

Applications of the Noahide laws to the harmonious coexistence of Jew and non-Jew in the Land of Israel

Much of the recent work of the Institute has had to do with the application of the Noahide laws – the universal ethics at the root of the world cultures – to the situation in the land of Israel. For recordings of an interview held in 2008 with the Director of the Institute on Israel National Radio (“Arutz Sheva”) go to page http://www.ijc.com.au/noah_laws.html

An issue of the *Bulletin in the Noahide laws* devoted to this topic can be read on line at <http://www.ijc.com.au/flyers/2009/vol-4-no-1-5769-2009.pdf>

Israeli luminaries discuss the Noahide laws in Institute Seminar

A forum “Israel, peace and the Noahide laws” was held by the Institute in Israel with several major figures of Israel society: (r to l below) former justice of the Israeli Supreme Court, Tsvi Tal; former deputy Attorney General of Israel, Professor Nahum Rakover; founding Dean of the Bar Ilan Law School, Professor Aharon Enker and the Director of the Institute. View at http://www.ijc.com.au/noah_laws.html



In the Victorian Parliament

In recent months the Institute held a forum with Mr Murray Thompson, Member of the Legislative Assembly in the Parliament of Victoria on “Re-anchoring society: sourcing values”. An important echo of his words at the forum were later heard in Parliament when he said:

“The popular idea that we cannot legislate morality...is a myth. It is legislated every day from the vantage point of some value system or another...Some thinkers who look at the family context hold the view that there is a transcendent value system...In the case of all of us, we may not have lived a perfectly moral life throughout all our lives, yet in the case of some there was a revelation, an experience or a sense of purpose at a point of their lives. This has given them the consistent, strong and purposeful moral focus which is a necessary ingredient of political leadership”

(Hansard Victorian Parliamentary Report, 4 December 2008)

Course on Noahide worldview to start

The first course of the Institute’s program in Universal ethics finished in January this year. There were some who participated via an interactive virtual classroom in the US, Middle East and Asia , as well as Australian participants around the table. This course dealt with the worldview of the Noahide laws, based on the monograph published by the Institute, *Perspectives in the Noahide laws* (available from the Institute <http://www.ijc.com.au/mono4.html>), which is now in a revised edition. This course (“The worldview of the Noahide laws”) is due to be rerun, starting Friday morning 24 April in Melbourne. Overseas participants can join over the internet. The second course, on the halachic practice of the Noahide laws is due to begin in June. See an overview of courses at <http://www.ijc.com.au/courses.html>

ESSAY

A new culture for Israeli and global politics

The secular political models or political cultures intended to support political peacemaking within Israel and between Israel and its neighbours have broken down. What is called for now is a common culture which is authentically rooted both in the spiritual identity of Israel as well as in the world cultures of the major religions. This is the ultimately shared ethics of the Noahide laws – G-d-given laws of civilized conduct for humanity, which resonate at a *grass roots* level in the cultures of Islam, Christianity and Judaism.

The revised – or restored – terms of Israeli political culture

The model of Israeli politics, which cannot bring itself to reiterate the words of tradition (unlike the last American President), that G-d gave this land to the Jewish people, has been one of secular western democracy. Based on simple demographics, the policy and the character of this society is left up to an aggregate majority result. It was this thinking which led Sharon disastrously to pull out of Gaza, where an Arab majority lived, and so according to simple democratic theory no Jewish State could exist; the same thinking leads a British academic to propose as the new name of a democratic, unified state in Israel “the Socialist Republic of Palestine”. The mistake here is that this land was given by G-d to the Jewish people as a *Jewish* land: it is the only land in which Jews can eventually perform the commandments of the Torah in their entirety and this is its special sanctity. No “democracy” can will this away: it was recognized even by the not particularly religious founders of the Israeli State, who acknowledged the special place of Judaism in the State. This spiritual characteristic relates to the entirety of the land of Israel according to its Biblical boundaries.

At the same time, the Torah always acknowledged the possibility and conditions of the coexistence of Jews and non-Jews within the land of Israel. Verses in the Torah prohibit idolaters

– and by this is meant the entire rubric of violence and barbarism which goes with paganism - from dwelling within the land. Nevertheless a Gentile could live in the land by acquiring the status of a *Ger Toshav* – a “resident stranger” – through acceptance in a Jewish court of the Noahide laws together with basis of their legitimacy, the revelation at Sinai. Not only may a *Ger Toshav* dwell in the land. S/he is also entitled to the care and welfare of the Jewish people, like a Jew. Joshua, the successor of Moses, before leading the Jewish people into the land which had been promised to them, offered its inhabitants in advance three choices: to accept the Noahide laws and dwell within the land under Jewish sovereignty, to leave, or to fight.

Whilst the procedure for acceptance of a *Ger Toshav* does not exist presently (it obtains at a time when the Jubilee year is practiced), nevertheless major halachic authorities have stated that an equivalent for it exists - whereby a Gentile may live within the land and be entitled to its welfare, like Jews. This is the verbal affirmation of the Noahide laws (and their source in the revelation at Sinai). This, however, would be an enduring residency in the land, not a political empowerment to overturn the Jewish character of the land. Just as the *Ger Toshav* was not permitted to dwell on the borders of Israel, so as to open up a security risk to the land, so too the non-Jews in the land of Israel cannot be allowed to jeopardize in any way the nation's physical security. So also, the extent to which they maintain a level of civilized conduct of the Noahide laws, determines the extent they may be self-governing and autonomous.

To achieve this, the resident populations must therefore be detached from the essentially secular politics of Hamas and other entities hostile to Israel - which merely adduce Islam as a religious veneer of legitimacy for their particularist politics. By the same token the proposal originating from sectors of secular Israeli politics to make them take an oath of political loyalty to the Israel state may also be mistaken. It imposes a secular politics, when the real allegiance is to be found in the common religious culture of the

Noahide laws, which already acknowledges Sinai and resonates with the traditions of Islam and Christianity themselves.

The required culture of international politics

Just as the Noahide laws provide the ultimate cultural-spiritual foundation for peace within the land of Israel, so also it is necessary to encourage a global culture of the Noahide laws. The very same conflicts being played out in Israel, and between it and its neighbours, are taking place now between world cultures. The orchestration of a “two-state solution”, assumes the guarantees and understandings of a Parliament of nations, which do not work with entities which want to destroy the Jewish State. On the international scale, there must be cultivation in Christian and Islamic cultures of the common ethic and spirituality of the Noahide laws. The terrorism which dresses itself up in a veneer of Islam, is in absolute contradiction to the Noahide common denominator. The moral relativism which appears in the governments of Western, Christian society, in Europe and of late even in America, unhinges them from the Noahide origins of their culture.

By the same token, the corrosive secularism which has arisen in Israeli politics must be redressed. When Jewish leaders themselves no longer profess a belief that G-d gave this land to the Jewish people, in which to live in accordance with Torah, that national spiritual demoralization itself strengthens the enemies of Israel. The long term security of a nation is not in its weaponry and its diplomacy. It is its merit, its spiritual and ethical morale. No nation has enjoyed miraculous Divine protection and deliverance like the Jewish people: they have survived all those who arose to destroy it. But it is only moral merit and the explicit acknowledgement of G-d, which calls forth this deliverance, as indeed it is for all peoples who call upon G-d with “pure lips”.

Rabbi Dr Shimon D. Cowen

For a text of this essay, with footnote documentation, contact the Institute. We acknowledge the assistance of the JEA V Inc in publishing this essay.

**THIS ISSUE KINDLY SPONSORED BY
MR. T. DANKO**