The Roman Colosseum and the Jews

The Bet haMiqdash, the great Temple of Jerusalem, was destroyed and burnt down by the army of Titus, the son of Vespasian, on 9 of Ab of the year 68. The Temple continued to be consumed by the flames also on the following day, the 10th day of Ab.

THE CIRCUS AND THE JEWS

The historian Flavius □□Josephus, who witnessed the destruction of Yerushalayim, writes that the Romans killed 1,100,000 Jews during the years of the siege of Jerusalem. Titus also took 97,000 Jews captives. These prisoners were part of the spoils of war and were "used" primarily for exhibition and entertainment. Josephus relates that when Titus arrived at Caesarea, he organized public games, the infamous Roman circus, where 2,500 Jewish prisoners were killed, forced to fight against hungry wild beasts or against professional gladiators. Titus continued with these games, killing thousands off Jews, until he arrived to Rome.

THE MARCH OF TRIUMPH

Once in Rome, Titus was received as a great hero by his father, the Emperor Vespasian. Together they organized a procession of victory for having defeated an enemy as audacious and powerful as the Jewish people, since as everyone knew, the Jews, though divided, fought with all their intelligence, perseverance and audacity. The Romans also organized a grand parade where the Jewish prisoners were publicly humiliated, and the treasures of the Bet haMiqdash were exhibited: the *shulhan hapanim*, a table of pure gold from the Sanctuary, and especially the famous *Menora*, also made of pure gold. The last item that was exhibited was a Sefer Tora, which for the Romans symbolized their triumph against the Jewish faith.

Defeating the Jews is a mission impossible… when HaShem is with us. As the Sages explained, no one can beat us except when we become unfit of HaShem's presence among us, i.e., when we abandon the paths of HaShem, as it happened in the first Bet haMiqdash, or when we figth among ourselves, as it happened in the Second Bet haMiqdash. Then, we "disconnect" from HaShem and remain at the mercy of the enemy.

THE ARCH OF TITUS

For Rome, the triumph against the Jews was extremely significant. To understand it a little better let us remember that around that period of time the Romans defeated the Macedonians, the Greeks, the Gauls, the British and the Germans. They also triumphed in Spain, Sicily and Carthage. But only the victory against the Jews was celebrated in such a special way. The monument that the Romans erected, the oldest , the most splendid and the only one that still exists is the famous Arch of Titus, in the Via Sacra, which celebrates the triumph over the Jews. This arch, which among other decorations features 12 Roman soldiers carrying the Menora taken from the Bet haMiqdash, was designed to humiliate the Jewish captives brought from Jerusalem, making them parade under the Arch as a sign of defeat.

MINTING HUMILIATION

The Romans also minted new coins to celebrate their victory over the Jews. These famous coins (see below) show a woman, "Judea", sitting under a dry palm, with her hands tied, and on the other side of the palm tree, a victorious Roman soldier. The coin says: "Judea capta" ("The province of Judea, has been captured").

THE COLOSSEUM

With the spoils taken from Judea and from the Bet HaMiqdash, the Romans increased their wealth remarkably, and in the time of Vespasian Rome lived in opulence for several years. A few years ago (2001), a Latin text was discovered, stating that Vespasian financed the construction of the infamous Coliseum in Rome with the treasures stolen from Jerusalem and Bet-haMiqdash (see HERE). The prisoners of war were being killed for amusement,

Now a few words of nehama (consolation) for the day after the 9th of Ab.

THE ARCH OF TITUS

For hundreds of years the Jewish community of Rome refused to walk under the Arch (In 1555 Pope Paul IV forced the Jews to swear allegiance to him there, under the Arch of Titus). However, on the 5th of Iyar, May 14, 1948, the Jewish community of Rome, led by the chief Rabbi of Rome, marched under the Arch, but *in the opposite direction*, as if history was now turning back, and the Jewish people returning back from their exile in Rome to their home in Israel.

THE MENORA

In 1949 the Menora of the Arch of Titus was chosen as the official symbol of the new State of Israel.

JUDEA CAPTA

In 1958, to commemorate the 10 years of its establishment, the State of Israel minted a new gold coin, very similar to the one that Vespasiano did, but with a different meaning. In this coin (bottom right) you can see a woman "Judea", standing, next to a blossoming palm with a baby in her arms. At her side, on the other side of the palm tree, a man is seen, coming from working and or about to plant a new tree. The text says: "Israel liberata" (Israel is now free!) . And in Hebrew it says: "Ten years of the independence of Israel, Jerusalem, 1958".

MAY HASHEM GRANT US OUR COMPLETE REDEMPTION, SOON IN OUR DAYS. Amen!



JUDEA CAPTA



ISRAEL LIBERATA



ARCH OF TITUS



THE COLISEUM