

however, were made to apply in all times and places, since the Torah's immutable prohibitions against intermarriage with gentiles (*Deuteronomy* 7:3) and Sabbath desecration (*Exodus* 20:10) must always be safeguarded.^[8]

It is clear that the negative remarks in this tractate about the morals of idol worshippers were descriptive of the pagans whose depraved behavior the Sages observed, and should not be construed as pertaining to any of the cultured societies in which we reside nowadays.^[9] On the contrary, Rabbinic luminaries in recent centuries spoke and wrote extensively about the responsibility of Jews to appreciate the kindness of the modern nations who recognize God and are hospitable to people of all religions, and about the obligation upon Jews residing in these nations to pray for their welfare.^[10]

With recognition of the benefits that modern society has provided us, and retrospection as to the tribulations our people faced in earlier times, we begin our study of this tractate with the prayer that it be the Will of Hashem for us to speedily witness fulfillment of the verse (*Isaiah* 11:9): "וְאֵין עוֹר לְפָנָיו וְאֵין מַחְשָׁב לְבָבוֹ" — "They will neither injure nor destroy in all of My sacred mountain, for the world will be as filled with knowledge of HASHEM as water covering the seabed. Eventually, we await realization of the prophecy (*Zechariah* 14:9): "וְיָשָׁב יְהוָה אֶל יְרוּשָׁלַם וְיָשָׁב יְהוָה אֶל יְרוּשָׁלַם וְיָשָׁב יְהוָה אֶל יְרוּשָׁלַם וְיָשָׁב יְהוָה אֶל יְרוּשָׁלַם" — "HASHEM will be King over all the world — on that day HASHEM will be One and His Name will be One."

NOTES

8. This overview is expressed most succinctly by *Meiri* to 26a and in numerous other places in our tractate. See also *Ran* to 22a, *Ritva* to 15a, *Rashba* cited by *Maggid Mishneh*, *Hil. Isurei Biah* 22:5, *Be'er Hagolah* to *Choshen Mishpat* 42:5, et al. Obviously, this is a mere synopsis of the issues. They are discussed on a case-by-case basis in *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah*, which should be consulted for halachic matters.

9. *Noda BiYehudah* writes (in his preface "בית דין אמת"): "I hereby announce and publicize — not only regarding my own publication, but also regarding all [Talmudic and halachic] works — that wherever there is a derogatory statement about 'idol worshippers,' 'gentiles' or the like, one should not erroneously interpret it as applying to the peoples of our times, for whoever explains in this manner is grossly mistaken and distorts the law of the Torah. Rather, the intent is for the people of

The foremost halachic authority of our own generation, *R' Moshe Feinstein*, called upon American Jews to appreciate the compassion and goodwill of the American populace and to thank God for His kindness in letting many of His people find refuge under the auspices of this *מדינת ישראל*, *Government of Benevolence (Igrus Moshe, Choshen Mishpat* II:29).

10. See, for example, *Derashos Chasam Sofer* Vol. II pp. 789-797, where *Chasam Sofer's* numerous sermons in this regard are recorded. See also *Teshuvos Mabot* II:199; *Alshich*, Introduction to Commentary on the Torah *תורת ארץ ישראל*; *Be'er Hagolah* *ibid.*; *Noda BiYehudah* *ibid.*; *Kreis U'Pleisi* *ibid.*; *R' S. R. Hirsch* *ibid.* pp. 226-8; *Tiferes Yisrael*, *Boaz, Bava Kamma* 4:1.