

“Portraits of Paul” (6/26/22, ET Life Together) – Paul, the Jerusalem Council, and the Noahide Laws

THE ISSUE – Gentiles and the Torah

Do pagan Gentiles coming to the ‘Jewish fold’ need to observe all the tenets of the Law of Moses (esp. circumcision)?

- NT – Gentile believers coming into the Jewish Early Church through repentance and faith in Christ (Do they need to be circumcised?)
- Rabbinic Judaism – What assures Gentiles a place in *Olam Ha-Ba* (the World to come)?
- Whereas both communities were dealing with this issue, keep in mind the complexities of oral tradition, compilation, acceptance of manuscripts (both NT and Talmudic) by the respective communities and in different periods.

PAUL and the Antioch Backdrop (GAL 2)

Galatians 2:1-10 (The Council?)

- Paul goes up to **Jerusalem with Barnabas** and Titus and privately relays “the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles” (v. 2).
- **Titus** (a gentile) was not compelled to be circumcised (v. 3).
- “**False brethren**” had “sneaked in” to “spy out our liberty which we have in Christ” (v. 4)
- Paul does not yield to the false brethren or on “the truth of the gospel” (v. 5); he interacts with “those who were of reputation” (v. 6)—James and Cephas and John (v. 9) who “contributed nothing” (v. 6) to Paul but do give to him “**and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship**” so they might go “to the Gentiles (v. 9).

Galatians 2:11-14 (The “Incident”)

- Conflict with Peter (v. 11) over his eating with Gentiles *until* “certain men from James” came [from Jerusalem to Antioch], “fearing the party of the circumcision” (v. 12).
- Other Jews join in with Peter and **even Barnabas** too (v. 13).

***Timing** - Paul writes of the incident here in Galatians 2 after what some scholars consider to be the Council. However, it makes more sense that the incident happened long before the Council (“perhaps shortly after Paul’s famine visit of Acts 11”), thus precipitating the need for the Council.*

PAUL and the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)

The Talmud (see Young, 86ff)

- Central text of rabbinic Judaism, primary source of Jewish religious law (*halakha*) and Jewish theology. Babylonian (more authoritative) and Jerusalem (earlier)
- Two components:
 - o **Mishnah** (c. 200 CE) (has Six Orders, each with numerous tractates):

The Six Orders of the Mishnah (ששה סדרי משנה) [hide]					
Zeraim (Seeds) (זְרָעִים)	Moed (Festival) (מוֹעֵד)	Nashim (Women) (נָשִׁים)	Nezikin (Damages) (נְזִיקִין)	Kodashim (Holies) (קֹדָשִׁים)	Tohorot (Purities) (טְהוּרוֹת)
Berakhot · Pe'ah · Demai · Kil'ayim · Shevi'it · Terumot · Ma'aserot · Ma'aser Sheni · Challah · Orlah · Bikkurim	Shabbat · Eruvin · Pesahim · Shekalim · Yoma · Sukkah · Beitza · · Rosh Hashanah · Ta'anit · Megillah · Mo'ed Katan · Hagigah	Yevamot · Ketubot · Nedarim · Nazir · Sotah · Gittin · Kiddushin	Bava Kamma · Bava Metzia · Bava Batra · Sanhedrin · Makkot · Shevu'ot · Eduyot · Avodah Zarah · Avot · Horayot	Zevachim · Menachot · Hullin · Bekhorot · Arakhin · Temurah · Keritot · Me'ilah · · Tamid · Middot · Kinnim	Keilim · Oholot · Nega'im · Parah · Tohorot · Mikva'ot · Niddah · Makhshirin · Zavim · Tevul Yom · Yadayim · Uktzim

- o **Gemara** (c. 500 CE) (elucidates on the Mishnah)

The Rabbis (see Young, 101ff; 175ff)

TANNAITIC (10-220 CE) RABBIS and the "NOACHIDE LAWS"

- These sages also debated the topic of Gentiles and the Torah at this time.
- Debate resulted in "The Seven Laws/Commandments of Noah" (*Sheva Mitzvot Shel B'nei Noach*) binding as "universal moral laws for the 'sons of Noah'—that is, all of humanity" since all people descend from Noah.
- The "Covenant of Noah" (*brit Noah*) from Genesis 9:4-6 (for all people, all of humanity, i.e., pre-Judaism)
- Those Gentiles who follow these are regarded as "Righteous Gentiles" or "Pious People of the World." (*ger toshav*)
- Thus, the "Noahide Laws" come both from the Hebrew Scripture (from Gen 2:16 on, six are exegetically derived from passages in Genesis, the seventh being the court of justice) and from Jewish oral tradition as rabbis commented *on* the Scripture.

Gen. 9:1 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. 2 "The fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given. 3 "Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as *I gave* the green plant. 4 "Only **you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.** 5 "Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man.

6 "**Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed,** For in the image of God He made man.

7 "As for you, be fruitful and multiply; Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it."

Gen. 9:8 Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, 9 "Now behold, **I Myself do establish My covenant with you,**...17 And God said to Noah, "**This is the sign of the covenant** which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth."

- The Temple - universal center of spirituality
 - King Solomon - asked God to heed the prayer of non-Jews who come to the Temple (1 Kgs 8:41-43).
 - Isaiah referred to the temple as a "house for all nations."
 - Sukkot service in the Temple - 70 bull offerings, corresponding to the 70 nations of the world.
- **The earliest complete rabbinic version of the seven Noahide laws can be found in the Tosefta:** [\[2\]\[17\]\[18\]](#)
- According to the Talmud, the seven laws were given first to Adam and subsequently to Noah. [\[1\]\[2\]\[6\]\[15\]](#) However, the Tannaitic and Amoraic rabbinic sages (1st–6th centuries CE) disagreed on the exact number of Noahide laws that were originally given to Adam. [\[2\]\[5\]\[6\]](#)
- Maimonides - any human being who faithfully observes these laws earns a proper place in heaven. The Torah is for all humanity.

See David Novak, [Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism: A Historical and Constructive Study of the Noahide Laws.](#) DOI:10.3828/liverpool/9781906764074.003.0011

This chapter describes Maimonides' theory of Noahide law. According to Maimonides, Noahide law is binding prior to its acceptance. It is written into the human constitution and exists before any possibility of assent. Maimonides maintains that there are three potential sources for knowledge of Noahide law: (1) the **Mosaic tradition**, both written and oral; (2) **rational investigation**; and (3) the **general revelation** found in the Torah. For Maimonides, the latter source is primary for gentiles. [\[Amazon\]](#)

- Today, there are many active groups of non-Jews called "B'nai Noach" who faithfully observe the Seven Laws of Noah.

Comparison of Proscriptions

Elsewhere in OT Proscriptions	Ten Commandments	Rabbinic Noachide Laws <u>Sanhedrin 56a</u>	Early Church Council Acts 15:19 & 21:25	Elsewhere in NT Proscriptions
Ex. 23:7 do not kill the innocent or the righteous	(6) You shall not murder (Mt. 5:21)	1. Concerning Bloodshed. Do not murder (avoid shedding the blood of one's fellow man) (<i>Shefikhut Damim</i>) [Gen 9:5-6]	1) abstain from blood (this is not the idea of not "drinking" or "eating" blood as is often thought, but of murdering a person)	Hate as murder 1 Jn. 3:15 everyone who hates his brother is a murderer Mt. 5:21-26 anger/reconciliation
Deut. 5:19 You shall not steal Lev. 19:11 You shall not steal	(8) You shall not steal (Ex. 20:15) (10) You shall not covet (goods)	2. Concerning Robbery. Do not steal (or kidnap; <i>Gezel</i>)		Eph. 4:28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour...that he may have to give to him that needeth.
Lev. 19:4; Num. 25:2; Deut 5:7, 6:14, 7:4, 16, 25; 8:19, etc. etc.!	(1) You shall have no other gods before Me. (Ex. 20:3, 23; 23:13, 24, 32) (2) You shall not make for yourself an idol..worship them or serve them...	3. Concerning Idolatry. Do not worship false gods (refrain from practicing idolatry) (<i>Avodah Zarah 64b</i>)	2) abstain from food polluted by idols	Rom 14; 1 Cor. 8 (Christian liberty and the weaker brother)
Lev. 20:10 Deut. 5:18 Prov. 6:32 Jer. 7:9, 29:23	(7) You shall not commit adultery (Mt. 5:27) (10) You shall not covet (another's spouse)	4. Concerning Sexual Immorality. Do not be sexually immoral (<i>Gilui Arayot</i>) (forbidden sexual acts are traditionally interpreted to include incest, bestiality, male homosexual sex acts, i.e. sodomy, and adultery.)	3) abstain from sexual immorality	Mt. 5:27-28 Even lust is adultery 1 Thess. 4:3 – abstain from sexual immorality
Prov. 12:10 A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.		5. Concerning a Limb from a Living Animal. Do not eat a limb removed [torn] from a live animal (i.e., before it is killed) (<i>Ever min ha-chai</i>) Command given to Noah in Gen 9 and traditionally interpreted as a prohibition of cruelty toward animals. [Gen 9:4]	4) abstain from the meat of strangled animals	Acts 21:25 (reiteration of 15:19)
Ps. 139:20 Your enemies take your name in vain. Prov. 30:9 profaning God's name	(3) You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain...	6. Concerning Blasphemy. Do not curse God (Refrain from blaspheming God's name) (<i>Birkat Hashem</i>) (or "bless" Him, euphemistically referring to blasphemy)		Mt. 15:9, Mk. 7:7 In vain do they worship me 2 Cor. 6:1 Do not receive the grace of God in vain.
Lev. 19:11 You shall not...deal falsely, nor lie to one another.	(9) You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor (Mt. 5:38 eye for eye; Mt. 5:43 hate enemy; Mt. 5:33-37 let your yes be yes your no be no)	7. Concerning Adjudication. Set up a system of justice (Behave equitably in all relationships and establish honest, effective courts of justice, police and laws; bring offenders to justice) (<i>Dinim</i>) [Gen 9:5-6]		Matt 18:15-18 (proper Church disc.) (Mt. 5:38-42 other cheek, extra mile, eye for eye) 1Cor. 5:12 (judging w/in the Church)

(4) Ex. 20:8 "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

(5) Ex. 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother...

Hosea 4:2: swearing, deception, murder, stealing, adultery, bloodshed

Jer. 7:9: will you...steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, offer sacrifices to Baal, walk after other gods?

Practical Application for Our Day – Questions to Consider

(1) How do we navigate being on differing sides of a debate with our siblings in Christ?

- a. A sense of betrayal (losing our “Barnabas”) when folks take sides
- b. Abortion?
- c. (Covid? Vaccinations? Health Care?)
- d. Political Affiliations?
- e. LGBTQ issues?
- f. Refugees/Immigration?
- g. Issues of Christian Liberty/License?

(2) How do we treat the “other” in our midst?

- a. Women in desperation over pregnancy
- b. Babies/Children
- c. Refugees
- d. Non-Binary Individuals

Select Resources



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_Laws_of_Noah lists these sources:

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