

The Noahide Message, the 4th of July and Universal Freedom

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Over the last few decades starting here in the West and spreading out around the world there has grown what some call a new “religious” movement called Noahides. For the record, the term Noahide obviously comes from the name Noah, the man famous for building the Ark. According to the Bible, only Noah and his sons survived the ancient flood, therefore all humanity is called by his name, thus we are all “children of Noah,” Benei Noah in Hebrew or Noahides. Mind you, this term obviously is equally applicable to Jews and non-Jews alike. Essentially Noahide is the traditional Jewish term for all humanity.



The modern Noahide group bases its views on the ideas described in Judaism that while Jews are commanded by G-d to follow Judaism, non-Jews on the other hand are obligated not to follow any one religion but rather a universal code of behavior. This code stipulates belief and honor of the Supreme Being, the standards of moral behavior, not to steal, not to murder, not to act with sexual immorality, not to eat the flesh of a living animal (which some interpret metaphorically to mean to live in harmony and in balance with nature) and last but certainly not least, to establish stable societies and sane governments based upon law and the upholding of these principles and values.

These principles in Judaism, however universal, remained a mostly unknown and uninteresting point of theology until recently, when the revolving door of religion began to swing both ways. In their religious zeal to convert Jews many Christian evangelists began a study of Judaism and theology to better understand their targets and how to better reach them. As many of these missionaries continued their studies into the roots of Christianity and the foundations of Judaism, many of them were persuaded to embrace the Jewish message instead of getting Jews to give it up. Some converted and became Jews however the majority of the others saw that Judaism proclaimed a path for all non-Jews that liberated them from the divisive theological imprisonments of one religion or another.

Judaism's message to the world was one of liberty and justice for all, based upon the same principles upon which the Founding Fathers of the United States created this nation. The relationship of these Jewish principles to the Founding Fathers is by no means a coincidence. Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and many of their peers apparently were already familiar with these ancient "Jewish" ideas about liberty and freedom for in many of their earlier writings some went so far as to call themselves Noahides.

Noahides and Noahidism is therefore no modern spiritual/religious expression of any kind. It is as old as the Bible and is as American as is America herself. True "Noahidism" is not a theology, a religion, a way of life or path that is connected culturally or socially with Judaism or the Jewish people. True Noahidism is a universal code and philosophy that proclaims the ability and rights of the individual. As the U.S. Declaration of Independence states, "*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.*" What greater truth can be proclaimed? What greater ideals can be followed? Noahidism was and therefore still is supposed to be focused upon these universal rights and principles for all humanity.

Theology however can be a funny thing and many people who embrace it also tend to crave rituals and cultural expressions to express their theological beliefs. Unfortunately, many modern Noahides have sought to embrace many aspects of Jewish practice and identity that are foreign to their origins. Many having left Christianity sought to replace the Christian religion in their lives with something equally religious and culturally fulfilling, therefore they are in the process of creating a pseudo-Jewish religion which they feel is the exclusive definition of Noahidism. This in my opinion is a terrible mistake.

Noahidism is a universal code, a message of liberty and freedom, responsibility and justice, morality and righteousness for all human beings. It is not a religion or a theology. It has no unique cultural expressions or ritual observances. It is not a pseudo-Judaism and it should not bare any resemblance to anything culturally or religiously Jewish.

True Noahidism is about being a moral, righteous and thus decent human being. This message transcends all cultures, all religions, all borders, all nations, all ethnicities and all creeds. Our race is the human race, a race of beings however different from one another, but united in that we believe ourselves, and this means all of us, to be equally created in the Divine Image. That which makes us special is that which unites us all with a single common destiny. We are all human beings sharing our planet together. We come from one source and are heading towards a singular destiny.

Humanity is humanity. We cannot subdivide and live by different and conflicting standards. The common denominator for all humanity is the universal code; this is what Judaism has called the "seven laws of the children of Noah." Rather than investigate these theologically, we should understand them as they were meant to be, as the Founding Fathers of these United States did, as moral code that serves as a common denominator for all humanity. I would hope and pray that this code should be not found offensive by anyone; after all it comes to us from the same source that brought us the Ten Commandments.

The message of Noahidism is not the exclusive domain of the ex-Christian. Noahidism should never be degraded to become an attack upon Christian beliefs and good hearted, good fearing Christian people. Just because many Christians might have left the fold and have adopted this more universal path does

not give them the right to act with a sense of superiority or arrogance towards their own past. Those who want to turn Noahidism into a new religion are doing nothing more than creating a new cult. Their efforts are misguided and they are actually arousing anti-Semitism towards Judaism by those who interpret this growing cult as some form of Jewish attack upon Christianity. This of course is false; nonetheless many so-called modern Noahides embrace their new faith and attack their old one with the venom and vigor of any newly converted zealot. Such behavior is deplorable.

Today peoples of all traditional religious beliefs are under attack. Today the attack comes from a world secular culture that while declaring itself neutral in all matters of religion is actually hostile to it. If this conflict were only in the realm of theology, we might not consider the threat so grave. Yet, the assault is not so much on theology, the real push and shove is in the arenas of morality, righteousness, fairness and freedom. These areas are under terrible assault and peoples of traditional religion and moral values, regardless of our backgrounds and theologies are all in the same boat together, under attack and in danger of being sunk.

Noahidism was and is supposed to embrace all that is good about being human. The United States of America was founded upon these principles. Granted, although Founding Fathers dreamed of a vision that many Americans have failed to live up to, nonetheless the vision is still great, even though the behavior of those who claimed to pursue the vision did not rise to the occasion.

The United States was founded upon the great principles of Noahide universalism. The message was that of freedom and liberty, of moral obligations and righteous responsibility. We cannot allow this message to become lost because many of its bearers did not embrace its truth. We cannot allow the reinterpretation of history to destroy the moral message upon which the United States was founded. We cannot allow present day secular social/political agendas to strip away everything moral and right that made the United States the great country it once was, and can still be again.

The United States in spite of everything it has done wrong and all the peoples, both indigenous and foreign that it has hurt, still proclaims a message and a freedom unparalleled in all of human history. Rather than to throw out the good with the bad, we should all embrace the universal ideals that the United States was founded upon and export these ideals to the entire world. The world does not have to become American, but the world could use a strong dosage of morals, discipline, righteousness and responsibility. We can all benefit by learning the lesson that united we stand and divided we fall.

The universal message of Noahidism is the great common denominator that binds together all of humanity. We do not need to bicker or quarrel over liberalism or conservatism as long as good hearted, righteous minded, sincere and concerned individuals are in the forefront promoting agendas of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. This is not just an American agenda; this is a human agenda and it transcends all national borders and cultural differences.

In my opinion, the Fourth of July, therefore should not be viewed as just the day of American Independence, but rather the day of the proclamation of freedom and justice for all. This is an ideal we can all aspire towards and make every effort to live up to. This is the true Noahide message, a message of universal spirituality, brought to you by the same people who brought you the Ten Commandments.

May G-d bless America; may G-d bless us all.