

## Inside the Daf

Have you ever heard of the Macedonian king and military leader Alexander the Great? It may surprise you that a story of him comes up in the גְּמָרָא.

Thousands of years ago there was a group of people in Israel called the כּוּתֵיִם (Cutheans) who had converted to Judaism out of fear and were very lax about Torah observance.

When Alexander the Great was on his way to conquer Jerusalem, the כּוּתֵיִם asked his permission to destroy the בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ (Holy Temple). Alexander granted their wish.

Some people who had heard of this came to the כְּהֵן גְּדוֹל, שְׁמַעוֹן, כְּהֵן גְּדוֹל (Simon the Righteous).

שְׁמַעוֹן donned special

clothing and set out with some of the most important people to meet Alexander the Great. At the crack of dawn Alexander saw the Jewish camp approaching in the distance with torches to light the way.

"Who are these people?" Alexander asked the accompanying כּוּתֵיִם.

"They are the Jews who have rebelled against you!" the כּוּתֵיִם answered.

At sunrise, the two camps met. Then an incredible thing happened: Alexander the Great descended from his chariot and bowed down in front of שְׁמַעוֹן. The accompanying כּוּתֵיִם were shocked.

"Shall a great king like yourself bow down before this Jew?" they asked.

"I see an image of this man before I win a battle," Alexander said.

"Why have you come?" Alexander asked the Jews.

"Idolaters have misled you," the Jews told him. "They want you to destroy the Temple where we pray for you and for your empire not to be destroyed."

"Who are these idolaters who tricked me like this?" Alexander demanded.

"They are the כּוּתֵיִם who stand before you!"

"Behold," said Alexander to the Jews, "you may punish them as you see fit."

Immediately they pierced the heels of the כּוּתֵיִם and dragged them through fields of thorns and thistles until they reached Mount Gerizim, the כּוּתֵיִם's base of operations. There, the Jews plowed earth (including the כּוּתֵיִם's temple of idols) and sowed it with oats – just like the כּוּתֵיִם wanted to do to the holy בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ!

This event happened on the 25th of the month of טֵבֵת which was declared a holiday.

# Don't Stay "Idol"!



We hear (and read) a lot of stories about Jews who used to worship idols. A lot of the תנ"ך (Old Testament) talks about the strong temptation the Jewish people had to worship statues.

But have you ever been tempted to worship a statue? Probably not. So how could our ancestors have been so tempted to do something so ridiculous?

The answer is found in today's גמרא. You see, we all have a יצר הרע (evil impulse) that tempts us to sin. It used to be that the יצר הרע was very strong for idolatry. In fact, this sin was the reason for the destruction of the First בית המקדש (Holy Temple).

The Jewish people begged Hashem to get rid of the temptation to serve idols. They declared "We do not want this evil impulse, nor the reward we get for overcoming it!"

After three days and nights of the people fasting, the יצר הרע was delivered to them in the form of a fiery lion cub leaving the קדש הקדשים (Holy of Holies) in the Temple. The people took this lion and sealed it in a lead cauldron from which the sound of its roar cannot be heard.

## A מְדוּת Moment

"Oh great!" said Yeruchem. "I lost my favorite binder, got my pants wet in the mud and can't remember where I put my afternoon snack!"

"Get a grip, Yeruchem," said his best friend Raphi. "You need a new binder anyway, your shoes and socks are dry (which is more important) and you eat too much sugar anyway!"

"Raphi," Yeruchem said, "you seem to be able to find the good in anything. Where did you learn that?"

"From today's *daf yomi*," Raphi said. "When our prophets saw that the Jewish people were enslaved and their Temple conquered, they stopped calling Hashem, 'powerful' and 'awesome.'"

"Right," remembered Yeruchem. "But the אנשי כנסת הגדולה (Men of the Great Assembly) came and called Hashem, 'powerful' because He restrains Himself from punishing the enemies of His people. They called Hashem, 'awesome' because He allows the Jews to survive!"

"So we see," said Raphi "if we want to, we can look all around us and see only wrong. But we can look at the *exact same things* and also see good!"



## Did You Know...

בגדי כהונה are allowed to wear their special כהונה (Kohen clothing) inside the בית המקדש (Holy Temple) even when they are not involved in Temple duties. They may not, however, wear these clothes outside the Temple premises.

## WORD OF THE DAY:



מִיּוֹדֵי

"SOMETHING"

## Review Questions – יומא דף ט"ו

1. Whose image appeared to Alexander the Great on his battlefields?  
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2. Which temptation of the יצר הרע (evil impulse) was destroyed?  
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3. Where may a כהן *not* wear his בגדי כהונה (Kohen clothes)?  
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Find Alexander the Great before he destroys the Temple!

## A "MAZE"ING

