

THE YESHIVA PIRCHEI SHOSHANIM SHULCHAN ARUCH LEARNING
PROJECT

The Noahide Laws Preface & Overview



**Written by Rabbi Avraham Chaim
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Preface

For the Jewish people, the twentieth century was the century of the unforeseeable and the unpredictable. The holocaust, the establishment of a Jewish state, the massive Torah-educational system – these are all things that no one could have predicted even 80 years ago. Among these many surprises is the resurgent interest in the seven Noahide laws.

It is peculiar, though certainly apropos, that the impetus for this interest has come not from within the Jewish world, but from without. Since at least the 4th century CE, the identity of *Noahide* had languished, relegated an arcane, obscure corner of Torah thought. Eventually, Noahism was no longer viewed as an independent religious identity, but as a fence [*geder*], an academic category or classification, in Torah law. Its renewal as an autonomous belief system began in the late 19th century, emerging from the correspondence between Aime Palliere and Rabbi Eliyahu Benamozegh.

However, their vision of Noahism is somewhat troubling. R' Benamozegh's theology, unconventional and Universalist, saw in Noahism a theological bridge, a tool, to be used to unite and explain his egalitarian vision. Their Noahism was not, therefore, explored via its retroactive position in Torah tradition and thought, but prospectively as part of a proposed theological approach. The subtle use of Noahism in advancement of proposed ideologies became a lamentable trend in the latter half of the twentieth century.

A number of institutes and individuals, holding beliefs atypical of mainstream Torah thought, have found in Noahism material that can be used to advance their ideas and build a base of support among non-Jews. In many cases, this is because these parties have been unable to find popular Jewish support for their agendas. The net effect is that many of those purporting to teach the Noahide laws are actually presenting a skewed vision that fails to examine Noahism independently.

The problem was compounded by the fact that most of the mainstream Torah-observant world remained wholly unaware of contemporary Noahism. This lack of awareness has allowed many of these groups, some of whose teachings are outright heterodoxy, to gain footing as “legitimate” authorities on Noahism.

In the early 21st century, however, this trend has started to reverse. As the mainstream Torah-observant world has become more aware of the resurgent non-Jewish interest in Noahism, it has also become aware of the problematic and often misleading presentation of Noahism by these aforementioned entities.

The response of the Torah-observant mainstream has been to produce a number of studies on Noahism examining it as an independent, autonomous identity in the

Torah tradition. Most notable is Rabbi Moshe Weiner's *Sefer Sheva Mitzvos HaShem*, translated as *The Divine Code*, which was the first comprehensive study of Noahism in Torah tradition and law that is wholly unconnected to particular ideologies or movements.

The most important contribution of Rabbi Weiner's *Sefer Sheva Mitzvos HaShem* is that it elucidated many necessary, fundamental mechanics of Noahism that should have been properly clarified at the outset of Noahism's resurrection as a religious identity.

Our program was originally created exclusively for the Rabbinic community, to provide Rabbis with a practical understanding of the Noahide laws. More and more Rabbis worldwide are being approached by non-Jews seeking connection with the Torah. Either they are looking to convert, Judaize, or explore Noahism. A fuller understanding of the Noahide laws and Noahide identity not only presents a solution to the difficulties caused by those looking to Judaize, but also empowers the Rabbinic community with a solution to the numerous problems posed by conversion. Many prospective converts are unaware that the Torah does not require conversion to Judaism in order to enjoy a full relationship with the God of Israel.

As we began developing the program, we received tremendous interest from the Noahide community who hungered to know the source material of their faith. In response, we decided to produce a parallel program for Noahides. However, we soon realized that a great gulf existed between the religious needs and backgrounds of the Rabbinic and Noahide communities. After much discussion with Noahide Nations, a Texas-based Noahide organization, the decision was made to merge the two programs into a single track that would satisfy the needs of both communities. The program can thus be studied by Rabbis and Noahides as well as used as a curriculum for teaching both Jews and non-Jews.

Since launching the program with our initial group of Rabbis and Noahides in spring 2014, we have attracted the attention and support of a number of prominent Rabbis, including Rabbis Shalom Arush and Lazer Brody, who graciously offered their enthusiastic endorsement and support of our program.

This program, the first on the Noahide laws produced by a mainstream orthodox institution for the orthodox Torah world, is an ongoing project. The input and feedback of the Noahide community is essential to make certain that the material is presented clearly.

This project was originally made possible via a partnership between Yeshiva Pirchei Shoshanim and Noahide Nations.

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We also owe a great debt of gratitude to *HaRav HaGaon* Chaim Kanievsky, *HaRav HaGaon* Asher Weiss, and *HaRav HaGaon* Moshe Shternbuch, whose tremendous wisdom, guidance, and clarity have helped to resolve many difficult questions in the study and production of this material.

May the Holy, Blessed is He; provide us with strength and clarity to present the Noahide laws thoroughly and in truth.

Rabbi Avraham Chaim Bloomenstiel
Author & Editor of the Noahide Laws Project
Yeshiva Pirchei Shoshanim September 2014

How to Use This Course

**WRITTEN
LESSONS**

Each week we will email two PDF summaries of the course material for that week. These written lessons are in constant development as we get feedback from students.

Occasionally, an item will appear [blue and underlined](#). You can click on these links to be taken to either English versions of the referenced sources, biographies of the rabbis discussed, or other interactive online content pertaining to the lesson.

We will occasionally send out revisions of earlier versions of the lessons. These will usually include corrected footnotes, grammar, and spelling. Occasionally we may expand minor topics into lessons of their own when needed or requested.

**ACTION
POINT**

You will occasionally see items labeled Action Points in the course of these lessons. Action points indicate areas where work needs to be done within the Noahide community to fill a particular need. For example, there are many days of the year with special relevance to Noahides. An Action Point for these days would be to compose uniquely Noahides prayer texts.

LIVE LESSONS

Once or twice a week, at set times, we broadcast a live, interactive session with Rabbi Bloomenstiel. During these sessions, you can ask questions, discuss the material, and chat with other members of the group.

**ONLINE
DISCUSSION
BOARD**

The yeshiva will provide an online discussion forum for everyone in the group. In this moderated forum you can post questions, discuss issues with the Rabbis, and also post links to other material for study.

EXAMS

The course will include approximately 6 exams on the Noahide laws. The exams will be multiple-choice and consist of approximately 30 questions each. You will be given plenty of time to complete each exam. The questions will only pertain to the conclusions discussed in the written lessons. You will not be asked questions about theory or other matters discussed in the live classes.

CERTIFICATION

For everyone completing the course, the yeshiva will provide a *tendab*, certification. Once you have completed the course, you will continue to receive any revisions of prior lessons and maintain access to the discussion board and live lessons. We encourage all participants to continue their study of the material with the goal of being able to eventually learn it in the original sources and original languages.

STAYING IN
TOUCH

Rabbi Bloomenstiel can be emailed anytime at RabbiBloomenstiel@shemayisrael.com He will usually answer your emails within 24 hours.

SCHEDULE

The course will be on hiatus for all Jewish Holidays. A calendar will be provided at the time that you register for the course.

Overview

Numbered lessons are those completed and published so far. The unnumbered lessons are in the process of being edited and prepared.

1. Introduction to the Noahide Laws: Jews & Gentiles
2. Basic History of Noahism
3. Gentile Identities in Torah Tradition: An Overview
4. The Uniqueness of the Torah Tradition: How the Torah is interpreted and How Practice is Derived
5. Deriving the Noahide Laws I
6. Deriving the Noahide Laws II
7. Deriving the Noahide Laws III
8. Deriving the Noahide Laws IV
9. Noahide Identity I – Ger Toshav
10. Noahide Identity II – Ger Toshav Today
11. Noahide Identity III – Two Difficult Paragraphs
12. Noahide Identity IV – What is a Noahide
13. Noahide Identity V – Becoming a Noahide
14. *Chiddushei Dat* I – A Fundamental Principle
15. *Chiddushei Dat* II
16. Noahide Prayer – Daily Prayer I
17. Noahide Prayer – Daily Prayer II
18. Blessings I
19. Blessings II
20. Noahide Torah Study I
21. Noahide Torah Study II
22. Selecting a Rabbi
23. Noahides & Shabbat I – The Prohibition of Shabbat Observance by Noahides
24. Noahides & Shabbat II – The Patriarchs & Shabbat
25. Noahides & Shabbat III – Practical Conclusions
26. Other Festivals I – Introduction to the Festivals & Elul
27. Other Festivals II – Selichos
28. Other Festivals III – Rosh HaShanah
29. Other Festivals IV – Yom Kippur & Sukkot

30. Other Festivals V – Sukkot II
31. Other Festivals VI – Cheshvan & Kislev
32. Other Festivals VII – Tu B'Shvat
33. Other Festivals VIII – Adar & Nissan
34. Other Festivals IX – Sivan & Av
35. Noahide Kashrus I – Ever Min HaChai I
36. Noahide Kashrus II – Ever Min HaChai II
37. Noahide Kashrus III – Jewish & Non-Jewish Foods
38. Noahide Lifecycle I: Gender Relations
39. Noahide Lifecycle II: Pre-Marriage & Marriage
40. Noahide Lifecycle III: Conception & Contraception
41. Noahide Lifecycle IV: Abortion
42. Noahide Lifecycle V: Circumcision
43. Noahide Lifecycle VI: Growing Up
44. Noahide Lifecycle VII: Honoring Parents
45. Noahide Lifecycle VIII: Sickness
46. Noahide Lifecycle IX: Illness & End of Life
47. Noahide Lifecycle X: Death, Burial, and Other Issues
48. Noahide Lifecycle XI: Inheritance
49. Other Laws I: Animal Welfare
50. Other Laws II: Cross-Breeding Species
51. Other Laws III: Misc.

- Establishing Courts & Judges
- Loans
- Returning Lost Objects
- Employment Law
- Theft & Robbery
- Kidnapping
- Personal Injury
- Causing Emotional & Physical Harm
- Threatening Another Person
- Striking a Jew
- Prohibition of Suicide & Mercy Killing
- Prohibition of Homicide
- Against Vigilantism
- Against Believing That There is Any God But God
- Forbidden Images & Icons
- Behavior Prohibited Before Forbidden Images & Icons
- Prohibition of Divination, Signs & Omens
- Prohibition of Masturbation
- Laws of Honoring Parents

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- Laws Pertaining to Interactions With Jews
- Theology: God
- Theology: Man, Reward & Punishment
- Theology: The Soul
- Theology: The Afterlife, Messiah & Redemption
- Theology: Messiah I
- Theology: Messiah II
- Theology: Prophecy & Inspiration