

THE YESHIVA PIRCHEI SHOSHANIM SHULCHAN ARUCH LEARNING
PROJECT

The Noahide Laws – Lesson Sixteen



**Written by Rabbi Avraham Chaim
Bloomenstiel**

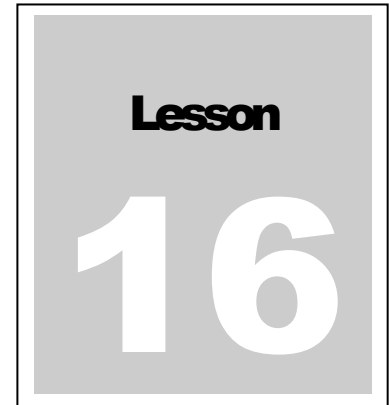
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Noahide Prayer: Daily Prayer I



Introduction

Our first sixteen lessons have been devoted to foundation concepts for understanding the sources, derivations, and guiding principles of the Noahide laws. With this sixteenth lesson we will now delve into the practice of Noahism.

The first lesson in this new section will cover Noahide prayer.

Obligations in Prayer

Jewish Obligations in Prayer

In Judaism, prayer exists on two levels: fixed communal prayer and personal spontaneous prayer. The fixed communal prayers require Jews to gather and pray three times each day facing east toward Jerusalem. These prayers are not personal prayers, but are fixed prayers with specific texts that are said on behalf of the Jewish community. These prayers were established in place of the thrice daily sacrifices offered in the temple. Personal prayer, however, is spontaneous and may be said in any language, using any words, and at any time one wishes.

Both forms of prayer are required and expected by God for the Jewish people.

**What about
Noahides?**

Neither the Talmud nor Maimonides mentions prayer of any type as being an obligation for Noahides.

At least one earlier authority, however, did recognize such an obligation. [Rav Shmuel ben Chofni Gaon](#), in his commentary on the Torah,¹ lists prayer as one of the expanded obligations of the Noahide laws.

A contemporary of Rav Shmuel ben Chofni Gaon, [Rabbeinu Nissim Gaon](#), does not list prayer as an obligation, but he implies such, writing:²

*Not all of the Seven Laws and their derivations require revelation. For example – the obligation to recognize God, to obey Him, and the obligation to **serve him** – all of which are rational and can be logically derived.*

The Hebrew term used by Rabbeinu Nissim for serving God, *le-avdo*, is usually understood as a specific reference to prayer. It is possible, though, that Rabbeinu Nissim is using the term *le-avdo* in its more general sense, meaning simply *to serve*. Nevertheless, the general idea conveyed by the passage is a concept true to both Jewish and Noahide thought: **that we are obligated to observe many principles by force of logic and reason alone, without any specific revelation.**

For example, Jews are required to make blessings before and after eating and drinking. The Talmud³ explains that the source of this obligation is logic rather than revelation.

Similarly, the obligation for Noahides to pray is not sourced in any particular textual derivation, but is rooted in reason.

Curiously, though, it is not mentioned in the writings of Maimonides or in the [Rama Mi-Fanu's](#) statement of the Noahide laws.⁴ This omission is odd considering that non-Jewish prayer is referred to many times in *Tanakh*, Scripture. For example:

¹ Commentary to Genesis 34:12. Chofni's Torah commentary was entirely forgotten until its rediscovery in the [Cairo Geniza](#). It even appears to have been unknown to Rav Shmuel's contemporaries. Originally in Arabic, it was not translated and published until 1978.

² Introduction to Tractate *Brachos*.

³ *Brachos* 35a.

⁴ The Rama Mi-Fanu's list was brought and discussed in an earlier lesson. It seems that R' Shmuel ben Chofni's expansion of the Noahide laws was unknown to Maimonides and Rama Mi-Fanu.

*My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.*⁵

On this verse [Rashi](#) remarks that the temple is a house of prayer not only for Jews but for all peoples. Also:

*Praise the L-rd, all nations, extol Him all the peoples.*⁶

We see from these versus that prayer is expected for non-Jews as well.

[Rav Moshe Feinstein זצ"ל](#)⁷ in a responsum on Noahide practice,⁸ puts prayer into perspective. According to Rabbi Feinstein, Noahides have no regular obligation to pray (this is in contrast to Jews who are required to pray daily facing east). Rather, all Noahide prayer is of the unfixed and personal type mentioned above.

For Noahides, prayer is only a *mitzvah* when performed in response to personal needs or circumstances. If one experiences challenges for which he does not pray, his lack of response is tantamount to a denial of God as the sovereign ruler of all things and all events. When one does pray in such circumstances, it demonstrates reliance and belief in the Creator.

When a Noahide prays to give thanks or praise absent a personal need, he still receives reward for such prayer even though it is not of the same nature as prayer prompted by personal needs.

It appears that many early authorities do not list prayer as an obligation due to its free, unfixed nature and due to its being derived from reason rather than revelation or textual exegesis.⁹

In summary:

- Jews have regular obligations to pray regardless of their personal needs or circumstances.

⁵ Isaiah 56:7.

⁶ Psalms 117:1.

⁷ Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (b. Russia, 1895 – d. New York, 1986) was the foremost Torah authority of his generation and one of the most important scholars of the past 200 years. His magnum opus, the responsa *Igros Moshe*, continues to exert tremendous influence on Jewish thought and practice worldwide.

⁸ *Igros Moshe* II: 25.

⁹ See [Nachmanides's](#) commentary on Maimonides's [Sefer HaMitzvos](#) regarding whether or not prayer should even be included among the 613 mitzvos for Jews.

- Noahides have no regular obligation to pray. Rather, prayer as a response to personal needs or circumstances is obligated by force of reason. For this prayer they receive reward for having performed a *mitzvah*,
- Nevertheless, prayer in praise of God for His might and for having created all things is still a *mitzvah* and rewarded even though it is entirely voluntary.

Texts of the Prayers

As with all personal prayers, there are no fixed texts for Noahide prayer. Since all Noahide prayer is essentially personal prayer, it is ideally expressed using sincere words from the heart.

However, we all sometimes need help jump-starting our prayers. In such cases, using a text can be of tremendous help.

The *Siddur* – Using the Jewish Prayer book

Many Noahides have asked about using the standard Jewish prayer book, the *Siddur*, for their personal prayers.

The core liturgy of the siddur was established in the 4th century BCE by the [*Anshei Kenesses HaGedola, the Men of the Great Assembly*](#). This was a group of scholars and prophets under the leadership of [Ezra](#) who rebuilt and reestablished Jewish practice in the Holy Land following the destruction of the first temple. After the destruction of the second temple, the prayer book underwent a number of subsequent revisions to reflect the situation of diaspora Judaism.

The result is a prayer book specifically tailored to the unique obligations and needs of the Jewish community in exile. As such, most of the *siddur* is not relevant to Noahides.

For example, the *siddur* is replete with prayers for “the return to Israel,” and prayers invoking the merit of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. A Noahide cannot recite these passages since Noahides do not have a share in the land of Israel or in the heritage of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Additionally, many passages refer to *mitzvos* that only apply only to those with a Jewish lineage.

For these reasons, it is preferable advisable that Noahides do not use the Jewish prayer book. Nevertheless, there are a few sections of universal application. We will look at these in our next lesson on prayer.

**The Psalms –
The Universal
Prayer book**

Instead, many rabbis have advised Noahides to use the book of Psalms, *Tehillim*, as their prayer book. The book of Psalms is a collection of the personal prayers of King David and many other great people.¹⁰ This “universal prayer book” gives voice to even the most subtly nuanced needs of the soul. At the end of this lesson we have attached an index of Psalms suitable for many occasions.

**Modern
Collections of
Noahide Prayers**

Despite the *Siddur's* general inapplicability to Noahides, it contains some material universal to both Jews and Noahides. In the past decade many attempts have been made to adapt this material into a regular order of Noahide prayers. In the next lesson on prayer we will examine these collections and suggested orders of Noahide prayers as well as excerpts from the siddur.

Practical Advice: How to Pray

Prayer is more than just speaking to God – it is the establishing of a relationship. Like all relationships, it takes work and communication. Our sages and *tzaddikim* (righteous ones) have established certain benchmarks for prayer to help us maximize our potential.

- 1) **Identify your prayer.** A prayer will always fall into one of the three categories below. Identifying your prayer will help you to better understand the prayer’s purpose and helps guide how to speak to God and articulate what is in their heart. The sages have identified three modes of prayer:
 - a. **Requests** – Asking God for one’s needs or for the needs of others. This includes both spiritual and physical needs.
 - b. **Praise** – Praising God for the abilities that are unique to Him alone. For example: praising God for his creation of the sun and the heavens, or for His ability to give life and heal sickness.
 - c. **Thanks** – Expressing gratitude to God for all that He has done on behalf of the petitioner. For example, health, family, friends and livelihood.

¹⁰ See *Bava Basra* 14b. It is a popular misconception that King David was the author of the Psalms. Though true that he authored many of them, he also edited the final collection, choosing to include many writings from earlier authors.

- 2) **Prayer should be verbalized.** By verbalizing our prayers we are forced to give voice and articulation to our most important concerns. Articulating them via speech gives honor to both the prayer and to God the recipient.¹¹
- 3) **Set aside regular times for reflection and prayer.** Though Noahides are not obligated in set times for prayer, establishing regular times for prayer spiritual reflection is intrinsic to the spiritual life of Jew and Noahide alike. This personal time should be fixed, regular, and sacred. The place should be somewhere private, quiet, and respectful. Some people will set aside time daily, others weekly. The beauty of Noahism is that you know what you have to do, but have a good amount of freedom to personalize it.
- 4) **Make a point of praying for all of your needs throughout the day.** God provides EVERYTHING. Even things appearing to come solely by the hand of man are still provided by God. Therefore, it is appropriate to pray for **all** of one's needs, whether great or small, physical or spiritual, silly or serious. Anything a person has is only a result of God.
- 5) **Prayer is directly and only to the one true God and creator of all things.** Noahism and Judaism both reject the idea of praying to or through any intermediary. Additionally, we only pray envisioning God as a single unity, not an entity with multiple forms or expressions. These concepts of a disparate God or of an intermediary are idolatrous and prohibited for Jews and Noahides alike. **All you need to connect with God is you, your prayers, and God.**

Index of Suggested Psalms

The following index of Psalms is compiled from a number of sources. You will find slight variations in practice and custom as to which Psalms are recited on which occasions.

When multiple psalms are given for one particular need, it is preferable that they all be said. This may be done either all at once or over a period of time. This is only a

¹¹ See *Igras Moshe* OC II: 25 that Noahides should verbalized their prayers. Purely mental prayer, even by Jews, is used only in extenuating circumstances.

recommendation, however. A little said with concentration and intent is better than a lot said without.

NOTE: Non-Jewish editions of the Psalms often use numberings that differ from the traditional Hebrew division of the psalms. The numbers below reflect the original numberings. We suggest the Artscroll Hebrew/English edition of the Psalms (Artscroll item# TEHH) available from www.Artscroll.com.

- Daily Psalms
 - Psalms for daily recitation: 67, 100, 145, 146, 150, and 20 – These appear in the Siddur and are recited daily by Jews as well.
 - Psalms for Specific Days:
 - In addition to the regular daily psalms, each day has its own specific psalm alluding to the work of creation accomplished on that day. The Psalm for the seventh day depicts the future messianic era. Each of these psalms was recited by the Levites on its corresponding day in the ancient temple. Today we continue the tradition of reciting these daily songs:
 - Sunday 24
 - Monday 48
 - Tuesday 82
 - Wednesday 94
 - Thursday 81
 - Friday 33
 - Saturday 92
- For after a full meal – a full meal is defined as one at which bread was eaten.
 - Psalm 67 or 104.
- For God's Guidance: 16, 19, 139
- For a Livelihood: 23, 34, 36, 62, 65, 67, 85, 104, 121, 136, 144, 145
- For Success: 57, 112, 122
- For a Favorable Judgment: 7, 35, 93
- For Help in Times of Need: 16, 20, 25, 26, 38, 54, 81, 85, 86, 87, 102, 130, 142

- For Being Rescued: 124
- For Thanksgiving for a Miracle: 18
- For Repentance: 51, 90
- To Find One's Spouse: 32, 38, 70, 71, 121, 124
- On the Day of One's Marriage: 19
- To Have Children: 102, 103
- Upon Giving Birth: 20
- For Recovery From Illness: 6, 30, 41, 88, 103
- To Express Gratitude: 21, 25, 26, 38, 54, 81, 85, 86, 87, 102, 130, 142
- For Peace: 46
- When the land of Israel is in Danger: 83, 130, 142
- For a Safe Journey: 91
- At a cemetery 33, 16, 17, 72, 91, 104, 130 (letters of the name of the deceased from 119)

Summary of This Lesson:

1. Noahides have an obligatory *mitzvah* to pray in response to their needs and circumstances. This prayer has no fixed texts or set times.
2. It is proper to offer other prayers of praise or gratitude. These voluntary prayers are likewise personal and have no fixed times or texts.
3. The Siddur, the Jewish prayer book is mostly inapplicable to non-Jews. It contains some universal sections which we will examine in a later lesson.
4. The book of Psalms is the universal prayer book and the most widely suggest text for Noahide prayer.
5. There are three types of prayer:
 - a. Requests

- b. Praises
 - c. Thanks
6. Prayer should be verbalized rather than performed in thought alone.
 7. One should set aside regular times for spiritual reflection and prayer.
 8. One should pray for ALL things, whether physical, spiritual, great or small.
 9. One should pray only and directly to God, no to or through any other entity.