



SPECIAL GUEST DVAR TORAH

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Seven Wisdoms, Eight Lights;

Exploring the Mysterious Relationship of Greek Wisdom to Torah Knowledge

One of best known – and most confusing – issues regarding the celebration of Chanukah is the legendary question of Rabbi Yosef Karo (the Bet Yosef): *Why did Chazal decree eight nights of Chanukah? The Maccabim found a cruet of oil to light the Menorah for one night. Therefore, wasn't the miracle only for seven nights?*

Scores of answers have been offered by Torah scholars throughout the centuries. In our times, Rabbi Yosef Ber Soloveitchik ז"ל suggested that the mere fact that the Maccabees had the great faith in Hashem that at least one undefiled jug would be found, and felt compelled to search for it, was in itself a great miracle.

The inner wisdom of Pnimius HaTorah (i.e. Kabbalistic and Chassidic sources) provides another possible solution. The *Likutey Halachot* (Shabbat 5:8) identifies that the entire source of Greek wisdom was taken from Egypt; the greatest civilization and scientific bastion of the ancient gentile world. This statement is likewise corroborated by researchers in the modern secular world. (*Stolen Legacy*, James, George G.M., 1954). Another linkage of Greek wisdom

to Biblical Mitzraim is the assertion of *Megaleh Amukot* (Parshat Vayeshev) that the entire Greek cultural exile of the Second Temple era was the direct result of the sale by Yaacov's sons of their brother Yosef, exposing him to the natural wisdom of the Egyptian Scientists/Necromancers (*chartumim*). The *B'nai Yissachar*, (Kislev 4.34) likewise posits that the entire Jewish people were subjected to the domination of Egyptian/Hellenic world by Aristotle's prime student, Alexander the Great, as a direct punishment and rectification for the sale of Yosef to *Mitzraim*, the ancient source of all of Aristotelian knowledge.

Yosef was taught, by the angel Gavriel, all of mankind's seventy languages in a miraculous fashion, prior to his encounter with Pharaoh (Zohar Bamidbar 213b). Gavriel gave Yosef the vast lexicon of occult and scientific knowledge revered by the ancient pharaohs. Beyond that, Yosef knew *lashon kodesh*, the language of Torah and Creation. He bested and dominated Pharaoh by virtue of the knowledge given to him by Hashem only, the correct interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams and the applied knowledge to deal

with the impending famine.

Yosef was thereby correctly identified by Pharaoh as *tzafnas paneach* – the revealer of hidden mysteries. Yosef was the receiver of prophetically Torah wisdom unknown to Pharaoh and his court. Similarly, Yosef was called by Yaacov, *Ben Zekunim*, the son who mastered the inherited kabbalistic legacy of his father, grandfather, and great grandfather Avraham (who were all the students of the traditions of Adam, Noah, Shem, and Ever). Therefore, the source of Yosef’s wisdom far exceeded anything the ancients had ever encountered because he understood the root essence of all *chochma*.

Yosef’s ascendancy over Egypt demonstrated that the seven wisdoms known to the ancient world Egyptian and Hellenic world – logic, language, mathematics, geometry, music, biology/psychology and astronomy – were superseded and dependent on a hidden eighth level that is the root of all seven natural levels of *chochma*.

Similarly, the seven-branched Menorah represents all aspects of natural *Chochma*. Its lights, however, are from the higher realm of the revealed *ohr* of Torah itself. The Maharal of Prague’s in his introduction to *Tiferes Yisroel* uses this precise image to explain the true miracle of Chanukah. He writes that the *Kodesh Kadoshim* (which contains the *Aron and Luchos*) is normally separated from the *Heichal* (the outer chamber where the Menorah stands). In the miracle of Chanukah, this separation was broken and the holiness penetrated from the *Kodesh Kadoshim* into the *Heichal* and shone through the Menorah itself. The Maharal thereby explains that seven represents the natural wisdom, whereas

eight represents the realm of Hashem; that which is beyond nature. The numbers seven and eight are therefore inextricably bound and correctly so. A novel answer to the Bais Yosef’s famed question.

Science is rapidly revealing the spectacular secrets and images of the distant cosmos and the mysteries of quantum subatomic structure. Eventually, science will be forced to concede that man will reach the limits of his own scientific inquiry and behind that final door, will discover their Creator. The Jews of the Hellenist era were seekers and thinkers who also stood at risk of falling into a humanistic trap. The supernatural oil’s extended burning was a swift reminder to all: the workings of nature are subject to the constant supervising energy and will of the Creator.

Our Chanukah lighting helps us always remember the link of seven to eight, We are welcome, even encouraged, to scientifically investigate the brilliant design and forces of Hashem’s created world, but only as part and parcel of our continuous development of faith in Hashem and his Torah the blueprint of Creation.

When we align the study of nature and the human condition as part of our pursuit of deep Torah wisdom we can truly reveal the wonders of G-d’s world. Torah is, and always must be, “our *chochma* and *bina* in the eyes of all the nations.” Happy Chanukah!

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