

The Seven Noachide Commandments

“The Seven Commandments given to Noah” are described in the Talmud as deriving from Chapter 9. They are: not to blaspheme (deny the existence of God), not to worship idols, not to murder, not to commit adultery, not to steal, to set up courts of law and not to be cruel to animals.

According to the Talmud and Jewish Law these are all the laws that the non-Jewish world is obliged to adhere to. If non-Jews keep them, they are regarded as pious human beings and achieve spiritual immortality. The plethora of additional laws and customs we are expected to follow is because we are supposed to show that it is possible to achieve a much higher level of spirituality. This is reflected in the number of ways and times we are asked to think about God and be good human beings throughout each day. And in the variety of ways our calendar forces us to step outside the non-Jewish world into our own religious cocoon for spiritual refreshment until we return to our weekly working state.

These Noah Laws are thousands of years old and still most of humanity including most Jews fail to live up to them. Our civil society is now so used to adultery, to bending the financial rules and taking advantage to the point where we really do often steal from other people. We think financial crimes are victimless crimes but that’s simply not true. Even if it is society rather than individuals that lose money, still someone suffers as a result, one way or another.

The Pew Research Center released a survey that claimed that over 40 percent of Jews think that sense of humor defines Judaism, not religion. I don’t take surveys based on a few telephone calls very seriously but still it shows how little so many Jews understand what Judaism is, if telling a good joke makes you a Jew!!! Noah would say it doesn’t make you a good non-Jew either! Even so, the core of being a good Jew is being a good person and that’s what this tradition emphasizes.