

Class on the month of Av – Lesson 4 – End Times

End times – 3rd Temple

Zachariah prophesied a time when we would be back in our land, relaxing like old men and women. This alludes to the time of Moshiach when the world will be so transparent to G-dliness that there will be no more war, no illness, no hunger, no death – even those who have passed on will be enlivened again (resurrection of the dead – techiat hamaitim). **It is a tradition to read Isaiah's prophecies of the time of Moshiach during the Shabbos before the 9th of Av.**

We are told that we are in the “end times” right now – just before the dawning of this new age. When the new age comes, we are told that the 3 weeks between the 17th of Tammuz and the 9th of Av will become days of celebration rather than mourning. So, on the 9th of Av, we are to envision the 3rd Temple in all its glory in order to hasten the time to come. (See the links section of the class where you'll see a link that will take you to sites that have actual drawings of what the Temple would look like.)

Here is some interesting Gematria on the days of mourning that point to it becoming days of celebration. The word tov means “good” in Hebrew. Each letter in the Hebrew alphabet represents a number and if you add up the letters in the word “tov”, you get the number 17 which alludes to the 17th of Tammuz. This year (as of this writing) both the 9th of Av and the 17th of Tammuz fell on Shabbat which of course is a very good day. Two years ago, they both fell on Tuesday which is when G-d said “good” twice in the story of creation.

As we get closer and closer to the new world that we are co-creating with G-d, the “bad” things will begin to show their concealed good. We are told that there is only good – both concealed and revealed. This idea can allow us to see what we go through in our own lives with more clarity. If we remember the story of the Temple's destruction and focus our minds on its renewal, this can be an analogy for how we live our lives.

Each destruction can be seen as a necessary experience, guided by a Higher Source, for the higher good of all. Our own problems and challenges help bring us forward to a time when there will be no more “bad” times.

15th Av is happy day

Immediately after the 9th of Av, on the full moon of the month, the 15th of Av, we have a very happy day. In fact, in ancient Israel, there were no greater festivals than the 15th of Av and Yom Kippur. The daughters of Jerusalem would go out and conduct their courtship dance in the vineyards on the full moon of Av.

Dancing maidens would call out their virtues to prospective bridegrooms, bringing the “bonding” idea to earth through action. In fact, both days, **the 15th of Av and Yom Kippur are days of marriage – one an earthly marriage and the other a recommitment to our mission in this world which marries us to G-d through cocreation.** On the 15th of Av, the daughters of ancient Israel would dance, saying, “Young man, raise your eyes and see which you select for yourself.”

Why did they say, “**see** which you select”? The Talmud tells us that there were 3 types of women and whoever the young men selected, they’d be able to see a mirror to their own soul level. Those soul levels are illuminated in the Tanya as specific levels of humanity. The Tanya is about teaching us how to rise to the next level. We are either at the level of “Tzadik”, “Benoni”, or “Rasha”. Tzadik being the most transparent to Gdliness. Benoni, is connected through behavior, though not through thought or feeling. And lastly, Rasha, is not connected through behavior, thought or feeling.

In the liturgy of Yom Kippur, we pray to G-d to look beyond our outer appearance and reaffirm our commitment to the mission and remarry G-d despite our state of being. We say, “Do it for *Your* sake, if not for ours”. Only You know what lies behind our appearance and what we can do for you. **You know that the way we appear is not our true essence but comes from the spiritual wasteland that is exile (golus/galut).** We have not been able to reach our potential and have failed over and over again. But You can enlighten us and awaken our bond to You, forgive us and bring us to our innate perfection.

I’ll end with the story of Yochanan ben Zakkai (during the 2nd Temple) which can be seen as an analogy of how we continue and renew ourselves after any destruction. This story is copied from Chabad.org

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai's Request

Vespasian's troops brutally conquered the north of Israel, eradicating all resistance. Meanwhile, the Jewish factions – now increasingly concentrated in Jerusalem – moved beyond power struggles into open civil war. While Vespasian merely watched from a distance, various factions of Zealots and Sicarii fought each other bitterly, even those that had common goals. They killed those advocating surrender. Thousands of Jews died at the hands of other Jews in just a few years.

Long before, the residents of Jerusalem had stored provisions in case of a Roman siege. Three wealthy men had donated huge storehouses of flour, oil, and wood—enough supplies to survive a siege of 21 years.

The Zealots, however, wanted all-out war. They were unhappy with the attitude of the Sages, who proposed sending a peace delegation to the Romans. In order to bring things to a head and force their fellow Jews to fight, groups of militias set fire to the city's food stores, condemning its population to starvation. They also imposed an internal siege on Jerusalem, not letting their fellow Jews in or out.

The greatest Jewish sage of the time was Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai. He wisely foresaw that Jerusalem was doomed and understood the need to transplant the center of Torah scholarship to another location, to ensure the survival of Torah study after Jerusalem's destruction. He devised a plan that would allow him to leave Jerusalem, despite the Zealots' blockade. He feigned death so that he could be carried out of the city. His disciples carried the coffin out of the city's walls, and Rabbi Yochanan proceeded directly to Vespasian's tent. He entered the tent and addressed Vespasian as "Your Majesty."

"You are deserving of death on two accounts," said Vespasian. "First of all, I am not the emperor, only his general. Secondly, if I am indeed emperor, why did you not come to me until now?"

Rabbi Yochanan answered: "You are an emperor, because otherwise the Holy Temple would not be delivered in your hands.... And as for your second question, the reckless Zealots would not allow me to leave the city."

While they were speaking, a messenger came and told Vespasian that Nero was dead and he had been appointed the new Roman emperor. Vespasian was so impressed with Rabbi Yochanan's wisdom that he offered to grant Rabbi Yochanan anything he wanted as a reward. Rabbi Yochanan made three requests.¹ The primary request was that Vespasian spare Yavne – which would become the new home of the Sanhedrin – and its Torah sages.

Rabbi Yochanan thus ensured the continuation of Jewish scholarship after the fall of Jerusalem. Even though they would no longer have a Temple or a homeland, the Jews would always have a spiritual center in the Torah.

In 69 CE, Vespasian returned to Rome to serve as emperor, but first he appointed his son, Titus, to carry on in his stead. In 70 CE, Titus came towards Jerusalem with an army of 80,000 soldiers.