

# 13 Principles of the Jewish Faith

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## The Thirteen Principles of the Jewish Faith

by Rav Moshe Ben Maimon, the Rambam – Rabbi Moses Maimonides

אשר בארנו בפרט בפרקי האמונה

The RAMBAM, in his commentary on the Mishnah (Sanhedrin, chap. 10), refers to these ‘Shloshah-Asar Ikkarim’ or thirteen principles of faith as “the fundamental truths of our religion and its very foundations.”

- Belief in the existence of a Creator and of providence
- Belief in His unity
- Belief in His incorporeality
- Belief in His eternity
- Belief that worship is due to Him alone
- Belief that G-d communicates with man through prophecy
- Belief that Moses was the greatest of all the prophets
- Belief in the revelation of the Torah to Moses at Sinai
- Belief in the unchangeable nature of the revealed Law
- Belief that G-d is omniscient
- Belief in divine reward & retribution in this world and in the hereafter
- Belief in the coming of the Messiah
- Belief in the resurrection of the dead

Yud Gimmel Ikrim – אשה ואיש

From The Siddur (prayer book)

1. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His name, is the Creator and Guide of everything that has been created, and that He alone has made, does make, and will make all things.
2. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His name, is One, and that there is no oneness like His in any way; and that He alone is our G-d, who was, is, and ever will be.
3. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His name, is not a physical body, and no physical phenomena can apply to Him, and that He has no form whatsoever.
4. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His name, is the first and is the last.
5. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His name, is the only one to whom it is proper to pray, and that it is not proper to pray to anyone else.
6. I believe with perfect faith that all the words of the prophets are true.
7. I believe with perfect faith that the prophecy of Moses our teacher, peace be to him, was true, and that he was the father of all the prophets, both of those who preceded him and of those who followed him.
8. I believe with perfect faith that the entire Torah which we now possess is the same that was given to Moses our teacher, peace be to him.
9. I believe with perfect faith that this Torah will not be changed, nor will there be any other Torah from the Creator, blessed be His name.
10. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His name, knows all the actions and thoughts of human beings, as it is said, It is He who fashions the hearts of them all, who discerns all their actions. (Psalms 33:15)
11. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed

be His name, rewards those who keep His commandments, and punishes those who transgress His commandments.

12. I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, and, though he tarry, I wait daily for his coming.
13. I believe with perfect faith that there will be a resurrection of the dead at the time when it will please the Creator, blessed be His name and exalted be His mention for ever and ever.

In what has become one of his most celebrated and well-known works, Maimonides, in his commentary on the Mishnah, compiles what he refers to as the Shloshah-Asar Ikkarim, the Thirteen Articles of Faith, compiled from Judaism's 613 commandments found in the Torah. The Thirteen Articles of Jewish faith are as follows:

1. Belief in the existence of the Creator, be He blessed, who is perfect in every manner of existence and is the Primary Cause of all that exists.
2. The belief in God's absolute and unparalleled unity.
3. The belief in God's non-corporeality, nor that He will be affected by any physical occurrences, such as movement, or rest, or dwelling.
4. The belief in God's eternity.
5. The imperative to worship Him exclusively and no foreign false gods.
6. The belief that God communicates with man through prophecy.
7. The belief that the prophecy of Moses our teacher has priority.
8. The belief in the divine origin of the Torah(Bible).
9. The belief in the immutability of the Torah(Bible).
10. The belief in divine omniscience and providence.
11. The belief in divine reward and retribution.
12. The belief in the arrival of the Messiah and the messianic era.

13. The belief in the resurrection of the dead.

It is the custom of many congregations to recite the Thirteen Articles, in a slightly more poetic form, beginning with the words Ani Maamin—"I believe--every day after the morning prayers. In his commentary on the Mishnah (Sanhedrin, chap. 10), Maimonides refers to these thirteen principles of faith as "the fundamental truths of our religion and its very foundations."

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## **The 7 Laws of Noah &...**

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# **The Seven Laws of Noah and the Non-Jews who Follow Them**

By Michael Kress

Sitting at a table at Mendy's Kosher Delicatessen in New York, Jim Long pauses to say a blessing in Hebrew before biting into a massive hamburger topped with fried pastrami. "This pastrami is better than bacon," he declares in his warm voice tinged with an Arkansan accent. The 58-year-old filmmaker—who no longer permits himself bacon—is in the city with his wife Carol, who sits primly beside him. They are here to speak at several Orthodox synagogues about their documentary, Riddles of the Exodus, which examines the biblical account through the lens of Egyptian archaeological finds.

The Longs are an observant couple. Hebrew phrases pepper their conversation—a b'ezrat Hashem (with God's help) here, a baruch Hashem (praise God) there. Back in Arkansas, they keep a traditional Jewish home. "We've got blessings in ivrit [Hebrew] hanging on the walls, and menorahs on display," Long explains. Each year, they build a sukkah and attend a Passover seder. "Our oldest grandson just turned six and already knows his aleph-bet," Long boasts.

But despite the baruch Hashems, the menorahs, the sukkah, the avoidance of pork and the intimate familiarity with advanced rabbinic texts, Jim and Carol Long are not Jewish, nor do they have any plans to convert. They are Noahides: non-Jews who accept the authority of Jewish law and focus their lives around the Jewish concept of Sheva Mitzvot B'nei Noach or the Seven Commandments for the Children of Noah. This set of laws is intended for non-Jews and, according to tradition, predate the Ten Commandments given at Mount Sinai. "I believe exactly what a Jew believes," Long tells me. "My belief system is exactly parallel to that of an Orthodox Jew. That doesn't mean I am one."

Unbeknownst to most Jews, there are hundreds, maybe even thousands, of Noahides, and most, like the Longs, are former Christians who've turned their backs on the faith. This is not the first time the world has seen a community of "Righteous Gentiles" who center their beliefs around Judaism but it is the first time in history that such a group has begun to organize as a worldwide movement. And that movement is being actively encouraged by some Orthodox Jewish groups—in particular, the Brooklyn-based Chabad-Lubavitch Hasidim.

About forty blocks north of Mendy's deli, Rabbi Yakov Cohen scurries around a second-floor office at the Schneerson Center for Jewish Life, the home of Chabad on the Upper East Side of Manhattan.

The 30-something Brooklynite with a close-cropped reddish

beard, rarely sits still: he devotes his copious energies to helping out with the Chabad center's core mission—classes, prayer services and other programs for Jewish residents of this tony Manhattan neighborhood.

His true passion, however, lies in reaching out to non-Jews through what are usually referred to as the “Seven Laws,” which he describes as pillars of universal morality that serve as a “balm for a world of conflict and immorality.” Jewish teachings say that God first gave these laws to Adam, then reaffirmed them as part of the covenant he made with Noah after the Flood. Just as the Jews have the Ten Commandments (plus an additional 603 mitzvot), non-Jews—all of whom are technically the children of Noah—have the Seven Laws, which command them to establish a legal system and refrain from murder, blasphemy, idolatry, adultery, theft and eating the flesh of a living animal.

“The non-Jews have the full length and breadth of Torah—they just have a different role in it,” says Cohen, his rapid-fire delivery complete with a yeshiva-ish lilt. “The role of every person is to be a good person, to bring divine light, to draw down godliness, Hashem, into the world. To do it as a Jew, as a non-Jew, it doesn't matter. It's the same light,” he says. “It's the same Godly energy.”

Like virtually all Chabad Hasidim, Cohen seeks counsel in the words of Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the late Lubavitch rebbe, who died at age 92 in 1994 and is still affectionately referred to simply as the “the rebbe.” “Influencing non-Jews to keep their mitzvos, the Seven Noahide Laws... will assist our task of making the world into a dwelling place for God, and help bring about the arrival of Messiah,” Schneerson said in a 1987 speech during a Purim celebration. In response to teachings like this, thousands of his followers fanned out around the globe to battle what they saw as society's moral degeneracy, bringing yiddishkeit to non-observant Jews and seeking out and supporting interested non-Jews.

About six years ago, Cohen founded Noahide.org, a website that serves as a sort of Noahide think tank, through which he runs conferences, publishes papers and counsels non-Jews from as far away as Scandinavia. Other Chabad-associated websites such as AskNoah.org and 7for70.com (meaning, seven laws for the proverbial 70 nations of the world) likewise seek to spread Noahide values to non-Jews in English, French, Spanish and other languages. Rabbis from Shimon Cowen in Australia to Immanuel Schochet in Canada offer halachic advice to Noahides and lecture about what Jewish tradition expects of non-Jews. In Israel, Chabad emissaries visit Arab and Druze villages to pass out literature about the Seven Laws and converse with the sometimes bewildered—but often receptive—locals. In addition to preparing the world for the Messiah, they see themselves as presenting moral values that will end the centuries-old animosities between Muslims and Jews.

“We, the Jewish people, especially from people, have to be a light upon the nations and we have to tell them what Torah says,” says Cohen. “We have the responsibility to shed light on the world.”

*Jack Saunders has a snowy white beard of biblical proportions.*

Back in the 1980s he was a Baptist minister at Frazier’s Chapel Independent Baptist Church in Cohutta, Georgia, near the Tennessee border. But that was before the now 58-year-old Tennessean began to question the fundamentals of his faith and came to the conclusion that the gospel stories of Jesus and the entire New Testament are false.

“It was kind of disturbing,” he says of the experience. “But if you’re looking for truth and truth smacks you in the face, then you have to do something. You have to be able to confront it and say, ‘This is the truth’ and let go of your emotions.”

Saunders recalls how hard it was to express his doubts to his

parishioners and admit that he had “been wrong for all those years.” The process was slow. For about a year and a half he preached only from the Jewish Bible, what Christians call the Old Testament. Then one Sunday morning, Saunders recalls, he stood on the pulpit and read from Isaiah 7:14, in which a young woman, interpreted by Christians to be a virgin, gives birth to Jesus. For the first time he let his parishioners know that he saw no hint of Christian prophecy in that passage. “That’s when everything, you may say, hit the fan.”

Some church-goers abandoned Saunders, but nearly half of the congregation’s 70 members were moved by the pastor’s change of heart and stayed as Frazier’s Chapel Independent Baptist Church removed its steeple and crosses. “At the time,” Saunders says, “the only thing we knew was what we were not.” After reading about the Seven Laws and studying with a rabbi, Saunders and his remaining flock became Noahides and redubbed their place of worship Frazier’s Chapel B’nai Noach Study Center. “I wanted to be able to read the Hebraic sources by myself,” says Saunders, who has since learned Hebrew. “I didn’t want to be lied to because I’d been lied to by all those Christians.”

It was Texas archaeologist Vendyl Jones who introduced Jim Long to the Seven Laws. The two met in 1993 when Jones appeared on the Dallas radio show that Long produced. A former Baptist preacher, Jones had grown dismayed with what he considered the anti-Jewish sentiments of the Gospels and sought council from rabbis, studied in Israel and became a Noahide. He is believed to have been the inspiration for the character Indiana Jones in the film *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and is the founder of the Vendyl Jones Research Institute—a nonprofit based in Grandview, Texas, devoted to Biblical archeology. Considered one of the pioneers of the modern Noahide movement, Jones fondly remembers meeting Schneerson in his Brooklyn home and the rabbi’s encouraging words: “‘Vendyl Jones, you are doing the most important work in the world.’”

Long found himself intrigued by Jones's spiritual journey. Having drifted from denomination to denomination until he abandoned Christianity altogether, Long "was looking for something to fill the void." Shortly after the radio interview, he began attending Torah classes and joined Jones on archeological digs in the Middle East.

For Pam Rogers, the break with Christianity was more wrenching. Rogers and her husband, Larry, who live in Tulsa, Oklahoma, were members of the Worldwide Church of God, a small Christian movement that observes the Sabbath on Saturdays, before becoming leaders of a Messianic Jewish congregation. In the early 1990s, a Jewish man befriended them and challenged them to prove the validity of the Christian Bible. As the couple tried to defend their views, they came to believe that the New Testament distorted the teachings of the Hebrew Bible.

The decision to become a Noahide threatened to break the Rogers family apart. Pam's father, a Pentecostal preacher, refused to speak to her for four years. Larry lost his job because he refused to work on Saturdays. The couple almost divorced because Pam made the decision to build her life around the Seven Laws before Larry did. "We lose our children, our spouses, our identities," Rogers says of the sacrifices that she and other Noahides are often forced to make for their faith.

*Despite what might seem an obvious trajectory, following the Seven Laws is not a path to becoming a Jew, says Yakov Cohen of the Schneerson Center. "We're not interested in membership," he says.*

Rather, the Chabad sees Judaism as a "universal religion" that offers salvation to everyone without conversion.

Jews are not known for proselytizing, and most Jews believe that Judaism prohibits it. David Novak—a Conservative rabbi and leading authority on the Seven Laws and what Judaism

requires of non-Jews—debunks that idea. “Find me one halachic prohibition against proselytizing,” he says. The popularly accepted notion that Judaism opposes proselytizing, Novak argues, rests less on theology than on the fact that most of Jewish history has been a perpetual struggle for survival. “For most of the time, Jews couldn’t do it.”

Novak, who teaches at the University of Toronto, points to sporadic attempts to convert people to Judaism throughout history. The best-known effort took place during the time of the Second Temple, which stood from 515 to 70 B.C.E. Living under the Romans, Jews actively proselytized, with great success. Some non-Jews converted, others simply took on aspects of observant Jewish life and became part of Jewish communities. Called the “God Fearers” (Yirei Adonai), they are immortalized in the Book of Psalms.

While Jewish law does not prohibit proselytization, it does not call for a world of Jewish converts, either. The traditional messianic vision, as articulated most famously in the Book of Isaiah, is of a world at peace in which everyone acknowledges one God, even if all do not adopt Judaism:

*And many peoples shall go and say: ‘Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares...*

Even in a text as familiar as the Aleinu prayer, Jews regularly reference a vision of Jews and non-Jews under a monotheistic ruler—to many, a clear allusion to Noahides:

*All the world’s inhabitants will recognize and know that to you, every knee should bend, every tongue should swear. Before You, Lord, our God, they will bend every knee and cast*

*themselves down and to the glory of your name they will render homage, and they will all accept upon themselves the yoke of your kingship, that you may reign over them soon and eternally.*

*Since the earliest days of Christianity, Jewish sages have argued over whether the Noahide commandment not to worship "false gods" is compatible with other religions.*

Islam, the rabbis hold, is acceptable because of its adamantly monotheistic stance. Christianity, on the other hand, remains a subject of contention, with many arguing that belief in the Trinity is polytheistic, and therefore out of bounds under Noahide law.

Another critical debate centers around whether the Seven Laws are a set of universal moral imperatives that people intuit on their own or are precepts that Jews must actively bring to the world. The dominant halachic attitude has been that Jews are not required to spread Noahide teachings to non-Jews. Moses Maimonides, the medieval Jewish philosopher and legal authority, disagreed. In his monumental 12th-century work the *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides envisioned a society in which non-Jews would be governed by Jewish law, noting that they could choose to convert. "If they do not want to, we do not compel them to accept the Torah and the commandments. Moses did, however, command in the name of God to compel all people to accept the Noahide laws," Maimonides continued. "Compel" may seem a particularly strong word, but Maimonides's stance is clear: Jews must do what they can to teach non-Jews about the Noahide laws.

The 19th century Italian rabbi and famed Kabbalist, Elijah

Benamozegh, also believed that Jews have a responsibility to guide non-Jews towards the path of righteousness. Shortly before his death in 1900, Benamozegh received a letter from Frenchman Aimé Pallière seeking advice on converting to Judaism. Benamozegh told the young man there was another way. "The religion of humanity is no other than Noahism," the rabbi wrote to Pallière. "Here is the religion preserved by Israel to be transmitted to the Gentiles. It is the path which lies open before your efforts, before mine as well, to spread the knowledge thereof, as is my duty to do so." Called the "first and last high priest of the Noahide religion," Pallière is believed to have been the first modern Noahide. A talented writer, he learned Hebrew, lectured at the Orthodox Rabbinical School of France and urged Jews to follow Orthodox traditions.

Benamozegh believed "that mankind cannot rise to the essential principles on which society must rest unless it meet[s] with Israel. And Israel cannot fathom the depths of its own national and religious tradition, unless it meet[s] with mankind." A half-century later, Benamozegh's dream of a Jewish-supported Noahide worldwide movement would be seized upon by Schneerson. "Every Jew has the obligation to ensure that all the peoples of the world observe the Seven Noahide Laws" and that non-Jews, as well as Jews, "acknowledge God as Creator and ruler of the world," Schneerson declared.

It's a position that remains controversial. "If Jews are telling Gentiles what to do, it's a form of imperialism," Novak says. To him, the Seven Laws are valuable in constructing a moral foundation that enables Jews to speak out on social issues, but not as part of a religion around which non-Jews should structure their daily lives. "Why would any Gentile want to be told by Lubavitch—or any other rabbi—what to do?" Novak asks. "I am suspicious of anyone who wants to live this way."

Novak isn't alone in his suspicions. "With a lot of rabbis, there's still this skepticism and fear that someone's trying

to infiltrate your shul and will end up being some sort of missionary trying to bring people to Christianity,” Jack Saunders says of the reception Noahides often receive when seeking guidance. Counseling Noahides is not the sort of subject covered in a typical rabbinical school education and rabbis tend to confront the issue only if approached personally by a non-Jew.

Barry Freundel, the author of *Contemporary Orthodox Judaism's Response to Modernity* and rabbi of Washington, DC's Keshet Israel, a modern Orthodox synagogue, is among the many rabbis who have never been approached by a Noahide. Freundel doesn't share Schneerson's belief that Jews are required to spread the Noahide laws to non-Jews—but he also doesn't believe that Jews can ignore interested Noahides. “Once they are doing it, you are required to help them,” he says.

Carol Long wishes there were many more rabbis who were willing to work with Noahides. “They have to know there are actually people out there looking to them for leadership and spiritual guidance and who respect what they bring to the world.”

*Today's Noahide movement has no prescribed ritual and liturgical life.*

Even the laws themselves—six out of the seven—are prohibitions such as “don't kill” and “don't steal.”

“We need to give more than ‘don't, don't, don't,’” Larry Rogers says. If more people are going to become Noahide, “they have to have a life. They have to know there are life celebrations,” he says. “We're trying to find our place with Hashem.”

To add greater meaning to their lives, some Noahides have created a lifestyle parallel to that of Orthodox Judaism: They study Jewish texts, pray and follow some of what are known as the “positive commandments”—rituals and other mitzvot. They've

adopted portions of Jewish liturgy and prayers, removing all mentions of chosenness, to make clear that this concept only applies to Jews.

But “there are so many opinions about Noahide halacha,” says Pam Rogers. “It’s very confusing for us Gentiles.” The Noahide approach to Shabbat illustrates the difficulty of deciding which Jewish traditions to follow. Rogers and her husband try to avoid work and set aside time for a festive meal and prayer, but don’t refrain from using electrical devices. Others may shun the use of electricity but go out of their way to perform at least one activity over the course of Shabbat that distinguishes them from Jews. Jack Saunders, for example, writes a check. “I always do something that makes it known I’m not Israel,” he says.

From his base in New York, Yakov Cohen is working to bring structure to this mosaic of Noahide spiritual life. He and others are creating a Noahide siddur (prayerbook) to standardize prayers, and a liturgy of lifecycle rituals, such as funerals and baby-naming ceremonies. This year, one of the first Noahide weddings was held in Buffalo, New York, under a chuppa. The officiating rabbi spoke of the Seven Laws as the marriage’s foundation and sealed it with a contract modeled after the traditional ketuba. Rabbis are also working on the first-ever Noahide Shulhan Arukh—a comprehensive book of law pertaining to non-Jews, which will spell out the specifics of Noahide life, making clear which mitzvot are acceptable for them and which aren’t. “We know what they can’t do,” says Cohen. “Let’s see what they can do.”

*Noahides are few, dispersed, often misunderstood and they crave community.*

Lucky ones, like Saunders, find likeminded souls near home with whom to gather together to study Jewish texts, pray, discuss the challenges of the Noahide life and socialize.

Local groups, such as the Chavurath B'nei Noach (the Fellowship of the Children of Noah) of Ft. Worth, Texas, serve as an important source of communal life for their members. Organizations such as The Root & Branch Association, Noahide Nations, Rainbow Covenant and B'nai Noach Torah Institute provide advice and support to Noahides wherever they live, often through the Internet.

No single organization, however, is widely recognized as representative of the worldwide movement. That's partly because of the diffuse and ad hoc nature of Noahide organizations, but it is also reflective of the nature of the movement, which is composed of independent-minded people who have rejected their traditional faith and are willing to follow a largely uncharted spiritual path. "We're very iconoclastic—we're all about taking down the idols," Jim Long says. Saunders puts it more pessimistically: "It seems like every time we try to organize, it doesn't go well."

The most recent effort to bring Noahides together comes in the form of High Council of B'nei Noah, an umbrella organization that seeks to fill the leadership vacuum. The High Council's mission is to provide support for Noahides, educate the general public, serve as a liaison with the Jewish community and standardize Noahide beliefs and practices. Last January, members of the Council—which included Saunders and Long—were inaugurated in Jerusalem, where they recited the following oath:

*"I pledge my allegiance to Hashem, God of Israel, Creator and King of the Universe, to His Torah and its representatives, the developing Sanhedrin. I hereby pledge to uphold the Seven Laws of Noah in all their details, according to Oral Law of Moses under the guidance of the developing Sanhedrin."*

The Noahide Council is supported by the respected Orthodox Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, best known for the edition of the

Talmud that bears his name, but who's also the leader of the "developing Sanhedrin" cited in the oath. Steinsaltz's Sanhedrin is the most recent attempt to revive the Great Sanhedrin of 71 sages who met in Jerusalem until 425 C.E. to discuss matters of concern to the Jewish people and adjudicate disputes. Steinsaltz argues that both Jews and Noahides follow different parts of the same belief system and can even be considered members of the same religion. "Even from simply a utilitarian point of view, we Jews have hardly any friends in the world. B'nei Noah are by definition our closest friends," he says. "So we should reach out to them."

Already, the Council has been troubled by internal disagreements and criticism from outsiders. Some Noahides are unhappy that its members were appointed by the Sanhedrin rather than voted on, while others complain that all its members are American. Jack Saunders is among those who have left the Council, tiring of the strife though still supportive of its mission. "For me, it's a wonderful thing," he says, but cautions that "working out all the problems is going to be tough."

Steinsaltz believes the Council—and the broader Noahide community—will overcome these rifts. Long also remains optimistic. A major conference for Noahides in Jerusalem for October 2007, during Sukkot, is in the works and Long hopes it will serve as an inspiration for Noahides worldwide. "We think that we could act as a *gesher*, a bridge, between Jews and Noahides," he says.

*As a child of a Jewish father, Philip Levy, a 28-year-old Noahide from the northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, DC, could walk into any Reform synagogue as a full-fledged member.*

But after drifting from Catholicism, his mother's religion, to evangelical Christianity, he found meaning in Orthodox

Judaism. Through the Internet and guided by the local Chabad community, Levy came to self-identify as a Noahide. He takes classes and attends services as a non-Jew at a Chabad synagogue and even created a website, [novanoahides.org](http://novanoahides.org) (nova as in Northern Virginia)—in the hope of meeting other Noahides who live nearby. So far, he has only found one.

Why doesn't Levy take that last step and convert, so he can be considered Jewish according to Orthodox standards and become a full member of the community? Nearly all Noahides grapple with the conversion question, sometimes for years and without definitive conclusion. After all, they adhere to traditional Jewish commandments more strictly than most Jews and many can quote from rabbinic texts as well as yeshiva students.

Some have become Jewish, but they are a minority. For the rest, the reasons for not converting are complicated. "I was raised on bacon and eggs," Levy jokes, "and if I had to give them up I don't know what I'd do." More seriously, he talks about an "attachment" to his "Gentileness" and his respect for his mother.

But for most Noahides the decision not to convert boils down to the fact that they find spiritual fulfillment in what they view as their role in the divine plan for the world: To follow the lead of the Jewish people—not become them. "Israel was chosen to be a nation of kings and priests and a light unto the nations," Pam Rogers explains. "We decided if everybody converted, who would Israel have to be priests to?"

They believe that they can have a greater impact as non-Jews following the Torah than as Jewish converts, both by encouraging other non-Jews to live according to Noah's laws and by calling upon Jews to observe their own traditions. "If I just converted and went out to the non-Jewish world talking about the Torah and the prophets and how great it was, then I'd just be another Jew running my mouth," says Jack Saunders.

To those who take the long view of Jewish history, like University of Toronto professor Novak, the Noahide movement is destined to peter out, as did the Second Temple-era God Fearers. Eventually, Novak reasons, Noahides will return to their original faiths or convert to Judaism. "If you want rabbis to tell you what to do, why not convert to Judaism?" he asks. "It's an untenable situation."

A couple of months after meeting the Longs at Mendy's Kosher Delicatessen, I called them at their home in Arkansas to ask how they envisioned the Noahide future, in 15, 20, or even 50 years. "There will be places in every state and nation where people can go to study and worship," answered Carol. No other group of Righteous Gentiles has had the tools of modern technology with which to communicate, organize effectively and dispense information. This, Jim said, not only insures the long-term sustainability, but the growth of the Noahide movement. Then he asked me a question: "Do you know what kind of world we would live in if all nations honored the Seven Laws?" He took a quick breath and answered his own query: "It would be transformational. If we were to stop killing, stop stealing, establish real courts of justice everywhere in the world, do you see what would happen? We'd have world peace."

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The Universal Noahide Code is one for peace.. Jewish Sages explain that a wonder of G-d's creation is that, although the face of every human being is essentially the same, no two people are identical.

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# Abortion and Jewish Law

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## Abortion and Jewish Law – Partial birth abortion

By: Rabbi Yakov D. Cohen

The sanctity and infinite worth of every human being is a quintessential Jewish value, grounded in the biblical notion that man is created in the divine image and likeness to the creator. According to the Mishnah (Sanhedrin 4:5) “Whoever destroy one life is as if he destroyed a whole world”.

Abortion is permitted, and perhaps even required in cases of serious danger to the mother according to Jewish perspectives. However for convenience it is prohibited. When the majority of the fetus has emerged... the mother and the child are co-equal and you can not take one life / soul for another life / soul.

In essence abortion is judged to be the unwarranted taking of a life within a life it is the same prohibition as murder. Unless the Torah / Jewish law permits it.

One of the ultimate goals of man is the imitation of G-d. We do this in every good act, paralleling G-d's own creation of good. The most direct way that we can do this, however, is in our actions toward our fellow man.

G-d's purpose in creation could have been fulfilled with the

creation of a single creature to accept His good. Such a creature, however, could never truly resemble G-d. G-d Himself is a bestower of good, and if only one creature existed, then to whom would it do good? Certainly not to G-d, for G-d has no needs. It is for this reason that G-d created the world as an arena for an entire species of man.

When G-d first created man, Adam was one. G-d then said (Genesis 2:18), "It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a helper as his counterpart." As long as man was alone, he could not really be good. For to be good is to imitate G-d, the giver of good. A man alone would have no one to whom to bestow good, and therefore, could not be called "good." This is what G-d meant when He said, "It is not good for man to be alone." G-d then created woman as a counterpart of man.

Man also imitates G-d by becoming His partner in the procreation of children. Just as G-d is a Creator, so man also becomes a creator of life. Our Sages therefore teach us that there are three partners in the procreation of a child: his father, his mother and G-d. The sexual act is the vehicle through which man displays this aspect of his partnership with G-d, and this is one reason why its perversion is considered among the worst of sins (Derech Mitzvotcha by Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch).

In a spiritual sense, the good that man does also benefits every other human being. Thus, in doing good, one is at least indirectly benefiting his fellow man, even in the case of ritual laws that do not directly do so. Our Sages thus teach us that every person is morally responsible for every other. The author of Reshit Chochmah explains that all souls are bound together, as with rope, and the movement of one is reflected in every other. This is what the Torah means when it says (Numbers 16:22), "One man sins, and anger is directed against the entire community." The Midrash provides us with an excellent example illustrating this: A number of people are

sitting in a small boat. All of a sudden, one man begins to drill a hole under his seat. When the people complain, he retorts, "What complaint do you have? After all, I'm drilling the hole under my own seat." Finally, a wise man answers him, "We are all in the same boat. The hole may be under your seat, but the water that comes in will make the boat sink with all of us in it."

In a spiritual sense, we are all in the same boat. Every good thing that we do affects all mankind. In every good act that we do, we imitate G-d insofar as we ultimately bring good to all humanity. This is indeed one reason why G-d put us all in the same spiritual boat.

Of course, we do this more directly when we do good toward our fellow man. This is the archetype of all good. There is no way of imitating G-d more closely than in doing good to others.

The Talmud says that we bind ourselves to G-d by imitating His ways. But in what ways does the Talmud say that we imitate G-d? Look at its words carefully:

Just as G-d clothes the naked, so shall you. Just as G-d visits the sick, so shall you. Just as G-d comforts the bereaved, so shall you.

Elsewhere, the Talmud says that we must also imitate G-d in His mercy and compassion. The general lesson is that we resemble G-d most in our relationship with our fellow human beings.

This concept is best exemplified by the famous story of Hillel. The Talmud tells us that a non-Jew once came to Hillel and said, "I wish to convert to Judaism, but only if you teach me the entire Torah while I stand on one foot."

Hillel replied, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man. This is the core of Judaism. The rest is mere commentary."

Many of the commentators find this story very perplexing. The commandments dealing with our relationship toward our fellow man are certainly very important. But there are also many other important commandments that apparently have nothing at all to do with other people. How could Hillel have dismissed these as mere commentary?

What Hillel was teaching us, however, was that the main reason for all the commandments is the imitation of G-d, and that this is exemplified by our relations with our fellow human beings. We must deal with our fellows just as G-d deals with us. In doing so, we fulfill His purpose in creation. This imitation of G-d is ultimately the purpose of all the commandments.

This is also the meaning of what G-d told His prophet (Jeremiah 22:16), "He judged the cause of the poor and needy, and it was well. Is this not to know Me?" As discussed earlier, we can only know G-d by drawing close to Him through imitating Him. G-d is telling us that the main way in which we know Him is by imitating Him in doing good to others.

There is a commandment in the Torah (Leviticus 19:18), "You shall love your neighbor like yourself." One of our foremost leaders, Rabbi Akiba, said, "This commandment is the core of the Torah." Rabbi Akiba is teaching us the same lesson as Hillel. We imitate G-d's love for the world through our love toward our fellow man. In this way, we draw ourselves close to G-d and fulfill His purpose in creation.

In a deeper sense, the concept of love itself is the archetype of spiritual closeness. Where a bond of love exists between two people, they are close – even though they may be separated by vast distances. On the other hand, people who hate each other are far apart, even when they are sitting right next to each other. Love and hate exist in a spiritual, rather than a physical dimension. Love between two people implies a harmony and complementarity between them. It is this harmony that

makes them close, irrespective of physical distance. In obeying G-d's commandments, we seek to bring a similar harmony and closeness between ourselves and G-d. "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" is therefore indeed the prime rule of the Torah. It not only leads us to a closeness to G-d, but also teaches us the meaning of such closeness.

Following a similar line of reasoning, we can understand what our Sages mean when they teach us, "He who denies the doing of kindness (Gemilut Chassadim) is like one who denies the most fundamental principle (G-d Himself)." G-d is the ultimate bestower of kindness, and one who divorces himself from such deeds, places himself poles apart from G-d. G-d is the ultimate doer of good, and this man denies doing good. He is therefore said to be like one who divorces himself from G-d.

G-d is the source of all life, and therefore, the more one resembles G-d, the more he partakes of life. One who clings to G-d is said to be truly alive, as the Torah says (Deuteronomy 4:4), "You who have clung to G-d are all alive today." We thus find (Proverbs 10:2), "Charity saves from death." When one gives, he resembles his Creator, the source of all life.

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## **High-Level Panel on The Role of Parliaments for Building Peaceful and Inclusive Societies and Combating**

# **Violent Extremism**

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## **High-Level Panel on The Role of Parliaments for Building Peaceful and Inclusive Societies and Combating Violent Extremism**

**UN Headquarters, New York, 21 July, 15.00 -18.00**

### **LIST OF SPEAKERS**

**Co-organisers** UNESCO, the Permanent Mission of Italy to the UN, Inter-parliamentary Coalition for Global Ethics

With the Patronage of H.E. Prof. Frederico Mayor, President, Fundacion Cultura de Paz

#### **Keynote Speakers:**

- Ms Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO
- Mr Jehangir Khan, USG and Chairman of the Counter-terrorism Implementation Task Force
- Mr Jehangir Khan, USG and Chairman of the Counter-terrorism Implementation Task Force
- H.E. Ambassador Kiarat Abdrakhmanov, Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the UN

- Video Address, H.E. Frederico Mayor

**Moderator:** Gianni Picco, former USG

**Panelists:**

**Panel 1 – The Call for National Legislation to Implement the Culture of Peace and Combat Violent Extremism**

- MEP. Lara Comi, EU Parliament Representative (Italy)
- M.P. Saman Jafri, Member of Parliament of Pakistan
- The Honorable Diane Watson, U.S. Congress(rt) and former Ambassador
- M.P. Oezcan Mutlu, Representative from Bundestag, German
- M.P. Jalila Morsli, Member of Parliament of Morocco
- Video Address – Senator Pier Ferdinando Casini, Chairman, Italian Senate Foreign Affairs Committee

**Panel 2- The Multi Track Partnership of Religious Leaders, Educators and the Media in Putting the Legislation into Action**

- Dr. Lahoucide Khabid, President, Atlas Center for Diplomacy in Morocco
- Dr. Boris Pincus, President, Religions in Dialogue
- Imam Agha Jafri, Founder, American Muslim Congress
- Rabbi Yakov David Cohen, President UN NGO Institute of Noahide Code
- Dr. Wafik Moustafa, Chairman, Muslim Conservative Network UK
- Rev. Thomas Del Balle-Reyes, Catholic Holy Cross Church
- Shoshana Nicole Bekerman, Director, Inter-Parliamentary Coalition for Global Ethics

**Moderator:** Mayor Martin Oliner

**Affiliated Sponsors:**

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- Australia Oriental Media Buddhist Charity Association

- The Institute for Noahide Code, UN NGO, Atlas Center for Diplomacy

22.07.2016 – ODG

## **Building peace starts on the parliamentarians' benches as much as on the benches of schools**



**On 21 July, UNESCO Director-General, Irina Bokova, addressed a High-Level Panel on “The Role of Parliaments for Building Peaceful and Inclusive Societies and Combatting Violent Extremism”, organized by the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations, UNESCO, and the Interparliamentary Coalition for Global Ethics, at UN Headquarters in New York.**

“Building peace and preventing violent extremism cannot be won with hard power only”, stated the Director-General. “We need soft power also, we need to win the battle of ideas, through education, through democratic debate, through a better understanding of each other’s cultures and religions” she continued. “Parliaments play a critical role to address the challenges of our times, when not everything can be solved at the level of Governments or United Nations Agencies alone,” said the Director-General in her opening speech highlighting that “parliamentarians have the unique power to bring solutions closer to the people, and make sure their needs and concerns are at the heart of our response.”

The event brought together parliamentarians and representatives of the diplomatic community, the United Nations system and civil society in an effort to establish a closer collaboration on the development of a culture of peace and preventing the unprecedented rise of violent extremism. It aimed at the adoption of legislation for mandatory education on culture of peace and measures to prevent terrorism and violent extremism. It also aimed at strengthening the multi-

track diplomacy partnership, to engage governments, the UN system, religious, academic, and media leaders to fulfil their respective roles to implement such aligned legislation. The Director-General gave an overview of UNESCO's action worldwide to prevent and counter violent extremism stating that "this starts on the benches of school, it must start with peace education, with textbooks and curricula that teach human rights, to prepare individuals to live as responsible citizens. Ms Emilia Gatto, Minister Plenipotentiary of the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations, stressed that "there are no easy answers... we need to tackle the root causes of violent extremism, including marginalization, inequalities, discrimination, human rights violations, and hate speech, using the full toolbox offered by Agenda 2030". H.E. Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov, Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations, urged that a long-term and comprehensive approach was needed to preventing and countering violent extremism, involving also regional and international cooperation, as a true requirement to deliver on the 2030 Agenda.

In his intervention, Mr Jehangir Khan, Director of the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, noted the key importance of dialogues with parliamentarians who represented the "citizens of the world". He argued that violent extremism was one of the great challenges of the 21st century in particular in terms of preventing and saving the young generations from engaging in violent extremism. He also recalled the UN Secretary-General's global plan of action, developed by the entire UN system.

Ms Hanifa Mezoui, Senior Advisor of the UN Alliance of Civilizations, commended UNESCO for having issued the Organization's 2016 "Teacher's Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism". Ms Mezoui presented projects of the Alliance of Civilizations, aimed at strengthening religious cooperation and working through mediation as a form of

preventive diplomacy.

The keynote session concluded with an address by Federico Mayor, President of the Foundation Culture de Paz, who recalled the important role of the UN High-Level Forum on a 'culture of peace', and urged parliamentarians to be at the forefront of the fight against extremist ideologies.

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***Inter-Parliamentary Coalition for Global Ethics***

*The Role of Parliaments for Building Peaceful and Inclusive Societies and Combating Violent Extremism*

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## **November 9th Summit**

On the week of the worst terrorist attacks in recent history in Europe, news that has shaken the international community to its core, a group of men and women, diplomats, journalists and Rabbis,

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## **UNC is all about PEACE**

The Institute of Noahide – UN NGO Celebrating Diversity was conceived as an opportunity to unite the world by re-echoing the belief in One G-d as the Creator of all human beings and the belief that we are

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# **Importance of Noahide Laws... a Moment**

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# **Importance of Noahide Laws... a Moment**

Reasoning Behind the Seven Laws –

Why are the 7 Noahide Laws Important?

A Moment of Silence

Much is said about freedom of speech, on the right of a person to express his opinions without fear. However, have you ever thought about our freedom to be silent? Silence is the ability to stop the mad rush of life, close your eyes and stop to contemplate by one's self. Silence enables us to connect with our ability to think and imagine. This is what separates us from other life forms.

## **The World Is Not a Jungle**

Let's take for ourselves a moment of silence: The world is full of various and conflicting cultures, peoples are still fighting for their independence and much of the world's population lives with hunger and poverty.

We don't have to go so far from our own experience. How many times have you encountered in your immediate surroundings lack of respect for others, acts that are the opposite of truth and justice and man's lack of respect for his environment. We ask ourselves, "How can it be, in a world that is so developed scientifically and human understanding has reached heights that once were unimaginable, these problems persist?"

These phenomenon have occurred in peoples who achieved the highest levels in science, philosophy and the arts. One moment of silence is enough time to come to the conclusion that the human conscience must be brought into line with a higher standard. Man made values are not enough to maintain a good and just society. Silence also allows a person to recognize something higher than himself, to understand that only the power and choice of the Creator allows the continued existence of the world.

## **The End of the Breakdown of Values**

Mankind has already come once to a breakdown of values that led to the destruction of most of the world's population at the time of the Great Flood. Afterwards, the Creator commanded Noah and his sons, who were the kernel from which the human race continued, concerning the "Seven Noahide Laws". These seven basic laws contain the basic morals for maintaining a healthy and just civilization.

This allows for the diversity and cultural plurality of mankind while uniting in faith in the Creator and with the Seven Noahide Laws providing a common moral foundation to human existence.

Moses who received the Torah from G-d spread the message of these Seven Noahide Laws and commanded us to influence all the nations of the world to accept them. One who keeps these laws because G-d commanded Moses on Mt. Sinai merits divine reward from G-d for keeping them.

The purpose of these commandments is to make the world settled and not barren, G-d forbid. These laws assure the continued existence of the world and all its inhabitants. One who abandons these basic values forfeits in this way his right to exist because his actions bring about the opposite of settling the world.

## **Where does this lead?**

Is it really possible for a world like this to exist? You would be amazed to hear that the answer is yes. It is a fact that the same world in which people worshipped strength and blindly followed rulers in fighting unnecessary wars has changed drastically since the middle of the 20th century. Mankind is coming to the realization that peace, social justice and freedom are the values to be championed. The cold war has ended, atomic weapons were destroyed and many people achieved their independence. There is still a long way to go and much more effort has to be expended. The trend, however, is clear enough.

## **The World Unites**

This didn't just randomly happen. The Bible states that the world will reach perfection at the time of the Redemption. In the days of the Messiah the nations will all be united in faith in the Creator and the performance of His commandments.

The prophet Isaiah said, "Then the peoples will speak a pure language to serve him together". This procedure will begin with the appearance of a great leader, the King Moshiach, whose deeds on behalf of education, justice, honesty and establishing faith will influence the entire world, even subconsciously. Then they will come to realize that the true strength and power are based on the statement, "In G-d we trust".

## **The Personality Behind the Process**

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, he is the man that G-d has chosen for this task. The more than 50 years of his leadership were devoted to working for education, justice and truth for the entire world. From the east to the west.

Many leaders have expressed their appreciation of his deeds and participated in his call for education that is based on faith in the Creator of the world and his prophet Moses, who gave the world these commandments. The Rebbe, King Moshiach, has declared that our generation is the generation of the Redemption and all mankind will march to a new age. An age without war, hunger, or competition; a world of peace, mutual assistance, economic abundance and high spiritual awareness. A world where the shining figure of the Moshiach will inspire the entire world.

Keeping the Seven Noahide laws will hasten the appearance of this wonderful age and assure each individual a place in it.

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## **One People, One World**

The Institute of Noahide Code, a non-governmental organization with consultative status at the United Nations, hosted an event at 777 UN Plaza on Monday called "One People, One World."