

## CHAPTER 1

### Awareness of God<sup>1</sup>

1. The basic foundation and the first principle of faith is to know that there is a Primary Being who brought all existence into being.<sup>2</sup> All of the entities in the spiritual and physical realms come into existence only from the truth of His Being.

2. This Being is the God of the universe and the Master of the entire earth. He controls the spheres and the entire universe with infinite and unbounded power that continues without interruption.<sup>3</sup>

3. This God is one, and only can be one, and not two or more. He is one with a complete unification that surpasses any of the types of unity that are part of the created realms; He is not one in the manner of a category that includes multiple individual entities, nor one in the manner of a body that is divided into portions or dimensions. Rather, He is completely unified, and there exists no unity similar to His within the created realms.<sup>4</sup>

If there were multiple gods, they would be limited to some type of spiritual body and form, because similar but distinct entities co-

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Rambam, *Laws of Foundations of the Torah* 1:1-7.

<sup>2</sup> \*In a note that Rambam wrote on his Commentary on the Mishnah, he explained, “Know that one of the great fundamental principles of the Torah of Moses is that our universe is a new entity, created and formed by God out of absolute nothingness ... the non-existence of the universe before the beginning of time ... proves God’s existence absolutely, as explained in the *Guide for the Perplexed*.”

<sup>3</sup> \*God’s complete knowledge and control of all creation extends to His continuous power of individual Divine Providence.

<sup>4</sup> \*The created realms include the physical and the spiritual, to the peak of levels, and God’s Unity transcends them all entirely. Thus it is impossible for a human or an angel to conceive of the true nature of His Unity. God has neither physical nor spiritual dimensions, as it is said (I Chr. 29:10-13), “Lord, Yours is [i.e., to You, in Your Essence, belong] the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty, even everything in Heaven and earth” – and none of these spiritual attributes are of His unknowable Essence.

existing on the same level are separated from each other through limitations that are associated with body and form.<sup>5</sup>

If God were to have body and form, He would be limited and defined, because it is impossible for there to be a body which has no limitation. Everything that has limitation and definition, by virtue of its body, also has a limited and bounded power. God's ability and power have no limitation or boundary,<sup>6</sup> so therefore His power cannot be the power of a body. And since He does not have a body or any form, He cannot be affected by any circumstances that can affect a body, as for example the effects of being separate from another entity. Thus it is impossible for Him to be anything other than one.

4. Just as His Existence is of an entirely different nature than that of the created beings, so too, His Truth is incomparable to the truth of the created beings. For all the created beings require Him, and He, blessed be He, does not require them. Therefore, the truth of His Being does not resemble the truth of any of their beings.<sup>7</sup>

This is implied by the words of the prophet (Jeremiah 10:10): "God your Lord is true" – i.e., He alone is true, and no other entity possesses truth that compares to His Truth. This is what is meant by the Torah's statement:<sup>8</sup> "There is nothing else aside from Him" – i.e., aside from

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<sup>5</sup> \*This limitation applies to the spiritual creations referred to as angels; see Rambam, *Laws of Foundations of the Torah* 3:3-8.

<sup>6</sup> \*Why then are we not overwhelmed by the presence of unlimited Godliness? His infinite power includes His ability to limit the revelation of His Godliness to His creations. Note the explanation by Rashi on Gen. 1:1: "Originally it arose in God's thought to create the world with the attribute of stern judgment [i.e., with total concealment of Godliness]; He saw, however, that the world could not endure, so He combined with it the attribute of mercy." Rabbi Schneur Zalman explains in *The Gate to the Unity and the Faith* (ch. 5) that this refers to His revelation of Godliness to mankind through exceedingly righteous individuals (such as Moses) and the signs and miracles recorded in the Torah.

<sup>7</sup> \*The truth of the existence of created beings is relative and subsidiary to, and a result of, the truth of His Being. For they exist only because, and as long as, it is His will that they exist. The creation and sustained existence of the spiritual and physical realms is only a result of God's will as it is expressed through His creative speech (Genesis ch. 1).

<sup>8</sup> Deuteronomy 4:35; compare Deuteronomy 4:39.

Him, there is no true existence like His.

### **The Torah of Moses**

5. Knowing this fundamental principle – the existence of God, blessed be He – was included in the commandment and the warning that prohibited idolatry to Adam the first man and all his descendants.<sup>9</sup>

The obligation of this knowledge is not only to hear and understand this precept once and to agree and set it in one's heart. Rather it is a continuous obligation for every person to think about and contemplate the existence of the Master of the universe and His greatness, in order to set the knowledge of God strongly in his heart and mind. One should constantly reflect upon this, as the righteous King David wrote, "I place God before me always; because He is at my right hand I shall not falter."<sup>10</sup>

This command of knowing and recognizing the existence of God includes acceptance of His Kingship and His constant authority (this is called "accepting the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven"). This means that each Gentile is obligated to accept upon himself all things which he is commanded by God – i.e., this recognition, and the Seven Noahide Commandments and their details as transmitted in the Torah – because God, the Master of the universe, commanded them and

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<sup>9</sup> The commandment to believe in one God and no other is obviously included in the prohibition against serving idols, based on one of the Oral Torah's Thirteen Rules for exegesis: "from the negative, one can infer the positive."

In Tractate *Sanhedrin* 56b, it is shown that Adam was prohibited from serving idols by the words, "And the Lord God commanded the man ..." (Genesis 2:16), from which we infer that Adam was prohibited from rebelling against the One Who commanded. Rashi explains there that Adam was prohibited from serving idols from these words, with which the Almighty commanded Adam that His Godliness should not be associated with any other entity. This is also clearly cited by Rambam (*Laws of Kings* 8:10): "Moses was commanded by the Almighty to compel all the inhabitants of the world to accept the [seven universal] commandments given to Noah's descendents." It is therefore obvious that all the nations of the world are commanded to believe in and recognize God.

<sup>10</sup> Psalms 16:8. See *Letter of Rambam (Iggeret HaRambam) to Rav Hasdai HaLevi* (pub. Lipsia, p. 24); *Likkutei Sihot*, vol. 27, p. 246.

informed us of them in the Torah through the prophecy of Moses.<sup>11</sup>

6. Any Gentile who accepts these Seven Noahide Commandments, and is careful to observe them, is truly a pious individual of the nations of the world, and merits an eternal portion in the future World to Come. (And with this merit, the person will be included in the Resurrection of the Dead).<sup>12</sup> This applies only if he accepts them and does them because the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded them in the Torah, and made it known through Moses our teacher, that the Children of Noah were previously commanded to fulfill them.<sup>13</sup>

However, if one fulfills the commandments of the Noahide Code only out of intellectual conviction (because his logic dictates them), he is forbidden by Torah Law to settle in the land of Israel,<sup>14</sup> and he is

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<sup>11</sup> Rambam, *Laws of Kings* 8:11. See *Likkutei Siḥot*, vol. 26, p. 132 ff., based on Rambam *ibid.* and *Laws of Forbidden Sexual Relations* 14:7 – “One needs a general acceptance of the yoke of Heaven as a preparation for keeping the Seven Noahide Commandments.” (However, when Gentiles perform a precept, they do not need to specifically intend that they are doing it because God has commanded them; see *Likkutei Siḥot* vol. 7, p. 33, note 18.)

<sup>12</sup> See Rashi and *Tosafot* on Tractate *Rosh Hashanah* 16b-17a. They state that the Talmud’s words beginning, “There are three groups for the Day of Judgment,” refer to the Resurrection of the Dead. The Talmud is speaking in reference to both Gentiles and Jews, so it is apparent that Gentiles can have not only a part in the future World to Come, but also in the Resurrection of the Dead. Ra’avad, Ramban, and teachings of Ḥassidic leaders, are of the opinion that the main, eternal reward and revelation of Godliness in the future will be in the physical world, after the Resurrection of the Dead.

<sup>13</sup> Rambam, *Laws of Kings* 8:11.

<sup>14</sup> According to Rambam’s *Laws of the Worship of Stars [and Idols]* 10:6, during the temporary diaspora of the Jewish people (during which the Jubilee cycle is suspended), no one can be accepted into the *legal* status of a Gentile “Resident” (*Ger Toshav* in Hebrew), even if he makes a declaration before three Torah-observant adult Jewish males that he accepts and abides by the Noahide Code. Nevertheless, for any Gentiles who do not accept and observe the Noahide Code, the Jews are commanded to expel them from the Land of Israel, and they are forbidden by Torah Law to dwell there (whether they are expelled or not). Ibn Ezra explains the simple meaning of Lev. 18:25-28, that the holiness of the Land of Israel cannot tolerate sinful inhabitants. From this it is clear that the spiritual standard of any inhabitants of the Land of Israel must be on a higher level compared to those who live elsewhere.

not counted among the pious individuals of the nations of the world.<sup>15</sup>

### **Deniers and Deviators from the Foundations of Faith**

7. One who believes there is another god denies the basic foundation of faith, for knowledge of the existence, truth and oneness of the Master of the universe is the foundation upon which all else depends.<sup>16</sup> Such a person is a “deviant believer” (a *Min* in Hebrew) and in the category of those who believe in idols.<sup>17</sup> There are five categories of deviant believers (who deny a fundamental principle of faith in God):<sup>18</sup>

- (a) one who says there is no deity (atheism), and the universe is not overseen;
- (b) one who says there are two or more gods;
- (c) one who says there is only one god, but having a body or a form;
- (d) one who says that God was not the only First Existence and the Creator of everything, but rather there was a continuously existing primordial matter from which God formed the world;<sup>19</sup>
- (e) one who serves an idol (or a star or constellation, etc.), that it should be an intermediary between him and God.

<sup>15</sup> See Rambam, *Laws of Kings* 8:11. However, if he fulfills the Noahide Code in practice, he is not liable to any punishment for this lack of belief.

<sup>16</sup> Rambam’s opinion, in *Laws of Foundations of the Torah* 1:6, is that one is a deviant believer and an idolater if he *believes* there is another god (a power independent of God). Some other Torah authorities held that the incorrect belief in an independent intermediary power (“*sheetuf*” in Hebrew) is not forbidden to Gentiles (see Part II, topic 1:2). Yet one who believes this is not one of the “pious of the nations of the world,” and he should be informed of his error if there is a possibility that he will correct his belief and keep the prohibition against idolatry to its fullest (in thought as well as in action).

<sup>17</sup> *Kesef Mishneh* on Rambam’s *Laws of Repentance* 3:7.

<sup>18</sup> Rambam, *Laws of Repentance* 3:7. See Part II, topics 1:2 and 3:1,4.

As explained in topic 1:2 there, the differing Rabbinical opinions regarding Gentiles and their concept of an intermediary is only in regard to whether a **belief** that the intermediary has independent power is forbidden. But one who **serves** an intermediary transgresses according to all opinions. Hence, the wording of Rambam cited in (e) is accepted by all Rabbinical authorities.

<sup>19</sup> Ra’avad, on Rambam’s *Laws of Repentance* 3:7.

8. There are three categories of “scorners:”

- (a) one who says there is no prophesy at all and no communication of knowledge from God to the hearts of individuals;
- (b) one who denies the prophesy of Moses our teacher;
- (c) one who says that God does not know the actions of people.<sup>20</sup>

There are three categories of “deniers of the Torah”.<sup>21</sup>

- (a) one who says that the Torah’s commandments are not from God (even if he observes some or all because they seem logical to him), even if he says that these commandments came from Moses himself (from his own intellect, and not as commandments from God);
- (b) one who says that the Written Torah and its commandments were from God, but the Oral Torah and its explanations of the commandments were from Moses himself (and how much more so, anyone who says that the Oral Torah was introduced by persons other than Moses);
- (c) one who says that God replaced any of the commandments He gave through Moses with another later commandment, or that His original Torah and its commandments were later nullified. (Included are those who say that the “first” Torah which was given to Moses was true and from God, but it was later nullified or changed.)

Each of these is a denier of the truth of the Torah.

9. The explanations of every precept that God commanded through Moses were also given directly from God to Moses,<sup>22</sup> and Moses gave these explanations orally to the Elders of Israel of that generation (in addition to teaching the entire Jewish people). This included not only the explanations of each commandment in a general way, but also details and measurements for the fulfillment of every precept, and the

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<sup>20</sup> Rambam, *Laws of Repentance* 3:8.

\*A “scorner” (*epicurus* in Hebrew) includes one who scorns the Torah or the Sages, or who shirks their teachings or authority. The Sages are those who transmitted the Torah’s Oral Tradition since the time of Moses.

<sup>21</sup> Rambam, *ibid*. It seems clear from Rambam that a Gentile scorner, deviant believer or denier of the Torah does not believe in Moses’ prophesy with all its details, so it is impossible for him to be truly observing the Noahide Code in accordance with Rambam’s text in *Laws of Kings* 8:11.

<sup>22</sup> Rambam’s Introduction to the *Mishneh Torah*.

specific rules for correct exegesis of the Written Torah. It was ordained by God that with this tradition, the recognized Sages of Israel<sup>23</sup> would clarify any future question about an explanation of a commandment, using these rules of exegesis. Therefore, the authentic Jewish Sages are the mainstay of the Oral Torah, and anyone who believes in Moses our teacher and his Torah must rely on them for explanations of the details of the Torah's precepts.

Anyone who denies their accepted rulings, meaning the Oral Torah, is also a denier of the Torah, as the term is explained above.<sup>24</sup>

10. If a deviant believer, scorner or denier (see above) has been taught about the truth of Torah, but he persists in these habits and false beliefs without repentance, his end will not be to receive a part in the World to Come,<sup>25</sup> but instead, as it says, "To the lowest world [the Purgatory] will the wicked return, all the peoples that forget God."<sup>26</sup> They are those who willfully dismiss the true God, like the deviant believers and the scornors, even though they did not serve idols, because they willfully dismiss the fundamental principles of faith [for Gentiles, about the One God and His commandments, prophecy, and the Torah]. Still, they are not liable to judgment by a court for this transgression, since a court may only punish for actions, but not for thoughts and beliefs.<sup>27</sup> God alone judges a person for heretical beliefs.

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<sup>23</sup> \*These were the members of the Supreme Sanhedrin which existed in the past, through an unbroken chain of ordination back to Moses. (This excludes false sages like the members of the heretical Sadducee Sanhedrin that temporarily existed in the days of King Jannai, c. 100 B.C.E.) Due to persecutions by the Romans, the Supreme Sanhedrin ceased many years before the Babylonian Talmud was completed. It will be renewed in the Messianic Era, when all people will be spiritually uplifted to serve God together (Zeph. 3:9).

<sup>24</sup> Rambam, *Laws of the Rebellious Ones* 1:1-2 and 3:3.

\*Regardless of what argument is advanced, a person is a denier of the Torah (a *kofer* in Hebrew), if the ultimate result of his approach will be a negation of any of the Torah's precepts or fundamental principles.

<sup>25</sup> Rambam, *Laws of Repentance* 3:6.

<sup>26</sup> Psalms 9:18. *Sanhedrin* 105a refers this to the wicked ones of the nations.

<sup>27</sup> Rambam, *Laws of the Worship of Stars [and Idols]* 2:6, states that anyone who believes in idol worship insults God, yet he does not mention any physical punishment assigned for this false belief.

11. Any reference in this work to liability for “punishment by the Hand of Heaven” (i.e., from God) or “punishment by a court” is only intended to indicate a person’s guiltiness and the liability of his soul. Permission for earthly judgment based on Torah Law applies only for a competent and empowered Torah-based court,<sup>28</sup> as provided by the Noahide commandment to establish Torah-based courts of law (see Part VIII, Chapter 1). Only an authorized Torah-based court has permission to apply any detail of the Noahide Code in placing a judgment of guilt upon a person.

12. All those who refuse to accept upon themselves to observe the Noahide Commandments are transgressors in God’s eyes.<sup>29</sup> However, they should be warned to change their ways and fully accept these prohibitions.

Therefore, to help a person who is a denier of Torah or an idol-worshiper because of the habit of his upbringing, and has never known the truth because he has not learned it, it is incumbent on one who does know the truth<sup>30</sup> to teach him God’s truth and the commandments that apply for him as a Gentile, and to correct and improve his ways.<sup>31</sup>

This effort and spiritual guidance is the proper path that Abraham followed (as will be explained in Part II, topic 1:6).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> We explain an authorized Torah-based court in Part VIII, topic 1:11.

<sup>29</sup> Rambam, *Laws of Kings* 8:9, and *Laws of Circumcision* 1:6.

<sup>30</sup> See topic 3:1 below, that this applies for both Jews and pious Gentiles who know the truth and details of the Noahide Commandments, if they are able to explain these obligations persuasively.

<sup>31</sup> This is evident from Rambam, *Laws of the Rebellious Ones* 3:3, in regard to the Karaites of his time. Even though the Karaites deny the Oral Torah, in *Rambam’s days* they were not judged to be deniers, since for many generations they were raised from their birth in that culture and compelled to follow that errant path.

It is also clear in Rambam, *Laws of Repentance* 3:14, that any person can return from his evil ways, do repentance and be forgiven by God, and therefore anyone who is liable – even to death by the Hand of Heaven – can repent and be saved from Divine punishment. But one who is convicted by an earthly court for a transgression that he committed cannot commute his legal sentence by repenting.

<sup>32</sup> See Rambam, *Laws of Kings* 10:1, that a Gentile is liable for transgressing a Noahide commandment due to negligence, since he should have learned it.



13. If there are deviant believers, scorners or deniers (as described above) who publicize their views that they do not believe in God or that they deny that the Torah is from God (yet they do not actually transgress any of the Noahide Commandments in practice because of fear of the government, or based on their concepts of morality or the like), a court does not judge them, since no physical transgression has been done (see topic 1:10 above). Nevertheless, in order to correct the world and remove this stumbling block, a Noahide court has permission to punish them if they cannot be convinced to change their brazen behavior and accept upon themselves to observe the Seven Noahide Commandments completely.

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But it seems that Rambam is only referring to a situation in which the general community knows the law this person transgressed, yet he excluded himself and didn't learn it. If most of the members of the community don't know this law, one of these individuals is not liable unless he was previously warned, since it was impossible for him to learn it in his situation. Since the laws of God are true and just, such a person is not liable under these unavoidable circumstances.

It is clear that this only applies to the Noahide commandments that need to be taught (since they are not dictated by logic), such as details of the prohibitions against worshiping idols and eating flesh that was taken from a living animal. But for the logical prohibitions such as stealing and murder, it is obvious that a community is obligated to learn and know them, and individuals have no excuse for ignorance of the main points of these precepts.

But even for stealing, which is a logical prohibition, we find in the Book of Jonah that God sent Jonah to the Gentile city of Nineveh to warn them to return the stolen property they had in their possession, before they were to be destroyed by the Hand of Heaven for this sin (Jonah 3:8). From this we can conclude that for an entire community, a court should not rush to judge them, but rather they should first be warned and given the opportunity to correct their ways. Likewise, we see that God's judgment against the generation of the Flood was sealed because of robbery, because the prohibition of theft is a logical precept, and they could not be excused by claiming they had not learned about it (see topic 4:2 for details; also Rashi and Ramban on Genesis 6:13, and Ramban on Genesis 6:2). Nevertheless, before the Flood, Noah was occupied in building the ark for 120 years, and during this time he repeatedly warned the people to abandon their sins (see Rashi on Genesis 6:14). Even though those events in the days of Noah and Jonah involved Heavenly judgments, we can still learn from them about the appropriate conduct for a court to follow in regard to passing judgment.

## CHAPTER 2

### Proselytizers and False Prophets

1. If anyone comes to convince individuals or a community – by influencing, or with intellectual arguments, or by demonstrating supernatural powers or the like, or with false claims to be a prophet – to serve idols, or to nullify one of the Seven Noahide Commandments, or to add a commandment (in addition to the Seven Noahide Commandments transmitted by Moses), even if he says that God commanded that this should be done, it is forbidden to listen to him or to accept his words. All are obligated to remove and silence him by any necessary means.

A proselytizer is one who privately or publicly tries to persuade another person to serve an idol. Even if a proselytizer does not serve the idol(s) he promotes, he is among those that cause the public to sin.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, even if proselytizers cannot be judged for worshiping idols, the court needs to silence them from their proselytizing and return them to good, and if this is not successful, the court may judge them so that they should not continue to cause the community to err.

2. In Part II, it will be explained that one who serves idols is liable. Therefore, if one convinces others to serve him as an idol and tells them words such as “serve me,” or “worship me,” and they did worship him, then he is the idol himself, and both he and they are guilty, as are all those who serve idols. However, if someone did not serve this person as an idol, but only verbally accepted his words, then the person who said “worship me” is exempt from punishment by a Noahide court. (The verbal agreement is not considered as a real acceptance of his words but rather is assumed to be mocking him.)

If someone convinces a person that he should serve another person or thing as an idol, but the one who was misled has not yet served it, then even if he accepted verbally and said, “Yes, I will go and serve it,” both of them are still exempt from punishment for their words.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Rambam, *Laws of the Worship of Stars [and Idols]* 5:1.

<sup>34</sup> See Rambam, *Laws of the Worship of Stars [and Idols]* 5:5. Although the proselytizer is liable to punishment by a Sanhedrin court, that precept for Jews does not apply to Gentiles (see *Minhag H'Inuh* Commandment 462).

3. A self-proclaimed prophet who convinces others to serve idols is liable. Whether he says, “This idol told me to serve it,” or “God told me to serve idols,” or words to this effect, he is a false prophet who has persuaded others to go astray.<sup>35</sup>

Even if he prophesies in God’s Name to serve an idol only for a specific time, and even if he performs miracles and says that God commanded that people must serve the idol for only a short time, he has spoken unfaithfully toward God, as it says,<sup>36</sup> “and the sign or the wonder comes about, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us follow the gods of others...’ – do not hearken to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of a dream, for the Lord your God is testing you... The Lord, your God, shall you follow and Him shall you fear; His commandments you shall keep and to His voice shall you listen... And that prophet or that dreamer of a dream shall be put to death, for he has spoken fabrication against the Lord your God.” Thus this person has come to contradict the eternal prophecy and Torah of Moses, and it is clear that he is a false prophet. All the apparent miracles he performs are just magic and sorcery.<sup>37</sup> The case of someone who says this in the name of God is not judged by a Noahide court, as explained below in topics 2:8-9. If he gives this false prophecy in the name of an idol, it is within the jurisdiction of a Noahide court to judge him.

4. Likewise, a self-proclaimed prophet who prophesies in the name of idols and says, “This idol or star told me that it is a commandment to do such and such,” or “not to do such and such” – even if he cited a correct Torah law – is liable for committing the sin of false prophecy.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Rambam, *Laws of the Worship of Stars [and Idols]* 5:2.

<sup>36</sup> Deuteronomy 13:3-6.

<sup>37</sup> Rambam, *Laws of Foundations of the Torah* 9:1.

<sup>38</sup> It appears that one who prophesies in the name of an idol, i.e. by saying his prophecy in its name, is a main component of the idol worship itself. Since Gentiles are forbidden to practice idol worship or its offshoots, this false prophet is therefore liable. It appears from Rambam, who places this law in *Laws of the Worship of Stars [and Idols]* and not *Laws of Foundations of the Torah*, that this is a part of the Torah law pertaining to idol worship. This is also clear because one who prophesies in the name of idols actually accepts them, and is liable like one who says to an idol, “you are my god.” (See topic 3:23 in Part II, and Ramban on Deut. 13:2; 18:20.)

Even if he prophesies in the name of an idol but gives instruction to do a permitted mundane act or not to do so, or only predicts the future, he is nevertheless one who prophesies in the name of idols.<sup>39</sup>

5. It is forbidden to arrange a discussion or a debate with one who prophesies in the name of idols (or with one who prophesies in the name of God to serve idols; both have the same status as a false prophet), and he should not be asked to perform a sign or a miracle. If he makes a sign or a miracle on his own, one must not pay attention to it or think about it. Anyone who thinks about these so-called miracles, debating if they are true, is a sinner, since the false prophet obviously denies a foundational principle upon which everything in Torah depends, as it says,<sup>40</sup> “If a prophet or dreamer of a dream shall arise among you, and he will give you a sign or wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes about, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us follow other gods, ... and we shall serve them!’ – do not hearken to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of a dream ...”<sup>41</sup>

6. Likewise, a Jew or a Gentile<sup>42</sup> who claims that God sent him to add, remove or change a commandment from those that God gave through Moses (the 613 Jewish Commandments and the Seven Noahide

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<sup>39</sup> This is included in the command (Deut. 18:20), “But the prophet ... who will speak in the name of the gods of others...” The general topic there (from Deut. 18:14-22) is speaking about two things: one who prophesies to do something as a temporary commandment, or to do some mundane act that is permitted to be done. Since, as explained above, this false prophet accepts the idol, it does not matter what he says in its name. Even if he relates a true command from God, which would appear to be a statement of truth, Rambam explains that it is still false prophecy if it is being said in the name of idols.

<sup>40</sup> Deuteronomy 13:2-4; see above in topic 2:3.

<sup>41</sup> Rambam, *Laws of the Worship of Stars [and Idols]* 5:7.

<sup>42</sup> See Rambam, *Laws of Foundations of the Torah* 9:1. It is clear from Rambam that all of these types of false prophets intend to contradict the Torah of Moses in some way, whether they prophesy in the Name of God or in an idol’s name, or to change the Torah-based faith, and therefore they are liable. However, God will never send a prophet to command the nations to change their Torah laws even temporarily, whether the prophet is a Jew or a Gentile. However, it is possible for one to be sent to instruct a permitted action; see *Laws of Foundations of the Torah* 7:7, and *Iggeret Teiman*, p. 147.

Commandments), is a false prophet. This applies even if he says that God sent him to explain the observance of a commandment in a way that differs from the tradition that was received from Moses,<sup>43</sup> or that God sent him with a message that one of these commandments was only meant for earlier times, but nowadays God has changed or nullified it. He is liable for this false prophecy, since he is contradicting the prophecy and Torah that Moses received at Mount Sinai, which God promised that He will never change or nullify, or replace with a new doctrine.

7. A person who prophesies in the name of God, but lies in his prophecy, is in the category of a false prophet, as it says,<sup>44</sup> “But the prophet who says something in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, etc., ... that prophet shall die. If you will say in your heart, ‘How can we know the word that God has not spoken?’ What the prophet will speak in the Name of God and that thing will not occur and not come about – that is the word that God has not spoken; the prophet has spoken with willfulness; you should not fear him.”

More specifically, a false prophet can be identified if he prophesies that a good event will come about and it does not come to pass, or if only part of the good that was promised comes to pass. This is because any good that God proclaims publicly (through a true prophet) will not be nullified, even if it is conditional, and this is a valid test for a false prophet.

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<sup>43</sup> See Rambam, *Laws of Foundations of the Torah* 9:1. It appears to be clear that this ruling also applies if the person prophesies a correct explanation known in the Oral Torah, because after it was given to Moses, the Oral Torah does not reside in the Heavens (Deuteronomy 30:12), and God promised that He would not inform us of a matter of Torah Law in a prophecy (Deuteronomy 17:11), so it follows that the person is a false prophet.

\*After Moses received the commandments from God, the definition of their observance was entrusted to the Sages of Israel in the Oral Tradition, and it left the context of any further prophetic revelation, as Moses taught: “For this commandment that I command you today, it is not hidden... it is not in the heavens... it is very near to you” (Deuteronomy 30:11-14; Tractate *Bava Metzia* 59). Subsequent prophets were sent to exhort people to keep the Torah, but not to add, change or nullify any of its commandments.

<sup>44</sup> Deuteronomy 18:20-22.

However, if a prophecy is given about punishments that will come, but they do not happen, the failure of this to occur does not nullify the possible validity of the prophet. For example, if a person declared as a prophecy that a certain person would die, or that in a certain year there would be a famine or a war, and the negative event did not occur, this is not proof that the prophet is false. Because the Holy One, blessed be He, is slow to anger, abundant in kindness, and forgiving of evil, it is possible that the person or the group of people repented and the sin was forgiven.<sup>45</sup> This occurred for the Gentile city of Nineveh, as written in the Book of Jonah. The prophet Jonah declared to the people that God would destroy their city, but the people repented from their evil ways (and made restitution to those whom they had wronged), and because of this God relented from destroying them.<sup>46</sup>

A person is a false prophet, and he is liable, if he prophesies in the name of God what he has not heard in a prophetic dream or vision, or if he hears a prophecy in the name of God from another person and then tells others that this prophecy was spoken to him by God.<sup>47</sup>

8. Even though a Gentile who prophesied falsely is liable in the judgment of Heaven, the Noahide Code does not include a commandment to judge false prophets,<sup>48</sup> and therefore a Noahide court does not

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<sup>45</sup> \*Or the retribution was delayed, as in the case of King Hezekiah, who was granted an extension of his life for fifteen years (Isaiah ch. 38).

<sup>46</sup> Rambam, *Laws of Foundations of the Torah* 10:4.

<sup>47</sup> Rambam, *Laws of the Worship of Stars [and Idols]* 5:8-9.

The laws regarding a false prophet also apply to Gentiles, as written in *Iggeret Teiman*, p. 149: “If a prophet stands up from among the Jews or the other nations and calls people to the religion of Moses [including calling Gentiles to observe the Noahide Code], and like Isaiah and Jeremiah and their kind, he does not add or subtract from them, we ask him for a miracle. If he gives one we believe him, and he is instated on the level of a prophet for us. However, if one thing is missing from his words, he is [a false prophet].”

\*But if one merely says falsely that he had a predictive dream that was fulfilled, without claiming that it was shown to him by God, or by some idolatrous power, he is not acting in the manner of a false prophet. Rather, he is merely lying and deceiving, which is forbidden in general as immoral conduct (see topic 8:4).

<sup>48</sup> Responsa *Tzafnat Pane'ah*, Part II, ch. 138.

judge them. Rather, they are to be judged by a Jewish Supreme Sanhedrin when the required conditions are met.<sup>49</sup> When there is no valid Jewish Supreme Sanhedrin, or if for any other reason they cannot judge the case, if a Gentile prophesies in the name of God to serve idols, or to change one of the Seven Noahide Commandments or to make a new religion, a Noahide court may judge this false proselytizer if the situation requires. If he only prophesies in the name of God falsely, but does not say to add to or change any of the Torah's commandments, but instead he speaks about permitted things, it appears to the author that we may only warn him and trouble him, to convince him to stop this behavior. However, we also inform him that he is liable to death by the Hand of Heaven, and that he will be judged by God.

9. This only applies to someone who prophesies falsely in the name of God. But anyone who prophesies in the names of stars, constellations or other idols, is judged by a Noahide court like one who actually serves idols. For anyone who prophesies in the name of an idol says about it, in effect, "You are my god." (See below in Part II, topic 3:23.) Thus by his own words he accepts the service of the idol, and he is liable for this.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Rambam writes, in *Laws of the Worship of Stars [and Idols]* 5:9, that a Jewish false prophet was judged only by the Supreme Sanhedrin. It is unclear if this also applies to a Gentile false prophet. Even though a Noahide court cannot judge a false prophet, we can say – according to Rambam's statement in *Laws of Kings* 10:9 – that if he makes a new religion, the court can warn him that he is liable, and that he must stop this sinful behavior. And if he continues to be a stumbling block, they may remove him like any false proselytizer, for the benefit of society.

\*The prescribed penalty can only be administered by a valid Jewish Supreme Sanhedrin of seventy-one Sages, if there is one that is meeting next to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, as these are requirements for trying the case. The Supreme Sanhedrin abandoned the Temple Mount forty years before the Second Temple was destroyed, and as a result of the Roman persecutions, there ceased to be a valid Sanhedrin several generations before the Talmud was concluded. The institution of a valid Sanhedrin of seventy-one Sages will be renewed in the Messianic Era (may it come speedily, in our days).

<sup>50</sup> See above, footnotes to topic 4.

## CHAPTER 3

### The Prohibition Against Making a New Religion or Adding a Commandment

1. Moses our teacher gave the learning and explanation of Torah, and fulfillment of its 613 Jewish commandments, as an inheritance only to the Jews, as it says,<sup>51</sup> “The Torah which Moses commanded us is an inheritance for the congregation of Jacob,” and to anyone who chooses to become Jewish through proper conversion. Likewise, Moses was also commanded by God to compel all nations of the world to accept the seven Noahide precepts that they had been commanded, and a Gentile who does not accept them is liable.<sup>52</sup>

This commandment to Moses to compel all the nations of the world to accept the seven Noahide precepts is not incumbent merely on the Jews, but also upon all the nations of the world; anyone who has the power to compel others to act in the correct way is obligated to do so.

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<sup>51</sup> Deuteronomy 33:4.

<sup>52</sup> Rambam, *Laws of Kings* 8:10. It appears to the author that even though Rambam uses the words “to compel” only regarding these seven commandments, and does not include other obligations of the Noahide Code (e.g., the prohibitions against cross-mating animals and cross-grafting fruit trees, and observing worthy precepts in which the nations have a rational obligation, such as honoring parents and avoiding deception), nevertheless, it is logical that they must be compelled to keep the obligations that are placed upon them as part of their commandment to observe *dinim* (a legal code).

We have left out Rambam’s statement, “one who accepts them is called a *Ger Toshav* (a *Gentile ‘Resident’* of the Holy Land),” and the laws of the *Ger Toshav*, because they do not apply while the observance of the 50-year cycle of Jubilee in the Land of Israel is suspended, as Rambam writes in *Laws of the Worship of Stars [and Idols]* 10:6. If a Gentile declares his acceptance of the Noahide Commandments before three observant Jewish men, it does not change anything in regard to his obligation to observe the Noahide Code, or his merit to be called one of the Pious of the Nations (*Ħassidei Umot HaOlom*, in Hebrew). See *Likkutei Siĥot*, vol. 26, p. 134, which explains that this is the opinion of Rambam. This appears to also be the opinion of Rashba in *Torat Habayit*, quoted in *Beit Yosef Yoreh De’ah* ch. 124, which says, “And we do not require him to accept them in front of a Jewish Court of three...” It seems clear that Rambam rules that nowadays, if a Gentile wants to act as a *Ger Toshav*, Jews should not prevent him from living in Israel.



If there is a court or government that has the authority, they must establish these seven commandments as an order and statute. If an individual has the ability to persuasively explain to Gentiles about their obligation, he is required to do so from this commandment to Moses.<sup>53</sup>

2. The general rule is that it is forbidden for a Gentile (an individual, and certainly a community which observes the Noahide Code) to add precepts from another religion or create a commandment based on his own decision. If he wants, he can seek proper conversion to become a Jew, or he can remain observant of the Noahide Code, without adding to or subtracting from the Noahide Commandments that he observes.

A Gentile may be deeply involved in study of Torah regarding the Noahide Code in which he was commanded (see Chapter 5), but one who delves deeply into other areas of Torah is liable. Also, if a Gentile abstains from weekday activities and makes a sabbath for himself, even on a weekday, he is liable. This includes one who establishes a “holy day” for himself, similar to the holy days and Sabbaths of the Jews (which are religious holidays, i.e. “holy convocation” days), during which he prohibits himself from work, since this is creating for himself a new religion.<sup>54</sup> Not only is taking on a sabbath day forbidden, but even the setting aside of any day for a specific religious observance or statute, such as one who establishes for himself a time to eat a special food as a precept (e.g., eating unleavened bread on Passover), or to fast on a specific day (e.g., the Jewish fast day of *Yom Kippur*), and the like. Even if he did not also set it aside as a sabbath or festival day (i.e., for refraining from work), this is considered as creating a festival and a religion from his own comprehension. However, if he sets up for himself a day of rest from work, not as a holy day but just as a break from work, it is permissible, for he is not establishing it as a religious precept from his own comprehension.<sup>54</sup>

If a Gentile does involve himself deeply in Torah study beyond the Noahide Code, or he curtails his activity in observance of a sabbath day, or he adds any other commandment upon himself, a court may chastise him and inform him that he is liable to death by the Hand of Heaven for this, but he may not be severely punished by the court.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> This is obligatory based on the commandment for Laws and Courts; see the Preface to *Sheva Mitzvot HaShem*. See also *Kol Bo'ai HaOlam*, pp.155, 189.

<sup>54</sup> Rambam in *Laws of Kings* 10:9.

3. Any commandment connected to a Jewish holy day, such as eating unleavened bread on Passover, or waving a palm frond (*lulav*) or sitting in a *sukkah* booth on Sukkot, is forbidden for a Gentile to observe specifically on those days, because he is then making a holy day that he is not commanded in, and it is forbidden to make one's own holy day because of the prohibition against making a new religion.<sup>55</sup>

(However, if a Gentile is invited to the home of a Jew on the night of Passover, and he is served unleavened bread as the available food, or he is invited to eat a meal in a Jew's *sukkah* booth during Sukkot, there is no prohibition involved in this for the Gentile, since he is eating out of honor to the Jewish host, and not as a religious ritual for himself.)

4. The commandment of circumcision to Abraham was for the males of his own household, and for his male offspring that he would have after he received the commandment, as it says,<sup>56</sup> "You and your offspring after you for their generations." This does not include any direct descendants of Ishmael (and they can no longer be identified, as explained on the next page), as it says, "Whatever Sarah tells you, heed her voice, since through Isaac will offspring be considered yours."<sup>57</sup> It also does not include the descendants of Esau, since Isaac said to Jacob, "And God will give the blessings of Abraham to you and your descendants, that you may possess the land of your sojourns which God gave to Abraham."<sup>58</sup> This means that Jacob alone is the child from Abraham and Isaac who agreed to follow that religious path and unique Divine service. Thus Abraham's descendants through Jacob are commanded in circumcision. The descendants of Abraham's children from his wife Keturah, who were born after Ishmael and Isaac, are also obligated to circumcise their male children on the eighth day from birth.

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<sup>55</sup> But if a Gentile wants to eat unleavened bread or sit in a *sukkah* booth for his physical pleasure (e.g., if he likes eating unleavened bread, or sitting in a *sukkah* for shade from the sun's heat), he is allowed to. This is so even during the Jewish festival days, since he does not intend at all to observe the Jewish commandment, but he does the action only for his physical satisfaction, and he is not establishing a festival for himself, as mentioned above in topic 3:2.

<sup>56</sup> Genesis 17:9.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* 21:12, and Rashi there; Sarah was greater in prophecy than Abraham.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* 28:4.

Since the descendants of Keturah became intermingled with those of Ishmael, all of them are obligated to circumcise their male children on the eighth day. However, the children of Keturah are not liable to punishment by a court for not observing this commandment, since it is not part of the Seven Noahide Laws.<sup>59</sup> (They are only commanded to circumcise the thick foreskin, but not the underlying covering of thin skin.<sup>60</sup> Once they have been circumcised, they are forbidden to extend back their skin to appear as if they are uncircumcised.)

5. A Gentile who is not from the descendants of Abraham who wishes to be circumcised, if he does so as a direct command of God, violates the prohibition of adding a religion or a commandment. However, if he has himself circumcised because he wishes to do so as a gift to God, he is permitted to do so, and he receives spiritual reward for doing so.<sup>61</sup>

6. If a Gentile wants to do one of the other commandments from the Torah in order to receive a **practical benefit** (but not as a direct commandment), we do not prevent him from doing so, even according to its correct laws for Jews (for example, if he desires to tithe for charity from his money or produce),<sup>62,63</sup> but with the following exceptions.

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<sup>59</sup> Rambam, *Laws of Kings* 10:8. However, the male descendants of Keturah still receive spiritual excision if they remain uncircumcised (see Gen. 17:14).

<sup>60</sup> Rambam writes in a responsa (*Pe'er Hador*, ch. 60) that a Jew may circumcise the thick and thin foreskin of a Gentile if requested, and it appears that Gentiles may circumcise themselves and their sons in this way.

<sup>61</sup> We must conclude that Rambam considers circumcision to be different from the commandments that Gentiles are prohibited to keep because they would be adding a religious observance; see *Laws of Kings* 8:10 and 10:9. The reason may be that this command was given to Abraham before the Torah was given, and it was never nullified, as we see that the descendants of Keturah are still obligated in it. Thus, a Gentile who wishes to have himself or his son circumcised may do so, and he is included along with the nations that are in the covenant with Abraham, but he is not obligated to do so.

<sup>62</sup> Rambam *Laws of Kings* 10:10. See Radvaz *Hilhot Melahim*, ch. 10.

<sup>63</sup> This applies even if he intends to do the commandment according to all the details of its Jewish laws. If he does the commandment not strictly in accordance with the prescribed details of Jewish observance, but rather only for a practical benefit he will derive, this is surely not a problem, as long as he does not intend to add this as a commandment or a religious practice.

However, if a Gentile observes any of the Jewish commandments from the Torah as a religious obligation (even if he does so from a desire to receive a spiritual reward), this is forbidden based on the prohibition of adding a commandment, and there is no spiritual reward to be derived from this.<sup>64</sup>

7. Gentiles are especially forbidden to perform commandments that require the holiness of a Jew, such as writing a scroll of the Torah or a *mezuzah* or phylacteries (*tefillin* in Hebrew).

The general rule is that any Jewish *mitzvah* between man and man, or between man and God, which has a reason and a logical benefit for a person or society, is permitted for Gentiles to perform. But this does not apply for any commandment that does not have a logical, natural benefit, but instead is a sign for the Jews (e.g., wearing ritual fringes [*tzitzit*] or phylacteries, or affixing a *mezuzah* on a doorpost),<sup>65</sup> or is a

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**His “reward” (*s’har*) in this context refers to the practical benefit he receives from doing even just a part or an aspect of the commandment, if doing so brings a specific benefit for the person or his society.**

A Gentile may validly choose partial observances of this type; for example:

- to circumcise only his thick foreskin, as opposed to the Jewish ritual circumcision which also includes removing the underlying thin foreskin;
- to marry a woman only to refine himself, without committing himself to have children or to engage in marital relations as a regular obligation;
- to return some lost objects, but not every type of lost object, or not to every person;
- to take upon himself an obligation to pray to God, but not on a daily or regular basis (which Jews on the other hand are obligated to do on a daily basis);
- to honor an old person or a Sage, but only if he recognizes the person’s wisdom or achievements.

<sup>64</sup> Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, *Igrot Moshe Yoreh De’ah* vol. 2, ch.7.

<sup>65</sup> Radvaz on *Hilhot Melahim*, ch. 10. See Rambam, *Laws of Tzitzit* 3:9 and *Shulhan Aruh Oraḥ Hayim* ch. 20, that it is forbidden for a Jew to give or sell a Gentile *tzitzit*, so the ritual garment will not come to be used by a Gentile for the purpose of disguising himself as a Jew. Rema writes in *Yoreh De’ah* ch. 291, in the name of Maharil, that a Jew should not give a *mezuzah* scroll to a Gentile for the same reason. It appears that beyond this, there is a general reason that Gentiles should not be compared completely to Jews. Therefore, they should not perform uniquely commanded Jewish signs, such as those.

Godly statute for Jews without reason or benefit understood to a person. A Gentile should be prevented from performing such commandments and should be taught that it is improper for him to observe them.

It is not problematic that male Gentiles are allowed to have themselves circumcised as a spiritual observance (although it is meant to be a sign in the flesh of a Jew), since many Gentiles are circumcised for medical purposes, and not to add a commandment or a new religion. Thus, a male Gentile who wishes to be circumcised in order to refine his personality and his body and its desires may do so.<sup>66</sup> But if he is not descended from Keturah, he should not do so as a commandment.

8. The abovementioned rule applies only to Jewish commandments that are not duty-bound by logic (even if they have a logical reason) such as circumcision or tithes. However, those that are duty-bound by

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See the *Ginat Veradim Oraḥ Ḥayim* Rule 2, ch. 28, which explains that Rebbe (Rabbi Yehudah the Prince) gave a *mezuzah* scroll to Artavon (a Roman Gentile) only to own, but not to be affixed to his door, for a Gentile has no purpose for this at all.

<sup>66</sup> See *Likkutei Siḥot* vol. 10, p. 139. Rabbeinu Baḥyai writes (on Genesis 17:13) that circumcision is comparable to offering a desirable sacrifice from one's body to God, and it can also accomplish a weakening of one's carnal desires (*Guide for the Perplexed*, Part III, ch. 49). These reasons are upright for every man for the purpose of controlling his nature, and likewise as a sacrificial offering, which righteous Gentiles are permitted to do. Therefore, if a Gentile wishes to have a circumcision for these reasons, and not as an obligation of observing a commandment, this is praiseworthy.

A Gentile may perform a Jewish commandment for a practical benefit, even if it is only indirectly – such as tithing for charity, which benefits society by supporting the poor and is a logical necessity; or returning a lost object, which helps to establish camaraderie; or sending away a mother bird before taking its young, which is having pity on animals. Since these actions have a benefit for him personally or for his society, they have practical justification, and he receives reward for performing them – both the practical benefit, and a reward from Heaven for doing a correct and good deed.

However, a Jewish commandment that has no physical effect on a person or society (such as *tzitzit*) accomplishes nothing for a Gentile. It follows that a Gentile would do this only because he desires to do a Godly commandment that he was not commanded, and thus he is adding a religion. He therefore receives no reward for this, and on the contrary, he would be committing a transgression that carries liability to punishment by the Hand of Heaven.

logic, such as honoring one's parents,<sup>67</sup> and kindness and charity,<sup>68</sup> are obligated to be kept by Gentiles, at least in a general way, because such is the correct way for a person to act, as befitting the image of God in which he was created. However, a Gentile may not keep them because it is a commandment to him from God, but rather because one is obligated to be a good, moral person.

Many prohibitions that are commanded upon Jews are obligations for Gentiles to observe based on logic, such as the prohibitions against hating others, taking revenge or bearing a grudge. A Gentile should observe these prohibitions out of human decency, and not as Divine commandments of their own. This duty is an absolute obligation upon Gentiles, and they are liable to be punished by God for transgressing these obligations and for acting against moral and logical practices, as the Generation of the Flood was punished in the days of Noah.<sup>69</sup>

9. Gentiles are obligated to give charity, and whether as an individual or a community, they are obligated to be concerned about help for the poor and needy, to help them appropriately in any way possible. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed only on account of their refusal to uphold and help the destitute, and their outlawing of any charity or help for the poor; for this, God judged them to deserve annihilation.<sup>70</sup>

10. Gentiles are permitted to add any prohibitions in order to guard themselves against transgression, or to establish a correct and orderly society. This is desirable as a part of observing the obligations of the Noahide commandment to establish courts of law and develop proper societies in the world. Examples are societal restrictions against harass-

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<sup>67</sup> See *Likkutei Sihot* vol. 5, p. 154; it is possible that honoring parents is an intellectual obligation on a Gentile just like charity, which is necessary for the establishment of a proper society and proper laws (*dinim*). However, it is obvious that a Gentile is forbidden to embarrass his parents, since it is against logical human respect, as we can see from the story of Ham (Genesis 9:22), who disgraced his father Noah. See *Pirkei Rebbe Eliezer* ch. 23.

<sup>68</sup> *Rokei'ah* 366, that also seems to say Gentiles are obligated to escort guests when they leave (referring to inviting guests also) as it is a logical obligation.

\*One's charitable donations should not go to fund activities that support idolatry, or drawing Jews or Gentiles away from faith in the Torah of Moses.

<sup>69</sup> According to Ramban on Genesis 6:2 and 6:13, and *Hiskuni* there, 7:21.

<sup>70</sup> Genesis ch. 19; Tractate *Sanhedrin* 104b; *Likkutei Sihot* vol. 5, p. 155.

sing women and children, and punishments set for transgressing such laws.<sup>71</sup> The prohibition of adding a religion or a commandment does not apply to this, because it is part of keeping the Noahide obligations of establishing courts and laws, and proper societies in the world.

This only applies to restrictions Gentiles accept upon each other as communities, to avoid damages. But it is prohibited to add communal restrictions as if they were those commanded by God (for example, if a Gentile community would establish a law against eating meat from an unslaughtered animal carcass, as if it were a religious transgression like eating meat that was severed from a living mammal or bird), because that would be instituting a new religion.<sup>72</sup>

However, if an individual wishes to accept a restriction in order to gain a practical personal benefit or to refine his personality, then he is not establishing the restriction as if it were a prohibition for him that is commanded from God, and it is permitted. Otherwise, it is prohibited.

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<sup>71</sup> Rashi on Genesis 34:7. See *Likkutei Siḥot* vol. 5, p. 190.

<sup>72</sup> That is to say, they wish to restrict the community in this additional manner as a religious precept. Similar to this would be a law against eating pork, which is permitted for Gentiles (and the same applies for an individual, if he adds it for himself as a religious precept). However, if a person wishes to restrict himself from eating meat from an unslaughtered carcass for the purpose of guarding his health, or from eating any pork or shellfish or any other food if he is disgusted by it (or for medical benefits), this is permitted.

An individual is allowed to additionally restrict himself for a religious purpose, if it is not in the manner of adding a new commandment. For example, a Gentile may restrict himself from eating any livestock or poultry meat, as a complete safeguard (stricter than is required) against the prohibition of eating meat that was severed from a living animal. Or, he may do this as a way to overcome a strong lust for fresh butchered meat, if he feels he will make himself more pleasing to God through this self-refinement.

The difference between the community and an individual is that an individual may set his mind and conviction to a specific personal purpose, but adding an unnecessary restriction upon the community is equivalent to instituting a decree with no logical purpose. From this we can conclude that a private person may choose to become a vegetarian, since this can be explained as a rationalization or an emotional desire, based on a personal aversion to the killing of living creatures for his food – which means that it is not based on a religious conviction. But to impose such a restriction on an entire community is definitely forbidden, because it amounts to adding a man-made decree that is unnecessary from a practical standpoint.