

## AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

by Rabbi Moshe Weiner

The Master of the universe commanded Adam, the first man,<sup>1</sup> on the day of his creation,<sup>2</sup> as it says,<sup>3</sup> “And the L-rd G-d commanded ‘the man’ (*Adam*) ...” G-d commanded six precepts to Adam:

- 1) the prohibition against worshiping false gods;
- 2) the prohibition against cursing G-d's Name;
- 3) the prohibition against murder;
- 4) the prohibition against specific forbidden sexual relations;
- 5) the prohibition against theft;
- 6) the commandment to establish laws and courts of justice.

The Creator added to these when He commanded Noah<sup>4</sup> not to eat flesh that was removed from a living animal, as it says,<sup>4</sup> “And G-d blessed Noah, ... But flesh, with its soul in its blood you should not eat.” These seven precepts are called the Seven Commandments for the *B'nei Noah* (“Children of Noah,” i.e. Gentiles, who are non-Jews).<sup>5</sup>

When Moses our teacher was called up on Mount Sinai, he received the Torah's commandments directly from the Holy One, blessed be He, together with their explanations. Moses received the entire Torah from G-d – both the Written Torah (the Five Books of Moses) and the Oral Torah. The Oral Torah is the explanation of all the command-

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**the commandment to establish ... courts of justice** - This includes an obligation for leaders to inform their communities about the Noahide precepts.

**not to eat flesh that was removed from a living animal** - This applies to land mammals and birds.

<sup>1</sup> Tractate *Sanhedrin* 56b.

<sup>2</sup> It is explained in Tractate *Sanhedrin* 56b that all of the Noahide Commandments can be exegetically derived from Genesis 2:16, “And the L-rd G-d commanded the man, saying, ...,” which was stated to Adam in the Garden of Eden on the day of his creation.

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 2:16.

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 9:1 and 9:4.

<sup>5</sup> Rambam, *Laws of Kings* 9:1.

ments, which are very concisely recorded in those Five Books.<sup>6</sup> Included in the Torah, G-d also repeated and gave to Moses the Seven Commandments for the Children of Noah, along with their explanations and their details.

All the Gentiles of the world were henceforth eternally commanded to accept upon themselves and to fulfill these seven Divine precepts, because the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded them in the Torah, and He made known through Moses our teacher that the descendants of Noah had previously been commanded to do them.<sup>7</sup>

These seven commandments have general rules and many details, and all of them are described in the Oral Torah, just as the 613 commandments (*mitzvot*) that the Jewish people were commanded to observe. The Jewish Sages and the faithful Rabbinical authorities in every generation are commanded to explain the Torah to the rest of the Jewish people. They are also commanded to explain the Noahide commandments to the Gentiles, and to teach them how these seven *mitzvot* should be fulfilled.<sup>8</sup>

We are not to rely on anyone else to provide explanations of any part of Torah, whether for Jews or Gentiles, aside from accepted Jewish Torah scholars, for they alone, as students of the earlier Torah Sages, are the authorities who explain the Oral Torah. (Rambam describes the Torah Sages of the Talmud as “the mainstay of the Oral Torah.”)<sup>9</sup>

In addition to observing the Seven Noahide Commandments with their many details, a Gentile is commanded to act in the proper ways that human intelligence would compel him, whether these are obligations to G-d or to other people, or to society as a whole. Even

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**They are also commanded ... to teach them how these seven *mitzvot* should be fulfilled** - Due to the extreme difficulties of the extended Jewish exile, this was not possible in most societies until the present generation.

**accepted Jewish Torah scholars** - These are the Jewish Sages and faithful Orthodox Rabbis, whose responsa and teachings may be cited by laypersons.

<sup>6</sup> Rambam, *Introduction to the Mishneh Torah*.

<sup>7</sup> Rambam, *Laws of Kings* 8:11.

<sup>8</sup> *Tosafot*, Tractate *Hagigah* 13a, states that it is an obligation for the Jews to teach and inform the Gentiles of the Seven Noahide Commandments.

<sup>9</sup> Rambam, *Hilhot Mamrim* 1:1.

though Gentiles are not commanded in detail about these parameters of proper conduct, nevertheless, G-d carefully checks and judges all the ways of every person. There are actions for which the individual or the society is liable to be punished, since such behavior is not appropriate for the human race, even though it is beyond the scope of the Seven Commandments. Societal morality is included in the commandment of “judgments” (*dinim*), by which the Children of Noah were commanded to set up courts of law, and judges who will supervise and warn society about prohibited behaviors. But G-d will look upon the ways of an individual and judge him for his every action, even if he is not under the jurisdiction of a court of law, or if the court is not able to judge him, or if the court does not know about his behavior.<sup>10</sup>

The purpose of this book is to explain these seven commandments according to Torah principles and Torah Law, including both their general rules and their details, and also the moral obligations that are intellectually incumbent. All of this is in order to teach faithful Gentiles the way of G-d and the path in which it is proper for them to go, until they will merit through this the distinctions and the spiritual beauty of “the pious of the nations of the world.”

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**behavior ... not appropriate for the human race** - The true specialty of mankind is expressed in Tractate *Avot* 3:14: “He [Rabbi Akiva] used to say: Beloved is man, for he was created in the image [of G-d]; it is even a greater love that it was made known to him that he was created in the image [of G-d], as it is stated [Genesis 9:6]: For in the image of G-d He made man.”

**even if he is not under the jurisdiction of a court of law** - This is a court that punishes convicted transgressors of the Seven Noahide Commandments.

<sup>10</sup> Tractate *Sanhedrin* 104b relates the destruction of the metropolis of Sodom and Gomorrah. Even though the practice of idol worship and forbidden sexual relations was rampant in those cities, in outright rebellion against G-d, the Divine decree of their total destruction came because they banned any practices of charity and kindness, to the extreme (they punished any performer of good deeds with tortuous execution). Hence it is obvious that G-d demands moral conduct from mankind, even though it is not explicitly commanded. See Ramban on Genesis 6:2, explaining why the generation of Noah’s flood was punished specifically because of theft, even though they violated all their commandments, because theft is a logical obligation that no one can negate by saying, “we did not know that we were commanded.”

## The Basis for Fulfillment of the Noahide Code

Rambam explains in *Laws of Kings* 8:11: “The Holy One, blessed be He, commanded the Seven Noahide Commandments in the Torah, and informed Moses our teacher that Noah’s descendants had been previously commanded to fulfill them.”

This means that even though Noah’s descendants were previously commanded to fulfill them – and this Divine command was not nullified in legal terms, and Gentiles are still obligated by the power of the original commands – nevertheless, there were more details added by G-d through Moses at the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Clearly, the Noahide Commandments were commanded to Moses, because even though they were commanded previously to Adam and Noah, they were never written down as Torah before Mount Sinai. Their recording in the Written Torah was through Moses, and their explanations and details as transmitted in the Oral Torah were given to Moses, as will be explained.

According to his above-cited ruling, Rambam explains that (a) the descendants of Noah are obligated to observe their Seven Commandments because these were commanded to them by G-d through Moses, and (b) when the Torah was given by G-d through Moses, there was a spiritual dimension that He added for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews. The explanation of this spiritual dimension of the Noahide Code, which was added by G-d through Moses at Mount Sinai, is given by Rambam in *Laws of the Foundations of the Torah*, Chapter 8.

Rambam explains that we do not believe in Moses our teacher as a prophet because of the miracles he performed, since a prediction and a sign could be accomplished through sorcery, and thus it could be doubted. Rather, we believe in Moses and G-d’s true Torah of Moses – against which there will never be a real challenge – based on the true testimony of what the eyes of the entire Israelite nation saw and their ears heard at G-d’s giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai.

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**the pious of the nations of the world** - These are Gentiles who earn eternal spiritual reward by accepting upon themselves to fulfill the Seven Noahide Commandments and being careful in their observance, specifically because the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded them in the Torah, and informed us through Moses our teacher that Noah’s descendants had been previously commanded to fulfill them.