

Beyond The Jewish Community

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For the longest time, man has been experimenting with a variety of ideologies, ostensibly to establish a truly civilized world in which he can live with purpose and in happiness.

The condition of the world today, however, bears testimony to his pathetic failure. Human logic alone simply cannot formulate a system of ethics and morality that will be universally acceptable and binding.

Witnessing the moral degeneracy of today's society, what should the Jewish response be? Perhaps we should withdraw and become an isolationist community, concerned only with our own survival and developing our "chosenness" solely to our own advantage? That might indeed serve our own interests to a degree, but it has always been a key component of G-d's plan that we, the People of Torah, should share with mankind the way towards hope and purpose.

No, Judaism is not a proselytizing religion. It does not seek converts. We believe that every person has a mission to fulfill in G-d's creation, and can be deemed worth of the Almighty's rewards – both in This World and in The World To Come – providing, of course, that he or she accepts and follows the guidelines that have been Divinely ordained for him or her. For the Jew, this means the 613 commandments. For the non-Jew – i.e. all "descendants of Noah" – it means the

basic program of ethical monotheism built on seven commandments, the universal moral code called "The Seven Laws for the Descendants of Noah."

"The Seven Noahide Laws" begin with the prohibition against worship of anything but the One Supreme G-d, and contain an orderly system of ethical behavior, comprising the code by which all of mankind is obligated to live. The Rebbe launched a campaign to teach and disseminate the Noahide Code to the world at large.

There is an obvious question, "Why now?" Why embark upon this outreach program to the Gentiles at this particular time in history? Why have the great Torah-leaders of previous generations not appeared to consider this a priority? The answer is, that throughout his turbulent history, with very few exceptions, the Jew has not been in a position to communicate on this level with his non-Jewish neighbor. The Jew has been a victim of severe circumstances, and could not dare suggest that he had something to teach his contemptuous hosts about faith and morality.

Today, in most countries, the Jew is, thank G-d, free to speak his mind on almost every subject. He would therefore be failing in his religious obligation and moral duty were he to choose to be an "unconcerned bystander" and not share his knowledge and insights with others. The opportunity triggers the obligation.

The obligation, in turn, triggers action – which has been highly successful on two levels, the governmental and the grass-roots. Some examples: Heads of State and government officials of various countries – particularly the United States – have issued proclamations encouraging their citizens to observe the Noahide moral code.

History repeats itself. As with many of the Rebbe's past campaigns, the initial sense of "innovation" was total. The

average non-Jew, though familiar with the Ten Commandments, had never heard of the Seven Noahide laws. Yet now, only a few years after the launching of the campaign, leaders in both government and education around the world are making increasing mention of the Noahide Laws as a cardinal foundation for ethical behavior. Seriously concerned by the erosion of morality all around them, they express warm appreciation of, and support for, the campaign.

Within the Jewish community, too, there is a greatly heightened awareness of the obligation to utilize one's contacts with non-Jewish friends and acquaintances not only for material concerns but also to impart moral influence, to inform and educate about the Noahide Laws.

In summary: What is the Chabad-Lubavitch attitude to the non-Jewish world? Just this; that if we live our lives with Divine dignity and purpose, will inevitably inspire others; if we talk about a Supreme Being who created this world and continues to watch over it, others will begin to sense His presence; and if vociferously deny vulgarity and promote G-d-give decency and purposefulness, others will follow our example. In these times of moral crisis, an all-out attempt must be made to remind all people of their original purpose. The ultimate intention of G-d's plan will be realized when everyone declares this world to be G-d Almighty's dwelling-place, and recognizes that, "The earth and all in it is the L-rd's, the world and its inhabitants" Psalm 24.

Culled from The Lamplighter