

# HALACHIC AND HASHKAFIC ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

## 13 - 10 TEVET: OLD MOURNING~NEW MEANING

OU ISRAEL/BEIT KNESSET HANASI - WINTER 2024/25

### A] 10 TEVET - THE START OF THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FIRST TEMPLE

3318	442 (607 <sup>1</sup> ) BCE	Nevucadnezer assumes the throne of Bavel
3319	441 (606) BCE	Nevucadnezer conquers King Yehoyakim of Judea, which becomes a vassal state of Bavel
3327	433 (598) BCE	Nevucadnezer exiles King Yechonia of Judea, together with the leading scholars, including Mordechai <sup>2</sup> and Yechezkel (on 1 Tevet)
3336	424 (589) BCE	Nevucadnezer lays siege to Jerusalem on 10 Tevet
3337	422 (587) BCE	Nevucadnezer breaches the walls of Jerusalem on 9 Tammuz and then destroys the Temple on 9 Av

1. כה אמר ה' צבאות צום הרביעי וצום החמישי וצום השביעי וצום העשירי יהיה לבית יהודה לששון ולשמחה ולמזדים טובים והאמת והשלום אהבו:

זכריה ח"ט

The Navi Zecharia refers to 4 fasts of his day which will eventually become days of simcha (on certain conditions - see below). One of these is the 'Fast of the Tenth Month' (now called Tevet). This is the fast of 10 Tevet.

2. קרי להו צום, וקרי להו ששון ושמחה! ... אמר רב פפא: הכי קאמר: בזמן שיש שלום (רש"א - שישראל שרויין על אדמתן) - יהיו לששון ולשמחה. יש שמד - צום. אין שמד ואין שלום, רצו - מתענין, רצו - אין מתענין. אי הכי, תשעה באב נמי? אמר רב פפא: שאני תשעה באב, הואיל והוכפלו בו צרות.

ראש השנה יח

The Gemara explains that these fasts will change to feasts, depending on the situation of the Jewish people. In a time of shalom<sup>3</sup>, these days are festivals. In the time of persecution, they are fasts mandated by the Prophets (divrei kabbala). In a time of galut, but without persecution, the Talmud states that, other than Tisha Be'Av (which was the most bitter day of disaster), they became 'voluntary' fasts.

3. ועכשיו נהגו הכל כמ"ס רבינו והרי הן חובה על כל ישראל עד שיבנה צהמ"ק.

מגיד משנה הלכות תעניות פרק ה

The Rishonim clarify that the Jewish people have accepted these fasts as compulsory until the Temple is rebuilt.

4. (א) ויהי בשנת התשיעית למלכו בחדש העשירי בעשור לחדש בא נבכדנאצר מלך בבל הוא וכל חילו על ירושלם ויחן עליה ויבנו עליה דיק סביב: (ב) ותבא העיר במצור עד עשתי עשרה שנה למלך צדקיהו: (ג) בתשעה לחדש ויחזק הרעב בעיר ולא היה לחם לעם הארץ: (ד) ותבקע העיר וכל אנשי המלחמה הפילה דרך שער בין החמתים אשר על גן המלך וכשדים על העיר סביב וילך דרך הערבה: (ה) וירדפו חיל כשדים אחר המלך וישגו אתו בערבות ירחו וכל חילו נפצו מעליו: (ו) ויתפשז את המלך ויעלו אתו אל מלך בבל רבלתה וידברו אתו משפט: (ז) ואת בני צדקיהו שחטו לעיניו ואת עיני צדקיהו עור ויאסרוהו ברחשתיים ויבאהו בבל:

מלכים ב' כה א-ז

The origins of the fast on 10 Tevet are just over two years before the destruction of the First Temple in the year 3336 (425/589 BCE). Nevucadnezer began the siege of Jerusalem on this day, which eventually led to the capture of the Jewish king Tzidkiyahu, whose children we slaughtered in front of him before his eyes were gouged out. The account of the siege is also given in Yirmiyahu Ch. 52.

1. I have given the traditional Jewish dating as well as the academically accepted earlier dating system. The differential is the missing 165 years from the traditional Talmudic Second Temple dating. See <https://rabbimanning.com/audio-shiurim/jewish-thought/2nd-temple-period/>.
2. See Esther 2:6.
3. The definition of 'shalom' for these purposes is subject to halachic debate. Some Rishonim define it as the Jewish people being secure in their Land. Others define it as the rebuilding of the Temple.

5. (א) וַיְהִי דְבַר ה' אֵלַי בַּשָּׁנָה הַתְּשִׁיעִית בַּחֲדָשׁ הָעֲשִׂירִי בְּעָשׂוֹר לַחֲדָשׁ לֵאמֹר: (ב) בֶּן אָדָם כְּתֹב לְךָ אֶת שֵׁם הַיּוֹם אֶת עֶצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה סִמְךָ מִלְּךָ בְּבֶלְ אֵל יְרוּשָׁלַם בְּעֶצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:

יחזקאל כד א-ב

6. (א) וַיְהִי דְבַר ה' אֵלַי בַּשָּׁנָה הַתְּשִׁיעִית - לַמַּלְכוּת לְדַקִּיכוֹ ... (ב) בֶּן אָדָם כְּתֹב לְךָ אֶת שֵׁם הַיּוֹם אֶת עֶצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה - הַנְּצוּחָה צֹאחַ לוֹ זַעֲשֶׁרֶה זַעֲצַת שְׂצוּחוֹ יוֹם סִמְךָ מִלְּךָ צֶלַל עַל יְרוּשָׁלַם וְאָמַר לוֹ שִׁכְחוּב אוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם וַיִּרְאֶה לְצַנִּי הַגּוֹלָה כִּי צֹאחוֹ הַיּוֹם סִמְךָ מִלְּךָ צֶלַל. וְכַשִּׁישְׁמַעוֹ אַחַר כֵּן מִפִּי הַמַּגִּידִים כִּי כֵן הִיֵּה צֹאחוֹ הַיּוֹם עֲלָמוֹ שְׂכַחַת הַנְּצִיחָה יָדְעוּ כִּי נְצִיחָה הִיֵּה צְחוּכֹם וְאַמַּת הַסּ דְּצִרְיֹו שְׁאוּמֵר לֵהֵם זַעֲסֵם הִ' וְלֹא יִשְׁמַעוּ עוֹד אֶל נְצִיחֵי הַשֶּׁקֶר.

רד"ק יחזקאל שם

*Yechezkel received a nevua on the very day of 10 Tevet when the siege of Jerusalem started. It was this prophecy that established him as a true Navi and discredited the false prophets of the time.*

7. .... וגם הרמז"ס כתב אחד מארבעה זמנות שחל להיות בשבת דוחין אותו לאחר השבת .... וה"ר דוד אבודרהם כתב בהלכות תענית (עמ' נד) שעשרה זעצת הוא משונה משאר תעניות שאם היה חל בשבת לא היו יכולים לדחותו ליום אחר מפני שנאמר זו (יחזקאל כד:ג) זעצת היום הזה כמו ציום הכפורים .... וכתב עוד דעשרה זעצת חל לפעמים זששי ומתענין זו ציום ושאר זמנות לעולם אין חלים זששי.

בית יוסף אורח חיים סימן תקנ

*According to the Abudraham, here quoted by the Beit Yosef, 10 Tevet is the ONLY fast, other than Yom Kippur, which is not moved if it falls on Shabbat. (This cannot actually happen in our fixed calendar). This is due to a link between Yom Kippur (10 Tishrei) and 10 Tevet, about both of which it is written הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה . It is also the only fast which can fall on a Friday and on which we fast into the beginning of Shabbat<sup>4</sup>.*

• What is the unique power of 10 Tevet? The Kli Yakar writes that the siege of Jerusalem by Nevucadnezer lasted for 2 years to give the people an opportunity for teshuva - a opportunity that they missed. 10 Tevet is the starting point of that opportunity and, as with all starting points, has a significant potential. The Lubavitcher Rebbe writes that this is hinted to in the verse in Yechezkel which uses the verse 'samach' for 'laid siege'. 'Samach' also means to support. The siege of Jerusalem had the potential to be its saving, had the people only done teshuva!

8. טובה גדולה עשה עם ישראל. כיצד? שבעשרה בטבת היו ראויין ישראל לגלות מירושלים שכן הוא אומר (יחזקאל כד) בן אדם כתב לך את שם היום הזה בעצם היום הזה וגו'. מה עשה הקב"ה? אמר אם יוצאין עכשיו בצנה הם מתים. מה עשה המתין להם והגלה אותם בקיץ.

מדרש תנחומא פרשת תזריע סימן ט

*10 Tevet should have been the day of exile, yet God delayed this until the summer to make it possible for us to survive.*

9. אך ראית התנחומא ממה שהזכיר לשון עצם היום הזה שפירושו זריחת האור ראשון שנקרא 'יום' סתם. דהוא התגלות אור הגנוז וזה היה רק בתשעה באב שאז נולד תיכף משיח .... ולמה נאמר בעצם היום הזה בעשרה בטבת? ומזה מדייק המדרש תנחומא שהיו ראויים לגלות בעשרה בטבת והיה ראוי אז להיות כמו תשעה באב.

ר' צדוק הכהן מלובלין - פרי צדיק ויקרא לחג הפסח

*According to Rav Tzaddok HaCohen, the expression 'Etzem Hayom Hazeh' is a reference to the emergence of the 'Or Haganuz' - the hidden light of spirituality which was lost. Although Tisha Be'Av became the actual day on which the destruction (and thus future rebirth) took place, the potential for both of these can be found in 10 Tevet.*

10. יש שם ימים שכל ישראל מתענים בהם מפני הצרות שאירעו בהן כדי לעורר הלבבות ולפתוח דרכי התשובה. ויהיה זה זכרון למעשינו הרעים ומעשה אבותינו שהיה כמעשינו עתה עד שגרם להם ולנו אותן הצרות, שבזכרון דברים אלו נשוב להיטיב.

רמב"ם הלכות תעניות פרק ה הלכה א

*Our mitzva on a fast day is to remember the misdeeds of our ancestors and to understand that we are guilty of making the same mistakes - which is why we have not yet been redeemed.*

4. This is fairly rare, even though it also happened last year and the next occurrence is 2034. The last time 10 Tevet fell on a Friday for two consecutive years was 1970 and (Jan) 72 and the next is 2070 and (Jan) 72.

11. כל הצומות האלו עתידים ליבטל לימות המשיח. ולא עוד אלא שהם עתידים להיות ימים טובים וימי ששון ושמחה שנאמר (זכריה ח:ט) ה' אֵלֵינוּ ה' צְבָאוֹת צוֹם הָרְבִיעִי וְצוֹם הַחֲמִישִׁי וְצוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְצוֹם הָעֲשִׂירִי יִהְיֶה לְבֵית־יְהוָה לְשָׁשׂוֹן וּלְשִׂמְחָה וּלְמַעֲדֵי טוֹבִים וְהָאֲמֶת וְהַשְּׁלוֹם אָהָבוּ:

רמב"ם הלכות תעניות פרק ה הלכה יט

The key to turn these sad days into simcha is given at the end of the verse from Zecharia that the Rambam quotes here at the end of his Hilchot Ta'anot - והאמת והשלום אהבו - Only by loving and pursuing peace and honesty - ie more care in mitzvot bein adam lechavero - can redemption be brought.

- 10 Tevet is a day to focus on personal self-improvement in the area of Bein Adam Lechavero and to understand our national responsibility to other people.

12. א"ל הקב"ה לגבריא לך ורשום על מצחך של צדיקים תי"ו של דיו כדי שלא ישלטו בהם מלאכי חבלה וימותו מיד. ועל מצחך של רשעים תי"ו של אדם כדי שישלטו בהם מלאכי חבלה. כנסה קטיגוריא לפני הקב"ה אמרה לפניו - רבש"ע מה נשתנו אלו מאלו!! אמר לה הקב"ה הללו צדיקים גמורים והללו רשעים גמורים. אמרה לו היה בידם למחות ולא מיחו. א"ל גלוי וידוע לפני שאם מיחו בהם לא היו מקבלים מהם. אמרה לפניו רבש"ע אם גלוי וידוע לפניך לפנייהם מי גלוי!!

מדרש תנחומא (ורשא) פרשת תזריע סימן ט

The First Temple was destroyed, partly, because the tzaddikim of the time did not accept responsibility for those who were less righteous. This sense of achdut and זה לזה is critical to the teshuva of a fast day.

13. לְךָ כְּלוֹס אֶת-כָּל-הַיְהוּדִים [הַנִּמְצָאִים בְּשׁוֹשָׁן] וְצוּמוּ עָלַי (אסתר ד:טז). מכאן שעיקרו של צום באסיפה. וכן הוא אומר (זואל א ד) קדשו קדש-צום קראו עצה אספנו זקנים.

מדרש תהלים מזמור כביה

Chazal understand that the main purpose of a fast is the gathering together of the people.

14. א"ר חנא בר בונא א"ר שמעון חסידא: כל תענית שאין בה ממושעי ישראל אינה תענית. שהרי חלבנה ריחה רע, ומנאה הכתוב עם סממני קטרת.

כריתות ו

Any fast without Jewish unity is not considered a fast - all elements of Jewish society must join together just as the ketoret contained some foul-smelling spices which were essential for the overall mitzvah. Note - a צמה is a braid of hair which brings separate strands together in one unit. According to Rav Soloveitchik, this is the root too of the word צום.

## B] 8 TEVET - THE TRANSLATION OF THE SEPTUAGINT

The Tur and Shulchan Aruch specify a list of 21 days which are called תעניות צדיקים - days which are not compulsory public fasts but private voluntary fasts for the pious.

15. כתב בה"ג אלו הימים שמתענין בהם ..... בח' בטבת היה מעשה דתלמי המלך .....

טור אורח חיים הלכות תענית סימן תקפ

One of them is 8 Tevet on which the Torah was translated into Greek under the command of Ptolomy

16. שמונה בטבת נכתבה התורה יוניית בימי תלמי המלך והיה חשך בעולם שלשה ימים.

שולחן ערוך אורח חיים הלכות תענית סימן תקפ

The Shulchan Aruch quotes Megilat Ta'anit Batra<sup>5</sup> that darkness descended on the world for 3 days after the translation into Greek. This darkness is reflective of the comments above concerning the obscuring of the multidimensionality of the Torah. As well as the connection to the 3 day plague of darkness in Shemot, the '3 days' could here also be hint to the 3 day nature of this fast - 8,9 & 10 Tevet.

5. We discussed this in detail in the previous shiur. This should not be confused the with Megillat Ta'anit from the Second Temple period which lists feast days on which the Jewish were victorious against their enemies.

17. מעשה בחמשה זקנים שכתבו לתלמי המלך את התורה יוונית, והיה אותו היום קשה לישראל כיום שנעשה בו העגל, שלא הייתה התורה יכולה להתרגם כל צרכה. שוב מעשה בתלמי המלך, שכנס שבעים ושנים זקנים, והושיבם בשבעים ושנים בתים, ולא גלה להם על מה כינסם. נכנס אחר כל 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, ושלשה עשר דבר שינו בה ....

מסכתות קטנות מסכת סופרים פרק א

*Chazal record 2 different occasions on which the Torah was translated into Greek by Ptolomy. The first - where he asked 5 Rabbis to translate it - is described as a disaster for the Jewish people like that of the Chet Haegel. The second - by 72 Rabbis - is not described in the same negative terms. On the contrary, God gave ruach hakodesh to the Rabbis to agree on certain emendations<sup>6</sup> to protect the integrity of the Torah.*

18. וְכָתַבְתָּ עַל־הָאֲבָנִים אֶת־כָּל־דְּבָרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת בְּאֵר הַיֵּטֵב: (רש"י - באר היטב - נשזכרים לשון)

דברים כ"ח

*Moshe was commanded to write out the Torah on the standing stones 'with clear explanation', which Chazal (Sota 36a) understand to mean that they were translated into the 70 world languages). According to this midrashic approach, it appears to have been intended that the non-Jewish nations should have access to the Torah in translation!<sup>7</sup>*

A number of reasons are given for why the Greek translation was such a negative event:

- the exposure of the Jewish people to the Greek language and culture, which led to Hellenism.
- the split between the written and oral law which was brought about due to the translation, hence the connection with the Chet Ha'Egel which also brought about a disconnection between Written and Oral Torahs<sup>8</sup>.
- The Torah, in translation, now become a one dimensional book which the whole world felt they could 'master'. Thus the Torah lost its respect in the world. We know it to be the multidimensional infinite word of Hashem; the world regards it as 'bible stories'.

6. Megilla 9a lists these changes and why they were made. In brief, they are:

- (i) They wrote: God created in the beginning [bereshit], reversing the order of the words in the first phrase in the Torah that could be misinterpreted as: "Bereshit created God" (Genesis 1:1). This was to negate those who believe in the preexistence of the world and those who maintain that there are two powers in the world: One is Bereshit, who created the second, God.
- (ii) They wrote: I shall make man in image and in likeness, rather than: "Let us make man in our image and in our likeness" (Genesis 1:26), as from there too one could mistakenly conclude that there are multiple powers and that God has human form.
- (iii) Instead of: "And on the seventh day God concluded His work" (Genesis 2:2), which could have been understood as though some of His work was completed on Shabbat itself, they wrote: And on the sixth day He concluded His work, and He rested on the seventh day.
- (iv) They wrote: Male and female He created him, and they did not write as it is written in the Torah: "Male and female He created them" (Genesis 5:2), to avoid the impression that there is a contradiction between this verse and the verse: "And God created man" (Genesis 1:27), which indicates that God created one person.
- (v) Instead of: "Come, let us go down, and there confound their language" (Genesis 11:7), which indicates multiple authorities, they wrote in the singular: Come, let me go down, and there confound their language.
- (vi) They replaced the verse: "And Sarah laughed within herself [bekirba]" (Genesis 18:12), with: And Sarah laughed among her relatives [bikroveha]. They made this change to distinguish between Sarah's laughter, which God criticized, and Abraham's laughter, to which no reaction is recorded. Based on the change, Sarah's laughter was offensive because she voiced it to others.
- (vii) They altered the verse: "For in their anger they slew a man and in their self-will they slaughtered an ox" (Genesis 49:6), to read: For in their anger they slew an ox and in their self-will they uprooted a trough, to avoid the charge that Jacob's sons were murderers.
- (viii) Instead of: "And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon a donkey" (Exodus 4:20), they wrote: And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon a carrier of people, which could be understood as referring to a horse or a camel rather than the lowly donkey.
- (ix) Instead of: "And the residence of the children of Israel, who resided in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years" (Exodus 12:40), which when read literally is imprecise, for they did not dwell in Egypt that long, they wrote: And the residence of the children of Israel, who resided in Egypt and in other lands, was four hundred years.
- (x) Instead of: "And he sent the youth of the children of Israel, who brought burnt-offerings" (Exodus 24:5), which evokes the question of why young men were sent to perform that service, they wrote: And he sent the elect [za'atutei] of the children of Israel.
- (xi) The same term was substituted again several verses later, rendering the verse: "And upon the nobles of the children of Israel He laid not His hand" (Exodus 24:11), as: And upon the elect of the children of Israel He laid not His hand.
- (xii) Instead of Moses' assertion: "I have not taken one donkey [chamor] from them" (Numbers 16:15), they wrote in more general terms: "I have not taken one item of value [chemed] from them," to prevent the impression that Moses took other items.
- (xiii) To the verse that discusses the worship of the sun and the moon, about which it is written: "Which the Lord your God has allotted to all the nations" (Deuteronomy 4:19), they added a word to make it read: "Which the Lord your God has allotted to give light to all the nations," to prevent the potential misinterpretation that the heavenly bodies were given to the gentiles so that they may worship them.
- (xiv) The verse: "And has gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or the moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded" (Deuteronomy 17:3), could be understood as indicating that God did not command their existence, i.e., these entities created themselves. Therefore, when these Elders translated the verse they added a word to the end of the verse to make it read: Which I have not commanded to serve them.
- (xv) In the list of unclean animals they wrote for him: The short-legged beast [ze'irat haraglayim]. And they did not write for him: "And the hare [amevet]" (Leviticus 11:6), since the name of Ptolemy's wife was Amevet, so that he would not say: The Jews have mocked me and inserted my wife's name in the Torah. Therefore, they did not refer to the hare by name, but by one of its characteristic features.

7. This contradiction is raised by R. Yonatan Eibschutz in Ya'arot Dvash #2.

8. See the approach of the Beit HaLevi on this, <https://www.torahmusings.com/2015/05/the-oral-torah/>

משל, למה הדבר דומה? לארי שניצוד וכלאוהו בסוגר. קודם שנכלא היו הכל יראים מפניו ובורחים, עכשיו הכל באים ומציצים בו ואומרים: היכן גבורתו של זה?  
 כך התורה, כל זמן שהיא נתונה ביד ישראל ומתפרשת ע"י חכמי בלשונה, לשון הקודש, הכל חרדים מפניה ומתיראים להטיל בה דופי. אפילו בן נכר שחשקה נפשו בתורה, אף הוא לא היה לו מגע עם התורה עד שנכנס תחלה תחת כנפי השכינה ומדבר בלשון הקודש ומבין טעמי תורה. כיון שכלאו את התורה בתרגום יחזני – כאילו ניטלה יראתה ממנה, וכל הרוצה בא ומציץ בה; וכל הרוצה לפגום, בא ופוגם.  
 ולפיכך דימו החכמים מאורע יום זה, ליום שנעשה בו העגל, שכשם שהעגל לא היה בו ממש ועובדיו חשבוהו לממש, כך אין בתרגום מממשה של תורה, אעפ"י, כל הגויים שרוצים אותו מדמים בנפשם שכבר יודעים את התורה ואומרים על התרגום: זאת התורה, והרי כבר ידענוה.  
 זה שאמרו חכמים: "והחושך בא לעולם שלשה ימים" ? אפשר שרמזו בכך, שעם חשכת היום הזה, יום ח' טבת, כבר נתמלאו שלשה ימים של חשכה שבאים רצופים בתדוש זה, והם: שמיני, תשיעי, ועשירי בטבת.

ספר התודעה, רב אליהו כי טוב עמ' קצה-ו

R. Eliyahu Ki Tov compares the Greek translation of the Torah to the caging of a lion. Once in the zoo, most of the majesty and awe of the lion is removed, compared to experiencing the lion in its natural habitat and context.

20. Greek philosophy more or less begins with the insight that a word is only a name, i.e. that it does not represent true being

Hans-Goerg Gadamer, Truth and Method (1975) p.366

• The Greek term for word - *onoma* - also means 'name'. However the Hebrew term for word - דבר - also means 'thing'. This represents a fundamental disagreement between the Greeks and the Jews on the nature of words and the centrality of a text.<sup>9</sup>

21. He who follows names in the search after things, and analyzes their meaning, is in great danger of being deceived .... How real existence is to be discovered is, I suspect, beyond you and me - we must rest content with the admission that the knowledge of things is not to be derived from names.

Plato's *Cratylus* 436a and 439

• Greek wisdom found truth in abstract concepts e.g. mathematics, logic. Torah finds truth in the words of the text and, on that basis, the Rabbis emphasized a 'textual logic'.  
 • Note the Greek focus on seeing and thinking yet the Jewish focus on hearing and speaking (שמע ישראל).  
 • Note the Greek focus on DEFINING the 'essence' of a thing. Torah is much more likely to DESCRIBE the things by metaphor.

22. .. spoken sounds are symbols of affections in the soul and written marks symbols of spoken sounds .... A name is spoken sound significant by convention.

Aristotle, *De Interpretatione* 1. 16a.3-8 and 16a19

• Note the 'anti-Scriptural' tendency of Greek thought. They are looking to get beyond the text to the real spirit of the metaphor behind the text. Consider the Greek influence on Christianity in this respect.

• The Greeks saw the focus of words as poetics and rhetoric - not the 'real science' of logic. The Rabbis main focus was in the words and in the text. They saw no inferiority in that - note that the entire Torah is called shira - poetry.

• The Greeks understood that physical matter was eternal and thus necessary and non-contingent. Thus there are certain basic and necessary axioms which must be true. Dialectical reasoning and argument about things that could be true is inferior. The Rabbis thought that matter was entirely contingent and was created by words - "Let there be ..." . There are no necessary axioms. Dialectical argument is critical. Everything could have been different - thus an endless search for alternative explanations!

• The Greek were concerned to find 'scientific truth'. The Rabbis are less concerned with that and much more concerned to find the 'textual truth'. Are the mefarshim on Chumash arguing about 'what happened' or about 'what the text is telling us about what happened'. If the latter, then the 'actual' historical or scientific events become far less central.

9. For those interested in an in-depth comparison of Greek and Rabbinic approaches in the light of modern literary theory, see the first three chapters of Susan Handelman's book - *The Slayers of Moses* (1982 SUNY). See also Rabbi Jonathan Sacks' *The Great Partnership* pp 41-51.

**C] 9 TEVET - THE DEATH OF EZRA**

23. .... בט' בו לא כתבו רבותינו על מה הוא.

טור אורח חיים הלכות תענית סימן תקפ

9 Tevet is recorded in the Tur (quoting the Behag) as a fast day, although with the enigmatic description that the Rabbis "did not write" what happened on that day.

24. (א) בט' בו לא נודע כו'. - תימא גדולה הא איתא צסליחות של י' צטצת דצט' צו מת עזרא הסופר ול"ע רצ

ט"ז אורח חיים סימן תקפ

The Taz (and other Ashkenazi Acharonim) ask in surprise why the Tur and Shulchan Aruch did not record what happened on 9 Tevet. It is explicit in the Selichot that this day was the death of Ezra!

In fact, the Selichot that the the Taz is referring to is the Ashkenazi nusach. The **Sefardi** selichot refer to the death of Ezra on **10 Tevet**. Hence the statement of the Tur and the question of the Taz (who was nusach Ashkenaz)

25. שבתחלה כשנשתכחה תורה מישראל עלה עזרא מבבל ויסדה.

סוכה כ.

Ezra is critical to our understanding and practice of Torah

26. היה צדורו כמו משה, וראוי היה התורה להינתן על ידו כמו ע"י משה ולכן כסרו צתהום. וצמות משה לא ידע איש קצורתו וג"כ כסרו צתהום רצה, ולכן נאמר לא נודע מה היה צו.

רבי יונתן אייבשיץ - יערות דבש ח"ב עמ' ע"ד - דרשה ט' טבת תקיא (1754)

Rav Yonatan Eibshitz writes that Ezra and Moshe were strongly connected. Ezra was in fact worthy of the Torah having been given through him. As such, just as the death of Moshe was covered so too the death of Ezra was not publicized on 9 Tevet.

27. מטל פתגמא דה' על ישראל ביד מלאכי דיתקרי שמיא עזרא ספרא:

תרגום יהונתן מלאכי א"א

Targum Yonatan on Malachi identifies Ezra as the prophet Malachi. Thus 9 Tevet is the date of the death of Malachi, the last prophet. Rav Avraham Zechuto (1452-1514) in the Sefer Yuchsin identifies this date as **the day on which prophecy was taken from the Jewish people!** Thus it represents is an very significant paradigm shift in the way humanity could connect with God. This loss of connection is a source on intense mourning. (Compare this with the loss of connection through Torah due to the translation of the Torah into Greek)<sup>10</sup>.

**D] 1 TEVET - THE DAY OF GREAT EXILE OF KING YECHONIA**

The leadership of Eretz Yisrael was exiled to Bavel on 1 Tevet some 11 years before the First Temple was destroyed. Although this was originally a day of mourning, is was later superceded by the events of Chanukah which happened over this date.

**E] 23 TEVET - FORCED CONVERSION IN PORTUGAL**

The decree for the expulsion of the Jews from Portugal took place on 23 Tevet in 1497. In the end, most Portuguese Jews were NOT permitted to leave but were forcibly baptized. Many continued to live as hidden Jews.

10. We looked in the previous shiur at other possible reasons for observing the fast of 9 Tevet, including: the death of Nechemia, the birth of Jesus, the taking of of Esther, the death of Shimon Hakalponi.

**F] 5 TEVET - THE DAY THAT THE NEWS OF THE FIRST CHURBAN REACHED BAVEL**

28. תניא - אמר רבי שמעון: ארבעה דברים היה רבי עקיבא דורש, ואני אין דורש כמותו ... צום העשירי - זה עשרה בטבת, שבו סמך מלך בבל על ירושלים ... ואני איני אומר כן. אלא: צום העשירי - זה חמשה בטבת שבו באת שמועה לגולה שהוכתה העיר, שנאמר (יחזקאל לג:א) וַיְהִי בַשְּׁתַּי עֶשְׂרֵה יָשְׁנָה בְּעֶשְׂרֵי בְחַמְשָׁה לַחֹדֶשׁ לְגָלוּתֵנוּ בָּא אֵלַי הַפְּלִיט מִירוּשָׁלַם לֵאמֹר הִפְתָּה הָעִיר. ועשו יום שמועה כיום שריפה.

ראש השנה יח:

The Gemara records a dispute between R. Akiva and R. Shimon as to when the 'Fast of the Tenth month' (as mentioned in Zecharia) should be. Rabbi Akiva said 10 Tevet, when the siege began and R. Shimon said 5 Tevet, when news of the fall of Jerusalem reached the community in Bavel.

29. ... אלא בארץ ישראל מתענין על המעשה ובגולה על השמועה ... לא נהגו ישראל להתענות אלא בעשרה בטבת על שם המעשה שגדול המעשה יותר מן השמועה.

פסיקתא זוטרתיא דברים פרשת ואתחנן :

The Midrash records that R. Shimon's opinion was that the Jews of Eretz Yisrael should fast on 10 Tevet (the siege) and the Jews of the Galut on 5 Tevet (the news). The minhag became for all Jews to fast on the 10th .

30.

והנראה לענ"ד ונפקא מינה לדין גם כן, דארבע זמנות הללו מדברי קבלה אין נקבע להם יום מיוחד עשרה בטבת או חמשה בטבת וכדומה, רק הדברי קבלה הוא על אלו החדשים דבטבת ותמוז ואב ותשרי מחוייבים להפענות בהם יום אחד, אבל לא נתייחד יום מיוחד רק באיזה יום שרצה יוכל להתענות רק באלו החדשים<sup>101</sup>. וראה לדבר דפסקוק [זכריה ח', י"ט] אינו מוזכר איזה יום כלל, רק צום הרביעי וצום החמישי וצום העשירי דהיינו החדשים אבל לא באיזה יום. ואב"ל לך עוד ראיות ברורות בענין זה. דהנה נראה שנה י"ח ע"ב פליגי ר"ע ורבי שמעון, דר"ע סובר צום העשירי היינו עשרה בטבת שבו סמך מלך בבל ורשב"י אומר זה חמשה בטבת שבה שמועה לגולה וכו', וקשה דהם היו חייבין לחזור חודש אחד ומאי פליגי, פוק חזי מה עמא דבר ומה היו עושין צבת שני דאז היה ששון ושמחה באיזה יום היו עושין, וצבת שני היו תנאים בית שמאי ובית הלל ויתר מקבלי התורה והיאך שכחו הדבר. וגם שם מוזכר דבמשעה בתמוז הובקעה העיר כמבואר בירמיה [ג"ב, ו'] ואין מתענין בשבעה עשר, ומתוך רצא דבית שני נחרב בשבעה עשר בו, ומובא בתוס' סם ד"ה זה, ובית שני חמיר לן על כן מתענין ב"ו. ותמיה גדולה היאך יכולין אהנו לעקור דברי קבלה שהוא כמורה הוה להו לקבוע גם י"ז בו, ואי משום דקשה על הצבור, מ"מ היאך יוכלו לעקור דבר מורה בקום ועשה לאכול ולשתות ואשר עניינים שהוא מדברי קבלה בשעת השמד ה"ו כמבואר בראשונים [רמב"ן בתורת האדם]. ועוד דר' יוחנן אמר [תענית כ"ט ע"א] אילו הייתי שם קבעתי בעשירי ורבנן אחלמא דפורענא עדיפא, והיאך אילו היה שם היה קובע בעשירי וכי בדידיה הדבר תלוי הלא הוא מדברי קבלה כך היה רצונו ימצרך וגזירת הכתוב הוא.

אלא ודאי הוא הדבר אשר דברתי בענין זה, דהקבלה לא קבעה יום מיוחד כלל רק החדשים ובאיזה יום חודש שרואים מתענים, וכן צמי ששון ושמחה באיזה יום שרואין בחדשים הללו עושין ששון ושמחה, א"כ צבת שני היה כל מקום נוהג כמו שהיו רואים, ואחרי זה כשנחרב הבית בשניה והיו רואים לקבוע הימים הללו לכל ישראל בשנה, כהוא דמקיעות דהמקין רב אצבו [שם ל"ד ע"א] שיהיו כל ישראל בשנה כמו שכתב רב האי גאון ז"ל הוצא בראשונים [ר"ן סם ו' ע"א מדפי הרי"ף ד"ה אהקין], וצברו חז"ל לאחר החורבן ימים הללו והיה דעת ר"ע שהצום יהיה עשרה בטבת שבו היה עת צרה לישראל ורשב"י אומר בחמשה בטבת, אע"פ שמבאין ראיה מפסוקים זה אסמכתא בעלמא. ועל כן אמר ר' יוחנן אילו היה שם היה קובע בעשירי, דזה הברירה באיזה יום היה מדברי חז"ל<sup>102</sup>. וגם סברת רבא דבית שני חמיר לן דברו ביום שהיתה צבת שני, ומ"מ לא נעקרה הקבלה כי בחודש הזה מתענים.

מנחת חינוך שא

The Minchat Chinuch has a very interesting chidush (based on the Ritva) that Zecharia originally did not fix the day of the month for each fast (or feast in the time of the Temple). He just fixed the month - "the fast of the tenth". The Rabbis later came to crystallize the specific date for the relevant fasts and thus occasionally differed in approach as to which date was best most appreciated

**F] YOM HAKADDISH HAKLALI**

- In 1949 the Israeli Chief Rabbinate chose 10 Tevet as the national memorial day for the Shoah and the day to say Kaddish for those souls who had perished on unknown dates or who had no relatives to say kaddish for them. They also decided to make Har Zion in Yerushalayim the central site for a Holocaust Memorial. At the time it overlooked the Jordanian occupied Old City. The attempt to designate Har Zion for holocaust memorial was a religious response to the establishment of a secular memorial at Yad Vashem.
- Both attempts failed. The Knesset passed a law in 1951 establishing Yom HaShoah on 27 Nissan. This was almost entirely rejected by the religious community since it places a day of mourning in Nissan which is halachically assur (the original Knesset proposal was to have Yom HaShoah on Erev Pesach - the day of the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto).
- Also, Har Zion largely fell out of use as a Holocaust memorial and Yad Vashem now stands as the main memorial site.

31.

בענין החבל שנתלו בו הקדושים בגולה והש"ץ בהר ציון משתמש בו להתאזר בתפלתו.

ע"ד השאלה של וועדת הר ציון, בענין מה שהביאו העולים חבל עב שהסירו מעל אחד העצים בעיר אחת שבמדינת פולין שנתלו עליו מאחינו בית ישראל הי"ד ומנהלי הוועדה הנ"ל הנהיגו שבזמן שמתאספים ביום עשרה בטבת בבהכ"נ של הר ציון להתפלל ולהזכיר נשמות ההרוגים הקדושים הי"ד אז יתאזר החזן בחבל זה, ועכשיו הם שואלים אם אין חשש איסור בזה.

לענ"ד נראה ברור שהמנהג הזה צריכים לבטלו ויש בו איסור ע"פ דין ..... החבל העב שנתלו עליו יש לו דין סודר שנחנק בו וצריך קבורה והוא אסור בהנאה וא"כ אסור להשתמש בו שיחגור אותו החזן על מלבשו, והוא איסור דאורייתא דיליף ל' מקרא כנ"ל.

שו"ת קול מבשר חלק א סימן נח

*This responsum from R. Mehulam Rot (1875-1962) concerns a minhag to daven on Har Zion on 10 Tevet using as a prayer gartel a rope that was used in the Shoah to hang Jews. He rules that that this is prohibited and the rope actually requires burial. But it shows the original strength of feeling for 10 Tevet.*

## APPENDIX - THE CREATION OF THE SEPTUAGINT

- Chazal address the translation of the Torah<sup>11</sup> into Greek - the Targum Shivim or Septuagint (LXX) - in mesechtot Megilla and Sofrim. It is generally portrayed as as a disaster for Torah and the Jewish people for reasons we addressed above.
- Fascinatingly, the account of the creation of the LXX is also addressed in other older sources,

### G] THE LETTER OF ARISTEAS TO PHILOCRATES

- 3rd/early 2nd century BCE and the earliest text to mentioned the Library of Alexandria.
- Produced by Hellenist Jews<sup>12</sup> and later quoted at length by Joephus.

30.

28 Now when this had been completed, he directed Démétrios to report on the transcription of the Judean books. For all measures were taken by these kings by means of ordinances and in great security, and with no trace of negligence nor carelessness. .... 29 Now the copy of the report is as follows:

*Démétrios to the Great King, Your order, O king, concerned the collection of missing books needed to complete the library, and of items which fell short of the requisite condition. And since I have given highest priority and attention to these matters, I now have the following report to lay before you: 30 Books of the law of the Judeans, together with a few others, are missing from the library. For these works are written in Hebraic characters and language. But according to the report of the experts, they have been transcribed somewhat carelessly and not as they should be; for they have never been made with any sort of royal foresight. 31 Now it is necessary that these works should also be made into an accurate version for your library, because this legislation, as could be expected from its divine nature, is also very philosophical and uncontaminated. For this reason, both writers and poets and the whole multitude of historians have been reluctant to refer to the previously-mentioned books, and to the men who have lived and are living in accordance with them, because their conception of life is so pure and solemn, as Hekataios of Abdéra declares. 32 Therefore, if you approve, O king, a letter shall be written to the chief-priest at Jerusalem, asking him to dispatch men of the most beautiful lives and who are elders, skilled in matters pertaining to their law, six in number from each tribe, in order that after probing the text agreed by the majority, and having achieved an accurate translation, we may produce an outstanding version in a manner worthy, even of the contents and of your purpose. May you be prosperous in every way!*

33 Now on receiving this report, the king directed a letter to be written to Eleazar concerning these matters, also giving an account of the redeeming of the Judean prisoners. But he also provided 50 talents of gold, and 70 talents of silver, and a large quantity of precious stones for the fashioning of both cups, and bowls, and a table, and libation-vessels. He directed the treasurers to allow the artisans to select whatever materials they might require for the purpose. He also commanded that 100 monetary talents be sent to the priest for sacrifices and for other requirements. 34 Now we will show to you details concerning the provisions after we have given the copies of the letters. Now the king's letter was of the following pattern:

*35 King Ptolemaios to Eleazar the chief-priest, greetings and good health. It is a fact that many of the Judeans settled in our country after being uprooted from Jerusalem by the Persians during the time of their mastery, but even more yet came with our father into Egypt as prisoners. .... 38 But it is our wish to grant favors to them and to all the Judeans throughout the inhabited earth, and to future generations. Therefore, we have decided that your law shall be translated into Hellenic characters from what you call the Hebraic characters, in order that they should also take their place with us in our library with the other royal books. 39 Therefore, you will act beautifully, and in a manner worthy of our eagerness, by selecting and dispatching elders of exemplary lives, experienced in the law and who are able to translate it, six from each tribe, so that an agreed version may be found from the large majority, in view of the great importance of the matters under consideration. For we believe that the completion of this project will win us great glory. 40 Now we have sent off on these things: Andreas the chief-bodyguard and Aristeas, men whom I hold in honor, to confer with you. And with them, they bring first-fruits of my votive-offerings for the temple, and 100 talents of silver for sacrifices and the other requirements. Now write to us on any matters you wish, and your requests will be gratified; and you will be performing an act worthy of a friendship, for what you choose will be carried out with utmost speed. Farewell.*

11. The famous translation commissioned by Ptolomy was of the Chumash only. The remainder of Nach was translated into Greel over the following centuries.

12. For a performance reading of the Letter see <http://www.biblicalaudio.com/aristeas.htm>

41 In reply to this letter, Eleazar wrote in acceptance as follows:

*Eleazar the chief-priest sends greetings to his genuine friend King Ptolemaios. Good health both to you and to your sister Queen Arsinoé, and to your children; if that is so, it would be beautiful, and as we wish. Now we also are in good health. 42 On receipt of your letter we rejoiced greatly because of your purpose and beautiful counsel. And we gathered together the whole multitude, reading it to them, that they might know about your piety toward our God. But we also showed to them the vessels which you sent, twenty of gold and thirty of silver, five cups, and a table for offering, and 100 talents of silver for the performance of sacrifices and the furnishing of the temple requirements. 43 These gifts were brought by two men held in honor by you, Andreas and Aristreas, men who are beautiful and good, and outstanding in discipline, and worthy in every respect of your conduct and righteousness. And these men communicated your messages to us, and they received a reply from me in agreement with what you wrote. 44 For everything which is to your advantage, even if it is unusual, we will carry out; for this is a sign of friendship and love. For you have even bestowed great and unexpected benefits upon our citizens in many ways. 45 Therefore, we offered sacrifices without delay for you, and your sister, and your children, and your friends. And the whole multitude prayed, that your plans might prosper continually, and that God, the Lord of all, might preserve your kingdom in peace with glory, and that the translation of the holy law might prove advantageous to you and be carried out successfully. 46 Now in the presence of the whole assembly we selected elders, beautiful and good men, six from each tribe, whom we have sent with the law in their possession. Therefore, once the translation of the books is complete, it will be a beautiful-deed, O righteous king, if you order, that these men be restored to us again in safety. Farewell.*

47 Now the names of the men are as follows: First tribe: Joseph, Hezekiah, Zechariah, Johanan, Hezekiah, Elisha. Second tribe: Judah, Simon, Samuel, Adai, Mattithiah, Eschlemiah. Third tribe: Nehemiah, Joseph, Theodosios, Basaiah, Orniah, Dakis. 48 Fourth tribe: Jonathan, Abrai, Elisha, Hananiah, Zechariah, Hilkiah. Fifth tribe: Isaac, Jacob, Jeshua, Shabbethai, Simon, Levi. 49 Sixth tribe: Judah, Joseph, Simon, Zechariah, Samuel, Shelemiah. Seventh tribe: Shabbethai, Zedekiah, Jacob, Isaac, Jesiah, Natthai. Eighth tribe: Theodosios, Jason, Jeshua, Theodotos, Johanan, Jonathan. Ninth tribe: Theophilos, Abram, Arsam, Jason, Endemiah, Daniel; 50 Tenth tribe: Jeremiah, Eleazar, Zechariah, Benaiah, Elisha, Dathai. Eleventh tribe: Samuel, Joseph, Judah, Jonathan, Caleb, Dositheos. Twelfth tribe: Isael, Johanan, Theodosios, Arsam, Abietes, Ezekiel. They were seventy-two in all. And this indeed was the answer given by Eleazar's party in reply to the king's letter.

Letter Of Aristreas To Philokrates, Chapter 2

307 Now, as we have previously-stated, they met together daily in their region (which was pleasantly situated for its calmness and brightness), proceeding to fulfill their prescribed task. But the outcome was such that in seventy-two days the translation work was completed, as if such a result was achieved by some predetermination. 308 But when it was completed, Démétrios gathered together the multitude of the Judeans in the region where the translation had also been finished. He read it publicly to everyone, and in the presence of the translators, who also received a great reception from the multitude, because of the great goodthings which they had conferred upon them. 309 But they also bestowed warm praise upon Démétrios, beseeching him, now that he had transcribed the whole law, to present a copy to their leaders.

310 Now after the scrolls had been recognized, the priests stood up, along with the elders from among the translators and from the representatives of the body of citizens, and with the leaders of the multitude, speaking, "Since this version has been made beautifully and sacredly, and in every respect accurately, it is only fair that this should remain exactly as it is, and that there should be no revision."

311 Now after everyone approved of what they stated, they directed that a curse should be pronounced, as was their custom, on anyone who should revise it by any addition, or by change to any part of the written text, or by any deletion either. This was a very beautiful precaution, to ensure that the words be preserved unchanged for all the future time.

312 Now when the events were also reported to the king, he rejoiced greatly. For it seemed that the purpose which he shared had been safely accomplished. Now the entire version was also read by him, and he marveled profoundly at the mind of the lawgiver. And he spoke to Démétrios, "How is it that none of the historians or poets have ever thought it was worth their while to allude to such a wonderful work?" 313 Now he declared, "Because the legislation is solemn and of divine origin. And because some of those who made the attempt were struck by God, they refrained from their design."

Letter Of Aristreas To Philokrates, Chapter 14

**G] PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA**

31.

amongst them to the king of highest repute. <sup>29</sup>Ptolemy, surnamed Philadelphus, was the third in succession to Alexander, the conqueror of Egypt. In all the qualities which make a good ruler, he excelled not only his contemporaries, but all who have arisen in the past; and even until today, after so many generations, his praises are sung for the many evidences and monuments of his greatness of mind which he left behind him in different cities and countries, so that, even now an act of more than ordinary munificence or buildings on an especially great scale are proverbially called Philadelphian after him. <sup>30</sup>To put it shortly, as the house of the Ptolemies was highly distinguished, compared with other dynasties, so was Philadelphus among the Ptolemies. The creditable achievements of this one man almost outnumbered those of all the others put together, and, as the head takes the highest place in the living body, so he may be said to head the kings. <sup>31</sup>This great man, having conceived an ardent affection for our laws, determined to have the Chaldean translated into Greek, and at once dispatched envoys to the high priest and king of Judea, both offices being held by the same person, explaining his wishes and urging him to choose by merit persons to make a full rendering of the Law into Greek. <sup>32</sup>The high priest was naturally pleased and, thinking that God's guiding care must have led the king to busy himself in such an undertaking, sought out such Hebrews as he had of the highest reputation, who had received an education in Greek as well as in their native lore, and joyfully sent them to Ptolemy. <sup>33</sup>When they arrived, they were offered hospitality, and having been sumptuously entertained, requited their entertainer with a feast of words full of wit and weight. For he tested the wisdom of each by propounding for discussion new instead of ordinary questions, which problems they solved with happy and well-pointed answers in the form of apophthegms, as the occasion did not allow of lengthy speaking.

<sup>34</sup>After standing this test, they at once began to fulfill the duties of their high errand. Reflecting how great an undertaking it was to make a full version of the laws given by the Voice of God, where they could not add or take away or transfer anything, but must keep the original form and shape, they proceeded to look for the most open and unoccupied spot in the neighborhood outside the city. For, within the walls, it was full of every kind of living creatures and consequently the prevalence of diseases and deaths, and the impure conduct of the healthy inhabitants, made them suspicious of it. <sup>35</sup>In front of Alexandria lies the island of Pharos, stretching with its narrow strip of land toward the city, and enclosed by a sea not deep but mostly consisting of shoals, so that the loud din and booming of the surging waves grows faint through the long distance before it reaches the land. <sup>36</sup>Judging this to be the most suitable place in the district, where they might find peace and tranquility and the soul could commune with the laws with none to disturb its privacy, they fixed their abode there; and taking the sacred books, stretched them out toward heaven with the hands that held them, asking of God that they might not fail in their purpose. And he assented to their prayers, to the end that the greater part, or even the whole, of the human race might be profited and led to a better life by continuing to observe such wise and truly admirable ordinances.

<sup>37</sup>Sitting here in seclusion with none present save the elements of nature, earth, water, air and heaven, the creation of which was to be the first them of the sacred revelation, for the laws begin with the story of the world's creation, they became as it were possessed, and under inspiration, wrote, not each scribe something different, but the same word for word, as though dictated to each by an invisible prompter.

<sup>38</sup>Yet who does not know that every language, and Greek especially, abounds in terms, and that the same thought can be put in many shapes by changing single words and whole phrases and suiting the expression to the occasion? This was not the case, we are told, with this law of ours, but the Greek words used corresponded literally with the Chaldean, exactly suited to the things they indicated. <sup>39</sup>For just as in geometry and logic, so it seems to me, the sense indicated does not admit of variety in the expression which remains unchanged in its original form, so these writers, as it clearly appears, arrived at a wording which corresponded with the matter, and along, or better than any other, would bring out clearly what was meant. <sup>40</sup>The clearest proof of this is that, if Chaldeans have learned Greek, or Greeks Chaldean, and read both versions, the Chaldean and the translation, they regard them with awe and reverence as sisters, or rather one and the same, both in matter and words, and speak of the authors not as translators but as prophets and priests of the mysteries, whose sincerity and singleness of thought has enabled them to go hand in hand with the purest of spirits, the spirit of Moses. <sup>41</sup>Therefore even to the present day there is held every year a feast and general assembly in the island of Pharos, whither not

only Jews but multitudes of others cross the water, both to do honor to the place in which the light of that version first shone out, and also to thank God for the good gift so old yet ever young. <sup>42</sup>But, after the prayers and thanksgivings, some fixing tents on the seaside and others reclining on the sandy beach in the open air feast with their relations and friends, counting that shore for the time a more magnificent lodging than the fine mansions in the royal precincts. <sup>43</sup>Thus the laws are shown to be desirable and precious in the eyes of all, ordinary citizens and rulers alike, and that too though our nation has not prospered for many a year. It is but natural that when people are not flourishing their belongings to some degree are under a cloud. <sup>44</sup>But, if a fresh start should be made to brighter prospects, how great a change for the better might we expect to see! I believe that each nation would abandon its peculiar ways, and throwing overboard their ancestral customs, turn to honoring our laws alone. For, when the brightest of their shining is accompanied by national prosperity, it will darken the light of the others as the risen sun darkens the stars.

**Philo, *Life of Moses* 2.29-44**

- Note that the account of the translation was also written up by the early Church fathers with a new Christian polemical spin<sup>13</sup>.

13. See for instance see Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.21.2 which portrays the separation of the Sages as a ploy by Ptolomy to prevent the rabbis from Mistranslating the Torah to avoid Christological translations.