We always read Parashat Devarim on the Shabbat before Tisha B’Av.

Why the juxtaposition of Devarim to Tisha B’Av? In perek alef, Moshe recalls the sin of the spies, who went up to scout out the Land of Israel (Bamidbar 13), and came back with a slanderous report. In response to their report, the nation sat and wept that night (Bamidbar 14:1).

Chazal teach that in response to their crying for naught, G-d said: you have cried for no reason, I will establish for you a crying for generations (Ta’anit 29a). That night of crying was the very first Tisha B’Av, which foreshadowed destruction through the ages.

In Megillat Eicha (4:11), we read: “G-d has accomplished His fury, He has poured out His fierce anger; and He has kindled a fire in Zion, which has devoured her foundations.” Chazal teach (Eicha Rabbah 4:14) that in an act of Divine Rachamim (Mercy), Churban Beit HaMikdash, ensured the eternal survival of Knesset Yisrael. Instead of destroying the nation, the Almighty preserved our holy places and our Land... but promised that our people would always survive.

Rav Soloveitchik: “Paradoxically, the moment the Beit HaMikdash was set ablaze was a moment of relief. At that moment, it became clear that G-d decided to take the collateral, the Beit HaMikdash, instead of pursuing the real debtor, the Jewish people. Paradoxically, once He took away the Beit HaMikdash in the afternoon of Tisha B’Av, the nechama, the consolation, could begin. Tisha B’Av is a day of limitless despair and boundless hope and faith” (Knot Masoret HaRav, p.283).

Reb Yossele Friedenson recalls, “I am not sure if Father expected that he, personally, would survive the war. When I was smuggled out of the (Warsaw) ghetto on December 31, 1941, his parting words to me were, ‘Who knows when we shall meet again... You should remember to always be a Jew’... He wept, of course. And my mother wept... Nevertheless, his faith in the eventual downfall of the tyrant never wavered, and anyone who came in contact with him was infused with his contagious emunah and bitachon – his unshakable faith in the yeshua (Divine salvation).”

“... On the day I arrived in America, a Yiddish paper printed an article mentioning my father’s name as one of the heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Did my father die a hero’s death? Maybe. He was involved in some underground activities from early on, but I was not present at the end, so I can never know for sure. This much though, I do know: that my father, like thousands of others, lived a hero’s life. Every day of Father’s life was filled to overflowing with heroic deeds of chesed and malasim tovim, of high-risk communal involvement, of tzedaka, hachnasat orchim, and bitachon – unbreakable links in an eternal chain of valor and heroism” (Faith Amid the Flames, p.123-124).

May we merit to see our destroyed places rebuilt and witness the return of our people to our Land, with the ultimate redemption. But until that great day, may we take comfort in knowing that our great nation is eternal, and has survived and flourished despite every enemy, every churban, every calamity and every exile.