

# The Rebbe speaks on Noahide

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Every Jew has the obligation to ensure that all the peoples of the world observe the Seven Noahide Laws. Although this task seems awesomely difficult, especially in this troubled time of exile, a true story concerning a Jewish yacht owner teaches that a Jew's actions have far-reaching influence, and the effect of even a single deed is immeasurable.

The mission and purpose in life of the Jew is to make this world a dwelling place for G-d. The world, which seems to run according to its own natural laws, is not independent. It has a Creator, Who has not left it unattended. G-d is on earth as He is in heaven.

The Jew, through his service to G-d, demonstrates that the spiritual and the physical can be brought together. The mundane can be sanctified, and everyday life can become holy. G-d dwells in the world.

### The Seven Noahide Laws

An integral component of the Jew's task is to see to it that all peoples, not just Jews, acknowledge G-d as Creator and ruler of the world. The world, we are told, "was not created for chaos, but that it be inhabited." A chaotic world results when there are no absolute criteria by which man lives, when morals and ethics are based solely on man's understanding. Man is swayed by interests other than reason and justice; and we have only too recently seen the destruction which results when

laws and philosophy are perverted to serve personal ends. G-d, the Creator of the world, has not abandoned His handiwork, but has given clear guidance how the world can be made "inhabited," settled and productive, decent and enduring. The nations of the world have been given a Divine code of conduct, the Seven Noachide Laws, which consist of six prohibitions against murder, robbery, idolatry, adultery, blasphemy, cruelty to animals – and one positive command, to establish a judicial system. These Seven Noachide Laws are general statements, which, with their ramifications and extensions, encompass countless details.

The reason these Seven Laws are to be observed is also important. The Rambam rules (Code, Kings 8:11) that the Sons of Noach (i.e. all humanity) must observe these Laws because "G-d commanded them in the Torah and informed us through Moshe that the Sons of Noach had already been so commanded." A non-Jew conducts himself in consonance with the Seven Laws not because human logic compels him to do so, but because they are G-d's commands transmitted through Moshe. This ensures that self-interest will never be allowed to pervert the Divine criteria of conduct.

It is through the observance of the Seven Noachide Laws that the entire world becomes a decent, productive place, a fitting receptacle for the Divine. Then, promises Scripture, "the glory of the L-rd will be revealed and all flesh together will see that the mouth of the L-rd has spoken." The culmination of this will be the Messianic epoch, when, through the agency of Mashiach, "all will call in the Name of the L-rd and serve Him with a common consent."

#### Jew's Role in World

The Jew has a crucial role to play in this. He cannot be a bystander, remaining aloof from the world's conduct. The Rambam explicitly rules (Code, Kings 8:10): "Moshe Rabbeinu commanded from the mouth of G-d to convince all the inhabitants of the world to observe the commandments given to

the children of Noach.” It is the Jew’s duty to see to it that all peoples lead the righteous and decent life which comes from compliance with the Seven Noahide Laws.

Not only is it a Jew’s duty because he has been so commanded by G-d, but it is also to his own benefit. A world full of “chaos,” where nations and individuals live by no law except that dictated by self-interest, must inevitably affect the Jew. And, as noted above, the universal observance of the Seven Noahide Laws is the prelude to the Messianic era when all will serve G-d together.

Yet the task seems immense, beyond a Jew’s capabilities. All Jews together are but a tiny minority among the nations of the world. How can Jews influence non-Jews to acknowledge G-d and observe the Seven Noahide Laws?

But it can be done. Even one action can have far-reaching consequences, ever widening ripples, until the cumulative effect of many such individual actions produces a mighty storm.

#### Lesson from a Story

A story. A true story which happened only recently, which illustrates just such a ripple effect. A story of a Jew, who unknowingly started a chain of events of which he could not even dream.

A Jew blessed by G-d with great wealth, who likes to take an occasional vacation on his yacht. He employs a captain, a non-Jew, to sail the yacht.

The time for prayer arrives. He knows that Jews face towards the holy city of Yerushalayim during Shemoneh Esreh, towards the east. He is not a nautical man. He does not know where east is on the ocean. He asks the captain.

Prayer time again. Again the same problem, where is east. Again he asks the captain. And so with the third prayer time, and the fourth.

The first time he asks, the captain pays no special attention. When the owner keeps on asking the same question from time to time, the captain becomes curious. His employer is not the navigator. Why is he always interested in knowing where east is? He asks him.

The Jew is not ashamed of his religion. "I am a Jew," he answers, "and I want to pray to G-d. Prayers pass through the site of the Beis HaMikdash in Yerushalayim. I must therefore face in that direction, which in this part of the world is east. Every time I pray I thus need to know where east is."

The captain is greatly impressed. This is a successful man, he thinks, wealthy enough to own his own yacht and hire a captain to sail it. Yet he considers it proper and right to interrupt his affairs to pray to G-d – and to even bother to face the correct direction. "I too," exclaims the captain to the owner, "shall begin to think of G-d, begin to pray to Him."

The story has a sequel. Some time later the captain told the Jewish yacht owner that ever since he decided to pray to the Creator of the world, he has, at every opportunity, also told his family and friends of the necessity to pray to G-d. "If all the people of the world would think about their Creator," concluded the captain, "the world would not be the jungle it is!"

The lesson from this story is clear: A Jew can influence non-Jews to acknowledge the Creator and ruler of the world, and to therefore conduct themselves accordingly by observing the Seven Noachide Laws. Moreover, as seen from the story, such influence is effective just by a Jew being proud and firm in his religion. The yacht owner did not consciously intend to fulfill the Rambam's ruling. Because he conducted himself properly, his influence was automatically felt. He could not know of the ripple effect he would cause merely by asking where was east. And because of him, a non-Jew began to think about G-d, conduct himself more righteously – and in turn,

lead others in the same path. All because of one Jew's actions.

### A Parable

We can go further. Nothing in this world happens by chance. All is through Divine Providence. The above episode of the yacht serves as a timely parable to a Jew's function and place in the world.

The Jew's task, we have explained above, is, through Torah, to reveal the G-dliness in the world. The "natural" laws of the world are but a mask, veils which conceal its true existence. Torah is the instrument wherewith Jews strip away these veils – and bring the world closer to G-d.

But a Jew can easily become despondent. The state of the world is not heartening. Nations do not seem to hearken to the voice of Torah, and governments, not Jews, seem to be the arbiters of the world's conduct.

The truth is different: The Jew and Torah can have influence on the world. It is only because of the darkness of the exile that it seems the governments of the world are its true arbiters.

The world in this troubled time of exile is like a ship sailing in stormy seas, steered by the governments of the world. But appearances are misleading. It is not they, with their plans and strategies, who truly determine its course and destination. What is truly important in the world, what has a permanent effect, is the Torah and mitzvos performed by the Jew. Before this all else is insignificant, unimportant. Whether the world will be in better or worse shape is in the hands of the Jew. One mitzvah, one act of bonding with G-d, has incredible repercussions – whether we are aware of it or not.

Beyond the obvious, beneath the surface, lies much, much more. The course of the world is not determined by the physical. The

spiritual is what counts. The governments who actually conduct the world's affairs are not more than the captain who steers the ship on behalf of the owner. Jews are engaged in loftier things, the things which are really important, Torah and mitzvos. But it is these things which are the true determinants. The governments of the world steer the ship, the Jew charts the course.

And this is what the above story of the yacht teaches. Outwardly it seems the non-Jewish captain is the master, for it is he who controls the rudder which steers the ship. Yet it is the Jewish owner who is truly master, and it is the owner who directs the yacht's destination.

The owner of the yacht is wealthy – and “there is no wealthy person except in knowledge,” knowledge of Torah. Through Torah, the Jew can influence the world, can chart the course. Just as the yacht owner, through acting according to the dictates of Torah, influenced the captain to come closer to G-d, so too Jews in general, through standing firm in matters of Torah and mitzvos – including the command to convince non-Jews to observe the Seven Noahide Laws – can influence the nations of the world to acknowledge the Creator and Master of the world.