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# The Noachide Laws

Claire Foley

## Introduction

For thousands of years, people lived in relatively isolated groups and developed their own unique traditions, culture, and laws. Today, technology is making it possible for people all over the world to connect, and while this has significant benefits, problems invariably arise as nations attempt to work together. Ever increasingly, news articles discuss global demand, global alliances, global debt, global networks, global workforce, global marketing, global communication, and global warming, and leaders must now routinely consider global repercussions as they search for global solutions.<sup>1</sup>

Globalization would be simplified if a universally accepted standard existed by which to judge or evaluate worldwide issues. However, no enduring set of global laws has surfaced to guide our progression to a more unified society. This absence of lasting universal law is surprising, given the time that philosophers through the ages have spent seeking a way for us to “all get along.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, on a smaller scale compared with today’s global cognition, political entities such as kingdoms, empires, and nations have always had to find ways to deal with their foreign neighbors as borders and rulers have been established throughout the ages, and numerous efforts have

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certainly been made at establishing a standard of morality or law that could be applied to all people.

One of the most compelling sources from which to determine universal law is holy scripture. Unlike legal code, which can be altered by an opposing political party, scripture historically remains unchanged, though it has sometimes been extensively interpreted by either the liberal or conservative groups of a particular era. One such set of universal laws, the Noachide laws, is based on the Pentateuch. This paper examines the tradition of the Noachide laws, the variations on these laws, and the relevance of these universal standards to the history and development of law in the Book of Mormon.

### **Universal Laws in Biblical Texts**

Through the biblical relation of the events of the creation and the subsequent growth of civilizations, God has expressed a minimum expectation for his children of this world. These scriptures have also recorded the universal laws structuring creation, and these laws, like gravity, must be acknowledged by all. Hebrew tradition in particular, according to one scholar, “did not distinguish between norms of religion, morality, and law. As befitting their common divine origin, man was bound to obey all of them with equal conscientiousness.”<sup>3</sup> Laws, for the Jews, “were attributed to divine revelation besides which there was no other legislation on record.”<sup>4</sup> According to their tradition, “the right of lawmaking was not mentioned among the royal privileges; on the contrary, the king was ‘to keep all the words of this law and these statutes’ (Deuteronomy 17:19).”<sup>5</sup> Thus, disobedience to law was an offense against God. In the first few chapters of Genesis, prohibitions against (1) murder (see Genesis 4:8–11), (2) violence (see Genesis 6:11, 13), (3) wickedness—“every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5), and (4) corruption of flesh (see Genesis 6:12) appear.

Further, the scriptures imply (5) the instruction for all things to obey and listen to the commandments of God (see Genesis 1:3, 7, 9, 11, 14–18, 20, 24, 31). The scriptures also include the commandment to all living things to (6) “be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Genesis 1:28; see also Genesis 1:11–12, 21–22, 24–25); and the commandment, to God’s children specifically, (7) to subdue the Earth and “have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Genesis 1:26; see also v. 27).

With Noah, Noah’s sons, the seed of Noah, and with “every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you, from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth . . . for perpetual generations” (Genesis 9:8–10, 12), God reestablished the covenant he had made with Adam in the Garden of Eden. This renewal included promises by God: “I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; . . . neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease” (Genesis 8:21–22), and “neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth” (Genesis 9:11). In return, Noah covenanted (1) to “be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Genesis 9:1, 7), and (2) to use for meat “every moving thing that liveth,” but to not eat “flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof” (Genesis 9:3–4). He promised (3) to respect life, recognizing that God had decreed that “the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea” and that “into your hand are they delivered” (Genesis 9:2), but that “surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man;



at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man" (Genesis 9:5); and (4) to not murder (see Genesis 9:5–6).

Noah, as the new Adam, represented all mankind, and God's laws to him are to be distinguished from the specific covenants God made with Abram regarding his posterity and inheritance of land (see Genesis 12:1–3; 13:14–18; 14:4–6, 13–16, 18–21; 17:2–21), with Isaac (see Genesis 26:2–5) and Jacob (see Genesis 28:13–15; see also Exodus 2:24), and with Moses and the Israelites at Sinai (see Exodus 19:5–6; 20:1–17, 22–26).

### **Fundamental Principles**

Jewish Rabbis have "interpreted the story of the creation as a legitimation of divine rule over the world."<sup>6</sup> From their interpretations of scriptures such as those mentioned above, Jewish scholars established the scope of God's commandments and a minimum standard of conduct. Soon after the time of Christ,<sup>7</sup> Jewish laws solidified these interpretations, defining acceptable behavior and legal obligations for all humans—both Jews and non-Jews. These laws consist of prohibitions against (1) idol worship, (2) blasphemy, (3) murder, (4) sexual sins, (5) theft or robbery, and (6) eating flesh cut or torn from a living animal.<sup>8</sup> To these was added the injunction to (7) establish courts of justice.<sup>9</sup>

This legal doctrine, defined largely in terms of primeval history, was loosely based on interpretations of scripture such as Genesis 2:16–17 and 9:1–9. Such laws outlined the "minimal moral duties" that all people must obey and described the basic relationship between God and humankind.<sup>10</sup> In other words, this doctrine set the standards of civilized society from a rabbinic perspective.<sup>11</sup> Because the Rabbis believed that the basic tenets of this doctrine had been introduced to Noah after the great flood, they often called this body of rules the "Noachide" laws.<sup>12</sup> The prevailing understanding about these laws is that the covenant with Noah was a renewal of the

covenant God made with Adam<sup>13</sup> and thus is binding on the entire human race.

The list of Noachide laws is distinct from the Sinaitic covenant established with Moses. Whereas the Sinaitic covenant is between God and Israel alone, the Noachide covenant applies to all people.<sup>14</sup> The term *Noachide* indicates this universality. Accordingly, while the Jewish laws of circumcision (applicable to the posterity of Abraham), temple sacrifice (required of covenant Israel), and the additional 613 commandments of the law of Moses<sup>15</sup> are to be strictly observed by the Jews, the laws given to Adam and repeated to Noah are to be observed by both Jew and Gentile.<sup>16</sup>

Jewish scholars are divided on the exact purpose of the Noachide laws. To various scholars they may be the universal formulation of “natural law,” “universal social convention,” or “reasonably presumed constructs of social contract.”<sup>17</sup> Other scholars view them differently still. To them, these laws apply because God issued them as commandments in a manner that makes them binding on all people as descendants of Adam and Noah. The rules are thought to be stipulations or conditions that attend the promises that God made to Adam and Noah (in the case of Adam, it was the promise of a Savior; in Noah’s case, it was the promise to never again destroy the Earth by flood); as beneficiaries of those covenants, all their descendants are bound to keep those covenantal stipulations and conditions. Yet to other scholars, the Noachide laws are merely an amalgam of directives “to govern the behavior of the non-Jewish resident living under Jewish jurisdiction.”<sup>18</sup> Elements of each of these perspectives have been considered by those striving to formulate globally applicable rules, and evidences of these same motivations are also found throughout the Bible. So although the underlying reason for the laws may be disputed, most believe that their effect would be universally beneficial.

### **Standards of Civilization**

Simple moral or societal norms are essential for the success of any civilization, and many believe that the list of Noachide laws is sufficiently broad and adaptable to most, if not all, societies, and would preserve basic order and morality.<sup>19</sup> Accounts from the Bible indicate that as civilizations or societies increased in wickedness and disobedience to the basic principles of respect and order found in the Noachide laws, they became unstable, and either they were destroyed by neighboring groups or by internal forces, or they repented and regained the strength and security that comes with obedience to the commandments of God. For example, Cain was banished for having murdered his brother (see Genesis 4:12), King Ahaz's kingdom was destroyed for worshiping false idols (see 2 Chronicles 28:1-5), and Jeremiah prophesied that Jerusalem would be destroyed by a great and cruel nation because of the prevalence of theft, murder, and adultery among the people (see Jeremiah 6). While these last two examples involved punishments of the Israelites, who had accepted a higher covenant, this higher covenant encompassed the basic commandments of the Noachide laws, and Jeremiah in the final example made it clear that part of the reason the people of his time would be punished was for their disregard of these standards of civilization. Note, too, that while it seems ironic that a wicked nation would be victorious over the perhaps equally iniquitous Israelites, Jeremiah also prophesied that these conquering nations of "heathens," who were also guilty of worshiping false gods, would not escape punishment if they did not repent (see Jeremiah 10).

### **Covenant Obligations**

Although not all people acknowledge that they are the beneficiaries of covenants made between God and Adam and Noah and their posterity, most recognize that each person is individually responsible for his or her actions. An important

precept of the Noachide laws is that all men and women are created in the image of God and possess the ability to discern good from evil; consequently, they are capable of acting for themselves. Genesis 3:22 informs us that this ability is one of the effects of the Fall (see also 2 Nephi 2:26; Helaman 14:30–31; Moroni 7:15–16). Whether or not people recognize a supreme being or subscribe to eschatological theories, most understand that in order to be included in a successful group—whether that means functioning in a basic civilization or belonging to an elect few—they must agree to certain restrictions on behavior. The Noachide laws are an example of one half of such an agreement; as indicated above, the other half is God’s promise to preserve the Earth, bless the land, and never destroy the world by flood again. Thus the principles behind the Noachide laws can be seen not only as a matter of “natural law,” “universal social convention,” or “reasonably presumed constructs of social contract,” but also as a reflection of the basic principles of covenants.

### **Justice and Equity**

While nonbelievers are expected to abide by simple moral norms or covenants, followers of God and the prophets, who understand the higher laws, are held to a stricter standard. According to Nahum Rakover, the thrust of the law “is not really concerned with prescribing regulations but with implementing just and equitable law.”<sup>20</sup> This becomes a concern whenever societies with different legal and moral standards intermingle. Because of the impossibility of keeping the covenant people of God separate from other civilizations, the Noachide laws provide a basic list designed to deal with this situation. References in the Bible make it apparent that all foreigners living within Israelite cities were expected to obey the Sabbath laws (see Exodus 20:10; Deuteronomy 5:14) and the law of Moses in general: “And Moses commanded them, saying, . . . gather the people together, men and women, and



children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 31:10, 12).

These ideas outline the principles behind the Noachide laws. Although specific Noachide laws were not codified until centuries after the events of the Bible and the Book of Mormon, the fundamental ideas underlying these laws are clearly alluded to throughout the Bible and, as will be demonstrated, throughout the Book of Mormon as well.

### **Variations of Scriptural Universal Standards<sup>21</sup>**

Universal standards are most helpful when integrating two differing systems. When one society or civilization meets another, they seek common ground to resolve important differences. In the Old Testament, such encounters and the resulting compromises led to variations in the articulation of Noachide-type laws. The later enumerations of these laws all come after Lehi had left Jerusalem, but they reveal that the above-mentioned principles upon which the Noachide laws were founded are stable.

As these laws became codified, disagreement arose over how many commandments were actually issued to Adam and Noah, respectively. Various texts record possible additional prohibitions such as those relating to (1) drinking the blood of living animals, (2) emasculation or castration, (3) sorcery, (4) all magical practices listed in Deuteronomy 18:10–11 (“There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer”),<sup>22</sup> (5) crossbreeding different species of animals (as mentioned in the Talmud),<sup>23</sup> (6) grafting different types of trees together,<sup>24</sup> (7) mixing seeds, and (8) blemished sacrifices. Injunctions regarding (9) charity, (10) procreation,

and (11) obedience to the Torah are also found.<sup>25</sup> Another record lists the seven Noachide provisions as prohibiting (1) idolatry, (2) adultery, (3) murder, (4) robbery, (5) eating from a limb cut from a living animal, (6) the emasculation of animals, and (7) pairing of different species of animals.<sup>26</sup> At one point, thirty Noachide laws were mentioned.<sup>27</sup>

Another list of laws recorded in *Jubilees*, which predates the rabbinic law lists, includes strikingly different commandments:

And in the twenty-eighth jubilee Noah began to command his grandsons with ordinances and commandments and all of the judgments which he knew. And he bore witness to his sons so that they might do justice and cover the shame of their flesh and bless the one who created them and honor father and mother, and each one love his neighbor and preserve themselves from fornication and pollution and from all injustice. (*Jubilees* 7:20–21)

From this passage, the Noachide laws are (1) to do justice (righteousness), (2) to dress modestly, (3) to bless the Creator, (4) to honor parents, (5) to love one's neighbor, (6) to avoid fornication, and (7) to remain free from pollution.

Other pseudepigraphic texts attributed to the antediluvian or pre-patriarchal periods list a different set of eight basic laws. Pseudo-Phocylides reads:

[1] Neither commit adultery nor rouse homosexual passion.  
 [2] Neither devise treachery nor stain your hands with blood. [3] Do not become rich unjustly, but live from honorable means. [4] Be content with what you have and abstain from what is another's. [5] Do not tell lies, but always speak the truth. [6] Honor God foremost, and afterward your parents. [7] Always dispense justice and let not your judgment be influenced by favor. [8] Do not cast down the poor unjustly, do not judge partially.<sup>28</sup>

Similar to the *Jubilees* text, the Sentences of the Syriac Menander reads: “[1] Fear God, and [2] honor (your) father and mother. . . . You shall [3] do no murder, and [4] your

hands shall not do what is hateful.”<sup>29</sup> And the Greek 3 Baruch reads: “Those who drink in excess do all evil: Brother does not show mercy to brother, nor father to son, nor son to father. And from the evil of wine comes forth: [1] murder and [2] adultery, [3] fornication [4] and cursing, [5] theft, and [6] similar things. And nothing good is accomplished through it.”<sup>30</sup>

Despite the possible additions and variations, the prevalent opinion in the Talmud is that there are only seven Noachide laws—the others are understood as falling under one or another of “the seven laws.”<sup>31</sup>

In the New Testament Paul gives a list of four commandments for converts to Christianity who were not Jews. “This list is the only one that bears any systematic relationship to the set of religious laws which the Pentateuch makes obligatory on resident aliens” dwelling amid the Israelites.<sup>32</sup> Paul’s four commandments are found in the following passage:

Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from [1] pollutions of idols, and from [2] fornication, and from [3] things strangled, and from [4] blood. (Acts 15:18–20)

The Noachide laws, then, were not a rigid list (for that matter, neither were the contents of the Ten Commandments),<sup>33</sup> but underlying each list are principles that bring about a standard of civilization, obedience to covenant obligations, and preservation of justice and equity. The earlier lists, such as that in *Jubilees*, reflect more of a concern with basic ethical and religious belief and behavior rather than with crossing boundaries or contracting impurities. As time went on, the Noachide laws expanded and became more concerned with Jewish ritual purity. Whatever their source or purpose, these laws are mandatory study for the Jewish scholar but almost universally ignored by the modern-day Gentile.

## Universal Laws in the Book of Mormon

The record of interactions between groups of people in the Book of Mormon describes the development of legal or moral standards for civilization that seem to be based on principles similar to those behind the Noachide laws. While the same lists of laws are not precisely enumerated in the Book of Mormon, the same ideas and moral principles upon which they are based are found throughout the record.<sup>34</sup> Because Book of Mormon history parallels the Noah-Abraham-Moses-David-Diaspora history of the Jews—Lehi’s small group separates, wanders, enlarges into a civilization, and finally falls into apostasy and forced destruction—the environment was such that similar evolution was possible if the Noachide principles were present at the onset.

The development of Nephite law occurred in three stages. The initial stage began when Nephites and Lamanites separated from each other. The middle period involved King Benjamin and the interactions his kingdom had with outside groups. Finally, with the coming of Christ, a new legal standard was implemented that applied to all. These stages highlight important legal developments in Book of Mormon history that reflect principles of universal standards.

### Early Nephite History

After the prophet Lehi died, disagreements arose between his sons, and one of them, Nephi, left the area, taking with him “all those . . . who believed in the warnings and the revelations of God” (2 Nephi 5:6). Nephi and those who followed him “did observe to keep the judgments, and the statutes, and the commandments of the Lord in all things, according to the law of Moses” (2 Nephi 5:10). Nephi acknowledged that the Lord was with him and his people (2 Nephi 5:11), but recorded that “the word of the Lord was fulfilled which he spake . . . saying that: Inasmuch as they [Nephi’s brethren, the Lamanites] will not hearken unto thy words they shall be cut

off from the presence of the Lord. And behold, they were cut off from his presence” (2 Nephi 5:20). The Book of Mormon notes that the Lamanites “delighted in wars and bloodshed, and they had an eternal hatred against us [the Nephites], their brethren. And they sought by the power of their arms to destroy us continually” (Jacob 7:24).

With the children of Lehi having split into two societies with differing policies and standards of civilization, Nephi clarified to his people that whether or not the Lamanites chose to acknowledge God and his commandments to them as covenant children, a minimum level of piety must still be observed by all. Nephi wrote that “the Lord [has not] commanded any that they should not partake of his goodness” and that “all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden,” but because both Jew and Gentile are “alike unto God” (2 Nephi 26:33), in order to receive God’s blessings of the Lord, the Lord has instructed that (1) “there shall be no priestcrafts,” or in other words, people should not “preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world” (2 Nephi 26:29). He has also directed that (2) “all men should have charity, which charity is love. And except they should have charity they were nothing” (2 Nephi 26:30).

Further, God

commanded [3] that men should not murder; [4] that they should not lie; [5] that they should not steal; [6] that they should not take the name of the Lord their God in vain; [7] that they should not envy; [8] that they should not have malice; [9] that they should not contend one with another; [10] that they should not commit whoredoms; and [11] that they should do none of these things; for whoso doeth them shall perish. (2 Nephi 26:32)

These commandments were the standard that God directed that all people follow, “black and white, bond and free, male and female” (2 Nephi 26:33) and are thus comparable to the



Noachide laws in scope and purpose. This initial stage in the development of Nephite civilization showed a deliberate attempt to proactively prevent a crisis by establishing universal laws for others not in the covenant.

### **Middle Period: From Benjamin to the Judges**

In the middle period, Book of Mormon history records that the Nephites were obedient to the “exceedingly strict” law of Moses while the Lamanites continued murdering, “drink[ing] the blood of beasts,” and frequently attacking the Nephites (Jarom 1:5, 6). Despite Nephite efforts to “restore the Lamanites unto the true faith in God,” their “labors were in vain; their [the Lamanites’] hatred was fixed, and they were led by their evil nature that they became wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people, full of idolatry and filthiness; feeding upon beasts of prey; . . . . And many of them did eat nothing save it was raw meat; and they were continually seeking to destroy us [the Nephites]” (Enos 1:20).

But by the time of King Benjamin, Book of Mormon civilization was no longer just a simple Nephite–Lamanite split. Other groups had formed and the interactions of the people on the American continent had become more complex.

The reign of the Book of Mormon’s second King Mosiah, from about 121 to 91 B.C., “was marked by an influx of several groups of people into his territories in the land of Zarahemla. Their arrivals resulted in increased cultural pluralism and also in heightened political instability in Zarahemla.”<sup>35</sup> The ruling Nephites had ceased being the majority; there were “not so many . . . who were descendants of Nephi, as there were of the people of Zarahemla, who was a descendant of Mulek, and those who came with him” (Mosiah 25:2). The Nephites and Mulekites had both kept track of their lineage and group identities, which indicates that they had not merged into one undifferentiated society.<sup>36</sup>

The arrival of the people of Limhi, who had escaped from the city of Nephi, shortly after Mosiah<sub>2</sub> began his reign,

added to the complex mix of societies already in the land of Zarahemla (see Mosiah 22:13). The Limhites became Mosiah's subjects but seem to have remained separate from the other groups of people in the land of Zarahemla. The additional "arrival of the people of Alma not only added to the growing political diversity in Zarahemla, but their piety also introduced new religious dimensions to the situation."<sup>37</sup>

The next twenty to thirty years of Nephite history was marked with strong social undercurrents that began to divide the people in Zarahemla very deeply.<sup>38</sup> Among the population,

powerful political factions were forming. For a time, the four sons of Mosiah and Alma the Younger joined forces with those who sought to destroy the church (see Mosiah 27:8). This group of dissenters rejected the Nephite traditions, did not believe in the resurrection, denied the coming of Christ, refused to be baptized by Alma, and would not pray (see Mosiah 26:1-4). [With high immigration and strong discord, this] was a precarious time for the Nephite rulers and Alma the Elder. Their political, social, and religious positions [were collectively unstable].<sup>39</sup>

In a previous effort to unify his people, King Benjamin had established the church and introduced minimum requirements for life in Zarahemla that were binding on the people whether or not they had made a covenant to participate in the church and strictly adhere to its religious requirements. His list of public laws prohibiting (1) murder, (2) plundering, (3) stealing, (4) adultery, or (5) "any manner of wickedness" (Mosiah 2:13)<sup>40</sup> appears six additional times in the Book of Mormon, "and in every case this set measures the extent to which kings and rulers had discharged their legal duty of maintaining the public order."<sup>41</sup>

The first time the Book of Mormon records a repetition of King Benjamin's standard is when Benjamin's son, Mosiah<sub>2</sub>, relinquished his kingship. Mosiah related that he had also punished those who had not complied with these

same laws (see Mosiah 29:14–15, 36). He recorded that “there should be [1] no wars nor contentions, [2] no stealing, [3] nor plundering, [4] nor murdering, [5] nor any manner of iniquity; And whosoever has committed iniquity, him have I punished according to the crime which he has committed, according to the law which has been given to us by our fathers” (Mosiah 29:14–15).

He further admonished that “all [the] iniquities and abominations, and [1] all the wars, and contentions, [2] and bloodshed, [3] and the stealing, [4] and the plundering, [5] and the committing of whoredoms, [6] and all manner of iniquities which cannot be enumerated . . . that these things ought not to be, that they were expressly repugnant to the commandments of God” (Mosiah 29:36). At this point, Mosiah’s people were about to make a dramatic change in methods of government—from kingship to a system of judges. Under these circumstances Mosiah made it clear that a minimum standard must be upheld for peace and righteousness to continue.

During the same time, a newly converted Lamanite king declared that the people “[1] ought not to murder, [2] nor to plunder, [3] nor to steal, [4] nor to commit adultery, [5] nor to commit any manner of wickedness” (Alma 23:3). King Benjamin’s words “in this regard were apparently taught to the Lamanite king by the four missionary sons of Mosiah,” also newly converted, “who, we can be sure, . . . knew the details of their grandfather’s speech.”<sup>42</sup> In this situation, Lamanites in seven lands and cities were converted, were “distinguished from their brethren” who had not converted by a new name, the “Anti-Nephi-Lehies,” and “did open a correspondence with them [the Nephites]” (Alma 23:8–14, 16–18), interacting with the Nephites more freely. As these people moved toward unity, Benjamin’s minimum standard helped to establish a basic level of law and civilization.

Alma<sub>2</sub> later states that he had fulfilled his responsibilities in the land of Zarahemla by apprehending all who had [1] “murdered, . . . [2] robbed, . . . [3] stole, . . . [4] committed adultery, . . . yea, for [5] all this wickedness they were punished” (Alma 30:10).<sup>43</sup>

Alma made this statement after the people of Ammon had been “established in the land of Jershon,” “the Lamanites were driven out of the land,” and “the people did observe to keep the commandments of the Lord” (Alma 30:1, 3). In this instance, Alma was dealing with a more religiously homogeneous group who may have previously covenanted to a higher standard of righteousness. In Alma’s day, as in other times, temple worthiness involved acceptance of specific and multitiered covenants—not dissimilar to basic Noachide laws. Nevertheless, when an outsider came into the land of Zarahemla and “began to preach unto the people against the prophecies which had been spoken by the prophets,” Alma records that “there was no law against a man’s belief; for it was strictly contrary to the commands of God that there should be a law which should bring men onto unequal grounds” (Alma 30:6, 7), and then proceeded to enforce the basic laws contained in Benjamin’s minimum standard.

The three remaining reiterations of King Benjamin’s list describe how

the wickedness of the Gadianton rulers in Zarahemla and the corruption of the Jaredite king Akish were judged harshly by Nephi and Moroni because they sought to “murder, and plunder, and steal, and commit whoredoms and all manner of wickedness, contrary to the laws of their country and also the laws of their God” (Helaman 6:23; see 7:21; Ether 8:16). Benjamin’s list appears in each of these scriptures, modified only slightly as the exigencies of the individual circumstances over time dictated.<sup>44</sup>

This list of minimum laws that emerged in the middle period of the Book of Mormon history follows the principles

of the Noachide laws and served to establish ground rules and a standard of civilization for groups of Book of Mormon people who were either merging with other societies or were changing systems of law.

### **Later Period: The Coming of Christ**

When Jesus Christ visited the people on the American continent, he announced that with his death and resurrection, the law of Moses had been fulfilled (see 3 Nephi 9:17; 12:17; 15:2-10). He instructed, "Ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings" (3 Nephi 9:19). Instead, he commanded that "ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit," and promised that "whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God" (3 Nephi 9:20, 22). Christ explained that "the covenant which I have made with my people is not all fulfilled; but the law which was given unto Moses hath an end in me" (3 Nephi 15:8).

The Book of Mormon records that by the "thirty and sixth year" after the coming of Christ, "the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanties . . . and they had all things common among them" (4 Nephi 1:2-3). Even after a hundred years, "there was no contention in the land, . . . no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness. . . . There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God" (4 Nephi 1:14-17). The record declares that "surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God" (4 Nephi 1:16). This time of peace marked a centuries-long era of economic progress with a surprising absence of discord.



National moral homogeneity in isolation made Noachide law considerations unnecessary.

However, after the second hundred years had passed following Christ's visit, the society began to break down as groups started to identify themselves as Lamanites, to become proud, and to no longer have their goods and substance in common (see 4 Nephi 1:20, 24, 25). Persecution, rebellion, robbery, and "all manner of iniquity" became more prevalent (see generally 4 Nephi 1), and wickedness prevailed (see Mormon 1:13).

Although the minimum standard presented by King Benjamin is not specifically enumerated, the Book of Mormon prophets during this period decried these same wicked practices (see, for example, murder, Mormon 4:11, 21; 7:4; 8:8; Moroni 9:10; 4 Nephi 1:30–31; sexual sins, Moroni 9:9; theft and robbery, Mormon 8:31; war and contention, Mormon 1:16; 2:15; 4:1; 8:2, 8; Moroni 9:2; wickedness or iniquity, Moroni 6:7; 10:22). Yet instead of requiring adherence to a specific set of minimum standards, the prophets call all to repent, to receive forgiveness and the Holy Ghost, and to become righteous members of the Church of Jesus Christ. As Christ had taught during his stay with the Nephites, a "broken heart and a contrite spirit," repentance, and drawing closer to him (3 Nephi 9:20, 22) were required of all people on the Earth. The remainder of the Book of Mormon follows a similar vein, calling for all people to repent and to come unto Christ, a process that encompasses all of the benefits and purposes of the Noachide and Noachide-like laws (see 3 Nephi 16:13; 18:32; 27:16; 30:2; 4 Nephi 1:1; Moroni 6:8; 8:8; 8:24).

This shift from specific laws and prohibitions to a more general call to repentance and righteousness undoubtedly was based on the same goals of unity and civility as the Noachide and similar laws. With Christ's coming the focus merely shifted from warnings of punishment for disobedience to the specific laws to promises of blessings and rewards, and

encouragement to seek for the peace and happiness that followed participation in God's plan.

These examples show that Noachide laws or their equivalent were present or absent in the Book of Mormon when logically predicted. It remains to be examined what other effects, if any, Noachide-like laws had on development of biblical and Book of Mormon legal codes.

### **Consequences of Disobedience**

Patterns of enforcement of these laws and punishment for disobedience can be seen in both the Bible and the Book of Mormon. First and foremost, God's response to individual and general disobedience to Noachide laws is similarly chronicled in both sacred works. God sometimes expressed his divine displeasure, as in the case of Cain, when God personally cursed him for committing murder (see Genesis 4:9-12). Isaiah warned that God would "punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity" (Isaiah 13:11). Likewise, in the Book of Mormon, God directly punished Sherem's blasphemy when "the power of the Lord came upon him [Sherem], insomuch that he fell to the earth" (Jacob 7:15).

Another way of enforcing the Noachide laws developed as Jewish populations sustained closer contact with gentile populations. This method involved legal intervention by Jewish communities when dealing with gentile offenders. Hebrew scholar Joseph Schultz described the formulation of legal thought and practice as beginning with a belief in the "theoretical principle that outside the ethicolegal system of rabbinic Judaism social and moral anarchy prevailed. This theory was undoubtedly bolstered by the Rabbis' personal experience in contacts with lawless and immoral pagans as well as by their judicial experience in dealing with the numerous cases involving Jews and amoral Gentiles."<sup>45</sup> In such cases there were two ways to deal with offenders:

On the one hand, there were sages who demanded stricter conduct from the Noahite than from the native-born Jew.

The strictness of the [laws was] intended as a deterrent to amoral Gentiles dealing with Jews in the Jewish State. On the other hand, there were sages who were more lenient with Noahites than with full-born Jews, particularly in the area of sexual relations and family life. Given the unchastity of his pagan environment, the Noahite was bound to fall short of the standards demanded of Jews by the law. Still, they hoped for minimal compliance. But both groups were disappointed.<sup>46</sup>

Alma 1 offers a Book of Mormon example of neighboring religious communities intervening to deal with gentile offenders. Under Mosiah's reign, the church had grown and was the governing force in the community. Yet some did not belong to the church, and

did indulge themselves in sorceries, and in idolatry or idleness, and in babblings, and in envyings and strife; wearing costly apparel; being lifted up in the pride of their eyes; persecuting, lying, thieving, robbing, committing whoredoms, and murdering, and all manner of wickedness; nevertheless, the law was put in force upon all those who did transgress it, inasmuch as it was possible. And it came to pass that by thus exercising the law upon them, every man suffering according to that which he had done, they became more still, and durst not commit any wickedness. (Alma 1:32-33)

This method kept the peace for a while, but its success as a viable legal option was critically connected to the stability and power of the religious leaders at hand.

A third method was enforcement at the social level: refusal to associate or interact with people who violated Noachide commandments or expressions of shame and disgust regarding the offender. The Book of Mormon is full of examples of one group or another relating just how far another community had fallen below the Noachide level. For example, a group of

wicked Nephites were reported in Helaman to have become “hardened and impenitent and grossly wicked, insomuch that they did reject the word of God and all the preaching and prophesying which did come among them” (Helaman 6:2). In this case, it seems as if these wicked Nephites did not want to associate with those who were obedient. However, in that same chapter in Helaman, a group of righteous Lamanites, because of their observance of the law, enjoyed much interaction that led to increased happiness: “Nevertheless, the people of the church did have great joy because of the conversion of the Lamanites, yea, because of the church of God, which had been established among them. And they did fellowship one with another, and did rejoice one with another, and did have great joy” (Helaman 6:3).

### **Rewards Promised for Keeping Basic Laws**

In the Old Testament, God promised that those who were obedient would be favored, protected, blessed, and ultimately, saved (see Exodus 19:5; Leviticus 26:3; Deuteronomy 4:40). Additionally, the benefits of living the Noachide laws were the peace and security the laws were intended to ensure.

The Noachide laws (at least as most Jewish scholars view them) were based on a belief in a minimally acceptable universal law, which all people were expected to live. Obedience to that law would be rewarded with blessings. This is very similar to the understanding of accountability that the authors of the Book of Mormon clearly taught. According to the Book of Mormon, men and women will be held accountable for the knowledge and agency they possess and all would be judged accordingly (see 2 Nephi 9:15; Alma 12:12–14; 3 Nephi 27:16–17 for a few such references). The Book of Mormon also recorded benefits of obedience similar to those found in the Old Testament, such as safety (see Jarom 1:9), prosperity (see Alma 37:13), greater covenants and opportunities (see Mosiah 5:8), and salvation (see 1 Nephi 22:31).

## Differences in Jewish and Nephite Thought Concerning Noachides

While the evidence that the Nephites adhered to a legal and religious notion similar to the Noachide laws is considerable, some distinctions exist between the beliefs of the Nephites and those of the Rabbis.<sup>47</sup> One such departure is in the chain of revelation of God's covenant with his people. Whereas Jewish tradition considers the Noachide laws to have been given only to the postdiluvian Noah, or to both Adam and Noah, modern Latter-day Saint scripture confirms that God also established his covenant with the antediluvian Enoch. Genesis 9:17 of Joseph Smith's translation records God's promise: "And I will establish my covenant with you, which I made unto Enoch, concerning the remnants of your posterity." Consequently, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believe the covenant with Noah was not original, but only "new" to Noah as well as to the heads of all other dispensations.

Another essential difference is that Jewish scholars and Rabbis hold that it is enough for non-Jews to accept and live by the Noachide laws; more than this is not required to obtain a place in heaven. In fact, according to Maimonides, "A gentile who occupies himself with the Torah is liable to the death penalty. He should only occupy himself with the Seven Noahide Commandments."<sup>48</sup> Therefore, according to the Talmud, "The righteous men of all the nations of the world have their share in the world-to-come."<sup>49</sup> Writes one Jewish scholar: "On this doctrine the justified Jewish claim has been based that Judaism emphasizes morality more than belief and that it does not condemn men just because they do not adhere to its law and faith."<sup>50</sup> Because of such a view, proselytizing is no longer one of the main emphases of the Jewish faith (compare Matthew 23:15).

Book of Mormon teachings, however, are strikingly different. In his parting words, Moroni speaks "unto all the ends



of the earth” (Moroni 10:24) when he invites all men to come unto Christ (see Moroni 10:30). King Benjamin, along with so many Book of Mormon prophets, teaches that belief in Christ, adherence to the Lord’s commandments, and participation in the covenant are essential steps to salvation (see Mosiah 4:5–8). Because of these beliefs, those in the Book of Mormon who accepted the gospel actively tried to persuade others to believe and live similarly.<sup>51</sup>

The teachings of the prophet Mormon in particular defuse the dispute that exists among Jewish scholars as to whether one can come upon these basic moral principles simply through rational thought or whether they must be revealed to man from God. Mormon teaches that within every man is a God-given light that will lead him to the discovery of such principles. In addition to man’s innate ability to distinguish good from evil,<sup>52</sup> the Book of Mormon teaches that all men can receive further revelation from God—even those nations that have not entered into any additional covenants with him. Alma the Younger taught that “the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have” (Alma 29:8). Not only do all nations receive some portion of the Lord’s word, they receive it in differing amounts as the Lord “seeth fit that they should have.” Thus the Book of Mormon more clearly explains the relationship between God and man. Even those who have not accepted his whole law and would be subject to Noachide law have been given the ability to discern good from evil and the possibility of receiving direction through revelation.

Modern times have seen a resurgence in interest in truth and fundamental law. The past few generations have developed no-fault doctrines for accidents, divorce, and insurance, but more and more people are now wanting stability in their lives and a foundation for their beliefs. In their search for universal truth, many have turned to investigation and study of the

Noachide laws.<sup>53</sup> Even “modern Jewish thinkers like Moses Mendelssohn and Hermann Cohen emphasized the Noachide conception as the common rational, ethical ground of Israel and mankind.”<sup>54</sup> The Book of Mormon prophets, however, understood that the law of Moses, and indeed any other law, had been given to point people toward Christ; they explained that the “law hath become dead unto us, and we are made alive in Christ because of our faith; yet we keep the law because of the commandments” (2 Nephi 25:25; see also 2 Nephi 11:4; see also 25:24–30; Jacob 4:5–6; Alma 25:15; 34:14).

Nevertheless, the amount of evident similarity between what the Nephites believed and practiced and what the Jews know as the Noachide laws is noteworthy. It appears likely that Lehi and his descendants adhered to the belief that even those who did not subscribe to the law of Moses were bound to obey a certain set of commandments and that disobedience was punished accordingly. That the basic prohibitions found in the Book of Mormon do not perfectly correspond with the list of seven Noachide laws in the Talmud should not be surprising, since it is believed that the Noachide laws were not formulated and recorded until long after Lehi left Jerusalem in 600 B.C. In fact, the number of similarities between the concepts adhered to by the Nephites and the Rabbis speaks for the validity of the doctrine.

### **Conclusion**

The Noachide laws, and those laws similar to them, are the first level of obedience required by God. Important goals of this type of law include establishing a minimum standard of civilization, enforcing participation in covenants and the fulfillment of obligations, and ensuring just and equitable application of law. This level is universal law in that all people must adhere to some standard of behavior to be able to cooperate on a global scale. However, the higher laws introduced to Moses and the children of Israel and the still higher laws

given with Abraham's covenant indicate that an advanced level of commitment and a greater degree of reward awaits those who are willing to commit to an additional set of laws. If our life's goals are happiness and salvation, this higher level of law is also, in a sense, universal, in that all must adhere to this standard in order to receive the full blessings of this existence. Jewish scholars debate this point, differing in opinion "as to whether the ultimate stage of humanity will comprise both Judaism and Noachidism, or whether Noachidism is only the penultimate level before the universalization of all of the Torah."<sup>55</sup> And yet the record in the Book of Mormon describes the law given at Christ's coming as an even grander and yet simpler rule: repent and follow Christ. This, then, is the true universal law, for if all were to put such law into practice, there would be no more murder, adultery, theft, blasphemy, idolatry, or any evil action. Nor would there be any divisions among peoples or even Noachide-like levels of covenant or commitment: all would be one in purpose and goal. Such a unifying law comes closer to a true universal law than the others.

As today's world grows smaller through technology and travel, ideas of civilization based on comprehensive standards, integrity in making and keeping covenants, and implementation of fair and just laws are becoming increasingly important. The more that is understood about the Noachide or Noachide-type laws in the Bible and Book of Mormon and the principles underlying them, the better we can progress toward a truly global existence.

## Notes

1. A Reuters news search for the term *global* retrieved 2270 articles. Search performed on Yahoo! on 8 February 2001.

2. See, for example, the discussions of natural law and natural rights proponents such as Thomas Aquinas, John M. Finnis, Lon Luvois Fuller, John Locke, Immanuel Kant, John Rawls, and others,

as summarized in *Jurisprudence: Text and Readings on the Philosophy of Law*, ed. George C. Christie and Patrick H. Martin, 2nd ed. (St. Paul, Minn.: West, 1995), 118–391.

3. Ze'ev W. Falk, *Hebrew Law in Biblical Times*, (Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1964; 2nd ed., Provo, Utah, and Winona Lake, Ind.: Brigham Young University Press and Eisenbrauns, 2001), 4.

4. *Ibid.*, 11.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*, 6.

7. Bockmuehl proposes that the Noachide commandments were probably not concisely formulated before the second century A.D.; Markus Bockmuehl, "The Noachide Commandments and New Testament Ethics," *Revue Biblique* 102/1 (1995): 72, 96. Nevertheless, the concept is probably older; see, for example, Acts 15:20, prohibiting the eating of food offered to idols, meat from strangled animals, and blood, and fornication.

8. Among the ancient Greeks, in Dionysian rites dating back at least to the fourth century B.C., worshipers would tear a limb from a living animal and smear themselves with the blood. In a lecture entitled "The Relationship of the Law to the Gentiles," given at the University of Missouri—Kansas City in 1978, Professor Joseph P. Schultz suggested that this Noachide law is a reaction to such ritual practices. This law could not have been revealed until this time, since before the Flood the eating of the flesh of animals was prohibited altogether (see also Saul Berman, "Noachide Laws in Jewish Law," *Encyclopedia Judaica* [New York: Macmillan, 1971], 12:1190).

9. Tosef., Avodah Zarah 64b; Yad, Melakhim 8:10; Sanh. 56a. See Steven Schwarzschild, "Noachide Laws," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 12:1189, which both lists the laws and discusses why other pre-Sinaitic laws such as procreation, circumcision, and the law of the sinew were not included in this list. The author of the article gives no satisfactory answer but states that "two somewhat strained principles . . . explain the anomalies. The absence of circumcision and the sinew is explained through the assertion that any pre-Sinaitic law which was not repeated at Sinai was thenceforth applicable solely to Israelites (Sanh. 59a), whence procreation, while indeed obligatory on non-Jews according to Johanan (Yev. 62a) would nevertheless not . . . be listed (cf. Tos. To Yev. 62a s.v. *benei*; Tos. To Hag. 2b s.v. *lo*)," (Berman, "Noachide Laws in Jewish Law," 1191).

10. Schwarzschild, "Noachide Laws," 1189. See Sanh. 50–60; Yad, Melakhim, 8:10; 10:12.

11. See Joseph P. Schultz, *Judaism and the Gentile Faiths: Comparative Studies in Religion* (East Brunswick, N.J.: Associated, 1981), 359.

12. These laws are also variously known as “Noachian laws,” “Noachic laws,” the “Noachitic code,” the “Noachitic covenant,” the “Heptalogue,” and “the seven laws of the sons of Noah.” “The term ‘sons of Noah’ is, in rabbinic usage, a technical term used to describe all human beings except those whom Jewish law defines as being Jews” (Berman, “Noachide Laws in Jewish Law,” 1190). For an in-depth discussion on the origin of the Noachide laws, see David Novak, *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1983), 3–52.

13. Similarly, see the Joseph Smith translation (Genesis 9:17, 21 JST, an expansion of Genesis 9:11, 16 KJV), which indicates that God had previously covenanted with Enoch also.

14. See Steven S. Schwarzschild, “Judaism, Scriptures, and Ecumenism,” *Judaism* 13/3 (1964): 259, 272; Schwarzschild, “Noachide Laws,” 1189.

15. Naomi G. Cohen, “Taryag and the Noachide Commandments,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 43/1 (1992): 47.

16. Somewhat ironically, there has been some debate about the extent to which Jews must obey, enforce, and be in harmony with the Noachide standard. See Nahum Rakover, “The ‘Law’ and the Noahides,” in *Politics and Theopolitics in the Bible and Postbiblical Literature*, ed. Henning Graf Reventlow, Yair Hoffman, and Benjamin Uffenheimer (Sheffield, Eng.: JSOT Press: 1994), 156–58.

17. The debate is whether the laws were commanded by God or were “accepted upon themselves.” This idea is not new, however: “Of course, this same conflict between revelation and consent as basis of authority appears with regard to the binding authority of Torah over the Jew, in the form of ‘we will do and obey’ (Ex. 24:7) as opposed to ‘He (God) suspended the mountain upon them like a cask, and said to them, “If ye accept the Torah, ’tis well; if not, there shall be your burial.”’” Rakover, “The ‘Law,’” 151–52. See also Berman, “Noachide Laws in Jewish Law,” 1191.

18. Berman, “Noachide Laws in Jewish Law,” 1190.

19. See Arnold N. Enker, “Aspects of Interaction between the Torah Law, the King’s Law, and the Noahide Law in Jewish Criminal Law,” *Cardozo Law Review* 12/1 (1990): 1147. Enker explains that the Noachide law, “the universal law, binding upon all mankind, requires adherence to those minimum standards of decent behavior essential to a properly functioning society.”



20. Rakover, "The 'Law,'" 151.
21. See accompanying chart of the Noachide laws and variations.
22. These first three laws are found in the Tosefta (Av. Zar. 8:6), quoted in Berman, "Noachide Laws in Jewish Law," 1190.
23. See Saul Berman, "Noachide Laws," in *The Principles of Jewish Law*, ed. Menachem Elon (Jerusalem: Keter, 1975), 708, quoting Sanh. 56b.
24. See *ibid.*, 708, quoting Sanh. 56b.
25. Schwarzschild, "Noachide Laws," 1189; Hullin, 92a.
26. Sanh. 56b.
27. Hullin, 92a; Berman, "Noachide Laws in Jewish History," 1190. The nonrabbinic sources of the tannaitic period also show great diversity. *Ibid.*
28. Pseudo-Phocylides vv. 3–10, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985), 2:574. This text contains many references to Noachide laws, and the quoted text is just a partial list.
29. Syriac Menander 2:9–10, 15–16, in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:592.
30. 3 Baruch/Greek 4:17, in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:668–69.
31. Schwarzschild, "Noachide Laws," 1189; see Tosef. Av., Zar. 8:4; Sanh. 56a. See also *Jewish Encyclopedia* 7 (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1904), 649.
32. Berman, "Noachide Laws in Jewish Law," 1190.
33. The makeup of the Ten Commandments, or Decalogue, is also not universal; see Exodus 20 and 34.
34. Although some of the Noachide laws, such as murder and theft, had a legitimately broad application, others of the so-called universal laws, such as the prohibition against eating flesh torn from a living animal, addressed specific behaviors those in charge wished to check and were more specific to the time rather than applicable to all. It would thus be surprising to find these more specific admonitions repeated in the Book of Mormon.
35. John W. Welch, *Law in the Book of Mormon: The Nephite Court Cases* (Provo, Utah: BYU Law School, 1996), 80.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*, 81.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*, 82.
40. Interestingly, just as this last Book of Mormon law—to avoid all other wickedness—is a catchall, encompassing and reinforcing the

other four, the last Noachide law—to establish courts of justice—also “is usually interpreted as commanding the enforcement of the others.” (Schwarzschild, “Noachide Laws,” 1189; Maim. Yad, Melakhim, 9:1)

41. John W. Welch, “Benjamin, the Man: His Place in Nephite History,” in *King Benjamin’s Speech: “That Ye May Learn Wisdom,”* ed. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 45.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Schultz, *Judaism and the Gentile Faiths*, 362. Interestingly, the Noachide tradition allows for “situations in which a non-Jew would be liable for committing an act for which a Jew would not be liable.” For example, a non-Jew is liable for “the eating of flesh torn from a living animal—even of a quantity less than the size of an olive,” but a Jew would not be liable. Berman, “Noachide Laws in Jewish Law,” 1191.

46. Schultz, *Judaism and the Gentile Faiths*, 362–63.

47. Indeed, some important legal procedure distinctions also exist between Noachide and Jewish law: see Rakover, “The ‘Law,’” 154–56.

48. Maimonides, *Laws of Kings and Wars*, 10.9; cited in Rakover, “The ‘Law,’” 149.

49. Tosefta Sanh. ch. 13:2; and Sanh. 105a, in Schwarzschild, “Judaism, Scriptures, and Ecumenism,” 272.

50. Steven S. Schwarzschild, “Do Noachites Have to Believe in Revelation?” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 52 (1961–62): 297.

51. See 1 Nephi 6:4; Jacob 7:24; Enos 11; Mosiah 28:1 for a few examples.

52. Such innate-ness is not stated in the Bible; only the Book of Mormon emphasizes its God-given-ness (Moroni 7:15).

53. Over thirty websites explaining, discussing, and promoting the Noachide laws exist on the Internet as of 15 February 2001.

54. Schwarzschild, “Noachide Laws,” 1190. See also Hermann Cohen, *Religion of Reason: Out of the Source of Judaism*, trans. Simon Kaplan (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1972); reprint with introductory essays by Steven S. Schwarzschild and Kenneth Seeskin (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 117–48, 381–88; originally published as *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums* (Leipzig: G. Fock, 1919).

55. Schwarzschild, “Noachide Laws,” 1190; see Talmud Yerushalmi, Av. Zar. 2:1.

## Appendix

### Noachide Laws and Variations

	Noachide Laws	Tosefta (Av. Zar. 8:6)	Sanh. 56b	Jubilees 7:20-21	Pseudo-Phocylides 1-9	Sent. of Syriac Meander 2:9-10, 15-16
Avoid Blood		•			•	
Blasphemy	•					
Bless Creator				•		
Charity				•		
Cross-breeding Animals			•			
Devise Treachery					•	
Eating Flesh of Living Animal	•		•			
Emasculation/Castration		•	•			
Envy					•	
Establish Courts/Dispense Justice	•			•	•	
Fear/Honor God					•	•
Grafting Trees of Different Kinds			•			
Honesty					•	
Honor Parents				•	•	•
Honorable Riches	•		•		•	
Idolatry						
Modesty				•		
Murder	•		•			•
Pollution Free				•		
Sexual Sins	•		•	•	•	
Sorcery or Magic		•				
Theft, Robbery	•		•		•	
Wickedness						•

	<i>Pre-Noah: Genesis 1-6</i>	<i>Genesis 9</i>	<i>Hullin 92a</i>	<i>3 Baruch 4:17</i>	<i>Acts 15:18-20</i>	<i>2 Nephi 26:29-33</i>	<i>Alma 30:10; Hel. 6:23</i>	<i>Mosiah 2:13; 29:36</i>
Avoid Blood	•				•			
Blasphemy							•	
Blemished Sacrifices			•					
Charity			•				•	
Contention/Wars							•	•
Corruption of Flesh	•							
Envy							•	
Honesty				•			•	
Idolatry					•			
Malice							•	
Mixing Seeds			•					
Murder	•	•		•			•	•
Obey God	•							
Obey Torah			•					
Plundering								•
Pollution Free					•			
Priestcraft							•	
Procreation	•	•	•					
Respect Life		•						
Sexual Sins				•	•	•	•	•
Subdue Earth	•							
Theft, Robbery				•		•	•	•
Things Strangled					•			
Violence	•							
Wickedness	•			•		•	•	•