

The Fast of the 8th of Tevet

Ezer Diena, ediena@bastoronto.org

1. Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 580:2

...בשמונה בטבת נכתבה התורה יונית תלמי המלך והיה חשך בעולם שלשה ימים.

...On the eighth of Tevet the Torah was translated into Greek in the time of King Ptolemy and there was darkness in the world for three days.

Questions:

If this story was not intended literally, why use this metaphor? Why darkness? Why 3 days? What might be bad about the Torah being translated?

2. Masechet Soferim, Chapter 1 (6-7 or 7-8)

מעשה בה' זקנים שכתבו לתלמי המלך את התורה יונית והיה היום קשה לישראל כיום שנעשה העגל שלא היתה התורה יכולה להתרגם כל צרכה:

There was a story of five elders who wrote the Torah in Greek for King Ptolemy, and that day was as terrible for the Jewish people as the day that the golden calf was created, since the Torah could not be properly translated.

Questions:

How is the day described this time? Why might that be an appropriate parallel?

שוב מעשה בתלמי המלך שכנס ע"ב זקנים והושיבם בשבעים ושנים בתים ולא גלה להם על מה כנסם נכנס לכל אחד ואחד מהם אמר להם כתבו לי תורת משה רבכם. נתן המקום עצה בלב כל אחד ואחד והסכימה דעתן לדעת אחת וכתבו לו תורה בפני עצמה: וי"ג דבר שינו בה... There is another story with King Ptolemy, who gathered 72 elders and placed them in 72 houses and he didn't reveal why he had gathered them, he entered to each of them and said "write me [a copy] of the Torah of Moshe". Hashem gave each of them [special insight], and each [copy was identical]. They changed 13 things in it...

Questions:

What was the difference between this story and the previous stories? How should we relate to Torah being translated nowadays?

3. A picture of a 2200-year-old manuscript of the LXX



Possible Approaches:

- Approach #1: Impossible to communicate everything properly*
- Approach #2: This translation was inadequate*
- Approach #3: This translation was for non-Jews*
- Approach #4: Sad that we had to get to this point*