



What about the Noahide Laws?

By Steve Cohen

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Goyim (gentiles) and the Law

When God established His covenant with Israel through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, He created a Chosen People for a specific mission: To be a light to the gentiles. They were to declare to those lost in paganism, idolatry, heathenism and worse that there IS one and one only true God.

Some of the “God fearers” became proselytes (the initial definition of that word was for gentiles to follow the Jewish laws eschew all false gods.)

According to Jewish tradition and rabbinic interpretation, it is through the observance of the Seven Noachide Laws that the entire world becomes a decent, productive place, a fitting receptacle for the Divine. The Rambam (Moses Maimonides, 11th century Jewish philosopher and scholar) explicitly rules (Code, Kings 8:10): “Moshe Rabbeinu (Moses our teacher) commanded from the mouth of God to convince all the inhabitants of the world to observe the commandments given to the Children of Noach.”

In the book, “Everyman’s Talmud”, by Rabbi Abraham Cohen, (a summary of the teachings of the oral interpretation of the Mosaic Law), Page 65 we read, “To the Gentiles who were not prepared to enter the fold of the Judaism, a moral code, known as the seven commandments of the Sons of Noah, was offered. It consisted of the precepts: “The practice of equity, prohibitions against blaspheming the Name, idolatry, immorality, bloodshed, robbery and devouring a limb torn from a live animal” (Sanh.56a). By righteous conduct, based upon these fundamental laws they would earn the divine approval.” Even the strict Jews believed that the Sabbaths were not necessary as binding on the Gentiles. Circumcision of the flesh is necessary before any person is required to observe the any Sabbath.

According to Jewish tradition and rabbinic interpretation, the Children of Israel are the Jews, the descendants of the Patriarch Jacob. They are commanded to fulfill the 613 commandments of the Torah. (See the Apple of His Eye web site Bible study section for a complete list of these commandments and their Biblical reference.) The Children of Noah are the Gentiles, comprising the seventy nations of the world. They are commanded concerning the Seven Universal Laws, also known as the Seven Laws of the Children of Noah or the Seven Noahide Laws.

The Seven Noahide Laws are:

1. Avodah Zarah: Prohibition on idolatry.
2. Birchat HaShem: Prohibition on blasphemy and cursing the Name of God.
3. Shefichat Damim: Prohibition on murder.
4. Gezel: Prohibition on robbery and theft.
5. Gilui Arayot: Prohibition on immorality and forbidden sexual relations.
6. Ever Min HaChay: Prohibition on removing and eating a limb from a live animal.



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7. Dinim: Requirement to establish a justice system and courts of law to enforce the other six laws. See (Talmud Sanh.56a)

Men and women are equal in their responsibility to observe the Seven Universal Laws. According to Jewish tradition, when a Gentile resolves to fulfill the Seven Universal Laws, his or her soul is elevated. This person becomes one of the “Chasidei Umot Haolam” (Pious Ones of the Nations) and receives a share of the World to Come. The Torah calls 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 to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and to offer sacrifices to the God of Israel.

If a Gentile 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.

In the New Testament, the first followers of Jesus were mostly Jews. Eventually more and more gentiles were grafted in to the body of Christ. There were zealous Judaizers who called for the gentiles to come under the full weight of the Jewish law, be circumcised, keep the festivals and dietary laws, etc. This led to great debate among the Jewish believers over the question, “What to do with the gentile? Have them keep the law and be circumcised like us or not?” (Keeping the law was NOT for salvation in the New Testament but done in liberty and through Jewish tradition.)

The Council at Jerusalem

Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses.” 6 The apostles and elders met to consider this question. 7 After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: “Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. 8 God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. 9 He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. 10 Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? 11 No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”... 23 With them they sent the following letter: The apostles and elders, your brothers, To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Greetings. 24 We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. 25 So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul— 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing. 28 It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: 29 You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell. – Acts 15

As believers in Jesus we know that we are all saved from sin not because we have kept any law, but totally by God’s grace through faith in Jesus, the Messiah. Those who look to the law for salvation have misplaced their faith by seeking to establish for themselves what no man was capable of doing. Sadly,



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when tradition trumps God's word, people are led astray and face a Christ-less eternity. Therefore the need for us to engage in the noble work of missions is critical in every age so that people lost in sin might see Jesus and find redemption.

The U.S. Congress officially recognized the Noahide Laws in legislation which was passed by both houses. Congress and the President of the United States, George Bush, indicated in Public Law 102-14, 102nd Congress, that the United States of America was founded upon the Seven Universal Laws of Noah, and that these Laws have been the bedrock of society from the dawn of civilization. They also acknowledged that the Seven Laws of Noah are the foundation upon which civilization stands and that recent weakening of these principles threaten the fabric of civilized society, and that justified preoccupation in educating the Citizens of the United States of America and future generations is needed. For this purpose, this Public Law designated March 26, 1991 as Education Day, U.S.A.



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For More Information

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