

## Bringing the Farbrengen Home

# LIGHT WITHIN DESTRUCTION

## A Roman Convert

By: Rabbi Shaul Wertheimer

When the Romans wanted to destroy the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, they sent Nero Caesar to attack the Jews. When he arrived at Jerusalem, he wished to test his fate. He shot an arrow to the east and it turned course and landed in Jerusalem.

He shot another arrow to the west, and it also fell in Jerusalem. He shot an arrow in all four directions, and each time the arrow landed in Jerusalem.

Nero understood this to be a sign from Above of his impending success in destroying the Temple, yet desired another test. He saw a child walking home from school, and asked him, "What verse did you learn in school today?"

The boy replied, quoting Ezekial 25:14: "And I will lay My vengeance upon Edom by the hand of My people Israel."

Since the Romans are associated with Edom, Nero understood the verse to be a reference to himself, and declared, "The Holy One, Blessed be He, wishes to destroy His Temple, and He wishes to wipe his hands with that man [i.e., with me]."

Nero ran away, converted to Judaism, and the great Talmudic sage Rabbi Meir descended from him.




Every detail of the Talmud is relevant. What is the significance of the fact that Rabbi Meir descended from Nero? Wouldn't it be equally impressive if any sage descended from this former enemy of the Jews?

Yet contained within this name is a profound message of hope:

You see, the word Meir means light. It was specifically Rabbi Meir who descended from Nero, to teach us that even within the destruction, there is light.

The darkest part of the body is the pupil -- but it also allows the light in.

If, G-d forbid, Mashiach is delayed, then Motzei Shabbos & Sunday will be Tisha B'av. May it be Hashem's will that Mashiach arrive before then, and not only will we not fast, but we will celebrate together in Jerusalem! 

## Tisha B'Av Reminders

1. One may not study Torah, except for portions dealing with the destruction of the Temple of similar tragedies.
2. All healthy boys over 13 and girls over 12 should fast. If there are concerns, one should consult a Rav.
3. Washings ones face is not permitted. Upon awakening one should wash (in the traditional way of pouring 3 times alternatively) on *fingers ONLY*. If hands are dirty, the dirty area can be washed.
4. One should not sit on a chair couch or bench until midday (1:01pm in Queens). One can sit on the floor or a low stool before midday.
5. It is not permitted to wear leather shoes.
6. You should not greet people on Tisha B'Av. However if someone is unfamiliar with this practice and offers a greeting, you may acknowledge the gesture.
7. The book of *Eicha* is read in shul in the evening. In the morning *Kinot* are recited and davening takes place without Talis & Tefillin (Sefarim wear them at Shacharit). Talis & Tefillin are put on for mincha.

**א גוט שבת**

# Best of times, Worst of times

## Moshiach Now

by Rabbi Shaul Wertheimer

Tu B'Av is tied with Yom Kippur for "most amazing day of the year." Well, that's what the Talmud says, at least!

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." With these words, Charles Dickens began A Tale of Two Cities.

Perhaps these words can be applied to this week on the Jewish calendar. Sunday, we plan to fast for Tisha B'Av (the 9th of the month of Av), the saddest day of the year, marking the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem; indeed, our Sages tell us that all calamities to befall the Jewish people stem from this day. On the other hand, today is Tu B'Av (the 15th of Av), which our Sages tell us is the greatest day of the year.

We know what makes Tisha B'Av the worst of times, but what is so great about Tu B'Av?

"Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel said: There were no greater festivals for Israel than Tu B'Av and Yom Kippur."

How can Tu B'Av be as great as the holiest day of the year?

The answer can be found the Zohar, translated to mean that on the 15th of every month, the moon is full. The Jewish calendar is lunar which means that the beginning of the month marks the rebirth of the moon, which is not yet visible in the sky.



As the month progresses, the moon waxes, until it is full on the 15th. Isn't the moon full every month?

What is so unique about the 15th of Av?

The Jewish people are likened to the moon, because we also wax and wane. Less than 80 years ago, we lost 6 million. Yet today, we are living in what many consider to be the greatest Jewish renaissance ever experienced.

So after the destruction of Tisha B'Av, we had descended to the lowest place. Exiled from our land, slaughtered en masse – unspeakable horrors. But the moon comes back. To full strength.

Tu B'Av is about recognizing that our descents serve to propel us to even greater heights.

So, dizzy from our people's over-long descent and anticipating a long-awaited upward swing, here's wishing to proclaim, "It was the best of times!" May we merit to change the world for the good, and usher in the Messianic era. And may it come soon!

### HAYOM YOM

#### 8 Menachem Av

The Six Remembrances are recited every day, including Shabbat, festivals, Rosh Hashana, and Yom Kippur.

From my grandfather's aphorisms: What good is Chassidus and piety if the main quality is lacking - ahavat Yisrael, love of another - even to the extent of causing (G-d forbid) anguish to another!

## Chassidic Story

Rav Moshe Leib Sossover was surprised to find the Jewish inn locked. It seems that the Jewish inn-keeper had fallen behind in paying rent and the Poretz (land owner) threw him in prison.

R' Moshe Leib pleaded with the Poritz to release the inn-keeper. "He is a fine and honest man, R' Moshe Leib argued, "it is not his fault that his income could not feed his family and pay the rent. When he recovers his finances, he will surely pay." The landowner remained unmoved.

Finally the Tzadik offered to exchange places with the poor inn-keeper. "I am well know and the Jewish community will be able to raise the funds needed for my release," he reasoned. The Poretz agreed.

R' Moshe Leib entered the dungeon with a light heart, happy to have the opportunity for *pidyon shvuim* (redemption of captives). Soon the righteous man became very distressed as he noticed the filth all around and realized he has no place to daven.

Meanwhile in *Shamayim* (the Heavens) there was a great commotion! The celestial beings wondered how such a holy man who had made such a tremendous sacrifice for another person could end up in such dreadful circumstances.

Suddenly the Poretz became deathly ill. In his final moments he confessed that his sickness was seemingly related to his cruel treatment of the inn-keeper and R' Moshe Leib. His priest instructed, "If you value your life, release the Jewish rabbi and beg for his forgiveness. We dare not start up with such a holy man!"

The Poretz's messenger hurried to release the captive, however he returned without R' Moshe Leib. "The Jew refuses to come...."

(To be continued)

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**7:52pm Candle Lighting**  
**7:57pm Mincha & Kabbalas Shabbos**  
**8:45am Chassidus**  
**10:00am Davening**  
**6:00pm Mincha**  
**8:09pm Fast Begins**  
**8:55pm Shabbos Ends**  
**9:05pm Maariv & Eicha**