance."

B) Repentance: The precepts connected to repentance are also connected to the heart: Nevertheless, "A person repenting must confess with his lips and say the things he has decided to do through his heart" (Rambam, Repentance, Chapter 2).

C) Ownership: When ownership is transferred, the most important part in this transaction is that the heart of the original owner agrees with the action. But all of this is not legal until some sort of action of transference is performed, such as that a deed or legal paper is signed or changes hands or the transfer of ownership done according to the Jewish religion (Halacha). (This includes an action which is accepted as a valid transference of ownership by the society where the transaction is taking place.)

D) Marriage: It is not enough for both sides to agree to marry and to live like a family, but a legal action must also be carried out for this agreement to be formal.

From all these examples we have learned that it is not enough for the heart to tell you to do something. There is a need for some sort of act to carry out the will of the heart. For this reason the spiritual fulfillment of a person is not reached unless it is carried out by action. The belief and the desire to be close to G-d and the actions

connected with it must be according to the precepts (Mitzvot) that G-d set forth in the Torah.

There is, sometimes, an opposite process when outside actions (not connected or controlled by the person) influence the internal thinking of a person as it is explained in Sefer Ha'Chinuch #16, explaining why the Torah has so many practical precepts: *"Know that a person is governed by his actions. His heart and all his thoughts are influenced by the actions that he is involved in be they good or bad. Even a wicked man whose thoughts are concentrated on doing evil all day, if he should start studying Torah and Mitzvot, even if he is not doing it for G-d's sake, he will start acting in a more positive manner. This is because the heart goes after the deeds. The same holds true, concerning a righteous man, who lives according to the Torah and Mitzvot, but makes a living from dubious transactions, or if for example he is forced by the King or ruler to deal in such dubious matters, he will eventually be transformed from a righteous man to an evil one."*

In Mesilat Yesharim (Chapter 7), it is written, *"Alacrity is brought about by the internal enthusiasm of a person. But even if a person lacks this internal enthusiasm, he should carry out and do things in an accelerated pace, this will bring about an internal enthusiasm. Since external actions brings about internal ones."*

The Rambam, in his commentary to Avot, wrote, *"If a person wants to give a certain sum to charity, it is worth while to divide this charity into several portions and give it away at different intervals and not at one time. By doing so, it has a greater effect on a person, than if he would give the sum to charity all at one time. This, despite the fact that to do so, he must invest more time and effort."*

The actions of a person should be done in order to fulfill and carry out the commandments of the Creator, since these are the things that elevate a person. As the Maharal from Prague wrote in Tiferet Yisrael (Chapter 4), *"The commandments of the Torah can be likened to a rope by which a person is drawn out of a hole or a well. The person is drawn from the lowest levels to the higher levels of the world. The more he does, the more he removes materialism from himself, which then enables him to sit next to the Lord of Hosts."*

The meaning of the word Mitzvot in Hebrew comes from the root Unite and Bind. Which means that each mitzvah unites and binds the person to the Creator of the world (see Tanya). In Tanna d'bei Eliyahu (Chapter 9), it is written, *"I testify before heaven and earth, Israel and the nations, man and woman between a servant and handmaiden, the Holy Spirit rests upon a person according to his actions."*

The fulfillment of the commandments in the Torah, builds the character of a person and raises him to a level of perfection, as it is written in Deuteronomy 4:14, *"And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances, that la'asot'chem – you might do them..."* [The Hebrew *la'asot'chem* also means "you shall make (i.e. build) yourselves."]

This word *la'asot'chem* teaches us here that the statutes and ordinances, the mitzvot, build the person and it does not merely mean that a person must carry them out. This is why it is written in this special way. A person must be trained on the way he

should build his life, starting from early childhood. Anyone reading books dealing with childcare can find many examples there. But even as a grownup, a person must take a grip on himself, if he wants to “discover himself” and find a real meaning to his life. The Noahide laws are logical. Many intelligent people will even agree that there is a need for them, but this is not enough. We must remember that we must carry out these ordinances and statutes because we have been ordered to do so by the Creator. They were given to Adam and Noah, then again given on Mount Sinai. Part of the Torah was given on Mount Sinai to the Israelites as a Holy Nation of Priests (Exodus 19:2). The remaining part is intended for entire human race. The Rambam wrote in Melachim-Kings (8:11),

Every person that agrees to carry out the seven Mitzvot of the children of Noah, and does this in a careful manner, is a righteous gentile, and has part in the world to come, meaning that he carries this out because G-d has ordered him to do so in the Torah, through Moses. But if these seven mitzvot are carried out just because he feels a necessity to do so, then he is not a Ger Toshav (Gentile resident in Israel), nor a righteous gentile or one of its sages.

The Mitzvot have been handed down to us in the form of an order, but just the same we are called to accept them gladly. A person must accept the Mitzvot with love. Despite the hardships in fulfilling them, he must carry them out. This also has an educational value.

A person who wants to do only those good deeds that he feels impelled to perform without being ordered to do so stresses his own importance. He thinks that he is the focus of everything. But when a person decides to carry out the Mitzvot because he has been ordered to by G-d, then he feels the importance of the G-d that orders. It is only then that he manages to discover and find all his hidden powers in order to carry out these mitzvot. These hidden powers cannot be tapped to their utmost if a person carries out the mitzvot simply because he has the sudden urge or mood to do so. This decision is strengthened even more when the person announces it before three learned and wise Jews. This act transforms the person into a Ger Toshav. Even today, when, since all of the Israelites have not yet returned to their land, the laws concerning a Ger Toshav are not applicable – in reference to the special privileges which would otherwise apply to a non-Jew who has made such a declaration – such a declaration made before three observant Jews nevertheless still enhances the status of the non-Jew.

This declaration should include: belief in the principles of the existence of the one true G-d, who is everlasting, the Creator of all things, guides all of his creations, is the One that gave the Torah on Sinai for all of humanity, and oversees all the actions of the human beings to reward and punish them for their deeds. Then the person should state that he is willing to fulfill the seven mitzvot that were given to Noah. (There are some authorities who believe that this announcement should be accompanied by submersing in a pool of at least 660 liters of water, like the sea, spring or a man-made pool built in the earth.)

Section 1

Commandments Dealing With Matters Between Man and G-d

Introduction

The basis of all commandments is the belief that G-d who is the creator of all things, and capable of doing everything, has commanded us to fulfill them. Habakkuk summed it up by stating that a righteous person shall live through his belief. Also in Chapter 9:23 of Jeremiah it is stated: "But let he who glories, glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the L-rd who exercises loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the world: for it is these things that I desire, says the Lrd."

The Gaon, Rabbi Shmuel Ben Hafni, stated that the important commandment for the people of other nations is the belief that the L-rd our G-d is the Creator and director of the world, that He is actively involved in the lives of every person and that He is One.

The Rambam writing to Rav Hasdai stated: *"Quoting from our sages, the righteous people from other nations have a place in the world to come, if they have acquired what they should learn about the Creator."*

In the category of the belief in the one true G-d, the seven commandments to the children of Noah include the prohibitions against worshipping other gods and against blasphemy (which includes professing atheism). There are, of course, many commandments connected with the belief in the one true G-d. They include:

- a) Loving G-d
- b) Praying to Him
- c) Thanking Him for His generosity
- d) Trusting Him
- e) Honoring Him
- f) Sanctifying his Holy Name
- g) Prohibiting the desecration of his Holy Name
- h) Moving away from those who do not believe in Him such as atheists, infidels and impious people
- i) Having a direct relationship with Him, not through any intermediaries. This is why it is forbidden to pray among others to any angels or to the dead or to any person past, present or future!

(a) Loving G-d: Inasmuch as the Israelites were commanded not only to love G-d, but that they should also teach all mankind to love G-d, we see that all people are supposed to love Him. One of the first to do so was Abraham the Patriarch (Sifri Vetchanan), and in the Sefer Mitzvot it says, "This mitzvah [loving G-d] includes that we should call every human being to believe in Him and worship only Him... See to it that you make Him beloved to your fellow men just as your forefather Abraham did."

(b) Praying to G-d: Noah was punished for not praying so that his fellow men might be saved from the flood. According to the sages (Zohar Leviticus p15b)., this is the

reason that the flood is named after Noah. However, the destruction of Sodom is another case. This event is not named after Abraham because he did pray to save the people of Sodom before it was destroyed. One type of prayer is a request by a human being to G-d. There is also a thanksgiving prayer that is an important obligation from a person for all the things for which he is thankful such as: his occupation that gives him a livelihood, health, family, etc. and especially if something good has occurred to him personally. This brings us to thanksgiving.

(c) Thanking G-d for His generosity: Again the best example is from Abraham. In the Gemara Sota: 10, Abraham in Beersheva would invite people to eat and drink with him. At the end of the meal he would request from them that they should bless and thank G-d for his generosity.

(d) Trusting in G-d: Joseph was punished by two years being added to his stay in prison because he requested help in getting a prison release from Pharaoh's wine chief instead of putting his full trust in G-d (Genesis Rabbah 29:3).

(e) Honoring G-d: To honor one's father and one's mother is a threshold to honoring the heavenly Creator Father who begat us. One should honor and give credit to all wise Torah teachers and sages, especially those who teach you Torah. He who does not fully honor his Torah teachers dishonors G-d. A person must be very careful in fulfilling this commandment. To give honor to G-d, he must give honor to the Torah and to its wise teachers. Honoring G-d also extends to honoring all of G-d's creations because they are His creations. In particular one should honor elderly persons because these persons have most likely witnessed in their lifetime many instances of G-d's intervention. Through my giving honor to them I am honouring someone who recognizes the greatness of the Creator. The importance of fulfilling oaths and vows made in G-d's name can be understood in the framework of giving honor to G-d.

(f) To be willing to make every effort for the Sanctification of His Holy Name: There are opinions that in some situations, a non-Israelite is even called upon to die as a martyr to protect the honor of G-d (i.e. not to worship other gods). All agree that he must be willing to die rather than to commit murder. The person must know that everything occurring is according to the will of G-d and accept it without complaining against Him. This commandment is part of the previous one.

(g) Prohibition against desecrating G-d's name: This was one of the reasons that the people of Sodom were punished. In this respect a G-d fearing person must be especially careful in the manner in which he conducts himself. If he does not act properly, others will point to him and say. "Look how unethically (or however badly) that person is acting and he is a believer in G-d." This constitutes a desecration of His name in an indirect way.

(h) Not Having Fellowship With Unbelievers and Impious People: Relations with unbelievers are only for the purpose already mentioned before. It is the duty of everyone to ensure that all human beings believe in the one true G-d and do His will. Consequently a person must be extremely careful that he does not bring another person to sin by his association with the ungodly. Psalms 1:1 says. "Happy is the man who has not been walked/followed after the advice of wicked men, who has not

stood/lingered on the path of immoral men, and who has not sat [or made his permanent dwelling] with scoffers.” This is especially true when participating in religious services where the ritual or sermons, songs or prayers are violating the Torah.

Walking in the Halacha

Faith is Emunah, what you believe, while Halacha means how you walk or conduct yourself in practice of what you believe. We do the things we do because we are what we are. A man will practice what he believes. If he professes to believe in righteousness, but practices unrighteousness, he is a practical, practicing atheist. “Noah was a righteous man in his generation.” “Noah walked with G-d.” “Noah found grace in the eyes of G-d” (Genesis 5:8, 6:9).

The Laws of Belief

- 1) It is a commandment (mitzvah) for a human being to believe that there is a creator of the universe, that He is Eternal, the First and Last of everything. He is One, and there is no unity comparable to his or G-d outside Him. His unity cannot be multiplied or divided. He is exclusive in his unity, and there is no other like Him in the universe. There is none other or any other sources that have His power or His capability. All the sources of power and energy in the universe stem and come from Him.
- 2) It is a commandment for a human being to study his belief, and to observe the creation to see and to recognize His greatness. It is written in Isaiah chapter 40, “Lift up your eyes and see Who created these.” Similarly he should study history to observe what has happened in time past and present: It is also commanded to observe what has happened in history to see how G-d has been in charge and the One who rules over all events. “Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations. Ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the L-RD’s portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance” (Deuteronomy 32:7-9). “Remember the former things of old; for I am G-d, and there is none else; I am G-d and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isaiah 46:10-11). Israel was created by G-d to receive the Torah and give the prophets to a pagan world that had many thousands of gods. Israel’s unique prophetic character is different and separates Israel from all other nations. Israel is the only nation on earth whose entire history was written before it happened. The Jews’ mission against a polytheistic world has had an unbelievable impact against polytheism. Even the atheists say, “There is no G-d.” They do not say, “There are no gods.”
- 3) It is appropriate to say aloud what you believe in order to strengthen the conviction in your heart. For example: There is one G-d and His name is One. (Zech. 14:9). There can be no compromise on pronouncing aloud this belief.

The Torah concept of G-d does not allow him to have a split personality. It is worthwhile to say different basic concepts of belief toward the one true G-d loudly and clearly, such as the affirmation (Shema Yisrael) "Hear O Israel..."

Here are other sentences that are worthwhile repeating at regular intervals, since they are among the basics of belief:

- I believe with a complete belief that the Creator, blessed be His Name, He alone, created and made all the created things. He alone made, is making and will continue to make all things.
- He is One, and there is none other like Him, in no way or manner. He alone is our L-rd in the past, present, and future.
- He does not have body. Nobody can be like Him, and no imagination can detail or describe Him. No picture can depict Him; no image can portray Him. No material can contain His essence. No wood, no stone, no plant, no star nor constellation can be compared to Him.
- G-d is first and last. Of no man can this be said.
- To G-d and G-d alone we should pray (meaning that no use at all of any mediator should be made in a prayer between man and G-d).
- G-d knows all the thoughts and actions of a person. He pays good wages to those who do good while punishing those who do evil. The most significant compensation will be in the next world (after death). There will also be worldwide compensation with the coming of the Messiah. After that, there will be a resurrection of the dead.
- G-d gave the Torah to the Jewish people so that they bring merit to all of humanity. This Torah has never changed and will never be changed. Part of this Torah was given to the whole human race. Another part of the Torah was given only to the Israelites. (Every human being can join and be part of Judaism by conversion, but a person is not obligated to do so.) If a person fulfills the commandments of a son or daughter of Noah, then that person will have a part in the world to come.

The Prohibition Against Doing Anything that Contradicts the Belief in One God

- 1) It is prohibited to worship any other god, in any form or matter at all. If a person is forced to do so, he should try as hard as possible not to carry out such a demand. If he is being threatened by death, there are those that believe that he should be willing to die as a martyr if he does so while being witnessed by ten Jews or ten people of other nations who worship only the One true G-d. A person is not allowed to give honor to other gods, to hug or kiss them; to swear by them, to pray to or worship them. He is not allowed to produce an idol so that others can worship it. He is not even allowed to produce it for artistic purposes. He is not allowed to participate in any rites connected with the worship of other gods even if this person is passive and does not take any active participation in it. All this is so that he will not be misunderstood and cause others to sin because of his action. It is the duty of

a person to degrade and hold in contempt all other gods or any form of idolatry.

- 2) To deny the existence of G-d is worse than worshipping other gods. Some maintain that this is included in the prohibition of worshipping other gods. Others maintain that it is considered blasphemy since there is no greater insult to the one true G-d than denying his existence.
- 3) It is appropriate to refrain from the following because they too are considered related to the worship of other gods:
 - a) Dealing in magical traits, such as predicting with the aid of a crystal ball, or hypnotizing yourself so that you can predict the future or dealing in black magic or trying to predict the future through other means such as horoscopes or things like that;
 - b) Believing in superstitions, such as bad luck because of a black cat or good or bad luck connected to certain numbers;
 - c) Gathering animals for magic, like hypnotizing them;
 - d) Dealing in spiritualism;
 - e) Trying to communicate with the dead.

The Prohibition Against Insulting or Offending the Honor of G-d

- 1) The prohibition against cursing G-d by His name or by any other substitute for His name.
- 2) The prohibition against denouncing G-d or his Torah;
- 3) The prohibition against asking philosophical questions about what occurred before the creation of the world. We should only observe what has occurred since the creation and this is so that we can try to realize and grasp the greatness of the one true G-d as we have already previously mentioned;
- 4) It is prohibited to interbreed animals or plants that are not of the same species.
- 5) It is prohibited to take on or initiate a new religion. But Noahides, fulfilling the seven commandments (mitzvot), are not taking on a new religion since these seven commandments are mentioned in the Torah. Noahides may perform commandments that were given specifically to the Jews in the hope that they will be rewarded for them, provided that they don't consider these actions obligatory. It is also important to note that according to some opinions there are some commandments that Noahides should not fulfill because they are connected with holiness and given specifically to Israel. These are the commandments of Tefillin and mezuzah. All agree that the child of Noah should not observe the seventh day of the week, Saturday, as Shabbat, as given to Israel as a day of rest, but it is appropriate for him to inculcate the message of the Shabbat, as will be explained further on. It is important to study the laws of the Torah that apply to Noahides. However they are prohibited from studying those parts of the Torah that don't apply to them. This refers mainly to the oral law (Talmud, Rambam etc.) but also when reading the Bible it is better to skip those laws that don't apply to them.

Explanations

According to Rabbinic literature, G-d does not want people to question matters connected with that which existed before the creation. As creatures in creation, we can only comprehend G-d in and through creation as Creator. "When I consider the heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; [I think:] What is man that You are mindful of him" (Psalm 8:3). Only the Torah existed before creation. David declared in Psalm 119: "Your word, O G-d is from everlasting to everlasting." "With Hashem's word the heavens were made, and all the heavenly hosts [were fashioned] with the breath of His mouth" (Psalms 33:6).

Genetic engineering is a delicate subject. There is room to postulate that engaging in some kinds of genetic engineering constitutes a violation of the prohibition to crossbreed. Since the prohibition of crossbreeding does not include hybrid breeding of plants and animals and breeding to develop a hybrid within a species of like kind the same can be said regarding some kinds of genetic engineering.

Even if it is permitted, those dealing in this field must be careful that through this work they will not feel that they are capable of divorcing themselves from G-d and His creation, that scientists will not feel that they are capable of creating independently from G-d, like Adam in his first sin.

Section 2

Commandments Concerning Honoring G-d

1. A PERSON MUST HONOR G-D AND HIS TORAH, including the sages, teachers of Torah, elderly person, holy books, holy places like houses of prayer and cemeteries where (tzadikim) are buried. If a person makes a vow in G-d's name, he must fulfill his oath. If he does not make the vow in G-d's name but pledges to do something for someone else, he must fulfill it. It seems that if he made the oath to himself or concerning only himself it is also appropriate that he fulfill his vow. In doing so, he honors himself. A person who makes a vow to himself in the name of G-d is honoring G-d by fulfilling it. If a person makes a pledge to a fellow man, he must fulfill it since it is in the category of civil laws that are incumbent on Noahides. By not fulfilling pledges, vows, oaths and covenants, one dishonors G-d, Torah and himself.
2. Before performing any work, or whatever, it is suitable for a person to say that he will do this thing with G-d's help, in order that he will remember that all of his successes are derived and come to him only through G-d.
3. A Noahide, to fulfill the seven commandments, should strive to learn carefully and seriously all his obligations concerning all the seven commandments of the children of Noah. If there is a problem, or if the person does not know exactly how to fulfill a certain obligation as a Noahide, he should turn to a Jewish Torah authority who is acquainted with the subject matter to make a decision on the issue or question. Any learned Jew can teach non-Jews only if he himself is a Torah observant Jew. He must believe that God gave Moses

the written law and also the oral law. He must observe Shabbat and Kashrut and the other Mitzvot.

Prayers

Noahides are not commanded to have formal prayers. It should be left to the individual how, what, and when he will pray. Prayer is permitted, but not commanded. There are several types of prayers; requests, recognition of G-d's grandeur, thanksgiving to Him for good things that He has done for a person and strengthening ones faith, as it is stated in many places in the book of Psalms. It is advisable to turn toward the direction of Eretz Yisrael, Jerusalem and the Temple Mount when praying.

A Siddur for Bnei No'ach should be established for these who wish to have guidance in prayer. Below are some suggestions for formal prayer that might be included in a Bnei Noah Siddur:

1. Regular prayers might be said everyday that could include a statement saying, "Know today, and place it on your heart, that Hashem is the L-rd in the heavens above and on the earth below -- there is nothing else." Also he might recite the affirmation, "Hear O Israel..."
2. Prayer in time of emergency or danger: A person who finds himself in danger should recite an appropriate chapter from the book of Psalms, for example, chapter 20. If the emergency is due to illness, chapter 103. If he needs to strengthen his belief in G-d so as to receive His help, chapter 121.
3. A Prayer of Thanksgiving: Psalms, chapter 107 or chapter 136. In the Standing Prayer emphasize, "and all the living will give thanks to You forever, selah."
4. Special prayers during holidays: It is worthwhile to pray for world peace. When saying such a prayer, one might add, "G-d of the world, give peace to the world, thereby allowing all living creatures that You created to enjoy all of your blessings." On the Sabbath one should recite from the book of Psalms, chapters 92 and 104.
5. Blessing before or after the meal: It is worthwhile that after the main meal of the day (whether at noon or in the evening) a Noahide should wash his hands if they have become soiled during the meal (before the meal there is no command for the Noahide to wash his hands in a ritual matter as do the Jews. This is specifically a Jewish practice. It is, however, necessary to wash them for sanitary purposes.) and utter a blessing of thanksgiving to Hashem for the good that He has given to him. It can be something like this: "Blessed are You, King of the Universe, Who feeds the whole world with His goodness, pleasantness, grace and mercy. He gives bread to all flesh and the world is full of His mercy. Due to his great goodness, we have never lacked and will never be in need of food forever. His great Name feeds and gives everyone his livelihood, does good to everyone, and prepares food for all those that he has created." A person can, of course, change this, especially if some good things have occurred to him lately. Each person who chooses to say this prayer should do so individually (as opposed to having one person say it for

all). Clearly, these prayers are to be directed solely to Hashem, and not to any intermediary.

6. Repentance: A Noahide who has sinned against G-d or his fellow man must repent and be sorry for what he has done. He must undertake that he will not commit this sin again. He should make a personal prayer to G-d, requesting mercy. If he has hurt a fellow person, or if he has done damage to that person's property, he must compensate him, as the people of Nineveh compensated each other, and he must request that person's forgiveness.

Prohibition Against Influencing Others to Sin

There is a prohibition against causing another person to err or commit sin as Pharaoh accused Abraham (Genesis 20:9) and the same concerning Avimelech who accused Isaac (Genesis 26:10).

In accordance with this, people should conduct themselves with modesty so as not to bring others to sin. In particular, women should apply this to their mode of dress and behavior.

Holidays

Sabbath

A Noahide should not observe the Shabbat in the manner that a Jew does. Nor should he make a point of abstaining from hard physical work on the Shabbat. A Noahide should not give occasion for a Jew to break the Shabbat.

There are those who say that every Ger Toshav (a non-Jew living in Eretz Yisrael in the time of the Jewish Temple, who has formally accepted the obligation to observe the Noahide laws in front of a Jewish court) has to uphold and keep the Sabbath

(Rashi, Kritot 9, Yevamot 40). There is room to suggest that the Noahides, even nowadays, by accepting to fulfill the seven commandments, are in the same category as a Ger Toshav and should, according to Rashi, be required or at least allowed to keep the Shabbat.

So I (Rav Schwartz) would like to suggest that this is the way that the Noahides could celebrate the Seventh Day, a day of refraining from his vocation. On the eve of the Sabbath (Friday night), they might have a festive family dinner with special food and light candles after sundown in honor of the Seventh Day, which was given to Adam and Noah (and to make the Noahide celebration of the Shabbat distinct from the Jewish Shabbat observance). During the meal they may sing songs to strengthen their belief, including songs about the creation. They may read from the Torah. They should not call this day the Sabbath, but the Seventh Day as it is written in Genesis.

On the Seventh Day itself, if they can arrange it without difficulty, they should refrain from going to work. If possible, they should go out to the fields or a park so as to feel close to the Creator of the world. If the congregation holds a prayer session, they may recite the Psalms connected to the Sabbath and to the creation (like Psalm 104). Also they should study portions of the Torah connected to commandments of

the children of Noah. They can study from the weekly portion of the Torah being read that Sabbath in the synagogues those subjects which concern all mankind and skipping those topics that concern specifically the Jews.

At the end of the Sabbath (Motzai Shabbat), the end of the Seventh Day and the beginning of the new week, they can recite the prayer for the new week (Havdalah) after having lit a havdalah candle, to thank G-d for having taught Adam how to make fire, which is the source of all energy that enabled man to make changes in this world. This Havdalah prayer, that separates the Seventh Day from the beginning of the week, can be recited as a Noahide wishes and can go something like this.

Blessed are you our G-d, King of the Universe, Who differentiates between darkness and light, between day and night, between the seventh day from the first day of the week, between the clean and the unclean, between the sacred and secular, between holy days and regular days, between Israel and the rest of the nations, who together are partners in one holy objective, to make Your Name holy in this world. AMEN.

Rosh Hashanah

Which is the first day of Tishrei is a day of reckoning for the whole world. The first day of Rosh Hashanah should be a day of repentance and deep inner thought about what a person has done during the past year. A Noahide should recite a prayer requesting that all the people of the world will accept and recognize the truth concerning the one true G-d. A Noahide can recite certain prayers from the Rosh Hashanah prayer book.

Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur is a day of repentance. While it is not a Noahide fast, repentance is a Noahide necessity.

Succot (Feast of Tabernacles)

It is stated in the book of Zechariah that after the Temple is restored, during the holiday of Succoth all the nations of the world will make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to bow down before G-d. Zechariah 14:1-21 states:

And it shall come to pass that every one that is left of all the nations which come against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the L-rd of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be that whoever will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the L-rd of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain, there shall be the plague, which with which the L-rd will smite the nations that come not up to keep this feast of Tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses Holiness Unto the L-rd; and the pots in the L-rd's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the

L-rd of hosts; and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them and boil them; and in that day there shall be no more a Canaanite in the house of the L-rd of hosts.

It is worthwhile for a person to take his vacation during this time. By doing so, a Noahide can use this free time to study, to observe nature and to meet with fellow Noahides for mutual prayer with emphasis on world peace just as Israelites did when the Temple existed and, as sacrifices were made for the welfare of all the nations, to pray for the coming of the Messiah who will amend the ways of the world.

Hanukah

Noahides are called to celebrate the victory of Judaism over Hellenism since this victory showed the world the strength of the Israelite's belief in the one true G-d, their true devotion and dedication in keeping the Torah and its commandments. It is also a time of special prayer for the restoration of the Tabernacle, the Temple and divine worship.

Passover

Passover is the first emancipation proclamation. It is advised that Noahides during this holiday should put a special stress on freedom for all humans. Although we do find slavery in the Torah, we must remember that the slavery mentioned there is a humane slavery. If one has a slave, then be a merciful master. Thoroughly cleaning ("spring cleaning") the house before this holiday would be a reminder of the slave labor of the Jews in Egypt. It also brings to mind the benefit that the exodus from Egypt brought to the world, a cleansing from the bad habits of mankind. On the eve of the first day of Passover, it is suggested that Noahides hold a festive meal with matzo and wine in honor of freedom.

Shavuot

Holiday commemorating the giving of the Torah. On this day there was a divine revelation and the human race acquired the Torah through it. It is a day that should be set aside for the study of Torah and the Noahide commandments.

Section 3

Commandments Dealing with Personal Matters

The purpose of the commandments is to correct the character traits of a person so that he can become closer G-d. Rabbi Abba Shaul in the Talmud explained a verse (Exodus 14, 2) as stating that we are to emulate those traits that G-d has revealed to us as being the principles that he uses in running the world. Rabbi Nissim Gaon in the preface to his commentary on the Talmud and Rabbi Moshe Feinstein in his responsa (Igrot Moshe, Yorah Deah vol. 2, chap. 130) wrote that all people are obligated to do all those things which are in the categories of ethics and proper character traits even though these actions are not specifically mentioned as being commanded.

Though the commandments have been divided into the two categories of between man and G-d and between man and his fellow, this distinction is an artificial one. This is because all commandments between a person and his fellow are also commandments between a person and G-d inasmuch as He has also commanded them.

Concerning Food

The people of the nations are not limited in the food they are allowed to eat, except the eating of living flesh or the flesh and blood of a human being. There are also those authorities who are of the opinion that a Noahide should not eat the flesh of a dead animal unless killed for the specific purpose of eating its flesh.

These are the main points to the Jewish law (Halachah): This ritual law requires that the animal be slaughtered by severing the trachea and carotid artery in one stroke. This causes the least possible suffering to the animal. The animal must be totally dead with all muscular and nerve flexing abated before one would be permitted to eat it. The lungs must be checked to determine that the animal was not afflicted with certain illnesses that would cause fatality according to the guidelines of the Jewish law.

Animals for eating

The people of other nations are allowed to eat all kinds of animals. Though there is a difference even for non-Jews between kosher and not kosher species, this is mainly regarding the sacrificial ritual and not for eating purposes.

[Why is it permitted for Noahides to eat any kind of animal whereas all animals were prohibited to Adam? It is written (Bereshit 9:3), "Every living thing that moves upon the earth shall be (as) food for you." Every living thing that moves includes cattle, beasts, birds, and even the fish of the sea. All of these are called "living things that move" (Ramban). Meat, which was prohibited to Adam, was permitted to Noah because (a) it was because of him and for his needs that G-d spared the animals; were it not for man they would not have been spared (cf. 6:7); (b) he toiled over them and attended to their needs in the ark. Of him it is said (Psalms 128:2): "You shall eat from the toil of your hands." He had thus acquired rights over them (Or HaChayim). "They were saved in an ark which you toiled to build; i.e. their salvation came through you; they are therefore yours to do with as you please like the green herbs of the field" (Bechor Shor; Chizkuni). "As the green herbage I have given you everything." Though I permitted only herbage, but not flesh, to Adam, I give you the same right to everything that he had for herbage" (Rashi). R' Bachya and Chizkuni comment that the comparison to green herbage is noteworthy: Lest one think that everything was permitted, G-d qualified His permission by comparing it to herbage. Just as some herbs are beneficial to man while others are unfit for food and even poisonous, so among the animals and birds there are those that are permitted by the Torah and those that are prohibited (see comm. of Chavel to his ed. of R' Bachya). This explains why, in spite of the general permission which was granted to Noah to consume meat, it is important that the Noahide not eat meat taken from a living animal, and the Jew eat only certain species slaughtered according to the Jewish

law. Malbim explains that it is logical and desirable for a lower form of life to be eaten and absorbed into a higher form. Therefore, animals eat plant life, thus elevating it, and humans eat animals, elevating them to become part of intelligent man. (O that man would be intelligent!)]

Flesh from the living

It is prohibited to eat meat that has been cut or torn off from a living creature, even from a dead animal, if the flesh was cut off when the animal was still alive or when it was on the verge of dying and not slaughtered according to Jewish law. If it was slaughtered by cutting its neck and not slaughtered by a Jew according to Jewish law, many of its parts are considered to have been cut from a living animal and are therefore forbidden. This refers to all parts that are attached to the trachea and the esophagus and includes the lungs, liver, stomach, and intestines.

There are various methods used for killing the animals that are intended for human consumption. Some of them present no problem but others would call into question the permissibility of eating the above-mentioned organs. One should therefore either not eat those organs, verify that the method which was used to kill the animal was not by cutting its neck or, (and this is the most practical suggestion) only purchase the meat of such organs if it has been slaughtered by a Jew according to Jewish law - i.e. that is certified as kosher.

Nearly all the meat for human consumption today comes from animals that have been killed for eating. However some slaughterhouses detach parts of the body before the animal has stopped flexing its limbs. If a Noahide is not sure about the source of the meat, it is advised that he buy the meat from a person whom he can trust such as a fellow Noahide. If a Noahide wants to remove all doubt, it is possible for him to buy kosher meat with a kosher label from a recognized Rabbinical organization. These rules of flesh from the living hold only toward animals and birds that have warm blood. It does not hold toward reptiles, creeping creatures and fish.

Flesh from the living is mixed with other meat

It is prohibited to eat meat that has been mixed with flesh from the living, whether it was done on purpose or not, even if cooked, broiled or added to a soup or any other type of drink.

Naturalist

The consumption of food should be mainly for health value. It is worthwhile though that a person should enjoy the food he eats since then the food is digested properly. There is also a spiritual value. If there is plenty of food on the table and it tastes good, a person feels and recognizes the grace of G-d. Food should be consumed to be healthy and not just for enjoyment. Therefore a person must ensure his good health in everything that is connected with his diet. This includes a naturalist.

Vegetarianism

It is not good for a person to be a total vegetarian if he is doing so because he is trying to be merciful toward animals. There is a danger that such a person will feel that he has fulfilled his duty and will become unmerciful toward other species, including human beings. In his book *Mein Kampf*, Hitler, the biggest criminal of the human race, said that he used to feed rats because he felt sorry for them. Of course, doctors have proven that it is not necessary to be excessive in the consumption of meat so as to remain healthy. Human teeth were created like those of an animal that eats vegetables and fruits. Adam was prohibited from eating meat. Only during the time of Noah was this prohibition lifted. This is because Noah saved animals from the flood and was allowed after that to eat meat. The Torah not only permits, but advises man to eat meat so that he recognize the difference between man and animal. Rabbi Abraham Issac HaCohain Kook explained it in this way: "The Torah commanded us to eat meat for by doing so we realize that G-d gave us guidelines that teach us to be careful not to cause needless injury to other members of creation. If we are careful for these other members of creation, then we will be doubly sure of being careful in our daily contact with the crown of creation, which is mankind".

Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages

A person should drink alcoholic beverages in moderation. To a Noahide it is enough to remind him of the sad story of Noah and the effects of his drunkenness after he planted a vineyard. A person who is an alcoholic should avoid use of alcohol.

Keeping Healthy

A person should not indulge in things that are hazardous to his life and health. According to Genesis 9:5, a person is not allowed to commit suicide. From this we can learn that anything unhealthy is prohibited. This includes smoking, narcotics, alcohol abuse, gluttony, exposing oneself to AIDS or other sexual diseases, driving when sleepy and taking unnecessary risks such as dangerous trips or pastimes. On the other hand a person can undertake dangerous professions, like building houses or picking fruits from tall trees because he is doing these things to build a better world and to find a livelihood for himself and his family.

Ethical Behavior and Moral Values

1. A person should strive for better ethical and moral values. He should be merciful and should not harm animals unless it is for the benefit of humans, such as food, medical experiments and for work. Hunting just for sport and not to eat the animal's flesh or use its fur, is seen as cruelty to an animal and is inappropriate. A person must also be merciful and just toward his employees and servants. He is not allowed to overwork or bring grief to his servants. According to the Rambam (Avadim 9:3), "A person must first feed his animals and servants before he sits to eat his own meal."
2. A person should strive not to be extreme in any character trait. For example, he should not be stingy; on the other hand, he should not overspend.
3. A person

should strive to be humble. As Abraham said about himself, “and I am just dirt and ashes” (Genesis 18:27).

4. A person should strive to be truthful except in instances that the truth can bring harm to himself or others. An example is Abraham in the book of Genesis who said that his wife was his sister so that he would not be killed. In his defense, there was truth in his saying that she is his sister since his father was also her ancestor. Abraham was Sarah’s uncle!

It is also permissible to change wording to preserve peace, but one must still be very careful about what he says. If the truth can bring harm, then it is not the truth. If the truth is harmful or shameful to the innocent, it should not be repeated. However, one should try not to lie to conceal the truth even for a good reason. He can simply refuse to comment or respond. Instead of saying, “I do not know” when you do know, say rather, “I cannot say,” or “I have no comment.” In explanation of this, the sages teach that when God wanted to create man, the angels were split on this issue. There were those who requested that G-d should not create man since mankind finds it difficult to say the truth, and their peace is full of disputes and fights. On the other hand, the angels that represented justice, grace, goodness, love, mercy, charity and benevolence called on G-d to create man. G-d threw truth to the ground, but not peace. From this the sages learned that truth that brings destruction and does not build is not truth. Thus a person is allowed to change his wording to bring peace.

5. A person must be grateful to whoever was kind and good to him. Joseph in his confrontation with Potiphar’s wife (Genesis 39: 9) explains his loyalty to a person that has been good to him which is reason enough not to sin, not to mention, that G-d also forbids it. Therefore a person must also honor his parents. One that disgraces his parents is liable to be punished.

6. Protecting the ecology is very important as long as it does not endanger human life.

7. A person should not be jealous. Cain killed Abel because of jealousy. In Pirkey Avot (4:20) it says that, “jealousy, lust and pursuit of honor remove a man from this world.”

8. A person should be modest and chaste in his clothing. One of the sins which brought about the flood was that the people of that time wore clothing which left inappropriate portions of the body exposed. He should be dressed appropriately for the occasion, be clean but not too conspicuous. According to Rashi, among the reasons that Jacob told his sons to go down to Egypt, (Genesis 42:1) was so that they would not be conspicuous in appearing as if the famine didn’t concern them. From this we learn that a person should not be ostentatious, neither regarding himself nor his deeds.

9. A person should work even if he is financially well off. Agriculture is recommended since it brings him closer to G-d as he realizes that his welfare is dependent upon the rain that is in His hands. Today, agricultural work is not as it used to be, so if he

tries to find another work he should look for something that will have a minimal danger of temptation and bring positive results.

10. A person should strive to be a peacemaker amongst the nations of the world and between fellow men. Rashi, in his commentary to Genesis 11:9, brings some sayings of the sages who explain why the generation of the tower of Babel, whose sins were worse than the sins of the generation of the flood, was punished less severely than the generation of the flood was punished. The reason is that there was love and peace among the generation of the tower. This goes to show to what high esteem G-d holds those who love peace.

Arts

The arts help develop creativeness in a person, and this is positive and productive when used in the right way. This means that a person should be allowed to deal in the arts if it will encourage the development of good values and morality and not the opposite. For example, if a person deals in arts that are connected with pornography, he is dealing in negative matters. The same holds true in arts that encourage violence or harm to other human beings or laughter and ridicule of those persons who are less fortunate than others, not to speak of pseudo-scientific literature that speaks against the belief in the one true G-d and His Torah. On the other hand, if a person is gifted and uses this gift by producing beautiful things that bring honor to G-d, he is fulfilling G-d's wish.

Pastime and Recreation

A person needs rest, but he should use this period of rest for the benefit of his physical and mental health. A person should not use his free time to engage in idle talk or matters that can bring him to sin. What a person does when he or she is away from home and among strangers decides that person's real character.

Working For A Living

1. Work as a moral value:

- G-d encouraged work to help mankind, as a moral value and in partnership in the work of the creations.

2. Restrictions in Agriculture

- It is recommended to not castrate men or animals because there was a great rabbi who was of the opinion that Noahides have taken upon themselves not to do this.
- It is forbidden to crossbreed animals and trees that are not of the same species. Breeding within a species in either the plant or animal kingdoms is permitted. It is permitted (even for Jews) to use and eat both animals and trees that were produced through forbidden crossbreeding.
- (Nowadays there are many things that can be done through genetic engineering. It may be that this is in the category of the prohibition of crossbreeding. One of the reasons given for the prohibition to Crossbreed.

- is that doing so implies disrespect for G-d's handiwork. It is as if one is declaring that those species that He created in His world are not enough.
- Though genetic engineering is not necessarily doing this, it may still imply a lack of respect for the Creator because it implies that the order of His creation is not good enough and is an attempt by man to improve on it. On the other hand there is no denying that man does have the right to try to improve a species and possibly genetic engineering is no different.)

3. A person should work as much as he can.

- This is true especially if he is a hired worker. This is true even if he is self-employed. We can learn this from Jacob who told the shepherds whom he met (Genesis 29:7), that they should not stop work at high noon.

4. Being a Faithful Worker

Jacob told his wives that he had worked with all his power under the employ of their father. A person should work in honesty and move away from dishonest ventures.

Studying Science

There is value in studying science, especially since this enables a person to recognize the greatness of G-d and to better the creation for the benefit of society. All this is under the condition that it be done in a proper manner and not by unbelievers who want to liberate themselves or take over the world from G-d, which was the first sin made by a man.

1. Healing with the aid of Doctors and Medicines

- As it is stated in Exodus that a doctor should heal, our sages learned that a person who can heal his fellow human being should do so, that a sick person must go to a doctor to be healed. The important point here is that he should not rely on doctors alone, but in G-d who is the true doctor. The person should make an effort to get well.

2. Transplanting of Organs

- This is allowed to save the life of a person as long as the life of another person is not shortened so as to withdraw organs from him.

3. Unnecessary Dangers

- A person should be careful about medical treatment and medicines so as not to fall into unnecessary dangers like a dangerous plastic surgery that can have serious effects on the health of a person. If the dangerous surgery or treatment is being carried out to try to save the person's life, then it is allowed.

4. The Purposes of Medical Treatments

- The main purpose is to increase the life span of a person and to prevent suffering, to increase fertility, but not to increase the pleasure of a person. It is prohibited to cause abortion without the medical reason of saving the life of

the pregnant woman. (As it is not certain that a Noahide is permitted to perform an abortion even in such a situation, one should try to find a Jewish doctor to do it.)

- A doctor is not allowed to stop the suffering of his patient by shortening his life.

5. Medical Experiments

- If such experiments endanger the life of the patient, but there is a chance that it can save his life, it is allowed. However, there is a need for the approval of the patient. It is not enough to request the permission of the family. It is also may be allowed if the experiment might help a terminal patient who otherwise will die. A rabbi who is an expert in Jewish law should be consulted before doing such a thing.
- If the experiment cannot endanger the patient, it is worthwhile to receive the patient's approval because there might be some side effects, or it might endanger him later.

Patriotism

A person should be faithful to his country and leader. A person should not only pray for the welfare of his country but for all the world and humanity. It is forbidden to evade paying taxes and customs. Tax evasion is not to be confused with tax avoidance. Tax evasion is criminal. However, one is allowed to avoid paying taxes by using all possible deductions, depreciation, amortization and transfers of properties to heirs before death to avoid taxation. It is legal and should be pursued.

Vows, Oaths and Pledges

A pledge is a positive mild commitment, "If I can, I will." It is a matter of conscience and ability to fulfill. It is probably appropriate that it should be fulfilled.

A vow is a commitment made to someone else. It should be fulfilled because of the obligation to abide by the laws of interpersonal relationships.

An oath is an unconditional commitment. When undertaken in the name of G-d it must be honored because of one's duty to respect G-d. Abraham made Eliezer place his hand under his thigh and swear by an oath (Genesis 23:2-3). A person must keep all vows, and oaths he made, especially if he has promised to give alms to the needy or a sacrifice to G-d.

Section 4

Commandments Dealing with Matters Between Man and His Fellow

The Prohibition Against Murder

Every man must safeguard the most important deposit given in the custody of humanity, the lives of human beings, be it his own life or that of others. It is therefore

prohibited for a person to endanger himself and, even more so, others. He should be careful to guard his own health and that of society and not do those things that are likely to cause harm like driving with excessive speed, etc.

A person is prohibited from murdering any person, adult or child, man or woman and even the fetus in a womb. However, abortion is allowed if it will save the life of the mother.

It is prohibited to kill a sick person although he is dying of a terminal disease, and there is no possibility of saving his life and even if the patient himself requests to die. Taking organs from such a person while he is still alive, although it may save another person's life, is also prohibited. If it is known that there is no chance of saving life, there is no need to prolong suffering by artificial means since the patient is dying anyway. However, we are not allowed to cut off the equipment that allows the dying person to breathe directly.

It is forbidden to kill a criminal before he is brought to trial and sentenced by a court. A person is not allowed to commit suicide or to shorten his own life in any way. If he is being forced to commit idol worship, he is allowed to commit suicide to sanctify the name of G-d. If a person is being forced to kill another person or be killed, he is still not allowed to kill others. However, if the killers are demanding that one person be handed over to them or they will kill everyone, it is allowed to hand over that one person to save the lives of all the others. However, in the case of terrorists, it should be considered that such demands by terrorists have only proven to encourage the killers to take more hostages and kill more people.

If a person is running after you or chasing you to do you harm but not to kill you, then you are not allowed to kill him. However, if his purpose is to kill, and you have no other way in which to save your life but to kill him, you are allowed to do so in self-defense. But if there is any other way that you can save your life, perhaps by injuring him just enough to stop him from chasing you, then you are not allowed to kill him. If you do slay the murderer, you are guiltless and may save other people's lives whom the murderer might otherwise kill later. Thus if the killing is to save your life or someone else's life, you are allowed to kill him. It is even a mitzvah to do so as Abraham went out to war to save Lot, his nephew and others. Here Abraham was saving life, not killing one who is trying to kill him.

It is prohibited to declare war on another nation since you will be involved in killing and you are endangering the lives of your people too. You are allowed to go out to war if you are being attacked. You are allowed to kill the attackers, but you are not allowed to kill prisoners of war if they are no longer endangering life.

Prohibition Against Spoil, Plunder, and Harming the Rights of Others

Embarrassing

A person is not allowed to insult or injure the reputation of another person in public. It is better that he be thrown into a burning fire rather than to embarrass someone else.

An example is Tamar who avoided publicly shaming Judah even though she had been sentenced to be burnt. Tamar was a child of Noah.

Hitting another person

It is prohibited to hit another person or to injure him. Parents or teachers are allowed to hit their children to discipline them and in self-protection. You are also permitted to fight back if you are attacked.

Property, Goods and possessions of others

It is prohibited to cause damage to such things. If a person is given such a possession to safeguard or for any other reason even if it is worthless, it must be returned to its legal owner. You cannot keep it. A person is also not allowed to cheat on taxes.

Returning lost property

When a country has laws concerning the return of lost property, then such goods must be handed over to the rightful owner.

Prohibition against cheating in business and weights

A person is not only prohibited from doing so, but he must make every effort to protect his credibility by carrying out his business transactions in the most honest and honorable way possible.

Coveting other person's property

This means property, money or anything belonging to another. It is prohibited to covet belongings of another, which means to scheme to acquire them by illegal methods against the will of the present owner. It is forbidden to sue for damages against any individual, company or government when there was no real damage done or for an exorbitant proportion.

Bribery

It is prohibited to give or accept bribes. Sometimes one may find himself in circumstances that cause him to pay a bribe, but this would be in a place where there is no justice, such as among robbers or the like, so as to save oneself.

Grace, Mercy, Charity, Kindness and Benevolence

A Noahide is called upon to give to charities and persons in need. According to Rav Saadiah Gaon, it is commendable for a person to tithe, meaning that he set aside up to one tenth of all his earnings for this purpose. However, a person need not deprive himself of his own basic necessities in order to give to others. According to Ezekiel, one of the reasons for the punishment of Sodom was that the poor people there were not given alms. It is worthwhile that a person keep a special account for such a purpose, and once a week or month he should transfer it to good causes. It is best to transfer it directly to the needy people.

A Noahide is called upon to act in a graceful manner and to be benevolent. One should be hospitable and a good host with all his heart as Abraham did.

Eight Degrees of Charity

There are eight degrees of charity, one higher than the other:

1. The highest degree is to aid a man who is in danger of losing his financial independence by offering him a gift or a loan, by entering into partnership with him, or by providing work for him, so that he may remain self supporting.
2. The next highest degree is where the one who gives and the one who receives are not aware of the identity of each other.
3. The third, inferior degree, is when the giver knows who is the recipient, but the recipient does not know who is the giver.
4. The fourth, still lower degree is where the recipient knows who is the giver, but the giver does not know who is the recipient.
5. The fifth degree is where the giver puts the alms into the hands of the poor without being asked.
6. The sixth degree is where he puts the money into the hands of the poor after being asked.
7. The seventh degree is where he gives less than he should but does so cheerfully.
8. The eighth degree is where he gives resentfully.

Courts of Justice

It is important to form courts of justice so that persons can be called upon to uphold the mitzvot, the religious laws and to be able to judge between people. Sages were divided as to whether the Noahides should be judged according to the Torah concerning financial matters or whether they should be judged according to common sense. It is worthwhile that such courts of justice should give sentences according to the same law for men and for women. The judges should be men since a woman should strive not to be involved in public matters. Every person should go to a court for justice and not try to mete out justice himself. Courts of justice are allowed to enforce regulations for the benefit of the society and to improve ethics and morality. It is the obligation of the Noahide to execute justice to the fullest degree and not to be merciful to criminals. People have the obligation to obey the law and see that the legislative and judicial and personnel and systems obey the law.

Marriage and Sex

Every man should marry a woman, and every woman should marry a man since it is written “that it is not good for a man to live alone by himself.” Marriage brings about a partnership between two people and increases the population of the world. In marriage a Noahide will participate and contribute in the building of the world. Marriage is initiated by the couple’s decision to live together as husband and wife followed by their sexual union. It is worthwhile and enhancing that the two hold a formal marriage ceremony and a marriage feast.

A married couple can divorce even if both don't agree to the divorce. If the husband sends his wife away from their home declaring that they are no longer married or if the wife leaves their home with a similar declaration they are no longer married. However, Noahides should abide by the laws of the state in which they live in marriage matters. They should therefore also follow any procedures that are required by the laws where they live so that they should be considered divorced also according to these laws. After the divorce, both partners are free to remarry. The marriage also ends if one of the two dies.

According to the Torah, a married woman and another man are not allowed to have sexual or any intimate relations with each other. A man, on the other hand, is allowed to marry more than one wife or concubine. Since the 10th century the Ashkenazic Jews generally have only one wife. Today there are also civil laws in many countries against bigamy, which are to be followed as law for the Noahide. A person is not allowed to have sexual relations with his mother, sisters, maternal aunts from his father or mother's side, his father's wife even after the death of his father, daughter, granddaughter, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law and her mother, his wife's daughters and granddaughters. A person is not allowed to have homosexual relations (man with another man or a woman with another woman). Also a person is not allowed to have sexual relations with animals. This is bestiality.

A Noahide should not have sexual relations with a Jew(ess).

Rape by a Noahide is a capital offence. There are opinions that, regarding people who are forbidden by the Torah to have sex with one another, the Torah prohibits any physical contact between them that is liable to be stimulating. This would include kissing, hugging and social dancing. It is nevertheless permitted for people to kiss their offspring.


It is worthwhile for men and women to minimize their mingling with one another. For this reason, youth groups and social activities should be organized separately for boys and for girls. In particular, when groups come together for prayer, etc. the men and the women should sit separately.

The purpose of sexual relations is to increase the human race and to strengthen the ties between the married couple. According to the Torah, a husband is called to gratify and satisfy sexually his wife. The same holds true for the wife toward her husband. All this is to strengthen the ties between the married couple. God created men and women with sexual appetite and chemistry. Sex is a blessing from God, and it is not sin in the bounds of permitted sex under the seven laws of Noah.

One should not read pornographic literature or watch pornographic movies. As women who are dressed inappropriately can stimulate men easily, women should dress modestly.

Most authorities are of the opinion that Bnei Noah are not obligated any more to have children. There is a minority view that they are. According to this minority view and the view of Nachmanides, masturbation is prohibited. Also, according to them only the female is allowed to use contraceptives. The ones that would be permitted are foam or pills or similar methods.

It is an ancient custom of Israel to be careful and not to have sexual relations when the woman is having her menstrual period. An Israelite married woman is not allowed to have sexual relations with her husband for seven days, starting from the first day of her menstruation period. After the seven days she must go to a ritual bath, a mikvah, before she resumes having sexual relations with her husband. A Noahide is not called to do so, but it is worthwhile for the couple to abstain from having sexual relations during the woman's menstrual period.

The background image is a dark, moody photograph of a stone staircase and a stone wall. The stairs are made of large, flat, greyish-brown stones, and the wall is constructed from rough, irregular stones in shades of brown and grey. The lighting is low, creating deep shadows and highlighting the textures of the stone. The overall tone is somber and ancient.

The Seven Commandments for Patriarchs

The Seven Commandments for Patriarchs

- Gen. 26:5 - “Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.”
- Gen. 18:19 - “For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.”

The Seven Commandments for Patriarchs

- What laws?
 - Did God define righteousness for the Patriarchs?
 - What were the terms of His covenant?
- It was a covenant that produced a priest so holy that Abraham paid tithes to him, Melchizedek - Gen. 14:18
- It was a covenant that produced a righteous man who never saw death, Enoch

The Seven Commandments for Patriarchs

- Whatever it was, it remained the covenant for the Gentiles until the Christian dispensation began
 - Rom. 4:8-10, 12, 16 - “Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin. 9 Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. 10 How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised... 12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised... 16 Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all”

The Seven Commandments for Patriarchs

- It is the covenant that the Gentiles exchanged for paganism
 - Psalm 22:27-28 - “All the ends of the world Shall remember and turn to the LORD, And all the families of the nations Shall worship before You. 28 For the kingdom is the LORD'S, And He rules over the nations.”
 - Jer. 16:19 - “O LORD, my strength and my fortress, My refuge in the day of affliction, The Gentiles shall come to You From the ends of the earth and say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, Worthlessness and unprofitable things.”

The Seven Commandments for Patriarchs

- Jonah 3:5-10 - “So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. 6 Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. 7 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. 8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. 9 Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish? 10 Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.”

The Seven Commandments for Patriarchs

- It is the proto-evangelium, the first law of God given to all men, the covenant that all the earth obeyed in the beginning

The Seven Commandments For Patriarchs

- The Noahide Laws or Noachide Code are a set of seven moral imperatives that were restated by God to Noah as a binding set of laws for all mankind.
- According to Judaism, any non-Jew who lived according to these laws is regarded as a Righteous Gentile and is assured of a place in the world to come.

The Seven Commandments For Patriarchs

- They are derived from:
 - Gen. 2:16, 24 - “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat... 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

The Seven Commandments For Patriarchs

- They are derived from:
 - Gen. 9:3-7 - “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. 4 But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. 5 Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. 6 Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man. 7 And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; Bring forth abundantly in the earth And multiply in it.”

The Seven Laws

- Prohibition of Idolatry: You shall not have any idols before God.
- Prohibition of Murder: You shall not murder.
- Prohibition of Theft: You shall not steal.
- Prohibition of Sexual immorality: You shall not commit fornication, adultery, incest, homosexuality, and bestiality.
- Prohibition of Blasphemy: You shall not blaspheme God's name.
- Dietary Law: Do not eat flesh taken from an animal while it is still alive or consume its blood.
- Requirement to have just laws: Have a legal system

They Were Before The Law Of Moses

- Seven Laws of the Patriarchs were re-given to humanity and embedded in the 613 Laws given to the Children of Israel along with the Ten Commandments, which were only issued to the Jews and are therefore binding only upon them
- The Jews were required to teach the Noahide laws to the Gentiles as God's righteous will for them, but up until the day of the Pharisees more often than not did not encourage proselyting

The Seven Commandments For Patriarchs

- Gen. 2:16 - “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat”
- "Commanded" implies law and justice
 - Deut. 1:16 - “Then I commanded your judges at that time, saying, 'Hear the cases between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother or the stranger who is with him.’”

The Seven Commandments For Patriarchs

- Gen. 2:16 - “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat”
- "And the Lord" implies the prohibition of blasphemy
 - Lev. 24:16 - “And whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall certainly stone him, the stranger as well as him who is born in the land. When he blasphemes the name of the LORD, he shall be put to death.”

The Seven Commandments For Patriarchs

- Gen. 2:16 - “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat”
- "God" (Elohim) implies a prohibition of idolatry
 - Ex. 20:3 - “You shall have no other gods before Me.”

The Seven Commandments For Patriarchs

- Gen. 2:16 - “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat”
- "The Man" implies the prohibition of murder
 - Gen. 9:6 - “Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.”
 - Gen. 4:11-15

The Seven Commandments For Patriarchs

- Gen. 2:16 - “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat”
- "From all the trees of the Garden" is an implicit prohibition of theft. It shows that permission is needed to take something that is not explicitly yours
 - Gen. 9:3 - “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.”
 - Note that Jewish dietary restrictions were not put on Gentiles

The Seven Commandments For Patriarchs

- Gen. 2:16 - “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat”
- "You may eat" implies that there are things which may not be eaten
 - Gen. 9:4 - “But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.”

The Seven Commandments For Patriarchs

- “Cleave to his wife” implies the prohibition against all fornication
 - Gen. 2:24 - “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”
 - Gen. 20:3 - “But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife.”

What Does It Mean In This Dispensation?

- Acts 15:28-29 - “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: 29 that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.”
- Elements of the Seven Laws for the Patriarchs are included in the present dispensation, simply because moral and righteous conduct remains the same from the beginning

What Does It Mean In This Dispensation?

- Matt. 19:4-6 - “And He answered and said to them, Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' 5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”
- These seven laws have been included in the moral covenants of all three dispensations

What Does It Mean In This Dispensation?

- Ex. 12:47-49 - “All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. 48 And when a stranger dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it. 49 One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you.””
- Gal. 5:3 - “And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.”
- We as Gentiles were never intended to keep the Law of Moses at any level

What Does It Mean In This Dispensation?

- When you:
 - Honor the name of God
 - Refuse idolatry
 - Refuse to murder
 - Refuse to steal
 - Do not eat live creatures or drink blood
 - Refuse fornication
 - Observe civil law and practice justice
- You are observing the same kind of moral and righteous conduct as Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah, and Jesus

What Does It Mean In This Dispensation?

- However, even though the moral laws of conduct are the same, the terms of salvation for each dispensation changes.
 - Heb. 1:1-3 - “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; 3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”

What Does It Mean In This Dispensation?

- However, even though the moral laws of conduct are the same, the terms of salvation for each dispensation changes.
 - Heb. 2:1-4 - “Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, 4 God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?”

THE SEVEN NOAHIDE LAWS: OF MONKEY BRAINS AND COURTS

IRENE MERKER ROSENBERG*

[1] Almost everyone knows, or at least has heard of, the Ten Commandments, which were given to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai after the exodus from Egypt: to believe in God, not to engage in idolatry or to take God's name in vain, to observe the Sabbath, to honor one's father and mother, not to murder, commit adultery, steal, give false testimony, or covet.¹ Fewer know about the Seven Noahide laws,² which were given to Adam³ and reaffirmed by God to Noah after the

* Royce R. Till Professor of Law, University of Houston Law Center. B.A., College of the City of New York, 1961; LL.B., New York University School of Law, 1964. My thanks to Harriet Richman, Faculty Services Librarian, University of Houston Law Library, for her excellent research services and to the University of Houston Law Foundation for its financial support. This essay is dedicated to the memory of my husband, Yale L. Rosenberg.

¹The Ten Commandments appear twice in the Old Testament: *Exodus* 20:2-14 and *Deuteronomy* 5:6-18. The wording is not exactly the same and commentators explore those differences in depth. Note, for example, that the Exodus version says, "remember" ("zachor") the Sabbath, whereas Deuteronomy states, "safeguard" ("shamoor") the Sabbath.

² See THE ARTSCROLL BABYLONIAN TALMUD, at Sanhedrin 56a5 (Hersh Goldwurm, ed. 1994) [hereinafter BABYLONIAN TALMUD] (listing the seven universal laws).

³ There is a dispute as to which of the Noahide laws were given to Adam and which to Noah. One of the difficulties with the argument that God gave all seven laws to Adam is that Adam was prohibited from eating meat altogether. See *Genesis* 1:29. Why then tell Adam that he is not to eat the limb taken from a live animal? Man was not given permission to eat meat until after the Flood. *Genesis* 9:3-4. See 1 ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDICA 141 (Isadore Epstein & Harry Freedman eds., 1969) [hereinafter ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDICA] (noting that "[s]ome derive this [the prohibition against eating a limb severed from a live animal] from the words spoken to Adam, 'you may freely eat' (*Genesis* 2, 16) implying that he may eat only of that which stands ready to be eaten, thus excluding a limb severed from a living animal, since a live animal does not stand to be eaten. . . . Others derive it from the words spoken to Noah (*Id.* 9, 4), 'Only flesh with the life thereof . . . shall you not eat.'"). Therefore some conclude that God gave Adam only six commandments and added the seventh regarding eating the limb of a live animal to Noah. See 1 MIDRASH RABBAH 131, 278 (H. Freedman trans., 1983) [hereinafter MIDRASH RABBAH]. See also

Flood⁴, thus "predat[ing] the revelation of biblical legislation to the Jewish people."⁵ These universal laws prohibit idolatry, blasphemy, murder, illicit sexual relations, robbery, eating a limb taken from a live animal, and failing to establish courts of law. The Noahide laws are all negative commandments,⁶ prohibitions against doing or failing to do certain acts, and violators are subject to the death penalty.⁷

[2] Jewish law posits that the Seven Noahide laws bind all non-Jews.⁸ Jews are also required to observe the seven universal laws, but only as a matter of Jewish law, that is, the Decalogue and the 613 commandments derived from it.⁹ This distinction has practical consequences because of the

Deuteronomy 12:23 ("you shall not eat the life with the meat" (prohibiting the ingestion of blood)).

There are also different opinions as to the precise biblical source of the Noahide laws, their exact number and their content. Some, for example, argue that non-Jews are prohibited from performing sterilization and the mixing of different seeds and animals. See discussion in BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, at Sanhedrin 56a5-57a2, and 4 ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDICA 361-64.

⁴ See CHAIM CLORFENE & YAKOV ROGALSKY, *THE PATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS GENTILE* 7-9 (1987) [hereinafter *RIGHTEOUS GENTILE*] (arguing that God gave Adam all seven laws and commanded him to teach it to succeeding generations, and after the Flood "God reaffirmed the original seven commandments that He had taught Adam." *Id.* at 9). See also discussion *supra* note 3.

⁵ NAHUM RAKOVER, *LAW AND THE NOAHIDES* 9 (1998) [hereinafter *RAKOVER*].

⁶ The duty to establish courts appears to be a positive commandment: set up courts of law. It is viewed, however, as a negative commandment, that is, do not fail to establish courts of law. See *RIGHTEOUS GENTILE*, *supra* note 4, at 101-02.

⁷ BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, at Sanhedrin 57b3 n.30. There are different opinions as to which of the four biblical death penalties applies to a Noahide convicted in a court of law--stoning, burning, beheading or strangulation. The majority rule is that he is subject to decapitation. 4 ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDICA, *supra* note 3, at 377.

⁸ BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, Sanhedrin at 56a5.

⁹ See BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, at Makkos 23b3 (noting that "[s]ix hundred and thirteen

differences in interpretation of both sets of laws.¹⁰ Some of the Noahide laws prohibit conduct that is also encompassed in the Decalogue, such as the prohibitions against murder and theft, but others do not.¹¹ A few of the Noahide laws are interpreted more strictly than their counterparts in Jewish law, that is, a non-Jew would be liable for committing a certain act, but a Jew would not.¹² Most are, however, more lenient¹³ than the 613 commandments governing Jews.¹⁴

[3] There is "no original text of the Noahide Code"¹⁵ as it is not explicitly stated in the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. The earliest source systematically discussing and analyzing the seven laws is Talmudic.¹⁶ Although there is no express statement of them in the Torah, the

are included in the Ten Commandments").

¹⁰ See 4 ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDICA, *supra* note 3, at 363 (noting that "[t]he seven precepts contain both stringencies and leniencies which differentiate Noahides from Jews").

¹¹ For example, there is no requirement that non-Jews observe the Sabbath, and indeed, although Noahides generally may observe almost all of the 613 rules binding on Jews, Sabbath observance is prohibited. See RIGHTEOUS GENTILE, *supra* note 4, at 41.

¹² See 1 ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDICA, *supra* note 3, at 141-42 (discussing the difference between the Mosaic kosher laws and the Noahide prohibition against eating the limb of a live animal). Jews may eat the meat of a ritually slaughtered animal even if there is still some movement in the animal. Noahides are not obliged to ritually slaughter animals, but they may not eat the meat of them until the limbs have completely stopped moving or quivering. *But see* BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, at Chullin 33a1 (asking, "Is there such a thing that an object or action could be permitted to a Jew and forbidden to a gentile?").

¹³ BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, Sanhedrin at 58b3 n.24.

¹⁴ See MAIMONIDES, THE COMMANDMENTS (Charles B. Chavel trans., 1967) (a two volume work explaining the 248 positive commandments and the 365 negative commandments incumbent upon the Jewish people).

¹⁵ AARON LICHTENSTEIN, THE SEVEN LAWS OF NOAH 11 (2d ed., 1981) [hereinafter LICHTENSTEIN].

¹⁶ *Id.* Rabbi Lichtenstein notes that "the earliest book of the Halakha [law] which undertakes to delineate the Seven Laws is the Tosefta, attributed to Hiyya bar Abba, born circa 160 [C.E.]."

Noahide laws are learned by biblical exegesis.¹⁷

[4] The biblical source for the Noahide laws is not obvious. *Genesis* 2:16 states, "And HASHEM God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat.'" ¹⁸ The verse is redundant¹⁹ as God had already informed Adam of this fact in *Genesis* 1:29, "I have given to you all herbage yielding seed that is on the surface of the entire earth, and every tree that has seed-yielding; it shall be yours for food." The Torah is very terse, and in most cases when a letter, word or phrase is merely duplicative, it is there to teach us something.²⁰ According to the Sages, each word of this superfluous verse in *Genesis* 2:16 alludes to the Seven Commandments given to Adam and his descendants.²¹

¹⁷ See THE COMPLETE ARTSCROLL SIDDUR 49-53 (Nosson Scherman trans., 1993) (the thirteen rules of interpreting the Torah).

¹⁸ Unless otherwise noted, English translations of the Bible are taken from THE ARTSCROLL STONE EDITION OF THE CHUMASH (Nosson Scherman ed., 11th ed. 2001). The word HASHEM literally means "the name;" it is used in place of God's actual name so that it is not said frivolously or in vain. When the Torah is read for religious purposes, God's actual name is uttered. The name for HASHEM denotes God's aspect of mercy. The Hebrew word for God in the verse denotes His attribute of strict justice.

¹⁹ BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, Sanhedrin at 56b1 n.9.

²⁰ See NEHAMA LEIBOWITZ, STUDIES IN BERESHIT (*Genesis*) 82 (Aryeh Newman trans., 4th rev. ed. 1981) (noting, "the Torah's sparing use of words and avoidance of every unnecessary repetition, even the addition or subtraction of a letter"). Leibowitz explains that "[t]he choice of every word [in the Torah] is deliberate and there is nothing accidental or coincidental in it but the imparting of some specific lesson". *Id.* at 513. This principle does not always apply. Sometimes the Torah may repeat a word or phrase because that was how people commonly spoke. See BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, Sanhedrin at 56a5.

²¹ The translation of *Genesis* 2:16 in the ArtScroll version of the BABYLONIAN TALMUD is somewhat different from the ArtScroll version of the Torah. See text *supra* note 18. The verse as translated in the BABYLONIAN TALMUD is "Hashem God commanded upon the man saying 'Of every tree of the garden you may surely eat.'" See BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, Sanhedrin

[5] Since Jews are commanded to obey 613 laws, one might conclude either that they need more restrictions, or that they enjoy a greater spiritual worth than non-Jews who have only seven commandments. One answer is that the Noahide laws are stated in general terms but they encompass various details and aspects,²² whereas the 613 laws are specific. For example, "[t]he single Noahide law against sexual immorality prohibits adultery, sodomy, and various types of incest. Yet, each of these specific offenses is enumerated separately among the 613."²³ Furthermore, if one counts only those of the 613 laws that are applicable in modern times (many commandments refer to ritual practice in the Temple), the ratio between the number of Jewish and Noahide laws is greatly diminished. As one noted scholar, Rabbi Aaron Lichtenstein, has observed:

It becomes apparent then that a comparison between just seven Noahide laws and six hundred thirteen Mitzvot [commandments] cannot be invoked as a supposed indication of the relative limitedness of the Noahide system, for the seven Noahide laws refer

at 56b1. The words "He commanded," refers to a system of law; the word "Lord," (Hashem) refers to "blessing," that is, cursing the name of God; the word "God," refers to idolatry, "upon the," means murder, "saying" (which is also redundant), refers to sexual transgressions, "of every tree of the garden" alludes to theft, and "you may surely eat," prohibits eating the limb taken from a live animal. Each of these meanings is supported by the use of the same words appearing in other verses.

²² See 4 ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDICA, *supra* note 3, at 362-64 (noting that the seven laws are generalizations and setting forth a list of the details of these laws compiled by an early Sage which encompass 30 precepts: unity of God, idolatry, blasphemy, prayer, taking an oath in vain, suicide, homicide, sexual relations with another man's wife, marriage by dowry and gift, relations with a sister, sodomy, bestiality, castration, eating the carcass of a dead animal, a limb taken from a live animal, eating blood, hybridization of animals, sacrifices from clean animals, robbery, honoring one's father and mother, consigning one's children to the fire, augury, soothsaying, divining, sorcery, casting spells, consulting a ghost, consulting a familiar spirit, inquiring of the dead. One of the precepts is missing in the manuscript. The missing precept follows the prohibition against hybridization of animals; perhaps the missing precept is a prohibition against the hybridization of seeds. See discussion in BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, at Sanhedrin 56b1.

²³ LICHENSTEIN, *supra* note 15, at 17.

to seven broad areas of legislation, whereas each of the six hundred thirteen refer to a separate, specific, narrowly construed statute. That is to say, the word 'law' as found in the term 'Seven Laws' refers to a broad legislative area; the word 'commandment' as found in the term 'Six Hundred Thirteen Commandments' refers to a stark legal dictum qualified as a mere bylaw of the broader area.²⁴

He concludes that sixty-six commandments can be derived from the Seven Noahide laws.²⁵ It is the same type of exegesis by which the 613 commandments governing Jews were derived from the Decalogue.²⁶ "Therefore, the numerical disparity in no way reflects the relative spiritual worth of the [Noahide] commandments."²⁷

[6] Official recognition of the Seven Noahide Laws is contained in a congressional resolution signed by President Bush in 1991, noting that "the historical tradition of ethical values and principles which are the basis of civilized society . . . have been the bedrock of society from the dawn of civilization, when they were known as the Seven Noahide Laws."²⁸ There are small communities of Noahide observers in the United States and indeed throughout the world. A leading figure in the movement is Vendyl Jones who conducts archeological digs to find the Ark of the Covenant.²⁹ He is reputed to be the model for the Indiana Jones movies.³⁰ Although most

²⁴ *Id.* at 92.

²⁵ *Id.* at 93.

²⁶ BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, at Makkos 23b3.

²⁷ RIGHTEOUS GENTILE, *supra* note 4, at 43.

²⁸ H.R.J. Res. 104, 102d Cong. (1991), Pub.L. No. 102-14.

²⁹ Information about Vendyl Jones and the B'nai Noach movement can be found at <http://www.vendyljones.org.il> (last visited Nov. 1, 2004).

Noahides start as Christians who want to learn more about their roots, they are neither Christian nor Jewish. They simply follow the Noahide laws and call themselves B'nai No'ach,³¹ which is Hebrew for the sons of Noah. In some communities they study and observe some aspects of Jewish law, even though it is not commanded.³² Some do, however, go on to convert to Judaism, although traditional Jewish law does not encourage conversion³³--it is not a religion that actively seeks proselytes. To the contrary, Judaism asserts that "by observing the Seven Noahide Commandments, a Gentile fulfills the purpose of creation and receives a share of the World to Come, the blessed spiritual world of the righteous."³⁴

[7] I had always understood the enduring importance of the values embedded in the seven laws. The prohibition against eating the flesh or limb of a living animal gave me pause, mainly because I could not imagine anyone doing such a thing. Apparently, however, it was customary to do so, else there would have been no need to prohibit such conduct. It may well be that prior to refrigeration people would cut off a piece of meat from a live animal as a way of assuring a supply of fresh meat,³⁵ or it may have been an aspect of pagan rituals.³⁶ But is the law of enduring significance? Is

³⁰ For a fascinating article on Vendyl Jones' life and activities, see Gerard Robbins, *Vendyl Jones and the Ark of the Covenant*, JEWISH HERALD VOICE OF HOUSTON, TEXAS (May 2000), available at <http://www.rense.com/general2/ark.htm>.

³¹ See J. DAVID DAVIS, *FINDING THE GOD OF NOAH: THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY OF A BAPTIST MINISTER FROM CHRISTIANITY TO THE LAWS OF NOAH* (1996).

³² See, e.g., Leslie Scrivener, *Noahides Make a Leap of Faith*, The Toronto Star, May 19, 1996, at F7; R. Gustav Niebuhr, *Christian Fundamentalists Seek Roots of Their Faith: There Goes the Steeple*, Wall S. J., Mar. 20, 1991, at A1.

³³ See BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, Yevamos at 47a3-47b2.

³⁴ RIGHTEOUS GENTILE, *supra* note 4 at 4.

it fundamental in the same way as the prohibitions against murder and theft?³⁷

[8] Subsequently, I learned that there are modern cultures which view certain foods obtained in that way as a delicacy. A friend was telling me about her first visit to an Asian country. Fine restaurants in that country had special tables with holes carved in the middle of them. A monkey, the top of whose head had been lopped off, is placed under the table, the exposed brain showing through, and diners ate the monkey's brains while it was still alive.³⁸ Presumably the monkey does

³⁵ Cf., *Genesis* 37:2: "and Joseph brought a bad report of them [his brothers] to their father." Rashi, the great 12th century commentator on the Torah and the Talmud, notes that Joseph "would report to his father that they ate a part cut off from a living animal." 1 THE PENTATEUCH AND RASHI'S COMMENTARY 370 (Abraham ben Isaiah and Benjamin Sharfman, trans. 1950). In *Deuteronomy* 12:23 God commands Moses: "Only be steadfast in not eating the blood." Rashi notes that "[f]rom the words 'Be steadfast' you can derive that they were dissolute in the eating of blood; consequently it was necessary to state 'Be steadfast.'" 5 RASHI'S COMMENTARY at 120. See also Alyza, *The Sheva Mitzvot B'nai Noach: An Introduction* ¶ 18 available at <http://www.homeworship101.com/bb-c5_sacred_covenants.htm> (

Today in the western world we have refrigeration and the storage of meat is not given much thought. But in the harsh pagan world, people would cut off a limb of the animal they used for food, tie off the stump of the severed limb so it would not bleed to death, and then leash up the animal so it would not run away. They left it to suffer until more meat was needed in a day or two, then hack off another limb, and so on. Some people prided themselves on how long they could keep an animal alive, while slowly carving it to death. This concept of keeping meat fresh, is a treatment to animals that is still being carried out today in some third world countries.

).

³⁶ See DAVID NOVAK, *THE IMAGE OF THE NON-JEW IN JUDAISM* (1983).

³⁷ See Lichtenstein, *supra* note 15 at 56: "A question that can legitimately be raised here is: Does not the Limb of a Living Creature seem too puny a violation to be found alongside such considerations as adultery, murder, theft, idolatry, etc.?"

³⁸ JOY MASOFF, OH, YUCK, *THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF EVERYTHING NASTY* 100 (2000)(my thanks to Yosef Kerzner, age 13, for finding this source). But see references at

not feel any pain, or it is restrained, otherwise eating dinner would be a somewhat challenging experience. The recent outbreak of monkey pox will undoubtedly deter this activity.³⁹ The practice of eating meat from a living animal is also apparently practiced in the United States. In some areas of the country bulls are castrated while they are alive and the testicles are cooked and eaten as a delicacy known as "Rocky Mountain" oysters.⁴⁰

[9] Therefore, the prohibition speaks to actual practices, then and now. Transcending these aspects, however, on a value level, what kind of person would inflict such pain on living animals? There are studies indicating that many violent criminals have a history of cruelty to animals in their childhood.⁴¹ Perhaps in recognition of such a connection the Torah speaks to the issue of animal cruelty in a variety of contexts. *Deuteronomy* 22:4 admonishes a person to help someone unload his donkey that has fallen on the road because of the heavy burden it carries. *Deuteronomy* 22:6-7 requires that if a person finds a nest with the female bird roosting on its eggs or its young, he should not take the mother with the young "Let the mother go, taking only the young for yourself." Similarly, in *Leviticus* 22:28 there is a prohibition against killing a mother and its

www.maxent.org/ch/monkey_brainsref.html, claiming that this is merely an urban legend. Nonetheless, some of their own citations belie that claim.

³⁹ See, e.g., Denise Grady & Lawrence Altman, *Beyond Cute: Exotic Pets Come Bearing Exotic Germs*, N.Y. Times, June 17, 2003, at F1 (describing how monkey pox was transmitted into the United States).

⁴⁰ Yirmeyahu Bindman, *The Seven Colors of the Rainbow: Torah Ethics for Non-Jews* 106 (1995)[hereinafter *Rainbow*].

⁴¹ See Margit Livingston, *Desecrating the Ark: Animal Abuse and the Law's Role in Prevention*, 87 IOWA L. REV. 1, 17-22 (2001) (analyzing various studies concerning a link between cruelty to animals and criminal behavior).

offspring on the same day.⁴² The Ten Commandments demand that the Sabbath be observed not only by people, but also by their animals--it is a day of rest for "your ox, your donkey, and your every animal."⁴³ In the Talmud there is an extensive discussion regarding cruelty to animals in general. The debate is not whether there is a prohibition against making animals suffer, but whether the commandment comes from the Torah or is merely a rabbinic ordinance.⁴⁴ The conclusion is that it is a biblical prohibition.

[10] If one learns it is wrong to be cruel to animals,⁴⁵ or to cause them unnecessary pain or emotional distress, even to assuage their hunger, then surely that lesson will extend to human beings. The commandment instills a reverence for living creatures and helps the individual achieve greater refinement and spirituality, and, in that sense, fits comfortably along with the other fundamental Noahide laws.⁴⁶

[11] The commandment that most intrigues me, however, is the requirement that courts of law be established. There are various disputes among the commentators regarding the exact content of

⁴² "But you shall not slaughter, from the herd or the flock, an animal with its young on the same day."

⁴³ *Deuteronomy* 5:12-15

⁴⁴ BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, Bava Metzia at 32b1-33a1.

⁴⁵ Lichtenstein, *supra* note 15 at 57 (notes the various Jewish laws prohibiting cruelty to animals in various contexts).

⁴⁶ See 4 SEFER HAHINNUCH, THE BOOK OF [MITZVOT] EDUCATION 409-10 (Charles Wengrov, trans. 1988)[hereinafter SEFER HAHINNUCH](noting in Commandment 452 that "[a]t the root of the precept lies the reason that we should not train our spirit in the quality of cruelty. . . there is no greater cruelty in the world than when one cuts a limb or flesh from an animal while it is yet alive before him, and he eats it.")

this requirement.⁴⁷ One of these disputes concerns whether "Noahides are permitted to legislate their own laws" or are bound by Jewish law.⁴⁸ But all seem to agree that it includes establishing courts of law and prohibiting any act that would lead to "an unjust judicial decision."⁴⁹ To ensure implementation of these two principles, many scholars believe that at least twenty precepts of the 613 Commandments of Jewish law are applicable to this Noahide requirement to establish a legal system: (1) "to appoint judges and officers in each and every community," (2) "to treat the litigants equally before the law," (3) "to inquire diligently into the testimony of a witness," (4) to assure "against the wanton miscarriage of justice by the court," (5) prohibiting a "judge [from] accepting a bribe or gift from a litigant," (6) prohibiting "the judge showing marks of honor to but one litigant," (7) enjoining "the judge [from] acting in fear of a litigant's threats," (8) prohibiting "the judge [from] out of compassion, favoring a poor litigant," (9) prohibiting "the judge discriminating against the litigant because he is a sinner," (10) prohibiting "the judge, out of softness, putting aside the penalty of a mauler or killer," (11) prohibiting "the judge [from] discriminating against a stranger or

⁴⁷ For example, Maimonides believed that the Noahide commandment to establish courts encompassed only an order to establish a court system so as to enforce the other six commandments. Nachmanides, on the other hand, believed that this commandment also required Noahides to set up an entire system of civil law. BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, Sanhedrin 56a5 n.48. Maimonides thought that such a requirement stemmed from the Noahide law against theft. *Id.* For an extensive discussion regarding the differences between Maimonides and Nachmanides see LICHTENSTEIN, *supra* note 15, at 35-43. For another scholarly exposition of this issue see RAKOVER, *supra* note 5, at 55-86.

⁴⁸ The conflict stems from the different views of two talmudic Sages. Although it is agreed that the biblical source for the Noahide laws is *Genesis* 2:16, there is a debate concerning which word of the verse refers to a system of laws. One Sage learns this obligation from the words "He commanded," and another infers it from the word "God." The first Sage concludes that Noahides are permitted to pass their own laws, whereas the other finds that the laws legislated by Noahides must be the same as Jewish law. See discussion in RAKOVER, *supra* note 5, at 56-57.

orphan," (12) enjoining "the judge hearing one litigant in the absence of the other," (13) prohibiting "appointing a judge who lacks knowledge of the Law," (14) prohibiting "the court killing an innocent man," (15) prohibiting "incrimination by circumstantial evidence,"⁵⁰ (16) prohibiting "punishing for a crime committed under duress,"⁵¹ (17) requiring "that the court is to administer the death penalty by the sword (i.e., decapitation)," (18) prohibiting "anyone taking the law into his own hands to kill the perpetrator of a capital crime," (19) a duty "to testify in court," and (20) prohibiting "testifying falsely."⁵²

[12] Almost all of these rules concerning the courts are sophisticated and fundamental to a righteous system of justice. They pale, however, in comparison to Jewish law, which is almost fanatically concerned with courts, their rules and procedures, and the fear of convicting innocent people. In *Exodus* 18, Moses' father-in-law, Yitro, visits Moses in the desert and observes him judging cases from morning to night. In *Exodus*, Yitro advises Moses to get some help:

And you shall discern from among the entire people, men of accomplishment, God-fearing people, men of truth, people who despise money, and you shall appoint them leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, and leaders of tens. They shall judge the people at all times, and they shall bring every major matter to you, and with every minor matter they shall judge.⁵³

⁴⁹ LICHTENSTEIN, *supra* note 15, at 31.

⁵⁰ *But see* RIGHTEOUS GENTILE, *supra* note 4, at 102.

⁵¹ At common law duress was a defense for every crime but murder. *State v. Toscano*, 378 A.2d 755, 756 (N.J. 1977). Section 2.09 of the Model Penal Code makes duress an affirmative defense without excluding homicide. MODEL PENAL CODE §2.09.

⁵² These duties are set forth in LICHTENSTEIN, *supra* note 15, at 31-35. *See also* RAINBOW, *supra* note 4, at 113-20 (discussing the laws that are necessary in a just society).

⁵³ *Exodus* 18:21-22.

[13] Jewish law, however, is composed not only of the Written law, the Torah, but also the Oral law. Indeed, the Written law cannot be read in isolation from the Oral law. The latter consists of the Mishnah, redacted circa 200 C.E., and the Gemara, redacted circa 500 C.E. Together they are known as the Talmud.⁵⁴ The Talmud is divided into 60 odd tractates, comprising over 5,000 pages, written in Aramaic, with no vowels or punctuation.⁵⁵ Together they are known as the Talmud.⁵⁶ The Talmud is divided into 60 odd tractates, comprising over 5,000 pages, written in Aramaic, with no vowels or punctuation.⁵⁷ There is no index or table of contents. The terseness is baffling. With whichever tractate you start learning, it is taken for granted that you know all of it. One must, however, accept the Talmud on its own terms or concede defeat and withdraw.

[14] In the Babylonian Talmud,⁵⁸ tractate Sanhedrin deals with courts, crimes and punishments, and it is filled with robust debates concerning the minutiae of law. The disputants intellectually wrap themselves around the particular issue, turning it over and around, inside and out, quoting sources and poking holes in each other's arguments, until the matter is resolved or the Sages say "Taykoo"--it will be decided when the Messiah comes. It is an elaborate edifice devoted to

⁵⁴ ADIN STEINSALTZ, THE TALMUD, THE STEINSALTZ EDITION: A REFERENCE GUIDE (Israel V. Berman trans., 1989).

⁵⁵ See Irene M. Rosenberg & Yale L. Rosenberg, *In the Beginning: The Talmudic Rule Against Self-Incrimination*, 63 N.Y.U.L. REV. 955, 966-74 (1988).

⁵⁶ Adin Steinsaltz, *The Talmud, The Steinsaltz Edition: A Reference Guide* (Israel V. Berman transl, 1989).

⁵⁷ See Irene M. Rosenberg & Yale L. Rosenberg, *In the Beginning: The Talmudic Rule Against Self-Incrimination*, 63 N.Y.U.L. Rev. 955, 966-74 (1988).

⁵⁸ There is another Talmud called the Jerusalem Talmud, which was composed by the Sages of Israel. For various reasons, the Babylonian Talmud has historically been viewed as more

ascertaining truth and justice as revealed by God.

[15] Over the years, my husband and I have written numerous articles about Jewish law, concentrating on the talmudic debates.⁵⁹ At first, the judicial system seemed, not to put too fine a point on it, which is particularly strange in criminal law. In time we came to know and appreciate the wisdom of the Sages.

[16] Jewish courts trying criminal cases are composed of 23 judges (three for civil cases),⁶⁰ who hector the life out of witnesses, admonishing them to tell the truth, or else.⁶¹ Only competent witnesses may testify, namely males,⁶² who are unrelated to the defendant or to each other,⁶³ are not insane, blind, deaf or mute,⁶⁴ or do not lend money on interest,⁶⁵ or engage in nefarious activities such as gambling or raising pigeons.⁶⁶

[17] There must be two witnesses to the crime.⁶⁷ The witnesses must warn the defendant that

authoritative.

⁵⁹ See, e.g., Irene M. Rosenberg & Yale L. Rosenberg, Lone Star Liberal Musings on "Eye for Eye" and the Death Penalty, 1998 Utah L. Rev. 505; Irene M. Rosenberg & Yale L. Rosenberg, "Perhaps What Ye Say is Based Only on Conjecture"--Circumstantial Evidence, Then and Now, 31 Hous. L. Rev. 1371 (1995). See also articles cited *infra* in notes 66, 69, and 78.

⁶⁰ BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, Sanhedrin 2a1.

⁶¹ *Id.* at 37a3.

⁶² BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, Shevuos 30a2.

⁶³ BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, Makkos 6a1.

⁶⁴ BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, Bava Basra 128a3-128b1.

⁶⁵ BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, Sanhedrin 24b2.

⁶⁶ *Id.*

the act he is about to commit is a crime.⁶⁸ The defendant must verbally acknowledge the warning,⁶⁹ thus obviating any claims of ignorance of the law, and then proceed to commit the crime in full view of the witnesses. Circumstantial evidence, no matter how reliable, is prohibited.⁷⁰ Causation requirements are very stringent.⁷¹ Confessions are of no evidentiary value, even if they are completely voluntary; no person may incriminate himself.⁷² The case must be tried and proven only through the testimony of the witnesses.⁷³ The judges question them separately and intensively, probing to find inconsistencies in their testimony.⁷⁴ If there are any discrepancies, even those that are minor, their testimony is excluded and the defendant is acquitted.⁷⁵ The judges cannot render a verdict the day the trial ends, they must retire and think about the case, looking for loopholes, until the following day.⁷⁶

⁶⁷ *Deuteronomy* 17:6, 19:15, *Numbers* 35:30.

⁶⁸ BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, Sanhedrin 80b1.

⁶⁹ *Id.* at 81b2.

⁷⁰ *Id.* at 37b1.

⁷¹ See Irene M. Rosenberg, Yale L. Rosenberg & Bentzion S. Turin, *Murder by Gruma: Causation in Homicide Cases Under Jewish Law*, 80 B.U. L. REV. 1017, 1051 (2000).

⁷² BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, Sanhedrin 9b2.

⁷³ *Id.*

⁷⁴ *Id.* at 37a3, 40a1-40a4.

⁷⁵ See Irene M. Rosenberg & Yale L. Rosenberg, *Guilt: Henry Friendly Meets the MaHaRaL of Prague*, 90 MICH. L. REV. 604, 619-25 (1991)

⁷⁶ BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, Sanhedrin 40a3. See also Irene M. Rosenberg & Yale L. Rosenberg, *Guilt: Henry Friendly Meets the MaHaRaL of Prague*, 90 MICH. L. REV. 604, 619-25 (1991)(describing and analyzing the overnight deliberation law).

[18] The difficulty in obtaining a conviction in the Jewish courts⁷⁷ is captured in a famous Talmudic passage discussing whether a court is named the "bloody Sanhedrin" because it convicted one person in seven years or one person in seventy years.⁷⁸ Some argue that these laws were merely aspirational or idealistic and were never actually implemented.⁷⁹ The difficulty is that the Talmud is replete with references to actual cases,⁸⁰ thus indicating that they were of practical import. In any event, the strict rules governing the criminal law clearly represent normative Jewish law.

[19] As noted above, there are disputes as to the content of the Noahide law regarding the establishment of a legal system, but most agree that this commandment is governed by at least some of the super-stringent rules of Jewish law and legal procedure.⁸¹ However, there are exceptions.⁸² A Noahide may be convicted by one judge.⁸³ It is unclear whether circumstantial

⁷⁷ Many of the safeguards applicable in the Jewish courts did not apply to the king's court. *See* THE CODE OF MAIMONIDES, Book 14: The Book of Judges, Kings and Wars 3:8-10, at 213-14 (Abraham M. Herschman trans., 1949). Furthermore, in times of emergency some of the rules were suspended for short periods of time even in the rabbinic courts. *See* BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, at 46a3 (allowing punishment without the usual safeguards because of the exigencies of the times).

⁷⁸ BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, Makkos 7a1.

⁷⁹ *See, e.g.*, GEORGE F. MOORE, 2 JUDAISM 186-87 (1930).

⁸⁰ *See, e.g.*, AARON SCHREIBER, JEWISH LAW AND DECISION-MAKING 278 (1979).

⁸¹ *See generally*, BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, Sanhedrin 56b3 n.33.

⁸² *See* 1 MIDRASH RABBAH, *Genesis*, *supra* note 3 at 279-80 (noting that the Noahide prohibition against bloodshed encompasses murder by an agent, the killing of an embryo, and the procedural rule that confessions are admissible).

⁸³ BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, Sanhedrin 57b1.

evidence is sufficient to establish guilt.⁸⁴ Defendants are presumed to know the Seven Noahide laws, and therefore, a witness need not warn them that they are about to commit a crime.⁸⁵ There need be only one witness to convict, if he is known to be a righteous person. If the witness's character is not known, two witnesses are required.⁸⁶ A defendant may testify against himself, but since his character is then in issue, a second witness is required to support a verdict of guilt.⁸⁷ As in Jewish law, a witness can only be male, however he may be related to the defendant, as can the judge.⁸⁸ These procedures are extrapolated from various biblical sources.⁸⁹

[20] In Genesis 9:5, which is a superfluous verse,⁹⁰ God says to Noah: "However, your blood which belongs to your souls I will demand; of every beast will I demand it; but of man, of every man for that of his brother I will demand the soul of man."⁹¹ The words "your blood which belongs

⁸⁴ Compare CLORFENE & ROGALSKY, *supra* note 4, at 102, with LICHTENSTEIN, *supra* note 15, at 31.

⁸⁵ See BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, Sanhedrin 57b1; CLORFENE & ROGALSKY, *supra* note 4, at 102. See also SEFER HAHINNUCH, *supra* note 4, at 147-49 (arguing that notice is not needed because "it makes no difference in their [Noahide] law, whether a transgression occurred unintentionally or deliberately"). This is contrary to Jewish law. See Irene M. Rosenberg, Yale L. Rosenberg & Bentzion S. Turin, *Murder by Gruma: Causation in Homicide Cases Under Jewish Law*, 80 B.U. L. REV. 1017, 1024-30 (2000) (noting the various grades of homicide under Jewish law).

⁸⁶ CLORFENE & ROGALSKY, *supra* note 4 at 108.

⁸⁷ *Id.* In American law a confession need only be supported by evidence that the crime occurred. *Smith v. United States*, 348 U.S. 147, 153-54 (1954) (noting that generally guilt can be established by the defendant's uncorroborated confession).

⁸⁸ BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, Sanhedrin 57b1.

⁸⁹ *Id.*

⁹⁰ *Id.* at 57b1 n.4.

to your souls, I will demand," teaches that a person may be executed by one judge,⁹² that no prior warning is required is learned from the words "of every beast will I demand it,"⁹³ that only one witness is necessary to convict stems from "I will demand it,"⁹⁴ that a woman may not testify is alluded to by the words "from the hand of man,"⁹⁵ and finally, that the testimony of a relative is permitted comes from "every man's brother."⁹⁶

[21] One can argue that these are only minimum requirements, and therefore Noahides may require stricter rules. On the other hand, one can conclude that since the Talmud specifically mentions the more lenient rules applying to Noahide laws, they are bound to convict people based on these less strict practices.⁹⁷ However, notwithstanding any differences between Noahide and Jewish courts, it is clear that the former must at least adhere to procedures and rules that assure not only the appearance of fairness, but also prevent conviction of the innocent, a problem that we in the United States have yet to solve.⁹⁸ The Noahide law teaches us that following the rules is

⁹¹ *Id.* at 57b1 nn. 4 & 5.

⁹² *Id.* at 57b5 (noting that the singular "I" is used).

⁹³ BABYLONIAN TALMUD, *supra* note 2, Sanhedrin 57b1 n.6 (arguing that a murderer, just as a beast, need not receive a warning).

⁹⁴ *Id.* at 57b1 & note 7.

⁹⁵ *Id.* at 57b1 & note 8.

⁹⁶ *Id.* at 57b1 & note 9.

⁹⁷ RAKOVER, *supra* note 5 at 73.

⁹⁸ See Hugo A. Bedau & Michael L. Radelet, *Miscarriages of Justice in Potentially Capital Cases*, 40 STAN. L. REV. 21, 35-36 (1987)(concluding from a study of 350 defendants sentenced to death, that 40% were innocent); see also *Herrera v. Collins*, 506 U.S. 390, 400 (1993)(ruling that claims of actual innocence unconnected to a constitutional violation is not cognizable in federal habeas

important and indeed doing so may assure that correct decisions are rendered. The rules, however, must reflect a humane substantive law:

[T]he commandment to establish a legal system requires the establishment of a *just* legal system, one that is applied with fairness and before whom all are equal . . . Law that violates fundamental human values does not satisfy modern conceptions of the rule of law and certainly does not meet the Noahide obligation to create a just legal system. Those who follow the dictates of an unjust legal system are held accountable for *obeying* the law and not resisting it. It was on this basis that war criminals were tried and convicted at the international tribunal in Nuremberg after World War II.⁹⁹

[22] "And God said, 'Let us make Man in our image, after our likeness.'"¹⁰⁰ God then commanded man to "[b]e fruitful and multiply."¹⁰¹ But understanding the essence of His creation all too well, He then directed man to establish courts of law to assure justice and harmony. That commandment is a precious gift to all people.

corpus).

⁹⁹ RAKOVER, *supra* note 5 at 7-8 (emphasis in original).

¹⁰⁰ *Genesis* 1:26.

¹⁰¹ *Id.*

“Do the Seven, Go to Heaven?”

An Investigation into the History of the Noachide Laws

ETS Annual Meeting • Washington DC • November, 2006
Tim Hegg • thegg@torahresource.com

In today's rabbinic Judaism, a well entrenched teaching is that Gentiles who observe the seven laws given to Noah are worthy of a place in the world to come. This was explicitly taught by Rambam:

Anyone who accepts upon himself the fulfillment of these seven *mitzvot* and is precise in their observance is considered one of ‘the pious among the gentiles’ (מְחַסְדֵי אֲמוֹת הָעוֹלָם) and will merit a share in the world to come.¹

Among biblical scholars, it is not uncommon to find appeal to the Noachide Laws when the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 is under discussion. At the Jerusalem Council it was decisively determined that Gentile believers need not become proselytes in order to be saved. The Apostles affirmed that salvation was based upon faith in Messiah Yeshua and not upon one's Jewish status (Acts 15:11). But having affirmed salvation by God's grace through faith in Yeshua, the Apostles went on to require Gentile believers to submit to a four-fold *halachah*: to abstain from 1) things sacrificed to idols, 2) from blood, 3) from things strangled, and 4) from fornication.²

In seeking an explanation for why these particular prohibitions were chosen, some scholars have suggested that Noachide Laws, known from the later rabbinic materials, were the recognized *halachah* for “resident aliens” among the 1st Century Jewish communities. As such, it would have been natural for the Jerusalem Council to utilize this established *halachah* for the Gentiles who were, in increasing numbers, filling their synagogues. Rather than requiring the Gentiles to become full proselytes, they accepted them as “resident aliens” (גֵּר תוֹשֵׁב), applying to them the same standards of conduct required by the wider Jewish community.³ The four prohibitions of the Council's decree are thus interpreted as reflecting

¹ Mishnah Torah, *Hilchot Melachim* 8.11, quoted from Rabbi Eliyahu Touger, trans., *Maimonides Mishneh Torah* (Moznaim, 2001), p. 582.

² The textual issues that surround the listing of the four prohibitions given to the gentile believers have been much discussed. The four items are listed initially in the council's discussion at Acts 15:20, then the decree itself is given in 15:29. The decree is also reiterated in 21:25. The Alexandrian texts list four things from which the Gentiles are to abstain, but the Western text omits “what is strangled” and adds a negative form of the Golden Rule in 15:20 and 29. The so-called Caesarean text omits “fornication” from 15:20 (Ⲫ⁴⁵ [which is not extant for 15:29 or 21:25] and the Ethiopic) and from 15:29 (as witnessed by Origen, *Contra Celsum*, viii.29 as well as by the Vulgate manuscripts Vigilius and Gaudentius). Many have suggested that the Caesarean text was emended to exclude “fornication” since it appears out of place when the other three prohibitions are understood as pertaining to food laws. The motivation for the Western text to exclude “things strangled” was to cast the prohibitions as moral injunctions rather than purity issues. The tripartite decree would thus require Gentiles to refrain from idolatry, unchastity, and murder (shedding blood). The addition of the negative Golden Rule emphasized the moral rather than ritual character of the prohibitions. But though some scholars have posited that the Western text was original, this perspective seems overburdened with difficulties, not the least of which is to offer a reasonable explanation for why the Alexandrian text would have added the prohibition of “things strangled.” Though the text critical problems are significant, it still seems to me that given all the extant evidence, the Alexandrian text (reflected in all English translations) offers the best reading. For further study, see Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (United Bible Societies, 1971), 429–34 (and the bibliography there); David Flusser, “Paul's Jewish-Christian Opponents in the *Didache*” in Jonathan A. Draper, ed., *The Didache in Modern Research* (Brill, 1996), 195–6; Charles H. Savelle, “A Reexamination of the Prohibitions in Acts 15,” *BibSac* 161 (Oct-Dec, 2004), 449–68; Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Eerdmans, 1998), 460 n. 410; Markus Bockmeuhl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches* (Baker, 2000), 165–66; James Strange, *The Problem of the Text of Acts* (Cambridge, 1992), 87–105.

³ Thus, in the later rabbinic materials, we meet with the term גֵּר תוֹשֵׁב, “resident alien” as distinct from גֵּר צִדִּיק or גֵּר זָדִיק which

these laws. The following are representative of this position:

Agreeing with Peter's recommendation (Acts 15:7–11), the assembly decided to "loose" (that is, absolve) the Gentiles from the obligation of undergoing circumcision and from the observance of the biblical commandments prescribed in the Torah of Moses. However, in accordance with James' recommendation, the assembled leaders decided to "bind" (that is, "prohibit") in the sense of obligating converts to this new sect of Judaism to observe three basic, universal and overriding commandments that within Judaism later developed into seven commandments known as the "Commandments of Noah" or the "Noachide Commandments." ... If this hypothesis is true, then the universal commandments that the leaders of the early church required of its Gentile converts were the same commandments that the nation as a whole expected righteous Gentiles, or God-fearers, to keep.... The Jerusalem council did not innovate, but rather ruled in accordance with usual Jewish expectations of Gentiles.⁴

In Jewish thought, all of the commandments of Torah are required of Israel, but the Gentiles are responsible only for its moral demands, which are epitomized in the covenant with Noah and his children. This is basically the position endorsed by the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:28–29). Gentiles who have accepted the message of Jesus and want to join the fellowship of the community will be responsible for the moral standard outlined in the Noachic covenant, but they do not have to be circumcised and assume Israel's entire covenantal responsibilities.⁵

These examples take as their starting point the presumption that the Noachide Laws, or some early form of them (perhaps as some formulation of "natural law"⁶) were not only extant in the 1st Century, but that they were so well known and practiced by the Synagogue that they presented the natural choice for the Jerusalem Council in determining the necessary conduct of Gentile believers.⁷

But is this presumption well founded? When were the Noachide Laws formulated by the Sages and considered as law for the Gentiles? And what was the purpose of the rabbis in formulating the Noachide Laws?

usually denote a full proselyte. Accordingly, the later rabbis defined the גֵּר תושב as a gentile who resided within Israel and lived according to the Noachide Laws, whereas the גֵּר צדק or גֵּר צדק was a full convert who had taken upon himself the full yoke of the Torah. Cf. *Mechilta* Kaspā 3 (Lauterbach, 3.178), *Bachodesh* 7 (Lauterbach, 2.255), cp. b. *Yevamot* 48b; b. *Gittin* 57b; b. *Kiddushin* 20a; b. *Bava Metzia* 71a; Mid. Rab. Num 8.9; Rambam, *Hilchot Avodat Kochavim*, 10.6. However, as Novak has shown, the criteria for defining a גֵּר תושב was being debated as late as the Talmudic era (cf. b. *Avodah Zera* 64b), and it may have been the need to define more clearly the term itself that necessitated the formulation of the Noachide Laws (David Novak, *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism* [Edwin Mellen Press, 1983], 14–19).

⁴David Bivin, *New Light on the Difficult Words of Jesus* (En-Gedi Resource Center, 2005), 141–43. Bivin's interpretation is based upon his view that the Western text (which does not contain "things strangled" and has the negative Golden Rule) represents Luke's original. (See footnote 2 above.) Novak has shown that the Noachide Laws neither defined the גֵּר תושב nor the φοβούμενοι/σεβομένοι, the so-called "God-fearers" in the 1st Century CE (David Novak, *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism* [Edwin Mellen Pub., 1983], 21–26).

⁵Brad H. Young, *Paul the Jewish Theologian* (Hendrickson, 1997), 74–5.

⁶This short study lacks space to explore the idea of "natural law" within the rabbinic literature, and especially in Philo. Note the remarks of Markus Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches* (Baker, 2000), 87–143.

⁷Davies, in writing of Paul's theology, also considers the Noachide Laws to have been firmly established by the 1st Century: "Now, that Paul was familiar with the Noachide commandments cannot be doubted" (W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* [SPCK, 1970], 115).

The Noachide Laws in Early Rabbinic Literature

t.Avodah Zarah 8.4

The earliest clear reference to the Noachide Laws is found in the Tosefta. The Tosefta embodies the additional comments and commentary to the Mishnah, traditionally thought to be gathered together by the 4th Century CE. However, there is no clear historical evidence that a body of rabbinic *halachah*, later known as the “Tosefta,” existed as a recognized, authoritative standard in the 4th Century CE, and it is very likely that such a collection of *halachic* formulations and discussions was not a “published”⁸ reality until much later. In fact, according to Millard (quoting Reif),

The transition from oral to written took place between the seventh and ninth centuries, only occasionally earlier...and the ‘current scholarly consensus’ accepts there was a ‘distinct preference not to commit [prayers and blessings] to an ‘authoritative written text’ earlier than that period.’⁹

Thus, even though in sources like the Mishnah, Tosefta, Talmuds, and Midrashim, sages who lived in the early centuries are referenced in accordance with their teachings and *halachic* rulings, this by no means is a valid criterium by which one can confidently place the date of such a ruling, for as Neusner affirms:

Ample evidence in virtually every document of rabbinic literature sustains the proposition that it was quite common for sages to make up sayings and stories and attribute the sayings to, or tell the stories about, other prior authorities.¹⁰

In Tosefta *Avodah Zarah* 8.4 we read:

Concerning seven requirements were the children of Noah admonished: setting up courts of justice, idolatry, blasphemy, fornication, bloodshed, thievery, [and a limb torn from a living animal]. (על שבע מצות) (נצטוו בני נח על הדינין ועל עבודת כוכבים ועל גלוי עריות ועל שפיכות דמים ועל הגזל ועל אבר מן החי)¹¹

But this Toseftan text goes on to show that while seven laws became the accepted tradition, other Sages reasoned that there were more than seven. For instance, in *t.Avodah Zarah* 8.6 R. Chananiah b. Gamliel (135–170 CE) reasons that if a limb torn from a living animal is prohibited, then so is ingesting blood. R. Chidqa (2nd Century Tana) adds the prohibition of castration. R. Simeon (b. Gamliel II [?] 2nd Century Tana) adds witchcraft, and R. Yose (b. Chalafta [?], 2nd Century Tana) includes all the prohibitions

⁸ Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (JTS, 1962), p. 85, defines “publication” in antiquity as having two categories: (1) books which had, or were expected to have, a large circulation, and (2) a situation in which the authentic copy would be deposited in a temple, a library, or the archives.

⁹ Alan Millard, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus* (Sheffield Press, 2000), p. 192, quoting S. C. Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer* (Cambridge Univ Press, 1993), p. 124.

¹⁰ Jacob Neusner, *Rabbinic Literature and the New Testament* (Trinity Press International, 1994), p. 68. Note also the premise of Marc Shapiro, that the Bavli has gone through numerous changes, updates, and edits even in the pre-modern and modern period which utilized the printing press (*Changing the Immutable: How Orthodox Judaism Rewrites its History* [Littman Library: 2015]).

¹¹ There exists a textual variant among the early manuscripts of the Tosefta at this point: the Erfurt MS lists only six laws, leaving off the final one “a limb torn from a living animal.” The Vienna MS, however, has all seven, and since the Erfurt MS begins with “Seven laws...,” and includes the seventh in the ensuing discussion, scholars presume that its omission is the result of scribal error (see Markus Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches* [Baker, 2000], 159 n. 59). The first printed edition of the Tosefta, Alfasi (Venice, 1521-2) is based upon a manuscript which is now lost, and it likewise contains all seven laws (see H. L. Strack and G. Stemmer, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* [Fortress, 1992], 178f).

listed in Deut 8:10–11 (regarding all manner of sorcery). R. Eleazar (b. Hyrcannus [?], 2nd Century Tana) further adds the prohibition of hybridization of beasts and trees. All of these form the basis for the later Talmudic debates, but it should be realized that even the Tosefta, naming supposed statements of early sages, does not present a picture of the Noachide Laws as settled and formulated even in the pre-destruction era.

Moreover, in the ensuing discussion in Tosefta *Sanhedrin*, the question of whether any Gentiles will have a place in the world to come is raised:

R. Eliezer says, “None of the Gentiles has a portion in the world to come,” as it is said, “The wicked shall return to Sheol, all the Gentiles who forget God (Ps 9:17).” “The wicked shall return to Sheol—these are the wicked Israelites.” Said to him R. Joshua, “If it had been written, ‘The wicked shall return to Sheol—all the gentiles’ and then said nothing further, I should have maintained as you do. Now that it is in fact written, ‘All the Gentiles who forget God,’ it indicates that there also are righteous people among the nations of the world, who do have a portion in the world to come.” (t.*Sanhedrin* 13.2)

Traditionally it is thought that R. Eliezar usually spoke for the house of Shammai, while R. Joshua often represented the teachings of Hillel. In the discussion that follows 13.2, the house of Shammai is noted to have delineated three groups: one for eternal life, one for shame and everlasting contempt (Dan 12:2), and one that is intermediate (who are punished for a time in Gehenna and then return after being thoroughly tested). The house of Hillel is represented as emphasizing God’s mercy (Ex 34:6).

Important for our study, however, is the obvious fact that while R. Joshua understood Ps 9:17 to teach that there were “some righteous people among the nations,” nothing by way of a body of laws that would define such righteous Gentiles is given. Apparently R. Joshua (and presumably the house of Hillel) simply held that God’s mercy somehow would encompass more than Israelites.

Mid. Rab. Genesis xvi.6

It is also interesting that in some of the *midrashim*, the Sages teach that six laws were given to Adam, with the seventh only implied (since according to the majority opinion, until the time following the flood, eating of meat from animals was not allowed).¹² Here, the commandments given to Gentiles go back to the creation narrative itself:

AND THE LORD GOD COMMANDED THE MAN, SAYING: OF EVERY TREE OF THE GARDEN YOU MAY FREELY EAT (II, 16). R. Levi said: He gave him six precepts: AND HE COMMANDED (WAY-YEZAW) alludes to idolatry, as you read: Because he willingly walked after *zaw*-i.e. idols (Hos. V, 11). THE LORD alludes to blasphemy, as you read, And he that blasphemes the name of the Lord (Lev. XXIV, 16). GOD alludes to the [authority of] judges, as you read, You shall not revile God-i.e. the judges (Ex. XXII, 27). THE MAN: this alludes to bloodshed, as you read, Whoso sheds man’s blood (Gen. IX, 6). SAYING alludes to incest, as you read: Saying: If a man put away his wife, etc. (Jer. III, 1). OF EVERY TREE OF THE GARDEN YOU SHALL FREELY EAT: here He commanded him against theft. The Rabbis interpreted the whole passage thus: AND THE LORD GOD COMMANDED. He said to him: ‘What am I?

¹²However, in b.*Sanhedrin* 59b, the teaching of R. Yehudah b. Tema (a Tana considered to be present at Yavneh, thus early 2nd Century) is brought forward, that “Adam was dining in the garden of Eden, and the ministering angels were roasting meat for him and filtering wine for him ...,” and the *Gemara* concludes that this was “meat that fell from heaven” and substantiates this with the story of R. Shimmon b. Chalafta (late 2nd Century) who was spared from ravenous lions encountered on the road by meat being given miraculously from heaven. The point of this within the discussion of the Noachide Laws is that the prohibition of a limb torn from a live animal was extant before the time of Noah, since Adam himself was given proper meat (i.e., anything that comes from heaven is clean) and thus could distinguish between that which was given and that which was prohibited.

God, [and I command] that I be treated as a God and not cursed.’ How do we know [that Adam was forbidden] incest? [From the passage], And cleave unto his wife (Gen. II, 24), which implies, but not to his neighbor’s wife, nor to a male, nor to an animal. OF EVERY TREE OF THE GARDEN YOU MAY FREELY EAT. R. Jacob of Kefar Hanan said: When does [an animal] become food, and when is it fit to be eaten? When it is ritually slaughtered. Thus He intimated [the forbidden character of] a limb torn from a living animal. (Mid. Rab. *Genesis* xvi.6)¹³

This midrashic exegesis, derived by *gezerah shavah*, is obviously based upon an already accepted norm of seven laws, for one cannot derive the seven Noachide Laws from the Genesis text itself unless one is predisposed to finding them there. What it does show is the rabbis felt the need to prove that the Noachide Laws were actually in place from the creation of Adam, meaning that they were always envisioned as applicable to all of mankind. They would not have felt such a need unless it was quite evident that the so-called Noachide laws were actually not something known as having a well established tradition in antiquity.

But the Bavli, recognizing that these laws are not explicit (but only derived), considers at least five of them to be self-evident:

Our Rabbis taught: My ordinances shall you do (Lev 18:4), i.e., such commandments which, if they were not written [in Scripture], they should by right have been written and these are they: [the laws concerning] idolatry [star-worship], immorality and bloodshed, robbery and blasphemy.¹⁴

Mid. Rab. *Gen* 34.8 also lists seven laws¹⁵ given to the children of Noah, but in a different order than that found in t.*Sanhedrin* 8.4:

The children of Noah were enjoined concerning seven things (דברים): Idolatry, incest, murder, cursing the Divine Name [blasphemy], civil law (הדין), thievery, and a limb torn from a living animal.

Once again (as in Mid. Rab. *Gen* 16.6), the ensuing rabbinic discussion lists various rabbis who added additional commandments: blood from a living animal, cross-breeding, witchcraft, emasculation, and everything prohibited in Deut 18:10 (i.e., child sacrifice to an idol).

Mid. Rab. Exodus xxx.9

Likewise, in Mid. Rab. *Exodus* xxx.9, six commandments are given to Adam, a seventh is added to Noah, an eighth is given to Abraham, and a ninth to Jacob. The Ten Words (commandments), however, are given only to Israel. This midrash commences with a taunt against four Sages (Rabban Gamliel, R. Joshua, R. Eliezar b. Azariah, and R. Akiva) who were teaching in Rome. Having taught that God does not command Israel to do anything He Himself does not do, a sectarian (מין) raises the following charge:

Your words are only falsehood. Did you not say that God says a thing and fulfills it? Then why does He not observe the Sabbath?

¹³See the similar discussion in *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana* 12.1 (Braude and Kapstein, trans., *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana* [Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975], 226f).

¹⁴b. *Yoma* 67b.

¹⁵The Soncino English translation lists only six, leaving out “thievery.” The critical edition (J. Theodor and Ch. Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba: Critical Edition with Notes and Commentary* 3 vols [Jerusalem, 1965]) based on the British Museum MS does include וְעַל גֵּזֶל, and this should therefore be received as correct.

The Sages defend God's activity of maintaining the universe on the Sabbath on the basis of the rabbinic rule of *Eruv*, in which one is permitted certain activities within his own designated place on the Sabbath, activities that are prohibited elsewhere. And since "the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3) and God declared "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" (Jeremiah 23:24), then the entire universe is "His place" and His activities on the Sabbath are therefore not a violation of the day. A further explanation includes the enumeration of commandments:

I did not give it [the Ten Words] to the heathen, but to Israel, who, as soon as they responded, 'All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and obey' (Exodus 24:7), were given the Torah. Hence, 'He declareth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His ordinances unto Israel.' He hath not dealt so with any nation (Psalm 147:20), only with Jacob, whom He chose from all the heathen people, giving to the latter only part [of the Commandments]. He gave Adam six Commandments, and added one to Noah, Abraham had eight and Jacob nine, but to Israel He gave all.

According to some of the Sages, the additional commandment given to Noah was the prohibition of eating flesh torn from a living animal. To Abraham was added the commandment of circumcision and to Jacob, the prohibition of eating the sinew of the thigh. Since Abraham and Jacob are technically regarded by the Sages as non-Israelites, these nine commandments were a precursor to the full revelation given to Israel at Sinai.¹⁶

b.Chullin 92a

But it should be noted that, even by traditional reckoning, as late as the 3rd Century CE there was still no clear consensus as to the enumeration of laws given to the Gentiles. Ulla b. Ishmael (3rd Century CE Amora) gives us an example. In *b.Chullin 92a* a discussion is recorded over the meaning of Zechariah 11:13 and the significance of the "thirty pieces of silver" described in that text.¹⁷ Rabbi Yochanan (in the name of R. Shimon b. Yehozadak) interprets the thirty pieces of silver to mean that there are thirty righteous Israelites in every generation on whose account the world continues to exist. Rav Judah, however, interprets the thirty to signify thirty righteous men among the nations by whom the nations are maintained. Ulla b. Ishmael interpreted the thirty to be the commandments given to the Gentiles:

Ulla said: These are the thirty commandments which the sons of Noah took upon themselves but they observe three of them, namely, (i) they do not draw up a ketubbah document for males, (ii) they do not weigh flesh of the dead in the market, and (iii) they respect the Torah. (*b.Chullin 92a*)¹⁸

According to Ulla, while the Gentiles were given thirty commandments, in reality they do none of them. The notice that they "observe" three of the thirty is tongue-in-cheek, for the manner in which they "observe" them is in reality proof of their paganism. Thus, though they engage in homosexual relations, they do not sanctify such relationships with a marriage contract (ketubbah). Likewise, even though they eat dead meat (and some would understand this even to include human flesh), they do not sell it openly

¹⁶Other instances in the *midrashim* pertaining to the giving of commandments before Sinai include: Mid. Rab. *Canticles* i.16; Mid. Rab. *Deuteronomy* ii.25; Mid. *Tanchuma*, Yitro, 5.2. In Mid. Rab. *Canticles* i.16, another pre-Sinai commandment is noted, i.e., that of the Levirate marriage given to Judah (Genesis 38:8).

¹⁷See the similar discussion in Mid. Rab. *Genesis* 98.9, in which the 30 commandments given to the Gentiles awaits the messianic age.

¹⁸See additional comments in Aaron Lichtenstein, "Noahide Laws from Genesis to Genizah," *Dor Le Dor* 1985-6, 14.2, 88-93, who finds similar words in the Cairo Geniza documents.

in the markets (they don't weigh it out). The final claim, that "they respect the Torah," (שמכבדין את התורה) is curious because at first it seems entirely out of place.¹⁹ We should presume, however, that this third phrase likewise contains a condemning accusation. One suggestion could be that the Gentiles utilize the names of angels found in the Torah in their pagan incantations.²⁰ It may also be understood as a slap at the *minim*, who claim to respect the Torah, but who pick and choose which laws to obey. So the phrase may mean "they claim to respect the Torah but in reality, they do not."

In fact, a regular refrain in the rabbinic literature is that the Gentile nations even refused to accept the few laws given to them, and as a result, they were exempt from them, meaning they lose any reward even if they do obey them.

b.Bava Qama 38a

This is confirmed in the talmudic discussion of the Noachide Laws found in *b.Bava Qama 38a*. Here, *m.Bava Qama* 4.3 is the subject, which states: "An ox belonging to an Israelite which gored an ox belonging to a Gentile, [the Israelite owner] is exempt." The Sages seek to know why this is the case, since the biblical text states "If an ox of a man gores the ox of his neighbor..." (Ex 21:35), and thus the question is raised why this does not apply to a Gentile neighbor. The answer that is forthcoming speaks of the seven laws given to the Gentiles:

R. Abbahu (3rd Century Amora) thereupon said: The Scripture says, "He stood and measured the earth; he beheld and drove asunder the nations," (Hab 3:6) [which may be taken to imply that] God beheld the seven commandments which were accepted by all the descendants of Noah, but since they did not observe them, He rose up and declared them to be outside the protection of the civil law of Israel [with reference to damage done to cattle by cattle].

Thus, according to Abbahu, since the nations refused to abide by the seven laws, they do not receive civil protection provided by the Torah to Israelites. Moreover, because of their refusal to accept the seven laws God declared them exempt from them, meaning no reward would be forthcoming even if they did obey them.

R. Joseph said: 'He stood and measured the earth; he beheld' etc. What did He behold? He beheld the seven commandments which had been accepted by all the descendants of Noah, and since they rejected them He rose up and granted them exemption. Does this mean that they benefited [by breaking the law]? And if so, will it not be a case of a sinner profiting [by the transgression he committed]? Mar the son of Rabana (or Rabina) thereupon said: 'It only means that even were they to keep the seven commandments [which had first been accepted but subsequently rejected by them] they would receive no reward.'

But this in turn gives rise to the discussion of a Gentile who voluntarily takes up the study of Torah:

R. Meir (2nd Century Tana) would say, "How on the basis of Scripture do we know that, even if it is a gentile, if he goes and takes up the study of the Torah as his occupation, he is equivalent to the high priest?"

¹⁹Note how the same phrase is used in *b.Shabbat* 119a: "Rabbi asked R. Ishmael son of R. Jose, The wealthy in Palestine, whereby do they merit [wealth]? — Because they give tithes, he replied, as it is written, 'Asser te'asser [which means], give tithes ['asser] so that you may become wealthy [tith'asser] (cf. Deut 14:22). Those in Babylon, wherewith do they merit [it]? — Because they honor the Torah, replied he."

²⁰See Clinton E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness* (IVP, 1992), pp. 71–4. This interpretation would make good sense since the discussion which concludes in *b.Chullin* 92a began (in *b.Chullin* 91a) with the text of Gen 38 and Jacob's wrestling with the Angel.

Scripture states, “You shall therefore keep my statutes and my ordinances, which, if a human being (אָדָם) does them, one shall gain life through them” (Lev 18:5). What is written is not “priests” or “Levites” or “Israelites,” but rather, a “human being.” So you have learned the fact that, even if it is a gentile, if he goes and takes up the study of the Torah as his occupation, he is equivalent to the high priest.”²¹

The implication is that if there remains a reward for Gentiles, it is only in their voluntary submission to the whole Torah. In this talmudic discussion, the conclusion is clear: obedience to the Noachide Laws brings no reward.

Mekilta on Exodus

Mekilta (midrash on Exodus) agrees. The Gentiles’ refusal to accept the seven laws highlights their basic inability to have received the Torah even if it had been offered to them:

If the sons of Noah could not endure the seven commandments enjoined upon them, how much less could they have endured all the commandments of the Torah!²²

This argument is one of several given as to why the nations will not be able to plead innocence at the day of judgment, arguing that the Torah had not been given to them. For if they refused to accept and obey the seven laws that were assigned to them, surely they would have refused the 613 laws of the Torah!²³

Sifre on Deuteronomy

This same argument is found as well in *Sifre* on Deuteronomy, with the added notice that the seven laws were taken from the nations and given to Israel:

And it is not enough for them [the nations] that they did not listen, but even the seven religious duties that the children of Noah indeed accepted upon themselves they could not uphold before breaking them. When the Holy One, blessed is He, saw that that is how things were, he gave them to Israel. The matter may be compared to the case of a person who sent his ass and dog to the threshing floor and loaded up a *letekh* of grain on his ass and three *seahs* of grain on his dog. The ass went along, while the dog panted. He took a seah of grain off the dog and put it on the ass, so with the second, so with the third. Thus was Israel: they accepted the Torah, complete with all its secondary amplifications and minor details, even the seven religious duties that the children of Noah could not uphold without breaking them did the Israelites come along and accept.²⁴

²¹The same material is found in b.*Sanhedrin* 59a where the previous statement by R. Johanan bar Nappaha (2nd Century Amora), “a gentile who studies the Torah is deserving of death,” contradicts the statement of Meir (a Tana). The Gemara resolves the conflict by stating that the gentile studies only the Noachide Laws of the Torah. However, the obvious meaning of the earlier Tana is that the study of Torah “as his occupation” (עוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה) would indicate that the gentile has accepted Torah as a general lifestyle. Ultimately, one would think that in the mind of rabbis, this would only be the case for a “God-fearer” who was on his way to becoming a proselyte. On the idea that no legal status was accorded to the גֵּר תּוֹשֵׁב or the φοβούμενοι/σεβόμενοι, but these were viewed as “pre-proselytes,” see David Novak, *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism* (Edwin Mellen Press, 1983), 20–28.

²²*Mekilta*, Bachodesh, 5, quoted from Jacob Z. Lauterbach, *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, 3 vols (JPS, 1933), 2.236.

²³This is also the point of Mid. Rab. *Genesis* 24.5: “R. Judah said: It was fitting that the Torah should have been given through Adam. Whence does this follow?—“This is the book of the generations of Adam” (Gen 5:1). The Holy One, blessed be He, said: ‘He is the creation of My hands, and am I not to give it to him!’ Subsequently, however, He said: ‘I gave him six commandments, and he did not remain loyal to them; how then shall I give him six hundred and thirteen precepts...?’

²⁴Pisqa 343, see Jacob Neusner, *Sifre to Deuteronomy*, 2 vols. (1987), 2.407. Note also *Yalqut Shimoni*, Beshalach, 257.67, “Ten commandments were commanded to Israel at Marah, including the seven the sons of Heth accepted.”

This accords with the lengthy discussion in b.*Sanhedrin* 59a on whether the Noachide Laws were repeated at Sinai (i.e., given to Israel). The *Gemara* concludes “there is nothing that is permitted to a Jew, but forbidden to a non-Jew,” which means “when the Jews received the Torah at Sinai, they did not shed any of their prior obligations. Rather they assumed further obligations.”²⁵

Indeed, *Sifre* goes on to teach that when the nations realize the glory of Israel’s God, they say “Let us come with you [Israel].”

What do the Israelites answer them? “You have no share in him: ‘I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine, who feeds among the lilies’” (Song of Songs 6:3).²⁶

Thus, on the matter of the seven laws given to the nations, *Sifre* concludes: 1) the nations rejected the seven laws even as they rejected the Torah when offered to them; 2) the seven laws were thus given to Israel along with the whole Torah; 3) the nations therefore have no share in Israel’s God.

b.Sanhedrin 56a–59b

It will be helpful to look more closely at b.*Sanhedrin* 56a–59b where the issue of the Noachide Laws is discussed, for it demonstrates that a precise formulation was still being debated as late as the Talmudic era. The subject matter of the *Gemara* is m.*Sanhedrin* 7.5 in which the penalty for blaspheming the Name is under discussion. During the trial of one accused of blaspheming the Name, witnesses who heard the blasphemy use a circumlocution instead of actually uttering the Name as they testify. After the trial, however, the judges dismiss the people, and then the first witness is asked to say literally what he heard. Here, he pronounces the divine Name and the judges rend their garments and do not later repair them. Then they ask the second and third witnesses for their testimony. They, however, do not utter the divine Name but simply respond that each heard the same words as spoken by the first witness.

The discussion eventually turns to the question of whether a Gentile incurs capital punishment for blasphemy, based upon the reading of Leviticus 24:15, “If anyone (אִישׁ אֶשׁ) curses his God, then he will bear his sin.” A Baraita is brought forward to show that “anyone” includes pagans as well as Jews. But R. Issac the smith (3rd Century Amora) responds that the law prohibiting pagans to blaspheme the Name is stated in Gen 2:16 (as noted in Mid. Rab. *Gen* xvi.6 given above), and thus the present text teaches that blasphemy occurs even where one utilizes a substitute for the Name. This accords with the *halachah* of R. Meir (135–170 CE). But the Sages ruled that blasphemy while actually using the Name was punishable by death, but when using circumlocutions did not incur capital punishment.²⁷

To substantiate the argument of R. Issac, that the Gentile prohibition against blasphemy came before Sinai, a Baraita is brought forward that enumerates the Noachide Laws:

Our Rabbis taught: seven precepts were the sons of Noah commanded: social laws (דינין), to refrain from blasphemy, idolatry; adultery; bloodshed; robbery; and eating flesh cut from a living animal.

Then follows the teaching of some of the Sages (as noted above in t.*Avodah Zarah* 8.4f) that more than seven laws were given to Gentiles:

²⁵Steinsaltz, *The Talmud* [vol. 18 - Sanhedrin part iv], (Random House, 1998), p. 132.

²⁶Neusner, *Sifre to Deuteronomy*, Op. cit., 2.411.

²⁷Rambam disagrees, and holds that execution is required both for blaspheming the Name when it is actually pronounced and when circumlocutions are used, *Mishneh Torah: Hilchot Avodat Kochavim v’Chukkoteihem*, 2.8 (in the Moanaim edition, p. 46).

R. Hanania b. Gamaliel (mid 2nd Century) said: Also not to partake of the blood drawn from a living animal. R. Hidka added emasculation. R. Simeon added sorcery. R. Jose said: The heathens were prohibited everything that is mentioned in the section on sorcery. viz., “There shall not be found among you any one, that makes his son or daughter to pass through the fire, or that uses divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them [i.e., the heathens in Canaan] out from before you” (Deut 18:10f). Now, [the Almighty] does not punish without first prohibiting. R. Eleazar added the forbidden mixture [in plants and animals]: now, they are permitted to wear garments of mixed fabrics [of wool and linen] and sow diverse seeds together; they are forbidden only to hybridize heterogeneous animals and graft trees of different kinds.

Following this is a lengthy discussion showing how the various Sages who enumerated more than seven laws for the nations did so by various interpretations of Gen 2:16 or other Torah texts.

But then an apparent discrepancy is noted in a stated Baraita:

Were then the children of Noah admonished to observe “social laws” [i.e., set up courts]? Surely it has been taught: The Israelites were given ten precepts at Marah, seven of which had already been accepted by the children of Noah, to which were added at Marah social laws, the Sabbath, and honoring one's parents.

The implication is that “social laws” (i.e., establishing courts) were not included in the Noachide Laws, but were given specifically to Israel at Marah. The on-going Talmudic discussion then strives to reconcile this apparent contradiction between the Sages. It is finally stated that the Tana from the school of Menashe who added the laws did so because “social laws” and blasphemy were not included in the original list he had received. His list included: idolatry, incest/adultery, bloodshed, robbery, eating a limb from a living animal, castrating a human being or an animal, and prohibited mixtures.

But immediately the teaching of R. Yehudah is brought forward:

The first man was only commanded about *the prohibition against* idol worship (b.*Sanhedrin* 56b).

Then follows the notice that R. Yehudah b. Betera (2nd Century Tana) added a second prohibition (blasphemy) in the laws given to the first man (Adam). To this some Sages added a third law, that the first man was commanded to establish a system of laws (i.e., establish courts). The point of all this for our current discussion, however, is simply to show that even in the talmudic era, what constituted the Noachide Laws was still being debated. No universal formulation had yet been received as clearly established rabbinic dictum.

The Noachide Laws in other Early Literature²⁸

Jubilees

A passage from Jubilees²⁹ is often cited in discussions of the Noachide Laws. In Jubilees 7:20 we

²⁸It is not uncommon in studies relating to the Noachide Laws to find authors conceptually connecting so-called “natural law” with the Noachide Laws. While one surely can see a connection, a study of the manner in which natural law may be foundational to or otherwise connected with the Noachide Laws is beyond the scope of this paper. Thus, for instance, with regard to Philo and Josephus, note the conclusion of Bockmuehl (*Jewish Law in Gentile Churches*, p. 157): “While their works are highly pertinent to the questions of universal ethics, they do not with equal frequency address the question of the halakhah for Gentiles, which lies at the heart of the Noachide Commandments.” (italics his)

²⁹The date of Jubilees has been more clearly known through its appearance in the Dead Sea Scrolls material. James

read:

And in the twenty-eighth jubilee Noah began to enjoin upon his sons' sons the ordinances and commandments, and all the judgments that he knew, and he exhorted his sons to observe righteousness, and to cover the shame of their flesh, and to bless their Creator, and honor father and mother, and love their neighbor, and guard their souls from fornication and uncleanness and all injustice.

It is suggested that the ordinances and commandments listed here are an early summation of the Noachide Laws. If the phrase "observe righteousness" is taken as a general heading, then the initial commands include: 1) to not go about naked, 2) to acknowledge (bless) their Creator, 3) to honor one's parents, 4) to love one's neighbor, 5) to abstain from fornication, 6) to abstain from uncleanness, and 7) to establish justice. The following context alludes to four more: 8) not to "sin against animals," 9) to abstain from eating blood, 10) to abstain from bloodshed, and 11) to offer the first fruits.

However, we should not be so quick to assign these ordinances and commandments to the Gentiles just because they are spoken by Noah. From the author's perspective, Noah is considered righteous "for his heart was righteous in all his ways, according as it was commanded regarding him, and he had not departed from aught that was ordained for him" (5:19). In other words, in the message of Jubilees, Noah was obedient to God's statutes, and thus stands as a model for Israel to follow. Far from being viewed as part of the nations, the author of Jubilees considered Noah to be one of God's elect, one who "found favor in His eyes," and thus was in line with the patriarchs of Israel.

In Jubilees 6, Noah is grouped together with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For Noah and his sons celebrated Shavuot and the Jubilee year, but these were forgotten after Noah's death until the time of the patriarchs, who restored them. Then they were forgotten in Egypt, but celebrated again at Mt. Sinai. In this way, Jubilees clearly links Noah with the correct calendar (6:32ff) and the Torah of Israel.

And this whole festival was celebrated in heaven from the day of creation till the days of Noah— twenty-six jubilees and five weeks of years: and Noah and his sons observed it for seven jubilees and one week of years, till the day of Noah's death, and from the day of Noah's death his sons did away with (it) until the days of Abraham, and they eat blood. But Abraham observed it, and Isaac and Jacob and his children observed it up to your days, and in your days the children of Israel forgot it until you celebrated it anew on this mountain. And you [Moses], command the children of Israel to observe this festival in all their generations for a commandment unto them: one day in the year in this month they shall celebrate the festival. For it is the feast of weeks and the feast of first fruits: this feast is twofold and of a double nature: according to what is written and engraven concerning it, celebrate it. (Jub 6:18–21)

Noah functions in Jubilees, then, not as the representative of humankind in general, but as one of the elect of God who stands in the line of the patriarchs. He has the same Torah (with its correct calendar and festivals) that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob followed, and which was given to Moses and Israel at Sinai.³⁰ As Wintermute asserts, "Obedience to the Law is the central message of Jubilees."³¹ Novak, rely-

VanderKam ("Jubilees" in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. [Doubleday, 1999], 3.1030–32) dates it between 170–140 BCE. Wintermute (Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. [Doubleday, 1985], 2.44) puts the date between 161–140 BCE. Jubilees is a haggadic expansion of portions of Genesis and the initial chapters of Exodus, purporting to contain information revealed by an angel to Moses on Sinai (Ex 24:18).

³⁰In similar fashion, Abraham is the first to celebrate Sukkot (Jub 16:21) and he does so in full compliance with the Torah that would be given at Sinai. Thus, as far as Jubilees is concerned, the lives of Noah and Abraham prove that the Torah existed, was known, and obeyed long before it was given to Moses at Sinai.

³¹O. Wintermute, "Jubilees," *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2.40. See also Joseph Hellerman, "Purity and Nationalism in Second Temple Literature: 1–2 Maccabees and Jubilees," *JETS* 46/3 (Sept, 2003), 412–21, who demonstrates the general nationalistic perspective of Jubilees.

ing upon the work of Chanoch Albeck agrees:

...the fundamental project of this book [Jubilees] was to show that the entire Torah was known by the patriarchs, and even earlier by Noah and his sons, as oral tradition before its public revelation at Mount Sinai.³²

Thus, the commandments and ordinances observed and taught by Noah in Jubilees are not offered as universal law for all, but as the divine revelation given to God's chosen people. Indeed, as far as the author of Jubilees is concerned, only the "children of the covenant" are blessed. All others are destined for destruction:

And every one that is born, the flesh of whose foreskin is not circumcised on the eighth day, belongs not to the children of the covenant which the Lord made with Abraham, but to the children of destruction; nor is there, moreover, any sign on him that he is the Lord's, but (he is destined) to be destroyed and slain from the earth, and to be rooted out of the earth, for he has broken the covenant of the Lord our God. (Jub 15:26)

This being the case, there is no warrant to find an early allusion to the "Noachide Laws" as a minimum standard for Gentile righteousness in Jubilees 7.³³ On the contrary, Jubilees presents Noah as though he were one of the patriarchs of Israel.³⁴

Sibylline Oracles

Some have suggested that Book 3 of the Sibylline Oracles (which is generally considered to be the product of Alexandrian Judaism³⁵) gives evidence of an early formulation of laws for Gentiles which are less than the full Torah given to Israel. Donaldson writes:

On the one hand, then, the opinion of the Sibyl is that Gentiles need to abandon their sinful ways and adhere to the law of God. On the other, the essence of the law is to be found in the avoidance of idolatry, worship of the God of Israel as the one true God, and adherence to a basic code of morality. While an element of particularism remains in that Gentiles were expected to worship God at the temple in Jerusalem, this by no means implied full proselytism in the Second Temple period.... In formal terms, then, the Sibyl wants Gentiles to become converts to the law, that is, proselytes (though the word itself does not appear); but in substance such conversion seems to fall short of the strict requirements of full proselytism.³⁶

It certainly is true that the Sibylline Oracles envision an eschatological renewal in which the wicked are destroyed and the righteous are exalted.

And God will speak, with a great voice, to the entire ignorant empty-minded people, and judgment will come upon them from the great God, and all will perish at the hand of the Immortal. (3.669–70)

³²David Novak, *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism* (Edwin Mellen Press, 1983), 12.

³³Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles* (Fortress, 1997), p. 68, thinks that even though the function of Jubilees 7:20f is to provide grounds for God's judgment of the Gentiles, it still reflects the Noachide Laws, and that "God has imposed a minimal standard of righteousness on the whole of mankind." But in doing so he has failed to appreciate the larger context and how it determines the role of Noah in Jubilees.

³⁴In Mid. Rab. *Genesis* 34.9, according to R. Eliezer b. Jacob, Noah and his family offered burnt offerings on the great altar in Jerusalem and will offer peace offerings in the future. The point is that they were given the Torah before it was revealed to Moses on Sinai.

³⁵See the comments of J. J. Collins, "Sibylline Oracles" in Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Doubleday, 1983), 1.355f.

³⁶Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 62.

But the sons of the great God will all live peacefully around the Temple, rejoicing in these things which the Creator, just judge and sole ruler, will give. (3.702–04)

But there is no evidence to support the notion that the Jewish author who produced this section of the Sibylline Oracles recognized a less stringent body of laws for Gentiles. The two hymns which extol the Torah, and describe it in general terms (cf. 3.218–64, 573–600), do so in connection with the Jewish people, not as something acknowledged by or incumbent upon the nations. And the fact that in these sections the “author slides over those aspects of Torah which separate Israel from the nations (circumcision, dietary regulations, and so on)”³⁷ in no way suggests that there were two different sets of laws envisioned: one for the Jew and another for the Gentile. The Sages were often in the habit of summarizing the Torah by its quintessential characteristics. Thus, the 613 commandments are summed up by eleven in Ps 15, by six in Is 33:15, by three in Mic 6:8, by two in Is 56:1, and as one in Amos 5:4 or Hab 2:4.³⁸ Even in the Tanach, the Torah is described in general, ethical and wisdom terms without mentioning particular laws (e.g., Ps 19:7f). Indeed, the Torah may be summed up as loving God (the *Shema*, Deut 6:4f) and loving one’s neighbor (Lev 19:18).³⁹

We may conclude, then, that the Sibylline Oracles are not an early witness of the later Noachide Laws, and to suggest that they are is rather anachronistic. Rather, Book Three of the Sibylline Oracles speaks of Israel’s Torah to which the nations will submit in the eschaton, reiterating the general picture presented by the Prophets.⁴⁰

What was the Rabbinic Purpose for the Noachide Laws?

As noted above, in orthodox Judaism of our day, the standard teaching is that a gentile who abides by the Noachide Laws may be considered righteous and thus worthy of a place in the world to come. This was not, however, the perspective of the ancient Sages. Almost in every case where the Noachide Laws are referenced in the early rabbinic materials, they are brought forward to show how a gentile may rightly be judged in a court of law (whether earthly or heavenly), or in *halachic* discussions pertaining to the daily associations of Jews with Gentiles.

This is the case in t.*Avodah Zarah* which deals with the *halachot* of association between Jews and Gentiles (for Gentiles are presumed to be idolators), and particularly with how a Jew may benefit from selling or buying from a gentile, as well as how a court would decide guilt and penalty for various infractions of the law. This is the purpose for stating the Noachide Laws in 8.4: they function as a proper basis for how an Israelite court would charge Gentiles for various crimes. For instance, in the matter of fornication:

On account of any form of prohibited sexual relationship on account of which an Israelite court inflicts the death-penalty, the children of Noah are subject to warning,” the words of R. Meir (2nd Century Tana). And the Sages say, “There are many prohibited relationships, on account of which an Israelite court does not inflict the death-penalty and the children of Noah are [not] warned. In regard to these forbidden relationships the nations are judged in accord with the laws governing the nations. (t.*Avodah Zarah* 8.4)

Similar *halachic* decisions are stated in regard to bloodshed, thievery, and liability for using a limb cut from a living animal. Thus, the reason for stating the Noachide Laws in this Toseftan text is not to offer

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸b.*Makkot* 23b–24a.

³⁹Cf. Lk 10:25–28; Rom 13:9; *Sifra* 89b; Mid. Rab. *Gen* 24.7.

⁴⁰Cf. Is 11:9ff; 25:3; 42:1–6; 49:6; 60:3; Jer 3:17; Mic 4:2; Zech 2:11; 8:22–23; 14:16; Dan 7:14.

the Gentiles a means of obtaining righteousness but as the legal basis for exacting penalties for infractions of the law, and to determine the boundaries of association between Jews and Gentiles.

Practically speaking, however, such jurisdiction could have only been carried out with regard to Gentiles who lived among the Jewish community and willingly submitted to the rule of Jewish courts (these Gentiles the rabbis refer to as גֵּר תוֹשָׁב or “resident aliens”). It seems far-fetched to think that the dominant Roman and Greek population living in Palestine would have bothered themselves much about Jewish regulations. In point of fact, the rabbinic discussion surrounding the Noachide Laws has far more to do with *halachah* relating to Jews than to Gentiles, as Novak points out:

The concept of the seven Noahide laws appears to be theological-juridical theory rather than a functioning body of laws administered by Jews for gentiles actually living under their suzerainty at any time in history.⁴¹

The Noachide Laws formed a casuistic theory for determining how Jews could rightfully engage in commerce and everyday life with Gentiles who were presumed to be idolaters, and also with Gentiles who were “resident aliens,” who, though not having become full proselytes, were presumed to have, for the most part, forsaken idolatry.

This is demonstrated in b.*Avodah Zarah* 64a–b:

‘Who is a *ger toshav*? Any [Gentile] who takes upon himself in the presence of three *haberim* not to worship idols. Such is the statement of R. Meir; but the Sages declare: Any [Gentile] who takes upon himself the seven precepts which the sons of Noah undertook; and still others maintain: These do not come within the category of a *ger toshav*; but who is a *ger toshav*? A proselyte who eats of animals not ritually slaughtered, i.e., he took upon himself to observe all the precepts mentioned in the Torah apart from the prohibition of [eating the flesh of] animals not ritually slaughtered. We may leave such a man alone with wine, but we may not deposit wine in his charge even in a city where the majority of residents are Israelites. We may, however, leave him alone with wine even in a city where the majority of residents are heathens; and his oil is like his wine.’ How can it enter your mind to say that his oil is like his wine; can oil become *neseq* [a drink-offering]! [The wording must be amended to] his wine is like his oil, but in every other respect he is like a heathen.

Thus, in this case, the gentile who has accepted the Noachide Laws is trusted not to offer his wine to an idol, nor to use oil in idolatrous worship, and thus an Israelite may use wine and oil obtained from a גֵּר תוֹשָׁב or that remains in his presence.⁴² But in all other aspects he is treated as an idolater. The point for our study is that the Noachide Laws in this discussion function to define the limits of association between an Israelite and a gentile. There is no hint that the seven laws were considered as a means of gaining a righteous status for Gentiles.

This is not to suggest that the early Sages considered every gentile non-proselyte as a practicing idolater. But legally, one could not be sure unless the gentile underwent full conversion and lived in accordance with the full Torah. And even then, there remained some suspicion, since it was not uncommon that proselytes would revert to their former beliefs and practices.⁴³ Thus R. Chiyya (early 3rd Century) is

⁴¹David Novak, *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism* (Edwin Mellen Pub, 1983), 34.

⁴²In the Mishnah and Tosefta, the Sages seem to take the view that “gentiles would make a libation to their gods with any wine which was available to them.” (Gary G. Porton, *Goyim: Gentiles and Israelites in Mishnah-Tosefta* [Scholars Press, 1988], 251.

⁴³Cf. b. *Yevamot* 109b, “‘those who receive proselytes’, [bring evil upon themselves, is deduced] in accordance with [a statement of] R. Helbo. For R. Helbo (220–250 CE) stated: Proselytes are hurtful to Israel as a sore on the skin.” Note Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.123, “for as to the Grecians, we are rather remote from them in place than different from them in

quoted as saying: “Do not have any faith in a proselyte until twenty-four generations have passed because the inherent evil is still within him.”⁴⁴ This suspicion was even more pronounced in regard to resident aliens, and it appears that in some cases, the Noachide Laws were developed to offer the Jewish community a legal basis for dealing with Gentiles who had regular social interaction with Jews.

Furthermore, in some of the rabbinic texts, the fact that God gave the full Torah to Israel and only a few laws to the nations is emphasized to show the favored covenant status of Israel. Thus, according to Mid. Rab. *Exodus* 30.9, the entire Ten Words were only given to Israel, and Psalm 147:20 is provided as proof. Even more to this point are the rabbinic texts that point out the nations’ refusal to obey even the few laws that were given to them.⁴⁵ Such disdain for the Creator’s commandments resulted in their being taken from the nations and given to Israel,⁴⁶ which in turn became the basis for the *kal v’chomer* argument as to why the nations could have never accepted the full Torah even when offered it. For if they refused a basic few commandments, surely they would be unable and unwilling to accept the whole Torah.⁴⁷

Still, the ambivalence of the Sages regarding the status of Gentiles is well noted. On the one hand, some taught that only judgment awaits the nations, and no possibility existed for Gentiles to have a share in the world to come,⁴⁸ which is reserved only for Israelites.⁴⁹ On the other hand, some taught that the possibility of righteous Gentiles clearly existed. As noted above, Rav Judah interpreted the 30 pieces of silver mentioned in Zechariah’s prophecy (Zech 11:12) as alluding to “thirty righteous men among the nations.”⁵⁰ We may note a similar motif in Mid. Rab. *Gen* 13.6. Here, the presence of rain is considered by the Sages as proof of God’s favor and blessing. This is why the prayer for rain is included in the second benediction of the *Shemonei Esrei* (which extols the power of God to raise the dead), for rain is connected with resurrection. “R. Hiyya b. Ba said: It [rain] is greater than resurrection, for whereas resurrection is for man alone, this is for man and beast; again, resurrection is for Israel, whereas this is for Israel and the nations.” Yet in the original saying from b.*Ta’anit* 7a, R. Joseph equates the sending of rain with the resurrection,⁵¹ with the implication that if God sends rain both upon Israel and the nations, one could conclude that some from the nations (i.e., those who are righteous) will be resurrected along with Israel. This accords with the teaching of R. Joshua in the debate with R. Eliezer,⁵² who interpreted Ps 9:17 to teach that there were some Gentiles who were righteous, and who therefore will have a portion in the world to come.

Yet most important for the current study is the fact that nowhere in the early rabbinic literature is there contained the teaching that Gentiles who live in accordance with the Noachide Laws (however

our institutions, insomuch that we have no enmity with them, nor any jealousy of them. On the contrary, it has so happened, that many of them have come over to our laws, and some of them have continued in their observation, although others of them had not courage enough to persevere, and so departed from them again....”

⁴⁴Mid. Rab. *Ruth* Zuta on 1:12.

⁴⁵b.*Chullin* 92a; b.*Bava Qama* 38a.

⁴⁶*Sifre* §343; *Yalqut Shimoni*, Beshalach, 527.67.

⁴⁷*Mekilta*, Bachodesh 5; Mid. Rab. *Genesis* 24.5.

⁴⁸Jubilees 15:26; *Mekilta* Nezikin 10 (Lauterbach, 3.87f); b.*Bava Batra* 10b; Gamliel in t.*Sanhedrin* 13.1; Mid. Rab. *Genesis* 48.8

⁴⁹m.*Sanhedrin* 10.1;

⁵⁰b.*Chullin* 92a.

⁵¹Cp. b.*Ta’anit* 7a where the original saying is attributed to R. Abbahu, and where R. Joseph differs with R. Abbahu, and maintains that “rain is equal to the revival of the dead,” concluding that since rain falls upon Israel and the nations, this must mean that some from the nations will also participate in the resurrection. Moreover, this rabbinic discussion linking rain and resurrection may offer a parallel to Yeshua’s words (Matt 5:45): “... for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”

⁵²t.*Sanhedrin* 13.2.

they may be formulated) are reckoned as righteous, given a legal status within the community of Israel, and therefore have a place in the world to come. Such an extrapolation is found only in the later rabbinic teachings (as that of Rambam). To the extent that the Sages developed the Noachide Laws, they did so in order to develop *halachah* for social interaction between Jews and Gentiles as well as to build a theological foundation for God's just condemnation of the nations. What we do not find in the early rabbinic materials is that the Noachide Laws were formulated to provide a way for Gentiles to have a legal, recognized status within the Jewish community.

When were the Noachide Laws Developed?

As we have seen, the earliest list of the Noachide Laws is found in the Tosefta (which is traditionally dated to have arrived at its final form sometime in the 4th Century CE). Neusner notes that the Tosefta is comprised of three types of supplements to the Mishnah: (1) citations of the Mishnah with glosses and further discussion, (2) complements to the Mishnah without directly citing the corresponding passage, and (3) supplements to the Mishnah with relevant information, but in theme and meaning autonomous of it.⁵³ The section that contains the listing of the Noachide Laws in the Tosefta (*Avodah Zarah* 8.4–8) is of this third category, for the Mishnah contains no reference to such a body of laws given to Noah. The difficulty in dating this third category of Toseftan citations is that they may be contemporaneous with the Mishnah, or subsequent to it.⁵⁴ However, it is clear that the Tosefta's discussion of the Noachide Laws follows from the theme of the final mishnah of m.*Avoda Zera* (5.12) which deals with cooking utensils purchased from a gentile and the manner in which they must be cleansed before they can be used. It is this commercial interchange between Jews and Gentiles that requires the Tosefta's discussion of the Noachide Laws. It would seem nearly certain, then, that the formulation of the Noachide Laws in the Tosefta occurred in the era subsequent to the oral compilation of the Mishnah, namely, sometime well after the 3rd Century.⁵⁵

Novak's own assessment comes to this same conclusion. He notes that the manner in which the Noachide Laws are discussed in the primary rabbinic sources indicates that they presuppose "a strict demarcation between Jews and non-Jews, with no "potential" Jews any longer in the middle."⁵⁶ He therefore dates them as the product of post-destruction rabbinic Judaism:

After our careful examination of the historical theories concerning the origins of the Noahide laws, and the evidence of the primary sources, there is no convincing evidence that this doctrine was conceived earlier than the Tannaitic period in which it was enunciated, specifically after the destruction of the Temple and the Christian schism.⁵⁷

⁵³Jacob Neusner, *The Tosefta*, 2 vols. (Hendrickson, 2002), 1.xiii.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 1.xv.

⁵⁵The often repeated tradition that R. Yehudah HaNasi was the first to "write" a copy of the Mishnah has not historical data to support it. The first mention of R. Yehudah HaNasi's connection with the Mishnah is to be found in the much later Bavli, b.*BavaMetzia* 86a, in the statement: "Rabbi and R. Nathan conclude the Mishnah, R. Ashi and Rabina conclude teaching, and a sign thereof is the verse, 'Until I went to the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end' (Ps 72:17)." The first time R. Yehudah HaNasi is stated to have written a copy of the Mishnah is in the Epistle of Shirira Gaon, dated to 19th Century CE.

⁵⁶David Novak, *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism* (Edwin Mellen Pub., 1983), 29.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 28-29.

Novak goes on to suggest that

a number of minimal, indispensable laws for the Gentiles might very well have arisen at the same time that a number of minimal, indispensable laws for Jews was conceived.⁵⁸

In b.*Sanhedrin* 74a the notice is given of the rabbinic decision to require the observance of three *mitzvot* even at pain of death:

R. Johanan said in the name of R. Simeon b. Yehozadak: By a majority vote, it was resolved in the upper chambers of the house of Nithza in Lydda that in every [other] law of the Torah, if a man is commanded: 'Transgress and suffer not death' he may transgress and not suffer death, excepting idolatry, incest, [which includes adultery] and murder.

R. Simeon b. Yehozadak was a 2nd Century Amora,⁵⁹ and the historical setting of this ruling was the persecution under Hadrian (ca. 135 CE). Under such persecution, Jews who were required by the Roman authorities to commit any of the three indispensable laws were required to accept execution rather than comply. As noted above (p. 4), b.*Yoma* 67b lists five commandments which are "self-evident," which includes these three.⁶⁰ Novak suggests that finding such indispensable laws for Jews that were self-evident also prompted the Sages to find similar self-evident laws for Gentiles, which eventuated in the formulation of the Noachide Laws.

Now the point which emerges from all of this is that rationality and universality are co-equal because both pertain to man *per se*. As such, a definition of what is rationally indispensable for Jews necessarily leads to a definition of what is rationally indispensable for gentiles.⁶¹

We may conclude, then, that the concept of the Noachide Laws entered the rabbinic debates well after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, as part of the Sages' attempts to deal with *halachic* issues under the severe persecution in the later centuries, perhaps beginning with the persecution under Hadrian. In the subsequent eras of the midrashim and Talmuds, the Noachide doctrine was strengthened through extreme midrashic interpretation and thus finding it in the divine revelation given to Adam, Noah, and the Patriarchs before the Torah was given through Moses at Sinai.

⁵⁸Ibid., 29.

⁵⁹See Gershom Bader, *The Encyclopedia of Talmudic Sages* (Aronson, 1993), 480.

⁶⁰Note also *Sifra*, Ach'rei Mot Perek 13, §194 which lists the prohibition of thievery, fornication, idolatry, blasphemy, and murder as self-evident even if such had not been written in the Torah.

⁶¹David Novak, *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism*, Op. cit., 31.

Summary

In the rabbinic literature surveyed, it seems clear that in the post-destruction era, and the emergence of rabbinic Judaism, the Sages were engaged in listing laws that they felt formed the minimal standard of morality and conduct both for Jews and for Gentiles. But it is also clear that the recorded teaching of these earlier Sages (particularly those based upon the midrashic interpretations of Gen 2:16) was derived, not by an exegesis of the Genesis texts themselves, but as a substantiation for laws already determined to be required of Gentiles, and through midrashic eisegesis, shown to have been given to Noah, thus before the giving of the Torah at Sinai.

While the extant lists of the Tosefta, Babylonian Talmud and midrashim are not uniform, the following items are mentioned: the prohibition of 1) idolatry, 2) fornication (adultery), 3) murder, 4) thievery, 5) not to eat blood, 6) to establish courts of justice, 7) prohibition of blasphemy, 8) prohibition of witchcraft and sorcery, 9) prohibition against castration of man or animal, and 10) prohibition for mixing of species (cross-breeding animals or hybridization of plants). Those that seem to be essential (i.e., show up in most of the lists) are: 1) prohibition of idolatry, 2) prohibition of fornication/adultery, 3) prohibition of bloodshed, and 4) prohibition of thievery. The requirement to establish courts is debated, some suggesting it was given to Adam or Noah, others maintaining it was only given to Israel.

The earliest rabbinic list of commandments incumbent upon Gentiles is found in the Tosefta, which is traditionally dated to the 4th Century CE.⁶² But the fact that even in the ensuing Talmudic era (400–800 CE) the Sages were still debating what constituted the minimum requirements for Gentiles, clearly indicates that no consensus had been reached by the earlier authorities. This is not to deny that the topic was a matter of concern among earlier authorities, even in the pre-destruction era (as Acts 15 would illustrate). But the very fact that the Mishnah itself (traditionally considered the earliest strata of the rabbinic literature) is silent in regard to the Noachide Laws strengthens the conclusion that their definitive formulation occurred much later.

It is not uncommon to find scholars and commentators who suggest that the Noachide Laws are referenced in other early Jewish literature such as the book of Jubilees and parts of the Sibylline Oracles. This perspective, however, needs to be reconsidered. Rather than describing a set of laws given to Noah that were universal in their scope, the book of Jubilees presents Noah and his sons as obeying the same Torah that would be given to Israel through Moses at Sinai. Thus, Noah, like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is presented in Jubilees as an example for Israel, not for the nations. The same is true for Book Three of the Sibylline Oracles. Here, if the nations submit themselves to God's laws, they do so in connection with Israel's Temple and the service that is performed there (716–20), not as obeying a code of ethics made just for them. In this early work, there are not two sets of commandments, one for Israel and another for the nations. There is one law given by the Law Giver to which all peoples must submit, something that will ultimately be realized in the eschaton.

When we seek to discover the role of the Noachide Laws in the early rabbinic literature, it becomes clear that they were not formulated as a means for Gentiles to obtain a righteous status nor to be given a legal status within Israel. Instead, the Noachide Laws (however they are envisioned), function both to condemn the nations and as a legal basis for Jews associating with Gentiles who had, to one extent or another, distanced themselves from idolatry. We may summarize the function of the Noachide Laws within rabbinic literature as follows:

- 1) to show that God is just in condemning the nations. Since God could not be just in condemning the nations without first warning them, the Noachide Laws function as the divine revelation (both as

⁶²See Jacob Neusner, *The Tosefta*, 2 vols. (Hendrickson, 2002), 1.xivf.

“natural law” and specific revelation to Adam, Noah, and the Patriarchs) upon which their condemnation is warranted.

- 2) to explain why the Torah was given to Israel and not to the nations. Since the nations failed to abide by the minimum number of commandments contained in the Noachide Laws, it is certain that they could not have obeyed the full Torah. Likewise, their refusal to receive the Torah even when it was offered to them is anticipated given their refusal to obey the Noachide Laws.
- 3) to establish *halachah* for Israelites and their association with Gentiles. Since the primary issue that separated Jews and Gentiles (at least in the minds of the Sages) was that of idolatry, the Noachide Laws offered an *halachic* basis for Jewish association with Gentiles. In the post-destruction era, the Jewish community was no longer comfortable with “semi-proselytes” or “God-fearers,” and the Noachide Laws do not function to identify such persons. Nowhere in the early rabbinic literature are the Noachide Laws given as a means for Gentiles to obtain a place in the world to come. “Do the seven, go to heaven” is a much later rabbinic invention.⁶³

Conclusion

The Noachide Laws were the product of post-destruction rabbinic Judaism, formulated at a time when the Jewish community was struggling for self-definition vis-a-vis the dominant Gentile communities of the diaspora, including the emerging Christian Church. The concept of Noachide Laws offered a theological explanation for the unique status of Israel as God’s chosen people as well as God’s rejection of the nations. For the nations refused even to submit to a minimal moral code while Israel willingly received the complete Torah. Thus, God’s choice of Israel and His rejection of the nations is based upon His having given to all mankind an opportunity to obey His commandments. Additionally, the Noachide Laws became a factor in determining *halachah* for social interaction and commerce with Gentiles, particularly in light of the stringent measures enacted by the Sages against idolaters and all things connected to idolatry.

What is not found, however, in the emerging rabbinic literature is any sense that a minimal list of commandments afforded Gentiles who obeyed them a righteous status apart from converting to a recognized anti-Yeshua Judaism. While such a theology did evolve in the later centuries, and while some early Sages believed that there existed the possibility of “righteous Gentiles” who had a place in the world to come, the majority opinion of the Sages was that the status of righteousness was reserved for Israel alone. It was, in part, this unique status of Israel in the theology of the rabbis that formed the impetus for the supersessionistic theology of the 2nd and 3rd Century Christian Church. For there would have been no good reason for the Church to have sought a “new Israel” status unless such a status was deemed essential in matters of soteriology.⁶⁴

⁶³Eckard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 2 vols. (IVP, 2004), 1.117 writes that “Another view that was popular in a later period emphasized that Gentiles who keep at least the seven Noahic commandments will share in the world to come” and lists b.*Sanhedrin* 105a as proof. But b.*Sanhedrin* 105a says nothing about the Noachide Laws, and no suggestion is given there that Gentiles who obey a minimal number of commandments obtained thereby a place in the world to come.

⁶⁴One has the sense that the theological struggle entwined in the Christian doctrine of divine election and the question of the “heathen” who had never heard the gospel, was also faced by the rabbis in their view of God’s sovereign choice of Israel. The divine choosing of Israel is only just in the minds of the rabbis if there existed some reason why the nations were rejected. The Noachide Laws were the refined explanation of Divine law (extant both in “natural law” as well as in the direct revelation given to Adam, Noah, and the Patriarchs) which the nations rejected, and thus God was just in rejecting them. On the other hand, Israel willingly received the Torah (which included the Noachide Laws) and is therefore seen as worthy of God’s choosing. Similarly it is interesting to note that in Romans 1:18f, Paul considers that God’s self-revelation in creation functions as the basis for His just condemnation of the Gentiles rather than offering them a means for attaining a righteous

We conclude, then, that interpreting the edict of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 on the basis of the much later Noachide Laws is both anachronistic and a misunderstanding of the function of the Noachide Laws in the post-destruction, emerging rabbinic Judaisms. For not only did the formulation of the Noachide Laws await the post-destruction era, but even when they were formulated within the rabbinic theology of the much later centuries, they did not function as a separate body of laws given to Gentiles as a means of attaining a righteous status, nor even as an actual code of ethics for Gentiles. It is wrong, then, to conclude that the Jerusalem Council gave the gentile believers a minimal list of commandments, exempting them from the full expression of God's will in the Torah. Another explanation for the edict must be sought. Since all of the prohibitions in the edict find a connection to practices in the pagan temples, it seems most likely that they were given to assure that the Gentile believers in Yeshua had entirely distanced themselves from the idolatry of pagan worship.⁶⁵

status.

⁶⁵So Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Eerdmans, 1998), 462–66, contra Eckard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 2 vols. (IVP, 2004), 2.1016–18. Fitzmyer also rejects understanding the “apostolic decree” as formed upon the Noachide Laws, and opts rather for parallels to Lev 17–18 (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* in *The Anchor Bible Commentary* (Doubleday, 1998), 557. Schnabel (Op. cit., 2.1017) and Haenchen (*The Acts of the Apostles* [Westminster, 1971], 469) also opt for seeing the decree as derived from Lev 17–18.

Noahide Commandments

by Rabbi Yoel Schwartz

Translated by Yitzhak A. Oked Sechter

Reviewed and corrected by Yechiel Sitzman in consultation with Rabbi Yoel Schwartz

(c) by Rabbi Yoel Schwartz 2004,
permission to reproduce without change and with credit is hereby granted

Introduction

This work deals mainly with the effort of defining the commandments that the non-Jewish nations should fulfill or make an effort to do so. In addition to the seven basic commandments, there are several other active commandments that have not been clarified and explained in depth in the scriptures and subsequent Torah literature. Just the same, according to what is written in the Torah the Talmud and the Midrash, we are able to learn something from the actions of those that existed before the Torah was given to Israel. According to the Talmud (Yomah 28b), the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob upheld more commandments than what the children of Noah were called upon to do. Even commandments that the sages turned into laws many generations later were kept by the Patriarchs.

According to these same sources, Jacob already upheld all of the 613 commandments of Judaism. This is why Jacob's children are no longer called children of Noah but children of Israel. Just the same, we can learn from some of their actions and from their expectations from those that lived during their generation regarding the ways that any person who wants to come closer to G-d and attain spiritual fulfillment, should act.

The matters that we are trying to explain in this work are not in any way an effort to try and establish a new religion. It is rather an attempt to look at the Scriptures and other Torah literature and reach conclusions concerning what a person should do or try to do. Our prayers are that this modest beginning will bring others to write a complete book and that it should cover a greater scope. In order to help all those among the nations who are looking for ways to come closer to G-d.

Judaism forbids establishing a new religion, as explained by the Rambam (Kings 10, 5:6-9): "The principle of the matter: You cannot allow them to establish a new religion or to carry out commandments from this knowledge..." Anyway, what we are doing here in connection with the Children of Noah is not the establishment of a new religion. Since a foreigner (Gentile) is not ordered in writing to fulfill them, but only, if by his own free will, he wishes to carry out such commandments as the Rambam wrote: "We are not allowed to stop a child of Noah that seeks to be compensated by fulfilling the (some of those) laws of the Torah (that were only commanded to the Jews)." So it seems that the establishment of a new religion occurs only when a person comes and says that he has been ordered by G-d to fulfill such and such a law and not when he is trying to reach a degree of spiritual perfection by fulfilling the commandments that the children of Israel have been ordered to carry out.

Foreword

On The Importance Of Doing (Fulfilling and Carrying Out)

“We will fulfill and we will hear” (Shabbat 88a).

Here we will try to explain the importance of spiritual fulfillment and its effect on the personality of the person. We will also see why it is not enough to feel this spiritual fulfillment in the heart, but that it must be accompanied by concrete actions. All this has been explained in the Torah and was understood as something quite simple by many intellectuals of the world like Soren Kirkegaard (In “A Jew, Who Is He, What Is He?” page 22) who said, “A belief that does not bring in its wake a fulfillment and a change, is a false one. The greatest believer, who carries out his belief with great enthusiasm, but shows no sign of a complete change in his life, proves, that his belief is simply part of his own imagination only. The influence and recognition of a belief in a human being depends on the way he carries out his day-to-day life and manages to control and suppress his desires, stops doing evil and the actions he takes to carry this out.”

The Greek philosophers, who did not believe in a practical religion, but believed that human perfection comes from recognizing and studying the truth, believed just the same, that a person must carry out and fulfill deeds that will teach him spiritual perfection: In his Kuzari, Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi thus wrote (Article A, Part A), “Question the truth on the things that you want to know, in order that your brain will act and not be acted upon. Talk to the point and in truthful ways. This will help you seek and recognize the truth. Then you will demand less, be more humble and accumulate good character traits.”

The Philosophers did not recognize G-d or the need to act accordingly to His commandments. This is why they believed that human beings can act in any way suitable that will bring them to fulfillment of their goals. Just the same, these intellectuals understood that it was not enough for a person to acquire education and knowledge but that he also needed to carry out and act in order that his internal thinking could turn into a reality. Which is exactly what the Torah tells us to do, and we will bring several examples here.

A) The Precepts (Mitzvot) connected to prayers: These precepts connected to prayers are done through the heart as it is stated in Ta’anit 2, “and to labor for him with all your heart - what is the service of the heart - it is prayer.” Anyway it is not enough to pray from the heart. If a person has some thoughts that stem from his heart but does not utter them out with his lips, then he has not fulfilled the commandment as it is stated in Berachot 20, “Thoughts are not the same as an utterance.”

B) Repentance: The precepts connected to repentance are also connected to the heart: Nevertheless, “A person repenting must confess with his lips and say the things he has decided to do through his heart” (Rambam, Repentance, Chapter 2).

C) Ownership: When ownership is transferred, the most important part in this transaction is that the heart of the original owner agrees with the action. But all of this is not legal until some sort of action of transference is performed, such as that a deed

or legal paper is signed or changes hands or the transfer of ownership done according to the Jewish religion (Halacha). (This includes an action that is accepted as a valid transference of ownership by the society where the transaction is taking place.)

D) Marriage: It is not enough for both sides to agree to marry and to live like a family, but a legal action must also be carried out for this agreement to be formal.

From all these examples we have learned that it is not enough for the heart to tell you to do something. There is a need for some sort of act to carry out the will of the heart. For this reason the spiritual fulfillment of a person is not reached unless it is carried out by action. The belief and the desire to be close to G-d and the actions connected with it must be according to the precepts (Mitzvot) that G-d set forth in the Torah.

There is, sometimes, an opposite process when outside actions (not connected or controlled by the person) influence the internal thinking of a person as it is explained in Sefer Ha'Chinuch #16, explaining why the Torah has so many practical precepts: "Know that a person is governed by his actions. His heart and all his thoughts are influenced by the actions that he is involved in be they good or bad. Even a wicked man whose thoughts are concentrated on doing evil all day, if he should start studying Torah and Mitzvot, even if he is not doing it for G-d's sake, he will start acting in a more positive manner. This is because the heart goes after the deeds. The same holds true, concerning a righteous man, who lives according to the Torah and Mitzvot, but makes a living from dubious transactions, or if for example he is forced by the King or ruler to deal in such dubious matters, he will eventually be transformed from a righteous man to an evil one."

In Mesilat Yesharim (Chapter 7), it is written, "Alacrity is brought about by the internal enthusiasm of a person. But even if a person lacks this internal enthusiasm, he should carry out and do things in an accelerated pace, this will bring about an internal enthusiasm. Since external actions brings about internal ones."

The Rambam, in his commentary to Avot, wrote, "If a person wants to give a certain sum to charity, it is worth while to divide this charity into several portions and give it away at different intervals and not at one time. By doing so, it has a greater effect on a person, than if he would give the sum to charity all at one time. This, despite the fact that to do so, he must invest more time and effort."

The actions of a person should be done in order to fulfill and carry out the commandments of the Creator, since these are the things that elevate a person. As the Maharal from Prague wrote in Tiferet Yisrael (Chapter 4), "The commandments of the Torah can be likened to a rope by which a person is drawn out of a hole or a well. The person is drawn from the lowest levels to the higher levels of the world. The more he does, the more he removes materialism from himself, which then enables him to sit next to the Lord of Hosts."

The meaning of the word Mitzvot in Hebrew comes from the root Unite and Bind. Which means that each mitzvah unites and binds the person to the Creator of the world (see Tanya). In Tanna d'bei Eliyahu (Chapter 9), it is written, "I testify before heaven and earth, Israel and the nations, man and woman between a servant and handmaiden, the Holy Spirit rests upon a person according to his actions."

The fulfillment of the commandments in the Torah, builds the character of a person and raises him to a level of perfection, as it is written in Deuteronomy 4:14, “And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances, that *la’asot’chem* – you might do them...” [The Hebrew *la’asot’chem* also means “you shall make (i.e. build) yourselves.”]

This word *la’asotchem* teaches us here that the statutes and ordinances, the mitzvot, build the person and it does not merely mean that a person must carry them out. This is why it is written in this special way. A person must be trained on the way he should build his life, starting from early childhood. Anyone reading books dealing with child-care can find many examples there. But even as a grownup, a person must take a grip on himself, if he wants to “discover himself” and find a real meaning to his life. The Noahide laws are logical. Many intelligent people will even agree that there is a need for them, but this is not enough. We must remember that we must carry out these ordinances and statutes because we have been ordered to do so by the Creator. They were given to Adam and Noah, then again given on Mount Sinai. Part of the Torah was given on Mount Sinai to the Israelites as a Holy Nation of Priests (Exodus 19:2). The remaining part is intended for entire human race. The Rambam wrote in Melachim-Kings (8:11),

Every person that agrees to carry out the seven Mitzvot of the children of Noah, and does this in a careful manner, is a righteous gentile, and has part in the world to come, meaning that he carries this out because G-d has ordered him to do so in the Torah, through Moses. But if these seven mitzvot are carried out just because he feels a necessity to do so, then he is not a Ger Toshav (Gentile resident in Israel), nor a righteous gentile or one of its sages.

The Mitzvot have been handed down to us in the form of an order, but just the same we are called to accept them gladly. A person must accept the Mitzvot with love. Despite the hardships in fulfilling them, he must carry them out. This also has an educational value.

A person who wants to do only those good deeds that he feels impelled to perform without being ordered to do so stresses his own importance. He thinks that he is the focus of everything. But when a person decides to carry out the Mitzvot because he has been ordered to by G-d, then he feels the importance of the G-d that orders. It is only then that he manages to discover and find all his hidden powers in order to carry out these mitzvot. These hidden powers cannot be tapped to their utmost if a person carries out the mitzvot simply because he has the sudden urge or mood to do so. This decision is strengthened even more when the person announces it before three learned and wise Jews. This acts transforms the person into a Ger Toshav. Even today, when, since all of the Israelites have not yet returned to their land, the laws concerning a Ger Toshav are not applicable – in reference to the special privileges which would otherwise apply to a non-Jew who has made such a declaration – such a declaration made before three observant Jews nevertheless still enhances the status of the non-Jew.

This declaration should include: belief in the principles of the existence of the one true G-d, who is everlasting, the Creator of all things, guides all of his creations, is the

One that gave the Torah on Sinai for all of humanity, and oversees all the actions of the human beings to reward and punish them for their deeds. Then the person should state that he is willing to fulfill the seven mitzvot that were given to Noah. (There are those who believe that this announcement should be accompanied by submersing in a pool of at least 660 liters of water, like the sea, spring or a man-made pool built in the earth. However we know of no basis for this view.)

Commandments Dealing With Matters Between Man and G-d

Introduction

The basis of all commandments is the belief that G-d who is the creator of all things, and capable of doing everything, has commanded us to fulfill them. Habakkuk summed it up by stating that a righteous person shall live through his belief. Also in Chapter 9:23 of Jeremiah it is stated: “But let he who glories, glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the L-rd who exercises loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the world: for it is these things that I desire, says the L-rd.”

The Gaon, Rabbi Shmuel Ben Hafni, stated that the important commandment for the people of other nations is the belief that the L-rd our G-d is the Creator and director of the world, that He is actively involved in the lives of every person and that He is One.

The Rambam writing to Rav Hasdai stated: “Quoting from our sages, the righteous people from other nations have a place in the world to come, if they have acquired what they should learn about the Creator.”

In the category of the belief in the one true G-d, the seven commandments to the children of Noah include the prohibitions against worshiping other gods and against blasphemy (which includes professing atheism). There are, of course, many commandments connected with the belief in the one true G-d. They include:

- (a) Loving G-d
- (b) Praying to Him
- (c) Thanking Him for His generosity
- (d) Trusting Him
- (e) Honoring Him
- (f) Sanctifying his Holy Name
- (g) Prohibiting the desecration of his Holy Name
- (h) Moving away from those who do not believe in Him such as atheists, infidels and impious people
- (i) Having a direct relationship with Him, not through any intermediaries. This is why it is forbidden to pray among others to any angels or to the dead or to any person past, present or future!

(a) Loving G-d: Inasmuch as the Israelites were commanded not only to love G-d, but that they should also teach all mankind to love G-d, we see that all people are supposed to love Him. One of the first to do so was Abraham the Patriarch (Sifri Vetchanan), and in the Sefer Mitzvot it says, "This mitzvah [loving G-d] includes that we should call every human being to believe in Him and worship only Him... See to it that you make Him beloved to your fellow men just as your forefather Abraham did."

(b) Praying to G-d: Noah was punished for not praying so that his fellow men might be saved from the flood. According to the sages (Zohar Leviticus p15b), this is the reason that the flood is named after Noah. However, the destruction of Sodom is another case. This event is not named after Abraham because he did pray to save the people of Sodom before it was destroyed. One type of prayer is a request by a human being to G-d. There is also a thanksgiving prayer that is an important obligation from a person for all the things for which he is thankful such as: his occupation that gives him a livelihood, health, family, etc. and especially if something good has occurred to him personally. This brings us to thanksgiving.

(c) Thanking G-d for His generosity: Again the best example is from Abraham. In the Gemara Sota: 10, Abraham in Beersheva would invite people to eat and drink with him. At the end of the meal he would request from them that they should bless and thank G-d for his generosity.

(d) Trusting in G-d: Joseph was punished by two years being added to his stay in prison because he requested help in getting a prison release from Pharaoh's wine chief instead of putting his full trust in G-d (Genesis Rabbah 29:3).

(e) Honoring G-d: To honor one's father and one's mother is a threshold to honoring the heavenly Creator Father who begat us. One should honor and give credit to all wise Torah teachers and sages, especially those who teach you Torah. He who does not fully honor his Torah teachers dishonors G-d. A person must be very careful in fulfilling this commandment. To give honor to G-d, he must give honor to the Torah and to its wise teachers. Honoring G-d also extends to honoring all of G-d's creations because they are His creations. In particular one should honor elderly persons because these persons have most likely witnessed in their lifetime many instances of G-d's intervention. Through my giving honor to them I am honoring someone who recognizes the greatness of the Creator. The importance of fulfilling oaths and vows made in G-d's name can be understood in the framework of giving honor to G-d.

(f) To be willing to make every effort for the Sanctification of His Holy Name: There are opinions that in some situations, a non-Israelite is even called upon to die as a martyr to protect the honor of G-d (i.e. not to worship other gods). All agree that he must be willing to die rather than to commit murder. The person must know that everything occurring is according to the will of G-d and accept it without complaining against Him. This commandment is part of the previous one.

(g) Prohibition against desecrating G-d's name: This was one of the reasons that the people of Sodom were punished. In this respect a G-d fearing person must be

especially careful in the manner in which he conducts himself. If he does not act properly, others will point to him and say. "Look how unethically (or however badly) that person is acting and he is a believer in G-d." This constitutes a desecration of His name in an indirect way.

(h) Not Having Fellowship With Unbelievers and Impious People: Relations with unbelievers are only for the purpose already mentioned before. It is the duty of everyone to ensure that all human beings believe in the one true G-d and do His will. Consequently a person must be extremely careful that he does not bring another person to sin by his association with the ungodly. Psalms 1:1 says. "Happy is the man who has not been walked/followed after the advice of wicked men, who has not stood/lingered on the path of immoral men, and who has not sat [or made his permanent dwelling] with scoffers." This is especially true when participating in religious services where the ritual or sermons, songs or prayers are violating the Torah.

Walking in the Halacha

Faith is *Emunah*, what you believe, while *Halacha* means how you walk or conduct yourself in practice of what you believe. We do the things we do because we are what we are. A man will practice what he believes. If he professes to believe in righteousness, but practices unrighteousness, he is a practical, practicing atheist. "Noah was a righteous man in his generation." "Noah walked with G-d." "Noah found grace in the eyes of G-d" (Genesis 5:8, 6:9).

The Laws of Belief

- (1) It is a commandment (mitzvah) for a human being to believe that there is a creator of the universe, that He is Eternal, the First and Last of everything. He is One, and there is no unity comparable to his or G-d outside Him. His unity cannot be multiplied or divided. He is exclusive in his unity, and there is no other like Him in the universe. There is none other or any other sources that have His power or His capability. All the sources of power and energy in the universe stem and come from Him.
- (2) It is a commandment for a human being to study his belief, and to observe the creation to see and to recognize His greatness. It is written in Isaiah chapter 40, "Lift up your eyes and see Who created these." Similarly he should study history to observe what has happened in time past and present: It is also commanded to observe what has happened in history to see how G-d has been in charge and the One who rules over all events. "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations. Ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the L-RD's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance" (Deuteronomy 32:7-9). "Remember the former things of old; for I am G-d, and there is none else; I am G-d and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure"

(Isaiah 46:10-11). Israel was created by G-d to receive the Torah and give the prophets to a pagan world that had many thousands of gods. Israel's unique prophetic character is different and separates Israel from all other nations. Israel is the only nation on earth whose entire history was written before it happened. The Jews' mission against a polytheistic world has had an unbelievable impact against polytheism. Even the atheists say, "There is no G-d." They do not say, "There are no gods."

(3) It is appropriate to say aloud what you believe in order to strengthen the conviction in your heart. For example: There is one G-d and His name is One. (Zech. 14:9). There can be no compromise on pronouncing aloud this belief. The Torah concept of G-d does not allow him to have a split personality. It is worthwhile to say different basic concepts of belief toward the one true G-d loudly and clearly, such as the affirmation (Shema Yisrael) "Hear O Israel..." Here are other sentences that are worthwhile repeating at regular intervals, since they are among the basics of belief:

- I believe with a complete belief that the Creator, blessed be His Name, He alone, created and made all the created things. He alone made, is making and will continue to make all things.
- He is One, and there is none other like Him, in no way or manner. He alone is our L-rd in the past, present, and future.
- He does not have body. Nobody can be like Him, and no imagination can detail or describe Him. No picture can depict Him; no image can portray Him. No material can contain His essence. No wood, no stone, no plant, no star nor constellation can be compared to Him.
- G-d is first and last. Of no man can this be said.
- To G-d and G-d alone we should pray (meaning that no use at all of any mediator should be made in a prayer between man and G-d).
- G-d knows all the thoughts and actions of a person. He pays good wages to those who do good while punishing those who do evil. The most significant compensation will be in the next world (after death). There will also be worldwide compensation with the coming of the Messiah. After that, there will be a resurrection of the dead.
- G-d gave the Torah to the Jewish people so that they bring merit to all of humanity. This Torah has never changed and will never be changed. Part of this Torah was given to the whole human race. Another part of the Torah was given only to the Israelites. (Every human being can join and be part of Judaism by conversion, but a person is not obligated to do so.) If a person fulfills the commandments of a son or daughter of Noah, then that person will have a part in the world to come.

The Prohibition Against Doing Anything that Contradicts the Belief in One God

- (1) It is prohibited to worship any other god, in any form or matter at all. If a person is forced to do so, he should try as hard as possible not to carry out such a demand. If he is being threatened by death, there are those that believe that he should be willing to die as a martyr if he does so while being witnessed by ten Jews or ten people of other nations who worship only the One true G-d. A person is not allowed to give honor to other gods, to hug or kiss them; to swear by them, to pray to or worship them. He is not allowed to produce an idol so that others can worship it. He is not even allowed to produce it for artistic purposes. He is not allowed to participate in any rites connected with the worship of other gods even if this person is passive and does not take any active participation in it. All this is so that he will not be misunderstood and cause others to sin because of his action. It is the duty of a person to degrade and hold in contempt all other gods or any form of idolatry.
- (2) To deny the existence of G-d is worse than worshipping other gods. Some maintain that this is included in the prohibition of worshipping other gods. Others maintain that it is considered blasphemy since there is no greater insult to the one true G-d than denying his existence.
- (3) It is appropriate to refrain from the following because they too are considered related to the worship of other gods:
 - a. Dealing in magical traits, such as predicting with the aid of a crystal ball, or hypnotizing yourself so that you can predict the future or dealing in black magic or trying to predict the future through other means such as horoscopes or things like that;
 - b. Believing in superstitions, such as bad luck because of a black cat or good or bad luck connected to certain numbers;
 - c. Gathering animals for magic, like hypnotizing them;
 - d. Dealing in spiritualism;
 - e. Trying to communicate with the dead.

The Prohibition Against Insulting or Offending the Honor of G-d

- I. The prohibition against cursing G-d by His name or by any other substitute for His name.
2. The prohibition against denouncing G-d or his Torah;
3. The prohibition against asking philosophical questions about what occurred before the creation of the world.

We should only contemplate what has occurred since the creation (and not before). This is so that we can try to realize and grasp the greatness of the one true G-d as we have already previously mentioned;

4. It is prohibited to interbreed animals or plants that are not of the same species.

5. It is prohibited to take on or initiate a new religion. But Noahides, fulfilling the seven commandments (mitzvot), are not taking on a new religion since these seven commandments are mentioned in the Torah. Noahides may perform commandments that were given specifically to the Jews in the hope that they will be rewarded for them, provided that they don't consider these actions obligatory. It is also important to note that according to some opinions there are some commandments that Noahides should not fulfill because they are connected with holiness and given specifically to Israel. These are the commandments of Tefillin and mezuzah. All agree that the child of Noah should not observe the seventh day of the week, Saturday, as Shabbat, as given to Israel as a day of rest, but it is appropriate for him to inculcate the message of the Shabbat, as will be explained further on. It is important to study the laws of the Torah that apply to Noahides. However they are prohibited from studying those parts of the Torah that don't apply to them. This refers mainly to the oral law (Talmud, Rambam etc.) but also when reading the Bible it is better to skip those laws that don't apply to them.

Explanations

According to Rabbinic literature, G-d does not want people to question matters connected with that which existed before the creation. As creatures in creation, we can only comprehend G-d in and through creation as Creator. "When I consider the heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; [I think:] What is man that You are mindful of him" (Psalm 8:3). Only the Torah existed before creation. David declared in Psalm 119: "Your word, O G-d is from everlasting to everlasting." "With Hashem's word the heavens were made, and all the heavenly hosts [were fashioned] with the breath of His mouth" (Psalms 33:6).

Genetic engineering is a delicate subject. There is room to postulate that engaging in some kinds of genetic engineering constitutes a violation of the prohibition to crossbreed. Since the prohibition of crossbreeding does not include hybrid breeding of plants and animals and breeding to develop a hybrid within a species of like kind the same can be said regarding some kinds of genetic engineering.

Even if it is permitted, those dealing in this field must be careful that through this work they will not feel that they are capable of divorcing themselves from G-d and His creation, that scientists will not feel that they are capable of creating independently from G-d, like Adam in his first sin.

Commandments Concerning Honoring G-d

1. A PERSON MUST HONOR G-D AND HIS TORAH, including the sages, teachers of Torah, elderly person, holy books, holy places like houses of prayer and cemeteries where (tzadikim) are buried. If a person makes a vow in G-d's name, he must fulfill his oath. If he does not make the vow in G-d's name but pledges to do something for someone else, he must fulfill it. It seems that if he made the oath to himself or concerning only himself it is also appropriate that he fulfill his vow. In doing so, he honors himself. A person who makes a vow to himself in the name of G-d is honoring G-d by fulfilling it. If a person makes a pledge to a fellow man, he must fulfill it since it is in

the category of civil laws that are incumbent on Noahides. By not fulfilling pledges, vows, oaths and covenants, one dishonors G-d, Torah and himself.

2. Before performing any work, or whatever, it is suitable for a person to say that he will do this thing with G-d's help, in order that he will remember that all of his successes are derived and come to him only through G-d.
3. A Noahide, to fulfill the seven commandments, should strive to learn carefully and seriously all his obligations concerning all the seven commandments of the children of Noah. If there is a problem, or if the person does not know exactly how to fulfill a certain obligation as a Noahide, he should turn to a Jewish Torah authority who is acquainted with the subject matter to make a decision on the issue or question. Any learned Jew can teach non-Jews only if he himself is a Torah observant Jew. He must believe that God gave Moses the written law and also the oral law. He must observe Shabbat and Kashrut and the other Mitzvot.

Prayers

Noahides are not commanded to have formal prayers. It should be left to the individual how, what, and when he will pray. Prayer is permitted, but not commanded. There are several types of prayers; requests, recognition of G-d's grandeur, thanksgiving to Him for good things that He has done for a person and strengthening one's faith, as it is stated in many places in the book of Psalms. It is advisable to turn toward the direction of Eretz Yisrael, Jerusalem and the Temple Mount when praying.

A Siddur for Bnei No'ach should be established for these who wish to have guidance in prayer. Below are some suggestions for formal prayer that might be included in a Bnei Noah Siddur:

1. Regular prayers might be said everyday that could include a statement saying, "Know today, and place it on your heart, that Hashem is the L-rd in the heavens above and on the earth below -- there is nothing else." Also he might recite the affirmation, "Hear O Israel..."
2. Prayer in time of emergency or danger: A person who finds himself in danger should recite an appropriate chapter from the book of Psalms, for example, chapter 20. If the emergency is due to illness, chapter 103. If he needs to strengthen his belief in G-d so as to receive His help, chapter 121.
3. A Prayer of Thanksgiving: Psalms, chapter 107 or chapter 136. In the Standing Prayer emphasize, "and all the living will give thanks to You forever, selah."
4. Special prayers during holidays: It is worthwhile to pray for world peace. When saying such a prayer, one might add, "G-d of the world, give peace to the world, thereby allowing all living creatures that You created to enjoy all of your

blessings.” On the Sabbath one could recite from the book of Psalms, chapters 92 and 104.

5. Blessing before or after the meal: It is worthwhile that after the main meal of the day (whether at noon or in the evening) a Noahide should wash his hands if they have become soiled during the meal (before the meal there is no command for the Noahide to wash his hands in a ritual matter as do the Jews. This is specifically a Jewish practice. It is, however, necessary to wash them for sanitary purposes.) and utter a blessing of thanksgiving to Hashem for the good that He has given to him. It can be something like this: “Blessed are You, King of the Universe, Who feeds the whole world with His goodness, pleasantness, grace and mercy. He gives bread to all flesh and the world is full of His mercy. Due to his great goodness, we have never lacked and will never be in need of food forever. His great Name feeds and gives everyone his livelihood, does good to everyone, and prepares food for all those that he has created.” A person can, of course, change this, especially if some good things have occurred to him lately. Each person who chooses to say this prayer should do so individually (as opposed to having one person say it for all). Clearly, these prayers are to be directed solely to Hashem, and not to any intermediary.
6. Repentance: A Noahide who has sinned against G-d or his fellow man must repent and be sorry for what he has done. He must undertake that he will not commit this sin again. He should make a personal prayer to G-d, requesting mercy. If he has hurt a fellow person, or if he has done damage to that person’s property, he must compensate him, as the people of Nineveh compensated each other, and he must request that person’s forgiveness.

Prohibition Against Influencing Others to Sin

There is a prohibition against causing another person to err or commit sin as Pharaoh accused Abraham (Genesis 20:9) and the same concerning Avimelech who accused Isaac (Genesis 26:10).

In accordance with this, people should conduct themselves with modesty so as not to bring others to sin. In particular, women should apply this to their mode of dress and behavior.

Holidays

Sabbath

A Noahide should not observe the Shabbat in the manner that a Jew does. Nor should he make a point of abstaining from hard physical work on the Shabbat. A Noahide should not give occasion for a Jew to break the Shabbat.

There are those who say that every Ger Toshav (a non-Jew living in Eretz Yisrael in the time of the Jewish Temple, who has formally accepted the obligation to observe the Noahide laws in front of a Jewish court) has to uphold and keep the Sabbath

(Rashi, Kritot 9, Yevamot 40). There is room to suggest that the Noahides, even nowadays, by accepting to fulfill the seven commandments, are in the same category as a Ger Toshav and should, according to Rashi, be required or at least allowed to keep the Shabbat.

So I (Rav Schwartz) would like to suggest that this is the way that the Noahides could celebrate the Seventh Day, a day of refraining from his vocation. On the eve of the Sabbath (Friday night), they might have a festive family dinner with special food and light candles after sundown in honor of the Seventh Day, which was given to Adam and Noah (and to make the Noahide celebration of the Shabbat distinct from the Jewish Shabbat observance). During the meal they may sing songs to strengthen their belief, including songs about the creation. They may read from the Torah. They should not call this day the Sabbath, but the Seventh Day as it is written in Genesis.

On the Seventh Day itself, if they can arrange it without difficulty, they should refrain from going to work. If possible, they should go out to the fields or a park so as to feel close to the Creator of the world. If the congregation holds a prayer session, they may recite the Psalms connected to the Sabbath and to the creation (like Psalm 104). Also they should study portions of the Torah connected to commandments of the children of Noah. They can study from the weekly portion of the Torah being read that Sabbath in the synagogues those subjects which concern all mankind and skipping those topics that concern specifically the Jews.

At the end of the Sabbath (Motzai Shabbat), the end of the Seventh Day and the beginning of the new week, they can recite the prayer for the new week (Havdalah) after having lit a havdalah candle, to thank G-d for having taught Adam how to make fire, which is the source of all energy that enabled man to make changes in this world. This Havdalah prayer, that separates the Seventh Day from the beginning of the week, can be recited as a Noahide wishes and can go something like this.

Blessed are you our G-d, King of the Universe, Who differentiates between darkness and light, between day and night, between the seventh day from the first day of the week, between the clean and the unclean, between the sacred and secular, between holy days and regular days, between Israel and the rest of the nations, who together are partners in one holy objective, to make Your Name holy in this world. AMEN.

Rosh Hashanah

Which is the first day of Tishrei is a day of reckoning for the whole world. The first day of Rosh Hashanah should be a day of repentance and deep inner thought about what a person has done during the past year. A Noahide should recite a prayer requesting that all the people of the world will accept and recognize the truth concerning the one true G-d. A Noahide can recite certain prayers from the Rosh Hashanah prayer book.

Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur is a day of repentance. While it is not a Noahide fast, repentance is a Noahide necessity.

Succot (Feast of Tabernacles)

It is stated in the book of Zechariah that after the Temple will be restored, during the holiday of Succoth all the nations of the world will make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to bow down before G-d. Zechariah 14:1-21 states:

And it shall come to pass that every one that is left of all the nations which come against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the L-rd of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be that whoever will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the L-rd of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain, there shall be the plague, which with which the L-rd will smite the nations that come not up to keep this feast of Tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses Holiness Unto the L-rd; and the pots in the L-rd's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the L-rd of hosts; and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them and boil them; and in that day there shall be no more a Canaanite in the house of the L-rd of hosts.

It is worthwhile for a person to take his vacation during this time. By doing so, a Noahide can use this free time to study, to observe nature and to meet with fellow Noahides for mutual prayer with emphasis on world peace just as Israelites did when the Temple existed and, as sacrifices were made for the welfare of all the nations, to pray for the coming of the Messiah who will amend the ways of the world.

Hanukah

Noahides are called to celebrate the victory of Judaism over Hellenism since this victory showed the world the strength of the Israelite's belief in the one true G-d, their true devotion and dedication in keeping the Torah and its commandments. It is also a time of special prayer for the restoration of the Tabernacle, the Temple and divine worship.

Passover

Passover is the first emancipation proclamation. It is advised that Noahides during this holiday should put a special stress on freedom for all humans. Although we do find slavery in the Torah, we must remember that the slavery mentioned there is a humane slavery. If one has a slave, then be a merciful master. Thoroughly cleaning ("spring cleaning") the house before this holiday would be a reminder of the slave labor of the Jews in Egypt. It also brings to mind the benefit that the exodus from Egypt brought to the world, a cleansing from the bad habits of mankind. On the eve of the first day of Passover, it is suggested that Noahides hold a festive meal with matzo and wine in honor of freedom.

Shavuot

Holiday commemorating the giving of the Torah. On this day there was a divine revelation and the human race acquired the Torah through it. It is a day that should be set aside for the study of Torah and the Noahide commandments.

Commandments Dealing with Personal Matters

The purpose of the commandments is to correct the character traits of a person so that he can become closer G-d. Rabbi Abba Shaul in the Talmud explained a verse (Exodus 14, 2) as stating that we are to emulate those traits that G-d has revealed to us as being the principles that he uses in running the world. Rabbi Nissim Gaon in the preface to his commentary on the Talmud and Rabbi Moshe Feinstein in his responsa (Igrot Moshe, Yorah Deah vol. 2, chap. 130) wrote that all people are obligated to do all those things which are in the categories of ethics and proper character traits even though these actions are not specifically mentioned as being commanded.

Though the commandments have been divided into the two categories of between man and G-d and between man and his fellow, this distinction is an artificial one. This is because all commandments between a person and his fellow are also commandments between a person and G-d inasmuch as He has also commanded them.

Concerning Food

The people of the nations are not limited in the food they are allowed to eat, except the eating of living flesh or the flesh and blood of a human being. There are also those authorities who are of the opinion that a Noahide should not eat the flesh of a dead animal unless killed for the specific purpose of eating its flesh.

These are the main points to the Jewish law (Halachah): This ritual law requires that the animal be slaughtered by severing the trachea and carotid artery in one stroke. This causes the least possible suffering to the animal. The animal must be totally dead with all muscular and nerve flexing abated before one would be permitted to eat it. The lungs must be checked to determine that the animal was not afflicted with certain illnesses that would cause fatality according to the guidelines of the Jewish law.

Animals for eating

The people of other nations are allowed to eat all kinds of animals. Though there is a difference even for non-Jews between kosher and not kosher species, this is mainly regarding the sacrificial ritual and not for eating purposes.

[Why is it permitted for Noahides to eat any kind of animal whereas all animals were prohibited to Adam? It is written (Bereshit 9:3), "Every living thing that moves upon the earth shall be (as) food for you." Every living thing that moves includes cattle, beasts, birds, and even the fish of the sea. All of these are called "living things that move" (Ramban). Meat, which was prohibited to Adam, was permitted to Noah because (a) it was because of him and for his needs that G-d spared the animals; were it not for man they would not have been spared (cf. 6:7); (b) he toiled over them and attended to their needs in the ark. Of him it is said (Psalms 128:2): "You shall eat from the toil of your hands." He had thus acquired rights over them (Or HaChayim). "They were saved in an ark which you toiled to build; i.e. their salvation came through you; they are therefore yours to do with as you please like the green herbs of the field" (Bechor Shor; Chizkuni). "As the green herbage I have given you everything." Though I permitted only herbage, but not flesh, to Adam, I give you the same right to everything that he had for herbage" (Rashi). R' Bachya and Chizkuni

comment that the comparison to green herbage is noteworthy: Lest one think that everything was permitted, G-d qualified His permission by comparing it to herbage. Just as some herbs are beneficial to man while others are unfit for food and even poisonous, so among the animals and birds there are those that are permitted by the Torah and those that are prohibited (see comm. of Chavel to his ed. of R' Bachya). This explains why, in spite of the general permission which was granted to Noah to consume meat, it is important that the Noahide not eat meat taken from a living animal, and the Jew eat only certain species slaughtered according to the Jewish law. Malbim explains that it is logical and desirable for a lower form of life to be eaten and absorbed into a higher form. Therefore, animals eat plant life, thus elevating it, and humans eat animals, elevating them to become part of intelligent man. (O that man would be intelligent!)]

Flesh from the living

It is prohibited to eat meat that has been cut or torn off from a living creature, even from a dead animal, if the flesh was cut off when the animal was still alive or when it was on the verge of dying and not slaughtered according to Jewish law. If it was slaughtered by cutting its neck and not slaughtered by a Jew according to Jewish law, many of its parts are considered to have been cut from a living animal and are therefore forbidden. This refers to all parts that are attached to the trachea and the esophagus and includes the lungs, liver, stomach, and intestines.

There are various methods used for killing the animals that are intended for human consumption. Some of them present no problem but others would call into question the permissibility of eating the above-mentioned organs. One should therefore either not eat those organs, verify that the method which was used to kill the animal was not by cutting its neck or, (and this is the most practical suggestion) only purchase the meat of such organs if it has been slaughtered by a Jew according to Jewish law-i.e. that is certified as kosher.

Nearly all the meat for human consumption today comes from animals that have been killed for eating. However some slaughterhouses detach parts of the body before the animal has stopped flexing its limbs. If a Noahide is not sure about the source of the meat, it is advised that he buy the meat from a person whom he can trust such as a fellow Noahide. In order to remove all doubt, it is possible to buy kosher meat with a kosher label from a recognized Rabbinical organization. These rules of flesh from the living hold only toward animals and birds that have warm blood. It does not hold toward reptiles, creeping creatures and fish

Flesh from the living is mixed with other meat

It is prohibited to eat meat that has been mixed with flesh from the living, whether it was done on purpose or not, even if cooked, broiled or added to a soup or any other type of drink.

Naturalist

The consumption of food should be mainly for health value. It is worthwhile though that a person should enjoy the food he eats since then the food is digested properly. There is also a spiritual value. If there is plenty of food on the table and it tastes good, a person feels and recognizes the grace of G-d. Food should be consumed to be

healthy and not just for enjoyment. Therefore a person must ensure his good health in everything that is connected with his diet. This includes a naturalist.

Vegetarianism

It is not good for a person to be a total vegetarian if he is doing so because he is trying to be merciful toward animals. There is a danger that such a person will feel that he has fulfilled his duty and will become unmerciful toward other species, including human beings. In his book *Mein Kampf*, Hitler, the biggest criminal of the human race, said that he used to feed rats because he felt sorry for them. Of course, doctors have proven that it is not necessary to be excessive in the consumption of meat so as to remain healthy. Human teeth were created like those of an animal that eats vegetables and fruits. Adam was prohibited from eating meat. Only during the time of Noah was this prohibition lifted. This is because Noah saved animals from the flood and was allowed after that to eat meat. The Torah not only permits, but advises man to eat meat so that he recognize the difference between man and animal. Rabbi Abraham Issac HaCohain Kook explained it in this way: “The Torah commanded us to eat meat for by doing so we realize that G-d gave us guidelines that teach us to be careful not to cause needless injury to other members of creation. If we are careful for these other members of creation, then we will be doubly sure of being careful in our daily contact with the crown of creation, which is mankind”.

Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages

A person should drink alcoholic beverages in moderation. To a Noahide it is enough to remind him of the sad story of Noah and the effects of his drunkenness after he planted a vineyard. A person who is an alcoholic should avoid use of alcohol.

Keeping Healthy

A person should not indulge in things that are hazardous to his life and health. According to Genesis 9: 5, a person is not allowed to commit suicide. From this we can learn that anything unhealthy is prohibited. This includes smoking, narcotics, alcohol abuse, gluttony, exposing oneself to AIDS or other sexual diseases, driving when sleepy and taking unnecessary risks such as dangerous trips or pastimes. On the other hand a person can undertake dangerous professions, like building houses or picking fruits from tall trees because he is doing these things to build a better world and to find a livelihood for himself and his family.

Ethical Behavior and Moral Values

1. A person should strive for better ethical and moral values. He should be merciful and should not harm animals unless it is for the benefit of humans, such as food, medical experiments and for work. Hunting just for sport and not to eat the animal's flesh or use its fur, is seen as cruelty to an animal and is inappropriate. A person must also be merciful and just toward his employees and servants. He is not allowed to overwork or bring grief to his servants. According to the Rambam (Avadim 9:3), “A person must first feed his animals and servants before he sits to eat his own meal.”

2. A person should strive not to be extreme in any character trait. For example, he should not be stingy; on the other hand, he should not overspend.

3. A person should strive to be humble. As Abraham said about himself, “and I am just dirt and ashes” (Genesis 18: 2 7)

4. A person should strive to be truthful except in instances that the truth can bring harm to himself or others. An example is Abraham in the book of Genesis who said that his wife was his sister so that he would not be killed. In his defense, there was truth in his saying that she is his sister since his father was also her ancestor. Abraham was Sarah’s uncle!

It is also permissible to change wording to preserve peace, but one must still be very careful about what he says. If the truth can bring harm, then it is not the truth. If the truth is harmful or shameful to the innocent, it should not be repeated. However, one should try not to lie to conceal the truth even for a good reason. He can simply refuse to comment or respond. Instead of saying, “I do not know” when you do know, say rather, “I cannot say,” or “I have no comment.” In explanation of this, the sages teach that when God wanted to create man, the angels were split on this issue. There were those who requested that G-d should not create man since mankind finds it difficult to say the truth, and their peace is full of disputes and fights. On the other hand, the angels that represented justice, grace, goodness, love, mercy, charity and benevolence called on G-d to create man. G-d threw truth to the ground, but not peace. From this the sages learned that truth that brings destruction and does not build is not truth. Thus a person is allowed to change his wording to bring peace.

5. A person must be grateful to whoever was kind and good to him. Joseph in his confrontation with Potiphar’s wife (Genesis 39: 9) explains his loyalty to a person that has been good to him which is reason enough not to sin, not to mention, that G-d also forbids it. Therefore a person must also honor his parents. One that disgraces his parents is liable to be punished.

6. Protecting the ecology is very important as long as it does not endanger human life.

7. A person should not be jealous. Cain killed Abel because of jealousy. In Pirkey Avot (4:20) it says that, “jealousy, lust and pursuit of honor remove a man from this world.”

8. A person should be modest and chaste in his clothing. One of the sins that brought about the flood was that the people of that time wore clothing that left inappropriate portions of the body exposed. He should be dressed appropriately for the occasion, be clean but not too conspicuous. According to Rashi, among the reasons that Jacob told his sons to go down to Egypt, (Genesis 42:1) was so that they would not be conspicuous in appearing as if the famine didn’t concern them. From this we learn that a person should not be ostentatious, neither regarding himself nor his deeds.

9. A person should work even if he is financially well off. Agriculture is recommended since it brings him closer to G-d as he realizes that his welfare is dependent upon the rain that is in His hands. Today, agricultural work is not as it used to be, so if he tries to find another work he should look for something that will have a minimal danger of temptation and bring positive results.

10. A person should strive to be a peacemaker amongst the nations of the world and between fellow men. Rashi, in his commentary to Genesis 11:9, brings some sayings of the sages who explain why the generation of the tower of Babel, whose sins were worse than the sins of the generation of the flood, was punished less severely than the generation of the flood was punished. The reason is that there was love and peace among the generation of the tower. This goes to show to what high esteem G-d holds those who love peace.

Arts

The arts help develop creativeness in a person, and this is positive and productive when used in the right way. This means that a person should be allowed to deal in the arts if it will encourage the development of good values and morality and not the opposite. For example, if a person deals in arts that are connected with pornography, he is dealing in negative matters. The same holds true in arts that encourage violence or harm to other human beings or laughter and ridicule of those persons who are less fortunate than others, not to speak of pseudo-scientific literature that speaks against the belief in the one true G-d and His Torah. On the other hand, if a person is gifted and uses this gift by producing beautiful things that bring honor to G-d, he is fulfilling G-d's wish.

Pastime and Recreation

A person needs rest, but he should use this period of rest for the benefit of his physical and mental health. A person should not use his free time to engage in idle talk or matters that can bring him to sin. What a person does when he or she is away from home and among strangers decides that person's real character.

Working For A Living

1. Work as a moral value:

- G-d encouraged work to help mankind, as a moral value and in partnership in the work of the creations.

2. Restrictions in Agriculture

- It is recommended to not castrate men or animals because there was a great rabbi who was of the opinion that Noahides have taken upon themselves not to do this.
- It is forbidden to crossbreed animals and trees that are not of the same species. Breeding within a species in either the plant or animal kingdoms is permitted. It is permitted (even for Jews) to use and eat both animals and trees that were produced through forbidden crossbreeding.
- (Nowadays there are many things that can be done through genetic engineering. It may be that this is in the category of the prohibition of

crossbreeding. One of the reasons given for the prohibition to crossbreed is that doing so implies disrespect for G-d's handiwork. It is as if one is declaring that those species that He created in His world are not enough.

- Though genetic engineering is not necessarily doing this, it may still imply a lack of respect for the Creator because it implies that the order of His creation is not good enough and is an attempt by man to improve on it. On the other hand there is no denying that man does have the right to try to improve a species and possibly genetic engineering is no different.)

3. A person should work as much as he can.

- This is true especially if he is a hired worker. This is true even if he is self-employed. We can learn this from Jacob who told the shepherds whom he met (Genesis 29:7), that they should not stop work at high noon.

4. Being a Faithful Worker

Jacob told his wives that he had worked with all his power under the employ of their father. A person should work in honesty and move away from dishonest ventures.

Studying Science

There is value in studying science, especially since this enables a person to recognize the greatness of G-d and to better the creation for the benefit of society. All this is under the condition that it be done in a proper manner and not by unbelievers who want to liberate themselves or take over the world from G-d, which was the first sin made by a man.

1. Healing with the aid of Doctors and Medicines

- As it is stated in Exodus that a doctor should heal, our sages learned that a person who can heal his fellow human being should do so, that a sick person must go to a doctor to be healed. The important point here is that he should not rely on doctors alone, but in G-d who is the true doctor. The person should make an effort to get well.

2. Transplanting of Organs

- This is allowed to save the life of a person as long as the life of another person is not shortened so as to withdraw organs from him.

3. Unnecessary Dangers

- A person should be careful about medical treatment and medicines so as not to fall into unnecessary dangers like a dangerous plastic surgery that can have serious effects on the health of a person. If the dangerous

surgery or treatment is being carried out to try to save the person's life, then it is allowed.

4. The Purposes of Medical Treatments

- The main purpose is to increase the life span of a person and to prevent suffering, to increase fertility, but not to increase the pleasure of a person. It is prohibited to cause abortion without the medical reason of saving the life of the pregnant woman. (As it is not certain that a Noahide is permitted to perform an abortion even in such a situation, one should try to find a Jewish doctor to do it.)
- A doctor is not allowed to stop the suffering of his patient by shortening his life.

5. Medical Experiments

- If such experiments endanger the life of the patient, but there is a chance that it can save his life, it is allowed. However, there is a need for the approval of the patient. It is not enough to request the permission of the family. It is also may be allowed if the experiment might help a terminal patient who otherwise will die. A rabbi who is an expert in Jewish law should be consulted before doing such a thing.
- If the experiment cannot endanger the patient, it is worthwhile to receive the patient's approval because there might be some side effects, or it might endanger him later.

Patriotism

A person should be faithful to his country and leader. A person should not only pray for the welfare of his country but for all the world and humanity. It is forbidden to evade paying taxes and customs. Tax evasion is not to be confused with tax avoidance. Tax evasion is criminal. However, one is allowed to avoid paying taxes by using all possible deductions, depreciation, amortization and transfers of properties to heirs before death to avoid taxation. It is legal and should be pursued.

Vows, Oaths and Pledges

A pledge is a positive mild commitment, "If I can, I will." It is a matter of conscience and ability to fulfill. It is probably appropriate that it should be fulfilled.

A vow is a commitment made to someone else. It should be fulfilled because of the obligation to abide by the laws of interpersonal relationships.

An oath is an unconditional commitment. When undertaken in the name of G-d it must be honored because of one's duty to respect G-d. Abraham made Eliezer place his hand under his thigh and swear by an oath (Genesis 23:2-3). A person must keep

all vows, and oaths he made, especially if he has promised to give alms to the needy or a sacrifice to G-d.

Commandments Dealing with Matters Between Man and His Fellow

The Prohibition Against Murder

Every man must safeguard the most important deposit given in the custody of humanity, the lives of human beings, be it his own life or that of others. It is therefore prohibited for a person to endanger himself and, even more so, others. He should be careful to guard his own health and that of society and not do those things that are likely to cause harm like driving with excessive speed, etc.

A person is prohibited from murdering any person, adult or child, man or woman and even the fetus in a womb. However, abortion is allowed if it will save the life of the mother.

It is prohibited to kill a sick person although he is dying of a terminal disease, and there is no possibility of saving his life and even if the patient himself requests to die. Taking organs from such a person while he is still alive, although it may save another person's life, is also prohibited. If it is known that there is no chance of saving life, there is no need to prolong suffering by artificial means since the patient is dying anyway. However, we are not allowed to directly disconnect the equipment that allows the dying person to breathe.

It is forbidden to kill a criminal before he is brought to trial and sentenced by a court. A person is not allowed to commit suicide or to shorten his own life in any way. If he is being forced to commit idol worship, he is allowed to commit suicide to sanctify the name of G-d. If a person is being forced to kill another person or be killed, he is still not allowed to kill others. However, if the killers are demanding that one person be handed over to them or they will kill everyone, it is allowed to hand over that one person to save the lives of all the others. However, in the case of terrorists, it should be considered that such demands by terrorists have only proven to encourage the killers to take more hostages and kill more people.

If a person is running after you or chasing you to do you harm but not to kill you, then you are not allowed to kill him. However, if his purpose is to kill, and you have no other way in which to save your life but to kill him, you are allowed to do so in self-defense. But if there is any other way that you can save your life, perhaps by injuring him just enough to stop him from chasing you, then you are not allowed to kill him. If you do slay the murderer, you are guiltless and may save other people's lives who the murderer might otherwise kill later. Thus if the killing is to save your life or someone else's life, you are allowed to kill him. It is even a mitzvah to do so as Abraham went out to war to save Lot, his nephew and others. Here Abraham was saving life, not killing one who is trying to kill him.

It is prohibited to declare war on another nation since you will be involved in killing and you are endangering the lives of your people too. You are allowed to go out to war if you are being attacked. You are allowed to kill the attackers, but you are not allowed to kill prisoners of war if they are no longer endangering life.

Prohibition Against Spoil, Plunder, and Harming the Rights of Others

Embarrassing

A person is not allowed to insult or injure the reputation of another person in public. It is better that he be thrown into a burning fire rather than to embarrass someone else. An example is Tamar who avoided publicly shaming Judah even though she had been sentenced to be burnt. Tamar was a child of Noah.

Hitting another person

It is prohibited to hit another person or to injure him. Parents or teachers are allowed to hit their children to discipline them and in self-protection. You are also permitted to fight back if you are attacked.

Property, Goods and possessions of others

It is prohibited to cause damage to such things. If a person is given such a possession to safeguard or for any other reason even if it is worthless, it must be returned to its legal owner. You cannot keep it. A person is also not allowed to cheat on taxes.

Returning lost property

When a country has laws concerning the return of lost property, then such goods must be handed over to the rightful owner.

Prohibition against cheating in business and weights

A person is not only prohibited from doing so, but he must make every effort to protect his credibility by carrying out his business transactions in the most honest and honorable way possible.

Coveting other person's property

This means property, money or anything belonging to another. It is prohibited to covet belongings of another, which means to scheme to acquire them by illegal methods against the will of the present owner. It is forbidden to sue for damages against any individual, company or government when there was no real damage done or for an exorbitant proportion.

Bribery

It is prohibited to give or accept bribes. Sometimes one may find himself in circumstances that cause him to pay a bribe, but this would be in a place where there is no justice, such as among robbers or the like, so as to save oneself.

Grace, Mercy, Charity, Kindness and Benevolence

A Noahide is called upon to give to charities and persons in need. According to Rav Saadiah Gaon, it is commendable for a person to tithe, meaning that he set aside up to one tenth of all his earnings for this purpose. However, a person need not deprive himself of his own basic necessities in order to give to others. According to Ezekiel, one of the reasons for the punishment of Sodom was that the poor people there were not given alms. It is worthwhile that a person keep a special account for such a purpose, and once a week or month he should transfer it to good causes. It is best to transfer it directly to the needy people.

A Noahide is called upon to act in a graceful manner and to be benevolent. One should be hospitable and a good host with all his heart as Abraham did.

Eight Degrees of Charity

There are eight degrees of charity, one higher than the other:

1. The highest degree is to aid a man who is in danger of losing his financial independence by offering him a gift or a loan, by entering into partnership with him, or by providing work for him, so that he may remain self supporting.
2. The next highest degree is where the one who gives and the one who receives are not aware of the identity of each other.
3. The third, inferior degree, is when the giver knows who is the recipient, but the recipient does not know who is the giver.
4. The fourth, still lower degree is where the recipient knows who is the giver, but the giver does not know who is the recipient.
5. The fifth degree is where the giver puts the alms into the hands of the poor without being asked.
6. The sixth degree is where he puts the money into the hands of the poor after being asked.
7. The seventh degree is where he gives less than he should but does so cheerfully.
8. The eighth degree is where he gives resentfully.

Courts of Justice

It is important to form courts of justice so that persons can be called upon to uphold the mitzvot, the religious laws and to be able to judge between people. Sages were divided as to whether the Noahides should be judged according to the Torah concerning financial matters or whether they should be judged according to common sense. It is worthwhile that such courts of justice should give sentences according to the same law for men and for women. The judges should be men since a woman should strive not to be involved in public matters. Every person should go to a court for justice and not try to mete out justice himself. Courts of justice are allowed to enforce regulations for the benefit of the society and to improve ethics and morality. It is the obligation of the Noahide to execute justice to the fullest degree and not to be

merciful to criminals. People have the obligation to obey the law and see that the legislative and judicial and personnel and systems obey the law.

Marriage and Sex

Every man should marry a woman, and every woman should marry a man since it is written “that it is not good for a man to live alone by himself.” Marriage brings about a partnership between two people and increases the population of the world. In marriage a Noahide will participate and contribute in the building of the world.

Marriage is initiated by the couple’s decision to live together as husband and wife followed by their sexual union. It is worthwhile and enhancing that the two hold a formal marriage ceremony and a marriage feast.

A married couple can divorce even if both don’t agree to the divorce. If the husband sends his wife away from their home declaring that they are no longer married or if the wife leaves their home with a similar declaration they are no longer married. However, Noahides should abide by the laws of the state in which they live in marriage matters. They should therefore also follow any procedures that are required by the laws where they live so that they should be considered divorced also according to these laws. After the divorce, both partners are free to remarry. The marriage also ends if one of the two dies.

According to the Torah, a married woman and another man are not allowed to have sexual or any intimate relations with each other. A man, on the other hand, is allowed to marry more than one wife or concubine. Since the 10th century the Ashkenazic Jews generally have only one wife. Today there are also civil laws in many countries against bigamy, which are to be followed as law for the Noahide. A person is not allowed to have sexual relations with his mother, sisters, maternal aunts from his father or mother’s side, his father’s wife even after the death of his father, daughter, granddaughter, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law and her mother, his wife’s daughters and granddaughters. A person is not allowed to have homosexual relations (man with another man or a woman with another woman). Also a person is not allowed to have sexual relations with animals. This is bestiality.

Rape by a Noahide is a capital offence. There are opinions that, regarding people who are forbidden by the Torah to have sex with one another, the Torah prohibits any physical contact between them that is liable to be stimulating. This would include kissing, hugging and social dancing. It is nevertheless permitted for people to kiss their offspring.

It is worthwhile for men and women to minimize their mingling with one another. For this reason, youth groups and social activities should be organized separately for boys and for girls. In particular, when groups come together for prayer, etc. the men and the women should sit separately.

The purpose of sexual relations is to increase the human race and to strengthen the ties between the married couple. According to the Torah, a husband is called to gratify and satisfy sexually his wife. The same holds true for the wife toward her husband. All this is to strengthen the ties between the married couple. God created men and

women with sexual appetite and chemistry. Sex is a blessing from God, and it is not sin in the bounds of permitted sex under the seven laws of Noah.

One should not read pornographic literature or watch pornographic movies. As women who are dressed inappropriately can stimulate men easily, women should dress modestly.

Most authorities are of the opinion that Bnei Noah are not obligated any more to have children. There is a minority view that they are. According to this minority view and the view of Nachmanides, masturbation is prohibited. Also, according to them only the female is allowed to use contraceptives. The ones that would be permitted are foam or pills or similar methods.

It is an ancient custom of Israel to be careful and not to have sexual relations when the woman is having her menstrual period. An Israelite married woman is not allowed to have sexual relations with her husband for seven days, starting from the first day of her menstruation period. After the seven days she must go to a ritual bath, a mikvah, before she resumes having sexual relations with her husband. A Noahide is not called to do so, but it is worthwhile for the couple to abstain from having sexual relations during the woman's menstrual period.