

SICHA SUMMARY

Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 15

Parshas Noach, Sicha 4

The Mishnah:

Beloved is humankind, for they were created in the image [of G-d]; it is a sign of even greater love that it has been made known to them that they were created in the image, as it says, “For in the image of G-d, He made man.” (*Bereishis* 9:6) (*Avos* 3:14)

Tosfos Yom Tov explains that this clause refers to gentiles, since the prooftext, “in the image of G-d...” was said to Noach and his children who were not considered Jewish.

As to why this teaching concerning gentiles is placed in *Pirkei Avos*, which is meant to be studied by Jews — it is because the Jewish people are commanded to “compel all the inhabitants of the world to accept the commandments given to Noah’s descendants.” (*Rambam, Hilchos Melachim* 8:10). We do this by telling our gentile neighbors that they were created in the image of G-d, thereby impressing on them the responsibility to fulfill the will of their Creator.

The Question:

Concerning this responsibility of the Jewish people to influence the gentile world, Rambam writes that a gentile’s observance of the Noahide laws is only praiseworthy when “he accepts them and fulfills them because G-d commanded them in the Torah and informed us through Moses, our teacher, that Noah’s descendants had been commanded to fulfill them previously.

“However, if he fulfills them out of intellectual conviction, he is not... of “the pious among the gentiles,” nor of their wise men.” (*Ibid*, 8:11)

Why is it important for gentiles to fulfill their commandments because G-d commanded Moses to command them? Why must their observance be mediated through the Jewish people influencing them? Why is their observance out of their own “intellection conviction” not enough?

The Explanation:

The Previous Rebbe taught that intellect can transcend the subjective ego of a person only when it is built on a foundation of humility. But only a Divine soul is capable of

true selflessness. All intellectual activity not mediated by the Divine soul is interested in the reality of the world and the self, and therefore, it cannot transcend the ego.

The humility of the Divine soul directs the intellect outside of itself toward G-d, allowing a person to fulfill G-d's commands for no reason other than it being G-d's will.

Therefore, when a gentile fulfills his commands "out of intellectual conviction, he is not... of "the pious among the gentiles," nor of their wise men" because his observance is not suffused with humility ("wise" refers to the faculty of *chochmah* which is associated with selflessness).

Only when gentiles fulfill their commandments because of the Jewish people's influence, and because G-d commanded Moses — the paragon of humility — to command the gentiles, can they fulfill these commandments without a trace of ego. A Jew can model selfless observance for the world, and the world can integrate this humility in their own Divine service.
