

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Devorim

6 Menachem Av, 5777 – July 29, 2017

Compiled from the works of
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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi
Parshas Devorim**

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Rashi in His Own Words

דברים א', ה': בַּעֲבַר הַיַּרְדֵּן בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב הוֹאִיל מֹשֶׁה בָּאֵר אֶת הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת לְאָמֹר:
רש"י ד"ה באר את התורה: בשבעים לשון פירשה להם:

Devorim 1:5: On the other side of the Jordan River in the land of Moav, Moshe began explaining the Torah saying,

Rashi Heading: explaining this Law: He explained it to them in seventy languages.

Synopsis

This week we read the Torah portion of Devorim. It marks the beginning of the fifth book of the Torah. Moshe reprimands his flock for things which they did which were less than perfect throughout the 40 years they spent in the desert. However, he did not mention any events out right. He merely hinted at the incidents which took place by mentioning the locations where they occurred. He would not humiliate even those Jews who repeatedly showed gratitude neither to himself nor to Hashem by declaring their offences explicitly.

Moshe tells the Jews that on the other side of the “Yarden – Jordan River” that Hashem began explaining the Torah to them. Rashi explains that Hashem taught the Torah in all of the 70 base languages from which all other languages were derived. The Sages tell us that this is a reference to engraving all of the words of the Torah on stone explained well prior to our crossing the Jordan and entering into Israel. The Sages explain that the meaning of the words “explained well” is that they were written in all 70 primary languages¹. Hence we see that these were all positive actions.

However we also find it implied that these actions were less than ideal. In Maseches Sofrim² it is written regarding this translation, that it was written by five Sages

1. Devorim 27:4,8.

2. Maseches Sofrim literally means the “Tractate of Scribes.” It is included in the so-called Minor Tractates. They were written by the Sages of the era of the Mishnah (Tanna'im) in the style of the Mishnah. However they were not included in the Mishnah. The particular point that we are writing is brought in Maseches Sofrim Chapter 1, Paragraph 6.

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who translated the Torah into Greek at the command of King Ptolemy. It adds there that that the day on which the Torah was translated into Greek was as bad for the Jews as the day on which the Golden Calf was made³. Tractate Torah Scroll also writes⁴ that Hebrew cannot be properly translated into Greek. Why should Greek be any better or worse than any of the other languages? Additionally, why should the Torah's translation into Greek (as opposed to any of the other 69 languages) be as bad as the day on which the Golden Calf was made? Furthermore, why should the Sages say that the day on which the Torah was written in Greek was "as bad as the day on which the Golden Calf was made." One would think that it should say "as bad as it was on the day that the sin of the Golden Calf took place?"

Rashi's Explanation

This week's Torah portion, Devorim, begins the fifth book of the Torah. The Torah tells us that⁵ "On that side of the Jordan, in the land of Moav, Moshe commenced explaining this Law saying." Rashi cites the words "explaining the Law (the Torah)." He explains that "He (Moshe) explained it (the Torah) to them in seventy languages." Prior to the Jew's entry into Israel, we needed to be able to teach Torah to everyone everywhere. We were totally isolated for 40 years. We had all been in Yeshivah. We had all studied Torah day and night from the world's greatest teacher, Moshe Rabbeinu. Now it was time for us to begin teaching all of those around us.

.Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Moshe told the Jews that on the other side of the "Yarden – Jordan River," Hashem began explaining the Torah. Rashi explains that Hashem taught the Torah in all of the 70 base languages from which all other languages were derived. The Sages tell us that this refers to Moshe's engraving the Torah before we crossed the Jordan. This was obviously very great.

3. A similar story is found in the minor Tractate Torah Scroll, Chapter 1, Paragraph 8. The difference is that there it is written that the Greek King Ptolemy who commanded 70 Jewish Sages to translated the Torah. There is another version that reads 72 Sages. Therefore it is called by the Greek name Septuagint. The original was correct, but it has been re-translated and re-copied so many times that it has lost all claims to veracity.

4. Chapter 1, Paragraph 1.

5 Devorim 1:3.

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However, we also find it implied that these actions were less than ideal. In *Maseches Sofrim*¹ it is written regarding this translation that it was written by five Sages who translated the Torah into Greek at the command of King Ptolemy. It adds that that the day in which the Torah was translated into Greek was as bad for the Jews as the day on which the Golden Calf was made². Tractate Torah Scroll also writes that Hebrew cannot be properly translated into Greek. Why should Greek be any better or worse than any of the other base languages? Additionally, why should the Torah's translation into Greek (as opposed to any of the other 69 languages) be as bad as the day on which the Golden Calf was made? Furthermore, the expression that it was "as bad as the day on which the Golden Calf was made" requires explanation. One would think that it should be compared to the "sin of the Golden Calf?" Why compare it to the day on which it was made?

Furthermore, the Sanhedrin consisted of 70 Sages; which is another reason for calling the translation the Septuagint, the "Targum Shivi'im – תרגום שבעים – Translation of the Seventy."

Actually there is an advantage to translating the Torah into Ancient Greek. We see that in terms of translating the Torah, the Greek language had a specific advantage. Noach had three sons; Shem, Cham and Yofes." Shem was the patriarch of all Jews. Cham was the father of the Canaanites and the Africans. Yofes was the patriarch of the Greeks. After the flood, the Torah writes that⁶ "May G-d expand Yofes, and may He dwell in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be a slave to them." The meaning of this is that Yofes, Greece received a special blessing. The only language in which a Torah may be written (besides for Hebrew) is ancient Greek. here is even a precedent for this. A Torah may indeed be written in Greek. This is the opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel; the Halachah is ruled in accordance with his opinion⁷.

The Explanation

We will understand all of this by first understanding the meaning of "it was as bad for the Jews *as the day on which the Golden Calf was made.*" What exactly happened on

⁶ Bereishis 9:27.

⁷. See Talmud Megilah 8, b in the Mishnah, *ibid.* 9, b. See also Rambam Laws of Tefillin Chapter 1, Paragraph 19.

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that day? The first thing that happened was that most Jews made a mistake calculating time. The Jews were not interested in having an idol! They wanted to replace Moshe. They were sure that he could not survive in Heaven together with Hashem. Therefore it is written that⁸ “When the people saw that Moshe was late in coming down from the mountain, they gathered against Aharon and said to him, ‘Come on! Make us gods that will go before us, because this man Moshe who brought us up from the land of Egypt we don't know what has become of him.’”

Aharon realized that the people believed in Hashem and in Moshe. He was simply trying to stall for time in order to keep the people from doing something they may regret. He said to them⁹ “... Remove the golden earrings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters and bring them to me. And all the people stripped themselves of the golden earrings that were on their ears and brought them to Aharon. He took them from their hands, fashioned them with an engraving tool, and made them into a molten calf, upon which they said: "These are your gods, O Israel, who have brought you up from the land of Egypt!" He hoped that the people would not give in. However, ultimately it says¹⁰ “When Aharon saw [this], he built an altar in front of it, and Aharon proclaimed and said ‘Tomorrow shall be a festival to the Lord.’”

In other words the day that the Golden Calf was built was the day before anything could happen. The point of comparing something to the day that the Calf was built, was that it was a comparison to a preparation to evil. Translating Torah to Greek was not evil. However it was a preparation to evil. Allowing Greek philosophers’ access to Torah bears the potential for the greatest evil.

A Deeper Explanation of Rashi

However now that we are so close to the arrival of Moshiach everything has changed. At one point having Torah available for one and all was a great danger, and was certainly unacceptable.

However now we are all aware of the famous letter written by the Baal Shem Tov¹¹. In this letter he describes a spiritual “trip” which he took. His soul ascended to the

8. Shemos 32:1.

9. Shemos 32:2-4.

10. Shemos 32:5.

11. This letter is printed at the beginning of Kesser Shem Tov.

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greatest heights of heaven. Reaching the chamber of Moshiach, he asked him “when is the Master coming?” Moshiach’s response was “when your fountains reach the furthest most places; then I shall arrive.”

Now it is important for each and every one of us to reach the level of the day of the *building* of the Golden Calf. Now it is necessary for all parts of Torah to be translated into every language. Then we will reach the ultimate redemption!

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Vo'eiro (Rosh Chodesh Shevat¹²) 5740)

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12. This was the date on which Moshe translated the Torah into the 70 basic languages.

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For a complete and speedy recovery

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May he merit to be a Chossid, a Yerei Shomayim and a Lamdon

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לזכות

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נדפס ע"י הוריהם

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