



Academy of Shem



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If the Teshuvah Fits, Wear It

The idea that Judaism has a universal teaching for mankind outside and apart from traditional Judaism was unknown to most Christians, and even to many Jews. This had to do with the church having the political muscle to effectively silence the rabbis; since the fourth century, a rabbi teaching a Christian the Seven Laws of Noah was met with severe reprisals, even death. Since 1948 and the founding of the modern State of Israel, however, the rabbis could again teach the Noahide Code without persecution, and once the numbing shock of Christian Europe's Holocaust began to wear off, the rabbis once again took up their responsibility to teach mankind G-d's moral law.

There is only so much the rabbis can do as far as the Noahide Code is concerned. They can teach it, of course, but to actively establish the Seven Laws in the various Gentile cultures is a job for the Noahides themselves. There are some in the Noahide community who believe that Noahides should not actively "proselytize," or push the Noahide Code onto Christians and other non-observant Noahides. One of the fundamental differences in Jewish Law and Noahide Law is that Jews are not supposed to actively pursue Jewish converts among non-Jewish nations. This is not the case for a Noahide. Not "pushing" the Noahide Law onto non-observant Noahides (such as Christians) implies that the non-observant Noahide has a choice. The only choice that the Noahide has is to become a *ger tzaddik* — to convert to Orthodox Judaism — or to remain a Noahide. Outside of this, there is no other option. The *B'nai Noah* are already under the Seven Laws and have been permanently warned concerning their observance, so it is not a matter of trying to "convert" someone from one religion to another, for the Noahide Code is not a "religion," and all organized "religions" are prohibited for the Noahide. For the Noahide, it is a matter of *teshuva*, not proselytization. In the same manner a Jew who grew up atheist or agnostic, or who had strayed from the Torah and converted to an idolatrous religion such as Christianity, when he realizes his mistake and returns to Judaism, he does not "convert" back to Judaism; it is a matter of *teshuva*, or returning. It is the same for a Noahide. Christians proselytize, Noahides return.

A Noahide must not be passive about turning others to the Torah, but must pursue righteousness and bring others into compliance with Torah Law. The law of *dinin*, or social justice, commands that every Noahide, each and every one of us, has a duty that the Noahide Law is the foundation for society's legal code. To say that a Noahide should not actively try to turn non-observant Noahides away from idolatry violates this important principle. When G-d changed Abram's name to Abraham, the Torah says: *I have made you the [moral] father of a multitude of nations* (Gen. 17:5). Abraham became the moral standard not only for Jews, but for Noahides as

well. In *Avodah Zarah* 9a, the Talmud teaches us that Abraham began to proselytize “the souls he made at Charan” (Bereishis 12:5). Abraham spread the knowledge of G-d among the Noahides he came into contact with. His mission was to turn the Noahides in Canaan to the Torah. The Noahide is not trying to “convert” anyone, but to bring them into observance. This requires an organized effort to bring the non-observant Noahide out of their idolatrous and pagan organized religions and secular beliefs. As *Ramban’s* commentary to *Bereishis* 34:13 shows, Noahides are culpable for failure to act; in this case, making sure that there are courts of justice to bring wrong-doers to justice. Organized religions such as Christianity are a violation of the Noahide Code, and Noahides are required, by Torah Law, to bring their society into compliance with the Seven Laws.

“*Shabbat* 54b states: Anyone who has the power to admonish the people of his household and fails to do so is held responsible for their behavior. [If he can admonish] the inhabitants of his city, he is held responsible for their behavior. If he has the power to admonish the entire world, he is held responsible for them.”¹

Notes

1. Maimonides, *Mishna Torah: Hilchos Teshuvah*. (New York: Maznaim Publishing Corporation, 1987), p. 95.