

2. Thus, if a Jew owns an idolatrous article, he may not feed it to his animal, burn it as fuel or even use it as a mere paperweight. He also may not sell it to an idolater, who is permitted to derive benefit from it, since the Jew would benefit from the sale. Although several substances are prohibited for all benefit (e.g. meat cooked with milk), idolatrous items are the most stringent of all. In most cases, if a prohibited substance becomes mixed with a permissible substance from which it is indistinguishable, the mixture is forbidden.

3. The Torah (*Deuteronomy* 7:3) forbids Jews to marry outside of their own faith.

NOTES

Proper comprehension of many concepts discussed in this tractate requires a clear understanding of the civilization in which the Talmudic sages lived, as well as of the idol worshippers to whom they referred. The Torah obligates the Jew to accord deference to every righteous individual, whether of the Jewish faith or

### III. The Perspective of the Rabbinic Restrictions

In addition to the Biblical prohibitions against idolatry and related activities, the Rabbis instituted restrictions against the consumption of various foodstuffs of idol worshippers. Some of these laws were enacted to protect against eating foods that are prohibited Biblically, either because of their use in idolatry or as a result of their contamination by nonkosher substances. Other Rabbinic restrictions on foods were enacted in order to discourage the type of social intimacy between Jews and others that might lead Jews to stray toward idolatry or that might lead to intermarriage with gentiles (see *Mishnah* 29b and *Gemara* 36b).<sup>[8]</sup> The most familiar of these is the restriction against the wine of idolaters, which is discussed at length in the fourth and fifth chapters of the tractate.

The *Mishnah* and *Gemara* in this tractate discuss numerous other Rabbinic restrictions on social interaction with idol worshippers (and sometimes, with gentiles in general). Many of these restrictions were imposed to ensure that Jews not violate the Biblical prohibition against abetting forbidden idolatrous or immoral acts on the part of the pagan population. Other Rabbinic enactments were designed to safeguard against Sabbath desecration by Jews dealing with gentiles. Finally, some were enacted to protect Jews from physical abuse at the hands of the more base elements of pagan society, as elaborated in the following section.

### II. The Rabbinic Laws

It is a principle of Torah law that in addition to personally avoiding any forbidden activity, one must refrain from doing anything that will cause another person – whether Jew or gentile – to commit a transgression. This is proscribed by the verse (*Leviticus* 19:14): *לֹא יִצְרֹף אִישׁ אֶת אֶרְבֵּי עַמּוּתוֹ, דּוֹרֵשׁ אֶת אֶרְבֵּי עַמּוּתוֹ בְּעֵינָיו, דּוֹרֵשׁ אֶת אֶרְבֵּי עַמּוּתוֹ בְּעֵינָיו, דּוֹרֵשׁ אֶת אֶרְבֵּי עַמּוּתוֹ בְּעֵינָיו*, *Do not place a stumbling block before the blind, for by providing someone the opportunity to sin, one "places a stumbling block" before him.* In our tractate, this prohibition finds expression in the rule that one may not cause or abet an idolater – even one who is not Jewish – to transgress the Torah's strictures against idolatry and immoral relations. The first two chapters of the tractate discuss numerous situations in which a Jew is restricted from activity that would be entirely innocuous if not that it could lead an idolater to commit a transgression.

The preceding are the Biblical laws with which the *Gemara* deals most extensively in this tractate. Other laws are discussed more briefly and will be elaborated as they arise.

#### ⚡ Deriving Benefit from Idols

The Torah states (*Deuteronomy* 7:26): *לֹא יִצְרֹף אִישׁ אֶת אֶרְבֵּי עַמּוּתוֹ, דּוֹרֵשׁ אֶת אֶרְבֵּי עַמּוּתוֹ בְּעֵינָיו, דּוֹרֵשׁ אֶת אֶרְבֵּי עַמּוּתוֹ בְּעֵינָיו, דּוֹרֵשׁ אֶת אֶרְבֵּי עַמּוּתוֹ בְּעֵינָיו*, *You shall not bring an abomination into your home, and (ibid. 13:18): דּוֹרֵשׁ אֶת אֶרְבֵּי עַמּוּתוֹ בְּעֵינָיו, דּוֹרֵשׁ אֶת אֶרְבֵּי עַמּוּתוֹ בְּעֵינָיו, דּוֹרֵשׁ אֶת אֶרְבֵּי עַמּוּתוֹ בְּעֵינָיו*, *No part of the banned property may adhere to your hand.* These verses are negative commandments (applicable to Jews) against deriving any benefit from idols, their accessories, or their sacrifices (*Rambam* *ibid.* 7:2).<sup>[2]</sup> The second, third and fourth chapters of this tractate deal extensively with these prohibitions, as well as with the conditions under which such objects may become permitted for benefit.

#### ⚡ Abetting Idolatry or Immorality