

BNEI NOAH AND JEWISH HOLIDAYS

What's the relationship?

What is Halacha?

- Jewish Law
 - It's composed of texts and explanations of those texts that develops generation after generation.
 - A rabbinical opinion has to be based on Halacha. You can't indicate a certain behavior just like that.
 - You have to provide sources.
- Drush (Homiletics)
 - You can't learn Law from Drush (Talmud Ierushalmi Chaguiga 1:8).
 - Mysticism can support a certain behavior, but only when based on Halacha (See Mishna Brura, 25:42 rules regarding this).

Sources 1

- Rambam, Laws of Kings, 10:9
 - The general rule: we don't allow them to create a religion and make commandments for themselves. Rather: either convert [to Judaism] and accept all commandments or keep yourself in your Torah (the 7 commandments) and don't add nor take away.
- Rambam, Laws of Kings, 10:10
 - A ben Noach that wants to fulfill a commandment of the rest of the commandments to receive reward, we don't prevent him from doing it according to Halacha (Law).

Sources 2

Commentary of Radvaz (r. David ben Zimra)

- A ben Noach that wants to fulfill a commandment etc.: and if he wants to fulfill it saying that he was commanded to do so, we don't allow him to do it. Except if he does it as someone that was not commanded to do so and does it, and our master (Rambam) was precise and wrote "in order to receive reward".
- However the commandments that require sanctity and purity like Tefillin, Sefer Torah and Mezuzah, I'm strict and they should not do them.
- Meiri (Commentary to Sanhedrin 58b)
 - The rest of the commandments, we don't prevent from him, because we accept his offerings and Tzedaka. Also he has reward for his actions (See Encyclopedia Talmud vol. 3, end of p. 358 y 359).
- Talmud Kidushin 31a
 - Story of Dama ben Netina (You could argue saying that his reward was only in this world (and not in the world to come (see Torat Cohaním Bechukotái 26:1)), but, in any case, is a reward for a commandment he was not commanded to do).
- Talmud Sanhedrin 59a
 - A non-Jew that studies (the 7 commandments) is like a High Priest. In other words, because he learns to know how to fulfill his commandments, obtains the spiritual virtue of a High Priest. (See Likutéi Sichot 14, p. 38-39).

R. Moshe Feinstein

Responsa in Igrot Moshe (Iore Dea 1:3, Iore Dea 2:7, Orach Chaim 2:25).

- There is no reward for a Ben Noach for the fulfillment of commandments of the Torah.
- There is reward for prayer, because G-d listens to the prayers of all human beings.
- Bnei Noach can only fulfill logical and rational commandments, like Tzedaka – charity, Honoring parents etc.
- Fulfillment of Jewish commandments is “making up a new religion”. Any religious act is “making up a new religion”.
- The manuscript of Radvaz (as well as a responsa of Rambam, ed. Freiman, 124 y the commentaries of Meiri to Sanhedrin 59a) are not liable sources.

Other opinions

Encyclopedia Talmud vol. 3, end of p. 358 y 359, Likutei Sichot, vol. 17, p. 326

- “The pious” among the nations of the world have a portion in the World to Come – Rambam Laws of Kings, end of ch. 8.– “Pious” (Chasid) is the one that goes beyond the letter of the law.
- There is reward for fulfillment of the 7 commandments – In this world without doubt and also in the world to come.
- A world to come for non-Jews separated from the one for Jews (Zohar Chadash Rut 96a)
- Spiritual reward.

Holidays and Moments of the Jewish year

• Holidays

– Biblical

- Rosh HaShana • Yom Kipur • Sucot
- Shemini Atzeret • Simchat Torá • Pesach • Shavuot

– Rabbinical

- Chanuka • Purim

• Moments

– Fasts

- Fast of Gedalia • 10 de Tevet • 17 de Tamuz • 9 de Av – Special days • 15 de Shvat
- Lag BaOmer • Tu beAv

What is a Jewish holiday?

- These are moments where the special bond between Jews and G-d is expressed (Includes Shabbat, see Shulchan Aruj, Orach Chaim 31 y Shmot 31:13).
- It makes no sense that non-Jews celebrate Jewish holidays.
 - It doesn’t represent a bond with G-d.
 - They don’t project the energies of the holiday (See Likutei Torah, Shmini Atzeret 83b).
 - They don’t internalize the available energies.
- Talmud Avoda Zara 3a (Sukkot)
 - G-d gave the nations of the world the commandment of Sukkah to see if they could fulfill it.
 - It’s clear from that story that the commandment doesn’t apply today for Bnei Noa

Lets be Clear

- It’s not the same to celebrate the moment “in the Jewish way” than to be aware of the moment and recognize it.

- It's not the same to fulfill Jewish commandments than to incorporate the teachings a holiday can offer.

- Example of Rosh Hashana:

- We blow the Shofar
- Day of Judgment
- Accept G-d as King
- Jewish commandment
- Recognize the moment
- Extract teachings

Rosh HaShana

- Mishna (Rosh HaShana, 1:2)

- In Rosh HaShana all human beings pass in front of Him as sheep as it's written (Tehilím 33:15): "He who forms together their hearts, who understands all their actions".

- It's the day of creation of human beings.

- It's the day of judgment over the actions of Man on the past year.

Other Holidays 1

- Yom Kippur

- Celebrates divine forgiveness for the Golden Calf.

- Sukkot

- Celebrates that G-d surrounded with Clouds of Glory the Jewish people in their trip through the desert

after coming out of Egypt

- There were offerings in the Temple for the 70 nations.

- Shmini Atzeret

- Celebrates the private relationship between the Jewish people and G-d (that's why there was only one

offering as compared with Sukkot with 70 offerings).

- Simchat Torah

- Celebrates the giving of the Second Tablets in Yom Kippur. End and beginning of the annual Torah reading

Other Holidays 2

- Pesach

- Celebrates the Jewish people going out of Egypt.

- Shavuot

- Celebrates Receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai.

- From here come the 7 commandments for Bnei Noach (see Rambam, Laws of Kings, 8:10).

- Chanuka

- Celebrates victory over the Greeks and re-inauguration of the Temple.

- Purim

- Celebrates victory over Persians.

Moments of the Year

- Fasts

- Most rabbinical authorities agree that Bnei Noach should not observe the rabbinical decrees

(Rambam, Laws of Inheritance, 6:10).

– In the story of Yona we find that the people of Nineve fasted together with Teshuva (repentance).

- Special days

– You can and should learn from the teachings of each day.

Conclusion

- Observance of Jewish commandments is not the most appropriate for Bnei Noach.

- Even when observed, they have to be observed according to the Jewish laws (See Rambam, Laws of Offerings, 19:16).

- It Certainly is not the first step.

- It's not the way of living the relationship with G-d, since He didn't command that this is the way to relate to

Him (for Bnei Noach).

- It is arguable whether there is reward or it makes sense.

- It is forbidden to "invent" observances.

– Of course they are not mandatory.

– Even when considered optional, they are still "invented religions".

– Made up blessings? (See Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Orach Chaim 46:6).

– Structure of prayers, Kidush, Havdala, to sit in a Suca... etc.

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