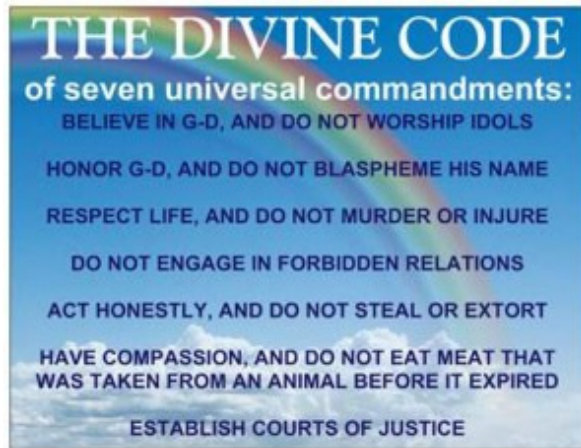


# 7 Commandments – Introduction

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G-d gave the first six commandments to Adam, the first human being. After the Flood, these commandments were repeated, and a seventh commandment was added, when G-d made the Covenant of the Rainbow with Noah and all of the world's creatures. These seven Divine precepts became known as the Noahide Commandments.

As an introduction before listing the Biblical source verses, note that the Covenant of the Rainbow was not dependent on these commandments. Rather it was G-d's [promise to all living creatures](#) that He would never again obliterate all land-life from the world, no matter how sinful people would become (Genesis 9:8-17 - "Never again will there be a flood to destroy the

earth"). The Covenant of the Rainbow has an inner meaning as well, which is that G-d promised that He would always accept a person's sincere personal repentance if it was directed to Him.

The entire Book of Genesis, and the Book of Exodus up to and including the arrival of the Israelites at Mt. 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 Seven Noahide Commandments which had become neglected by the nations. That was four days before the Ten Commandments (which implicitly included all the Torah's 613 Jewish Commandments) were spoken openly by G-d to all of the Israelites (who numbered approximately 3 million at that time), and at that point they become the Jewish People.

At Mount Sinai, G-d taught the essentials of Torah Law through Moses, and this is called the [Oral Torah](#). Included in the Torah Law are the details of G-d's directives that all Gentiles are commanded to observe the 7 Noahide Commandments. These details, as G-d specified them to Moses, are the true foundation of the Torah's [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, as his/her part in the Torah of Moses which is G-d's "Tree of Life."

# Locate Sources for the 7 Commandments

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The Oral Torah (Tractate *Sanhedrin*, ch. 7) explains that all of these 7 Noahide Commandments are encoded within a single verse: Gen. 2:16. Five Noahide Commandments are explicitly found in different verses in the Book of Genesis, and one is found in Leviticus:

## **1. Do Not Worship a False Deity**

Genesis 2:16 states: “And L-rd G-d commanded to the man, saying...” This Divine command to Adam implies that only the One True G-d, the Creator of the spiritual and physical realms, should be obeyed and honored as the Deity, and the greatest honor is to serve and worship.

Thus, one should serve and worship only the One True G-d, and not any idol.

## **2. Do Not Commit Blasphemy**

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, Jews and Gentiles. This demonstrates that blasphemy thus is prohibited to Gentiles as a capital offense even as it is for Jews (Tractate *Sanhedrin*, p. 56a).

## **3. Do Not Commit Murder or Injury**

The edict against murder, and the punishment for this transgression, 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.”

## **4. Do Not Have Forbidden Sexual Relations**

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, with a woman who has ever been his father’s domestic partner or certified wife, with a woman who is currently a domestic partner or certified wife of another man, with another male, or with an animal. A Gentile is also forbidden to have relations with his maternal sister, which is learned from Gen. 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. So they had the same paternal grandfather, who people often referred to as "father.") It also was universally accepted that father-daughter relations would be included, as evidenced by the disgrace of Lot after he had relations with his two daughters, following G-d's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:29-36, and Rashi's explanation of Gen. 20:1). Relations of a female with a female are likewise an abomination to G-d which is included as one of the subjects of the verse Lev. 18:3, which speaks against the immoral practices of the ancient Egyptians and Canaanites, and which Lev. 18:30 refers to as "abominable traditions." About these, the Midrash (Sifra) specifies: "A man would marry a man, a woman would marry a woman, and a woman would be married to two men."

### **5. Do Not Commit Theft**

The prohibition of theft is contained within the permission which G-d granted to Adam and Hava (Eve) in Genesis 2:16 to eat from the trees of the garden. This implies that if the permission had not been granted, they would have been forbidden to do so, because the property did not belong to them. This applied specifically to the fruit of the Tree of "Knowledge of Good and Evil" which was forbidden for them to take, under penalty of death (Genesis 2:17). This Noahide commandment was cited explicitly by Abraham in Genesis 21:25.

### **6. Don't Eat Meat that was Taken from a Live Animal**

Adam and Hava (Eve) were not given permission to kill animals for food, and this remained in effect until after the Flood. 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 meat, with its soul [which is in] its blood you shall not eat."

### **7. Establish Laws and Courts of Justice**

This can be learned from the story of Shechem, Dinah, and the sons of Jacob. In Genesis 34:2 it relates, "Shechem, son of Hamor the Hivvite, the prince of the land, saw her; he took her, and he lay with her, and violated her." His "taking" her against her will was a form of kidnapping, which was forbidden as a type of theft. Since the men of Shechem's city did not convene a court of justice and convict him for his crimes, they failed to obey this commandment and also collectively became accomplices to his crime. Jacob's sons therefore formed a court, convicted them, and executed them. It should also be noted that all the men of Shechem were also guilty of the sin of idolatry, as evidenced by the idols which the sons of Jacob removed from the city (Genesis 35:2,4). Also, note that Jacob called for the judgment of a court of law in Genesis 31:37.

# The Prohibition of Idolatry

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## *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.

*The following is adapted from the Introduction by Rabbi 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 planetary constellations *determine* human events or a person's fate. Likewise, soothsaying is a custom that comes from ancient idolatries, and it is forbidden to pick natural occurrences or random lots as signs for how one should choose to act even though there is no logical connection [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 consulting "spirits" (as people do in seances). 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. 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***

Gen. 2:16: "And the L-rd G-d (*E-lokim*) commanded the man, saying..."

The Hebrew word *E-lokim* is one of the Divine Names that mean "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 ..." (Ex. 20:3). Thus the statement to Adam in Gen. 2:16 implies that only the L-rd G-d should be worshiped, but not an idol.

[Note: the Talmudic sage Rabbi Yitzchak offered an alternative derivation. He suggested that the word "*tzav*" ("command") in the verse points to a prohibition of worship of false gods. The verse would then teach that only G-d, the One True G-d, is the source of all true commandments, and therefore only G-d is to be served.]

The 24 Books of the Hebrew Bible are filled with statements from G-d to His prophets that testify to His abhorrence of all types of idolatry.

### ***Some Major Details and Related Fundamental Principles***

1. The obligation to believe in the One G-d, and in no other entity as a deity.
2. The obligation for a person to obey what he is commanded by G-d, and to pray to G-d in times of need.
3. The prohibition of serving idols or following the idolatrous customs of those who serve them.
4. The prohibition of making, owning or selling an idol.
5. One may not swear in a name of an idol.

# The Prohibition of Blasphemy

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## *The Meaning*

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

At the very center of this world is *homo sapiens*, the human being Divinely endowed with intellect. This intellect 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 acknowledgment 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 worshipping G-d that applies equally to all, Jews and Gentiles 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. (Normally one is punished only for offenses involving an action. The sin of blasphemy, however, is

one of a very small group of offenses where speech on its own is deemed tantamount to criminal action. While actual articulation alone in this context will incur full penalty, blasphemous thoughts, too, are serious sins.)

More specifically, the Noahide prohibition of blasphemy derives from an acceptance of the supremacy and sovereignty of G-d which *ipso facto* demands respect or appropriate reverence for G-d. It follows then that –

(1) All Gentiles are subject to the precept of awe and reverence before G-d, more commonly referred to as the “fear of G-d.”

(2) A Gentile is not to use G-d’s Name in vain. To use G-d’s Name in vain (a Torah prohibition stated explicitly for Jews in the third of the “Ten Commandments”) is closely allied with the principle of blasphemy. It is clearly a form of disrespect. This would then also include a prohibition to swear falsely. Thus we find in the Torah that from the earliest times the concept of an oath was regarded as a sacred obligation by Gentiles as well. (See for example Gen. 21:22ff.; *ibid.* 26:28ff.)

### *Scriptural Sources*

Lev. 24:10–17 relates the incident of a Jew who violated the injunction of Ex. 22:27 and blasphemed in anger, and the Divine edict proclaiming this to be a capital offense. Moreover, it states in Lev. 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, Jews and Gentiles. This shows that blasphemy is prohibited to Gentiles as a capital offense even as it is for Jews. (Tractate Sanhedrin, p. 56a)

### *Some Major Details and Related Fundamental Principles*

1. The obligation to respect G-d’s Name
2. The obligation to fear G-d
3. The prohibition of cursing G-d (Heaven forbid)
4. It is forbidden to swear in vain (as in taking a vain oath, or swearing to a false promise or statement)

# The Prohibition of Murder and Injury

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The Baal Shem Tov 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..."

## *The Meaning*

*The following is adapted from the Introduction 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" (Gen. 1:28), and "He did not create it for emptiness; He fashioned it to be inhabited" (Isaiah 45:18).

In addition to sinning against the Divine and destroying the victim's physical existence, 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. But even physically, the effects of murder extend across time and space. We learn this from the world's first act of murder. When

Cain murdered his brother Abel, G-d responded by asking Cain (Gen. 4:10), "What have you done? The voice of your brother's 'bloods' [the literal translation] cry out to Me..." The use of the plural "bloods" is meaningful. It teaches that one who murders another also "kills" that person's would-be descendants for all generations to come. Who but G-d can know where those descendants would have lived or what good they would have brought to the world? 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, the Jewish Sages teach that all of a person's great or small good deeds are the spiritual fruits that he adds to the world. Therefore, the 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 constitutes the sin of murder? What acts are included in that category, and what acts are not? Are there times when killing is permitted, or even mandated, 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, we see that G-d provided ample instructions for how the commandment should be fulfilled in any circumstances.

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."

### *Scriptural Sources*

The prohibition of murder and injury 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 Fundamental Principles*

Adapted from the Table of Contents under The Prohibition of Murder and Injury, in "The Divine Code," Vol. I, 2nd Ed.:

1. The Prohibition of Murder; Abortion; Euthanasia; Causing Mortal Injury, and Partners in Murder
2. The Prohibition of Suicide
3. When it is Permitted to Sacrifice One's Life for One of the Seven Noahide Commandments
4. The Laws of a Pursuer and Self Defense
5. The Laws of Intentional and Unintentional Killing, and Killing Through Negligence or Under Duress
6. The Prohibition of Causing Personal Injury or Damage
7. The Prohibition of Endangering Oneself or Another
8. The Obligation to Save a Person's Life
9. The Prohibitions of Embarrassing Another Person; Evil Gossip, and Tale-bearing
10. 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):

6:13. One who injured or embarrassed another, even with words, does not receive full atonement for the distress he caused just through the restitution determined by a court. His sin is only forgiven when he asks forgiveness from the injured person and appeases him. It is not proper for the person who was harmed to be cruel and unforgiving. Rather, when he sees that the person who harmed him truly wishes to seek his forgiveness, he should pardon him.

8:1. It is also forbidden to cause another person suffering through one's speech. This is morally and logically binding, as Hillel said as a summary of the *entire* Torah, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow" (Tractate *Shabbat* 31a).

9:8. 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. Perhaps in the merit of this sincere penitence, G-d will grant him life. 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.

# The Prohibition of Forbidden Relations

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## *The Meaning*

*The following is adapted 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:*

One of the most powerful human desires is procreation and sexual fulfillment. It is a desire that is necessary for the continuation of humanity, but when used destructively has destroyed not only the morals of the individual, but has been historically proven to lead to the disintegration of whole societies.

The Hebrew words for Man (*Ish*) and Woman (*Ishah*) both contain the Hebrew word *aysh*, fire. The Talmudic Sages drew a correlation between the words: just as fire can be harnessed to produce great energy and infinite other powerfully positive uses, but when unleashed can destroy and harm endlessly, so too the human sexual desire must be kept within the boundaries of a productive and G-dly marriage.

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. The new modern-day vision of morality (which, in reality, 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, simply 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 during that period. He found that “the regulations of the relationship between the sexes” are the very foundation of civilized society.<sup>[1]</sup> 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 laws and obligations of the Divine Code are followed, humankind will hopefully not *self*-destruct. G-d provided a rainbow as evidence of His covenant that He will not again destroy the world. 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 whether a society will heed them – particularly the admonitions of sexual boundaries and proscriptions. These are set forth as a codex 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 Press, 1934.

### *Scriptural Sources*

Five of the six types of relations that are forbidden by G-d to Gentiles are covered in Gen. 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 Gen. 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. So they had the same paternal grandfather, who people often referred to as “father”.) It also was universally accepted that father-daughter relations would be included, as evidenced by the disgrace of Lot after he had relations with his two daughters, following G-d’s destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:29–36, and Rashi’s explanation of Gen. 20:1). Relations of a female with a female are likewise an abomination to G-d which is included as one of the subjects of the verse Lev. 18:3, which speaks against the immoral practices of the ancient Egyptians and Canaanites, and which Lev. 18:30 refers to as “abominable traditions.” About these the Midrash (Sifra) 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 Fundamental Principles*

Adapted from the Table of Contents of The Prohibition of Forbidden Relations, in "The Divine Code," Vol. I, 2nd Ed.:

1. Categories of Sexual Partners and Sexual Acts that are Forbidden
2. The Prohibitions of Homosexual and Bestial Relations
3. The Prohibition of Relations with Other Men's Wives
4. Partners with Whom there can be no Status of Marriage
5. Precepts Related to Marriage, Fornication, and Divorce
6. Precepts Related to Spilling Semen and Contraception
7. Guarding Against Forbidden Relations, and Following Ways of Modesty
8. Prohibitions Related to Being Alone with a Forbidden Partner

Selected rules related to the Noahide prohibition of forbidden relations, from the text of "The Divine Code" (Part VI):

1:6. A few other sexual relations that are not capital sins for Gentiles are also forbidden. For example, a full sister or maternal half-sister of a man's mother is forbidden to him.

1:9. 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.]

1:12. 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 upon themselves a marriage bond. An even higher minimum age should be set by communities at which to allow and recognize marriages. This should be the age at which most people in that community can be considered as having maturity and responsibility for their actions. Nowadays, this is usually in the late teens.

4:11. From 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," it is the natural and appropriate way for a man to marry a woman and establish a family. One who deviates from this path is mistaken, and acts against G-d's will in His creation of mankind and their character.

# The Prohibition of Theft

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## *The Meaning*

*The following is adapted 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 Man, as a societal person 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. This is illustrated by a dictum from the Ethics of the Fathers: "Rabbi Yosse says: the money of your friend should be valuable [and important] as your own."

Theft, in its different variations, causes corruption which can bring world society to the brink of destruction. This lesson has been historically documented in the decline of all societies.

One can see the harshness of the punishment for theft from the Generation of the Flood. The Sages say<sup>[1]</sup> that even though the people of that generation were very sinful with respect of all of their divine commandments, their decree of annihilation was only sealed over their sins of theft, as it says,<sup>[2]</sup> "The end of all flesh has come before Me, because the world is full of robbery, and behold, I will destroy the world."

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 focus of this command 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 the Creator of mankind Himself, who gave us commands and 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 is obligated to be extremely careful regarding the prohibition of theft, since there are many details; and the nature of a person is to covet the money of others, and one's evil inclination tricks him with various excuses for why it is permissible to do so. These different laws help a person always focus on G-d, his truth, and oneself truth.

One should exert extra effort to learn and understand this law and its details, so one may merit to be careful about the prohibition of theft, in order not to transgress the prohibition even by mistake. Likewise, it is an obligation to contemplate one's actions, in order not to fall mistakenly into theft, since this is likely to occur when one is not taking careful notice of his actions.

The complex details of this command allow a person to appreciate God's truth and justice and, and the Divine Kingship over the world. The fulfillment of all the Seven Commands, and especially the laws regarding theft, enhance human society to the point where we can merit G-d's promise to the prophet Isaiah (11:9), "They will not harm or destroy on all My holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as water covering the sea bed."

[1] Sanhedrin 108a, cited by Rashi on Genesis 6:13.

[2] Genesis 6:13.

### *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 the permission had not been granted, they would have been forbidden to do so, because the property did not belong to them. This applied specifically to the fruit of the Tree of "Knowledge of Good and Evil" which was forbidden for them to take, under penalty of death (Genesis 2:17). This Noahide commandment was cited explicitly by Abraham in Genesis 21:25.

## *Some Major Details and Related Fundamental Principles*

Adapted from the Table of Contents under The Prohibition of Theft, in "The Divine Code," Vol. I, expanded 2nd Edition:

1. The prohibition of (secretive) theft and (open) robbery
2. The obligation to return a stolen object, and restitution for theft
3. The prohibitions of assisting a thief, or benefiting from or buying a stolen item; accidental theft
4. Saving a life overrides the prohibition of theft, but the amount taken should be paid back if possible; retrieving a stolen object
5. Theft through false measurements; the prohibition of cheating or misinforming another person
6. The prohibition of extortion, and forcing a purchase
7. Laws of borrowing, renting, and safeguarding an entrusted object
8. Stealing or encroaching upon real estate property
9. The prohibition of kidnapping
10. Bodily injury and damaging another person's property
11. Delinquent debts, and withholding a worker's wages
12. The laws pertaining to an ownerless object
13. 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):

1:2. In the Noahide Commandments for Gentiles, there is no difference between theft (stealing secretly) and robbery (stealing openly). Therefore, these two types of actions are considered to carry equivalent liability for Gentiles.

1:3. There is another type of forcible acquisition of items, called *extortion*. This occurs when one forces his victim to *sell* him an object, even at its correct value. It is forbidden for Gentiles to commit such acts because of the Noahide prohibition of theft.

1:4. If the item taken is so small that *no one would be concerned about it*, for example, if one pulled a sliver of wood from another's fence to use for picking his teeth, such a thing is permissible (because the owner would not mind this minimal loss). Nevertheless, it is righteous to hold oneself back from this as well. (But if there are many people involved and each one is taking out a little bit, surely the owner would mind this, and it is either theft or an extortion perpetrated by a multitude, which is clearly forbidden.)

# The Prohibition of Meat from a Living Animal; Info on Animal Welfare/Humane Slaughter

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## *The Meaning*

*The following is adapted from the Introduction by Dr. Joe M. Regenstein, Ph.D. (Professor of Food Science, Cornell University) to the section on the Prohibition of Meat from a Living Animal, in "The Divine Code," Part IV:*

One of the Noahide Commandments is that which in Hebrew is referred to as "*Eiver Min Ha'ĥai*" ("Limb from a Living Animal"), which is the prohibition against eating flesh that was severed from a living animal. On the surface this seems like an easy concept to grasp, and it is. 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 ("*tza'ar ba'alei ĥayim*" in Hebrew) 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. So, it is clear that by including "*Eiver Min Ha'ĥai*" as one of the Seven Noahide Commandments that are incumbent on all humanity, Hebrew Scripture is making a very powerful statement of G-d's vision for humanity.

For those seeking to live in accordance with the eternal commandments that G-d gave through Moses, the need to understand the implications of both the entire Noahide Code and this particular commandment is critical. 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***

Adam and Hava (Eve) were not given permission to kill animals for food, and this remained in effect until after the Flood. 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. ("Nevertheless, you may not eat flesh with its life, which is its blood.")

## ***Some Major Details and Related Fundamental Principles***

Adapted from the Table of Contents under The Prohibition of Meat from a Living Animal, in "The Divine Code," Vol. I, expanded 2nd Edition, by Rabbi Moshe Weiner:

1. The prohibition applies to land mammals and birds
2. The Prohibition of Separating Meat from an Animal that is Living or in the Process of Dying
3. Consuming such Meat Before or after the Animal's Death
4. Deriving Benefit from Meat Separated from a Living Animal
5. Restrictions on Causing Suffering to a Living Creature
6. The Prohibition of Mating Different Species of Animals
7. The Prohibition of Grafting Different Species of Fruit Trees

Selected general rules of the Noahide prohibition of meat removed from a living animal are presented here, quoted from the text of "The Divine Code," (Part IV, Chapter 1):

2. After the flood ... the dominion granted to him [Noah] entitled him to kill any creature to eat its flesh, as the Torah states [Genesis 9:2-3]: "The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and every bird of the sky, upon everything that moves on earth and upon all fish of the sea; in your hand they are given. Every moving thing that lives shall be yours for food; like the green herbage I have given you everything."

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, as will be explained... Moreover, it is fitting for a person to distance himself from cruelty to the fullest extent possible.)

3. Noah was, however, forbidden to consume flesh that was removed from certain animals while they were still living, as the Torah states [Genesis 9:4]: "But **flesh** with its soul, [which is] its blood, you shall not eat." This refers [only] 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].

4. 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 commandment, "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...

5. 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, neither Adam, Noah, or their descendants were ever 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 the organ, one should first kill the animal and then take the parts of its body that one needs.

6. The prohibition against eating flesh taken from a living animal applies only to domesticated mammals, wild [land] mammals, and birds. In more general terms [as learned from the exact wording in Hebrew of Genesis 9:4], these are all the animals for which there is a Torah-law distinction between their flesh and their blood [so that prohibiting the flesh does not make the blood prohibited]...

# The Commandment to Establish Judicial Courts

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## *The Meaning*

If society is to function successfully, it must be able to impose on 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 for people's behavior. Every nation, state or province, and municipality is obligated to have a system of courts to uphold the Seven Noahide Commandments. Beyond this, all Gentile societies must also establish civil laws according to righteous principles, with civil courts rule on civil matters, since these inevitably arise in the normal functioning of people's daily lives.

It is important to understand that if secular courts or governments decide that it is fitting for the overall good of the society, they have the authority to place legal limits on activities that G-d's Torah leaves up to personal choice, if the restriction is acceptable to the population in general. Then by the Noahide "Law of Courts," it becomes required of the citizens to observe that secular law, and the courts can apply any rule for non-capital punishment that the public in general accepts, as long as it is not cruel and unusual. This is called "going beyond the letter" of the Torah Law. For example, a court system has the right to limit the 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 also part of G-d's 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, this is also a part of the Noahide obligation to promote "*yishuv olom*" – that people should be encouraged to act in ways that are morally proper according to G-d, or at least not to act in ways that are known from the Hebrew scriptures (which are authentic Divine revelation) to be abhorrent to G-d, whether or not the undesirable actions are actually liable to punishment according to the Torah's Noahide Code.

Even if there are no courts which expressly follow the Noahide Commandments, as in our day and age, every Gentile is still obligated to constrain himself or herself to believe in and follow the Seven Noahide Commandments. It is praiseworthy

to encourage others to do so as well, and to support laws in your own society which move toward the letter and spirit of the Noahide Commandments.

### *Scriptural Sources*

This precept can be learned from the story of Shechem, Dinah, and the sons of Jacob. In Genesis 34:2 it relates, "Shechem, son of Hamor the Hivvite, the prince of the land, saw her; he took her, and he lay with her, and violated her." His "taking" her against her will was a form of kidnapping, which was forbidden as a type of theft. Since the men of Shechem's city did not convene a court of justice and convict him for his crimes, they failed to obey this commandment and also collectively became accomplices to his crime. Jacob's sons therefore formed a court, convicted them, and executed them. It should also be noted that all the men of Shechem were also guilty of the sin of idolatry, as evidenced by the idols which the sons of Jacob removed from the city (Gen. 35:2,4). Also, note that Jacob called for the judgment of a court of law in Gen. 31:37.

### *Some Major Details*

1. it is the responsibility of the ruling power to institute oversight on the courts to be sure that only proper and expert judges are appointed, and that the judges do not act corruptly or unrighteously, which is forbidden. It also appears that the ruling power has the authority to institute a structure of "appeals" courts or "referral" courts.
2. 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). Rather, one must pursue a legal case within the legal system that has jurisdiction over the matter.
3. Circumstantial evidence is admissible in the Noahide courts of law.
4. The judges in Noahide courts must themselves be strict followers of the letter and spirit of the Noahide Commandments, and they must refer any questions they have on the Noahide Code to reliable Orthodox Rabbis who are experts in this area of Torah Law. Also, anyone who is known to transgress any of the 7 Noahide Commandments is not to be considered as a reliable witness.
5. All judges must deliver righteous judgments, and opposing claimants must be treated equally in every respect.
6. A judge is forbidden to take a bribe. Bribery to judge wrongly or rightly will corrupt any judgment.
7. In civil cases, seek arbitration and mediation or other means of finding an amicable settlement or compromise. This avoids a court trial, and more than that, it is an obligation to seek compromise.

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

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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, Inc., Northvale, NJ, 1998).

[The following list of these righteous practices is taken from this book with the gracious permission of the author, in synopsis.]

**1. [Contemplation of G-d](#):** Abraham, the first Patriarch, 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 on the omnipresence of the Creator, Who is the Source of existence and the only True Existence, is another spiritual practice discussed in various Kabbalistic and Chasidic works. However, for most of us, it is very difficult to progress on the proper path without the guidance of a Torah-true teacher. [After the Torah was given, you need to begin by learning and observing the Divine commandments which apply to you, either as a Gentile or a Jew.]

Synopsis of excerpts from a talk by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, on 11 Nisan 5743 – 1983:

“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, ch. 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 engages in this *mitzvah*, 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!”

**2. [Noahide Torah Study](#):** In order to live by the Universal [Noahide] Code, one must study its precepts. An outline is really just a starting point. The various ramifications of the Seven Noahide Commandments are discussed in several

modern works devoted to the subject. 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.

**3. [Prayer](#):** Every person can establish a relationship with G-d through prayer. One should petition 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 Patriach, who is described as praying "alone" in the fields. [Gen. 24:63] [Isaac also prayed at home with his wife, she on one side of the room, and he on the other (Gen. 25:21).]

The following is from the book *Vedibarta Bam (And You Shall Speak of Them)*, by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky, published and copyright © by Sichos In English:

QUESTION: What practical lesson can we learn from G-d's command to Noah to enter into the ark?

ANSWER: ...The Hebrew word "teivah" used for "ark" (meaning here a large, floating "box") also means "word." G-d is telling us as well to "enter" into the words of Torah and prayer. Sometimes when we study Torah we forget its holiness and the One who gave it; we say our prayers without sincerity or attention to their meaning.

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 the Torah-book or prayer-book, 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.

**4. [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 altruistic 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 [Tractate *Bava Basra* 10b].

**5. [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 previously. [Jonah 3:10] As the rabbis taught, "Nothing can stand in the way of repentance." The state of spiritual accord that one regains through this act of return is not something artificial. It is the original condition of the soul. King David exemplified repentance, as many of his psalms show [see for example Psalm 51]. Despair has no true existence, for it denies G-d's mercy, as well as His ability to alter the laws of nature or to intervene in history. The prophets of Israel taught that G-d seeks the repentance of Jews and Gentiles alike. [Jonah 4:11; Jeremiah 18:8] In a sense, this is the entire purpose of creation.

**6. [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" [Tractate *Taanis* 21a, concerning the individual Nachum Ish Gamzu]. 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 is 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 Chasidic 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 remarked. "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]

**ASK-NOAH NOTE:** The book [The Divine Code](#), Volume 1, by Rabbi Moshe Weiner, also includes these obligations:

**7. [Honoring One's Father and Mother](#):** Although Gentiles were not commanded to honor father and mother, from the beginning of creation they distinguished themselves by accepting an obligation to perform this righteous act. (See Tractate *Kiddushin* 31a.)

**8. [Not To Deceive Others](#):** This is another restraint that became universally adopted. This is shown by Jacob's accusation against Laban (Genesis 29:25), "Why have you deceived me," against which Laban takes pains to *justify* himself (thus showing that he agreed that deception was considered a sin). This rule also forced 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. (See *Likkutei Sichos*, v. 5, p. 141-148.)