Rabbi Benamozegh and Judaism for Non-Jews

I believe that one of Rabbi Benamozegh's greatest contributions to modern Judaism was his approach toward conversion to Judaism. At that time, from the middle to the end of the 19th century, there were not many non-Jews interested in converting to Judaism. On the contrary, many European Jews sought baptism to be accepted into Christian society.

Being Jewish then did not carry any privilege. There was no State of Israel that would welcome and protect the Jews, as we have today. In Europe, being Jewish was also dangerous. Remember that between 1881 and 1905 there were more than 200 progroms in Kiev, Warsaw, Odessa, etc. and thousands of Jews were massacred.

However, there were always individual cases, people very well educated in their own faith, who understood that Judaism is the "original religion", the first, only and last Covenant of God with a People.These few individuals were willing to take the unpopular and dangerous decision to convert to Moshe's religion.

One of the most famous cases of this willingness to convert to Judaism was that of Aime Palliere. Born in Lyon, France in 1868, Aime Palliere grew up in a devout Catholic family and from an early age he showed a great inclination for religion. First it was for Catholicism and then for Protestantism. But his inquisitive studies and doubts about the doctrine of the trinity (1 God = 3 gods?) and a visit to the Synagogue of Lyon on Yom Kippur, inspired him to seek conversion to Judaism. And that's how he decided to communicate, first by mail, with Rabbi Eliyahu Benamozegh.

Palliere eventually traveled to Livorno, Italy, met with the elderly Rab Benamozegh in person, and manifested his willingness to convert. Rabbi Benamozegh, faithful to the non-missionary tradition of Judaism, dissuaded Palliere from the idea of □□conversion. And he explained that if a non-Jewish individual believes in the truth of the Tora, and his or her desire is to do the will of God, he should observe the seven

Mitsvot of Bene Noah, that is, “Seven Universal Commandments” . Rabbi Benamozegh, who knew very well other religions’ doctrines, explained to the young Palliere in his own language that by following these laws a non-Jew obtains what is called in other confessions “salvation” (what in Hebrew is haye haolam haba, life in the world to come).

For Palliere the words of Rabbi Benamozegh made a lot of sense. Palliere, on the one hand, did not believe in the biblical religions that claim exist to “replace Judaism”, as if the original Judaism, that of the Five Books of Moshe, no longer existed! But on the other side, he was deeply attached to his mother and his relatives and friends. How could he separate from them all by converting to Judaism?

The words of Rabbi Benamozegh –that according to the law of Moses, when a non-Jewish person wishes to do the will of the God of Israel, he must adopt the “covenant”, the “covenant” of God with humanity – he had absolute sense, in philosophical and practical terms

Palliere had never heard of a religion that offered “salvation” to those who were not part of it. In other religions this alternative is NOT conceived. To attain “salvation” one must necessarily turn completely to that religion, and be a part of it. Palliere realized that only the Jewish faith possessed the self confidence and conviction in its own truth, to offer that alternative. Rabbi Benamozegh also told him that “the future of the human race lies in this formula [the Seven Noahide Laws]. If you come to be convinced of it, you will be much more precious to Israel than if you submit [convert] to the Tora of Israel. You will be the instrument of the Divine Providence to all mankind.”

The simple solution provided by Rabbi Benamozegh is extremely important. Especially in our times where so many non-Jewish people discover that despite all the enormous efforts that other religions have done for centuries to eliminate Judaism and the Jews, in order to JUSTIFY THEIR REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY, the original biblical covenant actually, It has never been replaced! And that they were our ancestors who paid with their lives (persecutions, progroms and holocausts) to maintain this truth.

Aime Palliere, thus, became a Ben Noah, a non-Jewish observant of humankind’s Jewish laws.

What are these seven laws of Noah? B’H next time.