

THE YESHIVA PIRCHEI SHOSHANIM SHULCHAN ARUCH LEARNING
PROJECT

The Noahide Laws – Lesson Seventeen



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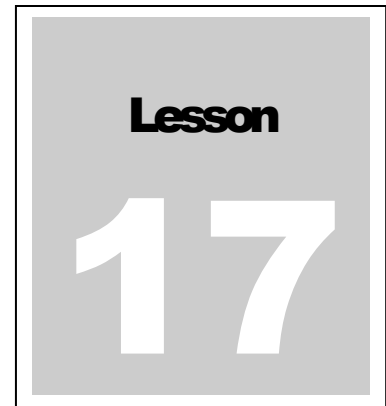
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Outline of This Lesson:

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. The Siddur**
- 3. Noahide Prayerbooks**
- 4. Other Details of Prayer**

Noahide Prayer: Daily Prayer II



Introduction

In the previous lesson on prayer (Lesson 17) we looked at the ideas behind Noahide prayer, practical suggestions, and the book of Psalms. In this lesson we are going to delve into the sections of the Siddur – the Jewish prayer book – which are universal to both Jews and Noahides. We will also look at recent compilations of prayers. We are also going to begin our discussion of blessings on food and other benefits.

The *Siddur*

As we mentioned in the last lesson, the *siddur* is not intended nor does it try to be a prayer book for both Jews and Noahides. It is uniquely tailored to the concerns of a Jewish community in exile. Therefore, much of its content does not apply to Noahides. The issue, however, goes beyond non-application; were non-Jews to use many of the prayers in the *siddur*, they would be praying falsely. For example, to say a prayer which includes the petitioner as part of Israel is a mistake because Noahides are not part of Israel. Though this seems like a minor detail, consider the verse from Psalms¹:

One who utters falsehood shall not stand before me.

Therefore, before saying any prayers found in the *siddur*, a Noahide must assess whether or not the particular prayer is relevant to non-Jews.

¹ 101:7

The following list of prayers is relevant to both Jews and non-Jews and found in all standard editions of the Siddur. I have been very conservative in selecting these passages. Certainly there are many others that can arguably be included. Nevertheless, I have chosen the ones upon which everyone can agree.

To reiterate what has been stated before: these are only suggestions. Noahides have no set liturgy for prayer and are free to take from here whatever works.

Page numbers refer to the locations of these prayers in the Artscroll Classic Siddur, Nusach Ashkenaz (Ashkenaz Liturgy):

- **Page 3: Upon Arising in the Morning.** The siddur discusses a ritual hand-washing performed by Jews upon arising. This is not applicable to Noahides. However, the two short prayers said here are relevant.
 - Upon arising, one should say: *Modeh Ani – I gratefully thank you...*
 - Once one has relieved himself, washed his face, and completed the regular waking routine, he should say: *Reishis Chochmah – The beginning of wisdom...*
- Once one is dressed and has his thoughts gathered, he should then continue with: **Page 13: Adon Olam – Master of the Universe.**
 - This famous hymn was penned in the 11th century by Rabbi Shlomo ibn Gabirol. The first part speaks of God the creator and transcendent king, while the second addresses God as the personal, immanent God of salvation and comfort. This classic text is recited before daily prayers and often after Shabbos and holiday prayers as well.
- **Morning Blessings.** As we shall see in upcoming lessons it is proper (yet not compulsory) for Noahides to recite many types of blessings. For the most part, Noahides can use the text for these blessings found in the Siddur.
 - **Page 15: Last paragraph – Blessing of *Who fashioned man with wisdom...***
 - This blessing praises God for creating the wondrous machine of the body and for maintaining its balance and function each day.

- Jews say this at some point after relieving themselves in the morning and after every such occasion throughout the day. Noahides may certainly do the same.
- **Page 19: Top of page – *My God, the Soul...*** This praises God for safeguarding our souls and restoring our spiritual and physical vitality every morning.
- **Page 19: The order of the Morning Blessings.** These will require some adaptation for Noahide use. The exact reasons behind these blessings and why they need emendation will be explained in the live lesson.
 - The second blessing, ...*for not having made me a gentile*, should be omitted.
 - The third, ...*for not having made me a slave*, should be omitted.
 - Whether male or female, the fourth blessing should be ... *for having made me according to His will*.
 - The remaining blessings through ...*who gives strength to the weary* on page 21 may be said without alteration. There are, however, two exceptions. One should omit the blessings that concludes with ...*who girds Israel...* and ...*who crowns Israel...*
- **Morning Psalms.** The next section of the Siddur is a collection of Psalms praising God.
 - **Page 59: *Boruch SheAmar – Blessed is He who Spoke.*** This blessing opens the daily recitation of Psalms. Noahides may precede their psalms with this blessing. Tradition tells us that this prayer fell from heaven and was transcribed about 2400 years ago. It is one of the deepest and most multi-layered parts of the liturgy.
 - **Page 67: Psalm 145** preceded by the opening versus: *Praiseworthy...*
 - **Page 71: Psalm 146**
 - **Page 75: Psalm 150**

- **Page 83: *Yishtabach* – *May your name be praised forever...***
This prayer concludes the recitation of psalms. Noahides may recite it, but it is proper to omit the phrase ...*the God of our forefathers*.

- **Page 91 – The *Shema*.** There is a lot of debate as to whether or not Noahides may say the *Shema*. On one hand, the *Shema* is composed of passages from the Torah, which are perfectly acceptable for Noahides to read and recite. On the other hand, the *Shema* is a prayer – a pledge of allegiance – and thus much more than a recitation of scripture. Having consulted with a number of experts and *poksim* (decisors of Torah law), the following is recommended:
 - **Bottom of Page 91: *Hear O' Israel: The Lord our God, The Lord is One!*** If Noahides wish to recite the *Shema*, then they should say the entire verse interpreting it as a statement of allegiance to the God of Israel and recognition that He is the one true God. This is preferable to omitting the “Hear O’ Israel” and only reciting the second part of the verse. It is forbidden to replace “Israel” with “Noah” because it is rewriting a verse of the Torah. An even better course of action is to compose a text that accomplishes the same purpose as the *Shema*. The reason Jews recite the *Shema* is as an acceptance of G-d’s sovereign kingship; it is a religious “pledge of allegiance.” The verse itself is only a means to doing this. Therefore, it is best advised that Noahides compose a text that expresses a Noahide acceptance of God’s kingship. Therefore, one will fulfill the intent and spirit of the *Shema* while avoiding the difficulties posed by using the Jewish texts.

 - **Top of page 93, first paragraph.** From *You shall love...* to ... *arise* may be recited. However, the last verses containing the commandments of *Tefillin* and *mezuzah* should be omitted as a matter of propriety, not prohibition.

 - **The remaining parts of the *Shema* should be omitted.**

- **Pages 163 to 169: The Psalms of the Day.** The appropriate Psalm of the day may be said.

Note that the *Amirah* / *Shemonah Esrei*, the central liturgy of the siddur, is not included in the above list. Authorities on Torah law are unanimous in their

conclusion that this prayer, instituted to replace Jewish temple sacrifices, should not be said by Noahides.

Noahide Prayer Books

It is not unreasonable to assume that ancient Noahide communities had their own unique liturgy. After all, we see that the siddur does not offer Noahides a great amount of variety.

If so, then what prayers did the ancient Noahides pray? This is a very hard question to answer. As we mentioned at the start of this course, the ancient Noahide communities disappeared in the 3rd century leaving no written evidence of liturgy.

This is because most set prayers at that time were said from memory. In fact, the Jewish community didn't even compile written prayer books until the 9th century.

The lack of uniquely Noahide prayers is acutely felt by both Noahides and Jews involved in Noahide study. In response, many collections of Noahide prayers have been authored over the past two decades.

Many of these compilations are excellent, while some make fundamental mistakes.

Having reviewed all of the publications available today, I would most recommend a small, pocket-sized booklet entitled *Prayers, Blessings, Principles of Faith and Divine Service for Noahides* by Rabbis Moshe Weiner and Immanuel Shochet (available online from Amazon.com).

This small booklet contains original and adapted liturgy, blessings, grace after meals, and other prayers for *Bnei Noach*. All of the material is meticulously researched and highly consistent with the underpinning legal and theological concerns of Noahism.

Other Details of Prayer

- Though one does not need to pray loudly, he should at least articulate his prayers aloud with speech.²

² *Igros Moshe* OC II: 25.

- One should either use his own prayers or those composed to the one True God by His believers. One should not use prayers composed by idolaters or commonly offered to idolatry. This is even if one's intent is to pray to the true God. This type of prayer is comparable to offering a defiled sacrifice before God.³
- Similarly, one should not pray to God in a *Makom Avodah Zarah* – a place of idol worship. This would include a church, a chapel in which there is a cross or crucifix, a Buddhist temple, or any place containing idolatrous imagery. Even though Islam is an unacceptable religion, a Noahide may pray in a mosque.⁴
- One should not pray within sight or odor of excrement or other bodily waste.
- One should pray in a clean, respectable environment. One may not pray in a bathroom, slaughterhouse, or other such place.
- One should not pray before adults or children who are nude or immodestly clothed.
- Though Noahides have no fixed obligations in prayer, it is nevertheless appropriate to establish regular times for prayer and reflection.
- Noahide prayers may be drawn from the Psalms, certain passages of the Siddur, and modern compilations of prayers.

³ Igros Moshe Ibid.

⁴ Although Islam is monotheistic, it rejects the Torah as the final revelation and authority.

Summary of This Lesson

1. In prayer, one must be very careful not to utter any words of falsehood.
2. Much of the Siddur is specific to the exile Jewish community and specifically addresses their concerns. Therefore, Noahides cannot use most of the material contained therein.
3. Nevertheless, the Siddur contains some universal material that Noahides may use for their daily prayers.
4. While ancient communities likely had specific Noahide liturgies, any actual evidence has been lost to history.
5. Recent authors have compiled and composed collections of Noahide prayers.
6. When one prays, he should do so in a place and manner that is respectable.
7. Prayer should be verbal and aloud.