

## **Lecture 2: What are the Noahide Laws?**

Shalom, and greetings.

We are happy to have you join us in the vital mission of the Bnei Noach, which will help lead to greater peace in the entire world!

First, though, we have to ask: What is a Ben Noach?

The answer is that Israel is the first nation which ever claimed to have spoken with the Creator of the World. Just think about it. Can it be that the world was created, and suddenly man was thrown into it, and then God did not even talk to him? No, that's not logical. In the book of Genesis, we see that in fact the Creator did speak to His creation, at the very beginning.

"And God said to Adam, be fruitful and multiply, and fill the world..." [Genesis 1,28].

Just look at that: the Creator didn't speak to the nation of Israel, rather He spoke to the ancestor of all of humanity!! Afterwards, the people sinned and were completely destroyed in the Deluge, except for one family, that of Noach. Noach and his sons are the ones who continued the chain of human existence.

Later on, the Creator revealed Himself to the nation of Israel, and He instructed them to proudly support and to disseminate the message of the Creator to humanity as a whole.

To summarize so far:

According to the Jewish tradition, all human beings are children of God, who created everything. Therefore, every human being, whether a Jew or a Gentile, is worthy of having a conversation with the Creator. The Jews, as the ones who accepted the

mission of bringing the Word of the Creator to the rest of the world, have agreed to perform more actions than the non-Jews. The commands are called mitzvot. One who is not a Jew is not required to perform all the mitzvot that a Jew must do! And that is the way things should be.

What are the mitzvot that a Ben Noach has been commanded to observe? There are seven basic mitzvot that every human being is obligated to perform. These can be viewed as the keys to seven categories of activity, and in this brief article we will try to summarize them. Before we start we should emphasize that these are simple acts that are necessary to establish a normal and healthy society, which will allow every person to live with all the others in a respectable way. Today this seems obvious, but when these decrees were first stated some 2,500 or 3,000 years ago – they were a novel approach that was not accepted by the other people...

For example, it is only in the last few hundred years that humanity has been trying to reveal a single unified basis for all of natural law. When the great philosophers were alive (such as Plato, Aristotle, and others), the people were convinced that there were different laws of physics that applied underneath the moon and above the moon... The idea that there is one set of universal physical laws that unifies everything is a concept that the nation of Israel gave to humanity.

And this leads us to the first two laws of Noach:

- (1) The prohibition of idolatry.
- (2) The prohibition to blaspheme against the Creator.

The main objective of these two mitzvot can be summarized in the following theme: "First of all, accept the authority of My Kingdom – then, afterwards, you can perform My decrees." Before we begin to study the details of actions which we must do, we must make a decision – to accept the authority of the King of the Universe, He who

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created it. This cannot be done while we continue to serve a foreign god or when we do not show proper respect for God (and blaspheme Him).

Note: Our prayer is a direct expression of our link to God. This is the positive aspect of these first two mitzvot. What is the proper form of prayer? This will be discussed in a later message.

### (3) The prohibition of murder.

There is no need to waste words on the importance of this commandment. The Creator gave every person the gift of life, and we should never dare to take this gift away from anybody, just as we cannot give life to anybody else. This was the sin of Cain, and from his time on humanity is crying out for the possibility that every man and woman will allow all the others to live, even though they don't think alike...

### (4) Illicit sex.

This law is quite complex, with many ramifications, and we will not discuss it in detail here.

Let us just say that when we burst forth from the womb of the mother who was pregnant with us, we received air to breath and usually also food, so that we would be able to live in this world. The main thing that we must do in return is to grant life in the same way to future generations. Any sexual fashions that do not provide a healthy and complete format for life within human society will lead to unnecessary destruction, and there should be no room for them in our world!

The best policy is to get married in an organized way, to establish a family, and to try to provide a better world for the future generations!

### (5) The prohibition to rob or steal from another person.



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This law, as the previous ones, is quite easy to understand. Every person labors to improve his or her life, and it is completely unreasonable to overturn the public order by taking away somebody else's livelihood. If this becomes a common action, how will society continue to exist?

**(6) Prohibition to eat a limb taken from an animal while it is still alive.**

This law has several very important elements, but we will only touch on them in this brief summary.

First, we must address a question in principle: Why are we permitted to eat meat in the first place? If we have been given permission to eat the flesh of an animal, we must at the very least be moderate and not live in a cruel fashion (such as cutting of the leg of an animal and eating it in full view of the animal, while it suffers from pain)...

From this law we can begin to understand how we should relate to other elements of creation. We must keep in mind that the Creator made not only man (or, as some people seem to think, only the nation of Israel...). This can lead us to thoughts about the link between mankind and his environment, and not only contact with other people.

**(7) The obligation to establish courts in order to make judgements between people.**

The need for this is certainly clear. Without a system of courts, whoever is strongest will force himself on the others. This mitzva is an obligation not for the individual but for society as a whole. It is nevertheless one of the most important commands, as was already recognized by Thomas Hobbes in his book, "Leviathan," more than 400 years ago.

Does this bring us to the end of the obligations of the Bnei Noach? Absolutely not!

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Questions that will be addressed in later more detailed lessons:

- \* What practical steps are necessary for a person to become a Ben Noach?
- \* What else must you learn?
- \* Can a person be a Ben Noach and still remain a Christian?
- \* What is the next step in this process?

Shalom, and greetings from the Land of Israel.



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